

[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. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications

director for the City of Saint Augustine. This week, I'm

sharing the break room with the newest member what I like to

call the city's green machine.

That is the team of folks whose

job it is to minimize our

carbon footprint to keep us

thinking about the environment

and most importantly that we

are not just thinking and

talking about it but actually

doing something about it. Allow

me to introduce Liz Johnson.

She is the city's first

sustainability specialist, Liz.

Welcome to your first episode

of The Breakroom. [Liz] Thank you for

having me, Melissa. [Melissa] So, I'm

excited. You're you're right

down the hall from me so we run

into each other in the copy

room and And I think Todd and

Glabra said hey let's get Liz

in. So before we jump into what
you're doing as our

sustainability specialist I
want to get our listeners up to
speed on not just what you're
going to be doing but tell us
about what that really means to
be a sustainability specialist.

It kind of sounds very fancy to
me. [Liz] So [Melissa] It's new. [Liz] It is new. Um

sustainability is kind of like
the way that humans interact
with the environment. It's just
like the study of humans in the

environment. [Melissa] Okay. [Liz] Um which can
be all kinds of things. Um I

graduated from JU with a degree
in sustainability. [Melissa] Okay. [Liz] Um

it's a bachelors in science so
it's very sciencey related.

[Melissa] Okay. [Liz] I actually started as a
nursing student but then

realized I didn't really
want to do the patient care. I

just like the science side of it. [Melissa] Science.

Okay. That's a good thing. Um

that's good. [Liz] And knew that I
liked the environment. I grew

up by the water, sailing,
surfing at the beach and I knew

I wanted to preserve that and
keep that. [Melissa] There's a lot you

see there I'm sure that's
alarming. [Liz] Right. [Melissa] Litter. [Liz] Yes.

[Melissa] Pollution. [Liz] Yeah. [Melissa] Yeah. [Liz] Um and
so I figured out that my school

offered a degree in
sustainability and I loved it

and I loved the coursework and
the classes. [Melissa] Can you what so

you say you talk about science.

Is it biology Chemistry hands

on. You did your internship
with us. [Liz] Yeah. Um it's it's

some of that. [Melissa] Yeah. [Liz] And then a
lot of the classes have to do

with like globalization and
environmental ethics,

resiliency, natural hazards. Um

I also took some GIS classes

which are map making, geography.

[Melissa] Well I would imagine there's a

lot of studying and comparing
because I think this is a big

it's a global I mean I don't
want without getting into any

politics of it. It is a very it

can be a political issue but

it's a very engaging if you
will a topic that I think the

city's really doing what we can
to do it's more than just

recycling. You you and I talked
a little bit. I think a lot of

people think of things of like
sustainability and being green

and I know I joke about you
guys are the green machine but

it it's all about keeping our
environment green, our earth.

[Liz] Right. [Melissa] Healthy. [Liz] Right. [Melissa] I'll
never forget. I don't know if

you saw them but when we had
COVID. [Liz] Mm hmm. [Melissa] Um the pictures

that were taken around the
world and posted. [Liz] Oh yeah. [Melissa] That

when everything got shut down.

[Liz] Mm hmm. [Melissa] You could see. [Liz] Yeah.

[Melissa] You [Liz] it was amazing. [Melissa] Sort of scary. But
that's kind of that's sort of

the realm that you're in,
right? [Liz] Right and recycling is

super important and our
recyclables do go somewhere. I

went and toured the facility
that it goes to. [Melissa] Right. [Liz] Um but

now we're kind of discovering
that not only recycling is

going to do it. We have to kind
of rewind time and. [Melissa] Yeah. [Liz] Do

more. [Melissa] Do more and almost do
less. You and I. [Liz] Exactly. [Melissa] So

let's talk a little bit about
doing less. Um so we we

understand how you got here.
We're glad that you're with us. [Liz] Thank you

[Melissa] Glad that the internship turned into full-time employment. [Liz] I'm

glad to be here. [Melissa] Um I think that's really great too because

you got a glimpse of what is here and maybe what needs to be

done so you're now in a position to say yeah these are

some direction I want to take right and you can shape that

[Liz] yeah definitely [Melissa] one of the program so part of your job is

to oversee an another new program if you will the

environmental service group our city manager presented that I

believe in his presentation when he was vying for the and

one of the focuses that he

talked about was environmental

service group. So tell us about
the service group. What does

that look like? What does it
mean for us? [Liz] So we have the

first meeting on calendar but
it hasn't taken place yet.

[Melissa] Okay. [Liz] It's people that have
volunteered from each

department that are willing to
take like analytics from me

from their department or just
kind of be like hey we now have

a water bottle refill station.

Make sure you bring water

bottles. Kind of just like a
PSA. A kind of a voice for

their department on the
environmental side of things.

Um and I think it'll be really helpful. There are people that

have volunteered for the position. So, they're willing

to do it and they're wanting to do it and it's really exciting.

[Melissa] So, cutting back, another one I know we do. We have a water

bottle dispenser down in our work area on the second floor.

So, it's like you, I always think of those when I used to

go into the doctor's office.

You have this big jug of water

and you pour out your little cup of water with those little

triangle cups, right? [Liz] Yes.

[Melissa] Except we have lots of bottles

in there because we now go through a lot of water. [Liz] Mm hmm.

[Melissa] We also are working on paper. I
try to print my paper on two

sides [Liz] Yes. Um I don't think
we're ever going to stop

printing paper. [Melissa] Yeah. [Liz] Um but I
do think that we can reduce

whatever you're going to print
by half if you print double

sided. So that's it's just the
little things that you're used

to in life that you could
switch up a little bit more

just to. [Melissa] I think our clerk's
office is also working on

getting away from the big
binders. I bet you watching the

commissioners and those board
meetings and seeing these big

binders of papers just makes

your skin crawl. [Liz] Yes. I know and

they're single single sided. So

hopefully we can get them on

board with. A tablet would be

great. [Melissa] Right. [Liz] But if they have

to have the physical copy, I

understand and maybe we could do double sided. [Melissa] Let's not do too much too fast. [Liz] it's

little steps. [Melissa] Right. If you're

just now tuning in, you are

listening to the break room.

I'm Melissa Wissel,

communications director for the

city and I have Liz Johnson

with us this week. She is our

sustainability specialist. It's

a new position and lots we

actually put some things in

place before COVID. I'll come

back to that but before we get

too far away, coming up this
spring, April is Environmental

Awareness Month, we do a
Campaign during April during

that week of Earth Day. Tell me
about some of the other things

though that the community can
look for because I think the

other part of your position is
to get community engagement. So

it's not just about what the
city's doing but how can the

city get residents engaged?

[Liz] Right. Um so we're calling it

Earth Month. Um April is Earth
Month. There's Earth Day in

April. Um we have a recycle
event that's happening on April

26th. You can your used
cooking oil, electronics, and

we'll do paper shredding and we
recycle the paper shredding.

[Melissa] Okay. [Liz] Um we also are going to
have a Earth Month work

workshop. Uh we had the same
thing last year. It's kind of

just going to be a few people
present giving presentations on

composting and I know Saint
John's Water Management

District was there last time.
I'm not sure exactly who's

going to be there this time.

Once it gets closer to the

date, we'll be posting on City
Saint Aug.com/Sustainability

Events on the website. [Melissa] And
those are public events. [Liz] Public

events. [Melissa] Anybody can come to it. [Liz] Yeah. [Melissa] Workshops, information,

talks, question and answer
sessions. [Liz] Yep. [Melissa] You're going to

let us know when it gets closer
who's coming because we're not

sure yet. [Liz] Right. [Melissa] That's okay.
Um and we have Fish Island.

Fish Island is a was a huge win
for us in terms of preserving

land. We gonna do anything out there?
[Liz] Yeah we have a few tours on the

schedule. [Melissa] Okay. [Liz] They JB Miller who's operates [Melissa] yeah. he's our land

management. [Liz] Yeah he's going to
be giving the tours. He's an

awesome guy. [Melissa] He's really smart. [Liz] Super friendly. [Melissa] Yeah. [Liz] He knows
every plant that you walk by.

[Melissa] Yeah. [Liz] Get ready to be on a long
tour. [Melissa] He's awesome. He's great.
And then we have resiliency

projects with our chief resilience officer and her

staff. Are we going to be able to do anything with them? [Liz] Um we

kind of have that in the thought Is they'll be giving a

walking tour probably of the different projects we have

going on in terms of the resilience projects that. [Melissa] And

then oh go ahead. [Liz] That'll be posted on the same. [Melissa] Right. [Liz] Area

of the website. [Melissa] Okay so we've got we got [Liz] a lot of work to do.

[Melissa] You told me about this and the minute you start saying things

on the calendar. I go oh my gosh. Good thing we have our

web admin person. [Melissa] Yes. To help us. [Liz] Yes. [Melissa] Get dates on the

calendar. Um coordinate the word out to our public and one

last thing, we had a green business initiative. I don't

know that we ever, it might be the first time people are

hearing about it 'cuz it might be actually the first time I'm

talking about it out openly. We were going to try a green

business initiative. Can you talk about that just a little

bit? [Liz] Yeah. So. [Melissa] Something to look forward to. [Liz] It is

something to look forward to.

We are hoping to kind of get it

launched, get it going by April Earth Month. [Melissa] Okay. [Liz] It was

something was really close to

being done and then Covid

happened. [Melissa] Right. [Liz] And so You
could be on the lookout for

that too. [Melissa] Okay. It's and that's
that's going to involve the

businesses. What can the
businesses rest more probably

more specifically restaurants?

[Liz] Right. It'll be like a ranking

kind of like you could be we
don't have there's going to be

three tiers. [Melissa] Okay. And you
could be the base level tier.

You just have to check a few
boxes in terms of [Melissa] like what

you're doing. [Liz] Yeah what you're
doing. Um And then you'll get a

little sticker for your window.

A Flagler student designed.

[Melissa] Great. [Liz] The sticker. [Melissa] Cool. [Liz] And
[Melissa] So we'll look for that too.

[Liz] Yeah. [Melissa] Lots of great stuff. [Liz] Yes.

[Melissa] I think you got a whole palette

in front of you. [Liz] I do. [Melissa] Clean clean
canvas. [Liz] Yeah. [Melissa] Very exciting.

[Liz] Yes. [Melissa] Um and how are things
going so far? [Liz] So far things are

great. Yeah [Melissa] anything in particular? No I know are you also

working on the you mentioned
the composting. We're still

doing composting in the trees.

Is that anything that you're

doing? [Liz] Yeah we're still doing
compost bins. Still doing the I

think we're we just ordered the
trees. Or we're about to order the

trees. [Melissa] Okay. [Liz] Um and then
they'll be planted in the

people that have applied in
twenty twenty-three. They'll be

planted in their yards. Um and
then the compost bins. Yep.

We're planning on doing that
again. Uh not not for a few

months though. [Melissa] Okay. So if
you're still waiting for those

composting bins we are going to
bring back that program. Think

that if I have heard
grumblings that we're trying to

get more. [Liz] Yes. [Melissa] So we're standby
for that. Or just we'll let you

know when to sign up. Uh Glabra
was telling us about that when

they first launched it and we
joked that between the the

composting bins and the trees.

It was like Ticketmaster for a

rock concert. There was sold
out in minutes. [Liz] Yes. [Melissa] So. [Liz] Yes.

[Melissa] That's a good thing. [Liz] It is a good thing. [Melissa] It's a really good

thing. Well, Liz, thank you for
coming and telling us the cool

stuff you're doing as things
start to unfold and get more

traction with the projects that
you got. We'll have you back.

We'll definitely have you back
in April to tell us about all

the cool stuff that's
happening. [Liz] Awesome. [Melissa] Keep our community involved. [Liz] Thank you for having me.
[Melissa] Absolutely.

We're always happy to have new
folks here to tell us what

they're doing. [Liz] Thank you. [Melissa] If
you're just now tuning in or

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this broadcast and more, you can

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for tuning in until next time.

[Narrator] You've been listening to The

Breakroom, a weekly program

addressing projects and

programs off 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. See

you at this time next week for

another edition of The

Breakroom.