

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 everyday. 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 tuning in. I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications
Director for the City of St

Augustine. It's Waste and
Recycling Work week. So, I've

invited the City of St
Augustine Solid Waste Manager

Olivia Smith to join me in
studio. Olivia, welcome back.

OLIVIA: Thank you. Always good to be
here. I love when you come

here. We have lots to talk
about. So, we're not going to

waste any time. Your entire
staff is made up of waste and

recycling workers. You guys are
the sunrise to sunset

superheroes. You work from 4 AM
to about 1 AM. OLIVIA: Correct. So, our

first staff crews start at 4 AM
for commercial garbage, all the

way through our night litter
gentlemen that ends at 1 AM.

So, there is only a three-hour

gap every 24 hours that we are

not servicing something or

someone. MELISSA: So, the city is

sleeping for three hours. OLIVIA: Yes,

correct. MELISSA: Well, that's not even

true because like water

treatment and wastewater. OLIVIA: Are

still at it. Right. So, trash

is sleeping for three hours.

MELISSA: Trash is sleeping. But let's

talk about that. You have

everything from trash trucks,

street sweepers, litter

control, yard debris,

dumpsters, power washers, front

loaders, rear loaders.

I only know that because I've

been working with you and we've

been doing these interviews. But

let's just address one thing
off the bat. We've had a hard

time keeping up with our
schedule somewhat but we're we

are keeping up. A little bit of
a slowdown. Tell me, tell us

what's going on. Let our
listeners know what happened

and we're back in action. OLIVIA: It's
fair enough, Melissa. So, on

the residential collection and
is where we're really feeling

the lull right now with
services. It's from outdated, older

equipment, if we have some
issues with our equipment, also

staffing, probably as the rest
of the world is dealing with,

every industry across the
board, we are short staffed.

If there's inclement weather,
that puts us a bit behind.

If there's large events and
other services, not to say it

takes priority, but it runs in
conjunction with other things

that we do with the department. There is a lag. MELISSA: You're

almost in competition with your
own resources. OLIVIA: With our own

resources. Yeah. Absolutely. And
so as we fall behind one day,

we have to catch up the next. So
obviously that becomes a domino

effect and so we're doing our
absolute best to get back on

track, hiring the right folks,
right, having the right

innovative equipment. Our routes
are also growing. So as more

people set more volume to the

curb and the city continues to

grow, our routes are getting

longer, harder and harder for us

to get done in an eight-hour

day. So we just want to thank

everyone for their continued

patience and support during

this time. It it's it has been

tough across the board. MELISSA: We, as

soon as we knew though, I will

say this to folks listening, if

you follow us on Facebook,

check out our website, because

we do have this little cool

alert ticker kind of thing that

goes across the top of the

website. So, it doesn't matter

what page you enter the

website. If we know that
there's going to be a delay or
an outage or a shortage of some
sort that's going to impact
residents for more than a day
really, we're going to put
something out about it. We
certainly appreciate people's
frustration but you, I think we
put the word out pretty well.
People were pretty
understanding once they knew
what was happening. OLIVIA: Yeah, the
communication was essential.
We hear it every day, phone,
via email, and obviously
through the social media
platform. So, all of us working
together to get that info out

to the community again has just
been instrumental. MELISSA: So, assuming

all equipment is working
functionally for the most part.

Tell me about some of the

equipment that you, your
department does operate. I
think, we, I just always think of

like a trash truck. Right. But
there's so much more than what

you guys do. OLIVIA: Yeah, if you break
down the apparatus and what it

is they do. Our front load
handles the commercial trash

and recycling. Then you've got
rear loaders. Most people are

familiar with. Go through and
do commercial and residential

trash, recycling, and yard waste.
So they're tipping on the back

with the throwers. The front
loaders are one man show.

They've got the forks on the
front. We've got roll off

drivers. They do all the
compactors and open tops.

Rather it's city owned, retail
owned. They are the ones that

haul... MELISSA: Dumpsters. OLIVIA: So they're a
large, yeah 30-yard roll off

container, is a is a large
construction dumpster and or

the compactors. MELISSA: So that like
what I see up north of town or

over by the ramp? The lighthouse? OLIVIA:
Correct. Okay correct yes. So

they're the larger units, they
do need to be hauled

differently. We do the clawn

grapple truck which is for your

oversize and your bulk material,

whether it's storm debris or

it's a move out or what not. We

also have a fork truck that

does our construction dumpster

rentals and also placement for

events, that we're able to

transport those dumpsters back

and forth to Francis Field, the

Fort, things of that nature.

Street sweepers, pretty people

are pretty familiar with. We

have nine zones. So, it takes a

bit for the street sweepers to

really work through their zone

and thoroughly maintain the

streets. Pressure washing van,

downtown corridor, parks, city

hall, bayfront, they do it all.

Also, the litter crew pickup is

again downtown, city hall,

parks, and right of way

cleanup. MELISSA: And that's people

physically. There's some stuff

you just can't do with a machine.

OLIVIA: That is correct. A lot of this

manual. MELISSA: Human person walking with

their hand and a poker pincher

thing in their hand. OLIVIA: Correct.

MELISSA: Very technical. Poker pincher

thing. Very technical. OLIVIA:

Yeah, you got it. But yes.

And that's what makes us, when

we look at essential workers

and waste workers week, the

safety and health side of it is

is pretty important. Those

factors of how people can be

injured on the job, we're
always in the top dozen most

dangerous jobs and careers in
the nation. And so it's pretty

important for folks to
understand what type of job

we're out there doing. MELISSA: When
you're exposed to all the

debris. OLIVIA: Airborne pathogens, you
name it. MELISSA: It's not pretty work. OLIVIA: No. No.

It's hard work everyday. Mike
Rowe made a career out of

that. OLIVIA: Yes. MELISSA: If you're just now
tuning in, you are listening to

The Break Room. I'm Melissa
Whistle, Communications

Director for the City of Saint
Augustine. Today, I'm sharing

The Break Room with Olivia

Smith. She is our Solid Waste

Manager and we are talking
about our Sunrise to Sunset

Superhero that is our waste and
recycling workers for Waste and

Recycling Workers Week. See if
you can say that five times

fast. So, we're talking about
the equipment. Tell me about

how we're how are we doing?

OLIVIA: Well, so we've got a division of

thirty folks. Out of those
30 folks, most of us harness two

to three decades of collection
and material management. So a

lot of expertise. And
because we are so busy are, we

still maintain our core focus
which is safety and customer

service. So that's always in
the forefront of what we do.

Kind of behind the scenes, what
what most people don't see, not

the the residential garbage
trucks and whatnot, is the other

things that we're doing behind
the scenes. The city owns seven

compactors, two of those being
solar. So we maintain those as

well. There are five city owned
recycling drop off centers, 15

city parks that we maintain, we
also do ashtrays, trash, and

recycling receptacles, benches,
sidewalks, loose litter, and

dog waste stations throughout the
entire city. So this, all of our

crews encompass this type of
stuff. In between that, we're

delivering carts to residents

and businesses. We are the

compost bins. We deliver those.

So we can touch on

that a little bit. We

coordinate and supply event

staging. So rather it's Fourth

of July or Nights of Lights or

it's a private event on Francis

Field. That is our folks as

well. We refurbish cans in

house, rather it's painting,

decaling, rebuilding some of

the stationary cans. We do

commercial audits. We build diversion

programs, homeless camp

cleanups, waterway cleanups, we

manage an e-waste program, and

we host annual environmental

events. So, just so everyone

understands, the scope of solid
waste. We're so much more than

just out there picking up a
little bit of garbage. Doing

the roadways. MELISSA: On the watch around
neighborhood, driving driving

cool trucks. OLIVIA: We're a big
outfit. MELISSA: Well and honestly, I

just trying to get one of your
workers, any couple of your

workers to come on today, and
they're just busy. OLIVIA: Yes. If

everyone is in the field. MELISSA: And
your folks love what they do. OLIVIA;

They're dedicated. They so are.
We're very very blessed with

just a crew that not only has
expertise, but they have heart. MELISSA:

Yeah, they do. What do you
want to remind, anything to

remind our listeners? We've
still got a few minutes to chat,

but. What do you see common, are
there trends? And how is the

composting working? OLIVIA: So, to
touch on the compost, we've

delivered about half of our
initial pilot applicant bins.

These folks are static. I mean,
we've even had folks come out

and give us produce from their garden
where they've started the

composting. They're
phenomenal. They're just so

excited and energetic about the
program, that I really hope that

this spreads. Yes. And that we
can do more. MELISSA: Help us keep ahead of

or at least in with the times
of being environmentally aware.

OLIVIA: Yeah and hoping that wet waste, you
know, that wet waste which is

organic matter, switching to a, to a better
use. And so that's been going

I've I've actually spoke to
each resident that we've

delivered personally, just to
offer that face to face. Do a

follow up. How's it going? Tips
and tricks. So, nothing but

kudos for that. MELISSA: And stay tuned
because we're not sure what the

next cycle of. OLIVIA: Right, fingers
crossed. MELISSA: Okay, crossed. And those

of you who have them, enjoy. If
if you happen to live next door

to somebody who got one, maybe

ask 'em if it let you. OLIVIA: Ask them some

questions. MELISSA: Throw some peels
their ways. OLIVIA: Yeah. Absolutely.

They're large. The units are
large and we're still

delivering. So, it's ongoing.
We appreciate your patience.

If you're one of the
applicants. So, reminders and
we've always got some great
reminders. Curbside service, 7

AM or the night before. We
can't stress that enough.

Routes are growing. Help us
help you get it collected. So,

7 AM is go time for us. Bag
the trash folks, right? We're

dealing with again, airborne
pathogens, dangerous materials.

So, we need that stuff to be
bagged for aesthetic purposes

also for safety and health
standards. Recycling always.

We do reminders. Let's keep it
loose, clean, and dry. So,

let's look at, containerize your
yard waste. A lot of folks are

yard waste in the recycling
bins and their trash bin. That

is not a yard waste bin. It
needs to be bagged or use your

own can and that will be
collected. MELISSA: Paper bags. OLIVIA: Paper

bags are great. I still have
some to give away if you folks

are listening. Call Solid
Waste. MELISSA: Call Solid Waste and

there's they're not that
expensive I will say. OLIVIA: No you

can get a bundle for about \$2.50

at Home Depot Lowe. Some of

your retailers. So those are

great for again composting and

things. So they break down great

in the environment. No

hazardous waste. We touched on

this multiple times on the

show. C and D material, your

construction debris. We do not

haul it at the curb. So, please

call solid waste. We'll give

you some recommendations. We

also rent construction

dumpsters. Great for demolition

projects, home renovation,

that's one of our specialties.

Glass, things like doors,

windows, and mirrors. Those are

too dangerous to throw just

loose to the curb. Let's
sandwich it in between some

cardboard, tape it up, and
write glass on it. When it's

thrown in that truck and the
hopper crushes it. It doesn't

bust out into your
neighborhood. It doesn't break

on the drivers, right? So
again, just safety and

cleanliness factors. Solid
waste works every holiday

currently except Christmas.

Make sure those cans are out

the night before. We try not to
go back on holidays. We want to

get home safely to our families,
as well. But we are there to

service you. Again, we've
had some recent delays. We just

want to thank everyone for your
patience, participation,

support, continued
participation and support in

our environmental programs that
we create. Without you guys,

these programs would not be
successful. And last but not

least, Solid Waste is hiring.
We have multiple job openings.

So, help us get this stuff
picked up. Come be part of the

team. We have a great time and
provide a great service. MELISSA: Well,

okay. I have to ask you one
last question though.

Furniture. OLIVIA: Furniture. That's a
good one. MELISSA: Now, why TVs I can

bring to the E Waste. OLIVIA: TVs.

Yeah. Call me down there and

let's discuss it. They're
considered hazardous waste

these days, like your paint and
light bulbs. But the other

electronics that we do collect.

Yes. So, your furniture,

your bulk items, we typically
allow two bulk items per

household collection day. That
is for our residents. Two

bulk items through, that way it
doesn't pack out the truck and

all your neighbors get the same
great service. MELISSA: And do I need to

call you and tell you or can I
put that nasty chair on the curb? OLIVIA: Typically no. If it's

a chair and a mattress, some

lawn furniture. Just remember,

two bulk items per collection

day. If you've got a move out

and a big purge project, you do

want to call us, there may be

charges that apply.

But in order to provide that

same great service that the folks have

come to expect and appreciate.

We have to make sure that we're

moving through these routes as

efficiently and effectively as

possible. So, always just

communicate with solid waste.

We love to speak to our

local residents and make sure

that everyone's getting it

right. MELISSA: You guys are great down

there. OLIVIA: Thank you so much. MELISSA: Always on

track. I did take some paint
cans up to the county. OLIVIA: Awesome.

MELISSA: Cuz I knew we couldn't take
them there. OLIVIA: That's right. MELISSA: We'll

look forward to what,
November our next event. OLIVIA: Yeah,

we've done Earth Day.
Successful and so yes, we'll be

moving on to November around
the fifteenth ish, which is

America Recycles Day. And so we
do that what three times a year

now. We're we're pretty on on
point with that so. MELISSA: So, stay

tuned for the next event.
Olivia, always great to talk

trash. OLIVIA: Absolutely. MELISSA: And thank
you. Please extend a great big

thank you to our Sunrise to
Sunset superheroes, all those

folks that you have down there

working for you. And we

appreciate what you and your

staff does. OLIVIA: Thank you guys so

much. MELISSA: The Break Room is now on

a Podcast. If you've missed any

part of this broadcast and

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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.