

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: April 26, 2022
RE: April 2022 Village Manager's Report

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

Hurricane Irma Financial Recovery

There has been no change since the last update. See this: 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.

Corona Virus/COVID-19 Pandemic Municipal Response

CFO Taubenfeld submitted additional reimbursement requests to Miami Dade County consultants, Hagerty Consulting, for **CARES Act** reimbursements that are being distributed from the County. The Village will be receiving approximately \$36,000 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 and convenient for residents. The Village is also planning for an inner-office renovation to allow for more space for co-workers to safely distance from one another, emergency communications that includes a digital marquee at the Village Hall, and other tech advances that will greatly impact emergency services for the municipality. This project is ongoing. The first ARPA Annual Report is due April 30, 2022, and CFO Taubenfeld and I will be working diligently to make our reporting deadline this Friday.

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 but this policy has become a lot more relaxed due

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to pandemic monitoring, we continue to observe social distancing and hand sanitization when visiting our offices. Staff continues to wear masks when interacting with others or utilizing small workspaces. All Village parks are open. 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

Legislation from the State failed to make any changes to existing regulations, therefore the Village will pursue our own regulations for short-term rentals in the Village that does not overstep the State's regulations. The ordinance is before the Village Council for second reading this evening.

State Appropriation Funded School Safety Roundabout 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. Senior Engineer Orlando Rubio and I participated in an update meeting with FDOT, and we were told that we must keep the project moving and have our contract executed by May 2022 in order to keep the funds. We are presently awaiting legal documentation in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Miami Shores Village to be drafted, presented and executed in order to finalize our contract with FDOT.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Village of El Portal Parks Renovation

The Village of El Portal Parks Renovation is on track for 2022.

Several issues are still unresolved about the protection of the burial mounds on the Tequesta and Sherwood Forrest sites. Our landscape architect and project manager have been working closely with the county's archeologist, Jeff Ransom, about allowable intrusions into the surfaces which in turn dictate the allowable construction and design elements for any improvements on those sites. Mr. Ransom has been held up by the tribes' responses. In the meantime, we are reviewing other areas of the project that we can direct.

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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. 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 was installed to maintain the equipment. 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 and CFO Taubenfeld prepared the quarterly reimbursement request. The Village Council and Administration have been promoting the service that requires reporting and community outreach to increase ridership. The ridership for the month of March 2022 is 55 completed rides, with 55 passengers. I have met with and will meet again with South Florida Commuter Services (FDOT)'s Marketing and Outreach department to come up with ways to better market the program for success. A social media commercial and mailers are being contemplated. FDOT will pay for the marketing effort.

NE 2nd Avenue Business Corridor including Sanctuary Property

Mayor Nickerson and I met with the Sanctuary property management team over the course of the month.

The Sanctuary Property – According to the property owners, there has been no changes at The Sanctuary. The management company is seeking information and assistance as they attempt to design the project in light of there being no sewer line, therefore limiting their development opportunities. Among other things, they are currently evaluating their options for a privatized sewer line on the property only. The 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 communication level.

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. Mayor Nickerson and I met with Miami Dade County Transportation and Public Works leaders Miami Dade County is 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.

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The Village also applied for a transportation planning grant 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.

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. We met with the primaries in a logistics coordination meeting this month. They will need to submit a right-of-way permit application with Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) plans for construction activities requiring partial road closures. Also they will need special permission for working earlier hours and meet Village noise requirements. They may need to coordinate with City of Miami also as part of the NE 83rd Street is in the City's right-of-way. Building Official Martinez and I have been addressing permitting questions and timelines with the developers to start the project in May 2022. A groundbreaking event is being planned for the morning of May 11th at 10AM at the site.

Skate Bird Miami (Skate Park)

Skate Bird Miami is open with a temporary certificate of occupancy.

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

Police and Public Safety

The EMT (Emergency Management Team) is meeting regularly to prepare for Hurricane Season 2022. A number of equipment shortfalls are being met with federal funding (ARPA) and additional staffing is being pursued with 3 New Reserve Police Officers are joining the ranks and are ready to be sworn in:

Rene Gutierrez- Retired Hialeah PD
Benny Merino-Retired Hialeah PD
Ricardo Chavez- Retired City of Miami PD

From Police Chief Alex Mendez

No additional information was provided at the deadline of all departmental submissions.

Code Enforcement

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The Village of El Portal has a new Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Carlos Herrera started with the Village of El Portal on Monday, April 25, 2022. I will be providing him an orientation and setting up trainings to onboard him. Mr. Herrera comes to the Village after a brief retirement from the City of Miami Code Enforcement and Zoning Departments where he served in various capacities and as supervisor over a thirty-year career. We welcome Code Enforcement Officer Herrera. Among several things to bring his department up to speed, Code Officer Herrera will be training on software, GovPilot, following up to open citations and violations left by the previous code officer and police officers, issuing his own citations, reviewing the 40-year certificates with Building Official Martinez, and getting to know our Village.

Building Department

From CAP/Building Department April 2022

Issued a total of 39 permits for the month of April (04/01-04/26/22).

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

Many of the Village's Special Projects fall under the Public Works Department "Umbrella." In addition to those projects already described, the newly formed department conducted the following:

From Public Works Department, Director Mohan Thampi for April 2022

- * Coordinate with Kavista developer and contractor Village right-of-way permit requirements.*
- * Coordinate with Craig A. Smith updating the VOEP Roads Improvements project report last prepared in 2019.*
- * Drive and inspect daily to various areas of Village to check for problems or issues.*
- * Coordinate landscaping activities with Orchidman, set up hurricane preparedness meeting with Orchidman arborist.*
- * Continue to make inspection and inventory of streetlights which need repairs and bulb replacement.*
- * Check stormwater drainage inlets and clear them of surface debris as needed.*
- * Completed evaluation of proposal to convert prison cell into office. Proposal approved. Coordinating work with Leading Edge contractor for this work.*
- * Request and evaluate quotes for flooring replacement.*

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- * Working with Adwave who were selected to install digital marquee signs in front of Village Hall and at the VOEP Nature Trail.*
- * Complete Police Storage shelter inventory.*
- * Obtain quotes from prefabricated building companies to replace Police Storage shelter building.*
- * Removed two electrical outlets on back of podium and replace with new outlets according to NEC.*
- * Coordinated the removal of dead animal from road in front of residence after request from resident.*
- * Attended CoMotion Miami 2022 Conference at Wynwood through Miami-Dade CITT with Village Manager Alou.*

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. Mr. Thampi and Mr. Aguera will participate in the taskforce in the coming months as guests.

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

This month, the Assistant Director of Construction and Maintenance for Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works provided me an update this week about the N. Miami Avenue bridge work. "Starting the week of April 4, 2022, construction is anticipated to resume on the western portion of the bridge. Southbound lanes will remain closed along North Miami Avenue and northbound lanes will remain open with one lane of traffic in each direction. The traffic shift is anticipated to be in place through September 2022 when construction begins on the eastern side of the bridge. Please keep in mind the construction schedule may change due to unforeseen circumstances."

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 required that the Village remove the bench at N. Miami Avenue and NE 86th Street. We did that this month. The equipment was too damaged to relocate elsewhere. Eight bus stops will be removed in the Village of El Portal, four will remain.

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.

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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 on West Side of Village

99 Homes of the Village's West Side – the Village met with and finalized all portions of the easement payment for the small parcel required for the lift station at Horace Mann Middle School. The first installment payment for \$18,000 was issued to Miami Dade County Public Schools, and the executed land conveyance is expected in the coming days. Once it is received a notice to proceed will be forthcoming for the Village's engineering firm in this project, Pennoni, to commence the final design work.

- 2. CDBG/HUD critical facilities hardening grant was awarded to the Village of El Portal.** 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. Consultant Robert Ruano of Ecostratas Consulting has taken on a new staffer to assist us with the management of this grant. We have done the requisite correspondence with the Miccosukee Tribe regarding the project and are now awaiting response. We also 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.

3. El Jardin Stormwater Improvement.

A phase of the El Jardin storm water improvement project was completed in January 2022. We are awaiting further funding opportunities to address the next phase of stormwater construction.

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 participated in the Little River Canal Cleanup this month, on April 2, 2022 in partnership with the El Portal Women's Club, South Florida Water Management District, the City of Miami, City of Miami Beach, FIU, the Oakland Grove Neighborhood Association, and Pelican Harbor Seabird Station. The event was an astounding success.

The Village will host its annual Arbor Day Festival on Saturday, April 30, 2022 from 4-7PM at the El Portal Nature Trail. Vice Mayor Urbom is the chair of the VOEP Tree Board and will host the event with members of the Village Council and the Tree Board. For more information visit the Village website.

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Administration and Finance

From Chief Financial Officer Harry Taubensfeld for April 2022

- *Audit 2019 and 2020 – All items have been submitted for the 2019 Audit to the Village's independent auditors, and a final report is expected in June 2022. Upon its certification, the 2020 Audit will commence and is expected to be completed very quickly.*
- *Work with the Village Manager to meet APRA federal funding report deadline – April 30, 2022.*
- *Working on various Finance matters for the Village.*

From Office Administrator Christian Abril for April 2022

- *Assisting CFO Taubensfeld with ongoing audit as needed.*
- *Assisting incoming Code Officer Carlos Herrera with new hire onboarding.*
- *Processing payroll and invoices for payment.*
- *Journalizing cash receipts from the front desk (permit fees, lien checks, etc.).*
- *Journalizing cash receipts from the front desk (permit fees, lien checks, etc.).*

More from Village Manager Christia E. Alou, Esq.

Though I participate in a variety of activities and programs as the Village Administrator, I want to call your attention to just a few others that have not been mentioned above.

On April 15, 2022, I completed leadership training through the International County and City Managers Association, entitled Leadership Development Academy, and obtained a Master Certificate. I am very pleased with the program and thank Mayor Nickerson and members of the Village Council for supporting me in this training. And thank you to Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward for recommending my involvement with the ICMA.

CoMotion Miami was held on April 20 and 21, 2022 at the Wynwood Convention Center, Mayor Nickerson, Mohan Thampi and I attended various sessions and participated in the marketplace where innovative transportation modes were demonstrated, and relationships were built. I am scheduled to meet with Miami Parking Authority next week due to our conversations about the change that is coming to NE 2nd Avenue in the Village of El Portal, and how it will become the main street of the Village over the next year due to development and infrastructure improvements.

I wrote and submitted the Village's Title VI Anti-Discrimination policies as required by Miami Dade County. Last month the Village Council approved a resolution adopting Title VI, as it does annually.

I updated the Village's People's Transportation Plan 5-Year Implementation Plan and will submit in the coming week. And I will be submitting the Village's Quarterly CITT Report by May 2, 2022.

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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.

