

**From:** George Gardner [gardner@aug.com]  
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# THE ST. AUGUSTINE REPORT

Local news in our Nation's Oldest City



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## UF takes over historic properties

The University of Florida (UF) will take over management of 34 state-owned historic properties here, including our Colonial Spanish Quarter, "by the end of the week," City Manager-designate John Regan told city commissioners Monday.

A reluctant commission, after considering legal action to thwart the state legislature's authorization, called for a transition plan "as quickly as possible," which could include our city continuing management of the Spanish Quarter and Government House under agreement with UF.

Discussion of the UF takeover and where that leaves our heritage program dominated the commission meeting, which also included updates on the 450<sup>th</sup> commemoration and the Home Again St. Johns County program to end homelessness, approval of permanent extended alcohol sales hours, and support of funding applications for the Riberia Street project and entry corridor improvements.

Commissioners also endorsed a proposal to shift architectural style guidelines from our state-regulated Comprehensive Plan to local control, but with extensive public hearings. The former Florida East Coast rail station at US 1 and San Marco Avenue was approved as the location for an Amtrak station, part of an eight-station passenger rail line from Jacksonville to Miami for which federal stimulus funding will be sought.



### *Fireworks Over the Matanzas*

St. Augustine's July 4th tradition continues Sunday with music at 6 p.m. and *Fireworks Over the Matanzas* at 9:30. The warm-up is the All Star Orchestra in concert in the Plaza gazebo, blending popular and patriotic music. Traffic detours

## *University and city - 'What relationship?'*

Commissioners Don Crichlow and Leanna Freeman agreed it's a matter of having faith that the University of Florida will have our city's best interests at heart in the new relationship, while Vice Mayor Errol Jones said, "What relationship?"

"This has been in the works for three years, and if a university official walked into this room right now, I wouldn't know it. There's been no relationship," Jones said.

City Manager-designate John Regan explained the university was not prepared to accept the takeover without funding, which was only granted recently by the state legislature "after the City Commission passed its resolution seeking a

will begin at 8:30, closing off the Bridge of Lions and bayfront between the bridge and Castillo at 9:30.

In good holiday spirit, our Heritage Department, in cooperation with British NightWatch, will present *REVOLUTION: St. Augustine 1776* at the Taberna and surrounding grounds from 6 p.m. through the fireworks. Military and cooking demonstrations are on tap, as well as a great viewing area for the fireworks.

Details and advisories are on our city [website](#).

*Photo: Mike Cubbedge*

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continuation of our management.

"That \$650,000 in state funding can only be used in certain ways," Regan said. "They don't have the flexibility we do to cover all the expenses. Our city supports the program with \$960,000 a year in funds from property rents, our parking facility, gift shops, and reduced labor costs using city personnel," he said.

Our Heritage Department has 53 employees, including 20 in the Spanish Quarter. Regan said intensive negotiations with UF over the past several weeks got no commitments, but acknowledgement that the university can't afford a total takeover.

## **450<sup>th</sup> needs a foundation**

City Manager-designate John Regan told commissioners Monday that discussions with experts in the field suggest the need to establish a non-profit foundation for the 450<sup>th</sup> Commemoration, and creation as soon as possible of a special license plate and commemorative stamps and coins.

## **Homeless costs: \$3.5 million a year**

That's the figure Mike Davis, chair of the Home Again St. Johns County program, gave commissioners last night as he briefed them on efforts to end homelessness. The figure was compiled from city police, county sheriff and fire and rescue, and Flagler Hospital records. The hospital costs alone account for \$1.6 million of the \$3.5 million annual costs.

Jon Benoit, president of the St. Augustine Society which oversees St. Francis House, said plans are being developed and permits drawn for a relocation of the facility to a new, 60-bed, three-story structure at South Dixie Highway and Old Moultrie Road. "We hope to have our approvals by fall and launch a fundraising campaign for the estimated \$3.2 million cost," Benoit said.

## ***Historic district style change enters process***

With City Commission approval, a proposed ordinance to shift architectural style guidelines from our state-regulated Comprehensive Plan to local control will enter the process of recommendations from our Planning and Zoning and Historic Architectural Review boards and public hearings before the commission.

The proposed ordinance will include similar public hearings for any change in the Architectural Guidelines for Historic Preservation (AGHP). They currently require colonial period style throughout our historic district, while commissioners want to allow alternate styles in Historic Preservation District 1, south of the Plaza, in keeping with development of that area through different eras.

Commissioners made one change to the proposal, reducing from 45 to 30 days the period between two mandatory City Commission hearings before a change can take effect.

Planning and Building Director Mark Knight noted the proposed ordinance would apply to new construction only. Modifications to existing structures are covered in other areas of the code, he said.

## ***Fort Mose reenactment draws hundreds***



Spanish forces attack British-held Fort Mose in Saturday reenactment. Jackie Hird photo

"Fort Mose had over 500 visitors and volunteers in attendance, setting a new record for the park," St. Augustine Garrison President Mark Schmitt says of Saturday's reenactment of the Battle of Bloody Mose.

"The reaction from the visitors, park rangers, city and county officials, and honored guests was overwhelmingly positive. We have already started discussing with the Park Service how to make next year's event bigger and better."

A recreation of the original 1740 fort two miles north of our historic district doesn't exist - yet, but hay bales served as walls, while across the grassy scene tents represented our town and the Castillo. Visitors lined one side of the field to watch the surprise attack by Spanish, black militia and Yamassee Indians on the fort, held by Georgia British and Scottish detachments.

While the actual attack came in the predawn hours 270 years ago, Saturday's reenactment was presented at 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. Schmitt noted that support between reenactors at St. Augustine, Fort King George, San Luis, Georgia, and South Carolina make such living history events so successful.

## ***History's Highlights***

# **Our first National Anthem written here**

One in a series of historic features as we prepare for our commemorations, drawn from research by George Gardner.

### ***5 years, 2 months, and 11 days to St. Augustine's 450th anniversary***

July 4, 1781, American patriots from South Carolina and New Jersey, including four South Carolina signers of the United States Declaration of Independence, are imprisoned at Fort St. Marks, the former Castillo de San Marcos before the British occupation of St. Augustine by treaty in 1763.

The American Revolution is nearing its end. St. Augustine and Pensacola, designated the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> British colonies, are the last remaining loyalist strongholds, their populations swelled not only with patriot prisoners but as well loyalist refugees from the northern colonies.

While there is bitterness between patriots and loyalists, Charles Reynolds, recounting the era in his 1887 [\*History of St. Augustine\*](#) (pp. 96-97), wrote:

"The Patriot prisoners ... have fared well in British custody. Dr. Andrew Turnbull has loaned them his English newspapers-little consolation for American rebels here-and local businessman Jesse Fish sent oranges and lemons from his world-famous grove on St. Anastasia Island.

"On the Fourth of July, by special permission, the American captives messed in common; and one feature of the bill of fare was an English plum-pudding of gigantic dimensions, and on its top a tiny flag with thirteen stars and stripes.

"Inspired by the occasion, Captain Thomas Heyward had that morning been busy with his pen; and at this Fourth of July Patriot dinner in British St. Augustine was heard for the first time:

***God save the thirteen states,  
Thirteen United States,  
God save them all.  
Make us victorious,  
Happy and glorious;***



*No tyrants over us;  
God save our States!*

"Being set to the familiar tune of *God Save the King*, the guards, peeping in at the windows and deceived by the accustomed air, wondered greatly at what they took to be the Yankees' sudden return to loyalty to King George."

Heyward, 34, had served in the Royal Assemblies of South Carolina, and was a Revolutionary War officer. He'd been captured at Charleston, where he fled after British forces seized his plantation. The [anthem](#) had five verses, each more stinging than the last. Two decades later, today's National Anthem was written by Francis Scott Key.

***Image: Anthem author Thomas Heyward***

The St. Augustine Report is published by the Department of Public Affairs of the City of St. Augustine each Tuesday and on Fridays previewing City Commission meetings. The Report is written and distributed by George Gardner, former St. Augustine Mayor (2002-2006) and Commissioner (2006-2008) and a longtime newspaper reporter and editor. Contact The Report at [gardner@aug.com](mailto:gardner@aug.com)

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Former Mayor George Gardner | 57 Fullerwood Drive | St. Augustine | FL | 32084

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