

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



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

MEMORANDUM

TO: Village of El Portal Council
FR: Christia E. Alou, Village Manager
DATE: June 27, 2023
RE: June 2023 Village Manager's Report

Please accept this memorandum as my June 2023 Village of El Portal Administrative Report to Council and the Community.

State of Florida Legislative Session 2023

The Village of El Portal submitted two projects, Village Hall Expansion and Stormwater Improvements for requested funding through the Florida legislature appropriations process. Neither request was funded.

The Village of El Portal's legislative team, Richard Pinsky of Akerman, LLC and Eli Nortelus and David Roberts of Nortelus Roberts, PA, advised that the State requires that municipalities prove and provide matching funds for all appropriation requests. Our requests are sponsored by our State Representative Dotie Joseph and State Senator Shevron Jones. Our legislative team will attend an upcoming Council meeting to provide information about the session, any funding that comes to the Village of El Portal, and preparation for fall session.

Hurricane Irma Financial Recovery

Great news! The Village of El Portal received \$537,477.88 this month in reimbursement. These funds are being transferred to Synovus Bank as a partial payment on the line of credit/loan for \$695,551.21 that was extended last month by the bank. I continue to work with FDEM to capture the remaining balance of the reimbursement.

Corona Virus/COVID-19 Pandemic Municipal Response and Recovery

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

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those departments more efficient and convenient for residents. The Village also conducted light inner-office renovations 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. The Village CFO and I provided a report to the federal government on April 30, 2023. All ARPA funds have been expended per our commitment.

Short-term Vacation Rental (STVR) In the Village of El Portal

The Florida Legislature did not reach an agreement in its plan to address short-term vacation rental properties. Therefore, there is no change at the state level. Currently, the state Department of Business and Professional Regulation issues licenses for vacation rentals.

As for VOEP's STVR policy, there has been no update since February 2023. Councilperson Darian Martin, Chairperson of the Village of El Portal's Planning and Zoning Committee and Attorney Joseph Geller held a second community workshop to discuss resident concerns about the Village's Short-Term Vacation Rental Ordinance on Thursday, February 23, 2023.

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 was designed, and the construction management will be with the Village engineering firm, Craig A. Smith, and Associates. Miami Shores Village Manager, Code Enforcement and Public Works Departments are in full support of the project, but a required interlocal agreement between the villages has not been signed by Miami Shores Village yet. Once approved, the Villages will execute a MOU for the shared location, but this is an EL Portal project. An RFP will be issued for general contractors to construct the project, and mobility plans and information about the project will be shared with residents of both municipalities and Horace Mann Middle School. This project will take three weeks to construct once construction commences after general contract selection is made through the appropriate procurement process. This project is ongoing.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Village of El Portal has a new Landscaping and Tree Services Contractor, Green Dreams Paradise Co. Hurricane preparedness tree trimming for safety only will be conducted June 28, 29, 2023. We welcome Green Dreams Paradise to our El Portal family.

Village of El Portal Parks Renovation

The Village of El Portal conducted a search for general contractor services for parks renovation and preservation in February and March 2023. One general contractor responded to RFP 2023-03 and is still being vetted due to pricing. As points of information, these parks projects have nuance and

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unique characteristics. For example, Sherwood Forest Park and the Tequesta Mound must have all restoration and preservation work done under the guidance of a certified archaeologist. When the project moves forward, the Village will engage Mr. Bob Carr, former Miami Dade County Archaeologist to oversee the renovation project in Sherwood Forest Park and the Tequesta Mound.

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

We are considering a smaller, less expensive vehicle that will not diminish the level of service. Though a small service, it is heavily relied upon by a small group of residents. Options for the service are being considered to increase ridership, such as expanded hours and expanded service area. This enhancement is forthcoming. Please stay tuned.

NE 2nd Avenue Business Corridor

The Sanctuary Property is now "Village Plaza". The Village Plaza project is ongoing, with permits and plans having been submitted this month. The project is planning a private sewer conversion of the property with Miami Dade County and Miami Shores Village and is expected to run from NE 88th Street to NE 1 Avenue to the closest Miami Shores Village lift station at NE 96 Street. The Village Administration and El Portal Police will work with the community and the Village Plaza Property team to communicate and accommodate local impacts for this project. According to the property managers, they are planning to develop two small restaurants, retail, and offices at the location.

Roadway and Traffic – The Village submitted our completed traffic study report and mobility study to Miami Dade County Transportation and Public Works to support the Village's request for reduced speed limit to 25mph on Village streets, for painted intersections at NE 2nd Avenue and N. Miami Avenue, and for a "road diet" to reduce NE 2nd Avenue from four lanes to two lanes to match the City of Miami and Miami Shores Village. The Village's Public Works Director, Mohan Thampi is submitted a permit application for the speed limit reduction to Miami Dade County which has been approved, and the Interlocal Agreement for the reduction of the speed limit is being presented at the May 23, 2023 Council Meeting. An information campaign for residents and visitors is forthcoming to educate about the new lower speed limit. This project is ongoing.

To report a pothole, please contact publicworks@villageofelportal.org with a physical address and photo.

Biscayne Boulevard/Annexed Area Development

The Kavista Rental Development at El Portal Annex

The Kavista Project continues developing according to plan, with occupancy expected by the end of the year. City of Miami residents have complained about the Skatebird for music noise 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 business hours and construction hours are permitted only upon application and approval of Special Events Permit. Skatebird Miami is preparing a noise mitigation

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plan that will include a sound curtain for the property, that they will submit to the Village in response to the request for it. Proprietor Johnathan Strauss provided words at the May 20223 Council Meeting about the noise mitigation plan, and that he would implement it, but we have not seen evidence of that at this time.

The owners of the Kavista Project development are planning a second development along the canal coast of the El Portal Annex entitled The Launch. Finalized plans are being prepared for submission in the coming months.

Skate Bird Miami (Skate Park)

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

Former Trailer Park "Little Farm"

This property is still in receivership. The problems any developer will face with this property is the brownfield status and mitigation of the water and ground pollution on the site. Once that is addressed and corrected, then development will follow.

VOEP DEPARTMENTS HIGHLIGHTS

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

Mayor Nickerson, Chief Mendez, Major Harrison and I prepared a Hurricane Season Readiness video message for the Village website and social media. Please check it out. Village of El Portal Police Department to receive three new exterior impact doors, three impact windows, a generator, and a new air conditioning unit from a HUD grant (\$50,000) the Village received. We look forward to the improvements.

From Police Chief Alex Mendez/Major Thomas Harrison for June 2023

-9 trunk mount radios were installed in the police vehicles by Miami Dade county giving the officers the opportunity to monitor multiple frequencies and know what's going on in our surrounding areas as well as our own.

-The City of Miami welcomed us to sign up officers to attend their upcoming Crisis Intervention Training in December and we were able to secure two (3) spots to this much sought after course which is difficult to get into.

-The officers are starting to get fitted for their new Bullet Proof Vests which will be purchased through the approved/awarded Patrick Leahy BVP Grant.

Code Enforcement

On June 27, 2023, the Village will re-institute Special Master hearings for code enforcement violation resolutions. This practice has not been done in over six years, but this will address several outstanding cases.

From Code Enforcement Officer Fitzgerald Simmons for June 2023

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Prepare 27 cases for Special Magistrate hearings. Continue to enforce code Village-wide, and identify areas within the code that need administrative and/or legislative attention. Work with Zoning to identify language for amendments to the code.

Building Department

From CAP/Building Department Building Official Pedro Martinez for June 2023

Total Fees Collected - \$8,013.77

Total Permits Issued - 22

Grand Total Construction Value - \$36,548

Planning and Zoning

Planning - Plus Urbia Design will now conduct Planning services only for the Village of El Portal. The Corradino Group is now the Village's Zoning contractor. They will conduct site plan reviews, variance requests and zoning inspections for the Village.

Zoning – The Corradino Group prepared and presented four matters (Village Plaza site plan and special exception for alcohol sales, and three variances) for the Planning and Zoning Committee this month. They are also working with PlusUrbia and Code Enforcement Officer Simmons to address issues related to swale maintenance.

Public Works and Maintenance

From Public Works Department Director Mohan Thampi

- *MDC Transportation and Public Works approved permit application be made by Village Public Works approving lowering of 30MPH road speed limit to 25MPH. The presentation was made in May 23rd by with David Plummer & Associates who did the engineering report.*
- *MDC NE 2nd Avenue Mobility (Traffic) Study by David Plummer & Associates completed with 3 recommendations which were presented at May 23rd Village meeting with one layout selected.*
- *New contractor, Victor Marzo, selected for construction of Tots Park at last May meeting.*
- *MS4 Permit Illicit Discharge Ordinance 2023-02 regarding discharge of contaminants and pollutants in the stormwater drainage system was approved by Village on May 23rd Council meeting.*
- *MS4 Co-permittee Year 5 Annual Report being drafted for*
- *Public works and Code Enforcement staff received NPDES MS4 Stormwater Inspection Certification after completing 1-1/2 day training class.*
- *Coordinating preparation of procurement documents for DOH grant for construction hardening of police building.*
- *Coordinate distribution of sand and sandbags at Village Hall for residents to fill and take for their use where Mayor and Police may assist.*
- *Attended the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) Vision Zero Program second municipal coordination meeting on May 24, 2023.*

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- *Staff and Village Manager attended Miami-Dade County Municipal Water Quality Coordination Workshop on June 22.*
- *Coordinate the pick-up of the new VOEP Conference Room table generously donated by resident, Mr. Scott Russell.*
- *Reviewing proposals to vacuum clean all stormwater catch basins.*
- *Drive and Inspect daily to various areas of Village to check for litter, problems or issues.*
- *Coordinate landscaping activities with Orchidman whose contract was terminated in mid-May and will end On June 30th.*
- *Continue to make inspection and inventory of streetlights which need repairs and bulb replacement.*
- *Continue checking stormwater drainage inlets, clear and clean them of surface debris blockages as needed.*
- *Continue to review various Village right-of-way permit applications and those submitted to Miami Dade Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) for construction in Village Road right-of-ways.*
- *Coordinating Building Recertification & Inspection – 40 Year Certification Study by HMB Engineering Services PA.*
- *Respond to queries on right of way requirements by contractors.*
- *Coordinating tree stump removal from rights-of-way.*

From Public Works Coordinator, Carlos Aguera

REMOVE GARBAGE AND TREE BRANCHES IN ALLEYS, PARKS

REMOVED GRAFFITI IN THE BUS STOP IN NORTH MIAMI AVENUE

*COORDINATE EXTERIOR PAINTING OF VILLAGE HALL WITH THE PAINT CONSTRUCTOR
COORDINATE AND REVIEW THE NEW BATHROOM DRAWING WITH GENERAL
CONTRACTOR (VIMAR CONSTRUCTION) FOR THE TOT LOT PARK*

REPORTED TO FPL THREE POLE IS NOT FUNCTION AND PARTS BROKEN POLE # 87360-0566 (301 NE 87 ST.) REPORT # 71594, POLE # 87360-1963 (425 NE 87 ST.) AND POLE # 87360-2268. (2 AVE NE AND 87 ST.)

HELP RESIDENT TO OBTAIN NEW GARBAGE RECEPTACLE WITH COASTAL WASTE & RECYCLING.

*HAVE OIL CHANGED IN PUBLIC WORKS PICKUP TRUCK AND GENERAL MAINTENANCE
PROGRAMMING THE MOBIL ELECTRONIC BOARD SIGN AND POSITION THEM IN THE
ASSIGNED PLACES (87 AVE NE / RAILWAY LINE), NORTH MIAMI AVE AND 87 ST.) FOR
POLICE DEPT.*

*VILLAGE WALK-THRU WITH GREEN DREAM PARADISE CORPORATION FOR
COORDINATION FOR TRIMMING ALL PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY TREES IN PREPARATION
FOR HURRICANE SEASON*

*ORDER AND INSTALL THE NEW BUS BENCH ON NE 2 AVENUE AND 88 STREET AND
ORDER THE NEW WASTE RECEPTACLE*

*ORDER AND INSTALL ALL KICK PLATE IN ALL INTERIOR DOOR IN THA MAIN OFFICE
VOEP*

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*COORDINATED CONTRACTOR PAINTED ALL INTERIORS DOOR IN THE MAIN OFFICE
VOEP
ORGANIZED THE COUNCIL MEETING ROOM FOR COUNCIL METTING
COORDINATING CLEANING ALL CATCH BASINS, ORDERED 2 CUBIC YARD SAND FOR
RESIDENT SANDBAGS, ORDER EXTRA DRINKING WATER TO STORAGE IN THE POLICE
SHELTER
INSPECTION, REVIEW FOR COMCAST UNDERGROUND CABLE PERMIT
MAINTENANCE ALL AIR CONDITION UNITS IN THE MAIN OFFICE (REPLACE FILTER,
CHECK PRESION GAS IN THE COMPRESORS, CLEAN COIL IN THE CONDERSER UNITS
AND CHECK THERMOSTAT PROGRAM).
COMPLETE THE BUS SHELTER INSPECTION SHEET AND SEND TO MIAMI DADE COUNTY
PER INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT*

Village of El Portal Sustainability and Resiliency

Mayor Nickerson, Public Works Director Thampi, Public Works Coordinator Aguera and I attended a meeting with Ms. Elizabeth Fata Carpenter, Executive Director of the Miami Environmental Law Center and Chairperson of the Village of El Portal Sustainability and Resiliency Taskforce to review the MS4/NPDES year four report, and to plan the year five activities. It was a very detailed and technical meeting that we will follow up with a second meeting.

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. This project is ongoing.

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. Mayor Omarr Nickerson is leading a collaborative effort with all Miami Dade County Coastal Mayors of Biscayne Bay.

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

Miami Dade County alerted the municipality and residents that the traffic shift on North Miami Avenue bridge just south of the Village of El Portal was implemented this month. This new traffic pattern is scheduled to be in place through November 2024, according to Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works.

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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 convene the project. We are awaiting a viable scope of work to be prepared and authorized by FDEP.
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. We have successfully submitted all required documents and are now awaiting a notice to proceed from HUD. Finally!
3. El Jardin Stormwater Improvement. Phase 1 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 with 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.
4. The Neat Street Tree Planting Matching Grant was received this month and will allow for the planting of 75 native trees in the Village. Planting to take place in May 2023. Tree City USA Certification is being renewed through application. A VOEP Tree Board will hold a board meeting in the coming months under chairman Councilperson Anders Urbom. In the meantime, Grants Consultant Robert Ruano and I continue to process necessary reports and documentation of the Village's Tree City USA status and activity

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and work with the Public Works Department on day-to-day maintenance. We are still awaiting the arrival of the new trees.

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 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. Vice Mayor Pirela is assisting in a Code Enforcement Reminder Flyer to residents about waste and recycled bins being addressed and put away appropriately for the health and safety and beautification of the Village. Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward is planning her annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Wreath Presentation for Monday, May 29, 2023. Mayor Nickerson and Members of the Village Council conduct outreach to residents regularly.

Administration and Finance

From Chief Financial Officer Harry Taubenfeld for June 2023

*Working with Synovus Bank on the newly negotiated line-of-credit repayment schedule
Working on the 2022 Audit*

From Office Administrator David Perez for June 2023

- *Held multiple meetings with multiple ADP staff (including from the headquarters office) to correct all the issues we are having with the payroll system.*
- *Performed multiple audits to correct payroll issues with different employees due to ADP calculations problems.*
- *Initiated the process to add a third company to our payroll for the Council Members.*
- *Updated and replaced all gas cards with the correct names and badge numbers.*
- *Assisted Madam Manager and CFO in gathering information needed for audits and grants.*
- *Regular day-to-day accounting activities.*

There continue to be varied requests, directives, and projects I provide at the request of the Village Council and members of the El Portal community. I also participated in several forums on behalf of the Village over the course of the month. For more information, please contact me directly. Thank you.

Village Manager Christia E. Alou, Esq.

