

NEWSLETTER OF
THE CITY OF PUNTA
GORDA

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- City Council meets the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 9:00am
- City Council meetings are held in the Council Chambers at City Hall
- Agendas for City meetings can be found at www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us

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The CITYHALLways

VOLUME IV, ISSUE II

FALL/WINTER 2009

Tis the season for visiting snowbirds...

Welcome back to our winter residents! Snowbirds are more than just guests, they are neighbors. The return of snowbirds should mean more economic activity for local merchants and an opportunity to renew old friendships to our full-time residents. Snowbirds enhance our unique "season", boosting our entertainment venues, making it possible for restaurants and shops to thrive in our City. Snowbirds, we are glad you are back!

Over the past months, our year-round residents have watched the construction and project completions.

Here's the latest—
The Laishley Park enhancements including the interactive fountain, play equipment, and shaded stadium seating has been a success since its completion. Visitors of all ages are enjoying the opportunity to take advantage of Punta Gorda's great weather and its newest feature.
New On-Street Parking is available on Taylor Street between Harborside Dr. and Marion Avenue. Improvements included parking, brick pavers, decorator lights and landscaping.
Ponce de Leon Park has received a new bar-b-que

foundation and pavilion.
Aqui Esta Road Improvements continue. Residents temporarily impacted by driveway removal are receiving advance notification. For the project status, schedule and 3-week look ahead, visit the City's Main Page website at <http://www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us>, **Aqui Esta Project Update.**
Street Resurfacing throughout the City has been performed, providing for a more safe & smooth travel on its streets.



Neighborhood Marine Watch Launched

The Punta Gorda Police Department announced an exciting new enhancement to the Neighborhood Watch Program. The Punta Gorda Isles (PGI) waterfront community, in cooperation with the Punta Gorda Police Department, has launched a Neighborhood "Marine" Watch (NMW) program comprised of PGI residents who are volunteering their time and boats to patrol the PGI canals and waterways.

NMW program provides similar benefits and protection that "Neighborhood Watch" does in the community.

Volunteer members log as many as 10-12 total hours of on-the-water patrols weekly and, as additional volunteers join the group, there are plans to increase the number of patrols. Signage on boats will identify the vessel as a NMW patrol.

at 941-661-9702 (cell) or 941-505-5099 (home) or email: radioman3029@comcast.net.

If you would like to establish a new Neighborhood Watch Program in your neighborhood (whether a marine or traditional program), please contact Sergeant Joe King at 941-575-5525.

The scope of marine crime is very broad, ranging from thefts of vessels and equipment to boating offenses and wildlife violations. The NMW mission is to Observe and Report, avoiding contact and confrontation at all costs. The

If you would like further information regarding the PGI Neighborhood Marine Watch or would like to join this all volunteer and worthwhile program, contact Bill Guenther, Program Coordinator PGI Neighborhood Marine Watch



Photo Provided by Florida Weekly, Kathy Grey

Urban Design - Planning a Community



As a division of the Growth Management Department, Urban Design plans communities using traditional town planning principles which promotes the high quality of life our residents have come to expect. Expectations include preservation of Punta Gorda's essence as a small town. Whether reviewing new development or redevelopment, staff evaluates projects for design to ensure walkable and sustainable projects are built that will enhance our community. Some of the current projects of Urban Design include:

Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Most recently staff undertook the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. This user friendly document is set up to create an interconnected unique and sustainable park system. The City of Punta Gorda Parks Master Plan serves as a declaration of values and a foundation on which to

build our Parks System. The Plan looks at the existing system in a comprehensive way. It includes 10 specific sections which address and assess the existing Park System, summarize public input, define specific park types and associated design standards, include implementation strategies and provide technical design standards.

Landscaping Projects

The City has long been engaged in soliciting grant funds through various agencies including the Florida Department of Transportation. Many of you may have seen the addition of plants in the US 41 medians from Carmalita Street to Royal Poinciana; the Royal Palms along the US 41 Corridor between Carmalita Street and the US 41 N & S bound bridges. The recent addition of brick pavers on Marion Avenue between Nesbit and US

41 southbound, are currently under construction with a completion date by the end of December.

Ring-Around-the-City

The construction of the new bike path on U.S. 41 N between Aqui Esta and Monaco, which included landscaping, will be followed by two additional bike path phases that will complete the multi-recreational trail from Airport Road to Burnt Store Road. In addition to the multi-use recreational trails, Urban Design has been busy designing Linear Park which will be constructed in 3 phases. The first phase is scheduled to begin construction in January 2010 with grant funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Stimulus Grant. Also, on the designing board is Harborwalk which will extend along the waterfront from Patty Avenue to Fisherman's Village.

Downtown Flooding Improvement Project on Schedule

The downtown flooding project which commenced July of this year continues to make progress and is on schedule.

Large drainage pipes have been installed on McGregor, Berry and Dolly Streets. Large pipes are being installed on Chasteen Street. Cleanup of the Historic District will continue through January 2010. After the first of the year, crews will move to the

east side of U.S. 41, installing additional pipes north of Marion Avenue on Nesbit Street, Milus Street and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Various streets will be closed short durations during construction. Please drive slowly and use caution when walking or biking in the work areas.



2010 Census: It's In Our Hands



The foundation of our American democracy is dependent on fair and equitable representation in Congress. In order to achieve an accurate assessment of the number and location of the people living within the nation's borders, the U.S. Constitution mandates a census of the population every 10 years.

The goal of the 2010 Census is to count all residents living in the United States on April 1, 2010. The U.S. Census Bureau does not ask about the legal status of respondents in any of its surveys and census programs.

Between now and the 1st day of April, the City of Punta Gorda will be partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau to "get the word out". It is imperative all residents of the City of Punta Gorda complete and return their census questionnaire. All federal funding for the City of Punta Gorda is dependent on an actual census count.



Billing and Collections Relocates Effective January 1, 2010

Change Of Address Notice



The Billing and Collections Office for water bills will be relocating the first week of January 2010 to the 2nd Floor of the City Hall Annex at 126 Harvey Street.

Effective January 1st, payments remitted by mail should be sent to the City of Punta Gorda Billing and Collections Office at 126 Harvey St., Punta Gorda, FL 33950. To make a payment by credit card, visit the City's website at <http://>

ci.punta-gorda.fl.us, click on "I want to" and select Pay My Utility Bill or call the office at 941-639-2528 to pay over the phone with a credit card.

The most convenient form of payment, automatic bank drafting, is still FREE and easy to establish. To set your account up for auto pay, you may either contact our office via phone, 941-639-2528, fax, 941-575-5042 or email to pgcollections@ci.punta-gorda.fl.us to receive a authorization

form, or download the form by accessing the Pay My Utility Bill section of the City's website.

A drop box will be available on the east side of the Government Center parking lot for check payments. Utility payments made in cash and all applications for new service installation should be brought to the Billing and Collections Office at 126 Harvey Street for proper receipting. Please DO NOT put cash in the drop box.

The Latest 411 on H1N1 Flu...

By now everyone has heard much information about the H1N1 Flu. Here is the most recent update:

H1N1 Flu is contagious and can spread from person to person. The virus spreads in the same way regular seasonal influenza viruses spreads: person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people become infected by touching something—such as a surface or object—with flu viruses on it and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose.

Who is at greatest risk?

People at greatest risk for H1N1 flue infection or transmission include children and young adults, caregivers of very young children, pregnant women, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel and people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease.

How to protect yourself & family:

- Get a H1N1 vaccine
- Cover your nose & mouth with a tissue

when you cough or sneeze.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Try to avoid contact with sick people
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities
- While sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them
- If you don't have one, develop a family emergency plan as a precaution to limit trips to the store.

Trash Talk



The City Sanitation Division would like to remind its residents of the proper disposal for **REAL** Christmas trees.

Remove all the decorations and lights, and place the tree

out to the curb for collection on your regular yard waste collection day. If disposing of any other decorations or artificial Christmas trees, they will be picked up with your household trash.

Remember to place trees or any items out for refuse collection at the curb, and **not** in the street. This will alleviate drainage problems or worse, an accident.

Protect Yourself Against Unlicensed Contractors



Each year homeowners and businessmen lose hundreds of thousands of dollars, not to mention the mental stress, to uncertified (unlicensed) contractors and craftsmen posing as contractors.

The City of Punta Gorda is committed to doing all it can to protect the public against illegal contractors by educating the public and offering the following suggestions. Watch for the following warning signs, these may indicate the person/company is not certified:

You are asked to obtain the permit.

A large down payment is required before work begins.

No license number on the vehicle, business card, contract, newspaper/flyer or yellow page ad.

Contractor displays only an "Local Business Tax Receipt" which is required in addition to Certificate of Com-

petency.

Permit is obtained by someone other than the person/company to do the work.

You are informed the job does not require a permit or inspection.

Verbal contract only, person is not willing to put all terms in writing.

The contractor is only willing to work on weekends or after hours.

The person may request front money (money before work begins).

The contractor does not have proof of General Liability or Workman's Compensation Insurance.

The following are a few of the things you need to know concerning the use of an unlicensed contractor.

According to FS 455.228, if you hire an unlicensed contractor, the Depart-

ment of Professional Regulations (D.P.R.) may issue a cease and desist order and also may take you to Circuit Court, which has the authority to impose a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 for aiding and assisting unlicensed activity. You could also be liable for court cost.

If you pull a permit for an unlicensed contractor, you are held responsible for the work, not the contractor.

If you hire an unlicensed contractor, you may actually pay more for the job, than if you hired a licensed contractor. Especially, if the work is done incorrectly or never finished, you may have to pay twice or more for the same job to be corrected or finished.

For more information or to verify a contractor licensing & insurance, **call the Building Division at 575-3324, option #1.**

Water Restrictions Eased For Area...

The Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management voted to ease restrictions for Charlotte County, including Punta Gorda, Manatee, Sarasota and Desoto Counties. As a result, the areas will now follow the District's Modified Phase II (or Severe) water restrictions. This Order is in effect until February 28, 2010. A list of water conservation measures contained in the Order are as follows:

Customer Responsibilities
Lawn and landscape watering schedule only allowed one day per week either before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m. For properties larger than two acres before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m.

Irrigation schedule for addresses:

Ending in 0 or 1 irrigates on Monday
Ending in 2 or 3 irrigates on Tuesday
Ending in 4 or 5 irrigates on Wednesday
Ending in 6 or 7 irrigates on Thursday
Ending in 7 or 8 irrigates on Friday

New or Replacement Lawns for the first 30 days, starting the day of installation; may water any day before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m. Second 30 days; may water three times per week (EVEN addresses on Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday; ODD addresses on Monday, Wednesday, Saturday), before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.

Hand watering and Micro Irrigation of non-lawn areas may occur on any day and at any time, if needed.

Pressure washing is allowed for painting and/or for other necessary maintenance. It is also allowed to maintain warranty, health and for safety reasons.

Large Fountains or waterfalls are restricted to 8 hours per day; hours of operation must be posted. However; small indoor and backyard fountains may operate at any time. Saltwater fountains are exempt.

Family Holiday Safety Tips



* During this holiday season, people like to use candles for decoration; if you do so, remember to be safe. Blow out all candles when you leave the room or go to bed.



Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Use candle holders that are sturdy and won't tip over easily. Put candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface. **NEVER** use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.

* Cooking fires are the #1 cause of home fires and home injuries. More than half (55%) of home cooking fires started with the ignition of food or other cooking materials.

* Holiday safety gift ideas: Smoke/Carbon Monoxide detectors with batteries; a quality fire extinguisher, a first-aid kit; a quality flashlight.

* With visitors this holiday season, remember vehicles are prohibited from being parked in the right-of-way, on vacant land or areas other than in a permitted driveway between the hours of 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. Should the need arise for a vehicle to be parked in one of these areas overnight or for an RV to be parked at your residence, you must obtain a parking permit from Code Compliance by calling 575-3352. After hours, notify the Police Department at 639-4111. Additional restrictions may apply.



The City of Punta Gorda
326 West Marion Avenue
Punta Gorda, FL 33950

We Wanted You to Know...



- The City’s budget is available online at www.ci.punta-gorda.fl.us as well as the financial statements.
- The PG Police Department has announced the availability of the **2009 Residential Customer Satisfaction Survey**. The survey has been implemented to assist the Police Department in evaluating its overall performance. Citizens of Punta Gorda are invited to access the survey at www.puntagordapolice.com. This survey can only serve as a quality performance measurement tool with the involvement & participation of our residents. It only takes a few minutes to complete online.
- If you notice a street light is out or malfunctioning, notify Public Works at (941) 575-5050. When reporting such a problem, please let us know the location of the problem along with your name, address and telephone number in case we need more information. The City will then establish a work order with Florida Power & Light (FPL). Please allow 15-20 days for the repair once reported.
- If a “red light” is on at any of the City’s lift stations, please report immediately to the Utilities Department emergency number at 941-575-5070.
- Vehicle and mobile equipment washing: car, truck and mobile equipment washing is restricted to one washing a week and must use low-volume methods, such as a handheld hose, equipped with a shut-off nozzle. For residential properties, vehicle washing is permitted on Tuesday or Saturday for an even address or Wednesday or Sunday for an odd address. Car wash fundraisers are permitted on behalf of non-profit organizations.
- A recent article noted refuse & recycling workers are in the 6th most dangerous job in the country. Many workers are killed or injured by motorists, when the truck has stopped to collect trash. For the safety of our workers, please...
“Slow Down To Go Around”.
- City government offices will be closed on December 24th & 25th, 2009 and January 1, 2010.

**The City of Punta Gorda
Wishes you a safe and happy
Holiday season!**

Frequently Called Numbers



Police Dept. (non-emergency)	639-4111	Growth Management	575-3372
Fire Dept. (non-emergency)	575-5529	Human Resources	575-3308
City Manager	575-3302	Park Rentals	575-3387
City Clerk	575-3369	Public Works	575-5050
Code Enforcement	575-3352	Sanitation	575-5050
Billing & Collections	639-2528	Urban Design (P&Z)	575-3372
Building/Permitting	575-3324	Utilities	575-3339
Business Tax Receipts	575-3369	Water Leaks (Business Hours)	575-5088
Design Studio	575-3372	Water Leaks (After Hours)	575-5070
Finance	575-3318	Charlotte County	743-1200
		Charlotte Co. Schools	255-0808
		Charlotte Co. Justice Center	639-3111
		Char. Co. Mosquito Control	764-4370
		Char. Co. Public Works	575-3600
		Char. Co Sanitation	629-1106