

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

City Commission Special Meeting
Monday, May 12, 2025

The City Commission met in formal session on Monday, May 12, 2025, at 3:15 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
Stephen Slaughter, Director, Public Works & Utilities
Amy Skinner, Director, Planning and Building
Corey Sakryd, Director, General Services
Melissa Wissel, Director, Communications
Melissa Burns, Director, Finance
Jennifer Michaux, Police Chief
Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief
Elyse Wiemann, Recording Secretary

2. General Public Comments

(NONE)

3. MID-YEAR FINANCIAL UPDATE

3.A. City of St. Augustine Mid-Year Budget Analysis Report. (M. Burns, Finance Director)

Melissa Burns, Finance Director, reviewed the 2025 Mid-Year Budget Analysis Report.

Commissioner Jim Springfield noted that the percentage of personnel spent at 48.26% could be viewed several ways, with it not directly at 50% the City was saving money; however, it seemed that the

staff was full, with hardly any vacancies which was a plus. He asked if there was any money left over from personnel that was carried to the following year.

Ms. Burns replied that the City did not budget to carry over any money for personnel.

Commissioner Barbara Blonder said on the FY25 General Fund Revenues by Function graph, there looked to be a decrease to tax revenue.

Ms. Burns replied that it was slightly down; however, the majority of property taxes were collected between November through January, but the other remaining taxes were collected a month in arrears. She

said closer to the end of the year the budget would likely be more accurate but was not shown since this was the mid-year report.

Commissioner Cynthia Garris asked if the number could be skewed because some people pay their taxes in installments.

Ms. Burns replied in the affirmative; however, noted that was not always considered.

There was consensus to accept the FY2025 Mid-Year Budget Analysis Report.

4. STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

4.A. City of St. Augustine Strategic Plan. (D. Birchim, City Manager)

David Birchim, City Manager, reviewed the Strategic Plan, and said it was the blueprint for the City's future and identified how resources were allocated to achieve the City's goals. He said the Strategic Plan began with the 2014 Vision Plan which set forth the City's principles and core values. He said the Vision Plan was currently being updated and the new themes were as follows:

- Livability
- Authentic Character
- Resiliency
- Vitality

Mr. Birchim said categories were refined in the Strategic Plan, which had eleven specific objectives, and these were updated last year in 2024. He outlined the objectives as such:

- Infrastructure Planning and Construction (Capital Improvements Plan)
- Mobility Planning and Construction
- Zoning and Building Code
- Resiliency
- Sustainability

- Arts, Education, and Community
- Enhance our partnership to affect change in affordable/workforce housing and homelessness
- Proactive planning to preserve our downtown character
- Event Planning and Management
- Diversity in the Workforce
- Historic Preservation and Archology

Mr. Birchim advised that these were the objectives used to relate to the budget. He said during the budget process, budgetary requests were provided to staff, and they would identify an objective in the Strategic Plan and the request fit best. He said the Strategic Plan may need to be revised to reflect the updates in the Vision Plan and that could take place during the summer.

Commissioner Jon DePreter asked if there was a set date required to complete the updates.

Mr. Birchim replied that it was an ongoing process.

Commissioner Springfield pointed out that the full-time homeless coordinator was not mentioned and he felt that should be highlighted as it had been successful and she was doing a great job. He said data related to the STAR shuttle should be reviewed. He said from personal experience, it was utilized as much as he felt it should be, and thought alternative ways for the shuttle should be considered. He said the shuttle was not doing what he anticipated it would. He reminded staff that when moving forward with the proposed different projects, if the powerlines could be underground it would allow more trees to be planted to provide more shade. He noted there were a total of sixty-nine people in attendance at the five Vision Plan meetings, which he felt was not a lot.

Mr. Birchim replied that Amy Skinner, Planning and Building Director, would have more information regarding the Vision Plan update and meeting participation.

Commissioner Garris felt many people would not attend the workshop but thought a questionnaire could be mailed to residents. She said using a different approach would allow more participation, allowing more data to be collected.

Commissioner Blonder noted she had the same observations about the shuttle. She agreed that having more data about the shuttle would be beneficial.

Mr. Birchim said there have been internal discussions about the STAR circulator routes in the future. He said the routes could be expanded to include the Broudy parking garage once it was complete and to the St. Augustine Amphitheater when it was used for event parking.

Commissioner Springfield said the run time for the shuttles was every fifteen minutes. He said they could be used more effectively if they were coming from places not within walking distance.

Commissioner Garris suggested the shuttles needed to make more stops to be more convenient for people.

Commissioner DePreter asked how the STAR circulator was funded. He asked if the main function was to move people and not visitors around the City.

Mr. Birchim replied that the circulator was funded by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). He said the function was to move people including visitors around the City.

Commissioner DePreter said with that in mind it would be beneficial to make it more like a public transit system. He said his concern was that the grant money might be a limitation; however, that was not the case.

Mr. Birchim replied that the mobility staff was in the process of trying to make the circulator more effective.

5. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

5.A. Capital Improvement Plan. (S. Slaughter, Director, Utilities & Public Works)

Stephen Slaughter, Director, Utilities & Public Works, reviewed the Capital Improvement Updates. He provided details for each individual project, including the project status, construction cost, and the projected start and end dates.

Commissioner Garris asked where the St. Augustine Joint Public Safety Training Complex would be located.

Mr. Slaughter replied that the building was the old wastewater treatment plant number two, just east of 312 Bridge on the north side.

Commissioner Springfield asked if there would be water access with Inlet Drive.

Mr. Slaughter replied that with the Inlet Drive Shoreline Stabilization project was for hardening the shoreline and water access could be revisited at a later date.

Commissioner Springfield questioned if the traffic changes could be implemented prior to the completion of the design or the start of construction on King Street.

Mr. Slaughter replied in the affirmative. He noted that the King Street replacement project would begin the construction phase, and the water main would be replaced and the tie in would be done after Memorial Day. He said there were some lane closures but there would be two lane traffic on King Street; however, later this week there would be two days when Malaga Street was closed north and south. He said it was minor for such a large project. He noted Marcus Pison, the City Project Manager, was working closely with the Communications Department to make

sure the information was provided to the community.

Commissioner Springfield said in relation to the Paving Management Plan, there had been discussion by email about some streets set to be paved in 2028.

Mr. Slaughter said some of the streets that were to be paved in future years had been moved to 2025. He said if there were any suggestions regarding the paving of streets, it could be sent to him for consideration.

Commissioner Garris commented that Madeore Street had been paved; however, there was a portion of the street that was missing, which was a very rough area.

Mr. Slaughter replied that he would investigate the reasoning, but he knew there were several other streets in West Augustine that needed to be paved, and he thought that it could have been an oversight.

Commissioner Blonder commented that the City was working diligently on converting septic to sewer in West City. She asked if state funding was used for the projects.

Mr. Slaughter confirmed that state funding and grants were used for several of the projects. He noted the Pearl Street Gravity Sewer and Water Main Improvements was funded by a \$2 million-dollar American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and a \$2 million-dollar grant from the Florida Department Environmental Protection (FDEP).

Commissioner Blonder said this was a high priority for the City to help maintain water quality and quality of life for City residents.

Mr. Slaughter added that this specific project also included water main improvements.

Commissioner Garris questioned when the construction would start for the sidewalks on South Whitney Street, Anderson Street, and South Dixie Highway

Mr. Slaughter replied that the construction would begin right after the design was completed. He said this project was part of the South Whitney Box Culvert, which would be West King Street to State Road 207 (CS207) sidewalk. He said the design was thirty percent complete and construction cost would be established when the design was closer to sixty or ninety percent. He said once design was complete, construction would begin. He said the project was very large and the construction would most likely take place in phases.

Commissioner Blonder pointed out that the commercial loading zone redesign was included with the Tolomato Parking Lot Improvement project.

Commissioner DePreter asked for a bit of clarification regarding the title work along the coquina ditch.

Mr. Slaughter replied that the need was to find a balance between the size of the ditch to maximize the hydrologic capacity with the existing conditions without having to do an extensive amount of title work such as easements, which was being worked on. He said once more information was available, it would be presented.

Commissioner DePreter said he attended one of the workshops about the Adaptation Plan based on the Vulnerability Assessment. He said the plan focused on protecting cultural and recreational facilities in town and other assets. He asked if the adaptation was for protecting those identified properties.

Mr. Slaughter explained that the vulnerability assessment had identified critical infrastructure at different levels and the adaptation plan would result in Capital

Improvement Projects (CIP) to harden and help reduce flood risk; however, the plan could be altered if needed.

Commissioner DePreter said he was happy that there would be bike lanes on Anastasia Boulevard. He confirmed that an architect had been selected for the new Fire Station on the Island and questioned if there were Request for Proposals (RFPs) for construction management.

Mr. Slaughter said that was correct and it would be located where Blue Water Jewelry was currently. He said this was an alternative bidding process to bring a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) to help with design and construction.

Commissioner DePreter asked about the Watershed Management Plan that was discussed in relation to the Stormwater Master Plan.

Mr. Slaughter said there was a lot of overlap between the different studies taking place, and he thought out of those, a Stormwater Master Plan could come out of them.

Commissioner DePreter asked for further clarification about the Lighthouse Park Gravity Sewer Improvements.

Mr. Slaughter explained that they met with the neighborhood, and they were not all in agreement with moving to a gravity sewer. He said gravity sewers were the best, but it could require deep construction. He said there were alternatives that may be a better fit for Lighthouse Park.

Commissioner Garris expressed her gratitude about moving forward with the easements on South Whitney Street as it moved closer to West King Street. She asked for clarification about the Old Dixie Highway sidewalk as she felt thousands of dollars had been allocated for the drafting and the Assistance City Manager told her that the project was moving forward. She

said now the project was only sixty percent complete with the design. She said they were in need of acquiring easements.

Mr. Slaughter explained they were in the process of obtaining easements; however, with a project of this magnitude for a sidewalk in an area that existed for a long time, the sidewalk had to be designed to fit the existing landscape, utilities, and driveways. He said this was more complicated than a new construction neighborhood.

Reuben Franklin, Assistance City Manager, explained that the sidewalk was taking longer than expected; however, the entire corridor had been surveyed and there were tight rights-of-way. He said they were in the process of evaluating where easements were needed, and there were lots of driveways and curb cuts. He said they were meeting property owners as it would impact people's driveways. He said it was slowly coming together but he felt it would start to move quickly now that the surveys were completed.

Commissioner Garris thanked Mr. Franklin for further explaining and pointed out a lot of people in that area walked to work and with the Day Center opening, the sidewalks would be valuable.

Mr. Franklin said they were looking at a phase approach, starting with South Dixie Highway first and then continuing with the rest of the project. He said they would discuss what money could be allocated to the project each year during the budget process.

Commissioner Springfield commented that Jessica Beach, Chief Resiliency Officer and Deputy Director of Public Works and Utilities, spoke at a neighborhood meeting regarding flooding. He said South Whitney was scheduled to have sidewalks added in the spring and suggested making those streets one way as it could be beneficial with travel. He said some of the feedback

from the neighborhood was that they were not opposed to having one-way streets to help accommodate flooding, but it could also allow bike paths and sidewalks.

Mr. Franklin agreed and said they had been contemplating one-way streets to help increase the sidewalk widths. He said if streets were changed to one-way that would require an ordinance change plus a lot of public engagement would have to be done to make sure residents understood what was being done.

Commissioner Garris commended staff for obtaining a generator at the Water Treatment Plant. She said the paved road at the Tolomato Parking lot had made a huge difference as it was so much easier entering and exiting. She said she was looking forward to the project being complete.

Commissioner Springfield asked for more explanation about the fluoride law and the water treatment.

Mr. Slaughter said there was a new law that would prohibit the City from adding fluoride to the water; however, this would not affect because the City did not add fluoride to the water. He said it was a naturally found element and was in the City's water as we used ground water and it was well below the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) limits.

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, said the legislation was about additives and the City did not do that.

Commissioner Springfield clarified that the septic to sewer projects were not in the City; however, the City provided the water to the area. He said most of these projects were not funded by general taxes, he asked if the funding source could be added for reference.

Commissioner Blonder asked for a summary noting how everything was

funded. She thanked Mr. Slaughter for his presentation and staff for being able to handle all the different projects. She said she looked forward to continuing progress.

6. ITEMS BY MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner DePreter asked if there were specific requests could be provided.

Mr. Birchim said specific requests related to the budget were able to be made at any time, but budget workshops would begin soon.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:11 P.M.¹

Barbara Blonder

Barbara Blonder, Vice-Mayor

Darlene Galambos

Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



¹ Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann