

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. This week, I've
invited Olivia Smith, back to

the studio. Olivia is the
City's Solid Waste Manager and

as always we are going to do
some trash talking. Welcome

back, Olivia. OLIVIA: Thanks for having
me. MELISSA: So we're going to talk

first of all about our
aftermath of Hurricane Ian. You

and I and Cindy were in very
close contact for several

weeks. It's over. For the most
part we're done. Couple

weeks ago now, we're finally, but
give me the numbers. Tell me

what, how we did. How did we do?
How did our residents do? And

are you recovered? OLIVIA: So yeah,
there's a lot going on with

hurricane recovery, pre and post

storm. To wrap up the

numbers, we were looking at
6500 cubic yards and that's

just what the contractors
collected. Our city crews

collected an additional 3,000
cubic yards. And so that's

combined with your construction
debris, your household, and

then your vegetative piles.

MELISSA: So, what does that measure up

to? And if you say cubic yards? OLIVIA:

Cubic yards. So, when you're

looking at, we do everything in

tonnage. So, when you take

10,000 cubic yards, you're

really looking at about 200,000 tons of material. MELISSA: That's a lot. OLIVIA: Nope, 200,000 pounds.

MELISSA: Okay, alright.

OLIVIA: 200,000 pounds of material.

Still smaller than what we've

seen in Matthew and Irma, but
still a substantial storm. You

know, recovery still took us
roughly four weeks with

contractors, six weeks with city
folks. So, still substantial

debris. MELISSA: And we were beating
the drum, beating the pavement,

about the messaging about
segregation, separation, the

piles. Parking cars, bags
versus cans. How did we do? OLIVIA:

We did very well. I think that
the first and foremost, the

messaging, right? Streamlining
our messages using our social

media platforms, was
instrumental. The storm that

we've seen even in past, as

we've kind of developed that.

This the residents did
phenomenal. Our biggest

challenge was getting cars
moved off the street. I know

folks were in mitigation and
recovery processes, so they

needed to move their cars to
get crews in. But again, it's

essential to get the cars off
the curb line to be able to

have not only the debris
haulers coming through and

collecting that material, but
then our street sweeper

trailing the debris, loose
debris. And so that was our

biggest challenge was cars and
then a few mixed piles. When

folks don't segregate properly
like we've emphasized, those

mixed piles are the last thing
we're going to get to, because

we have to segregate it at the
transfer location. So one site

is not going to take a certain
type of debris, nor is the other

site that's permitted to take
let's say construction, they're

not going to take your
vegetative. So again, our

messaging is important and then
the compliance factor from

folks. MELISSA: And we, with construction
debris, are we, is there

something that folks need to
know now after the fact, in

terms of how's that get picked
up? Can I leave my construction

debris? I mean, that we're we
are done if you will with our

efforts in terms of the
hurricane picking up of

construction debris. But I may
still be renovating my house, I

may have to have a contractor
come in. What am I supposed to

do? Does my contractor get rid
of that? OLIVIA: So, that's a good

question, if they are performing
the work, they are required to

haul that material. A lot of
them contract with their own

containers, solid waste also can
rent small four yard containers,

we also have a list of approved
franchise haulers. So if folks

have questions on that and

they're in that recovery phase,

they need to contact either
Public Works or they can

contact Solid Waste directly.
We'd be happy to provide them

that information. But at this
point, we are done with the

collection side of the City and
the contractors. The debris

contractors collecting
construction debris and things

like that at the curb. Costs
are incurred. MELISSA: Okay. Talking

about the pickup, and you're
you're talking about

contractors. I want to make
sure to give you a chance to

explain a little bit about how
that whole process works from

the City standpoint of bringing
in pickup contractors to come

and do that. We compete with,
where, we were in competition

with Fort Myers and and that
whole area that was just devastated. OLIVIA: Gulf side. MELISSA: They

say you want to be hit either
first or worst. Certainly not

both. OLIVIA: That's true. Yeah. MELISSA: But
when you're the first one hit,

you're also the first one to
seek assistance. OLIVIA: Reimbursements.

MELISSA: So just so that our listeners
understand.. The fact that we

were a to get contractors in as
quickly as we were was a feat

in and of itself. But there's a
little bit more I think that

people don't understand behind
the scenes that you have to

deal with. You can't just call
anybody. OLIVIA: That's correct. So, we

start with proposals, you know,
early before we're kind of

locked into that storm season
and we know that we're in the

eye of the storm. So, we have
those secured. But still, when

you look at an overall impact
area, and as you said, first and

worst, certainly this time, we
were very fortunate compare to

times, you know previous, or what
the folks down south are

dealing with. We are at that
mercy with resources and having

folks be cognizant and tolerant
of that is really important in

our recovery phase. So, even

though we had contracts in

place, it took us a week to get
those contracts deployed, to get

that type of equipment into our
space restraint areas. Things

that are very unique to St
Augustine. So we started as

City crews. We literally
reacted next day. So we

started recovery efforts,
triaging immediately with our

City crews and what resources
and equipment that we had. And

that was essential to start
that first push. Start getting

the messaging out there, but
even with those contracts and

proposals, it takes some time
to get those folks in. And then

you need to have a strategy,
right? Very strategic on how

you're going to move through
the impacted areas. So, even

though it may have the most
debris, if it's inaccessible

from, excuse me, overhanging
limbs, lines, live wires, cars

parked, the mixed piles.
Things are coming out. You

could make a first push and
literally four days later it

looks like you haven't touched
that neighborhood. So in

order to provide equality on
collection services, and quality

control, rather it is city crews
or contractors. You have to

really spread those vehicles
out and then make punch list

and continue. So, it's a layered effect and everything has to be

monitored. I think that's another side of it. Behind the

scenes. MELISSA: A person monitor. OLIVIA: It's a company. So not only do you

contract for contracting debris removal, but you have to have

monitors that are FEMA certified to come in, and that

is a separate contract, a separate company, and they have

to be present for every single load that is collected at a

residential property and then goes across the scale and

photos and whatnot documentation provided at that

transfer location. So, that's

the aftermath. When everyone

else is recovered, we're still,
you know, counting numbers and

scanning tickets. And so this
process will continue for us

for several months in order to
get that reimbursement support

that the City desires. MELISSA: From
from FEMA. Right. So

there's a lot, there is a lot to
it. MELISSA: If you're just now

tuning in you are listening to
The Break Room. I'm Melissa

Wissel, Communications Director
and I have Olivia Smith with

me. We are talking about debris
removal, pickup, surviving and

getting through Hurricane Ian.
And I'm going to shift gears on

you a little bit about our
recycling event that's coming

up next week. That's
important. I don't want us to

get off track too much today.
Let's talk about the recycling

event. We have them every year.
Have a couple of them. This is

the one that's kind of in
conjunction with National

Recycling Day. Tell us about our event. OLIVIA:

Yeah. So, this is our annual

one: Friday, November the
18th. It's for America

Recycles Day. We've recognized
it several years in a row. We

have a great turnout. So,
you're going to have the

shredding truck come out again.

Free shredding for our local

residents, up to five boxes per
resident. Don't need to worry

about paper clips, staples, things
like that. The on-site

shredding truck is innovative.
It's got a live camera and it

is able to shred that type of
stuff. Large clips and binders

and things you want to remove,
but that's one of our most

popular features of the event.
We also do electronic and

battery collection and used
cooking oil. MELISSA: No TVs though. OLIVIA: No

TVs. That's hazardous waste
considered at this point.

Leaded glass, mercury, things
like that that are that are

handled in in that type of

environment. MELISSA: And no light

bulbs? OLIVIA: No light bulbs, no
chemicals, no tires, no

pesticides, all of that stuff
needs to be facilitated through

St Johns County who has
that hazmat permit and a proper

way to handle that material.
So, we will turn it away at our

events. MELISSA: I always feel bad just
putting a TV out, but I guess if

you put it on your curb, maybe
someone will come by and get

it. If it's not broken, you can
put on it, say this works. Feel

free to take it. OLIVIA: Yeah, Class
One Landfills are still

accepting that stuff. So, as
much as we'd like to work that

through the electronic battery
recycling program, it's been a

tough market for us. But again,
tires, paint, chemicals, things

like that, light bulbs, we will
turn away. We are not approved

for that. MELISSA: And the whole, the
whole recycling, of course when

it all started. It was reuse,
repurpose, recycle. OLIVIA: Reduce, reuse, recycle.

MELISSA: Renew, recycle. So and the
City does a good job internally.

We're we're taking measures to
do that. We'll have to get

Glabra to come on and talk to,
talk to folks about that. The

oil event, oils are accepted
this one as well, correct?

OLIVIA: Cooking oil only. MELISSA: Cooking oil only. Not motor oil. OLIVIA: Not motor

oil. So, that goes through the
county. MELISSA: Right. And we do

have a motor oil dispenser can,
or whatever you would call it,

drum down at the marina. So, if you have a motor

oil and you want to dispose of
dispose of the oil itself, not

the container, but the oil. You
could do that at the marina.

I want to go back just for a
second and talk about yard

debris, in general. Tell me or
tell our listeners bags,

plastic bags, cans, what's the
preferred? OLIVIA: So, we... MELISSA: And I'm

talking not just hurricane, just
in general. OLIVIA: Right, so our

vegetative collection for
resident's every Wednesday, up

to a four yard pile. That's our
volume threshold, so that we can

actually get through the
routes. We are, we have to

comply with the quality control
standards of the transfer

location that we take it to.

And so we are permitted to

bring bags out there. Most of
the bags degradate in the

process where they're grinding
down the material. So we are

still able to take that
material in bags. Cans, as long as

they don't weigh 50 pounds,
those bags and cans get heavy,

especially if the debris is
wet. We've had a rainy season.

Our folks are manually
loading that and we want people

to be aware that when you've
done 150 homes in a day and the

bags are heavy. Or
they bust in the street or

whatnot. So again, quality
controlling it at the curb and

just being accountable for how
you package that. If you're

raking up loose leaves, we need
you to bag it or containerize

it. If you leave it loose, our
folks aren't out there just to

rake up and sweep and whatnot.
They do a great job. Don't get

me wrong and they take a lot of
pride in what they do. But our

routes are getting heavier. You
know, our routes are getting

longer, more homes being built.

And so in order to move

effectively and efficiently

through those routes, we need

folks to help us get it

collected by containerizing it.

MELISSA: Can I use plastic? I shouldn't

use plastic, because that's not

necessarily recyclable. OLIVIA: Correct. MELISSA: Could

it be clear plastic? But will

you pick up, a, will you pick up

a plastic, a black plastic? OLIVIA: If

it's outer brush, we will rip

it open to make sure that it is

brush. That's just part of

our quality control efforts. If

it's construction debris and

it's out or it's household food

waste, it's not going in those

brush trucks. It needs to be

set out, you know, accordingly.

But yeah, bags, you can do

paper bags, call us down at

Solid Waste. We may still have

some to give away for free. But

yeah, paper bags, plastic bags,

containerizing it in cans,

yeah. Yeah. MELISSA: The, and in terms of

like tree limbs, debris, those

bigger things, they should be

cut, so it's... If you can't get it to the street,

then it's very likely that the

person on the back of our truck

is not going to be able to get

it in the truck. OLIVIA: That's correct.

and we see folks doing

wheelbarrows and that's great

if you're picking up your yard.

You've got pine cones and twigs

and whatnot. But our guys have

to physically, guys and girls,
have to physically lift that

wheelbarrow. To dump it
into the hopper. So, being

being practical in how you
package any type of your waste

or recycling is essential in
that collection process. If

there's, if we didn't collect
it, there's typically a reason.

Give us a call at Solid
Waste. We'll walk you through

it. MELISSA: Right. So one last quick
question before we sign off.

We're almost out of time. Any
word on the glass recycling

coming back? I know it may
still be. OLIVIA: So much feedback. MELISSA: Stand by and wait, but

we're trying, right? OLIVIA: It is.

It's so we're it's something

that we're working on.

It, we didn't, just because we've

had storm recovery and other

things going on. We've got

Nights of Lights and things

coming up. It's in the

forefront, right? So, we're

always looking at our our

programs we're going to bring

to you. So, stay tuned for some

hopeful, exciting updates on

things like glass recycling,

more solar initiative, new

vehicles, just some fun things

we want to bring out to the

community. MELISSA: So you'll have to

stay tuned for next time on The Break Room. OLIVIA: That's right. MELISSA: Thanks for stopping by. Don't forget about the recycling

event... OLIVIA: Friday November the 18th
from 9AM to 1PM. MELISSA: Down at the, at

Riberia. OLIVIA: At the end of Riberia, 501 South
Riberia Street. MELISSA: Wonderful. if you

missed part of this broadcast
and you want to go back and

listen from the beginning, you
can find us now on your

favorite podcast app. If you
check us out at CityStAugRadio.com. You'll find a
complete listing of the podcast

platforms and links to those
past episodes. We want to keep

you informed about what's
happening in and around the

City and most importantly that
you hear it hear from the

people doing the work and
making it happen every day.

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thanks for tuning in. ANNOUNCER: You've

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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

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Communications Specialist for

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

time next week for another
edition of The Break Room.