

VILLAGE HALL  
500 NE 87<sup>TH</sup> 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: October 25, 2022  
RE: October 2022 Village Manager's Report

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

### **Hurricane Season and Emergency Preparedness 2022**

June 1, 2022, marked the start of hurricane season. The Village Administration updated our internal emergency protocols and have conducted our preparation Village-wide. This month, the state of Florida was hit with Hurricane Ian with the most damage occurring on the gulf coast of the state. In preparation for Hurricane Ian, Mayor Nickerson and the Public Works, El Portal Police Department and Administration prepared and delivered sandbags to members of the community who needed them. The Village of El Portal suffered some flooding in along 86<sup>th</sup> Street at the C7 Little River Canal. Many homes who received the sandbags were extremely thankful to Mayor Nickerson for the sandbags.

The annual Miami Dade County Hurricane Preparedness Guide was mailed to every resident of Miami Dade County, and extra copies are available at the Village Hall. We encourage residents to download the Miami Dade County App Ready MDC. It is free and it has critical information for emergency conditions.

As a reminder, the Village of El Portal has a Mutual Aid Agreement with the Florida Department of Emergency Management to address post-hurricane safety clean-up. The MAA requires certain procedures for reporting and removal of hazards that may not be immediate. Prevention and preparation are the Village's best defense against weather emergencies.

### **Hurricane Irma Financial Recovery**

We received an appeal amount of **\$448,998.21 for debris and other appealed Hurricane Irma expenses as Monday, September 26, 2022**. FEMA has sent the appeal grants to be obligated and those funds will be transferred to the Village of El Portal, whereupon we will immediately wire the funds to Synovus Bank to pay on the \$695,551.21 note. The Village has sixty days to appeal for more funding, and we intend to do so within that deadline.

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**Corona Virus/COVID-19 Pandemic Municipal Response**

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 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 continue to use caution and staff continues to observe social distancing and hand sanitization when visiting our offices. 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 Vacation Rental In the Village of El Portal**

The Village of El Portal passed an ordinance regulating Short-Term Vacation Rentals (STVR) within the municipality in May 2022. Councilperson Darian Martin hosted a STVR Community Workshop on Saturday, July 23, 2022, where I provided my license application/permit, renewal and inspection fees recommendation and the Local Business Tax Receipt fees to the body, giving the community members and the Village Council members who were present an opportunity to review and consider the recommendation and their own experiences and requests for the ordinance and its fees. An item will be placed on the October 2022 Council agenda to advance the Village's Short Term Vacation Rental efforts.

**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 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The project will be designed, and the construction management will be with Village engineering firm, Craig A. Smith and Associates. Miami Shores is in full support of the project and is working with me and our contractor to execute the MOU, and to confirm utilization of the Miami Shores right-of-way. The stakeholders are Florida Department of Transportation, Miami Shores Village, Miami Dade County, and the Miami Dade Public Schools. This project is ongoing.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

### **Village of El Portal Parks Renovation**

The Village of El Portal Parks Renovation is on track for 2022. Our landscape architect and project manager have been working closely with the county's archeologist, and incorporated community, Sustainability and Resiliency Taskforce Members input on the initial plans. The plans are still being finalized and a Request for Proposal package is being prepared by the project manager soon after. Information about the renovation will be distributed to the area residents. As a special project, Councilperson Luis Pirela, Chairperson of the Public Works Committee will be vetting muralists for a mural project at the entrance of the El Portal Tot Lot.

### **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. The Village has requested the execution of an Interlocal Agreement for the circulator with Miami Dade County. Due to state funding being held until the Village submits the 2019 audit, the matching funds from FDOT were held for this project. The Village continues the project with CITT (Transit) funds, an allowable expenditure for these funds that are very limited for what they may be used. In the meantime, the El Portal Electric Shuttle will have advertising to benefit the service starting in November. And the Shuttle will be available for local use only on Saturday, October 29, 2022 from 2pm to 6pm between the East and West Shuttle Stops so that residents may attend the "This is Our Village" Informational Exposition and Community Day without concern for parking.

### **NE 2nd Avenue Business Corridor**

The Sanctuary Property – According to the property owners, there has been no changes at The Sanctuary. There are delays associated with supply chain issues and inflation, extending the project because of material availability. A private sewer line to tie-in to Miami Shores Village's lift station is being explored by the owners.

Roadway and Traffic - Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works provided the Village of El Portal a grant opportunity for a mobility study. Once completed, the department is also working with the Village to install "painted" crosswalk(s) at NE 87 and NE 89 and NE 2 Avenue. Our Public Works Director is reviewing engineering considerations presently. This project was born from the meetings that the Village Mayor and I had 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.

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Signage, Sewer Conversion, Parking. The Village also applied for and received 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. This project is ongoing.

**Biscayne Boulevard/Annexed Area Development**

Vacant Lots for Sale at El Jardin/NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and NE 86 Street

Two lots are presently for sale at this location. I have made inquiries as to the purchase of the properties so that the Village may utilize one for public use as a park and/or for a 7-foot easement to construct a stormwater improvement drain to outfall into the C7 Little River Canal. Both properties are priced outside of the Village's ability to purchase at this time and have expressed disinterest in providing the stormwater improvement easement to alleviate some of the flooding in El Jardin at this time.

The Kavista Rental Development at El Portal Annex

The Kavista Project was granted an extension of construction hours to 7AM from 8AM. Some City of Miami residents have complained about the Skatebird Miami and Kavista construction project noise. Under the Code and according to the Z5 zoning, music and noise are permitted within 100 feet of the property in its usual course of business. For the Village of El Portal, music, and noise outside of the business hours and construction hours are permitted only upon application and approval of Special Events Permit. Both Skatebird Miami and Kavista Project have applied for and been granted these permits. Kavista Project will also be submitting a right-of-way permit application with Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) plans for construction activities requiring partial road closures. 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.

Skate Bird Miami (Skate Park)

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

Former Trailer Park "Little Farm"

No movement to sell or develop has been reported at this time.

**VOEP DEPARTMENTS HIGHLIGHTS**

**Police and Public Safety/El Portal Police Department (EPPD)**

The EMT (Emergency Management Team) is meeting regularly to prepare for Hurricane Season 2022.

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*From Police Chief Alex Mendez for October 2022*

- *Chief Mendez participated in the Miami-Dade County League of Cities (MDCLC) - 10th Annual Best Practices Conference. In which he spoke on a panel in regard to humanizing the badge, community policing and enforcement*
- *Hired a new Reserve Non-Compensatory Officer Brandi Drapal*
- *The Glock handguns assembly has been completed*
- *We are removing the Chevy Impalas from the station lot*
- *I am very proud to say that our officers caught a burglary subject that has wreaked havoc for many months and has caused over \$1 million dollars in damage throughout Miami Dade County, Miami Shores Village, Village of Biscayne Park, City of Miami and the Village of El Portal in theft of copper wire. Ever since he was taken into custody there have been no more incidents.*
- *We have installed most of the printers inside the police vehicles making it easier for the officers to work in the field.*
  - *Awaiting the installation of a new, weather resistant, and ventilated storage unit for Police Department use and storage of equipment and evidence.*
  - *Will participate in the Miami Dade County Hometown Heroes Parade on Sunday, October 30, 2022 in Downtown Miami from 10AM-2pm*

**Code Enforcement**

*From Code Enforcement Officer Fitzgerald Simmons October 2022*

- *Open Liens in the Village of El Portal        7*
- *Satisfied Liens to date                    169*
- *Active Cases (CCIN's, NOCI's, Verbal Warnings, Complaints)        290*
- *Compliances                                4*
- *Department Expenditures for October 2022 (Supplies/Fuel/Equipment/Software)*
- *Fuel, Date Stamper App, Inkjet Printer*
- *Board-Ups                                    0*
- *Parking Citations Issued                    0*
- *Short-Term Vacation Rental (STVR) Inspection                    0*
- *Minimum Housing (MH) Inspections                    0*
- *Work Orders                                2*

**FYI(s)/Reminder(s)**

*I spoke with Horace Mann Middle School Assistant Principal Dawkins and School Resource Ofc Delgado regarding several complaints the Village of El Portal has received regarding the parents parking on the swale area of the corner properties along NW 2nd Ave during dismissal. The parking and trash from dismissal negatively impacts the residents, but the school says it has to function in this way. I was also asked what the Village expects from them. EPPD Major Harrison and I will stop by during egress to directly observe the issue and discuss alternatives. It must be a team effort to rectify this issue, and the school is willing to do its part.*

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- **GovPilot**

*Public map: <https://map.govpilot.com/map/FL/elportalvillagefl>*

*(Review and track the progress of all complaints and cases)*

*Public form: <https://www.govpilot.com/forms/main/dfb9fa03-049/Report-a-Concern/elportalvillagefl/FL/47122/0>*

*(File a formal complaint. Complainant contact info is required, per F.S.S. 162.06(b))*

- **Bulk Pick-Up Schedule and Placement of Garbage Cans/Trash**

- **December**

*Tuesday, 12/27/2022*

*Wednesday, 12/28/2022*

*Thursday, 12/29/2022*

- **Notice regarding anonymous complaints**

*Florida Statute 125.69 has been changed and now requires that a code inspector only proceed to investigate an anonymous complaint if the code inspector determines, based only on the information from the complaint, that the violation reported presents an imminent threat to the public health, safety, or welfare or imminent destruction of habitat or sensitive resources. If a code inspector does not have enough information or determines that the information provided does not indicate an imminent threat, then the anonymous complaint will not be investigated.*

*If you wish to remain anonymous, you understand that your complaint will not be investigated if the code inspector determines they do not have enough information or that the information provided does not indicate an imminent threat.*

*If you do not want to remain anonymous, an investigation can proceed regardless of whether there is an imminent threat, but you must provide both your name and address.*

### **Building Department**

*From CAP/Building Department Building Official Pedro Martinez for October 2022*

*Cindya Lazo joined the Building Department as Permit Clerk until Ms. Dina Escobar returns from maternity leave. Welcome, Ms. Lazo!*

*Total Revenues for the Local Business Tax Receipts from 09/01/2022 – 10/24/2022: \$4,867.66.  
This is a major improvement, for revenues for the same period last year: \$120.92*

*Revenues for the Building Department from 10/1/2022 to 10/24/22: \$39,972.92.*

*Kavista Project development is planning to complete their early morning concrete pours by early December. Until then weekly Special Events permits, and police coordination will continue.*

### **Planning and Zoning**

*Three variances are before the Village Council for October 2022 Council Meeting.*

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**Public Works and Maintenance**

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

*From Public Works Department, Director Mohan Thampi for October 2022*

- 1. Prepared and submitted to Miami-Dade TPO, the documentation required for conditions of award for NE 2nd Avenue Mobility (Traffic) Study grant up to \$40,000. Received David Plummer's scope and schedule which was submitted before September 30 grant deadline to County Transportation. County will pay 80% of cost while Village's share is 20%. Presently awaiting Village Council executing interlocal agreement after review for approval at Village meeting.*
- 2. Coordinating Village Traffic Study and Mobility Study with David Plummer & Associates.*
- 3. Prepared and submitted to FDOT the updated form requested for "2022 Centerline Mileage Data for FDOT".*
- 4. Biscayne Bay RAP program's coordinator has asked Village to provide a list of stormwater mitigation projects for grant consideration. Provide the last updated Stormwater Master Plan which is online, and they were sent a list of projects for consideration.*
- 5. Regarding Village's Biscayne Bay RAP Grant first application, MDWASD contacted and discussed with Village about taking over "Septic to Sewer Phase 1" project utilizing the grant monies as they will be using County allocated grant for El Portal. Village does not have an issue transferring to MDWASD as they are going to be the owner and operator of the new Phase 1 sewer system and pump station. MDWASD informed Mayor and Village Manager about transferring the project to County as the funding is from the County.*
- 6. Had video meeting with members of CHA, an engineering consultant who are the design engineer for another sewer line project going through El Portal that is the Little River 12-inch Sewer Force Main. It is on the same route as the above Septic to Sewer Phase 1 project.*
- 7. Coordinating replacement of Police Storage Shelter in rear of Village Hall/Police Station.*
- 8. Coordinating recycling unclaimed bicycles in Police Storage.*
- 9. Coordinate with Police Department and Saltex Corp. for design of access control.*
- 10. Had meeting with FPL and Police Department about stolen power wiring that caused lighting failure along NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue for several months.*
- 11. Continue coordinating training of Public Works and Code Enforcement staff on requirement for MS4 NPDES Stormwater Permit.*
- 12. Continue to provide engineering information to Ecostrata as requested by State grant manager for Police Station Hardening Grant requirements.*
- 13. Review Hurricane Plan with Orchidman/Joe's Landscaping and Tree Service and coordinate trimming of trees in anticipation of Hurricane Ian.*
- 14. PW staff on standby for Hurricane Ian.*
- 15. Two road depressions looking like sinkholes at NE 89th St need repair. Received 3 quotes with the recommended award to contractor, Ozuna, is on the October 25 Council agenda for approval.*
- 16. Continue to coordinate installation of Village of El Portal Police Station and Offices flooring.*

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17. *Coordinate new restroom facility for Tot Lot/Parks Renovation. Have created technical layout and sent to Landscape Architect doing park renovations design.*
18. *Reviewed quotes for repairing and replacing pavers at NE 87th St. One-Stop Paver's quote of \$6,765 is lowest responsive quote which is on the October 25 Council agenda for approval.*
19. *Drive and inspect daily to various areas of Village to check for litter, problems, or issues.*
20. *Continue to coordinate landscaping activities with Orchidman.*
21. *Coordinated fallen tree removal at 495 NE 89th St.*
22. *Continue to make inspection and inventory of streetlights which need repairs and bulb replacement.*
23. *Coordinate repairs of public lighting on NE 2nd between NE 86th and 90th Streets.*
24. *Continue checking stormwater drainage inlets, clear and clean them of surface debris blockages as needed. Increased frequency of inspections before and after Hurricane Ian.*
25. *Review various Village right-of-way permit applications and any submitted to Miami Dade Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW).*
26. *Coordinate completing the painting of Village Hall.*
27. *Coordinate tree trimming request with resident and coordinating replacement of tree with.*
28. *Parks project design package is 100% complete. Village has requested consultant to prepare RFP bid package to advertise.*
29. *Received quotes for Hall janitorial services. Reviewing the quotes.*
30. *Coordinate Village staff training on using the new digital Village Hall sign.*

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.

The Village of El Portal was granted approximately \$900,000 for the Resilient 305 2021-22 grant to be utilized for stormwater improvements on Phase Two of the El Jardin community as was detailed in the Village's Local Mitigation Strategy. This is a matching grant, for which I met with FDEP leadership to determine if the El Jardin Stormwater Improvement Phase One work that was just completed earlier this year may be considered for the Village's match. The answer is yes, but we must add approximately \$250,000 to make up the residual amount of the match. This is good news for the Village and for our efforts in bringing water quality improvements to the residents.

The Village of El Portal was included in the Miami Dade County Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP), led by Miami Dade the RAP coordinates County water quality policies and initiatives and prioritizes the County's most vital areas, with El Portal and our neighboring municipalities being identified as most needy due to the C7 Little River Canal's effect on Miami Biscayne Bay's water quality.

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

There is no update since last few months' submission on the N. Miami Avenue bridge reconstruction.



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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 from MDCPS was received last month. Additionally, Miami Dade County Transportation and Public Works received a grant that they will use to take over the project in the coming months. We will be meeting with them to formalize the transition and roles and responsibilities of the project.

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 Ecostrata Consulting, the Village of El Portal Public Works Department and the Chief Financial Officer and I have done the requisite reports, policy drafts, correspondence with the Miccosukee Tribe regarding the project and are now awaiting responses and approvals. 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. Just recently, the Village of El Portal was granted the Resilient Florida Grant for 2021 by Governor DeSantis. This grant is a matching grant that would provide the Village over \$900,000 from the State (FDEP) to do the next phase of the El Jardin project. Receiving the Resilient Florida grant is a tremendous win for the Village of El Portal, and a meeting between me and FDEP garnered the approval of the use of the El Jardin Stormwater Improvement Phase 1 project to serve as a portion of the match requirements of Phase 2. Phase 2 will require the outfall easement that we desperately need in El Jardin. Craig A. Smith and Associates Consultant Engineer Orlando Rubio and I are meeting with homeowners to begin the process of securing the outfall easement.

**Public Affairs**

Village Mayor Omarr Nickerson and Members of the Village Council are hosting a **“This Is Our Village” Information Expo community event** on Saturday, October 29, 2022, from 2-6pm at the Village Hall Campus and Tot Lot to with a day of activities such as Mayor Nickerson's State of

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the Village Address, Village of El Portal First Responders Recognitions, Village of El Portal Veterans Recognitions, Citizens Crime Watch presentation, El Portal Businesses marketplace, and much more. Free El Portal Electric Shuttle Service is provided between the East and West Shuttle Stops for residents who opt not drive between 2-6pm. Food trucks will be onsite for your dining pleasure.

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 Administration will continue to support all public affairs efforts.

At present the Village's website and social media, the digital marquee sign, Mayor Omarr Nickerson's door-to-door flyer distribution with vital information about what is happening in the Village, are being utilized as outreach.

**Administration and Finance**

***From Chief Financial Officer Harry Taubefeld for October 2022***

*Audit responses*

*Preparing and submitting eTrim and Village budget 2022-23 filings*

*To conduct a Workers Compensation Audit on Thursday, October 27, 2022*

***From Office Administrator David Perez for October 2022***

*The Finance Department is being streamlined and updated. This month we were able to clean out our office and store old files at our storage facility. We have been reviewing and updating some of our accounting procedures to make them more consistent and efficient. We are updating our records with different vendors to make sure we are tax exempt therefore conserving the Village funds. And I continue to process payments, attend to day-to-day accounting and payroll.*

As the Village Manager, I am happy to represent the Village within the community and outside of the community. Among several other things this month:

On October 3, 2022, Village Mayor Nickerson, Sustainability and Resiliency Taskforce Chairperson Carpenter and I hosted the National Science Foundation Workshop Tour that stopped at the C7 Little River Canal and the Village of El Portal Hall to engage with us about resiliency efforts being made by the Village and our collaborations with the state of Florida and Miami Dade County.

On October 13, 2022, I participated in the Miami Dade County League of Cities Best Practices Forum as a panelist for the session on municipal recovery from disaster. Mayor Nickerson moderated this, and another session entitled Humanizing the Badge, where Police Chief Alex Mendez discussed as a panelist, ways police departments and community work best together. Both sessions were standing room only. And members of the EPPD also attended the event.

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On October 16, 2022, I attended the Miami Shores Village Gay Pride event, where Mayor Nickerson participated in the parade. Several El Portal residents were present and enjoyed this inaugural event in support of the community.

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

Thank you.

*Village Manager Christia E. Alou, Esq.*

