

Administrator's Update for 3/27/09

By Roger Baltz

Our Board of County Commissioners has begun its budget review for fiscal year 2009/2010. Between now and the end of May there will be approximately 15 budget workshops, which will be broadcast live on CCTV-20 and accessible from our online video archives. An important part of the budget process is citizen input. We would like to hear citizens' opinions on a variety of County programs and services.

Our residents can visit the County website at www.CharlotteCountyFl.com to provide feedback on services, as well as to make suggestions on ways we can reduce expenses or create efficiencies. On our web site you will find a link asking for your input and ideas for helping us meet our budget challenges.

The State of Florida has awarded the County \$2 million in incentive funds in exchange for reducing our impact fees. The money will be distributed through our Housing Division and will be used for homeownership assistance for low to moderate income households, acquisition of foreclosed properties for resale to low to moderate income households, and foreclosure prevention.

Our County has received a Recovery Act Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant in the amount of \$275,631. This grant can be used for programs for law enforcement; prosecution and court; prevention and education; corrections; drug treatment and enforcement; planning, evaluation and technology improvement; and crime victim and witness programs.

We have converted 39 school zone flashers from standard electrical energy to solar power. The solar panel charges batteries inside the units, which keeps the school zone flashers operational during the specified hours. This will not only reduce electrical energy cost, but also eliminates construction costs.

Charlotte County recently hosted the annual Best Tasting Drinking Water Taste Test for Region 10 of the Florida Section American Water Works Association, which represents water utilities in five counties. All regional water utilities were invited to submit a sample for a blind taste test by five, impartial judges. Nine samples were submitted and Charlotte County Utilities was declared the winner. As the Region 10 winner, CCU will compete in the statewide competition in Tallahassee in April.

The Murdock Village Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee has moved their monthly meeting to the second Monday of every month starting at 5:30 p.m. The committee believes that the change in time from the former early morning meeting schedule will allow more public participation. The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 13 in Room 106B of the County Administration Building.

Members of the County's Beaches & Shores Advisory Committee completed a field review of Stump Pass Beach State Park, Englewood Beach, and Knight/Don Pedro Island. The tour allowed members to observe beach changes and learn about beach renourishment projects first-hand.

U.S. Department of Agriculture representatives held a workshop at Boca Grande highlighting the outcome of research conducted on Green and Spiny-tailed Iguanas. Information was shared on reproduction, food sources, and other findings collected during the past year of the Iguana Control Project underway on Boca Grande, Charlotte portion. USDA recently entered into agreement with Lee County Officials to provide control practices on the Lee portion of Boca Grande. Research will be on-going as the project continues. Now both portions of the island [Lee and Charlotte] have an iguana control program managed by USDA Wildlife Services Division. Residents are still being encouraged to report iguana sightings by visiting the County website.

Charlotte Behavioral Health Care, in partnership with County Human Services and Veteran Services, was recently awarded a \$200,000 two year grant from Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice. The Foundation awarded the grant to address the mental health and other social service needs of local military personnel, and their families, who have been affected by deployment in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

Senior Games were held countywide this past week. Over 700 individuals age 50 and up participated in a variety of sports and recreational events. A complete list of winners is posted on our website.

The County partnered with Habitat for Humanity on their recent Builders Blitz. This annual event resulted in the completion of nine single family homes in six days. The County participates by providing an on-site building inspector to insure that the homes are constructed safely and in record time.