

Audio file

Vicky Oakes, St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections, July 16, 2024.wav

Transcript

00:00:00 **Narrator**

You 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.

00:00:20 **Narrator**

Melissa Wissel

00:00:20 **Vicky Oakes**

00:00:21 **Melissa Wissel**

Welcome to the break room and thanks for tuning in. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the City of Saint Augustine with federal, state and local elections happening this year, we've invited St. John's County Supervisor of Elections, Vicky Oakes, back to the break room. She's got some important and very timely reminders about the upcoming voting session. Vicky, welcome back.

00:00:40 **Vicky Oakes**

Thank you, Melissa. Thanks for having me as always.

00:00:44 **Melissa Wissel**

I'm glad you called to remind me or tech emailed me and we got you in just under the deadline. But remind our listeners what's so important about registering now for in this particular phase of the voting cycle, shall we say, in the schedule of voting?

00:00:59 **Vicky Oakes**

OK, so the August 20th primary election is coming up.

00:01:03 **Vicky Oakes**

The deadline to register to vote or change your party affiliation for the August election is Monday, July 22nd. OK, so.

00:01:14 **Melissa Wissel**

You got some time left. And where do I do that online?

00:01:18 Vicky Oakes

OK. Yes, we actually do have online voter registration available on our website, votesjc.gov. If you have a Florida drivers license, you may utilize the system. Otherwise you can always register to vote at your local Public Library, come to the elections Office.

00:01:35 Vicky Oakes

Paulis will be able to direct you.

00:01:37 Melissa Wissel

OK. And again, I'm going to, I'm going to hammer that website.

00:01:40 Melissa Wissel

VoteSJ.

00:01:43 Melissa Wissel

Gov correct vote sjc.gov we want folks to be using the website. It is a super duper website. It's it you did an overhaul. What a year ago. A little less. Yeah, about.

00:01:54 Vicky Oakes

18 months ago.

00:01:55 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, and something else you've got on that new website. I'm going to give it a quick peek. Is is the texting options texting and actually getting text messages from the county. But we're going to come back to that. OK, on the on the second-half of the show. But let's also talk about.

00:02:13 Vicky Oakes

You all send out sample ballots and a citizen guide. Tell me about those. OK, sample ballots are already available to voters on our website. You can go there, click on my voter status, put your information, pull up and look at your own sample ballot. They will come in the mail to each voter.

00:02:34 Vicky Oakes

Order July 26 OK.

00:02:39 Vicky Oakes

And then yeah, so look for those and then our citizens guide, we're doing a.

00:02:43 Vicky Oakes

Brand new one, OK.

00:02:44 Vicky Oakes

We want to get our voters ready for the August 20th primary and then of course the November 5th general election. So these are going in the mail, so voters should check their mailbox for the new citizens guide.

00:02:50 Melissa Wissel

But the big.

00:02:58 Vicky Oakes

For the primary and general election and that.

00:03:01 Melissa Wissel

Looks like a little newspaper insert. It's really. It's really cool.

00:03:05 Vicky Oakes

It does, and 137,000 of.

00:03:08 Vicky Oakes

These have gone in the mail OK and will be reaching voters or sent to every residential mailbox in Saint Johns County.

00:03:18 Vicky Oakes

And tell me about the mail in ballots. Can I get a mail in ballot? You absolutely. Can you have to request one, though, Melissa? You know, I know you like to vote by mail, but I'm not a mind reader. So for voters that have already requested them, they are scheduled to be mad.

00:03:27 Melissa Wissel

OK, OK.

00:03:37 Vicky Oakes

Child July.

00:03:39 Vicky Oakes

OK. But if you haven't requested one, you still have time. You can either call the office at our regular number 823-2238 or simply go online and use the website tools we have available there for.

00:03:43 Melissa Wissel

OK.

00:03:55 Melissa Wissel

Getting your mail by mail in ballot mailed to.

00:03:58 Vicky Oakes

You. Yes. And there is a deadline for requesting a vote by mail ballot for the primary and that is.

00:04:04 **Vicky Oakes**

August the 8th.

00:04:06 **Melissa Wissel**

OK, so if I want to mail in my ballot for the general.

00:04:11 **Melissa Wissel**

You said yes, OK.

00:04:12 **Vicky Oakes**

You can still request it. It's about 10 days before the general election. The deadline for requesting your ballot, but do it now. Do it now. Go ahead and get the request in. So your ballot will go out in the first drop.

00:04:15 **Melissa Wissel**

That's OK. OK.

00:04:25 **Melissa Wissel**

OK. And one of the other important things that we always want to do and particularly because we've got so many new folks.

00:04:32 **Melissa Wissel**

Living in the area vote sjc.gov.

00:04:36 **Melissa Wissel**

Once you're registered, or if you've been registered, go update your information or make sure your information is.

00:04:41 **Vicky Oakes**

Accurate yes, and heads up and reminder about Florida's closed primary laws because yes.

00:04:48 **Melissa Wissel**

OK, give us that.

00:04:52 **Vicky Oakes**

Our laws say that in a primary election, you vote the ballot of the party in which you're registered, so registered Republicans will receive a Republican ballot, registered Democrats, a Democrat ballot, registered voters with no party affiliation or minor political parties receive a non partisan ballot.

00:05:12 **Vicky Oakes**

Now this year we have a little exception. It's called a universal primary contest. It's a Republican race that is actually going to appear on all of the ballots in the primary because there's only two

candidates. They're both Republicans. It will be settled in the primary and will not move ahead to the general.

00:05:29 **Vicky Oakes**

So that opens.

00:05:30 **Vicky Oakes**

It up to every registered voter to be.

00:05:33 **Vicky Oakes**

Eligible to vote on so. If you're a registered Democrat or a nonpartisan voter, don't think I've lost my mind there.

00:05:41 **Melissa Wissel**

And what is it? What is?

00:05:42 **Vicky Oakes**

The seat it is, clerk of the Circuit Court.

00:05:46 **Vicky Oakes**

It is a Republican race that will appear on all ballots in St. John's County for the primary election.

00:05:53 **Melissa Wissel**

Interesting. So some of our city residents may be saying I don't need to vote because I don't. We don't have a we don't have anybody in the primary, but we vote we as city residents still vote at the county level.

00:06:05 **Vicky Oakes**

Absolutely do. And Melissa.

00:06:07 **Melissa Wissel**

So don't. Yeah. Don't think that just because we as the city don't have.

00:06:11 **Melissa Wissel**

That happening on this particular ballot, this primary and the and your, the the Mailer that we are getting shows every seat that is.

00:06:22 **Vicky Oakes**

Up, yes, those.

00:06:23 **Melissa Wissel**

Senate election. Yeah, yeah.

00:06:24 **Vicky Oakes**

Federal races on the ballot. They're federal. All of our state representatives from Tallahassee, our state senator and.

00:06:31 **Vicky Oakes**

Our legislators.

00:06:33 **Vicky Oakes**

They're all term limited out, so we have all new.

00:06:33 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah, they're all going.

00:06:36 **Vicky Oakes**

Yeah, we'll be elected this election. The huge year. Yes, some county races that are going to be on the ballot, the sheriff, all three county Commission.

00:06:45 **Vicky Oakes**

Seats with two.

00:06:45 **Vicky Oakes**

School board members and I knew some of the residents in the city do live and county Commission and.

00:06:51 **Vicky Oakes**

School Board District 5.

00:06:52 **Vicky Oakes**

Five, so a school board member will appear on their ballot regardless of their party affiliation, because the school board races are nonpartisan.

00:07:02 **Melissa Wissel**

OK.

00:07:03 **Vicky Oakes**

But they're also district specific, so you have to live in the district. For example, I live in the District 2, the District 2 school board race will be on my ballot, but not yours. If you don't live in District 2.

00:07:11 **Melissa Wissel**

OK.

00:07:13 **Melissa Wissel**

Not mine.

00:07:14 **Melissa Wissel**

OK.

00:07:15 **Melissa Wissel**

So pay attention to your mailboxes. You're going to see sample ballots. You're going to see the Citizen guide, and if you're just now tuning in, you're listening to the break room. I'm Melissa. Whistle, communications director for the city. And I have Vicki Oaks with me in studio. She is our St. John's County Supervisor of elections. She is the elections.

00:07:35 **Melissa Wissel**

New.

00:07:36 **Melissa Wissel**

And I want to talk a little bit before we wrap up. You've got some really cool new things coming for all of us.

00:07:44 **Melissa Wissel**

Mobile users texting and alerts on our phones. Is it an app everybody? My experience with the parking fiasco in Saint Augustine is is there an app? It's not an app, it's just a texting option. Is that correct? OK.

00:07:48 **Vicky Oaks**

Yes.

00:07:58 **Vicky Oaks**

Right.

00:07:59 **Vicky Oaks**

Which?

00:08:00 **Vicky Oaks**

And when you?

00:08:01 **Vicky Oaks**

Go on our website votesjc.gov in the lower right hand corner, you'll see a little widget that pops up and it says text.

00:08:06 **Melissa Wissel**

Yep, I saw it.

00:08:08 **Vicky Oaks**

Gov yeah. Click on it and then you can choose to put your phone number in to receive alerts from our office on pertinent.

00:08:20 Vicky Oakes

Voting information through the season and then separately, there's a telephone number you can text with questions that you'll get a response from my office. So this is brand new. We are very excited about that and we're just rolling that.

00:08:34 Vicky Oakes

Out now, now.

00:08:36 Melissa Wissel

It's very exciting. So I will tell you I went on and I checked it out and it is cute. It's the little, the little banner, little widget widget thing there. I'm so technical. It's right next to the little accessibility guy that's there. And when you click on it, it takes you this really easy landing page text.

00:08:51 Vicky Oakes

Right.

00:08:56 Melissa Wissel

Gov. And you can text vote SJC there. It is again that vote SJC to the number 91896.

00:09:06 Melissa Wissel

Or you can send a text to a phone number 904-439-4555 and I'm sure everyone wrote that down and you're just going to text the word. Hi. And that is on the text, my Gov landing page. And I did notice that it is votesjc.gov/textmygov.

00:09:27 Melissa Wissel

Yes. So it's a very easy.

00:09:28 Melissa Wissel

Web web URL for folks to use the other real quick before we leave so folks go check out the website votesjc.gov, check out the widget for the texting reminders and the important election alerts. I do want to remind folks to not just with regards to the primary.

00:09:49 Melissa Wissel

It's on.

00:09:51 Melissa Wissel

August 20th. We have early voting. What people to remember about early voting. You can vote anywhere in Saint Johns County. So if you live in one area and you work in another and you just can't quite make it because of your commute, the offices are open 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, right. Oh, no early voting.

00:09:54 **Vicky Oakes**

We do.

00:10:07 **Vicky Oakes**

No early. OK, we have early voting. Sites will have seven of them over the primary. They are open for voting from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM daily. The dates are October the 10th through the 17th. That includes 2 Saturdays and one Sunday. Excuse me, August.

00:10:17 **Melissa Wissel**

OK.

00:10:26

OK.

00:10:26 **Melissa Wissel**

Right.

00:10:27 **Vicky Oakes**

August 10th through the 17th. Yeah, two Saturdays. One Sunday. We will be pushing that information out to voters at the relative time. And if I sign up with text my Gov, I bet you're going to send me an alert of an alert and sign me.

00:10:46 **Melissa Wissel**

That early voting is open. You're going to remind me where the locations are. Yep. And the times of the day. We really don't have any excuse. I know we talked about this sometimes too. The whole no excuse state, but we really don't have a reason.

00:11:01 **Vicky Oakes**

Or an excuse to not cast our ballot. Voting has never been easier than it is today. Any registered voter can request a ballot and vote by mail, sit right on your couch. We have early voting prior to each election, and then as a last resort for the traditionalist, your precinct is always open on Election Day from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

00:11:21 **Melissa Wissel**

That's where my 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM came in and you guys have really good.

00:11:27 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah.

00:11:28 **Melissa Wissel**

Workers, volunteers. We don't have a lot. All that shenanigans and confusion and problems. You train them if I want to volunteer. Can I come in now and volunteer for this season? This year? No, we are.

00:11:29 **Vicky Oakes**

We do.

00:11:37 **Vicky Oakes**

Yes.

00:11:41 **Vicky Oakes**

OK, you have we are still taking some workers, they're not volunteers, are actually paid. We have online training. You have to go through a series of online training classes and then some in person training right on our website, votesjc.gov across the top, there's a.

00:11:46 **Melissa Wissel**

OK.

00:11:58 **Vicky Oakes**

Section for poll worker. You click on the poll worker, fill in an application and you'll receive a response from my staff. We do need a few new workers for the November election. I will warn you, it is a long day. It is a very long day. At least the 14 hour day. There's physical requirements.

00:12:18 **Vicky Oakes**

You have to be able to lift 25 lbs.

00:12:21 **Vicky Oakes**

To be able to handle and set up the voting equipment and then have a certain level of technology because everything in the precinct now is computers, so you have to be able to use. So there's certain restrictions if you have any questions, be sure to reach.

00:12:32 **Melissa Wissel**

Computer, yeah.

00:12:36 **Melissa Wissel**

Out to our staff, OK, so I can volunteer. I could get paid for some of it. I can.

00:12:41 **Melissa Wissel**

Help. And how did our numbers look last last election? Do you have any kind of goals in mind or do you kind of set something you're hopeful for if you could, if you could go? I know I'm putting you on the spot with that. OK, our numbers looking and what are your?

00:12:58 **Vicky Oakes**

Our numbers for a primary are usually very sad. OK, we have not had a voter turn out in a primary election in St. John's County. That has been any higher than 31% since 2004.

00:13:12 **Melissa Wissel**

Ohh so it's challenge our listeners.

00:13:13 Vicky Oakes

That was disgraceful. I am. I want to challenge our voters. You have no excuse. So.

00:13:16 Melissa Wissel

Now and.

00:13:17 Melissa Wissel

Them from on.

00:13:20 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, there's no reason.

00:13:22 Vicky Oakes

Right. So really hoping to up it with the mailing of our citizens guide county wide to every resident mailing of our.

00:13:32 Vicky Oakes

Sample ballots vote by mail with some of these new things that we're putting in place with the text. Mike Gov. Really hoping to drive that up to at least 35% for the primary St. John's County does great and in a presidential election and last presidential election we had an 85%.

00:13:52 Vicky Oakes

Over turn out third highest in the state.

00:13:54 Melissa Wissel

Imagine it's going to be pretty high again.

00:13:56 Vicky Oakes

This year, yes. And we are actually planning for a 90% voter turnout. So regardless of the fact that we're staffed and prepared, right.

00:14:08 Melissa Wissel

Well, get out there, vote sjc.gov, get your text reminders signed up for and don't miss it. That's right. Thanks for coming in. Thank you. And good luck. Yes, I know.

00:14:17 Vicky Oakes

Thank you. And remember, thank you and your vote counts.

00:14:21 Melissa Wissel

I'm an in. I'm actually an in person voter. I go on on Election Day because there's something about it. So thank you Vicki for coming.

00:14:31 **Melissa Wissel**

The deadline to register to vote again is Monday, July the 22nd. There is still time to take care of your registration for the general election, which is October 7th. The general election, of course, is in November and all that information is vote sjc.gov if you miss part of this broadcast, we want to go back and listen from the beginning. You can now find us on your favorite podcasting.

00:14:51 **Melissa Wissel**

App we want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city and in the county. Remember, in order to stay connected, you need to be connected, so be sure you're following us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at City Saint Aug. Thanks for tuning in until next time.

00:15:06 **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.

00:15:23 **Narrator**

Of the break room.