

Administrator's Update for 6/22/11
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

Last week the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approved funding economic development incentives in the amount of \$1 million. To support the efforts of the economic development office (EDO), the BCC created a separate line item fund in the budget specifically dedicated to economic development projects. This fund will provide the financial resources to implement the EDO's incentive tools. These tools include the Economic Development Incentive program, which provides monetary awards to companies creating job opportunities and expanding the tax base in Charlotte County. Setting aside \$1 million makes it clear to prospective companies that Charlotte County is committed to funding economic development efforts through these programs.

Dog walk areas

The BCC has approved allowing nine parks to have dog walk areas. The community services department held two public meetings and an online survey to gauge public opinion on the issue in response to numerous inquiries that had been received. Eighty percent of those polled favored allowing dogs in parks at some level or another. Specific areas in parks are being designated by the department. Dogs will not be allowed at playgrounds, athletic fields or beaches and must remain on leashes no longer than six feet in length. Dog waste stations will be provided at the nine parks, and donations have been received from local businesses and non-profits to help offset the expense.

Comp plan in effect

Smart Charlotte 2050, the County's vision for how to grow into the future, became officially effective as of 5 p.m. June 14. Although the plan was adopted by the commissioners on July 20, 2010 and found to be "in compliance" by the Department of Community Affairs, its consistency with state regulations was challenged by a group of citizens concerned by how some of the policies in the plan could affect their community. The county and the challengers were able to negotiate some small revisions being made to the plan. The process of making those revisions has been completed and the plan is now fully in effect. Staff will now concentrate on implementing the goals, objectives, and policies of the new plan. To view the plan, visit www.SmartCharlotte2050.com.

Housing division news

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program III was approved by the BCC allowing real estate services to work with our housing division in the acquisition of foreclosed homes in the Medical District. The funding for this program is from a grant made to Charlotte County by U.S. Housing and Urban Development.

Our housing division negotiated with the Florida Housing and Finance Corporation to receive \$350,000 in State Housing Initiative Program (SHIP) funding for fiscal year 2012. This funding will be used according to the strategies approved in the Local Housing Assistance Plan.

Partnership Award

The “Keep Charlotte Beautiful” program and Waste Management of Charlotte County, Inc., received the Outstanding Partnership Award for Recycling and Waste Reduction at the recent Recycle Florida Today Conference. The award recognizes the public/private partnership’s work to increase awareness and participation in community recycling the past year. Recent recycling events included the Green Futures Expo, the Nature Festival, America Recycles Days, and the Charlotte County Air Show. The Air Show had 40,000 participants; 1,600 pounds of material was recycled that otherwise would have ended up in the landfill. Recycling containers have been obtained through a PepsiCo Dream Machine grant. The 200 bottle-shaped recycling bins have been placed in Charlotte County schools and county parks.

New hospitality group

The Charlotte Harbor Visitor and Convention Bureau is working with members of the hospitality industry to revitalize and grow a Charlotte County Hospitality Association. The Bureau met with members of the lodging industry and community members to assist the association with the development of an annual program calendar, website, brochure and membership development program. The new association will be open to anyone in Charlotte County who has an interest in sustainable tourism development. The next association meetings is Aug. 2, 8:30 a.m. at the Punta Gorda Airport.