

Administrator's Update for 6/9/10

By Roger Baltz

I provided a presentation recently to the South County Coalition regarding County priorities, projects, and current issues. I also attended the Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting and the monthly Building Industry Oversight Committee (BIOC) meeting to provide information and discuss County issues.

Assistant Administrator Kelly Shoemaker and I attended a meeting with Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) officials. We meet on a regular basis to ensure that we are communicating clearly regarding on going County projects. SWFWMD plays an important regulatory role in the permitting processes.

Commissioner Starr, County Attorney Janette Knowlton, Interim Utilities Director Terri Kesner, and I attended a meeting with South Florida Water Management District (SFWMMD). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss our Babcock Ranch water use permit application.

Economic Development

I attended a meeting of the Economic Development Working Group. This group, made up of community leaders and Commissioner Starr and Council Member Wallace, has been working for several weeks to discuss and formulate recommendation regarding economic incentives. Topics have focused upon strategies related to topics such as property swaps, tax abatement, and impact fees. When the recommendations are ready they will be brought forward to a future County Commission meeting for review.

Boat Ramp Improvements

Commissioner Starr, Commissioner Loftus, Assistant County Administrators Ray Sandrock and Kelly Shoemaker and I attended the re-opening of the El Jobean Boat Ramp on May 27, 2010. In addition to a new, wider boat ramp, improvements were made to the dock and paved parking including handicap parking for trailers and cars was added. Funding for the project came from the Boater's Improvement Fund and parking fees. Boaters enjoyed free parking for the weekend in honor of the grand re-opening and Memorial Day.

Utility Cost Savings

Utility lift stations, which pump wastewater from one section of the system to another, typically have a life cycle of 15 years. At the cycle's end they can either be rehabilitated or replaced to avoid catastrophic failure of the equipment, which causes sewage overflows. Recognizing this need for preventative maintenance,

our Charlotte County Utilities (CCU) has a long-standing history of programming capital improvement dollars into the budget annually for the rehabilitation of a portion of their lift station inventory every year.

A study was done in 2009 that demonstrated it would be more cost effective and efficient for the rehabilitation services to be performed with in house staff rather than contract the work out. A work group was formed to begin the rehabilitation process this year. CCU has just completed the rehabilitation of station #309 for less than \$64,000, compared to the engineer's opinion of probable cost for contract services in the amount of \$179,000, resulting in a savings of \$115,000.

Comprehensive Plan

Our Growth Management department transmitted the draft of the County's new Comprehensive Plan, Smart Charlotte 2050, to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) last December. DCA responded with an Objections, Recommendations, and Comments (ORC) report, which listed thirty-three objections and eight comments designed to ensure that the Plan conforms to relevant state statutes and codes. Our Growth Management department has spent much of the past few weeks addressing the substance of the report, and making the necessary adjustments. Smart Charlotte 2050, in the form of petition PA-09-09-15-LS, is scheduled to go to the Board for adoption on June 15.

Habitat for Humanity

Our Human Services staff attended the dedication ceremony of three Habitat for Humanity homes for families in the Port Charlotte area. The County, in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, provided housing grant funds through the Reduced Impact Fee grant to assist with the rehabilitation and completion of these previously abandoned homes.

Venice Canal Bridge

The Venice Canal Bridge has been re-opened to traffic. The bridge replacement is part of the Aqui Esta Drive Widening Project. For the construction, the bridge has been closed since Dec. 1, 2009.

Turbo Draft Units

Our Charlotte County Fire/EMS department has just purchased two Turbo Draft units for use on fire units. The Turbo Draft is a new piece of equipment that can be deployed into canals and lakes to draft water for use in rural areas of the County where water is not available. This device will help assist the fire department to establish a water supply for fire suppression operations. It will also assist homeowners with their fire insurance class rating where water sources are not reachable by fire units.