



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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Multi-venue exhibit space for 450th

Admitting a need for exhibit space for our upcoming commemorations, Monday night's City Commission discussion centered on whether to build an 8-10,000 square foot exhibit hall or spread exhibits through existing facilities.

Spreading the exhibits won, as commissioners authorized funds from the 450th commemoration account to assess available properties for space.

"We won't get them all under one roof," Commissioner Don Crichlow said, "and there's an advantage to having different exhibits in different places."

City venues will be studied, as well as properties in cooperation with the University of Florida, Flagler College, the National Park Service, and private properties. Crichlow noted as well temporary structures, "more modern tents that have the feel of permanence but can be disassembled after the commemoration."



Assault on FOG

Haven't the foggiest about FOG? Read on.

It's Fats, Oil, and Grease, and our city, thinking green for both economics and environment, has developed a FOG Program to reduce clogging our sewer lines, both through state-mandated grease interceptor tanks for food businesses and greater awareness

UF official confident of preservation partnership

"I'm genuinely excited in our ability to put together a partnership that will advance the cause of historic preservation."

City Manager John Regan paraphrased a note from University of Florida Vice President Ed Poppell to City Heritage Director Dana Ste. Claire, following a week of visits to 34 state-owned historic properties here now managed by the University, and negotiations to form a city/university management agreement.

"(Poppell) said he can't believe what we're doing in the Spanish Quarter," Regan said. "Wares made in the quarter being sold in the gift shop, the interpretive stations manned. He saw some great improvements."

Negotiations are continuing with our city's hopes that we will continue management of the Spanish Quarter and Government House.

City closing \$2 million gap

in our homes.

Details on our city [website](#) point out that dishwashing patterns in our homes can create as much sewer line indigestion over time as restaurants without interceptor tanks.

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Commissioners Monday approved a tentative millage of 7.5, holding the rate to this year's level but representing a \$1.2 million loss in next year's budget.

"It's actually a \$2 million loss considering rising expenses," City Manager John Regan said.

"Staff has been working hard to close the gap," Regan said, "through shrinking middle management, incentive retirements, and reduced outside contract services among other efforts."

One example, Regan eliminated his former position with his elevation to city manager.

The tentative millage rate is set to provide the county with a figure for tax notices. Commissioners will workshop the budget in August, with public hearings in September before final millage rate approval.

Short list for City Clerk successor

Four city employees have applied to succeed City Clerk Karen Rogers, who will retire July 19, but commissioners Monday delayed a decision for two weeks in the absence of Commissioner Leanna Freeman.

City Clerk assistants Carly Mason and Darlene Kirkland, City Manager John Regan's executive assistant Alison Ratkovic, and Spanish Quarter employee Joseph Dezendorf have responded to internal advertising for the position.

Regan said he could provide a short list, but commissioners decided to wait until the full commission can vote, and continue advertising in the meantime.

Appraisals ordered in Wendler hotel suit

Commissioners Monday approved \$15,000 for appraisal of seven properties, part of a lawsuit brought by Donna Wendler after our city rejected her plan to demolish the properties and build a boutique hotel between King and Oviedo streets.

City Attorney Ron Brown said the suit is based on the Bert Harris Private Property Act, which calls for compensation for property owners' lost income as a result of government action. The city faced a similar suit several years ago on dock plans for the Fish Island development, finally reaching a negotiated settlement.

The city has until November 1 to respond to the suit.

'No flaws' in commuter rail plan

A feasibility study for commuter rail service between St. Augustine and Jacksonville has "no flaws," Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTA) spokesman James Boyle told commissioners Monday - except perhaps the 8-10 year wait to get funding in place.

"Volume of ridership, time, and costs are all comparable to other areas," Boyle said of the plan for 13 stations from Jacksonville to West Augustine, with 51 minute morning, afternoon, and evening runs, "competitive with automobile drive times."

Boyle noted the commuter plan differs from the current Amtrak initiative as it will serve workforce commuting, while Amtrak service along the east coast is longer city to city service with fewer stations.

Style procedure moves to second hearing

Commissioners Monday passed to a second public hearing in two weeks a proposed ordinance to move actions under Architectural Guidelines for Historic Preservation (AGHP) from our Comprehensive Plan to the City Commission level.

Approved after public hearing was an Islander Planned Unit Development (PUD) for 72 townhomes along SR 312 south of the All American Air Conditioning offices, with assurances the developer will work with the Florida Department of Transportation on creating turn lanes for growing traffic at the SR 312 and Mizell Road intersection.

Another design for Spanish Street

Property owner George Arnold will present a design for a Second Spanish Period-style commercial and residential building at 74 Spanish Street as he returns to our Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) Thursday with a request to demolish an 1865 two-story structure.

The HARB meeting is at 2 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall.

Arnold has already gotten approval to modify a neighboring smaller building at 76 Spanish Street to develop a restaurant. In previous HARB hearings,

demolition has been denied in hopes the Civil War era building could be saved. With demolition, only pre-1821 structures can be built in this historic preservation district.



Restaurant (left center) and residential/commercial buildings proposed for 74 and 76 Spanish Street

Recycling bin choices go to HARB



Choices - trio at Castillo, black steel, and city's wood style litter boxes designated for recycling

Five designs for recycling bins in our city will be presented Thursday to our Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB), which oversees styles in our historic district. Among them are bin trios styled after those in use at the Castillo, black or blue steel single bins, and converted wood-styled litter bins currently used in our historic district.

Our city will also seek HARB approval to modify sidewalk plans for Aviles Street, where a redesign project begins next month, and modifications to the small building adjacent to the White Lion Restaurant, to develop a visitor drop-off and entry to the Colonial Spanish Quarter.

For folks who enjoy a cool drink on the porch of Ann O'Malley's Tavern on Orange Street, HARB will be asked to approve installation of two outside ceiling fans.

Info session on proposed carriage ordinance

A public informational meeting is scheduled for next Monday to discuss a contentious proposed horse drawn carriage ordinance, which drew a standing room only crowd to a preliminary workshop two months ago. The session will be held from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall, hosted by Assistant City Attorney Carlos Mendoza.

City commissioners gave assurances at the first workshop that the proposal would undergo extensive hearings, and Heritage Director Dana Ste. Claire said, "Our business plan is about improving the visitor experience, and one visitor expectation is our horses and carriages."

Key sticking points in the proposed ordinance are a \$5,000 annual carriage permit fee and regulation of ticket sales by city staff. Carriage business owners were urged to review the plan with city staff during the two-month hiatus.

Of 46 permits authorized by the city, Murphy McDaniel's Avalon Carriage Company holds 43 after buying out former owner Stuart Gamsey during legal battles. Two others are held by Country Carriages and one by C.B. Hinson.

History's Highlights

Our founder's adventure began as a teenager

One in a series of historic features as we prepare for our commemorations, drawn from research by George Gardner.

5 years, 1 month, and 27 days to St. Augustine's 450th anniversary

There are similarities in the founder of our city and the founder of its gilded age 300 years later.

Henry Flagler left home in his early teens to seek his fortune. Pedro Menendez, as well, began his venture in life as a teen, leaving his 19 brothers and sisters to live in a foster home and pursue his love of the sea.



Pedro Menendez de Aviles y Alonso de la Campa was described as compact, muscular, with years at sea etched on his face; a small head, high forehead, long nose, and small mouth. He was animated in conversation, but also good listener.

As a teenager he commanded a small fleet fighting French corsairs plaguing Spanish shipping in the Mediterranean. He showed his unusual talents at an early age. At one time, French corsairs attacked vessels carrying a wedding party. His small *patache* was no match for the three attackers, so he separated two in a chase, and took them one by one. The remaining attacker fled.

By 1558, at the age of 39, he had proved himself a responsible, if not always obedient, commander. Ordered to escort six *zabras* (freighters) with four warships to the battleground at Flanders, he found only four freighters, and no warships, ready. He decided not to wait, and sped the convoy to the distant port before the corsairs could attack.

The return trip was more spectacular. Ordered to escort six ships, he found another 27 stacked up, with a French armada laying in wait. Adding the 27 to his convoy, he approached the fleet, gathered his charges and wove and darted about, leaving the fleet in confusion and safely reaching port.

His rise to become Spain's greatest seaman of the age was rapid. Seven years later, as Captain of the Ocean seas, he would assemble a fleet and cross the Atlantic to drive the French from Florida and found St. Augustine, our nation's oldest continuously occupied European settlement.

The St. Augustine Report is published by the Department of Public Affairs of the City of St. Augustine each Tuesday and on Fridays previewing City Commission meetings. The Report is written and distributed by George Gardner, former St. Augustine Mayor (2002-2006) and Commissioner (2006-2008) and a longtime newspaper reporter and editor. Contact The Report at gardner@aug.com

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