



# THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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## Mooring field hearing Dec. 14

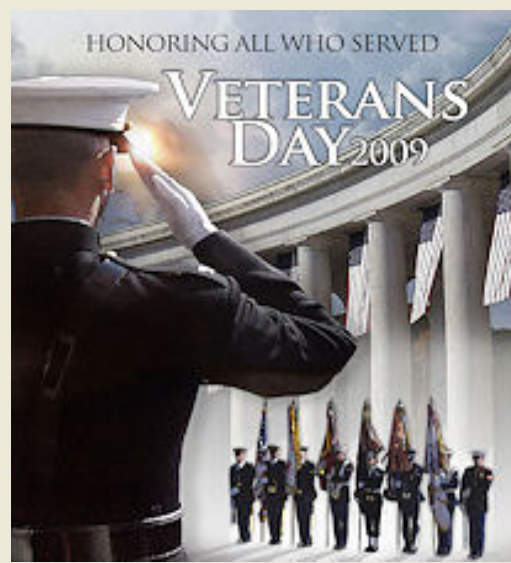
Despite concerns of several residents that "there are still many questions to be answered," our City Commission voted Monday night for a public hearing and final action on a harbor management plan and mooring fields at its December 14 meeting, rather than delaying it until after the holidays.

"There have been four public workshops and discussion over the past three years," Vice Mayor Errol Jones said. "I don't see the need to delay this process."

City Manager Bill Harriss assured commissioners details of expected costs and proposed fees would be presented at the December meeting. Proposed are 178 moorings in our bay and Salt Run, with a preliminary installation estimate of \$2,500 each, a total of \$445,000.

### Holiday hiatus

Our City Commission, normally meeting every second and fourth Monday of the month, has only one meeting in November and in December. The fourth Mondays in each are Thanksgiving and Christmas weeks.



## Echo House faces code board today

Rosalie Gordon-Mills heir Carlotta Miles and husband Tony will be on hand today at 3 p.m. as our Code Enforcement Board hears staff testimony that Lincolnville's historic Echo House is an unsafe structure. The board meets in the Alcazar Room at City Hall.

The Miles spoke before Lincolnville's St. Cyprian's Episcopal congregation Sunday, noting efforts they've made to secure the structure over the years while seeking funding for its repair. City Attorney Ron Brown clarified to commissioners Monday that the city sold the property to a non-profit board of trustees headed by Mrs. Gordon-Mills in 1973, but has a reverter interest if it fails to use the property for non-profit or charitable purposes.

Commissioner Don Crichlow, who has been employed by the Echo House board as an architect, recused himself from any commission discussions.

Brown noted that appeals of Code Enforcement decisions go directly to circuit court, and City Manager Bill Harriss assured commissioners that, while the code board supersedes our Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB), any decision to demolish the structure would likely be vetted through HARB.

Echo House, built by Buckingham Smith as a nursing home for blacks, is part of an historic triad including the former Excelsior School, renovated by our county and used today as a cultural center and county offices, and St. Benedict School, a restoration work in progress through a

## ***Ida dampens ceremonies***

*Tropical Storm Ida's threat has forced cancellation of the traditional Massing of the Colors at Francis Field tomorrow morning, and tonight's concert in our Plaza by the Florida National Guard's 13th Army Band..*

*The storm is expected to move into our area tonight and continue through Veterans Day.*

civic non-profit committee.

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## **Parking limit will change to 3 hours**

Reviewing the first full year of our city's new parking program, City Comptroller Mark Litzinger won approval from commissioners to change the on-street parking limit from two to three hours, and to offer parking facility bulk discounts on the purchase of five rather than the current ten monthly passes. The bulk discount reduces the card cost from \$32 to \$26.75. Litzinger says the discount program will start immediately, while the on-street meter changes will take about three weeks.

## ***City to FDOT: 'Let's talk - again'***

The State Department of Transportation will be invited to the December City Commission meeting to discuss four current commission concerns: its planned King Street flooding abatement project, continued flooding at the east end of the Bridge of Lions, progress on the bridge, and the question recently raised of who owns the seawall between the bridge and the Castillo.

## ***County 'doing our best' on West King Street***

County Public Works Director Joe Stephenson assured commissioners Monday night that the West King Street project "will be completed by February," apologized for delays, and noted, "We have a good working relationship (with businesses) in a difficult situation."

Difficult, he said, has been trying to complete installation of a new water line piece by piece to avoid cutting off business accesses.

The \$1.5 million project has major funding of \$788,000 from the State Department of Transportation with additional funding and in-kind support from our city and county.

## **Legislators gather here Thursday**

Our St. Johns County Legislative Delegation will hold its organizational meeting and legislative hearing Thursday from 4-6 p.m. in the St. Johns County Auditorium, to hear our concerns and comment on legislative bills impacting us.

## ***New Police boat thanks to criminals***



**Sleek new city police boat - courtesy of criminals**

Our city is outfitting a new, powerful, patrol boat - courtesy of criminals.

City Manager Bill Harriss calls it one of the most satisfying public-private partnerships. The funds came from assets seized from criminal violators over the last several years.

The 24 foot "Nautica," specifically designed for rescue and recovery operations, features a bow ramp that lowers into the water to assist with the rescue and recovery of victims.

She'll be dedicated to the memory of Leo C. Chase, the first St. Augustine resident to die in the Vietnam war.

The St. Augustine Marine Unit was started in 2002 with the purchase of a 20 foot "Mako," - the first "Leo C. Chase" - and was manned on a part-time basis with funding from the St. Augustine Port, Waterway and Beach District. In the first seven years of operation, the Marine Unit has overseen the removal of some 66 derelict or abandoned vessels, and rescued 19 and recovered four deceased victims of maritime accidents.

## **Going and coming**



**Shops for sale**

### ***Christmas Shop/Tepee Town for sale***

The shelves are empty and the For Sale sign up in front of the landmark bayfront Christmas Shop and Tepee Town. Price for the two properties: \$2.4 million. The location stands between our Colonial Spanish Quarter and the Castillo, an area under study for pedestrian crossing improvements.

### ***Sears moving to Ponce Mall***

Jack Bunch's Sears store, a fixture in the Winn Dixie Plaza at US 1 and SR 207, will be moving to the former Rex Appliance location in the Ponce de Leon Mall on US 1. Good news for the mall, hurt by the closing of Regal Cinema but maintaining its anchor JC Penney and Belk tenants.

### ***Mission exhibit center nears completion***

Work continues on an exhibit center on the Mission of Nombre de Dios grounds, scheduled for completion early next year. The 4,000-square-foot center, made possible through the Crisp-Ellert Foundation, is expected to feature Diocese artifacts, the outer casket of St. Augustine Founder Pedro Menendez, and an exhibit of the history of Spanish missions of Florida.



**Great cross backdrops project**

**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](mailto:gardner@aug.com)

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