

Weekly Highlights Report Oct. 21, 2022

City Manager

- City Manager Column** – This week, I had the privilege of promoting Holden Gibbs to the position of Fire Chief for the Punta Gorda Fire Department (PGFD). Chief Gibbs earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Morehead State University. Holden started volunteering with Punta Gorda Fire in 1998. He enjoyed it so much that he returned to College and became EMT and Fire Certified. After volunteering for two years, he was hired full-time by the city. Chief Gibbs has been with the city for 21 years and ten months, starting in December 2000, as a firefighter I (entry-level position). Holden earned the rank of Fire Station Officer in October 2005. This position was later changed in December 2006 to Lieutenant. In May 2013, Chief Gibbs was promoted to Fire Operations Chief, a position he held until his promotion to Interim Fire Chief in May 2022. Holden has been happily married for 22 years and is blessed with three wonderful children. When he is not at work, he enjoys spending as much time as possible with his family, boating, and coaching little league baseball.



I have often said that I like to see how someone in an interim leadership position performs under adverse or challenging times before determining that they are the right person for the promotion. A hurricane wasn't precisely what I had in mind as that challenge, but Chief Gibbs has risen to the occasion. He has led our city team through pre-storm preparations and post-storm recovery efforts.

Keeping with the Fire Department theme, Fire Prevention Month is observed annually every October. Jennifer Molnar serves as our Fire Marshal and encourages residents to take the following information to heart. Fire is fast! It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill your home. Fire is dark. Fire starts brightly but quickly produces black smoke and complete darkness. Fire is hot. Room temperature can rise to over 1000 degrees F at eye level. Smoke and toxic gases kill more people than flames do. Have a home fire escape plan for everyone in your home. Some people may need help waking up or getting outside; plan for your abilities. Knowing two ways out of every room is essential to your home fire escape plan. Have a clear path to your exits. Have an outside meeting place safe from your home where everyone should meet. Call 9-1-1 or the fire department from outside your home.

The Fire Marshal with the City of Punta Gorda Fire Department is highly recommending that no open burning be conducted at this time. This advisement means any outdoor fires and open burning of debris or items needing to be disposed of after Hurricane Ian. This would exclude attended barbecue cooking equipment appliances. A great deal of combustible material in and around our city could ignite quickly. If anyone has any questions, they can contact the City of Punta Gorda Fire Marshal at (941) 575-5529.

The PGFD has a wealth of information regarding fire safety available on the city's website at www.cityofpuntagordafl.com. I look forward to the continued growth and development of the PGFD under the leadership of Chief Gibbs. *City Manager Greg Murray at citymgr@cityofpuntagordafl.com or by calling the main office line at (941) 575-3302.*

- **Halloween in the City of Punta Gorda** – After much discussion and careful consideration, the City of Punta Gorda is encouraging residents to make alternate plans this Halloween. Hurricane Ian has left the City with a number of areas that no longer have functioning street lights. There are also many intersections missing traffic signals or stop signs, and an abundance of debris throughout City neighborhoods. Streets will not be closed and the City Hall Annex will not be offering trick or treating. We look forward to welcoming residents and visitors back to a traditional Halloween experience in 2023.
- **Veteran's Day Parade** – The parade is canceled due to current conditions along the parade route.
- **Commercial Sanitation Routes** – Commercial routes officially began on Mon., Oct. 10. Staff is experiencing major issues with commercial properties placing construction debris inside and/or around the dumpster. This is making it extremely difficult for staff complete the commercial routes. We ask that businesses separate regular trash and construction debris and provide a clear space around the dumpsters. In order to safely empty the dumpster, staff requires at least a 5-foot perimeter around the dumpster. Bags of regular trash must be placed inside the dumpster and not on the ground in and around the dumpster. Construction debris is strictly prohibited from being placed in or near the dumpster and is not collected by the City's sanitation department.
- **Odor Similar to Sewer Gas** – The City of Punta Gorda's Waste Water Collection System is up and running with 100% effectiveness. With the restoration of power to the service area, all lift stations are back on the FPL grid. Any minor issues that arise are quickly resolved by the City's dedicated hard-working staff. There have not been any raw sewage spills in Punta Gorda Isles or any of the City of Punta Gorda neighborhoods in recent weeks. The smell that residents are noticing is decaying vegetation. 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. Another source of odor can be the P-trap in your home. Simple advice to eliminate this odor is available at [A Dry P-Trap Might be Why Your Bathroom Smells - Water Wise Plumbing \(waterwiselv.com\)](https://www.waterwiselv.com/why-your-bathroom-smells-like-sewer-gas/).

Urban Design

Upcoming Events

- Charlotte Harbor Event Center, 75 Taylor St. For additional information, visit <https://www.charlotteharborecc.com/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.charlottecountycommerce.org/events/calendar>
- Military Heritage Museum events can be accessed at [Upcoming Events – Military Heritage Museum](https://militaryheritagemuseum.com/upcoming-events/)
- Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association, 2001 Shreve Street; for all community events and class information, visit <https://pgica.org/>.
- The Visual Arts Center events can be accessed at [Welcome to the Visual Arts Center of Punta Gorda, FL \(visualartcenter.org\)](https://visualartcenter.org/)
- October 22, Blues, Brews, and BBQ, History Park, 501 Shreve St; for more information, contact jrwright@puntagorda-chamber.com
- November 12, Lighting of the village, Fishermen's Village, 1200 W Retta Esplanade; for more information, contact kburnam@fishermensvillage.com
- Nov. 19-20, Season Opener Arts & Craft Show, Gilchrist Park, 400 W Retta esplanade; for more information, contact mypromo@mypromotions.com

Lot Mowing Program

- The lot mowing crew is scheduled to resume operations on Oct. 26. Please keep in mind that some of the lots on the lot mowing program may not be accessible due to damage or debris. Once the inaccessible lots are cleaned, the lot mowing crew will complete the missed lots.

Planning

- **Planning Corner – Unlicensed Contractors**

DID YOU KNOW?

Allowing an unlicensed person to perform work on your property puts you, as the owner, at risk?

- Unlicensed contractors are unable to obtain workers compensation coverage or general liability insurance
- Unlicensed contractors are unable to obtain permits for the work they are doing.
- Should injuries occur at the site, the owner may be liable for the injuries.
- Any work performed without a permit, may not be covered by your insurance company in the event of future claims.

Any person who does work without the correct licensure during a state of emergency may be charged with a felony?

- Per Florida Statute 489.127(2)(c): "Any unlicensed person who commits a violation of subsection (1) during the existence of a State of Emergency declared by executive order of the Governor commits a felony of the third degree." A State of Emergency was declared by Gov. Ron DeSantis on Sept. 23, 2022, as a result of Hurricane Ian.

This applies to all types of construction?

- Not just that which is associated with repairs due to a tropical storm or hurricane. and is in addition to the regular penalties incurred by unlicensed individuals acting in the capacity of a contractor.

It is easy to find out how to work in the City?

- Anyone coming into the area wanting to work as a contractor should first contact the City of Punta Gorda Building Department for more information at (941) 575- 3324. Note: This applies to all licensed contractors – all contractors working in the county must register with the City prior to contracting for work
- For more information about whether a person is licensed and registered as a contractor in the City of Punta Gorda, or to notify us of possible unlicensed activity, please contact the City Building Department at or visit myfloridalicense.com or [Business Tax Receipt/Contractor Competency Registration \(aspgov.com\)](http://Business Tax Receipt/Contractor Competency Registration (aspgov.com)). Zoning, Code Compliance and Building For the safety of our residents, during this recovery time after Hurricane Ian, staff would like to remind everyone that unlicensed contracting is a First-Degree Felony during a declared State of Emergency, Florida Statute 489.13. If you want to check if a contractor is properly licensed or registered with the City of Punta Gorda, please contact the Building Division at (941) 575-3324. If you suspect work is being performed by an unlicensed contractor, please call the Police Department's non-emergency number, (941) 639-4111.



Public Works

Canal Maintenance

- **Hurricane Ian** – Canal maintenance crews with the assistance of Engineering have performed and completed their field assessments. Maintenance crews have staked off damaged sites with erosion issues. We are currently reviewing the data collected and post-processing information (prioritizing sites, and creating meaningful spreadsheets and maps). Our collected data will be submitted to the

Finance Dept., which in turn will provide the data to FEMA. A project manager from FEMA will be assigned to our project and meet with City staff to discuss whether or not the City will receive assistance from FEMA. If the City gets approval from FEMA, at that time FEMA will want to perform its own inspection and create detailed estimates for each damaged site. A City representative will be part of this field process due to the quantities being negotiated on-site at that time. These quantities are used for bidding on federalized contracts in accordance with federal standards. This process is expected to take months. For instance, Hurricane Irma arrived on Sept. 10, 2017, and bids were opened on January 8, 2018. Once the contracts are secured then the seawall replacement program can begin. From our Hurricane Irma experience, FEMA will not reimburse the City for seawall failures if a site was scheduled for seawall replacement. FEMA considers those seawalls as already failed. The City has given the approval for the current seawall replacement contractor – Marine Contracting Group (MCG) to start replacing seawalls identified in the FY 2022/2023 Seawall Replacement Work Program that are classified as Severe Damage – High Priority during the assessment. There are four sites classified as severe (approximately 750 LF) and one site that is borderline severe with minimal erosion issues (approximately 300 LF). MCG has started the panel staging process and is expected to begin the wall replacement work the week of Oct 24. MCG is currently working with contacting those property owners to help prepare their properties for construction. MCG has also started contacting residents that were scheduled for seawall replacements this fiscal year and letting them know their project would be delayed.

Additional Points of Interest:

- Stabilizing erosion: Property owners **are responsible** for stabilizing their property from erosion. A step-by-step process on how to do this has been advertised on the website and shared on FB, emailed, and handed out to several individuals. Information on stabilizing soil near seawall failures can be found at [Hurricane Ian Recovery Update | City of Punta Gorda, FL \(punta-gorda.fl.us\)](https://www.punta-gorda.fl.us/hurricane-ian-recovery-update). This is meant as a guide for what helped in many cases during the Irma seawall failures. Property owners are encouraged to contact engineering firms and contractors to assist with erosion should additional action be necessary to protect your property.
- Channel Markers – In conjunction with IT we worked to set up a Survey 123 report/process to inspect and assess channel markers. Our police department marine patrol unit will be assisting with the assessment. All damaged or missing channel markers will be added to the request for FEMA reimbursement.
- Removal of canal debris will be handled by the on-site contractor as the Canal Maintenance vessel was damaged in the storm.
- Boaters Alliance has created a Dock Match program to connect residents that have available dock space with residents that need a place to temporarily store their boats. This information may be found on the city's website under Hurricane Ian Recovery Updates.
- The Canal Maintenance pole barn collapsed, steel for seawall panel production was stored under the pole barn. Crews were able to remove steel that was stored on the exterior of the pole barn and start forming seawall panels. Seawall panel production is scheduled to resume the week of Oct 24.

Engineering

- **Debris Hauler** – The debris hauler has removed 55,000 CY of vegetative debris in the first two weeks of work. Collection trucks are running in all six collection zones. Additional trucks will be added this weekend. Work in the parks has begun.
- **Harborwalk Two Parking and Uplands Improvement Project** – The contractor continues: to excavate material for the future parking lot in front of the Bayfront YMCA, placement of diagonal parking curb installation, and backfill with crushed concrete in preparation for street bricks. Sidewalk formwork, concrete, and finishing continue with the park and side street connections.

- **Boca Grande Drainage Improvement Project** – Design work continues. Coordination with Southwest Florida Water Management grant staff for water quality improvement funding. Staff also continues to work with the DEO CDBG MIT grant funding staff.

Right-of-Way

- **Damage Assessments** – The department damage assessments are ongoing throughout the City. The main focus for sign repair is the critical signs such as stop signs, one-way signs, and do not enter signs. We are awaiting supplies to make the permanent repairs. We are also assessing the damage to the decorator lights and sidewalks so that those repair process may also begin.

Facilities

- **Downed Poles** – All of the downed light poles from hurricane Ian have been isolated. Facilities are now proceeding with bypassing all of the downed poles so that the rest of the lights will work except the ones that need to be replaced. Facilities have also been securing electrical lines in the areas of buildings that have sustained damage. The parking garage stairwells are now open to the public. The parking garage elevator is currently non-operational as the elevator shaft needed to be pumped out and the operational circuit board needs to be replaced.

Parks and Grounds

- **Clean-up**– Our first pass of the park's vegetative debris, and cul-de-sac debris has been piled up for the haulers. We received assistance from a volunteer group with cutting trees and cleaning up at Hounds on Henry and Ponce Park. Mowing routes have been resumed by the City and contractor forces. All of the park's restroom facilities have been properly cleaned and are ready for the parks to reopened once deemed safe.

Fire

- **Time to Say Thanks** – You may have noticed the Punta Gorda Fire Department hasn't had many updates in the Weekly Highlights the past few weeks. We have just been overwhelming busy, but have many expressions of gratitude that need to be publicly shared. The fire department administrative staff would like to thank and recognize its staff for an absolute amazing job throughout the hurricane recovery process. Many of the crews did not leave for five days straight to ensure the city was safe, roads were accessible, hazardous debris was mitigated and multiple crews were available for an increased emergency call volume. Our first responders are used to hugging and sharing goodbyes with their families to perform a 24 hour tour of duty here in the city to keep us all safe but, five days was a significant sacrifice made by our crews while also not being able to attend to their own homes and family needs. This is the life we chose and were proud to serve our great city. Thank you to all our crews who stepped up in a time of need and ultimately made a big difference!



Police

- **Beware of Illegal Contractors** – With the demand for home repairs high after the hurricane, illegal contracting becomes a serious problem. Please beware and ensure that any contractor you hire is properly licensed. You can verify a license through the Department of Business and Professional Regulation by visiting www.myfloridalicense.com or by calling 1 (850) 487-1395.

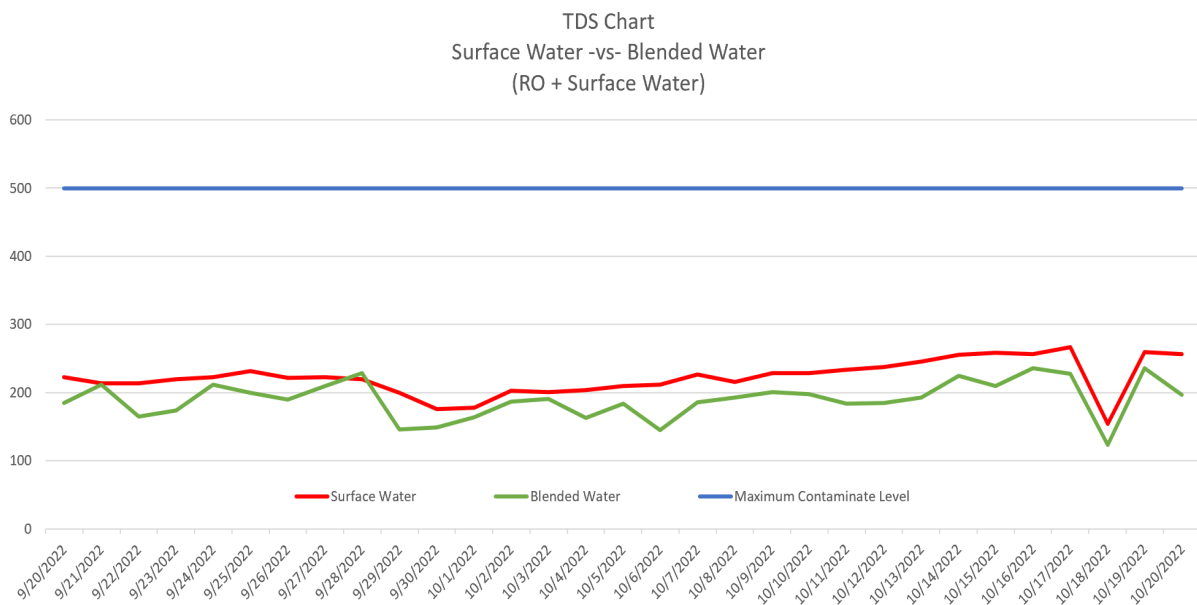


Hire Licensed Contractors Only
Residents can verify contractor licenses at <https://puntegov.aspgov.com/Click2GovOL/index.html> or call the City of Punta Gorda Building Department at (941) 575-3324



Utilities

- R.O. Plant



Water Treatment Plant Operations

- 38.8 MG delivered to the distribution system with a 5.5 MG daily average
- Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority Emergency Interconnect – Receiving 1000 gallons per minute from the new Interconnect (Phase 1 Pipeline). Sending 1000 gallons per minute from the tank on 17 (Phase 1A Pipeline).
- Rainfall Oct. 2021 .90" Oct. 2022 0.00"
- Hardness is a measurement of calcium and magnesium ions naturally occurring in the raw water. Currently "slightly hard" – Grains of Hardness 7 ppm – Total hardness 119 ppm
- TDS Oct. 20 – Current 197 ppm, Low 197 ppm, High 433 ppm, 12 Year Avg. 333 ppm
- Reservoir Oct. 20 – Current 5.50', Record Low 5.00', Record High, 6.14' 57 Year Average 5.32'

Wastewater Treatment

- **Maintenance** – Team members continue to mow and trim the plant and remote station grounds.
- **Operations** – The average daily flow for the past week was 3.05 million gallons for a total of 21.4 million gallons of wastewater being treated this week.

City Clerk

Current Board and Committee Vacancies

If you are interested in serving on a board or committee, please visit our online portal to complete an online application at <https://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/government/boards-committees>

- **Planning Commission** – (one alternate) Meets the 4th Monday at 2 p.m. in City Council Chambers. Must be City resident. Seven member board with two alternate members. Three year terms – maximum of three terms. Makes recommendations to City Council with regard to amending, extending or adding to the comprehensive plan for the physical development of the City, platting or subdividing land within the City and adopting and amending a zoning ordinance.
- **Burnt Store Isles Canal Advisory Committee** – (three regular) Meets the 2nd Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers. Must be resident of Burnt Store Isles. Five 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 of Ordinances
- **Code Enforcement Board** – (two regular and two alternate) Meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday at 9 a.m. in City Council Chambers. City residency required. Seven-member board with two alternate members. Three-year terms, maximum of three terms OR partial term plus two more terms. Financial disclosure required.
- **Utility Advisory Board** – (two regular) Meets monthly on the fourth Monday at 9 a.m. in City Council Chambers. City residency required. 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 drawings and specifications.
- **Punta Gorda Isles Canal Advisory Committee** – (two regular) 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** – (Three regular) Meets the 4th Thursday 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. 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 archaeological preservation and its community benefits.
- **Board of Zoning Appeals** – (one regular and two alternates) Meets monthly on the fourth Tuesday at 4 p.m. in City Council Chambers. City residency is required. Seven-member board with two alternate members. Three-year terms, maximum of three terms or partial term plus two more terms. Financial disclosure required. Makes recommendations to City Council on variances to City Code.
- **Utility Advisory Board** – (two regular) Meets monthly on the fourth Monday at 9 a.m. in City Council Chambers. City residency required. 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 drawings and 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:

- ABC Supply Co, Inc., 250 Carmalita
- Burnt Store Title, 1133 Bal Harbor Blvd, #1131
- Connor & Gaskins Unlimited, 357 W Marion Ave
- CX Graphix LLC, 318 Tamiami Trail, #221
- Edward D Jones & Co, 311 Taylor Street
- Gotcha Covered, 265 E Marion Avenue
- KKMart, 221 Venezia Court
- Mumme Jiu Jitsu, 3941 Tamiami Trail #3179
- Rivers and Tides Outfitters, 109 E Olympia Avenue, #305
- True Blue Pool Supply, 2511 Vasco Street, #112
- Wal Tech LLC, 524 W Virginia

If you mailed in a check for renewal of your Business Tax Receipt but did not provide a self-addressed stamped envelope or if you paid over the phone and have not yet received your renewed Receipt, please email renewals@cityofpuntagordafl.com.