

The Break Room: Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor, October 15, 2024

Narrator:

You've tuned in to 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. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the city of St. Augustine. Thanks for tuning in this week. We've been a bit of a whirlwind, overwhelmed. We've been coming out of two named hurricanes in less than two weeks. I've asked Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline to jump in and talk about what's been happening around the city since her last visit, which was almost exactly one month ago. Mayor, welcome back.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

Thank you, Melissa.

Melissa Wissel:

We, so last month we were talking about 100th anniversary of sister cities, and I had to chuckle a little bit because you will recall when they were here, we had a bad, very spotty weather.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

Flooding rain.

Melissa Wissel:

Flooding rain. That Friday night looked like a hurricane. We couldn't get through the streets. We were walking with water up to our knees. But then we actually had these two storms come through. Helene, of course, was a lot of wind. Milton is our most recent. We kind of hunkered down for that one. Let's talk about Hurricane Milton. You were really pleased with our residents.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

I thought one of the things that I thought was good was how the residents behaved so well. Everybody seemed very well prepared. It was really a bragging point. When I went out to the media was to say that we were ready. It looked like everybody had, they understood the sandbagging operation. And I've got a number here, something like 20,000 bags were given out at Francis Field. People started early asking the question about the parking garage. Could they bring their cars to higher ground? Of course, the city always opens it for free parking during these storms. When they expect flooding, it always fills up. And it did. But people find other places, neighbors helping neighbors.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah, I think a couple of other businesses opened their parking lots. I don't want to name anybody because I don't want to put anybody on the spot next time. But several businesses along the corridors did open up as well.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

Yes, we all really pulled together really well. I was really happy to see how that worked. People. I'm not, you know, we kept, the media would ask questions about, you know, you have an evacuation order, how many people left, and, you know, you don't know, but I think not as many as you would expect.

Melissa Wissel:

We're seasoned. Yeah, I've heard you say that several times, and it's true. We're seasoned. I don't. But I don't think we're the. I don't think we disregard the call to evacuate either. I think people are, because they're seasoned. They kind of know their own personal limit of what

they're willing to risk. But it's for the flooding. We don't want people to get trapped in their homes with the flooding.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

And we always say the same thing every time, which is if you don't evacuate, we're not sure we can get to you. And then, of course, you know, you're putting the first responders at risk because you know they want to get to you. That is their dream and desire, and that is what they're there for. So it kind of puts them in a difficult position, and we always send that message out. But people understand, and as always, people, there are people that stay behind, and then, as always, there are those calls, those are those assists that you get through the night. In this case, they came through the night. Yes, there was a number of those, and I don't have a number for you, but. But I was aware. We talked to the police chief, I mean, the fire chief, Carlos Aviles, by the way, did an outstanding job, but overall, good job.

Melissa Wissel:

I think the hard part for folks, maybe something else that I'm gonna remind folks of, what maybe people do or don't think about. This is what always gets me, is the standing water after a storm, if you've stayed behind and there's downed power lines or there's bacteria in the water, that's. You and I both know someone with very bad infection, almost died. And then we also knew last year someone was electrocuted that we were able to save, and it all worked out. But I think those are the hazards that folks don't think about. So when we ask you to evacuate, think about that, too. Be careful of your own safety coming out of that.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

That's right. These waters are not safe in there. Many times they can be class three waters. They're going to be dirty water. And in some case, although, knock on wood, we did not have failure in our lift stations. The lift stations have, as everybody knows, have been elevated, and so they potentially out of the flood waters, especially what we expected here. I wanted to kind of give you a little bit of a report out. Not that we all want to go through that trauma again, but just to let you know, kind of an after action report, maybe. I believe FPL restored the city fully within a couple days, which is great. The storm itself had, the high sustained winds were 45 to 55 miles an hour, which blew for 7 hours straight with the highest gusts of 62 mph between the hours of one and 03:00 a.m. the recorded rainfall at

the city marina was 6.4 inches. And it's likely that we had a three to four foot storm surge. But since the storm passed at low tide, we did not experience that normal feeling of the three to four foot surge.

So we were prepared for a much worse and more intense storm and thank goodness we were spared. And unfortunately, other communities in the state were not that lucky and got hit really, really hard. So, you know, those folks are in our, and our thoughts. And as I understand it, according to the city manager and the fire chief, there will be assists, assisting teams from various either from, excuse me, public works, from the fire department and the police department to go out to other cities and lend a hand in those communities as they're needed and as our teams are available.

Melissa Wissel:

And we do that because they help us.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

They help us. It's reciprocated.

Melissa Wissel:

So we, and that, that would be my only reminder to folks, you did a great job and don't let your guard down. Cause we're not through hurricane season yet.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

We're not through it yet.

Melissa Wissel:

Folks, I'm gonna ask you to help me on this moment. Before we do a quick, we're about halfway through our visit this week, but I do want to do one urgent reminder. Don't be that guy. Please refrain from driving through the flooded streets after the storms

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

and creating that wake. It can make all the difference in the world for a business or a residence. Just that one inch that gets in, it could be that one inch that wake that you've created in your vehicle. And we know there's no rush after the storm. You don't have to go rushing around. You need to go slow because chances are that salt water and you really don't want it up in the undercarriage of your vehicle.

Melissa Wissel:

You really don't want it in your car.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

I don't know. People maybe don't care, but, you know, I certainly do. And I've always been taught in St. Augustine is don't drive through that water.

Melissa Wissel:

Right, right.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

Because it will rest the bottom of your car.

Melissa Wissel:

Yep. So if you are just now tuning in, you're listening to The Break Room. I'm the communications director, Melissa Wissel for the city of St. Augustine. And Nancy Sikes-Kline is in studio. We're talking about recent storms, the city's preparedness. A kudos shout out to all of our community for being so prepared this time. Before we say our goodbyes, we have a few more minutes, I want to shift gears to a little bit more positive note. And I can't believe we're bringing this up already, but nights of lights is coming.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

That's right. I saw the trucks down in the plaza putting the lights up in the trees. You know, they get started early.

Melissa Wissel:

Yes.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

So it takes them a long time, but yes, it's coming up. November.

Melissa Wissel:

Saturday, November 23, is our light up night. That is the light up night. You and I have talked. Are you revealing who our honorees are yet or not yet?

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

I think we should. I think we should tell them. I think we should tell them.

Melissa Wissel:

Here it is. You're hearing it first. Okay, you say it.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

Okay. So the gets to select. That is one of the few privileges that I actually get. Discretion is the mayor's discretion.

Melissa Wissel:

Yes.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

And this year, in light of our hundredth celebration, hundredth anniversary of our relationship with Aviles, Spain, we're going to invite the Sister cities association, who's been our partner all these years, to come, and turn those lights on the tree and the city and the canopy.

Melissa Wissel:

We're not quite sure who exactly, so we don't want to, Representatives. But that's very exciting. So you heard it here first on The Break Room. So it is breaking news this week, but we've got a reminder. We've got, it's a day long festivity on that Saturday. It's the Saturday before Thanksgiving. And at 04:00 we've got showtime USA over in front of city hall. The all star orchestra plays in the plaza. And at 6:30, we start the lighting. And we'll also have shuttles that weekend or that Saturday. And then we'll also have the free parking and shuttles over the course of the weekends in December. You love the lighting.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

That is my favorite event, is the one thing that I take immense pleasure from. And I love my job. You know, I love my job, but that is just a special indulgence for me to be in the gazebo with the all stars and, you know, they're just, that all star orchestra is amazing. They're so good. And to be able to be there and see everybody's faces and hear that ooh and aw. And that countdown, and it's just an ultimate small town excitement for me, you know, it's just a thrill.

Melissa Wissel:

And a couple of years ago, to be inclusive, we also added a menorah. Yes. It's not the same night. It's during Hanukkah.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

Yeah, it's during Hanukkah. And it's automatically lights every night even though the Chabad does do a menorah lighting and they gather there in the gazebo and they do a lighting. But there's a menorah down there every night of Hanukkah. And we are very proud of that. We are very proud of that.

Melissa Wissel:

And just so folks know, nights of lights goes into January. It always seems to be this big point of discussion, but it will end the last Sunday in January. So if there's any questions. Last Sunday in January. And we start the kickoff for that is light up night on Saturday, November 23. What else have we got going on? It seems like we've been so busy. I think I do want to have a shout out. I'm going to go back to our storm discussion because I think there were some questions this week about the debris pickup. And I did want to remind folks we've got a little bit of messaging out, but reminding folks debris pickup will continue from the storm debris. Just a shout out to Steve Slaughter and Olivia and the whole team down at the, at solid waste.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

Yeah, they're great. And then also one thing I wanted to mention is we do have a king tide cycle coming up in a full moon. So we are going to experience more flooding and we want people to stay prepared for that and not be surprised. Although we're doing, Melissa, your office is doing an amazing job of getting that message out. So, so those are the two topics. Big topics right now is what I'm hearing is when am I going to get my debris picked up and how long are you going to be picking it up? Well, we're picking it up until it's all gone.

Melissa Wissel:

Yes.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

So, and is this a timely fashion as possible? Because we know that these, we know we're still in hurricane season and it's necessary that they get picked up. So stack them neatly. Stack them now get it out of the yard. You know, I know most people were able to do it over the weekend, but I still see more and more pollen coming out.

Melissa Wissel:

I've got ten bags in my garage waiting for yard debris day.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

You know, we lost a couple of those really big, our cedar trees, a couple big limbs come down like you see when it rains and blows like that so, but those, I think those are the main things that we're trying to get people to know just to keep at the top of their minds because they were not finished yet.

Melissa Wissel:

Right.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

But we'll get through it together.

Melissa Wissel:

The king tides, just for some of the, some folks, we've got a lot of new residents. Those king tides are where you see that, what we call the sunny day flooding. So all of a sudden your street will start flooding in the middle of the day during those tides. Check out our social media. We've got the chart, the dates and the times for October. I do know these first couple of days it hasn't, it hasn't reared its ugly head, but I do know they're coming in the next couple of days. So do keep an eye out through around the 23rd for that king tide.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

All right. Well, we will. Thank you. That was good for that. Heads up. Appreciate it.

Melissa Wissel:

And believe it or not, we're out of time. It goes so fast.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

It does.

Melissa Wissel:

Thanks for coming down. You've been on it several times this year. I've really enjoyed having you come down. So we'll have you back again before the end of the year.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

It's great. It's great to be out there. You know, during the storms, I was able to get out there quite a bit. A lot of interviews, a lot of taped messages, which I appreciate. You know, I think especially during those events that you just can't communicate enough. So moving forward, I think we learned a good lesson. We'll just keep communicating because people want to know what's going on minute to minute round. We're all watching weather channels around the clock. Twenty four seven.

Melissa Wissel:

And you got to Come down to the EOC. You spent a lot of time this time in the EOC. It was great to have you.

Nancy Sikes-Kline:

That was my first time as with the storm and spending all that time. Boy, I really learned a lot about how complicated the actions are and I, how important they are and what really goes into it to get these messages out and to get the work done. It's absolutely, they are pros, let me tell you. We have great partners in the county. The emergency operation teams are amazing. Can't say enough good things about them.

Melissa Wissel:

All right, well, and with that, we're going to sign off. If you missed part of this broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning, you can find us on your favorite podcasting app. Look for us on Spotify, Apple podcasts and more. You can find a complete listing of our podcasting platforms, links to this episode and others at citystaugradio.com. we want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around the city and that you hear it

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Narrator:

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