

TOWN OF ST. JAMES WORK SESSION MINUTES
September 18, 2025

The St. James Town Council held a Work Session on September 18, 2025 in the Earl Dye Council Chamber. Mayor Toner opened the Work Session at 10:01 am.

Council Members Present: Mayor Jean Toner, Mayor Pro Tem David DeLong, Councilors Lynn Dutney, and Dennis Barclay.

Staff Present: Town Manager Jeff Repp, Finance Director Pauline Haran, and Town Clerk Jamie Burns

Absent: Councilor Jim Board

Others Present: State Port Pilot Reporter Eliot Duke and 8 residents.

Administration Update

a. *Harbor & Canal PUD Projected Timeline*

Jeff Repp, Town Manager, presented the projected timeline for the Harbor and Canal Planned Unit Development (PUD) project (the development which would surround the municipal complex). He explained that the developer would be approaching the town at the October meeting with a petition for annexation. Mr. Repp outlined the following key dates and processes:

- Week of September 22, 2025: Expected submittal of the petition for annexation.
- October 1, 2025: Town Council meeting to accept the petition for annexation and approve a resolution for the town clerk to investigate the sufficiency of the petition (verifying the petition is valid).
- October 14, 2025: Community meeting held by the developer at the event center (6-8PM) to receive public comments on the proposed development. This is the responsibility of the development group, not the town, because a report will need to be provided in the application for conditional zoning
- October 20, 2025: Tentative submission date for the conditional zoning application
- November 3, 2025: Planning board meeting to consider the conditional zoning application, as well as comments received from the public planning meeting
- November 5, 2025: Town Council meeting to receive the certificate of annexation sufficiency and set a date for the public hearings on annexation, conditional zoning and development agreement
- November 11, 2025: Potential callback meeting of Planning Board in the event additional information is required
- December 3, 2025: Town Council meeting to hold public hearings and consider approval of annexation, conditional zoning, and the development agreement.

Mr. Repp also discussed the proposed property swap between the town and the developer. The town would transfer its current public works area (approximately 3-4

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acres) to the developer in exchange for a 10-acre parcel off Commerce Drive for the public works garage, potential site for SJFD Station #3, and hurricane vegetative debris storage area.

Additionally, Mr. Repp mentioned negotiations for a parking easement on the property across from the event center, which would allow overflow parking for large events. If the property remains undeveloped after a certain period, the town may have the option to build a 30-car parking lot on donated land.

Mr. Repp clarified that the current council would be responsible for these decisions at the December 3rd meeting, as the new council would not take office until the end of the meeting after action is taken on agenda items.

Councilor Barclay asked a question about the concurrent nature of the processes. Mr. Repp clarified that the annexation would be the first action taken at the December meeting, followed by consideration of the conditional zoning and development agreement. Conditional zoning gives developers the assurance that zoning will not change after it's approved. The Town has 60 days from the date of annexation to zone the property.

Mayor Toner asked for clarification on the proposed concept plan, particularly regarding the cell tower property. Mr. Repp explained that the cell tower property would be transferred to the developer with the same terms and conditions currently in place. The cell tower was originally accepted from Brunswick County with terms and conditions. The county never requested there be any rental revenue received, which is why the town is prohibited from getting any even though it is the town's land.

b. *St. James Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) Final Review*

Town Manager Jeff Repp presented the updated Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which incorporates comments received from the council. He noted that this would be the final review before the plan is put on the October agenda for adoption. Mr. Repp highlighted that the only change since the council packet was distributed was an update to the flooding vulnerability numbers on pages 53 and 54, which includes updated numbers. The council did not raise any additional questions or concerns about the EOP. Mayor Toner expressed appreciation for the thorough review and update of the plan.

c. *August 2025 Zoning Report*

Mr. Repp presented the zoning report for August 2025. In August, there were a total of 12 zoning permits issued. There were 3 new construction permits issued and 9 for additions/modifications, such as decks and pools. The running total of permits issued in the last 12 months was 49 new construction permits and 103 others. There is a slow decline in the number of permits due to the decreasing availability of lots within the town, but suggested that the upcoming PUD project might change this trend in the future.

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d. *August 2025 Event Center Reports and Survey*

Town Manager Jeff Repp reviewed the Event Center reports for the month of August. He reported that the total number of events through August for the calendar year was 1,789 generating revenue of \$57,878. This was slightly down from the same period last year (1,824 events and \$66,000 in revenue) but ahead of 2023 figures. Mr. Repp noted that the vast majority of events (1,543) were free events hosted for town residents. Lorna prepared the report which included 210 reservations for the past month and their associated revenue breakdown.

In regard to the Event Center Survey, Mayor Toner expressed concerns regarding storage space shown in the space needs assessment. Mr. Repp explained that Steve Brennan, current Event Center Manager, was satisfied with the proposed changes after a video call with the consultants. He clarified that storage was provided in two areas: the new multi-purpose room and the space that was originally proposed for restrooms.

Mayor Toner requested clarification about the width of the modified drop-off lane, particularly whether it would only be one lane since currently two cars can fit side-by-side in the drop-off loop. Mr. Repp indicated that this was not addressed as part of the space needs assessment but should be addressed in the next phase of planning.

Finance Update

Finance Director Pauline Haran presented the following financial updates:

- Sales tax revenue for July (received in August) was \$341,000
- Property tax collections for August were almost \$400,000
- The final franchise tax payment for fiscal year 2025 was received, totaling nearly \$100,000
- Total collections in September of over \$800,000

Ms. Haran noted that the audited financial statements were nearly complete, with the final franchise tax deposit being the last piece needed. She anticipated having the audit results ready for the council review by the end of October, with potential presentations in November.

Ms. Haran also provided updates on ongoing projects:

- The fire department pumper truck purchase (\$850,000) was delayed by one month
- A payment of \$144,000 was made to BEMC for streetlights as part of a grant project
- Small ongoing projects include payments for the Event Center needs assessment and architect fees
- A deposit was made for the new Zoom equipment for the EOC at fire station 2

Ms. Haran reminded the council of upcoming events, including Steve's retirement celebration, Meet the Candidates forum on October 8th, and the Speaker Series on September 29th with speaker Captain Angela Kreuser of the Civil Air Patrol. She also reported that Jon Zaley has

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been hired to supplement Lorna's position at the Event Center. Council discussed the anticipated arrival of new chairs for the event center, including where the current chairs can be stored.

Councilor Barclay shared that he was conducting a series of meetings with county officials to address concerns about infrastructure. He mentioned that he has met with BEMC and has upcoming meetings with county water authorities and county planning officials.

There was a brief discussion regarding road infrastructure and evacuation routes, with Mayor Pro Tem DeLong explaining the complexities of road funding and prioritization at the state level.

Adjournment

Mayor Toner adjourned the Work Session at 10:51am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved,

Jamie Burns, Town Clerk

Jean R. Toner, Mayor