

Administrator's Update for 6/23/10
By Roger Baltz

Economic Development efforts have been a topic for several weeks for the Economic Development Working Group, which was set up by the County and City. Our County Economic Development Director, Don Root, provided a presentation at the joint meeting between the City of Punta Gorda and our Board of County Commissioners. Topics under discussion included the incentive programs that group members were hoping to add to Economic Development's toolbox, including land swaps, spec. buildings, and ad valorem tax abatements.

Growth Management staff delivered a presentation at the annual 2010 Florida Planning and Zoning Association's (FPZA) three-day conference this month at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Sarasota. The opening session was awarded to our Concurrency Manager Jim Fendrick as he presented the evolution of the Smart Charlotte 2050 Comprehensive Plan, highlighting how the dedicated website and online commenting tools increased public participation in the development of the Plan. The software, which was developed through a partnership between Charlotte County and the University of Central Florida, is free and available for use by other jurisdictions upon request.

Earlier this month traffic was transferred to the new Coral Creek Replacement Bridge. Demolition of the old bridge will begin later this month, and all work is scheduled for completion by October 2010.

Our Public Works staff has begun changing pedestrian signal indicators in the City of Punta Gorda from "hand/man" to "countdown" indicators. Materials were supplied by the FDOT as part of a safety enhancement program. The countdown indicators display the number of seconds until the traffic light changes, helping motorists better gauge their actions.

Our Geographic Information Systems (GIS) division has installed the WebEOC Mapper extension and configured it on the WebEOC server. The WebEOC is software we use in emergency activation situations to coordinate communications. This new extension allows for the visualization of emergency locations as well as live updates on weather, wildfires, oil spills, and more.

The first of five summer history camps was held last week at the Charlotte County Historical Center on Bayshore Road. Last week was "Pow Wow Adventure," in which children learned about Native American legends, rituals, games and foods from Florida history. Each week is a different four-day camp for ages 6-12 held Tuesdays through Fridays. Call the Historical Center for more information at 941.629.7278.

Our Growth Management Department provided interactive workshops for children throughout the month of June at three different venues. These

workshops featured hands-on planning demonstrations through online games, building blocks and Box City. The exercises illustrated land use and planning principles, and were accompanied by exhibits displaying the history of city planning and how land use planning works. Children designed their own neighborhoods and learned about planning and how they can be involved in the local planning process.

Our Family Services division has partnered with the Health Department's Women, Infant and Children (WIC) office to develop a nutrition counseling component for our food pantry. A licensed nutritionist from the WIC office reviewed the current inventory of our food pantry and made recommendations for eliminating items that had poor nutritional content and replacing them with better options. In addition, the WIC office developed a brochure which includes tips for grocery shopping on a budget, healthy recipes and a two week sample menu that uses food items they receive from our pantry. This brochure is now distributed to all families served by the Human Services food pantry.