

*For Your Information*

FROM THE CITY MANAGER & STAFF

December 21, 2020

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE CITY OF CLEWISTON,  
AMERICA'S SWEETEST TOWN**

**Solid waste collection will remain on the regular schedule through the Christmas and New Year Holidays. Roll off bins will be placed throughout the community for residents to dispose of their Christmas debris. Please do not place construction debris, household garbage or yard clippings in these containers.**

**Dates to Remember**

December 21, 2020 – City Commission Meeting

December 23, 2020 – City Offices Close at noon

December 24-25, 2020 – Christmas Holiday – City Offices Closed

January 1, 2021 – New Year Holiday – City Offices Closed

January 11, 2021 – Tentative City Commission Workshop

January 18, 2021 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – City Offices Closed

January 21, 2021 – Golf Course Advisory Board Meeting

January 25, 2021 – City Commission Meeting

**Office of the City Manager:**

Citizens, Business Owners & Other Interested Parties:

The following report is an administrative assessment of the “State of the City” I recently prepared and will be formally presenting to the City Commission at the upcoming biennial organizational meeting on December 21, 2020.

## **CITY OF CLEWISTON**

# **STATE OF THE CITY REPORT**

**December, 2020**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The City of Clewiston, Florida was founded in 1925 and incorporated as an independent Florida municipality in 1931. The Clewiston General Plan as it is referenced was initially designed by nationally prominent land planner John Nolen. As such, the City has consistently valued its rich heritage and desires to honor the basic principles of the Nolen plan in future development considerations while recognizing that the current vision will likely require adjustment to adapt to modern development standards. The City is virtually surrounded by sugarcane fields and thus historically known as “America’s Sweetest Town”. This designation also appropriately acknowledges the significant positive impacts on the City, Hendry County and surrounding influence area of being the corporate home for the U.S. Sugar Corporation (USSC) which is widely recognized as an agriculture industry leader in south central Florida’s heavily ag-dependent region.

Clewiston is centrally located in south Florida about 60 miles east of Fort Myers on the Gulf of Mexico and 60 miles west of Palm Beach on the Atlantic Ocean. Through almost a century of growth, Clewiston has retained its charm and beauty as the gateway community to Lake Okeechobee which is Florida’s largest and the continental United States’ second largest freshwater lake. Centrally located by inland waterways and highways between the coasts, Clewiston is uniquely positioned among Florida municipalities in this regard. Visitors are attracted to Clewiston in large part due to excellent freshwater fishing in Lake Okeechobee which is widely acclaimed as the “Bass Capital of the World” and offers the best in black bass and pan fishing including crappie and bream. The 109 mile Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) circles the lake’s perimeter and, as part of the Florida Trail system, passes through the Clewiston community along the ridge of the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) which connects the City with the body of the lake. This access provides a lakeside recreational area and an excellent biking and walking opportunity. It is also a favorite location for the many visitors in the region to enjoy bird and wildlife observation.

The primary transportation connector route “Sugarland Highway”, as it is affectionately known, is a combination of U.S. Highway 27 and State Road 80 which runs east to west through the City to form an axis point for the City.

Clewiston is a full-service City providing all major municipal services including: police, emergency dispatch, animal control; fire protection & first responder emergency medical; public utility operations encompassing potable water treatment & distribution, wastewater collection & treatment and electric utility distribution; community development, planning, zoning, permitting & code enforcement; public works activities encompassing solid waste collection & disposal, street, sidewalk, & stormwater system maintenance, park & public building maintenance, street lighting, mosquito control & public boat ramp facility maintenance; parks & recreation programs & facilities; public golf course operations; public facility rentals (e.g. playgrounds, park facilities, picnic shelters, splash pad, pool, auditorium, youth center & other buildings; public library services & facilities; finance & administrative services, human resources, risk management & personnel administration.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

From an administrative perspective, it is deemed a worthwhile endeavor to conduct and document an end-of-year assessment of progress, as well as, offer a brief prognosis for the coming New Year. This exercise is intended to be a reminder of achievements with appropriate recognition of shortcomings, so that limited resources can be allocated and strategically targeted going forward to enhance outcomes recognizing that forces beyond the City’s control often impact on plans and schedules adversely. This information can also prove to be helpful for future reflection and in efforts to update and refine goals and objectives going forward.

This summary is intended to document some of the most significant items, but is not a comprehensive listing of all activities of the prior year nor should it be interpreted as being presented necessarily in its entirety in priority order. In most cases, comments are organized by service area or related functions to the maximum extent possible. This summary is further provided to capture and highlight many other documents, resources and activities which are available by reference for more in depth evaluation and critique. The following comments are offered in this context to highlight the year 2020:

## **PART ONE: PROGRESS**

**a) Novel Coronavirus Pandemic & Response (COVID-19):** By any standard, one of the items most influential upon the City during 2020 has been the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). The implications have been far-reaching and significantly impacted practically every element of the City's operations as well as the community at large. The implications continue now as they have for the last ten months of the calendar year, and this space will not be utilized to dwell on the many obvious negative aspects. Instead, focus in this report is being placed on some of the things that occurred that helped the City be prepared to respond or which will be occurring near term as a result of the process and its outcomes. Most significantly, management recommended and with the invaluable efforts of legal counsel, the Commission adopted an updated Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) prior to the 2020 COVID-19 events. This was fortunately accomplished in the last quarter of 2019 and made the City's response to the pandemic much better organized than would have been the case under the previous CEMP. Despite all the distractions and negative influences at work, management in cooperation with the County Emergency Management has also recently completed a re-draft of the Clewiston relevant provisions of the FEMA required Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) document which is a necessary multi-jurisdiction planning tool for use in emergency management type activities that qualifies local jurisdictions to remain eligible for federal financial assistance programs. The LMS update will be presented to the Commission in January for review and acceptance in concurrence with the County and LaBelle. This required five-year cycle update reflects the provisions of the new City CEMP document and is Clewiston's first meaningful update to the LMS since it was originally adopted more than a decade ago.

The pandemic on the adverse side also resulted in significant revenue losses for state and local governments and Florida was no exception. This had negative implications in the City's last fiscal year budget and in the eventual budget adopted for the current fiscal year. Fortunately, the City was less impacted economically overall than municipalities that are more reliant upon tourism dollars. This also translated to fewer private sector job losses and permanent business closures locally. On the positive side, the state allocated federally approved Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to counties who in turn shared those revenues with municipal governments to offset eligible expenditures in response to COVID-19 that in the case of Clewiston resulted in the recent receipt of \$890,000 in reimbursements to the City for

eligible public safety expenditures. This funding allows the City to redirect available City resources to address much needed expenditures particularly in the area of public safety and upgrades to technology that will be very valuable in dealing with conditions imposed by local government response to this and future declared states of emergency.

**b) Public Safety Initiatives & Activities:** Management and staff in collaboration with Hendry County completed this year a final drafting of the long outdated (vintage 1980's) Inter-local agreement (ILA) between the parties for the East Hendry Fire Services provided by the Clewiston Fire Department. Upon legal review, the updated agreement will be presented in early 2021 for County and City Commission approval. Another major priority initiative was accomplished this year with the Commission's approval and due to the ability to redirect resources as a result of the flexibility provided by the CARES Act public safety reimbursements described earlier. The City has finally been able to procure the long needed upgrade to E-911 communications system equipment as this challenging year comes to a close with project completion expected early in 2021. This was identified as a high priority need for a number of years by the police department and took on new urgency to achieve countywide emergency communications interoperability in compliance with the legislative mandate that took effect early in the year requiring this emergency communication achievement. The communication equipment upgrade in cooperation with the County will ensure that all city public safety delivery agencies can seamlessly and efficiently communicate, and it replaces aged portable radio equipment that has served its useful life thus enhancing first responder and the public's safety in the process. The year realized project completion and formal closeout of the state grant funded initiative begun in 2016 to acquire, renovate and relocate the police department to its new and improved facilities which was another long established priority capital improvement need of the City. Also, the County and City collaborated to increase the County Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU) funding support charged to out-of-city beneficiaries of the East Fire Services district to meet operating and capital outlay needs going forward. This change provided necessary funding flexibility to revise the Clewiston Fire Department budget to provide for enhanced personnel benefits (i.e. cancer & expanded accident coverages) to the department's volunteer firefighters which was requested by department leadership on behalf of the volunteers in mid-2019. The current year budget included provision of the benefits requested and the volunteer firefighter coverages began in October, 2020.

**c) Infrastructure Needs, Accomplishments & Economic Development**

**Planning:** During preparation and development of the current fiscal year budget, considerable energy was exerted by the Commission, management and staff to update and refine the City's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) process. Every impacted department was engaged in this endeavor which resulted in creation of a longer term ten-year planning document that focused primarily upon the first five-year period in terms of more immediate needs for capital funding. As one of the primary means of addressing immediate and shorter term identified capital outlay needs, management and staff focused this year upon aggressively pursuing available state and federal grant opportunities to address long accumulating demand for priority capital improvement and infrastructure needs. This resulted in the pursuit of a record number of grant seeking efforts for the City and thus far an impressive number and amount of approved grant funding resources with several major project applications still pending. To further capital needs planning and pursue project design and completion, a major milestone was achieved this year when management solicited Requests for Qualification (RFQ) and the Commission authorized negotiated contracts for the provision of professional engineering services. The City received a dozen qualified responses and a staff committee narrowed the list to four recommended firms. The Commission approved the contracts and the City is now positioned with enough firms to pursue multiple capital projects going forward in compliance with new state regulations requiring separation of design and inspection type services on major projects. In preparation for utilizing these services, the City's current lead consulting engineer completed design and permitting requirements in 2020 for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) approved C-21 bridge project and the FDOT funded and approved Ventura Avenue pavement repair and resurfacing project. These timely efforts completed this past year secured: a) the legislatively authorized C-21 bridge funding already allocated and b) the FDOT approved grant funding for the Ventura Avenue project. The City was awarded grant and zero interest loan funds this year to complete inflow & infiltration improvements to the wastewater collection system throughout the service area which satisfied a major element of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) consent order decree requirements which the City originally agreed to in 2018. This project will result in reduced Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) flows which positively impacts upon operating costs and frees up permitted plant treatment capacity for future new development and redevelopment use. A second utility project also using FDEP grant and loan funding was completed this year which satisfies another consent order

requirement by providing two stationary generators strategically located on the wastewater collection system to operate major lift station bypass pumps and four portable generators all available to be utilized during power outage events to avoid wastewater backups and overflows. Another permanent generator upgrade is planned for the WWTP facility as an element of its renovation. In collaboration with the County, the City also submitted grant applications this year to multiple sources for funding to complete the planned renovation of the aged WWTP to meet modern standards and to extend a wastewater forcemain from the plant to serve areas west of the City along the 27 Corridor to the Airlades International Airport (AIA) location. The City made substantial progress this year in the pursuit of the goal to modernize the electric and water utility system operations by converting to an automated Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system. In cooperation with the Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA), of which the City is a member, the City procured the services of an independent consultant to evaluate the feasibility of the conversion and assist in the preparation of a procurement process to receive proposals from qualified firms to complete the project. Proposals from qualified bidders are scheduled to be received in mid-January, 2021. During 2020, the public utilities department completed an analysis and initiated electric distribution resiliency maintenance including transfer station and transmission line improvements. Staff also completed a grant application to further these efforts to reduce the potential and duration of power outage events particularly related to extreme weather events. In cooperation with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the City was involved throughout the year in coordination activities to address impacts on the adjacent City managed recreation area as their project contractor commenced the major rehabilitation contract on the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD). The HHD project is expected to be substantially completed within Clewiston in 2021. In another cooperative effort, the USACE and City agreed to design and construct a septic-to-sewer project to connect USACE operations facilities to the City's wastewater system with the USACE responsible for funding the project. With community and agency support, the City applied and received approval of a Safe Routes to Schools sidewalk construction project grant which will provide pedestrian facilities in close proximity to Clewiston schools. The project design, bidding and construction activities will be pursued in the New Year. FDOT also completed installation of a new sidewalk section along a portion of West Ventura Avenue east of south Berner Road near the new police department location. The City continued its collaboration with Hendry County's Economic Development Council in marketing this year with considerable contacts resulting

within the County in the vicinity of Clewiston including significantly increased interest in the City's Commerce Park (CPID) property. In cooperation with the USSC, the City renamed the public golf course facility to the J. Nelson Fairbanks Clewiston Golf Course and installed new signage along San Luiz Avenue.

**d) Community Development, Redevelopment Areas, Regulatory Reform & Code Enforcement efforts:**

At the beginning of the year, the Commission held workshops to discuss and address priorities. The Commission determined the highest economic development priority to be the development and redevelopment of the 27 Corridor particularly the downtown and older sections of the City. The Planning & Zoning Board and Clewiston Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Advisory Committees began discussions and consideration of development and regulatory tools. The 27 Corridor planning efforts, intended to update and recommend ordinance and corridor comprehensive plan reform, stalled in March due to COVID-19 impacts. The restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic by the state also adversely impacted code enforcement efforts throughout the City particularly the Special Magistrate process. Management is committed to pursuing these priority items in 2021 with the goal to complete the 27 Corridor related development and regulatory tool review and updates as the top priority. On a brighter note, the CRA saw increased funding for the first time in a decade in the new City budget to address priorities. The City completed this year the fourth phase of a 27 Corridor FDOT grant funded beautification project to install additional palm trees along the highway. The City also applied during the year for additional funding from FDOT to complete installation of palm trees for the remainder of the 27 Corridor within the city limits. The City applied and was approved for very timely FDOT funded professional planning assistance in 2020. The agency's Planning Studio division was engaged to provide assistance and utilize the services of a planning consultant to complete a 27 Corridor Vision Plan for the City and portions of the highway outside the east and west city limits into Hendry County. Much of the planning effort scope of work, including a robust public participation component, was substantially completed during 2020 despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19. It is expected the plan will be completed and presented to the City & County Commissions in the first quarter of 2021. With the leadership and assistance of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC), the City was also selected for a Florida Boating Improvement Program grant to develop a Lakefront Master Plan within and near the expanded CRA area. This project will be pursued in 2021 utilizing SWFPC resources and staff to procure a consultant

to do the necessary study to develop a master plan for the area. The City approved a revised Planned Unit Development (PUD), on U. S. Sugar owned property on the south side of the 27 Corridor at the western end of the City, to address housing needs focused on creating workforce residency opportunities for professionals such as teachers and first responders. At the request of a potential business expansion representative, the City reviewed and approved limited permitted use revisions to somewhat expand the marketability of the Commerce Park (CPID) properties. To protect the community's interests, the City and other regional partners including Hendry County, Glades County and the City of Moore Haven, hired a consultant to monitor USACE regulatory reform efforts impacting on Lake Okeechobee. In the name of water quality protection, the City adopted an ordinance regulating fertilizer use to address nutrient level considerations in surface waters. In response to state efforts to expand the scope and applicability of Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) requirements and to address the City's obligations to FDEP, citywide stormwater processes were reviewed and regulatory ordinances modified to meet the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) standards. These changes satisfied FDEP's NPDES permit renewal requirements with additional responsibilities for updated mapping to be completed on an approved schedule in future years.

**e) Fiscal Management, Compliance & Reporting:** The past decade, in terms of adverse economic conditions, took quite a toll on City financials and for a number of reasons, became an essential priority for the City to address immediately. Reserves were largely depleted and fiscal compliance type conditions resulted in the need to take actions aimed at reversing trends of late. In each of the City's enterprise funds and operations, for example, priority steps were identified to recommend actions to the Commission. Utility rate structures were a focus with independent analysis of the electric, water & wastewater funds and interdepartmental analysis of the solid waste fund undertaken and completed over the past year and a half. Based upon the results, management recommended and the Commission adopted plans and implemented steps in 2020 expected to make immediate significant improvements. Yet, in some instances, recovery will take some time over the next couple of years to realistically accomplish established financial goals and restore full City financial policy compliance in all funds. This was done utilizing a very deliberate and transparent process that for the most part seems to have been adequately justified to the public based upon the minimal negative feedback received in

response thus far. Specifically, the user fee based rate structures were modified for the first time in most cases in over a decade. To prevent this condition from being repeated, management recommended and the Commission agreed to implement steps for regular cost-of-living type analysis to occur with rates adjusted as necessary. Another very important step was accomplished this year in this regard when the Commission established a well-qualified private sector advisory committee to make recommendations on the auditor selection process. The Commission subsequently accepted the Committee and management's recommendation to procure the services of a highly experienced municipal accounting and financial management firm to conduct the City's annual required financial audits going forward. Due to the concerted efforts of the City's capable and dedicated finance department, the most recent audit for FY 2018-2019 was completed this past year with the important goal accomplished of eliminating past audit findings that had plagued City financials for a number of years. The Finance Department also implemented enhanced monthly internal financial reporting processes that produce monthly reports to the Commission and interested public on current fiscal activities reconciling revenue and expenditures with budget projections. City finance staff also expanded their role in terms of internal auditing, reporting & analysis functions by taking the lead in the effort to evaluate and update solid waste fund fee structure recommendations. The department also completed a financial analysis of golf course operations and budget review.

**f) Intergovernmental Cooperation:** Experience has proven that no local government flourishes to achieve its optimum potential without developing cooperative working relationships with peers and other influential organizations and agencies. By most accounts, Clewiston made historical progress last year in terms of intergovernmental cooperation. Representatives from the cities of Clewiston and LaBelle joined Hendry and Glades counties to visit legislative leadership and the local delegation members and select state regulatory agencies in one unified group to advocate for priorities, projects and funding assistance on several topics of mutual interest and benefit. Based upon the reaction of several legislators, this was unprecedented in modern times and very well received. The result was increased funding and other positive outcomes during a most challenging fiscal year in terms of state budget allocations to localities. As for interagency cooperation on a local level, as noted elsewhere in this report and evidenced by a number of other less notable examples, positive City interactions with Hendry County have become much stronger during 2020

and are expected to continue into the New Year on several important initiatives of mutual interest. I attribute the progress thus far primarily to improved communication efforts, but there is still work to be done particularly with some other local agencies. Outreach to federal and state agencies to foster improved relationships and interactions have also been advanced as well. Prominent examples where it is perceived that the City significantly enhanced its relationships and standing are the USACE, FDOT, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), SWFRPC, Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), FMPA, as well as, fostering improved communication with other important federal and state agencies including the FDEP, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), federal Small Business Administration (SBA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) and the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) among others. The City has also continued allowing use of its facilities for monthly office hours for the staff of U.S. Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart and recently began accommodating weekly office hours for newly-elected Florida House of Representatives member Lauren Melo.

## **PART TWO: PROGNOSIS**

Looking ahead to 2021, much attention is rightly focused upon positive outcomes which are expected to minimize continued adverse effects of the COVID-19 virus and the need for a state of emergency. As recently approved vaccines become widely distributed and hopefully result in eventual minimization if not eradication of the virus, its far reaching impacts should eventually diminish. Until this condition is achieved, it is expected that Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance and other protective measures will continue to be a priority for the safety of the public and city employees. Based upon economic indicators, management remains bullish on prospects for the local economy as 2021 unfolds.

Substantial progress or completion on several activities and projects are expected as follows: formal adoption of the 2020 negotiated County & City East Fire ILA; recommended acquisition of replacement firefighter breathing apparatus equipment (SCBA system) utilizing funds made available due to the flexibility provided by the CARES Act reimbursement funding for eligible expenditures described earlier in this report; Police Department accreditation; adoption of the necessary ILA with the Hendry County Sheriff's Department

regarding interoperability to satisfy the legislative mandate upon completion of the City & County emergency communications system upgrades; consideration and approval of an intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) initiated in cooperation with the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District State Attorney's office aimed at fighting drugs and related crimes on a regional basis (i.e. NETFORCE initiative); review and as necessary update the (vintage 1980's) City & County Animal Control ILA; review and as necessary amend storm shutter ordinance requirements; expect to achieve substantial compliance with the FDEP Consent Order decree for the City to address identified wastewater system deficiencies cited by the agency in previous years; bidding and, depending upon securing sufficient funding, construction of the C-21 bridge project; bidding and construction of the Ventura Avenue partially FDOT grant funded repair and resurfacing project; complete and submit an FDOT grant application for upgrading the remaining unimproved section of Ventura Avenue from Deane Duff Avenue to W.C. Owen Avenue; consider adoption of driveway apron ordinance amendments; completion of 27 corridor FDOT Planning Studio Visioning process begun in 2020; early implementation of any approved Corridor Vision Plan elements to the extent CRA funding and other sources are available; completion, vetting & Commission adoption of 27 Corridor Comprehensive Plan & regulatory ordinance upgrades; in collaboration with the SWFRPC, complete the grant funded project to develop a lakefront district master plan; pursue successful marketing & sales of the vast majority of the Commerce Park properties including subdivision of the 10 acre parcel into multiple lots; complete Request for Proposal (RFP) process, secure FMPA financing, award a contract & initiate construction activities of the AMI utility metering project; once the required FDOT permit is issued, completion of the west end 27 Corridor median flagpole project in cooperation with the County and Fair Board who is committing funding for the project; final completion of the USACE funded HHD rehabilitation project clearing the way for the C-21 project to proceed; finalizing of complete plans & permitting of the USACE funded septic-to-sewer project with bidding & construction activity to follow for phase one up to the amount of federal funding available and committed to the project; review in-city & out-of-city water & wastewater rate structure; comply with approved schedule for City to address FDEP enforced BMAP standards & NPDES permit requirements for stormwater system mapping submittals; SFWMD requested water conservation model ordinance evaluation and consideration; commencement of construction on the approved west end PUD project on USSC owned property to begin satisfying housing demand needs; continued planning for the next phase of PUD

development on USSC property on the north side of the 27 Corridor in the vicinity of the Walmart area including both commercial and residential development and providing lake access via the canal system; bidding & construction of FDOT funded sidewalk improvements project for San Luiz & the McDonald's vicinity along both sides of the 27 Corridor to fill voids; with USSC financial assistance, replace building signage at the golf course and country club locations and repaint both buildings; continued progress in code enforcement activities and results utilizing the Special Magistrate hearing process particularly focused in the downtown & older sections of the City and in close proximity to the 27 Corridor; review outstanding property liens particularly for non-homestead properties; evaluate and consider identified surplus property disposal & public building use options and agreements; and, develop a strategy to achieve City "brand" enhancement & community marketing efforts.

### **CONCLUSION**

In an abbreviated 2019 partial year report prepared a year ago, an observation was noted that considerable pessimism existed within the community regarding certain elements of the general state of affairs in the City. For whatever reasons, confidence levels regarding numerous community interests were lower than desired. Now, it is increasingly apparent that a more optimistic view is beginning to emerge in several sectors and appear to be more positively impacting confidence levels in the community. There continues to be private investment and development interest in potential business locations as evidenced by the uptick in Commerce Park visits and contacts over the past year. The Hendry County Economic Development Council (EDC) also reports that monthly contacts with interest in the entire County have been on the rise as well. To illustrate the point, the EDC recently shared a Google marketing report which indicates that marketing photos uploaded by the EDC received 23,987 total views in the last month. Typically, views averaged more in the 1,000 per month range in past years. It is yet to be determined what prompted the recent surge or whether it is an anomaly, but it will be interesting to follow the pattern. In terms of the development of housing stock, new opportunities are on the horizon to accommodate growing interest in the Clewiston area that will contribute to needed commercial investment in the City's central business district where available sites exist. Management strongly desires to build on the momentum begun in 2020 which will hopefully produce desired results if the City succeeds in further getting its house in order as discussed in this report. Management is optimistic that 2021 and beyond will realize many shorter term

goals and objectives and build a sustainable environment for overall community advancement into the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Randy Martin, City Manager

In closing, I wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Thank you for your continued support and interest in the City of Clewiston.

### **Staff Reports**

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

- **Mosquito Control:**  
Trap counts have been low in all areas due to colder temperatures.
- **Grant & Project Updates:**
  - Clewiston has been awarded a Safe Routes to School (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 2021 construction. All reviews have been done and 100% plans are ready. We are currently working on the bid documents.
- **Parks Department Activities:**
  - Staff continues working to prepare the fields for the upcoming baseball and softball seasons.
  - Staff repaired major sprinkler line break on the Clewiston High School soccer practice field.
- **Street Division Activities:**
  - Mowed and cleaned all of the surface and park areas.
  - Trimmed trees and hedges at all city facilities.
  - Repaired potholes and road shoulders throughout the city.
- **Facility Maintenance:**
  - Began working to make repairs to the Golf Course pedestrian wooden bridge. Materials have been ordered and should be here before the end of the year.
  - Ordered material to repair the Trinidad Park pavilion roof.
  - Measurements were taken to repair and install new gutters on city buildings.
  - Hung Christmas lights on city buildings.

#### **Golf Course Director Robbie Rush reports:**

- Get all information of what's going on at Clewiston Golf Course Facebook.
- Get on our email 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 7:15am-5:00pm. The first tee time is 7:45am. Tee times are required. Golf Shop 863-983-1448
- Golf carts have to be in at 5:45pm.
- Walking 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.
- Monday's Special after 12:00pm - 18 holes - cart included - \$26.00 plus tax. Tee time required. Golf Shop 863-983-1448.
- Clewiston Golf Course offers very competitive pricing on all golf gear the golfer needs.
- On Saturday, December 5, 2020 the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual His Vision Our Hands Stan Wegscheid Golf Tournament took place. The tournament fielded 98 players.
- 2020 Sugar Cup Gators vs World Tournament was a good one, with the World winning 16-12. The tournament is a Ryder Cup format between 2 teams made up of Florida Gator fans against non-gator fans. The tournament has been going now for 21 years.
- Clewiston Men's Club Championship is scheduled for December 26, 2020. For sign-up call the golf shop.
- The first Ladies Golf Clinic is Friday, January 8, 2021. The clinic will cover Putting and is free of charge. The clinic is from 4pm to 5pm.
- Starting Saturday, January 9, 2021 Clewiston Golf Course will have a Junior Golf Clinic on Putting from 11am to 12pm. Free of charge.
- January 16, 2021 HCSO Deputy Brian Haas Memorial Tournament is scheduled to be played. To sign-up call 863-983-1448.

**Code Enforcement Officer Debbie Clay reports:**

**At Last We Say So Long.....**



## **And to those storm shutters covering our windows!**

### **Sec. 110-530. - Residential development and improvement.**

(d)Shutters, storm panels and storm rollups. Shutters, storm panels and storm rollups shall meet the following design standards:

(1)Permanently installed shutters:

a.Shutters shall be painted to match either the principal color or the trim color of the structure to which they are attached.

b.Permanently installed hardware for storm panels and storm rollups shall be painted to match the principal color or the trim color of the structure to which is attached, according to which will make such hardware the least noticeable.

**c.No permanently installed plywood panels are permitted.**

(2)Storm shutters and panels which are not permanently installed shall meet the following utilization standards:

a.They may be put in place or closed not more than 72 hours before and 72 hours after a storm event;

b.They may be put in place or closed for two periods of up to 15 days each between June 1 and November 30 (the hurricane season) when the owner is absent; and

c.They may be put in place on rear windows during any period of time.

**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 extension 309 or online at: <https://www.clewiston-fl.gov/egov/apps/action/center.egov>**

#### **Police Chief Aaron Angell reports:**

*Nov. 26, 2020*

#### **Robbery**

*9:30 pm 600 block of Saginaw Ave.*

A man was sitting in his residence when he heard his doorbell ring. When he answered the door two armed assailants forced their way in the residence where a struggle took place. The resident was struck multiple times in the face with a firearm before the suspects fled. At the same time the suspects were fleeing the residence the victim's brother was returning home. Both the victim and his brother gave chase during which time they were able to gather information that helped

Clewiston Police Department Investigators identify the suspects. As the investigation into this crime unfolded detectives were able to identify one of the two suspects who had perpetrated this violent crime. The suspect was arrested and booked into the Hendry County Jail on charges of robbery, theft, and aggravated assault.

*Nov. 27, 2020*

**Reckless Driver**

*300 block of Sugarland Hwy*

Officers responded to the area after receiving a report of a vehicle being operated in a reckless manner, specifically that the vehicle was doing “donuts” in the parking lot. When officers arrived the vehicle was no longer there and a search of the area yielded negative results. On 11/30 while patrolling the area officers observed a vehicle matching the description previously provided and capitalized on the opportunity provided to introduce themselves to the vehicle’s occupants and address the previous complaint.

*Nov. 28, 2020*

**Drug Case**

*10:23 pm Francisco St. near Alverdez Ave.*

After observing a vehicle run a stop sign an officer conducted a traffic stop. During the encounter the officer made several observations concerning the operator of the vehicle as well as the vehicle, none more noticeable than the strong odor of marijuana coming from vehicle. When the discussion turned from the traffic violation to the odor of marijuana the operator of the vehicle offered to hand over “the weed.” A subsequent search of the vehicle yielded thirty grams of marijuana as well as a scale. The driver of the vehicle was subsequently arrested and booked into the Hendry County Jail on felony drug possession charges.

*Nov. 30, 2020*

**Drug Case**

*1:09 am 800 block of East Sugarland Hwy*

An officer conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle after witnessing a traffic infraction in the 800 block of East Hwy 27. Upon approaching the vehicle officers observed several people inside the vehicle one of which they knew to hold an active warrant for his arrest. During the arrest of this individual he was found to be in possession of drug paraphernalia that tested positive for the presence of methamphetamine. During the course of the traffic stop officers also noted that one of the passengers was in possession of a prescription medication bottle from which the label had been removed. A subsequent search of the vehicle yielded several more pill bottles. The pill bottle that was observed in the passenger’s possession was found to contain prescription drugs for which the individual did not have a prescription. The individual was arrested and booked into the Hendry County Jail on drug related charges.

*December 1, 2020*

**Traffic Stop**

Officers attempted to stop an ATV, however, the operator had other plans and decided not to stop. The juvenile operator fled from officers via Okeechobee Blvd. Determined to address the situation appropriately officers did not give up and located the juvenile male operator several

blocks over where they were finally able to stop him. The juvenile male was issued a citation for the illegal operation of the ATV and turned over to his mother.

*December 5, 2020*

**Suspicious person**

*9:59 am 300 block E. Alverde*

Officers observed a suspicious male subject attempting to conceal himself in the back yard of a residence after fleeing from them when he observed them patrolling the area. Officers felt that the suspicious behavior of the subject warranted further investigation and subsequently made contact with the subject. During the encounter the subject provided officers with inconsistent information regarding his identity and refused to provide identification. Officers were finally able to positively identify the subject and confirmed that there was an active warrant for his arrest in Glades County. The subject was taken into custody and delivered to the Hendry County Jail.

*December 7, 2020*

**Assist other agency**

*1:23 am Hwy 27 North of Clewiston*

A vehicle was reported to have crashed north of Clewiston on Hwy 27. Officers responded and found that a vehicle had slid off the roadway but that no crash had occurred. The vehicle slid from the roadway after the driver lost control. All occupants of the vehicle were okay.

**Suspicious person**

*3:47 am 100 block Royal Palm*

It was reported that a woman appeared to be running from a man and knocking on multiple room doors inside the Clewiston Inn. When officers arrived they did locate the two subjects on the property. Both advised they had been staying with a friend at the Clewiston Inn until the friend recently kicked them out. During the investigation officers learned that the woman had an active warrant. She was placed under arrest and delivered to the Hendry County Jail. The male subject was escorted from the property and peace was restored.

**Disturbance**

*7:45 pm 200 block Basilan Crescent*

A woman reported that her boyfriend and her were arguing and that she wished for him to leave the residence. The boyfriend was trying to leave the residence when officers arrived, however, could not find his keys. The girlfriend was extremely upset and while officers were trying to restore peace and have the boyfriend leave she continuously approached them and her boyfriend in an agitated and argumentative state making it increasingly difficult for officers to restore peace. The fourth time she did this officers attempted to escort her from the immediate area to another part of the residence to quell the disturbance. The girlfriend however had other plans and instead of complying with the officers she attempted to punch one in the face, unsuccessfully. A brief struggle then took place between the officers and the woman before she was taken into custody on charges of resisting an officer with violence and battery on a law enforcement officer.

*December 10, 2020*

**Drug Arrest**

*12:10 am 500 block East Sagamore*

After stopping a vehicle for an equipment violation, officers observed the front seat passenger acting in a suspicious manner as they approached the vehicle. During the course of the stop officers learned that the driver did not possess a valid driver's license, and that the vehicle he was operating had not been properly registered. During a search of the vehicle officers located a white substance that tested positive for methamphetamine. The driver of the vehicle was released after being issued two notices to appear, and the passenger, who is currently on probation, was arrested for possession of methamphetamine.

**Officer Ambushed while on Traffic Stop**

*3:30 pm 500 block E. Obispo Ave.*

An officer of the Clewiston Police Department was engaged in a traffic stop in the 500 block of East Obispo Avenue in Clewiston, Fl. While located in a marked city issued patrol vehicle the Clewiston Police Department officer was ambushed by an individual armed with a knife. The unidentified individual attempted to stab the officer multiple times while the officer was seated in the officer's patrol vehicle. During the assault the armed individual verbalized a desire to die. This officer acted swiftly and tactically, defending himself from an armed assailant's knife and was able to fend off the attack. During the course of the struggle the officer made multiple attempts to call for assistance but was unsuccessful due to failed radio transmissions from the issued handheld radio. The officer was able to reach the in car radio to request additional units. Despite deadly force conditions the officer was able to subdue the armed assailant without injury. Due to the officer's reactive and tactical response both officer and the armed assailant were unharmed. The City of Clewiston is beyond proud of this officer's quick thinking and reverence for life safety for all. Video footage of this event is available on the police department's Facebook page.

*December 12, 2020*

**Disturbance**

*12:27 pm 1000 block of W. Sugarland Hwy.*

An on duty City of Clewiston Animal Control Officer was at the establishment when a citizen approached her in a hostile manner yelling profanities at her. The situation escalated to the point that the citizen struck the Animal Control Officer with her elbow. The citizen continued to threaten the Animal Control Officer stating to her that she was compiling evidence on her with the intent of having her fired.

**Disturbance**

*10:31 pm 900 block E. Avenida Del Rio*

Officers received a report that a disturbance had taken place, and that one of the men involved had left to retrieve a firearm with the intent of returning and settling the matter. After observing another man dancing with his girlfriend the man became enraged and left the establishment returning to his residence where he retrieved a firearm. Officers were provided with the subject's identity and a description of the vehicle he was driving. Officers located the vehicle in the vicinity of the establishment. Officers did in fact locate a loaded firearm and the subject was arrested.

**Drug Arrest**

*12:23 am, 300 block S. Deane Duff St.*

An individual acting in a bizarre manner prompted further investigation by officers. Officers made contact with a male subject who immediately discarded a syringe and clear plastic bag. While speaking with the man officers noted that he was under the influence. Upon retrieving the items discarded by the man officers learned that the syringe contained heroin, and that the clear plastic contained methamphetamine. The man told officers that he had only been in possession of the items because he was taking them to a friend, and that he discarded them because he did not want the officers thinking the items belonged to him.

**Drug Arrest**

*3:09 am 400 block W Sugarland Hwy*

After receiving a tip that a fugitive was currently staying at a local lodging establishment officers responded to investigate further. They located the subject in question and confirmed that he was in fact wanted in Monroe County. During the course of the investigation officers also observed narcotics in plain view. Subsequent tests of the narcotics revealed them to be marijuana and heroin. The subject was taken into custody and booked into the Hendry County Jail.

*December 13, 2020*

**Drug Arrest**

*10:30 pm 300 W. Sugarland Hwy*

After conducting a traffic stop for an equipment violation officers locate narcotics. During the course of the stop officers developed suspicions that there was criminal activity afoot. Subsequent investigation confirmed the officer's suspicions when the passenger of the vehicle was found to be in possession of a syringe and other narcotics equipment containing illegal substances. The woman was arrested and booked into the Hendry County Jail on drug related charges.

*December 14, 2020*

**Animal Complaint**

*300 Block W. Sagamore Ave.*

A homeowner found a very unwelcome guest inside her efficiency. When officers arrived they found what appeared to be a rabid raccoon who had established residence in the caller's efficiency. This being an issue they were unsure how to deal with they contacted the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission who responded and removed the unauthorized tenant without incident.

**Suspicious person**

*200 block E. Sugarland Circle*

A resident of the area reported having captured a subject in a red hooded sweatshirt on video prowling around her residence during the night. Thankfully nothing else occurred, however, we would like to remind citizens to lock their vehicles when unattended and that valuables should not be left in vehicles. If you noticed anything suspicious please contact the Clewiston Police Department.

## **Other Happenings**

In addition to their daily patrol and investigative activities Clewiston Police Department Officers have enjoyed participating in a number of holiday related activities throughout the city. We are thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the community and participate in these worthwhile events.

The Clewiston Police Department was excited to receive an invitation from the State Attorney for the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit to participate in NETFORCE. This multi-jurisdictional task force has enjoyed tremendous success in Lee and Collier Counties recently resulting in forty-one arrests, and property and narcotics seizures totaling over 750K respectively.

The Clewiston Police Department continues to move toward achieving accreditation. After being delayed due to the COVID pandemic the Clewiston Police Department was finally able to take the first steps in this process by obtaining the necessary training for the personnel who will manage and oversee this venture. We now enjoy a team of several individuals who understand the process and who bring a vast amount of experience to the table.

In the wake of recent events we would also like to assure everyone that our long sought public safety communications project is coming to completion. We anticipate project completion next month, January 2021, with the hope it will mitigate future incidents like the one that happened on December 10<sup>th</sup>. This line of communication is quite often the crucial link between the community and the officers in the field, as well as the critical line of communication officers depend on in events such as the one that took place on December 10<sup>th</sup>. We must not forget those women and men who staff our 911 communications center 24/7 and their dedication to the community and those they serve. They serve as that vital first point of contact for both you the citizen and the officers and we all depend on them.

We would also like to say thank you to all of those who have supported us. We have enjoyed the outpouring of support from the community and the donations we have received. Knowing that we share such an amazing relationship with our community and that we have your support is important to every member of the Clewiston Police Department team. So again, we say thank you and we wish you all the happiest of holidays.

## **Animal Control**

When people hear “Animal Control” many different thoughts can come to one’s mind. In this field it can be extremely brutal from both the animals and public. Many would say it’s a thankless job, however if you ask any ACO “Why or how can you do this job?” we can guarantee the answer will almost always be the same...it’s a passion! We at CAC have had quite an eventful year thus far. With a pandemic hitting us at peak kitten season we, along with many other animal control entities and rescues struggled with rising intakes.

We try to work closely with the community to aide them with any animal related issues or questions they may have. This year we have a few highlighted moments that make us proud of CAC staff, the community, and volunteers.

- August 29, 2020: Food Drive + Vaccine Drive for Montura with a turnout of 190 pets/owners

- October 24, 2020: Free Rabies drive for Clewiston with a turnout of 191 pets/owners
- November 29 2020: “Coppers journey home” a 10 year old golden retriever mix became lost from his family, from NORTH CAROLINA! CAC and volunteers coordinated a transport from Clewiston to Savannah GA to reunite the beautiful family. Please visit the Clewiston Police Department and Clewiston Animal Control Facebook page for the full story on Copper’s amazing journey.
- December 12, 2020: CAC vended a Santa Paws event hosted by rescue partners for the community and their pets.

Intake from January 2020- December 15, 2020

- Cats: 258
- Dogs: 361
- Returned to Owners: 55
- Adopted: 23
- Transferred to No Kill rescues: 640
- Currently CAC is housing 10 dogs and 40 cats/kittens with full capacity levels being 14 for Dogs 20 for Cats

We would like to thank everyone who came out and who supported the Santa Paws event on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Donations from our local businesses and organizations as well as those outside of our community were instrumental to the success of this event. Thank you to the following organizations and businesses. We are so thankful to have you as a part of our community.

- All for the Critters
- Team Moose
- Caloosa Humane Society
- Buddy’s Furnishing Store of Clewiston
- Beall’s Outlet
- Roland Martin Marina
- Common Grounds Coffee Shop
- Clewiston Florist
- Cape Coral Animal Shelter]

While Clewiston Animal Control has seen a decrease in dog intakes and is currently under capacity so far as K9s are concerned we have seen a tremendous increase in cat intakes. We feel this is the perfect opportunity to share some of the statistics regarding stray and feral cats and how even properly managed feral and stray populations can have adverse effects on the community and the environment. First, let’s distinguish that a feral cat is one that is born in the wild and can rarely be domesticated. They carry diseases that are not only harmful to other cats and animals but which also affect humans. Stray cats on the other hand are those that were born into domestication and later abandoned or lost by their owners. Having said that we must understand that there would be no feral cats without the abandonment of domesticated unaltered cat. Feral cats, even managed populations still pose a significant threat to the environment, even beyond the diseases they carry and transmit. They continue to hunt birds and small animals, some of which may even be on the endangered or threatened species list. This is the reason many people oppose TNR programs and managed populations, and some even suggest holding colony

managers responsible for the damage caused by the feral populations they manage. If you feel that you have a feral or even a stray cat problem in your neighborhood we ask that you contact Clewiston Animal Control so that we can address the issue before it becomes a problem. Female feral cats can become pregnant as early as five months old and a pair of breeding cats can produce two to three litters a year resulting in the pair exponentially producing 420,000 offspring over a seven year period. CAC is addressing a current ongoing feral population of unknown size in the city limits. Efforts are ongoing to manage this problem.

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

Thank you to our customers for your patience during the planned outages the week of November 30. I'm pleased to report that staff completed the necessary maintenance and repairs to our distribution substation which will ensure our substation continues to operate efficiently and reliably.

- **Electric Crew Activities**
  - removed vegetation from power lines;
  - repaired street lights;
  - installed three new security lights for residential customers;
  - reinstalled poles at lake for lighting;
  - changed old pole on Lopez street;
  - repaired underground service on Palmetto Street;
  - repaired wires on tennis courts;
  - changed connections on transformer on Ventura Avenue
  - installed three junction boxes and wire for new lights at the Boat Basin;
  - assisted contractor by disconnecting service at the Aztec trailer park;
  - connected new service to 769 Alabama Avenue;
  - repaired broken “stinger line” on Lopez St.;
  - replaced service to railroad crossing on Francisco St.;
  - repaired timers on sports lighting at Trinidad park
- **Water Sewer Crew Activities**
  - repaired three water breaks;
  - assisted contractor with commissioning of new bypass pumps at (2) lift stations;
  - consulted with contractor for a street repair project;
  - repaired pump at lift station
- **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).