



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



Published by the Department of Public Affairs, City of St. Augustine, Florida

August 10 2010

450 foundation now official

Not without some concerns, city commissioners Monday approved turning over the reins of our 450th commemoration to a community-based non-profit foundation, along with \$275,000 in start-up funding.

The foundation has yet to complete its bylaws and organizational chart. "Is there an opportunity for the city to bless the bylaws?" City Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline asked. "We are using tax dollars to provide seed money for this foundation."

"To make a clean cut," City Attorney Ron Brown responded, "the city cannot exercise any dominion and control. It can, however, terminate the agreement at any time."

Attorney Don Wallis, member of a city-appointed 450 steering committee, and businessman Colin Bingham developed the private foundation concept. That committee voted to disband, its membership being offered foundation board seats.

"We need to cut the cord and move ahead," Commissioner Don Crichlow said.

Wallis anticipates the foundation's first meeting "before the end of next week" to begin developing bylaws and an organizational chart. He promised "transparency will be a priority" in the foundation's activities.

The First America Foundation, Inc., will be headquartered in a storefront at San Marco and Cincinnati avenues.



Wedding bells hit sour note

"We don't want to ruin anyone's wedding day," City Commissioner Leanna Freeman remarked, but our City Commission agreed Monday that some regulation of short term rentals being used for large wedding parties is necessary.

After an hour of public hearing and discussion, commissioners advanced to public hearing August 23 a proposed ordinance including registration and a limit of less than 20 at gatherings in short term rental property.

Targeted is a Water Street property being advertised on the internet and drawing large groups, music, and even fireworks.

City Attorney Ron Brown said code enforcement officials need code support to cite offenders, and Planning and Building Director Mark Knight said a \$250 fine for the one day events can be wrapped into the wedding expense, while violation in a registered property can bring fines of \$250 a day for seven days. City code already requires short term rentals to be no less than a week.

Among complications to be debated over the next two weeks: the impact of rental registration on homestead exemption, and gathering limits affecting residential parties throughout the city.

Recycle bins approved

Look for recycling bins in your neighborhood, following approval by our Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) of bins styled after current grey litter boxes. HARB chose a black three-product steel receptacle for the Visitor Center and Aviles Street areas.

As part of an expanded recycling program, our Public Works Department has already placed cardboard containers for businesses in our historic district and is developing a recycle drop-off at the solid waste facility on Riberia Street.

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Do we need a city clerk?

There may not be a successor to retired City Clerk Karen Rogers.

Mayor Joe Boles made the suggestion Monday as commissioners turned to the process of studying more than a dozen applications for the post.

City Attorney Ron Brown said the clerk's primary function is verification of authority on official documents, but that the charter could be changed and the city manager rearrange responsibilities to discontinue the office. A proposal is expected at a later meeting.

Aggressive panhandling 'a small circle'

"The homeless is a large circle, panhandling a small circle within it, and aggressive panhandling an even smaller circle," Assistant City Attorney Carlos Mendoza told commissioners Monday as he waded into proposals for stiffer regulation of aggressive panhandling.

Mendoza said current city code prohibits threatening, touching, or blocking a person's path, and suggested adding continuing to solicit, soliciting within 20 feet of an ATM or financial institution, at outdoor dining facilities, at or on transit facilities, persons standing in line, and after dark.

City Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline added one suggestion to the list: soliciting around parking meters or terminals, "anywhere people have their wallets out."

Mendoza will continue shaping an ordinance for commission review. In the meantime, the King Street /Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue and Davenport Park/May Street intersections are expected to be added to the list of banned areas for panhandling.

Additional beds for homeless - a success story

A pilot program three years ago, providing additional beds for the homeless, resulted in sheltering 322 persons in just one week, City Manager John Regan told commissioners Monday. And he suggested the former county fire/rescue facility off South Dixie Highway - planned future home of St. Francis House - could have similar success.

"Those placements resulted in 111 job referrals, eleven photo IDs, 22 bus tickets and tokens for family reunifications, 22 substance abuse and 46 case management referrals" among other services, Regan said.

He proposed using the existing fire/rescue building, "which housed firefighters," in the same way. The 2007 program, in which the city paid St. Francis House \$15,000 for three weeks to provide bed space, allowed police to move persons sleeping in the Plaza to the alternate shelter. The program could not continue because St. Francis House has inadequate fire protection.

Regan said a proposal by former Mayor George Gardner earlier in the meeting, to reconsider a 42,000 square foot industrial building on Dobbs Road, now in foreclosure, "would be too expensive - a \$10 million program." St. Francis House's relocation plan includes a 7,000 square foot two story building with 66 beds.

Official voices to go on camera

For years the city's three principal officers, city manager, city attorney, and city clerk, have been only voices in televised City Commission meetings. City Manager John Regan told commissioners Monday night that will change with installation of an additional camera. "We (officials) are engaged in discussions with you," Regan said. "The public should be able to seeing who's talking."

Scout project aids Spanish Quarter

Eagle Scout Danny Geores saw an opportunity for a service project during his scout troop's visit to our Colonial Spanish Quarter to help with spring cleanup. The result is a goat enclosure, carefully designed to historic standards and completed over six days with twenty other volunteers.

"It wasn't easy." Danny reflects, "We tried to reuse as much wood as possible, but a lot of pieces had decayed over the years and were just unusable. We were able, however, to salvage original hinges and nails; we made it work."

Museum historic interpreter Brad Taylor, who's completing a shelter within Danny's enclosure, is among those appreciative of Danny's efforts.

"St. Augustine's history belongs to everybody in the world I suppose, but especially to the people of St. Augustine. If we can get the people of the community more involved in what we do here, then they can feel an ownership and a pride in the history."



Taylor with shelter project

History's Highlights

Florida Ordinances become earliest martial law

One in a series of historic features as we prepare for our 450th, researched by George Gardner

5 years and 30 days to St. Augustine's 450th anniversary

One year after the founding of St. Augustine in 1565, Pedro Menendez faced a dilemma: he had been charged by Phillip II to lead a naval expedition to seek corsairs and build the defenses of the island Indies.

But mutinies had developed in the Florida garrisons he established - St. Augustine, San Mateo, and Ays in the Canaveral area - for want of supplies and reinforcements. Menendez had to leave the garrisons in strong condition to withstand external attack and avoid further mutinies.

The *Adelantado* gathered all his Captains and issued a declaration. He first noted that many past attempts to conquer Florida had come to grief because of insubordination and poor discipline. Once lack of respect for authority had begun, he said, then plots among the soldiers could multiply.

Therefore, he had agreed with his Captains upon certain ordinances to govern the soldiery and the community's life. These were published and made the law of the land.

The Florida ordinances reflected the closely interwoven nature of Royal government, religion and current military tradition. A scold or complainer would be punished by sitting eight days with his head in the stocks and then eight more with his feet in them; he would also forfeit his wine ration.

Any man blaspheming against the saints would lose a day's wine. A soldier was obliged to recite the catechism twice daily; if he did not know it after a year, he would forfeit three months' pay. The fine would go to the hospital and for Masses for the Catholics who died or would die in Florida.

To discourage the well-known hot temper of the soldiers, it was forbidden to put hand to sword or dagger against another, on pain of six months at hard labor on the Royal fortifications. Assault was also forbidden; the penalty, perpetual galley service. Libel was punishable by three lashes. Desertion by going from a soldier's assigned post to another fort without permission could result in the death penalty.

Finally, it confirmed a system of local government and justice, quite similar to that of the Metropole (civic center), except that military Captains would serve ex-officio on the Council.



From Eugene Lyon's [*The Florida Mutineers, 1566-67*](#)

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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