

The Break Room: Barry Fox, Code Enforcement Manager, September 24, 2024

Narrator:

You've tuned into another edition of the Break Room, a weekly conversation about how the city of St. Augustine works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the city of St. 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:

Welcome to the break Room. Thanks for tuning in. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the city of St. Augustine. And for a third time in a row, third time's a charm. We've brought back former police chief Barry Fox, currently our code enforcement manager, supervisor, short term rental supervisor, manager, homelessness liaison, jack of all trades, master of none, Barry Fox. Welcome back.

Barry Fox:

Thank you for having me again.

Melissa Wissel:

We're on a roll. So we're just going to continue this conversation. Let's do a quick recap. The homeless drop in center, the vision is dining services, wraparound services, and really being a point of intervention.

Barry Fox:

Yeah. Yes, absolutely. So as I explained before, the phase one, because we'll talk in phases, phase one is really building that dining pavilion, and we're gonna bring over dining with dignity there. We will eventually build out some showers and some laundry in that facility and open up a mail room. And the mailroom is key for receiving benefits. And then phase

two will involve meeting with the continuum of care. And I believe Mister Franklin also wants to do some town hall meetings with the public. So that will also be

Melissa Wissel:

more to come

Barry Fox:

Yeah, right. There's a couple visions in reference to that. Office space is one of them for the service providers and another one being kicked around as a possible, um, community meeting room, which will possibly double as a evacuation center for the homeless. But these are all vision. There's nothing in stone. That's what we're kicking around. Um, so though that'll be different phases. And trust me, when we start talking about them, you know, it's all about financing and, and things like that. So we started talking about this pavilion in June of last year, and we just got the architectural done on it. it was really kind of an eye opener for me because I thought, well, it's a city project. They go right through. No, they have treated me like they treat everybody else. And it's been a, it's been an eye opening.

Melissa Wissel:

No special treatment.

Barry Fox:

There's been no special. I've had to go through all the same protocols as everybody else. So, so, but we got some we got some good people working on it now, and that vision's really coming alive. We. And dining with dignity. The communication with them is really, really good right now. And I am, on the 30th, I'm meeting with some individuals from the continuum of care under that umbrella on site to do a. To do a survey. And if anybody from the public wants to go take a look at the site and just kind of walk around and talk about the vision, I don't mind. I'll meet anybody out there that wants to good about them. I mean, I know there's some people that feel that we don't need to be doing this,

Melissa Wissel:

the goal is to help people get their life on track. Yeah, there are those that won't. Won't take advantage of it. Can't they just, they're not there and they never will be. But it's, it's being in a position to be able. When somebody says, like you said on our last conversation, I need help, and being able to say, let's go get in my car, and we're going to get you help today. Now.

Barry Fox:

Yeah. Cause, you know, you know, prevention of homelessness is key. If we can really concentrate on that, that'd be great. The other ones. I'm not looking through those red colors glasses. I realize there's challenges with individuals in reference to drug addiction, alcoholism, and the biggest one being mental health. Those are huge obstacles. The entire nation struggles, every city, everything. But the ones that we can prevent or get immediately off the street, they're out there, and we don't have to let them fall into that. And we can provide some intervention immediately, and that's important. And then when the ones that are the hard cases finally do say, I need some help, because they do, they truly do occasionally come across that point where they say, I need some help, I want to get off the street. You got to be able to react immediately right then.

Melissa Wissel:

And how great to be able to say, we have a place, and on Tuesday we have a mental health counselor, or on Wednesday we have a career counselor, or on Thursday we can get you a haircut, whatever. All those service providers.

Barry Fox:

we able to put a free clinic in there. You know, that's great. So, yeah, the vision is good. You know, it's. The vision I talk about right now probably will not be the reality, but that's the vision we're moving forward with, and we'll make as much of it fit between me and Mister Franklin, city leaders and the commissioners and everything we will get it worked out as to what it looks like for St. Augustine.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, it's a lot of great work that you've been doing, and it's great to see it start coming to fruition.

Barry Fox:

Yeah, it's. It's, um. It's. It's exciting. So we'll see how that goes. But, um, so we checked on that. We touched on, uh, short term rentals, you know.

Melissa Wissel:

But I want to talk if you're just now tuning in, you're listening to the break room. I've got Barry Fox back with us this week. I want to circle back with you on the police memorial.

Barry Fox:

The police memorial.

Melissa Wissel:

So that was. That was a couple of episodes ago, but where are we with that?

Barry Fox:

It, um. So very interesting. Um, we're moving right along with that. So we're talking about Officer Robert Chambers from the 1880s, who was killed in line of duty when he was attempting to arrest mister. Glover, Henry Glover. And he died, like, three days later after being beat to death. He's never been honored by our community, and it was basically forgotten. And it was really the lieutenant from New Jersey.

Melissa Wissel:

Is it Bob Alvarez?

Barry Fox:

His partner.

Melissa Wissel:

His partner. Okay. I don't know the partner's name, but we'll give a shout out to Bob's partner.

Bob brought it to your attention.

Barry Fox:

Bob brought it to my attention. His partner found it going through the historical papers in Savannah. And because the St. Augustine record was not archived or was lost in a fire or something, he was able to double down on the verification through the Palaca Daily News archives. So he was able to absolutely say, okay, this is a real thing. Robert Chambers was a black male and is 31 years old, and he had a wife and a daughter I have met with. So on our first broadcast, we asked for the public's help, and a young lady reached out to us, and I'm so sorry, but I don't have your name on. I apologize, but thank you very much.

Melissa Wissel:

She reached out.

Barry Fox:

She reached out. I did go down and meet with Best Richardson or Richardson Best?

Melissa Wissel:

I don't remember.

Barry Fox:

I can't. At the museum. Mister. I think it's mister. And miss Richardson. And she sat there. Amazing woman. She sat there, and just. She back and forth, and she was going from here and there, and she was back and forth with it, and she did a great job. But because the wife

and the females in the 1880s, unfortunately, through marriage and, you know, changes like that, they get.

Melissa Wissel:

Lost in the name.

Barry Fox:

Yeah, the name gets lost, and it gets. And it gets. It fades off and you can't find it. So I'm still very open to anybody who thinks that they can, you know, find something. If they need a starting point, just call me at 904-669-9030 and I'll give you the information on Robert Chambers. And you can start from there. If you think you're a super sleuth, I would enjoy you doing this for me. But, um, so we are working on that and the commission told me to go forward on that. So in the meantime,

Melissa Wissel:

what's it going to look like?

Barry Fox:

It's, it's going to be consistent with the memorials that are in front of the police department. Now, I met with Chief Aviles last week at fire department.

It's going to be in front of the fire department, and it's going to be consistent with the two memorials that are already established there.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay.

Barry Fox:

Um, the only difference is they're like a cloverleaf, like a three clover leaf. The only difference will be there'll be three. Three pedestals on the clovers and one will be for law enforcement, one will be for the fire department, and one will be for the general employees.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay.

Barry Fox:

And we have identified individuals that may qualify in each one of those services to the city that have passed and we are working on getting them approved to be able to put their names on them on the, on the boards. Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

And will we have a groundbreaking or some type of a ceremony?

Barry Fox:

Oh, sure. Yeah, I'm sure the city will have a invite the families and of course, if we can find some Robert Chambers family, but the other two families, if the commission approves and Mister Birchim approves and we move forward with those names, that I'm sure that we'll have a ceremony of some sort. Yes.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, it'll be nice to see that. I know this was something that we've never done in terms of public safety memorial for our public safety..

Barry Fox:

.. death and line of duty. So, you know, I kind of prided myself as the department historian because I spent hours as a PIO and going up and I never found this. And it wouldn't have been found in the record. Well, maybe take it back, had I looked through the death

certificate, because I actually found chambers death certificate, the handwritten. Once I knew the name I was looking for. But had I gone through the death certificates individually, I'd have possibly found him. It wouldn't have said he died in the line of duty, but it would have said he died from injuries and that he was a police officer.

Melissa Wissel:

And he was a police officer.

Barry Fox:

Yeah. But because the record was lost, I never knew that the Savannah paper and the Palaka Daily News had St. Augustine sections in theme, so they were always a day behind. They listed election.

Melissa Wissel:

Interesting.

Barry Fox:

They listed visits. They listed.

Melissa Wissel:

Who knew?

Barry Fox:

Who knew? I didn't know that until now. So now it wants me to go back and kind of research its papers to see what else we're missing. But, yeah, it's exciting. Chief Aviles is excited, chief Michaux is excited. But we're working towards doing that. We want to stay consistent up at the fire department. So I'm going to go with what's already laid out there. That was Chief Aviles.

Melissa Wissel:

It's kind of like a hole in that symmetry of that park sort of in front of the. In front of the fire department. So it sort of fills that gap. Fills that void.

Barry Fox:

It's a city park.

Melissa Wissel:

it's a nice space where we do the 911 ceremony and the fountain is there and the.

Barry Fox:

Flag poles and everything else. So it'll be a good. It's a good venue for it and it's a good place for it. So it'd be. It'll be great.

Melissa Wissel:

Excellent.

Barry Fox:

So that's what we're moving forward. I've budgeted a little bit of money for it, so we'll see how it goes.

Melissa Wissel:

All right.

Barry Fox:

Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

Anything else you want to tell us about?

Barry Fox:

What else am I doing?

Melissa Wissel:

I don't know. That's all we got.

Barry Fox:

No, we got through the fourth. I did the announcements.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, that's right. You do the fourth. And concerts in the Plaza.

Barry Fox:

which is tonight.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah.

Barry Fox:

Today's my son's birthday, so shout out to my son the 18 July is.

Melissa Wissel:

His birthday when he hears this will be broadcast later. We're going to save this one.

Barry Fox:

Yeah. Oh, okay.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah, we're going to save this for when I don't have anything else to post well, okay.

Barry Fox:

So. No, that's really it.

Melissa Wissel:

So, yeah, we keep you busy. You've got new employees over there.

Barry Fox:

I got one new employee, and we're working on some other things and see how it goes. Yeah. We have a new magistrate instead of a code board. And that's that translation.

Melissa Wissel:

How is that working out?

Barry Fox:

It's going well. It's going well.

Melissa Wissel:

And the magistrate is more of a as needed type of a body.

Barry Fox:

They got. They're there every month. Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

Are they?

Barry Fox:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

But is it, is it scheduled every month or is it every month because there's something that needs to be addressed.

Barry Fox:

It's scheduled every month.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay.

Barry Fox:

Yeah. Every month. We have something to ask. Go before the magistrate.

Melissa Wissel:

All right. I thought the magistrate was like, well, I guess it's more because it's an individual. How does the magistrate work?

Barry Fox:

It's a quasi judicial. They're an attorney. Okay, so it replaced the board.

Melissa Wissel:

That's. Okay. So it was replacing multiple people having to sit on a board.

Barry Fox:

Yeah. You know, we were having trouble filling the spaces, the places in the board, and so they just kind of realigned it. They wrote the magistrate into the short term rental ordinance. And then what we just did, when we started having those troubles filling their spots, Washington, the city attorney went back and just readdressed code board and replaced it with magistrate. Now we hear everything before the magistrate except for nuisance and variances because that has to be a board by law. And then, you know, city commission and harb and planning, zoning.

Melissa Wissel:

That's it.

Barry Fox:

Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

And just like that, we've finished another episode.

Barry Fox:

Yeah, there you go. It was a long 13 minutes.

Melissa Wissel:

It was a short 13 minutes. I think we might have gone over the last time, but always appreciate you coming back. We have a lot of good stories to tell, and we were not finished last time, so thank you for taking the time to let us finish up what we didn't finish last time.

Barry Fox:

I appreciate you having me.

Melissa Wissel:

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Narrator:

You've been listening to the Break Room, a weekly program addressing projects and programs offered by the city of St. 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.