

Communication from Lynne Matthews, Mayor
Punta Gorda City Council District 4

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Oh hi! Just hangin' around...wanna join me?

Photo provided by David Starr.

Here are the City Highlights for week ending February 26, 2021.

For the full text of the report, click [HERE](#).

In this week's City news...

JUST ANNOUNCED AND HOT OFF THE PRESSES! GREAT NEWS FOR PUNTA

GORDA RESIDENTS!! This has just been released from the Florida Department of Health Charlotte County: Two new Florida Department of Health in Charlotte vaccine locations will open from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m., Wednesday, March 3 at Tringali Park Recreation Center, 3460 N. Access Road, Englewood, and the **Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, 75 Taylor St., Punta Gorda**. We are anticipating 7,000 doses of the vaccine to arrive for these three sites next week. **YOU MUST HAVE AN APPOINTMENT**, so don't just go there and expect to get the vaccine without an appointment. First and second shots will continue to be administered at Harold Avenue Regional Park, 23400 Harold Ave., Port Charlotte. First shots will be administered from 9 a.m.-noon. Second shots will be administered from 1 to 3:30 p.m. on the date provided when first shots were administered. Eligible Florida residents who pre-registered with the State vaccination website or call center will be contacted to schedule appointments. To pre-register, visit MyVaccine.FL.gov or call 866-200-9160 (or 833-990-3549 for TTY users). For information and answers to your questions, click [HERE](#) or click [HERE](#).

From the desk of City Manager Greg Murray - In previous columns I have discussed the responsibility that local government has to public health. Much of the information previously shared was in regard to prevention of disease transmission and disaster preparedness. The City's responsibility for public health is large in scope. It also includes the provision of water and wastewater services to both City residents and those living in unincorporated Charlotte County in our utility service area.

The City of Punta Gorda operates two water treatment plants. A surface water plant gets its source water from Shell Creek, and the newest plant which is a reverse osmosis plant uses ground water drawn from wells. Both plants are operated and monitored via computer interface systems. Plant operators are able to access the system remotely for emergency operations if necessary. There are safeguards in place to restrict access to only authorized personnel, but of course it is still a computer system. The plants themselves have meters throughout the treatment process which monitors the chemistry of the water. When meters have a reading outside their set parameter, it will send an alarm to the system to alert the operators on duty. In addition, the operators take samples and analyze the chemistry manually. This is an additional safety check and also verifies that the meters are reading correctly.



The situation in Oldsmar, Florida brought the safety of these facilities into the spotlight. In the Oldsmar attack an operator's computer was overtaken by a remote hacker. The hacker raised the levels of sodium hydroxide to 100 times the normal level. Sodium hydroxide is a chemical that basically changes the pH of the water. It can be contained in drain cleaner as was reported, but can also be contained in common household products such as shampoo and even shaving cream (or water). Although it was later reported that this incident was actually at a wastewater treatment facility, the City of Punta Gorda water treatment facility has pH monitors that automatically alarm if the pH is out of range, and also manual sampling protocols. The same is true for other chemicals.

While cybersecurity is certainly not a new issue with security concerns spanning many years, City staff remains equally as concerned with physical security to protect the water supply and treatment facilities. Simply limiting access to the facilities is one form of physical security in place for the City of Punta Gorda's water and wastewater utility and one of the primary forms of protection. This includes fencing as another feature designed to protect the vital assets and protect the water supply.

Physical and cybersecurity do not happen without the people committed to providing quality service to our utility customers. Six divisions; utilities administration, water treatment, water distribution, wastewater treatment, wastewater collections and fleet, made up of 68 individuals work under the direction of Interim Utilities Director Chuck Pavlos to ensure safe drinking water and safe treatment of wastewater for the City utility customers. The provision of these services is a 24 hour a day, 365 days a year responsibility and I thank each of our employees who take on this challenge. Their work helps the City deliver on our vision to

continue to preserve our small-town character while promoting diversity, economic development and sustainability.

Signs in the right-of-way (ROW) - At the February 17 City Council meeting, Council moved that beginning February 26, Code Compliance will resume the enforcement and removal of all signs placed **in a public ROW** in all zoning districts, regardless of content, with the exception of approved special event signage. This does not apply to signs on your property, just public ROW.

City Council meeting - The Punta Gorda City Council will meet on March 3 at 9 a.m. at the Historic City Hall. Some of the agenda items include:

- Award of security enhancements to Charles Perry Partners, Inc.
- Appropriation for wayfinding signage project
- Sign Code draft discussion
- Street closure policy

The complete agenda is available by clicking [HERE](#). The meeting will be streamed on the City YouTube channel - click [HERE](#).

Promote Punta Gorda “Small Business Spotlight” - The City of Punta Gorda has launched a new program entitled Promote Punta Gorda. This is a small business spotlight to focus on the businesses that are at the heart of Florida’s Harborside Hometown. Small business is a critical economic driver for the City. Not only do small businesses create jobs, they also foster community pride and create a unique sense of place. It is only with the partnership with business that the City can fulfill our mission to preserve and enhance Punta Gorda’s identity as a vibrant waterfront community, unique in character and history; and as a desirable place to live, work, and visit. Promote Punta Gorda shines the light on the many business owners and their offerings in the community. Small business owners within the City limits of Punta Gorda are eligible to have their business featured on the City’s social media channels and in the Weekly Highlights Report. To sign up to be in the spotlight, click [HERE](#) or call 941-575-3394 for more information.



Update on COVID-19 vaccines - The State offers an 800 call-in number to "Get in Line" for the vaccine, and also has an accompanying website signup. You can call 866-200-9160 (or 833-990-3549 for TTY users) or you can go to myvaccine.fl.gov to get on the list. You fill in some basic information for yourself and anyone else you want to get the vaccine for and disconnect. You can select how you want to be contacted - email, text or phone call and someone will contact you to set up your appointment. This is a WAY more efficient way for

people to try and get vaccinated! Those currently ineligible to receive a vaccine may sign up to receive updates to learn when they will be eligible to receive a vaccine. Second dose appointments will be provided when the first dose is administered. The Department of Health vaccine location in Charlotte County is currently at the Harold Avenue Regional Park, 23400 Harold Ave., Port Charlotte.

A completely separate stand alone operation that opens up appointments a couple of times a week is through Publix. Publix website is <https://www.publix.com/covid-vaccine>. Publix has seven vaccination sites operating in the County, and hundreds of other sites around the State, so if you don't mind doing a little traveling, you can probably score an appointment at one of them.

At this time, vaccines are only available to residents who are 65 and older, health care workers, first responders and those in nursing homes/assisted living facilities. The County Dept. of Health is working with the Governor's office to establish more vaccination sites. The Governor has also included Winn-Dixie, Walmart and Sam's Clubs in selected communities as well, but those locations are limited.

I hope this helps everyone work their way through the process. It's going to take a lot of patience, but everyone will get the vaccine as supplies open up in our County. We've let the Governor know we want more of them, and he is responding. Fingers crossed!

Florida requires proof of residency for Florida residents for those signing up for the first shot of the vaccine. Residency requirements:

- Valid Florida driver license or Florida identification card OR
- Two of the following items:
 - * A deed, mortgage, monthly mortgage statement, mortgage payment booklet or residential rental or lease agreement.
 - * A utility hookup or work order not more than two months old.
 - * A utility bill not more than two months old.
 - * Mail from a bank or other financial institution, including checking, savings, or investment account statements, not more than two months old.
 - * Mail from a government agency not more than two months old.

The VA is offering vaccines to those who are in their system and use their medical services. I know of at least one veteran who was at the clinic for an appointment, he walked across the street where they were giving vaccines and was able to get an appointment. So that may be another option for those veterans in their system.

You can also sign up to CHARCOCARES to be notified of when appointments will go live on the website. Text CHARCOCARES to 888-777 to receive notifications of vaccine availability and COVID-19 test sites.

Facial covering ordinance - City Council adopted a resolution to extend the facial covering ordinance until April 30, 2021. In response to the public health emergency within the City of Punta Gorda resulting from the spread of COVID-19, face coverings are required to be worn

indoors. Additionally, all persons preparing or serving food or beverages for public consumption shall be required to wear a face covering (per the Governor's orders). There are a few exceptions that can be found on our COVID-19 information website - click [HERE](#). And for those who have asked, the Governor's order on September 25 DID NOT remove the requirement for all restaurant workers to wear masks. If you feel that a restaurant is not complying with this order to keep you safe, it will be your choice to decide whether or not to patronize that business.

COVID-19 update - Testing is available at CVS - click [HERE](#) by appointment, and at select Walgreen's - click [HERE](#). The County Department of Health on Loveland Blvd. also offers testing - click [HERE](#). And here is a link to the County's website, listing other sites available for testing - click [HERE](#).

Citywide drainage swale regrading - Work is underway along Santander Court and Segovia Drive. Work will begin on Portofino Drive the first week of March.

Palm Ave. and Chasteen St. Intersection to McGregor St. road closure - Utilities is awaiting approval from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for bacterial testing so that the final water main connections can be completed. The project is anticipated to be completed in April (weather permitting). For information, click [HERE](#) or contact Linda Sposito, Sr. Project Manager, Public Works Department at 941-575-5050 between the business hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.



Adrienne Street pier - Pending is the delivery of materials. The materials are back ordered due to the storm and power outages in Texas. The pier is currently closed to the public and will remain so for safety reasons until the work is complete.

Ponce De Leon Park seawall repairs - The project is complete.

Veterans Park - Public Works and Urban Design staff assisted volunteers with the installation of the Purple Heart monument at Veterans Park and cleaning of memorial bricks. New benches have also been installed in the park.



Answers to some of your questions - I receive many questions each week from residents, asking all kinds of things about Punta Gorda activities. Here are some from this week:

I've been reading a lot of posts this week about coyotes in the area. This is very scary, as I walk my little dog every night and don't want anything to happen to him (or me). Why isn't

the City doing something to remove these animals? This is not a new question, and I can tell you definitively that the City has not and will not try to remove or eradicate these animals from their habitat. We had experts from the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission come to the City to speak to a group of about 100 citizens a couple of years ago, and were told that we should not try to do anything to them, because they then multiply much faster and the herd grows a lot quicker when they have been threatened. So while we know that there are several of them that live in the vacant parcel of land on Aqui Esta, we do not plan to take any action to eliminate them. The best advice I can give you is to carry a whistle, air horn or other noise making device with you at night to scare them away, but try to avoid them if you see them. They do walk long distances at night and they can also swim, so that is why we're seeing a lot of them in the bird section of PGI.

I am just about at my wit's end with trying to get the COVID-19 vaccination. I have faithfully been on the Publix website every single time they have opened it up, and I can get as far as trying to schedule a date and time, and then it tells me every time that all appointment slots are filled. Why can't the City set up a vaccine site to serve the citizens here? This whole system is really broken and has to be fixed. And now they are saying the Governor wants to open it up for younger aged people. We'll NEVER get our appointment! Please help!! I'm really sorry you've had such a difficult time with this. I sympathize a lot...I really do. As I mentioned at the top of this newsletter, the City just this afternoon was given the go ahead to be a new vaccine location beginning next week. Hopefully, also with the possible addition of the Johnson & Johnson brand being approved in the next several days, the supply chain will open things up a little more, making it easier for everyone.

When are the many excess utility poles going to be removed? Driving around the City there are multiple poles everywhere. Some are wood, some concrete, some in use, some bare. There doesn't seem to be any order and they surely don't enhance our City at all. I couldn't agree more! I have been working on this problem for over three years with the utility companies. FPL comes through and installs new poles, then they have to inform Comcast to come through and move their wiring to the new poles, then FPL has to come back through to remove the old poles and restore the properties to original condition. That's the way it's SUPPOSED to work! Unfortunately, since the utility companies are exempt from having to pull permits with the City for this, we have no jurisdiction or authority to require them to follow through. I have begged FPL to get this done in a more timely manner, and to finish one section before moving on to another, but the response is not what we need it to be. So I've asked for us to discuss this at next week's City Council meeting, and to ask for support from my colleagues for the City to draft a letter to FPL and Comcast and take a more assertive approach to try and get this done. I won't give up until it is!

If you ever have a question you would like answered, please email me at

lmattews@cityofpuntagordafl.com. If I don't have the answer, I will get it for you and I answer all emails I receive.

Seawall program - The seawall replacement contractor has seven projects under construction and six completed projects in Punta Gorda Isles. There are 26 seawall replacement projects scheduled for Punta Gorda Isles. There is one seawall replacement project currently underway in Burnt Store Isles and three completed. Four seawall replacement projects are scheduled for Burnt Store Isles this fiscal year.

The list of properties scheduled to have their seawalls replaced in fiscal year 2020/2021 has been posted to the Canal Maintenance webpage. Notices have been sent to residents that will have work performed on their seawalls. Residents can expect to receive a notice in the mail approximately six weeks prior to construction. It is highly recommended that property owners contact the contractor to discuss how to prepare the property for construction. Contact information is provided in the notice. For the FY2021 replacement schedule which began on October 1, click [HERE](#).

Annual seawall assessment - The field work for the annual seawall assessment is complete.



Stop in to see the new interactive exhibits, and check out our full season of wonderful entertainment in the Gulf Theater. Our mission is to promote an understanding and respect for the rich military heritage of the United States and the sacrifices made by all who serve, living and deceased, emphasizing that freedom isn't free. For more information on the museum, click [HERE](#). This year's concert series is underway, and you won't want to miss some of the great tribute shows - click [HERE](#) for information!

Would you like to be on the mailing list for the Military Heritage Museum, and receive advance notice of upcoming events? If so, please click [HERE](#). You MUST include your name and email address in your request in order to add you to the database.

Here is a partial list of some upcoming area events - The City has once again started issuing event permits, provided the event planner supplies with their event application a public safety plan to insure safety protocols are in place. Social distancing will still be recommended, along with increased spacing of participant/vendor spaces where applicable. Here's a partial list of upcoming events:

February 27 - Boys & Girls Club Farm to Table fundraiser, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St. For information click [HERE](#).

February 28 - Charlotte County Veg Fest, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St. For information click [HERE](#).

March 1-15 - TEAM Punta Gorda's Build a Bike-Win a Bike (Pedal and Play alternative). For information, click [HERE](#).

March 2 - Punta Gorda Short Film Festival, City Marketplace. For information, click [HERE](#).

March 6 - YMCA Harbor Nights Fundraiser, Gilchrist Park, 400 W Retta Esplanade. For information, click [HERE](#).

March 6 - Bacon Jam, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St. For more information, click [HERE](#).

March 6 - PG Garden Club Arts & Craft Sale, 1st United Meth. Church, 507 W. Marion Ave. For information, click [HERE](#).

March 6 and 7 - MY Promotions Arts & Craft Show, 10175 Tamiami Tr. (Muscle Car City). For information click [HERE](#).

March 11-14 - Punta Gorda Boat Show, City Marketplace. For information, click [HERE](#).

March 14 - Concert in the Park, Laishley Park, 96 Nesbit St. For information, click [HERE](#).

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day celebration, Celtic Ray. For information, click [HERE](#).

March 19-20 - Premier Auto Auction, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, 75 Taylor St. For information, click [HERE](#).

April 10 - Pirates in Paradise, Four Points by Sheraton lawn. For information, click [HERE](#).

April 17-18 - Spring Home & Garden Show, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, 75 Taylor St. For information, click [HERE](#).

April 30-May 2 - Hibiscus Festival, Gilchrist Park. For information, click [HERE](#).

May 28-31 - Healing Field of Honor, Laishley Park. For information, click [HERE](#).

For a full list of upcoming events and festivals from the City's website, click [HERE](#), and a link to the Punta Gorda Chamber's events page - click [HERE](#). And here's a third link to the events list posted by the Charlotte County Visitors Bureau - click [HERE](#). Hope to see you out and about in this beautiful City of ours, enjoying our sunshine! Also, each Tuesday, First Macedonia Food Distribution, 411 E Charlotte Ave., 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., For additional information, click [HERE](#). For a link to upcoming events in the Gulf Theater at the Military Heritage Museum - click [HERE](#). And for upcoming events at the Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, click [HERE](#).



Police Department -

Watch out for gift card scams - Please remember that legitimate businesses, organizations, and government entities will **NEVER** ask you to make a payment using gift cards. If anyone calls you and requests that you make a payment by purchasing gift cards and providing the numbers, please hang up the phone! Gift cards are nearly impossible to trace and the chances of identifying the scammer and returning the money spent on them is very low. If someone asks you to purchase gift cards to pay a past due bill, provide money for a loved one in trouble, to pay back taxes, or for any other reason, please call 941-639-4111 and ask to speak with an officer before



making any purchases.

K9 donation - Thank you to the residents of the Gulf View RV Resort who presented the police department with a donation for the K9 Unit. We appreciate the continued support of our program and love our community!



Volunteers in Policing (VIP) Program - The police department has an active and diverse volunteer program including vehicle patrol, bike patrol, marine patrol, community services, and more. We are always looking for dedicated volunteers. Members of the community interested in volunteering are encouraged to contact the Volunteer staff Coordinator at 941-575-5536 or by emailing vip@pgorda.us.

Dispatcher testing process - The department is currently accepting applications for the next testing, to be held on April 26.

Police Officer testing - The Punta Gorda Police Dept. is currently accepting applications for the position of Police Officer. Testing will be held on April 19 with oral board interviews scheduled on April 20 and 21. Currently we are only accepting applications from candidates who are currently certified, Equivalency of Training (EOT) eligible, or current law enforcement academy students.

Internship program - The department is currently accepting internship applications for the summer and fall semesters of 2021. Our internship program is open to college students and high school seniors interested in gaining educational experience in law enforcement, criminal justice, and small government administration.

To apply for any of the above, please visit www.pgpdjobs.com or contact the Employee Development Coordinator at 941-575-5571 or email employeedevelopment@pgorda.us.

Fire Department - The Punta Gorda Fire Department has a volunteer section. The Punta Gorda Fire department volunteers meet every second and fourth Monday evening. They usually have up to 25 active volunteers who are either interested or already certified in becoming a state certified Firefighter/EMT.



After their meeting they train on the skills and abilities of being a Firefighter/EMT. They also contribute a minimum of 24 hours of volunteer time riding with the paid members of the department. This week they covered using airbags in emergencies. The departments Field Training Officers have contributed to teaching the skills that are used in the field for the active members of the department.

Lot mowing program - The City has completed mowing the following areas: Colony Point (Colony Point Dr., West Marion Ave., Socorro Dr. and Coronado Dr.); PGI (Bal Harbor Blvd. and Ryan Blvd., Deborah Dr., Suzi St. and Casey Key Dr.); PGI (Magdalena Dr., Via Veneto, West Henry St. Appian Dr. and Columbian Dr.); and PGI (Almar Dr., Albatross Dr., Whippoorwill Blvd. and Turtle Dove Blvd.).

Urban Design Department -The Planning Corner: Land Development Regulations

(LDR's): Save the Dates! The Code Framework Workshops will be held in March. More information regarding the workshops are provided below with dates, times, and Zoom links.

Code Framework Workshop: Part I March 23 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. - The Code Framework

Workshops have been designed to involve the community of Punta Gorda in establishing the building blocks of the new form-based code. In the first part of this two-meeting workshop, Dover, Kohl and Partners will give a brief overview of what land development regulations and form-based codes are and then go into more detail regarding the challenges and issues with Punta Gorda's existing zoning regulations. A question and answer session will follow. After questions have been answered, the planning team will present some initial elements for the future Form Based Codes framework for the community to consider. Participants will be asked what building types they prefer and where they think those are appropriate as well where the most and least intense building forms should be permitted.



Zoom Link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_XOKKJbA3QYKwcv_jXOOZnQ

Code Framework Workshop: Part II March 30 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. -

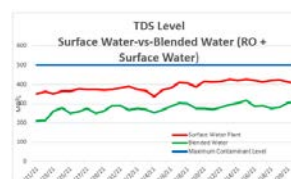
The Code Framework Workshops have been designed to involve the community of Punta Gorda in establishing the building blocks of the new form-based code (FBC). In the second part of this two-meeting workshop, Dover, Kohl and Partners will summarize the community input from Part I, as well as input received during the technical meetings. The team will then present an updated Regulating Plan, which is a fine-grained version of a zoning map that divides the FBC area into distinct zones that correspond to unique building form standards. Participants will be asked if they agree or not with the zones defined in the plan and will have a chance to recommend revisions. To get into more detail about the character of development that is appropriate for each zone, participants will also be asked about specific architectural styles, building form standards, and frontage types.

Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dmYKLO0bSoKL3cETXbndyw

The informational video can be viewed by clicking [HERE](#). Learn more on the Master Plan - Click [HERE](#), Comp Plan update - click [HERE](#) or email at UrbanDesign@CityofPuntaGordaFL.com.

Permits required - Staff would like to remind our residents and contractors that a Right-of-Way (ROW) permit is required prior to restoring or re-sodding any right-of-way, for all properties, developed or vacant. ROW permit applications must be submitted by a licensed contractor. The ROW permit will initiate a line and grade inspection to ensure that proper drainage is maintained as the property is restored.

Groundwater RO plant update - Maximum total dissolved solids (TDS) allowable is 500 without a waiver. Our numbers are



consistently way below the maximum allowable level with the new R.O. Plant water now in service.

Welcome to new or transferred businesses in the City this week - Acuity Urgent Care LLC, 310-312 Nesbit Street and Edward D Jones & Co, 100 Sullivan Street, Unit 111.

Current board and committee vacancies - ([Volunteer Appointment Information Form](#)) -

Currently, a vacancy exists on the Board of Zoning Appeals, Building Board, Utility Advisory Board, Historic Preservation Advisory Board, General Employees Pension Board and Firefighters Pension Board. If you are interested in applying for any position, please contact the City Clerk's office at 941-575-3369 or pgclerk@cityofpuntagordafl.com.

Thanks for staying in touch with what's happening in Punta Gorda. I hope that you find this newsletter informational. If you would like to share it with others, please feel free to do so. If you know anyone else who may want to receive this, please have them email me their name, email address and zip code, and I'll be happy to add them to the distribution list. Also, if you change your email address, please let me know it is changed so you can continue to receive the newsletter - go to the bottom of the newsletter and "Update your preferences" to keep it current.

A few of my readers have experienced periodic problems with not receiving this newsletter. It seems that some of the virus prevention programs send the newsletter to spam from time to time, especially if the newsletter is lengthy. Please insure you have the sending email address in your address book, which is upstateone@comcast.net. And if you suddenly stop receiving this, please be sure to check your spam folder. I never delete anyone from the subscriber list unless I am asked to do so. Apologies for any inconvenience.

If at any time, you would like to get in touch to ask a question, feel free to contact me.

Lynne Matthews

Mayor, City of Punta Gorda

Punta Gorda City Council District 4

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and on Facebook,

<https://www.facebook.com/lynnemattthewspgcitycouncil/>



Florida's Harborside Hometown