

For Your Information

FROM THE CITY MANAGER & STAFF

May 1, 2020

Dates to Remember

May 18, 2020 – Virtual City Commission Meeting – Virtual meeting instructions on how to watch and/or participate in the virtual meeting will be included with the meeting agenda announcement.

Office of the City Manager:

Citizens, Business Owners & Other Interested Parties:

As of this update, the city, county, state and nation remain in a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Much discussion among citizens, business owners, government officials and the media of late has evolved from focusing on preventing the spread of the virus to re-opening our communities. While it is prudent that the community prepare for this transition in the coming days and weeks, it is vitally important that we collectively remain diligent in our individual efforts to control the spread of this virus by continuing to practice social distancing and adhering to the hygiene related guidance recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that has helped to see improvement thus far in Florida's statistics in terms of new case numbers being in a declining pattern in the state overall.

Locally, we need to recognize the fact that being rural in nature, Clewiston and the rest of Hendry County were much later than urban areas in seeing rising confirmed case numbers and that we logically should expect that the spread of the virus would likewise be behind trends in urban areas. To illustrate this point, Hendry County did not report its first confirmed case until March 29th while cases were on the rise elsewhere and had been for most of the month of March. While Hendry County saw no cases in the first month or so, the last month has been quite a different story as the latest Florida Department of Health (DOH) report now reflects 92 confirmed cases in the County. The trend is even more pronounced in the last two weeks during which the county has seen the numbers increase by 61 cases, or a 66% increase in total cases. In the last week alone, the Hendry County total of confirmed cases has increased by 30.

Roughly two-thirds of the cases in the County are listed as being within the Clewiston zip code which encompasses all of the city and significant geographical areas within eastern unincorporated Hendry County including specifically Harlem, Montura and Pioneer. DOH officials are reporting that 33 of the confirmed cases thus far in the county have been associated with the two nursing homes located within the county with one in LaBelle and the other in Clewiston. Long term care type facilities are recognized as being among the "hot spots" throughout the state and obviously are home to some of our most vulnerable citizens, but there have also been other "hot spots" contributing to the county case total. In particular, the county's

proximity to Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties continues to adversely influence Hendry County case totals. Specifically, the GEO detention facility located in South Bay has been a contributor locally as a number of cases are linked to Hendry County residents employed at that facility. The media reports that this facility is among the two highest in the state in terms of numbers of COVID-19 cases.

This data and information indicates anything but a decline in confirmed cases of COVID-19 locally. Considering DOH reported numbers of pending tests awaiting results in the county, Hendry County likely has not reached its peak in confirmed cases. These things said, the city has continued to promote adherence to CDC guidelines and compliance with the Governor's stay at home orders and designations of essential businesses and activities which was issued several weeks ago. Of course, things have continued to change at the state level and again on May 4th, the landscape will again be altered regarding phase one of the Governor's plans to relax some restrictions in previous executive orders. Although these changes have received mixed reviews from several sources, I applaud the Governor's measured approach with gradual changes expected in the weeks ahead. The latest Governor's executive order [Executive Order 20-112 FAQs for Executive Order 20-112](#) will take effect Monday which will allow some businesses to resume limited operations while requiring the implementation of CDC guidance in their operations.

Given these new guidelines, the City will continue to do its part in enforcing the requirements, but it is imperative that the business community take their role seriously if they are to convince customers and the general public that it is safe to venture out and patronize their businesses going forward. The results of a recent survey done by the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce overwhelmingly supported the notion that the public is not ready to see stay at home orders relaxed until they are convinced that health officials believe it is prudent and that safe conditions and practices exist in businesses and service providers. To this end, the DOH, Chambers of Commerce, local governments and other partners will be offering assistance in various forms to the business community and will continue to message the public on appropriate actions to fight the spread of the virus. Please do your part in the critical period that lies ahead, so that the phased re-opening of our community and state can be maintained in the weeks ahead.

I also am pleased to report that the City Commissioners endorsed at their last virtual meeting held on April 20th, the adjustment of electric utility bills to lower the power cost adjustment for all city electric utility customers to help financially during the COVID-19 crisis. A press release [April 29, 2020 Press Release](#) gives the details of this adjustment that will be effective in the May, 2020 bills for services rendered in April.

In closing, I again thank each of you for your continued support and interest in the City of Clewiston.

Randy Martin

Staff Reports

Library Director Natasha Hayes reports:

- Over the past few weeks, the Library has been closed to the public but staff has been diligently working behind the scenes.
- Library staff have been providing curbside services to our patrons which allows them to pick up the items they have chosen to place on hold. Simply call the library Monday through Friday from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. to place holds with staff assistance or visit our website www.hendrylibraries.org and place a hold on your account with your pin number. Staff will then pull your holds and call you to schedule a pick up.
- Library staff has been rearranging shelving and books, proof reading shelves, deep cleaning, and various other tasks.
- The staff has been providing virtual story times and activities on our Facebook page. Please check out the Clewiston Library page for stories as well as follows along for updates for new programs and activities that will occur virtually.
- Members can contact the library between 12 and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to place holds or to obtain reference assistance.

Public Works Director Sean Scheffler reports:

- **Countywide Amnesty Week is May 2-9, 2020:** Residents will be allowed to take anything but hazardous waste to the Transfer Station and dispose of it at no charge. Proof of residence will be required. Sorry, no commercial waste is allowed. Local residents are encouraged to use this opportunity to clean out items that may become an issue as the hurricane season approaches. This also helps increase the efficacy of our collection operation and helps to keep our town not only America’s Sweetest Town, but America’s Cleanest Town. For questions call 983-1471 and ask for Jay.
- Levee access will be blocked off this week as work on the Levee Cut-Off Wall progresses. This closure is expected to stay in place until the end of October, 2020.
- **Mosquito Control:** Trap counts for the following dates were:

	4/13/2020	4/14/2020	4/15/2020
Okeechobee Blvd.	109	136	72
W.C. Owen	0	211	21
Saginaw	57	87	55
Golf Course	79	78	48
Harlem	38	47	0

These are base line numbers to work from as we enter the mosquito season.

- **Grant & Project Updates:**
 - New sidewalk projects from Wendy’s to San Luiz, San Luiz to Alverde, McDonalds to Berner Road, US27 to Balboa and US27 to Del Rio have projected construction start dates of FY 2022/2023. A set of 60% plans were submitted to City staff for review and verification of utilities this week.
 - Staff is seeking ¾ of a mile of sidewalk through a FDOT SRTS grant.

- The Ventura Avenue Rebuild Project is in design phase and scheduled for 2020 construction. The City’s engineer is preparing design plans to accommodate under the road infrastructure before paving begins.
- **Parks Department Activities:**
 - The floors and walls in the men and women’s locker room and the foyer at the pool were painted. The “gutter drains” are scheduled to be painted next week.
 - An aquatic structural engineer inspected the pool on Thursday because of cracking in several places. His report is expected within a couple of weeks.
 - The high school art class has offered to paint new “murals” on the wall on the west side of the Splash Pad and on a wall in each of the locker rooms at the pool this summer.
 - Poles for the net for a sand volleyball court were installed. The court is being built in the Sports Complex north of the pavilion. Much activity at the old dirt court identified the need and will be a good addition to this facility.
- **Street Division Activities:**
 - Eight pallets of sod have been installed on all disturbed ground around the new Police Department generator. Irrigation is set to run twice a day until the sod is established.
 - This year’s sidewalk project is done. Locations addressed were North W.C. Owen, Olympia and Aztec.
 - One hundred feet of pipe was installed on North W.C. Owen between US27 and Pasadena. This culvert is tying three inlets together along the west side of the street.
 - Staff finished installation of the splash and sneeze protection glass in the City Hall and Community Development Office Building. Doors will be installed when they come in. We have ordered portable splash and sneeze guards for the Library and Golf Course facilities and working on the Animal Control facility.
 - The old “Welcome” sign on the east end of town has been demolished and removed.
 - The Olive trees on Central Ave. have been trimmed up as we start looking toward hurricane season.
 - Speed limit and caution signs were installed on Bayberry Loop this week.
- **Reminder to all residents:** Not everything you pick-up in your yard needs to go by the street. **Items that should be placed in your tipper cart are:** Bagged waste from inside the home; small amounts of leaves, weeds and small sticks or plant clippings; plastic flower/plant material pots; mulch bags; and old/not working solar lights. **All boxes must be broken down and placed in the cart.** Loose packing material, like styrofoam, popcorn, bubble wrap and paper is to be bagged and placed in your cart. These are requirements that must be followed in order for the collection system to operate at peak efficiency. It also keeps Clewiston clean between scheduled services. Keep anything that doesn’t fit inside the cart with the lid closed at your home until your next pick up day when there is room from the previous collection day. Never place bagged house garbage next to your cart. Tree branches for collection at the street must be cut down to no longer than four (4) feet in length. For answers to any questions you have about how to best utilize you cart and pile size; call 983-1471 and ask for Jay.

Golf Course Director Robbie Rush reports:

- Get all information of what’s going on at Clewiston Golf Course Facebook.

- The Golf Course has implemented new procedures to minimize exposure to COVID-19. Please contact the Golf Course at 863-983-1448 for questions or information.
- Get on our E-mail list by going to the City of Clewiston website www.clewiston-fl.gov. Go to the golf course division and at the bottom of the page you can sign-up on Constant Contact and get all Clewiston Golf Course information.
- Golf Shop Hours are 7:30am-5:30pm. The first tee time is 7:45am.
- Golf Carts must be in by 6:45pm.
- Walking is permitted all day at the golf course now. Tee time is a must.
- For more information, call the golf shop at 863-983-1448.

Code Enforcement Officer Debbie McNeil reports:

- **Hurricane Preparedness Week is May 3-9, 2020.** Be ready for hurricane season. Today you can determine your personal hurricane risk, find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone, and review/update insurance policies. You can also make a list of items to replenish hurricane emergency supplies and start thinking about how you will prepare your home for the coming hurricane season. If you live in hurricane-prone areas, you are encouraged to complete these simple preparations before hurricane season begins on June 1. Keep in mind, you may need to adjust any preparedness actions based on the latest [health and safety guidelines from the CDC](#) and your local officials.

Utilities Director Danny Williams reports:

- **Electric Crew Activities**
 - Straightened pole on Pasadena Avenue & N San Jose Street;
 - installed two spans of underground primary in Harlem Garden Apartments, rerouted service line and removed two poles at fertilizer plant;
 - repaired streetlight fixtures;
 - installed new transformer on 10th Street, changed transformer at San Jose Street, Margaret Street and Bayberry Loop addresses, replaced three transformers at Bass Capital;
 - coordinated contractor work for bearing replacement at Clewiston substation;
 - coordinated service for contractor for work at E. Del Monte Avenue and Ridgewood addresses;
 - replaced three lighting arresters near Kelly Tractor Company, two lighting arresters near Bass & Sun Condominiums and three arresters on San Luiz Avenue;
 - removed roof from pump house at Clewiston Golf Course;
 - sprayed weed suppression behind Golf Course;
 - installed three new terminators on San Luiz Avenue;
 - located utilities at 12 project sites;
 - replaced primary dead end shoe on Feeder 4 distribution line;
 - repaired broken service drop at Clewiston High School;
 - transferred secondary cables to new pole on Avenida Del Rio;
 - replaced cross arm on 10th Street and at Harlem Academy.
- **Water Sewer Crew Activities**
 - Repaired three water breaks;
 - performed repairs at three collection system lift stations;
 - repaired one sewer line break.

- Clewiston Utilities wants to remind everyone that certain items should not be flushed down the toilet, as it can clog and damage sewer systems in the community. For some, toilet paper supply at home is low during the coronavirus pandemic. However, if you are using items other than toilet paper in the restroom, please do not flush them. This includes "flushable wipes," despite the flushable claim on the container, the wipes shouldn't be flushed.
- The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) issued an order on water conservation measures with guidelines to property owners to follow irrigation schedules that conserve water amid drier than average conditions. Please take additional measures to conserve water including:
 - Water lawns only two days per week between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.
 - Apply no more than 3/4-inch to 1 inch of water per week on your lawns and landscapes and only as needed to supplement rainfall.
- **Customer Service Department**
 - The public Utilities building drive-through service will remain open to customers during normal office hours.
 - To help our customers cope with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the City of Clewiston will reduce the Bulk Power Cost Adjustment (BPCA) for bills going out in May, cutting the BPCA **by one-third**. Customers experiencing financial hardships as a result of the COVID-19 should contact our office before their bill becomes due and we will work with you. However, we encourage you to stay current with your payments as much as possible.
 - We offer several bill paying options; please visit or call the office at 983-1454 if you'd like to learn more!
 - **Please remember to register with CodeRed (Reverse 911)**. This system allows us to contact you in case of an emergency or with other informational announcements. You may register by clicking on the CodeRed link at the bottom of the City's website page www.clewiston-fl.gov. You may update your information at any time through the same link.
 - If you are considering replacing your air conditioner or insulation, remember the City offers a **rebate program** for those items. Most local contractors participate in the program and can give you information. You can also visit our website at www.clewiston-fl.gov or call our office.
 - **Don't forget to sign up for your meter based surge protection!** Visit our office today.

PLEASE BE AWARE OF UTILITY PAYMENT SCAMS: Scam artists are calling Utility customers posing as employees of Clewiston Utilities and threatening disconnection of services if payment is not made immediately. Please be aware:

- 1) **Clewiston Utilities will NEVER request you to purchase money cards or gift cards to pay your account over the phone.**
- 2) **Clewiston Utilities will NEVER contact our customers on the weekend and threaten disconnection of services.**
- 3) **Clewiston Utilities will NEVER speak to our customers in a threatening tone.**

If you feel you have been a victim of this scam, please contact Clewiston Utilities to verify the call or the Clewiston Police Department and file a report.