

Administrator's Update for 12/26/2008

By Roger Baltz

Our County Commission has approved steps to provide preference to local firms over out-of-town firms when making request for proposals. Successful bidders are normally ranked using a point system based on a number of different criteria. A citizens group worked with the County's purchasing director to develop criteria for local preference. These recommendations were given to the Commission at their Dec. 15 meeting. A policy was approved that provides extra points to firms that have established offices in the County (the longer the tenure, the more points earned), and that employ workers who live in Charlotte County.

The County Commissioners, County Department Directors, and myself participated in a day long retreat this past week. Our Commissioners discussed expectations, goals, and information regarding a wide range of issues. The goals and guidelines established at the retreat will be posted on our County website at CharlotteCountyFL.com.

The County Utilities Department has completed the wastewater expansion program in the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) under budget and ahead of schedule. The project was partially funded by a Community Development Block Grant and will replace the aging septic systems on environmentally-sensitive properties near the harbor. To assist low-income property owners with the wastewater connection fees and other related costs, a grant program has been established to reduce the out-of-pocket expense to residents.

This past week the County Growth Management staff held a series of stakeholder meetings to provide an overview of the East County Planning Guide and to receive input from interested parties. The meetings included a brief overview of the East County Planning Guide and its relationship with other Charlotte County planning initiatives, including the *SmartCharlotte 2050* Vision Plan and comprehensive plan update.

Our County has begun work to acquire property for right-of-way for the Burnt Store widening project. Phase I, which runs from U.S. 41 to Norte Dame Blvd., is currently in the permit phase with construction expected to start this summer.

The economic downturn has caused an increase in unlicensed contractors. Please be cautious. Always use a licensed contractor to perform work on your home. It's easy to check for contractors licensed in Charlotte County by going to our website, www.CharlotteCountyFL.com, or you can call our Building Construction Services Department at 941.732.1201. They will be happy to confirm if your contractor has a current license.

Distribution of the new automated garbage carts to all unincorporated Charlotte County has been completed. Those residents seeking to exchange their cart for either a smaller or larger unit can call our hotline at 1.941.883.3533.

The County 211 call center has completed phase three of the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) national accreditation process. Accreditation is required of all designated 211 operation centers nationwide. The 211 call center gets you connected with community information, agencies, health and human services for every day needs, as well as times of crisis. Callers can speak with a trained specialist who will provide resources tailored to their specific needs.

Our County has entered into a service agreement with the City of Punta Gorda to provide Geographic Information Services (GIS). The County GIS Department will now maintain the city maps and database architecture. This is a win-win partnership that provides revenue for the County while giving the City access to mapping support for its citizens.

The newly opened Charlotte County Event and Conference Center continues to be utilized. Last week we held our first sporting event with the AAU Fall Sate Gymnastics Championship. Over 600 athletes and 3,900 spectators attended, dividing their time between the Event Center and the community.