

Administrator's Update for 2/13/09

By Roger Baltz

Our Commissioners have held two "State of the County" Town Hall meetings in recent weeks; one in Englewood and another in Murdock. The public had the opportunity to speak directly with their commissioners and to receive an update on County activities. The next State of the County Town Hall meeting will be on February 23, 2009 at 6:00pm at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center in Punta Gorda.

Our Human Services Department's Housing Division recently learned that our Hurricane Housing Recovery Grant has been extended through June 2010. This will allow for the completion of the last two, low-income rental complexes, Marion Manor and Charlotte Crossings, which have been previously approved by the Board of County Commissioners to receive funding. Marion Manor is a 31 unit complex located in Port Charlotte. Charlotte Crossings is a 124 unit complex for seniors located in Deep Creek.

County budget staff attended a regional forum in Orlando entitled, "County Budget Challenges: Sharing Strategies." The event brought together county administrators and finance directors from several Florida counties to share information and to brainstorm regarding issues such as property tax reform, declining real estate values, tax revenues and fees, and the global recession. Our staff brought back useful ideas and new strategies for consideration which will be shared as we develop next year's budget.

County Commissioners have held a workshop to gather the information needed to develop a Green building Ordinance. The workshop was well attended and we received input from green building experts, as well as local contractors. Our Building Construction Services Department was directed to establish a focus group with local stakeholders to review the County's sustainable strategy and ensure that the proposed green building ordinance did not conflict with other county ordinances.

The Veterans Services Division has partnered with Port Charlotte High School's media department to interview and videotape local veterans who have served in WWII. This undertaking is part of the national Veterans History Project. The final tapes will be submitted to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., for archive preservation.

Construction on the Charlotte County Sports Park is now complete and we are counting down to the first Tampa Bay Rays game on Feb. 25. One of the unique features of the Stadium is the neighboring Tippecanoe Environmental Park. Now that the Stadium work is complete, it has been necessary to find an environmentally friendly way to deter the local bird population from inhabiting the Stadium concourse and light poles. Speakers have been deployed that emit sonic and ultra-sonic sound waves, and predatory bird calls. Within only a few days, the birds relocated to other, quieter areas. These efforts will reduce maintenance costs and protect the health and safety of the public, while protecting the natural features of the Stadium and nearby environmental park.

The Aquí Esta Road Widening project is about to get underway. Last week we held pre-construction meetings with the contractor, who will soon begin moving materials and equipment on to the site. The official groundbreaking is scheduled for Feb. 27. This will be a 2 year project and construction will extend from U.S. 41 westerly to Bal Harbor Boulevard in Punta Gorda.

Repaving of Peachland Blvd. from Loveland Blvd. to the Morningstar Waterway is complete. This connector road was reduced to one-lane traffic during the construction period. The project was a part of the 2009 county-wide Paving Program.

Fire/EMS staff have been working with the County's new Motor Sport Park on Bermont Road. The owner and the County are working together to ensure that the park provides the safest environment possible for ATV riders, including proper medical coverage during events.

Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands is prominently featured in a four-page color spread in the February/March 2009 issue of *Boat U.S. Trailering* magazine. Visitors are already calling the County for additional boating and fishing information about the area as a result of the article. This editorial coverage is the result of our hosting the outdoor writer in October 2007.