

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT SEPTEMBER 11, 2020

City Manager

- **September 11 Remembrance** – At its Sept. 9 meeting, City Council issued a proclamation commemorating September 11 a Day of Remembrance urging all citizens of Punta Gorda to observe a moment of silence to honor those who were lost as a result of these attacks and thank our Nation's incredible service members and first responders. We will always remember the sacrifices made in defense of our people, our country and our freedom.
- **Words Matter** – As a long-time member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), I feel compelled to reiterate the ideals set forth in our Code of Ethics and aptly stated in a recent ICMA publication that commit to the integrity and promotion of maintaining and enhancing public trust and confidence in local government, to achieve equity and social justice, to affirm human dignity and improve the quality of life for the community. It is a commitment to our basic values as a democratic and pluralistic society, a commitment that emphasizes the need for humility in public service, a statement that there is little room for arrogance in our profession for we must service our community with compassion and professional integrity.



The United States has had more than our share of challenges and unrest over the past year. Fortunately, the City of Punta Gorda, although affected by things like COVID-19, economic challenges, and protests has been able to remain focused on the vision of the community to, “continue to preserve our small-town character while promoting diversity, economic development and sustainability”. One of the threats to achieving that vision is if we allow ourselves to forget that words do matter. Language and communication can and do shape how we move forward as a community for the benefit of all.

As my staff can attest to, I often use songs to accentuate the projects that we work on and challenges we are working to overcome. There is power in music to unite and connect people over a common goal. A song that speaks volumes to me of late is Eric Church's “Kill a Word.” The message in the song is simple yet profound, negative words can cause as much damage as sticks and stones. Words that promote fear, hate and brokenness can lead to the civil unrest and discord that we see play out in some areas of our country today.

Those of us in local government and the community who evaluates our performance emphasize action-oriented results. As such, why would we pursue the above mentioned ideals without taking action. I remember what a former City Manager Sylvester Murray said when discussing the promotion of ideals. “It is often said that an ideal is something unachievable, the highest star to reach for, knowing you will never do it.” That is not the case with the ideals of ICMA. He went on to say, “Our ideals are achievable. Each of us ought to be committed to achieving the ideals set forth in our code of ethics. Our cities would be better off, our organization would be better off, and we would be better off as individuals.”

These ideals are embedded in how we strive to deliver the services that our residents, business community and visitors have come to expect and deserve. Nothing more, nothing less. So thank you Eric Church for reinforcing that the words we use really do matter.

- **FY 2021 Budget Recap** – City Council approved a tentative millage rate of 3.4337 mills at the Sept. 9 public hearing. The rate is the same as the previous year and represents a 2.59% increase over the rolled back rate of 3.3469. The final public hearing on the millage rate as well as the total budget is set for Sept. 23, 5:01pm in the Council Chambers. In other budget-related actions City Council approved the following assessments at the same public hearing:
Lot Mowing - \$175 per mowing unit
Buckley’s Pass - \$399.95 per water access unit for the second of the three year assessment for those who haven’t paid in full
PGI Canal Maintenance - \$550 per single family lot or zoned for multi-family with single family residences
BSI Canal Maintenance - \$460 per single family lot or zoned for multi-family with single family residences
- **Boat and RV Parking** – It will be status quo regarding boat and RV parking in the non special residential overlay areas of the City (historic district and Boca Grande/Narranja neighborhood). Upon receiving numerous requests from property owners to retain current regulations that permit such parking overnight, City Council decided to forego any changes at this time.

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 mowers will begin a new mowing cycle on Sept. 14.

Urban Design

- **Serenity Garden at Nature Park** – Staff received approval on the revised Five Year Management Plan from Florida Department of Environmental Protection Division of State Lands/Florida Communities Trust for the next phase at the Nature Park! The PGI Green Thumbs will be working to create a Serenity Garden with a meditation plaza for all to enjoy.



- **America In Bloom** – Work was completed this week for the beautification of Hector House Plaza including six flowering pots and irrigation. Phase two efforts have started that will beautify the area around the court house. Previously, 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 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.



- **The Planning Corner** – During the [August 26th City Council meeting](#), City staff provided an update to the Council on the progress of the Comprehensive Plan project. A brief overview was given of major items for revision in each of the following five elements:

- Future Land Use - Broadly sets development expectations
- Coastal Management - Water dependent uses & environmental resilience
- Housing – Population demographics & housing needs
- Transportation - Safer streets for everyone
- Historic - Preservation of built legacy

The Planning Corner



The [Housing Element](#) identifies the existing housing conditions and population demographics of the City. This data is examined to identify possible disconnects between the communities housing needs and the housing available now in the existing stock or potentially available in the future through construction. The update to the Housing Element draws heavily on the economic and demographic analysis contained in the [Economic and Budgetary Analysis](#) prepared in 2019 as part of the Plan Punta Gorda 2019 Citywide Master Plan. The analysis identified that the real estate market in Punta Gorda could support the following housing development by 2030:

- 580 to 930 new single-family detached and attached houses
- 320 to 420 new rental housing units
- 300 to 750 new condominiums

The Housing Element is also required by Florida Statutes to identify the ways in which the community is addressing housing affordability needs and special housing needs of the disabled and elderly. The goals, objectives, and policies within this element will be update to reflect these needs including exploring incentives and partnerships and identifying the need for additional senior and assisted living facilities.

- **The Parks and Recreation Master Plan General Survey** – The Parks and Recreation Master Plan General Survey is still open, but only until Sept. 18! It is a 30-question survey that takes approximately seven minutes to complete. Make your voice count and let us know what you think! To take the survey, please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LTXP5X6>. If you'd like more information on the Punta Gorda's Place to Play, visit <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/visitors/punta-gorda-pathways/park-recreation-master-plan>.
- **Sign Code Survey** – City staff has been working to re-write the sign code in order to more fully comply with recent US Supreme Court and US District Court decisions regarding regulations on commercial speech and to ensure the sign code remains content-neutral. The following is a link to the sign code survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7FGGS3M>. Staff would like to emphasize that the sign photos shown on the survey are only examples of current or previous signs within the City. Signs are currently regulated by content, such as real estate, political, incidental, commercial, non-commercial, which is the very reason the sign code is being re-written. It is the intent to have the sign code be content neutral and the proposed re-write of the sign code regulate signs by number, location and size only, not by content. We greatly appreciate the input!



Public Works

Canal Maintenance

- **Dredging Bass and Snook Inlets** – Dredging is completed within the Bass and Snook Inlets, spoil material has been staged at the easterly end of Elizabeth Park and is currently being transported to another location by dump trucks. The project is expected to be completed by next week. For information on this project contact Canal Maintenance Supervisor, Cathy Miller, Punta Gorda Public Works Department at (941) 575-5050 between the business hours of 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday.
- **Seawall Replacement Projects** - The seawall replacement contractor has completed 34 seawall replacement projects in PGI and there is one project under construction. Six seawall replacement projects have been completed in BSI and the work program for this fiscal year has been completed. A seawall replacement project is not considered complete until the sod has been placed.
 - Crews filled depressions at 14 locations.
 - Crews mowed and trimmed the Burnt Store Isles lock and Sancho Panza Point.
 - Crews removed two pieces of debris from the canal.

Engineering

- **ADA Improvements City Hall Annex** - The Purchase Order has been issued to the contractor. A Project Kick off meeting is set for Sept. 11.
- **City wide Drainage Swale regrading** –Work on the swale regrading program with JRL Underground Inc. will resume after Oct. 1 and funding is available in FY 2021.
- **Cooper Street Recreation Center** – The work to install ADA compliant sidewalk connections between the Recreation center, tennis court, pavilion and basketball courts is complete. Installation of the new picnic table, benches and grills will be completed by City staff over the next week or two.

- **Harborwalk (Gilchrist Gazebo to Berry St.)** - Electrical work continues to install decorative light poles and bollards. Grading and sod placement also continues. The site furniture has begun to arrive and be installed. Minor concrete repair will be scheduled near the end of the project this fall. Pedestrians and cyclists are restricted from the work area during construction.



- **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>.
- **Sullivan Street Renovation to Historic Bricks** - Beginning Sept. 15 through Nov. 16 weather depending, construction is scheduled on Sullivan Street between Retta Esplanade Avenue to Marion Avenue renovating the street from asphalt to historic street bricks. Work includes: some curb removal and replacement, asphalt and subgrade removal and rebuilding the roadbed, an asphalt base and finishing the street with bricks. The Sullivan Street renovation will require this section to be closed to all traffic until re-opened in Nov. 2020. Travelers are requested to use extreme caution while workers are present in the right of way and allow additional time for travel while work is performed. Temporary delays are to be anticipated. For information please contact Linda Sposito, Sr. Project Manager, Public Works Department at (941) 575-5060 between the business hours of 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday or <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/home/showdocument?id=11456>.

Police Department

- **Community Presentation and Discussion** – The Punta Gorda Police Department in partnership with the NAACP held a community discussion and presentation conducted by Dr. David Thomas, a professor at Florida Gulf Coast University and renowned author of *The State of American Policing: Ethics, Implicit Bias, and Credibility*. Dr. Thomas will be providing training to officers over the next week regarding the impacts of bias in policing.
- **Police Officer Testing** – The Punta Gorda Police Dept. is currently accepting applications for the position of Police Officer. Testing will be held on Jan. 11 with oral board interviews scheduled on Jan. 12 and Jan. 13. Currently we are only accepting applications from candidates who are currently certified, Equivalency of Training (EOT) eligible, or law enforcement academy students.



- **Public Safety Dispatcher Testing** – The Punta Gorda Police Department is currently accepting applications for the position of Public Safety Dispatcher. Testing will be held on Jan. 19.
- **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. To apply for any of these positions or for more information please visit www.pgdjobs.com (941) 575-5571 or employeedevelopment@pgorda.us for additional information or to have an application package sent.

Fire Department

- **Pediatric Training** – The fire departments Medical Director, Dr. O’Leary, hosted a pediatric emergencies training. This training included multiple pediatric emergencies such as airway compromise, viral and bacterial pathology, abuse and many other potential emergencies. Dr. O’Leary makes frequent visits to the fire stations to provide quality assurance oversight for medical reports and to host lectures.



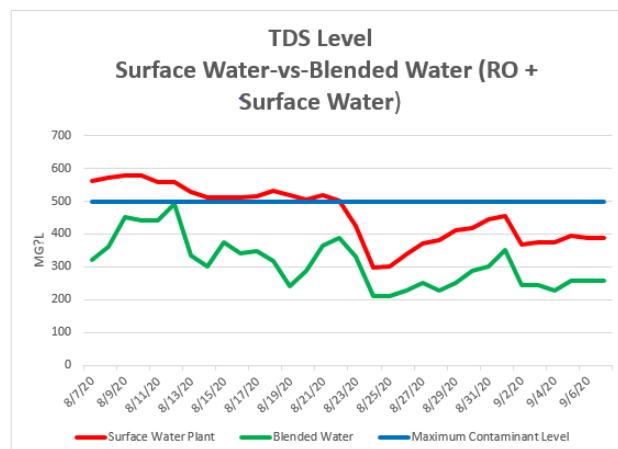
Utilities Department

Utilities Administration

- The City flushes fire hydrants throughout the service area when required for the following:
 - Routine maintenance and testing
 - Adhere to strict regulations from regulatory agencies.
 - Help find weaknesses in the water system
 - Improvement of water quality
 - Taste and Odor issues
 - Water Sampling

The time involved in flushing can vary from a few minutes to several hours depending on the circumstances.

Ground Water RO Update –



Water Treatment Plant Operations

- 47.5 MG delivered to the distribution system with a 6.8 MG daily average
- Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority Emergency Interconnect – Sending water at a rate of two million gallons per day, started July 13.
- Rainfall in Sept. 2019 0.08” Sept. 2020 2.20”
- Hardness is a measurement of calcium and magnesium ions naturally occurring in the raw water. Current Condition “slightly hard” – Grains of Hardness 6 ppm – Total hardness 103 ppm
- TDS for Sept. 10 – Current 260 ppm, Low 182 ppm, High 375 ppm, 12 Year Avg. 285 ppm
- Reservoir Sept. 10 – Current 5.56’, Record Low 5.10’, Record High 6.62’, 55 Year Avg. 5.65’

City Clerk

Current Board and Committee Vacancies ([Volunteer Appointment Information Form](#))

- **Board of Zoning Appeals** – (One alternate) Meets the 4th Tuesday at 4 p.m. in City Council Chambers. City residency required. Seven member board with two alternate members. Three year terms - maximum of three terms. Financial disclosure required. Makes recommendations to City Council on variances to City Code.
- **Building Board** – (One alternate) 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.
- **Code Enforcement Board** – Meets the 4th Wednesday at 9 a.m. in City Council Chambers. Must be City resident. Seven member board with two alternate members. Three year terms – maximum of three terms. Hears and decides alleged violations of the City Code of Ordinances.

New Businesses

- All persons, firms or corporations engaging in business or occupation within the City of Punta Gorda are required to obtain a Local Business Tax (LBT) Receipt in accordance with Chapter 12 of the Punta Gorda City Code. As part of our effort to promote economic development and vitality in our area, we offer the following list of new or transferred business within our community this week:
 - LMB Baking Company, 145 W McKenzie Street
 - Retirement Wealth Advisors LLC, 6210 Scott Street, #215