

Visitors Services Supervisor Jessica Joyce, and General Services Deputy Director Barb Moore, February 4, 2025

Transcript

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 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. This week we're starting with a trip to the Visitor Information Center, with us in studio I've invited Jessica Joyce to join me. She's a Visitor Services Supervisor and she's here to tell us about what's happening down at the Vic. And I've also invited Barb Moore to join us for the first time. Barb is the General Services Deputy Director. She's the project manager for what's happening at the VIC, as well as some other exciting things happening around the city. But before we get to Barb, Jessica, welcome back.

Jessica Joyce:

Thanks for having me. Good to be back.

Melissa Wissel:

So, Jessica, I think the last time you were here was December 2021. So, it's been a while. Yeah, I think you also did an interview with my predecessor, Paul Williamson. This is not your first time.

Jessica Joyce:

No, it's not.

Melissa Wissel:

So, tell us about what's going on down at the VIC.

Jessica Joyce:

Well, we're going through.

Melissa Wissel:

Or tell us about. Tell us about you.

Jessica Joyce:

Well, About the VIC and what we do there, I'll tell you about that. We have License Information Host that help visitors plan their stay, but we also help the locals. We hope that everybody enjoys St. Augustine, we have a great gift shop and right now we're going under through a little transformation.

Melissa Wissel:

Big renovation going on, but to you what you were just talking about, even though it's the Visitor Information Center, what we want to know is that locals can come down all the time, anytime if they do their resident discount, they can park super cheap at the parking garage. But we can't get in right now. What have got going on right now, it's a renovation. Of the floors. Tell me about the floors.

Jessica Joyce:

So, the floors so that we have currently have the original floors from when the building was built in 1935. So, they're ninety years old.

Melissa Wissel:

That makes me tired thinking about being ninety years old.

Jessica Joyce:

They they, you know, they're at their end of life. And now we needed to make a change to preserve what we have there.

Melissa Wissel:

I know some of them are being replaced, which we hate to use that word replace, but there are some that are going to be refinished. But the big thing here, I guess the reason that we're talking about this is there's changes in the hours of operation, access of people being able to get in. So, tell me about the schedule changes that are happening down there.

Jessica Joyce:

OK, so right now we're at a limited capacity, but we still have Information Host you could still access all the restrooms. Still come inside to a certain point. From the fifth through the eleventh, tentatively, we are going to be closed for visitor information and the gift shop. But the restrooms. The outside restaurants are still fully accessible at the normal time frame.

Melissa Wissel:

So, excuse me and this is going to go until February fifteenth weekend of the fifteenth, right on Valentine's Day.

Jessica Joyce:

Our goal is the fifteenth.

Melissa Wissel:

Goal we like to say that we like to put the little asterisk barring any unseen circumstances or anything like that. Anything else going on... now when we come back from the renovation, is it going to look the same? I think we're also talking about some maybe new exhibits, different exhibits, not quite sure yet.

Jessica Joyce:

Not quite sure yet, but I hope everybody comes down to see it because with the transformation of the new floors, we're hoping to, you know, shake things up a little bit and change things a little. So, if you're local and you've come here and you're used to seeing the same thing, you might not see the same thing.

Melissa Wissel:

And do we have a discount period if I'm a local that I can come in and shop? Get any kind of discount.

Jessica Joyce:

Yes. So, the whole month of December, we offer ten percent off to all St. Johns County residents. So, you just have to show your ID.

Melissa Wissel:

For Christmas shopping, so if you want to get your local goodies for your out-of-town guests.

Jessica Joyce:

Yeah. Datil pepper sauces, local honeys, local artists. We carry a lot of things that are just unique to Saint Augustine.

Melissa Wissel:

And Local, like you said, I like. I like that about the gift shop you can get. You can get all that other stuff down on St. George Street. But come into our gift shop too, and we've got. Some good local artists. Local books. A nice little book. I call it a book nook.

Jessica Joyce:

It is.

Melissa Wissel:

Kind of a neat little book spot.

Jessica Joyce:

Yeah, that's one of our favorite parts of the gift shop.

Melissa Wissel:

Alright, so renovations are happening and just be prepared for some closures or some limited access to the indoors. All in all, we're going to look forward to some new changes and a fresh look. After the fifteenth.

Jessica Joyce:

Yes, yes, I'm excited.

Melissa Wissel:

OK, awesome. Well, thanks for coming down and talking to us. And we're going to do a quick identification. If you're just tuning in, you're listening to The Break Room, switching gears. All of these great things have to have money behind them. I've invited Barb Moore. She's our Deputy General Services Director, Barb. It is your first time on The Break Room.

Barb Moore:

It is and thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

Melissa Wissel:

So, tell us, you kind of run the money on these projects. Some of that give. Give us a background on what does a Deputy General Services Director do?

Barb Moore:

Well...I support our Director.

Melissa Wissel:

We don't have that much time.

Barb Moore:

You know we cover a lot of the things in the General Services Department, the Marina, the Visitor Center, Fleet, Property Services, Purchasing. But as it relates to this grant. So, we received a grant from the Department of State Division of Historical Resources. In the amount of three million, six hundred and twenty thousand.

Melissa Wissel:

Three-point. Let's call it three-point six. That's not just the floor, though. That's an expensive floor.

Barb Moore:

No, but it's five different projects. So, if it was a line-item budget in the in the state of Florida budget last fiscal year, so we got a grant for two years. The grant expires at the end of June of 2025.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Barb Moore:

So, it covered five different projects. So, the Visitor Center is just one of them.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Barb Moore:

So, we waited till the Nights of Lights to start. Some of these projects.

Melissa Wissel:

Thank you. Thank you.

Barb Moore:

So, starting and kind of tagging on to the VIC. The grant covered the floors, but I just kind of wanted to mention we just got done replacing or restoring all of the windows at the VIC.

Melissa Wissel:

OK. Yeah, they wouldn't let you replace the windows. That's the that's the tough one.

Barb Moore:

It is, but Demari, our partner, has done a great job. That was a Capital Improvement Project. They are just about finished. So, the VIC has a relatively new roof. All brand-new floors will be done in a few weeks and all the windows are completely done.

Melissa Wissel:

So brand spanking new. Fresh paint inside. We're going to get a new paint job.

Barb Moore:

Not yet. Maybe coming,

Melissa Wissel:

Maybe next year, yeah.

Barb Moore:

But is the bulk of what needed to be done at the VIC. And so, you know, kind of to tag on the main floor is a ninety year old floor. It's hard pine. It's very hard to. Come by. So, this went out for bid, and it's being replaced with the very same material. It is not something you can buy off the shelf.

Melissa Wissel:

And it's not laminate, it's not a fabricated, it's not the stuff at Home Depot that's like your, no, no, it's not your.

Barb Moore:

Very few mills in the United States. Those products.

Melissa Wissel:

Wow.

Barb Moore:

So, this actually came from a mill in Kentucky being shipped in and it's all being pretty much hand done.

Melissa Wissel:

Wow.

Barb Moore:

So, it's going to be beautiful when it's done.

Melissa Wissel:

So it's authentic and it has to maintain that historic authenticity hence coming that because it came from the Department of Historic Resources grants.

Barb Moore:

Yes, the grant. Since the department of State has very specific guidelines on all of our projects. They had to approve every single thing we're doing and they're historical. Those the floors were putting in are exactly what's coming out. So, it's going to be really lovely. Moving on to the second grant is the Pena-Peck House and we actually are doing two projects at the Peck House. First one is painting the building. And that was done in February of 2024.

Melissa Wissel:

A year ago.

Barb Moore:

CertaPro Painters won that contract, and they did a beautiful job.

Melissa Wissel:

And the Pena-Peck house is on the corner of St. George Street?

Barb Moore:

81 St. George Street.

Melissa Wissel:

81 Saint George Street.

Barb Moore:

So right now, we are replacing the roof. So that is grant project number three. So, the roof is on there right now is a steel roof and we are putting on a beautiful hand crimped copper roof.

Melissa Wissel:

Really.

Barb Moore:

So, it went through HARB.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Barb Moore:

It's honestly, it's a piece of art.

Melissa Wissel:

Really.

Barb Moore:

What's what they're going to do is going to take. About two and a half weeks to rip off the steel and about two and a half months...

Melissa Wissel:

Oh wow, OK.

Barb Moore:

to put the copper on, they're going to bring it panel by panel. It's all handcrafted. There is and it's all soldered. The roof will last. All of our lifetimes.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, right. Amazing.

Barb Moore:

So, we're working. Very closely with the Woman's Exchange. All the ladies down there are lovely, very excited.

Melissa Wissel:

It's a beautiful facility we have a very long relationship with them. Have a very long history with the City. And the building, the museum that's in there, the gift shop, the grounds. It's so beautiful.

Barb Moore:

It is.

Melissa Wissel:

So that's great to hear.

Barb Moore:

And they are custodians of our building. They do a wonderful job. So, grant wise we're doing the roof and the painting aside from that, also a Capital Improvement Project not grant related, is we have restored all the windows. That was a two-year capital...

Melissa Wissel:

Again, with the restoration.

Barb Moore:

There it is. We did not replace them. Every single pane of glass in that building was restored, and that project spanned two fiscal years for our budget and is complete. So, when we're done with this roof other than the little things here and there, we're putting in a brand-new handrail custom made for the back staircase we're pretty much completely restored.

Melissa Wissel:

Nice, was that five? One more project? You said there was five.

Barb Moore:

That was three. So now we're going on to City Hall, Lightner Museum.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Barb Moore:

So, we have two. Our final two projects are at City Hall. The first one is waterproofing, so I don't know if everybody seen the bucket trucks.

Melissa Wissel:

Yes.

Barb Moore:

The abashed people on the sides of the buildings.

Melissa Wissel:

Right.

Barb Moore:

So, what that project is, and it's one point three five-million-dollar job. Is they are repairing all of the cracks in the building that were previously fixed incorrectly the wrong materials in some of them.

Melissa Wissel:

OK. So, they're basically going back and taking it out, kind of like replacing the grout in your bathroom.

Barb Moore:

Very similar. Very similar, so we...

Melissa Wissel:

Only it's how old. And you have. You can't just stick. You can't throw some caulk in there and call it done.

Barb Moore:

You cannot, It's a very specific material. HARB has approved all of this. We have a second crew repairing all the terra cotta. So, all the Spires you see, all the dental molding around the windows everywhere there's a defect. It's being handcrafted. It's amazing what these people are doing.

Melissa Wissel:

And we still have those that we still have that expertise hard to find.

Barb Moore:

Very hard to find. We've got a great crew. So, they're actually having to color match. You look at our building and depending upon the elevation.

Melissa Wissel:

Right.

Barb Moore:

Some get sun some, some doesn't. Some 's faded, some 's not right, so they are actually coloring every specific area of the building to match.

Melissa Wissel:

You wouldn't think about that. Wow. Wow.

Barb Moore:

And then...

Melissa Wissel:

It's not like you take it down to Sherwin-Williams and they put it under the little thing and go here's your gallon of paint.

Barb Moore:

Absolutely not. So, we've got multiple crews, and we have a waterproofing crew, so they are actually. Applying a waterproofing approved product on the building that will actually repel water. It's going to be amazing. So, our building sucks it up because it's coquina.

Melissa Wissel:

Coquina, yeah.

Barb Moore:

This will.

Melissa Wissel:

Permeable...

Barb Moore:

It won't. Yeah, it won't let any water in. So, we will see the benefits for years and this product will last for years. Won't not need to be reapplied for about ten years.

Melissa Wissel:

Nice

Barb Moore:

And that is a grant.

Melissa Wissel:

So, I was going to say so. When you're talking about a lot of this money, the grants we have a grants program where we apply for grants, and we get it. This is all outside of our general fund or our budget.

Barb Moore:

It is, yeah, completely funded by the state, but it is not a grant. It's a, it's an apportioned line item in the state 's budget, which is a little bit different.

Melissa Wissel:

OK, OK.

Barb Moore:

It was approved by the Governor as a line item in his budget versus something we applied for.

Melissa Wissel:

OK. applied OK, OK, good to clarify.

Barb Moore:

And on the waterproofing project, I just want to make people understand that. The money we're putting one point three five million did not cover the entire building.

Melissa Wissel:

Oh, really? OK.

Barb Moore:

So, it's the City Hall front portion of the building with the cracks and the terracotta repair.

Melissa Wissel:

So that's where my office is.

Barb Moore:

Yes, precisely.

Melissa Wissel:

OK, good precise.

Barb Moore:

So, we're going to try and get more funding. To cover the same project all the way to the back of the building with the Lightner.

Melissa Wissel:

The Lightner OK. Well,

Barb Moore:

So, we have one more and we're in the process. All of these are in the process right now. They've already begun. The last one is the windows.

Melissa Wissel:

Oh, at City Hall.

Barb Moore:

At City Hall and the Lightner.

Melissa Wissel:

OK,

Barb Moore:

So, over the course of the last, probably, it's been twenty years ago. We've already put in replaced three hundred and twenty-eight windows. And these are not restored in City Hall.

Melissa Wissel:

In City Hall?

Barb Moore:

In City Hall

Melissa Wissel:

How many windows are in city?

Barb Moore:

A lot!

Melissa Wissel:

More than three hundred and twenty-eight?

Barb Moore:

Like six hundred over six hundred between City Hall and the Lightner.

Melissa Wissel:

Really. You don't think about that!

Barb Moore:

You don't.

Melissa Wissel:

You'd think, oh there's probably fifty. No.

Barb Moore:

There's no and if you look at the building, every window that you see that is yellow.

Melissa Wissel:

Painted yellow, ok.

Barb Moore:

Has been replaced already.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Barb Moore:

All the brown ones and all the windows in the Lightner have not been touched.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Barb Moore:

So, this grant covers finally replacing all of them.

Melissa Wissel:

All of them.

Barb Moore:

So, most of the windows are at the Lightner. We're working very closely with the Lightner Museum. All of the windows have been ordered. Some we already have here, and we are doing a solicitation right now for the install of three hundred and thirty.

Melissa Wissel:

So, I'm going to get a new window. I have one window in my office.

Barb Moore:

You are. Oh, you're going to get a brand-new window.

Melissa Wissel:

Awesome!

Barb Moore:

and it's a great project, that one the budgets right around one million, five hundred and thirty-five. That includes the windows cost of the windows, so we're halfway there. We anticipate the installation, maybe beginning in March and you'll see people all over, most of the windows are installed from the inside, so they will be working from the inside.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Barb Moore:

Theres some challenges for anyone who's been inside the Lightner Museum

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah, yeah.

Barb Moore:

Most of the windows are there. Every window is being replaced.

Melissa Wissel:

You got a lot going on.

Barb Moore:

It's great. It's so much fun!

Melissa Wissel:

I'm going to have to cut you off. Cause we're out of time, sorry.

Barb Moore:

Thank you for having me though. I'm so excited and this is great!

Melissa Wissel:

And Jessica, thank you for coming back. I we, I put you on the spot and said tell me about you. I said tell me about the VIC. But thank you for giving us the update on the VIC.

Jessica Joyce:

Thank you for having me.

Melissa Wissel:

It's very it's all really exciting stuff. So, my goal this year is to get as many of our staff on air and talk about the projects that are going on and you guys are part of that. And thank you for all the work that you do.

Barb Moore:

We appreciate it. Thank you.

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 Saint Augustine. Join us each week as the Cities 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.