

**Administrator's Update for 4/10/09**  
**By Roger Baltz**

This past week Assistant County Administrator Kelly Shoemaker, Budget & Administrative Services Director Ray Sandroek and myself attended a day long budget roundtable meeting held in Hillsborough County. The meeting included County Administrators and key staff from Pasco, Polk, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota and our own County. Information regarding strategies under consideration or implementation to deal with budget challenges was shared among our group. Many of us are facing similar challenges due to revenue reductions and the economic slow down. The opportunity to learn from one another was useful.

Our County is limiting the use of paper and multiple copies of documents. Last month, our Commissioners gave direction for us to move forward with "going paperless" when and where possible. Our sometimes large paper filled agenda packets are now replaced with online documents. Computer screens have been installed at the dais in the Commissioner's Board Room allowing not only Commissioners, but all committees' meeting in the space, to access agenda documents via the internet. The computers were recycled from surplus as a result of other budget reductions.

Hard copies of Commission agendas will still be made available upon request and a copy will be available at our information desk during Commission meetings for the public if needed.

The Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee endorsed the conceptual design plan for the Gateway Pedestrian Promenade Project at their March meeting. The CRA Advisory Committee is seeking public input on the proposed design concepts, which include fishing amenities and improved public access to the waterfront. The plan will be available for public review on April 23 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Charlotte Harbor Convention and Events Center.

The County has recently signed contracts with merchants to offer mobile food pushcart vending at Englewood Beach and Port Charlotte Beach. This is a new service intended to provide additional amenities for our beach visitors, as well as generate revenue.

Building Construction Services (BCS) held meetings to discuss changes being proposed to contractor licensing regulations. The meetings gave the public opportunity to comment on the existing draft in an informal setting.

Extension Services hosted a bus tour through the agricultural production areas of Charlotte County. Guided by multi-county UF/IFAS agricultural agents well-versed in large scale agricultural ventures in the area, 45 participants learned

about the local agricultural industry, its history, how agriculture affects our economy and the production efforts of local farmers in many diverse operations.

Our Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program recently conducted a workshop for 28 participants concerning the Rain Barrel water conservation program. Participants increased their understanding of water conservation using rain barrels, from set-up to use in their home landscape. The Rain Barrel Program has resulted in Charlotte County residents utilizing over 600 Rain Barrels with a potential to replace 33,000 gallons of potable water for use as plant/landscape irrigation purposes.

Plans Examiner Julia Galofre has become a LEED accredited professional. She is now qualified to act as a certifying agent for green building designs. LEED encourages the adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through acceptable tools and performance criteria. Galofre is also Florida Green Building Certified and has been working closely with permit applicants to assist them in building green.

Our Charlotte County Fire/EMS, along with mutual aid organizations from neighboring counties, did an extraordinary job on Saturday, March 28, 2009 fighting the 188 acre brush fire in south county that was fanned by 49 mph winds. The citizens of the area, the fire departments and local police agencies put forth an exceptional effort to save lives and property during this fast moving fire.

This week, the draft Comprehensive Plan elements went live on the Smart Charlotte 2050 webpage. Eight of the ten elements' Goals, Objectives, and Policies sections are now available for public view and input. Visitors to the site can register or log in anonymously to examine the material and leave comments. Registering provides the ability to bookmark comments and receive email updates. This important feature brings public participation into the process much earlier than would otherwise be feasible. To access the documents, visit [CharlotteCountyFL.com](http://CharlotteCountyFL.com) and click on the Smart Charlotte 2050 link.