



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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Area officials to meet with Mica ***Appropriations on agenda with congressman***

Federal funding for projects throughout our county will be on the table Monday as area officials meet in joint special session with Congressman John Mica. The 10 a.m. public session will be held in the Virginia Room at Flagler College's Ringhaver Student Center.

Included are the St. Johns County, St. Augustine, St. Augustine Beach, and Hastings commissions. Each commission has a wish list for federal stimulus and other funding opportunities.

For St. Augustine, Chief Operations Officer John Regan says, "First, we'll want to thank the congressman for his efforts in securing funding for the federal St. Augustine 450th Commemoration Commission (\$500,000 a year through the commemoration period) and for our seawall mitigation project."

That's a \$4.7 million project to strengthen the seawall south of the Bridge of Lions, now being evaluated by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

"We have several requests in connection with our 450th commemoration," Regan said, "including \$3.2 million for improvements along our King Street entry, streetscape improvements in the core historic district - Charlotte, Spanish, Cuna, Treasury, and Hypolita streets, and underside lighting for the Bridge of Lions."

Our city Thursday secured purchase of the car wash site at US 1 and King for \$222,000, to be turned into a green space entry, which Regan said demonstrates the city's commitment to King Street improvements.



Historic style returns to City Commission

The question of what architectural style we want in new construction in our historic district, first raised last summer when City Commissioner and architect Don Crichlow proposed a 20th century commercial building on St. George Street, returns to the City Commission Monday.

Planning and Building Director Mark Knight and City Attorney Ron Brown will outline legal steps necessary to revise our long-standing Historic Preservation (HP) District guidelines, asking commissioners if they'd like changes.

The city has five HP Districts. Commission debate has focused on three in the downtown area north and south of our Plaza.

It's on an agenda that also includes a proposed amendment to the recently passed extension of alcohol sales hours, a public hearing on an ordinance to ban trailer, boat and heavy commercial parking in residential areas, and updates on the Chase Park Boys and Girls Club and the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

The meeting begins at 5 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall.

February dipped in chocolate

Our Visitor and Convention Bureau reports a decadent good offer to celebrate this month of Valentine's Day - a *One and Only St. Augustine Chocolate Tour*.

"Step aboard an Old Town Trolley and be whisked away on a decadent tour drenched in chocolate delights," they say.

Included: chocolate treat stops at Hilton Bayfront's Aviles Restaurant, Casa Monica Hotel, Claude's Chocolates, Whetstones Chocolates, and Raintree Restaurant.

Tickets are \$60 for the tours each Saturday and Sunday from Feb. 6 thru Feb. 28, at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Details at 904.829.3800.

Colonial or alternative style?

Commissioners last summer, after extensive debate and public hearings, turned down a proposal to build a revision of the Bishop's Building at St. George Street and Cathedral Place, deciding the architectural style should be Spanish colonial.

Crichlow, who as project architect did not participate in the Bishop's Building discussion, said later "We are a city of more than four centuries. We should highlight our different eras in architecture."

Commissioners appeared to agree that HP 3 - the restoration area north of Hypolita - should reflect Spanish colonial. HP 2 south of Hypolita and HP 1 south of the Plaza might be debated for styles of different eras.

Among the legal steps Knight and Brown will outline: making changes by ordinance rather than resolution - which doesn't require public hearing, and updating the city's comprehensive plan, which carries the original Historic Preservation District guidelines.

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Tweaking alcohol's toast

Discussion while commissioners recently approved a temporary extension of alcohol sales hours from 1 to 2 a.m. led to suggestions of a further tweaking, and Monday's proposed ordinance to change the weekday opening hour from 7 to 6 a.m. and adjust the Sunday opening time.

Vice Mayor Errol Jones suggested many fishermen are preparing for the day at 6 a.m., and other commissioners noted that Sunday brunches cannot serve liquor before 1 p.m. Sunday opening time will be decided by commissioners if they approve advancing the ordinance to a public hearing at a later date.

The temporary extension of alcohol sales hours, also passed recently by our county and St. Augustine Beach, sunsets July 12 unless further extended by the bodies.

Upchurch Skateboard area reopens weekends

The Hamilton Upchurch Park skateboard area, closed last fall to install a 12-foot sound barrier wall, reopens tomorrow - but only for weekends from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. while painting wall, landscaping and sidewalk installation are completed.

West King Street repaving begins in April

Road projects in the first block of West King Street off US 1 should be completed by the end of February, and repaving of the entire street to Holmes Boulevard and beyond should begin in April, County Public Works Director Joe Stephenson says.

He apologized recently to our City Commission for the lengthy construction period in that first block. "We were replacing water and sewer lines as well," he explained, "and had to do small sections to keep the older systems operating as new lines were installed."

The West King repaving is temporary, but sorely needed, he said. "Our master plan for West King is for utility extension and a wider street with curbs, sidewalks, and a middle left turn lane. We continue to seek funding for that, in cooperation with the city."

Stephenson said the repaving will extend over I-95 to State Road 13A, and anticipates another round of stimulus funding to complete the project to SR 13. The repaving is expected to take three to six months.

Gullah/Geechee Commission to meet here

The [Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor](#) Commission (GCCHCC), a four-state federal panel, comes to St. Augustine February 19 for its first quarterly business meeting of 2010.

"This is a great sign of things to come," Derek Hankerson says - and will report to city commissioners Monday. Derek is part of a team that's been pushing for continuation of the heritage corridor - extending from Wilmington NC to Jacksonville - to include St. Augustine and Fort Mose.

The public meeting will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at St. Paul A.M.E. Church, and focus on partnership opportunities with non-profits; cities; towns; federal, state, and county governments. Last summer our City Commission issued a proclamation of support for the extension effort. Gullah communities were established in the 16th Century by Africans left behind by Spanish explorers when establishment of a colony in 1526 failed in the Carolinas. The culture continues today, as does the Gullah language, partly derived from West African and Creole dialects.

Derek says the extension is in the National Park Service Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor management plan, which is being reviewed by the U.S Department of Interior.

Keeping Amtrak plan on track

The push for Amtrak commuter rail service from Jacksonville to Miami, recently sidetracked from federal funding, will be stepped up for the next round, City Commissioner and North Florida Transportation Planning Organization representative Nancy Sikes-Kline vows.

"We should not walk away from this as if it's over," Nancy responded to an item in the Report that the proposal was rejected because it "did not demonstrate that the project was sufficiently developed to receive funding for the proposed activities..."

"Plans are developing to get tourism, attractions and hospitality industries together to build an advocate program for our town," she said.

Nancy's working with Kim Delaney, liaison for the AMTRAK/FEC East Coast Corridor Coalition. Delaney's Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council spearheaded the proposal for the \$268 million project, succeeding in getting 132 letters of support in the effort. Delaney said more cities nationwide are seeking a piece of the passenger rail stimulus pie, and Florida may miss out on the opportunity if it doesn't fight harder.

The Amtrak FEC Corridor Coalition plans a meeting later this month in Cocoa Beach, followed by a St. Augustine community leader's meeting in mid-March, Nancy said.

"St. Augustine is touted as the poster child for an AMTRAK station location (at US 1 and King Street) since it is located near downtown travel destinations and the city's multi-modal center," Nancy says. "The rail station will bring an estimated 40,000-50,000 annual new visitors to our city. Now is the time to turn up the volume and make ourselves very vocal to our representation in Tallahassee and Washington to get the project prioritized for funding." Contact [Nancy](#) at 806-6203.



Sikes-Kline

History's Highlights

San Pelayo part of our forgotten past

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

More from a 2005 talk by historian and author Buff Gordon to our Historical Society.

How many of you know the name of the ship that brought the first truly permanent colonists to what is now the United States?

It was the San Pelayo, a 900-ton galleon built in Spain, one of the most powerful ships afloat and the flagship of Pedro Menendez and his 800 colonists.



It was named for his ancestor, the Visigoth nobleman warrior named Pelayo, who became King of Asturias and eventually Saint Pelayo; he had led a small band of Christians and defeated a Moorish army in 722 at Covadonga, inspiring Christians in northern Spain to re-conquer the peninsula.

However, England-looking history writers got into our schools first. Generations of children, like most of us, crayoned the Mayflower and its brave English pilgrims. No children colored the San Pelayo and its brave Spanish colonists.

A replica of the Mayflower can be seen in Plymouth; where is there a replica of the San Pelayo? (Ed: our 450th Maritime Activities Committee is working to develop a replica smaller 16th century caravel).

The forgotten San Pelayo has company. A 2005 poll at a college in Maryland found that only 30% of the students knew Mount Vernon was the home of George Washington; 23% thought it was Gettysburg. The rest thought it was... anyone want to take a guess? Graceland.

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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