

Audio file

Christina Parrish Stone, Public Art Committee, May 7, 2024.wav

Transcript

Narrator

You've tuned into another edition of the break room, 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 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 Wissel

Thanks for tuning into the break room. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the City of Saint. The city has been working on a public art project in search of an artist, a sculptor, actually, to create a piece of work that will be placed in the traffic circle at the intersection of Main Street and San Marco, or as we locals like to call it the peanut. The Public Art Committee had several meetings. They've narrowed down the field to three artists, and I've invited Christina Peristome, the executive director. On the St. John's County Cultural Council to join. The in studio. To tell us about it. Christina, welcome. This is your first visit to the break room.

Christina Parrish Stone

Yes, thank you so much for having me.

Melissa Wissel

It's a great we were just as we were getting sorry we said this is going to be a fun interview because it's a really exciting. Project and I'm going to just let you take it away and and tell us about it starting.

Christina Parrish Stone

With the committee, it is an incredible project. It is the first significant public art project in the city of Saint Augustine, and I think the city making the decision to create a public art committee and make this a project with lots of community engagement. Is very special. We were so fortunate to have a city commissioner or vice mayor, Roxanne Horvath, who is herself a professional artist. Yes, and has done some large scale sculpture work, public art projects, so wonderful person to lead the committee. I can't say enough about how important it was to have her leadership. I know she wanted to be here today, but had another commitment. She worked with the city to put together a very impressive committee. I have pretty good public art experience. I used to chair the Public Art Committee for the City of Jacksonville, but the other people on the committee. Had incredible experience as well, Julie Dickover, who runs the crisp Ellert Art Museum at Flagler, served Diane Matarazzo, who is a longtime consultant in arts and Culture, worked for the National Endowment of

the Arts from. Years and then Randall Rourke, who also has lots of public art experience. And it's a good thing we had such a good committee because we had almost 100 artists submit applications.

Melissa Wissel

That that was insane. When I heard that 96, I think. Who who submits how many? How many other RFP's RFQ's can say they got 96 I. Don't know. That's a lot.

Christina Parrish Stone

That's probably more than I've ever seen. It's a really interesting project. I think people from all over the country were excited about doing something in a city. With a history as rich as St. Augustines. The project has a fairly good budget, although in terms of really big public art projects, some of those go in the millions of dollars. But I think the the budget for this project is excellent. It will result in a great piece of art and it was very impressive to see the qualifications of the artist that submitted. I was out of town when my notebook. With all of the applicants was delivered to my office. And one of the women I work with in a picture with a ruler next to it to show me it was like 12 inches worth it. I've seen the binder. I

Melissa Wissel

let's not talk about the environmental impacts of those binders.

Christina Parrish Stone

We recycled all of the paper we we all left our binders behind. And recycled but. It was a difficult process. Fortunately, the city created some really good guidelines for us to follow, and the first criteria that we had to consider and we we were able to rule out some of the applicants. Was they were required to have significant experience already creating a project, not necessarily with this higher budget as ours, but a substantial budget experience with community engagement experience working on a project that might involve government input and. Traffic issues and that that type of thing. And so we were able to sort of narrow it down. We ended up each committee member came to the selection meeting, having scored every single application.

Melissa Wissel

Restriction, yeah.

Christina Parrish Stone

And selecting their top ten finalists, we all the votes were tallied and it was interesting how much consistency there was. We had some agreement and after several hours of discussion, we were able to select three incredible finalists and two.

Melissa Wissel

That's good.

Christina Parrish Stone

Alternates who are just as amazing as the finalist, so that.

Melissa Wissel

In the event tell us. OK. OK.

Christina Parrish Stone

Can you? I can. I can. So the finalists that were selected included Vicki Suri, who has 35 years of experience with public art all over the country. She has, in particular, experience working with large sites like the one that we're working with. And that was impressive. Ivan Depena Who grew up in Miami, he has Hispanic heritage, which is a nice fit for Saint Augustine. Sean has a Masters in architecture from the Harvard School of Design. He's lived all over the country. Boston, San Francisco, Miami, New York City, Charlotte, NC now has done very significant projects and has won big awards at the Arts, Public Art Network, year in review for one of his projects. And lots of experience with community engagement, Patrick Morold, another one with great academic credentials, Rhode Island School of Design, 2 decades of public art experience and commissions at place. Just like the Denver and Fort Lauderdale international airports, so and they've worked with budgets of, you know, as much as a.

Melissa Wissel

Ohh wow, that's.

Christina Parrish Stone

\$1,000,000 but.

Melissa Wissel

Sure.

Christina Parrish Stone

Also have done lots of projects in the hundred to two \$50,000 range and have done projects with a budget like ours that I thought were amazing and would be a good fit here. The alternates are Matt Niebuhr and Matthew Mazzota and I will say that you know some of the committee members had those two ranked in their top three. So whoever we end up with and the reason for picking alternates.

Melissa Wissel

Right, yeah.

Christina Parrish Stone

At the time, everyone applied for this several months ago, their schedules were open. But since that time it's possible and I've had this been experience in the past working on these projects and artists who would love to do the project has just accepted another Commission and has to say, you know, I'm sorry I can't participate. So we hope that. All three of our finalists are able to come to a meeting that we're going to talk about next, but if one of the three finalists doesn't make it, I would be thrilled to have either of the alternates participate.

Melissa Wissel

So if you are just now tuning in, you are listening to the break room and I have Christina Perry stone with us this week. She is the executive director of the Cultural Council and we're talking about the public art project. Just did a little bit of a summary of the committee, the finalists, a shout out to Vice Mayor Roxanne Horvath for chairing our committee. And what's next, which is so so. Paul to the next piece for public input.

Christina Parrish Stone

Yes, we did not ask any of the artists to submit a design for the project. We looked at their credentials and they talked a little bit about ideas they had based on what they had learned about the city. And I have to give the city another shout out the package they put together. For our artists, was one of the best I have ever seen. They learned all about Saint Augustine all about the. Right. But the goal was to have the community influence the design for the final proposals. So the artist will all be visiting Saint Augustine. I think they're arriving on Monday, may the 13th. They'll have site visits, visit other locations in the city. For our listeners, mark down Tuesday, May 14th, 4:00. At the waterworks, which is on San Marco Ave. immediately across the street from the. Peanut and we'll have a community meeting open to the public. We'll describe the project. Each of the artists will be there to make a presentation about their experience and the work you'll see. Examples of the work they've already done, and then you, the public, will have a chance to provide your input on what elements of Saint Augustine's history, culture, people from the past. From the present, you know what are the things that the artist should be inspired by when they're creating this work of? Art and after the formal meeting, we'll have a reception where you can talk one-on-one with the artist. Great opportunity for any of our local artists who want to meet some people who are really at the top of their game to come out and maybe you can chat them up and see if they might let you work with them if. They get the project and that I would.

Melissa Wissel

Just recap. That's on Tuesday. May 14th. Yes. And that's that's a very informal. Much more sociable type interaction at the. Water Works OK.

Christina Parrish Stone

Yes it is. It will be an opportunity for people to have a back and forth conversation with the artist moderated by me. So you know, I'll try to keep it under control, but that I've attended a lot of these community engagement meetings. They are always fascinating and.

Melissa Wissel

It there.

Christina Parrish Stone

It's amazing to see the ideas that these creative folks that do this for a living come up with. And and they will be influenced by what the community says and the communities input will be reflected in the final sculpture. It's a really interesting process to follow and then see what the end result becomes.

Melissa Wissel

I think that's important. I want to make sure that we're emphasizing that because the artists, three of them with two alternates. Have been selected, but there's not been any piece of art selected and they haven't given any type of a design or anything to say this is what I'm recommending want to be very clear so that the public understands there's lots of time.

Christina Parrish Stone

Absolutely.

Melissa Wissel

Opportunity and not lots, but there is still time and opportunity to come and weigh in and have have your input.

Christina Parrish Stone

Hurt, yes, absolutely no design selected. In fact, one thing the committee was very careful about was looking at artists who had worked on a roof variety of projects in terms of. The media, they worked in the subject matter. I mean, there were some wonderful artists who really specialized in one type of sculpture and we didn't feel like that's what we should approve or or or bring forward because we want the community to drive this process.

Melissa Wissel

And you want the artist to be receptive, not kind of stuck in their own right.

Christina Parrish Stone

Yes, 100% and that was another of the important categories that we scored was how the artist had used community engagement to inform their work in the past. So we've got that great informal opportunity on Tuesday at the waterworks, May 14th at 4:00. Then after that we have the next step in the process, which is more formal. Also a chance for public comment. We have a. Official public meeting at City Hall on Wednesday, May 15th at 9:00 AM, and I think there's a chance for public comment there, but it won't be a chance for the public to ask the artist question, so come on Tuesday if you want to ask.

Melissa Wissel

Right.

Christina Parrish Stone

And the artists again, they're not going to be making a presentation at that meeting. They're going to meet individually one after the other with the committee and just have a back and forth conversation, share some of their inspiration, talk to the committee about what they learned at the community meeting and after that. They all go home, put together their final proposal based on the Community input and they will submit that by June 28th they will return to Saint Augustine in July to present their proposals to the committee again at a public meeting. Again, I think there will be public comment opportunity. And following that meeting, the committee has some time to

deliberate over the proposals the committee will select a they'll rank the proposals and the rankings will be submitted to the entire city Commission. So the committee doesn't make the final choice. I think the city Commission. Because they felt it was really important to have a committee made-up of people with experience, with public art, and I'm sure they're going to weigh the ratings, right, heavily. But the city Commission will determine the final ranking, and that should happen in August. So hopefully we'll have an artist selected and ready to start work. Before the end of.

Melissa Wissel

August, But there's certainly been, I mean, even just listening to your you describing all the upcoming meetings and presentations, there's there really is a lot of thought going into who's being selected and the committee is doing this, like you said, this isn't a Commission decision yet. The committee is really going to put forth that ranking and listening, and I love the idea of. That you get to come and listen to the presentations and then they take away that public input and come back like, what did I if I'm the artist, what did I hear the community say they want? And here's what my rendering is. That I would recommend we do. And then that's what the committee.

Christina Parrish Stone

Is going to look at yes and and I mentioned this before, but I want to emphasize this for your listeners. I've been involved in a lot of public art projects that involved community engagement and the city of Saint Augustine has done an outstanding job from start to finish. The composition of the committee, the solicitation, the call to artists, the information that was provided, obviously when they got 100 applications, they got people excited.

Melissa Wissel

Yeah, I'd say they got the word out.

Christina Parrish Stone

And and really, really good applications. And the fact that we now are able to get all those artists here, which of course the city is bringing them to Saint Augustine to meet our community in person, I know the city is going to work hard to make sure. Everyone in town is aware of this meeting. The Cultural Council is going to blast out a notice in our newsletter on Friday and I hope we have a capacity crowd at the waterworks. We'll have plenty of seats and room for everybody to come participate.

Melissa Wissel

Well, I think the Water Works is a great setting for it. We are out of time. Thank you for coming and telling us all this again. That's May 14th. A 15th of the information is on the city website citysano.com. There's a homepage story. Look for it on social media. It'll be on event calendar. We're going to pair up with the Cultural Council for being Co hosts of those events. So. You heard it here.

Christina Parrish Stone

Thanks, Melissa. And and I look forward to coming back and talking about more exciting arts culture and heritage and the city.

Melissa Wissel

On the break room. Thanks for coming. Yeah. Lots of fun. Lots of fun. You can now find us on your favorite podcasting app. You can hear this episode if you missed any of it, go check it out at citysantaradio.com. We want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city. Follow us on social media. You'll find us on Facebook X and Instagram, and the city can be found at City St. Aug also on our website at citysaintaug.com until next time.

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 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 break room.