



THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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City budget adjusts to economy

It begins with cutting back - trimming our budgets to a weak economy. For our city, it's meant staff reductions, early retirement incentives, salary freezes, deferred maintenance - all while trying to maintain the level of service we expect.

The trimming began two years ago, with budget cuts of \$1.6 million. Another \$2.5 million was cut this year, and \$1.7 million would be cut in next year's proposed budget.

Still short \$1.4 million in what city officials consider a "bare bones" budget, city commissioners approved three revenue sources: a two-cent per square foot increase in fire assessment fees, expected to raise \$325,000; a flat eight percent tax on our electric bills (\$160,584), and a millage increase (\$892,413).

Our city's also been able to increase federal and state grants by \$583,172.

Despite the millage increase, the city will actually receive less revenue from property taxes due to reduced property assessments.

Commissioners endorsed the fire assessment fee and electric utility tax increases as a way to spread the financial burden to that 36 percent of properties that are off the tax rolls - these increases apply to all properties in the city and all electric users. This shift of burden would otherwise translate into another one-third mil increase in property taxes.

The total city budget has been shrunk from \$51 million two years ago to \$48 million proposed for next year. The General Fund - the city's operating budget, has been reduced \$1.4 million, from \$22 million to \$20.6 million. Like our own family budgets, this in the face of higher fuel, insurance, materials, and other costs.

The final public hearing on the proposed 2009-10 budget will be September 17 at 5:05 p.m. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. Budget details are on the city [website](#).



A School of Excellence

He calls it "a new door opened to our community."

Pastor Ron Rawls of St. Paul AME Church is developing a St. Paul School of Excellence, "a private school that will work to ensure that our children have every opportunity to reach their full potential as students."

A meeting last week started both the application process and assistance to parents with a scholarship program. Plans are to begin kindergarten enrollment in January 2010, adding 1st grade in the fall of 2010 and a minimum of one grade a year thereafter. A West Augustine location will be sought to house the anticipated growth.

A 15-member advisory board will meet again today at 5:30 p.m. at St. Paul Church.

Rawls, who developed a program of "Young Men and Women of Excellence" with Murray School students, said, "I am a staunch supporter of our excellent school system in St. Johns County, but this is a tremendous opportunity to ensure that even less children fall through



St. Paul's Rev. Rawls

911 ceremony Friday

The painting by St. Augustine Artist peter O'Neill, "Two Minutes of Silence," quietly speaks to the bravery of the men and women who responded September 11, 2001, and, in Peter's words, "my way of saying thank you to these brave men and women who risk their lives every day."

Its \$20,000 sale proceeds went to the 911 Relief Fund, and he has since distributed more than 17,000 prints free to fire, police, and emergency service stations across the country.

Our city will once again commemorate that fateful day on Friday, September 11, in our Plaza de la Constitución, with ceremonies at 8:30 a.m., concluding at 8:45 with the ringing of bells throughout the downtown.

The timing coincides with the time the first plane hit the first tower of the World Trade Center eight years ago.

the cracks."

Excelsior Center adds artifacts

An archaeology display has joined Excelsior Cultural Center's exhibits capturing the history of Lincolnvilve.

The City of St. Augustine and Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) teamed up with Excelsior to display artifacts from the Kelton family, who lived in a historic Lincolnvilve home starting in the late 1800s. Two Kelton sisters were teachers at the school.

Historical research for the display was compiled by Toni Wallace, and Barbara Vickers provided historic photographs and valuable insights. The [Excelsior Center](#), at 102 Martin Luther King Avenue, is open Tuesday to Thursday from 1 to 5 p.m.

Luncheon is served at Woman's Exchange

The Woman's Exchange of St. Augustine is accepting reservations for its annual Fall Luncheons in the Pena-Peck House garden October 16, 20, 23, 27 and 30. The \$20 fee includes a tour of the historic house, a \$5 gift certificate for the Woman's Exchange Gift Shop, and incomparable menu prepared by Woman's Exchange members. Reservations at 904-829-5064.

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Groundbreaking for Hospice Center



Rendering of planned Bailey Family Center for Caring

The Bailey Center for Caring, an 11,000 square-foot facility to be located just west of Flagler Hospital's main entrance, will bring the resources of Community Hospice of Northeast Florida to our community.

Groundbreaking will be September 24 at 9 a.m. on the hospital grounds. The name reflects a seven-figure donation by the Bailey family, part of the fundraising campaign which has so far passed \$3 million of the \$5 million goal.

Community Hospice president and CEO Susan Ponder-Stansel says, "The response from the St. Augustine community has been overwhelming. We are gratified to know that so many people have come forward in support of this inpatient care

center, which will provide end-of-life care and an improved quality of life for families in St. Johns County."

The facility will include 12 private patient rooms, family gathering areas, chapel, kitchen, and lounge areas. Community Hospice medical staff will provide 24-hour care in a unique, homelike setting, complete with gardens and walkways.

Construction is expected to begin later this year.

EPIC's Greenough named to state post

EPIC's Chief Executive Officer, Patti Greenough, has been named President-Elect of the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association (FADAA) Board of Directors. FADAA represents more than 100 community-based substance abuse treatment & prevention agencies and over 1,000 individual members throughout Florida.

"Being involved with FADAA is critical as it allows us access to the latest resources in order to confront the substance abuse problem in our community," Patti said. "The individuals involved with FADAA offer outstanding expertise in the field of substance abuse prevention and treatment."

EPIC (Education, Prevention, Intervention, Counseling) has been a member of FADAA for nearly 25 years. Joining her at a recent FADAA conference in Orlando were Nickie Gorce, Director of Prevention, and Dianne Tymeson, Clinical Director.



EPIC's Gorce, Greenough, and Tymeson

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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