

Administrator's Update for 10/23/13

By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

Construction of the Winchester Boulevard (South) roadway extension is moving forward. This project provides for a new, 3-mile-long, four-lane divided roadway from S.R. 776 south to C.R. 775 (Placida Road). The design includes roadway lighting, sidewalks, drainage improvements and utility work in conjunction with Charlotte County Utilities and Englewood Water District. Major components of the project are the signalization of both the S.R. 776 and Placida Road intersections with Winchester Boulevard. When completed, this project will result in a four-lane connector from Placida Road to the Charlotte/Sarasota County line, with a direct connection to I-75 via River Road within Sarasota County. This project was approved by the residents of Charlotte County as part of the 2002 sales tax extension.

A construction contract was awarded on Sept. 24, 2013 and a pre-construction meeting was held on Oct. 9. At the pre-construction meeting, the "Notice to Proceed" with construction was set for Jan. 6, 2014. Construction on the project is expected to take 420 calendar days to complete. Total project construction costs are \$17,387,148, with funding sources of gas tax, sales tax, transportation impact fees and a \$6 million dollar grant from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

This project has many unique construction challenges, including mitigation of endangered species such as the Florida scrub jay, an estimated 75 gopher tortoises, and eastern indigo snakes. Before any work can commence, the contractor will ensure compliance with all applicable permitting agencies, both federal and state. FDOT has required that a west-bound right turn lane be constructed on S.R. 776 to facilitate turning movements onto Winchester Boulevard (North). When the turn lane design is complete, traffic signal plans are modified, and all required FDOT and SWFWMD approvals are received, the intersection and signalization improvements will be incorporated into the current project (Winchester Boulevard South) at which time construction will have already been underway.

A map depicting the alignment of the new Winchester Boulevard corridor is available at www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov – click Project Status Updates in the Popular Links list on the left. If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact the Project Manager, John Elias, at 941.575.3632 or via email john.elias@charlottefl.com.

Charlotte Assembly

The two-day Charlotte Assembly was held last week at the Cultural Center of Charlotte County. Over the two-day process, five groups of residents gathered to discuss topics relating to the county's vision, sales tax extension, and five focus areas of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). These focus areas were economic development, public safety, growth management, quality of life, and quality and quantity of water. At the end of the second day, the groups convened to come to consensus on recommendations for the BCC on all of the topics discussed. Public input was taken, and a final policy statement should be available in about a month's time. This is the fifth Charlotte Assembly to be held since 1996. Information on all of the past Assembly events is available on the website: www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov, click "Charlotte Assembly 2013" in the Hot Topics list.

Sunshine Lake water level control structure

A water control structure is planned for the downstream end of the Sunrise Waterway to restore and enhance the water quality of Sunshine Lake. Responses to the Southwest Florida Water Management District's request for additional information are being submitted this week. The additional pond depth created by the water level control structure will also be credited towards requirements of the Midway Boulevard Phase II project, saving approximately \$500,000 by the elimination of special underdrain that would have been otherwise required. The Environmental Resource Permit is expected to be issued by the end of this month. Construction is projected to begin in the spring of 2014.

US 41 Storm Structures

The contract was awarded at the Sept. 24, 2013 Board of County Commissioners regular meeting and construction is scheduled to begin in November. Construction will begin on Elmira Boulevard at the Pompano Waterway, replacing the existing drainage pipe, before moving to US 41 at the Pompano Waterway. Overall, this project involves engineering and permitting for the directional drilling of culverts under US 41 at the Fordham, Elkcam, and Pompano Waterways, replacement of culverts at the North and South US 41 Access Roads and within the Pompano Waterway, as well as replacement of stand-alone weirs across the Elkcam Waterway and across the Fordham Waterway.

50th Anniversary

On Friday, Oct. 11, Charlotte County Libraries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Charlotte County Library System from 1963 to 2013. Approximately 50 people attended a special program in which staff presented the decades from the 60s to 2013. A 50-year display board is available for everyone to enjoy at the Mid County Regional Library until the end of November, after which it will circulate among the other three county libraries.