

Weekly Highlights Report December 23, 2020

City Manager

- **From the Desk of the City Manager Greg Murray** – Annual financial planning for the City of Punta Gorda is an ongoing process. It involves the creation of a long range financial plan including a strategic plan which drives operating budgets, the capital improvement plan with associated operating impact, revenue requirements, and ultimately accounting, monitoring and reporting requirements culminating with the audit and comprehensive annual financial report. Many of these steps in the process actually happen concurrently. When the City Council returns in January the first order of business will be to focus on the capital improvement plan (CIP).

The CIP is the long-range plan used for the acquisition or construction of capital facilities, projects or significant purchases with a multi-year useful life. The city develops a five year CIP projection. It is updated annually based on the overall goals and current opportunities as well as funding availability. CIP projects are unique projects that provide improvements or additions such as land, buildings and infrastructure.

The CIP enhances the overall quality of life for residents in the city by improving the physical structures, systems, and facilities that provide services to the community. CIP projects are generally large and expensive, and the assets they install, replace, or rehabilitate will likely be required for decades of public use. A capital need includes, but is not limited to, project types such as bridges, drainage, lighting, parks, pathways, sidewalks, streets, and water and wastewater utilities. Capital projects are typically managed in-house by the individual departments. The Finance Department prepares the five year CIP for City Council by matching project expenditures with anticipated revenues.

Council will hear updates about the progress of current construction projects and discuss future projects. Many but not all are multiyear projects. One of the more visible projects to be discussed is the continued enhancements to Gilchrist Park including new parking. Another large visible ongoing project is the seawall repair and installation of new seawalls at Ponce Park. This project protects the shoreline from erosion and is scheduled to be concluded by April. Nature Park is slated to receive much needed access enhancements including expanded pathways and a rebuilt observation pier. The Historic District east of US41 has an ongoing project to improve street lighting for the safety of residents. A variety of sidewalk and Complete Street projects are also a part of the CIP update. Purchases of certain public safety vehicles also fall within the CIP. A less visible but highly important project is the waste water treatment plant expansion necessary to meet the needs of the growing population. As I have mentioned previously, preservation and rehabilitation of the Historic City Hall is a key CIP priority.

Those were just a few of the CIP projects slated to take place over the next five years. A complete overview of all of the projects will be presented on January 6 at the 9 a.m. meeting of City Council in the Historic City Hall. Residents are also invited to view the meetings on our YouTube channel <https://tinyurl.com/y89nq29b>. Thank you for your continued interest in the City of Punta Gorda as we continue the work to make it an even better place

- **Christmas and New Year's Holiday** – The government offices of the City of Punta Gorda will be closed on Thurs., Dec. 24 and Fri., Dec. 25 for Christmas holiday and Fri., Jan. 1 for New Year's holiday. Due to Christmas Day falling on Friday, this holiday closure WILL affect residential refuse, yard waste and recycling collections. It will also affect commercial customer collections. Please refer to the schedule listed below for all services; including household trash, yardwaste and recycling:
 - **Friday Household Trash:** Residents with Fri. household trash collections will have no pickups on either Fri., Dec. 25 or Fri., Jan. 1. The next collections for these residents will be on Tues., Dec. 29 and Tues., Jan. 5.
 - **Friday Household Yardwaste:** Residents with Fri., Dec. 25 yardwaste collection will have their yardwaste collected on Thurs. Dec. 24. Residents with Fri., Jan. 1 yardwaste collection will have their yardwaste collected on Thurs., Dec. 31.
 - **Friday Household Recycling:** Residents with Fri., Dec. 25, recycling collection will have their recyclables collected on Sat., Dec. 26. Residents with Fri., Jan. 1 recycling collection will have their recyclables collected on Sat., Jan. 2.

For the disposal of real Christmas trees, place tree at the curb for collection on your regular yardwaste day. All decorations and lights should be removed before placing the tree out for collection. Artificial trees will be collected on your regular household trash day. If you have any questions, please contact the Public Works Department at (941) 575-5050 between the business hours of 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Mon. through Fri.

Upcoming Events

- Fishermen's Village events can be accessed at <https://www.fishville.com/events/>
- Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce events can be accessed at <https://puntagordachamber.com/calendar-events/>
- Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce events can be accessed at <https://business.charlottecountychamber.org/events/calendar>
- Military Heritage Museum events can be accessed at <https://freedomisntfree.org/#>
- Dec. 24, First United Methodist Church Live Nativity and Christmas Eve Service, Gilchrist Park, 400 W Retta Esplanade. For additional information, visit <https://www.whatis1st.com/>
- Jan. 8-10, MY Promotions Snowbird Celebration Arts & Craft Show, City Marketplace property, 115 Tamiami Tr. For additional information, visit <http://www.mypromotions.com/>
- Jan. 9, Punta Gorda Chamber City Wide Garage Sale, 1133 Bal Harbor Blvd. For additional information, visit <https://puntagordachamber.com/calendar-events/>
- Jan. 23, Rumble on the River Boxing Event, Marketplace property, 115 Tamiami Tr. For additional information, visit <http://www.smugglersevents.com./>
- Jan. 23, Church of the Good Shepherd 125th Anniversary Celebration, 401 W Henry St. For additional information, visit <https://goodshepherdpuntagorda.dioswfl.org/>

Lot Mowing Program

- **The City has completed mowing the following areas** – All zones were completed this week.

Code

- **Signs in the Residential zoning districts** – At the Mar. 18 City Council meeting, Council voted to not enforce sign regulations for signs on residential lots in the ROW or otherwise until such time as the sign ordinance was amended. This includes political signs/flags. The sign ordinance is in the process of a rewrite at this time. Staff brought the sign survey results to City Council as a presentation on Dec. 2. Staff has received direction that until the new sign code is adopted, there will be no enforcement of the sign regulations on residential lots or rights-of-way. This includes political signs/flags.

Urban Design

- **The Planning Corner – Park Typologies** – Punta Gorda has a wide variety of parks and open spaces distributed throughout the City, from pocket parks to large neighborhood parks and open spaces. The City’s park system is currently composed of various distinct park types – Regional, Environmental, Urban, Waterfront, Linear, and Neighborhood Parks. While each type is distinct in terms of how each park operates within the overall system, certain consistency of design standards is necessary to reinforce community character and understanding of the parks as pieces of the same vital system.



Regional Parks – Regional parks are vast multi-use parks that serve several communities within a particular region. They are multiple acres in size and serve those areas within a one-hour driving distance. The regional park provides active and passive recreation opportunities, with a wide selection of facilities for all age groups. The City of Punta Gorda currently relies on the Charlotte County Parks System for the provision of regional park facilities. South County Regional Recreation Center and Carmalita Athletic Park provide the City with sufficient access to athletic fields, Skate Park, BMX track, recreational center, and public pool facilities.

Environmental Parks – An Environmental Park is a park with a primarily ecological purpose, protecting an area of significant environmental value. They form the foundation of the community’s understanding of the need to preserve the natural environment. Ponce de Leon Park includes environmental features as it is near the water and the boardwalk offers knowledge on the animals and wildlife that live nearby.

Urban Parks – Urban Parks or plazas are the public cornerstone of the urban environment that provides a green relief from the intensity and excitement of the urban landscape while providing a public gathering place to exchange ideas. The random social interactions that offer vital links between the community and the City. Herald Court Plaza, Bailey Brother’s Park, and Pittman Park Extension serve as Urban Parks due to their location within or adjacent to residential and commercial uses.

Waterfront Parks – Waterfront Parks maximize the connection of residents and visitors to the water, both visually and physically. The City’s Waterfront Parks, such as Gilchrist, serve regional and local users. Enhancement features include native and drought tolerant landscaping for shade, flowering trees, and plants for visual interest and seating for eating and resting.

Linear Parks – Linear Parks and linkages are built connections or natural corridors that link parks together. Typically, linear parks are developed for one or more modes of recreational travel such as walking, jogging, or biking. The Linear Park includes the Fitness Zone, which is located between W. Retta Esplanade and W. Olympia Avenue. There are three outdoor gym areas that contain multiple pieces of adult fitness equipment (17 total pieces) with activities designed to target the upper body, core, lower body, and the cardiovascular system and is safe for use for persons 14 years of age and older, regardless of ability.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks serve a variety of age groups within a limited area or neighborhood. They include areas for active and passive recreation. Active activities include court games and playgrounds while passive recreation activities consist of walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking. Hounds on Henry, Nature Park, and South County Regional Recreation Center serve as neighborhood parks primarily due to their location within or adjacent to residential communities.

Public Works

Canal Maintenance

- **Canal Odor** - Almost every year, as cooler weather moves into Southwest Florida the canal water ‘flips’ or ‘turns’. This means that the bottom (including silt, decomposing plant material and miscellaneous debris) comes to the surface bringing with it a smell of stagnant water and debris, while the surface water goes to the bottom. This is a natural occurrence and typically happens in dead end canals. This occurrence is expected to only last approximately two weeks then returns to normal.
- **Seawall Assessment** – Beginning Dec. 14 City staff will be performing the Annual Seawall Assessment during low tide periods until Feb. 2021. City staff will be inspecting seawalls from the waterside while traversing canals in a boat. Residents may see city staff in a boat close to their seawalls while inspecting the condition of seawalls.
- **Seawall Replacement Projects** – The seawall replacement contractor has five projects under construction and one project completed in Punta Gorda Isles. There are 26 seawall replacement projects scheduled for Punta Gorda Isles. There are two seawall replacement projects currently underway in Burnt Store Isles. Four seawall replacement projects are scheduled for Burnt Store Isles this fiscal year. A seawall project is not considered complete until the sod has been placed.
 - Crews filled depressions at six locations.
 - Crews manufactured 30 (10’ ft. each) seawall panels.

Engineering

- **Gilchrist Park Pier Deck Replacement** – Construction is anticipated to commence on Jan. 19 through Feb. 12.
- **Palm Ave. and Chasteen St. Intersection to McGregor St. Road Closure** - Mobilization is scheduled to commence with the bricks removal and Utility work during the months of early Jan. and Feb. 2021 (weather permitting). Based on bid award approvals; the curb replacements, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramp, road base, asphalt, sand and re-placement of historic street bricks are to follow completion of Utility work. The project is tentatively scheduled to occur between the months of Jan. 2021 thru April 2021. For information [Engineering | City of Punta Gorda, FL \(punta-gorda.fl.us\)](http://punta-gorda.fl.us) or contact Linda Sposito, Sr. Project Manager, Public Works Department at (941)575-5050 between the business hours of 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Mon. through Fri.
- **Ponce De Leon Park Seawall Repairs** – The contractor has finalized tie-back repairs and deadman installation. Placement of rip-rap at the north end of the project is underway. During the week of Dec. 28, weather permitting, the contractor will complete the epoxy coating of the seawall cap and will begin backfilling and clean-up of the beach area. The project is on track to be completed by the end of Feb. 2021. The contractor and staff are working diligently to get the beach area re-opened as quickly as possible.

- **Paving Program Street Resurfacing** - The media advisory has been issued with a complete list of streets to be milled and resurfaced the week of Jan. 4 through Jan. 22 (weather and equipment operations permitting). For complete list of streets [Paving Program January 2021](#). For information contact Linda Sposito, Sr. Project Manager, City of Punta Gorda Public Works Department at (941) 575-5060 between the business hours of 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Mon. thru Fri.

Police

- **Marine Compliance Checks** – As part of our on-going commitment to boater safety, the Punta Gorda Police Department Marine Unit conducted nighttime safety compliance check in our waterways. This included random checks of vessels operating in our waterways, checks of the approximately thirty boats moored in various locations in the river, and specialized patrols in canals looking for illegal commercial fishing, speeding vessels, and suspicious activity. As a result of this operation several citations were issued for safety infractions, but no suspicious activity was found and most people were just out enjoying the Christmas lights.



- **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 current 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 Summer and Fall Semesters 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

- **COVID-19 Vaccine** – Mayor Matthews reached out to Bayfront CEO Tara McCoy to get your COVID-19 vaccine questions answered.

1. When do you expect the vaccine to be available in Punta Gorda? Will Bayfront Health PG and PC have it available to administer? As you likely know, the federal government has recommended that healthcare workers and nursing home residents be the first to receive the vaccine. We have been in contact with the state and have received notification that we are on the distribution schedule to receive the vaccine, as early as next week.

2. Is it safe? No serious safety concerns have been observed in either the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine studies, which together, include over 70,000 participants with racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. Therefore, the COVID-19 vaccine CANNOT give you COVID-19. However, following a COVID vaccine, COVID antibody tests will be positive. The country's vaccine safety system works to ensure all vaccines are as safe as possible. It is important to know that while these vaccines are being developed as quickly as possible, safety has been a top priority and vaccines are held to even higher standards than other types of medication. The same safety standards required for any vaccine in development are required for the COVID-19 vaccine.

3. Which of the vaccines do you think would be available here - Pfizer or Moderna, or both? Will people have a choice? The key difference between the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines—which could affect their distribution—is how they're stored. The Pfizer vaccine requires very cold storage temperatures whereas the Moderna vaccine does not. There are limited institutions that have the capability to store the Pfizer vaccine so the Moderna vaccine may be more readily seen in clinics and pharmacies. Once additional vaccines are approved and supplies are more plentiful and distributed, there may be more flexibility.

4. Can snowbirds get the vaccine down here, and do they need to get both shots at the same location? In other words, if they get the first shot here, do they need to also get the second one here, or will they be able to get it when they return up north if they leave within 30 days? Both vaccines include a first dose and a second dose, in 21 (Pfizer) or 28 (Moderna) days; the second dose is imperative for the appropriate immune response. Pfizer reports data from the Phase 3 clinical study demonstrated a vaccine efficacy rate of 95%. This was consistent across age, gender, race and ethnicity demographics, with efficacy in adults age 65 and over of more than 94%. Possible side-effects include pain at the injection site, as well as fatigue, chills and fever. These symptoms are generally short-lived and usually go away on their own. You can learn more about the science behind Pfizer's vaccine at <https://www.pfizer.com/> Moderna reports vaccine efficacy against COVID-19 was 94.1% and vaccine efficacy against severe COVID-19 was 100%. Efficacy was consistent across age, race and ethnicity, and gender demographics. Possible side effects include pain at the injection site, muscle aches and headaches. These symptoms too are generally short-lived and usually go away on their own. You can learn more about the science behind Moderna's vaccine at <https://www.modernatx.com/>

5. If snowbirds come down here and inundate the local distribution points for shots, will that affect our year round locals being able to get the shots? Early on, the FDA began investigating select manufacturers to help them increase their ability to quickly make and distribute a large amount of vaccine, ultimately allowing as much vaccine as possible and a continuous increase in the weeks and months to follow. The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a vaccine as soon as large quantities are available.

6. Do you anticipate the second shots being made available on a timely basis? The second dose is imperative for the appropriate immune response. People should be prepared to sign-up for their second dose immediately following their initial vaccination.

7. Have you heard anything about side effects and adverse reactions to the shots, and are the hospitals prepared for this if it happens? What are the main side effects people can expect? If they experience bad side effects, would they need to be tested for COVID? The most common side effects include mild to moderate injection site pain and redness, fatigue, achiness, headache, and fever. Side effects are a sign that your immune system is doing exactly what it is supposed to do and building up protection to the disease. These symptoms are generally short-lived and usually go away on their own. And, it's important to note that none of the COVID-19 vaccines currently in development in the United States use the live virus that causes COVID-19. Therefore, the COVID-19 vaccine CANNOT give you COVID-19.

8. Can people who recently received a flu or pneumonia shot get the vaccine, and will it be safe to do so? It is recommended to wait at least 14 days to receive the COVID-19 vaccine following a flu or pneumonia shot.

9. If people have already had COVID-19, should they still get the vaccine? People who have gotten sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and the fact that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, people are advised to get a COVID-19 vaccine even if they have been sick with COVID-19 before. At this time, experts do not know how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. The immunity someone gains from having an infection, called natural immunity, varies from person to person. Some early evidence suggests natural immunity may not last very long. If you have already had a COVID-19 infection, it is safe and likely beneficial to receive the vaccine. Everyone who has survived a COVID-19 infection will have some level of immunity. So, if you have already had a COVID-19 infection, you can afford to wait longer to receive the vaccine. But experts believe that taking the vaccine under these circumstances is safe and will likely boost the immunity that you already have.

10. Should those who receive the vaccine still practice social distancing, mask wearing and other protocols, or will they be immune once they have the shots? Yes, masking will still be encouraged. Even though the vaccine has been shown to significantly reduce the likelihood of becoming infected with COVID-19, there is not yet enough data to make fully informed recommendations on when masking will no longer be required. In addition, patients need to be reassured that our hospitals are following all CDC guidelines and in order to make sure they feel safe, recommendations regarding masking of all hospital personnel will not be changed based on vaccination or exposure status.

11. Will the vaccine cover some of the new strains being reported? Data available so far has shown that the change in strain shouldn't affect the efficacy of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

12. How will I know when it's my turn? This is a very fluid situation as manufacturers scale production and states determine allocations.

13. Will I have to get the shots more than one time? In other words, how effective is it and how long will it last? Data available so far have shown that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are around 95% effective. This is a very effective vaccine since the typical influenza vaccine is usually 40-60% effective at preventing the flu. Although not yet proven, it is believed that the 5% of individuals who could still become symptomatically infected with COVID-19 after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine will experience a milder illness.

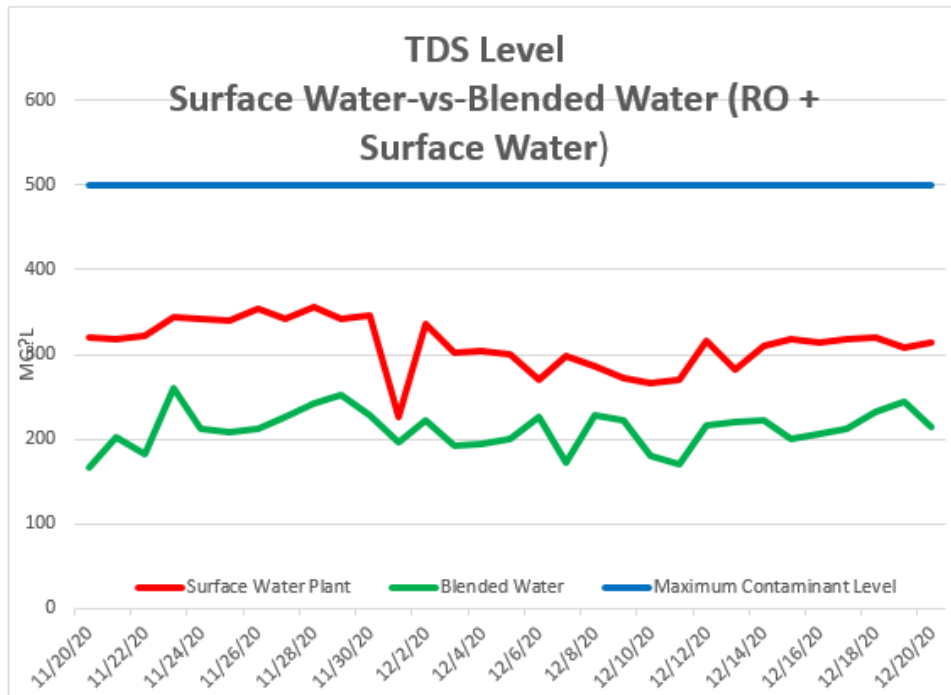
14. Will it be safe for children? The clinical trials conducted tested the vaccine's safety and efficacy in adults. Researchers will need to conduct additional studies on how the vaccine affects younger children. It'll likely be several months before a vaccine is approved and available for kids.

15. How much will it cost? There will be no charge to the person receiving the vaccine. However, insurance information will be collected. Federal guidelines (<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid-vax-ifc-4.pdf>) ensure that no one is charged any out-of-pocket funds for the administration of the vaccine. There will be no co-pay and no charge to those who do not have insurance. The vaccine is free of charge from the federal government, but insurance may be charged the \$28 administration fee.

16. Will everyone be required to get the shots? No. Although we strongly recommend that all healthcare workers (and individuals) receive a COVID-19 vaccine, it will not be mandatory. COVID-19 can be a minor illness in some or lead to severe disease or even death in previously healthy people. This means, everyone should take the virus seriously — if not for themselves, then for those around them. Many treatments and medications are being studied, but there is no cure. Prevention is key. Vaccination is an important step in helping to prevent this illness and its potentially devastating consequences. We hope this helps shed some light and alleviate some anxiety that members of our community may be experiencing. Here are some resources you can share as well so that they can continue educating themselves about the COVID-19 vaccines. The decision to accept vaccination is personal and we are encouraging everyone to learn more. Resources for information: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html> Food & Drug Administration (FDA): <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines> Florida Department of Health: <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/>

Utilities

- **Ground Water RO Update** – Maximum total dissolved solids (TDS) allowable is 500



Water Treatment Plant Operations

- 38.2 MG delivered to the distribution system with a 6.4 MG daily average
- Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority Emergency Interconnect – Receiving 450 gallons per minute from the new Interconnect (Phase 1 Pipeline). Sending 550 gallons per minute from the tank on 17 (Phase 1A Pipeline).
- Rainfall in Dec. 2019 1.10” Dec. 2020 2.60”
- Hardness is a measurement of calcium and magnesium ions naturally occurring in the raw water. Current Condition “moderately hard” – Grains of Hardness 7 ppm – Total hardness 124 ppm
- TDS for Dec. 23 – Current 261 ppm, Low 261 ppm, High 584 ppm, 12 Year Avg. 456 ppm
- Reservoir Dec. 23 – Current 5.30’, Record Low 4.92’, Record High 6.33, 55 Year Avg. 5.19’

City Clerk

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

- **Board of Zoning Appeals** – (Two alternates) Meets the fourth 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 fourth 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.
- **Utility Advisory Board** – Meets the fourth Monday at 9 a.m. in City Council Chambers. Must be City resident. Seven-member board. Three-year terms – maximum of two terms. Makes recommendations to City Council with regard to, but not limited to, revisions to the utility construction standards, alleged billing discrepancies and review of utility specifications.

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:
 - El Dorado Mexican Grill LLC, 615 Cross Street
 - The Rouse Law Firm, 1203 West Marion Avenue