

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: September 26, 2023
RE: August/September 2023 Village Manager's Report

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

FY2023-24 Budget Preparation and Approval

The Village of El Portal conducted its budget workshop and hearings 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 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 are in the process of working on the new balance and its repayment with Synovus Bank. We continue to work with FDEM, by meeting with, following up with requests for information, to capture the remaining balance of the reimbursement.

At this summer's elections, I was elected to the FY 2024 Executive Board as Treasurer for the Miami Dade City/County Managers Association by my city administrator peers. I am honored to represent my fellow managers and serve them and El Portal on a larger scale within the County.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Village of El Portal Parks Renovation

The Village of El Portal met several times to try to close the gap between the quoted price of the parks renovation and preservation selected general contractor and has put the project on hold until more funding can be added through grants or other means. In the meantime, I requested a landscaping and plantings quote from the Village's Landscaping and Tree Services Contractor,

Green Dreams Paradise, and presented it to the Public Works Committee Chair for consideration at Fall 2023 Public Works Committee Meeting.

The Village was also offered a lovely donation from an El Portal private property owner of four cultural statues, Stupas, that could be added to the Village of El Portal Nature Trail. These statues are quite large and impressive, and our space is limited in our small parks. I met with Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works, the true owner of the El Portal Nature Trail, and permission was granted to install the statues so long as their installation follows the Miami Dade County permitting and that the Village execute an Interlocal Agreement that VOEP will maintain the Stupa(s). Our Parks Renovation and Preservation Project Manager, Sr. Engineer Orlando Rubio and I reviewed the requirements of the space and found that one statue would be the maximum we can fit in the space without changing the landscaping design and keeping exercise equipment area that was identified for the park's renovation. We also made sure that the existing sewer pump station easement located on the public school property just north of the El Portal Nature Trail would not be obstructed in any way if the statue is installed.

A family-sized restroom is being installed in the El Portal Tot Lot, and its completion is expected Fall 2023.

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

Due to low ridership, the Village of El Portal will discontinue its Transportation Pilot Project. This transit project lasted two years in the Village of El Portal through the use of Citizens Transportation Trust Transit funding. The Village will utilize these funds for other transit and transportation projects, including the speed-limit reduction initiative.

NE 2nd Avenue Business Corridor

The Village Plaza project is presenting its site plan review to the Village Council at the September 26th meeting. 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.

Public Works Coordinator Solomon and I provided a site visit and audit documentation for the ARRA Funded bus shelter located at NE 2nd Avenue between NE 87 and NE 88 Streets. We passed, and are happy to be in compliance with our 2006 contract with FDOT/MDC regarding the bus shelter equipment and its maintenance.

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. The County is requiring that the Village provide an engineering plan to remove and replace and place street and speed limit signage, which is an item on the September Council agenda. 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 is being executed. 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

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

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Manager's Report**

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)

The Village of El Portal Police Department is 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. This project is currently under an active Request for Proposals for construction services. We look forward to the improvements.

From Police Chief Alex Mendez/Major Thomas Harrison for August/September 2023

August 2023

Submitted our budget request for 2023/2024 fiscal year.

Ofc. K. Torrens and Ofc. J. Brito were promoted to supervisor (Corporal) rank.

Appointed (2) Reserve Captains B. Merino and R. Padron who combined bring over 60 years of police experience to assist with operations and administration at no cost to the Village.

Hired a new officer right out of the Police Academy, Officer A. Machado – WELCOME OFFICER MACHADO!

September 2023

- Department completed the Long rifle certification and all full timers are now carrying them daily to assist in an active shooter situation .

-CPL. Torrens completed 40 hours of General Investigations Training (GIU) at the Miami Dade Police Department training bureau.

-Chief Mendez, Capt. Merino, Cpl. Brito, Ofc. Machado and Major Harrison attended the Marvin Dunn breakfast hosted at Horace Mann Middle School.

Code Enforcement

On June 27, 2023, the Village re-instituted Special Master/Magistrate hearings for code enforcement violation resolutions. Hearings were held on August 29, 2023,

From Code Enforcement Officer Fitzgerald Simmons for August/September 2023

August 2023

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

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- *Work Orders (VOEP Clean-Ups) - 1*
- *Final Orders (Imposition of Fine) - 7*
- *Notices To Appear - 14*

September 2023

Open Cases (CCIN's, NOCI's, Verbal Warnings) - 279

- *Work Orders (VOEP Clean-Ups) - 1*
- *Notices To Appear - 11*

Building Department

*From CAP/Building Department Building Official Pedro Martinez for August/September 2023
August 2023*

Permit Report Grand Total of Fees Collected - \$28,228.98

Total Permits – 31

Total Construction Value - \$690,197.00

September 2023

Permit Report Grand Total of Fees Collected \$12,619.50

Total Permits – 40

Total Construction Value - \$96,507.00

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. Plusurbia has been preparing a presentation and recommendations to the Village's Planning and Zoning Committee through the chair in anticipation of an October 2023 Planning and Zoning Committee meeting. Swale material, flooding and code of ordinance issues related to that matter are being contemplated due to overwhelming property owner concerns and non-compliance due to environmental challenges including tree canopy, tree roots, flooding and the need for parking that affect the swales presently. Corradino Group continues to work with the Village Plaza property development team, as well as with residents for their zoning needs and zoning inspections.

Public Works and Maintenance

From Public Works Department Director Mohan Thampi for August/September 2023

August 2023

Coordinating with contractor Mr. Victor Marzo the Tot Lot Bathroom plans was sent to Building Department for permits review remaining for planning and plumbing.

- *MS4 NPDES Co-permittee Year 5 Annual Report being submitted by June 30th deadline. Currently preparing additional documentation request due by the end of month.*

August/September 2023 Manager's Report

- *Coordinate distribution of sand and sandbags at Village Hall for residents to fill and take for their use.*
- *Drive and inspect daily to various areas of Village to check for litter, problems or issues.*
- *Coordinate landscaping activities with Green Dreams whose contract started on 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.*
- *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.*
- *Submit additional information for SS4 grant application.*
- *Respond to queries on right of way requirements by contractors.*
- *Coordinating tree stump removal from right-of-ways.*
- *Coordinated with Testa & Son signs to redo the VOEP front welcome sign and the Police sign.*
- *Set up a trash bin for the public at bus stop on NE 88-89 block.*
- *Set up one cork board at nature trail park.*
- *Ordered and replaced the American flag for VOEP.*
- *Removed unnecessary screws and anchors on the walls and painted the men bathroom.*
- *Painted and touched up the interior of VOEP office and doors.*
- *Replaced A/C filters.*
- *Got 3 quotes to replace two front windows at the VOEP building.*
- *Work with code enforcement to report illegal dumping and overgrown grasses.*
- *Report to FPL North Miami 86-91 blocks of road lights not working at night. FPL stated that it may take them 40 days to solve the problem.*
- *Village Hall A/C was not working for one day due to FPL damaged equipment. Called FPL where they replaced one transformer on west side of the VOEP building.*
- *Drive around daily around the Village to review sub-contractor work.*
- *Repaired meeting room ceiling, double doors, men's toilet door, and kitchen door.*
- *Reported to code enforcement a stop sign that is inside a resident's fence at the intersection NE 4th AVENUE.*
- *Drive around to check potholes and stormwater drains. Vacuum cleaned 20 drain inlets.*
- *Checked trees for any damage or disease that could be a threat to the public.*
- *Checked bus stops, streets lights and reported any damage to our contractors or Miami Dade county.*
- *In spirit to reduce carbon footprint and air pollution in VOEP, bought a 20-Watts blower that operates on batteries.*
- *Reported to FPL a report that I received from resident at 8601 NE 86th Street, an electrical pole is leaning on her house side. FPL will address the problem in 1-3 following days.*
- *Checked daily on parks to see they are maintained clean.*

September 2023

- *Coordinate construction of the Tot Lots Bathroom with contractor Mr. Victor Marzo where the Building Department has approved and issued building permits.*
- *Bulletin Cork board installed at Tot Lot Park Entrance*

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- Reviewed 3 quotes for replacing Village Hall front chamber entrance windows with impact glass panes.
- After Miami-Dade DTPW approved Villages engineering report to reduce speed limit, Miami-Dade TPO requires VOEP hire an engineering consultant to design replacement of traffic speed sign from 30 MPH to 25 MPH. Engineering design proposal from David Plummer & Associates is on agenda for approval.
 - Bus Shelter FY22-23 Audit conducted Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works. Provided maintenance logs and fixed assets list.
- Fire Hydrants in the village being identified and locations recorded. Repainting plan of hydrants is currently in progress.
- MS4 NPDES Co-permittee Year 5 Annual Report was submitted by June 30th deadline. Submitted additional documentation request due beginning of September 2023. Includes FDEP Stormwater Inspection Certification received by VOEP Public Works and Code Enforcement Staff
 - Review stupa donation proposal for installation in VOEP parks.
 - Coordinated with Shenandoah to provide quote to repair potholes in front of NE 86 street.
 - Village Hall campus irrigation repaired where broken pipe 4'' cap replaced.
 - Coordinate distribution of sand and sandbags at Village Hall for residents to fill and take for their use.
 - Drive and inspect daily to various areas of Village to check for litter, problems or issues.
 - Coordinate landscaping activities with Green Dreams Paradise.
 - Coordinate residents request to trim tree branches obscuring stop sign at NE 89th St and N Miami Avenue.
 - 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.
 - Submit additional information for SS4 grant application.
 - Respond to queries on right-of-way requirements and permits by contractors.
 - Coordinating tree stump removal from right-of-ways.
 - Replaced A/C filters in Village Hall.
 - Work with code enforcement to report illegal dumping and overgrown grasses in abandoned lots.
 - Report to FPL North Miami 86-91 blocks of road lights not working at night. FPL stated that they it may take them 40 days to solve the problem.
 - Drive around daily around the Village to review contractor work.
 - Drive around to check potholes and stormwater drains. Vacuum cleaned 20 drain inlets.
 - Checked trees in right-of-way for any damage or disease that could be a threat to the public.
 - Checked bus stops, streets lights and reported any damage to our contractors or Miami Dade County.
 - Checked daily on parks to see they are maintained clean.
 - Attended quarterly meetings of American Public Works Association Miami-Dade Chapter at Miami Shores Golf Club.

Village of El Portal Sustainability and Resiliency

The Sustainability and Resiliency Taskforce held a meeting on August 30, 2023, where grant funding pursuits were among the topics discussed. The Administration met with Chairperson Carpenter and Mayor Nickerson several times over the last two months to coordinate grant funding opportunities for which we have applied for water quality funding, and will apply for and request state legislative funding for a sustainable police department building and more water quality and parks renovation projects.

The Village of El Portal was granted approximately \$900,000 for the Resilient305 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. Miami Dade County's WASD will utilize its federal resiliency funding

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Manager's Report**

- for the construction of the S2S project but is now seeking further grant funds for the design of the project. This project is ongoing with a two-year minimum before construction is to commence.
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.
 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.

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.

I met with local high school students to establish a routine collection of books to supply to the Little Library located at the West side of the Village Hall campus, next to the El Portal Tot Lot. The plan

August/September 2023 Manager's Report

is to provide flyers to residents about the collection of books, to be stored at the Village Hall in a box provided by the students, and to encourage literacy and the love of reading for all residents and visitors. They will also fix up the current Little Library by touching up the paint, while keeping the integrity of its original artist's work.

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

Administration and Finance

From Chief Financial Officer Harry Taubenfeld for August/September 2023

*Establishing and preparing Budget FY2023-24 hearing dates, and materials for Council approval.
Working with Synovus Bank on the newly negotiated line-of-credit repayment schedule
Working on the 2022 Audit
Working with Village Manager to address administration and finance improvements and reporting.*

From Office Administrator David Perez for August/September 2023

August 2023

- *Meet with ADP customer relations department to express our dissatisfaction with the services we have been receiving since switching over to them from Payday. Was able to have them waive 2 invoices for company code Y9Q and received a three-month credit for all three-company code.*
- *Meet with APD implementation team to finalize the process for company code Y9Q.*
- *Meet with Miami Dade County TPO on multiple occasions to gather information on what is needed from us in order to obtain the refund for the NE 2 Ave Mobility study. Was able to provide them with all documentation requested. All refunds were received according to the bargaining agreement.*
- *Perform another payroll audit for clerk Jacobi as requested. Meet with the Mayor and Clerk to discuss my findings.*
- *Perform an audit on clerk Jacobi sick time to bring her up to date.*
- *Assisted and responded to public record requests due to incident that occurred back in February.*
- *Place multiple calls and mailed out a certified letter appealing the decision made by the Unemployment Assistance Program office regarding Christian Abril claim. Provided evidence that shows that Christian Abril voluntary resigned his position to pursue a new position with another municipality.*
- *Assisted in posting the Police Station RFP on Demandstar.*
- *Began preparation for the 2024 local business tax receipt renewal season. Contacted BS&A to find a more efficient way mail out the reviewal notices.*
- *Contacted FP to set up 3 different accounts on the postage machine as per our CFO request.*
- *Assisted Vice Mayor Pirela in the setup of his new laptop.*

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- *Working with IT to get a new quote for replacing our current ethernet switch and doing cable management in the IT closet.*
- *Regular day to day duties and other task assigned.*

September 2023

- *Meet again with ADP customer relations department regarding pending issues.*
- *Continue to provide information requested to APD implementation team to finalize the process for company code Y9Q.*
- *Continued working with Mayor Nickerson and Clerk Jacobi on the clerk's payroll audit.*
- *Assisted in correcting the RFP for the Police Station and posted it on Demandstar.*
- *Updated BS&A Business License letter and application templates.*
- *Mailed out all renewal notices for the Business Tax Receipt.*
- *Took the initiative to created different departments account with Office Depot to keep better records of items ordered by departments (I am the only one that places orders for all the departments except the council)*
- *Met with a vendor sent by Complete Care IT to get a quote for replacing our current ethernet switch, installing a server rack with patch panels to make the IT closet organized.*
- *Updated Village of El Portal Organizational Chart.*
- *Regular day to day duties and other task assigned*

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 last two months. The Village Attorney, Village Clerk and I coordinated an internal mandatory training for all police and administrative staff on public records request and customer service. Village Attorney Joseph Geller conducted the training for staff.

For more information, please contact me directly. Thank you.

Village Manager Christia E. Alou, Esq.

