

The Charlotte County Public Works Team **By Robert Halfhill, Director**

As the new Charlotte County Public Works Director and one of the newest residents, I would like to say how pleased I am to have the opportunity to work and live in Charlotte County. This area is one of the undiscovered treasures of Florida. A great deal of this is attributable to the people. Everyone I have met here has been very friendly and helpful. I want to thank all of you for the welcome.

Since my arrival I have been assessing the Public Works Department and how it does business. I am proud to report that there are a lot of good things going on in your Public Works Department. But, as with any organization, there is always room for improvement. That's my job. We have already begun making organizational changes and revising some of the processes in order to improve efficiency and service. I am confident that I speak for everyone in the Department by saying our goal is to provide quality service to the residents at a reasonable cost.

Public Works departments come in a variety of shapes and configurations. Some departments have utilities or facilities maintenance, and some even have an airport assigned to them. The Charlotte County Public Works Department is the road maintenance and engineering variety. Our mission is the construction and maintenance of roads and drainage in Charlotte County. To accomplish this mission the Department has three operating divisions: Maintenance & Operations, Engineering, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The Maintenance & Operations Division is the core of the Department. The Division operates out of three satellite offices and services over 2,000 miles of roadways in the County. These services include maintaining not only the road surface, but also drainage, vegetation, sidewalks, culverts, signs and lighting. The scope of work for the Maintenance & Operations Division includes every aspect of rights-of-way maintenance.

Public Works is a service request-driven organization. By submitting a service request, the work can be logged, tracked, assigned, inspected and funded. In short, the request for service does not get lost. A pending service request is assigned a number, which the customer can reference when calling to request an update. There are two primary ways to submit a service request. Service request forms are accessible on the Public Works Website at www.charlottecountyfl.com; choose Public Works, Maintenance & Operations, then the appropriate category. You can also telephone Public Works at 575-3600.

The Engineering Division is the driving force behind construction projects approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The state-licensed Civil Engineers review design work for new bridges, roadways and other transportation-related projects. These engineers spend the majority of their time in the field inspecting construction projects and supervising contractors' activities.

The Transportation Engineering Section, which includes the Lighting District and Signing & Marking Division, maintains all traffic control devices within the County. This includes roadway striping, turn arrows, crosswalks, stop bars and other essential informational markings. If you see an area of striping or a traffic signal that requires attention, please contact the Department at 575-3600 and initiate a service request.

Stormwater Management provides engineering, project, and maintenance planning support for the implementation of the County's stormwater management programs, dredging programs, and Charlotte County's Master Stormwater Management Plan.

The Stormwater Engineers are responsible for analyzing and designing stormwater improvements for primary and secondary drainage systems throughout Charlotte County while

assisting other Charlotte County units with stormwater needs. The department also analyzes and designs maintenance dredging projects and manages Charlotte County's Beach Erosion Control Project.

There are many major transportation construction projects in progress that are supervised by the Public Works Department. To check the status of the projects, please log on the Charlotte County website and follow the prompts to the Public Works site and Project Status. You may also call 575-3600, and staff will be happy to provide the project status.

One of the most visible ongoing programs is Pavement Management. This program monitors the condition of roadways and plans the annual resurfacing projects. The paving program has been in place since 1999 and provides the Board of County Commissioners a viable tool for determining funding levels.

The third division of Public Works is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO is a governing body with the authority to develop and adopt transportation plans, programs, and policies. The MPO was established to provide a forum for transportation planning services, coordinate intergovernmental needs and goals, and facilitate public involvement. The MPO has been very successful in obtaining transportation projects and funding for Charlotte County.

The principal goals and responsibilities of the MPO include establishing a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process. The MPO maintains a Long-Range Transportation Plan and a Five-Year Transportation Improvement Plan, which includes all projects in the metropolitan area that are proposed using State transportation monies and Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration funds. The Planning process also addresses issues such as land use planning, intermodal transportation, public transportation enhancements, community impact assessment, and efficient transportation decision making. MPO meetings are regularly held the second Monday in the months of February, May, August, October, and December at 2:00 pm in the City of Punta Gorda City Hall, City Council Chambers, 326 West Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda, Florida.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to work and live in Charlotte County and, as stated previously, Public Works is a service request-driven organization. If we can help you with a concern about anything around the County that needs attention, please contact us at 575-3600 and submit a service request.