

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 tuning in. I'm

Melissa Whistle, Communications
Director for the City of St

Augustine. Every year, the
commission recognizes

individuals for their
outstanding service and

contributions to the City by
way of presenting awards. We

had Greg White in The Break
Room talking about the Order of

La Florida Award. He was the
2022 recipient and we ran out

of time with our conversation
about not only what Greg is

involved with in his past, but
moving forward what exciting

projects we have ahead. So, I
have invited Greg back to The

Break Room to pick up our
conversation where we left off.

GREG: Pleasure to be here again. MELISSA: We
we talked about you, the work

that you've been doing, in case

our listeners didn't hear the

last interview. Would you just
give us a snapshot of you, your

life here in St Augustine
growing up. You married your

high school sweetheart. You
served in the military. You've

got a great, great life story.
Tell us a little bit about that

to start us off. GREG: Yes, I'm
married to my childhood

sweetheart. Her name is Lydia.
We've been together 50 plus

years. I don't want to say a
number because I get it wrong

and then she'll get angry,
especially... We have four kids,

two boys, two girls, and grands
and even have the pleasure of

having great grand, so it's, it's
wonderful. MELISSA: What a wonderful

life experience. GREG: Been a great
ride. MELISSA: And you lived here during

the civil rights, was a very
hard time here in St

Augustine. Tell us a little bit
about that and and a little bit,

maybe how that shaped how you
see things and how you want to

make a difference. GREG: Well, I think
the key here Melissa is to

truly make a difference. Even
though we were very young

15, 16, 17, 18. The
college kids at that time had

to be 19, 20, 21, 22 and
like I mentioned earlier, the

high school kids would go with
the the college kids, and we

would march from homes in King
all the way to the plaza,

singing our songs and going
around. I remember at First

Baptist Church, Doctor Martin
Luther King came. This is after

Jose had parted to see, Jose
Williams, and everybody was

excited that Martin Luther King
coming. So, he comes to First

Baptist Church and he just give
this speech and everybody on

the hills and ready to go.
And my grandma was still living

at that particular time and she
was ready to go. So, we all

line up. We line up in tools
and we walk. My grandmama was

behind me and we're walking

towards the slave market, we

didn't say plaza during that
time. And so I said, my mama stay

close by me now, stay close, okay,
okay, okay. So as we walk and we

get to the corner, and I didn't
see my grandmama. So I said gosh,

wonder what happened. So I
circle back and I still didn't

see my grandma. I circle back
and I still didn't see my

grandma. So now I have to go
back to who I was walking with

and get with them we walk
around the slave market, we come

back to First Baptist Church.
And as I walked, in my grandma

sitting on the pew, and I said
mama what happened? She said God

told me to turn around. So she
come back and she said she sit

back down. But that was the
first memorance of me with with

Doctor Martin Luther King. And I
thought, I always thought he was

a big man, but he's like 5'6", 5'7". MELISSA: And how old were

you? GREG: I was like sixteen. 16
years old. MELISSA: That was, that must

have been exciting. GREG: Oh gosh,
it was exciting. It was

exciting just to to get that
close to the guy and to

listen to him and actually... MELISSA:
Inspiring? GREG: Oh gosh, inspiring

wouldn't be the word. Yeah.
Very inspiring. Very exciting

so. MELISSA: And you went and served in
the military. Came

back, worked for FPL. Talk a little bit about some

of those projects you had
shared with us last time in

case folks missed it.

Basically, the start of things

was people wanting community
activities for kids. GREG: Exactly.

Exactly. We did the survey and
the survey indicated youth

activities. And I thought it
would be policing, but it's

youth activities. So, from that
survey came to birth of the

Solomon Calhoun Center. The
pool as well as the Pop Warner

football field to give our kids
a place they could actually go.

Nationwide, more black kids
drowned in Florida and

nationwide, than any other
ethnic group. I know

for a fact that John Adam, the
Baldwin girl Tyrone Bell, and I

can go on and on in my lifetime
when I was a youngster kids

drowning in the pool. So it was
very important that we have

that particular ethnic in there
as well. And working with the

County Director then was Tom
Crawford, we made all of that a

reality as we sit today. MELISSA: And you
got involved also with the CRA

in Augustine. GREG: Oh yes. Yes. Yes.
The CRA like I had mentioned

earlier. I got involved
simply because the corner, the

prostitutes doing that time
moved the kids to another

location, and that began my
involvement with the CRA. MELISSA: You

really want, and and it, you're
right it comes comes down to

providing a safe environment
for kids. That they stay

in the community. They don't
get in trouble. And

somewhere in all of that also
became the birth of the kids

safe zone for the, with the
Legion. Yeah. GREG: In our 26th year,

okay. And we've been very
blessed that we've served, oh

gosh, hundreds upon hundreds
and maybe thousands of kids, but

even with that particular
program, Melissa, we have a

summer program that we

partnered with the YMCA. So,

opposed to just jumping in the
pool splashing. We are actually

teaching these kids the skills
that's going to last for a

lifetime. Teaching swimming
with the YMCA. We've been doing

that since the beginning. MELISSA: And
mentorship. GREG: And the mentorship

is great. The the
kids, the kids just energize

you, you know. MELISSA: Right. They
energize. They really do. If

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

Room. I'm Melissa Wissel,
Communications Director for the

City of St Augustine. I have
invited back Mr Greg White.

I have the honor of sharing the studio with him. He is the

recipient of the 2022 Order of La Florida Award. He's been

extremely involved in the community and specifically in

West Augustine with improving the lives of our families over

there. One of the other projects we we talked about

last time, the septic to sewer project. Let's talk about what

is coming, because there is a lot happening that is coming in

the future, which continues to make West Augustine a great

place. Talk, tell us about the health center. GREG: So be it. We

we've got a medical center coming on the corner of Brevard

and King Street in in West
Augustine. We partnered with

Flagler Health Plus, okay? Epic
Behavioral Health Center, also

the YMCA to address wellness, as
well as some other private

entities. But let's come to
Flagler Hospital Plus first.

They're going to provide the
medical component in this, in

this center, and with their name
recognition, we know that's

going to be successful. On
the private sector, I've gotta

mention the gentleman named
Mark Bailey, who has been a drum

major as far as this calls go
to make it a reality. We were

able to see the

five-million-dollar grant from

the County to go ahead and pursue it.

We partnered with local

architects, with local civil

engineers, as well as mechanical

engineers to get this health

center going. Let's talk a

little bit about the mental

illness. The mental illness in

the LMI area. LMI is low to

moderate income area, okay?

It's a stigma that we've got to

break, in in this sense. It's an

illness, just like cancer, just

like any other illness. We

address cancer in my area, but

it appears that they won't

address the mental illness. So,

we partner with Epic to address

that particular need. Talk a
little about wellness. We

partnered with the YMCA, what
they say ounce of prevention is

worth a pound of cure. I think
it's the way it goes. So, we

partner with with with YMCA to
bring in that wellness

component. So, those are the
three major components that

we're bringing in to the
medical complex. But we also did

a little bit research and we
also want to try to bring in

the pharmaceutical at that
medical complex, as well. So,

that's pretty much where we are
with the medical. Now, one would

say okay, when is it going to be
up? MELISSA: It isn't going to be

next year. GREG: I'm in hopes that
this would be up at the end of

next year. Okay because
we have a deadline with the

grant to have it finished by 2024, So the tock is
clicking. MELISSA: It is ticking. GREG: It is
yes clicking and ticking. It is

both of them. MELISSA: And you're right.
A lot of times with those grant

funds, there's a timeline you
have to start within a certain

time, has to be completed in a
certain amount of time.

And that ties in,
before we run out of time.

Let's let's circle back just a
little bit about the housing

that's coming in. That whole
community corner there is

really, we're hoping to see a
real burst. A real

blooming. GREG: Yeah. And again
credit to the City Manager and

the powers to be with the City
for getting infrastructure.

Water and sewer without an
applicant. The vision to say

that we build it. They will
come is unprecedented. Thank

you City Manager, appreciate you.
It's bursting, right? We've we,

being our non profit, we partner
with Ability Housing, who has a

reputation statewide at
building some of the best

affordable units in the state
okay. They have been very

fortunate that they receive
funding to build 92 units and

they're going to serve 30% of
the AMI, 60% of the AMI, up to

80% of the AMI. Most of the time
when you hear workforce

housing. Well, that's
plus 80%. Okay. That leave a

lot of the CNAs, a lot of
the service workers, out

completely. So, not only do we
get a perfect unit built by

Ability Housing, we given a
safe unit built by Ability

Housing. MELISSA: And we can see that
now. Being built out, is

it on, it's on Volusia? GREG: It's
going to be on on the Volusia

and Chapin, right there on
Volusia, where the PAL

Building is. But this okay

right. Right at that site.

MELISSA: Okay. Lots of great things
going on. I have to say, I can't

think of anyone more deserving
as we've mentioned of the La

Florida Award recognizes those
who have contributed

extraordinary services to the
community. You are obviously

committed. You're not giving
up. You're not done. You're

certainly not finished, and we
appreciate your countless

hours, your talents making
St Augustine a better place.

Is there anything else we
missed? We talked about the

septic to sewer, is there
anything else you want to

share with us? You got just a few minutes left. GREG: No, I think

we've covered all the major components that make a

community whole, okay. The Sheriff Department with the new

Sheriff, Sheriff Hardwick he understands it. He's trying to

put a PAL building in the West section of St Augustine. So,

we could capture more kids. If you look at the Boys and Girls

Club, Congressman John L Mica stayed in St Johns County

four years. That's the reason that we have that Boys and

Girls Club. Okay. Because he had the vision to say we need

more youth activities, opposed to just one site. So we gotta,

we gotta, we gotta, we gotta
prepare for the youth. MELISSA: And that

pal building right now is
kind of old. It's kind of

tucked in the trees, so he's got
a vision for something bigger?

You know? The pal building? GREG: The
oh, oh yes. Oh yes. Oh much much

bigger. Much bigger than than
where they are. MELISSA: That's kind of

a, it's really off the beaten
path. GREG: Oh oh yeah it it is. MELISSA: I

went I had to go down there
about, I don't know, seven eight

years ago when we first moved
here and sign up my son for pal

football, and I was like, where
is this building? I mean, and it,

I was surprised because I

thought a program like Pal

would be some type of complex
or something, so. GREG: So, his vision

is to be grand and his vision
is to have the complex in the

West section of St
Augustine. So it's coming. MELISSA: Well,

and if any, if the the new
Sheriff's compound out there

off of 16 is any indication of
the vision I think we're in for

a great, a great compound there
for pal. GREG: He has been a drum

major in making things happen.
MELISSA: Well Greg, I I can't thank you

enough for coming by. You are
quite a force in this

community. We are so fortunate
and blessed to have you. GREG: Thank you. MELISSA: Keep on
doing what you're doing because

we are better for it. GREG: Thank
you. Appreciate it. MELISSA: If you

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

from the beginning, you can
find us on your favorite

podcast app. We're on Spotify,
iHeartRadio, Apple Podcast, and

more. You can find that
complete listening of podcast

platforms and past episodes
online at CityStAugRadio.com. Be sure to follow
us on all of our social media

platforms. You'll find us @CityStAug. We're on

Facebook, Twitter, and
Instagram. 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.