

Jabari White, Nightlife Liason, July 22, 2025

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:

Thanks for tuning in welcome to *The Break Room* I'm Melissa Wissel communications director for the city of Saint Augustine. This week we have a first-time guest joining us. Jabari White, he is the nightlife liaison and permit technician for the city of Saint Augustine. He's responsible for keeping track of and enforcing mobile vendor permits, First Amendment art, driver for hire, medallions, pedicabs and taxis and if that wasn't enough, he's also out and about downtown late at night, on the weekends keeping an eye and ear on things. Jabari welcome to *The Break Room*.

Jabari White:

Hi thank you for Having me.

Melissa Wissel:

So you got a lot on your plate. You started with the city we were saying 2 years ago ish and you've been the permit tech nightlife liaison for about a year. Give us a little background. And introduce yourself to us let Us know who you are.

Jabari White:

Yeah so I say my name is Jabari White, I am a local. I grew up here went to St Augustine High School, graduated in 2012. Raised family here, like my family's been here for multiple generations and I've always loved the City and it feels really good to be a part of something that's actually serving the city.

Melissa Wissel:

Wonderful. You started in solid waste.

Jabari White:

Correct.

Melissa Wissel:

Got your foot in the door, how did you come upon this position? Was it just you were wanting a change or was did the position really kind of interest you?

Jabari White:

So it was kinda I I love and I have to give all credit to my position to God really because. I came into solid waste because I was at the school board first and from there I wanted to try to get into law enforcement and long story short I went for their physical test and I got hurt during the test. But I you know grew a relationship with people at the PD and it was really great. And then I heard that this position was coming open and just keep an eye out for It and apply for it and you know and luckily I I got it and so I'm right where I want to be to help serve the city and I'm just doing in a different way than I thought I would be.

Melissa Wissel:

And you bring up an interesting point. PD, nightlife liaison and the permanent technician is a job out of the Police Department it's not a I mean you work for the city but it's a Police Department position. And you enjoy? Do you carry a gun?

Jabari White:

I do not. I do not. I am, just so people can understand, only sworn officers carry firearms.

Melissa Wissel:

OK OK OK so you're not armed. I want to come back to the nightlife liaison position because that was born out of the night light initial nightlife initiative from a couple of years ago but I want to talk about your permit technician job because it really is there to address and The keyword enforce permits mobile vendors let's talk about that First Amendment art. Give me give me the lowdown on what that really is so that our listeners understand.

Jabari White:

Sure which one would you like first is it a little bit.

Melissa Wissel:

Let's do, let's start with mobile vendors.

Jabari White:

Mobile vendors OK so during like our big events like Nights of lights, 4th of July and Sing Out Loud weekend, you know we have always have like an influx of people that come into town it's great it's great for our businesses and everything. So there are people who like to sell what I like to call their wares. But to properly and legally sell them here in the city you have to be permitted. And sometimes people try to come in and they don't like to get the permit and they just you know because there are certain rules of what you can and cannot sell. Just for example no mobile vending can sell food or drink in the in the city of Saint Augustine that is just, we don't allow it. So with mobile vendors there is a a little bit that has to go into that for you to be a mobile vendor. Right, so you have to be there there's a background check and then there's also you have to have insurance and you have to have a sales tax receipt that kind of goes into the weeds. I'm not going to get into the weeds with that.

Melissa Wissel:

Sure.

Jabari White:

But. You have to have certain documentation for you to be able to be permitted with the city to be able to go out in the street and sell and then also what you are selling has to be approved as well.

Melissa Wissel:

We'll just I'm going to just say it you're being very polite and saying it it's the folks that come and pop up on the sidewalk or they pull up their truck and they open their trunk. And here we are and to your point also we have people that are mobile vendors year round.

Jabari White:

Yes.

Melissa Wissel:

That are permitted and they're they're conducting their business and in a sense these folks who come in just quickly haphazardly on any given weekend kind of threatens. The other businesses a little bit if they're not doing it legally.

Jabari White:

Correct.

Melissa Wissel:

We want to make sure that it's legal.

Jabari White:

Correct, like we want to make sure that it's legal because whenever I started this job, there was at least with my people who were constantly permitted right there was discussion of like well this person is doing this and this person is doing that I wanted to eliminate all that so with going through my job for the year throughout the year. I was able to get 8 people educated on what our standard is and what the what the code enforces and allows

me to enforce with mobile vending and then pretty much all those problems started they just really go away and compliance is great.

Melissa Wissel:

Wonderful and you have special hours of operation that you accept applications and that you process permits is that correct?

Jabari White:

correct

Melissa Wissel:

can you give us that?

Jabari White:

So my I I got to call them my in-office hours, they are Tuesday through Thursday. And I am processing those permits for Drive for Hire only on Wednesdays let me state that only Wednesdays, but but all 3 days I will do mobile vendor at the police station from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Melissa Wissel:

OK so let's switch gears on that real quick before we switch gears I do want to let folks know if you're just tuning in you're listening to *The Break Room*. I'm Melissa Wissel communications director and I have Jabari White in studio he is our nightlife liaison and permit technician and we're having a very robust discussion about vendor permits and permit enforcement. So we just talked about you mentioned the vendor permit and drive for hire so let's go ahead and jump in to drive for hire. What is drive for hire and what's the difference between drive for hire and petty cabs?

Jabari White:

So really there is no difference. Like drive for hire you can consider it as like an umbrella term.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Jabari White:

Which is so under there there can be different types of driver for hire. Pedicab is one of the probably one of the more popular ones here in town. But there are people who like to use their personal vehicles to use as a quote, unquote type of taxi system you know business to you know to be able to shuttle people back and forth. If anyone ever goes to The Amp you know like you see where the petty cab guys are always lined up and you always see like where the taxi drivers and people who like to use their personal vehicles are lined up. But that's like one of the better ways that actually see like the difference in between them. But there are people out there who like to use electric golf carts that are permitted they I've seen this one really cool it looked like a bike but it also looked like a old time like like first edition Ford, it was really cool.

Melissa Wissel:

OK.

Jabari White:

Yeah like so people get really creative with them.

Melissa Wissel:

Thank you set up a little pull behind something on his bicycle that looked like an old timey car.

Jabari White:

No, it was it was it was a petty cab but it looks like like the frame of it just looks. Like uh I I forgot the name of the of the car.

Melissa Wissel:

He. He's out there listening to like oh you're so close you got it wrong.

Jabari White:

yeah yeah yeah so sorry about.

Melissa Wissel:

That's OK yeah that's good so but those are also regulated or at least they have permits we don't have any type of a cap or anything on that correct?

Jabari White:

Correct.

Melissa Wissel:

You can you can bring in your business apply for a license and once you're approved you can go run your business.

Jabari White:

Uh. Correct correct correct as the code sits in states right now there is no cap on it there is no. I'm sorry I shouldn't say there is no, but there IS right regulations to do that and one of the things that I look for when I'm out on the street is 2 main things one you have to have the City of Saint Augustine business license that we print out and give you and you also have to have a medallion On the vehicle bike or whatever you are using to transport people from A to B.

Melissa Wissel:

that's going to be clearly displayed?

Jabari White:

Correct it. Should be clearly displayed excuse me on the back of the vehicle. Now sometimes these carts and things get a little bit oddly shaped as long as it's just somewhere that I can easily identify and see we're good to go.

Melissa Wissel:

And the medallion or excuse me you've got the medallion and you said the. You were pointing to yourself is it like a something that they need to be having on their person that's easily identifiable so you're not having to stop them.

Jabari White:

Correct so because that that's a good point because I am not a sworn officer I cannot pull people over I can't stop them. Just like when they're just pulled over and having a break or whatnot I can then go over have a conversation with them and the 2 things that I that I'll ask and look for is there some people call it a hack license I like to just call the city of Saint Augustine ID badge that we print out for all mobile vendors, all First Amendment, and all drive for hires. OK they have to have those 2 things in order to operate.

Melissa Wissel:

OK so we've talked mobile vendors, vendor permits, medallions, pedicabs, driver for hire you mentioned First Amendment let's talk about that one for a minute First Amendment art?

Jabari White:

Correct. Correct. So that gets a little tricky in some spaces because everyone is kind of subjective about like you know what they considered to be art. And what is not, but just to kind of put it plainly from my experience in the past. Here it has to be something that is it

can't be utilitarian. It can't have any useful purpose. So like the example that I like to give people when they're asking me questions is you know you can take like a wooden kitchen spoon and you can dress them up however you want to. But in my eyes you can still use that to make soup like it has a functional purpose as long as it does not have a functional purpose and it's just literally there just to look as what it is just a beautiful piece of art, then I consider that a First Amendment piece of art.

Melissa Wissel:

That is permitted.

Jabari White:

that is permitted correct.

Melissa Wissel:

So I can't go paint spoons. And get. So a painted spoon would be considered art not it would not be considered First Amendment.

Jabari White:

It would not be considered first amendment in the way that the code reads because I can identify another purpose for that just upon first appearance.

Melissa Wissel:

OK and when we say we're permitting that does that mean. If I was painting something I have to have a permit to paint it?

Jabari White:

No no no. You can make whatever you want. It is the selling part it's where it has to be where is where the enforcement part comes in correct.

Melissa Wissel:

OK ah OK the selling part got it thank you OK that's where I was having a hard time getting there. got it OK so I can't sell my spoon that. That's painted because it's still a spoon.

Jabari White:

Correct but you know you can't make soup with a painting so you can easily sell a painting right.

Melissa Wissel:

Got it yeah. No that's a good way of putting it and it really what it comes down to is like you just you said vendor it's the ability to sell your product, your wares. Well I'm going to say this, how are people responding to you?

Jabari White:

In the beginning there was, I don't wanna say pushback, but there definitely was kind of like a little bit of like well what is this like why is this so new? And I had to come in and kind of tell people like if this isn't new, this is exactly what the code has been for the longest time. And it is just become my job to make sure that I educate the public on it so we just get back to full compliance. So the beginning was a little it was maybe a little rocky, but like now it is complete compliance. And I have grown to have really good relationships with pretty much all of our vendors who are here year round. Get to know their stories, get to know their families even, so it's been really cool.

Melissa Wissel:

Do you feel like maybe in that radius of the people who are coming in those sort of I won't call I don't even call them bad actors it's just the folks who come in and try to jump in on it without getting a permit. Do you think words getting out at all? I didn't like a little bit of like hey you know the city is cracking down the city Is serious about this? we're paying attention.

Jabari White:

Correct. And a lot of and some of it I would definitely say comes from the vendors themselves because you know like they're not gonna like they like not to say like you said bad actors or whatnot but. They come in and then they see these people who obviously don't have a permit they've never seen them before they'll you know try to strike up a conversation with them and they'll just say hey just to keep in mind there is somebody out here who does enforce this for us and if he comes here you know like then a different type of conversation will be had with you so like I've always. You know kind of heard stories about people that I just never seen right that come in and they try to vend something but by the time I get there they're gone. So it's it's I think the problem in the for the most part starting to handle itself.

Melissa Wissel:

Right. Well I told you this would happen we didn't even get to talk about your nightlife liaison position so we're going to have you come back I hope that this has given our listeners a great understanding and education about vending, permitting, and your job and we're so excited to have you.

Jabari White:

OK. I appreciate it. Thank you for having me.

Melissa Wissel:

Thank you we'll have you come back and we'll talk about nightlife liaison roles next.

Jabari White:

Be super excited thank you.

Melissa Wissel:

You can now find us on your favorite podcasting app. Look for us on Spotify, apple podcast, Spreaker and more. A complete listing of our podcasting platforms, a link to this episode and our past episodes is available online at citystaugradio.com. Follow us on social you'll

find us on Facebook, Instagram, and X at citystaug and the Police Department. Shout out to Jabari's organization at staugPD. Until next time, thanks for tuning in.

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 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*.