

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. I'm Melissa Wissel,

Communications Director for the  
City of St Augustine. Thanks

for tuning in. We are on week  
two of a five series of

interviews with the St  
Augustine City Commission. Our

guest this week was first  
elected to the commission in 2012. She has served on all of  
our major volunteer civic

boards, that includes Planning  
and Zoning, HARB, and Code

Enforcement as well as serving  
on the Entry Corridor Review

Board. She served as chair of  
the City's visioning initiative

in 2014, that was Visioning 2014  
and beyond. Currently, this

week's guest serves as chair of  
the First Coast Resilience

Collaboration, as well as member of the  
Affordable Housing Committee,

which are both part of the  
Northeast Florida Regional

Planning Council. She is  
president of the Jacksonville

Chapter of the American  
Institute of Architects, and

serves as co chair of  
Resiliency Florida. So, before

I give away all of our  
community involvement and

accomplishments, allow me to  
introduce Vice Mayor Roxanne

Horvath. Welcome to The Break  
Room. ROXANNE: Thank you very much. MELISSA: It's

been a while, so we're going to  
just start from scratch like

it's your first time with us.

We have a lot of folks who

listen to our program, lot of  
new residents, I want to get

started with, tell us about  
you. ROXANNE: Oh my goodness. Well,

let's see. I moved down to

Saint Augustine in 1989 and I

actually work for the City as a

kind of the Special Projects

Coordinator for two years,

which is great because I got to

meet a lot of people. And then I

opened my practice in 1991 and

so I've had that ever since. And

I specialized Historic

Preservation. Lot of work,

different phases of City Hall

renovation. Flagler College.

I did the Art Department there.

Flag, Lion Building, Ancient

City Baptist Church. But my

other mainstay was government

work through St Johns

County. I did the growth

management building. I did the

property appraisers and a tax  
collectors building. I did the

Southeast Library. You're  
probably familiar with a lot of

those buildings. And it was a  
great I was very, very busy. And

the last few years I've calmed  
down a little bit. And along

the way I've been doing a lot  
of the civic work that I told

you, on various boards that have  
been on. MELISSA: The, you, so serving on

Planning Zoning, Code Enforcement as well as HARB.

Those were the civic volunteer  
boards. And I would imagine

seeing what you saw there.  
That's, is that part of what

prompted you to actually run

for public office? ROXANNE: Absolutely.

I actually got involved in  
Planning and Zoning through a

neighborhood that I lived in.

There was a project that had

been demoed, the old Flagler  
Hospital on Marine Street. Large

piece of property and a  
developer wanted to build 7, 95

foot tall buildings on that  
site. MELISSA: Oh my goodness.. ROXANNE: It's in a

single family neighborhood, so  
you can imagine the neighbors

were a little upset, so they  
contacted me to ask if I could

help fight it, so I did. And it  
just occurred to me after going

through that and managing  
to get it denied how important

it was for architects to be involved, because we can

actually see the problems before they get built. MELISSA: And that,

and that site just for our listeners. There is a a condo.

ROXANNE: Baypoint condos. It's a three store. MELISSA: Residential, but

not, no. ROXANNE: Three stories. MELISSA: Five story. Wow. ROXANNE: No, that would have

been like almost nine stories.

And these are three stories.

MELISSA: So, this is a a problem if you will that is not new. ROXANNE: Oh no. MELISSA: In

terms of people wanting to come in a parcel, and we're going to

build on it. ROXANNE: Maximize it. MELISSA: Maximize it as much as we can.

I can't imagine that down there. ROXANNE: And the problem was it

would have been opening the door to other potential sites

that would've.. How could we fight that if it's already been

done? So I was very happy to be involved in that and it really

did wake me up to the fact that I needed to be involved in

planning and zoning, which I did for seven years. And after doing

all that, I said maybe I should go on the Commission so. MELISSA: So,

we've been happy to have you.

You've served as our Vice Mayor

before. ROXANNE: Twice. This is my second time. MELISSA: Yes. Wonderful and

so glad to still have you with us. Some of the things.. What is

what are some of the things,

maybe or one thing that you

see? We just talked about  
development that you see as one

of the big issues that I know  
you want to focus on. You're

on, we talked about your  
serving on a on Resiliency

Florida and the affordable  
housing. ROXANNE: Oh, absolutely.

Well, it's like a passion with  
this resiliency Florida. I

mean, I woke up there Matthew  
in 2016 and I have a picture of

my. MELISSA: Literally. Literally woke  
up. ROZANNE: Yes. Yes. The, my campaign

sign underwater, and so I, you  
know, my total focus has been

there other than affordable  
housing and those are both two

needs that we have to address  
here. And hopefully we're

going to get going on the 80  
acres that we own in the county

out west of town a bit, and  
hopefully we're be planning

some affordable housing there.  
Because it may, it's a domino

effect. If people can't live  
here and work here, they have

to live in another county, which  
means they're on our roads,

which clogs the roads, which  
diminishes their quality of

life. And so, you know, it's  
just we have to have housing.

MELISSA: Absolutely have to. If  
you're just now tuning in,

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

Communications Director for the  
City of Saint Augustine. I have

the pleasure speaking with Vice  
Mayor Roxanne Horvath. We're

talking about the important  
issues of resiliency housing. We

mentioned the visioning, and I  
think looking at your career

here and what you see in terms  
of a vision. You were on that

visioning 2014 committee, let's  
talk about that. The visioning.

because I was actually at  
something at the county level,

and we were talking about the  
branding initiative. And I asked

them do you all have a  
visioning document? Thinking to

myself we have a visioning

document, and I don't know that

they do or don't. I don't

want to, I don't want to

disparage the county. But I

want to make sure what folks

understand is we do have a

visioning document, and we look

to that often. ROXANNE: Every day. MELISSA: All

the time. Tell me about

being the.. you were the chair of

that committee. Tell me what

that was, because we're now

almost 10 years. ROXANNE: Yes. Next year

will be 10 years. MELISSA: What was that

all about? ROXANNE: Well, it was almost

20 years since we had done a

visioning, when I came on the

board. That was one of the

things I ran on us. I thought,

it's been a long time. We've  
had many changes. We need to

get, you know, some key people  
together and start thinking

about what we want to be as a  
City. There's a lot of

pressures on us and what are  
our values. So, we had a great

group of people and it took  
almost a year to put it

together. And as you said, we do  
refer to it on every project

that we take on. How does it  
fulfill one of the pillars? We

have livability, sorry,  
livability, authenticity,

character, and vitality, and  
each of those, have strategies

under them and goals and  
objectives. And it's been very

successful. But as I say, next

year's 10 years. It might be

worth having a workshop with

the other Commissioners, maybe

a facilitator, bring some other

people that are in the

community, and just really speak

about, is it still current?

Should we add more? Because

as I said, so much has happened

in 10 years. MELISSA: So much in 10

years. I've been here, well

actually 10 years myself, and

now that I'm working for the

City, I see things so

differently. But mobility. Infrastructure,. I can

remember when I first started

was the first year we started

shuttles for Fourth of July. ROXANNE: Oh

my gosh. That that doesn't seem  
like it was 10 years ago, does

it? MELISSA: It doesn't. But I look at this  
visioning document as well

sometimes when we talk about  
things. and when you talk about

livability, you're talking  
about mobility. How do we get

places? The authenticity is so  
important, being the historic

City that we are. ROXANNE: Absolutely. MELISSA: How do you do you think that,

that's something that we can  
build upon? ROXANNE: Oh sure. I

definitely think so. Well,  
we're working on, you know,

our resiliency. Many different  
forms of that. You know, the

back-based study, that we're  
huge. Big we're so, we've just

signed it last night, so we're  
thrilled to have that. It's

going to take three years. And,  
but we've had great funding on

it, and it's really going to  
give us a plan for going

forwards for the whole City, and  
how we can build strong, not

temporarily but permanently,  
build strong to be resilient.

MELISSA: The, to the, to your point about  
the back-based study. We got a

lot of the ugh another study, ugh  
another study. Can you address

that a little bit to our  
listeners why this is so

different? It's such a, it's  
such more comprehensive. This

isn't just a traffic study at a  
traffic light. ROXANNE: Oh no no. Well,

yeah we, this sets us up for  
funding for appropriations at

the federal level that will  
help realize some of these

solutions. And without doing  
this study, we won't be in line

for that funding. So, that's one  
of the key issues. You can

do all the studies, but if you  
don't have funding, yeah.

They will sit on the shelf. MELISSA: And  
they are going to come back

with some suggestions? I mean,  
we'll see some tangible

solutions, suggestions,  
recommendations. ROXANNE: Absolutely and

we're going to be looking to  
present these and get feedback

from the community. That's

that's a big part of it. We

want a buy in from the people  
that are going to be helped by

this. And I want their  
understanding of what we're

doing. So. MELISSA: Yeah, the mayor talked  
about that. And Jessica Beach

also talked about that, that and  
listen up listeners, when we

tell you we're going to have  
these meetings and public

input. We need your help. So  
you're very right about that,

Vice Mayor So, thank you for  
reminding us about that.

Lots of big things happening in  
the City. You mentioned the

back-bay study. We've also  
got the fire station, possibly

coming? ROXANNE: A possible new location  
for that, which will help us at

the intercept section of  
Anastasia Boulevard and Red Cox

Road, which is really a fairly  
dangerous location. We're

hoping to be able to vacate the  
existing fire station, which is

very old and not really up to,  
to where it needs to be. And

relocate and give that property  
for a roundabout, so that would

be a great improvement in that  
location. We are also

continuously working on  
mobility, which was the number

one thing that came out of this  
vision, visioning study. And we

have lots of things going on  
there. MELISSA: The, I'll give folks a

sneak peek about what's coming

in February. We don't have

dates yet, but standby because

we are getting the circulator.

ROXANNE: Oh I know. I'm so excited. MELISSA: Downtown

circulator. ROXANNE: Yeah that's

going to be a, I hope a big

boost. MELISA: So for those who are

tuning in anyway, what's the

circulator going to be? It's

going to be a shuttle. Local

shuttle, if you will, that's just

going to run a loop circulating

from the VIC to the Bayfront

over to cathedral and then back

to the VIC. Nice little

circulating bus. Hopefully help

folks get around the City. Park

at the parking garage. And

leave your car. ROXANNE: Yes. Yes.

MELISSA: Anything else? Any favorite projects that you're looking

forward to in particular coming up? ROXANNE: Well, it's really the 80

acres. And then, of course, the resiliency work,

that the Maria Sanchez Lake project. That is going

to make such a difference. I, I've calculated that I've

flooded, I think, six times now in the last however many years.

The worst was Matthew, of course. That, the wall system

that we're setting up there and pump system will not actually

have kept water out of my garage, but it would have

the other five. And so and

everybody else that is impacted,

I don't know how, how many  
people 500 people or something,

and but a huge mile area.

Couple of mile area. MELISSA: Downtown.

ROXANNE: Influenced. MELISSA: Yeah. Very good.

Well, we are out of time. ROXANNE: Oh my

goodness. MELISSA: I told you it would  
fly by. ROXANNE: It did. MELISSA: It's great

having you for our first time  
here. Thank you for coming and

we'll be sure to have you back.

ROXANNE: Thank you so much. MELISSA: If you

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

from the beginning, you can now  
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platforms on social. You'll

find us on Facebook, Twitter,  
and Instagram @CityStAug. 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.