



## NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 16

ISSUE 2

### Mayor and Vice Mayor for 2007



The Commission at its January 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting elected as Mayor and Vice Mayor Commissioner Edward George (shown above on the left) and Commissioner Rich O'Brien. Mayor George began his second four-year term on the Commission on January 1, 2007. In his first four-year term (2003 through 2006), he was Vice Mayor in 2005. His current term on the Commission will end December 31, 2010. He is a strong advocate for the City's beach and has attended regularly conferences related to beach restoration and technology. He grew up in Florida and is a Registered Professional Engineer and the owner of E&S Consulting. Vice Mayor O'Brien took office in November 2006 to fill the remaining two years of former Commissioner Barbara Ellis's term. He is the City's representative on the Tourist Development Council and is a strong proponent of implementing the A1A Beach Boulevard Vision Plan. He and his wife own the La Fiesta Inn and Suites and the Fiesta Falls Miniature Golf business on the Boulevard.

## New Commissioners Sworn In



At the Commission's January 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, the Commissioners elected at the November 2006 general election were sworn in by City Attorney Geoff Dobson. They are, left to right: Edward George, Frank Charles and Brud Helhoski.

## Plaque for Barbara Ellis

Mayor George (left) presented a plaque to Mr. Michael Ellis, son of former Commissioner Barbara Ellis, to recognize Ms. Ellis's service to the community as a City Commissioner for 2005 and 2006. Ms. Ellis had to resign her position last December for medical reasons. As a Commissioner, she was the City's representative on the Tourist Development Council and was responsible for proposing the City's first annual New Year's Eve fireworks show in conjunction with the South Beaches Area Council of the Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Ellis played a key role in obtaining \$25,000 from the TDC to pay for the fireworks.



## Plaque for Chamber of Commerce



At the City Commission's February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, Mayor George presented a plaque to representatives of the South Beaches Area Council of the Chamber of Commerce (left to right above): Peter Darios, Carrie Lynn, Jennifer Sauvage, Mayor George, Jill Atwood, Robin Burchfield, and Vikki Naecker.

The plaque was presented to recognize the South Beaches Chamber's outstanding work on organizing and presenting the recent New Year's Eve fireworks show at the County pier park.

## IN RECOGNITION

Sgt. Joseph Beaudoin of the City's Police Department receives a plaque from Mayor George for 20 years of employment with the City. Sgt. Beaudoin was hired by the City in December 1986 and was promoted to the position of sergeant in April of 2005. He is one of the City's two motorcycle officers.



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## CHANGES TO CITY'S GARBAGE/TRASH COLLECTION SCHEDULE BECAUSE OF HOLIDAY

The holiday is Memorial Day on Monday, May 28, 2007. The garbage/trash schedule on that day will be as follows:

Monday, May 28:	HOLIDAY. CITY OFFICES CLOSED. NO PICKUP OF HOUSEHOLD WASTES.
Tuesday, May 29:	Residents scheduled for pickup on Monday will have service on TUESDAY.
Wednesday, May 30:	Residents scheduled for pickup on Tuesday will have service on WEDNESDAY. The only special waste picked up on Wednesday will be YARD TRASH.
Thursday, May 31:	Regular pickup of household wastes.
Friday, June 1:	Regular pickup of household wastes.

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## WHERE WE'VE BEEN.....

During the past three months, the City Commission has made the following decisions, among many:

1. Approved the following ordinances:

- three ordinances related to four lots north of the Sea Grove subdivision: one ordinance annexed 1.44 acres into the City; the second changed the land use of the four lots from their County designation of Residential C to the City designation of Low Density Residential; the third changed the zoning to Planned Unit Development, which matches the approved zoning for the Sea Grove subdivision. The Sea Grove developer plans to build four single-family houses on these lots.
2. Approved the following resolutions
    - to support certain priority issues for the 2007 session of the Florida Legislature.
    - to declare certain items of City property as surplus and to authorize their disposal.
    - to adopt updated City Commission Policies and Procedures Manual.
    - to amend the Fiscal Year 2007 budget for various reasons.
  3. Made the following miscellaneous decisions:
    - appointed the following citizens: Mr. Barry Tuttle as a regular member and Ms. Andrea Samuels as an alternate to the Planning Board; Ms. Ann Palmquist as alternate to the Code Enforcement Board.
    - approved a proclamation to recognize International Women's Day on March 8, 2007.
    - approved the following special event permits: for the Knights of Columbus 11<sup>th</sup> annual 5K beach run on Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup> ; for Flagler College's Spring Beach Blast on March 31<sup>st</sup>; for the Civic Association's A Taste of St. Augustine Beach at the County pier pavilion on Sunday, May 20, 2007 from noon to 6 p.m.; for the Civic Association's Spring/Summer Concert Series at the County pier pavilion each Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. starting on May 9 and ending on Wednesday, September 26, 2007.
    - approved the City hosting again the Northeast Florida League of Cities in October 2007.
    - decided not to exercise the option to purchase two lots on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, as the owner wanted \$900,000 for them.
    - reviewed with the City's auditors the audit report for Fiscal Year 2006. The auditor reported no problems with the City's accounting and use of the public's money.
    - appointed Commissioner Brud Helhoski to be the City's representative on the County-wide Intergovernmental Committee and Commissioner Charles as an alternate to the Committee.

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## WHERE WE'RE GOING.....

During the next three months, the City Commission will consider the following, among many topics:

1. Ordinances: At the Commission's April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, there'll be public hearings for the following ordinances: to increase the additional homestead exemption for low-income senior citizens from \$25,000 to \$50,000; to lower the speed limit in the Woodland Estates subdivision (Woodland Avenue, Dogwood Drive, White Court) from 25 miles per hour to 15 miles per hour; to adopt the City's logo as the City's official seal.
2. Regulating Short-Term Rentals in Medium Density Land Use Districts: Such districts are located along the Boulevard between 16<sup>th</sup> and F Streets east and west of A1A Beach Boulevard. Since December of 2006, the City Commission has discussed limiting short-term or vacation rentals in the medium density districts. The discussion began because of resident complaints about noise, parking, and other problems created in some areas by visitors renting a house for a weekend or a week. At a workshop meeting on February 20<sup>th</sup> that the

Commission had with the Planning Board, Voce Mayor O'Brien proposed terms to regulate short-term rentals, such as requiring persons offering property for short-term rentals to have an occupational license, as well as a lodging license if required by State law, and proof of a bed tax license. He defined rentals of less than seven days as transient rentals and those of more than seven days as short-term rentals. He suggested phasing out transient rentals from medium density land use districts. Also at that workshop meeting, the City's Building Official, Mr. Gary Larson, presented a proposed ordinance that he had prepared. The Planning Board will review both ordinances and take from each the regulations that the Board believes will effectively regulate short-term rentals in the City. The Board's draft will then be reviewed by the City Commission at a public meeting. Persons with questions about regulating short-term rentals may call Mr. Larson at 471-8758 or e-mail him at [glarson@cityofsab.org](mailto:glarson@cityofsab.org).

3. Vacating of Two Alleys: One is the alley west of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets; the other an alley west of A1A Beach Boulevard between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets. At its March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, the City Commission held a public hearing on the request to vacate each alley. An ordinance to vacate each will be on the agenda for the Commission's April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, with a public hearing on each ordinance for the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.

4. Contract for Recycling: The City's current contract with Waste Management Industries for the pickup of recyclables in the City expires at the end of April. The City has advertised for proposals from companies in the area that provide the service. These proposals will be reviewed by the City Commission at its April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

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## PROJECTS

1. **Sewer System Improvements.** St. Johns County provides sewage collection and treatment for properties in St. Augustine Beach. However, there are older neighborhoods in the City where the residents rely on individual septic systems for sewage treatment. Because septic systems can leak and pollute groundwater, and because the small lots in the older subdivisions mean that there are septic systems close to others, the County Utility Department has obtained State funds to construct sewer mains in these older neighborhoods. During March, the County's wastewater consulting engineering firm, Camp, Dresser and McKee, will have surveys of the neighborhoods done. Street rights-of-way, lot corners, trees, culverts, ditches, driveways, and the like will be located. This phase of the project will take five months. Construction plans will be prepared from the information provided by the surveying.

2. **Splash Fountain at Pier Park.** This is to be a play fountain for children. It will be constructed east of the Visitor Information Center in the County pier park. The City has obtained a State grant of \$112,500 for the project, while the South Beaches Area Council of the Chamber of Commerce is raising money from the sale of bricks and special events, such as the New Year's Eve Beach Blast-Off for 2007. From that event the South Beaches Council raised over \$13,000 towards the Fountain.

At its February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, the City Commission approved a design-build contract with Mudrak Engineering and Construction. Mudrak will prepare plans, and on the basis of the plans, apply for the required State and Water Management District permits. Once the permits have been obtained, construction can begin.

3. **New Year's Eve Fireworks Show.** The show on December 31, 2006 at the County pier park was so successful that planning is already underway for the event on the last day of 2007. The tentative plans are for the fireworks to be shot off at 7:30 pm. There may be more vendors, better signage to show where restroom facilities are located, and larger shuttle

buses. Persons who live in the vicinity will be encouraged to walk or ride bicycles. The next meeting for the committee planning the 2007 event will be in late April.

**4. Master Tree Plan for Rights-of-Way in City.** The City has received a \$15,000 urban forestry grant to hire a master arborist to develop a tree planting plan along the rights-of-way of certain streets in the City. A local master arborist, Mr. Chuck Lippi, has been hired, as he was the only one who responded to the City's request for proposals. Mr. Lippi is also acting as an unpaid advisor to the City's Tree Board/Beautification Advisory Committee. Mr. Lippi has begun his work on developing the tree planting plan. The plan, when completed, will tell the City what types of trees should be planted and where and will have a written maintenance guide for Public Works employees to use to help the trees survive. The goal of the grant is to increase the City's tree canopy along certain streets, such as Pope Road, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets.

**5. Branch Library in Sea Grove Subdivision.** The County Library will have a branch library in the commercial part of the Sea Grove subdivision, which is located on the west side of State Road A1A at A Street. It will be a two-story, 8,000 square-foot building. The projected completion date is July 2007. There'll likely be a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the occasion when the library will be done and ready for public use.

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## POST OFFICE

Since September 2004, the U.S. Postal Service has used as a post office the 600-square-foot building on the west side of the city hall parking lot. The Postal Service pays the City a monthly rent of \$150.00. As the population of St. Augustine Beach and the surrounding area of Anastasia Island has grown, the public's use of this post office has increased accordingly. The Postal Service is now looking for space, either in an existing business, or a parcel of land large enough for a 2,000-square-foot post office with parking area and loading dock. In December and early January, the Postal Service advertised for potential sites. As of the middle of January, it had received six proposed locations: four that are in St. Augustine Beach, and two that are outside. These two are: vacant land adjacent to the Gate convenience store on State Road 312 and the northwest corner of the intersection of SR-312/A1A.

At its March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, the City Commission reviewed two proposals: enlarging the building at the city hall complex that the Postal Service now is using, and possibly leasing or selling an acre or two of City-owned land west of the City's Public Works Department facility on Mizell Road. The Commission didn't favor enlarging the existing building, because to do so would mean reducing significantly the number of parking spaces for city hall. The Public Works Director will provide a report on the pros, cons and costs of a post office site next to the Public Works Department. This report will be reviewed by the Commission at its April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

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## BOULEVARD VISION PLAN

Starting in September 2005 and continuing on to May 2006, the consulting firm of Wallace, Roberts and Todd of Coral Gables developed a vision plan for the Boulevard. It was based on a number of meetings that the firm held with a Commission-appointed vision committee and with other residents. The cost of the plan was \$75,000. In the plan document a number of "action" steps were recommended. These included creating a mixed-use (residential and

commercial) land use category; having “activity centers” at A Street and the pier area; developing architectural standards for buildings along the Boulevard; and grants and other funding means for improvements to areas along the Boulevard, such as the plazas.

Since May 2006, the City Commission has concentrated on amending the Comprehensive Plan to create the mixed-use land use category, while the Planning Board has concentrated on the development of architectural styles for buildings.

In the Vision Plan developed by Wallace, Roberts and Todd, the mixed-use concept is described as a category of land use “whose primary intent will be to accommodate the development of high-quality residential and transient (lodging) uses, as well as complementary retail, service, dining, and entertainment functions.” The Plan suggests there be a mixed-use district from 16<sup>th</sup> to F Street from the Boulevard to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue on the west side of the Boulevard and 150 eastwards of the Boulevard’s east right-of-way border. The purpose of mixed-use is to change the customary strict separation of residential and commercial uses by allowing the intermingling of these uses as was done traditionally in small towns and cities in America.

An ordinance to amend the City’s Comprehensive Plan to create the land use district was adopted, but because the definition of mixed-use in the ordinance is different from that in the Vision Plan, the ordinance will need to be redrafted and reviewed by the City commission for first reading at its April 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

In the meantime, the Planning Board is working on the development of architectural standards for buildings along the Boulevard.

Persons with questions about either the mixed-use concept, or the architectural standards or both, may call the Building Official, Mr. Gary Larson, at 471-8758 or e-mail him at [glarson@cityofsab.org](mailto:glarson@cityofsab.org).

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## HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

*Editor’s Note: The information below was provided by Ms. Tara Dobson, the County’s Habitat Conservation Coordinator. The County’s Habitat Conservation Plan covers the beach in our City.*

The beaches of St. Johns County are recognized as important habitat for protected species including sea turtles, the native Anastasia Island beach mouse (AIBM) that only occurs on Anastasia Island, and several species of nesting shorebirds. The sandy beaches of St. Johns County are wide, flat, hard-packed and to some are considered ideal for driving. We are privileged to drive on our beaches but we also have an important responsibility to create a compromise between our coastal inhabitants and beach users. In doing so, St. Johns County applied for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2003 to authorize the unintentional taking of federally protected species caused by vehicular related activities regulated or managed by the County. In addition, a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), a statutory component of the ITP application, was prepared and submitted. The HCP describes the various programs, policies, plans and measures to minimize and mitigate the take of sea turtles and the native AIBM that may be related to ITP authorized activities. In August, 2006 the ITP and HCP were formally approved through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service allowing for continued public use and access of beach driving. In addition to beach driving, there are a variety of other human impacts to sea turtles and AIBM on St. Johns County’s beaches. These include but are not limited to; public and private beachfront lighting, special events, human presence on the beach at night, pedestrian traffic and horseback riding, uncontrolled public

access, feral and free roaming cats, trash and objects on the beach, coastal development and construction, shoreline protection, and other types of erosion control measures (e.g. beach nourishment, dune restoration, sand fencing, etc.) The programs and policies contained in the HCP will improve protected species management on the City of St. Augustine Beach's and County's beaches relative to practices currently in place. There is no official season for AIBM, however, sea turtle season is from May 1- October 31, and many changes will take place on our beaches during this time. The most effective and noticeable to beach goers will be the limited beach driving hours from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, excluding properly permitted commercial fishermen, and the increased and dedicated enforcement of beach driving policies. The other programs include a protected species and permit program for commercial fishermen, north beach drivers, and horseback riders, a rut removal program, developing public awareness workshops, increased enforcement of the existing Conservation Zone, developing a proactive Beach Lighting Management Program and align the City of St. Augustine Beach's lighting regulations with the County's existing lighting regulations, and restricting Porpoise Point vehicular access. If you would like more information regarding these policies and programs you may log onto [www.co.st-johns.fl.us](http://www.co.st-johns.fl.us), use the search engine by typing in Habitat Conservation Plan, here you will find the complete HCP and ITP. For more information you may also contact Tara Dodson, the Habitat Conservation Coordinator for St. Johns County Beach Operations at 209-0336.

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## PROPERTY TAX REFORM

The 2007 Florida Legislature will consider a number of proposals for property tax reform. In late February, the Florida League of Cities provided an outline of one reform plan which has been proposed by the Florida House of Representatives. Here's a summary:

- A state law that rolls back local property taxes based on a formula based on your city's 2001 rate, adding increases for inflation. A rollback rate of this magnitude will require significant budget cuts for your city this year. A more detailed formula will be provided so that you can calculate the impact to your city.
- A Constitutional amendment change that, if adopted by voters in a statewide election in 2007, will:
  - Cap spending by cities, based upon the 2001 spending formula. Cities could exceed the cap with a unanimous vote of the governing body.
  - Eliminate property taxes on homestead property and replace it with an increase in the state sales tax by 2.5 cents.

The state law would take effect, if approved by the Legislature, in July 2007. The Constitutional amendment part of the plan does not speak to how the increase in sales taxes would be distributed if approved by voters.

The League also provided an analysis of the effect of the House's tax reform plan on the property tax revenue for every Florida city. In summary, the effect would be to reduce significantly the revenue for most cities. For St. Augustine Beach, the reduction would be \$1,000,000 out of a total of \$2,273,118 estimated to be received from property taxes for Fiscal Year 2007. The City's Finance Administrator, Ms. Burns, analyzed what the effect on the City's current budget a \$1,000,000 reduction in revenue would be. What the City would have to do in order to have a balanced budget would be to delete all capital expenditures. This means no new police cars, sanitation truck, road paving and drainage projects, and the replacement of obsolete computer equipment. Residents re encouraged to send their ideas and opinions about

property tax reform to their local State elected officials. They are: Representative Bill Proctor, 823-2550 or (850) 488-2977, e-mail [bill.proctor@floridahouse.gov](mailto:bill.proctor@floridahouse.gov) ; Senator Jim King, 727-3600 or (850) 487-5030, e-mail [king.james.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:king.james.web@flsenate.gov) .

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