

## CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Regular City Commission Meeting  
Monday, February 10, 2025

The City Commission met in a formal session on Monday, February 10, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline, and the following were present:

**1. Roll Call:** Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor/City Commissioner  
Barbara Blonder, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner  
Cynthia Garris, City Commissioner  
Jim Springfield, City Commissioner  
Jon DePreter, City Commissioner

Also Present: David Birchim, City Manager  
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney  
Darlene Galambos, City Clerk  
Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager  
Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager  
Amy Skinner, Director, Planning and Building  
Stephen Slaughter, Director, Public Works & Utilities  
Barry Fox, Manager, Code Enforcement and Vacation Rental  
Donna Hayes, Director, Human Resources  
Corey Sakryd, Director, General Services  
Melissa Wissel, Director, Communications  
Jennifer Michaux, Police Chief  
Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief  
Elyse Wiemann, Recording Secretary

---

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline requested a moment of silence and Vice-Mayor Barbara Blonder led the pledge of allegiance.

### **2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

#### **2.A. Modification and Approval of Regular Agenda**

#### **MOTION**

Commissioner Jon DePreter **MOVED** to approve the Regular Agenda. The motion was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Jim Springfield and

### **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

### **3. Special Presentations, Recognitions and Proclamations**

**3. A. Proclamation 2025-06: Proclaims February 2025 as Black History Month in the City of St. Augustine. (C. Garris, Commissioner)**

### **4. General Public Comments (3 minutes per individual)**

The Commission heard from the following members of the public:

- Brook Cantiu
- Teresa Rose
- Chris Fulmer

- David Abraham
- Kelsey May
- Tom Reynolds
- Debra Silbar
- Lauren Giber
- Bryce Hannon
- Aaron Jockers
- Isabel Dickson
- Robert Lenz
- BJ Kalaidi

## 5. Consent Agenda

David Birchim, City Manager, read the Consent Agenda.

CA.1. Preview of upcoming Commission meetings.

CA.2. THE FOLLOWING ORDINANCES ARE TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR SECOND READING ON DATE: NONE.

CA.3. Reminder of Upcoming Meetings:  
•February 24, 2025, 5:00PM–Regular City Commission Meeting  
•March 10, 2025, 5:00PM–Regular City Commission Meeting  
•March 24, 2025, 5:00PM–Regular City Commission Meeting  
•April 14, 2025, 5:00PM–Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR COMMISSION MEETINGS:  
•January 13, 2025–Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.5. RELEASES OF LIEN FOR UNIT CONNECTION FEE MORTGAGE(S):  
•125 Martin Luther King Avenue–Ella Pearl Stevens  
•110 Cerro Street–Malorie Shannon

CA.6. PROPOSED PROCLAMATIONS, CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION/RECOGNITION. (COMMISSION APPROVAL REQUIRED). (TO BE READ AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING).

Proclamation 2025-05: Proclaims February 16, 2025, as A1A All-American Road Day

in the City of St. Augustine. (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)

CA.7. NOTIFICATION OF PROCLAMATIONS/CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION ISSUED: NONE.

CA.8. MOU between the City of St. Augustine and the firefighter's union modifying the distribution of state premium tax revenues share between the City and the firefighters. (D. Hayes, Human Resources Director)

End Consent Agenda

**5.A. Additions, deletions or modifications to Consent Agenda**

(None)

**5.B. Approval of Consent Agenda**

**MOTION**

**Commissioner Springfield MOVED to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was SECONDED by Mayor Sikes-Kline and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

**6. Appeals**

(None)

**7. General Public Presentations, Items of Great Public Importance, and Other Items Requiring Public Hearings**

**7.A. General Public Presentations**

(None)

**7.B. Items of Great Public Importance**

(None)

**7.C. Other Items Requiring Public Hearing**

(None)

**8. Ordinances and Resolutions – Public Hearing Required.**

**8.A. Ordinances – Second Reading**

(None)

**8.B. Ordinances – First Reading (only if required by law)**

(None)

**8.C. Resolutions – Public Hearing (only if required by law)**

(None)

**9. Ordinances and Resolutions - No Public Hearing Required**

**9.A. Ordinances – First Reading**

(None)

**9.B. Resolutions**

(None)

**10. Staff Reports and Presentations**

**10.A. Update on the status of the City's Drop-in Day Center and establishing Dining with Dignity at 90-92 South Dixie Highway. (B. Fox, Code Enforcement and Vacation Rental Manager)**

Barry Fox, Code Enforcement and Vacation Rental Manager provided an update of the City's Drop-in Day Center off South Dixie Highway.

Commissioner Springfield asked if there had been any architectural improvements since the last meeting.

Mr. Fox replied that the recommendations from the commission were considered, and improvements had been made.

Commissioner Springfield said Dining with Dignity was a relatively large group of

people and asked if the pavilion would hold that many people.

Mr. Fox replied that there would be some exterior picnic tables but most seating would be under the pavilion.

Commissioner Blonder said that sidewalks were not completely down South Dixie Highway, and in addition she was concerned with how people would get to the site. She asked if transportation would be provided.

Mr. Fox noted that there would not be transportation to the site; however, sidewalks for the site had been discussed and there would be one constructed on the west side of South Dixie Highway.

Commissioner Blonder explained that it was not safe to walk or bike down South Dixie Highway and her concern was how people would make it to the site.

Mr. Birchim said Stephen Slaughter, Public Works and Utilities Director would have more insight on the sidewalk.

Stephen Slaughter, Public Works and Utilities Director, replied that the sidewalks were currently under design and could provide a more specific timeline at a later date; however, he knew it would be completed this fiscal year.

Mr. Fox said the sidewalk on the property should be tied to another one. He noted there was no formal transportation plan at this time.

Commissioner DePreter said he was in favor of the building being built on piers to save the tree canopy and that the electricity would be underground.

Commissioner Garriss thanked Mr. Fox for the update. She said the sidewalks on South Dixie were important and wanted an update on when that would happen as many could not walk to work and it needed

to be safe for the homeless trying to make it to the site.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said at a future meeting they wanted an explanation to the sidewalk plan and other ways to encourage people to get to the site.

Mr. Birchim replied in the affirmative.

**10.B. 2024-2025 Nights of Lights in Review Presentation. (D. Birchim, City Manager)**

David Birchim, City Manager, provided a brief overview regarding the 2024 Nights of Lights! (NOL) Season. He reviewed the following items:

- Traffic and Congestion
- Shuttling
- Parking
- Public Restrooms
- Solid Waste
- Public Safety: St. Augustine Police Department and St. Augustine Fire Department
- Communication
- Economic Impacts
- Vendors

He provided feedback from the stakeholders meeting, short-term and long-term recommendations.

Mayor Sikes-Kline thanked the residents for providing their input and having patience. She said they all appreciated it as they were the ones suffering the most.

Commissioner Springfield asked how many parking spaces there were at the current Broudy lot. He said locals told him this was the best place to park as the shuttle rides were not long as it was closer to town and there were many spaces.

Reuben Franklin, Assistance City Manager, replied that the grass lot was able to hold around 300 vehicles.

Commissioner Springfield noted that once the parking garage was built there would be an additional 400 parking spaces.

Mr. Birchim commented that this location would be able to shuttle people into the City who were walking or using bicycles in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Springfield felt it was a difficult job to keep a balance between the residents' quality of life and businesses' wants and need to drive the economy. He was concerned that the City was exposed to an event similar to the one that recently took place in New Orleans as there were so many pedestrians. He said that type of event could not be prevented; however, he felt we needed to be prepared for it. He said there should be substations for the Fire Department, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), and the Police Department as a way to eliminate having to return to the station. He thought limiting the number of days Nights of Lights! took place should be considered if the funding needed was not available, as we were at a deficit, and it was unfair for the residents and businesses who had to cover the cost. He understood there was some controversy with hiring a consultant; however, he felt they were experts at large events and could be of assistance.

Commissioner Blonder felt that the current Nights of Lights! was unsustainable, but understood how important it was for businesses. She mentioned the Heritage Tourism Assessment and Recommendations Report of 2003 and felt it was very illuminating. She said the parking garage payment system was too slow and thought there were ways to sell tickets in advance or make it automated. She said the 'working group of stakeholders had to include the neighborhood associations for resident representation. She said resident services were reduced significantly during NOL and she understood as there was only so much equipment and staff but thought it was a cost to the residents. She was not in

support of daily pressure washing because too much water was being used, and it required a lot of staff time. She recommended that the golf carts tours should be licensed. She felt all advertisement for NOL tourism should be suspended as there was a lot of advertisement provided from the "Best of" magazines and did not feel NOL needed continuously to be advertised. She said during times of high visitation, having more streets pedestrian only could be best and thought it should be expanded, and downtown streets should be closed on peak days to non-resident vehicles. She thought the shared bike/transit lane on San Marco Avenue should be reconsidered. She said the City had a direct deficit of \$325,000 and there were even more indirect expenses. She noted the Heritage Tourism Assessment and Recommendation Report of 2003 and said it had many outstanding points and thought they should be taken into account. She recommended having a tourism management ordinance put in place.

Ms. Lopez asked for more clarification as to what that meant.

Mayor Sikes-Kline clarified that it was a recommendation referring to the similar ordinance in Charleston, South Carolina. Commissioner Blonder stated that she did not feel NOL was Heritage Tourism, but the intent was to highlight the architecture of the buildings, and it was not serving the purpose of what it was originally designed to do. She said the report suggested creating a 'task force' with equal representation.

Commissioner DePreter thanked the City Manager for the comprehensive approach as well as the community for their feedback and constructive ideas. He thought that the last season of NOL had been less than successful as there were too many cars and people trying to share the area. He stated that his main concern was public safety, and this City had not been designed for so many cars or such masses of

people. He said that through his discussions with various business owners and residents, it appeared that there had been some confusion as to whether NOL was a pedestrian or a drive through event. He said, going forward he wanted to see safe areas for bicycle storage, which would alleviate some of the traffic and thought that the messaging should focus on letting visitors and residents alike know that this was a multi-modal City. He was in favor of engaging a consultant that would assist the commission with setting goals for the next big event as well as open communication with the county in the future.

Commissioner Garriss thanked Mr. Birchm for his review. She noted in the report it was mentioned that the restroom facility costs had more than doubled with so many visitors in town. She felt that traffic near the bridge was very congested, and it was an accident waiting to happen. She pointed out that bicyclists were not respected on the road and that it should be looked into as she thought more people would ride their bikes if they felt safe. She asked for parking notifications to be displayed on Highway US1 to help alleviate the congestion that was caused when the parking garage was full. She agreed that having a consultant could be helpful. She said the problem with NOL was the amount of people could not be predicted. She said the residents were the ones who lived here year-round, and livability was important, and they were unable to enjoy NOL. She said something needed to be done to have a balance. She suggested removing the parking fee on Sundays from 1:00p.m. to 9:00 p.m. as she did not understand the reason for the fee. She said Sunday should be residents' day as businesses still needed the residents in order to be successful.

Mayor Sikes-Kline made a few comments regarding the presentation. She noted that in the report provided there would be a severe increase in costs, and those costs were unknown. She said these things should be done to make the City safe;

however, the City did not have a large staff and felt that the task at hand was monumental. She noted that it was sixty-five consecutive nights and that was a challenge as there were around 16,000 residents within ten square miles. She felt expanding the vendors' ordinance was a good opportunity and needed for the safety of the pedestrians. She pointed out that the violation of colored lights had not been addressed. She said the intent of NOL was to highlight the architecture of the buildings in town. She said this needed to be approached with a global view as this could be a way for the City to grow and change in new ways. She agreed that having a consultant was beneficial as it held someone accountable to the Commission and the citizens. She thought having a consultant could assist with the following items:

- Dedicated shuttle lane and/or bicycles
- Crowd control
- Public safety plan
- Employee parking
- Better management of visitor experience
- Protecting the reputation of the historic city

Mayor Sikes-Kline suggested creating a task force as mentioned in the Heritage Tourism Assessment and Recommendations Report. She said she was committed to asking the Tourism Development Council (TDC) for funding as they were willing to assist moving forward. She suggested expanding the vendor ordinance, moving forward with a consultant, and creating a mission statement for the task force.

Commissioner Blonder felt the global view should be a priority, keeping the multi-model transportation, and have the task force create strategies for leveraging steps for a plan.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she hoped that the recommendations from Mr. Birchim was the plan moving forward and the next steps

were to find out the costs as well as staffing.

Commissioner DePreter questioned what was needed for staff.

Mr. Birchim replied that he wanted consensus for a consultant, moving forward with the short-term recommendations of renting the Bank of American (BOA) parking lot, renting of portable toilets, staffing service for the cleaning of those toilets, and trash removal increase. He informed the Commission they had talked to the BOA owners, and if there was a consensus to move forward with the short-term recommendations for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, he would provide the costs.

Commissioner Blonder said she wanted to make sure the consultants fee was included in the request to TDC. She said for her to be in favor of the short-term recommendations was that the City would be paid back for the cost as the City had invested so much already and without that, she was unable to support NOL moving forward.

Mr. Birchim replied that step one was obtaining the amount needed. He said a scope of services had been drafted for a consultant but requested feedback. He said this was the crucial step before moving forward but wanted to provide financial impact before requesting assistance from the TDC.

Commissioner Springfield asked if the construction of King Street bridge would last until December 2026.

Mr. Birchim replied that it would take approximately two years.

Commissioner Springfield agreed with Commissioner DePreter that this was a twelve-month problem. He reminded everyone that the awards the City had been acknowledged for were given to the City by different organizations hard work.

He noted that the City did not advertise for tourism and lost money on tourism.

Mayor Sikes-Kline commented that the advertising by the TDC was governed by state statute, and advertising would continue.

Commissioner DePreter inquired about the SMART St. Augustine project that was being established. He said there were about 1,600 parking spaces with about one-third of those parking spaces belonging to the City and the rest were private spaces. He asked if this system would provide both public and private spaces or only public.

Reuben Franklin, Assistance City Manager replied that SMART St. Augustine, a grant project for \$15 million dollars, was under design currently and it would cover the public parking lots or lots that the City had a cost share agreements with and managed by the City.

Ms. Lopez asked for clarification regarding vendors. She reviewed the locations where vendors were not allowed and asked if there were other locations or data they wanted about vendor locations.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked to included Avenida Menendez and the block between St. George Street and Cordova Street on Cathedral Place. She said she noticed problems in these locations and thought the Police Chief would have more guidance as to where the problem areas were located.

Ms. Lopez said she reviewed the Charleston, South Carolina Tourism Ordinance as noted in the Heritage Tourism Assessment and Recommendations Report of 2003, and the items listed were being done by the City currently or were going to be implemented.

Mayor Sikes-Kline noted that Charleston had a 'livability court', which the City did not have.

Ms. Lopez said that was Code Enforcement.

There was a consensus on the short-term recommendations made by staff.

Commissioner Blonder said she was in agreeance but with the contingency she had mentioned earlier regarding funding.

There was a consensus on the long-term recommendations to hire a consultant.

Mr. Birchim replied that he would provide the financial impact of this for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July prior to requesting funds from TDC.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked about creating a task force as mentioned in the Tourism Ordinance as noted in the Heritage Tourism Assessment and Recommendations Report of 2003.

Ms. Lopez suggested having the consultant lead the meetings with the various stakeholders rather than creating another Sunshine Committee that would be required to abide by the Sunshine Laws.

Mayor Sikes-Kline agreed that would be best.

Commissioner DePreter agreed.  
Commissioner Blonder said the 'task force' would be one of the contractual items for the consultant.

Commissioner Springfield said in the scope of work it should require him to gather information from local experts and use them as a key source resource.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said one of the things she was hearing was to add more Police Officers; however, she understood the City would need more employees to help with crowd control. She said statutorily, according to the City Attorney, the TDC was unable to pay for more officers.

Commissioner Garris asked if the TDC could assist with the security that was at the parking garage.

Mr. Birchim replied that there were some things that Public Safety Assistants (PSA) or private security were allowed to be used for but there were other things that they were unable to use. He said they would have to take a closer look at staffing and see how it could be handled.

Ms. Lopez said authorized uses of TDC monies were, for example, convention centers, auditoriums, aquariums, museums, zoos, or advertising tourism. She said in terms of tourist public facilities the statue was focused on capital improvement type items, such as transportation, sewer, water, drainage and pedestrian improvements. She said that was the challenge but there were different statues that would allow the City to use different funding but the City did not qualify.

Commissioner Blonder commented that she had heard from the business community that they were in support of assisting. She said there could be a way to help bridge the gap between what the City did qualify for and what they do not.

Ms. Lopez said the VIC could use TDC funds, so it could be creative budgeting. Mayor Sikes-Kline thanked the community for the feedback and the positivity. She said this was a delicate balance between the residents, businesses, employees and tourists.

## **11. ITEMS BY CITY ATTORNEY**

### **11.A. 2025B Special Session Legislative Update-for informational purposes only. (A. Owen, Assistant City Attorney)**

No presentation made, provided by the City Attorney's Office for information purposes.

## **12. ITEMS BY CITY CLERK**

(None)

## **13. ITEMS BY CITY MANAGER**

Mr. Birchim reminded everyone that Menendez Day would take place on Friday, February 14, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.

## **14. Items by Mayor and Commissioners**

Commissioner Springfield noted that at the prior meeting he had mentioned recognizing native landscaping and vegetation. He said that the program was in place but had been suspended due to COVID. He said it was part of the Street Tree Advisory Committee, and it would start again soon. He thanked the Commission for their support of the Forson Family in presenting them with the de Avilés Award. He noted downtown employee parking was an ongoing issue and not just during NOL. He agreed that bike sharing was a problem. He agreed with one of the speakers during public comments, that residents and tourists should both feel welcome in the City. He said it would be good to know which businesses profit during peak tourist periods. He noted that he had visited the Homeless Coalition which was a county program. He said it was a great program and encouraged everyone to visit.

Commissioner Blonder said she spoke to many businesses owners in Uptown and they noted the locals were their primary business and during NOL, their profits decreased. She noted that she had experienced the dangers of riding a bike on a shared road, but it needed to be addressed. She thanked those who came out to Fish Island for the ribbon cutting and those who provided feedback at the meeting.

Commissioner DePreter said he was an avid bicyclist in town and was using an electric bike currently and found people to be more respectful; however, bike safety

needed improvement. He said if downtown became more pedestrian friendly the question was what businesses would benefit, and which would suffer long term. He said he enjoyed the Fish Island ribbon cutting and the City's new poet laureate. He said he met with the Visitors & Convention Bureau (VCB) in his new capacity and said he would keep everyone up to date.

Commissioner Garris thanked those who came out and voiced their concerns. She said traffic was heavy even without NOL as there had been an influx of new county residents. She said the consultant could help those who were out of state but there were many new residents, and traffic would continue to increase. She said in the past fifteen years the City had changed and it continued to daily, she said we should prepare ourselves for the change and govern accordingly.

Mayor Sikes-Kline thanked the community for their input. She said there was a bicyclist safety campaign put out by the City paid for by the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and she felt it could be referenced when the City requested grants from them in the future. She recognized Jessica Beach, City's Chief Resiliency Officer, as she was on the cover of Florida Trend Magazine and had the center fold. She asked Commissioner Blonder if she would sponsor adding an Environmental Stewardship Award for the City.

Commissioner Blonder agreed, and said she was happy to take the lead and thanked her for asking. She said she would work with staff and provide an update in the future.

Mr. Birchim advised that Carlos Avilés, Chief of the St. Augustine Fire Department had a brief announcement.

Carlos Avilés, Chief of the St. Augustine Fire Department announced that 'Spark the Flame' youth empowerment program

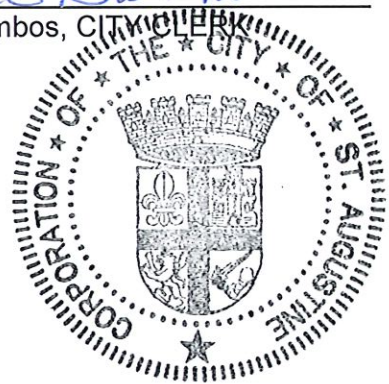
would be held again this year on April 18<sup>th</sup> and April 19<sup>th</sup> for middle and high school students.

## 15. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 P.M.<sup>1</sup>

  
Nancy Sikes-Kline, MAYOR

  
Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



<sup>1</sup> Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann