

Charlotte County update for 7/6/16

County remains vigilant about Zika virus

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County Administrator

Last week's confirmation of the first case of the Zika virus in Charlotte County heightened awareness of its spread across the state. It is important to note that none of the nearly 250 confirmed cases of the virus were contracted in Florida; all were travel-related. That said, staff remains vigilant in monitoring the situation and are actively implementing our mosquito control plan.

In its most recent update, mosquito control staff reported spraying 22,571 acres with pesticide and larvacide and responding to 59 service requests. In addition, staff conducted 48 landing rate counts to determine potential spraying targets and set six traps to identify which types of mosquitoes are most prevalent.

Residents can do their part to eliminate breeding areas by emptying any items holding water, such as birdbaths, watering cans, buckets, tarps, tires and trash cans.

For information on the Zika virus, visit the Florida Department of Health in Charlotte County website at charlotte.floridahealth.gov or call the Zika Information Hotline 855-622-6735.

For information on Charlotte County Mosquito Control visit its website www.charlottecountyfl.com/PublicWorks/PestManagement/Mosquito/ or view a video about our mosquito control division on CC-TV's YouTube page at youtu.be/dWDgb7M4YFU.

Tern nests

More than 30 least terns have established nests in the roped area at Stump Pass. Last month, staff was alerted that some terns had laid eggs outside of our bird lines. Staff assessed the situation just before a storm hit. The tides were high and the terns were nesting dangerously close to the water. The lines were extended, but it was unknown if the nests or birds would survive the night. They did.

Staff established a small shoreline path outside the boundary so visitors could still maneuver around the nesting area. Visitors were careful to avoid these protected areas despite their curiosity. Staff has been approached repeatedly with inquiries about the terns, which are designated as a threatened species in Florida. People are genuinely concerned about their well-being. During a recent inspection, the birds were still nesting safely and staff is expecting hatchlings soon.

For information about nesting shorebirds, visit MyFWC.com and click Wildlife & Habitats.

Justice Center

The County Commission adopted a funding strategy for the reorganization of space within the Charlotte County Justice Center to accommodate growth over the next five to seven years.

Beginning next year with the relocation of the Clerk of Courts archives, the renovations will be phased in over four years.

We appreciate the input of all the Justice Center stakeholders as staff explored the space needs and opportunities to maximize the utility of the existing facility. The renovation of existing space, which was part of the original plan when the Justice Center was built, and a detailed review of staff levels, court caseloads and other factors will delay the need for new construction. Staff and stakeholders will continue to monitor space needs and the County Commission will be reviewing and voting on renovation projects during the reorganization timeline.

Property values

The Charlotte County Property Appraiser calculated countywide ad valorem revenue of \$88,092,330, a 6.41 percent over 2015. Staff will prepare the detailed information for the July 14 presentation of the tentative budget.

Landscaping

One of the board's long-term strategic focus areas is quality of life. To enhance the county's desirability as a place to live, work and visit, the board directed staff to plan, design and install landscaped community entrance features that will improve the appearance of certain gateways.

The first project to be completed was landscaping along State Road 776 from U.S. 41 to Murdock Circle. Funding was provided, in part, by a grant from the Florida Highway Beautification Council. A final walk-through was conducted June 29.

Median landscaping is being installed along Toledo Blade Boulevard from U.S. 41 to Hillsborough Boulevard and Midway Boulevard between Yancey Street and Harbor Boulevard. Both are expected to be completed in late August. Along U.S. 41, contractors are installing landscaping at the Elkcam, Fordham and Pompano waterway drainage crossings.

Staff is also providing assistance to the private non-profit organization Facelift 41, whose goal is to enhance the appearance of this busy major roadway. The group's plan is to brand sections of U.S. 41 with wayfinding features featuring the county's four high schools and two professional baseball teams, the Rays and Stone Crabs.

Tourism meeting

The Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau held a marketing program meeting June 27 to share research, highlight national and regional travel trends and review marketing strategies to attract visitors to Charlotte County. About 20 members of the Charlotte County tourism industry participated, representing accommodations, restaurants, services and other segments of the industry.

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