

Administrator's Update for 2/4/15
By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

On Monday the Planning and Zoning Board held a special meeting to discuss a proposed ordinance that would amend Chapter 3-5, Planning and Development, by creating Article XI, Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). After several years of work, the county's HCP was approved late last year by the Department of Interior through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and will be in effect for 30 years. The HCP was a major step in acquiring a permit that allows for the conservation of species through mitigation of their habitats, and at the same time allows for development to take place.

The possible adoption of this ordinance by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) is the final step so that owners of scrub-jay identified land can develop it by acquiring a permit quickly from the county and also avoid paying excessive fees to the state. Without the HCP and this ordinance, owners of scrub-jay identified land must develop their own HCP and have it approved through the state, a lengthy and much more expensive process. Landowners will still have the option of going through either process to develop their land.

The Planning and Zoning Board advises and informs the BCC in matters relating to planning and future development, including zoning codes and the comprehensive plan. At their special meeting on Feb. 2, after discussion and a public hearing on the topic, the Planning and Zoning Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the ordinance to the Board of County Commissioners. The ordinance is going before the Board of County Commissioners at their Feb. 10 regular meeting.

South County Overlay

The South County Overlay District encompasses approx. 15 square miles south and east of the City of Punta Gorda and generally includes properties along U.S. 41 and other major roadways, including U.S. 17 (Duncan Road), Marion Avenue, Cooper Street, Carmalita Street, Florida Street, Airport Road, Taylor Road, Burnt Store Road, Jones Loop Road, Acline Road, and Tuckers Grade. The Charlotte County Community Development Department is hosting a public stakeholder meeting next week to gather input from property owners, interested parties and other stakeholders regarding the proposed South County Overlay District regulations.

The overlay district regulations will consist of enhanced design standards for development taking place non-residential, non-agricultural zones located within the overlay district. The proposed regulations, which were developed with input from the City of Punta Gorda, address landscaping and buffering, signage, and architectural design within the overlay. These regulations will provide an appropriate transition between unincorporated county lands and city lands by establishing design standards that complement the character of the city, but that can be applied to the suburban and rural areas within the overlay.

The meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2015 at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, 75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda. Staff will be explaining the regulations and gathering input from the public.