

## *For Your Information*

FROM THE CITY MANAGER & STAFF

October 2, 2020

### **Dates to Remember**

- October 19, 2020      **City Commission Meeting** – Clewiston City Hall at 5:00 p.m. Attendance and participation allowed in-person and via telephone conference call (863-254-4038, Conference ID 994729#).
- October 22, 2020      **Golf Course Advisory Board Meeting** – Clewiston City Hall at 11:00 a.m. Attendance and participation allowed in-person and via telephone conference call (863-254-4038, Conference ID 994729#).

### **Office of the City Manager:**

Citizens, Business Owners & Other Interested Parties:

As everyone is likely aware, the Governor issued another coronavirus pandemic related executive order on September 25<sup>th</sup> which was intended to transition Florida businesses into what has been referred to as Phase 3 of reopening efforts throughout the state. This action was taken as the state statistics related to COVID-19 have shown favorable trends in recent weeks. As for local implications of the Governor's order, most businesses in the Clewiston area were already operating with few limitations other than occupancy limits and other self-imposed guidelines. The Governor's action expanded the levels of service for businesses such as restaurants and bars in particular and restricted a local government's ability to enforce more stringent limits. Individual businesses and facilities are, however, still allowed to impose their own restrictions. In this vein, all City of Clewiston office facilities will again allow visitors to enter facilities beginning on Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, but visitors are advised social distancing and other CDC recommended guidance will be required including wearing of masks until further notice.

All of Hendry County has seen consistent improvement in local COVID-19 data particularly in the reduced number of confirmed positive cases throughout the month of September. Nonetheless, the entire county does continue to have positive cases identified and the number of hospitalized patients has steadily increased although at a slower pace of late. As of this writing, the county has seen a total of 2,080 positive cases, with over 20% of those tested being positive since March, 2020, and 191 patients hospitalized and 41 deaths attributed to COVID-19. The city continues to recommend everyone remain diligent in efforts to prevent further spread of the virus. Please do your part to protect yourself and others by continuing to adhere to proper

sanitation practices and follow other recommended guidance of health professionals in an effort to avoid any resurgence of COVID-19 in our community as we enter the traditional tourism season and the agriculture crop harvesting season.

On a brighter note, as for the crop harvesting season, U.S. Sugar kicked off their 90<sup>th</sup> harvest season this week in grand fashion with a dedication event for its recently restored historic steam locomotive Engine No. 148 which hauled the season's first sugarcane train from field to mill. It was an exciting and historic event for the company and for the community. The company announced plans for further expanding the use of the steam engine, that has been designed to run on recycled vegetable oil, "to add passenger cars to Engine No. 148 in the future so visitors can see their farms and learn more about the company's rich history and food production from a very unique perspective. The *Sugar Express* also is expected to help draw more visitors to America's Sweetest Town as they come to experience a ride on a genuine steam locomotive." The city is very excited about this announcement and congratulates U.S. Sugar for its many accomplishments thus far and the vision for the future.

In other good news, the city was recently notified that a grant application filed on its behalf by the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council has been approved to develop a Waterfront Master Plan for the publicly owned properties in close proximity to the city boat basin, Herbert Hoover Dike recreation area and Lake Okeechobee access point. The planning process will also seek input from property owners and other stakeholders and address nearby privately owned undeveloped and under-developed sites including the marina properties. Much of the area is included in the City of Clewiston expanded Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) boundaries as well. This grant award is timely as an additional consideration in the development of a Clewiston U.S. 27 Highway Corridor Vision Planning process currently underway in collaboration with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 1 Planning Studio. Both the Corridor Vision Plan and the Waterfront Master Plan involve concerted efforts to solicit public engagement and input into the development of future plans for the city and its environs. The FDOT planning effort and Florida Boating Improvement Program grant are fully state funded with no required local matching dollars committed. The results of both efforts are planned to be completed in 2021.

Related to these aforementioned "good news" topics and other city economic development related efforts, I recently prepared a report that was published in the Clewiston Rotary Club newsletter that further describes recent planning efforts. The essence of that article is reprinted as follows:

The City Commission's identified top priority established early in 2020 is enhancing the Sugarland Highway (US 27) corridor including focused efforts to boost the Clewiston economy. Economic development initiatives include as a priority central business district enhancements particularly redevelopment of vacant and underdeveloped properties along the entire corridor within the city limits with emphasis on the easternmost sections of the City. The City is also supportive of the promotion and expansion of industrial, commercial and residential mixed use development along and near the predominantly undeveloped US 27 corridor from the westernmost sections of the City toward the vicinity of the Airglades International Airport site. Thirdly, the City

encourages the promotion of tourism related economic opportunities particularly related to the City's access to Lake Okeechobee and its amenities.

Following a Commission workshop on goals and priorities held earlier this year during which these topics were discussed, the City has been aggressively engaged in the pursuit of various grant funding opportunities for several potential infrastructure projects of benefit to the City's economic development and overall quality of life enhancement efforts including: public utility system rehabilitation & expansion projects; street & drainage improvement/maintenance projects; and, recreation & leisure facility enhancements. These efforts have focused on the pursuit of funding assistance from several agencies including the Florida Boating Improvement Program administered by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation (FWC) Commission. The City utilized the services of the Southwest Florida Planning District Council, of which the City is a member, to complete and submit an application to develop a City of Clewiston Lakefront Master Plan for the areas of the City in close proximity to Lake Okeechobee. This area encompasses portions of the eastern and northern sections of the City including areas in close proximity to US 27 and areas near the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) much of which is included in the City's expanded Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) district boundaries.

Regarding the recently announced grant approval from the Florida FWC Commission, this grant provides \$175,000 in state funding with no committed local dollars to develop a master plan for the waterfront area. This is timely in that: a) the City is currently engaged in developing a Corridor Vision Plan for US 27 through the City with the assistance of FDOT; b) the City is also in the process of designing a project for the construction of the new C-21 Bridge that will impact significantly on public access to the waterfront area and require redesign of major elements of the area including specifically boat ramp parking; and, c) the opportunity that the proposed elevated C-21 bridge upon completion will provide for expanded canal accessibility for boaters to undeveloped properties west of the City's existing boat ramp area.

Like the FDOT Corridor Vision Plan development process, the Lakefront Master Plan development process will include a significant effort to solicit public engagement, so your assistance in helping to spread the work is appreciated.

In closing, the City Commission recently adopted the operating and capital budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 which began on October 1<sup>st</sup>. I recognize and congratulate the Commission for their dedication and hard work particularly this year in the face of some major fiscal and logistical challenges to accomplish this important task. In the weeks ahead, additional budget details will be further discussed particularly solid waste collection rates changes for the new year. Overall, this budget was significantly impacted by the effects of COVID-19 within the state and the resulting funding implications particularly on state revenue sources shared with municipalities. I congratulate the Commission for making a number of difficult, but necessary, decisions this year and am confident that city financials will be positively impacted going forward as a result of this year's budget process. I also appreciate and recognize the efforts of the city staff during this challenging budget development process to work together for the betterment of the city and its citizens and customers. Rest assured, the city staff intends to utilize

the available resources to provide the best possible value in terms of service delivery to the community.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in the City of Clewiston.

Randy Martin

## **Staff Reports**

### **Community Development Director Travis Reese reports:**

- Yard sale permits will be available to the public beginning Monday, October 5, 2020. The City encourages all citizens and visitors to practice social distancing and wear a mask when appropriate.
- In remembrance of the 19<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup> the Clewiston Fire and Rescue hosted a BBQ for local law enforcement. Our volunteer firefighters spent the morning cooking up tasty chicken and ribs. Sonny's BBQ generously donated the delicious sides.
- A building permit for a new single family home was issued for West Sugarland Circle, this will be a 3 bedroom and 2 bath home.
- Construction of a new home has been completed and a Certificate of Occupancy will be issued for the new dwelling located near the corner of East Royal Palm and Avenida Del Rio.
- The US 27 Corridor Project through FDOT conducted a safe walking/bicycling tour of Sugarland Hwy. The purpose of this walk was to identify any areas of concern for citizens and tourists while walking or bicycling along Sugarland Highway.
- City of Clewiston received a Boater Improvement Grant for the Lake Okeechobee waterfront improvement project in the amount of \$175,000. These funds will be used to create a conceptual plan to revive the lakefront area to reflect the original town designers' vision of Clewiston's access and use of Lake Okeechobee.

### **Public Works Director Sean Scheffler reports:**

- Levee access is closed until the end of October.
- Mosquito Control Trap Counts:

	8/20	8/21	8/28	9/5
Okeechobee Blvd.	350	600	700	550
Public Works	100	143	200	118
Saginaw	200	250	300	300
Golf Course	400	500	700	400
Sports Complex	118	156	200	100

Ground Missions: August 6, August 14, August 21, August 24 and September 14

Air Missions: August 4, August 8, August 28, September 5 and September 18

- **Grant & Project Updates:**
  - FDOT announced last week that Clewiston had been awarded a Safe Route to Schools (SRTS) grant for new sidewalks on Laurel, DeSoto, Deane Duff and El Paso.

- New sidewalk projects from Wendy’s to San Luiz, San Luiz to Alverde & McDonalds to Berner Road funded by FDOT are being planned with projected construction start dates of FY 2022/2023.
- The Ventura Avenue Rebuild Project is scheduled for 2020 construction. All reviews have been done and 100% plans are ready. We are currently working on the bid documents.
- **Parks Department Activities:**
  - The decking replacement work on the east side “T” dock in the Boat Basin has been completed.
  - Replaced water valves at the Splash Pad. The Splash Pad and Swimming Pool are closed for the season and will remain closed during the new fiscal year beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> or until further notice.
  - Work on the basketball half court on Osceola was suspended until the weather allows a few dry days for staff to paint.
- **Street Division Activities:**
  - Large trees were cut back, opening drivers’ visibility at two major intersections – Ventura/Olympia and Arcarde/Ponce de Leon.
  - With all the rain, staff has stepped up the watch for potholes. A few were seen and addressed quickly.
  - Planted flowers in the Civic/Memorial Park and in front of City Hall.
  - Installed social distancing floor markers and hand sanitizing stations were installed in city buildings in preparation for reopening of facilities to walk-in visitors.
  - Installed the new Golf Course sign and finished landscaping for the dedication in honor of former U.S. Sugar CEO J. Nelson Fairbanks on September 15.
  - Trimmed Crape Myrtles around the Library air conditioner on the east side of the building.
  - Power washed the sidewalks on Bond Street.
- **Facility Maintenance:**
  - The 15 ton air conditioner on the east side of the Library was replaced.
  - Roof drains were cleaned out to ensure proper drainage.
  - Staff has called three roofing companies to look into leaks in the Library roof. All are very busy or will not come to Clewiston at this time. We are looking into alternative ways to seal the roof and buy more time.

**Library Director Natasha Hayes reports:**

- Over the past several weeks with the re-opening of the library to the public, word is slowly being spread and people are excited to be able to come in and choose their own book, make copies, and fax. Still due to the uncertainty of the pandemic our hours of operation and opening procedures remains as follows:
  - Open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. daily. This will allow staff the opportunity to empty the drop box, sanitize returned items, and open branch safely in the morning while allowing an hour in the afternoon to provide an in-depth cleaning of the facility of our high touched surfaces and opportunity to empty the return bin again.
  - Phone assistance for reference questions and help with placing holds for materials is available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.

- Patrons will be on a first come, first served basis with a maximum occupancy of 10 patrons at a time.
- Masks required for entry
- No in-person or group meetings/programs at this time
- Visits are limited to 1 hour
- Practice social distancing at all times
- Return of all materials will occur at the book drop box outside
- All materials will be quarantined for three days prior to being checked in and returned to shelves
- All library fines that have accrued during the pandemic time period will be waived until further notice
- Study rooms, newspapers, and magazines are currently unavailable (duplicate newspapers are available for keeping on a first come, first served basis)
- Staff is continuing to do an amazing job with creating the libraries digital arts and crafts programs as well as keeping our Facebook page updated and full of fun things to do and read. This week, the digital craft was “Craft & Chat!” All materials for the event are provided by the library in the form of a small kit. Patrons pick up the kits on a designated day and time to ensure contactless transactions. Those patrons who participate in the program register with Diana through email and obtain access to the programs. Patrons will then create the craft on their own all the while chatting and collaborating with others in attendance. Staff is doing a wonderful job with bringing stories alive through her virtual storytimes as well. All events are listed on our Facebook page.
- If you have not done so already, please join our Facebook page (Clewiston Public Library) in order to remain up to date on the library’s events and programs.

**Golf Course Director Robbie Rush reports:**

- Get all information of what’s going on at Clewiston Golf Course Facebook.
- Get on our E-mail list by going to the City of Clewiston Website. 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 7:45am-6:00pm. The first tee time is 8:00am.
- Golf Carts have to be in at 7:00pm.
- Walking play is permitted all day at the golf course now.
- Clewiston Golf Course has a driving range. The driving range has lights which means you can hit golf balls after (Night Time) hours. Tokens for the range ball machine can be purchased in the golf shop or at the Clewiston Police Department after hours.
- Golf lessons are available at the club from PGA Professional Robbie Rush. Contact the golf shop at 863-983-1448.
- The Clewiston Golf Course offers very competitive pricing on all golf gear the golfer needs.
- **For more information, call the golf shop at 863-983-1448.**

**Code Enforcement Officer Debbie McNeil reports:**



**Sec. 18-44. - Permits required.**

A permit will be required to do any alteration, construction or repair of a building or structure or make any changes or extensions.

(Code 1960, § 16-12; Code 1982, § 6-151; Code 1999, § 18-46)

**The dangers of pulling an Owner/Builder  
Permit without verifying a license**

If you do not intend to do the work yourself and have been asked by someone without a construction license to pull the permit, you are at risk of financial harm.

When property owners act as their own contractor, they must provide direct on-site supervision of the work being performed. If you pull an owner/builder permit for an unlicensed contractor to perform work on your property, you must deduct F.I.C.A., withholding tax and provide workers' compensation for them.

**Individuals who aid unlicensed persons may face fines up to \$5,000.**

If you have any questions you may contact the Community Improvement Division at:  
141 Central Avenue, Clewiston Utilities Building.

The public is encouraged to report code violations by contacting us at the above address, calling 983-1454 ext 309 or online at:

<https://www.clewiston-fl.gov/egov/apps/action/center.egov>

### **Utilities Director Danny Williams reports:**

- **Electric Crew Activities**
  - Removed vegetation from power lines;
  - prepared materials for upcoming substation preventative maintenance;
  - inspected substation for “hot connectors”;
  - changed connector at Esperanza Street residence;
  - repaired flag pole at utilities office building;
  - replaced lightning arrester in substation;
  - replaced transformer on 11th Street;
  - repaired street lights;
  - removed power pole for sewer repair, and reinstalled service after completed;
  - replaced bad connector on secondary on Trinidad Avenue;
  - installed new three phase transformer at fertilizer plant;
  - repaired two primary terminators;
  - assisted sewer department at collection lift stations;
  - spread weed suppression at substation.
- **Water Sewer Crew Activities**
  - Replaced water meters;
  - Repaired pumps at five lift stations- failures caused by a combination of heavy rainfall and non-flushable material in the collection system.

A sewer rehabilitation project is currently underway in the city. The \$2.3 million dollar project, with \$1.784 million funded with grant monies, will identify defects in the gravity sewer and the service lines, and make designated approved repairs. The city has contracted with **American Infrastructure Technologies** for this project. If they are working in your neighborhood, you may be asked to limit your water usage for a few hours. We apologize for the inconvenience. If you have any questions, please call our office at 863-983-1454. You may also call American Infrastructure Technologies directly at **256-739-4747 ext. 5**.

- **Customer Service Department**
  - Your Utility partners with customers to bring renewable power to the electric grid. If you'd like to learn more about net metering, please visit the FTC consumer information site at <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0532-solar-power-your-home>.
  - The public Utilities building drive-through service will remain open to customers during normal office hours.
  - 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](http://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](http://www.clewiston-fl.gov) or call our office.

- *IT'S LIGHTNING SEASON!* Don't forget to sign up for your meter based surge protection! Visit our office today.
- ONLINE BILL PAY IS AVAILABLE on our web site at [www.clewiston-fl.gov](http://www.clewiston-fl.gov) or [www.municipalonlinepayments.com/clewistonfl](http://www.municipalonlinepayments.com/clewistonfl).