

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. I'm Melissa Wissel, Communications

Director for the City of St Augustine. Thanks for tuning in

and happy New Year. We have a five week series of interviews,

starting this week, as we kick  
off a new year of The Break

Room with a newly seated City  
Commission. We have two first

time Commissioners and three  
Commissioners returning. Our

first special guest in our  
series is no stranger to

serving the City of St  
Augustine. She was first

appointed to the Historic  
Architectural Review Board in

1996 and was elected to the  
City Commission for the first

time in 2008. She has served as  
our Vice Mayor 2 times and

currently sits on the Tourist  
Development Council for St

Johns County and the North

Florida Transportation Planning

Organization Board. I know  
y'all are wondering who I have

in The Break Room this week.

Let me welcome without any

further ado, Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline. NANCY: Thank you. I'm happy to

be here. MELISSA: I'm thrilled to have  
you and I'm excited that we're

going to do this. You have been  
very active in this community

for such a long time. You've  
lived here since 1984.

You've been involved in many  
organizations and committees I

didn't even begin to mention. If it's okay with you, I

would love to start by just  
taking this opportunity to have

our listeners get to know you a  
little better. Tell us about

your path here becoming Mayor. NANCY:

Well, thank you. Walked down

memory lane. Yes, I first

came here as a senior in

college and I worked in the

planning office. And I had as a

child always visited in the

holidays because my family's

from here, but even though I

didn't grow up here. And I fell

in love with the City And

specifically came to love the

historic preservation effort.

Felt like at the time it was

really needed, that we have

champions for our archaeology

resources, as well as our

historic preservation

resources. So, when I graduated

college, I came to St

Augustine to live and got my  
first job in planning office

right here downtown St  
Augustine and was a land  
planner, did land planning for  
a number of years, on and off, as

consultant. I'm retired now. But  
I got my first dip into

community service was with the  
Junior Service League working  
on the Lightkeeper's House. And  
that was even before the

Lighthouse was part of the  
property. And the

Lighthouse was closed and  
wasn't open to the public, but

we opened the museum there and  
then, within a few years, we're

able to get a lease on the  
Lighthouse, and spent a lot of

time working on that. That was  
my first stint working on the

Lighthouse Project. I came back

later on on the Community

Service Board, the Community  
Board. And at that time, we had

some great accomplishments in  
that we established the

Lighthouse Archaeology Maritime  
Program, which was which was a

great resource to the community  
today. Even but yeah, over time,

I worked on a number of things  
that was a great success, very

well received by the community.

And worked on Save Our Bridge

Inc to Save the Bridge of Lions.

I also served on the State

Historic Preservation Board  
back in the day when the state

did operate the properties  
downtown, the

historic properties downtown.

Cross and Sword. I was on

the Cross and Sword Board. I  
was on the Florida National

Guard Historical Association  
Board and just a number of

things. But my focus has really  
been transportation and

historic preservation all these  
years. MELISSA: And that planning start,

really, I think, gives you quite  
a historical knowledge of the

City. When you really can  
sit at the table and think back

how things have changed, what

you've seen. NANCY: And the value of

the town, and really the true  
value, the deep intrinsic value

of that that national landmark  
town plan that was laid down by

the Spanish King. And  
why does the City, why is the

city work? Why is it so  
beautiful? Why do people like

walking around? Why does it  
feel so good to them?

And the planning background  
really helped me identify those

things so that we can go and  
make sure that we preserve

those things. So but yes,  
so. MELISSA: What would what would you

say strikes in your mind, if you  
could name a couple? I'm sure

there's so many. Things that  
have really changed over the

years. Something that you wake  
up in the morning and you think,

wow, this is so different. I I'm,  
I haven't lived here long but

I've been coming here for over  
20 years, and my way back can

recall that when you went  
across the Bridge of Lions you

could turn left at Anastasia  
Island. When you cross the

bridge over to Anastasia you  
could turn left. That's how far

my memory goes back. NANCY: Well,  
those, there are many changes like that. Some very big,  
some smaller. You know, I I

like to well, I kind of have a  
little rundown I go through, and

we've been through since I've

been on the Commission. This is

just my time on the Commission  
since 2008, you

know, the economic downturn of  
2009. And then the

450 Commemorations which just  
brought, brought us a whole new

notoriety as a city.

Two major hurricanes,

Matthew and Irma, which were a a  
kind of a shock. You know, we

did, each one of these was a  
shock in its own way to the

community. And you know of  
course, while the St

Augustine population has  
remained relatively stable,

it has experienced explosive  
growth all surrounding the city.

There's just so many  
many people, although we still  
  
stay relatively small. MELISSA: There's

nowhere for people to go

here. NANCY: Yeah. It's changed,  
that's changed a lot. There

are many good things and the  
many not so good things. The

expansion of short-term  
rentals in residential

neighborhoods and the struggle  
that the City has and we're not

alone. And that struggle  
and how do we manage that and

in its many, many impacts.

And most, of course, most

recently, the the two tropical  
storms literally back to back

within six weeks, and it's sort  
of like a replay of the

hurricanes that we had. It it

feels very, even though they

were tropical storms.

Not hurricanes. It felt like a

hurricane had hit us.

So, we had that again. And you

know, those are, those have

created an impact in this, on

the psyche of the community that we've all had to

react to. And so I'm not so

much speaking to the traffic

pattern changes or things like

that, but like what's really

going on with people and what

in the in, how they feel about

the town. And I think that this

growth has probably had the

greatest impact. This,

not our, the City's growth, but

the growth surrounding us, and  
the struggle with that. And

combined with increased  
tourism. We've had

tremendous crowds of tourism. At  
any one da, the city residents

are outnumbered by  
tourists. So, and how do

we manage that? So. But yeah,  
those are. MELISSA: If you're just now

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

Wissel, Communications  
Director for the City of St

Augustine. And this week, it is  
my pleasure to have Mayor Nancy

Sikes-Kline in studio. We're  
talking about how things have

changed, some of the impacts of

change over the years. And we

have a long road ahead of us.

Things that we're constantly

looking to improve, recognizing

where we need those

improvements. I think some of

the ones that most people are

most familiar with, you were

talking about the hurricanes,

which of course leads us to the

sea level rise and resiliency

conversation. And then you're

also mentioning tourism and the

amounts of people,

transportation, and mobility.

I know you've got lots of

thoughts. What would your.

what what would you want to say.

just in terms of what we're

thinking, what you're thinking  
in terms of those topics and of

course, keeping our citizens  
informed? NANCY: Well, yes. So, all

of these changes have really  
resulted in a, you know, a well

seasoned City staff that has a  
deep, really deep understanding

of of the issues facing the  
City. And I think that they

have a pretty good proven track  
record, taking action, to create

positive outcomes for the  
strong stronger future for us.

And some of those actions that  
we can expect to see

happening, coming to fruition,  
will be the the things that

they have been working on  
diligently, like bringing the

Back Bay Coastal risk

management study that we're

doing. It's a three-year study

from the Army Corps of Engineer,

that begins with, it begins with

gathering data, so they can

build a model that will project

different scenarios, so that we

can begin to predict how we can

best mitigate those risks,

those flooding risks. And that

will be a big, a big change

for us. The Maria Lake Maria

Sanchez flood mitigation and

drainage improvements. I mean,

we've got stuff across the City

planned over the next 2 to

5 years that will really dig

down into the hardest, most

challenging, difficult areas,

like Maria Sanchez project will  
address 200 acres of downtown.

And it won't it won't  
save us from the big

one, but it will help us during  
these repetitive flooding

events that we have. These kind  
of smaller ,maybe up to category

one kind of things, like this  
daily flooding that we get.

MELISSA: The King Tides. NANCY: The King Tide, those  
sorts of things. Full moon

tides, things like that. The  
inlet, across the city, so

here's an example, Inlet Drive  
has a shoreline resiliency

project that's, you know, we  
found in these storms that

there's a gap in the in the  
seawall there, and that's where

the water comes in and hits  
North Davis Shores. That's

going to be, we'll be able to  
address that, I think, in some

ways, creative ways. The Court  
Theophilia up in North City has

had drainage improvement  
problems. You know, I mean

drainage improvement.

Needs. MELISSA: Right. Needs. NANCY: And South Davis

Shores. Well, we're very  
famous, South Davis Shores, and

the City has a plan to address  
that, as well. In addition to

the ongoing tide tide check  
valves projects that

we've been working on for so  
long. We got some great

stuff coming that we'll be able  
to monitor the groundwater.

We'll have a network to that so  
that we can see what the, what's

actually happening in real  
time. So, that's a positive

move. So, we're trying to put  
the tools in the toolbox that

we need, and address the hardest  
problems and challenges we have,

everywhere from a comprehensive  
level. Right down to the

nitty-gritty of this streets still  
floods too much. MELISSA: And that comp

level is that, what 30-year  
plan, 20-year plan, that

everybody, you know, one of my,  
one of my, one of the things

that impressed upon me, the

significance of something a

comp plan was the development  
of Antigua and the condos. That it seemed like  
everybody thought.. where did

this come from? Well, those  
developments started years ago,

so. NANCY: Many years. MELISSA: Kinda has that  
same effect of like, when's the

best time to plant a tree 25  
years ago? When's the best time

to plan for less future  
development, now? So that. NANCY: Right.

So, well, that's, planning is  
a very important tool and I,

you know, I I think in those  
terms myself, just as my

training is, but. And I'll move  
to the next subject, which is

everybody wants to talk about.  
We always talk about this is

parking and traffic.

Always and in the city we

define it as mobility. That's

how we measure it. How mobile

are we? And it doesn't just

refer to cars. It refers to

pedestrians as well as bicycles,

as well these other modes of

things, and we call that

complete streets. We were

trying to build complete

streets where all modes of

travel are more equal to the

car. And safer, you know,

for all modes. But we've got

some great things coming along

with that and the the King

Street takeover, the shuttles,

improving our shuttle system, to

move, we're really getting good

at managing crowds, and  
special events. The downtown

circulator, we've got that  
coming online. And one

interesting thing that a lot of  
people don't know about is the

\$15 million dollar raise grant  
that we got from US Department

of Transportation, and that's  
going to give us some new park,

new what we call smart parking  
technology in downtown. That it

will actually provide live  
information on parking

availability and also will give  
us the ability to pay, users.

Pay on, on... It's not an  
app. It's a web-based system.

But you'll be able to pay  
on for your parking through

that, through your phone. It  
won't be an app, but you can

still use a URL. You'll be able  
to use a URL, so. And then, of

course, the Anastasia Boulevard  
improvements that we've been

really working diligently there  
at Red Cox and Coquina, which

will, is calls for a roundabout.  
But it also calls for moving

the Fire Station, too. As well as  
the crosswalk, they'll be

building. The DOT has promised  
they'll be building a crosswalk

in Anastasia. I think it's a  
Herrado and to get people  
safely across. MELISSA: So, you don't  
have to walk all the way up to

the light. NANCY: Right. Right. MELISSA: Well,

I hate to cut you off because

we are just getting started and

we even said that when we were

sitting here getting mic'd up. We

are going to run out of time.

But the exciting part about

that is I can have you back. And

we'll schedule another visit for you to

come and join us in The Break

Room and keep filling us in. We

want to keep our folks informed

about what's happening in and

around the City and that you

hear it here from the people

day. Follow us on all our

social media platforms, on

social. We're on, at [CityStAug.com](http://CityStAug.com). Thanks again for

tuning in. Until next time.

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.