

Charlotte County Weekly Update for 6/6/08
By Roger Baltz

Our County Commissioners and staff have continued to review our budgets for various departments. As one part of our efforts to address an anticipated shortfall in revenues we have set a target goal to find roughly \$8 million in reductions for operations in departments under the authority of the Board of County Commissioners. The budget reduction actions and overall budget preparation activities for the County will continue and be subject to change up until a tentative budget can be presented in July.

Three members of our Environmental and Extension Services Department participated in the Eighteenth Annual Farm Safety Day at the UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee. Specifically, EES Mosquito Biologist Ginny Day presented on "Mosquitoes and Health – What You Need to Know". Participants included those who work in agriculture from surrounding counties, including Charlotte.

Charlotte County Landfill and Utilities departments are working together to produce compost. Our County invited the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to examine a recent test plot of compost made from our Utilities department's domestic wastewater sludge and our Solid Waste department's vegetative waste. The vegetative waste is a combination of yard waste from residents and landscape debris from landscapers. The landfill mulches the vegetative waste and mixes it with sludge to produce the compost. The examination by FDEP was positive and we have requested permission to continue testing the manufacturing of compost for 180 days. Should the test prove successful we will seek the necessary permits and site improvements to make the composting a permanent operation. Composting at the landfill will reduce Utilities domestic wastewater treatment plant costs and the landfill will use the compost for cover, reducing the reliance on purchased soils.

As Florida Power and Light has announced that it is seeking rate increases for all customers, the county is upgrading lighting and sensors in the older fire stations for greater efficiencies. This is in addition to lighting and air conditioning adjustments already completed in a variety of other County facilities.

The self-evaluation component of the County's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan Update has been completed. The Transition Plan is a requirement under Title II of the ADA Act of 1990. The self-evaluation is to insure compliance with ADA by examining all public programs, activities, services, policies and practices that may adversely affect persons with disabilities. The next step is to develop a plan for effecting modifications, where needed, in order to meet compliance. The County-wide plan was last updated in the 1990's.

The County West County Annex on San Casa Drive in Englewood is now connected to our fiber optic system for transmitting data. This connection will provide reliable connectivity for computers and telecommunications and remove recurring monthly costs.

Our Fire/EMS and Utilities departments have begun their yearly fire hydrant maintenance program. This maintenance consists of painting and greasing caps and stem valves followed by color coding hydrant caps that help locate the hydrant during emergency responses.

Our County recently secured permits and a construction contract to re-nourish the Port Charlotte Beach with funds from FEMA. This beach was significantly damaged during the hurricane season of 2004. Additional funding is being provided to plant sea oats on the shoreline through the Hazard Mitigation program to prevent future erosion.

Our Utilities staff met with the Rotonda Meadows/Villas Conservation Association Board of Directors to share the results of the utility system investigation and gained approval to move forward with design and construction of a total system upgrade of water and sewer lines.

A \$10,000 grant was received from the National Recreation and Parks Association for the "Take Me Fishing" campaign. This money will go towards partial funding for a variety of programs like Fishing Specialty Camp, Big Surf Fishing Tournament and others.