

Charlotte County Weekly Update for 08/29/2008

By Roger Baltz

Tropical Storm Fay may have had a minor impact on our community, but the County organization still has significant work to do in documenting the event. Preliminary estimates indicate that the cost to mobilize equipment and staff for Fay exceeds \$170,000. While the County is eligible for partial reimbursement from FEMA, compiling the necessary documents and working through the application process can take considerable time. Until our request is reviewed and approved, these costs are typically covered with funds that we place in reserves for just such events.

By the time you read this, if you own property you should have received a Truth in Millage (TRIM) Notice from the County Property Appraiser. This notice is very important. You will recognize it by the "DO NOT PAY - THIS IS NOT A BILL" statement on the envelope and document. The TRIM Notice tells you the taxable value of your property and provides information on proposed millage rates and taxes as estimated by each Charlotte County taxing authority which includes the County Commission, School Board, City, etc. It also tells you when and where these authorities will hold public meetings to discuss tentative budgets and set your final tax millage rates. The Board of County Commissioners will hold their first public hearing on September 11. The Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands Visitor's Bureau has received the state of Florida's top tourism marketing achievement, a "Flagler" for its 2008 Visitor's Guide. The Visitor's Guide won the award in the Resource/Promotional Material–Consumer category during the Flagler Awards presented by VISIT FLORIDA, the state's official tourism marketing corporation. Entries were judged on design, innovation, copy writing, and content. The award was presented August 17, 2008 at the 2008 Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism.

We continue to look for opportunities to reduce our budget by creating new revenue sources. This week Charlotte County Fire/EMS Training Division conducted a college level Firefighting Course for firefighters from neighboring counties and cities. The student fees paid for the class generated \$2,710 for the County.

This past week, several Charlotte County Master Gardener volunteers assisted a research team investigating the sugarcane grub, a difficult new turf pest present in Charlotte County. Grubs were harvested to evaluate how well certain insecticides are working. The data collected will provide the information needed to control these pests and maintain a sustainable green environment.

Our Family Services Center hosted an in-service on Florida KidCare for 22 Charlotte County Public School nurses and 13 school social workers. Florida KidCare is a state-sponsored health insurance program for uninsured children ages birth to 18 and encompasses children's Medicaid, Healthy Kids, MediKids and Children's Medical Services Network. The nurses and social workers were provided with information that will assist families in accessing health care for children.

We will unveil our draft vision plan for Smart Charlotte 2050 in October. This will be a public event that we hope will encourage lively conversation among our residents. Smart Charlotte continues to be a very challenging project that will set the guidelines for our new comprehensive plan. Based on observations of comp plans across the state, we have found that the standard 10 to 20 year time spans are no longer sufficient to deal with contemporary growth issues, hence Smart Charlotte 2050, which utilizes a 40 year planning horizon. To be incorporated in the comp plan will be the results of a number of studies that we currently have underway.

For example, we will be completing a countywide build-out study. These population numbers will be used to define specific areas where growth management tools will be used to shape county growth. We are conducting a commercial and industrial lands needs assessment, as well as a US 17 corridor study. We are also creating a guide for rural lands development in East Charlotte County. Over the next 14 months all of this work will be completed and incorporated in the new comprehensive plan. Your input is a necessary part of the process. You can participate by visiting our website at CharlotteCountyFL.com and clicking on Smart Charlotte 2050.