

metro

ORLANDO MANHUNT

Suspect apprehended nine days after officer was killed **Story, B-3**

IN GEORGIA

Study to look at effects of deer on Jekyll Island plants **Story, B-8**

Business leaders send letter backing HRO legislation

Similar bill to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation failed in 2012

By Christopher Hong
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A group of Jacksonville's top business and civic leaders sent a letter Tuesday to City Council members urging them to pass a law that would protect the LGBT community from discrimination.

Passage of the anti-dis-

crimination legislation, which is being considered by the council, is a top priority for the organization and the city's business community, according to a statement the group issued Tuesday.

"It is time for Jacksonville to join the majority of Florida and U.S. cities in affirmatively protect-

ing its citizens from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity," said Ed Burr, the group's chairman.

The legislation would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The group says Jacksonville remains one of the last major cities without such a law, and that makes the city less competitive in attracting new businesses and hinders economic development.

The Civic Council also supported similar legislation that failed in 2012 and legislation that was withdrawn last year before the council voted on it.

In the group's letter to council members, they listed three reasons to support the legislation. They said the legislation protects the LGBT community from discrimination while preserving individual rights to religious freedom and protecting small business from un-

due burdens, is simple and specific to Jacksonville and enhances economic development opportunities.

While the legislation has exemptions for religious organizations and businesses with 15 or less employees, that hasn't soothed criticism of it.

Opponents of the legislation, some of whom believe homosexuality is a sin, say they don't believe the exemptions will be enough to prevent the leg-

islation from infringing on their religious liberties.

So far, it's unclear whether the legislation has enough support on the council to pass.

Three council members, Jim Love, Tommy Hazouri and Aaron Bowman, are the legislation's sponsors.

Council committees are set to discuss the legislation early next month, and the full council could vote on it as early as Feb. 14.

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Abraham Lincoln, aka Dennis Boggs of Nashville, Tenn., entertained local students on his first of two days at the Jacksonville Public Library's Main Library downtown Tuesday where he told the story of Lincoln's life and death. The event is sponsored by the Colonial Dames of Florida who have brought previous historical actors to the city. (Photos by Bob Self/Florida Times-Union)

Talks with Honest Abe

Actor playing president describes early struggles, encourages students

By Sandy Strickland
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Obviously from another century, the tall man in the long black coat, paisley vest, pocket watch and fob walked on stage of the Main Library auditorium and handed his black stovepipe hat to a fifth-grader for safe-keeping.

Then he proceeded to keep a roomful of students enthralled as he talked about his childhood misadventures, his lack of education, his love of learning, his triumphs and tragedies and his assassination. It was Abraham Lincoln, displaying his sober and yes, his humorous side. Honest.

The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in Florida brought Lincoln, portrayed by Dennis Boggs of Nashville, Tenn., to the library Tuesday and Wednesday for performances underwritten by the Roger L. and Rochelle S. Main Charitable Trust.



Abraham Lincoln hands off his top hat to Jack Potter, 10, a fifth-grader at St. Mark's Episcopal Day School, to hold while he entertained local students.

About 1,600 primarily fifth-graders from 19 public and private schools heard him bring the 16th president to life. His agenda included presentations at two St. Johns County schools.

He told the students that he was born in a one-room cabin with a dirt floor. His mother died of poisoned milk when he was 9, and his father made her coffin. His father remarried, and his stepmother, who had three children, treated him as her own child. But she insisted that his father cover the dirt floor with wood and paint the walls and ceiling of their home snow white. He thought it was funny to let his stepbrother get mud on his feet and then turn him upside down so he could leave footprints across the ceiling. That is, until he had to get a bucket and clean it up.

He went to the proverbial one-room schoolhouse but only got a year's worth of schooling because he was needed to work on the farm. However, his stepmother encouraged him to read.

A trip to New Orleans and seeing slaves in shackles made a lasting impression, and he vowed to do something about it if given the chance.

When he decided to take the law exam, he read the books, took the test and failed. He did it again and failed. He studied harder a third time and still failed. He finally got a tutor and passed the fourth time.

LINCOLN continues on B-4

Be thoughtful as marketing our area defines who we are



mark woods

A few months ago, on the way back from Georgia, I stopped at the Florida Welcome Center off I-95, hoping

to get two things: orange juice and a column.

On the way to the building, I passed license plates from all over the country (plus quite a few from Canada). Near the entrance, a few tourists were taking pictures of themselves in front of "Satchmo," a 6-foot dolphin statue, covered with musical notes, designed to promote Clearwater's jazz festival and that area's "Dolphin Trail."

Once inside, I passed an astronaut statue, a reminder to visitors that if they continued about 150 miles down I-95 they'd arrive in the Space Coast.

Of course, some of them undoubtedly followed the lead of another large display — for the Wizarding World of Harry Potter — and veered off I-95 near Daytona, taking I-4 to Orlando.

As I drank my juice — I opted for grapefruit and it was quite tasty — I wondered what the people around me knew about the Florida city they were about to pass through. So I started to ask some of them.

Joe Wilson, a retiree from Cleveland, said with a laugh: "Jacksonville? You have a really bad NFL team. Not as bad as ours, but still pretty bad."

I told him that after the Cavaliers won an NBA title and the Indians made it to the World Series in 2016, we no longer have any sympathy for Cleveland fans.

"Other than that," he said, "I don't know much about Jacksonville."

This was pretty much repeated by all of the people I talked to. Some noted that we have a bad NFL team and stadium swimming pools.

I didn't turn any of this into a column then, but I thought about it when I opened Monday's paper and saw the headline: "City ponders its place on tourism map."

WOODS continues on B-4

Officials mull changes to afterschool program spending

Children's Commission expected to discuss access for public schools

By Denise Amos
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The Jacksonville Children's Commission for the first time is revamping how it makes grants to afterschool and summer learning programs.

On Wednesday, the commission will approve a new document soliciting bids, called a request for proposals (RFP), which agencies must use to compete for the nearly \$10 million in city money.

But some groups recently aired concerns and criticisms about the proposed document.

Among the sticky issues last week was whether

public schools would be allowed to bid for afterschool money, whether providers could help teenagers, and whether afterschool programs would continue transporting children home at night.

The process of revising the RFP started last year, when a coalition of non-profit giants in the county formed Jax Shines to, among other things, help the commission expand services to more children and improve quality.

In Jacksonville, afterschool programs serve only 22 percent of the children who live in low-income neighborhoods; summer school services only 16



The Jacksonville Children's Commission for the first time is revamping how it makes grants to afterschool and summer learning programs. (Bob Self/Florida Times-Union)

percent of them, according to Jax Shines, which studied the area's 17 largest afterschool and summer providers, serving 35,700 youth, or 28 percent of the students in Duval County schools.

The children's commission board is expected to

discuss allowing public schools to compete for after-school and summer learning dollars.

Duval public schools currently house many afterschool programs, but the programs are mostly run by outside groups. It also provides summer

school programs that the district runs and funds.

LeAnna Cumber, a member of the children's commission, said many on the Jax Shines task force feel Duval as a district should not be eligible for afterschool money, though its outside providers are.

She said the district already raises money through local property taxes to partially pay for its school-day activities; giving it more city dollars would be like double-dipping.

But charter schools should be allowed, she said, because they can't levy local taxes like the district can.

"I don't think that Duval County Public Schools should be excluded but if they are, that [exclusion] should not apply to charters because ... they're non-

profits," Cumber said.

Charter schools are public schools, but they operate independently of the district and School Board. They receive federal and state money like district schools, but not local property tax revenues.

Others on the children's commission board said it is not clear whether the city can legally fund charter school programs while denying money to other public schools.

Tom Majdanics, CEO of three KIPP Jacksonville schools, said he was "disappointed and puzzled by that language."

He said the KIPP schools — which are charters — serve 930 students and provide after-school activities on their own dime, for

SCHOOL continues on B-4