

Administrator's Update for 1/22/10
By Roger Baltz

Med-Vac Helicopter

Our Charlotte County Fire/EMS operations and the Tampa General Hospital now have a partnership to bring the hospital's Med-Vac helicopter to standby two days a week at the Fire Station #7, located at the Charlotte County Airport. This special unit will be utilized to fly out severely injured patients to a trauma center. The center is equipped to provide comprehensive emergency medical services to patients suffering trauma injuries that often require complex and multi-disciplinary treatments for the best possible chance of survival and recovery.

Parking Pass Options

Our Charlotte County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources department has expanded the options for parking passes used for beaches and boat ramp areas. Patrons can now purchase a 3-month seasonal parking pass for \$25 or a 6-month pass for \$35. The annual pass for \$50 remains available. Currently passes are available at all Recreation Centers, the Oyster Creek Regional Park Pool and the Charlotte Sports Park. For more information call 625.PLAY.

Waterfront Trail

Our County Commissioners approved a grant agreement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails to construct the Oyster Creek Waterfront Trail. The trail will connect Cedar Point Park and Oyster Creek Regional Park by developing a scenic boardwalk under the Oyster Creek Bridge. The grant will cover 50 percent of the cost up to \$100,000.

Roads/Transportation

The last of the required right-of-way for the widening of Midway Boulevard, from Elkcam to Harbor has been acquired. A court hearing was held Jan. 5, 2010, and the property was granted to the County. The project has been advertised and bid opening is expected in early February 2010.

Our Public Works staff held a meeting of division managers to discuss and develop a list of projects that might qualify for the second round of Stimulus Funds (ARRA). The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is working with the City of Punta Gorda and the Charlotte County Airport Authority to determine what assistance is needed for them to submit a list of City and airport transportation projects.

The punch list inspection of the portion of the Toledo Blade Widening Project within Charlotte County is completed. The contractor is working on the items and expects to have a final inspection by the end of Jan. 2010.

Veteran Services

Veteran Services has hired a new Assistant Veteran Services Officer to replace retiring Don Vecoli. Our new Officer will assist the County's Veteran Services Office in expanding access to local veteran assistance in filing VA claims and obtaining benefit entitlements.

Carbon Neutral

In follow up to the recent Green Futures Expo and Energy Options Conference, our staff has explored efforts to make expo and conference a carbon-neutral event. We have teamed up with an event sponsor, Johnson Engineering, to plant 23 Cypress trees at Florida Gulf Coast University to offset the event's carbon emissions. Participants at the expo and conference completed carbon assessment questionnaires to help calculate the event's carbon footprint. Based on the 424 responses, the total emissions were estimated at close to 30 metric tones of carbon dioxide (MtCO₂). Commercially available carbon offset credits cost approx. \$5 to \$10 per MtCO₂, which means to offset the emissions from the event, and be carbon-neutral, the cost would be approx. \$150 to \$300. Planting the Cypress trees keeps the carbon offsets within the region, and over their lifetime the trees will continually capture and sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Donations collected at the event to promote a carbon reduction project in Florida will be used in part to purchase the trees locally.

Overlay Efforts

Our Growth Management staff attended an organizational meeting last week for the South County Gateway (the City/County Overlay) project held at the City Hall Annex in Punta Gorda. Also attending were David Hilston and Mitchell Austin from the City, as well as several members of TEAM Punta Gorda. The group identified a venue for the first public meeting, which is tentatively scheduled from 6 to 8 pm on Feb. 4. The group is exploring the possibility of modeling project charrettes after those used by architect and designer Jaime Carrera, which encourages ideas without limits.