

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 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 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 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

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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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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.