

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT JUNE 12, 2020

City Manager

- **City Council Elections** – Qualifying for the November 3 election ended at noon today with the following candidates officially qualifying: District 1 – Mr. Jaha Cummings (incumbent - unopposed); District 2 – Ms. Debby Carey (incumbent-unopposed); District 4 – Ms. Lynne Matthews (incumbent – unopposed). Congratulations to all of the candidates. All unopposed candidates are automatically elected/re-elected to office
- **America in Bloom** – At its June 3 meeting, City Council endorsed the efforts of TEAM Punta Gorda to move forward on the America In Bloom pilot project. America In Bloom is a national program dedicated to helping communities flourish. It is their belief that “communities are more welcoming and vibrant with colorful plants and trees in clean environments.” TEAM Punta Gorda has organized a collaborative committee to work on implementation of a design for the downtown area. The committee currently includes members of the PGI Green Thumbs, Punta Gorda Garden Club and Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce. Other partners may join as the project moves forward. The project goal is to enhance the landscaping of Punta Gorda’s downtown streets with low maintenance decorative planters and other floral features. The group has developed a preliminary plan for a Taylor Street pilot program. The total pilot project has a budget of \$20,016. Local business owner, community supporter and philanthropist Alan Schulman has graciously committed to fund the pilot project. Thank you Mr. Schulman for this generous beautification gift.
 
- **Blanchard House Museum** – While the Blanchard House Museum remains closed to visitors because of the COVID-19 situation residents can view the new virtual exhibit entitled Pandemic remotely. The exhibit discusses the parallels between the Spanish Flu of 1918 and the current pandemic. View the presentation at http://www.blanchardhousemuseum.org/uploads/4/9/4/6/49462741/bhm_virtual_exhibit.pdf
- **City of Punta Gorda Town Hall Webinar** – For the first time ever, the City of Punta Gorda is hosting a Town Hall meeting virtually. On June 19 at 10 a.m. residents of Punta Gorda are invited to ask questions of City Council, the City Manager and Department Leaders in this two hour question and answer session that will take place via Zoom. Questions can be submitted through Q and A during the webinar. The link to attend is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87467962557>. Please plan to log in a few minutes early to make sure your technology is working appropriately. If you have any questions about the webinar please call (941) 575-3394.
- **COVID-19 Testing** – COVID-19 testing will take place at the Cooper Street Recreation Center on June 16 and June 18 from 9 a.m. until noon. This is walk up or drive up testing site. Those wishing to be tested can register at <https://coadfl.org/covid-19-testing-assessment/>.

- **City Council Agenda** – City Council will meet on June 17 at 9 a.m. in the City Hall Chambers. A few of the items that will be covered are:
 - A request for an extension at 900 W. Marion Avenue to extend a moratorium of enforcement related to the public use of the auditorium.
 - Discussion of Complete Streets Improvements for E. Virginia from U.S. 41 North to Nesbit.
 - Discussion of rear yard encroachments within the Special Residential Overlay District.
 - Update of PLAN Punta Gorda Citywide Master Plan comprehensive plan revisions.
 - FY 2021-2025 Capital Improvements Program

The complete agenda is available at <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/government/boards-committees/agendas-minutes>

- **Service Line Warranties of America** – Punta Gorda utility customers are receiving an introductory mailing informing them about optional exterior water or sewer service line repair plans available through SLWA. Because we have an agreement with SLWA, the City of Punta Gorda logo will appear on the mailings, which will clearly state that the program is voluntary and is administered by SLWA, not the City. The Exterior Water Service Line Coverage is available for \$5.75 per month and an Exterior Sewer/Septic Line Coverage plan is available for \$7.75 per month. Services are billed, monthly, quarterly or annually directly through SLWA. SLWA plan holders have access to a repair hotline that is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and repairs are performed by local, licensed, and insured contractors. Punta Gorda homeowners can learn more about these optional plans and SLWA by visiting www.slwofa.com or calling toll-free 1-866-922-9006.

Upcoming Events

- Fishermen’s Village Events – available at <https://www.fishville.com/events/>
- Military Heritage Museum Events – available at <https://freedomisntfree.org/upcoming-events/>.
- Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce Events – available at <https://puntagordachamber.com/calendar-events/>
- Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce Events – available at <https://business.charlottecountychamber.org/events>

Lot Mowing Program

The City has completed mowing the following areas: Downtown and Historic District (W. Marion Ave., W. Olympia Ave., Shreve St., and Harvey St.) East Side and the area behind Dunkin Donuts (E. Marion Ave, E Olympia Ave, Narranja St, E Henry St, and Cooper St).

Urban Design

- Exciting announcement to kick off the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update in the City of Punta Gorda. As part of the Recreation and Open Space Element of the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to be updated every 10 years. The last plan was adopted in 2009 and the necessary update was placed on hold until the completion of the Citywide Master Plan. We are asking residents to take part in the contest to name the updated plan! Not only that, we will also offer bi-weekly video updates to let you all know how the plan is coming along and to answer any frequently asked question. Watch the video and stay tuned on what's to come at your Florida Harborside Hometown! For more information, please visit <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/i-want-to-view/park-recreation-master-plan>.



- Urban Design and Fire staff met with a developer regarding the naming of a private street in order to clarify addressing for public safety purposes. Naming concerns included no conflicting existing street names within the city, developer's desire for a name with a nautical or water related theme, and historic street naming pattern with the 1884 Town of Trabue plat historic area of the City.
- The Charlotte County-Punta Gorda Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) hosted a virtual technical meeting to discuss the on-going progress of the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP provides the vision used to guide the prioritization of transportation projects throughout Charlotte County that use Federal or State transportation funding. The MPO will be hosting virtual public workshops soon. Please visit the MPO website at <https://ccmpo.com/wp/> for more information.

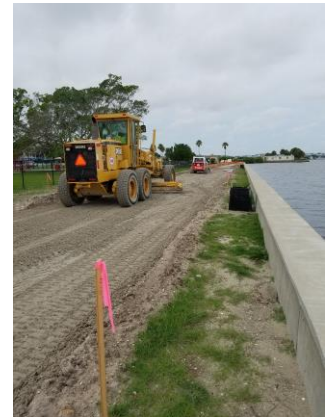
Public Works

Canal Maintenance

- **Seawall Replacement Projects** - The seawall replacement contractor has completed 18 seawall replacement projects in PGI and there are seven projects under construction. Four seawall replacement projects have been completed in BSI and there are two projects under construction. A seawall replacement project is not considered complete until the sod has been placed.
- A section of seawall failed last Saturday as a result from the heavy rains experienced last week from Tropical Storm Cristobal. The seawall replacement contractor (Marine Contracting Group) mobilized to site and was replacing seawall panels by the following Monday.
 - Crews filled depressions at 21 locations.
 - Crews performed three seawall cap and seam patches (15' linear ft.).
 - Crews restored the seawall berm located on Bal Harbor.

Engineering

- **Harborwalk (Gilchrist Gazebo to Berry St.)** - The contractor continues sending in product submittals for approval. Subbase placement is occurring with compaction density testing scheduled by the end of the week. Grade work continues. FPL completed removal of the overhead connection in the park. Pedestrians and cyclists are not permitted in the work area during construction. This project is anticipated to complete by the end of September 2020. Please visit the City's YouTube channel to view drone footage taken of the construction progress. Check out the very popular playlist by visiting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2z1NSTPCy0>.
- **City wide Drainage Swale regrading** – The contractor has completed work at 320 Coldeway Dr.; 443-469 Monaco Dr. and 509 Berry St. During the week of June 15 work will be underway at 403-409 W. Grace St, 418-434 W. Grace St. and 434-440 W. Ann St. To date the contractor has completed work at 758 properties totaling 567,800 square feet of grading and sodding.
- **FDOT - US 41 Carmalita Street to Marion Ave. within City of Punta Gorda** - The Florida Department of Transportation's contractor, Highway Safety Devices, continues work to install new signals on US 41 from Carmalita St. to Marion Ave. The construction will take place Monday through Friday during daytime and nighttime/overnight hours, weather permitting. Lane closures may occur during daytime hours from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For complete details, contact information and map <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/government/public-works/engineering>.
- **Shreve St (MURT)** – Lighted bollards have been ordered.



Police Department

- Due to current discussions in our country, many people, including community members and leaders, have asked questions regarding training, equipment, and department policy. As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency, we would like to address some of these questions and concerns to our entire community.

Training: The Punta Gorda Police Department provides our officers with approximately seven times the amount of in-service academy training required by the state. This training includes all high liability training (such as weapons recertification, vehicle operations, and defensive tactics) as well as specifically selected training courses. For example, in early May during in-service academy training officers were provided with a course on fair and impartial policing designed to teach officers to manage implicit bias and use procedural justice techniques and a course on new community policing designed to reinforce the importance of police-community partnerships. In addition to in-service academy training officers regularly receive virtual training as well as specialized training.

Cameras: The Punta Gorda Police Department has had in-car video cameras for over a decade now. We have been working diligently for more than a year on purchasing body cameras in the department. After navigating a federal assistance grant for funding and the procurement process, we are expecting our cameras and equipment to arrive in a matter of days and have already begun the implementation process.

Chokeholds and Strangleholds: The Punta Gorda Police Department removed the Vascular Lateral Neck Restraint from our policy as an allowable force option in 2018. Prior to 2018, our policy had allowed this maneuver as a less lethal force option, however, it had been determined that it had not been used by officers and new research suggested that there was a higher probability of injury than had previously been known. Our policy states that officers are prohibited from using this tactic unless the use of deadly force is necessary. Any other kind of “chokehold” or “stranglehold” would also be considered deadly force.

De-escalation: Punta Gorda Police Department policy states that officers **shall** use de-escalation techniques and tactics to reduce any threat or gain compliance to lawful commands without the use of force or with the lowest level of force possible, whenever possible.

Warnings before Discharging a Weapon: Punta Gorda Police Department training and policy require officers to provide a verbal warning before discharging any weapon, including subject control spray (pepper spray), Taser, or firearm, when possible.

Use of Force Continuum: The Punta Gorda Police Department adopted the recommended Use of Force: Force Guidelines established and implemented by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in 2008. Our policy states that officers **shall** avoid the use of force unless it is not possible to do so. Our policy also states that officers **shall only** use force that is reasonable, necessary, and proportional to respond to the threat or resistance in order to effectively and safely resolve an incident and will immediately reduce the level of force as the threat or resistance diminishes.

Shooting at Moving Vehicles: While Punta Gorda Police Department policy does not prohibit shooting at a moving vehicle, this type of tactic is considered deadly force and is only to be used when absolutely necessary to protect human life. In recent history individuals have used vehicles as weapons, such as in the 2017 New York City terrorist attack where an individual drove a vehicle into a crowd of people killing eight people. For this reason we do not feel it would be prudent to prohibit this action, but rather limit its use to absolute necessity. In addition, our policy states that supervisory approval shall be requested prior to utilizing this type of force, if possible.

Duty to Intervene: Punta Gorda Police Department policy states that officers **shall** intervene to prevent the abusive conduct or the use of excessive force by another officer.

Use of Force Reporting: Punta Gorda Police Department policy states that any officer who uses force, observes another officer use force, or who must threaten force (such as displaying a weapon) in order to gain compliance and respond to resistance **shall** immediately notify their supervisor and **will** accurately and completely report the use of force by the end of their shift. For more than a decade the several levels of staff have reviewed and evaluated these reports to ensure that the use of force was justified, that policy and training standards were followed, and to determine any potential patterns such as the repeated use of force by a specific officer. In addition, the department conducts an annual evaluation and analysis of all use of force incidents.

- **Police Officer Testing** – The Punta Gorda Police Department is currently accepting applications for the position of Police Officer. Testing will be held on Sept. 14 with oral board interviews scheduled on Sept. 15 and Sept. 16. You can apply to participate by visiting www.pgpdjobs.com. For more information, please contact the Employee Development Coordinator at (941) 575-5571 or by email at employeedevelopment@pgorda.us.
- **Internship Program** – The police department is currently accepting internship applications for the Spring Semester of 2021. Our internship program is open to college students and high school seniors interested in gaining educational experience in law enforcement, criminal justice, and small government administration. Please contact the internship program coordinator at (941) 575-5571 or employeedevelopment@pgorda.us for additional information or to have an application package sent.

Fire Department

- **Lightening Safety** – Florida has more lightning flashes per square mile than any other state in the country. In fact, lightening hits each square mile in Central Florida 40 times a year. Our state averages 10-13 deaths, 30-40 injuries and over \$6 million in property damage annually due to lighting, typically occurring between May and September. Lightning can strike as far as ten miles away, about the distance you can hear thunder. Immediately move to safe shelter and stay put until at least 30 minutes after you hear the last sound of thunder. If you are caught outside with no safe shelter nearby the following actions *may* reduce your risk of being struck:

- ✓ Squat low to the ground. Kneel or crouch with your hands on your knees (“lightning position”).
- ✓ Avoid tall structures (towers, trees, fences, poles).
- ✓ Get away from bodies of water. Leave pools, rivers, lakes, and beaches. Come ashore and land any boats, kayaks, canoes, or other watercraft.
- ✓ Immediately get off elevated areas.
- ✓ Avoid water and wet items, metal objects, tents, natural lightning rods (golf clubs, tractors, fishing rods, bicycles).
- ✓ If you feel your hair stand on end, drop to your knees, bend forward, and put your hands on your knees. Do not lie flat on the ground.



Utilities Department

Utilities Administration

- If you are a customer that has previously participated in in the Lead and Copper sample collection program, the City of Punta Gorda will be calling you to schedule sample collection for the end of July. Samples are collected by the homeowner, to determine the contribution of faucet fixtures, household pipes and/or solder to the lead and copper levels in their tap water. This sampling effort is required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and is being accomplished through the cooperation of homeowners. Previous participants are also welcome to call the Water Treatment Plant to get scheduled at (941) 639-2057 or (941) 575-5004.

Groundwater R.O. Construction Update

- The project is nearing completion. The actual startup of the new RO facility will be a measured and gradual process. We are testing to ensure all the components including pumping, controllers, sensors and chemical feed systems are functioning as designed to ensure the water produced meets all regulatory standards. We expect the new RO facility to begin providing water to the City's customers by the end of June.
Week 101 – RO plant cartridge filter training



Water Treatment Plant Operations

- 26 MG delivered to the distribution system with a 3.7 MG daily average
- Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority Emergency Interconnect – Receiving water at a rate of .5 million gallons per day, started Sept. 30.
- Rainfall in June 2019 7.30”, June 2020 6.40”
- Hardness is a measurement of calcium and magnesium ions naturally occurring in the raw water. Current Condition “hard” – Grains of Hardness 14 ppm – Total hardness 240 ppm
- TDS for June 11 – Current 397 ppm, Low 255 ppm, High 617 ppm, 12 Year Avg. 453 ppm
- Reservoir June 11 – Current 5.54’, Record Low 4.23’, Record High 6.40’, 55 Year Avg. 5.29’

City Clerk

- **Current Board and Committee Vacancies ([Volunteer Appointment Information Form](#))**
Several City Boards have resumed holding meetings in June (only those with time sensitive or urgent business to address). Please check the City's web calendar for schedule. The City Clerk's Office will continue to announce vacancies and accept new Board Appointment Information Forms (available at <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/government/boards-committees>) from interested citizens for City Council consideration so that we are prepared to resume meetings with a full quorum of members when it is safe to do so.
- **Building Board – (Two alternate vacancies) Meets the 4th Tuesday at 9 a.m. in City Council Chambers – City residency not required. Seven member board with two alternate members. Three year terms – maximum of three terms. Four members must be involved with the building industry and three members must be consumer advocates who are not, nor ever have been, involved with building industry. Makes recommendations to City Council on the minimum qualifying requirements for obtaining Certificates of Competency in the various construction trades and the fees for same. Periodically reviews and holds public hearings on all building, electrical, plumbing, housing, gas, fire prevention and other related codes. Reviews enforcement of all codes relating to construction standards and acts as condemnation board in matters of violation of minimum standards. Hears alleged complaints against contractors.**