

March 2017 Column:

I thought I would share a 'walkaround' update on a number of efforts underway at City Hall.

We added a prominent welcome to Historic St. Marys in early March, dedicating the new Monument sign and fountain at the front of the Mill Site property. A real tangible indication that improvements to the property are happening. The Joint Development Authority discussions are still ongoing with potential tenants for a Marine Industrial Center component on some of the acreage. With the towers now down reclamation of the hardscape materials on the property are ongoing, continuing the long term cleanup plan of the Trustee and the scheduled buyer of the property.

With some minor city council adjustments, the Special Use Permit for Barnett Southern was approved by City Council. Work on transport of 18,000 tons of granite to Crab Island in support of the Navy's enhancement project will commence on April 1st and may last up to six months. One barge a day will transport the material to the island following the guidelines imposed by the DNR and Corps of Engineers. This project PowerPoint is still accessible on the front page of the city website www.stmarysga.gov as Barnett Southern Corp...

Our Public/Private partnership with the Rustapalooza organization generated attendance at well over 5,000 visitors. The event help cement the effort as another annual program to look forward to. The multi-site location scheme work well as we welcomed many new people to the St. Marys area who had never been to the city. The strong showing for the event benefited the Downtown Development Authority's efforts to have a tidal clock installed at the waterfront. We look forward to seeing this new feature before the end of the calendar year.

Work has progressed on the city budget for fiscal 2018 and departments will meet to review their needs with senior staff in the beginning of April. The first draft review of the budget process will have been schedule tentatively for April 25th and the morning of the 26th. Council and staff remain focus on the managing to the focus items identified during the retreat held in November. These meetings are work sessions but are open to the public.

The Sea Grant Study has been completed and you can find the final report on the front page of the city website www.stmarysga.gov as 'St. Marys Resiliency Project'. This long awaited study will help guide the future development of the city and become a key determinant in the county wide Comp-Plan soon to be revised by the cities and county as well as becoming an integral part of the Master Plan initiative. To remind us all of the origin and effort I have attached the opening lines of the report to hopefully pique our interest in the result.

"Since 2013, the City of St. Marys has collaborated with Georgia Sea Grant, Stetson University, and North Carolina Sea Grant to engage in flood resiliency planning. The historic, low-lying community has already experienced approximately nine inches of sealevel rise since 1897, and this trend is expected to accelerate in the future. This project has paired local knowledge with academic expertise to analyze risks to the City's infrastructure and provide initial recommendations to manage flooding risks over the next

50 years. A model for other communities, this effort has grown to include other cities and counties throughout the U.S. southeast Atlantic region.”

The Master Plan “First DRAFT” is now on the city website. While this has been made available, the document is still very early in its assemblage and we expect some aspects of the data and plan to be added and completed before the FINAL version is ready for public review. Early input is welcomed.

Work has commenced on the walkway on the Gateway property at the riverfront. Contractor estimates for Phase 1 completion of the pedestrian walkway is mid to late May. Completing of the entire walk is being managed through the grant programs at the State and grant application for the funding of Phase 2 through state and federal funding will hopefully yield the same results.

We have much to accomplish and we are in the midst of developing many useful programs to move St. Marys forward. I look forward to sharing the results of these efforts and others in some of my next columns.