



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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Community call to save properties

It's time for our community, which banded together to create the restoration area for our 400th anniversary in 1965, to rally once again for those historic properties for our 450th.

Heritage Tourism Director Dana Ste. Claire and our City Commission have developed a solid business plan for public/private partnerships to repair the 34 state-owned historic properties and to breathe new life into our Colonial Spanish Quarter experience.

After years of trying to maintain these treasured properties, our city had hoped necessary funding - estimated at \$27 million - would come through management and budgeting by the University of Florida (UF). But four years after the state legislature authorized UF to take over, funding is still not there and not likely in the foreseeable future.

A personal message

Now our community needs all our voices, individually and as organizations, to urge UF President Bernard Machen to support repeal of that legislation so we can proceed with a plan that will work.

As mayor (2002-2006) and commissioner (2006-2008), my major priority has always been our heritage. The heart of our heritage program is people with a passion for our city, and it will be those people and that passion - both here and abroad - that can rally to show the world our pride as we commemorate 450 years as our nation's oldest city.

Never have I been more confident.

I urge a community like no other to contact President Machen to support the repeal, and to support a City Commission and management who have demonstrated their ability to get this job done.

President Machen's contact information is president@ufl.edu, 226 Tigert Hall, PO Box 113150, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611, phone 352.392.1311, fax 352.392.9506.

George Gardner



Commission job #1 a new city manager

A license plate for our birthday

One of initiatives on the minds of our City Commission is a license plate recognizing our 450th anniversary.

The image above is one possibility. Likely graphically-inclined St. Augustinians can come up with something better.

The process promises to be a challenge. According to the Department of Motor Vehicles [website](#), "The organization must hire an independent survey company to conduct a survey on Florida registered motor vehicle owners, an application fee of \$60,000, a long-term and short-term marketing plan, financial analyses and the design of the license plate. The requirements must be submitted to the Department 90-days before the first day of the legislative session."

On the other hand, maybe some well-planned lobbying can get waivers and endorsements in our state legislature.

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City commissioners Monday night will face a task not encountered for a dozen years, the selection process for a city manager.

With City Manager Bill Harriss' announcement earlier this week that he'll be retiring this summer after 25 years with the city, the last twelve as its chief executive officer, commissioners will begin discussion of a successor.

That discussion tops an agenda which includes a report from the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization on transportation improvements through 2015, and an interlocal agreement with the county for drainage improvements in the Ravenswood area.

City manager search begins

City Manager Harriss is expected to recommend that the search for his successor begin within our city government.

Harriss noted the tenures of city managers in St. Augustine has been exceptional in a state where the average stay of a city or county manager is three years. He credits that to the quality and professionalism of our city's management staff - both he and his predecessor, Joe Pomar, were groomed in the local ranks.

SR 312 bypass remains in slow lane

The North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) will report to city commissioners Monday that right of way acquisition - at least - is funded through 2013 - the start of our commemoration period.

The acquisition alone is estimated at nearly \$7 million, with \$41,000 local contribution and remaining funds from a Surface Transportation Program and Transportation Regional Incentive Program.

Yet to be scheduled on the long-awaited project to relieve traffic on US 1 - engineering and construction.

Ravenswood Drainage improvement

The ill winds of Tropical Storm Fay may blow some good as the county seeks a Disaster Recovery Initiative grant to improve drainage in the Ravenswood area along the west boundary of St. Augustine.

City commissioners will consider an interlocal agreement with the county as the area includes portions of our city, but the project will be totally funded by the county.

Who should run a 450th foundation?

Our 450th commemoration needs a non-profit foundation - primarily to raise funds, but one resident suggested to orchestrate the commemoration as well.

The question raised Wednesday, at the first of an expected series of public workshops on the 450th, was whether the foundation should be government or privately controlled.

"Government is good at some things, but not things like the 450th commemoration," resident Bill Leary said. "It can't be nimble, like a private foundation."

"Our taxpayers have to pay for all the infrastructure," Mayor Joe Boles argued in favor of City Commission control. "We take the hit when things go wrong. We have to be accountable."

Leary, a retired US Department of the Interior official, has been assisting the city in the process of finalizing the federal St. Augustine 450th Commemoration Commission. He suggested a private foundation of community representatives, with the federal commission and Regional Steering Committee as advisors to it, would be more efficient, but added the city must have oversight to hold the foundation accountable.

Commissioners agreed greater communication with the community is necessary, and along with regular public workshops, discussed updates through email, a 450th website being developed, and email newsletters like the *St. Augustine Report*.



Sorting out architectural styles

Our Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) will be sorting out historic architectural styles and fitting them into our codes and comprehensive plan at its May 4 session at 2 p.m. in the Alcazar room at City Hall.

Also on the board's agenda: a zoning change to allow a bar/cocktail lounge in the former Panache property on Hypolita Street - where John Arbizzani plans a piano bar called Rhett's adjacent to Scarlett O'Hara's, and a Planned Unit Development (PUD) request for a Flagler College Welcome Center on Cordova Street.

Our City Commission seven years ago approved a code change to allow varied era styles in Historic Preservation District 1 (HP-1) - the area south of the Plaza. But it somehow ended up in the code as approval for varied styles in HP-2 and HP-3 as well - those areas north of the Plaza.

A proposal to build a late 1800s style commercial building at St. George Street and Cathedral Place pointed up the flaw, and that legislation was rescinded. Commissioners agreed varied styles should be allowed in HP-1 alone, and City Attorney Ron Brown said any changes in Historic Preservation District architectural styles must include a change in our comprehensive plan where they're specified.

Brown also suggested that any style changes should require an ordinance, with public hearings, rather than a resolution as enacted by our commission in 2003. PZB will sort it all out for recommendation to our City Commission.

Change of Flags - the way it was



Adelsperger

The April 20 *Report* item on flags on our Bridge of Lions sparked memories for Marge Adelsperger, whose late husband Dewey was director of exhibition buildings from 1967 to 1976. "His idea was to 'Educate while Entertaining,'" Marge says. Along with pictures from her files, she sent a newspaper clipping reprinted below.

"In the early 1970s my husband was in charge of the marchers on St. George St. from the City Gates to the Hispanic Gardens," Marge says, "and then Dr. (Michael) Gannon, with his magnificent voice on tape, would introduce 'St. Augustine, THE CITY OF CENTURIES,' and the program would continue.

"It was done with the high school boys volunteering," she says. "I don't remember where the costumes were from, but I was one who helped mend them. The boys if I remember right were Jimmy Allen, Robert Banta, Bobby Eutzler and Ernie Bjorkman. Bobbie and Ernie went on to be

news anchors in New Orleans and Denver."

History's Highlights

Flag Ceremony was daily experience here

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



With a roll of the drums and the tramp of marching feet, the history of St. Augustine, the nation's oldest living city, unfolds through the Change of Flag ceremony held four times daily in the restored area.

Each program depicts a period in the colorful four-hundred-year life of Historic St. Augustine. The programs are presented each day except Friday in the Hispanic Garden, corner of St. George and Hypolita streets.

The initial ceremony takes place each morning at ten o'clock when the Spanish flag of Don Pedro Menendez de Aviles, the city's founder, is raised by soldiers wearing authentic costumes. Preceding the actual raising of the flag a special narrative is given of the history of St. Augustine to 1565.

At twelve noon, soldiers wearing Spanish and English uniforms of the 1760 era, lower the Spanish flag and raise the English flag while the announcer presents a history of the city through the English occupation from 1763 to 1783.

At 2 p.m., the English flag is lowered and the Spanish flag of 1783 is raised, to portray the return of Spanish control of the city from the English.



At 4 p.m., soldiers in the Spanish uniforms of 1821, and their American counterparts, lower the Spanish flag and raise the American flag, to commemorate Florida becoming a United States Territory.



Each program begins with the soldiers marching from the St. Augustine City Gates,



located at the north end of the restored area. They march down St. George Street to the cadence of military music of the period being depicted, and thence into the Hispanic Garden for the actual ceremony.

Shutterbugs have not been forgotten in the program. Adequate time and space has been provided for them to take pictures during the actual ceremony. In addition, the soldiers will be on the street following the programs for any additional photos requested. The Change of Flags ceremony will be held during the summer months only.

Pictures and reprint of newspaper article, courtesy of Marjorie Adelsperger

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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