

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Regular City Commission Meeting
Monday, April 28, 2025

The City Commission met in formal session Monday, April 28, 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
Stephen Slaughter, Director, Public Works & Utilities
Amy Skinner, Director, Planning and Building
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

Mayor Sikes-Kline **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.2025 City Commission Citizenship Awards. (C. Niles, Event & Venue Coordinator)

3.B.2025 Citizens' Academy Graduation Ceremony. (R. Franklin, Assistant City Manager)

3.C. Proclamation 2025-21: Proclaims April 2025 as National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month. (J. Springfield, City Commissioner)

3.D. Proclamation 2025-23: Proclaims May 2025 as National Historic Preservation Month. (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)

4. General Public Comments (3 minutes per individual)

The Commission heard from the following members of the public:

- Melinda Rakoncay
- Heather Neville
- 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: NONE.

CA.3. Reminder of Upcoming Meetings:

- May 12, 2025, 3:00PM-Special CRA Meeting
- May 12, 2025, 3:15PM-Special City Commission Meeting
- May 12, 2025, 4:30PM-Adelaide Sanchez Award Presentation to Cyndi Stevenson
- May 12, 2025, 5:00PM-Regular City Commission Meeting

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

- March 24, 2025, Regular City Commission Meeting
- April 14, 2025, Shade Meeting

CA.5. RELEASES OF LIEN FOR UNIT CONNECTION FEE MORTGAGE(S): NONE.

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. Quarterly Report: 2nd Quarter FY 2024-2025. (I. Lopez, City Attorney)

CA.9. Approval for perpetual permission to use the City Crest for the annual History Festival. (M. Wissel, Communications Director)

CA.10. Approval of the Phase 3 plat for Madeira at St. Augustine. (A. Skinner, Director Planning and Building)

CA.11. Authorizes execution of the annual Nights of Lights operating agreements between the City of St. Augustine and Old Town Trolley Tours. (C. Sakryd, Director General Services)

End Consent Agenda

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

Mayor Sikes-Kline expressed concern for perpetual permission to use the City Crest.

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, said it could be automatically annually renewed unless the Commission brought it back as an action item to terminate the agreement.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked if that modification could be added to that item, she would make a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Commissioner DePreter asked for clarification.

Ms. Lopez said it would automatically be renewed unless it was brought back to be terminated.

5.B. Approval of Consent Agenda

MOTION

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

be used elsewhere. She said art was very valuable but everyday living and a community impact was better for the residents.

Commissioner Springfield said after more reflection, he was on the Commission to represent the residents. He said part of his reason for voting in support of the project in August 2024, the art committee had selected an artist, and he respected their decision even though he was not in support of the result. He said after receiving comments from the community, the consensus was that they were not opposed to artwork, but they were opposed to this specific piece of artwork and the price of \$250,000. He said one trait for a commissioner was to admit when you were wrong, and he felt that he would be inclined to scrap the project and save the rest of the money left for another time. He said in the future, the money could be used for art, but it needed to reflect the culture of the City.

Mayor Sikes-Kline agreed. She said she was not opposed to art and mentioned that the county was working on establishing a public art program and wanted the City to have one. She said she regretted this misstep, as this particular piece of art was not supported by the community. She felt many people found it unrelatable, and installing this piece in a location where it could not be accessed made it more difficult to enjoy. She said she could support moving it but preferred to end the project in totality.

Commissioner Blonder said she had seen many pieces of art that she was not a fan of; however, she felt art was an expression and an opportunity to engage in often uncomfortable feelings and discussions which were a critical need in our society. She felt the decision made by the Commission was not a misstep as there was a long lengthy process, which included a lot of public engagement and feedback. She said the citizen subcommittee was led by the former Vice-Mayor Roxanne

Horvath, and due diligence was done. She said time had been invested in by the committee and artists and she felt that it should be respected. She said the City had invested \$87,500, in good faith, of taxpayers' money for public art in this location. She said the tone on social media regarding the artwork already was embarrassing and disrespectful, and she apologized directly to the artist. She said she would not support more landscaping as the site was landscaped with native plants by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) under the contract with the City. She stated she was disappointed.

Commissioner DePreter said the artwork was budgeted as a one-time cost and in the grand scheme of things, he did not feel that \$250,000 was a lot of money. He stated art and culture was a goal of the City as it was in the Vision Plan and that was what made the City different from other coastal towns. He said the subcommittee had very qualified local people on it and the City was lucky to have them in the community. He explained the meetings were noticed to the public, public comments were given, the selection was unanimous by the subcommittee and voted on by the Commission. He said he did not feel this art piece was controversial as the piece was conceived to be in this location as it was designed for circular viewing. He said \$87,000 had been invested in the project and he did not want to lose the investment. He said since this was a goal of the City, he felt this was a way of retreating.

MOTION

Mayor Sikes-Kline MOVED to end the art installation and decide at a later time how to use the remaining funds. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield.

VOTE ON MOTION:

AYES: Sikes-Kline, Springfield, Garriss

NAYES: Blonder, DePreter

MOTION CARRIED 3/2

10.B. Nights of Lights Public Engagement Schedule. (D. Birchim, City Manager)

David Birchim, City Manager, reviewed the Nights of Lights! public engagement schedule, and noted he recently spoke to the Tourist Development Council (TDC). He said there would be continued work on how to improve large events in the City and a staff-level traffic circulation working group had been created. He said this required a robust public engagement effort and he planned to hold a total of five (5) meetings, two for the residential stakeholders, two for the business stakeholders, and one joint meeting consisting of both. He noted the meetings would take place in the Alcazar Room at City Hall on the following dates:

- Residential- May 20, 2025, at 9:00a.m.
- Business- May 22, 2025, at 1:00p.m.
- Residential -May 27, 2025, at 9:00a.m.
- Business -May 29, 2025, at 1:00p.m.
- Joint Meeting- June 10, 2025, at 9:00a.m.

He advised there had been one change, which was the time for the joint meeting. He said it would take place during the evening. He said everyone was welcome to come to the meetings to provide suggestions, concerns, complaints, or ideas. He stated the meetings would be advertised on all social media outlets, the City website, directly contacting, and neighborhood and business associations. He said a report would be compiled from these meetings and provided to the Commission for consideration.

Commissioner DePreter asked what time the joint meeting would take place and if they would be recorded and online.

Mr. Birchim replied the June 10th, the Joint meeting would take place between

5:00p.m.-7:00p.m. and all meetings would be held in the Alcazar Room. He said the meeting would not be recorded but the information would be captured.

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, stated that several recording secretaries would be needed to conduct these types of 'town hall' meetings, and that was unable to be done. She said these were more relaxed, with only the public and staff in attendance.

Mr. Birchim pointed out that the comments would be written down by staff and those would be provided back to the Commission.

Commissioner Springfield pointed out that there was a difference between public awareness and public involvement. He said the City no longer had The Record Newspaper, which hindered the involvement of the public. He said staff was doing everything possible to communicate with the public but once a decision was made by vote, word spread rapidly and it became more of an awareness situation. He said that was where he felt there would be a disconnect at no fault to anyone, but did not feel there was a way to provide information as thoroughly as many did not use social media. He said he hoped there would be ways to make the public aware after having public involvement.

Mayor Sikes-Kline complemented Mr. Birchim for his presentation to the Tourist Development Council (TDC). She thanked the residents for coming and voicing their concerns regarding safety.

10.C. Noise Ordinance Update. (A. Cuthbert, Deputy Chief of Police)

Anthony Cuthbert, City of St. Augustine Assistant Police Chief, provided an update on the noise ordinance. He said the final ordinance would be ready and submitted for first reading at the June 9th meeting.

Commissioner Springfield commented that there had been less than positive feedback

from some of the business community about using the plainly auditable version as it could result in one officer being overzealous for one reason or another. He said he felt there would be complaints no matter what, especially when a police officer was involved. He said he thought this would be beneficial as it would allow them to instruct businesses to turn down the volume by giving a warning. He said if a business consistently broke the rules, it would allow more offenses.

Chief Cuthbert replied that part of the enforcement program was to start with education first.

Commissioner Blonder said she liked that a clear timeline with the first and second readings being outlined. She thanked Chief Cuthbert for his hard work.

Commissioner DePreter said he had been a little skeptical of only relying on someone's opinion but liked the idea of using it to give warnings and then after a few warnings, a decibel meter reading could take place for a more objective reading. He said he would be in support of this if that was the way the ordinance was outlined.

Commissioner Springfield clarified that he meant a warning and citation could both be given by the plainly auditable reading.

Commissioner Garriss explained she had received an email from Scott York, a citizen, who had called about a noise complaint and the officer who responded did not have the equipment nor training to provide a decibel reading. She asked if the information given to Mr. York was accurate because she felt very disappointed by this. She asked once this was in place, would more officers be trained in order for them to respond effectively.

Chief Cuthbert replied that majority of the officers would be trained and certified on the decibel meters but also trained on the aspect of the new ordinance to include the

plainly audible. He said regarding that particular complaint, there was a certified decibel meter officer training on duty that night; however, he was conducting a reading on Anastasia Island at the same time. He said the vision was to have everyone trained and armed with the knowledge on how to enforce the new ordinance.

10.D. Information regarding the City's Community Rating System (CRS) Program. (A. Skinner, Director Planning and Building)

Richard "Buddy" Schauland, City Building Official and Flood Plain Administrator, provided a brief overview of the Community Rating System (CRS) program. He reviewed the requirements that would have to be achieved by the City to reach a level "4" providing residents a 30% discount for flood insurance.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked if an example of a Watershed Master Plan could be provided to the Commission.

Mr. Schauland replied he would reach out to the City of Palm Coast for their plan and send that out for review.

Mayor Sikes-Kline felt creating a Watershed Master Plan would be the next steps for the City.

Commissioner Blonder felt the City should try to obtain a CRS 4 rating level as an additional 5% could make a significant difference for residents. She thought the Watershed Master Plan was within reach. She said the Surface Water Improvement Management (SWIM) Plan under the direction of the St. Johns Water Management District fit within the Watershed Master Plan and thought they would have models that could be used as a resource. She said she was very supportive of this; however, was concerned that the CRS plan was under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which was really stretched. She said she

did not want to commit without knowing the outcome of the CRS, as the contract had been awarded to another company, but thought the exercise was worth trying.

Mr. Schauland said another Water Management District in our region of the Water Flood Plain Managers Association, spoke about the State wanting to have a Watershed Master Plan done for the entire state; however, the issue was funding and too far in the future.

Commissioner Blonder commended Mr. Schauland for bringing this to the Commissions attention and pointed out there was a lot of funding available for modeling given the City's elevations and rainfall.

Commissioner Springfield asked if St. Johns County received a positive Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) rating would the City benefit from since the City was within the county. He asked what the County's CRS rating was.

Mr. Schauland replied in the affirmative and explained the City was a part of the Flood Warnings Program, and the LMS, which belonged to the county. He said the County's CRS rating was the same as the City, level 5.

Commissioner DePreter said he was interested to see where growth was expected or redevelopment according to the Watershed Master Plan. He asked since reverification was underway with the CRS coordinator, would that information be provided to the Commission. He asked, if he knew how long a Watershed Master Plan took to complete.

Mr. Schauland replied that it would be provided, and this was done yearly around the same timeframe; however, the results would not be received until a year later. He said they attended the webinar that was conducted by the State for this year's grants and the University of Florida contacted them, and after further

conversations they said it could take between one to two years for the study. He said they were hoping some of the studies Jessica Beach, Chief Resiliency Officer, was conducting would contribute to this one.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said by participating in the CRS program, homeowners received a 25% discount on flood insurance and if able to move to Class 4, it would increase by 5% for a total of 30%, discount which was significant to homeowners. She said she wanted to take the next steps to move forward and since he knew what was needed for the grant program, she wanted him to be proactive and take the steps to proceed. She said the grant program would be very beneficial to the City.

Mr. Schauland said he would look into the grant process.

11. ITEMS BY CITY ATTORNEY

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, advised that the bills they had been following maybe voted on this week.

12. ITEMS BY CITY CLERK

12.A. Request for one (1) appointment to the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). (D. Galambos, City Clerk)

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, one appointment to the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). She said there were three (3) applications received from Michael Blake, Gaere MacDonald, and Roy Williams. She said all three were qualified for the position. She said the Commission could vote by ballot or a nomination could be made.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked if Mr. MacDonald was on the HARB.

Ms. Galambos replied that he was on the board; however, his term had expired at the end of March 2025. She said in the

past they had allowed a former Board member to apply for two additional terms if they met the qualification due to how difficult it was to find qualified applicants given the nature of the Board requirements. She said they were allowed to apply as long as they had missed one meeting in between.

Mayor Sikes-Kline requested a ballot vote.

Ms. Galambos tallied the votes and announced that with four votes Mr. MacDonald was reappointed to the Board.

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

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, reminded the Board of the open positions on the different Board and Committees. She said applications were being accepted for the Corridor Review Committee and applications for the Lincolnville Community Redevelopment Area (LCRA) Steering Committee would be brought back in June. She said an application would be presented to the Firefighters Pension Trust Board's for the fifth member and would be brought back for ministerial approval.

13. ITEMS BY CITY MANAGER

David Birchim, City Manager, congratulated Xavier "X" Pellicer for being awarded George Gardner Award for Civic Excellence, from the neighborhood council for his work on Spanish Street.

14. Items by Mayor and Commissioners

Commissioner Garris spoke about her trip to Avilés, Spain with Communications Director, Melissa Wissel and nine members of the Sister Cities Organization. She mentioned the different places they visited and expressed her gratitude for the Easter Celebration and added that the hospitality was unbelievable. She thought the student exchange program would be

very beneficial and could make a difference for these students in their future. She thanked the City and the Commission for allowing her to go and experience the culture.

Commissioner Springfield encouraged those who attended the Citizens' Academy to apply for the different opportunities available on Boards and Committees. She thanked Melissa Wissel, Communications Director, for her assistance with the Citizenship Awards.

Commissioner Blonder said with the upcoming budget cycle. She had a few suggestions and ideas, and thought with the Flood Plain Management, an incentive program should be implemented for residential and commercial rain gardens and bio swells. She said the Street Tree Advisory Committee was trying to be reintroduced and thought this was something that could be done and to encourage the use of native species. She added that staff had mentioned a solar initiative test case and wanted that to progress. She emphasized the desire for the composting program to continue and expand as this was the City's third year. She said during public comment Ms. Rakoncay mentioned the demolition of buildings and the effects the vibrations could have on historic buildings. She said demolitions were taking place in parts of the city and pointed out that a website that noted the vibration assessment explained the damage to the walls, foundations, chimneys and other parts of the buildings and the extent of the damage was unknown. She said if there was a baseline for construction, the City should be proactive to assess the types of damage that could take place and the type of equipment that could be used and emphasize how this could affect the historic nature of the buildings.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she had received the same email regarding vibrations, and spoke with Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, specifically related to the Planned Unit

Development (PUD) project that was being developed and requested a vibration plan. She said she agreed with Ms. Rakoncay that daily monitoring should take place, and historic buildings were in this PUD, which was an irreplaceable structure. She said she spoke with David Birchim, City Manager, and Ms. Lopez, about moving forward with how the zoning code and PUD zoning code could be modified to incorporate the vibration issues. She encouraged the rest of the Commissioners to take a tour of the Indinahead Biomass, LLC as it was very informative and interesting. She noted that Chief Jennifer Michaux, City of St. Augustine Police Department, was offering a ride-a-long, and she recommended each Commissioner to accept the offer if they had not taken one. She stated she received a request for a letter of support or resolution to promote National Distractive Driving Awareness Month, even though it was April, she felt a letter of support should be sent as there was a bill in the State Senate that addressed this issue. She asked for consensus to send the letter in support.

Commissioner Blonder felt that it fit with the City Mobility Plan.

There was a consensus to send the letter.

15. Adjournment

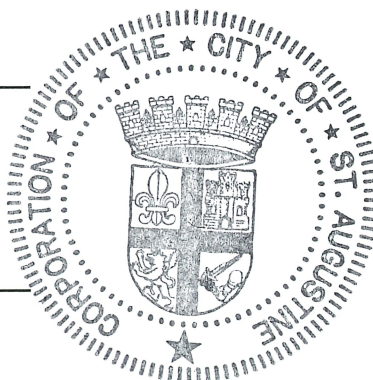
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 P.M.¹



Nancy Sikes-Kline, MAYOR



Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



¹ Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann