Advisory Board Meeting NEH Grant
November 2nd 2012

Advisory Board members present:
Carl Halbirt, City Archaeologist, St. Augustine
Susan Parker, Executive Director, St. Augustine Historical Society
Herschel Shepard, Retired Architect, FAIA

UF Project Team members present:
Thomas Caswell, PI, Unearthing St. Augustine
James Cusick, Co-PI, Unearthing St. Augustine
Mark Sullivan, Systems Programmer, DLC
John Nemmers, Archivist, Special and Area Studies Collections
Matt Armstrong, Project Manager, Unearthing St. Augustine
Matt Peters, Project Programmer, Unearthing St. Augustine

- The agenda and minutes from the last board meeting were accepted and approved.

- Tom Caswell presented the new members and asked them to introduce themselves.
    - Matt Peters – has a background in GPS tracking and is open to the committee's vision
    - Matt Armstrong – graduated from Flagler – has a historic preservation degree – understands the value of this material for students in their research

- Tom Caswell asked if a survey (both pre and post) regarding the creation of the interface can be developed for this project and asked the board members to think about what they want it to look like.

- Herschel Shepard followed up and asked again what materials are they going to target for this project?
    - The goal is to have 1500 records completed by end of December.
    - Need to know from Carl Halbirt what he wants to include.
    - Part of the Herschel Shepard Collection has been ingested (about 200 item records so far).
    - Tom Caswell asked about the prioritization guidelines for items to be digitized.
    - Susan Parker and Carl Halbirt are not yet ready to present their lists of items to be processed at this time but will begin working on that soon.

- Matt A. established he will be working in the Government House lab Monday through Friday from 8am – 5pm if any of the board members want to meet with him during those times.

- Jim Cusick and Carl Halbirt have met outside the board meetings to discuss how to begin the process.
    - Jim Cusick developed an idea of how to begin.
    - Carl Halbirt wants items that are transferred from the site file to the lab to stay in order while in transit to and from the Government House.
    - He wants to begin with the Castillo project -- he has photos, maps, etc.

- Matt A. questioned whether or not the larger maps in the collection were to be scanned and if so, how they were going to be selected.
    - Tom Caswell said that because of the deduction of the grant award, large scale maps were taken out of the proposal but they could accommodate the digitization of such items on a case by case basis.
    - Anything larger than a newspaper will have to be transported to Gainesville and be digitized on campus.
    - DLC is currently being moved off campus so all large format requests will have to wait until they have successfully relocated and are up and running again.

- Tom Caswell asked Susan Parker if there were older maps out of copyright that could be digitized.
    - She said "yes" but they don't always have the best copies of things (it sometimes is the difference between 1930's technologies versus 1970's technology).
    - They do have a good finding aid but are physically extremely large items – bigger than the scanning bed in the Government House lab.

- Herschel Shepard asked about how to prioritize these maps?
    - The town plan of the colonial city is historic and has a landmark status.
    - He suggested that there should be a special category of maps that directly related to the historic city's layout.
    - The early maps of St. Augustine are extremely important to this project and should definitely be included.

- Susan Parker said that another worthwhile project would be to include the public records from the clerk of the court.
    - There are older drawings that have separate map indexes.
    - She suggested that someone go through the map index and all the public records to digitize them.
    - The deeds that accompany the maps are very interesting and add background information about the property.
    - She suggested that they ask Carleton from the city clerk's office to attend the next board meeting to gain his expertise and knowledge in this area. He is a good source for suggestions on what to include in this project. She will email Tom Caswell his last name so that he can be included in the next meeting.
    - She also mentioned that St. Augustine is unique in that they have all public records from 1820 to present; nothing has been destroyed in any natural disaster like a fire or flood as is true of other cities.
    - Tom Caswell agrees that this would be a good component for the project.

- Carl Halbirt suggests that someone take the Alvarez ledger and make sense of it. The ledger is of properties during the Spanish period – 1830s that includes the buyers and sellers of each property. It has never been digitized.

- Jim Cusick said that if students/faculty could cross reference the maps that would be helpful. Currently it is difficult to go through a single property when conducting research on a given area so it would be helpful to have someone make it easier to use – like a grad student or programmer.

- Jim Cusick asked about what's happening with the progress of the grant over the next 2 weeks.
    - Matt Armstrong is going to be working on processing files related to properties that were outlined by Herschel Shepard and he's doing prep work in the lab to begin to get a more streamlined work flow.
    - As a side note for the processing of each record - Mark Sullivan said that Matt A. can assign record numbers locally for each item digitized at the lab – he doesn't have to wait for UF to issue numbers remotely.
    - Matt P. is training – getting up to speed with the software he'll be using to create the interface.

- Jim Cusick and Carl Halbirt discussed how to get the items from archeology prepped.
    - First, they need to discuss what needs to be taken to be scanned.
    - Due to their nature, archeological items can be fairly complicated to process.
    - Carl does not want these items to be processed within the current workflow – he wants them to be processed separately and then merged back together after they have been digitized.

- Jim Cusick suggested that they may want to spend November through December prepping the archaeological stuff.
    - Get the records ready before beginning to scan them.
    - This will impact both Jim and Carl during this process as they will have to schedule further meetings.

- Site by Zone layout for digitization was suggested to be sure that all have been linked correctly.
    - Tom Caswell said that having a good finding tool will be crucial.
    - Mark Sullivan said that there will be a geographical component – individual items will be indexed but there will also be structure and overall folders to make searching easier.

- Jim Cusick suggested that the project team takes the most complicated archeological site to process first in order to find and hopefully conquer all unforeseen problems before they launch into the whole workflow.
    - Carl Halbirt agrees.
    - Tom Caswell assumes that each will have its own issues because of the way they are arranged.

- Herschel Shepard asked about the priority for these items to be scanned. Is it the time frame of the property or is it the actual historic site that should be considered?
    - Jim Cusick says that the most complicated with the most data – one that has all the time periods represented.
    - Carl Halbirt says that the vast majority of them have multiple components.
    - Herschel Shepard asks if they are to be arranged by geographic location.
    - Jim Cusick says that that is the question – by location, by time period.

- Herschel Shepard states that there should be 4-5 keywords associated to each record for each in future searching.
    - Jim Cusick assures him that there will be more than that. It's the goal of the project to have as complete/complex indexing as is possible/plausible.

- The floor opened up to a discussion of where and what to start with?
    - Jim Cusick suggests starting with Cubo Line.
    - Carl Halbirt– over 10 years old.
    - Herschel – start with the most complex.
    - Jim Cusick agrees to start with the most complex so that would help to decipher how much time/effort it is going to take.

- Carl Halbirt is concerned with scheduling.
    - He has a big project that is coming up on Cordova Street.
    - It will be 6 months in the field.
    - Carl will have to schedule times to meet with Jim Cusick for delivering items because when he's out of the office, it is locked and no one can get in.

- Herschel Shepard asked if there are any archeology students from UF that might be interested in volunteering with the project.
    - Tom Caswell said maybe.
    - Carl Halbirt said to be careful how many "volunteers" get involved – he doesn't want too many people handling these sensitive materials for fear they may be damaged.

- Matt A. said he can coordinate with Carl Halbirt to arrange and schedule times for the delivery and pick-up of any materials that will be digitized.

- Tom reminded Matt A. about "scan on demand" items that public officials and other researchers will be asking for as we move forward with this project.
    - It's important to keep all items in order so that everything can be digitized and kept safe.
    - Matt A. will have to come up with a viable work flow for such impromptu requests.
    - Matt A. assured Tom that he's working on a solution for such things.

- Tom Caswell asked that everyone take the next few weeks to think about how to prioritize items to be digitized so that the project will have a starting point.

- Jim Cusick and Carl Halbirt agreed to meet.

- Matt A. questioned how to list items – will they be by location? For named properties, yes.

- Tom Caswell said there will be a GIS component on all properties.

- Carl Halbirt asks if the project wants to digitize the lab analysis sheets on each site.
    - John Nemmers asked if they are already included in each report.
    - Carl Halbirt verified that each does have a lab analysis sheet.
    - Jim Cusick says that we should scan them too.
    - Carl Halbirt says to be sure to scan them on both sides as they have information on the front and back of each sheet.

- Tom Caswell asked Susan Parker to commit to getting some materials ready and she agreed.

- Tom Caswell asked the board and project team members if they have any questions or expectations about this project.

- Herschel Shepard says he feels like it is an extraordinary time as the University of Florida partners with the city of St. Augustine – it's a major milestone.
    - Colonial core in the private sector.
    - He also said that it's a great privilege to be working on this project during this great time in St. Augustine's history.
    - There is an extraordinary dynamic in the city at this time.

- Susan Parker agreed saying that it's a good thing that the University of Florida is working with the city to accomplish this great task and that together a more generalized overview of items from the collection will be reached.

- Matt A. and Matt P. gave out contact information to the board members.

- Tom Caswell said he would send out a list of everyone's email addressed and contact information.

- Meeting adjourned.