

Administrator's Update for 3/20/09

By Roger Baltz

Our Human Services Department - Transit division has been allocated \$1,896,507 in Capital funds for immediate utilization under the ARRA (Stimulus Program). No local match is required. Transit has plans to purchase five "green buses" with these funds.

Charlotte County's partnership with the Tampa Bay Rays has been of high visibility and attention for our staff. As I write this column, seven spring training games have been played at the Charlotte Sports Park. The Tampa Bay Rays are averaging over 6,000 fans per game and media reports indicate that the Rays have the greatest increase in spring training attendance (65%) of all the MLB teams.

Charlotte County Utilities has received approval from Florida Department of Environmental Protection to operate a portion of the new reclaimed water distribution line that runs from the East Port Water Reclamation Facility on Harborview Road to Riverwood Development on S.R. 776. The Charlotte County Sports Park is now using reclaimed water to keep their fields and landscaped areas irrigated.

Our County Commissioners received an update on the Green Building ordinance at their recent meeting. Staff members have had several meetings with the stakeholders group and will be returning with a final draft of the ordinance in a few weeks. Part of the development process includes reviewing many of our existing ordinances (such as landscaping) to insure they are not in conflict with green initiatives.

Our Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources staff offered the 2009 "Fit for Life" Senior Games which began in early March. This 10 day event includes events like basketball, swimming, cycling, football, tennis, volleyball, softball throw, kayak racing, track and field and a 5K race. Other events include air pistol shooting, billiards, bridge, horseshoes, golf, shuffleboard, bocce, bowling and table tennis. Pickle Ball, a combination of tennis and table tennis that can be played on a tennis court, is new to the games this year

Our Commissioners recently amended the jail construction contract to allow the completion of all Phase Two work, including areas for juvenile detention, two courtrooms, classrooms and an inmate library.

On March 13, 2009 our County Commissioners held a joint meeting with the Punta Gorda City Council. Our Commissioners and City Council members expressed concern about a series of bills proposed by the Florida Legislature. Most of the items, if passed, would preempt local authority, limiting our ability to adjust government services to local need. It was suggested that the City and County develop a joint position paper and work closely with our local representatives to make them aware of the local impact of any actions they may take.

Charlotte County staff members visited Lee County's primitive camp ground and toured their facility. At the request of residents, Charlotte County is exploring the possibility of introducing primitive camping at selected Parks and Conservation Charlotte properties. Primitive camping is for campers who want to experience the outdoors in its natural state, without amenities like bathrooms, electric or water services.

The County Office of Emergency Management participated in the Project Storm Ready Board of Director's meeting at the National Weather Service in Ruskin. This quarterly meeting brings together local, State and Federal emergency managers and focuses on enhanced early warning and notification in emergencies as well as public education. Charlotte County has been a Project Storm Ready Community since 1999 and was the first County in South Florida to achieve this designation.

Our Animal Control Officer Reannon Juergensen has received an Honorable Mention Award from the Florida Animal Control Association as the Animal Control Officer of the Year.