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JTA fiscal woes result in ratings downgrade

City council still wants to question departed CEO

David Bauerlein
Jacksonville Florida Times-Union
USA TODAY NETWORK

Nat Ford starts his new job Oct. 26 at Dallas Area Rapid Transit, but Jacksonville Jacksonville City Council still wants him to make one more trip to

Jacksonville City Hall for questions — either in person at the podium or virtually via a video screen connection — about financial problems that will impact JTA long after his departure. City Council members kept a subpoena in force for Ford after he declined to appear on Oct. 23 to answer their



Ford

questions about JTA's fiscal upheaval that triggered a downgrade by Fitch Ratings. Ford left open the door to appearing before City Council at a date yet to be determined after he becomes CEO of Dallas Area Rapid Transit agency.

Ford is moving on from Jacksonville as JTA deals with the aftershocks of two straight years of steep deficit spending that caused Fitch Ratings to drop JTA's issue default rating by two notches from AA+ to AA-. Fitch said Oct. 21 that JTA suffered "diminished financial resilience" caused

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A man walks along a tidal flooded street in Palm Beach on Sunday, Oct. 25. KIMBERLY MILLER/USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

KING TIDES FLOOD COASTAL FL CITIES

Outlook for state's eastern shore could become even wetter

Kimberly Miller
USA TODAY NETWORK– FLORIDA

King tides overwhelmed sea walls and bubbled up through storm grates along Florida's east coast Oct. 26, forcing road closures, traffic snarls and exasperated residents to either get their feet wet or turn away from the brackish onslaught. The normal autumn high tide flooding, which was stoked this week by the nearness of the perigean full moon and a heaving surf, triggered a coastal

flood warning through Wednesday, Oct. 28, in South Florida, with the worst of the surge coming between 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. each day. At the same time, an area of low pressure over the Bahamas rubbing against high pressure over the Mid-Atlantic, caused gusting winds to 46 mph and crashing waves of 12 to 15 feet in areas from Palm Beach County through Miami-Dade County.

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Former FBI officials charged with lying

Testified to House panel on Hunter Biden probe

Natalie Neysa Alund
USA TODAY

The U.S. Justice Department on Oct. 23 announced the arrest of two former FBI officials for allegedly lying to Congress about their knowledge of investigations into former President Joe Biden's son, Hunter. Nikki Floris, 46, and Bradley Benavides, 56, are accused of misleading a House panel about the role of the FBI's since-dissolved Foreign Influence Task Force probing Hunter Biden during the 2020 election, federal officials said. Floris, of Alexandria, Virginia, and Benavides, of Aiken, South Carolina, were each charged with a single count of making false statements stemming from testimony before lawmakers in 2023, according to a criminal complaint released Oct. 23. U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro, in a post on X, said Floris and Benavides surrendered on arrest warrants earlier in the day. The defendants, who both previously held senior roles in the FBI's counter-intelligence division, were charged in federal court in Washington, DC. The Foreign Influence Task Force, created in 2017 to combat covert foreign malign influence and election interference, was officially disbanded by former Attorney General Pam Bondi in February 2025. Floris led the FITF as a deputy assistant director from 2019 through 2022, according to FBI Director Kash Patel, and Benavides served as the task force's section chief from 2019 through the 2020 election.

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Two former FBI agents have been charged with giving false testimony to a House committee about the probe into former President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden, right. MANDEL NGAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

Survey: Rising electric bills add to strain

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

About 1 in 5 Americans have cut back on groceries or considered buying less expensive food to afford their electricity bills, while about 1 in 4 have reduced heating or air conditioning to uncomfortable levels or considered doing so, according to a new Consumer Reports survey. The findings highlight the financial

trade-offs households are making as electricity costs rise, with some consumers also cutting back on nonessential spending, including eating out and traveling. The nationally representative survey of 2,003 U.S. adults found that 81% of Americans who have lived in the same home for at least three years said their electricity bills had increased during that time. More than a quarter, 28%, reported increases of 20% to 49%.

Among respondents whose bills increased, about 3 in 4 said the higher costs strained their household finances, Consumer Reports found. People with annual household incomes below \$85,000 were more than twice as likely as those with higher incomes to say the increases strained their finances a lot. Rising electricity costs are adding

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