

Administrator's Update for 6/30/10

By Roger Baltz

Assistant County Administrator Ray Sandrock and myself met with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) officials to review issues and projects. Our County works closely with FDOT on many transportation projects to coordinate permitting and funding requirements. Our Public Works Department has several such projects under way and we are planning a presentation to the County Commissioners in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Bob Starr, County Attorney Janette Knowlton, representatives from our Clerk of Courts Office, and I met with representatives from British Petroleum (BP). We were given an update of BP's ongoing efforts in response to the gulf oil leak and their claims processes.

Our Growth Management department applied for and received a \$25,000 Environmental Justice Small Grant through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to go toward the creation of a natural urban wetland in downtown Port Charlotte. The grant monies will be used to rehabilitate natural drainage patterns in the Port Charlotte area to reduce the amount of surface water runoff pollution that reaches our waterways. Staff from Growth Management will team with local schools and students to create the overall restoration plan for the wetland.

Our County Commissioners have approved several funding recommendations made by the Marine Advisory Committee (MAC). Funds come from the West Coast Inland Navigation District (WCIND) and Boater Improvement Fees. Some of these recommendations included:

- \$11,500 for the Charlotte County Civil Air Patrol Composite Squadron.
- \$17,000 for Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) to provide boat based education programs.
- \$130,000 for the abandoned vessels program.
- \$2,950 for the Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance for "Boater Alert" cards.
- \$200,000 for Stump Pass Dredging.

The Charlotte County Tourism Office continues to monitor impacts of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The Tourism Office took advantage of free Internet banner advertisements offered by Waterman Broadcasting on NBC-2.com and ABC-7.com as well as free banner advertising offered by Collinson Publishing. The Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce reached out with a free promotional opportunity to Charlotte County and other Gulf Coast destinations. The Charlotte Harbor Visitor and Convention Bureau responded with a promotional piece that will be distributed to the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce's membership.

Last Week Mr. Gene Boles, from the Center for Building Better Communities with the University of Florida, met with staff from our Community Services and Growth Management departments. The group discussed planning and developing a Walkable Community in the hospital district redevelopment area in Port Charlotte, and gave Mr. Boles a tour of the area. A walkable community promotes sustainability, safe transportation choices and improved quality of life.

Staff from Human Services, Growth Management, and Charlotte County Sheriffs Office (CCSO) have also met to discuss potential initiatives within the hospital district. Much of the discussion focused on the potential for a "Weed and Seed" project within the designated area. Weed and Seed is a US Department of Justice Initiative that is focused on 'weeding' out crime and 'seeding' positive activities such as housing and social services as a tool for community redevelopment.

Last week Charlotte County Fire/EMS sponsored a two-day Hazardous Materials Training Class titled "HazMat IQ." This program was paid for through the state's Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) grant funds. The program was attended by Charlotte County Firefighters in addition to organizations outside Charlotte County.

The Charlotte County Library System summer reading program is busy with attendance significantly higher than last year. Last week's attendance at the Punta Gorda branch reading programs was 71. The Mid-County Library had 108 on June 10 and 121 on June 17.