

The Break Room with Jacob Webber, Grants Administration Coordinator, December 23, 2025

Narrator:

You've 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 I've invited our grant administration coordinator Jacob Webber back to *The Break Room* for one last interview in 2025 we have an update on some final projects and a sneak peek at a very exciting and highly anticipated project kicking off in 2026 Jacob welcome back.

Jacob Webber:

Thanks for having me back.

Melissa Wissel:

You had a busy end of the year last time you were here with our harbormaster Eric Mauldin can you give us a quick recap or however long you want to take tell us about how things went at the lighthouse park boat ramp and then wrapping up the municipal Marina dock repairs.

Jacob Webber:

yeah absolutely. Kind of touch base on where we were from last time so good news is repairs are done at the lighthouse boat ramp specifically the dock right that's what they're working on. And they've moved to the Marina now I heard when they're working on

everything they got it done very you know efficiently quickly and they also did it in a way that let people come in and out of the dock. This is a really great process contractor has been great and now they're now they're moving forward to the second part which is definitely the bigger part of the project. Uh. I believe the timeline was something like 3 months about the you know the work it would take but that breakwater dock that they're working on that was damaged is so important you know was there on Monday just kind of checking things out seeing how the project was going and it was like a super it's been really windy this week right like super windy and the wind is blowing in waves crazy crashing into that dock and then right past that with the other docks you just see calm water calm.

Melissa Wissel:

Alright well you don't I've worked at the Marina for a year years ago when I first started and I that is definitely makes an impression because you look out and you see all the chop. In the mooring field all coming through but like you said you just turn around and you look into the Marina. Nothing it's just calm.

Jacob Webber:

It's Just calm. yeah it's it's one thing to see photos because I've seen some of the you know documentation from Milton and whatnot just kind of seeing how crazy the tide was water levels and the wind when you're out there you can see some strong wind. And actually have first-hand it's it's pretty incredible what we come up with the you know help marinas out or anywhere honestly any projects.

Melissa Wissel:

mitigating Mother Nature

Jacob Webber:

yeah

Melissa Wissel:

so you just mentioned we do still have a couple of months remaining on the repairs in the Marina but it's coming along and looking good.

Jacob Webber:

Yeah they I think they got some material out there recently getting things ready they've been working out there even during the windy times you know there's still out. There uh going along and it's they're doing it smoothly making spaces where they can for everyone to still come in there.

Melissa Wissel:

Still Operating.

Jacob Webber:

Yeah during this busy time you know Eric 's really great at that is navigating these big projects and still getting everyone in that he that we need to during this holiday season.

Melissa Wissel:

Well and this is the time of year we in in October and then again April ish we call it the migration the migration going South the migration going north but now like you said Knights of lights people are here it's very busy.

Jacob Webber:

Right.

Melissa Wissel:

So let's switch gears and talk about I'm not sure if people are aware of the project I think I've known about it just because I work for the city but talk to us a little bit about the history of the project what happened what's been taking so long just give us the back story on it on St. Francis 's house.

Jacob Webber:

Yeah so it's very exciting because it's I think you mentioned earlier it's kind of been a long time coming. We got this grant a couple years ago it is a CDBG grant which is a community development block grant specifically CDBG CV so was there in the kind of COVID-19 period of time so you know when you're getting federal funds. Especially something like this there's a lot that goes into getting these projects off the ground besides it being federal you also have state and local requirements that you're. Trying to meet. With these kind of funds in particular when you have it from the federal government you have different requirements when you have to purchase contractors contracts materials when you have to pay your laborers who is out there and when you're working with engineering or planning so all those aspects it takes a lot of coordination. It takes time.

Melissa Wissel:

and timelines are so critical

Jacob Webber:

yes and timelines are so critical. You know you get a grant for a period amounts you know X amount of time you try and squeeze it all in there and then you realize oh we also need to you know make sure we have our Environmental Protection measures in place and you know maybe there was something else that came up with design or maybe there is a code or part of the permits that we had to go back to. And so that process takes. Some time but I think a lot of people. In the city and the people who've been working with you know the Saint Augustine society who's you know in charge of Saint Francis housing and the contractor we just got you know this year we signed that agreement with breaking ground and the engineer Dean Scott all these actors have been doing. Great work to move this forward and so the exciting part is they you know broke ground to start construction a couple months ago and we're looking at finishing it sometime next year before the summer. And it's been going smoothly which is which is part you. Always love to.

Melissa Wissel:

Knock on wood.

Jacob Webber:

yeah knock on wood.

Melissa Wissel:

so exactly what is this so we're talking about all these things up that we haven't really said so at Saint Francis house but tell us about what this is what it is at Saint Francis house and why this is so important.

Jacob Webber:

Right so Saint Francis house crisis center is there for those in need right those who are experiencing homelessness who don't have a place to stay in particular families right in this you know in our city you know surrounding. Yes and so previously they had a space really close to where we're constructing the new building in fact I think it's right next door where they could house about 4 families and this project is going to increase that to 9 families or 34 individuals and so it's really going to increase the capacity of those you can bring in. You know when the grant was received again kind of during the COVID-19 process there's a focus on getting people out of areas where they might get sicker or getting them isolated getting the right healthcare they need to recover you know from contraction of COVID-19 and whatnot and so this building is going to serve. Couple different purposes in that way where it's going to bring people in it's going to give them shelter it's going to give them you know a break in a place to recover from any sort of illness I do believe Saint Augustine society is also working on a program with local hospitals to kind of get those people there too if they need to stay and recover. You know a little bit longer it so that's that's kind of where the project and then is addressing.

Melissa Wissel:

The building that we're talking about though you mentioned it's next door to one of their other they have a they have 3 buildings I believe.

Jacob Webber:

yes

Melissa Wissel:

and this building it's been worked on but then we've had some storms and some damage and so have there been some things along the way that have interfered with the progress?

Jacob Webber:

Yeah no that's that's exactly right so it was it was kind of started there was damage there were storms stop things and it kind of stopped and I think you go on to Washington street you can kind of see the 4 walls and it's kind of been like that for a bit now and if you've seen people kind of. Working on that street around that building that's the Saint Francis kind of project we've we got going on and and so. Yeah I'm not sure exactly the time frame but they are getting close to a portion where it's all sealed in and when it's all sealed in you know it's protected from elements then you get into the inside you start working on the inside elements and so that part's really cool that the fact that you know I've been these 4 walls for a period of time for legitimate reasons.

Melissa Wissel:

and it was I mean it was almost like. I mean it looked there was no structure it was the outside you could see through it. There was no roof on. It yeah and it was just and we I know that I've always wondered if like when are we going to get that done when are we going to get that done. So it's great to have you had a chance to go down and see it?

Jacob Webber:

yeah you know funny enough from the conference room for General Services where I work you can see. Right down the window so sometimes I'll just kind of walk into the conference room and look out the window and kind of see like Oh yeah we're working on it again you know they're getting the electrical wiring and sewage lines all you know ironed out underneath and when they told me they're going to get close to that process where the whole building sealed in it's like. Great sense

Melissa Wissel:
it's a huge step.

Jacob Webber.

It's a huge step and you know the team just keeps moving forward anything that comes up they keep pushing forward.

Melissa Wissel:
And the we had to get an extension on it are we you said by summer time this year hopefully we have a, will they do a groundbreaking or a ribbon cutting maybe.

Jacob Webber:
Right I'm you know I'm not too sure exactly kind of what that process is going to look like just because there are still elements right we're working with the grants like we said we got it a little while ago and so we've had to extend that a couple times I think total of 3 modifications to the grant. And so mostly time purposes extending extending it so we have the time but because it's funding was in the past there's a hard deadline that comes up in the summer where the grant can't go any further past this summer deadline so that's kind of where we're at but we're looking earlier in the year and then summer that's just kind of like the hard deadline. Some interesting thing too with funding in particular, because extending grants can be a little bit easier to like hey I can I get a little extra time like yeah we kind of bake that in you know weather, administrative services, whatever it might be, but funding is always a little more tricky right like going back to the well saying hey I need some extra dollars.

Melissa Wissel:
An Extra \$100,000.00 or whatever.

Jacob Webber:

Right and delays can cause complications because if construction you know if you have an estimated price in 2020 and it takes you a couple years to get to the actual solicitation all of a sudden prices go up but you know for this project it was estimated I think at \$1.3 million in the price came back 1.7 you know roundabouts but the Saint Augustine society stepped in actually and is covering that \$400,000.00 gap so they you know they really are.

Melissa Wissel:

Partnering

Jacob Webber:

Partnering with the city and we're all really working together and we have some stakes in this this project and we really want to See it through.

Melissa Wissel:

so you were mentioning just to recap so this is a project on Washington street part of the Saint Francis housing crisis center and this is going to be for families. Tell me again the numbers you said we it was 3 families now it's 9.

Jacob Webber:

So it was 4 families before now it's 9 and that could translate into 39 individualis total so it's kind of like you're doubling capacity from before and that previous center I believe they're going to repurpose for individuals as well so they're you know overall capacity for getting in these individuals who are experiencing homelessness or having these issues you know increases dramatically.

Melissa Wissel:

And they have programs there that you have to enroll in you know that you're participating that you're an active participant in the housing is being provided and it's great to see that the city is helping to get this project finally come to a close and get that house built.

Jacob Webber:

Yeah then it what's cool about this project and kind of Saint Francis here is between Jacksonville and I want to say Deltona yeah between Jacksonville and Deltona this would be the only full-time little barrier housing option. For those individuals so it's really crucial right there's a large space between Jacksonville and Deltona so. It addresses a big need and it's amazing that city gets to come in and and contribute where we can to helping those who are having a really hard time out there.

Melissa Wissel:

Well and it's it's not just like you said it's not just within Saint Augustine and Saint Johns county it reaches up Jacksonville and and and further out so the fact that we are in a position to be able to provide that to provide safety particularly when you've got children involved I think the school system you have we've got some notes here. More than 500 students that are without safe permanent night time residence so the fact that we can then you know after this. Is finalized to bring in those families and and keeping families together it's so critical.

Jacob Webber:

Yeah yeah no it it is so critical and especially for the families right and for those children who are developing and going to school it's it's a big deal to have a roof over your head even for a little bit while you work on things and get get back on your feet so.

Melissa Wissel:

Anything else that you've got brewing for 2026 I'm putting you on the spot here and if you're not if you're not prepared to answer that you can tell me that you're going to come back.

Jacob Webber:

Well so 2026 you know a lot a lot of what I do has a lot of grant management right I'm looking forward to closing out some projects or a lot of FEMA stuff that I'm like I really want to close out want to get them done we have some. You know administrative costs are going to get reimbursed for some some of that maybe might more be more than nitty gritty kind of less less interesting we did just recently finish dredging salt run. That was a huge project so

26 is us going back and asking for reimbursement for that project that was super super great.

Melissa Wissel:

Right.

Jacob Webber:

And it's always you know benefit to the channel to have that dredge and get that material out of there and and we should be pretty solid there for a while. But I would say a lot of what I've project wise working on I think got to go back and see where we're at with some of those you know kind of go from there but.

Melissa Wissel:

Getting some money back and yeah new year umm well congratulations on wrapping up some of those projects that's a nice feeling at the end of the year to kind of put some of that to bed and and. Hit the ground running in 2026.

Jacob Webber:

yeah. No thank you yeah it's it's exciting.

Melissa Wissel:

well we'll have you back when we've got something more to report on Saint Francis house maybe we can make an announcement about a ribbon cutting. And until then happy new year.

Jacob Webber:

happy new year to you too.

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 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*.