

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: July 25, 2023
RE: July 2023 Village Manager's Report

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

FY2023-24 Budget Preparation and Approval

The Village of El Portal will conduct, at the Village Hall Chambers:
Budget Workshop - Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 6:30PM
Budget Hearing #1 – Tuesday, September 12, 2023 6:30PM
Budget Hearing #2 – Tuesday, September 26, 2023 6:30PM

Hurricane Irma Financial Recovery

The Village of El Portal received \$537,477.88 last 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 in May 2023 by the bank. We continue to work with FDEM, by meeting with, following up with requests for information, to capture the remaining balance of the reimbursement.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

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 an agreement could not be reached regarding pricing. As points of information, these parks projects have nuance and 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. In the meantime, alternative measures are being considered for the renovation of the parks, including engaging the Village landscaping and tree services contractor, Green Dreams Paradise, to conduct the planting portion of the work and doing the project in smaller phases.

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 Village Plaza project is ongoing, with permits and plans submittals with the Building and Zoning Departments. 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 Improvements – 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 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 prepared. 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.

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 Council, Village Manager, Code Enforcement and Public Works Departments are in full support of the project, and an interlocal agreement between the villages will be signed. 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.

Biscayne Boulevard/Annexed Area Development

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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. Skatebird Miami is preparing a noise mitigation plan that may include a sound curtain for the property, that they will submit to the Village in response to the request.

The Launch Rental Development at El Portal Annex

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. We are still awaiting a Sound/Noise Mitigation Plan and its implementation from the business as there have been several complaints about Skatebird Miami from surrounding City of Miami and El Portal residents. The proprietor insists that he is making every effort to keep the performance noise confined to the property, not beyond 100 feet of the property as required by VOEP Code of Ordinances. EPPD and El Portal Code Enforcement continue to monitor and address issues related to the violation of the law and code.

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. 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 July 2023

- *Major Harrison, Det. Merino, Det. Padron, Det. Berthet and Det. Gutierrez attended an FDLE workshop on Background/Internal Affairs Investigations.*
- *Chief Mendez, Major Harrison, Det. Merino and Det. Gutierrez attended a Police Academy graduation to show support for a current applicant.*

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- *Chief Mendez attended a CERA model active shooter application training/demonstration along with Miami Shores P.D., Biscayne Park P.D. and Sweetwater P.D.*

Code Enforcement

On June 27, 2023, the Village re-instituted Special Master/Magistrate hearings for code enforcement violation resolutions. Mr. Simmons prepared 27 cases for Special Magistrate hearings. He continues to enforce the Code Village-wide and identifies areas within the Code that need administrative and/or legislative attention. He also works with the Zoning Department (Corradino Group) to identify language for amendments to the Code. This month, a Code Enforcement Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, July 18, 2023, where Mr. Simmons gave information and guidance on the department, his activities, and his recommendations for legislative review and Code amendments.

From Code Enforcement Officer Fitzgerald Simmons for July 2023

Open Cases (CCIN's, NOCI's, Verbal Warnings) - 270

- *Work Orders (VOEP Clean-Ups) - 2*
- *Final Orders (Imposition of Fine) - 9*
- *Notices To Appear - 14*

Building Department

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

Grand Total Fees Collected - \$822,446.98

Total Number of Permits Issued – 42

Grand Total Construction Value \$235,094.00

Planning and Zoning

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

Public Works and Maintenance

From Public Works Department Director Mohan Thampi for July 2023

- *Subner Salomon is the new Public Works Coordinator*
- *Attended SFWMD Water Resources Forum on July 25th.*
- *MS4 NPDES Co-permittee Year 5 Annual Report submitted by June 30th deadline. drafted*
- *Assist grant firm in the preparation of procurement documents for DOH grant for construction hardening of police station.*
- *Coordinate septic to sewer project with WASD's new Little River Sewer Force Main.*

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- *Coordinate distribution of sand and sandbags at Village Hall for residents to fill and take for their use where the Mayor and Police Department may assist.*
- *Coordinated the pick-up of the replacement garbage containers with Coastal Waste and Recycling*
- *Drive and inspect daily to various areas of Village to check for litter, problems or issues.*
- *Coordinate landscaping activities with Green Dreams Paradise, the new landscaping firm from July 1.*
- *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. Coordinate the maintenance of the Stormdrains.*
- *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 right-of-ways.*
- *Respond to queries on right of way requirements by contractors.*
- *Coordinating tree stump removal from right-of-ways.*

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. 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 new traffic pattern is scheduled to be in place through Spring 2024, according to Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works Bridge Director, Alex Barrios.

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 WASD received a grant that they will use to convene the project. There is a Little River Sewer System expansion that will tie into the Village's project, which could increase the number of homes being converted by the County's project. We are STILL awaiting approval of the scope of work from FDEP for a contract with the Village of El Portal. Public Works Director Thampi continues to work with WASD to coordinate this 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. We prepared a draft RFP/Invitation to Bid (ITB) for the necessary work that this grant will provide and will release it early August pending approval by HUD: 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 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 September 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 and work with the Public Works Department on day-to-day maintenance. We are still awaiting the arrival of the new trees.

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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 Mayor Nickerson and Members of the Village Council conduct outreach to residents regularly.

Councilperson Darian Martin's new initiative, El Portal Junior Birders Program began on July 2023. Please visit the Village website for more information.

Administration and Finance

From Chief Financial Officer Harry Taubenfeld for July 2023

Establishing and preparing Budget FY2023-24 hearing dates, and materials for review with the Mayor and Village Manager.

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

From Office Administrator David Perez for July 2023

- Held multiple meetings with ADP's Customer Relations Department to try and correct the issues and image we have of ADP.
- Assisted in welcoming and setting up our new Public Works.
- Met with the Village Clerk and Mayor regarding audit that was performed for the Clerk.
- Recovered 90% (the other 10% is expected to be collected this next payroll) of the overpayment that was made to certain officers due to ADP issues.
- Updated vendors and employees contact sheet.
- Assisted Madam Manager and CFO in gathering information needed for audits and grants.
- Held meetings with Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization and provided documentation they requested.
- 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.

