

The Many Facets of BCS

By Jim Evetts, Director of Building Construction Services

The Charlotte County Building Construction Services department (BCS) is not just about making new structures! The department has many different functions. I would like to introduce you to all aspects of Building Construction Services and how we can help you in your day to day lives.

First, BCS issues Building Permits. Permits are a necessary part of our life and are required for most types of construction and repairs for both residential and commercial buildings. The only way to get a building permit in unincorporated Charlotte County is to go through Building Construction Services.

BCS is also the home of the County's Code Enforcement division. This division handles all complaints relating to the enforcement of the County's codes and ordinances. So, when you complain that a home in your neighborhood has grass and weeds growing out of control, or that a property has unregistered, inoperable cars all over, it is BCS that takes that complaint and tries to rectify the situation. BCS works with owners to achieve compliance and, failing that, has a very comprehensive code enforcement process that can result in substantial fines and liens for those failing to correct violations. The Code Enforcement Board meets every month and the meetings can be viewed live on our CCTV-20 station or online at www.CharlotteCountyFL.com.

A second part of Code Enforcement is the Contractor Licensing section—this area ensures that all contracting work performed in Charlotte County is done by properly licensed and insured contractors. They monitor and regulate contractors that are licensed both through Charlotte County and through the State and will not allow an unlicensed person to be attached to a permit. In addition, they also actively investigate and discipline people holding themselves out to be contractors, those contractors who fail to maintain their permits or those who perform work outside the scope of their license. The department takes cases to our local Construction Industry Licensing Board that meets every month.

The third function of BCS that is an essential part of the work done by Charlotte County is our Right of Way and Stormwater section. Any work that is done that touches the County-owned Right of Way, or things such as sidewalks, swales, roads, must go through BCS. Examples of this are things like a telephone company putting a new line into a home, must have a Right of Way permit and an inspection to ensure that they do not damage the sidewalk or swale in any way. The stormwater part of this section makes sure that any new developments or additions to new developments have a stormwater plan that is consistent with the County's overall Stormwater plan. This ensures that new developments do not make existing drainage issues worse.

BCS heads the County's Floodplain Management Program. This is the program that determines the rate a property owner pays for flood insurance. The rate depends on how well the jurisdiction manages development in the special flood hazard area, and

Charlotte County holds a very high rating. Because of this rating, property owners can possibly receive a 25 percent discount on their flood insurance premiums—this is the highest discount currently awarded in the State and only four communities in the Country have a higher rating.

Charlotte County BCS is at the forefront of the County's sustainability movement. The department pioneered a well-respected Green Building program that incentivizes the use of sustainable building techniques for both new construction and remodeling. Even with today's low level of construction, we have three new single family homes enrolled in the program and are actively seeking more.

Along with the Green Building Program, BCS also organizes the annual Green Futures Expo and Energy Options Conference, in conjunction with the Economic Development Department. 2009 saw the inaugural event and over 2000 local citizens attended what proved to be a fun, entertaining and educational event. The 2010 event will be held in November and we expect it to be bigger and better than last year!

BCS has a strong presence online. You can apply for permits, lodge code enforcement or licensing complaints, get information on existing complaints and permits, find out all sorts of useful information and tips as well as contact department staff and ask us questions. View our website at www.CharlotteCountyFL.com/BCS . So call us, come and visit us, or just surf our website and let us help you!