

VILLAGE HALL
500 NE 87TH ST
EL PORTAL, FL 33138
CHRISTIA E. ALOU, ESQ.
VILLAGE MANAGER



MAYOR OMARR C. NICKERSON
VICE MAYOR ANDERS URBOM
COUNCILPERSON LUIS PIRELA
COUNCILPERSON ANNA LIGHTFOOT-WARD
COUNCILPERSON DARIAN MARTIN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Village of El Portal Council
FR: Christia E. Alou, Village Manager
DATE: January 25, 2022
RE: January 2022 Village Manager's Report

Please accept this memorandum as my January 2022 Village of El Portal Administrative Report to Council and the Community.

Hurricane Irma Financial Recovery

The Village was granted a 120-days extension of the line of credit loan we have with Synovus Bank that paid for Hurricane Irma debris removal. There has been no change in the reimbursement with the Village owing \$679,750.56. The Village's Appeal of the partial de-obligation of reimbursement is still pending with FEMA. This month, the Village administration responded to requests for copies of bank documents, which we provided upon request.

Corona Virus/COVID-19 Pandemic Municipal Response

I completed a Close Out process with Miami Dade County Contractor, Hagerty Consulting, for CARES Act reimbursements that are being distributed from the County. They requested documentation as a follow up, and our new CFO, Harry Taubenfeld is working to respond to that request. The Village will be receiving approximately \$32,000 in CARES Act reimbursements. We are still awaiting this distribution.

American Rescue Program Act (ARPA) funds were distributed by the US Federal government through Florida Department of Emergency Services. The Village of El Portal is a non-entitlement unit (NEU) and has been allocated funds to be utilized in our pandemic response efforts that address front line employees dealing directly with the public, technology-based service delivery, parks, pandemic related water projects. The Village is undergoing a digitization project for all departments, starting with the Building Department and Code Enforcement. By implementing digital services, the Village will make services and operations in those departments more efficient convenient for residents. The Village is also planning for emergency communications, a digital marquee at the Village Hall, and other tech advances that will greatly impact emergency services for the municipality.

Since March 2020, the Village Administration observed state and county executive orders to follow the CDC guidelines in practicing safe social distancing. The Village Hall is open to the public and we are asking visitors to wear masks, observe social distancing and hand sanitization when visiting our offices. Staff continues to wear masks when interacting with others or utilizing

**January 2022
Manager's Report**

small workspaces. All Village parks are open. The Tot Lot is being sanitized weekly by the Village's cleaning contractor, Clean and Clear Cleaning Services. The Emergency Management Team continues to observe the viral variants and the numbers that may affect our service.

Short-term Rental In the Village of El Portal

We continue to field questions, concerns, and requests for interpretation of the Village's policy or drafting of policy for short-term rentals (STR) in the Village. The Village Attorney has been working with Councilperson Darian Martin and Councilperson Luis Pirela to draft language workshopped in the December 2021 Council meeting as its first reading of the ordinance. The second reading is slated for January 25, 2022.

State Appropriation Funded School Safety Rotunda (project name correction) at Horace Mann Middle School

The Village received \$300,000 from the State of Florida in the 2021 Legislative Appropriations to fund the development of a traffic calming project at NW91 Street and NW 2nd Avenue. The project will be designed, and the construction management will be with Village engineering firm, Craig A. Smith and Associates. Mayor Nickerson and I presented the project at the December 2021 Miami Shores Village Council Meeting. Miami Shores is in full support of the project and has advised us to approach the Miami Shores homeowner to begin the project, The issues also affect residential landscaping which we hope to resolve in the next week with the property owner former El Portal Mayor Cubillos on the Southwest quadrant of the intersection. The stakeholders are Florida Department of Transportation, Miami Shores Village, Miami Dade County, and the Miami Dade Public Schools. CAS and I are responding very quickly to production requests from Florida Department of Transportation Contract Coordinator and to establish and stick to timelines for completion of the project.

For the 2022 legislative session, the Village requested Senate and House of Representative funding appropriations for the expansion and improvement of the Village Hall, our parks renovations, and water projects. CAP Government engineers and Craig A. Smith and Associates engineers provided the technical information required in these appropriation requests. The legislative session started last month and continues.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Village of El Portal Parks Renovation

The Village of El Portal Parks Renovation and Renewal Project (funded by Kavista developers fees) is on track for 2022, with the new VOEP Public Works Department, Director Mohan Thampi and Technician Carlos Aguera, our engineering consultant Orlando Rubio and landscaping architect Jim Santiago, the Miami Dade Historic Preservation, Miami Dade Parks and Recreation, and Comcast to name a few. I have planned a project kick-off meeting with the chair of the Public Works Committee, Councilperson Luis Pirela February 9, 2022. I am pursuing additional state funding through appropriations requests for FY 2022 as noted in the above paragraph. The Village will be renovating our parks and historic site with these funds

**January 2022
Manager's Report**

The Village of El Portal follows the Miami Dade County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and I meet bi-weekly with the South Florida Parks Coalition. The County is implementing a Parks Impact Calculator program, and the Village must input tracking data into this calculator for reporting purposes. New Public Works Technician, Carlos Aguera, will be attending to that project.

Village of El Portal Transportation Circulator Pilot Project Shuttle to Downtown Transit

The Village of El Portal has a lovely electrical shuttle vehicle, fully operating through FreeBee. An application may be downloaded to access the shuttle schedule and map. This information is also provided in a flyer and card that may be picked up at the Village Hall or on the Village website. Signage will also be provided by FreeBee. The shuttle stops are at the Village Hall parking lot (next to the Little Library) and at the El Portal Nature Trail. A security camera will need to be installed to maintain the equipment. Amenities are being planned for the Nature Trail stop through a FDOT grant application in Spring 2022. The Village has requested the execution of an Interlocal Agreement for the circulator with Miami Dade County. I submitted the first FDOT quarterly report for the service.

NE 2nd Avenue Business Corridor including Sanctuary Property

Mayor Nickerson and I met with Miami Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava in November 2021 and several department directors and leaders to discuss areas of partnership with the County such as the Pedestrians First, the Resiliency and Sustainability Adaptation Action Area, and areas of collaboration with departments such as Economic Development, Transportation and Planning, Water and Sewer, and Community Action. More follow up meeting are expected in February and March. Miami Dade County is presently consolidating its public bus system and stops. Eight stops will be removed from N. Miami Avenue and 87th Street over the next six months. The Village will retain four stops in the County's consolidation plan.

The Village also applied for a transportation planning grant last week with the County's assistance, to prepare this project. This is the planning necessary to start the development of the Village's Business Corridor as planned in meetings with me, Mayor Nickerson, our urban planners at Plusurbia, and our Village Attorney to consider policy changes for businesses owners along the NE 2nd Avenue corridor that include septic to sewer conversion that is critical to the Village's economic development, as well as signage and short-term rentals and lodging. Traffic changes are also a consideration for NE 2nd Avenue.

The Sanctuary Property – According to the property owners, there has been no changes at The Sanctuary. They have gotten the County's approval of the interior demolition plans. The Village is currently reviewing and once completed, they will apply for temporary power and water service so to begin the interior demolition and asbestos abatement. They have been able to complete the roof repairs, allowing the interior to dry out. There is a propane tank on the exterior of the building. They have discovered that the tank still contains gas so they will be removing the gas prior to removing the tank. Their redesign is on hold until they can safely demolish the inside. The

**January 2022
Manager's Report**

property managers have been extremely accessible and responsive to neighbor complaints and concerns that have been brought to my attention. We expect to continue that good repour.

Federal Build Back funds in El Portal

The Village was awarded \$1.32 M to be utilized for 87 Street from NE to NW. No activity from this federal funding award, due to federal hold. We are awaiting next steps from the federal government to address our Sustainable Streets and Business Corridor Plans – In August 2021, the Village received \$1.32M in funding for NE/NW 87th Street - Federal Transportation and Infrastructure Committee senior member Congresswoman Frederick Wilson aided in the Village receiving these funds. In April 2021, with our engineers at Craig A. Smith and Associates Steven Smith and Orlando Rubio, as well as Miami Dade County engineer Christopher Rosenberg, of the TPO, we prepared the technical project summary for the only project that qualified for the Infrastructure Improvement funding – NW/NE 87 Street Corridor Improvement Project, as identified and sponsored by FDOT and Miami Dade County TPO. The TPO will update its Transportation Improvement Program. This road was the only one in the Village of El Portal that qualified under the guidelines of the investment program. We are pleased to receive the funds and look forward to receiving the funding agreement to see the specifics of how these funds are to be used for 87th Street. It is our hope to address some sustainability and traffic calming with this fund, but we will follow the federal requirements. There have been no follow-ups from the state or federal agencies on these funds as of the time of this report.

Biscayne Boulevard/Annexed Area Development

The Kavista Rental Development at El Portal Annex

The Kavista Project is on track to begin construction in the first quarter of 2022. Building Official Martinez and I have been addressing permitting questions and timelines with the developers to start the project now that the Miami Dade County permits and impact fees have been paid. I will be meeting with the primaries, AR and Ken Barrington, with Mayor Nickerson and the Building Official Pedro Martinez in the first week of January 2022.

Skate Bird Miami (Skate Park)

Skate Bird Miami continues to prepare its site for opening. For the first week of December, the owner opened under a special events permit, for two days to hold Art Basel/Art Miami charitable event at the location. The event was well attended, and well organized and executed. The project is still pending ADA parking, fire marshal, and several other requirements before they are to proceed with the opening of the space.

Former Trailer Park “Little Farm”

Mayor Nickerson, PlusUrbia and I have met with prospectors of the property. But no movement to sell or develop has been reported at this time.

DEPARTMENTS

January 2022 Manager's Report

Police and Public Safety

We are awaiting three quotes to purchase computers and portable printers for the department.

From Police Chief Alex Mendez January 2022

- *We brought on two additional officers. Officer Luigi Moccia as a Full-time Officer and Officer Steven Canela as a Reserve Officer (We will be Swearing them in at the beginning of the January 2022 Council Meeting). Officer Luigi completed his field training and began working Solo on January 16th. Officer Canela is currently in Field Training and should transition to Solo quickly as well.*
- *The new Patrol vehicles were delivered to the upfitter and should be delivered between the week of January the 23rd or 31st , pending delayed equipment for installation.*
- *The new Code vehicle was upfitted, with only the decal pending.*
- *I should be securing the Titles for the Dead-lined vehicles by this month, which will clear the way to have them removed.*
- *We had two Officers out on extended leave due to COVID positive tests, which have since returned to work. We had several possible exposures as well, but they were followed by negative tests.*

Code Enforcement

The Village of El Portal has a new Code Enforcement Officer. His name is Terrell Williams. He started with the Village of El Portal the first week of January 2021.

*From Code Enforcement January 2022
No report was provided at the time of this report.*

Building Department

The Building Department is managed by CAP Government under Building Official Pedro Martinez. This month, Ms. Annazia joined the Building Department with Ms. Grettel Fernandez on permanent assignment with the Village of El Portal through CAP.

CAP government and the Village of El Portal's IT contractor, Complete Care IT, began the Village's Administrative transition into digitized document maintenance. This technological advance will digitize the Village's administration allowing for better, faster customer service and

January 2022 Manager's Report

freeing up much needed office space for employee safety and productivity. This will be a long process, but one that will garner much favor with our resident/customers and staff. The project is currently in the prepping stage where documents are being prepared for scanning. Since the Village has documents which are very old, they require extra careful handling. Laserfiche was activated and we currently have a coding template which we have completed that will bring about the documents management system for the Village.

*From CAP Building Department January 2022
NO report was submitted by the reporting deadline.*

Planning and Zoning

Plusurbia continues to provide the items for review for signage, short-term rental, and other important planning and zoning matters before the Council. Mayor Nickerson, PlusUrbia and I are meeting with entities interested in purchasing the "Little Farm" property and NE 2nd Avenue commercial property for sale, discussing the Village's charette, zoning requirements, sanitary sewer capabilities and parking matters related to the properties potential use.

Public Works and Maintenance

CAP Government provides the Village of El Portal Public Works and Maintenance services. This service, to be provided by a part-time engineer and a full-time service technician, will coordinate existing contractors for electricity, landscaper/arborist, cleaning, environmental plumbing and services for backflow and storm drain maintenance, as well as preparation and submission of local, state, and federal reporting, and a host of other necessary public works and maintenance duties for the Village.

Village of El Portal Sustainability and Resiliency

Most public works activities affect the Village's sustainability and resiliency. The Village of El Portal Sustainability and Resiliency Taskforce Liaison, Mayor Nickerson, makes reports to Council.

Miami Dade County's Renovation of C7 CANAL BRIDGE at N. Miami Avenue

There has been **NO CHANGE** of the N. Miami Avenue Bridge at C7 Canal from last month's report. According to Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works, the bridge reconstruction project remains halted because soil conditions did not allow for the implementation of the canal bank slopes originally permitted by the Army Corp of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District. Therefore, the County's Design Build Team developed an alternative solution for the canal embankment protection and is in the process of obtaining the permit modifications required for the new design. Once these modifications are approved by the permitting agencies, the bridge construction will resume. In the meantime, the

**January 2022
Manager's Report**

Design Build Team is inspecting and maintaining the site regularly, ensuring the safety of the public and that the Maintenance of Traffic devices are properly in place. Stay alert and stay safe.

Miami Dade County Bus Route Consolidation Project

Miami Dade County is conducting a bus route consolidation throughout Miami Dade County that will eliminate a bus stop at N. Miami Avenue and 86th Street. The amenities are to be removed along with the bus stop. Miami Dade County Transportation and Public Works requires that the Village remove the bench. I asked if we may relocate the bench to another bus stop and am awaiting a location. Eight bus stops will be removed in the Village of El Portal, four will remain.

The Village of El Portal Parks Renovation and Renewal Project (funded by Kavista developers fees) - please see Special Projects Section for update. I continue to participate in the South Florida Parks Coalition with standing meetings every other Thursday afternoon.

Village Circulator Shuttle Pilot Program – please see Special Projects Section for update.

NPDES - The Village of El Portal was selected with seven other municipalities for an NPDES audit for 2021. We are responding to the requests and providing required information to the audit. A public education campaign continues the Village website, and flyers are posted at Village marquees and provided door-to-door.

Other Outstanding Public Works Projects:

1. Septic to Sewer Project (Pennoni) on West Side of Village

Pennoni –The Village will pay Pennon to finalize the Septic to Sewer design of the West Side project only, and to do the stormwater construction for that area. We met with Florida Department of Environmental Protection last week and were told that the funding opportunities are still there AFTER the design is completed.

CDBG/HUD critical facilities hardening grant was awarded to the Village of El Portal in February 2021. An environmental assessment was conducted twice and addressed by me and Building Official Pedro Martinez and Robert Ruano. I have painstakingly prepared all the requirements of the contract with HUD/DEO for these funds. The Village is required to have four financial and administrative policies in place, where we only had one. Interim CFO Wallace has provided some of the policies at my request. We will continue to work on getting the balance of the required items including a training. Robert Ruano and I prepared a draft RFP/Invitation to Bid (ITB) for the necessary work that this grant will provide: the contractor will do the replacement of external doors and the installation of a generator at the Police Station/Village Hall. The grant amount is \$50,000.

2. El Jardin Stormwater Improvement.

**January 2022
Manager's Report**

The El Jardin storm water improvement project started on October 4, 2021 and wrapped up this month. A road resurfacing project is to commence now that all contractual obligations for the grant are completed through the utilization of the remaining grant funds and some Surtax funds to make up the balance.

3. Coastal Waste and Recycling – The 2022 bulk pick-up schedule is posted on the Village website and was distributed by Mayor Nickerson in his neighborhood walk tours.
4. FPL Utility Update – No updates. I will be meeting with FPL to discuss franchise fees service service fee increases in January /February 2022.

Public Affairs

My and the Administration's participation in public affairs is to supplement and aid the Public Affairs Committee/El Portal's Women's Club where possible.

The Village Administration is coordinating a FreeBee Village of El Portal Ride-Along to introduce the new free shuttle service to the community. A video is planned and will be placed on the Village website to encourage ridership.

A blood drive will be held coordinate with Ms. Marie Etienne of OneBlood Mobile for a single blood drive event in the Village. It is to take place between December 2021 and March 2022. We are awaiting a date that will be set by the Public Affairs committee.

Administration and Finance

The Village of El Portal has successfully identified a CFO/Finance Director. His name is Harry Taubenfeld, and he is working with the former-Interim CFO Chris Wallace to complete the 2019 and 2020 Audits.

From Office Administrator Christian Abril for January 2022

- *Assisting CFO Taubenfeld with 2019 audit.*
- *Assisting newly hired officers with onboarding/HR/payroll related inquiries.*
- *Processing invoices/payroll/cash receipts on an ongoing basis.*

There continue to be varied requests, directives, and projects I provide at the request of individual councilpersons and members of the El Portal community. For more information, please contact me directly.