

# Weekly Highlights Report August 30, 2024

### **City Manager**

 Through hard work and sound decision-making, we are fortunate to be able to present to residents a budget that allows the City of Punta Gorda to maintain our reserves and accomplish our strategic plan objectives without raising the millage rate. The projected millage rate remains unchanged from the previous three years at 3.95 mils.

With the taxable values from the Charlotte County Property Appraiser coming in at higher than the conservative estimates used of five percent, the additional revenue allows the City to offset substantial increases in project and operating costs. This then allows us to allocate the dollars needed to invest in



planned infrastructure projects and fund additional needed personnel, all while maintaining our reserves. This includes hiring public safety personnel to enhance services and reduce overtime hours spent currently, as well as other essential personnel consistent with the overall personnel management plan presented to the City Council.

The FY 2025 budget prepares the City to keep projects moving forward as we continue to work through recovery from Hurricane Ian. We also continue our focus on accessing FEMA funds and finalizing insurance payouts as a result of the hurricane. It also programs excess reserves in the general fund, which are planned for one-time costs based on the five-year proforma, while never allowing the reserve to fall below the 16.7% national standard. This is vitally important to keep the City fiscally sound to be able to weather the next hurricane, disaster, or unexpected expense.

Salary and enhanced benefits, consistent with surrounding jurisdictions, has been a budgetary focus for several years based on the previous wage and benefits study. Employee retention and attraction is still a key consideration for delivering a high level of service to residents. The budget for the upcoming fiscal year includes the next wage and compensation study performed routinely to ensure we are consistent with employee offerings. Competitive and fair compensation is a key factor in employee satisfaction and retention. The study helps align compensation with employee expectations and market trends.

Each year, I present a focus for the upcoming year. In FY 2025, we will piggyback on the first phase, which was our first five-year planning period. Using the Strategic Plan as a platform, the focus will continue with long-term planning for infrastructure with necessary funding, along with long-term growth management. This includes adjusting impact fees, investing in water and sewer infrastructure, planning for drainage projects, and seeking funding for projects through grant opportunities.

I take great pride in being a member of the team contributing to the City of Punta Gorda. We are fortunate to have an actively involved Council, a dedicated group of employees, and a wealth of expertise. Our approach includes a practical and prudent budget along with meticulous, data-driven long-term planning. This prepares us to manage necessary improvements to our City facilities, ensures adequate staffing levels, and equips us to face future challenges. We have a bright future ahead.

City Council will hold budget hearings on September 4, at 5:01 p.m. and September 18, at 5:01 p.m. at the Military Heritage Museum at 900 West Marion Avenue in the City of Punta Gorda. We continue to work to preserve and enhance Punta Gorda's identity as a vibrant waterfront community, unique in character and history, and as a desirable place to live, work and visit. For any further inquiries, you may reach City Manager Greg Murray at citymgr@cityofpuntagordafl.com or call the general office line at (941) 575-3302.

• Labor Day Holiday - The government offices of the City of Punta Gorda will be closed on September 2, in observance of the Labor Day Holiday. Residents of the City of Punta Gorda will notice no change in their trash, yard waste, or recycling collections during this holiday. Commercial customers will notice no change in trash collections during this holiday.



- City Council Meeting City Council will meet at 9 a.m. on September 4, at Military Heritage Museum, 900 W Marion Avenue. Items of interest include:
  - An ordinance of the City of Punta Gorda amending and restating the City of Punta Gorda Firefighters' Retirement System, as adopted by Ordinance 879-87.
  - ➤ An ordinance of the City Council of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, amending the provisions of Chapter 17, "Public Utilities", Article I, "General Provisions: Water Rates", and Article II.
  - An ordinance of the City Council of the City of Punta Gorda, Florida, amending Punta Gorda Code Chapter 10, "Yard Waste, Solid Waste", Article II, "Solid Waste", amending Section 10-11.
- Alert Punta Gorda To change the types of alerts you are receiving please visit <u>City of Punta Gorda Public Sign In (everbridge.net)</u>. If you would like to subscribe to the service visit <u>City of Punta Gorda Public Sign Up (everbridge.net)</u>. Alert Punta Gorda, an emergency public notification system. This system allows the City of Punta Gorda to contact the entire community or to target specific areas in case of an emergency or for urgent situations that require the public's immediate attention such as natural disasters (hurricane warnings or fires), man-made disasters (chemical spills or gas leaks), search and rescue situations (missing children or endangered adults), sexual offender alerts, etc.

#### **Human Resources**

• Open Positions – The City of Punta Gorda offers a very generous benefit package to include medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and a defined contribution retirement plan with matching contributions <a href="Employment Opportunities">Employment Opportunities</a> | City of Punta Gorda, FL (punta-

<u>gorda.fl.us</u>) Currently hiring for the following professional position:

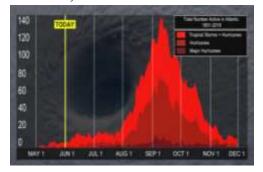
- ➤ Utility Engineer Utilities. A professional position responsible for Utilities Engineering and providing technical engineering services for City utilities construction and improvement projects.
- ➤ Senior Accountant, Finance A professional position responsible for applying the principles of accounting to analyze financial information and prepare

financial reports by compiling information, preparing profit and loss statements, and utilizing appropriate accounting control procedures.

- ➤ **Zoning Official Urban Design** A supervisory professional responsible for administering the City's codes as they relate to property zoning, design, and maintenance standards.
- ➤ **Permit Technician Building** An entry level clerical position responsible for accepting and processing applications for building permits, issuing permits, and collecting and accounting for payments and fees collected by the Building Division.
- ➤ Sanitation Worker 1 Public Works An entry level laborer position responsible for solid waste collection services to residents and businesses of Punta Gorda.
- ➤ Operator A, B, or C Water Treatment Plant A skilled and licensed technical position responsible for the proper plant operation and monitoring of the treatment process of a Water Treatment Plan.
- ➤ Utilities Maintenance Worker II Wastewater Collection, Utilities A skilled laborer position responsible for the construction, maintenance and repair of wastewater collection facilities and systems.
- Peak of Hurricane season Historically, the peak of Hurricane season is September 10, with heightened activity between mid-August and October.

Tropical activity may be slow at the start, but it won't take long for things to heat up! In fact, June brings the better chance of storm development to the northern Gulf of Mexico near the Big Bend region of Florida.

By the time August arrives, storms are more likely to form out much further in the Caribbean and near the Virgin Islands. From these distant locations, they have more time to strengthen upon making landfall.





Those areas expand as we get into September, when the majority of storm systems develop and rapidly strengthen. Abundant heat and moisture are available, which translates to storm fuel.

• How often do hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast? Forecasting a hurricane's track in motion can be
extremely difficult. Now imagine trying to forecast a
track before that storm even develops. Although we
cannot know exactly when and where a storm will strike,
a season like this one raises the odds of a Gulf Coast hit.
We can track the frequency of hurricanes along the Gulf
Coast by looking at return periods. NOAA defines it this
way: hurricane return periods are the frequency at which
a certain intensity of hurricane can be expected within a
given distance of a given location.





# **Urban Design Upcoming Events**

- Charlotte Harbor Event Center,
   75 Taylor St. For additional information, visit charlotteharborecc.com/events;
- Fishermen's Village events can be accessed at <u>PLAY | Fishermen's Village | Punta Gorda, Florida (fishermensvillage.com)</u>
- Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce events can be accessed at <u>Community Events Punta</u> Gorda Chamber of Commerce
- Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce events can be accessed at <u>Event Calendar</u> Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce, Inc.
- Military Heritage Museum events can be accessed at <u>Upcoming Events Military Heritage</u> Museum
- Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association, 2001 Shreve Street; for all community events and class information, visit <u>Home Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association</u>, Inc. (pgica.org)
- The Visual Arts Center events can be accessed at <u>Visual Arts Center (visualartcenter.org)</u>
- September 20, Recovery Candlelight Vigil, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St, for more information contact: <a href="mailto:kpomerville@cbhcfl.org">kpomerville@cbhcfl.org</a> or visit <a href="mailto:Annual Recovery Candlelight Vigil returns to Laishley Park Charlotte County Florida Weekly">Charlotte County Florida Weekly</a>
- Lot Mowing Program The Lot Mowing Cycle is currently underway and scheduled to be completed by September 4, weather permitting.

#### **Planning Corner**

• What is a Planning Professional? - A planning professional provides data-driven insights and technical expertise to elected officials seeking to manage growth, navigate change, and plan for the provision of public goods like streets, housing, and parks. Planners create policies that promote community objectives such as historic preservation and environmental protection. They are responsible for translating complex information into easy-to-understand, manageable components so that information can be



disseminated to the public. In a similar fashion, they are responsible for gathering public opinion and aggregating it into usable policy alternatives that the elected body can choose from.

The American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) provides the only nationwide, independent verification of planners' qualifications. Certified planners pledge to uphold high standards of practice, ethics, and professional conduct, and to keep their skills sharp and up to date by continuously pursuing advanced professional education. Planners with the AICP suffix following their name have a minimum of five years of experience as a professional planner and have passed the AICP certification exam. In addition to the AICP certification, many planners have a bachelor's or master's degree in Planning or Urban Design.

At the City of Punta Gorda, planners are responsible for long-range planning, implementing the policies of the comprehensive plan, planning/designing large capital improvement projects, providing technical expertise to elected officials, communicating with the public, and a myriad of other professional services. For more information on the planning profession, please visit the American Planning Association's (APA) website: American Planning Association

#### **Public Works**

- Canal Maintenance Production Maintenance crews' filled depressions at 55 residences, patched seawall caps, and repaired seams at five locations. Crews removed one piling from the canal system in Burnt Store Isles.
- **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. Utilizing plastic during a rain event will help keep the soil in place preventing further erosion.
- Canal Maintenance Seawall Failure Update Construction schedules have been updated and are posted on the Canal Maintenance website for the next six months look ahead. There are 17 projects in Punta Gorda Isles under construction with 109 projects completed. All 30 seawall projects in Burnt Store Isles have been completed. Hurricane Ian Related Seawall Failures | Hurricane Ian Related Seawall Failures | City of Punta Gorda, FL (puntagorda.fl.us)
- **Establishing sod after seawall replacement** Placing the sod is the final phase of seawall replacement construction. As per the City ordinance, property owners are responsible for establishing the sod after it has been placed and the City will not reimburse the owners for their water usage.
- 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.
- **Dock Match Program** The Punta Gorda and Charlotte Harbor Boaters Alliance has created a program that connects boat owners who need a temporary relocation of their boats with owners that have available dock space. This information can be found at <a href="Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance">Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance</a> (boat2puntagorda.org) click on the Dock Match button for information.

#### **Engineering**

- **Swale Regrading** The Engineering Department has completed the yearly swale inspection Citywide. The employees install GoPros on their trucks and drive every street within City limits after a 72 hour period with no rain to record videos of all the swales. The Engineering department will now review the videos to create the 2024-2025 swale re-grading list.
- City Hall Annex The contractor has completed the interior work on the third floor where Urban Design, Code Enforcement, Zoning, IT, and City Manager offices are. The Procurement and Building departments have moved to the third floor. There are signs for residents and contractors to use the elevator to conduct business there. The contractor has completed the full restoration on the second floor in the Procurement, Billing/Collections, and Building departments. The Billing/Collections will be moving down to the second floor on August 29, and will be conducting business. The Human Resources department has moved temporarily into the Procurement office while the contractor completes the full restoration. The contractor is scheduled to be in the HR department for the next two weeks.
- **City Hall Annex Roof** The contractor has finished installing the last torch-down material to the roof. They have started to install the sheet metal for the ridge cap and will be calling in the final inspection
- Laishley Splash Pad Construction continues at the Interactive Fountain area in Laishley Park. This work includes rehabilitation and upgrades to the splash pad/play area. Play equipment installation is nearing completion.

Please use extra caution while driving or walking through the park due to construction personnel and equipment. To the highest extent possible the restroom facilities will remain open to the public. The access to the restrooms will be from the marina side of the building. There will be periodic temporary sidewalk closures immediately adjacent to the construction area as required for public safety. The construction area will be closed to the public at all times during this period. The enhanced fountain area is scheduled to reopen in late 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact the Public Works Department at (941) 575-5050 during the hours of 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

• **Fiber Optic Internet Network** – The fiber optic provider HyperFiber has been issued permits for a portion of the construction project to install a citywide fiber optic internet network within the city right of ways. This project will be under construction during the next

several months as they install the network citywide. They are currently permitted to work in the areas highlighted in red below. The green areas are where the work is completed and their permit has been inspected for final by the engineering department. Additional areas are scheduled to be final in the next several weeks. The blue areas are where the installation will be taking place as the project progresses. Construction is beginning in Burnt Store Isles and Burnt Store Meadows.







Initially you will see utility markings within the city right of way, followed by the

directional drilling of the fiber optic conduit. Fiber optic boxes will be installed in the right of way or easement at the edge of your property. Once the installation of the underground and service points has been completed for the entire sector, crews will then return to individual locations for the restoration of sod. This will take place at the end of construction in each sector. Please be patient and allow time for the restoration. The city engineering department will be performing spot inspections during construction as well as a final inspection on when restoration is complete to ensure the contractor's restoration meets the City's requirements.



HyperFiber has provided a telephone number to call if citizens have questions or concerns about the project and installation. Please contact HyperFiber's Lori Haight at (501) 844-6340. Please use extra caution while driving through the project area due to construction personnel and equipment.

• Peace River Wildlife Center – Construction has begun for the Peace River Wildlife Center located next to the Hounds on Henry Dog Park! This work includes the development of the wildlife center and the expansion and reconstruction of the parking lot for the Hounds on Henry Dog Park.

Please use extra caution while driving or walking through this area due to construction personnel and equipment. Please obey the newly installed stop signs as dump trucks are delivering fill dirt at the rate of approximately (30) loads per day.



These trucks require a wide turn area, and vehicles should give them plenty of room to maneuver. The fenced construction area will be closed to the public at all times during this period.

If you have any questions, please contact the Public Works Department at (941) 575-5050 during the hours of 8 a.m. -4:30 p.m.

# Right of Way

- Crews continue to mow around the City. Mowing at the Nature Park along Bal Harbor Boulevard, and along Acline Road at the water tower has been completed.
- Repairs have been made to the drainage pipe on Taylor Road and Carmalita Street as well as the corner of Grace Street and McGregor Street.
- Crews also patched the radius at Grace Street and McGregor Street.

#### Sanitation

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• Loose Yard Waste Piles – As a reminder, please do not place loose yard waste piles near or under power lines, trees, telephone boxes, fire hydrants, etc. This could impede access to the yard waste materials and cause property damage. In the picture below, the Lumen terminal was buried underneath a loose yard waste pile. The clamshell truck operator has no way of knowing



what is underneath the pile, and in this case, the Lumen terminal was destroyed. The property owner is responsible for properly placing the yard

waste pile in the right-of-way.

## **Police**

• New Volunteer Boat - A new 19-foot Carolina Skiff was placed in service this week. It will be assigned to the Marine Volunteers and primarily used for patrol in the river and canals. Marine Officer Aaron Russell spent Thursday and Friday familiarizing some volunteers with the operation of the new vessel.

# **OPEN POSITIONS**

- **Police Officer Testing** The Punta Gorda Police Department is currently accepting applications for the position of Police Officer. A virtual testing process will take place in August. Applications must be received by September 27. The written exam will be completed online between October 4 and October 11 and virtual oral board exams will be conducted via Zoom on October 24. The department is accepting applications from certified and non-certified candidates.
- **Public Safety Dispatcher Testing** The police department continually conducts new hire testing to prepare for future openings. Currently, the department is accepting applications for the position of Public Safety Dispatcher. The exam will be held virtually between October 11 and 18. Applications must be received by October 4.
- Internship Program The police department is currently accepting internship applications for the Spring Semester of 2025. 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. Spots fill up quickly and the selection process can be competitive, so we encourage potential interns to apply today! To apply for employment or more information, please visit <a href="Employment Opportunities">Employment Opportunities</a> | City of Punta Gorda, FL (punta-gorda.fl.us) or contact our Employee Development Coordinator at (941) 575-5571 or by email at <a href="employeedevelopment@pgorda.us">employeedevelopment@pgorda.us</a>.

#### **Fire**

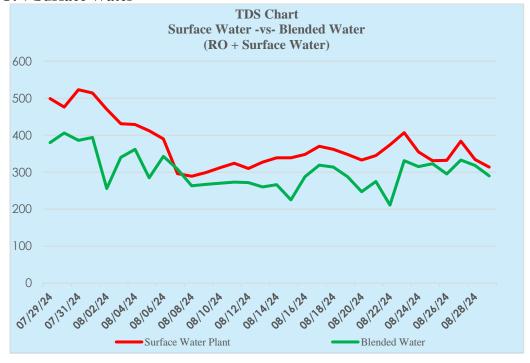
• Mass Casualty Incident Training – This week the fire department participated in a three day mutual aid mass casualty incident with Charlotte County Fire Rescue and Engelwood Fire Department. Crews faced a three vehicle accident with eight patients and limited resources available. They also had to deal with dynamic situations, interoperability, communication obstacles, and unfamiliar equipment and personnel. Crews used their critical thinking skills, teamwork, and professionalism to ensure all patients were extricated, triaged, treated, and transported to the proper facility for their injuries. These drills help our firefighters practice real-life situations and learn how to improve if presented with them again.





# **Utilities**

• R.O. + Surface Water



#### Administration

- **Leaks** If you notice a water or sewer leak outside of normal business hours please call the after-hours number (941) 575-5070 or the Water Treatment Plan at (941) 639-2057.
- Water Treatment Plant Operations 32.9 MG delivered to the distribution system during the last seven days with 4.7 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 August 2023 9.01" August 2024 9.11"
- Hardness is a measurement of calcium and magnesium ions naturally occurring in the raw water. Currently "hard" – Grains of Hardness 7 –Total hardness 112 ppm
- T.D.S. August 29 Current 290 ppm. Low 178 ppm, High 413 ppm, 14-year average 288 ppm.
- Reservoir August 29 Current 5.81, Record Low 5.04, Record High, 7.43' 58 Year Average 5.66'

# **Lawn Watering**

 Phase I Water Shortage – The Southwest Florida Water Management District's (District) Governing Board declared a <u>Phase I Water</u> <u>Shortage</u> for the District's central and southern regions, which include Charlotte, DeSoto,



Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas and Sarasota counties. The primary purpose for a Phase I water shortage is to alert the public that watering restrictions could be forthcoming. The order also requires local utilities to review and implement procedures for enforcing year-round water conservation measures and water shortage restrictions, including reporting enforcement activity to the District. A Phase I water shortage order does not change allowable watering schedules, however it does prohibit "wasteful and unnecessary" water use. Water Restrictions | City of Punta Gorda, FL

• **Lawn Watering Schedule/Times** – Lawn watering is limited to twice per week (if needed) by property address. Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. Hand watering and micro-irrigation of plants (other than lawns) can be done on any day and at any time using a shut-off nozzle on their hose, so water isn't wasted. For more irrigation and water saving tips, please visit the District's website at *WaterMatters.org/Water101*. Water Restrictions | City of Punta Gorda.FL

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	Addresses ending in 0 and 1	Monday & Thursday	Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
	Addresses ending in 2 and 3	Tuesday & Friday	Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
	Addresses ending in 4 and 5	Wednesday & Saturday	Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
	Addresses ending in 6 and 7	Thursday & Sunday	Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
	Addresses ending in 8 and 9	Friday & Tuesday	Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
	Addresses ending in letter or		
	Location without a discernable	Friday & Tuesday	Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
	address		

• **Service Award** - Congratulations to Albe Quednau for receiving his 20-year service award.



#### **2024 Election Cycle**

- **Elections** The seats for Districts 1, 2, and 4 are scheduled for election this year. A general election will take place on November 5, as two candidates qualified for each district. Qualified candidates are listed on the City's website.
  - ➤ Subscribe to the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections' monthly newsletter to stay up to date on elections news. <u>Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections > Home</u> (soecharlottecountyfl.gov)
  - ➤ Did you know your signature can change over the years? Ensure the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections has an up-to-date record of your signature on file for the upcoming election. Stop by their office at 226 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda, Florida, 33982, to update yours during regular business hours.
  - ➤ In order to vote by mail, you must have a valid request on file with the Supervisor of Elections Office. Requests for vote-by-mail ballots can be made in person, by calling (941)833-5400, or by visiting the <u>Supervisor of Elections website</u>.
- **Business Tax Receipt Renewals** City business tax receipts must be renewed for Fiscal Year 2024/2025 prior to September 30, or else a late fee will be assessed. The first and second renewal notices have been emailed to the address on file with the City Clerk's Office on July 8. If you have not received an emailed renewal reminder, please call the City Clerk's Office at (941)575-3369 or email <a href="mailto:businesstax@cityofpuntagordafl.com">businesstax@cityofpuntagordafl.com</a> to update your email address.
- 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 <u>City of Punta Gorda, FL: Board Application (granicus.com)</u>. Unless otherwise noted, all boards meet in in Council Chambers, which is currently located in the Military Heritage Museum at 900 West Marion Avenue.
  - ➤ Building Board (one consumer advocate, one contractor, and one alternate) Meets the fourth Tuesday at 9 a.m. Board of seven members with two alternates; four members must be involved with building industry and three members must never have been involved in the building industry. City residency not required. Term period is three years with a limit of three terms. Financial disclosure required. Reviews enforcement of all codes related to construction standards and acts as condemnation board in matters of violation of minimum standards. Hears alleged complaints against contractors.
  - ➤ Donation Review Committee (one historic non-profit representative) Meets the fourth Thursday of January, April, July and October, or as needed, at 10 a.m. or immediately following the Historic Preservation Advisory Board (HPAB). Board of five members; chair of the HPAB, two HPAB members, one local historic non-profit representative, and one local arts organization representative. Term period for Council appointees is three years with a limit of three terms. Charged with review of all non-monetary gift donation proposals/letters of intent received by the City, in accordance with the review process and established criteria identified in the Non-Monetary Donation Policy. Makes recommendations to the City Council for the acceptance or rejection of non-monetary gift donations.
  - ➤ Historic Preservation Advisory Board (one alternate) Meets the fourth Thursday at 9 a.m. Board of seven members with two alternates; members must be residents, property owners, or business owners of the City, except one member may be a resident, property owner, or business owner of Charlotte County. Term period is three years with a limit of three terms. Identifies for the 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.

➤ Utility Advisory Board – (one regular) Meets the fourth Monday at 9 a.m. Board of seven members. Term period is three years with a limit of three terms. Makes recommendations to City Council regarding revisions to the utility construction standards, alleged billing discrepancies, and review of utility drawings and specifications.