



CITY OF ATLANTIC BEACH
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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November 23, 2022

Councilman Nick Howland
Chair, Jacksonville Waterways Commission
City Council - City of Jacksonville
Jacksonville, FL

Dear Chairman Howland:

This is a request for any report, recommendations, or requested corrective actions from the Subcommittee established by the Waterways Commission, to address the Bridgeport Barge incident off our coast for several months in 2021. This request extends beyond the fine imposed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the spill. This is a follow-up to my email dated August 22, 2022.

As you know, the grounding of the barge and subsequent spill of Agremax (coal ash) raised significant concerns in Atlantic Beach, and I addressed them before the Waterways Commission. Despite the EPA classification of coal ash as non-hazardous waste, I addressed the need to better inform the public across local, state, and federal jurisdictional lines and to consider corrective actions to avoid similar spills in the future. We did our best by taking our own steps to test water quality and to share information with the public despite the fact that our city lacked jurisdiction.

Understanding the complexities as well as the economic benefits, the public expects us to know more about what is passing through our port. As we learned, this and other coal ash shipments have been going to a private terminal where the material is then trucked to a landfill in Georgia. By resolution, Atlantic Beach asked the City of Jacksonville to consider prohibiting the transit of coal ash through our waters.

In an update from the U. S. Coast Guard in August, I was concerned to learn about actions of the barge tug crew. I was told this was the first time (and in bad weather) that the captain had towed this material into the port. A pilot endorsement or onboard pilot was not required. In May 2022, Channel 4 reported that, according to the Coast Guard, the cause of the grounding was a "lack of training/familiarity with the operation" by the tugboat crew as it maneuvered between the jetties.

Beyond the fine levied for the spill by the DEP and any sanctions to the barge captain, it would be worthwhile and meaningful for the City to formally address the training, endorsement, and piloting issues with any responsible parties, the port, and other state and federal partners. Perhaps more stringent requirements will be imposed, or voluntary efforts can be discussed.

If you have questions, please contact our City Manager Shane Corbin at scorbin@coab.us or Mayor Curtis Ford (after November 28) at cford@coab.us.

Sincerely,



Ellen Glasser

cc: Councilman Rory Diamond
Mayor-Elect Curtis Ford