

ST. JOHNS COUNTY Cultural Resource Review Board

CULTURAL RESOURCES REVIEW BOARD

Dr. Leslee Keys (Chair)
Susan Schjelderup (Vice Chair)
Nicholas Jonihakis
Christine Newman
Blair Knighting



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

4040 Lewis Speedway
Conference Room 1

Megan Wright, Environmental Specialist
Kealey West, Sr. Asst County Attorney

Monday, August 11th, 2025, 1:30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Leslee Keys, Chair (Dr. Keys, Chair Keys)
Susan Schjelderup, Vice Chair
Nick Jonihakis
Christine Newman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Blair Knighting

STAFF PRESENT:

Megan Wright, Environmental Specialist
Ryan Mauch, Environmental Supervisor
Michael Lagassé, Environmental Manager
Kealey West, Sr. Asst. County Attorney
Dan Whitcraft, Facilities Management Director

- Meeting called to Order at 1:30pm
- Roll call for CRRB members
- Reading of the Civility Clause
- Public Comment
 - Keith Willard – Discussed a potential lawsuit against the County from Florida Downtown Association
 - Sallie O’Hara – Discussed citizen input in the Vilano Beach CRA is mandatory. Referred to the Magic Beach Motel demolition permit and the Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP).
 - Ed Slavin – Discussed the St Johns County press release regarding the demolition permit of Magic Beach Motel.
 - Sacha Martin – Discussed the Magic Beach Motel demolition permit and requested that Joy Andrews delay the demolition.
 - Dr. Leslee Keys – Shared that on 8/29, there will be a Jimmy Buffet beach cleanup at Flagler Beach. Informed the room that on 9/2 the Board of County Commissioners will honor and recognize Gordie Wilson after 50 years of service with the National Park Service. He has served as Superintendent of the Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments for more than three decades.
- CRRB Meeting Minutes for Board Approval: 4/14/25
 - Motion made by Vice Chair Schjelderup, second by Newman.
- CRRB Meeting Minutes for Board Approval: 6/30/25

- Motion to amend minutes to add “Sallie O’Hara: Recommended the Board advance the National Register nomination of the Vilano Beach Center as a Vilano Beach National Register Historic District” made by Chair Keys, second by Newman.
- Approval of Current Agenda
 - Chair Keys included ideas to add to the agenda. Atty West explained that the Chair sets the agenda. Chair Keys proposed adding a discussion item of applying Vilano Beach for a National Register Historic District, a discussion item for resubmission of small matching grants for Hastings Archive Processing and a survey for southern A1A, a discussion item for the Cary White Landmark discussion update from County Staff, and a discussion item for the telecommunications tower for PZA discussion.
 - Motion to approved amended agenda made by Chair Keys, second by Newman.

BOARD ITEMS

(00:23:20)

1. Discussion of Former Detention Center: 4025 Lewis Speedway – Dr. Leslee Keys, Chair

In March, Chair Keys and Vice Chair Schjelderup had taken separate tours of the facility with Dan Whitcraft, County Facilities Director. Chair Keys had visited the St. Augustine Historical Society research library to obtain the clearest resolution photos of the building façades which she provided to Whitcraft. She added that the exterior is proposed to have work undertaken that would be based on the original design, and that the Civil Rights role would be considered for interpretation at the building, too. Whitcraft was in attendance and added that rehabilitation of the Former Detention Center is in the recommended Fiscal Year 2026 budget. He and OCA Kealey West noted that the budget year begins October 1. Chair Keys recommended that the CRRB work with the County to allow for a rehabilitation and concurrently pursue Landmarking and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing to have all processes completed simultaneously.

Public Comment:

- Sallie O’Hara: Supports the exploration of designating the Former Detention Center.
- Ed Slavin: Supports the exploration of designating the Former Detention Center.

Motion to defer the Landmark Designation and a National Register of Historic Places nomination to be reviewed at the December 2026 meeting Board Item made by Schjelderup, second by Jonihakis (Motion passes 4/0, Absent: Blair Knighting).

Additional discussion: Atty West explained the Safety and Resilience Act, cited in support of approval of the Magic Beach Demolition permit.

(00:34:50)

2. Action Item: Review Applicants and Vote - CRRB Member Vacancies

Chair Keys read LDC Section 3.01.02.2, “Members shall, when possible, have practical and professional experience in one or more of the following fields: archaeology, architecture or architectural history, curation or conservation, planning, professional engineering, real estate, history, historic preservation, or related disciplines”. Two applicants fit the CRRB member requirements. The first qualified applicant is Paul LeBlanc who applied on 7/9/25. LeBlanc volunteers with the City of St Augustine’s Archaeology Program and carries a recommendation from a City archaeology volunteer member. The second qualified applicant is Walter O’Kon who applied on 5/25/25. O’Kon has previously served on the CRRB and is an architect by profession.

Motion to recommend both candidates to fill the vacated positions made by Jonihakis, seconded by Vice Chair Schjelderup. (Motion passes 4/0, Absent: Blair Knighting).

Public Comment: None

(00:39:10)

- 3. Recommendation for Vilano Beach to become a National Register Historic District - Dr. Leslee Keys, Chair**
Chair Keys explains that she is aware that this area may non-contiguous, but the NRHP allows for that. Chair Keys requested an update in October.

7-minute recess taken

Motion to recommend Vilano Beach, including other areas outside of Vilano Beach Main Street, become a National Register Historic District, by Newman second by Vice Chair Schjelderup. (Motion passes 4/0, Absent: Blair Knighting).

Additional information: Chair Keys informed the room that Florida's Department of State's Historic staff typically looks at the applications once or twice per year, so this process may take some time.

(00:47:12)

- 4. Resubmission of Small Matching Special Category Grants – Hastings Archives and Survey for A1A South.**
Chair Keys recommended a resubmission of grant proposals for the two grants: Historic Properties Survey of A1A, application number 22.h.sm.200.101 and Historic Properties Survey of Hastings, Florida, application number 21.h.sm.200.085. The grants were not funded. Lagassé inquired if Chair Keys suggested an edit of the content. She explained that draft language can be submitted to the CRRB for review. Chair Keys requested that Ryan Mauch send comments to the CRRB that the Florida Historical Commission had made for the two grants.

Motion was made by Newman for recommendation for staff to resubmit the grants submitted to the state, second by Jonihakis. (Motion passes 4/0, Absent: Blair Knighting).

(00:51:57)

- 5. Update on Landmarking Progress for 825 S. Orange St**

Dr. Keys shared that the homeowner to this property reached out to her with an interest in pursuing County Landmarking. Dr. Keys explained that the concept for Landmarking is probably due to the West Augustine Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), Black Heritage Trail, and the recently funded grant for the Florida Black History Museum in St Johns County. This property is known for its association with Cary White who was the First Black Deaf graduate from the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in 1922.

Wright has sent the property owner the Landmark application. Lagassé referenced the procedure for options for County Landmarking. Dr. Keys requested an update on this process at the next meeting.

Motion made by Vice Chair Schjelderup for an update at the October meeting, second from Newman. (Motion passes 4/0, Absent: Blair Knighting).

6. Information about Telecommunications Tower near Hughes Cemetery, PZA Application

Dr. Keys discussed the denied PZA application, TOWER 2025-01 Wildwood Treaty Wireless Facility, located adjacent to the established Hughes Cemetery. Fort Peyton is a Seminole Indian Wars and this area may contain unmarked graves. Mauch was the County Staff that reviewed this application for historical components. There is a CRAS for this site and a NEPA report. There was also a ground penetrating survey that Mauch requested that collected data, confirming that there were no unmarked graves near the proposed Tower site.

Dr. Keys asked how County Staff ensure that construction activity does not disturb the existing cemetery.

Mauch replied that the County employs construction inspection crews as well as limits of disturbance and silt fencing around that area. Human remains at the Hughes Cemetery are not Native American. The applicant reached out to six different tribes and the tribal contacts did not respond. The list of the contacts is in the application packet for the Tower.

Atty West reviewed the process for the Tower application that may go through the Board of County Commissioners if it does become appealed. Staff will bring a review of this potential appeal to the CRRB in the October meeting.

(01:06:15)

- **Board Member Reports**

NPS Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Design Review - National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) – In partnership with NPS, professionals throughout the US participated in presentations regarding the anticipated rollout of revised Standards and review of the recent Substitute Materials publication (2024).

Florida Black History Museum (FBHM) – The Florida Legislature, through a bill introduced by Sen. Tom Leek, approved \$1Million as a Member Project to begin the process of implementing the FBHM. To assist in introducing the project publicly, the Foundation for the FBHM launched the inaugural issue of Estebana magazine. I contributed an article about Estebana, the first black child baptized in the New World – in St. Augustine. The link to the magazine is provided below. <https://evolve-success.com/back-issues-estebana/estebana-inaugural-issue/>

America 250 – Through the Maria Jefferson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the three local governments have issued proclamations, City of St. Augustine – July 14; St. Johns County – July 22; City of St. Augustine Beach – August 4. I wrote the proclamations and orchestrated the administrative requests for the presentations.

Preservation on Main Street POMS2025 – Between July 15-18, I participated in the POMS2025 Preservation on Main Street conference in Fernandina Beach (part of city's 200th anniversary). My presentation "Fundraising and Friendraising: Creating Preservation Partnerships" was particularly timely in light of the \$0 funding from the Florida Legislature for the Special Category Grants – the first time in 43 years. The lack of funds has projects in St. Johns County and St. Augustine quickly searching for alternate sources of funds to address hurricane/storm damage.

I serve as a Trustee Emerita of the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation and as an active member on the

NE FL Council.

Resilient First Coast Collaborative – I remain as the sole historic preservation professional who participates. The resilience plan is forthcoming for the Northeast Florida Region.

Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals – Case 25-04, Barrancotto’s Restaurant, 165 Vilano Road, St. Johns County Landmark – I attended the meeting on July 21 and requested the case records from Loni Silvestri, Records Management Officer. At the meeting, according to Code Enforcement Officer Lori Troxel, the property has an active Code Enforcement case. Owner is Fish House Holdings, LLC, c/o Nathan Stuart and Margo Klar. Ms. Troxel reported that they are awaiting a letter from Growth Management as well. The owner has received certified mail notices since 2024 for having the building open and unsecured. He has signed for the letters. He was given until August 1 to secure the building. Additional actions are scheduled for August 15. There is another open case for Landmark Violations. Future action may include a hearing before a Special Magistrate.

St. Johns County Jail/Annex/Detention Center – Community interest was demonstrated throughout the spring for retention of this building. Concurrently, as part of the County’s budget process, needs were identified for additional space by a variety of entities, including the Sheriff. To that end, the approved budget has funds set aside for rehabilitation of the structure, proposed to take place in 2026. Considered in this work are changes to the front façade to reestablish the original character of the entry. Independently, I reviewed files on the property that are part of the collections at the St. Augustine Historical Society Research Library. I am serving as a volunteer preservation expert regarding interpretation of the historical significance of the building. Additional documentation of the building can take place throughout 2026 as the building rehabilitation takes place.

St. Benedict the Moor Schoolhouse/St. Joseph Neighborhood Center – The project received a state preservation award, making a total of three awards to date for this exceptional effort.

St. Augustine Lighthouse 150th Anniversary – My presentation drew a full sanctuary attendance of 200+ at Memorial Presbyterian Church as part of the speaker series: “History In the Shadow of the Tower: The Rise of Florida Tourism” supported by the Florida Humanities Council, Florida Arts Council and other sponsors.

- **Staff Reports: None**

Additional discussion: Sallie O’Hara asked a clarifying question in regard to the impact of the Cultural Resource Management Plan as it relates to the Magic Beach Motel.

Lagassé explained that according to a Florida Statute, the developer does not legally need to preserve anything. The developer has explained that when they have clarity about their process of salvaging, that they may call County staff voluntarily.