

A look ahead into 2011

Administrator's Update for 1/5/11 By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

Looking ahead into this new year of 2011 and beyond, we have gained momentum towards fiscal stability and better public service to the citizens and visitors in Charlotte County. We are taking steps towards a 2-year budget process which will be more efficient and productive for all involved. Improvements in technology and infrastructure will be beneficial to residents in all areas of the county, and we can look forward to a productive year.

Internally we have a few enhancements to our workflow that will result in better service. Over the year our IT division is rolling-out a Microsoft SharePoint-based system that will enable employees to more easily find information and be even more effective overall. This change is part of IT initiatives that strive to analyze and streamline business processes in the county. As part of these efforts, near the end of the year our intranet and the county public website will be redesigned to enable website users to find more information easily.

As part of the SharePoint public website project, a new Utility E-Bill payment solution is in development which will offer a true Web billing solution. Customers will have a central location online to view their water usage and amount due, opt out of receiving a paper bill, and make payments. Significant savings and enhanced service will be realized through the implementation of this online solution.

Among other internal improvements designed for cost savings and better service, our building and growth management department is reviewing the recently-completed study by FGCU on our permitting process and will implement as many of the recommendations as possible to further improve the permitting time.

Over the coming year our growth management division will be transmitting the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) amendments of the Smart Charlotte 2050 comprehensive plan to the Department of Community Affairs. The division will also be working on completing the revitalization plan of the medical district community redevelopment agency and identifying the required capital improvements.

Our community services division will be very busy in 2011. Coming up soon it will be time for the Tampa Bay Rays spring training at the Charlotte Sports Park. Other new recreation locations and improvements on existing places are planned, including the development of the Cattle Dock boat ramp, Bay Heights boat ramp, and the Placida boat ramp expansion. The Englewood Library expansion will be underway, and construction of a new baseball field and renovations to the disc golf course at North Charlotte Regional Park will begin.

Sustainability efforts will remain a focus in 2011 with ongoing energy efficiency improvements throughout county facilities, including implementation of a county-wide energy monitoring program. We will be replacing old, inefficient sports lighting with energy-efficient "green" lighting, and plan to optimize use of reclaimed water for irrigation purposes. The electric generating plant for the landfill gas-to-energy system will be installed and operational later this year, as well as procurement and installation of the new landfill tower site to improve south county coverage.

Staff will be looking further into the future by researching the feasibility of building a regional bio-solid fertilizer plant, and will be promoting recycling towards meeting the state mandated recycling goal of 40 percent by 2012.

Our human services department will undergo some changes with the upcoming co-location and consolidation of the department to the new Loveland Blvd facility, to be constructed on the same site as the health department. This move will bring human services' administration, senior services, housing, veteran services and family services together and will provide for co-location efficiencies and improved communication.

Our Fire/EMS department has re-started the replacement program and, in doing so, is currently in committee for the purchase of a specialty engine for the rural areas of east Charlotte County. The apparatus is slated to replace the engine currently stationed on SR 3, which provides the opportunity to design an apparatus to better serve the unique demands of this hard to reach area, including four wheel drive features and 1200 gallons of water capacity.

Road projects will continue over the year as we respond to excellent bidding conditions. The Bermont Road milling and resurfacing will be completed, including paved shoulders, replaced or extended culverts, and drainage work. We plan to complete the design to widen Edgewater, from Harbor Boulevard to Midway Boulevard and bid and complete the paving program for the resurfacing of roads in greater Port Charlotte, the road and bridge district, Punta Gorda non-urban areas, Tropical Gulf Acres, Town Estates, and Manasota Key.

A long list of Greater Port Charlotte water control structures will see progress, including the design engineering for Pompano waterway at Elmira boulevard, Sunset Waterway at Forrest Nelson Boulevard, and Dorchester Waterway at Bachmann Boulevard to name a few.

The construction on Piper Road South will be completed later this year. Sidewalks funded with sales tax monies from year one and year two will all be underway or partially constructed, and sidewalks from year three will be in the design phase.

We have a busy year ahead of us and look forward to providing stellar public service as we all enjoy the magnificent area in which we live. Have a healthy and prosperous new year!