

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another
edition of The Break Room, a

weekly conversation about how
the City of St. Augustine works,

from those who do the work
every day. Hosted by the City

of St Augustine's
Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a
closer look at the different

city departments and provides
updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now
your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The Break Room. I'm
Melissa Whistle, Communications

Director for the City of St
Augustine. Thanks for

listening. If you've ever
explore online real time

interactive maps, and I'm not
just talking about Google Maps.

More like the maps you use when
you're trying to find your

evacuation zone, or maybe the
tax appraisers website, even if

you've used a COVID dashboard
in the last couple of years.

Maybe you've heard of something
called story mapping. If any of

those terms sound familiar,
then you have a little bit of

an idea about the work of a GIS
professional. That would also

be known as a geographic
information systems person.

I've invited Jeremy Berg to The
Break Room this week. He is the

City of St Augustine's GIS

Manager. He's responsible for a

team of folks who, interestingly
enough, manage all of the

location-based information and
data about the City of St

Augustine. And if that wasn't
too much too process as I was

describing it, then, let's
introduce Jeremy and see if he

can help map it out for us and
make sense of all of that, that

I just said, Jeremy. Welcome to
The Break Room. JEREMY: Hey, Melissa.

Thanks for having me today. MELISSA: So,
you are down the hall me. You

work very studiously in your
office and you do all these

really great mapping things.
So, tell me exactly what it is

you and I've had conversations
about it. It's really cool what

you do. But see if we can make
sense of it for our listeners. JEREMY:

Basically, we we manage the day
to day of mapping data and

other requests that come
through for the city. We

support the operations of
primarily Utility and but also

Public Works, Fire Department.
We can, we do work with Planning

and Building. There's a lot of
departments we touch on and

we're there to support any
mapping activities and also

data and technology requests
regarding spatial data. So,

it's a, it's kind of a general
way to put any kind of spatial

data information and tracking,
we handle it, and that can be in

maps. It can be in
applications. It can be in

other specific things. There's
there's a lot of different

details we do. So, that's
that's a nutshell version. I

know we're going to get a
little bit deeper into it here. MELISSA:

So, so I think of it as like
you build maps. And I think of

it, you know back in the day
there was paper maps. We don't

really use paper anymore. We
all are trying to get away from

paper. So, I mentioned the COVID
dashboard and when you explain,

you and I were speaking

about it. Tell me how Covid

dashboard is a GIS tool. JEREMY: Sure.

So I think everyone became

aware of GIS indirectly through
the pandemic. And everyone

referenced the Johns Hopkins
COVID-19 dashboard. And so,

that's kind of an example of
kind of where GIS is ending up

now, which is more of an open
platform to display data. So,

what you were seeing in that
COVID dashboard was data

aggregated from various health
department agencies, federal

state, local governments. And
kind of put into an easy one

plate of glass kind of view of
all the data to kind of make

sense of it. It's a lot harder
to to make sense of data if

it's disparate, if it's
different containers, that

dashboard is really effective
way of showing it all in a, an

easy way to kind of filter it
to see what results you want. MELISSA:

I'm not looking at an Excel
spreadsheet. I was looking

at spikes. I was looking at
lows, highs, flat lines,

trends. JEREMY: You can look at trends
you can see, you know,

specifically to your location.
So, there's a lot of

different interesting things
you can do with the data which

which is kind of what GIS is
now. It's it's always been

about data but now it's kind of
how we can kind of

compartmentalize or serve that
data up into something very

specific for for your use. So we
have a lot of examples of that

on our, on our data hubsite that
we have at the City. MELISSA: Before we

move on to some of the stuff
that we use externally, we had a

dashboard, as well. Were we
piggybacking on the Johns

Hopkins, or were you, were we
actually using a dashboard that

we the city created on our
COVID dashboard? JEREMY: So the state

of Florida, for I think about a
year and a half, was

releasing data related to

COVID-19. And so what we did for

the City is we kind of we
pulled that data in and created

a version of of that dashboard.

We also had some other

statistics related to COVID and
outreach. But yeah, so it was

kind of a version of that, but
it was more geared toward our

community. MELISSA: So if if you're just
now, if you're listening and you

don't know that the city had a
COVID dashboard. I'll just give

that as an example. It was CityStAug.com/COVID19 and that landing page
does have a link to the GIS

platform that was created.

We were also mentioning,

mentioned in the introduction
story maps. It's kind of a new

thing that cities are doing.

Can you tell us how the city is

using an idea about story

mapping? JEREMY: Sure. So, story

mapping is another application.

So, if you think of this whole

GIS world, there's lots of

applications that serve up the

data. And story map is a very

effective way to kind of

contextualize some type of

spatial data. So, you can kind

of incorporate a map into into

a narrative. And and it's a very, I

guess, robust way to kind of

explain it. It can be a problem

or it can be anything really.

There's there's a lot of story

maps out there if you go to

just story maps. If you Google

that, you you can see a gallery.

And there, they they come from

all around the world as well. MELISSA:

And we and we have them.

Archaeology uses them and

historic preservation. JEREMY: Yes.

They have a couple that have.

MELISSA: And you built those or...? JEREMY: No. MELISSA: The

team built those? JEREMY: The team

built those. Yep. And they're

great. They're great examples

of kind of telling a, it would

cumbersome story but in a very

simplistic way and kind of

giving you graphics. There can

be, there's video. It can be

very useful information store

as well. You can kind of

outreach. You can, you can

provide documents and other

other important things to your
constituents through a story

map. MELISSA: And we actually use it for
the shuttles. JEREMY: We do. Well not

that story map, but we do have.

MELISSA: Not story maps. Sorry. GIS.

Yeah. GIS we use for shuttles.

JEREMY: Right. So getting back to your

point about not using paper
maps anymore. It's much

better now. So if you think of
a paper map it's kind of good

for a minute as soon as you
print it and then it's

outdated. And the system we
have now at the city, all of

our data is being updated,
almost real time. So, we're

able to kind of show changes to
our data, whether it's utility

data, you know, zoning data,
whatever the case is, as it's

happening. And that data is
available to all city staff

now. So, it doesn't make sense
to kind of print a map out and

have it with you when you can,
you know, have a mobile device

such as an iPad which we have
deployed now at the city to

kind of view that data. If
you're at a meeting or you're

out in the field, you need to
view some utility information.

Staff now can have that
ability to see the actual

real-time data. So, it's it's
it's a much better system. MELISSA: If

you're just now tuning in,
you're listening to The Break

Room. I have Jeremy Berg with
me today. He is the city's GIS

manager. And before we get back
into talking about some of the

really cool map technology we
have on our website, I want to

congratulate you. You have
recently been certified by the

state as a Certified Public
Technology Manager and I think

you may be the only one in
Johns County. So, we're really

fortunate to have you. JEREMY: Thank
you. MELISSA: On our staff,

congratulations. And what, give
me just a snip. What does that

mean exactly? JEREMY: So, it's a

program that's only available

to public employees of the
state. And it's put on through

the state of Florida through
university or Florida State

University, sorry. And it's a
program to help people that

work in IT and GIS and
technology. It provides them

with some tools and some
analysis processes to kind of

help evaluate, you know,
is this technology solving problem

for our specific city problems
that we're trying to solve, or

is it, you know, another piece of
technology that doesn't really

solve this the problem
directly? So there's a, there's

a lot of tools provided. It's
just kind of gave you a good

baseline of to help you make
better decisions for the city

and how they spend you know
their funds on various

technology platforms. MELISSA: And we've
come quite a long way. I know,

without talking too much about
what we use internally. You

were just mentioning that our
employees can use it on field

tech folks can use it out in
the field, utilities. One of

the ones I do want you to share
with the our listeners was you

did something for the fire
department. JEREMY: Yes. So, believe it

or not, it's the first day I
started here at the city three

and a half years ago. Chief
came in and asked, he had

some paper maps and with some
dots on it and he said, I I you

know, I have these fire
hydrants. He's, you know,

our firefighters use these
paper maps and they're, they

weren't very good maps, by the
way. And you couldn't really

see any information as just
some dots on the on the map on

the piece of paper. So, he's
like, is there any way you can

show me something that gives me
colors based on, you know,

which hydrants are, maybe have a
better flow? Which most hydrants

are fairly equal in their flow.

But he just needed something

that was a little easier to
have when they're, you know,

being deployed to a, to a case.

So, so I basically just built

them a a web viewer so they can
pull it up on their phone, and

they can see all of our fire
hydrants, our water mains,

valves, and so they know when
they get to the scene. They

they can quickly locate and
identify where these these

structures are. MELISSA: But that's the
flow of a fire hydrant. So we,

on our website, I'll just give
this plug. We've got several

map pages and I want folks to
go take a look. If you go to

just CityStAug.com/GIS, that's

going to take you to our
landing page. But, if you go to

the CityStAug.com/GISMaps. I

want to talk to this. You have
a button on there. There's all

kind of stuff. Utility Services
look up. There's some of the

resilient heritage stuff is on
there. Flood hazard maps, city

zoning maps. So, when you're
wanting to put that addition on

your house and you don't know
what zone you're in. If you

want to look up and see that
you're in the city limits. A

lot of times I know our
utilities, public works people

get calls. My trash wasn't

picked up. Maybe go under the

map and make sure you live in
the city limits. Parking

locations. If you want to look
at where our handicap parking.

Our bike stations. There's a
ton of stuff there for

residents to look at and use
those maps for and that's all

the work that you guys did. JEREMY: Yup.
And the great thing about these

tools now is people have their,
everyone has their phone with

them, you know, they can easily
pull these up. And it's a

really, it's a of benefit to
the staff because they're not

answering thousands of calls
with some basic questions that

can be answered by quick
application. So, that's a huge

benefit and it's a huge, I would
say, burden lifted for from a

lot of staff, you know, not
having answers some simple

questions. MELISSA: Right. And your point,
like you just said, pulling it

up on your phone, the web
addresses that I was sharing,

we're trying to make it real
easy for folks to find it and

that's why it's that CityStAug.com/GIS, if

you just go to that GIS landing
page, there's a link there to

what's called the data hub. And
that data hub is also going to

give you the, those same kind of
maps. So, it's pretty much

all in the same place once you
get into that GIS landing page.

Before we go, we
were just talking about all

these great tools for our end
users, or our residents, to use.

But this really is something
internally that's really what

the focus has been up to this
point. JEREMY: Yes and so, basically,

it's a leap forward in kind of
how the city operates. I mean,

to put it bluntly, we, we're
kind of using a system, which is

the GIS system, and there's
other applications such as City

Works that it's is built on the
GIS system, which allows all of

staff to basically share,
decompartmentalize that's a fun

word, decompartmentalize their
work and kind of be able to

see everyone's work and what
they're doing. So an example

would be, we we touched on the
utility data. In the past, you

know, there was forms that they
would fill out in the field.

They would go into a file
cabinet and at some point we

would need to reference that
file. And whoa where's the file? MELISSA:

Yeah, piece of paper on a
clipboard. JEREMY: And so what the GIS

platform has us to do is you
can go in and search that

address and it'll pull up all
of the work history for that

location. So that's very useful

for not only, you know senior

staff, for reporting. But also,
just hey, did we replace this

hydrant? When did we do that?
When was the last time we

maintenanced it? So just these
basic questions that before

could take, I don't know, how
long hours to find the piece of

paper. Now it's all right in
your iPad or your desktop, you

know. So it's it's a much more
user-friendly system. Not only

that, you're you're spending
less time looking for

information when it's already
there. MELISSA: Ultimately, and this is

something for the future, and
we'll we'll have you back to

talk about it. Because when this
when this day comes, it's

going to be an exciting day.
We're hoping to see a an

interface of some sort, where end
users, it's something on the

website where. We can use
it to submit requests. JEREMY: Correct.

So, we're going to have the
ability to, if you see perhaps a

pothole or there's some water
in the street, or there's some

other issue you would like to
report to the city. We're

going to have a quick and easy
way to do that. And it's

going to, the difference now is
right now you can still do that,

but it's going into a website
then someone's gotta kind of

look at it, send it to someone
else, print it out, etcetera.

Right now, we're working in a
system where you'll you'll put

that request in and it'll
instantly go into someone at

the city's inbox, so to speak
and they're going to be able to

address it quickly. And you'll
actually be able to see the the

status of that on the website,
as well. So, it'll be a great

tool. You, you know, you can
see exactly what happened, what

the status was, was it a City
issue? Maybe not. There's a lot

of things that go into it. But
this will be a quick and easy

way for the public to kind of

see what's happening almost

live. MELISSA: So, until then, you can
still report a concern from the

homepage of the website. We do
have forms, but we will be

waiting in great anticipation
for more to come from GIS.

Thanks for coming. JEREMY: Thank you.

MELISSA: It wasn't so bad, right? JEREMY: No, it

was fun. MELISSA: We'll have you back.

Thanks again for stopping by,

Jeremy. JEREMY: Thanks, Melissa. MELISA: If you
missed part of this broadcast

and you want to go back and
listen from the beginning, you

can find us on the web at CityStAugRadio.com. We

want to keep you informed about
what's happening in and around

the city and most importantly

that you hear it here from the

people doing the work and
making it happen every day.

Follow us on social media
platforms, Facebook, Twitter,

and Instagram @CityStAug. Until next time, thanks

for tuning in. ANNOUNCER: You've been
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Communications Director, Melissa
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who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. The
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Communication Specialist for

the City of St Augustine,

Cindy Walker. See you at this
time next week for another

edition of The Break Room.