

You've tuned in to another edition of The Breakroom, a weekly conversation about how the City of Saint Augustine works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the City of Saint Augustine's communications director, Melissa Wissel. The Breakroom 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. Welcome to The Breakroom. Thanks for tuning in. We are back in studio this week with Rueben Franklin. He's our assistant city manager. Last time Rueben was here, we got So, talking about affordable housing, Spanish Street Construction ran out of time. Rueben, welcome back. Thank you. Again, we're going to pick up where we left off. Uh we might repeat ourselves a little bit but I want to go ahead and ask you to tell us or give us an update if you would on the firehouse on the island, the Anastasia Island Firehouse. I know that was. Yeah. So, of the big topics we had talked about. I think we got through affordable housing. So, happy to be back to dive into some of the bigger projects and Plans we have going on and one of them is the on Anastasia island Anastasia Boulevard. We are looking at developing a new firehouse. Um it's it's part of a larger project that involves where the existing firehouse is a transportation improvement project where we would install a roundabout at the Redcox Road Anastasia Boulevard that curve right there and that roundabout is intended to be a transportation safety improvement. Uh we've had accidents there. We've heard from the neighborhoods in the community that it's a bit it's a tricky fix from fatalities. Right. We've had fatalities. But from an engineering standpoint because it's on a curve because you have side streets coming in at different angles. Uh you can't just go put a traffic stop. Everybody says just go put up a traffic signal. Right. Well the there's FDOT won't sign off on that and there's reasons behind that from an engineering point of view so we got a roundabout. Okay. Uh and the roundabout's considered a resiliency improvement because there's no power associated with it. We love resiliency solutions. You know, you get hit with a hurricane, you go clean up the debris and the roundabouts working again. Right. Uh so, the big thing with that is they need the room where the existing fire station is and that fire station is old. Uh it's outgrown its usefulness. So, we actually were in the business of looking for a new fire station site anyway. So, it kind of made sense when we sat down with DOT and so now we are looking at the site across from the amphitheater and currently that is a state-owned land it's with the state park system and so we're looking to further a site development concept there that we can enter a lease agreement with the state to develop that site as the fire station and recognisably so the neighbors around there have questions right now it's a nice piece of property of maritime hammock and so the city's looking at what we can do to mitigate the

impacts of the that site being used as a fire station. So conservation. Right. So we're looking to what else can we put in conservation in the area that could be a benefit to the island. Uh so when we do impact the that hammock that we have another area in the island that we're we're basically it's a zero sum. We're putting something in the conservation where we're taking something out. Uh and that's an important piece of the puzzle the next important piece is once we have the site plan developed to sit down with that neighborhood and those residents we've already met with them but there's still a lot of questions floating around out there and our intention is to really create a natural buffer between the fire station and the residential area to keep as much as that natural sand dune in place and so all that is being worked on and we will once we have more details you know reach out to the neighborhood we'll have public meetings but that's on the horizon and it's a going to be a change on the island but it checks a lot of Different boxes for the community from mobility transportation safety improvements to new firehouse increased level of service there as well. And that I think that's the other piece of the puzzle that I know the fire department is looking forward to is being able to have more and better services. Not that the service we provide isn't good. We have one vehicle, one apparatus out there. It doesn't even fit really in the bay. There's only three people I think that can be out there at a time. So you'll have ambulance service yeah that's correct in inciting it's a little more difficult than people might think because it it we have to take into consideration there are emergency response times right so right now where they're at they're kind of in the center of Anastasia Boulevard we have to reach all the way out to 312 all the way to the base of the Bridge of Lions all those neighborhoods are encompassed in that area and so one of the logical things that people bring up is well why don't you just build a new one on State Road 312 well because now that response time all the way into North and South of assures you've just increased that response time. So that's another reason why the site is so advantageous to us is that it it's not far removed from where the existing site doesn't impact those response times. The other thing is is it's not on the curve. So right now any site around there we're still have a deal with the curve. Uh boating traffic in and out from the ramp. Uh and so this actually puts it on a straight away. Now we are right across from the amphitheater. So you know during times where there's concerts there's but we believe we can work through that and and would also include an emergency signal in pedestrian crosswalk for for just huge yeah yeah which may or come that will happen whether the fire station's there or not. Right. But if we move forward with this we will intently move design it to be a pedestrian crossing with an emergency signal. While you're talking about crosswalks before I forget we've got a couple

crosswalks we're working on that folks have asked for you want to talk about crosswalks? Let's just transition that great transition Rueben right in the crosswalks. Uh the long awaited one is has been the one on Anastasia Boulevard at Zereda. Uh right in between Oddbirds and Sarbez. Uh lot of pedestrian traffic there. We've had a lot of accidents over the years. Some tragic. Uh so that's actually under construction. So when you're driving down Anastasia Boulevard and you want to know what's going on. That is going to be a signalized pedestrian crossing. Uh a great improvement for the boulevard. Uh and then the next one is due to our our new Commissioner [Melissa] Yes. [Rueben] Commissioner Garris. Uh she championed a crosswalk on [Melissa] she did. She went right to work on that and did not waste any time. [Rueben] And that is actually getting installed now. Uh and so we worked with the county since that's a county maintained road and and want to thank the county for facilitating that crosswalk as well. [Melissa] Great. So lots of safety improvements. If you're just now tuning in you're listening to the break room. I've Rueben Franklin with us. He's back again is the Assistant City Manager, we're talking about last time we talked about affordable housing. We talked about construction, the firehouse. Let's talk briefly here before we wrap up. We have a few minutes left. Uh the homelessness initiative. Big concern, lots of talk about it. Lots of change. How did you end up with that as Assistant City Manager? [Rueben] Well, it was one of the items that David was our our new city manager, David Burchim was charged with and so when I took over the helm as Assistant City Manager, you know, he has a lot of things going on himself. So, I'm I'm taking over these initiatives and I'm very excited. We recently had an approved land exchange agreement. So, we have a site that we're going to look at developing into a day drop-in center and and so this next year coming up. There's going to be lots of changes. Uh we'll have more detail once we actually close on the property. Right. Uh but the whole intention is to develop an day drop-in center that has wraparound services for individuals and and try to get them moved out of the downtown area and into this area that has shade, a place for them to stay and and you know, as Barry Fox is is going to be leading the charge. [Melissa] Yeah. [Rueben] Uh and I'm I'm going to be helping him with this. Uh he has a term he uses Dignity Village. [Melissa] Okay. Uh so I like that. [Rueben] So yeah, it's a great vision and and one of the things I've learned in in just my two months or so being Assistant City Managers is the great work that's being done out in the community. Uh Flagler Health Plus with Flagler Care Connect and the Continuing of Care. Uh there's just a lot of great work being done. Uh I was very [Melissa] because you hadn't had anything to do with this. [Rueben] Yeah. So, getting involved. You know, the first thing is is what's going on and I've been very impressed with the nonprofits and everybody. I mean, this is an issue that people care about and it's it's a big issue for the community

as a whole but one of the surprising things for me is all the great work that is being done and so I think over the next year you know few years you're going to see a lot [Melissa] it's not just and it's not just our problem I mean it's a nationwide [Rueben] just like affordable housing you know there are no one when I look at city issues a lot of times you find out that a lot of Clay County cities have the same issues. Right. Um and so there's a lot of creativeness too that goes into solving them and and and it's just not us. It's it's it's a a health care issue. It's it's you know there's a lot of nonprofits. Churches people are involved to help these individuals that need help. [Melissa] Right. So. Well it's like you said it's a wraparound services too. It's it's giving them a place. [Rueben] Yeah like one of the things that you know it became evident was just mail. Like there's no okay. Folks to get mail. So how you know if you're on the street and you need you know you need mail it's just a critical thing and I think that that's a component that this drop-in center is going to be able to provide is a is a place to get mail at least. [Melissa] Well, you don't I think you're absolutely right. You don't think about the things that we take advantage of. If someone's living on the street because they're homeless but they're trying to make a better life or find a way out of that but they can't get mail, how do you apply for a job? How do you get information for yourself? You know, how do you you don't think about that? [Rueben] Right. [Melissa] Need a haircut? Think about that you know just a place to you know so I I we have as you mentioned Barry Fox is heading that up and we are going to have him in on the break room talk about that so stay tuned at the break room and recapping our last conversation real quick Spanish Street should be ongoing now [Rueben] correct [Melissa] downtown quick recap on that one I [Rueben] just we're rebuilding Spanish Street Kirbo Street it's going to look beautiful we just gotta get through the construction Uh so bear with us and in the short time. Well, it's going to be a nice, beautiful street just like the other sections. [Melissa] And the other last piece to remind folks the in case there are questions, the affordable housing community, that development area that's out on Holmes Boulevard and your next steps with that. [Rueben] Yeah, we'll be going through the review process, development review process with the county since it's out in the county. We want, we need to get their requirements and and feedback to how to move forward with developing that site. So that's up to 400 units of potential affordable housing units that can contribute to to the area and and give young professionals yeah [Melissa] our workforce [Rueben] yeah our workforce a place to live and work in the community. [Melissa] Just a few things you got going on? [Rueben] It's never dull at the city of [Melissa] anything surprising you before we before we send off. Anything expected or unexpected that you you're like wow I I didn't realize or something that anything? [Rueben] No no [Melissa] putting you on a spot there. [Rueben] No, not too surprising. Um a

lot of things I was working with David on and that's one of the benefits in my mind of being here for 13 years is I've I've gotten to know the community, know the issues, and then also know how to implement and go out into the community and work with us to get these important topics and projects done. [Melissa] Because they take time. They do take time. I know that when I first started and I've been here eight years I remember hearing talks about Lake Marie Sanchez and that was my first lesson. I've probably said it here before. Well, when are we going to put the first shovel in and we really, we haven't yet but we're getting close. We're getting close. We're getting close. Rueben, thanks again for coming down and talk with us. I hope this was informative for folks and we'll we'll get you back. [Rueben] Thank you. [Melissa] If you missed part of this broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning, you can now find us on your favorite podcasting apps. We're on Spotify, iHeartRadio, Apple Podcast, and more. You can find a complete listing of those Podcasting platforms and our past episodes including this one at City Saint Aug Radio. com. We want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city and most importantly that you hear it here from the people doing the work and making it happen every day. Stay connected with us on our social media platforms. You'll find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at City Saint Aug and also check out our website City Saint Aug. com. Thanks again for tuning in. Until next time. [Narrator] You've been listening to The Breakroom, a weekly program address projects and programs offered by the City of Saint 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 Saint Augustine, Harley Miller. See you at this time next week for another edition of The Breakroom.