

Weekly Highlights Report January 29, 2021



Florida's Harborside Hometown

City Manager

- **City Manager Column** – Welcome back to all of our part-time residents. With the influx of those who make their second home in Punta Gorda comes a variety of questions about why things are done a certain way or why they have changed. I'll focus on two of the most frequently asked questions of the week.

The first question comes in almost daily in a variety of ways and can be summed up by saying, "The election is over, why doesn't the city make people take their political signs and flags down"? I'll start with a brief history. At the March 18 Council meeting Council voted to not enforce regulations for signs on residential lots in the right of way or otherwise until such time as the sign ordinance was amended to reflect content neutral language. City Council and staff had/have been advised by our City Attorney that our new Sign Code, including flags, must be content neutral or the City risks exposure to litigation under Section 1983 of the United States Code. The new sign code will be presented to Planning Commission on Jan. 25 and City Council in February with the hopes to have the code fully implemented by the end of March. City Council has the ability to regulate the number of signs or flags on a property, the size of the signs, and even location regarding right-of-way, but not what is actually printed on the sign. All this to say that the city does not have the authority to force people to remove political signs unless they aren't properly sized or there are more than allowed on the property.



The second question that has come across my desk lately is some variation of, "Why aren't the other four nets up on the Pickleball Court at Gilchrist Park"? The city does not plan to reopen discussions about allowing the use of portable nets or reopening more courts for pickleball play at this time at Gilchrist Park. City Council reduced the number of courts to four when PicklePlex® was opened and had a sound barrier installed to mitigate the noise which has resulted in less impact on the surrounding neighborhood. This decision included banning the use of portable nets on the pickleball and tennis courts.

The final topic I'll touch on, the COVID-19 vaccine situation, doesn't have an easy answer. The city unfortunately does not regulate distribution or provision of the vaccine at any level. We do know that as the only incorporated city in Charlotte County, we represent approximately 12% of the County, and that more than 68% of our residents are over the age of 65, the most vulnerable and at-risk population. While we may not be the largest County, we definitely top the charts with a median age of 66.9. Punta Gorda has the second oldest demographic in the country according to census data, second only to The Villages. Our residents have been hugely affected by the pandemic, many not leaving their homes for several months.

This has affected not only our residents, but it has had a huge effect on our local area businesses and restaurants as a result of quarantining. The City of Punta Gorda and Charlotte County need a greater supply of COVID-19 vaccine and are working to insure this information stays in front of the decision makers regulating vaccine distribution. Our staff stands ready to support distribution and provision of the vaccine if/when given the opportunity.

- **State of the City** – On behalf of the entire City Council Mayor Matthews delivered the State of the City address to members and guests of the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce. The presentation can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga0UNqMYInA&t=276s>.
- **City Council Meeting** – City Council will meet on Feb. 3 at 9 a.m. at the Historic City Hall. Some of the items of interest include:
 - Laishley Park Playground Options
 - Participation in 2021 Legislative Session
 - City Attorney Quarterly Litigation Update
 - Wayfinding Signs

The meeting is live streamed on our YouTube Channel [City of Punta Gorda - YouTube](#)



- **Code and Public Works Communication** – Code is not receiving permit requests, code complaints or park rental requests through the website at this time. Public Works is also experiencing similar issues with their online processes. IT is aware of this and has contacted the responsible party with software support at Granicus, our provider, but it has not been resolved at this time. This has been an issue for approximately 2-3 weeks, so if you have not received a response from staff please contact pgcode@CityofPuntaGordaFL.com or call (941) 575-3352. For Public Works requests please contact jdaumann@CityofPuntaGordaFL.com or call (941) 575-5050. Text My Gov can also be used to report issues in the City by texting hi to (941) 347-0747 and following the prompts.

Upcoming Events

- Charlotte Harbor Event Center, 75 Taylor St. For additional information, visit <https://www.charlotteharborecc.com/events>
- Jan. 30, Smuggler's Chili, Beer & Blues Festival, Marketplace property, 115 Tamiami Tr. For additional information, visit [http://www.smugglersevents.com./](http://www.smugglersevents.com/)
- Feb. 6, Punta Gorda Chamber City Wide Garage Sale, 1133 Bal Harbor Blvd. For additional information, visit <https://puntagordachamber.com/calendar-events/>
- Feb. 6 and 7, The Invitational at Punta Gorda Arts & Craft Show, Gilchrist Park, 400 W Retta Esplanade. For additional information, visit <https://daniellesblueribbonevents.com/>
- Feb. 7, Local Ladies Social Network Vendor Craft Fair, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St. For additional information visit, <https://www.ilsnevents.com/>
- Feb. 12-14, Big Boy Toyz Expo, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, 75 Taylor St. For additional information, visit <https://www.charlotteharborecc.com/events>
- Feb. 27, Boys & Girls Club Farm to Table Fundraiser, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St. For additional information visit, <https://www.bgcofcc.org/events>
- Feb. 28, Charlotte County Veg Fest, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St. For additional information visit, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/charlotte-county-veg-fest-2021-2nd-annual-tickets-97988661725>

Building

- **Unlicensed Contracting** – Beware of hiring someone found using the following methods:
 - On-line websites
 - Phone sales calls
 - Door to door salespeople (Note that door to door sales are not permitted within the Punta Gorda city limits)

These individuals often prey on the elderly. There appears to be a network of people in different aspects of work, such as, air conditioning, roofing, paint, water conditioning sales, etc., that specifically depend on websites, phone, and door to door sales to conduct their business. These individuals will often spend a lot of time with a potential customer in attempts to gather your personal information and will employ high-pressure salespeople who will not leave until a contract is signed. If you feel pressured, advise them to leave. If they refuse or you feel threatened, call the Punta Gorda Police Dept. at (941) 639-4111 or 911. Please note that not all on-line, phone sales, and door to door sales representatives are unregistered, instructions for verification are located below.

- All Contractors & Sub-Contractors must be registered in the City of Punta Gorda prior to performing any work.
- If a bona fide contractor has a Punta Gorda Certificate of Competency, they can obtain permits. If they do not, they must obtain the Certificate of Competency prior to working or being issued a permit.
- Residents are encouraged to contact the City of Punta Gorda Building Staff prior to hiring your contractors. A simple call (941) 575-3324 or email to licensing@pgorda.us prior to signing a contract will ensure that you are hiring a properly registered contractor.
- Report what you believe to be unlicensed activity to (941) 575-3324.

Code

- **Pet Waste Cleanup** – Staff would like to remind our residents and visitors to be good and responsible neighbors and canine owners and pick up after your canine from any street, sidewalk, swale, bike path, park area or any other public property or private property not owned by the canine owner/handler. The City's entire Pooper Scooper Code can be viewed at <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/home/showpublisheddocument?id=1409>, Sec. 5-2.
- **Signs in the Residential Zoning Districts** – At the Jan. 6 City Council meeting, Council reaffirmed that there will be no enforcement of the sign regulations for signs on residential lots in the Right of Way or otherwise until such time as the sign ordinance is amended and adopted. This includes political signs/flags.

Lot Mowing Program

- The City will begin a new mowing and trimming cycle on Feb. 15

Urban Design

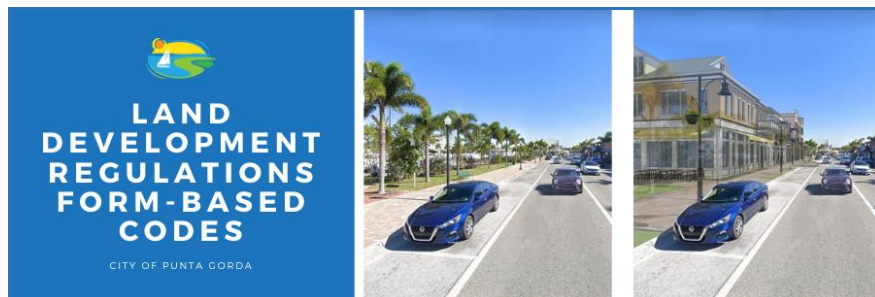
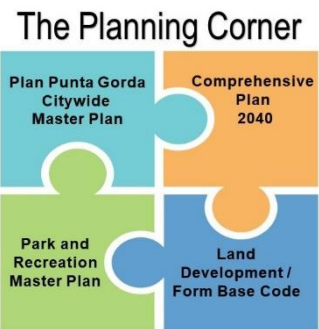
- **Walking Tour Downtown Fort Myers** – Urban Design staff attended a walking tour in Downtown Fort Myers as part of a continuing educational program hosted by the Florida Planning and Zoning Association (FPZA). The walking tour focused on the ongoing residential development project that is replacing the former site of a K-Mart anchored shopping center that was demolished in the early 2000's. The new residential development known as West End at City Walk is a mid-rise (4 –story) residential apartment development with associated community amenities and parking garage. This development is right across the street from a Publix shopping center and is within a 5 minute walk of the lively Fort Myers River District (historic downtown).

One of the interesting aspects of this luxury rental apartment development is that there is a separate rental fee charged of \$20 per month per vehicle which advantages “car-lite” households that have fewer automobiles. With abundant shopping, dining, entertainment, and employment options within walking distance living life outside the car is likely to be an attractive alternative for some future residents. Electric vehicle connections for a separate fee will also be available on site.

- **Whitaker College of Engineering Partnership** – As part of a partnership, that began in 2015, with the Whitaker College of Engineering at Florida Gulf Coast University, Urban Design staff serves as a mentor to students during their Senior Engineering Design Course. This course is structured as a mini-thesis where groups of students work in teams as mock engineering firms on sample projects provided by the engineering, construction, and governmental entities across Southwest Florida. This semester a group of FGCU students will be working on a proposal for streetscape improvements for Nesbit Street from E Virginia Ave to Lashley Park. Items discussed at the student project kick-off meeting and site walk included, utilities locations, speed management/traffic calming, parking, landscape, decorative streetlights, and enhanced sidewalks and crosswalks. This year a professional engineer from Weiler Engineering in Punta Gorda will assist City staff in mentoring the students during the semester.

Planning Corner

- **Land Development Regulation Presentation** – Please join City Manager Greg Murray and Mitchell Austin, Chief Planner, Feb. 10 at 10:00 a.m. via [Zoom](#) for a discussion on the proposed reforms to Land Development Regulations and implementation of Form Based Codes to modernize the rules for development in our City. These proposed reforms are a result of the City Wide Charrette held in spring 2018, and will provide the basis of our Comprehensive Plan for the next 15-20 years. You will have an opportunity to make comments or ask questions via the chat feature on Zoom. The Zoom link will be available at [PGICA.org](#). You do not need a Zoom account to log in but can attend by following the link or putting in the meeting ID at Zoom.us and clicking on Join a Meeting. We recommend you login 3-5 minutes prior to the start time. Registration is not required, and the presentation is free. Have your voice heard for Punta Gorda’s future!



For more information, please contact Mitchell Austin, Chief Planner, by phone (941-575-3335) or email (MAustin@CityofPuntaGordaFL.com). Topic: Punta Gorda Comprehensive Plan Time: Feb 10, 2021 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada) Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83201194457> Meeting ID: 832 0119 4457 Passcode: 575912 One tap mobile +13126266799,,83201194457#,,,,*575912# US (Chicago) +16465588656,,83201194457#,,,,*575912# US (New York)

Public Works

Administration

- **Citizens' Academy Fire Department Session** - The Fire Department session of 2021 Citizens' Academy was a huge success. The evening involved a presentation highlighting the resources and capabilities of the department. Participants were given some hands on education with fire/EMS tools and gear. Participants were also given the opportunity to put out a live fire! Another area of interest was the historic mural painted on the Firehouse wall. The highlight of the evening was a treat to "Fire House Chili" prepared by Fire Department staff.



Canal Maintenance

- **Seawall Assessment** –City staff continues the Annual Seawall Assessment during low tide periods until Feb. 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 four projects completed in Punta Gorda Isles. There are 26 seawall replacement projects scheduled for Punta Gorda Isles. There are three seawall replacement projects currently under construction and one project completed 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 20 locations.
 - Crews manufactured 30 (10' ft. each) seawall panels.
 - Crews patched/repaired 88' linear feet of seawall cap and seams.

Engineering

- **City Wide Drainage Swale Regrading** – Work on the swale regrading program with JRL Underground Inc. is underway in the Burnt Store Isles subdivision on Licata Court. Following Licata Court work will move to the corner of South Crete Drive and Tripoli Boulevard.
- **Paving Program Street Resurfacing** – The contractor has completed 4.25 miles of mill and resurface work. Permanent striping placement is pending. For complete list of streets [Paving Program January 2021](#). For information contact Linda Sposito at (941) 575-5060.
- **Palm Avenue between Chasteen Street to McGregor Street Road Closure** - Utility staff and equipment continue excavation for the removal of old water and sewer lines replacement with new lines and backfilling. Well point dewatering is also occurring. The Bid Solicitation for contract work consists of; some curb replacements, ADA ramps, crushed concrete road base, asphalt, sand and re-placement of historic street bricks. The entire project is anticipated through April (weather permitting). For information [Engineering | City of Punta Gorda, FL \(punta-gorda.fl.us\)](#) or contact Linda Sposito at (941) 575-5050.
- **Adrienne Street Pier Pile Jackets** - A purchase order has been issued to the contractor. There is a lead time for the materials procurement. Once a timeframe is established the contractor will provide a schedule to complete work. This pier is currently closed to the public and will remain so until work is complete. Dates to be determined.

- **Ponce De Leon Park Seawall Repairs** – The North end of the beach is reopened to the Public. Construction of the sidewalk between the fishing pier and the South end of the beach parking lot is anticipated to be complete during the week of Feb. 5. The beach parking lot will re-open for use during the week of Feb. 8.

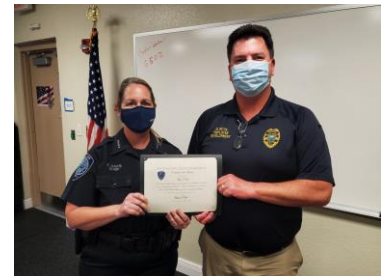


Sanitation

- **Yardwaste Disposal** – A reminder to Residents, the regular yard waste crew does not collect loose piles of yard waste that are larger than a wheelbarrow full. Residents will need to contact Public Works Sanitation at either (941) 575-5050 or pubworks@CityofPuntaGordaFL.com to request bulk collection service of a large yard waste pile. Once a ticket is entered, the yard waste pile will be collected as soon as possible by the City's clamshell truck. Please do not place yard waste piles on vacant lots. Do not place yard waste piles near or under power lines or trees, telephone boxes, mail boxes, fire hydrants, etc. This could impede access to the yard waste materials.

Police

- **Employee of the Quarter** – Employee Development Coordinator Glen Ritta was recognized as the Employee of the Quarter for the last quarter of 2020. Glen was nominated for his outstanding handling of the department's training program during the pandemic. Even with all of the challenges and hardships COVID-19 created for our in-service training academy, the department was able to provide officers with more than 50 hours of in-service training (25% more than has been provided historically). In addition, Glen was able to achieve many of the department's advanced training goals, even while many in-person courses across the state have been cancelled or postponed. Congratulations Glen!
- **Interns** – The Punta Gorda Police Department (PGPD) would like to introduce their interns for the spring 2021 Semester. Maricella Madoo and Dora Scogna are both Forensic Studies majors from Florida Gulf Coast University. During their internships they will have an opportunity to gain experience in most aspects of the police department through the shadowing of department members and participation in agency projects. We are excited to have them for the next few months as part of the PGPD team!



- **Police Officer Testing** – The police department is currently accepting applications for the position of Police Officer. Testing will be held on Apr. 19 with oral board interviews scheduled on Apr. 20 and Apr. 21. Currently we are only accepting applications from candidates who are currently certified, Equivalency of Training (EOT) eligible, current law enforcement academy students, or those with prior experience in a law enforcement related field.
- **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 Apr. 26.
- **Volunteers in Policing (VIP) Program:** The police department has an active and diverse volunteer program including vehicle patrol, bike patrol, marine patrol, community services, and more. We are always looking for dedication volunteers. Members of the community interested in volunteering are encouraged to contact the Volunteer Staff Coordinator at (941) 575-5536 or by emailing vip@pgorda.us.
- **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 Vaccines** – The state of Florida on Friday launched a COVID-19 vaccine appointment pre-registration website, myvaccine.fl.gov. Eligible registered users will be contacted when appointments become available. Vaccine supply remains limited. Appointments may not be available for several weeks.

The following populations of Florida residents are currently eligible to receive the vaccine:

- Individuals 65 years of age and older
- Long-term care facility residents and staff
- Healthcare personnel with direct patient contact
- Individuals deemed to be extremely vulnerable to COVID-19

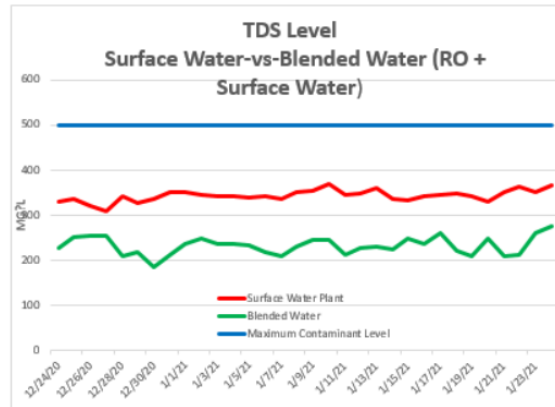
Users who already registered by phone do not need to register online and will receive a call to set up an appointment when vaccines are available. Eligible residents who do not have a computer or access to a computer may pre-register for a vaccine appointment by calling 866-200-9160 (or 833-990-3549 for TTY users). Those currently ineligible to receive a vaccine may sign up to receive updates to learn when they will be eligible to receive a vaccine. Second dose appointments will be provided when the first dose is administered. The Department of Health vaccine location in Charlotte County is Harold Avenue Regional Park, 23400 Harold Avenue., Port Charlotte.

Florida residency requirements:

- Valid Florida driver license or Florida identification card or
- Two of the following items:
 - A deed, mortgage, monthly mortgage statement, mortgage payment booklet or residential rental or lease agreement.
 - A utility hookup or work order not more than two months old.
 - A utility bill not more than two months old.
 - Mail from a bank or other financial institution, including checking, savings, or investment account statements, not more than two months old.
 - Mail from a government agency not more than two months old.

Utilities

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



Water Treatment Plant Operations

- 51.5 MG delivered to the distribution system with a 7.4 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 Jan. 2020 .90” Jan. 2021 0.20”
- 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 116 ppm
- TDS for Jan. 28– Current 250 ppm, Low 250 ppm, High 661 ppm, 12 Year Avg. 478 ppm
- Reservoir Jan. 28 – Current 5.11’, Record Low 4.88’, Record High 6.35, 55 Year Avg. 5.20’

City Clerk

- The City Council adopted the following meeting schedule for the remainder of calendar year 2021 (* denotes a change to the regular meeting schedule):

Feb. 3 and Feb. 17
Mar. 3 and Mar. 17
April 7 and April 21
May 5 and May 19
June 2 and June 16
July 7 and July 14*
Aug. 25*
Sept. 8* and Sept. 22*
Oct. 6 and Oct. 20
Nov. 3 and Nov. 17
Dec. 1*

Meeting agendas and minutes are available on the City’s website at www.CityofPuntaGordaFL.com or from the City Clerk’s Office, 326 West Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda FL 33950 or by calling (941) 575-3369.

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.
- **Code Enforcement Board** – Meets the fourth Wednesday at 9:00 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.
- **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.
- **Punta Gorda Isles Canal Advisory Committee** – Meets the third Monday at 1:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers. Must be a resident of Punta Gorda Isles. Seven member board. Three year terms – maximum of three terms. Makes recommendations to City Council on effective maintenance of existing canals, waterways and navigable channels within the district, together with the maintenance and reconstruction of seawalls. Holds public hearings and makes final decision on petitions for special permit to the provisions of Section 6-6(c) of the City Code.
- **Historic Preservation Advisory Board** – (Two regular) Meets the fourth Thursday at 9:00 a.m. in City Council Chambers. Must be City resident. Seven member board with two alternate members. Two members must reside within the Historic District. Three year terms, maximum of three terms. Identifies for the City Council historically significant structures and sites that should be considered for designation as a “Local Historic Landmark” or be nominated for listing on the Florida Master Site File and the National Register of Historic Places. Makes recommendations of the policies for the protection of historically significant structures and sites. Makes recommendations to staff with regard to certificates of appropriateness for any demolition, variance, sign or relocation of structures. Promotes public awareness of historic preservation.

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:
 - Total Home Watch LLC, 246 Freeport Court
 - Mint Thai Cuisine, 209 West Olympia Avenue