

**Charlotte County Weekly Update for 6/20/08**  
**By Roger Baltz**

Our County Commissioners approved agreement with Waste Management which will result in once per week garbage pickup in Charlotte County. The negotiations and agreement will result in several significant changes and enhancements including: a sanitation assessment reduction of \$15.96 per residential unit per year for once-a-week automated garbage collection and a guarantee not to increase the sanitation rates for two years. The Contract's annual savings to the County is estimated to be over \$1.2 million in the first year which will be passed on to the County residents in the form of the assessment decrease of \$15.96 per residential unit. The automated carts will be direct-purchased by the County to save on sales taxes, with the initial cost and distribution to be funded from the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund's capital reserves as identified in the Division's Capital Improvement Plan. All future carts will be furnished and funded by Waste Management of Florida, Inc.

Our Mosquito Control Biologist continues educational prevention programs including an appearance on the last day of school at the end of the Camp Skeeter program.

Our Economic Development office co-hosted the Post-Legislative Luncheon for the Charlotte County Legislative Delegation. Approximately 150 members and guests met with the Charlotte County Legislative Delegation and get a complete "wrap up" of the 2008 Legislative session. Participants had the opportunity to interact with the panel and ask questions about legislation related to economic development, education, property taxes, insurance, transportation, growth management and other issues.

Three staff members from our Building Construction Services department, including the Deputy Building Official, achieved Level Three certification from the Florida Association of Code Enforcement Officers. This is the highest level of certification offered.

In the first 11 days of this month, our Building Construction Services has issued 11 new single-family home permits. Six permits currently dormant on the Extension Inspection program were reactivated. This is the most activity early on in a month for several months. It is too early to say this is a sign of a turn around but it is nice to see.

Summer Safari Camp with our Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Department began this past week. There are four sites this year that include Tringali Recreation Center, Harold Avenue Recreation Center, South County Regional Park Recreation Center and Murdock Middle School. The first session lasts for one month. Campers are divided into three camps: Discovery (entering grade K to 2), Explorer (entering grade 3 to 5) and Adventure

(entering grade 6 to 8). The campers will be participating in the Summer Reading Program at our local libraries as well as participating in swimming lessons at our local pools. Registration is underway for the second session starting in July.

Our Utilities department (CCU) and the Gasparilla Island Water Authority (GIWA) have been working closely to successfully complete the transfer of mainland customers from GIWA to CCU. GIWA is currently in the process of transferring ownership of a 12-inch water pipeline, so that CCU may serve commercial and industrial accounts located on Linwood Road.

Charlotte County Utilities also received its Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) permit authorizing the expansion of the East Port Water Reclamation Facility from a 6 million gallon per day (MGD) treatment facility to a 9 MGD facility.

Our Department of Human Services has depleted all funds from the CSBG (Community Service Block Grant) and Housing and Family Assistance Program for rent and mortgage assistance. The CSBG funds have run out in past years and the Housing and Family Assistance fund, which was started after Hurricane Charley, has been used to pick up the difference for clients that qualified for the assistance. This program provides a one time maximum benefit of up to \$750.00 per household. Eligible households can receive assistance only once in a five year period. The new fiscal year's rent and mortgage assistance program will begin again October 1, 2008.

The educational campaign for the Sales Tax Extension is underway. Speakers are available for your upcoming meetings on issues involved in the sales tax extension. If you do not have time for a speaker, all pertinent information is available on our website, [www.CharlotteCountyFL.com](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.com). Simply click the penny at the top of the main page. Brochures are available; however, your members are encouraged to go green and visit our website! Please call 743-1944 to place your group on our speaker schedule.

Our Facilities Department updated both the Board of County Commissioners and the City of Punta Gorda Council members at the joint City/County meeting last week on the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center. An audio visual presentation gave everyone a good look at the progress of construction. At this point in time all structural construction is complete. The building exterior is nearly complete and the interior is being sheetrocked in preparation for the final finish. Wall and floor tile work has begun and the main lobby terrazzo floor is scheduled to begin shortly. The electrical and HVAC systems to the building have been started. Construction of the Riverwalk is underway as well as the parking lots and the landscaping.

At the Charlotte Sports Park, our Facilities department has been overseeing construction work that began at the stadium site in August of 2007, this involved site work and demolition of selected portions of the existing stadium. At this point in time the 40,000 sq/ft clubhouse for the Rays has been erected and interior framing is being done. Drainage work on the stadium field is complete and the seeding for the new field will take place in late July. The pilings for the 360 degree walk-around boardwalk are in and construction of the boardwalk itself is scheduled to begin. Restoration work on the practice fields is underway. Work is currently underway on the renovations to the press suite area. New seating for the stadium is expected to be installed in August and all mechanical, plumbing and HVAC work is underway for both the Ray's clubhouse and the stadium.