



Charlotte Assembly 2001

Update to the Implementation Plan

April 2007

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CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Customer Relations in County Government

- A. That increased staffing could improve customer services in the human services, building, and code enforcement departments and the Sheriffs office.

Actions Taken:

- Both Code Enforcement and Building Construction Services have increased staffing to meet demand. They have also identified a number of efficiencies that resulted in shortened permit review time and better customer service.
- Redesign and expansion of office space for the Building Construction Services Department has allowed for the introduction of technology that better manages documents and customer processing.
- The Human Services Department has expanded the staff that coordinates housing programs. We also continue to vigorously pursue grants for a variety of human service programs. Following Hurricane Charley the County received over \$30 million in grant funding for affordable housing. Human Services issues are detailed in the Human Services Section of this update.

- B. That training and experience are needed in the following areas:

1. The County Commissioners should gain a hands-on education of County government operations. Participants suggested that the Commissioners spend a day working with non-profits.

Actions Taken:

- Local service agencies have been contacted and arrangements can be made (at the convenience of the Commissioners) for work assignments.
2. Staff members should be trained in customer service. Staff members should also be kept up-to-date on new policy changes.

Actions Taken:

- Communication has increased between management and staff. The CCNews (employee newsletter) has been expanded to include articles informing employees on organizational change, strategic planning, and goals and objectives.
- The Human Resources Training Division has established a comprehensive program of Customer Service training. There is also a Customer Service component included in new employee orientation.

- C. More information and services should be available on-line. Specifically, participants mentioned putting capital improvements projects and the County government budget on the web page.

Actions Taken:

- The website continues to expand both proactively and in response to citizen and staff requests.
- The newest services added are:
 - Video on-demand allows access to County meetings and original videos on a variety of County topics.
 - Streaming video allows the public to view CCTV-20 content via the internet.
 - An updated agenda process provides a comprehensive information packet for the items addressed at Board of County Commissioner meetings.
 - On-line services are: On-line permitting, payment of CCU water bills, registration for recreational programs, access to the County library system's card catalog and reference materials, access to mosquito spraying schedules and waste pickup schedules.
 - Budget documents, tracking of DRC documents, search database for licensed contractors and permit tracking, CIP projects and construction updates
 - Many County periodicals and newsletters are accessible and older issues are archived for research purposes.

D. The following actions were recommended:

1. The County government should stagger office hours and offer more complete services during lunchtime, which will require cross-training.

Actions Taken:

- Many departments offer hours outside of the routine 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. business model.
2. Publicize Communications Department

Actions Taken:

- Since 2001 the activities of the Communications & Marketing Department have expanded to meet the needs of the community.
- Established regular publications: Charlotte Shines, a focus on CIP and sales tax projects; Charlotte ENews, a monthly email newsletter that provides information on specific "hot topics" and informs subscribers about new website content; Annual Report, a yearly publication providing an in-depth look at the year's accomplishments
- The Citizens' Academy program gives the public an opportunity to view the behind the scenes activities of County government. Approximately 100 citizens graduate from this program each year.
- Media relations continue to be a major component of the communications plan. Staff assists the press in gathering information for stories and we monitor newspaper and TV news to insure that data used is accurate.
- The Speakers Bureau continues to expand and County staff speaks to hundreds of community groups each year on a variety of topics.
- Staff writes newspaper columns and prepares articles on County services and programs and responds to customer inquires for County information.

3. Decorate the lobby of the County administration building to make it less "institutional" looking.

Actions Taken:

- The lobby in the Murdock Administration Center has been refurbished. A new customer service desk has been installed that better serves the public and meets A.D.A. requirements.
 - Improved directional signs guide the public throughout the building
 - Bulletin boards and display cases have been installed to highlight County activities
 - A seating area has been created that includes comfortable furniture and access to CCTV-20 for those taking a break from meetings or citizens looking for a quiet place to talk to staff.
4. Continue Government Day at the Mall.

Actions Taken:

- Since Hurricane Charley the Government Day at the Mall has not taken place due to funding and staffing issues. We intend to re-establish this program in 2007.
5. Put the "Welcome to Charlotte County" directory on the website and form a public/private partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to improve dissemination.

Actions Taken:

- All County publications are now available on the County website and the Welcome book, now renamed the "*Charlotte County Owner's Manual*", is accessed hundreds of times each day.
 - In 2007 15,000 copies of the *Owner's Manual* were distributed through a variety of venues including: Chamber of Commerce, Charlotte County Public Schools, Board of Realtors, local hospitals, etc.
6. Occasionally hold Commission meetings in the evenings so more people can attend.

Actions Planned:

- This request is forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners.
7. Expand services offered at the Englewood office.

Actions Taken:

- The following services are now available at the West County Annex:
 - Veterans Services Office
 - Human Services – Senior Services
 - Charlotte County Utilities
 - Charlotte County Building Construction Services
 - Supervisor of Elections
 - Health Department
 - Property Appraiser
 - Tax Collector

8. Continue to put County government policies in writing and make available to customers upon request.

Actions Taken:

- All government documents are available on request as required under Florida Statutes. In addition, a number of our rules and policies are available on our website and additional documents are being added daily.

9. County government should examine staff levels and training and empower staff members to resolve customer service problems.

Actions Taken:

- Human Resources has reviewed staffing levels, job classifications and salary levels. A market survey was undertaken for all positions and specific classifications are reviewed on a yearly basis. In order to retain well-trained workforce salaries must remain competitive with surrounding employers.
- Human Resources has implemented a customer service training program. Employees have been empowered to resolve customer service problems at the departmental level through proper training and performance incentives.

10. Distribute the Human Service Resource Guide free of charge to all human services agencies, e.g., Sheriff's office, hospitals, and non-profits.

This is covered in the Human Services Section.

11. Implement a way to recognize citizens who serve the County.

Actions Taken:

- For several years the County held a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon which was attended by over 900 volunteers. Since Hurricane Charley, this event has been temporarily canceled due to cost and facilities issues.

12. Explore using an ombudsman in the County government for citizen advocacy.

Actions Taken:

- The Communications & Marketing Department currently serves the ombudsman function and assists both citizens and departments in solving customer disputes. Complaints are passed to Communications & Marketing if a resolution is not found at the departmental level.
- Citizens are given more opportunities to comment on the service they receive at County facilities. The County website provides email contacts and feedback forms for a variety of services. In addition, customer surveys will become a regular part of our business practice.

13. Place Emergency Help pocket guide on the website.

Actions Taken:

- We have expanded the information available on the website.

HUMAN SERVICES ISSUES **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Meeting Human Needs: Public, Corporate and Private Responses

A. Charlotte County should strive to provide all of its residents with accessible social services to include, but not limited to, affordable health care, mental health services, housing, and child care; and it should do so through education and forging partnerships among the State and County governments, the community, and the private sector. Charlotte County should strike a balance with the economic reality of the community and the cost of goods that must be purchased.

B. We urge greater financial support for these necessary services from both State and County governments, the community and the private sector.

C. An important role for local governments and the community is to help unemployed persons and low-wage workers as they strive to better their lives and those of their families. They need education and occupational skills training, and low-cost transportation services to get to school, training sites, and places of employment. They would also benefit from incentives to encourage private enterprise to construct child care facilities.

D. The welfare-to-work initiative in Charlotte County: In particular, more attention should be placed on communicating to "potential beneficiaries" and "influencers." More grassroots involvement is needed to reach people in the welfare-to-work program. In addition, we need to reach out to employers, educators, community and civic groups, faith-based organizations, homeowners' associations, volunteer organizations, etc.

E. The Assembly participants focused on four areas where the County's human service activities should be enhanced. (These are not listed in any particular order.):

1. Affordable Housing - The County government should partner with the community and the private sector to alleviate homelessness and should work to remove roadblocks for organizations that provide housing assistance, thus facilitating quicker construction.

Actions Taken:

- Since Hurricane Charley impacted Charlotte County in 2004, Charlotte County has received over \$30,000,000 in grant funds to assist with housing recovery and with affordable housing strategies. The County has provided direct assistance to over 200 single family households and has partnered with 10 developers to replace and rebuild affordable rental housing, adding over 475 units to the housing stock. New strategies have included a Community Land Trust, Debt Management and Foreclosure Prevention.
- The Homebuyers Club was launched in 2002 and over the years has served over 500 members. Current membership is over 300.
- An affordable housing fair is held annually. This year's Housing Fair held on March 17, 2007 at the Family Services Center had close to 300 housing customers with 19 financial institutions and housing vendors participating.

- The Homeless Coalition continues to take the lead in partnering in the community with human services agencies and leaders to eliminate homelessness in Charlotte County. The Coalition annually provides data to the State Office on Homelessness. The annual count for January 2007 was 730. Children under 18 years represented 39 percent of the count at 284.
- In 2006, with grant, county and other funds, the Homeless Coalition opened the Chara House, a 16 bedroom facility for single mothers with children four years and younger. Also in 2006, the Bishop House, a 6 bedroom facility was opened for pregnant women and their newborns. A 52 bed Safe House shelter is planned to be constructed in 2007.
- In 2006, the County invested in a Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The goals of this program are to preserve and enhance neighborhoods within the County; promote civic pride and responsibility in among neighbors and neighborhoods; to empower citizens through education, information and resources to be become involved and improve conditions in their neighborhoods; and to revitalize challenged neighborhoods by working with each neighborhood to determine their distinct issues, assets and resources. The program has already sponsored a neighborhood clean up and a neighborhood watch program. Work has begun on a landlord organization and a home beautification program.
- The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee meets monthly to monitor and discuss impacts on affordable housing and provides ongoing recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The County's Housing Division staff continues to work with non-profit agencies, developers and the community in building partnerships for affordable housing. County staff also reviews new housing developments such as Murdock Village, Babcock Ranch and the Loop to provide comments regarding the impact and need for affordable housing.

2. Child Care - Presently there is a lack of affordable child care in Charlotte County.

- After Hurricane Charley, close to \$400,000 from Volunteer Florida Hurricane Relief Fund were awarded to more than 20 child care facilities to assist in repairs so they could re-open.
- The County continues to provide grant in aid to several childcare and after school programs. The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland (formerly The School Readiness Coalition) receives match funding from the County for State dollars that support child care scholarships for low income families. Through its programs, the Coalition provides voluntary pre kindergarten, school readiness programs and child care information and referral.
- The County is committed to after school and recreational summer programs. The County funds children programs through the Parks, Recreational and Cultural Resources Department. Some of the other agencies that the County partners with and/or provides funding to include the YMCA, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Boys and Girls Club, New Operation Cooper Street, the School Board, and the Police Athletic League (PAL).
- The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department has established a scholarship program which provides assistance for those low-income families wishing to enroll their children in summer camp programs.
- In 2006, the County opened the Family Services Center in Port Charlotte. This Center coordinates activities and hosts many non-profit and government agencies offering a variety of family services and programs within the center and within the neighborhood. Beginning in the spring of 2007 using grant funds from the

Department of Juvenile Justice, the County and the Center are sponsoring a Neighborhood Accountability Board which will hold youth offenders accountable to their victims and their neighborhoods by dispensing sanctions.

3. Health Care Cost, Coverage and Funding - Many participants feel that adequate care is not available or affordable to those in need. Also, participants pointed out that gaps exist in services and in specialized areas of care

Actions Taken:

- In 2006, \$50,000 from County funds were provided to start a Hepatitis C free clinic. In 2007, the County matched over \$82,000 to draw a \$112,000 federal grant to the Charlotte County Health Department for its proposal to expand clinic hours and reduce unnecessary emergency room visits.
- Healthcare providers including the Medical Society, physicians and hospitals, Health Department, Family Health Centers, St. Vincent de Paul Pharmacy, Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida and the County Human Services Department continue to participate in the Indigent Healthcare Advisory Board and the Health Care Access Consortia to discuss healthcare programs, solutions and partnerships.

4. Mental Health Care – Increased mental health care is needed in the County. In addition, there is a specific recognized need for services that help citizens handle domestic violence and drug use.

Actions Taken:

- In 2006, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) authorized \$1.2 million to build a detoxification facility in Charlotte County. Charlotte Behavioral Health Care (formerly Charlotte Community Mental Health) has received State dollars to fund operations for the new facility which will be located on their site.
- In 2006, the BCC also submitted a letter of interest to the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) which would allow future county general revenue dollars committed as local match to count as match toward new federal Medicaid dollars. Services would target outpatient treatment and prevention of substance abuse.
- Since 2003, Charlotte County government has partnered with the School Board, the Sheriff's Department, and other state and community agencies to co-fund the non-profit agency, Drug Free Charlotte County (a.k.a. Charlotte Alliance for a Safe and Drug Free Community). This agency is committed to preventing and reducing substance abuse in youth through increased education, awareness and collaboration.
- In 2006, from Hurricane Housing Recovery funds, the County awarded Coastal Behavior \$500,000, in partnership with the Homeless Coalition, to reconstruct a 52 plus bed Safe Haven on the site in Punta Gorda formerly occupied by the Kelly Hall facility. The Safe Haven facility will provide a safe, temporary place for the homeless residents to transition into the community. Those with mental health and substance abuse illnesses will be offered treatment. The facility is expected to be open by the end of 2007.

5. General Human Services Recommendations:

a. Extend the coverage of the resource hotline and provide additional resources to meet the demand.

- b. Expand the availability of rapid-response programs to assist those referred with immediate needs.
- c. Set up a resource directory on the County government's website
- d. Redefine grants as "contracts for services"
- e. Assist agencies with grant writing.
- f. Revise the County government process for funding non-profit organizations by establishing an advisory review committee.
- g. Establish a central needs directory (a centralized "wish list") for human service agencies.
- h. Use a variety of means to reach people, including radio, television (including the local cable access channel), newspapers, electronic kiosks in shopping centers or other high traffic sites.
- i. Continue the agency fair held at the civic center.
- j. Businesses and the community should work together to create an "adopt a nonprofit agency" program.
- k. Distribute the Human Service Resource Guide free of charge to all human services agencies, e.g., Sheriff's office, hospitals and non-profits.
- l. Expand the human services emergency hotline to a 24-hour a day, 7 days a week.

Actions Taken:

- In 2005, the County launched its 2-1-1 information and referral telephone call center. State authorized and nationally recognized, the County in partnership with the Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies (CARE), community volunteers, and sponsorship from the United Way of Charlotte County, operates the call center 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. The call center receives close to 1,000 calls each month and provides callers with information and referrals to approximately 390 agencies providing over 600 Health and Human services programs to county residents. The 2-1-1 Center also maintains a data base and listing of front line emergency providers. This list is periodically updated and shared with other non-profit agencies. 2-1-1 plans to convert its data base to the web in 2008.
- In late 2006 the United Way of Charlotte County began a new web based clearing house for all persons wanting to volunteer in the human services field in the Charlotte community. VolunteerWay matches individuals wanting to volunteer with non-profit and human service agencies seeking volunteers.
- In early 2007, through a partnership with the County and most of the major wireless cell phone companies, 2-1-1 callers can also now access the service directly using their cell phones.
- 2-1-1 continues to play a vital role in collaboration with the County's Emergency Management Operations by staffing and answering telephones during a natural

disaster or emergency event. In the summer of 2007, the 2-1-1 Center will be co-located with the Emergency Management Office at the new Public Safety Facility in Punta Gorda.

- Recognizing the ongoing need for children and family assistance in Charlotte County, the Board of County Commissioners with approval of the Governor's Office, reactivated the Children Services Council (prior to Hurricane Charley) in 2004. This 10 person council is committed to advocating on behalf of families and children, to providing priority services and to seeking needed funding. A request for a future tax referendum is under consideration by the Council for 2008.
- Charlotte County Human Services continues to partner in the community with other non-profit agencies to delivery services to those in need. In early 2007, a grants analyst was added to staff to provide technical assistance to non-profits seeking grant and county funding; to monitor the performance measures of agencies; to identify priority services in the community; and to provide recommendations to the BCC for funding needed services. For the 2007-2008 funding cycle, Human Services and the Charlotte County United Way collaborated on reviewing requests for funding and plan to continue to move toward a joint or common application process for non-profit agencies.

INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

I. Expanding Recreation Opportunities and Parks

A. Participants suggested the following improvements. (These are not in any particular order.):

1. More boat ramps with parking areas are needed. The County government should charge for parking or charge user fees for access to the boat ramps to help pay for maintaining existing facilities and building new ones. Tourist development dollars should be used to construct new facilities. Public/private partnerships could also help offset the costs. The County government should adopt rules and regulations governing boat ramp use and parking in parks and on right-of-ways.

Actions Taken:

- Public workshops were held with the Marine Advisory Committee and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board.
 - A proposal to the Board of County Commissioners included land needs and revenue ideas.
 - Right-of-way parking ordinance prohibiting parking on certain sections of County Roads 771 and 775 was adopted by the BCC on June 25, 2002.
 - The BCC continues to aggressively pursue acquiring waterfront properties for boat ramps.
 - In several boat ramp locations the BCC has acquired additional property to accommodate parking
2. Bayshore Park should be developed.

Actions Taken:

- Land acquisition is complete and the park is currently under construction. It is expected to be completed Fall 2007.
3. More fishing piers should be added.

Actions Taken:

- Currently there are eight fishing piers available to the public in Charlotte County. In the approved master plan for Bayshore Live Oaks Park there is an additional fishing pier.
 - A fishing pier had been constructed on the bay side at Englewood Beach Park.
4. Some railroad trestles could be improved into piers.

Actions Taken:

- At every opportunity attempts are made to utilize railroad trestles for piers. Currently, four of our eight fishing piers are on railroad trestles.
5. There are limited camping areas in Charlotte County. There is land on the Myakka River that could be developed for tent camping.

Actions Taken:

- Currently the BCC has adopted master plans for environmental parks. In several of these master plans tent camping for groups has been included. The BCC has not yet established construction timelines.
6. More sports facilities, such as basketball courts, skateboard parks, and swimming pools with evening hours, are needed.

Actions Taken:

- Three new regional parks have been completed. These parks have a multitude of activities including swimming pools, basketball courts, ball fields, radio controlled car track, playgrounds, etc. The major funding for these parks was the sales tax program.
 - At Tringali Park in Englewood a hockey rink has been added and a skate park is under construction
 - Many County parks have evening hours and ball fields are lit to accommodate evening play.
7. County parks and recreation and school facilities should continue to be used for activities.

Actions Taken:

- The Parks & Recreation Department is committed to joint usage of facilities. Sharing of facilities has continued to increase annually.
8. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board occasionally should meet in the evenings.

Actions Planned:

- The Parks & Recreation Director has proposed evening meetings to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board.
9. Funding options to develop and maintain facilities should be explored.

Actions Taken:

- Review of funding options for development of new facilities and maintenance is an ongoing and daily issue for the Parks & Recreation Department. Grants are aggressively pursued and there has been significant success (\$7.186 million of grant funds leveraged with the current sales tax projects).
- Many projects have been funded through FRDAP grants.
- Urban Forestry grants have enabled the parks to maintain a tree replacement program
- FCT grants continue to fund the purchase of park property

B. It is agreed that some use should be made of the stadium and that a decision should be reached fairly quickly.

Actions Taken:

- On June 25, 2002 the BCC approved a Master Plan for the stadium.
- The County has signed contracts with the Independent Professional Baseball League.

- The County has signed an agreement with the Tampa Bay Devil Rays to make Charlotte County Sports Park their spring training home beginning in 2009. A complete retrofit of the facility is currently underway funded by the Devil Rays, a State grant and Tourism Tax dollars.
- The Stadium continues to be fully active with a variety of community activities such as concerts, Veterans events, Family Fun Days, Senior Games, etc.

D. More recreational opportunities for youth and more parks that meet the diversity of uses are needed, and the Charlotte County Cultural Center needs to move ahead. To meet current and future needs, the County government should implement its long-range planning strategy. This master planning should include appropriate stakeholders to promote eco-tourism.

Actions Taken:

- There is a strategic plan in place to guide the County through the year 2010 to meet current and future recreational needs. When this plan was established, public meetings were held. The County has aggressively pursued land acquisition of environmental park land and currently the sales tax is funding the amenities to allow the public to interface with these environmental opportunities. The regional parks along with Charlotte Sports Park will provide a significant number of increased recreational opportunities for all segments of the population.
- The 2002 Sales Tax Extension funded the completion of the Mid-County Regional Park, the South-County Regional Park and the West County Regional Park, all of which are complete. The Sales Tax also funded the construction at Bayshore Live Oaks Linear Park and provided \$3 million for boat ramps.
- The Cultural Center expansion (funded with 1998 Sales Tax Extension funds) was completed in 2001.

II. Building the Infrastructure (power, communication and transportation) for Strong, Diverse Local Economies

A. Roads and Transportation:

1. Most participants agreed that road improvements should be a priority, for reasons of safety and accessibility. There was general agreement on the roads that are most in need of attention. A number of fatalities have occurred on Burnt Store Road during the past year. Routes that would alleviate traffic on US 41 and SR 776 need to be developed. Problems on Midway, Veterans Boulevard, Winchester south of 776, Edgewater, Piper Road and Aqui Esta need to be addressed. Roads leading to the airport should be improved to attract economic development in that area. The cumulative impacts of lighting should be addressed.

Actions Taken:

- The County's CIP addresses a number of major transportation priorities over the next 10 years including widening &/or up grading of Midway, Winchester South, Edgewater/Flamingo, Piper Rd., and Aqui Esta to cover the specific corridors mentioned at the Assembly. These and other County roads are planned for improvements to provide additional capacity as well as parallel capacity to compliment US 41 & SR-776. To improve access to the Charlotte County Airport for economic development, the County has the final design underway for construction of Piper Road. The County has been successful in obtaining more than \$8 million in

matching funds for the design & construction of improvements in this corridor. Veterans Blvd., Harbor View Road, Winchester North, Placida Road and S.R. 776 have all been widened in the past 5 years.

Actions Planned:

- Various safety improvements, including widened shoulders along Burnt Store Rd. Design for widening of the initial phase (U.S. 41 to Notre Dame) is currently underway.

2. In addition to traffic congestion, participants noted that some roads were improperly constructed, lanes were too narrow, and drainage ditches were too close to the sides of the roads. (Comment – Many years ago, when standards were less than what would be acceptable today, with lanes were narrow).

Actions Taken:

- Streets and highways are designed and constructed using the latest standards from FOOT. Of course, these standards change over time. Unfortunately, many of our streets that pass through the developed areas of the County were designed and built to a minimum standard when the areas were sparsely populated. The roadway design and construction that is currently underway complies with the FOOT standards in place today. For all new projects, the County acquires adequate right-of-way to meet the standards and to provide the necessary amenities.

3. West County's evacuation routes need to be expanded.

Actions Taken:

- Winchester Blvd. North has been completed and is open to traffic between SR-776 and So. River Rd. in Sarasota County.
- The next phase of this hurricane evacuation route, Winchester South, is scheduled for construction in the CIP. This section of the highway will connect Placida Rd. to SR-776.
- The County is an active participant in the on going corridor study of an Englewood Interstate Connector which would link Winchester Blvd. at So. River Rd. directly to 1-75.

4. West County's road network needs to be improved

Actions Taken:

- There has been significant roadway construction activity in West County. The last phase of the SR-776 has been completed as well as the improvements to Placida Rd. (CR-775)/Pine St.
- In 2001, the County completed extensive improvements to the Placida Rd./Boca Grande Causeway intersection and the roadway leading to the toll plaza.
- Construction of the Coral Creek Bridge at Placida. Is funded and scheduled to begin once the final permits are received.

5. A few participants also noted that the County's transportation problems are not limited to road improvements. Programs such as Dial-a-Ride help alleviate public transportation problems. Public transportation is also an important element in helping

new entrants into the labor force reach centers of employment and take advantage of educational and training opportunities.

Actions Taken:

- The existing Dial-a-Ride has been successful in meeting many of our needs; however, it has limited capacity and availability.

Actions Planned:

- The next increment of transit service to be considered will be some form of fixed &/or variable route system that travels the US 41 corridor as the "backbone", connecting South County with the Murdock area. Other links will follow as demand for service increase.

6. Beyond addressing the specific needs listed above, the County government should formulate a long-term transportation plan with the following elements:

- a. Attention to multiple modes of transportation, including roads, and public transportation.

Actions Taken:

- All jurisdictions in Florida are required to prepare and up date a Comprehensive Plan which includes a transportation element. This element is generally managed and up dated by the Metropolitan Planning Organization and projects the transportation needs of some 20 years in the future. It addresses the needs in a multi-modal approach, including highways, sidewalks, bikeways, and transit. The analysis depends heavily on the results of the transportation model which gives decision makers the ability to evaluate various alternative land uses as well as highway options which can result in new arterials and collectors, serving County-wide and local trips. When considering various alternatives, the costs and benefits are evaluated. b. A strategy for developing alternative routes, including new collectors, for localized and countywide travel.

c. Prioritize projects based on a cost-benefit analysis approach.

d. Use new traffic lights and synchronized traffic signals to ease traffic flow problems.

Actions Taken:

- The state currently has a comprehensive system up grade underway that primarily effects the US 41 corridor. It is phase 1 of a multiphase program to provide better synchronization on all the thoroughfares in the County. The goal is to increase the carrying capacity of the major roads without adding lanes.

e. Proceed with new road designs that include sidewalks and pedestrian safety features. Retrofit existing sidewalks to be American Disabilities Act compliant.

Actions Taken:

- All new roadways include the standard FDOT pedestrian facilities which are in conformance with the ADA conditions.

Actions Planned:

- There is an on going program to retrofit existing pedestrian facilities to meet ADA standards as part of the proposed Sales Tax Extension program.

f. Some participants suggested that a referendum for a bond issue to finance unfunded projects should be brought before the voters. Others suggested using gas tax or sales tax revenues as a funding source.

Actions Taken:

- Financing of major transportation improvements is an on going challenge. The proposed CIP for the up coming year will have a \$31 million shortfall if all projects go forward as indicated.
- While bonding or borrowing could fill this gap, the approach is to offset the shortfall through an extension of the Sales Tax program.

g. Some suggested that the County government's impact fee program should be evaluated.

Actions Planned:

- The County continues to review impact fees and updates them as issues are identified.

h. The concept of sustainability should be addressed for all new road network design.

Actions Taken:

- The concept of sustainability for our transportation network is always considered. Generally, the public has high demands such as new or widened roads, new sidewalks or bike trails, or expanded public transit; however, we need to consider the costs beyond the initial capital outlay. So Fire/EMS. Fire/Emergency Medical Service (EMS) was also deemed a priority issue.

1. Concerns. Two areas of concern to the participants were response times and funding levels. Many participants stated that response times need to be decreased and that planning for sites and equipment should be directed toward this end.

Actions Taken:

- In 2002 the Fire/EMS Department added two new additional rescue units to Fire Station 3 in El Jobean and at Fire Station 6 located at US 17 and Cleveland. This decreased response times and covered the increase in calls to these areas.
- The Fire/EMS Department has developed in the Capital Improvement Program a five year plan to improve the response times to the mid-county, northwest and east areas of the county. This plan included three new fire stations at the locations of Harbor/Veterans in FY 02/03, Cornelius/Chamberlain in FY 03 /04, and at Washington Loop/ US 17 in FY 05/06. The new station locations will reduce response times from 12-15 minutes to a 4-6 minute range. A new station (#8) opened in Mid-County on Clinton Avenue in 2006; Fire Station #15 in northwest Charlotte and Fire Station #16 in east Charlotte will be opening in May 2007.
- Of note: A number of Fire Stations were repaired and/or upgraded following damages received in Hurricane Charley in 2004.

2. Actions for Fire/EMS Improvements. County government should explore building a Fire/EMS station to serve northwest Charlotte County and explore ways to reduce emergency response time.

Answered above

3. County government must immediately find alternative funding to ensure that Fire/EMS and law enforcement staff salaries are competitive.

Actions Taken:

- The County contracted with a vendor to prepare a classification and compensation study. Salaries are continually reviewed to assure that they remain competitive with surrounding communities.

C. The Airport. County government should consider extending incentives to include concessions on impact and connection fees. County government and the airport authority should continue to work together to develop marketing programs to encourage business in the area.

Actions Taken:

- Charlotte County established a policy for public incentives for the private development in the Enterprise Charlotte Airport Park. This includes impact fee credits and reimbursements for hookup charges for water and wastewater.
- Direct target marketing campaign is presently underway showcasing the businesses in the Enterprise Charlotte Airport Park.

III. Creating Partnerships for Urban Design and Community Development

The quality of life in Charlotte County depends in part on the community's appearance, which can affect property values, economic conditions, and civic pride. The Assembly participants considered a number of strategies to maintain and enhance the County's image.

A. Gateways into Charlotte County. Community gateways add aesthetic appeal, create a sense of place, and define a community.

1. There is strong support for improvements along the main traffic corridors in Charlotte County. Businesses should be encouraged to clean up and maintain their property, and existing codes should be enforced proactively. Immediate actions on community improvements include moving the numerous newspaper boxes to centralized locations or bus stops, maintaining canals and palm trees, planting trees along the median on county-owned property, and maintaining public and private property on US 41.

Actions Taken:

- The County has contracted for the S.R. 776 Corridor Study and is in the process of requesting study proposals for the U.S. 41 Corridor. Both studies emphasize the need for an integrated approach to design, sign and landscape standards for the corridor and a plan for the on-going maintenance of public spaces. The studies will also look at traffic circulation and ways of improving circulation along these corridors.
- Recently adopted ordinances concerning dumpster placement and screening, restriction of billboards, prohibition of utility work vehicles in residential areas and

political sign are part of an on-going effort to improve the aesthetics and livability of the community.

Actions Planned:

- The County continues to review, revise and create ordinances that enhance the visual appearance of the community both from its major roadways and in the community itself.

2. Participants support the idea of establishing gateways, and there is general agreement about where they should be. Gateway areas identified are all 1-75 interchanges as well as US 41 and SR 776.

Actions Taken:

- Both the U.S. 41 and S.R. 776 Corridor studies will look at creating gateways at key points along the corridors. The study will not only define entrances into the County, but also define entrances to different community areas (e.g. Charlotte Harbor, Port Charlotte, El Jobean, etc.),
- The Placida community in conjunction with the Tourism Bureau developed a gateway to Placida along S.R. 775.

Actions Planned:

- Further coordinated efforts with the Bureau will place specifically designed entrances to other areas.

3 Charlotte County government should seek an additional gateway along 1-75 between Toledo Blade and Kings Highway.

Actions Taken:

- The County, at this time does not have a specific program or process for establishing gateway standards, locations or a source for funding their development. It is expected that the development of the U.S. 41 and S.R. 776 corridor studies will provide the gateway standards and potential sources of funds for their development.

4. In conjunction with expanding Toledo Blade into four lanes, Charlotte County government should partner with the City of North Port to create a gateway into both communities.

Actions Planned:

- The future widening of Toledo Blade will provide the opportunity for partnering with the City of North Port to develop a joint community gateway.

5. Some suggested that trees displaced from road projects could be used to beautify other roadways.

B. Design Standards and Codes. Design codes are the tools used to create a visual theme, or themes, for landscaping, signage, and set-backs. These standards would apply to private development as well as to the County government's management of its properties.

1. Participants have different opinions about what kinds of design standards should be used and how they should be implemented. Options run the gamut from wanting to keep

the streets free of trash, to advocating a wide ranging combination of design standards and architectural controls to promote a special community appearance.

Actions Taken:

- To address community appearance the County has drafted several ordinances that will significantly affect the visual appearance of the community.
- The County has prepared a countywide commercial design standard that addresses building design, materials, landscaping and signage.
- The County has also adopted ordinances affecting dumpster location and screening, parking of commercial and multi-axle vehicles in residential areas and the restriction of billboards and political signs.
- The County is also addressing the appearance of new development within the County through the application of 'overlay district', which place specific design standards on specific land areas. Two new areas where this application will apply are the Airport Commerce Park and the Murdock West Commercial Center. Each area will be developed following very specific guidelines for land use types, and building and development standards (color, materials, height, roadway and landscaping, signage, etc.)

2. Another proposal is that the County government should form a cooperative between the Chamber of Commerce, homeowners, business owners, and neighborhoods to develop a master plan design standards and landscape improvements.

Actions Taken:

- Through its 'Beautification Program' the County currently partners with citizen groups to develop landscaping plans for County roads within their community. The program is funded through the Native Tree Fund and purchases trees to be used in landscaping projects.
- The County has worked with Rotonda West Association to landscape Rotonda Boulevards North, South, East and West. Other organizations the County has worked with include the Burnt Store Lakes Property, Gulf Cove, Deep Creek and Edgewater Associations.

3. A third view was that the County government should develop a master plan for community design and appearance.

Actions Taken:

- The County's application of countywide regulations of design and appearance has been limited in scope. Rather than create homogeneous standards the County has concentrated on working with specific groups in specific areas to develop specific plans and regulations for design and appearance. These areas are the proposed Airport Commerce Park and Murdock West Commercial Center Overlay Districts, the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Area and the U.S. 41 and S.R. 776 Corridor areas. While the County will continue to work on specific area plans to create separate identities there will be an overall consistency in the level of standards applied to these separate projects.

C. Neighborhood Planning and Design. Participants agree that strong neighborhoods are important to any community; when there is no collective interest, there is no community pride. Once a neighborhood is defined, it can describe its needs and help shape policy.

1. The first step toward creating defined and established neighborhoods is for the County government to devise neighborhood design plans that would address current and future wants and needs. Neighborhood planning should be incorporated into all aspects of planning, but building and establishing neighborhoods is also the responsibility of the citizens.

Actions Taken:

- The County has established a model community plan on the County website and individual webpages specific to all existing community planning efforts.
- South Gulf Cove, Placida, Burnt Store Area Plan, and Manasota Key have all had plans accepted or approved by the Board of County Commissioners.
- The County has undertaken a redevelopment effort for the Murdock Village area, a 1,100-acre area south of U.S. 41 and north of SR 776 between Collingswood Boulevard and the Crestwood Waterway. The County has assembled the majority of the parcels in the Redevelopment Area under public ownership and entered into negotiations with a private developer to develop this land into a mixed-use urban town center neighborhood, including retail, office, office showroom, and civic uses, and single-family and multi-family dwellings.
- Babcock Ranch, a proposed development consisting of 9 neighborhoods, 8 of which in Charlotte County, has incorporated neighborhood planning into the earliest stages of the process. Including a range of stakeholders, these distinct neighborhoods shall have a cohesive design, using progressive techniques of designing: parks and recreation facilities; residential uses; and vertically mixed use structures to provide the best opportunities to develop a unique sense of identity.

Actions Planned:

- Boca Grande, Little Gasparilla Island, Harbour Heights, and Grove City will all have proposed community plans to the Board of County Commissioners by 2010.
- The adoption of Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code amendments to implement the County's vision for Murdock Village. The completion of a Redevelopment Agreement and Developer's Agreement with a private entity regarding the nature of the development within the Redevelopment Area. The sale of the property for the commencement of redevelopment.
- Babcock Ranch will be undergoing design and development throughout the buildout horizon of 2030, and beyond. Stakeholders, such as the 21st Century Commission, will be given an opportunity to make comments on ways to improve the design of the development. Creating a sense of community in this development is clearly in the best interest to all of those involved.

2. To improve neighborhoods, participants suggested that:
- a. Neighborhood plans should include neighborhood parks, buffer zones, and sidewalks.
 - b. Neighborhoods should create a distinct identity; and
 - c. The County government should partner with 21st Century Challenge to strengthen neighborhoods.
 - d. Develop neighborhood commercial nodes.
 - e. Use vacant lots to create new development patterns.
 - f. Consideration should be given to include community design standards in neighborhood plans.

Actions Taken:

- Many communities have, through MSBU funding, achieved community planning goals; for example, South Gulf Cove Linear Park.
- Concurrent or in conjunction with several existing community planning efforts is the creation of unique zoning or design overlays.

Actions Planned:

- Continued enhancement of internal and external stakeholder awareness through consensus building and the creation of improved communication and information networks.

3. Traffic is not perceived to be a primary problem at this time though some participants suggested the use of traffic calming mechanism.

4. Neighborhoods should be elder-ready.

Actions Taken:

- The community/neighborhood plan would take into consideration the residents of the area and their special needs.

D. Rehabilitating Old Structures - the Courthouse. A large number of the Assembly participants supported restoration of the Old Courthouse, but most felt that tax dollars should not be the sole source of funding.

Actions Taken:

- In 2006 the County, after significant community input, began renovating the 86 year old Courthouse structure. Construction is expected to be complete fall of 2007.

E. Future Uses of 'Old Platted Lots'. The Assembly participants had a wide range of opinions on the matter.

1. Some participants suggested that the County government enter into the real estate market to trade lots or sell them to the private sector. By trading lots, or by selling lots and using the revenues to purchase other lots, the County government could pursue a variety of objectives. In this regard, it was also suggested that the County government could partner with a non-profit corporation to trade lots and replat them, or to assist private developers in lot assembly and replatting.

Actions Taken:

- The Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations have begun to include policies to help make neighborhoods more elder-ready. For instance, the anticipated Murdock Village includes the policy to, "address the incorporation of human-scale aesthetics into street and building design. Building design and location shall reinforce a pedestrian-oriented character including linkages between land uses through a functional bicycle-pedestrian system. Public gathering places shall be incorporated within each distinct land use area." The Charlotte Harbor CRA has policies and regulations to support bringing buildings to the street, thereby pushing parking to the rear. These are but a few examples how the County is addressing issues like: the fact that seniors are outliving their driving years by 5-10 years; are

distracted by street noise; and that in 2003, the fatality rate for pedestrians age 70+ was twice that for persons younger than age 70.

Actions Planned:

- The County is making a significant effort to overhaul the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations over the next couple of years. From employing 'Universal Design' principles on a macro level, to learning the fine points of using design concepts, like avoiding shade changes in paving patterns in areas to be used by the elderly, the County is looking to accommodate the anticipated upswing of Boomer retirees. Further, staff is investigating progressive models, such as co-housing, that have the potential to significantly reduce: the cost of housing, loneliness, and increase support structures for 'Active Adult Living'.

2. Other participants thought that the County government should not be in the real estate business but should instead make some lots available for community purposes.

Suggested re-use options included (in no particular order):

- a. Building community recreational facilities.
- b. Building Fire/EMS stations.
- c. Mitigation for road development and improvement or to hold retention ponds.
- d. Green/open space.

Actions Taken:

- The County will continue with its active property management program, acquiring properties that meet a specific County need and selling those properties deemed surplus.
- Through the above methods the County has acquired a significant number of lots and has adopted a procedure for managing 'surplus lands.' The active management of County owned property's is done in concert with other County uses of these properties, such as use for parks, infrastructure requirements, environmental mitigation and conservation, property trades, sale of transfer of development rights (TORs) and actual property sales.
- On December 12, 2004, the Charlotte County Transfer of Density Units (TDU) Code ordinance was adopted. Under this code, residential development rights associated with real property with environmentally sensitive, historic, or archeological resources, or bona fide agricultural uses or real property otherwise deemed less suitable for development due to location, may be properly transferred to property better suited for higher density residential development. Future growth will be directed in a logical, economical, and efficient manner away from those areas of the county less suited for such growth, and toward those areas of the county best suited to provide the public services and facilities necessary for such growth and for the protection of the health, safety and welfare of the general public.
- In 2006, an ordinance was passed in Charlotte County creating the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee. This group has the option of selling density on purchased property. This would allow developers to implement the County's TDU ordinance (adopted 12/13/04), shifting density from coastal high-hazard property to land more suitable for development.

3. A few participants suggested that the lots be combined and rezoned to one unit per half acre to reduce density.

NATURAL RESOURCES ISSUES **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Protecting Our Natural Resources

The Assembly participants recommended actions in a number of areas to protect the County's natural resources and preserve or enhance the ecological character of the area.

- Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat. All Assembly participants placed great value on Charlotte County's natural resources, but they had different views about how much weight should be given to the environment when environmental protection conflicts with important human wants or needs.
- 1 The Assembly participants were in general agreement on the following recommendations to preserve important habitat for wildlife:
 - a. Make sure that the County government's own land use activities are environmentally sensitive.

Actions Taken:

- Charlotte County coordinates its review of any development activities including County projects - which may impact threatened or endangered wildlife or their habitats with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission which are, respectively, the lead Federal and State agencies charged with the protection of wildlife. Charlotte County will not grant local approval for any project which might cause such impacts until such time as these agencies' permits are obtained. Similarly, Charlotte County works with other agencies such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Water Management District to ensure that its capital projects meet or exceed such agencies' requirements in regard to protecting surface- and ground-water quality. Protection of surface and groundwater in turn protects natural systems, such as the Charlotte Harbor estuary, which provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.
- In addition to the application of Federal and State regulations to its own land use activities, Charlotte County has also acquired environmentally sensitive lands such as xeric scrub communities and wetlands, often with the assistance of the Florida Communities Trust program, with the specific purpose of protecting them from future development. Such properties are utilized primarily for passive recreation, and the County is developing the management ability needed to maintain (and where necessary restore) their natural functions.
 - b. Designate environmentally sensitive areas, notify the public of these areas, post notices in these areas, and educate the public who may be harming the environment unintentionally.

Actions Taken:

- Where environmental sensitivity coincides with County ownership, Charlotte County has posted informational signs and other notices to help educate the public regarding

the uniqueness of such lands. However, Charlotte County's ability to designate and post environmentally sensitive lands in private ownership is limited by a number of legal (Harris Act, property rights) and practical (limited financial and personnel resources) concerns.

- In November 2006 Charlotte County residents approved a .2 millage increase to fund the purchase of environmentally sensitive property. This funding source will allow the County to bond up to \$77 million to acquire these unique lands, and provide land management dollars to maintain the historical significance of the lands.
- The County continues to educate the public through speaking opportunities and materials available on the website.

c. Make it easier for individuals and developers to protect the environment. For example,

Utilize some vacant lots to preserve land in perpetuity;

Actions Taken:

- Utilizing vacant lots is the primarily strategy employed in the development of the Tippecanoe Scrub Phase II Florida Communities Trust program. Located in the vicinity of the County Stadium, the Tippecanoe II project encompasses 214.5 acres of threatened scrub-jay habitat and is made up of 454 vacant lots, primarily in individual ownership. Acquisition of these properties will not only preserve scrub habitat, it will provide proactive mitigation for impacts to scrub-jay habitat, which will occur when the County widens and extends Edgewater Drive.

Use mitigation banking;

Actions Taken:

- Mitigation banking - that is, proactively restoring and managing natural communities and listed species' habitats for the specific purpose of offsetting future, inevitable impacts to such resources - holds considerable promise for Charlotte County which still retains some of the finest examples of natural communities in Florida. Mitigation banking also presents an opportunity for the County to recover some of the costs it must incur in preserving and managing native habitats in the form of "mitigation credits" which are sold on the open market to anyone (private developers as well as government entities) needing to provide mitigation to obtain development permits.

Actions Planned:

- Charlotte County is discussing the possibility of establishing a mitigation bank with two private, not-for-profit organizations.

Allow land swaps;

Actions Taken:

- Charlotte County is pursuing land swaps as part of its strategy for acquiring properties included within the boundaries of the Tippecanoe II project.

Promote eco-tourism;

Actions Taken:

- The Tourist Development Department is promoting ecotourism as one of the County's major assets. This is doubly beneficial as it not only provides a clean source of income, it helps perpetuate an appreciation for natural resources that will result in a better environmental stewardship ethic among the general public.

d. Conduct studies to increase knowledge about environmental issues and to help set policies.

Actions Taken:

- Charlotte County participates in the National Estuary Program and the Charlotte Harbor Surface Water Improvement and Management Program, both of which have conducted, and continue to conduct, numerous studies intended to increase our understanding of the Charlotte Harbor Estuary system, and how human activities impact this vital resource.
- Charlotte County has also undertaken a comprehensive, County-wide study of all of its scrub-jay habitats with the intention of completing a County-wide conservation plan for this species.

2. Participants agree that the County government should continue to expand efforts to support the Environmental Lands Acquisition Advisory Committee's (ELAAC) efforts to identify parcels for future land acquisition and continue with additional land acquisition.

Actions Taken:

- With the passage of the Environmental Lands Acquisition Referendum (Conservation Charlotte), ELAAC was disbanded and the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee was formed to provide insight to the BCC on all future environmentally sensitive land purchases. Although ELAAC "sunsetted" because they had met their goals and objectives, their mapping data will be used as a comprehensive planning tool to acquire environmentally sensitive lands.

3. The balance between manatees and boaters is a subject of contention. It is agreed that various users should share waterways.

Actions Taken:

- The Board of Commissioners established two special committees to study the issues associated with multiple uses of the County's waterways. These committees' efforts culminated in the Board's acceptance of a series of recommended protective measures aimed at helping prevent impacts to this species due to boating and other water-related activities. However, litigation at both State and Federal levels between environmental organizations and the regulatory agencies has resulted in a settlement agreement which renders these efforts largely moot as Manatee protection zones have been ordered by the courts.

B. Promoting Partnerships to Prevent Pollution. The Assembly participants voiced concern that phosphate mining may contaminate or otherwise degrade the region's water supply resources phosphate mining as an economic benefit, but Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota Counties and the Peace River Water Supply Authority share concerns over the potentially disastrous impacts that mining could have on regional water quality and quantity.

- 1 The County government should lobby the Governor to require an area-wide impact study; to set a build-out limit on mines; and strongly insist agencies enforce existing rules and regulations and require compliance with regard to mining; and negotiate with IMC to achieve positive outcomes for the County.

Actions Taken:

- Charlotte County is pursuing action on all fronts, including legislative changes to tighten permitting requirements, investigation of additional regulatory protections which have not yet been applied, continued insistence on a cumulative analysis of the impacts of phosphate mining, and has encumbered funds within the yearly budgets since 2002 for additional litigation, if necessary. In the hope of avoiding additional litigation, Charlotte County has entered into tentative negotiations to determine whether it is possible to provide the protections necessary for the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor without further legal action.

C. Charlotte County's Tree Ordinance: Three actions were recommended: The tree ordinance should be changed to a habitat ordinance; the County government should establish a nursery to recycle trees removed from roadways; and the biological clause in the ordinance should be eliminated.

Actions Taken:

- Trees on developed properties should not be equated to ecologically meaningful habitats for the very reasons discussed in A.1.c., above. While trees provide many environmental benefits (reduction of urban heat islands, production of oxygen, lowering of local temperatures, softening the built landscape, conservation of water, and even some value to generalist bird species), habitat protection cannot rely on landscaping in parking lots or even on residual tree stands preserved through "open space" requirements of the County Code.
- Due to set up costs, the County decided against the establishment of a County nursery several years ago. While there is considerable sense to such a move, it appears unlikely that it will be a priority given the County's other pressing financial needs.
- Removing the biological clause creates an artificial separation between development (and other human activities) and the natural environment.

D. Water. The participants agreed that the year-round availability of water is a priority, not only for Charlotte County but also for the entire region, and that long-term strategic planning must be continued. The participants stated the County government should support the regional water alliance and work to find alternative solutions, because there is an over-dependence on the Peace River. The following actions should be considered:

1. County government should pursue alternative water sources such as a regional desalination system.

Actions Taken:

- In order to address potential, short-term shortfalls in our regional water supply, the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (PR/MRWSA) has developed a "Gap Plan" and, in 2004, encouraged its members to independently seek new water sources. CCU began to establish a plan for water source

exploration. Recognizing the urgent need, it was necessary to simultaneously procure feasibility studies for all possible sources, with the intent to pursue those projects deemed most beneficial once the multiple studies were completed.

- In 2005, CCU established an Engineering Library of 10 professional consulting firms to complete large work orders, including feasibility studies for water source exploration, as well as plant expansions and other Capital Improvement Projects.
- CCU frequently reexamines its demand projections, at least once a year as required by the PR/MRWSA Master Water Supply Agreement negotiated in 2005. The recent decline in development activity has reduced the immediate urgency for new water sources, but we continue to pursue options to meet the needs of future growth.

2. Public education programs should be expanded.

Actions Taken:

- CCU offers community outreach and education opportunities to our citizens. From community association presentations to public school outreach, CCU's public speakers bring the Utility to the community. Presentations showcasing CCU products and services range from casual speakers to multimedia presentations, with a focus on what CCU is doing for Charlotte County through its water and wastewater treatment and reclaimed water programs.
- This spring, CCU's Community Relations division has participated in educational outreach to over 300 elementary and middle school students throughout the County.
- CCU also focuses on education and outreach through local news media, including press releases and editorials focusing on Utility issues, such as water quality and conservation.

3. Conservation methods should continue to be promoted

Actions Taken:

- Charlotte County Utilities regularly advises its customers to conserve water through a variety of means. Charlotte County Utilities customers are already some of the most conservation conscious in the state; our average customer uses 5,000 gallons per month, compared to 9,000 gallons or more in many neighboring municipalities.
- In October 2006, the BCC approved a new rate plan for CCU, which includes a five-tier, conservation-based rate structure; the previous rate structure included three tiers. The new rate tiers reward those customers who use the least water with lower usage rates, while penalizing those who use the most water. Practicing conservation behaviors, such as observing the once-per-week irrigation restrictions and detecting and repairing plumbing leaks, will allow customers to keep their utility bills lower.
- A full-time Water Conservationist position was approved by the BCC. CCU's Conservationist will be working with engineering consultant Malcolm Pirnie to create and enforce a written conservation plan for the County, as recommended by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). The Conservationist will also be participating in community-outreach opportunities to educate our citizenry about the importance of water conservation.
- CCU's Community Relations division has been actively pursuing conservation-based community outreach for the past several years. Efforts include public speaking engagements, such as CHEC's Water School; and sponsorship of and participation in community events, such as the Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival and Keep

Charlotte Beautiful programs. For the past three years, the division has executed a community-outreach program for Florida's Water Conservation Month, including BCC proclamation, public speaking engagements, press releases and editorials and the distribution of water conservation literature and tools (toilet tank water savers, replacement flappers, faucet aerators, hose sprayers, shower timers and leak detection dye tablets) at its customer service offices.

- This year, in cooperation with Communications & Marketing, CCU's Community Relations division created a water conservation video and three Public Service Announcements, which can be viewed on CCTV-20 and on the County Web site.

4. More wastewater should be reclaimed for use.

Actions Taken:

- All four of the County's treatment facilities are rated for reclaimed water production.
- Existing reclaimed water customers served by CCU's East Port WRF include Kingsway Country Club, Port Charlotte Country Club, Maple Leaf Estates, Marylu Homeowners Association and Suncoast Lakes. Customers served by the Rotonda WRF include Links Golf Course, Palms Golf Course and Windward Patio Homes. Reclaimed water customers served by West Port WRF include Coral Creek Club and Long Marsh North and South.
- Engineering consultant Wilson Miller has designed Phase I of a cross-County reclaimed water main that will eventually connect the East Port WRF on Kings Highway to the Rotonda and West Port WRFs in West County, allowing the reclaimed water created at these facilities to be directed to those parts of the County where it is needed most. Potential future customers to be served by this main include Riverwood, Murdock Village, the U.S. 41 Beautification project, additional golf courses, schools and County parks. Construction of Phase I, which runs from the East Port WRF to the Riverwood development, will begin in September 2007 and should be completed by fall 2009.
- CCU and its consultants have been working on a new Reclaimed Water Policy/Ordinance. The completed document will be presented to the BCC for approval in the coming months.

5. Additional aquifer storage reservoirs should be put in place;

Update:

- The PR/MRWSA has experienced a number of arsenic issues with its large ASR well field. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has been issuing consent orders for ASR wells that are having problems meeting water quality standards.

6. The County government's tiered rates-structure should be modified to increase the costs for high users.

Actions Taken:

- In order to preserve and protect our drinking water supply, regulatory agencies, including FDEP and SWFWMD, are requiring increased conservation efforts by utility systems and their customers. A multi-tier, conservation-based rate structure is recommended. CCU already had a three-tier rate structure in effect, but the new rate structure approved by the BCC in October 2006 established a five-tier structure. The

highest rate tier, 26,000 gallons and more per month, is billed at \$7.85 per thousand gallons, \$3.72 higher than the lowest tier. Under emergency conservation rates, usage in this tier is billed at \$11.78 per thousand gallons – almost three times higher than the lowest tier.

- Approximately 75 percent of CCU residential customers regularly fall in the first rate tier (0-5,999 gallons per month). Another 20 percent fall into the second rate tier (6,000-10,999 gpm). Only five percent regularly use more than 11,000 gallons per month and fall into the third, fourth or fifth tiers.

7. Preserve and protect surface waters and surrounding land.

Actions Taken:

CCU's plans to increase the number of customers served by our wastewater collection system, thus decreasing the number of septic tanks in the County, includes the following:

- A Countywide wastewater expansion study is underway. Consultant Jones Edmunds is modeling the existing wastewater system and projected needs using computer software (modeling should be complete by mid-2007), which will identify areas where capacity upgrades are needed. The study will also prioritize areas for future system expansion, based on age of existing septic systems, proximity to surface water and other factors.
- In FY 2006, three wastewater-expansion Municipal Services Benefit Units (MSBUs) were approved by the BCC: Rotonda Sands and Rotonda Meadows in West County and Pirate Harbor in South County. All three of these subdivisions are already served by County water, and, in each case, the wastewater expansion was requested by a group of property owners. Installation of infrastructure is expected to be completed by summer 2008 for Pirate Harbor and by January 2009 for Rotonda Sands and Meadows.

End of Report