

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 stopping by. I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications Director for the City of St

Augustine. I've invited the St Augustine Utilities Director Todd

Grant to join me this week in

The Break Room. It's been a

while since we've talked on air

about trash recycling, solid

waste, all those environmental

green topics. So Todd let's just

get to it what's happening in

Solid Waste and Utilities? TODD: A lot

of things are happening. As the

residents and some businesses

know, we for the first time gave

some of our staff off on

holidays. MELISSA: Yeah, so it was. TODD: It created

a little confusion, but I think

we made it through, with some

valuable lessons were learned,

and so we will be refining

that. Another hot topic, so

to speak, is the glass

recycling. That has been

something in the works for  
quite a while. The listeners

will remember that I said to  
stop recycling glass. MELISSA: Yeah we

used to. We used to stop  
recycle, or we used to recycle glass.

TODD: Correct. Yes. Currently we're  
being charged around \$150 a ton

for recycling. Trash is  
about \$62 a ton. So it's,

you're balancing an ethical, right thing to do, with

fiscal responsibility. So, glass  
being heavy. I ask that it just

be thrown away. So, that doesn't  
sit well with me or Olivia

Smith, the Solid Waste Manager  
so. MELISSA: And most residents,

very upset about it. TODD: So we have

the containers, eight yard

dumpsters ready to go. We're  
about to order the stickers.

And then those will be placed  
out where our recycling drop

off locations are currently,

North on San Marco off of

Red Cox Road, and down at the  
Solid Waste Facility on Riberia

Street. We're also waiting  
on a company called Strategic

Materials, who basically has a  
end user for the glass. So,

we're trying to work out the  
logistics and cost for them, if

there's going to be any, to  
collect the glass and haul it

off to Jacksonville. MELISSA: So when  
you say end user, to me that

says, ooh so it's not going to

just go in a landfill, or trying

to actually repurpose it to

somewhere, or? TODD: Correct. So, what

Strategic Materials, if you look

on their website, they have a

really good video on what, how

their glass gets, you know,

basically they're saying that

from the minute you recycle it,

it could be back in use two

days later. That's how

quick the process is. But they

have their own facility that it

gets crushed. It gets sorted by

color through optical scanners,

and then it gets shipped off to

people who make new bottles

with it. So, yes. So,

it's going to go to the

materials recovery facility in Jacksonville. And from there, it

will either get crushed and sorted, or transported to

another facility that Strategic Materials has. So, that's what

we're waiting on. I'm hoping, prior to April, when I have to

update the Commission again on where we are with glass

recycling, I can say, hey, we are, it's successful. And so once

we roll that out, we have an extra dumpster with the

possibility of adding a site out at St Augustine Beach.

We partnered with them when they took over their own

recycling for about 6 months.

We had dumpsters out there and

it was wildly popular. So  
much so that we had to have

three dumpsters out there. MELISSA: And  
this is, this is a recycling

where, I collect my glass at my  
house, but I have to go drop it

somewhere. TODD: Correct. MELISSA: Which isn't  
a problem. I've lived in

communities where that's just  
the way you do it. TODD: Correct and

so for now, starting small  
and then trying to work ourself

up. Because from a labor  
standpoint and equipment

standpoint, I don't have enough  
manpower to actually have an

extra collection day. However, we  
will start toying around with

modifying the, maybe a one day  
no yard debris and a set out,  
you know, where we can actually  
collect it curbside at the

residence. Ideally, I'd like to  
get some containers downtown

from the commercial side of it,  
because all the restaurants, lot

of it. Another nice thing to try  
to promote is use of cans or

other things that are easily  
recyclable. So, we're going to

start off small, depending on  
how the responses from those

drop offs. We'll start looking  
at other options to increase

the ease at which somebody can  
recycle. There's also been

talks of, why don't you just get  
a crusher? And so that's always

that's always in the mix, but

again, starting small and

manageable, to where we just

have three locations. We go

collect, dump it into one

location, and another person

comes and gets it. Is where

we're going to start. MELISSA: Well, if

you, and when you talk about,

you know, people have great

ideas. Oh, just get a crusher.

Flagler Beach is doing, or

Flagler County is doing it, but

there's a lot more to it. You

mentioned it at the Commission

Meeting and I don't know, I

wouldn't have thought about it.

But okay, so we crush up all

this glass, to what granular

level? Do you put it somewhere?

Do you bag it? Do you, you

know, is that the new

sandbagging? I mean, it

could be. But, what do you do with

all of it? TODD: Right, you have to

have a place to store it and

especially, if you have the

volumes, you know, if it

becomes wildly popular to drop

it off, I'm going to have a

mountain of sand glass.

Glass sand or whatever. And you

know, you hope that there's no

more storms. Or, for

sandbagging. But yeah, we went

five, 6 years. Since

the last round of of storms. And

so, that's a a drawback.

Flagler Beach is a smaller

community than St Augustine. So they have

the ability to use it somewhere,  
if there's an opportunity that

says, oh if you're going to  
crush it up to sand we'll come

get it. So we'll explore  
those ideas, but again start out

small, figure out the the pros  
and cons, and then increase it.

MELISSA: If you're just now tuning in,  
I've got Todd Grant in The

Break Room this week. I'm  
Melissa Wissel, Communications

Director, and of course, Todd is  
our Utilities Director. Wrapping

up glass recycling, we still  
have our regular recycling

solid waste, you mentioned,  
modifying the schedule, trying  
to give our folks a break. We're

always trying to do green, good

things. Olivia stays busy down  
there. We got just a few more

minutes. What else are we  
talking? TODD: Well, also what's

become more and more popular is  
our kind of, our recycling

drop-off days. We just  
recently had one after the

holidays for electronics and  
used cooking oil.

That was very, we had a whole  
trailer full of electronics. I

think, 40 gallons of used  
cooking oil, so that doesn't go

down the drain. Back in  
November, we had America

Recycles Day. So, it's  
become very popular, especially

the shredding. When we first  
started off, we couldn't fill a

truck. And now we are maxing out  
the truck, which is, yeah, I

forget how many tons of paper.

And so that's become very, very

popular. It's really county  
wide because we don't ID people

saying you're not a resident.

With the electronics,

Olivia's done a very good job  
of, she's very picky about zero

waste, and so all of the vendors  
that she uses to pick up the

electronics don't just take out  
the good stuff and then throw

the plastic away. They are there from  
from cradle to grave, making

sure that it's 100% recycled or  
as much as possible. So, that's,

that's increased. And then  
we've also done our compost

bins. We're going to do that  
again this year. We just

have to determine like we did  
last year about April how much

money we have to go towards  
that. MELISSA: So before we get off the

event topic, we'll have another  
one in April. I can't think of

the date off the top of my  
head. It's right around Earth

day. April time frame.

We also do an Environmental

Awareness Campaign during that  
week. So, you'll see it. If you

listen to the broadcast, you  
get News and Notes. Also,

follow us on social media.

You'll see that. Talk about the

composting here for a few  
minutes. We joked when we

opened the registration online.

It was like a Kenny Chesney

concert. We were out of those  
bins in an hour. TODD: It's like a

ticket master fail. Yeah.

So, within minutes, we had 50

applications, and so we had to  
shut it down, which is great.

It's obviously wildly popular.

And what we've done, and I

haven't I haven't seen some of  
the the data, is Patricia down

in Solid Waste follows up with  
the residents that we gave them

to, asking how they like it. Is  
it still standing up? Is it

mechanically okay? Just so we  
make sure that we're not

continuing down the road with a  
particular type that's actually

has a lot of defects or  
problems with it, or if they

really like it, then we're  
going to continue to buy those

kind. We have stand alone and  
then have ones that, bins that

you can actually rotate. And so  
it's depending on someone's

preference. MELISSA: So the rotating one  
is like a... TODD: A bin, turning bin.

And the other one's just  
basically, it's like a 55

gallon drum. Nicer, but. Right.  
And you just have it in one

location. MELISSA: And then I guess if  
you're the one of those proud

recipients of the bin, you know  
what you're doing with it. Or you should? Do we get an, do we  
get an instruction, every flyer?

TODD: Every compost bin when we assemble  
them has a how to compost 123.

And so we go and deliver it to  
the house. You know, technically

it's supposed to stay with the  
house if you move. So we educate,

you know, the resident with  
the the pamphlet that comes

with it, and then we're always  
open for questions. One of the

things that we're going to try  
to do through Solid Waste and

Environmental Compliance is  
more of an Environmental

Awareness Day, where we're  
bringing in on those drop off

days, having actual composting

seminars, lessons, butterfly

garden, attracting plants,  
native plants to, to make it a

little bit more, probably around  
Earth Day, a little bit more

broad rather than just drop  
off. You can drop off your

stuff and maybe learn something,  
or actually get some plants

that are native and  
attractive to bees,

butterflies, etcetera. MELISSA: We did  
the monarch butterfly, the

Mayor's Monarch Pledge. TODD: Yes and.. MELISSA:  
It's still going. TODD: We checked

all the boxes, and so are still  
compliant with the Mayor's

Monarch Pledge. MELISSA: But there's a,  
if you can, tell me the

difference. There's a plant  
that... TODD: The milkweed. MELISSA: The

milkweed, but there's two  
different kinds, and people

think they they go to Leonardi's  
or wherever and they get their

milkweed, but it's not quite the  
right milkweed is it? TODD: Right.

There's a native, I don't know  
the species genus name or, but

yes. I think a majority of  
what you may find in the big

box stores is not native  
milkweed to Florida. And so. MELISSA: Does

it work? TODD: I'm not. MELISSA: Don't know.  
Okay. Right. We don't know. TODD: I'm

sure it does, right? I don't  
know. I haven't talked to a

butterfly where she says, no.  
No. That's not native. I'm not

eating that. MELISSA: That's not  
Chardonnay. TODD: The farm to table

here, buddy. So, I imagine they  
both work, but I think from

propagating, because once they  
get eaten in the seeds, they

they repopulate themselves. So,  
if you ever talk to Glabra

Skipp, she can tell you the  
difference. MELISSA: We'll get her on

next. TODD: Or JB Miller. MELISSA: Right.  
Okay. Any last comments? We got just a

quick minute to wrap up. You  
guys are always busy. I will

give a shout out. I know it was  
frustrating for the community.

There was it was a rough patch  
when you did the the modified

schedule. But I will ask our

residents on your behalf. Give

our folks a break. We're trying  
to find a a fine line between,

you know, we want to keep the  
services going as necessary, as

needed. We're also trying to  
give our folks a break, that was

also coming off of back to back  
storms, cleanup.

Debris removal. It was a rough  
fall. TODD: Yeah, they needed a break

and if, you know, other  
communities, the county, St

Augustine Beach, their employees  
are off on holidays. And so, in

my 14 years here, we had never  
done that. And so, we

gave it a try. And I do, overall,  
I think it was well received.

There was some confusion, so I  
think we'll learn from that and

do a little bit better job of  
of trying to get the message

out there, and and how they can  
get their their stuff picked up on

a right day. MELISSA: Yeah and it did  
take a while. Some of that

recycling. I know, I recycle  
and by that third Friday or

fourth Friday of no recycling.

I was like oh my gosh, what are

we going to get to... TODD: I was going to the drop off  
myself when the

beach didn't pick up. MELISSA: Yep. Well  
thanks for everything that you

do. Thank you for your staff.  
Olivia, Glabra, you mentioned,

and you've got a whole slew of  
other folks out there working

round the clock to get the... TODD: They make the City look good. MELISSA: Clean and green. Thank

you. TODD: Thank you. MELISSA: We'll have you back. If you missed part of

broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning,

you can find us on your favorite podcasting app. Look

for us on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and more. You can

find a complete listing of the podcasting platforms and links

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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. You

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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.