

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 Augustine, Saint Augustine Police Department has been very busy lately. Not just out on patrol and keeping our city safe, but they recently passed their accreditation evaluation, completed a Community outreach survey. And they are currently working on the noise study for making recommendations to update the noise ordinance in studio this week. Anthony Cuthbert, our assistant chief of police, is here to give us the latest welcome back.

Anthony Cuthbert

Good morning. Thank you for having me

Melissa Wissel

we. You guys, I mean, you're always busy, you guys never. Sleep.

Anthony Cuthbert

No, we have good job security.

Melissa Wissel

Good job security. But you do have some of those internal things that have to be done to keep things running well for the city outside of patrol. The accreditation was a huge.

Anthony Cuthbert

Absolutely. It was.

Melissa Wissel

Since the second cycle.

Anthony Cuthbert

It is the second. It's a reaccreditation from the first time, so it's it's been a two year progress since we were first initially accredited and that culminated into an assessment which was this mid-april and we got through that pretty well and we were being recommended for reaccreditation.

Melissa Wissel

Hmm.

Anthony Cuthbert

We do travel to Orlando in June before the Council, the CFA Accreditation Council, and we'll get the official nod at that.

Melissa Wissel

Point. Give me a little bit. We talked about it the first time when you guys did it. It's everything from how you do things, what you do tell us a little bit about what?

Anthony Cuthbert

Yep.

Melissa Wissel

What is it? What do you have to do to get it credited? It's quite a process.

Anthony Cuthbert

Yeah. So there's, I can't remember the exact number of standards, but there's probably over 100 and we have to abide by all the standards. Of course, some of them do not apply to us because we don't have a dispatch center. Anymore. But the standards will cover policy. They'll cover equipment, they'll cover inventory and property evidence, and it's pretty in depth. And we have to prove that we're meeting the standards by showing proofs. Those standards so. As something that we have to keep up almost on a daily basis, so as long.

Melissa Wissel

And your process how you do things, yes.

Anthony Cuthbert

As we're doing it. It is in the process that we do things and so they come up and they do the policy reviews. They look at that, look at our proofs, make sure we're doing it correctly, they go out and they actually speak to officers and ask them about policy and how they do things. And then there's also observations where they go out.

Melissa Wissel

It's going to say. Do they go out and watch? Go on ride alongs and they do?

Anthony Cuthbert

Yep. They sure did.

Melissa Wissel

Keeps us, keeps us honest, keeps us doing things by the book, literally.

Anthony Cuthbert

They do. They keep this to a good standard and that's what we need because it helps us with community engagement, trust and performance.

Melissa Wissel

Which perfect parlay into our next topic, which is the Community survey. Have you guys done anything like that like that in depth of a survey in recent time?

Anthony Cuthbert

I think the last time we did one was in 2016 when Barry Fox became chief and I thought it was time that we went ahead and revisited that because it's been probably nine years or something like that.

Speaker

Right.

Melissa Wissel

Yeah. Yes.

Anthony Cuthbert

So.

Melissa Wissel

It was a pretty in-depth survey. I thought we worked on it. You worked on that with Kim McCrea, our web admin coordinator. She helped with that. So shut out to her, you guys, it was a. But you came to the table with that. It was a lot. Tell us about the survey. It's closed now. Now you're kind of summarizing the data and looking over what everybody.

Anthony Cuthbert

You guys did a great job helping me with that.

Melissa Wissel

Said and thought, what are your takeaways initially?

Anthony Cuthbert

Well, initially I I it's technically by the time it says it will be closed, we still have one more down, but I just looked at some of the we have 602 responses which is a great response.

Melissa Wissel

Yeah.

Anthony Cuthbert

Great. 73% of that was residents great at 26 were identified as non resident, which they could be visitors or just Saint Johns County residents and majority were 55 and older, which I thought was very interesting. But part of the survey was listing some of their top concerns.

Speaker

Yes.

Anthony Cuthbert

And not surprisingly, the homeless was. One of them traffic. And then another one is disorderly conduct, yes.

Melissa Wissel

Really, when we see these things and that.

Anthony Cuthbert

We have. We've had some recent events that's right now and and new and everybody's mind. So maybe that's why it was one of the chosen ones. But the homeless, not surprising to us, but that kind of segues into, you know our outreach program and the stuff that the city is doing, the Police Department is doing and our drop in center.

Melissa Wissel

Right.

Anthony Cuthbert

Which is underway and we have this great program of family reunification program that we've had for almost 3 decades. UM and we reunify homeless people at a rate sometimes three to five a week, which people don't know that that we're doing that. And that's quite a a good enough. Absolutely. You get him off the street.

Melissa Wissel

Connecting them back with families, right? Anything surprising on the survey at all, and I'll put you on the spot a little bit because I know we haven't had. You haven't had a whole lot of time to really look in and dig into. Did anything surprise you at first glance?

Anthony Cuthbert

No, not. Really.

Melissa Wissel

All right. Well, I I I'm assuming I'm going to go out on a limb here. I'm assuming you're going. To do some. Type of a report or an update probably. I'm sure somebody's going to want to hear. What? What did? All that mean, so that's great.

Anthony Cuthbert

Once this finally closes and we'll go ahead and go through the the data and take some points away from it, we'll probably do a Commission review with them and we'll know what the results were and then we'll definitely be sitting down and seeing how we can improve things at the Police Department based on. The.

Melissa Wissel

Data real quick just popped into my head. Are you guys? At full employment, I know sometimes you're.

Anthony Cuthbert

Yeah, actually we are. We do have an officer sponsored in the Academy right now, but once that person comes on board, we'll be fully staffed, which is a first in quite a long time. And we did just rewrite our recruitment program. Great. And it's been. It's been successful.

Melissa Wissel

What? What is? What did that entail? Can you like when you, when you say you rewrote what was what was? Can you, can you say?

Anthony Cuthbert

Well, I want to put together some things that I found out from local agencies in Northeast Florida what their best practices were. So and that was utilizing the websites outreach going to the academies sponsoring in the Academy.

Melissa Wissel

OK.

Anthony Cuthbert

Is what we find. There's a lot of these agencies in Northeast Florida are grabbing these candidates before they even go to the police Academy interviewing them. Picking the best satellite group and then sponsoring them or paying for the Academy and sometimes paying a wage while they're in the Academy, which is what we do. OK, so we capture them before.

Melissa Wissel

They even get out there a little bit of an incentive and then and then a guarantee of what you're going to get.

Anthony Cuthbert

Correct. Yeah. Guaranteed employment when they.

Melissa Wissel

Right. Get out. Great. Well, that sounds like, I mean, I'm I'm really happy to hear that you guys are are at capacity and you're and you're operating on on full staff. That's great.

Anthony Cuthbert

We are too, because it certainly opens the doors to a lot of different things that we can accomplish.

Melissa Wissel

If you're just now tuning in, you're listening to the break room joining us this week, Anthony Cuthbert is our assistant chief of police. Talking, of course, about great job on the accreditation. Our recent survey, and then the other sticky topic that everyone's well we hear about is the noise ordinance and what can we do about the noise downtown and you've. The department has been tasked by the Commission to see what we can do about that and. Really addressing regulation, which is the ordinance, how can you enforce and you guys are in a tough spot the way it's currently written to to be able to do anything.

Anthony Cuthbert

It is, and it's been a long time in coming that we actually go back and review this ordinance and see what's best. But ultimately the. Goal is to write an effective code, an effective code that can achieve the balance and protecting the residents while allowing for economic activity downtown. And that's really what we're aiming for. I know there's a. A lot of nervousness about what what will result of this. But we also want to make it easily enforceable for the Police Department, because right now there's there's some difficulty in enforcing. But we did hire the best consultant, in my opinion, nationally. Internationally, I speak with him on a weekly basis. And right now what we're doing is we're in the process. We're in our third week of collecting data downtown. And that's basically an officer going downtown, taking readings and noise. Not necessarily by complaint, but just picking out different areas throughout the city and downtown to take ambient noise levels. And then if we have, if he identifies a source like a a loud noise or a band or something like that, taking note, those noise meter readings. So if you see an officer downtown with a noise meter reading, that's what they're doing. As of right now. I would say we're almost complete. This will be the last weekend that we do it.

Melissa Wissel

And that's to get the baseline.

Anthony Cuthbert

Correct. That's to provide the consulting with the the data he needs. So we can look at what our permissible noise levels are right now and then the see what actually is happening in the downtown area as far as.

Melissa Wissel

Noise goes and one of the challenges I I think I maybe people may already know this, but maybe they don't. Is that when you when you. Call and complain. You can't go to that spot. I think that's one of the biggest nest conceptions, or how it how it currently works and why it kind of doesn't work.

Anthony Cuthbert

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So the the noise arts is written so that we would take the noise meter reading from a complainants location or the receiving properties location a lot of times we don't have that data because callers are sometimes calling in anonymously. So we're looking at being able to make that noise meter reading outside the source of the of the. Are of course we need to understand how that impacts the current noise level readings or the noise level that's permissible.

Melissa Wissel

Right.

Anthony Cuthbert

Because if you have a real high permissible level. Or a low level permissible level and you're taking it at the source. It might be a problem, so we need to adjust that, and that's what the consultants.

Melissa Wissel

Going to do, is there anything in particular that you're? I mean, is there a goal in the sense of this is something that you think would work? I don't, I don't want to put you on the spot of. You know what? What you may think will work may not be the recommendation, but what is the end result that we're hoping to get out of this? Is there a? Is there a model that we're looking to try to get to or is it just really dependent on us?

Anthony Cuthbert

It's not really dependent on on the city and what's legally enforceable, but again, it's it's all about protecting the residents while allowing for economic activity downtown. So if we can find a nice.

Melissa Wissel

OK.

Anthony Cuthbert

Level right there that does both and then allows us to easily enforce it. That's the route we want to go and that's that's the way the consultant is talking to. So we're in total full agreement.

Melissa Wissel

And that's anything from live music, amplified music, windows open windows closed. You can't do anything. I I'm I'm a boater. And so I'm aware of things like fog and noise traveling over water and I don't know that people.

Anthony Cuthbert

Yes.

Melissa Wissel

The average person necessarily that maybe people do know that, but those are factors. If I'm over in Davis shores. And I hear all that noise come across and it's foggy. It's going to sound different than on a clear night when I don't hear it, whether it's amplified.

Anthony Cuthbert

Yeah, there's all kinds of. Or not. Yeah, there's all kinds of environmental factories. There's even winds, effector, ambient noise, sometimes ambient noise. It is so high that. The source noises. They cancel each other out so and we've seen that before in the past and it's downtown. We have a lively, you know, it's a night.

Melissa Wissel

Right.

Anthony Cuthbert

Life people talking in the background, cars driving by it's it's just a it's just generally A noisy environment, but there is calculations we can do on the scene that subtract that ambient noise from the source, but sometimes they do cancel each other out.

Melissa Wissel

It's not just the bands in the in the music, it's just noise, yeah. Well, we will look forward to the results of. Recommendations for the new noise ordinance updates. We'll look forward to the survey results.

Anthony Cuthbert

All that's coming soon.

Melissa Wissel

All right. Well, thank you for the update. You guys had a lot going on and and continuing to do a great job.

Anthony Cuthbert

Thank you. We appreciate it.

Melissa Wissel

So if you missed part of this broadcast and you want to hear it again, you can go back to citystaugradio.com. You can also listen on Spotify, Apple Podcast, and other podcasting platforms. That listing is also available at citystaugradio.com. We want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city, and that you hear it hear from the people. Doing the work to make it happen every. Today you can follow the Police Department on Facebook X and Instagram. The Police Department is at Saint Aug PD and the city of course is at citysaintaug.com. This visit us on the web at City sanog.com and sanogpd.com until next time. Thanks for tuning in.

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 Whissell, 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.