

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT May 5, 2023

City Manager

- Although it seems too soon to be thinking about hurricane readiness, the storms last Sunday morning and the associated winds were reminders that it is time to get ready for severe weather. This past week was designated Hurricane Preparedness Week by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Residents and city workers are encouraged to have hurricane preparedness top of mind. The city makes many preparations in advance of the season to protect our assets and respond and recover as quickly as possible from any storm situation. Residents also need to take similar precautions. All residents must take action now to prepare for hurricane season 2023.



For some, this will be the first time they must prepare for a potential storm in Punta Gorda. Others will recall the devastation of Charley, Irma, and Ian and their impact on the city, homes, and businesses. Simple preparations can be done well in advance of a storm. Share your contact information with neighbors and close friends to ensure you have a way to communicate after the storm. Put your storm shutters up and keep your trees and shrubs trimmed. Create a weatherproof box containing all essential insurance policies, contractor phone numbers, bank accounts, investment accounts, utility company accounts, etc., so you have something to start with after the storm. Ensure sunblock, insect repellent, first aid, and tire plug kits are on hand. Purchase bleach and extra cleaning supplies. Buy extra garbage bags, toilet paper, and paper towels. Fill your grill's propane tanks for cooking during a power outage. Have bottled water and non-perishable food for each household member, including your pets. In the event that you need to evacuate, have a plan in place of where you will go and what you will need to bring with you. And don't wait until the last minute! There are often long lines at gas pumps when a storm is imminent. Shelters fill up quickly, so be prepared in advance. Keeping your car's gas tank full is also recommended during hurricane season.

The city website has a variety of printable publications that can aid in resident preparation available at <https://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/residents/emergency-preparedness>. While you are on the city website, sign up for Alert Punta Gorda. This service notifies residents of any weather or other related emergency. You can receive alerts on your home or business phone, mobile phone, email, text message, or more based on your settings.

A Home Hardening Sales Tax Exemption, provided by the State of Florida, is still in place through June 30, 2024. This allows Florida residents to purchase impact-resistant windows, doors, and garage doors without paying sales tax. There will also likely be a Sales Tax Holiday for Disaster Preparedness later this month into early June. We will inform residents of the time frame as soon as the dates are confirmed.

Prepare for the worst and hope for the best as we enter the time of the year when weather dominates our plans. Unfortunately, we know all too well what havoc a hurricane can create. A little preparation now will make coping with hurricane precautions and impacts easier as we get into hurricane season. *Readers may reach City Manager Greg Murray at citymgr@cityofpuntagordafl.com or call (941) 575-3302.*

- **Did you ever wonder what the blue V's on the City of Punta Gorda streets are used for?** – Our Utilities Department started marking valve locations using a thermoplastic blue “V” about four years ago. The Water Distribution Valve Technician Clarence “Ed” Britt came up with the idea as an alternative to marking valve locations with spray paint that would wear away within a year’s time. The base of the “V” points in the direction of the valve and the small arrow shows the direction of water flow that the valve will isolate. Ed has even started to add the small white numbers at the base of the “V” indicating how far from the base of the “V” the valve lid is. Needless to say, Ed’s idea has saved many hours searching for a shut off valves enabling crews to isolate water main breaks more effectively. Thanks Ed!



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.charlottecountychamber.org/events/calendar>
- Military Heritage Museum events can be accessed at Upcoming Events – Military Heritage Museum
- May 5-7, Hibiscus Festival, Gilchrist Park, 400 W Retta Esplanade, for more information [Hibiscus Festival | Hibiscus Festival - Punta Gorda, FL \(thehibiscusfestival.com\)](http://thehibiscusfestival.com)
- May 6, Girls on the Run, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St, for more information contact Kristen.manomat@girlsontherun.org
- May 20, Mental Health Walk, Gilchrist Park, 400 W Retta Esplanade, for more information [Mental Health Awareness Walk Saturday, May 30th | Charlotte Behavioral \(cbhcf.org\)](http://cbhcf.org)
- May 20, Moving Day – Walk for Parkinson's, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St, for more information contact michellemoenning@gmail.com

Urban Design

- **Signs** – As a friendly reminder, unless otherwise provided for in the Sign Code or as approved with a Special Event permit, signs within the public right-of-way, public property, public easements, or structures, including, but not limited to, medians, roundabouts, sidewalks, utility poles and cabinets, streetlight poles, utility/planting strips, traffic control devices/support poles, and street trees are prohibited. Signs found to be in violation will be removed by City staff
- **Planning Corner – Public Schools Facilities Element** Urban Design staff has posted a draft copy of the updated *Public School Facilities Element* on the City’s website. The purpose of the *Public School Facilities Element* is to ensure adequate school facilities are available to current and future residents. This element requires local governments to adopt a school concurrency system that ensures coordination between the City, County, and School Board in planning and permitting development that affects school capacity and utilization rates. The Florida statute mandating the *Public School Facilities Element* also requires the City to update its existing interlocal agreement (a partnership between the City, County, and Charlotte County School Board, that establishes coordination efforts between the agencies) and requires amendments to the existing *Capital Improvements Element* and *Intergovernmental Coordination Element*. All of the data contained in the *Public School Facilities Element* reflects current information and figures. This draft identifies changes in school capacity and facilities since the current Comprehensive Plan was adopted. [City of Punta Gorda Comprehensive Plan \(punta-gorda.fl.us\)](http://punta-gorda.fl.us)



Public Works

- **Channel Marker Replacements** – Channel Marker signs have been received and the contract to install new channel markers will be advertised soon.
- **Canal Maintenance Production** – Canal Maintenance crews filled depressions at 51 locations and manufactured 27 seawall panels.
- **Dockside Dredging** – Property owners that are listed on the Hurricane Ian Seawall Damage list will not be allowed to have dockside dredging performed adjacent to the seawall until the seawall has been repaired. Any dredging along the damaged seawall may cause damage.
- **Stabilizing Erosion** – Just a friendly reminder for property owners to regularly check the condition of their tarps or plastic that is protecting the eroded areas. Tarps and plastic tend to become brittle in the sun and may start falling apart. Our area is still experiencing rain events and plastic will help keep the soil in place preventing further erosion.
- **Canal Maintenance Seawall Failure Update** – The seawall contract has been approved by City Council. A Notice to Proceed (NTP) will be issued soon and the contractors have 20 calendar days to start work. Once schedules are submitted and approved they will be advertised on the website. Approximately 7.25 miles of the seawall were impacted by the storm – 6.50 miles in Punta Gorda Isles and .75 miles in Burnt Store Isles. Failed seawalls have been classified as either HIGH PRIORITY (failed seawall with severe erosion or erosion close to structures); MEDIUM PRIORITY (seawall standing but not functioning with some erosion) and LOW PRIORITY (seawall has minor damage and functioning with little to no erosion). Maps indicating the location and classification can be found on the Canal

Maintenance website. Note: When reviewing the address list on the city's website for seawall failures there are two columns of addresses per page.

- **Canal Debris Cleanup** – After the storm, Public Works received several calls and emails reporting debris in the canals – that information was documented. Since the debris removal process has started, City staff has been working with the community and the contractor verifying the reported debris has been picked up. The contractor is expected to be here for a few more weeks to ensure all the debris has been removed from the canals. The contractor has completed their initial sweep through the canals.
- **FEMA Update** – The City continues to work with FEMA to provide them with the information they are requesting. The City continues to work with FEMA to develop a schedule for inspection. Property owners that have damaged seawalls as a result of Hurricane Ian can expect to see City representatives along with FEMA inspectors walking through their yards to inspect and collect data for the damaged infrastructure.
- **Dock Match Program** – The Punta Gorda and Charlotte Harbor Boaters Alliance has created a program that connects boat owners that need a temporary relocation of their boats with owners that have available dock space. This information can be found at [Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance \(boat2puntagorda.org\)](http://PuntaGordaBoatersAlliance(boat2puntagorda.org)) click on the Dock Match button for information.
- **Vessel Speeds** – Canal Maintenance is asking people to be mindful of the current situation in the canals with seawalls being damaged. City code states that the operation of vessels in the canals shall be Slow Speed Minimum Wake in the waterways within the City limits. The speed and operation in the Ponce Inlet, Pompano Inlet, Bass, and Snook Inlet are Idle Speed and No Wake. Wakes from watercraft can cause additional erosion and damage to seawalls already compromised.

Engineering

- **Hounds on Henry Dog Park** – The improvements to the Dog Park have been completed. The improvements allowed for increased area within both the small and large dog park. Additionally many areas were resodded and the irrigation system was expanded into the new area. Park closures have been posted to be closed from April 24 till May 25 for the continued establishment of the sod that was installed.
- **Swale Regrading** – The swale contractor has completed the swales on North Plum Tree, Scarlet Sage, Panarea Dr., Madrid Blvd, and Tripoli. They will be watering Tripoli for the next 30 days until the sod gets established. They have excavated approximately 21,250 SF of material and re-sodded all areas with sod. The next swale to be re-graded will be on South Crete Ct. They will be excavating approximately 4100 SF of material and re-sodding these areas at the proper elevations. Once South Crete Ct. is completed the next location will be on Narranja St.
- **Ponce de Leon** – The boardwalk project is moving very smoothly. The contractor has finished removing all the handrails from the old boardwalk. They have started to remove the decking and frame work from the original boardwalk. Please take extra caution while driving thru the park due to construction personal and equipment.



Sanitation

- **Appliances and White Goods** – White goods are washing machines, refrigerators, stoves, dryers, water heaters, and similar appliances. The appliances cannot be taken to the County Landfill along with other household trash. These items are collected by the clamshell truck and transferred to a recycling facility. The City handles the collection of these items each week on Fridays. Residents must request a special pick-up at least 24 hours prior to the collection date by calling the Public Works Department (941) 575-5050 or completing the online web request <https://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/government/public-works/sanitation>.
- **Moving Boxes** – The cardboard boxes must be emptied of all debris (plastic and Styrofoam is not allowed). The boxes must be broken down, flattened, and stacked roughly four feet from the recycling container. Residents must request a special pick-up at least 24 hours prior to the collection date by calling the Public Works Department (941) 575-5050 or completing the online web request <https://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us/government/public-works/sanitation>

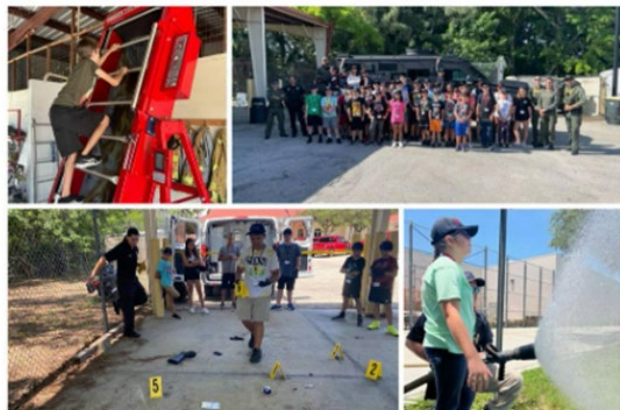
Police

- **Southwest Florida Honor Flight Honor Flight** – The police department's very own Ron Dressler participated in the Southwest Florida Honor Flight this week. Ron, along with other local veteran's, traveled from the Punta Gorda Airport to Washington D.C. for the day to spend time at our nation's veteran memorials. What an amazing way to honor the service of these amazing men and women!
- **Police Officer Testing** – The police department conducts new hire testing continually in order to be prepared for future openings. We are currently accepting applications for the position of Police Officer. We will be holding a virtual testing process in June. Applications must be received by June 26. The written exam will be completed online anytime between June 30 and July 7, with virtual oral board exams conducted via Zoom on July 24. We are currently only accepting applications from candidates who are currently law enforcement certified or Equivalency of Training (EOT) eligible.



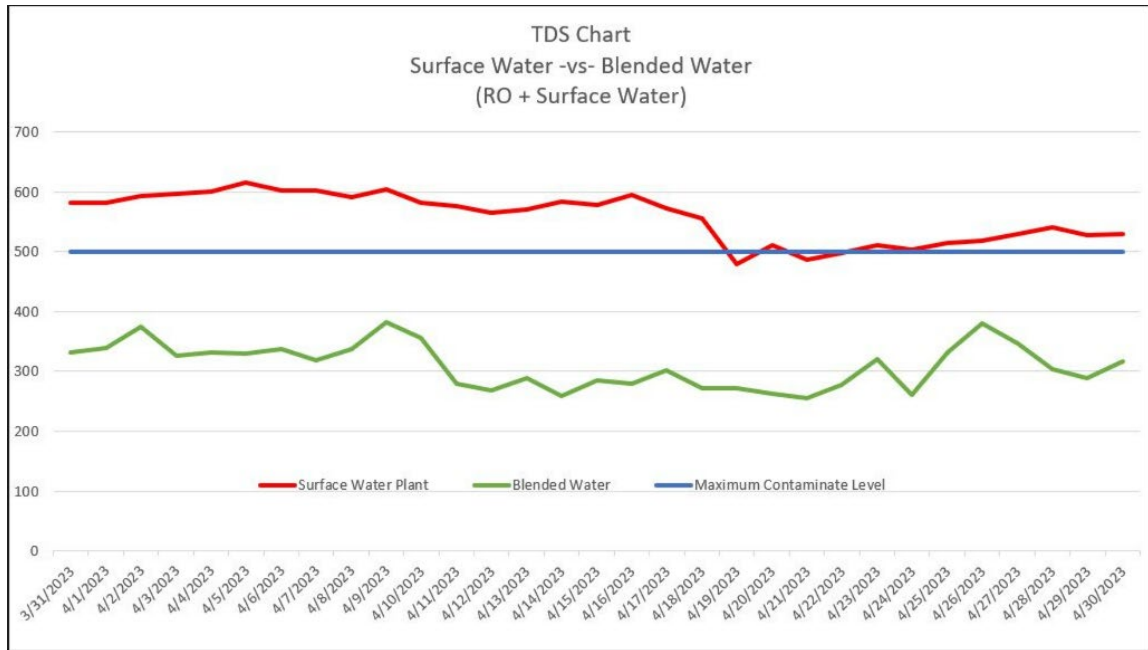
Fire

- **Punta Gorda Police and Fire Department Summer Youth Academy** – We are happy to announce that we will be holding our 2nd Annual Summer Youth Academy the week of June 19-June 23. Last year's Summer Youth Academy was such a success, and we are excited to host our new recruits this summer! Registration opens May 15. Make sure you secure your child's spot as space will be limited!



Utilities

➤ R.O. Plant



Water Treatment Plant Operations

- 55.3 MG delivered to the distribution system with a 7.9 MG daily average
- Startup of the new belt filter press has been completed and the press is dewatering sludge successfully. Thanks to Chris, Jim, and Gavin for their hard work getting the press installed and ready for startup!
- Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority Emergency Interconnect – Receiving 800 gallons per minute from the new Interconnect (Phase 1 Pipeline). Sending 800 gallons per minute from the tank on 17 (Phase 1A Pipeline).
- Rainfall May 2022 7.67” May 2023 1.06”
- Hardness is a measurement of calcium and magnesium ions naturally occurring in the raw water. Currently "hard" – Grains of Hardness 9 –Total hardness 136 ppm
- TDS May 4 – Current 242 ppm, Low 242 ppm, High 625 ppm, 13 Year Avg. 477 ppm
- Reservoir May 4 – Current 5.14', Record Low 4.52', Record High, 5.62' 58 Year Average 5.07'
- **Water Disinfection** – City of Punta Gorda Utilities in conjunction with the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority, will temporarily change the disinfection process for its potable (drinking) water supply. Now through May 14, the water will be disinfected with free chlorine rather than chlorine combined with ammonia (chloramines). This conversion to free chlorine from chloramines allows the utility to perform a distribution system purge as recommended by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for water utilities using chloramines as their primary disinfectant. A "free chlorine conversion", as it is known, is a common practice by public water systems that use chloramines to periodically increase the level of disinfectant residual throughout the

distribution system. The City of Punta Gorda Utilities water will REMAIN SAFE TO DRINK throughout this process and boiling water is not necessary. Customers may notice a change to the taste and smell of the water. The water may discolor laundered clothes. Homeowners should flush any cloudy or discolored water that may enter the plumbing by running a faucet for several minutes or until the water runs clear. For information on preventing waterborne germs, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/preventing-waterborne-germs-at-home.html>. Customers on kidney dialysis who use a proportioning machine to prepare dialysate at home are advised to contact their physician or equipment supplier to obtain the appropriate steps to accommodate the change in water disinfection and to install the proper filtering devices, if needed. Customers using the water for aquariums should monitor the chlorine residuals and are advised to contact a professional aquarist to ensure proper pretreatment of the water before adding or changing the water in the tank to avoid any problems associated with chlorine. The utility will flush the water distribution system in conjunction with this change in the process. The flush will allow the free chlorine to move quickly throughout the distribution system. For information on the "free chlorine conversion" contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Brooke.Keck@FloridaDEP.gov.

City Clerk

- **Candidate Packets Now Available** – Candidate packets for the 2023 City General Election are now available for pick up at the City Clerk's Office, currently located at 117 Herald Court Centre, Unit 112. Candidate forms can also be obtained online from the City's website at <https://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us> as well as from the Division of Elections website at <https://dos.myflorida.com/elections>. The 2023 General Election will take place on Nov. 7 and will include City Council Districts three and five. Councilmembers serve a two (2) year term and are elected at-large. Only opposed candidate races will appear on the ballot. If more than two candidates seek election for any one district seat, a primary election must be held on Aug. 22 (11 weeks prior to the General Election). Qualifying for the 2023 General Election cycle begins Jun. 12 at noon and ends on Jun. 16 at noon. For information or questions regarding qualifying, please contact Karen Smith, City Clerk, at (941) 575-3369 or email pgclerk@cityofpuntafordafl.com. Questions regarding voter registration, vote-by-mail ballots or precinct and polling information should be directed to the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections Office at (941) 833-5400.
- **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>
 - **Building Board** – (one regular and one alternate) Meets monthly on 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 OR partial term plus 2 more terms.
 - **Code Enforcement Board** – (two regular and two alternates) 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.

- **Historic Preservation Advisory Board** – (two alternates) Meets the fourth 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.
- **Utilities Advisory Board** – 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.
- **Planning Commission** – (two regular) Meets the fourth 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.
- **Utilities Advisory Board** – (one regular) Meets monthly on the fourth Monday at 9 a.m.

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:
 - Art by Rakel, 701 Aqui Esta Drive