

**Charlotte County Weekly Update for 07/18/2008**  
**By Roger Baltz**

Charlotte County launched a new communications tool this week called Charlotte Alert. Charlotte Alert provides information on request to our residents through a mass notification system utilizing email, phone, fax or TTY. Visit our website at [CharlotteCountyFL.com](http://CharlotteCountyFL.com) to subscribe to a variety of newsletters and other important government information.

Christian Harvey, a sophomore at Port Charlotte High School, will spend 40 hours this summer learning about nonprofit operations with Keep Charlotte Beautiful Coordinator, Glenda Anderson and the Keep Charlotte Beautiful Board of Directors. Harvey is working on her Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award available in Girl Scouting. We have a number of high school and college students that work with us throughout the year. We appreciate their community service and we enjoy providing them with the opportunity of a real life work experience.

The County has successfully completed the refinancing of Utility System Refunding Revenue Bonds, Series 1996B and 1998 with the issuance of a new Revenue Bond. By locking into an interest rate of 3.94%, we will experience a gross savings of \$2,823,764 over the term of the bond, representing a reduction in interest expense.

The County continues to work through the budget process. Last week the Commissioners received a report that provided an update on Employee Focus Group ideas. Our Commissioners publicly recognized employees for their hard work, commitment and participation in contributing more than 85 ideas for improved efficiency and cost reductions in the way we deliver services. We have already implemented a few of the suggestions and will be developing a work plan to address some of the other suggestions over the next few weeks.

On July 10 the Commissioners set the tentative millage rate, as they are required to do before TRIM (truth in millage) notices are sent to tax payers. The County will take the next 60 days to review the financial decisions that have been made through 30+ meetings and to complete the budget for fiscal year 2008/2009. The final millage rate will be set in September.

Charlotte County has received the Army Corps of Engineers permit for the Aqui Esta road widening project. We are awaiting the final item, the Notice to Proceed from FDOT. Upon receipt of the Notice, the project will go out for bid.

Some of you may have noticed the new sidewalk that is inching its way down Peachland Blvd. It will stretch from Forrest Nelson Blvd. to Loveland Blvd. and is currently 60% complete. This is the last of the 2002 sales tax sidewalk projects and is expected to be completed in late fall.

Charlotte County provided the public and the media with an inside look at our new Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS). The system monitors 53 intersections on US 41 and 28 intersections on SR 776. It allows the County to monitor traffic flow directly from a Traffic Management Center within the Public Works Department in Punta Gorda. This information can be used to modify signal timing or notify the appropriate authorities in case of accidents and assists in keeping traffic flowing smoothly.

County staff and commissioners continue to respond to community requests for presentations regarding the sales tax referendum on August 26. We just completed an informative video that provides an update of past sales tax projects and outlines the proposed projects. To view this video, tune into Charlotte Showcase on CCTV-20 or visit our website at [CharlotteCountyFL.com](http://CharlotteCountyFL.com).