

METRO

Bill would give voters a say on JEA sale

By David Bauerlein
dbauerlein@jacksonville.com

Jacksonville City Council member John Crescimbeni unveiled legislation Thursday that would give voters the final say on selling JEA.

Crescimbeni said regardless of whether the current exploration of privatizing JEA goes anywhere, the intensity of the debate convinced him the City Charter should give voters the right to weigh in at the ballot box on any sale because they are the utility's

"shareholders."

Mayor Lenny Curry, who says he is undecided on whether the city should put JEA up for sale, was open to a voter referendum.

Curry said he hasn't reviewed Crescimbeni's legislation, but the mayor noted Duval County voters approved a 2016 referendum linked to Curry's pension overhaul.

"I haven't studied the proposal," Curry said, "but my pension reform referendum demonstrates my willingness to give voters the opportunity

to make the decision on big issues."

It would take a super-majority vote by at least 13 of 19 council members to amend the City Charter and insert the requirement of a voter referendum on selling JEA.

As it stands now, the charter says any sale exceeding 10 percent of JEA's assets must get approval by City Council. Crescimbeni wants to add another step to that approval process by putting the "terms and conditions of the sale" before voters, who would

support or reject the deal.

Crescimbeni will file separate legislation for a non-binding straw ballot in November when voters would say whether they think the city should require a sale of JEA to go before voters at the ballot box.

He said he hopes that by the time of the straw ballot, City Council will have amended the charter to add the requirement on a referendum for any JEA sale. He said the straw ballot would send a message to future City Councils about

public support for keeping that requirement in the charter for many years to come.

City Councilman Garrett Dennis, seated next to Crescimbeni at a Thursday meeting they called to discuss voter involvement, said he would withdraw his own legislation that sought an August straw ballot asking voters whether they support or oppose selling JEA.

The city is still in the early stages of deciding whether it

See BILL, B3



LEFT: The 1926-vintage Barnett Bank building on West Adams Street will be the site of the new University of North Florida location downtown. [BOB SELF/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION][THE FLORIDA TIMES-UNION/BOB SELF] TOP RIGHT: Jacksonville University President Tim Cost and the JU Honors String Quartet were on hand for the opening of JU's downtown campus. [BOB MACK/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION] BOTTOM RIGHT: The 1926-vintage Barnett Bank building on West Adams Street will be the site of the new University of North Florida location downtown. [BOB SELF/FLORIDA TIMES-UNION]

UNF to start classes in Barnett

By David Bauerlein
dbauerlein@jacksonville.com

In sprawling Jacksonville, it's a six-mile drive from Florida State College at Jacksonville's main campus to Jacksonville University, and it's 10 miles from JU to the University of North Florida.

But in downtown, the three schools will have satellite locations within a three-block stroll of each other.

The University of North Florida will be the next to plant its flag in downtown with plans for classes to begin in January in the historic Barnett Bank building.

The city's Downtown Investment Authority on Wednesday approved a \$380,000 loan to help UNF set up classrooms and a center for entrepreneurship on the fourth and fifth floors of the 18-story building, which has stood vacant for years but is undergoing top-to-bottom renovation.

a \$1 million pledge from Luther and Blanche Coggin to support the start-up of the UNF Center for Entrepreneurship, which will be named for the Coggins.

UNF's commitment to the Barnett Bank building adds to the impact of higher education in downtown revitalization.

Jacksonville University began offering classes last year at the SunTrust Tower. Florida State College at Jacksonville will use the Lerner Building on Adams Street after the owner finishes renovating that structure for a ground-floor restaurant and upper-floor student housing. UNF's classes at the Barnett Bank building will be near the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, which is part of UNF.

"This is just a continuation of what they've already started," DIA Chief Executive Officer Aundra Wallace said of UNF's presence in downtown.

The Barnett building will

See UNF, B2

Higher education initiatives downtown



UNF
Plans masters-level business classes for about 150 students along with a center for entrepreneurship that would be open to the community

JU
SunTrust Tower branch that opened last fall has programs from the Davis College of Business and the Brooks Rehabilitation College of Healthcare Sciences, along with the Bisk Center

FSCJ
Student housing beginning in the fall and a ground-floor restaurant to open next month that is part of the school's culinary arts program

Source: maps4news.com/@HERE

GATEHOUSE MEDIA

THIS WEEKEND

SATURDAY

• JJ Grey & Mofro, the Southern soul rock band from Jacksonville, is the headliner for the Blackwater Sol Revue at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre. One of the nice things about the band's songs, as fans already know, is they reflect the heart, soul and landscape of the region. Also in the lineup: Los Lobos, North Mississippi Allstars and The Marcus King Band.

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INSIDE | B4

FIREFIIGHTERS CREDIT TRAINING FOR RESCUE

Consider river when grooming yard for spring



Quinton White

After what turned out to be a fairly cold winter, with water temperatures reaching lower than normal levels, it is almost hard to believe how warm it has become for late February. But we also need to remember that we still have a few more weeks before we are out of danger. The long-range weather forecast shows a very slight chance of a late season freeze, but you never know. After all, this is Northeast Florida, where if you don't like the weather, just give it a few days. It will change.

But as the weather warms and likewise the water, our

See RIVER, B2

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