



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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

September 29 2009

Skate park improvements praised

The mayor, city staff, and neighboring residents, praised adjustments to the skateboard area at Hamilton Upchurch Park during Monday's City Commission meeting - two weeks after commissioners discussed filling in the skateboard bowl.

The comments came during a meeting in which commissioners approved efforts to fund the Riberia Street improvement project, Police Department equipment grants totaling more than \$60,000, and an ordinance regulating parades.



Changing the Guard

A feature of St. Augustine tourism - almost lost in the budget crunch - the Changing of the Guard, will begin Saturday and continue the Saturdays of October 10, 17, and 24.

The half hour reenactment, depicting a daily routine for the Spanish Garrison of St Augustine in 1740, begins at 7 p.m. in front of Government House, as a detachment marches up St. George Street to relieve the posted guard.

The retiring guard clears their weapons by firing a round, and remains to answer questions and pose for photographs.

The event is presented by the volunteer St Augustine Spanish

Hush falling on skate park

Susan Hill, a neighboring Flamingo Drive resident, thanked commissioners Monday for the "huge relief" in a change of hours for the area. City Chief Operations Officer John Regan noted that removal of higher skill rail elements "has changed the demographics. We're not seeing older kids there now."

And Mayor Joe Boles said that on his visits to the park, "there was more noise coming from the (adjacent) soccer field."

Regan will be reporting to commissioners October 26 on a proposal to build a 12-foot sound-deadening wall and other efforts to make the skateboard area a good neighbor.

We once owned Bridge of Lions

For six years, the City of St. Augustine owned the Bridge of Lions, "built with civic pride" through a \$1 million bond issue approved by city voters in 1927.

Therese Segal, whose Save Our Bridge committee spearheaded a successful campaign to restore the bridge, took commissioners on an historic tour Monday night, noting that the completed bridge was a toll bridge (ten cents horse and rider, 50 cents for autobuses, and \$6 to \$12 licenses for cars) until 1933.

The state then leased the bridge, abolished the tolls, and ten years later gained ownership through a lease/purchase agreement.

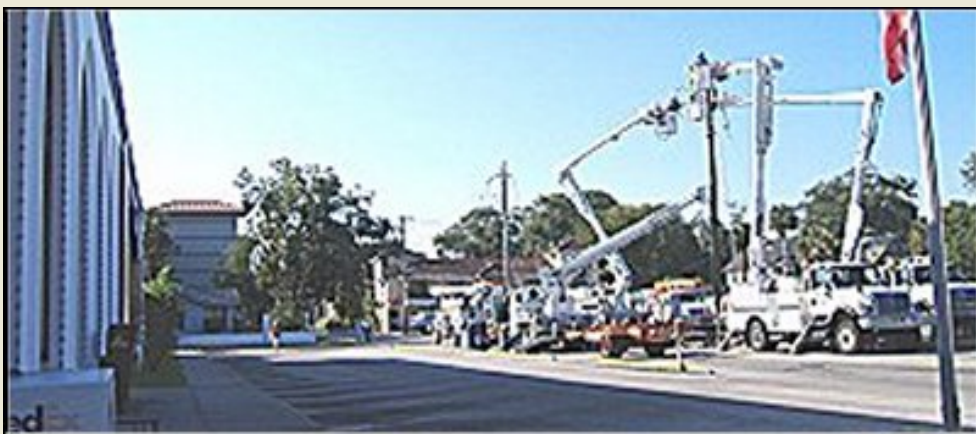
Segal said the bridge's history and stature deserve a carefully planned reopening, drawing together grandparents who witnessed the original opening, and grandchildren who will see the bridge into the future, and perhaps a parade of cars representing each decade of the span's use.

Segal said while the bridge is expected to reopen later this year, the sentinel lions, which have been refurbished in storage, won't return for another fifteen months, "after the temporary bridge is torn down and landscaping is completed." Commissioners plan a discussion of reopening plans at their October 12 meeting.

Garrison, with support from the City of St Augustine and St. Johns County Tourist Development Council. Visit the Florida Living History [website](#).

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Previous Issues



Rare photo - empty Post Office parking lot

It took an accident, shearing off a utility pole, to produce an empty Post Office parking lot on ML King Avenue Monday as Florida Power & Light crews worked to untangle fallen wires.

All Aboard Amtrak express



If a well-organized campaign succeeds, Amtrak passenger trains should be stopping in St. Augustine by October, 2012.

More than 100 resolutions and letters of support, adopted by public and private organizations around the state, are providing the drive for passenger rail service on 326 miles of FEC railway between Jacksonville and Miami. And it's Florida's only economic stimulus transit application in partnership with a national entity - Amtrak.

It will be the first time passengers have ridden on FEC rails since 1968.

The federal application is for \$120 million, including construction of eight stations along the east coast - at a total cost of \$350,000 a mile, compared to most passenger rail projects in the \$5 - 10 Million per mile range, officials say.

Eight new stations are planned: St. Augustine, Melbourne, Daytona, Vero Beach, Titusville, Fort Pierce, Cocoa, and Stuart. Officials plan two trains running northbound and southbound to start - it could grow to 4-6 trains daily. A Jacksonville - Miami trip should take about 6 hours, and early estimates are for 250,000 riders annually.

Among the pluses: More "stay-cations," within Florida - increasing local spending; construction jobs along the east coast; traffic relief on I-95, and reduction

THE TIMELINE	
Application	October 2, 2009
Grant award	November 2009
Grant receipt	January 2010
Project start	February 2010
Service start	October 2012

of carbon emissions and dependence on foreign oil.

Jax considers commuter rail

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) is considering commuter rail service reaching north to Yulee, south to Green Cove Springs, and southeast to St. Augustine.

A \$400,000 consultant study suggests the system could cost \$543 million to build and \$40 million a year to operate, along existing tracks and right-of-way of CSX, Florida East Coast Railway, and Norfolk Southern.

The southeast corridor would have stops at San Marco/Prudential Blvd., University Blvd., Baymeadows Road, Southside Blvd. Extension, Old St. Augustine Road, CR 210/Palm Valley Road, International Golf Parkway, St. Johns County Complex, and St. Augustine.

Two applicants for Plaza lottery

Just two vendors have applied for space in the Plaza market building under a new city ordinance restricting vending to twelve spaces in the building through a monthly lottery drawing.

City Comptroller Mark Litzinger said an artist selling his own art will set up for October on the side designated for First Amendment protected expressive art, and another artist - selling both artwork and other items - will set up on the side allowing general vending.

Litzinger said the remaining ten spaces will remain available on a first come - first served basis until filled. Fee for the spaces is \$75 a month.

Sorting out vending ordinances

Confused with all the recent ordinances passed by our City Commission to regulate market activity in our Plaza and along St. George Street?

An article and the complete ordinances, guidelines, and applications have been posted on our city [website](#) to help clear the air.

Recent court decisions prompted an overhaul, which included scrapping a vending ban in the Plaza and surrounding historic district, putting in place a lottery system for twelve vending spaces in the Plaza market building, and moving a provision allowing parades from the St. George Street entertainers ordinance to a parade section in our codes.

Shrubbery around the market building has been removed to increase visibility. Under the ordinance, this will be the only site in the Plaza for vending and visual arts activity.



Shrubs removed from market building

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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