

# Transcript

00:00:00 **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.

00:00:20 **Narrator**

**Melissa Wissel.**

00:00:21 **Melissa Wissel**

Welcome to the break room. Thanks for tuning in. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the city of Saint Augustine.

00:00:27 **Melissa Wissel**

This week we're talking with Commissioner Barbara Blonder about two very important issues that she has brought to the attention of her fellow Commissioners, both relating to the health and Wellness of our community. One issue concerns our environmental health and Wellness, and the other addresses the health and Wellness of our labor force. Commissioner Blonder, welcome back.

00:00:45 **Barbara Blonder**

It's great to be back, Melissa. Thank you for having me.

00:00:48 **Melissa Wissel**

Here my first question for you about the what we're calling the Florida Friendly Fertilizer Ordinance is why is this so important? We all work in our yards we fertilize.

00:01:01 **Melissa Wissel**

Why? Why now?

00:01:02 **Barbara Blonder**

Why now? Because we still have good water quality for the most part. But we're also seeing some challenges to it. It's declining in some places. It's problematic in other places, and we have the ability to to to make it better by wisely using fertilizers.

00:01:21 **Barbara Blonder**

Both in terms of the amount and the.

00:01:23 **Barbara Blonder**

Timing fertilizers provide necessary nutrients to our plants. Our landscape plants are native plants and so forth, but they and and so those nutrients in particular nitrates and potassium that are found in fertilizers are are important for plants.

00:01:43 **Barbara Blonder**

To grow when they get into our water bodies, though, by overuse or misusing them at the.

00:01:49 **Barbara Blonder**

The time. Then they can fertilize the algae that is naturally found in our water bodies and in some cases those those species of algae can be harmful. They're actually toxic, like red tide, and others are. They just will overgrow with the with the excess of nutrients. And so when that happens, you see what we saw.

00:02:11 **Barbara Blonder**

In the Gulf of Mexico, with the big die offs and we want to avoid that.

00:02:15 **Barbara Blonder**

Yeah.

00:02:16 **Melissa Wissel**

And when you talk about the water quality, excuse me.

00:02:20 **Melissa Wissel**

I don't know if people realize you know when you say to me we need to monitor our fertilizer use and and monitor this. And like you said, when and how much what we're talking about is how this affects like you just said, our waterway, this stuff runs off and goes into the river, goes into our our local area waterways that we live on.

00:02:40 **Melissa Wissel**

And literally live fish, swim boat. So it's not just about it going down the drain because we all know or maybe we don't. It also goes, which is why we say only rain down the drain. So this really is something that people need to realize. It's not just about.

00:02:52 **Barbara Blonder**

Right.

00:02:57 **Melissa Wissel**

The the fertilizer in the in our land or in in the soil, it's that runoff and why the weather is so important those those boundaries.

00:03:06 **Barbara Blonder**

We've done an excellent job of summarizing that. Thank.

00:03:09 **Barbara Blonder**

No, you got it. You got it right on. And when we overuse fertilizers in our lawns, for example, or apply them at the wrong time, they do wash off their plants, can only take them so much at a.

00:03:23 **Barbara Blonder**

Time and during certain seasons of the year, too, growing season versus dormant season. So using fertilizer at the wrong times or the wrong amounts will just result in that fertilizer getting washed away down our storm drains. It's supposed to be funny. Yeah, I mean, yeah.

00:03:37 **Melissa Wissel**

And it's and it's a waste of money.

00:03:41 **Melissa Wissel**

Let's think about that.

00:03:43 **Barbara Blonder**

To waste of money and and you think about the.

00:03:47 **Barbara Blonder**

What the negative impacts are of that for fertilizer in our waterways that cost us money too, in terms of our fisheries, in terms of our recreation and you know, if we have shellfish, closure closures because, you know, of pollutants in the waterway that that that's a problem.

00:04:00

Right.

00:04:05 **Barbara Blonder**

Yeah, it's dangerous for human health. It's also a cost to our our, you know, commercial industries.

00:04:12 **Melissa Wissel**

Too. One of the one of the pieces of this and I want to switch a little.

00:04:15 **Melissa Wissel**

Bit so we.

00:04:16 **Melissa Wissel**

Have time. Who this affects? We've talked a little bit about.

00:04:22 **Melissa Wissel**

You've got your professional service providers, landscapes and also our residents give our listeners just a a quick a pointer of why this is important for those service providers versus residents.

00:04:33 **Barbara Blonder**

OK, so the service providers like your landscape companies should be. I believe they are receiving training on.

00:04:41 **Barbara Blonder**

In the proper application, fertilize.

00:04:44 **Barbara Blonder**

But this is a great opportunity for an educational campaign. This is really what it comes down to. This is not trying to punish people, but to raise awareness so that people do what they would want to do anyway if they knew better. And so this is an opportunity for people to learn. And that's really what my whole goal was, is to try to raise awareness and then.

00:05:06 **Barbara Blonder**

All of us working together to help protect our water quality and and our recreation and our health.

00:05:11 **Melissa Wissel**

And I think the other thing you.

00:05:12 **Melissa Wissel**

And I talked about.

00:05:14 **Melissa Wissel**

Is the when you see a storm coming, that's not necessarily when you're supposed to because.

00:05:19 **Barbara Blonder**

Because that that leads to that whole run off thing. So don't wait for the storm to fertilize. Yeah, right. Absolutely. Don't fertilize right before a storm. Right. It'll all run off. You just wasted your money and you've just added to the problem. But yeah, and and on our upcoming city Commission meeting on the 22nd, I believe, of this month, July.

00:05:39 **Barbara Blonder**

And the staff is going to present the Educational awareness campaign that they're getting ready to roll out on the on homeowners and and you know, so.

00:05:48 **Barbara Blonder**

Forth on how they can they can make it better and use fertilizer more wisely.

00:05:55 **Melissa Wissel**

And if you are just now tuning into the break room, I'm Melissa. Whistle communications director. I'm in studio this week with Commissioner Barbara Blonder. She has brought up some important issues to the Commission. We were just talking about the Florida friendly fertilizer use. I do want to switch gears a little bit because this also talks to health and, well.

00:06:13 **Melissa Wissel**

This where this was talking about our environmental, health and Wellness. We've had some concerns with our workers, the workforce, this this talking about environment, high heat high feels like temperatures completely off the charts and our and our workers need need a break. Yeah. And you're you're bringing that to our attention.

00:06:22 **Barbara Blonder**

Yeah.

00:06:34 **Barbara Blonder**

Yeah.

00:06:35 **Melissa Wissel**

Give us give our listeners a little bit of a back story on that as.

00:06:38 **Barbara Blonder**

Sure thing. Yeah, it you know.

00:06:38 **Melissa Wissel**

Well, it's important.

00:06:40 **Barbara Blonder**

And personally, I, you know, we're we traveled, you know, to a place that it's winter for vacation and came home to a couple of days of record-breaking heat and feels like temperatures and then our air conditioner broke over the 4th of July weekend. So we had three nights of this is what it's like.

00:06:59 **Melissa Wissel**

So. Oh great, yeah.

00:07:01 **Barbara Blonder**

You know, this is what Florida was like when I grew up here and we didn't have air condition.

00:07:05 **Barbara Blonder**

But we we're.

00:07:06 **Barbara Blonder**

Lucky too. And so if I'm just sitting in my house, you know, with the fan running, if you're working outside as our staff do say there's a storm coming and our our staff are out there making sure the storm drains are clear and it's high humidity and over 90°.

00:07:25 **Barbara Blonder**

And they are feeling the heat. They're they're doing physical.

00:07:28 **Barbara Blonder**

Clerk and they're exposed to that excessive heat. I think that it's incumbent upon us to make sure that they are safe. And So what I wanted to do was kind of counter to what the the state government has recently decided to do is to make sure that we do protect our workers. We give them breaks.

00:07:49 **Barbara Blonder**

And.

00:07:49 **Barbara Blonder**

So if they're out there, or if they're exposed to heat in an air conditioned place that we have policies that we're implementing, we're in the process of looking at some model policies and we'd like to serve as a model. The city itself serve as a model for small businesses to look, take a look at what our policies are and say, OK, you know every what you know.

00:08:09 **Barbara Blonder**

Depending on what the temperature is outside, but the field like temperature.

00:08:14 **Barbara Blonder**

Then you know our workers will get a break to to make sure they're hydrated to make sure that they get into some air conditioning if they need to, or at least some shade, and so that they can. Yeah. So that they can recover. And it's cumulative, like, day after day, this stuff, you know, can really impact our.

00:08:23 **Melissa Wissel**

Not overheating.

00:08:30 **Melissa Wissel**

Health well, and I think what's important too.

00:08:35 **Melissa Wissel**

I think some of us are very quick to criticize local government and you see a car with a decal that's got the city on the side of it and you see the guy sitting in there eating his lunch in the parking lot and people kind of go, oh, look at what city?

00:08:48 **Melissa Wissel**

But you kind of that kind of was what piqued your your awareness of this was some criticism in looking into it further, it's like, well, no. But we need to give them breaks. They need to be able to legitimately say I'm on a break. I need a break and my work quality is going to be better and I'm.

00:08:51

Yeah.

00:08:53

Yeah.

00:09:04 **Barbara Blonder**

Going to be healthier? Sure. Yeah. I mean, in terms of productivity.

00:09:08 **Barbara Blonder**

Wayne, you know our workers when they're safe and healthy are going to be able to do more and more efficient.

00:09:14 **Barbara Blonder**

So somebody who runs up with heat stroke is going to be in the hospital. Their life is at risk. They're certainly not back at work right away. And so it's, you know, you can look at it as just doing the right thing and being compassionate toward people. And you can also look at it from the workforce efficiency perspective, too. But yeah. So I did have a complaint.

00:09:35 **Barbara Blonder**

To my resident invite me sewing away, you know the the car is running.

00:09:39 **Barbara Blonder**

The that that uses up fuel and pumps more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and so the look you know, isn't good even if the workers not even launch. They may be in there because their boss just told them under city policy, which I hope we'll have soon, that they need to take a break so that they they're they're displaying.

00:09:59 **Barbara Blonder**

Means of heat, you know, exhaustion or whatever they need to get in an air-conditioned vehicle and get cooled off, get that core temperature down.

00:10:04 **Melissa Wissel**

And and that will it be in in the form of an ordinance or policy or more of a more of a policy?

00:10:09 **Barbara Blonder**

It'll be it'll be policy that will run through our human resources department, I believe.

00:10:12 **Melissa Wissel**

OK. And then we'll have training and people will know what to look for and our workforce will be will be safer.

00:10:17 **Barbara Blonder**

Hmm.

00:10:19 **Melissa Wissel**

You know you are. You are a very compassionate and caring person and you look out for us and you look out for Mother Earth and our environment. And so I think you know, these are very important initiatives and it's and it's great that you I feel like to the Commission is receptive. Oh I know.

00:10:38 **Barbara Blonder**

You absolutely.

00:10:39 **Melissa Wissel**

It's a great board. Yeah. Is it OK to ask your? You're running again? Yeah, or you're you're you. You've already won. Yes, I've already won the, the the race was yes.

00:10:46 **Barbara Blonder**

So stick with uncontested. So formally, as of June 14th.

00:10:54 **Barbara Blonder**

I'll be yeah, I don't have to campaign. Yeah, I'm back. I'm happy to do that. But thank you. Thank you very much.

00:10:56 **Melissa Wissel**

You're back. Great. Well, congratulations. We're glad you're sticking around.

00:11:01 **Barbara Blonder**

I I really.

00:11:01 **Barbara Blonder**

Really. Enjoy the people in this city. I know the passion, the commitment, how much everybody values, where we live and and each other. What makes us great.

00:11:12 **Barbara Blonder**

And so I I really appreciate those words and I know my fellow Commissioners, we can disagree on things and we often do. We do it in ways that are constructive, I think.

00:11:24 **Barbara Blonder**

And in this case, though, in both of these in in cases that we're talking about today with the fertilizer ordinance and the and working on getting some protections for our workers in, in working in the heat, we, you know, we agree on that that's unanimous. And so I love that we can when when it counts, you know.

00:11:44 **Barbara Blonder**

And some important issues we regardless of what political party we're in, right. You know we we do agree on the on the key things so.

00:11:52 **Melissa Wissel**

Things well, I'll say thank you for bringing us to our attention. I will look forward to seeing all you know, the changes coming into effect, the Fertilizer Ordinance regulation doesn't happen for 90 days. I think. So we've got some time to educate for people to to to get up to speed.



00:12:04 **Barbara Blonder**

And since 90 days. Yeah. Yeah. And then at the speed, the mayor, in fact, I think we were going to go in 10 days because that's the typical right time frame. Yeah. And. And and she made a good point, you know, let's give people some time to get educated. Let's roll out our awareness program. And so 90 days is what we're going with. So.

00:12:15 **Melissa Wissel**

Right.

00:12:24 **Barbara Blonder**

Yes.

00:12:25 **Melissa Wissel**

And again congratulations. The four years went by quick. Yeah. And another four. We're looking for it. Yeah. I I would also say you're you're not quite finished yet. So.

00:12:27 **Barbara Blonder**

Thank you.

00:12:34 **Barbara Blonder**

I have a lot. Yeah, I'm learning so much. And when as I learn, I like things like both of these issues that you're bringing up. You know, these are things that I went on my priority list two months ago.

00:12:37 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah.

00:12:47 **Melissa Wissel**

And the heat one with the labor force almost leaves you also, isn't that you guys? Where we are looking?

00:12:53 **Melissa Wissel**

OSHA.

00:12:54 **Melissa Wissel**

So it it kind of peels back the layers of of learning even for everybody.

00:12:57 **Barbara Blonder**

Yeah, yeah, OSHA is has got the guidelines. They're fast tracked through at the federal level, so it gives us a lot of meat to work from in, in, you know, in terms of best practices.

00:13:08 **Melissa Wissel**

Great. Yeah. Well, lots of good stuff and we look forward to having you for another four years.

00:13:12 **Barbara Blonder**

Thank you so much, Melissa. We really appreciate your kind words.

00:13:14 **Melissa Wissel**

Yes. Yeah. Well, thanks for coming down. We'll have you.

00:13:17 **Melissa Wissel**

Back again so.

00:13:17 **Barbara Blonder**

OK. Sounds like a plan. Great.

00:13:19 **Melissa Wissel**

Thank you. If you missed part of this broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning, you can now find us on your favorite podcasting app. Look for us on Spotify, iHeartRadio, and more. You can find that complete listing on our website at [citysaintaugradio.com](http://citysaintaugradio.com). We want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city and most importantly, that you hear it hear from the people doing the work making it happen.

00:13:39 **Melissa Wissel**

Everyday.

00:13:41 **Melissa Wissel**

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00:13:52 **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.

00:14:09 **Narrator**

Of the break room.

00:14:12

Yes.

