

Stewardship of County Resources

By David Milligan, Director of Charlotte County Facilities Construction and Maintenance

The employees of your Charlotte County government make a sincere effort to be effective “stewards” of the public resources and assets—financial, physical and environmental—under their charge.

Stewardship is one of the five adopted values of the organization. The facilities construction and maintenance department exemplifies this value daily. Our department’s mission statement is “to create and support facilities which contribute to a productive, safe and enriching environment for employees, residents and visitors to Charlotte County.” We do that in many ways and means, but the county is now on the verge of implementing two exciting new programs that will advance stewardship of county resources by leaps and bounds. First is a guaranteed energy performance savings contract and the second is a capital asset planning and management system.

The scope and intent of guaranteed energy performance savings contracts in Florida are defined in Florida Statutes 489. The principle behind such a contract is that an investment in energy conservation measures can reduce the amount of energy consumed, and produce immediate and long-term savings. Many county departments have implemented energy efficiency measures through a wide variety of methods; however, the guaranteed energy performance savings contract is a mechanism to fund large-scale initiatives that exceed available budgets.

Charlotte County is seeking an energy performance contractor to identify, implement and measure energy efficient, operational savings improvements in County facilities. Initially, eight major buildings and systems have been identified as potential recipients of energy conservation measures. The improvements may range from window tinting to major HVAC retrofits to lighting changes.

It is important to note that these energy-saving improvements will be financed through guaranteed cost savings achieved from the improvements. No upfront, out-of-pocket costs are expected. The design and installation of projects will be structured so that the energy savings, maintenance and operational savings, and other avoided costs resulting from the installed energy conservation measures are sufficient to cover 100 percent of all project costs. After contracted costs are recovered, ongoing savings will accrue to the county.

The county is embarking on another exciting initiative that promises to result in better management of county assets. The goal behind implementing a capital asset planning and management system is to simply create a plan, based on objective criteria, that guides the maintenance and replacement of major building systems. It begins with a comprehensive condition assessment of each building. Factors such as the building’s walls, roofing, windows, and flooring will be evaluated. Electrical, air-conditioning, and plumbing systems will also be included.

Over 100 County buildings encompassing about 1.7 million square feet could be evaluated. When all of the individual building components are tabulated, the result is a “facilities condition index” for each building. When building index values are compared and ranked, they will suggest where to focus repair and maintenance dollars to better preserve a building’s physical integrity.

The computer program that manages the facility assessment data prioritizes maintenance activities based on factors such as equipment condition, operating demands, and life-cycle. This objective analysis enables managers to allocate funding where most needed or evaluate the impact of “what-if” scenarios when demands outstrip projected funding. Predictable preventative maintenance allows for more accurate budgeting and optimizing the value of each piece of equipment.

By working hand-in-hand the energy performance contract and capital asset planning and management contract will identify deficiencies and enable some equipment replacements to be accomplished through energy performance savings. Both contracts will lead to enhanced stewardship of energy and environmental resources, public funds and capital assets.