

Administrator's Update for 7/24/09

By Roger Baltz

Our Utilities Department has moved forward with the Rotonda Water Reclamation Facility (sewer) expansion. This major capital project expansion takes the facility from a treatment capability of .625 million gallons per day of effluent to 2.0 million gallons per day, saving the rate payers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

We have also been working with the Charlotte County Public Schools (CCPS) to replace older high-consumption toilets in school facilities that use 3.5 gallons or greater of water with new low-flow models that use 1.6 gallons or less per flush. CCPS has now identified approximately 180 toilets that need to be replaced and are moving forward to complete this task over the next few months. This transition is calculated to potentially save approximately 142,000 gallons of water per year and reduce taxpayers' expense. The project is being financed by grant funding received from the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Our County Commissioners approved the Charlotte Harbor CRA Gateway Harbor Walk concept plan and directed staff to move forward to complete the design, engineering and permitting for Phase I. This will include replacement of the seawall, parking lot, sidewalks and bathroom facility. The project is within the Florida Department of Transportation right of way and is located on the east side of US41 at the foot of the northbound US 41 bridge.

Last fiscal year, in negotiations, the IUPAT Union agreed to a wage freeze for the fiscal year ending September 2009, with the opportunity to bargain wages for the fiscal year beginning October 1. The Union and County re-opened the contract this June as contractually required, but the Union was prepared immediately to extend the wage freeze for another year. Our Commissioners approved this action at a recent meeting. This quick action and cooperative approach in working on our budget for the coming year is appreciated.

Activity at our Mini-Transfer & Recycling facilities has substantially increased over the last nine months. Residential disposal of household chemicals and hazardous materials has had a 100% increase in participation. When residents drop off pesticides, paints, household cleaning agents and other similar materials at our recycling facilities, it keeps these chemicals out of the landfill, which helps to protect our ground water resources. So far this year 14,444 customers have disposed of chemicals by visiting our Mini-Transfer & Recycling facilities.

Our Public Works Department has completed the installation of all 60" RCP storm drains (107 linear feet) for the **Cheshire Waterway Drainage Control Structure** on Chancellor Boulevard. This included installing a large control basin on the north side of the project, installing a large endwall at the outfall of the south side of the project, and installation of two structures and the associated 95 linear feet of 18" RCP. We also

completed the installation of all triple barrel 72" RCP storm drains (216 linear feet) for the **Apollo Water Way Drainage Control Structure** on Chancellor Boulevard.

Our Human Services Department has received notice of a two year Federal grant from the US Department of Justice for Drug Court enhancements in the amount of \$199,990. Drug Court is a court-supervised treatment program for non-violent defendants and the grant will be used to hire a Court Coordinator and treatment staff at Charlotte Behavioral Health Care. The program's goals are to increase the number of people served, decrease the number of days between arrest and admission to treatment, and to conduct an evaluation of the program.

Our Commissioners have approved an agreement to exchange land with Habitat for Humanity. Habitat turned over Scrub Jay lots in exchange for six buildable lots that the County had in its inventory. The result will be the construction of six affordable homes for needy Charlotte County families, primarily located in West County. The lots the County received will be included in the analysis when we develop our Habitat Conservation Plan.

Charlotte County's tourism office has been awarded an advertising grant in the amount of \$2,500 from the Florida Commission on Tourism to use towards marketing the ecotourism advantages of Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands.