

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: May 24, 2022
RE: May 2022 Village Manager's Report

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

Hurricane Season and Emergency Preparedness 2022

June 1, 2022 marks the start of hurricane season. The Village Administration updated our internal emergency protocols and have placed service orders for our annual stormdrain maintenance with Shenandoah Construction and our annual dangerous tree limb trimming with Orchidman Landscaping. The annual Miami Dade County Hurricane Preparedness Guides will be available at the Village Hall next week, and we encourage residents to download the Miami Dade County App Ready MDC. It is free and it has critical information for emergency conditions. FPL and AT&T are also conducting line maintenance and tree trimming in the Village of El Portal. We implore the residents to NOT add to the debris piles the utilities are creating and continue to follow the Village's Bulk Pick-Up Schedule – June 28, 29 and 30th.

Hurricane Irma Financial Recovery

There has been no change since the last update. See this: The Village renewed its note 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 received approximately \$36,000 in CARES Act reimbursements. Those funds are being placed in our Reserve account.

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

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address front line employees dealing directly with the public, technology-based service delivery, parks, pandemic related water projects. The Village is utilizing these funds to enhance the El Portal Police Department with equipment and staff that has been long- needed, and 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.

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 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. This project is ongoing.

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, about allowable intrusions into the surfaces which in turn dictate the allowable construction and design elements for any improvements on those sites. In the meantime, we are reviewing other areas of the project that we can direct. The Public Works Chairperson and Committee are reviewing the preliminary plans that were submitted by the architect, and the Sustainability and Resiliency Taskforce are also reviewing the plans. Public Works Committee Chairperson Luis Pirela will be hosting a Community Forum/Town Hall to review the preliminary plans with the residents this summer. A date will be determined soon.

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 April 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 featuring Mayor Omarr C. Nickerson and mailers are being produced. FDOT will pay for the marketing effort.

NE 2nd Avenue Business Corridor including Sanctuary Property

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 considering there being no sewer line, therefore limiting their development opportunities. 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.

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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.

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. This project is ongoing.

Biscayne Boulevard/Annexed Area Development

The Kavista Rental Development at El Portal Annex

The Kavista Project groundbreaking ceremony was held on May 11, 2022 and was very well attended and coordinated. 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.

Skate Bird Miami (Skate Park)

Skate Bird Miami is open with an extension of 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.

From Police Chief Alex Mendez and Major Thomas Harrison

- *Hired five (5) Reserve Police Officers*

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*Officer Benny Merino
Officer Rene Gutierrez
Officer Ricardo Chavez
Officer Frantz Dorcin
Officer Johnathan Brito*

- *Working on the COPS grant to add full time officers if awarded*
- *We have received the lasers and are implementing traffic details to deter people from speeding in our village*
- *We are officially going to electronic case numbers given to us by Miami Dade County Police Dispatch*
- *We were awarded a Police Vest grant and we are working on accepting the funds*
 - *The "Police Fleet Graveyard" vehicles are being processed for removal with Enterprise Leasing. They were sent the vehicle titles, and towing is being scheduled. The vehicles will be decommissioned (name and seals removed) and then they will be auctioned off by Enterprise Leasing.*

Code Enforcement

*From Code Enforcement Officer Carlos Herrera
No report submitted by today's deadline.*

Building Department

*From CAP/Building Department Building Official Pedro Martinez
We issued a total of 37 permits for the month of April (05/01/22-05/24/22). Please see below.*

*Total fee collection - \$15,820.30
Total Construction Value - \$0*

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.

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 department conducted the following:

From Public Works Department, Director Mohan Thampi for May 2022

1. *Coordinate installation of new Village Hall Digital Sign by Adware.*
2. *Complete conversion of Jail Cell by Leading Edge to office space.*

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3. *Obtained three quotes for Village Hall carpeting and flooring replacement, before Village Council on May 24th for approval.*
4. *Drive and Inspect daily to various areas of Village to check for problems or issues.*
5. *Coordinate landscaping activities with Orchidman.*
6. *Continue to make inspection and inventory of streetlights which need repairs and bulb replacement.*
7. *Continue checking stormwater drainage inlets, clear and clean them of surface debris as needed. Coordinate with stormdrain maintenance contractor, Shenandoah Construction, for hurricane season.*
8. *Coordinate building permits with Kavista Apartments' developer and contractor, participate in groundbreaking ceremony on May 12th. Village right-of-way permit requirements.*
9. *Obtaining quotes for painting of Village Hall.*
10. *Maintaining all parks in preparation for renovation projects. Reviewed preliminary landscape plans received in May.*
11. *Addition of a restroom to the Tot Lot park – coordinating design with construction contractor doing renovations at the Village Hall.*

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

Last 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."

NPDES - The Village of El Portal Public Works Department will submit the 4 Year Cycle 4 NPDES Plan and the 20-Year Needs Analysis by its June 2022 deadline. A public education campaign continues on the Village website, and flyers are posted at Village marquees and have been provided door-to-door.

Other Outstanding Public Works Projects:

1. Septic to Sewer Project on West Side of Village

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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 held its Annual Arbor Day Celebration at the El Portal Nature Trail on Saturday, April 30, 2022. And the El Portal Women's Club held a blood drive at the Village Hall on May 7, 2022. On May 11, 2022, the Village Mayor and the Village Administration and El Portal Police attended the Kavista Project's lovely groundbreaking ceremony. And from May 24th to May 31 the Village of El Portal will be illuminated in green lights in observance of Mental Health Awareness Month, through a Miami Dade County awareness campaign.

Administration and Finance

From Chief Financial Officer Harry Taubenfeld for May 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.*
- *Working on various Finance matters for the Village.*
- ***From Office Administrator Christian Abril for May 2022***

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- Editing and formatting the Village's Finance Policies and Procedures Manual.
- Continuing to assist CFO Taubenfeld with ongoing audit as needed.
- Keeping invoice payments and payroll up to date.

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.

Thank you.

Village Manager Christia E. Alou, Esq.