



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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Francis Field Guidelines on city agenda

Guidelines for Francis Field, proposals for our Bridge of Lions reopening, and progress on our King Street flood control, Riberia Street improvements, Aviles Street, water treatment expansion, and a skateboard noise wall are just part of our City Commission's lengthy agenda for Monday. The session begins at 5 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall.



Holiday? Not here

Monday, October 12 - in the U.S., it's Columbus Day, in Canada, it's Thanksgiving, and in Latin America *Día de la Raza*, the Day of the Race.

In St. Augustine, it's business as usual, including a regular City Commission meeting. The date is not on our city's holiday schedule.

While we celebrate Columbus, Spanish speaking countries celebrate the Hispanic heritage of Latin America, and Canada celebrates the safe return of Explorer Martin Frobisher, who had been trying to find a northern passage to the Pacific Ocean.

Frobisher's feast in 1578 is yet another Thanksgiving predating the Pilgrims of 1620. We maintain the

Managing Francis Field use

An event review committee, a certified crowd manager, and noise control are among elements of a 17-page "Francis Field Guidelines" to be presented to commissioners Monday by Public Affairs Director Paul Williamson.

Nearly every city department has a role in regulation of events that could range from 500 to more than 25,000 participants, according to Williamson's report.

Commissioners earlier this year put a hiatus on further event scheduling to give Williamson time to develop a management plan.

Calling Francis Field "one of the City of St. Augustine's greatest community assets," Williamson notes it requires a basic level of infrastructure services as "a valuable event site for a variety of local non-profit organizations, a recreation area for both school and after-school activities, and a passive park for residents."

Ideas for Bridge reopening

Twenty-seven pedestrians, to be selected by drawing and designated "The 27 Club" in recognition of the 1927 opening of our Bridge of Lions, will be first to cross the reopened span later this year, under a proposal Public Affairs Director Paul Williamson will outline to commissioners Monday.

"Brief remarks by officials, a ribbon cutting, and a procession led by a group of selected pedestrians, followed by antique vehicles representing the decades of the bridge's service," is the scenario Williamson will suggest.

He said the event will be managed by the City of St. Augustine in cooperation with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and contractor Skanska, with program development assistance from the Save Our Bridge organization.

After the ceremonies, the bridge may be opened for a brief period to the general public for pedestrian-only use, followed by a traffic switch from the temporary bridge, Williamson said.

County Commissioner and city resident Ken Bryan earlier suggested a charity fundraising raffle for first pedestrians and vehicles to cross the bridge. FDOT earlier planned the early reopening with a formal ceremony

first was in St. Augustine September 8, 1565.

That Spanish Día de la Raza opens up another opportunity for heritage celebration in St. Augustine - if city workers can get the day off.

some 18 months later, after the temporary span is removed.

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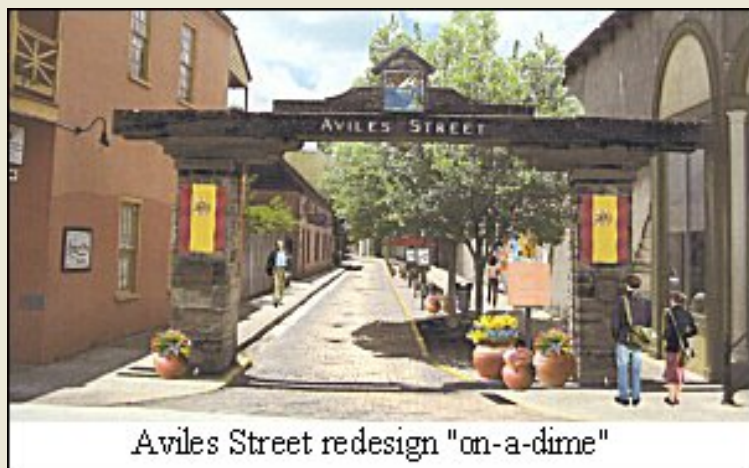
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Aviles Street 'on-a-dime'

Paint and plants are major features in a proposal to resurrect Aviles Street "as a retail destination by increasing access and visibility with low-cost 'design-on-a-dime' techniques.

Chief Operations Officer John Regan will present a proposal to commissioners, worked out with "enthusiastic participation" of business and property owners from King to Cadiz Street.

A study by Halback & Associates includes a survey of Aviles Street businesses as well as case studies of streetscape design in other areas of the world.



Another step toward King Street flood control

In that effort to correct flooding on King Street between Malaga and US 1, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will ask commissioners to subordinate the city's interest in lands along the south side of King for construction of new storm drains.

Public Works Director Martha Graham explains that, under the agreement, any necessary relocation of city utilities during the work would be at FDOT expense.

Tightening billboard control

"Billboards and signs along the roadways should maintain and enhance the appearance and aesthetic environment of the City, particularly within the historic districts and along entry corridors into the City."

With that motivation, city staff will propose to commissioners additions to our city signage code for greater regulation of roadside signage, and bring pre-existing nonconforming signs under a uniform city code as well. The ordinance will go to public hearing at a later meeting if approved.

Easing the cost of business start-ups

Leasing rather than up-front payment of water and sewer connections for businesses that create more than 100 new jobs would provide "long term benefits in assisting with economic development."

The concept, to be presented to commissioners Monday, has been developed with an eye toward the recently-formed city/county West Augustine strategic plan. Under the proposed ordinance, qualifying businesses would pay utility fees on flow-based usage for a designated term. If advanced by commissioners, the ordinance will go to public hearing at a later meeting.

Plan funds sought for Riberia Street, water plant projects

Commission approval will be sought for \$269,725 in Utility Fund reserves for the Riberia Street improvement project and expansion of our new reverse osmosis system for water treatment. Public Works Director Martha Graham says \$164,925 would be used for additional plans to improve scoring on a Community Development Block Grant application for Riberia Street, while \$104,800 would be used for necessary planning for the reverse osmosis expansion.

21st Annual Colonial Arts and Crafts Fair



Spinner at work during annual Colonial Arts Fair

The Colonial Spanish Quarter will host the 21st annual Colonial Arts and Crafts Fair Saturday and Sunday - our annual step back in time with more than 30 craftspeople demonstrating indigo dyeing, broom making, woodcarving, and numerous other colonial skills. Details [here](#).

Greek Festival at Francis Field

Greek descendants are proud to call St. Augustine home of the first Greek colony in today's America, and they'll show that pride this weekend in the 12th Annual Greek Festival at Francis Field. Look for a variety of Greek food and beverages, music, dancing, and colorful costumes Friday 4-9 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday noon

to 5 p.m. Details [here](#).

Heat/cold mix closes VIC restrooms

Heat and cold don't mix - at least in attic ventilation systems blowing on air-conditioning ductwork.

The mix over the past three years has caused excessive moisture, mold, and finally ceiling collapses over the restrooms at our St. Augustine & St. Johns County Visitor Information Center (VIC). That west entry area will be closed for several months to assess and correct the problem.

Timing is bad, with the holiday season approaching, but our city will make the best of it. The main hall, with information desk, gift shop, and video room remains open, and temporary restrooms are being installed. They promise fancier facilities in the near future.

The VIC was built in 1935 under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, predecessor to the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and renovated with the completion of our Historic Downtown Parking Facility in 2006.



Temporary restrooms line VIC sidewalk

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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