

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Regular City Commission Meeting
Monday, March 10, 2025

The City Commission met in formal session Monday, March 10, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Vice-Mayor Barbara Blonder, and the following were present:

1. Roll Call: Barbara Blonder, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner
Cynthia Garris, City Commissioner
Jim Springfield, City Commissioner
Jon DePreter, City Commissioner

Absent: Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor/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
Melissa Wissel, Director, Communications
Jennifer Michaux, Police Chief
Elyse Wiemann, Recording Secretary

MOMENT OF SILENCE and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Mayor Barbara Blonder requested a moment of silence and Commissioner Cynthia Garris led the pledge of allegiance.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

2.A. Modification and Approval of Regular Agenda

MOTION

Commissioner Jim Springfield **MOVED** to approve the Regular Agenda. The motion was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Jon DePreter and **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

3. Special Presentations, Recognitions and Proclamations

3.A Proclamation 2025-03: Proclaims March 2025 as National MS Awareness Month. (B. Blonder, Vice Mayor)

3.B Proclamation 2025-10: Proclaims March 2025 as Archaeology Month. (N. Sikes- Kline, Mayor)

3.C Proclamation 2025-11: Proclaims March 17-21, 2025 as Government Finance Professionals Week. (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)

3.D Proclamation 2025-14: Proclaims March 2025 as National Women's History Month. (B. Blonder, Vice Mayor)

4. General Public Comments (3 minutes per individual)

The Commission heard from the following members of the public:

- Shannon Sapp
- Nancy Murphy

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 MARCH 24, 2025:

- Ordinance 2025-03: Amends the Future Land Use Designation of approximately 0.08 acres of property from City of St. Augustine Residential Low Density to City Commercial Low Intensity at 4 Locust Street.
- Ordinance 2025-04: Establishes the Zoning Designation of approximately 4.39 acres of property from undesignated to City Open Land (OL) at 179 State Road 16.

CA.3. Reminder of Upcoming Meetings:

- March 24, 2025 5:00PM–Regular City Commission Meeting
- April 14, 2025 5:00PM–Regular City Commission Meeting
- April 28, 2025 3:30PM–Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting
- April 28, 2025 4:30PM–Adelaide Sanchez Award Presentation to the Sisters of St. Joseph
- April 28, 2025 5:00PM–Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR COMMISSION MEETINGS:

- January 27, 2025, Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.5. RELEASES OF LIEN FOR UNIT CONNECTION FEE MORTGAGE(S):

- 4564 Fourth Avenue-Ironsides Land Trust

CA.6. PROPOSED PROCLAMATIONS, CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION/RECOGNITION. (COMMISSION APPROVAL REQUIRED).

(TO BE READ AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING). NONE.

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

CA.8. Advancement of Nomination for selection of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Cyndi Stevenson for the 2025 Adelaide Sanchez Award for Historic Preservation and Restoration. (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)

CA.9. Approval of the Edward Memorial Justice (JAG) Grant for the purchase of the four (4) vehicle mounted radios. (J. Michaux, Chief of Police)

CA.10. Marlow V. City of St. Augustine-Invoice for Professional Services. (I. Lopez, City Attorney)

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 Commissioner DePreter 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

(None)

11. ITEMS BY CITY ATTORNEY

11.A. 2025 Legislative Session-for informational purposes only. (A. Owen, Assistant City Attorney)

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, provided a brief overview of the legislative items and

highlighted the bills that were important to local governments which could profoundly affect the City. She said there were many Land Use and Development Regulations bills, with the most important being House Bill (HB) 943. She said most of those bills could affect the way the City handled zoning, land use, and permitting in general, limiting the City's regulations. She said there were amendments to the Live Local Act, which required local governments to incentivize affordable housing, allowing an increased density and intensity if certain requirements were met, and would now include Adult Dwelling Units (ADU) such as 'granny flats' or garage apartments. She said this would no longer allow these properties to be regulated differently than the surrounding properties, and it would not differentiate if the property was for a long-term or a short-term rental.

Commissioner Blonder felt the City could be more proactive, as they had been in the past with other legislative bills.

Commissioner Springfield said one of his main concerns were restrictions on cities. He said a Community Development District (CDD) had more ability to control their environment than a City. He said the State was taking away the rights of the City.

Commissioner Garris said it was difficult when there were so many regulations, which made it hard for the City to govern accordingly. She asked if this would prevent tiny homes from being allowed on people's property.

Ms. Lopez said this would stop the City from regulating those. She said they would be considered an ADU or what was sometimes known as a 'granny flat'. She said this bill would allow these everywhere without a public hearing or having to meet criteria regulations. She said this could be beneficial for some areas with the need for affordable housing; however, if the area was high tourism like the City, it could increase the amount of short-term rentals

because these types of units rarely became full time dwellings.

Commissioner Garris asked if Code Enforcement was able to help with this matter.

Ms. Lopez replied that Code Enforcement was unable to, even under the existing laws they were not, and these bills would allow even more ADUs on the parcel without requiring regulations. She said most were supportive of affordable housing tiny homes, and 'granny flats', but if that was not coupled with the ability to limit them to "true rentals" and not vacation rentals then the problem was not being solved.

Commissioner DePreter said he was in support of ADUs, but the situation was different because they were not short-term rentals, and there were code regulations; however, that had changed. He said the contradictory nature of the bills was difficult. He said allowing tiny homes could be beneficial for affordable housing and helpful to working families or the elderly to make extra income. He said adding these without allowing regulations made it hard. He said he would like to see affordable housing units but not under the conditions they were being offered.

Ms. Lopez said Senate Bill (SB) 634 and HB401, created single family residential use or single-family hybrid housing use. She said these would allow the ability to differentiate the difference between owner occupied property and one that was a "hybrid" housing. She said it appeared that these two bills were trying to give the City more control. She said she would do a bit more research and provide more information at a later date. She noted other bills discussing Homestead and Ad Valorem tax exemptions. She said there was one bill that wanted to study the concept of removing all property taxes, known as Ad Valorem tax from governments. She said the finance department had reviewed some of the

impacts of the reductions, as this could really affect the City. She mentioned there were other bills regarding driving through flood waters and creating wakes, flood waters and emergencies, several related to law enforcement, firefighters benefit updates and illness related to their line of work, more on building permits, and one that limited the number of years a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) could be active. She said the bill regarding the CRA's could affect the City since there were almost three in the City.

Commissioner Blonder asked if the third CRA would be complete before October 1, 2025.

Mr. Birchim replied that the CRA had been created; however, the plan had not been adopted, but that should not be an issue.

Commissioner Garris mentioned the bills related to eliminating property taxes and the effects it could have. She questioned the homestead exemptions as one bill wanted to eliminate it, and another wanted to increase it to \$75,000. She asked for clarification.

Mr. Birchim replied that there was a bill that would increase homestead exemption to \$75,000 and another that would increase all exemptions to \$100,000, even non-homesteaded properties would receive that. He said that would result in less Ad Valorem taxes coming into the City. He said Meredith Breidenstein, Assistance City Manager and the Finance department, had calculated the impacts of this if it were to pass, and this information would be provided to the Commission. He said if property taxes were eliminated entirely, the City would not be able to operate.

Commissioner DePreter felt the property taxes were more political and had nothing to do with planning. He thought there was a larger issue when it came to homestead exemptions, which had to do with property insurance. He said it should be followed.

Commissioner Springfield said the reduction in the property tax and increase in homestead exemption was positive for residents, even though it hurt the City. He said the City had considered a reduction in the millage rate in the past and he understood there would be a comprehensive report this year on how this could affect the City. He said as of today, he was not in support of either as the State and Federal Governments were drastically cutting services to those who needed assistance. He said this would increase the burden for cities and the people who were receiving the services would no longer have them available. He stated many non-profit organizations in St. Augustine that help fill the gap with the homeless, food banks and other things that the federal governments were not supporting. He said if these programs were cut, it would be up to private citizens and that the amount of influx it would be unmanageable. He said the State, following the Federal Government, in trying to establish their own Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), which he was in favor of reducing waste and federal expenditure; however, he was not in favor of it at the cost of the people in small towns.

Commissioner Blonder agreed with Commissioner Springfield. She said if there were no property taxes the money would have to come from elsewhere. She said the City had a higher level of services than other locations and if property taxes were eliminated, it could result in increased taxes for businesses, higher sales tax, and could put an end to tourism altogether, which was one of the biggest sources to help regulate the amount of taxes collected. She said SB50, Nature-based Methods for Improving Coastal Resilience, was monitored by Jessica Beach, City Chief Resiliency Officer. She said there were two bills that had been actively supported in the City HB717 and SB582, Unlawful Demolition of Historical Buildings and Structures, and she hoped there would be support for both of those bills. She supported the idea of property owners who

invested in making their properties more resilient or elevating them would not have to pay additional property tax if their assessments increased. She said HB73 and SB156 were the Safe Waterways Act, which was important, as it would increase monitoring for impaired waters where people swim in particular and would require signs if fecal amount were high, which would help maintain water quality.

Ms. Lopez clarified that if the CRA bill passed, all the CRAs would terminate in FY 2045 and could not be extended.

12. ITEMS BY CITY CLERK

12.A. Proposed changes to the 2025 meeting schedule. (D. Galambos, City Clerk)

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, discussed the proposed time change to the 2025 Community Redevelopment Agency meetings and recommended having the April, July, and October meetings begin at 3:00p.m.

There was Board consensus to move the meetings to 3:00p.m.

12.B. Request for one (1) appointment-Corridor Review Committee (CRC). (D. Galambos, City Clerk)

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, requested one appointment to the Corridor Review Committee (CRC). She said the term would expire March 28, 2025, and received one application from the current Board member Lorna MacDonald, who was eligible for reappointment.

MOTION

Commissioner DePreter MOVED to reappoint Lorna MacDonald to the Corridor Review Committee. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

12.C. Request for two (2) appointments for the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB)–one (1) regular and one (1) alternate member. (D. Galambos, City Clerk)

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, requested two appointments to the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) one regular board member and one alternate board member. She said after advertising two applications were received, one from Brad Beach who was a current board member and the other from Barbara Wingo who was the current alternate board member who were both eligible for reappointment.

MOTION

Commissioner DePreter MOVED to reappoint Brad Beach and Barbara Wingo to the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

Commissioner Springfield noted on the next item that there were three vacancies listed for HARB and after these two appointments, would there be only one vacancy.

Ms. Galambos replied in the affirmative.

12.D. Reminder of Open Positions on Boards and Committees. (D. Galambos, City Clerk)

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, said this would be a continuous item for information to notify the Commission of the different Board positions that were vacant or had upcoming term expiration.

Commissioner Springfield commented that he was surprised there were three vacancies on the Lincolnville Community Redevelopment Area (LCRA) Steering Committee as there were many community members that might want to volunteer.

Ms. Galambos replied that those were not vacancies but upcoming term expirations. She said applications were being accepted at this time and some had been received. She said moving forward, upcoming term expirations and vacancies would be stated clearly. She noted there were vacancies on the Police and Fire Pension Boards.

Commissioner Blonder said the Citizens Academy was at a capacity of twenty and thought it could be used to help fill openings.

13. ITEMS BY CITY MANAGER

David Birchim, City Manager, said they had just returned home from Poland where they had accompanied Mayor Sikes-Kline for the 10th European Congress of Local Governments. He said the mayor spoke during two sessions about local governments and the challenges with tourism. He said that apart from flooding and hurricanes, we were facing the same challenges as other European cities with over tourism when it came to parking, transportation, traffic congestion, vacation rentals, and the loss of authenticity with local cuisine and restaurants. He said all the same things that we discussed locally that were an impact from tourism were the same as they dealt with.

Commissioner Blonder said she was pleased that they were able to attend, share the challenges, and brainstorm ideas.

14. Items by Mayor and Commissioners

Commissioner Garris said Shannon Sapp had come before the Commission expressing her concerns and she hoped at the next meeting there could be an update on that situation. She welcomed Mr. Birchim back from his trip and thanked Meredith Breidenstein for meeting with her for the weekly meeting. She said her church, New Mt. Moriah Christian Ministries, appreciated the proclamation for celebrating their 100th Anniversary.

Mr. Birchim said he would provide what he could about the situation regarding Ms. Sapp.

Commissioner Blonder said she had the opportunity to volunteer at Habitat for Humanity and work on the Women's Build Day. She encouraged everyone to participate as it was a great program. She said it was March, and people were still voicing their concerns about Nights of Lights! (NOL). She said with the impacts Nights of Lights! had, she directed staff to prepare a resolution to temporarily reduce the dates for the upcoming 2025 season. She asked for it to start Thanksgiving weekend to the weekend after New Years, January 5, 2026. She said there were three reasons as to why she had made this request. She asked if a consultant had been retained.

Mr. Birchim replied that the solicitation had been prepared and was being advertised.

Commissioner Blonder stated that we were in the process of securing a consultant, who would make recommendations that the Commission would have to consider and deliberate on with public input. She said that the process would not be completed in time for the NOL 2025 season. She said they needed more time to implement the changes and with limited time, it would not get better by itself. She said secondly, the King Street Bridge would be under construction and could have an undetermined and significant impact on the City and during NOL. She said lastly, if it began later in November, hurricane season would be over, and it would limit the number of repairs before the NOL season started.

Ms. Lopez asked for clarification on the dates. She said Light Up Night would take place on Thanksgiving Day, a Thursday and end January 5th, a Sunday.

Commissioner Blonder asked for a recommendation from staff as to the best day to hold Light Up Night. She said she

wanted it to be significantly shortened and to start in late November. She asked for staff to add to an upcoming agenda a report on the vehicles for hire and options for licensing.

Commissioner Garriss said she saw a rumor about cruise ships being allowed to come here to port. She said there was not a port to allow this, and the blame was being placed on the mayor. She said she wanted to clarify that this was not happening.

Commissioner Springfield said there was a cruise ship parked in the inlet for five days. He said he had no other information about it nor where it was from.

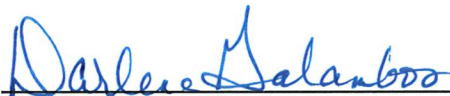
Mr. Birchim replied that the City was not advocating for that and never had.

15. Adjournment

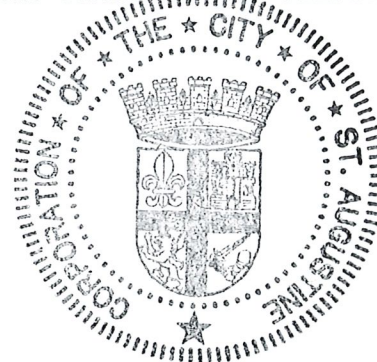
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:16 P.M.¹



Nancy Sikes-Kline, MAYOR



Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



¹ Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann