

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. Thanks for joining us. I'm

Melissa Whistle, Communications Director for the City of St

Augustine. This week, we welcome a returning guest on

our show, Vicky Oakes. She is
the Supervisor of Elections for

St Johns County. Vicky,
welcome back. VICKY: Thank you,

Melissa. Thanks for having me.

MELISSA: We've got a lot to cover. So,

we're going to just jump right
in. VICKY: Alright. MELISSA: Starting with, we

have an election season. We
have general elections. We've

got primaries and qualifying
period, all that. Clearly,

it's not my area of expertise,
so I'm going to let you tell us

all about it. VICKY: Okay. So, our two
elections are the August 23rd

primary election. And the
general is November the eighth.

Candidate qualifying is June

the 13th through the

17th, ends at noon on

Friday the 17th.

However, the law allowed us to

start collecting papers from

our candidates, beginning this

week. So, we are

actively collecting papers from

candidates. MELISSA: And qualifying is

basically where I say I want to

run, and I, do I have to get a

signed petition or I just throw

my name in the hat? VICKY: Yes, that you

actually file your papers and

pay your fee. There's a lot

involved, especially for city

candidates. They're a little

different because under their

city charter, they are required

a different petition than our
regular candidates have to, say

a county commission candidate.

So, I recommend anyone

interested in running for
office, immediately please

contact our office, because time
is running out. There are

certain things you have to do
to make ballot position,

including having all of your
signed petitions turned into

the office, if you're a city
candidate by noon on Friday.

MELISSA: Friday the 17th. And we have a
lot of seats. I'm going to run

off a couple and there, it, the
list is way longer and we don't

have time to mention them all.

But right here closest to us,

and I know I may miss some, but
it's on your website, two Board

of County Commission seats, a
judge, three on the school board,

three commission seats in St
Augustine, three commission

seats in St Augustine Beach,
we've got some on the airport

Authority, Beach Port Waterway
and Beach seats. There's a lot

of opportunity for people to be
getting involved and running

for office in our county. VICKY: There
is. And we have a full slate of

candidates already, Melissa. Just
go to our website and you'll

check and see who's filed
papers with us to run this

year. MELISSA: And I'm going to tell our

listeners, VoteSJC.com. VICKY:

.gov. MELISSA: .gov. SJ, no, VoteSJC.gov. VICKY: .gov. MELISSA: Vote SJC. And

it's a fabulous brand-new
website. I'm going to say as

well. I will tell you, the old
one had a lot going on. And this

one, I got on last week when I
looking over things for our

notes for our conversation
today, and let me tell you. Big

bold buttons, register to vote,
my voter status, vote by mail,

election results, ways to vote,
election security candidates,

and newsroom. Not to mention
you've got these fantastic drop

down menus that have every
imaginable short, easy. I bet you,

I would challenge anyone to not

find something within two

clicks. It's that good. VICKY: Well
thank you. I'm glad you'd like

it. MELISSA: I love it. And
particularly the, the candidate

information. There's a
downloadable PDF that has, it's

a full page of all of the
offices that are scheduled, even

up at the federal level. So,
there's. all that information is

on the website. Again that is

VoteSJC.gov. VICKY: And my

favorite part of our new
website is our frequently asked

questions section. We have
different sections. You can go

there. And last week, we even had
a couple of questions that came

Up. So, we because of someone inquiring, we added them to our

list. MELISSA: Get enough of those same questions. You say, okay,

clearly, clearly we're missing something on the website. So,

let's add it. It's wonderful. The, let's talk a

little bit about our precincts.

There's been a lot of

discussion with district lines, voting lines, state, county,

local, school districts. Tell me how all of that affects you

and affects us as the voters in terms of where we vote and how

do we know? VICKY: Okay. A has changed since the last general election

in 2020 because of the census.

Then the redistricting process

happened in '21. So we
have new voting districts. We

have new precinct lines and we
have some new polling places,

especially here in the city.

MELISSA: And that means not all of the

places we're used to going to
are open. VICKY: That's correct. Now.

MELISSA: Can you tell us? VICKY: Alright. 78%
of our voters will be voting at

the same location that they
voted at on election day in

'20. The 78% of our
voters. MELISSA: In the county? VICKY: In the

county. Okay. In the entire
county. So some great news

about the city. We consolidated
a couple of our very small

precincts. Willie

Gallamore Center and the Days

Inn on San Marco will no longer
be used as polling places.

The River House is one of
our new polling places. I'm

very excited about that. And
then another new polling place

is the National Guard Armory on
San Marco. MELISSA: Okay, so no longer

Days Inn and the Galimore.

Galimore is down there in

Lincolnville and the Days Inn
is over there on US-1. VICKY: Yes.

MELISSA: So those are no longer.

And those those are being

replaced, if you will, by the
River House, which is down in

Old City South. And the
National Guard Armory by the

library. VICKY: Correct. Okay. MELISSA: Now,

how do I know that? If if I'm

not, if I was, if I'm not so
fortunate to be listening to

this broadcast, or if my
neighbor asked me, what do I

tell them, how are they
going to know where to go?

VICKY: Okay, first thing you need to
do is watch your mailbox

because there's a publication
coming out by my office. It's

called Citizens Guide to
Registering and Voting. It will

be delivered to 120,000 plus
residents in St Johns

County. It's going to every
residential mailbox in the

county and will be delivered this
week. So watch for, watch

your mailbox. The first
thing that's going to come is

the Citizens Guide that has all
the information about preparing

for the 2022 elections, plus

information on the new precinct

lines, new polling places. Then,

in the two weeks following that,

watch your mailbox again.

Because every registered voter

in St Johns County is going
to be mailed a new voter

information card, giving them
and letting them know their new

districts. The new precincts,
the new polling place, and like

I said, 78% may have not, have
not changed. However, some

have. MELISSA: So, even if mine hasn't
changed, I'll still get a card.

VICKY: Absolutely. MELISSA: Everybody's getting
a brand-new card. VICKY: Everybody in

St Johns County, if you are
registered voter will be

getting a new voter information
card from my office. MELISSA: Okay. So,

watch the mail box coming. I'm
just going to do a quick

station identification. You are
listening to The Break Room, I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications
Director for the City of St.

Augustine. And today in studio
with me, I have Vicky Oakes.

She is the Supervisor of
Elections for St Johns

County. So, Vicky, let's talk
about voting itself. How do I

vote? I mean, I know how I

vote. I check the box where I

go to the polling place. How do

we vote? VICKY: Voting's never been

easier than it is today. Any

registered voter can request a

ballot and vote by mail. You

can vote early. We have a

period, time period before each

election. And as a last resort,

your precinct is always open on

Election Day from 7AM to 7PM.

So, Melissa, it's really your

choice. MELISSA: Okay. So, if I, so I

don't have to be out of the

area physically to vote by by

mail. It's a convenience thing.

VICKY: That's correct and Florida's a

no excuse state. If you want to

vote by mail, all you have to

do is ask. MELISSA: Is there a deadline
that I have to ask by to get my

ballot? VICKY: Yes, it's about 10 days
before the election. MELISSA: Okay, so I

can't go in or request it like
2 days before. My, my vote by mail

ballot. VICKY: You can come in the
office and request one in

person. But we stop
mailing them. So, now's

a great time. You can go right
on our website. People can use

the tool, the my voter status.

If they can't remember whether

or not they have a request on
file. They can look and see,

because after this year, the
requests are only going to be

good for one year. It's very
possible that if people voted

by mail in 2020 and they made

their request for the two

general elections that they

have a request on file already

for this year. MELISSA: Okay. But then

you're you're saying that it's

possible then that we're

going to have to renew that

request each year. It's not,

just going to be indefinite.

VICKY: That's correct. That's the new

law. There were some law

changes the last couple of

years too. MELISSA: So vote by mail. I

can vote early, but that's

physically going in. VICKY: Right.

That's voting in person.

And for the August primary, we

will have eight days of early

voting, from August the

13th through the

20th, our regular six

locations, and our, they will

all be open from 9AM to 6PM

daily. That includes two

weekends. MELISSA: Okay. And that's for

early voting? VICKY: Right. MELISSA: In August

and also in November, I can

vote early? VICKY: Yes, we'll have

almost two full weeks of early

voting for the November general

election, again two weekends.

MELISSA: Now you mentioned six locations,

and I think maybe general, you

told me there was eight. So we

have how many total voting

place, voting locations? VICKY: Okay, so

early voting. We have six for

the primary. Eight for the general. We now have, with our

new lines. We have 53 precincts. And we have 41

polling locations. Some precincts share polling locations.

MELISSA: So we're not, you need to be careful if you're going to vote

early in person. Your your place may not be the place you

go for early voting. VICKY: Well, the greatest thing about early

voting is there's no wrong place to go. You can go

anywhere. MELISSA: That's open. VICKY: In the county, any of our six early

voting locations. MELISSA: Got it. Okay. VICKY: But on election day, you are

required to go to your assigned precinct to vote in person.

MELISSA: Okay, and that's going to come
on my card. VICKY: Got it, right. MELISSA: In

the mail. VICKY: Right. MELISSA: But when all
else fails, go to the website,

VoteSJC.gov. VICKY: Right. MELISSA: It's a
fabulous website. The only

other thing I wanted to ask
you, voting in person on

election day, for me, there's
just something about going on

election day. Feeling like
today was the day and today of

it. VICKY: We do have our
traditionalists, but you know,

Melissa, trends really are
changing over the last few

years. And do you know in the
November 2020 general election

where St Johns County had an
85% voter turnout. Third

highest in the state, only

15% of our voters went to

the polls on election day to

count their cast their vote. MELISSA: So

we had 85% voted and only 15%

of that was in person. On

election day. VICKY: On election day

yes. MELISSA: Wow. So we're taking

advantage of those early

options or by mail. VICKY: Yes. MELISSA: But

we're voting. VICKY: Yes. MELISSA: And we like

to see that. VICKY: Yes. I wish, now

that was for a general

election. Unfortunately, we

don't see that kind of turnout

in the primary. Sadly, it's

only been 26, 28, 29% in the last

few primaries. Those are

important elections, because so

many of our local elected

officials are elected in our

primary. MELISSA: Yes. Well, let's do a

big shout out to make sure that

you're registered to vote. Come

out for the primary in August.

Take advantage of early voting.

And we'll have you back to tell

us what our trend is looking

like at the end of this

election season. We might have

you back in before November. But

thank you for joining me.

VICKY: Thanks for having me. MELISSA: It's

always great pleasure to have

you. The Break Room is now a

podcast. So, if you missed part

of this broadcast and want to

listen from the beginning, or

share it with your friends,

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Until next time. Thanks for

tuning in. ANNOUNCER: You've been

listening to The Break Room, a

weekly program addressing

projects and programs offered

by the City of St Augustine.

Join us each week as the City's

Communications Director,

Melissa Wissel, has in-depth
conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet
the needs of our community. The

Break Room is produced by
Communication Specialist for

the City of St Augustine,
Cindy Walker. See you at this

time next week for another
edition of The Break Room.