

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 everyday. 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. [Melissa] Welcome to The
Breakroom. Thanks for tuning

in. With state and local
elections coming in 20

twenty-four. You might think
it's a little early to be

talking voter registration but
Vicky Oakes, Saint Johns County

Supervisor of Elections thinks
otherwise, it is never too

early and it's always something
she's thinking about, not just

about voter registration in the
elections but community

outreach and making sure
everyone knows when, where, and

how to vote. So, in studio this
week, we bring back Vicky

Oakes. [Vicky] Good morning. [Melissa] Good
morning. Good afternoon.

Welcome back. I love having
you. I tell this I say this

every time you come in. I just
love sitting and having a

conversation with you. [Vicky] Well,

thank you and I always enjoy

with you too, Melissa. Thank
you for having me. [Melissa] Uh

elections, big thing, it's
where we all get to have our

say. We get to vote in the
people we like, vote out the

people we don't. Uh tell me
about, I know you're you're

about to get out some citizen
guides or maybe they've already

come out yet depends on where
you live. Tell us about the

citizen guides. [Vicky] Okay. It's
never too early to begin

preparing and even though we
did not have any elections in

twenty twenty-three. I want Our
citizens and our residents

prepared and ready to vote in
twenty-four. So, our citizens

guides are being mailed. Watch
your mailbox and they are going

to a hundred and thirty-five
thousand residential mailboxes

in Saint Johns County. [Melissa] And
that's all registered voters or

anyone. [Vicky] No. [Melissa] No. Okay. [Vicky] If you
live in Saint Johns County or

have a residential mailbox at
the post office. [Melissa] Okay. You will

receive Eve, one of my citizens
guides. [Melissa] Hence why it says guide

to registering and voting. [Vicky] And
voting, correct. Because you

know, we have a lot of new
people here and they don't know

about the laws in Florida. They
may vary from the state that

they came to. [Melissa] Right. [Vicky] And it's full of election dates,

imported dates. [Melissa] Right. [Vicky] Law changes. [Melissa] Primaries. [Vicky] Yup. [Melissa] So,

I'm going to say this for those who are new. I like to call

this interview between you and me today because like you just

said, it's not an election cycle this season. This is like

The blue sky days for hurricane preparation. You don't think to

prepare for the hurricane when there's blue skies but you

want to be ready when it comes. So if you're not thinking about

voting because it's not an election season right now. Now

is the time. [Vicky] Now is the time.

[Melissa] Now is the time. Uh you just

mentioned election laws. We had
some changes in the legislature

legislature this year. There's
too many for me to keep track

of in general but I know that
there were some changes to our

election rules, what do we need
to know most? [Vicky] Okay, the most

important thing that voters may
not realize is all vote by mail

ballot request following the
2022 general election expired

period. So, we reset to zero.

If you want to vote by mail in

the 20 twenty-four elections,
you have to ask. Make that

request and you can do that by
calling our office or visiting

our website at vote SJC. gov
and there'll be information in

the Citizens Guide about that
as well. [Melissa] And like you said

that. So just that is for
anyone who wants to vote by

mail. You have to ask for your
ballot to be sent to. Is that

going to be every year now? [Vicky] It
will be every election cycle

now. So today Melissa you could
call and request your vote by

mail ballot for the twenty-four
elections. [Melissa] Okay. [Vicky] And then

you'll just have to remember
before twenty-6 to make that

request. If you could continue
to wish to vote by mail but we

have other options too. [Melissa] And I'm
going say to two things. One is

that would be me because I do
do the vote by mail and we'll

probably have you on again to
remind folks for twenty

twenty-six. [Vicky] Oh. Yeah. Great.
For sure. [Melissa] But tell me about the

other ways that I can vote
which it seems obvious but I

love it that you once told me
we are a no excuse state just

because we have so many ways
for people to cast their

ballots. [Vicky] Right. So no excuse
state refers particularly to

voting by mail. [Melissa] Okay. [Vicky] Because
any registered voter can

request a ballot and vote by
mail. There's early voting as

well and we have a time period

before each election that you

can go vote in person and then

as a last resort your precinct

is always open on election day

from 7AM to 7 PM [Melissa] and one thing

to point out when you do vote

early that's not dependent on

your precinct correct [Vicky] that's

correct and our early voting

dates times and locations vary

by election they're always

announced 30 days prior to each

election so we let the Voters

know. That information is

included on their sample ballot

that they receive. So yes. [Melissa] And

do I get a sample ballot if I

am not voting by mail or is

that only if I vote by mail? [Vicky] If

you vote by mail, you would not receive a sample because you've

already got your ballot. [Melissa] Okay.

Well, I was asking a silly

question backwards but that's alright. So, if I'm going to go

vote in early election, if I'm not a vote by mail voter, I am

going to get that sample ballot and you really recommend for

folks to read it and I took you up on that reminder and

recommendation. There's a lot of stuff on there. [Vicky] There is.

There's the information that's still not too late to request a

vote-by-mail ballot, our early voting dates, times, and

locations and Melissa, it's also an actual copy of your

ballot so you can do your
research, study, and prepare so

when you're ready to go vote,
you a lot of people mark em and

take em along with them. [Melissa] Okay,
so I can take my ballot in with

my sample ballot. [Vicky] You
absolutely can. [Melissa] Well, if you'd

hate to be the one that goes in
and says, gee, I didn't really

look at this particular
position that's open. Let me

see. What, am I going to do
this by alphabetical order? Am

I going to do it because their
name sounds, you know, you

really want to go in and be
educated. This is serious

business. [Vicky] Yeah and we mail em

out about three weeks ahead of

each election. So, you have
plenty of time. [Melissa] Okay. Uh if you

are just now tuning in You're
listening to the break room. I

have Vicky Oakes in studio.

This week we are talking about

elections. She's our supervisor
of elections. Uh before we talk

about our numbers, I do want to
make note, you are as we talk

about elections and precincts
and where I vote. You've got

some tours also of your
facilities. [Vicky] I do. [Melissa] Coming up in

October, November. [Vicky] We do and
those tours are specific to

elections integrity. We've Had
some questions following the

2020 elections. So in 21 we began opening our doors to

people. [Melissa] Why not? Conducting tours. It's important that

people learn the facts about how elections are conducted in

Saint Johns County and in Florida. So we opened our

doors. We give you a behind the scenes look and answer any

question that you have. And people's reaction Melissa they no

idea what have you do. [Melissa] Uh I will sign up for one and I also

tell you or or I'll ask you or do you take people's

information if they want to volunteer? If you found that

when they people see that, they say, how do I get involved?

[Vicky] Yes, we're still taking applications for poll workers.

[Melissa] Okay. [Vicky] Um and there's a place right on our website under the

election drop down for poll workers that anyone that's

interested can apply. [Melissa] And I'm going to repeat that website

vote SJC dot gov. Uh it does work if you do vote SJC. com.

It does redirect because I did the. com. Um so any of this

voting information, education materials, we're going to talk

about that in just a minute as well. Uh vote SJC. gov or vote

SJC. com. Get all this information and it is English

and Spanish. [Vicky] Correct. [Melissa] Correct.

So, also the dates of the

tours, I'll just let folks know
there's one October ninth

October 18th, November 3rd, and
November 14th. Not going to get

into all the detail of that but
it's two in October, two in

November. Check out the
website. Let's talk a little

bit about our numbers. You and
I were talking on our way over

to the studio. They dropped
quite significantly. [Vicky] Yes, our

voter registration numbers have
just decreased by a little over

fifteen thousand. [Melissa] That's a lot.
[Vicky] That's a lot. Some of that has

to do with our Regularly
scheduled by annual maintenance

which we do every two years but
it also has to do with law

changes that were in statute
this year. So we have been

working by we I mean
supervisors have been working

with our legislature the last
couple of years to make

improvements on our laws that
govern how and when we contact

our voters and how we do list
maintenance. They have really

helped us a lot. They've given
us some additional tools that

we were able to roll out
beginning July 1st and what

we're seeing is voters being
moved from the active list to

the inactive list. For example,
we are required by law to mail

every voter who has not voted
in the last two general

elections. That means they
didn't vote in twenty-two and

they did not vote in twenty and
we have not heard from them in

twenty. We mail them a note
There's a attached postcard

return. They can check the
block that says my information

is correct. I'm confirm I live
here. Sign it. Mail it back.

They can say oh no I've moved.
Here's my new address. They can

also say cancel my
registration. I've moved out of

state. Sign it. We remove them
from our voter rolls. [Melissa] So this

is one heck of a database

update. [Vicky] It is. It's really what

it is. It is. [Melissa] I'm picturing
updating my Christmas card

list. It's pretty easy. This is
a totally this is not a Card

list. Right. This is major.

[Vicky] Yes. So early August we sent

that list of voters that had
not voted in the last two years

and we had not heard from them
was almost seventeen thousand.

So that was the notices we
mailed. Um they are required to

respond within 30 days. We had
about 1500 voters actually

respond to our notices. The
majority of them came back

returned undeliverable. Oh. Or
if they did not respond then

after 30 days they were moved
from the active over to the

inactive voter list. [Melissa] Okay. [Vicky] And
what inactive means is that

starts you on the path for
being removed from Florida's

voter rolls. You are still
active. You are still eligible

to vote through twenty-four and
twenty-six. And if we don't

hear from you by the end of
twenty-6 you'll be removed from

the voter rolls. But Melissa

Let's just say that you saw it,

you threw it down, you didn't
respond to us, we did hear from

you, and we move your name to
the inactive list. You're still

eligible to vote. You have to
contact our office. The first

thing you have to do is confirm
your Saint Johns County address

for us. [Melissa] Can I do this online?
[Vicky] You can do an app or on the

phone. Okay. And then once you
confirm your address for us,

you can then request a
vote-by-mail ballot if you

like. Update your address if
you need to or then you can go

and vote in person. [Melissa] Okay. So,
if I got the memo and I didn't

respond, I still am in there. I
just need to go reactivate

basically. [Vicky] Yes. [Melissa] Okay. Well,
believe it or not, we're close

to being out of time. I, like I
said, I love when you come on.

There's a lot of great

information. Um those are some

big numbers and I know you guys
track it on your homepage. [Vicky] Yes.

Only because you told me. I did
see the numbers but I didn't

realize that they are they are
live numbers that are updated

daily. So, if you're curious
about our numbers of voters,

how many are registered, what
the parties are. Go to vote

SJC.gov. That's at the top of
the page. Some of this

information about why the
registration numbers went down

is also available under the
voter education tab under

materials. Lots of great
information. And we'll see you

before the next election. [Vicky] Thank you so much. Yes for sure. And

our next election is March nineteenth. It's Florida's

presidential preference primary so I probably need to come see

you in late January or early February [Melissa] that's in March which

is going to be just around the corner [Vicky] March 19th [Melissa] that will be

here before we know it right after Saint Patrick's Day [Vicky] yes

[Melissa] alright we'll have you back before then great thanks for

coming Vicky don't forget if you want to check your voter

status and see any other information you can also check

out my voter status that's going to be where you're

going to find out information
on your voter status the Room

is now a podcast. If you missed
this broadcast or want to

listen to any from the
beginning, you can check us out

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. Until next time, you can

find us on Facebook, Twitter,
and Instagram at City Saint

Aug. [Narrator] You've been listening to
The Break Room, a weekly

program addressing projects and

programs offered by the City of

Saint Augustine. Join us each
week as the city's

communications director,
Melissa Whistle, has in-depth

conversations with the people
who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. See
you at this time next week for

another edition of The
Breakroom.