



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 24 2010

State aides want city contract to get on Trustees agenda

'Incredible hiccup' in Castillo center plan

State staff notified our city Monday that it must sign a contract agreeing to purchase or replace state-owned land needed for a Castillo Orientation Center in order to get on the agenda of the Internal Improvements Trust Fund - the Governor and Cabinet - which will decide on the land transfer.

"This is an incredible hiccup based on our discussion with the Acquisition and Restoration Council," said City Manager John Regan, referring to assurances by that board twelve days ago that it would not push for compensation, but rather let the trustees decide.

"Let's cross out the reference to repaying \$588,000 in three years, execute the contract and send it back," Mayor Joe Boles suggested, and won commission approval.

The unexpected turn came after 11 p.m. Monday, at the end of a lengthy commission meeting. The land is a portion of the Colonial Spanish Quarter which, coupled with city-owned land, would be given to the National Park Service to build the center.

"This is not the trustees, this is staff," Vice Mayor Errol Jones said of the demand. "I'm not going to commit half a million dollars without hearing from the public," Commissioner Leanna Freeman said. "It's after 11," Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline added. "There's no public here. That's (official action) wrong."

"We have to have National Park Service assurance that any expense will be covered by future revenues" such as joint ticket sales with the Spanish Quarter and higher parking fees in the Castillo parking lot shared with the city, Boles said.

Commissioners agreed against any action committing the city financially, but Boles' contract adjustment was supported, while City Manager Regan promised his team would be focused on clarifying the issue. A formal trustees staff meeting is set for September 8 and the trustees meeting September 14.



Voting 'til 7 in primary

Voting continues until 7 tonight in what for two County Commission seats and possibly one City Commission seat will be final election to office.

Primaries are designed to reduce the number of candidates in the same party for an office to one for the November general election. But only Republicans have announced for County Commission District 2 (incumbent Ron Sanchez, former County Administrator Ben Adams, former Commissioner Karen Stern, and Randy Brunson) and District 4 (former Commissioner Jim Bryant, Joseph Mayhew and Jay Morris).

With no challengers from other parties, this will be a Universal Primary - all registered voters, regardless of party, can vote.

The single City Commission race on the primary ballot is Seat 5, where incumbent Nancy Sikes-Kline faces Chuck Hennessey and Dutch Register. City elections are non-partisan. The top two will go on to the November ballot, unless one wins more than 50 percent of the primary vote to win election to the city seat.

Three non-partisan circuit judge races and one seat on the Anastasia Mosquito Control District are also on the Universal Primary ballot.

(Wedding) party is over

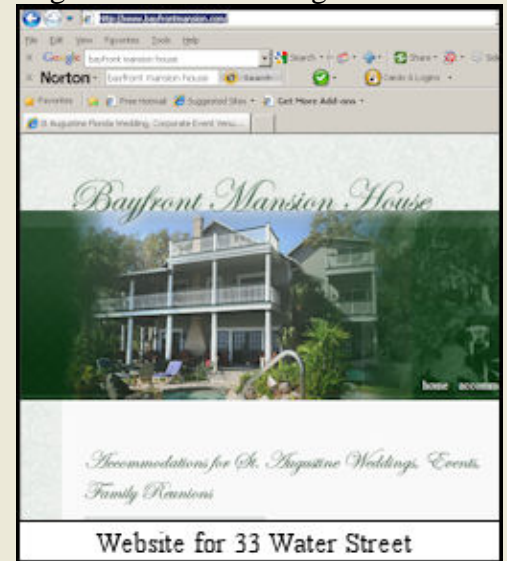
Large wedding parties at 33 Water Street brought the issue forward, but even the property owner complained about similar events near another property he owns.

Our City Commission voted unanimously Monday to require registration of short term rentals of more than four times a year, and to limit gatherings to less than 20 at those registered properties. The vote came at the end of an hour of debate and public comment, during which resident Virginia Whetstone-McGuire noted, "It's the amplified music."

Robert Graubard, owner of 33 Water Street as well as a bed and breakfast on Marine Street, was among those protesting large gatherings near his Marine Street property.

City Manager John Regan showed commissioners a [website](#) advertising Graubard's Water Street home for "Weddings, Events, Family Reunions." He suggested the matter could be enforced under current city code, but commissioners weren't swayed by that or a letter from Graubard promising to discontinue wedding reservations at the end of 2010. Graubard has six reservations through the end of this year and nine so far for 2011.

Under the adopted ordinance, violations at registered properties can draw a \$250 a day fine for each day of the rental period, as opposed to \$250 for a single instance under previous code. Repeated violations go to \$500 a day.



San Marco rehab sold, will close in 2-3 years

The San Marco Rehabilitation Center, recently sold to Brooks Home Care for \$5 million, is scheduled for \$250,000 in improvements. It will then be closed "in two to three years," Brooks Representative Linda Jewell told city commissioners Monday.

In a shuffle described as "part of doing business" by one commissioner, the San Marco center's seller, Whispering Creek LLC, has modified the Whispering Creek Town Center plan to add 40 skilled nursing beds to take patients from the San Marco facility.

Both a resolution approving a Jacksonville \$65 million regional bond issue and first reading of the Whispering Creek modification were approved. The bond issue only impacts our city as the San Marco facility is located here.

Jewell said Brooks is venturing into a new field of skilled nursing, and will use the San Marco facility for training. She assured commissioners existing staff positions are secure.

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Previous Issues

King /Riberia added to panhandling ban

Our City Commission Monday added the intersection of King and Riberia streets to a proposed ordinance extending areas where panhandling will be banned. The ordinance, which will move to a public hearing, also includes the May Street/Davenport Park area and King Street and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue.

Also moved to public hearing is an ordinance strengthening regulation of aggressive panhandling.

Commissioners also adopted a policy for loaning city archaeological artifacts, got updates on mooring field installation, planning for better pedestrian access along the bayfront and replacement of the San Sebastian bridge on US 1, and approved three resident parking spaces on Shenandoah Street.

Container conversion

Opportunity for released inmates among ideas

Recidivism - the return of released inmates to prison. In St. John's County, more than two-thirds of released inmates are back in prison within 3 years. They leave jail with \$50 dollars and a change of clothes.

Flagler College's Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) has a better idea: supportive housing and transitional employment for former prisoners, using converted oceanic shipping containers.



Vision for converted containers
LOCI Design - Tim Woods

SIFE's *Containers for a Cause* "will give participants gainful and steady employment, the tools to become self-reliant, and a place to live with the support they need," SIFE Advisor Donna DeLorenzo says. "SIFE's vision is to create a business and vocational training program that will employ discharged inmates to convert these containers. The program will teach plumbing, electrical work, insulation, construction and more as these individuals transform containers into homes."

It's one of several ideas for the shipping containers piling up on this side of the ocean. Of 800,000 shipping containers entering Jacksonville each year, some 240,000 are left unused. Other ideas: creating a business in West Augustine to convert containers, and converting a container into a produce business. Designs have been prepared by [Tim Woods](#) of LOCI Design.

SIFE President [Victoria Van Arnam](#) says the plan is well under way, with architectural plans at the county building department for approval, partnering with Home Depot for furnishings, and with the St. John's Housing Partnership to receive the first container. Victoria welcomes your ideas.

After plan approval, that model 40-foot container will be converted on the parking lot of the St. Augustine Record.

History's Highlight

Menendez challenges French foothold

As St. Augustine's 445th birthday approaches, this is the first of four accounts of our founding period, including Pedro Menendez' contract with Spain's King Phillip II, the founding voyage, the battle with the French, and the founding.

5 years and 16 days to St. Augustine's 450th anniversary

Pedro Menendez' voyage to La Florida, initially planned to establish settlements and disband a French settlement, had grown into a major military expedition as, one after another, reports reached Spain that French Captain Jean Ribault was preparing a fleet to replenish and reinforce Fort Caroline near today's Jacksonville, and that he was adding to his fighting force.

The two fleets arrived within days of each other, Ribault already at Fort Caroline as Menendez sailed along the coast, identified the area where he would establish a garrison, then continued north until the French settlement was spotted.

Within hornshot if not cannon shot, Menendez asked the French who they were and why they were there. Came the expected response: We are Huguenots, loyal to France and laying claim to this land.

Menendez relayed his king's options to them: Leave this Spanish territory, remain and pledge allegiance to the Spanish king and church, or be put to the sword.

There followed a brief flexing of sea muscle before Menendez turned back to establish his settlement, offload supplies, and prepare for battle.

The hurricane that struck the area in the second week of September gave the two commanders choices. Ribault decided it would provide cover for his force to attack Menendez' fleet in his harbor. Menendez decided an overland assault would be safer than risking his ships in the storm.

September 20, 1565, two weeks after its founding, Menendez assigned a home guard at St. Augustine and began a four-day march in torrential rains through marsh and swamps. His force easily overwhelmed the defenseless French fort, while Ribault's fleet was storm-driven past St. Augustine and destroyed along the coast in the Canaveral area.

Days later, Menendez' troops found 200 survivors of the Ribault fleet some 15 miles south of St. Augustine, and later another 150, including Ribault.

Those professing the Catholic faith and allegiance to Spain were spared - the remainder giving that area its name, Matanzas, Spanish for slaughters.

Image: floridahistory.org

Next: St. Augustine's Founding



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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