

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 Whistle. 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 whistle.

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. This week, I've invited Barry Fox back to join us in the break room. He is the short term rental supervisor. The code enforcement manager, homelessness liaison, among other things. Barry, welcome.

00:00:38 Barry Fox

Back thank you for having me.

00:00:40 Melissa Wissel

You just always have a lot going on, so I thought it would be good to have.

00:00:43 Melissa Wissel

You come in and give everybody an update.

00:00:45 Barry Fox

You went into people, didn't you? Yeah, maybe.

00:00:47

OK.

00:00:49 Melissa Wissel

Believe it or not, it's been kind of slow. No, I take that back. We're ahead of schedule of our recording schedule.

00:00:54 Barry Fox

OK. OK. Then you do want to know what?

00:00:57 Melissa Wissel

I do want to know what's going on.

00:00:57 Narrator

OK.

00:00:58 Barry Fox

So what do you want know about first?

00:01:00 Melissa Wissel

You tell me also what's like with?

00:01:01 Barry Fox

Let's go. Let's stick with short term rentals and homelessness and the memorial.

00:01:06 Melissa Wissel

OK. You don't like talking about code enforcement?

00:01:07 Barry Fox

Yes.

00:01:09 Barry Fox

No, it's just we we work with compliance and that's what we drive for and and we strive for compliance. But you know occasionally we got to take people.

00:01:17 Melissa Wissel

And it's reactive and people are upset and you just do the best you can.

00:01:19 Barry Fox

Each week, yeah.

00:01:20 Barry Fox

We do the best when we work with people and the ones that end up in front of the magistrate are the ones that just.

00:01:26 Barry Fox

Need additional help? Encouragement, encouragement. There you go.

00:01:29 Barry Fox

Come.

00:01:30 Barry Fox

So I.

00:01:30 Barry Fox

Mean it's, you know.

00:01:31 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, it's getting better.

00:01:35 Barry Fox

No. Yeah. No. Yeah, yeah. I mean the the with.

00:01:38 Melissa Wissel

That was a that was a pregnant pause to answer.

00:01:41 Barry Fox

We're providing more support for more in depth kind of city issues now, so we're we're really supporting the burning official heavily and Harb and the historic preservation.

00:01:46 Melissa Wissel

OK.

00:01:54 Barry Fox

Officers and public works OK, so the the what they used to do is not really taken priority. So now we're really kind of.

00:02:03 Barry Fox

We're really kind of working in towards, you know, the unlicensed contractors and the homeowners doing work without permits. And then we're really supporting the historic function, OK. And and that right now entails me going back and doing a an assessment.

00:02:23 Barry Fox

Of about 600 homes that we had on these damage assessment lists and.

00:02:27 Barry Fox

My mom was.

00:02:27 Barry Fox

Complete with that now and the good news is, is now that ties into short term rentals because the good news is, is that.

00:02:34 Barry Fox

The short term rental would be economy and the short term rental.

00:02:38 Barry Fox

Aspect of our economy really kind of caused the renovation of a lot of these homes that were on these damaged lists. These categories doing category four homes that we were, you know, kind of paying attention to or or someone had made this list of them. So it caused them to be renovated or brought into compliance. So I'm I'm finding that a lot of the homes of the 600.

00:03:01 Barry Fox

I mean, we may really want some done with it. We may really be looking.

00:03:04 Barry Fox

About, you know, 25% of that list is something still needs to be addressed. So you know the economy, short term rentals and things like that is really kind of pushed the the renovation and the and the compliance of those.

00:03:17 Melissa Wissel

Homes. The short term rentals. Do you? What do you what do you find? I know a lot of what you do. And what?

00:03:25 Melissa Wissel

Morgan does is the inspections making sure that everybody's registered? What are the other things you do respond to a lot or are you more you feel like you're proactive or reactive on the short?

00:03:36 Barry Fox

Yes, so we try.

00:03:37 Melissa Wissel

Term rental slide.

00:03:38 Barry Fox

To be proactive on the things that we can and then of course we're completely reactive in reference to bad actors in the neighborhoods. You know, the residents know they can call a number. One of the things that sticklers is trash cans for short term rentals and parking for short term rentals. And those things are really can't be. They're not easily solved.

00:03:59 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, the parking is sticky.

00:04:01 Barry Fox

The Parkings will sticky and it and.

00:04:04 Barry Fox

And for good reason. It's confusing to the public and the and the people out there. And so, you know, we have to kind of work through those things individually.

00:04:13 Melissa Wissel

The problem with the parking is that if cars are if cars are legally parked.

00:04:19 Melissa Wissel

On the street, you can't go and look and say, are you a resident or are you just here with that short term rental across the street?

00:04:22 Barry Fox

Yeah. So yeah, so.

00:04:28 Barry Fox

The the ordinance says that you have to provide parking on site. It doesn't say that the parking.

00:04:33 Barry Fox

Has to be used to use that.

00:04:35 Barry Fox

Unfortunately, that's because.

00:04:38 Barry Fox

It it's American. It's a public street, right. And people have the right now, unless you know you're violating some sort of a residential neighborhood parking issue or no parking or yellow curb or something like that. I mean, those rules still exist, but, you know, we're still in America and that's, you know, that's still legal.

00:04:47 Melissa Wissel

Which? Yeah.

00:04:54 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, it's.

00:04:57 Melissa Wissel

The.

00:04:58 Melissa Wissel

But we do have neighborhood parking in some of our neighborhoods, resident parking.

00:05:02 Barry Fox

We do.

00:05:03 Melissa Wissel

Yep. You remember which ones I.

00:05:05 Barry Fox

Don't I do they're they're spread out sporadically through the different neighborhoods, depending on the parking needs downtown.

00:05:11 Melissa Wissel

Mostly.

00:05:11 Barry Fox

Right. Yeah. Downtown, I think there's those Uptown neighborhood. Should I think they have one there. The water St. neighborhood may have one in that area somewhere.

00:05:16 Melissa Wissel

North North city.

00:05:23 Barry Fox

In in the there's some spread out through model Amtrak like Sargasso or Valencia may have one or two blocks that are so. So I don't really keep up with it because they're clearly marked when you get into those areas. But.

00:05:30 Melissa Wissel

OK.

00:05:34 Melissa Wissel

Right.

00:05:36 Barry Fox

Umm.

00:05:38 Barry Fox

So yeah, so that causes you know and I know that the city just went through some sort.

00:05:43 Melissa Wissel

Of a parking didn't happen.

00:05:44 Barry Fox

Parking ordinance? Yeah, that didn't happen. Which I I you know, I I don't. I don't really concentrate on the impacts on. I just kind of deal with it once once it passes. So I don't really know what it said or what it was trying to accomplish because I always wait for the Commissioners to say we're going to do this and then that's you know what I got to do.

00:05:54

Right.

00:06:01 Melissa Wissel

There was.

00:06:02 Melissa Wissel

We had a lot of public meetings, a lot of public outreach, and it it just I think the sentiment from the community was still they weren't ready for it. So the Commission kind of punted and said, we'll table it.

00:06:14 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, definitely. It'll probably come back in a couple of.

00:06:17 Barry Fox

Years, but it'll be driven probably by the public. At that point, you know, and that's what you got to really wait.

00:06:22 Barry Fox

For is you.

00:06:23 Barry Fox

Know when when you try to do the right thing and the public's really not behind it. You're kind of really.

00:06:28 Barry Fox

You know.

00:06:28 Melissa Wissel

It's they don't. Well, I find it from where we sit, it's the public says we never knew about this. How can you and from where I sit, you know, I like to think that we do our best to educate and get the information out. And sometimes I think we feel like we've been telling you you just now started paying attention.

00:06:44 Barry Fox

Yeah, yeah. You know, they they.

00:06:46 Melissa Wissel

It happens.

00:06:47 Barry Fox

It's like with us too. You. You pay attention to what interests you and you you don't do other things until it affects.

00:06:49 Melissa Wissel

Yeah.

00:06:51 Melissa Wissel

Yeah.

00:06:54 Melissa Wissel

You now. So you walk around the streets a lot. Short term rentals, taking care, I know you. You get out of the office quite a bit and you're out in the community. Let's shift gears a little bit and talk about our homelessness. You've been.

00:07:08 Melissa Wissel

Our liaison we've been seeing, I've been hearing feedback.

00:07:12 Melissa Wissel

It's looking less so, but I don't know what that translates to and where are we on our.

00:07:18 Barry Fox

Yes.

00:07:21 Melissa Wissel

Center.

00:07:21 Barry Fox

We had a the the family reunification program, the the one that started under 2003, 2004, under Steve Fricky, that's been tweaked a little bit.

00:07:33 Barry Fox

That the funds have been.

00:07:35 Barry Fox

Little easier to get to. So that's given the law enforcement, the ability to move more people.

00:07:42 Melissa Wissel

That's putting them on a bus and sending them out of out of Saint Augustine.

00:07:45 Barry Fox

Somewhere. Yeah. And you know, and we have a new homeless outreach officer that works for me now. Not the Police Department. She provides support in the form of transportation stuff for the Police Department. So we don't take police officers off.

00:07:59 Barry Fox

The.

00:07:59 Barry Fox

Street. And then when she's not doing that, she does a lot of walking around and meeting with people and a lot of referring to the different.

00:08:06 Barry Fox

Service providers because you know the the we don't want to ever.

00:08:14 Barry Fox

Recreate the services that are already being offered and the that's not what we want to do as a city or as government, and that's not what I don't think our citizens want us pushing money to recreate.

00:08:23 Melissa Wissel

We we as a city don't want to be creating services that we know are already being provided.

00:08:25 Barry Fox

Yeah, already being provided for and already being funded by government and there there are a huge amount of organizations doing that. And if you don't know, just go to the continuum of care and you can look at the umbrella organization and see all the organizations up underneath that continuum of care. So.

00:08:28 Melissa Wissel

We have a lot of organizations in the community.

00:08:44 Barry Fox

That's what Jessica's been doing. She's really been making a lot of contacts, moving a lot of people around. She's helping them as much as getting them over to Social Security or to the, you know, wherever they need to go to get services provided to them. And and then we've been concentrating on the drop in center.

00:09:00 Barry Fox

Mr. Franklin and I recently met with the continuum of care and we are in the process of setting up some dates so we can have some open houses for the service providers for phase two. So phase one will be the.

00:09:14 Melissa Wissel

Tanning. Tanning with the OK.

00:09:14 Barry Fox

Dining, dining, pavilion, and we'll call it dining with pavilion because we'll, we'll say, dining with dignity is moving there. But dining with dignity may change hands. Or, you know, another organization may come and you know. So we're going to say it's. Yeah, the dining pavilion. The showers will be.

00:09:25 Melissa Wissel

Oh, I like that dining pavilion.

00:09:30 Melissa Wissel

In it and the dining pavilion, if folks are folks, aren't sure what we're talking about.

00:09:34 Melissa Wissel

So.

00:09:35 Melissa Wissel

A year ago or more, this is this conversation has been going on, but they're behind the wind, Dixie on 207 and S Dixie Highway. If you drive by there, there was the old furniture store was there on the corner. And that's going to be the center. And then if you drive by there now, you see the fence behind that fence is where this.

00:09:42 Barry Fox

207 S sexy yeah.

00:09:55 Melissa Wissel

Dining pavilion and some will call them amenities but yeah, so continue. I just wanted folks.

00:09:56 Barry Fox

Vegan will be.

00:10:00 Barry Fox

Yes. So we're talking about the dining pavilion is out for bid now and when it's built, it'll have an under roof dining area where dining with dignity can start serving dinner.

00:10:01 Melissa Wissel

To know what?

00:10:12 Barry Fox

There it will also have a water fountain. It will have fans.

00:10:17 Barry Fox

But it it additionally, we'll have showers and it will have the ability to have washers and dryers there. So ultimately what we want to provide is dining a facility for the individuals wanting to serve food to the homeless and then we are going to provide showers.

00:10:37 Barry Fox

In a in a.

00:10:39 Barry Fox

Country. And then we're going to create a post office there because the post office is key because if they can get mail at a physical address then they can start receiving benefits that they're entitled to. Benefits won't get mailed to general delivery, and that's how that's. So if they're, if they're.

00:10:54 Melissa Wissel

Right.

00:10:57 Melissa Wissel

It's things like getting an ID card.

00:10:59 Barry Fox

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So we got to create that. You know that process for the mail and I got some good ideas from an organization down out of Orlando.

00:10:59 Melissa Wissel

Getting your.

00:11:06 Barry Fox

And and we'll, we'll get that. That'll be hammered out real quick, but the the open house kind of town hall meetings that we're going to have with the service providers and continuum of care first will be strictly concentrated on phase two. And phase two will be the development of a much larger facility.

00:11:27 Barry Fox

That will include.

00:11:30 Barry Fox

Space for service providers to be in now. We're not going to house an individual service provider, we're going to supply an, you know, an office for, right? Yeah.

00:11:37 Melissa Wissel

It's fake, like a Co-op. Almost.

00:11:39 Melissa Wissel

Like a Co-op for.

00:11:40 Melissa Wissel

Providers.

00:11:41 Barry Fox

Right now, one or two service providers may take up a full time resident seeing it because it's important.

00:11:48 Barry Fox

We plan on having an area that's big enough for a neighborhood meeting room in it that can also double as because we'll be out of the flood area, flood zone at that point and we can be on generated power for need be. So we want to.

00:12:06 Barry Fox

Build an area big enough to wear possibly.

00:12:09 Barry Fox

It can be considered right to look at the ability for an evacuation, kind of a homeless shelter in the form of that, because now they got to go to it. They go to schools and there's there's problems riddled with that, yeah.

00:12:12 Melissa Wissel

In evacuation space.

00:12:22 Melissa Wissel

And that's it. That is that going to be in that building, we think we're going to be able to renovate.

00:12:26 Melissa Wissel

Or we're not sure yet if it's going to be a tear down.

00:12:27 Barry Fox

No. So nothing will be in the blue building because the blue building doesn't meet. We would have to put so much money into the blue build.

00:12:34 Barry Fox

That we would eclipse that 50% and that would cause us to have to bring it up the to the base flood elevation. Just gonna ultimately probably the blue building comes down OK. Unless we can find a different use other than offices or habitation for it like think storage or something like that. But other than that you know the blue building ultimately will probably come down.

00:12:38 Melissa Wissel

They're.

00:12:39 Melissa Wissel

Going to.

00:12:53 Melissa Wissel

Yeah.

00:12:54 Melissa Wissel

Well, the it's great to hear the you saying phase two because we used to not talk about phase two because it was so far off. It's great to hear that the pavilion is coming together and that we'll be seeing that and let me see this question from the way you're saying this, if I'm hearing you correctly.

00:13:03 Narrator

Yes.

00:13:04 Barry Fox

Yeah.

00:13:11 Melissa Wissel

Yes, there will be dining with dignity, but it also sounds like maybe there's an opportunity if other organizations want to also provide meals, it won't just be a single operator.

00:13:23 Barry Fox

Or or if someone so dining with dignity is is doing the dinners and we're building that to give them more dignity in the dining part.

00:13:24 Melissa Wissel

It would. It could be.

00:13:32 Barry Fox

So they're locked in on dining with dignity, and they do more like a supper. So if someone, if an organization wanted to do like a small breakfast or when, when, when. When Jessica goes full time and it's open full time.

00:13:34 Melissa Wissel

OK.

00:13:36 Melissa Wissel

OK. Separate.

00:13:37 Melissa Wissel

Time.

00:13:46 Barry Fox

For that period.

00:13:47 Barry Fox

Or someone wanted to start doing a lunch. We would open the facility. We would allow them access to that dining pavilion to provide a lunch, the ultimate goal.

00:13:50 Melissa Wissel

OK.

00:13:57 Barry Fox

Once we have the showers and the laundry open.

00:14:00 Barry Fox

Is to open before dining with dignity, and it really be a space where the homeless can come and reach.

00:14:07 Barry Fox

Large.

00:14:08 Barry Fox

Charge phones get water. Get out of the heat because I don't know if you've been there or not, but it's the canopy. The tree canopy is beautiful and it's it's like 20° cooler up underneath it than it is in sun, and we plan on opening it up so that earlier so that people can come and just stay. There will be security there and they will be able to come. We will probably be looking at putting in some leads.

00:14:14 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, flights. Really. Very nice. Yeah.

00:14:28 Barry Fox

For animals so that.

00:14:29 Barry Fox

If you have an animal that can.

00:14:31 Barry Fox

Come there. Now. We don't want to warehouse dog food.

00:14:33

Right.

00:14:33 Barry Fox

That's not right.

00:14:34 Barry Fox

You know, we're not looking to do that, but but we are looking to build a.

00:14:39 Barry Fox

Which our Wellness kind of just?

00:14:40 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, a place to come and collect yourself and provide some service though to help folks really. Really, the goal is to help get people on their feet.

00:14:44 Barry Fox

Elect yourself.

00:14:50 Barry Fox

Yes, and and the important part about that is that when a homeless person reaches that point where they're like.

00:14:56 Barry Fox

Need help. You have to be able to wrap that help around them right then because if you're out in the middle of the woods and they say I need help and you have to leave the woods to go.

00:15:04 Barry Fox

Check on services.

00:15:05 Melissa Wissel

Let me go see let me see.

00:15:06 Barry Fox

Who's available? Right. And by the time you get back to them, they've fallen victim to their own demons again, and that causes a lot of hardships, a lot of hurdles for getting the helping people in this manner. But the more important part is, once we get this facility open, those individuals that are facing homelessness.

00:15:07 Melissa Wissel

Yeah, let me.

00:15:24 Barry Fox

Of a paycheck away. I just lost my job and I've got two kids.

00:15:28 Barry Fox

I can't pay my rent at the end of the week or I'm being evicted.

00:15:33 Barry Fox

There is a place for the indigo before they become homeless, where we can start interacting with them.

00:15:38 Melissa Wissel

Can intervene in some US an intervention.

00:15:40 Barry Fox

And do some intervention before they hit the street, especially if they have children. Yeah, that's, you know, we're gonna. We're gonna be able to intervene. We're not gonna have we we don't wanna the.

00:15:53 Barry Fox

The vision is.

00:15:55 Barry Fox

New children hits the street. Yeah, you know, I mean, we'll start there. Yeah. Let's start there and we'll figure we'll figure out the rest of it. No children hit the street. God, you know what I mean. And that's that's going to be key. OK, so, yeah. So that's that. And then we have the memorial. We're out of time. Oh, sorry. You want to come back again? This is the.

00:15:57 Melissa Wissel

Yeah.

00:16:15 Barry Fox

Come back from the.

00:16:16 Barry Fox

Last time it's a, it'll be it'll be a.

00:16:17 Melissa Wissel

Mother, we'll have to have you come back again.

00:16:19 Melissa Wissel

Part three-part 3.

00:16:22 Barry Fox

I'll enjoy that.

00:16:22 Melissa Wissel

But hold that thought and we'll we'll bring you back and we'll finish on the.

00:16:25 Melissa Wissel

Next one, OK.

00:16:26 Barry Fox

At a that would be fine.

00:16:28 Melissa Wissel

If you missed part of this broadcast and want to come back and listen from the beginning, you can catch this broadcast and past episodes on citysaintaugradio.com. You can also find us on your favorite podcasting app. We want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city. Follow us on our social media. You can see us on Facebook, Instagram and X, formerly known as Twitter at City St.

00:16:48 Melissa Wissel

Hug until next time, thanks for tuning in.

00:16:51 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 Whistle, 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.

00:17:09 Narrator

Of the break room.