

Charlotte County update for 1/13/16

## **Microtunnel project earns national recognition**

By Raymond Sandrock, Charlotte County Administrator

I'm pleased to announce that American City and County Magazine featured the Charlotte County Public Works Department's U.S. 41 microtunnel project on the cover of its January issue. The project, which employed a 96,000-pound, remotely controlled tunneling machine, earned the government-affairs trade publication's Crown Communities Award.

The culverts installed beneath U.S. 41 are part of the county's master stormwater plan, created in response to a pair of 100-year flood events in the 1990s. The widening of Midway Boulevard and its gutter-and-drain design required an expansion of stormwater capacity through the drainage canals running beneath the highway.

"The final piece of the stormwater puzzle required moving millions of gallons of water beneath U.S. 41, a six-lane highway that stood between the source of that water and its eventual destination: Charlotte Harbor," Public Works Director Danny Quick told the magazine for its feature story.

### **Stone Crabs**

County commissioners and I will be on hand at Charlotte Sports Park for today's press conference presenting the new ownership group that recently purchased the Charlotte Stone Crabs. Majority owner Lou Schwechheimer worked closely with me and Tampa Bay Rays management during the negotiations with Ripken Baseball, the team's former owners. He is well respected in the baseball industry and has expressed his long-term commitment to keeping the team in Charlotte County.

The defending Florida State League champion Stone Crabs will continue to serve as the Class A Florida State League affiliate of the Rays, who hold their spring training at the sports park.

### **Riverwalk zoning**

The Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Agency advisory committee is working on land development regulations revisions. One of the proposed changes is to create a riverwalk zoning district covering the area near the Gilchrist Bridge and extending north to Scenic Avenue and west to Main Street.

This area was identified in the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Plan as "an area that has the potential to capitalize on the scenic, recreational and historic quality of the riverfront to develop into a resort, entertainment, dining and specialty retail shopping destination." The proposed zoning would allow for a mixture of uses, including hotels, residential and retail. A planned riverfront walkway would be an attraction to visitors and residents.

Once finalized by the advisory board, the Board of County Commissioners will review the proposed changes and decide whether or not to adopt them.

## **Home building**

In December, the Community Development Department issued 106 single-family permits. It was the first monthly total above 100 since 2006. The Utilities Department reported it hooked up more than 60 new sewer customer in the same month.

## **Library meeting**

If you are interested in the planned South County Library, I encourage you to attend a public workshop at 4 p.m., Thursday at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center in Punta Gorda. Participants will be asked to provide input on the library's programming, features, amenities and appearance.

## **Combat flag**

As a thank you for coordinating a shipment of supplies and holiday greetings for deployed airmen and soldiers, the crew of a B-1 bomber with the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing at Al Udeid Air Base sent Ivey Winkler of the Veteran Services office an American flag. The flag had been flown during a recent combat mission over Iraq and Syria in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, the name assigned to military operations being conducted against Islamic State terrorists. The flag is especially significant to Ivey because she was deployed with the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing in support of Operation Enduring Freedom 10 years ago.

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