



# THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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## Regan becomes city manager July 1

With approval by our City Commission Monday, Chief Operations Officer John Regan will become city manager July 1, replacing Bill Harriss, who has served our city for 25 years, the last 12 as city manager.

A contract, negotiated by Regan, Mayor Joe Boles, and City Attorney Ron Brown, includes a salary of \$131,000, a five-year term with automatic extensions, and annual evaluation and definition of goals and performance objectives.

Regan, 48, has been with our city for 12 years, and is considered by Harriss "my point man on the tough assignments." Those assignments have included the Riberia Street landfill move and restoration, West Augustine infrastructure plans, Visitor Center parking facility, seawall south of the Bridge of Lions, Riberia Street project, and Aviles Street redesign.



Regan

## Commission to revisit historic architectural style

The question of how to handle architectural style in our historic district, tabled on a split vote two weeks ago after lengthy debate, goes before our City Commission once again Monday, along with a public hearing.

It's part of the regular meeting agenda which also includes consideration of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) for a Flagler College Welcome Center on Cordova Street, and updates on a possible downtown Post Office move, discussions with the University of Florida, and Amtrak commuter rail efforts. The meeting begins at 5 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall, following a 3:30 p.m. workshop to discuss a proposed horse-drawn carriage ordinance.

### *That matter of style*

Commissioners delayed action two weeks ago to get public input on whether adjustments to architectural style in our historic district should be made more swiftly through ordinance at the local level, or go through a lengthier Comprehensive Plan amendment process with state overview.

The Comprehensive Plan, which guides our city codes, includes Architectural Guidelines for Historic Preservation (AGHP) which specify only colonial style in new or modified construction in the areas north and south of



## ***Welcoming our visitors***

That smiling face at our Visitor Center information desk has a plaque to add to her memoirs.

Caroline Craig, an information host for the City of St. Augustine's Visitor Information Center, has been named St. Johns County's 2010 Tourism Employee of the Year for Attractions.

Joining her in accepting recent honors was Brian Callan, human resources manager at the Sawgrass Marriott, recognized as tops in the accommodations category.

They were selected by the Visitors and Convention Bureau from nominations submitted from throughout the 11,000-member tourism industry.

At age 87, Caroline, a native of St. Augustine, has worked in the local tourism industry for more than 25 years, and counts on her wealth of knowledge to guide our visitors.

the Plaza, Historic Preservation (HP) Districts 1, 2, and 3. Both our Planning and Zoning and Historic Architectural Review boards recommended moving those guidelines from the Comprehensive Plan to city code, making changes possible without state review.

"We're raiding our Comprehensive Plan's Historic Preservation Element," Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline protested two weeks ago. "This (proposed ordinance) would give future commissions the opportunity to have different visions," Commissioner Don Crichlow countered.

They represent opposing views on an issue that began seven years ago with an effort to allow architectural styles other than colonial in Historic Preservation District One (HP-1), our historic area south of the Plaza where, over time, non-colonial styles have predominated.

## **Clearing waters for mooring fields**

Funds from our Municipal Marina reserves will be sought Monday for the removal of illegal, private and unpermitted moorings still located in our waters.

General Services Director Jim Piggott outlined to commissioners earlier a schedule which includes voluntary mooring removals and mandatory removal of remaining units to prepare for installation of mooring fields in our bay and Salt Run beginning after the July 4 holiday. Completion of the project is expected by the end of August, Piggott said.

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# **Discussions to impact our future**

A post office downtown without dozens of mail trucks, a partnership with the University of Florida as we develop our heritage program, and passenger rail service along the east coast with a station in St. Augustine.

These major efforts are on our City Commission agenda Monday as we plan for our future.



Postal trucks line ML King parking lot

Postal officials met with Mayor Joe Boles and Congressman John Mica recently to discuss a possible move of the King Street - ML King Avenue post office to space in the Ponce Mall on US 1. It would move the central mail distribution to the mall, but leave a retail location in the downtown area.

Flagler College is interested in converting the current property into a Communications Department for the school.

Commissioners will be updated on discussions with the University of Florida (UF) for a partnership to improve our heritage program and, with the National Park Service, build a Castillo Orientation Center in our Colonial Spanish

Quarter. The university has state legislative authorization to take over management of 34 state-owned historic properties here - including the Spanish Quarter, while our city, with a solid business plan developed by new Heritage Tourism Director Dana Ste. Claire, wants to continue management with the support of UF's academic programs.

Continuing efforts to get federal funding for passenger rail service will be reported by Commissioner Nancy Sikes-Kline, the commission's representative on the North Florida Transportation Organization. A recent Amtrak "inspection train" ran the proposed route from Miami to Jacksonville, helping promote awareness throughout the region, and dozens of public workshops are in progress to beat a deadline for the federal fund application in July.

## **Commission to workshop carriage rules**

Proposed new regulations for horse-drawn carriages - key among them a \$5,000 annual permit fee and limit of ten permits per carriage business - will be discussed at a City Commission workshop at 3:30 p.m. Monday, ahead of the commission's regular meeting at 5 p.m. Both sessions are in the Alcazar Room at City Hall.

Revision of our city's carriage ordinance was called for more than a year ago by commissioners. City Attorney Ron Brown says city staff has been developing the proposed ordinance to include concerns for the horses' welfare, traffic and pedestrian safety, and appearance. Brown turned to cities like Charleston to gather information on regulations elsewhere.

Murphy McDaniel, owner of Avalon Carriage Company, holds all but three of 46 current permits, and calls the proposed ordinance "revenge by the city for the court case" waged over the past several years. In those proceedings, McDaniel charged the city was promoting a monopoly of permits, owned by Stuart Gamsey at the time. McDaniel later bought Gamsey out, while the courts upheld the city's powers of regulation.

Commissioners can discuss and revise the proposed ordinance in Monday's workshop, but any formal action would await a future commission meeting.

## ***450 workshop scheduled for Tuesday***

The second of monthly public workshops on planning for our commemoration period will be held Tuesday at 5 p.m. in the Alcazar room at City Hall.

The workshops were ordered by our City Commission to keep it and the public up to speed on planning progress. City Heritage Director Dana Ste. Claire, also 450 Commemoration executive director, is likely to note the success of the First America program series completed last Monday, and plans for a second series next year.

A major hurdle is completion of the appointment process of a Federal St. Augustine 450th Commemoration Commission and appropriation of \$500,000 annually in support funds. The commission announcement has been delayed as appointees go through a rigorous financial disclosure process, Bill Leary, a former US Interior Department official, told commissioners at the previous workshop.

## ***History's Highlights***

# **His vision is St. Augustine's legacy**

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

***5 years, 3 months, and 19 days***

***to St. Augustine's 450th anniversary***

He came out of upstate New York, an itinerant minister's son, whose vision forged the Standard Oil empire and continued with the idea that the sub-tropical wilderness that was Florida could become a tourist mecca.

He found no appeal in the growing city of Jacksonville, so continued south to the edge of wilderness - the ragged town of St. Augustine. Here, he convinced himself, an American Riviera could be fashioned.

He needed to convince no one but himself - wealthy beyond belief after his successful oil venture with another visionary, John D. Rockefeller.

It would take a lot of that money to realize his vision. There was not only the cost of construction of a magnificent hotel, then another, but there were existing properties in the core area of his vision - churches, a jail, and the trickling Sanchez Creek running through the middle.



Undaunted, he built new churches and public buildings elsewhere, and filled in that stream, and converted dirt streets into brick boulevards, and built a waterworks and rail station to serve the wealthy patrons he anticipated from the dead of winter up north.

The expense? While building the Ponce de Leon Hotel, he remarked: *"I think it more likely I am spending an unnecessary amount of money in the foundation walls, but I comfort myself in the reflection that a hundred years hence it will be all the same to me and the building the better because of my extravagance."*

After discovering more dependable warm weather further south, he continued his rail line and mecca-building further along the coast, leaving behind a legacy combining the Spanish heritage of St. Augustine with the magnificence of the gilded age of the late 1800s.

Henry Morrison Flagler died May 20, 1913, at the age of 83, at his palatial Whitehall at Palm Beach. He lies today with his first wife, Mary, daughter Jennie, and infant granddaughter Margery, in a tomb at his Memorial Presbyterian Church.

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.

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