

The Break Room with Marcus Pinson, Environmental Project Engineer Transcript 05.13.25

Narrator

You tuned in to 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, Melissa Wissel.

Melissa Wissel:

Welcome to The Break Room thanks for tuning in. I'm Melissa Wissel communications director for the city of Saint Augustine. If you've been downtown recently coming in from US1 on King Street you've probably noticed some orange cones and a lane closure this is a small piece of the King Street bridge construction project as the city prepares for the FDOT improvements and bridge replacement that is planned for later this year. In studio this week I've invited Marcus Pinson to join me he's the environmental project engineer managing the project he's here to tell us about this little piece of the puzzle, Marcus welcome back.

Marcus Pinson:

Thank you very much Melissa thank you for having me.

Melissa Wissel:

You and I were talking about last time you were on here was COVID.

Marcus Pinson:

That's correct, it's been a little while.

Melissa Wissel:

Talking about. I don't even remember, sanitation practices at the city all the great things we were doing. You were in charge of it.

Marcus Pinson:

I believe so yes ma'am.

Melissa Wissel:

I think you were drilling something over at the hospital maybe.

Marcus Pinson:

This possibly could be another directional drill project yes.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah so directional drill sounds very official, very engineering. So in all seriousness I do think people are probably going Oh no what's happening at King Street? Cones, lane closures, what does this mean everybody gets in a panic what tell us about.

Marcus Pinson:

Yes ma'am so this project actually manifested through the King Street bridge FDOT improvements that are planned in the summer time, with the bridge reconstruction. We have a good number of utilities and other regulatory right of ways like the FDOT&FEC Railroad. And when the time comes where the authority needs to make improvements or replace something we typically have to reposition our utility so it doesn't impede construction of their new design.

Melissa Wissel:

And utilities let's just call it that big pipe that's right along the side of the bridge.

Marcus Pinson:

That's it.

Melissa Wissel:

I don't know if people really pay any attention to it.

Marcus Pinson:

Well you're absolutely right it's something that kind of inconspicuous you know and it you really you don't see it until you if you're you know if you walk over.

Melissa Wissel:

Now

Marcus Pinson:

Bridge pedestrian you know.

Melissa Wissel:

Now that we've said this.

Marcus Pinson:

Oh sure.

Melissa Wissel:

Because we have a lot of listeners now all of a sudden everybody 's like Oh my gosh I never noticed that. I also looked When I was driving earlier today. The when you come from the fire station heading South on US 1 if you look at the little bridge that we're talking about it

goes from US 1 down into downtown you can see the pipe but you wouldn't, You don't necessarily think about what that is.

Marcus Pinson:

No you're absolutely right I think that happens with a lot of utilities you know things that are just kind of inconspicuous or that hide you know and that?

Melissa Wissel:

Hiding in plain in plain sight.

Marcus Pinson:

Exactly.

Melissa Wissel:

So tell me what is it you said directional drill so now that we've identified what this project is, why are we closing off the street and, and lane closure what, what does it mean to do this directional drill of moving these utilities what does that mean.

Marcus Pinson:

Sure, well I'll describe a little bit of it if you don't mind. here well the city. We never really tried to miss out on an opportunity to harden our infrastructure and with that being said, we looked at different designs to replace the main and settled on the HDD or horizontal directional drilling as it's known. This is what is known in the industry as a trenchless technology. Basically you have 2 pits or holes and one is an entry pit and the other is an exit or receiving pit. And a drill rig sits on one side of the obstacle, in this case it will be the West side of the San Sebastian river on King Street and it will drill metal connecting rods at various angles under the river below the mud line they'll track the tip of the drill which is called the pilot head with GPS which is actually really cool they ensure its location matches the design profile and make sure that the pipe is and where it's supposed to be.

Melissa Wissel:

So I gotta I gotta interrupt you for a second so is there like a guy there was like a little remote control kind of thing like. Driving this thing underground?

Marcus Pinson:

That's exactly right it's on the rig it's actually on the drill rig so he can see it so all the controls are there so it matches their profile but absolutely he's paying attention to every

Melissa Wissel:

So I'm picturing that that app game with that like royal match where the the king is trying to escape something and then there's like a drill path of going under the ground or something so is that kind of

Marcus Pinson:

yeah. It could be. Either more or less intricate but basically the same I guess yes.

Melissa Wissel:

So that's cool so OK so you've got one drill on the West side and it's drilling under the riverbed, under underground OK continue.

Marcus Pinson:

OK so once they get to the other side they'll remove that pilot head and they'll attach what they call is a reamer head is a little bit bigger of a head that way you can get through and drill a bit more mud and displace more mud so you can actually get the pipe through so then they'll attach the pipe and pull the metal rods, the reamer head and the HPP pipe all back at once.

Melissa Wissel:

So this is also kind of like when I'm trying to run wire in my house in a conduit I put the little I

put it I tie it to the string and I run it through and then I attach it on the other end of The pipe and I pull it back.

Marcus Pinson:

That's exactly right yeah yes ma'am that's known as phishing too the electrical industry that is exactly right yes yes.

Melissa Wissel:

OK wow that's and so how long does this take this particular piece of this project.

Marcus Pinson:

This phase of the project should be completed before Memorial Day.

Melissa Wissel:

OK and that's.

Marcus Pinson:

so this this this should be completed by next week.

Melissa Wissel:

OK and that's going from West side or east side to West side. Of king of the river.

Marcus Pinson:

Yes ma'am.

Melissa Wissel:

going from basically the dormitory to the foxtail whatever on the end on the corner.

Marcus Pinson:

On the quarter yes of US1.

Melissa Wissel:

Right there and then did you also tell me there's another drill but that's part or not part of this project.

Marcus Pinson:

well it's not a drill that will be an open cut actually on Prawn Street that is just a little bit further east there and so yes that'll actually happen after Memorial Day and that will last probably all of about 2, 2 to 3 weeks so it by the end of June our project we should be out of there and and and be demobilized.

Melissa Wissel:

Now on this one that's going to Prawn Street or at Prawn Street is that going to be another MOT another interruption of lanes and that sort of thing?

Marcus Pinson:

There will be another MOT but it will be very much mimicking what you see right now where we using the center lane for the northbound lane and so. So just kind of deviating lanes if that hopefully no detours and nothing closed down, just switch a change of lanes.

Melissa Wissel:

OK so for right now we're talking a little bit of an interruption. Cones, lane closures through just right up to Memorial Day and then we'll have a little something after Memorial Day and then we are out of there.

Marcus Pinson:

Yes that's correct.

Melissa Wissel:

And then we all sit on pins and needles on the edges of our chairs waiting on the edges of our driver seat. Waiting for DOT to drop the hammer.

Marcus Pinson:

that's true and you'll be seeing that we're going to cities that obviously going to try to connect and communicate with the community and and the further the more we know about their project and and it's progress the for you know we will notify the community.

Melissa Wissel:

We'll have you back

Marcus Pison:

yes ma'am yeah absolutely absolutely.

Melissa Wissel:

OK. Well if you're you're not off the hook yet we're only about halfway through if you're just now tuning into The Break Room you are listening to Marcus Pinson he is our environmental project engineer overseeing the project that's currently happening on King Street right there near US 1. Directional drilling under the river. Pulling the pipes back through getting our utilities underground what other projects you do have a little a few more minutes but I do want you to tell us a little bit about some of the other projects that you've worked on I want you to talk about the headworks a little bit because that was sort of an. And what would I call that like a a very quiet victory for you. It was huge though.

Marcus Pinson:

Yes

Melissa Wissel:

Tell tell me about I always tell people and I know they've heard it here because I always say it if you've never been to the wastewater treatment plant and you are a resident you should call Marcus and get yourself a tour everybody needs to see that because it's where your stuff goes when you flush your toilet.

Marcus Pinson:

Yeah tickets are cheap.

Melissa Wissel:

Dirt cheap

Marcus Pinson:

Yeah so you can reach out to us.

Melissa Wissel:

so tell me about the headworks though.

Marcus Pinson:

So the headworks actually that was one of the probably project I am most proud of at at my career here at the city of Saint Augustine just because of the sheer I guess environmental impact that it has to the river. This project was a replacement of the wastewater treatment plants grit and screening systems which basically filters out all the non biological elements

that find themselves in the process so all your Spiderman figurines and everything that might get flushed down the toilet that's not biological

Melissa Wissel:

Wash cloths

Marcus Pinson:

sure absolutely.

Melissa Wissel:

the end of the toilet paper roll they accidentally falls in.

Marcus Pinson:

Pens, pencils, pen caps.

Melissa Wissel:

Other things we can't mention but it's just if you've accidentally dropped it in the toilet it ends up here at the headworks so tell us then what happens with all of that?

Marcus Pinson:

So that so that's like basically the first line of defense it it's actually pumped with lift stations. Up to this. Branching primary filtering screen system and then it filters everything else goes into a dumpster where it gets landfilled from there.

Melissa Wissel:

And we finished that project you can you I'm going to put you on the spot. What did that what was the cost, did we have cost sharing? Was that a capital improvement project?

Marcus Pinson:

That was the CIP and it was I think right around 4,000,000 or 4.5 I think.

Melissa Wissel:

A big deal.

Marcus Pinson:

Which we saved a lot of money relative because that was a rehabilitation project relative to a total reconstruction which reconstruction I think was running about 25 to 35 million.

Melissa Wissel:

and did that have anything correlating to the hardening for I think we have door dams and stuff down there.

Marcus Pinson:

Absolutely. We raised that's a great question actually so we raised raised all of our programming logic controller panels and our RTU 's and anything electrical that runs the headworks is all elevated out of the 500 year floodplain.

Melissa Wissel:

So now we're not as worried when those storms threaten us. And Oh my gosh here comes the water and everything 's up along with our lift stations.

Marcus Pinson:

That's right.

Melissa Wissel:

In the city OK one other question. Water treatment plant you're also oversee some things that happen over there at water treatment. You don't run it you're not the guy there cleaning keeping the water clean but you oversee it. Tell us what what was I know you had something. It was a very fancy terminology tell me tell me the fancy word and then tell it to me in in my terms.

Marcus Pinson:

Well we just got actually finished completing a motor Control Center project over there. So that motor Control Center was a a total replacement actually and it powers the city 's high service pumps high high service water pumps and the auxiliary generator. It's it's a critical piece of infrastructure that houses breakers, transfer switches and variable frequency drives and other electrical components responsible for sending water out to the community.

Melissa Wissel:

Our fantastic water, you know some people don't like it But I love our water. It's good water. it used to be award-winning.

Marcus Pinson:

It's great. It makes good coffee.

Melissa Wissel:

Yeah. So one last question for you Sevilla Street

Marcus Pinson:

Yes

Melissa Wissel:

That's our next another next upcoming.

Marcus Pinson:

That's true. So Sevilla Street is a complete utility rehabilitation as well so that'll be sewer, water, drainage and then brick rehab because that section that we're going to do I believe it's Valencia all the way to Saragossa. So it would be like those those 2 blocks I believe.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Marcus Pinson:

And so that's all brick so that'll be a brick reconstruction as well.

Melissa Wissel:

Underneath so once you get the underneath replaced you're going to make it pretty on top.

Marcus Pinson:

Yes I am.

Melissa Wissel:

And that's not to be confused with the rehab that's happening at Flagler College that's a whole different.

Marcus Pinson:

That's a completely different project.

Melissa Wissel:

Nothing to do with us.

Marcus Pinson:

As far as I know.

Melissa Wissel:

I don't think we have anything to do with that. Well Marcus you're an off awfully busy guy. What else anything else you want to tell us about?

Marcus Pinson:

We have others, but.

Melissa Wissel:

Tell us.

Marcus Pinson:

But then you know well we can do another break room

Melissa Wissel:

you got one more you got you got like 2 more minutes quick

Marcus Pinson:

Oh let's see here.

Melissa Wissel:

Or tell us more about the DOT project if you want to give us any back story on the King

Street project?

Marcus Pinson:

What we have at the King project is actually is something that Mrs Jamie Perkins is dealing with and and we're reviewing the utilities down that road.

Melissa Wissel:

Oh what is that.

Marcus Pinson:

So that's a complete also a complete project that is all utilities and roadway project as well and a beautification project.

Melissa Wissel:

Is that gonna be where we get the MLK beautified? We've been talking about.

Marcus Pinson:

Yes yes yeah it's in the works.

Melissa Wissel:

That for a long time.

Melissa Wissel:

She's talking about the pretty stuff you're talking about the underground.

Marcus Pinson:

Well it's all it all fits together right you don't wanna do anything pretty before you know before you

Melissa Wissel:

Tear it up.

Marcus Pinson:

improve anything exactly down below so we try to do a complete rehabilitations for something we're going to beautify so we don't tear it back up.

Melissa Wissel:

so you're going to rip it all up and then put it back together and then Jamie is going to make it pretty and when is that going to happen?

Marcus Pinson:

Well I think that's all.

Melissa Wissel:

Come on Marcus. Give me an answer when's that gonna happen so I can hold you to It?

Marcus Pinson:

Well I think they're

Melissa Wissel:

just kidding.

Marcus Pinson:

They're coordinating easements and financing right now so you know as soon as.

Melissa Wissel:

OK something to keep looking forward to.

Marcus Pinson:

That gets worked out.

Melissa Wissel:

Well we got a lot going on.

Marcus Pinson:

it's busy.

Melissa Wissel:

Thanks for coming.

Marcus Pinson:

Sure, thank you for having me.

Melissa Wissel:

Well we'll have you back to finish talking more about all that stuff that's happening on King Street and any other directional HD DP, whatever, horizontal horizontal directional drill yes thanks Marcus.

Marcus Pinson:

Thank you.

Melissa Wissel:

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Narrator

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