

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

in. This week, we're following up on the status of the

nightlife ordinance with planning and building director

Amy Skinner. Uh this was a conversation back in September.

Amy, welcome back. We're just going to jump right back in.

[Amy] Sure, I appreciate it. Thank you. [Melissa] We it seems like we've

been talking about this for a long time. It has been a hot

topic of conversation I think to the pleasure of our business

owners. The ordinance was defeated at the commission

meeting. Let's let's go back and talk about that. We'll

we'll start as we have in the past with the recap because I

don't know that everyone recalls exactly how we found

ourselves at this conversation.

[Amy] Right it it's it's not a new

conversation. I think we've
realized over the years as the

downtown has evolved. Even
starting before COVID in 2019

we started talking about
nightlife issues within the

city. Um going back to as we've
talked about you know becoming

kind of a little entertainment
district downtown. So before

COVID we started talking about
this. We drafted an ordinance

which was originally heard by the
commission in 2021. At that

point we then hired a
consulting firm Responsible

Hospitality Institute to sort
of help us figure out the

situation downtown. Look at the issues. Look at the conditions.

Give us some recommendations.

They finished their report in

the summer of 2022. [Melissa] So before I want to

stop for a quick second on the RHI because I know if people go

back and listen to the Commissioner Comments and

listened to the meeting and they've heard this RHI. Can we

pause and sort of take a little detour and talk a little bit

more about RHI? It was sub committees. It was people in

the community. So I don't want people to feel like we just

brought in a consultant and these people that weren't from

here took some kind of an evaluation. [Amy] That's right. There

was a really an extensive effort. They found you know we

had kind of stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders meeting. [Melissa] There's

like 6 subgroups. [Amy] Subgroups.

[Melissa] Yeah. [Amy] Um there's a series of

meetings, a series of of kind of issues that were

discussed. They were discussed at in broken out into groups.

[Melissa] Round table meetings. [Amy] Kind of round table then they came

together and provided feedback.

Um I I think. [Melissa] I sat on a couple

of them myself actually and really good conversation

bringing in and it was the ones that I set in were the

combination of a business

owners, community leaders,

people from the college, people

from the hospitality, people

from [Amy] Residents. [Melissa] There were

residents in all of them public

safety, city staff, city

administration, elected

officials, the whole you're

right. It was a very thorough

and intensive. [Amy] And they

definitely wanted kind of broad

base of people, a broad

perspective on on what was

going on downtown and realized

and you know from that came we

identified some of the issues

that need to be addressed like

some of the safety issues. The

lighting issues downtown. You

know it it is kind of dark.

That's another balance. Yeah.

Of you know we're trying to
maintain a historic ambiance.

[Melissa] Right. [Amy] But then at the same
time you knew people need to

feel safe. [Melissa] Right. [Amy] You can't
have dark patches. You know

things like that. [Melissa] Just just
those dim lights create a nice

ambiance but you sometimes
wonder are they dim because

they're broken or they're not
bright enough or is that what

they're supposed to be and
maybe you don't think about it.

Okay so thank you for
clarifying that RHI study that

was you started to say it was
completed in June twenty [Amy] Yes,

sorry. [Melissa] No, go ahead. [Amy] So, since
since it had been since 2021

that the commission had heard
the first round of ordinance,

the ordinance, we decided to
bring it back as first reading

in July, that's what happened
in July. The commission decided

not to move it forward on first
reading because there were some

questions about what we
actually wanted in the

ordinance. It had been revised
But whether it needed kind of

further refinement and further
revisions. So the city

commission wanted to have a
workshop. We had a workshop in

August and where the issues

were discussed. Uh the city

attorney then tweaked the

ordinance you know some more.

It was reintroduced in

September and then this last

week was the second reading for

an ordinance. That's kind of a

technicality. But we consider

it it's called the second

reading and a public hearing.

So this last week was the

public hearing on the draft

ordinance that that we've

kind of come to. [Melissa] So it's

interesting when you also talk

about a first ordinance a first

reading then another first

reading. So I guess my point to

there is in defense of the

commission. They have been
listening. [Amy] Yes. [Melissa] And we and we

as the city government have
been doing our due diligence

and making sure that what we
were putting forward was

something that we were
comfortable with. [Amy] Yes. [Melissa] Which

clearly it Passed first reading
but then as you know as our

democracy works you know we it
didn't pass first second

reading. Excuse me. It was
defeated. Um and we had a lot

of public comments. Uh I know
some folks got a little they

wanted to speak in the opening
session of general public

comment and then we had more
public comment during that

public hearing. Um anything in
particular what what how do you

how would you summarize all
that? [Amy] Well and we have had

hours of of public comment. You
know so certainly I think we've

wanted to from as many people
that are impacted in in

different ways. Um the you know
I guess I would say there's

always two sides to every
story. [Melissa] Mm hmm. [Amy] And we gotten to

a point where it was kind of an
a minimal fee, a 140

dollars about is what we were
talking about for this permit

to sell alcohol from midnight
to 2 AM. That's basically what

we were talking about. If you

want to sell alcohol from

midnight to 2 AM, you required

a permit and and we it was

basically a tool for the city

to verify that you were doing

your training, having security,

you know being responsible for

[Melissa] Adhering to all these [Amy] adhering

to all these you know some

probably many people said

industry standards [Melissa] Right [Amy] that

are you know a business should

be doing you know on their own

from hearing the comments [Melissa] Right

[Amy] and you know talking about

reiterating the noise ordinance

things like that from outside

music and so the two sides are

well if it's if it's not that

big of a deal then then why not

why are the businesses

objecting and if they're doing

it already why object why are

they objecting but then the

other side is well if it's not

that big of a deal and we can

police ourselves and we can

form an alliance and we can

work together to to do things

then we don't really need the

oversight by by the city so

that's kind of the crux of the

of what it came down to so

[Melissa] Great great point for us to

quick stop and make an

identification you are tuning

in to the break room I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications

Director for the city and I'm

here with Amy Skinner planning

and building director also For

the city and we're recapping

the nightlife ordinance that

was defeated and but moving

forward and like you you made

reference to and a lot of the

public comments from our

industry folks were that these

are these are requirements or

things as you will that are

already out there that we

should be doing and maybe some

do and maybe some don't but it

also sounded like there was a

willingness you mentioned the

word alliance that the mayor

talked about all the commission

brought up this alliance this

idea of putting together

industry folks leadership from

the city and helping to hold

each other accountable being

good neighbors and being

supportive of one another and

sort of taking a united front of

united front from within the

industry so what is that what

does that look like moving

forward because [Amy] certainly we

want people to be able to live

downtown and we certainly don't

want to squash our our main

industry of tourism. So we are

we are looking we had already

started a rideshare study. So

we are looking to wrap up that

study as as soon as possible.

And where we can establish
areas kind of on the north side

and on the south side of of the
downtown where people can go to

get a ride share. [Melissa] Um so we're
the city is hoping to not have

people stopped in the middle of
Avenida Menendez between No

Name and Meehans and Mary's and
all along the Bayfront there.

We're not going to be able to
do that anymore. We hope. [Amy] We

hope that it would be a safe
area, a well-lit area I assume.

[Melissa] Right. [Amy] Where if you are calling
for an Uber or whichever you

know company you use of some
sort of rideshare to come get

you and and take you home that
you can go and you can meet

there. So yes so it's there's
it's convenience. [Melissa] Right. [Amy] And

safety and [Melissa] And near a bathroom.
[Amy] And near a bathroom hopefully.

So the city is going to work on
that. Um the public restrooms

we recognize that that is an
issue. You know a lot of times

maybe even after nine or ten
o'clock you know that you have

public restrooms available that
can be used. Uh the city is

going to work on that. Keeping
those open later. Um you know,

the city's gotta work through
how to do that. We've talked

about hiring kind of a
nightlife manager type person

that's sort of make sure the
bathrooms get locked at 2:00 or

2:30 and. [Melissa] So, it's somebody
that's sort of down there on

call watching monitoring,
keeping an eye on things.

[Amy] Right. [Melissa] And that if I if I'm not
mistaken, that is included in

the new budget. [Amy] Yes, there is a
position in in the budget. So,

we are kind of discussing what
that's going to entail. Uh

lighting. We've done a lighting
study so we've already looked

at where the dark dark spots
are and we as we improve new

roads you know or kind of like
on Spanish Street where we're

working on Spanish Street right

now part of the project is to

install new lighting so that we
have priority areas where we

need some better lighting trash
the city already works very

hard with our solid waste and
you know washing down doing the

washing of the Saint George
Street but we know we need more

trash cans those [Melissa] Those big
belly dump the big belly trash

cans are great because they
help they are automated with

their volume you know they
smash [Amy] and they right compact

things down. [Melissa] Yeah. [Amy] We're
going to work with our solid

waste crews so that if they are
if they can identify some key

areas where you know it just
seems to be logical to put a

trash can where we're finding
trash a lot then we're we're

going to respond to that. Um I
think we are looking at as the

commission discussed which I
think is important to make sure

we have good communication. The
city's kind of looking at

establishing some sort of
nighttime alliance group that

where we can have the different
stakeholders get together, work

through issues, you know, and
and identify issues that maybe

there are problems that we
don't know about so that we can

address them. We definitely
want a livable, workable city

where everyone feels safe,
workers can make their money.

[Melissa] Yeah. [Amy] Businesses. [Melissa] Make a
living, yeah. [Amy] Make a living.

Yeah. And and but then, we also
want residents to be able to

live here and enjoy because we
need a well-rounded city.

[Melissa] Absolutely. One other thing
before we sign off, the noise

ordinance or the the sound
ordinance was something that

came up in conversation and I
know that that's that's not a

perfect ordinance right now.

So, I I think people can expect

to see that come back. [Amy] Yes, we
do. [Melissa] To be revised. [Amy] Yes, I think

that because it's actually an

code. It it will we're going to

have to address that kind of
separately. We're going to have

to make sure that we kind of
understand how to measure a

noise. [Melissa] It's a tricky. [Amy] It's a
tricky thing. It's not as easy

as as as some people think. [Melissa] You
can't just call when those cars

drive by with their thumping.

[Amy] Yeah. [Melissa] Noise and sound coming

out of the car and say, I just
heard somebody go chase 'em

down. [Amy] There are certain devices
that you need to be trained on

to use. Uh there's certain
conditions that they work best

under and you have to have, you
know, actual training on these

devices and because again, if
we're going to be out there

measuring noise, And it's
going to impact you know

somebody's business or
whatever. We want it to be

correct. We want it to be fair.

[Melissa] Accurate. [Amy] Accurate. Yes. [Melissa] Yeah

because I know if even if I'm
over in Davis Shores and it's

foggy. You know people don't
not to say people don't think

about but I don't think
everybody realizes even

something as minor as fog you
could hear something one night

and not another because fog
deflects the sound. [Amy] Right and

how sound travels [Melissa] yeah. [Amy] Yes [Melissa] so
it's not as it's Not as simple.

We're doing our best. [Amy] Right.

With everything I think there's

always lessons to learn and

there's always you know two

sides to everything and we and

the city tries to be as

responsive as possible. [Melissa] I think

the commission's done a great

job of of listening and I think

we're going to we're going to

get that that nighttime I don't

want to call it a nighttime

alliance group because the

acronym is nag or maybe that

would be appropriate. I don't

know. But we are already out of

time. So Thank you for stopping

by. [Amy] Thanks for having me.

[Melissa] Hopefully this can be a quick

listen for folks who want to go

back and listen to all of our
all of our points and hats off.

I'm going to give a hats off to
our commission for staying the

course and listening and and
doing what is hopefully

ultimately going to be best for
our residents and our business

owners. If you missed part of
this broadcast and want to go

back and listen from the
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Until next time. [Narrator] You've been

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Wissel has in-depth
conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet
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