Voters Asked to Support Police and Fire Departments

On April 3, 2007, voters will be asked to approve a general obligation bond to pay for a new Public Safety Facility for the police and fire administration services. The cost for the completely furnished facility is $110 million. For a home with a $142,000 taxable assessed value, (the average value in Cape Coral) the $110 million bond equates to a cost of about $60 per year, or $5 per month. The bond will be repaid over a 20-year period.

“For several years, the Police and Fire administrations have operated out of antiquated and substandard facilities,” said Police Chief Rob Petrovich. “This much-needed new facility will provide the resources and technology to deliver the high-quality services expected by our community.”

“As we continue to grow, our public safety challenges become more demanding and more complex,” added Fire Chief Bill Van Helden. “We absolutely need a public safety facility that can provide the necessary tools and security to protect and serve the citizens of Cape Coral.”

Continued on Page 4
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On The Move is a quarterly newsletter produced by the City of Cape Coral for the citizens of the city. The publication is mailed as a courtesy to every household and business in the city. Comments or questions can be directed to the City Manager’s Office, P.O. Box 150027, Cape Coral, FL 33915-0027 or by e-mail to cmo@capecoral.net.
The city made history in October when the city council voted to annex almost 2,500 acres of lands on the Northern Border of Cape Coral into the city. These unplatted lands will provide for larger commercial developments that are very difficult to accomplish on the smaller platted lots that exist in our city. It was a pleasure negotiating substantial donations to our city from the land owner as part of this annexation. The donation includes 160 acres of waterfront property along Gator Slough that will be used as a future park, as well as acreage for a police training facility. It is estimated these donations exceed $20 million in value. I would like to personally thank the Zemel Trust for being a true partner with our community.

We have worked to provide significant benefits to our residents at low cost. In November, the city council approved playground equipment and two new parks. “Jim Jeffers Memorial Park”, which is located next to Christa McAuliffe Charter Elementary School, will have state-of-the-art facilities designed to give residents requiring handicapped accessible equipment to enjoy the same level of playground excitement that every child enjoys. My personal thanks to the Parks and Recreation Staff for obtaining a substantial discount on this equipment.

It is my pleasure to say “welcome back” to our many snowbirds. We hope you enjoyed your summer “up north,” and we look forward to seeing you at our events and venues around the city.

We were indeed fortunate to close out the 2006 hurricane season with no direct impact from any major storm. After the past two seasons of significant hurricane activity, we are grateful for a respite from the storms.

In September, the City Council approved the FY 2007 budget and again provided property owners with a reduction in the tax rates. For the first time since 1994, the General Fund millage rate is below 5 mils. This reduction was possible through a combination of factors including careful management of our resources, strong property values, and the objective of the mayor and council to provide top services at the most reasonable cost. However, real estate markets have been tempered, and we do not expect to see the level of property value increases experienced these past few years.

There are two vital issues I will touch on here. The first issue is the need for a new Public Safety Facility. Please read the personal messages in this newsletter from Police Chief Rob Petrovich and Fire Chief Bill Van Helden. They address the overwhelming need for the facility and explain the difficulties their departments have had working out of the old City Hall on Nicholas Parkway. The old building is inadequate in many ways and does not provide an appropriate housing for our key public safety services.

You will be hearing a lot of information during the next few months about this facility. On April 3, the citizens will be asked to support the construction of the building via a referendum vote. Approval by the voters will mean that all property owners, vacant and improved, will pay for the building through the issuance of a general obligation bond. The annual cost for a property owner with a taxable assessed value of $142,000 is about $60 per year, or $5 per month. That amount could decrease each year as the total taxable value for the entire city increases. Please take the time to read the information available on the facility and consider supporting this referendum.

The other issue is the City’s charter school system. The system has faced some financial difficulties, and the system’s administrator has subsequently resigned. Let me emphasize that the City Council, the Governing Board and the City administration want to see these schools succeed. While there have been some obstacles, we believe that there remain opportunities for success. Oftentimes, a change in direction and philosophy can energize an organization, and we are confident that all involved can work together to achieve our goal of a quality educational experience.

Again, welcome back to our seasonal residents.
Public Safety Building  continued from page 1

The overall complex is more than 400,000 square feet, with a 4-story main building (218,000 square feet), a 4-story parking garage (182,000 square feet) and a mechanical building (2,500 square feet). The main building will be located across from City Hall and provide adequate space for police and fire personnel through the year 2025. The building will be “turnkey,” which means all equipment and furniture necessary is included in the total cost.

Because of post 9-11 requirements, the Public Safety Building must meet certain requirements not found in a standard office building. The building must have an extraordinary degree of survivability since this is the location where the City’s first responders will coordinate the response to hurricanes and other natural/man-made disasters. These requirements result in a higher cost per square foot than the typical office building.

General obligation bonds are bonds backed by the full faith and credit of the City of Cape Coral. They are repaid with revenue generated from a debt service millage added to the annual property tax bill. These bonds must be approved by a majority of the voters who participate in the special referendum in April.

“We certainly hope that our citizens will support paying $5 a month for their police and fire services,” said Chief Petrovich. “This will be an investment in the future protection and safety of the community.”

For more information, visit the City website at www.capecov.org

Rob Petrovich Sworn in as New Police Chief

Rob Petrovich was sworn in as Cape Coral’s Chief of Police on October 10. He was appointed by City Manager Terry Stewart to replace Dan Alexander, who returned to Boca Raton to serve as chief of their police department. Chief Petrovich has served the citizens of Cape Coral as a law enforcement officer since 1984. He began as a patrol officer and received several promotions, and most recently served as the Department’s Deputy Chief of Operations. Prior to coming to Cape Coral, he served as a Corrections Officer with the New York State Department of Corrections.

Chief Petrovich holds a Master of Science degree in Public Administration from Central Michigan University. He also has a Bachelor's in Liberal Studies from Barry University and an Associate’s in Criminal Justice from Edison Community College. He is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s National Academy and also the Senior Management Institute for Police “Executive Strategic Management” by the Police Executive Research Forum.
Police Chief Petrovich on the New Public Safety Building

For the past several years, your Police Department has operated out of the former City Hall building located at 815 Nicholas Parkway. While other departments were moving into newer facilities, the Police Department remained in this older structure. The Fire Department administration joined us in 2002. From the outset, the goal for our two departments was to make the best of a difficult working environment until a new Public Safety Facility could be built.

How difficult is the work environment at the old City Hall? Over the years, we have seen our share of health and safety problems. From the occasional human waste seeping into work areas due to plumbing issues to mold growing in the walls, we have worked in these conditions. A continual leaky roof only adds to the musky odor that permeates the building.

Because the facility was not built to withstand even a Category 1 hurricane, employees must be evacuated during significant storm events as the building is unsafe. How logical is it to put the very people who are needed for our emergency response and daily operations in a building that must be evacuated when an emergency occurs? Not only is the building unsafe for the officers, firefighters, staff employees and the public, but the equipment and files left behind are vulnerable to destruction.

The City Council continues to place the safety of our citizens at the top of the priority list. Each year, the Council has funded additional police officers to serve and protect the community. However, with the number of police employees now approaching 400, the challenge of finding adequate space has been enormous. Walls have been torn down and rebuilt numerous times. Offices have been moved and reconstructed, and entire areas have been reshaped and revamped to accommodate growth. When problems arise with the building, the department is forced to take a Band-Aid approach, fixing things temporarily, hoping it will last.

The bottom line – the current building has outlived its usefulness and simply was not designed to meet the needs of today’s police and fire services. The holding cells are outdated and fail to meet requirements. More importantly, the entire facility does not meet post-911 security standards for the safety and well-being of employees and the public.

For these reasons, we have moved forward with designing a new Public Safety Facility for the Police and Fire departments. City planners, engineers and the design team spent many months going over every detail, eliminating the unnecessary while maintaining quality standards that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also fiscally responsible. The $110 million facility will not only meet our department’s current needs, but also will meet our needs well into the future (2025). The building will provide adequate space and can withstand a Category 4 or 5 hurricane. The cost includes everything needed to operate the facility, right down to the furniture and fixtures.

To pay for the building, we are asking the citizens to approve a General Obligation bond issue on an April 3 special referendum ballot. By approving the bond, the citizens agree to tax all properties in Cape Coral for the facility. What does this mean? It means that a home with the average taxable value of $142,000 will pay about $60 for the first year, or $5 per month. As more people move into the city, and taxable values increase, the amount gradually will decline.

Is $5 per month too much to pay for better police, fire and EMT services? We do not think so, and we hope that our citizens agree. On behalf of the men and women at the Cape Coral Police Department, we appreciate your support on April 3.

Fire Chief Van Helden on the New Public Safety Building

As Fire Chief, I feel one of the most important factors to our organization is our department’s ability to provide the best fire and rescue services to the community. For the past few years, we have operated from the old City Hall building on Nicholas Parkway. During the 2004/2005 hurricane season, this facility from which the Fire Administration operates was closed due to the weather threat and loss of power.

The old City Hall has been renovated and repaired frequently to try to accommodate our expanding public safety services. However, from the outset, this building was never envisioned to be a permanent solution to a pressing need – the need to have an adequate facility from which fire and police could operate safely, effectively and efficiently. The design of the new Public Safety Building will provide room for growth and a platform whereby staff can provide continued service delivery regardless of the circumstances.

The Fire Department has outgrown our portion of the current public safety facility. We will not be able to add personnel without decentralizing staff members to remote locations. The Fire Department anticipates expansion of the services we provide to the community as well. It will be very challenging to meet our goals due to the limitations of our current facility. While the Fire Department will occupy less than 20 percent of the new building, it will be vital Fire Department operations such as fire administrative services, training, fire prevention services, public education, emergency management, and support services. This includes recruitment and assuring that all fire stations, facilities, equipment, apparatus are properly maintained.

The new public safety building also will have an enhanced Emergency Operations Center. Our current EOC, which proved invaluable during the 2004/2005 hurricane season, no longer can support all of our vital emergency services. The enhanced EOC in the new Public Safety Building is where your public safety staff will coordinate with all other city officials, other governments and private sector entities to assist our community’s response to and recovery from disasters.

Having a building from which we can operate effectively and efficiently to address the needs of our growing population is essential. We are seeking your support on the upcoming referendum to help us provide the best services we can to you, our valued citizens.
Eagle Skate Park Celebrates Anniversary

The Eagle Skate Park officially opened on January 7, 2006. For years skateboarders have been practicing their ollies and kick flips in the parking lots and streets of Cape Coral. Thanks to a very generous donation from the Eagle family, the City of Cape Coral was able to build a skate park where children and adults can skate and bike.

For the past year, many skateboarders, rollerbladers and BMX bikers have been coming to the park everyday. More than 900 members have joined the Eagle Skate Park since its opening, and nuisance calls for wanton skateboarding dropped 33 percent six months after the park’s opening.

The park is located at 315 SW 2nd Avenue adjacent to the Wm. “Bill” Austen Youth Center. It features nearly 27,000 square feet of ramps, rails and pipes. Memberships are only $25 a year for Cape Coral residents along with a $3 daily fee. Options are available to non-members for only $6 a day, which allows many kids from other areas to use the park while visiting Southwest Florida. The park’s hours during the school year are Monday - Thursday from 3 – 9 p.m., Friday from 3 -10 p.m., Saturday from noon – 10 p.m. and Sunday from noon – 7 p.m.

The park is monitored by attendants who are certified in both CPR and first aid. The skate park staff enforces all the rules and regulations of the park including wearing a helmet while skating or biking at all times.

The park provides skateboard lessons as a six-week class for kids ages 6 – 15. Participants can learn all the basics of skateboarding, including some tricks. Another six-week course will be offered in mid-January. The cost for the class is $100.

The Eagle Skate Park also offers birthday parties for children age 6 and up. For $125, the birthday package includes pizza and soda for up to 15 party-goers with no additional daily fees. The birthday child will receive an extra free day pass and a small gift courtesy of the skate park staff.

The park hosts skating contests and provides special skate days. Members can receive discounts on the daily fees when the park has college nights, oldies nights and many other specialty nights as well. For more information about the skate park, please call 242-3950.

Charter Schools Update continued from page 1

The City’s charter schools follow the Core Knowledge curriculum – a solid, specific, shared core curriculum that helps children establish strong foundations of knowledge, grade by grade. For more information on Core Knowledge, visit www.coreknowledge.org. For registration information, call 542-1577, or visit www.capecarterschools.org.

The leadership structure of the charter school system has changed following the resignation of Charter School Administrator Patrick Mark. The Charter School Governing Board appointed Oasis Charter Elementary School principal Steve Hook as the interim administrator. Mr. Hook and his fellow principals, Chris Terrill and Dr. Lee Bush, are working together to encourage and increase enrollment numbers at the three schools. The team has created a business plan and marketing strategy to make the schools a viable and attractive choice to families in the community.

New Blue Cross Blue Shield Contract to Include Enhanced Rehabilitation Benefit

The City of Cape Coral’s Benefits Division completed negotiations on the renewal of the medical insurance contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield, which will provide City employees with medical insurance for the 2007 calendar year. The negotiations resulted in a 10 percent increase to current rates as a result of increased claims. The increase is 3.18 percent less than the original proposed increase by BCBS of 13.18 percent. By negotiating a smaller increase, the City realized a one-year cost savings of $341,888.

The new contract also provides an enhanced rehabilitation benefit. Effective January 1, 2007, this enhancement will allow covered employees and their dependents to seek rehabilitation at rehabilitation hospitals. The previous contract only provided for rehab services at skilled nursing facilities.
Effective October 2, drivers now can have two emergency contacts attached to their Florida driver's license. This service is provided by the Florida Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles. This provides a quicker way for law enforcement and medical personnel to identify and contact relatives or friends if an individual is in an accident. When police run the driver's license through the system, the two emergency contacts will appear.

To register your emergency contacts, go to www.hsmv.state.fl.us and click on “Emergency Contact Information.”

The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting has been awarded to the Financial Services Department of the City of Cape Coral by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2005. This is the 20th consecutive year that the City has achieved this prestigious award.

The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

To be awarded a Certificate of Achievement, a governmental unit must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized comprehensive annual financial report, whose contents conform to program standards. The report must satisfy both accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America and applicable legal requirements.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association serving about 16,000 government finance professionals with offices in Chicago and Washington, D.C.

Within the past several months, the Community Redevelopment Agency started implementing the branding process for the Downtown. The CRA area now is divided into four districts, and each district has a logo featuring a different bird. The four districts are:

North of Del Prado Boulevard – Burrowing Owl
Gateway East - Ibis
Downtown Core – Flamingo
Gateway West – Blue Heron

The CRA is in the process of having a way-finding program created and instituted that will provide for easier navigation throughout the Downtown area. The CRA also is creating a common theme for presentation in all publications. The first Downtown Cape Coral Tabloid was published on November 17, and the tabloid will be published on a quarterly basis. The tabloid will provide information about the variety of businesses that call Downtown “home.”

The first Dining and Entertainment Guide will be printed highlighting Downtown food and entertainment businesses. The CRA will create a “Best of Downtown” award, and visitors/residents will be able to cast votes for favorites in various categories, and “Best of Downtown” banners will be awarded to the winners. Ballots will be in the guide and at participating Downtown food and entertainment establishments.

The CRA continues to sponsor many events Downtown. On Saturday, January 27, the first Music and Martini Marathon will take place. Prior to the event, bartenders around Downtown will be creating some wonderful martini concoctions that will be voted on by a panel of 10 judges. Trolley passes will be available for purchase prior to and the day of the event. At each participating business, attendees can purchase a sample or a full-sized version of the various martini creations. The businesses also will provide a special appetizer menu to compliment the martinis.

Also in January, in association with the Art Festival being held on January 13 – 14, the People's Choice Award for the “Best of Show” will be instituted this year. Ballots can be picked up at Downtown businesses prior to the Art Festival. Attendees will be able to choose who they believe was the Best of Show and place their ballots in boxes located at the businesses or at the CRA Booth at the Art Show. There will be a Grand Prize given to the artist who receives the most nominations. A random drawing for another prize will be awarded to one lucky person who has completed the ballot.

On Saturday, February 17, there will be an International Chocolate Tasting in Downtown. This event will be held in the retail stores. As with similar events, there will be trolleys available.

If you need any additional information about the CRA, please contact us at 549-5615 or via email at crainfo@capecoral.net.
Division Chief Haston Retires After 28-Year Career

Division Chief Jeffery Haston recently retired from the Cape Coral Fire Department as Division Chief of Operations. Jeff started his career with the department in 1978, attaining the ranks of Lieutenant, Captain and Division Chief along the way. His 28-year career with the City of Cape Coral was one of dedication to his community and professionalism within his fire family. His contributions to the community have been very much appreciated, and his leadership within the department will be missed.

Jeff and his wife, Amy, purchased a bed and breakfast in Central Florida. Amy, also employed with the Cape Coral Fire Department as Public Education Specialist, is planning to retire within a few months with 20 years of service. Good luck to both of you.

Hair Appointed to City Council Seat

On Monday, September 25, City Council members selected Tom Hair to fill the vacant District #1 Council seat. The seat became vacant following the death of Council Member Jim Jeffers on September 5. Hair was selected from nine applicants who sought the appointment. Council members interviewed the applicants at the afternoon Committee of the Whole meeting, and then conducted the selection process at their regular meeting at 5:30 p.m. Three applicants were nominated, and Hair ultimately was selected. He was sworn in immediately following the Council decision.

Jeffers was elected to the seat in April 2005. Hair will serve until the next scheduled election, which will be November 2007. At that time, candidates can compete to complete the final two years of Mr. Jeffers’ term.

Council member Hair has been a resident of Cape Coral for 10 years. He is a math professor at Florida Gulf Coast University. He served in the Navy from 1985-1996, and was a reserve officer until 2002, when he was honorably discharged at the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Hair ran an unsuccessful campaign against former Council Member Gloria Tate in 2000 for the same district seat.

Dr. Hair has a special interest in seeing the Yacht Club Master Plan executed in a way that balances both the needs of nearby residents and the city as a whole. He is also keenly interested in helping facilitate the many projects put forth by the Community Redevelopment Agency. Additionally, he would like to research innovative ideas for making the Golf Club a viable place for golf, recreation, and green space in our ever-expanding city. He is married and has three children.

Code Red

Residents, business owners and employees of the City of Cape Coral are now able to receive notification of emergencies through the services of a high-speed telephone emergency notification service called Code Red.

The Code Red system gives City officials the ability to deliver pre-recorded emergency telephone notifications to the entire City or to geographically targeted areas at a rate of up to 60,000 calls per hour. Officials from Emergency Management, the Fire Department, and the Police Department have been trained on the system to ensure all citizens can be informed of any emergency public safety issues.

While the Code Red system is in place with an existing list of home and business phone numbers being utilized, citizens are strongly encouraged to log on to the City’s website at www.capegov.org to register their current information. Those without Internet access can call the Cape Coral Emergency Management office at 242-3901 to request their name and number be added.

Business owners also should register their business phone numbers. Individuals who have unlisted phone numbers or have changed their phone numbers or addresses within the past year, and those who prefer to be notified by their cell phones, should register as well.

Code Red is a secondary means of notification, with the local media outlets still being the primary tool. Cape Coral officials continue to emphasize personal responsibility to the public to partner with us in maintaining an accurate database.
Dry Season Requires Conservation of Water Resources

Lawn Irrigation Limited to Two Days per Week

The summer rains are gone and the dry season has arrived. However, the dry season started earlier than normal with almost no rain in October.

Water levels are much lower than this time last year at two well monitoring locations in the city. Water levels at these locations have dropped 20 – 25 feet in just the past month. Canal levels also are 6 to 7 inches lower than last year. This means we are starting the dry season off in poor condition for water supplies, which can result in serious water issues in short order. Also, the lowering of the groundwater levels threatens the potable water supply in areas served by private wells.

Irrigation water comes from two sources: reuse water from the water reclamation facilities and surface water from the freshwater canal system. Currently, canal water makes up about 75 percent of the supply, and the canal water is not an unlimited supply. Without sufficient rain during the dry season, the canal levels will continue to drop from irrigation use. Once the canal levels drop to minimum permit levels, no more water can be withdrawn from the canal system. This means the city will not have enough water for irrigation. Until sufficient rainfall elevates the canal water levels, there will be no more irrigation supply from the canals.

Much of the irrigation usage is from people watering on the wrong day. On Tuesdays, which is a non-watering day, irrigation usage has been between 15 million and 20 million gallons per day.

Illegal watering has wasted more than 250 million gallons of water this year. That is water we cannot get back to use this dry season. The City has employees patrolling and writing citations for illegal watering, and more than 1,600 warnings and citations have been issued in the past few weeks.

City Council approved a resolution in June that increases the fines for watering violations. The resolution removes the mandatory fine for the first violation, which previously had been $25. However, the second violation is $50, the third is $200 and the fourth and subsequent violations are $400.

Cape Coral is experiencing rapid growth, and this growth will continue to put significant stress on the water resources available for both irrigation and domestic use. The City is developing and implementing long-range plans to address the growing demand for water. However, the benefits from these improvements may be 3-5 years away.

Please be a responsible and wise steward of our water resources and follow the watering schedule. Remember that during the dry season, your lawn does not require as much water as it receives during the rainy season.

Here is the watering schedule, which is in effect year-round.

**Watering Schedule**

Even homes: Thursday and Sunday
Odd homes: Wednesday and Saturday
Non-residential: Monday, Wednesday and/or Friday

No watering between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.
Maximum of 4 hours per day

**Tips to maintaining a healthy lawn**

Efficient lawn irrigation starts with watering only when your turf begins to show signs of stress, such as:

- Bluish gray areas in your lawn
- Footprints that stay in your grass long after being made
- Many blades of your grass folded in half lengthwise

As a rule, your turf’s average annual irrigation needs are about 1 inch of water a week. During extremely dry periods, which occur during April and May, your grass might need about 1.5 inches.

Make sure to soak the soil when you water. Usually one-half to three-quarters of an inch of water per application is sufficient. This will encourage deeper root systems that are more tolerant of drought conditions. Too much watering can cause disease in your yard. Watering too frequently, and too lightly, encourages shallow root systems that are less tolerant of drought.

You can measure the amount of water being applied by placing several empty containers within the sprinkler's spray pattern. Keep track of the time it takes for the average depth in the containers to reach one-half or three-quarters of an inch. This will then become the guideline for the irrigation time your grass needs. (Try this calibration again every once in a while to make sure that you are still applying the correct amount of water.) Remember that your turf’s average annual irrigation requirements are generally about one inch of water a week.
Four Mile Cove Offers Variety of Activities for Visitors

Four Mile Cove Ecological Preserve is currently the largest preserved green space in Cape Coral. Located just north of Veterans Parkway, “Eco Park” features a 5,500-foot nature trail and boardwalk, two observation piers, a visitor’s center, and a seasonal native plant sale and kayak rental operation. There is an 800-foot portage along the kayak trail, and children under age 6 are not permitted in the kayaks.

Visitors of any age can walk through the preserve on the boardwalk 365 days a year. There is no admission fee or charge for parking. Possible wildlife sightings include eagles, osprey, ibis, herons, other wading and migratory birds, raccoons, snakes, etc. Be sure to stop at the visitor’s center to check out the displays. The center has information on local wildlife, trail guides and restrooms. Pets, boards, bikes or skates are not permitted on the boardwalk.

For more information on rentals or plant sales, call 549-4606 or 574-7395 or email kalockli@capecoral.net.

Southeast One Project Complete and $2 Million Under Budget

The Southeast One Utility Extension Project is complete and finished more than $2 million under budget. The smaller Northeast Loop Utility Extension Project also was completed and is in the close-out process.

Yacht Club Master Plan Update

At a public information meeting on September 28, Wade-Trim presented three conceptual ideas for the future design of the Yacht Club Community Park. Wade-Trim is the consultant hired by the City to provide a master plan for the park. About 300 residents attended the meeting to review the ideas and express their opinions. The consultant and City solicited written input, and about 460 people completed surveys that will be used to assist Wade Trim, City staff and City Council in their decision-making process.

The existing diversity of uses in this park prompted the City to evaluate opportunities to make the park more user-friendly. Some ideas for potential changes that were presented to the public were to move the boat ramp off site or relocate it to another area of the property; expand the beach and parking (which included a proposal for a parking garage); relocating the Tony Rotino Senior Center; and, adding additional restaurant facilities. The concepts moved from very subtle changes, such as improved landscaping, to very elaborate changes, such as a large promenade walking area around the entire park.

City staff will present all the information to City Council for review and discussion. Council will decide in which direction this project will go. The public should see a completed Yacht Club Master Plan by early 2007. If you have any questions regarding the Yacht Club Master Plan, please call 573-3113.

Assessments Reduced for Southwest Four Property Owners

At the request of City Council, the Southwest Four Utility Extension Project was re-evaluated for options that could lower the assessments. Both design and assessment methodology changes were considered. The options evaluated were:

- Change the meter box material used for potable and irrigation water services
- Reposition the water and irrigation mains to reduce restoration costs
- Reduce the amount of contingency funding
- Transfer the costs of pump stations and force mains from assessment funding to transmission funding
- Elimination of the large parcel methodology discount

After careful review by the Technical Review Committee, City staff and Council, a reduction of $3,374 to the overall assessment was achieved. The reduction applies to all three utilities on a typical two-lot site (10,000 square feet) and lowers the assessment from $21,366 to $17,992.
Facilities Expansion Program Update

The facilities expansion program is moving forward to meet the utility service needs of our rapidly growing city. Below is a brief update as to the status of the various program elements.

Water Treatment Plants

The existing Southwest Reverse Osmosis Water Treatment Plant is being expanded from a 15.0 million gallon per day (MGD) facility to an 18.1 MGD facility. The engineering design for this expansion is complete. To provide additional water for treatment for this expansion, it is necessary to construct eight additional raw water wells. Seven of the wells have been drilled to date. Construction of the raw water transmission piping required to connect the wells to the plant has been completed. Design has been completed for the emergency backup power system for all the wells in the event of a power outage. Expansion of the plant itself is in progress, and the plant should be capable of producing additional water this spring.

A new Reverse Osmosis Water Treatment Plant will be constructed in north Cape Coral in the vicinity of Kismet Parkway and Chiquita Boulevard. The first phase of the water plant will have a treatment capacity of 12.0 MGD with two future phases of 12.0 MGD each. This will provide a total treatment capacity of 36.0 MGD. Engineering design of the first phase is complete. Permits for construction have been received from the regulatory agencies. Work has started with clearing, grading and filling, and stormwater pipe and detention areas are under construction. The major new structures should be under construction in the spring. Design of the raw water well field (22 wells), emergency backup power system, and raw water transmission piping and treated water transmission piping is complete. Seven of the 22 news wells have been drilled. It is anticipated the new plant will be capable of producing water in the fall 2008.

Wastewater Treatment Plants

The Everest Water Reclamation Facility is being expanded from 8.5 MGD to 13.4 MGD. Primarily to address permitting requirements and to expedite the schedule, this project also is being implemented in construction phases – Phase I minor modifications and Phase II major modifications. The minor modifications are under construction with clearing, grading, filling and stormwater work in progress. Construction of two, 5-million-gallon reuse storage tanks also is in progress. Approval from the regulatory agencies has been received. The major modifications engineering design has been completed. The project has been bid and contract award approved by City Council. Construction completion is scheduled for fall 2008.

A parallel wet weather discharge pipeline, which will serve the expanded Everest WRF has been constructed along Everest Parkway.

The Southwest WRF is being expanded from 6.6 MGD to 15.0 MGD. To address permitting requirements and to expedite the construction schedule, this project also is being implemented in construction phases – Phase I minor modifications and Phase II major modifications. The minor modifications are under construction with clearing, grading, filling and stormwater work in progress. Construction of two, 5-million-gallon reuse storage tanks also is in progress. Approval from the regulatory agencies has been received. The major modifications engineering design has been completed. The project has been bid and contract award approved by City Council. Construction completion is scheduled for the end of 2008.

A new North WRF is planned to be in service by summer 2010. This facility will be located adjacent to the new North RO Plant. The first phase will have a treatment capacity of 10.0 MGD, with build out capacity of 20.0 MGD. Preliminary engineering has started.

Irrigation Projects

The City currently is working on several projects to increase irrigation water supply and conservation of those supplies. One of the projects is a water resources study, which will address the long-term needs of the city for both domestic and irrigation water use. Deep exploratory wells currently are being drilled to determine the water quality and quantity available to meet the city’s future domestic needs. Construction of weir improvements recently has been completed. Those improvements will provide additional water storage for irrigation supply.

A master plan is being developed for Aquifer Storage and Recovery wells that will store water in the summer time for irrigation use in the dry season. Recently, the City Council moved forward with evaluating the irrigation system to determine the nature and extent of deficiencies that are causing low pressure problems in the existing system. Recommendations for improvements will be brought back to City Council.

Aquifer Storage and Recovery Wells

A master plan is under development to identify locations for Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells at several locations throughout the city. The South Florida Water Management District Regional Irrigation Distribution System Study recommended ASR wells to help meet the city’s long-term irrigation supply needs.

During the summer, excess water from the canal system will be pumped and stored in the ASR wells. During the dry season, the water can be withdrawn from the wells and used for irrigation supply. Each ASR well can provide an estimated 1 million gallons of water per day during the dry season. Six locations have been selected thus far for the first ASR “test wells.” Permits are pending from the regulatory agencies for three of the six wells. Once wells are drilled and put through a series of tests, they can be placed into service.

This testing process takes from 12 to 18 months before a well can be used. Once wells are successfully tested, additional wells will be drilled in the surrounding area to create a small well field of six to 10 wells. Contract documents are under development in preparation for bidding and constructing the first ASR wells.
City Council Adopts Budget and Lowers Taxes

On September 20, the City Council adopted the FY 2007 operating budget for Cape Coral which began October 1. City Council set the tax rate at its lowest level since 1989. If you have a homesteaded property, this reduction will provide for a decrease in the Cape Coral General Fund and Cape Coral Debt Service portions of your property taxes.

Please note that Cape Coral property taxes make up only about 27 percent of your total property tax bill. School taxes are the greatest single portion of the tax bill. Services for Lee County government, the Library Fund, Mosquito Control as well as South Florida Water Management District also contribute to your total property tax bill.

Listed below is the adopted budget for City of Cape Coral funds. Property taxes are included in the General Fund.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Fund</td>
<td>$161,469,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Revenue Funds</td>
<td>59,388,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt Service Fund</td>
<td>6,430,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Projects Fund</td>
<td>92,556,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Funds</td>
<td>596,567,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Service Funds</td>
<td>11,591,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$928,003,268</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The City Council approved a General Fund millage rate of 4.8787 and a Debt Service millage rate of 0.0627 for a total millage rate of 4.9414 mils. This equates to $4.9414 per $1,000 of assessed property value. This millage rate represents a decrease of 0.4492 mils or 8.3 percent.

This is the eighth straight year that the combined millage rates have decreased. Listed below is a comparison of millage rates since fiscal year 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2000</td>
<td>6.8478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2001</td>
<td>6.7787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2002</td>
<td>6.5177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2003</td>
<td>6.3745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2004</td>
<td>6.1049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2005</td>
<td>5.7598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2006</td>
<td>5.3906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2007</td>
<td>4.9414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Does This New Tax Rate Affect Your Taxes?

If you have a homesteaded property, you should see a decrease in your Cape Coral property taxes. This table shows estimated tax decreases from last year to this year on various levels of taxable assessed value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxable Value</th>
<th>Cape Coral Tax FY 2007</th>
<th>Cape Coral Tax FY 2006</th>
<th>Tax Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$494.14</td>
<td>$539.06</td>
<td>($44.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>$988.28</td>
<td>$1,078.12</td>
<td>($89.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>$1,482.42</td>
<td>$1,617.18</td>
<td>($134.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>$1,976.56</td>
<td>$2,156.24</td>
<td>($179.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>$2,470.70</td>
<td>$2,695.30</td>
<td>($224.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homesteaded property provides two benefits to the homeowner. The first is a $25,000 reduction on the assessed value of the home. This reduces the final amount upon which your taxes are calculated.

The second benefit is the “Save Our Homes” law, which limits the amount that a homesteaded property can increase in assessed value each year. With Save Our Homes (SOH), a homesteaded property’s value can only increase by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 3 percent, whichever is lower. For this year, the CPI was 3.4 percent so increases were limited to the 3 percent.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

With escalating property values, Council needed to find a way to provide services for a growing community and temper the financial impact of Cape Coral’s increasing property values. For homesteaded properties, the impact is minimal, as these homeowners are shielded from increasing property values. For non-homesteaded and vacant property and local businesses, the task is much more difficult.

The Council adopted a budget that provides a tax rate reduction, yet maintains core level services in all major areas. City Council also placed an emphasis on public safety in this year’s budget.
This means that regardless of market conditions, for property tax purposes, the value of homesteaded property can increase by only 3 percent. Here is an example of how a property benefits from Homestead and Save Our Homes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homesteaded</th>
<th>Non-Homesteaded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessed Value 2005</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed Value 2006 w/SOH (Limited to 3% inc)</td>
<td>$154,500</td>
<td>$229,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestead Exemption</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$ -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Taxable Value</td>
<td>$129,500</td>
<td>$229,395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please take these safety precautions when handling and transporting hazardous waste:

Wear protective gloves when handling household hazardous waste. Use cardboard boxes, or other suitable containers to prevent spills.

Packaging

- Keep products in their original containers. Do not mix products. This can save lives.
- Label materials that are not in their original containers.
- Label unknown items to the extent possible. If unaware of specific product name, provide product category, such as pesticide or cleaning product. Label the outside container with the contents and date.
- Make sure lids are tightly sealed.
- If a container is leaking, this container should be placed within a larger, plastic container with a tight-fitting lid. A non-flammable absorbent, such as clay-based cat box filler, “kitty litter,” should be packed around the product to absorb any possible leaks.
- Place products upright in cardboard box and secure so that they do not tip over in transport.

Transport products in the back of a pickup truck or in a car trunk. If you must transport the products in the passenger compartment, make sure there is adequate ventilation.

Do not smoke while transporting hazardous materials. Keep flammables out of direct sunlight and away from sources of heat, spark, flame, or ignition.

**Household Chemical Waste Collection Days for 2007**

Lee County Solid Waste has scheduled six collection days for Household Chemical Waste, two of which will be in Cape Coral at the Public Works Annex off Everest Parkway. Household chemical waste cannot be placed in dumpsters, compactors or curbside. Citizens need to dispose of these items at one of Lee County’s scheduled drop-off collection days. This is a free service provided by Lee County Solid Waste for the citizens of Lee County.

Residents can bring drain cleaners, pool chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, liquid paint and thinners, polishes and strippers, fluorescent tubes, electronics, car and boat batteries, auto oil and antifreeze, gas propane tanks, flares and ammunition, and boat flares. More than 75 percent of the materials brought to these collections are recycled.

For more information and to see what items can be dropped off and what is not allowed, please visit the Lee County Solid Waste site [www.lee-county.com/solidwaste](http://www.lee-county.com/solidwaste). For more information, contact the Lee County Solid Waste Division at 338-3302.

**2007 COLLECTION DATES (Hours are 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.)**

March 24, Page Field, North Airport Rd.
May 19, Page Field, North Airport Rd.
September 22, Page Field, North Airport Rd.
December 1, Bonita Springs, Greyhound Track

The return of cooler weather in Southwest Florida signals two significant annual migration events – snowbirds and manatees. As our friends from the North journey south for the winter, the mild-mannered manatee also begins its journey toward the warmer waters of the Caloosahatchee River.

It is important for boaters to be aware of the speed zones in place to protect the manatee. However, speed zones alone will not keep manatee deaths at a minimum. Responsible boating is the key. Reducing the number of manatee/boat collisions requires increased vigilance by boaters and law enforcement.

For more information on the speed zones and manatee protection, visit the Lee County Natural Resources Division’s website: [www.lee-county.com/naturalresources/marine](http://www.lee-county.com/naturalresources/marine) and click on “Manatee Protection.”
The Cape Coral Arts Studio has several artsy opportunities for visitors and residents this upcoming spring. Join internationally known artist Gale Bennett as he teaches “Classic Impressionism” on Saturday, February 24, and “Creating Abstract Paintings using Collage” on Saturday, March 24. Both workshops are 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and are for students at all levels of knowledge. Please bring a bagged lunch.

Be sure to stop by to see one of our monthly bead shows on January 20, February 17, March 3 - 4, April 7 or May 5. The shows will be from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. You can choose from a wide variety of gemstones and glass beads. Other items include crimp beads, jump rings, charms, sterling silver and gold-filled chain by the foot, gemstone pendants, watch faces, cabochons, tools and more. Basic beading instructions are available at any time from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. for a nominal fee.

Have you always been interested in trying your hand at arts? Join us at the annual Fine Craft Bash held at the Arts Studio and sponsored by the SW Florida Craft Guild. On Saturday, January 27 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., the studio will offer three-hour workshops in the following categories: Precious Metal Clay, Wire Wrap, Beaded Wire Sculpture, Off Loom Weaving, Beginning Glass Beadmaking, Marbleizing Paper, Polymer Clay and Jewelyrmaking. A full-day workshop in Advanced Glass Fusing will be taught by the members of the Craft Guild.

The Florida Society of Goldsmiths – SW Chapter and the SW Florida Glass Beadmakers collaborate in an exhibit for both wearable and decorative art from April 6 – April 27. Hours are Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. An artist’s reception will be held on Friday, April 13 from 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. This reception is free and open to the public, and is a great opportunity to meet the artists.

The Arts Studio also offers monthly exhibits in the fine arts gallery. These exhibits are free and open to the public during regular business hours, which are Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Artists’ receptions are held the second Friday of each month from 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. and provide an excellent opportunity to meet many of the area’s professional artists.

For more information or to register for these classes (or any of the classes mentioned in this article), contact the Arts Studio at 574-0802. The Cape Coral Arts Studio is located at 4533 Coronado Parkway in Rubicond Park.

The City of Cape Coral was awarded more than $4.6 million in state grant funding for the FY 2007 construction projects from the Alternative Water Supply Program. The program is administered by the South Florida Water Management District.

The City submitted several grant proposals, which included requesting funds for new raw water wells, the North Reverse Osmosis Plant expansion, the reuse portion of the expansion to the Everest and Southwest water reclamation facilities, and irrigation piping for Southwest 4. The SFWMD had about $41 million available for FY 2007, and the district awarded grants to 37 entities. Cape Coral received the most for a single entity.

The City generates water supplies for domestic and irrigation purposes using various alternative water supply sources. This includes reverse osmosis water treatment for domestic needs using the Lower Hawthorne Aquifer, reuse water from our water reclamation plants, and freshwater from the city’s canal system for irrigation purposes. Construction projects associated with these alternative water supply sources may qualify for grant funding under the AWS program.

Last year, the City submitted grant proposals and received almost $2 million in AWS grant funding for FY 2006 construction projects.
City Applies for Reduced Flood Insurance Rates

In an ongoing effort to provide additional hazard mitigation and thereby help keep flood insurance affordable for our citizens, the City of Cape Coral has applied for a reduced flood insurance rating from FEMA. FEMA, which runs the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), has a voluntary program offering reduced rates to citizens if a municipality exceeds their NFIP requirements. The City of Cape Coral currently has a class 7 rating, which gives our citizens a 15 percent discount on their flood insurance. The City has implemented several improvements within the past year which should improve our rating to a class 6. That would give our citizens a 20 percent discount on their flood insurance. We should receive notification from FEMA within the next several months. If our application is approved, all flood insurance renewals after May 1, 2007 should reflect the 20 percent discount.
Brush Fire Season Begins

The beginning of dry season also means the beginning of brush fire season in Florida. With the rapid pace of development in the area of urban interface (between forest and suburbs), people are building sizeable structures in wooded areas. This can be a dangerous combination during the dry season.

We recognize that fire is a natural occurrence in forest management; however, this natural occurrence can have unintended consequences when people build and occupy structures in wooded areas.

There are some preemptive steps that homeowners can take to help protect their properties during the brush fire season. If you live in these wooded and brushy areas, we encourage you to maintain a good, clean perimeter of at least 30 to 40 feet around the home and outbuildings so that any approaching fire will be slowed down. These perimeters also allow better access for the Fire Department.

The Division of Forestry recommends residents answer these 12 questions to determine if their home and surroundings need attention to prevent fire damage:

- Does forest vegetation encroach too near to your home?
- Do trees overhang the roof of your home?
- Is your roof clear of limbs and debris?
- Do your chimneys have spark arrestors?
- Do tree limbs overhang your chimney?
- Do you store firewood and other combustibles near or under your home?
- Do you allow leaves and trash to accumulate around or under your home?
- Do you have an outside source of water in case of fire?
- Do you keep tools such as shovels, rakes and a ladder handy?
- Do you have fire-resistant shingles?
- Do you have cypress mulch or pine straw in landscaping adjacent to your home?
- Are you located in an area where a majority of the trees are pine trees?

Some additional threats for residents to recognize include:

- Highly flammable plants providing a pathway to the home
- Wooden fence attached to home under eaves area
- Grasses/shrubs not properly watered
- Boat too close to home or other structure
- Camper or trailer too close to structure
- Wood or other combustibles stored too close to structure
- Vehicles parked near structure
- Propane/gas tanks too near home

Please take a look at your home and property, and take steps to fireproof the area. For additional information, call the Cape Coral Fire Department at 574-0501.

New Parks to Open in 2007

The Parks and Recreation Department will be opening three new City parks this spring or early summer: Neighborhood Park #1, Neighborhood Park #4 and Jim Jeffers Park.

Neighborhood Park #1

This park will feature two, age-specific playgrounds: one for ages 2 – 5 and the other for ages 5 – 12. The park will have basketball courts, picnic shelters and racquetball courts, walking paths, public art, landscaping and open space. This park is located in the southeast Cape Coral, east of Del Prado and south of Hancock Parkway.

Neighborhood Park #4

This park also will have two, age-specific playgrounds: one for ages 2 – 5 and the other for ages 5 – 12. The park will include picnic shelters, a one-acre lake, walking and exercise paths, and exercise equipment, tennis courts, horseshoes, shuffleboard courts, public art, landscaping and open space. This park is located west of Burnt Store Road and north of Pine Island Road.

Jim Jeffers Park

This park, named after the former Council Member who passed away in September, will have a mega structure playground with elements for ages 2 – 12 located in different areas. There also will be an inclusive playground for children with or without disabilities. The site will have four soccer fields, one softball field, tennis courts and basketball courts. This park is located north of Pine Island Road and is adjacent to the Christa McAuliffe Charter Elementary School.

A grant was received through Gametime Playground Equipment that allowed the City to purchase $700,000 worth of equipment for $448,000 for all three of the parks. The funds were available through a “Fight Obesity Through Play” grant.

For more information on these new parks or other opportunities within the Parks and Recreation system, please call 573-3113.

Proposed design for neighborhood park #1
Neighborhood Traffic Management Program

Worried about speeders in your neighborhood? Is there a stop sign that is constantly being ignored? Now you can become proactive and help the Cape Coral Police Department at the same time. The City has started a new Neighborhood Traffic Management Program that will help keep local neighborhoods safer. Here’s how it works:

- A petition outlining specific concerns is provided to the Cape Coral Police Department’s Traffic Management Team Coordinator.
- At least five neighborhood households must sign the petition.
- The CCPD will contact the petitioner and schedule a brief training class for citizens who are participating.
- The petitioner will be given a handheld radar unit to use for three consecutive days. Two sessions will be required each day. At these sessions, two or three residents will be needed: one to operate the radar unit, one to act as observer, and a third to record tag numbers, description of the vehicles and time of infractions.
- The petitioner then gives the information to the CCPD and a form letter will be sent to the owner of the registered vehicle to encourage them to slow down.
- No citations will be written. In fact, the goal of the program is not to ticket people, but to make drivers aware of the speed limits in area neighborhoods and encourage them to drive safer.

Police officers cannot be everywhere all the time, but if people take part in the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program, they can help keep traffic in local neighborhoods in check.

Perhaps the problem is not speeders, but the neighborhood has a small or large scale issue that needs to be addressed. Here is a list of potential problems that occur in many neighborhoods:

- Improperly parked vehicles
- Landscaping or other objects blocking the view of oncoming traffic
- Drivers running stop signs at a specific neighborhood intersection
- Traffic crashes at a particular location

Whatever the traffic issue, residents can use the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program to work with the police department to find a solution. It is important to note that not all streets are suitable for traffic calming solutions. To learn more, contact the Traffic Management Team Coordinator at 242-3386, or email the coordinator at winstraffic@capecoral.net.

Council Approves Economic Development Tools

In the FY 2007 budget, City Council approved several items geared specifically toward economic development and business attraction. Council approved adding a business recruitment specialist, funding several research and study projects, creating university liaison networks, venture capital prospect identification and permit review project managers.

The project managers are a key addition and will not be City employees. These contractors will be used as an incentive for an investor or developer to commit to build a project beneficial to the City by a date certain. However, the City must live up to its end of the bargain and meet specific time lines within the permitting process. By committing the City to a set date for completion of the permitting process, the investor knows that a permit manager will oversee the permitting process to keep the project moving and on track. The client agrees to pay the expenses of the permit manager if the City meets the completion date. If the City does not meet the date, the expenses for the permit manager would be paid by the City.

The new business recruitment specialist will provide greater focus for the City at trade shows worldwide, interacting with site selectors, identifying those corporations seeking to open a regional office or relocate their headquarters to Florida. The new position also will oversee the City’s tourism development programs.

The Economic Development Office will be evaluating other pre-platted communities with regard to best practices for land use and zoning. The Office is looking for options on how to assemble the land resources needed to enable building of commercial projects and office parks – an obstacle to many outside developers. New incentive ideas and grant programs also will be studied for maximum benefit to Cape Coral. Other research will look for the industries best-suited for our current and future workforce.

These initiatives are intended to help the City move to the next level in attracting, retaining and growing businesses in a manner that will serve the City well into the future. For more information, call the Cape Coral Economic Development Office at 574-0444 or e-mail ecodev@capecoral.net.
Construction Just Around the Corner of Two Major Cape Roadways

Construction on Phase II of the Santa Barbara Boulevard road widening project began in November. Santa Barbara Boulevard is the first major road corridor to be constructed as part of the City of Cape Coral’s Five-Year Road Improvement Program managed by Centex Construction.

Santa Barbara is designed to be widened in three phases from four to six lanes from Gleason Parkway to Pine Island Road. Construction of Phase II will start just south of SE 8th Street north to Pine Island Road, and includes the adjacent portion of Hancock Bridge Parkway west of Santa Barbara Boulevard. This phase of the project extends more than 1.6 miles and is expected to take 14 months to complete. The improvements also include installing curbs and gutters, median landscaping, irrigation, sidewalks and new traffic signals.

Phase I of the project was the widening of the Cadman Canal Bridge, which was completed in August within budget, on time and with no lost-time accidents. The last phase of Santa Barbara Boulevard improvements, a 2.8-mile stretch of roadway from Gleason Parkway to SE 8th Street, is expected to reach 90 percent design completion next month.

As construction begins, motorists may experience some slowing of traffic while traveling through the work zone. Flagmen, variable message boards, advance warning signs and barricades will be used to assist motorists in safely traveling through the construction area. As an added safety measure, the speed limit has been reduced to 35 mph in the construction zone.

The next major corridor to be improved is Del Prado Boulevard. The widening of Del Prado Boulevard from four to six lanes will begin just south of Pine Island Road to just north of Kismet Parkway. The project is scheduled to be completed in five phases and take about three years. In addition to the widening of Del Prado Boulevard, the project includes the construction of five new bridges.

• Phase I Off-site bridges—NE 14th Place and NE 17th Place (crossing Jaguar Canal)
• Phase II Mainline Bridge—Del Prado Boulevard over Jaguar Canal
• Phase III Off-site Bridge—NE 16th Place over Zurich Canal
• Phase IV Mainline Bridge—Del Prado Boulevard over Zurich Canal
• Phase V Roadway—Pine Island Road to Kismet Parkway

Improvements also include landscaping, paved multi-use paths, street lighting, curbing and new traffic signals.

The bridge construction will precede road construction and is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2007. Improvements to the bridges prior to the roadway reconstruction will help minimize the extent and duration of traffic disruption. Critical to this train of events is the acquisition of rights-of-way by the City along with the relocation of private and public utilities throughout the corridor.

About 50 citizens attended an Open House on November 2 in the City Hall Lobby to review the planned improvements to Del Prado Boulevard Phases I-IV (bridge construction) and to discuss the project with City staff members and construction consultants. Phase V improvements (roadway construction) will be presented at a future open house.

If you have any questions, please contact Brenda Menendez, Public Information Officer, at 707-9050. Information about the project can be found on the website at www.capecoraltransportation.com or you can email info@capecoraltransportation.com.
In recent years, the City of Cape Coral has experienced tremendous growth in both residential and commercial development. With this growth has come a significant amount of paperwork, which is difficult to process and store. For these reasons, the City of Cape Coral has acquired an automated document management system called SIRE Workflow™. SIRE will help the City manage its document processing in an effective and expedient manner, as well as eliminate the need for cumbersome storage. At this time, more than 3.5 million documents have been converted to electronic images, allowing for rapid accessibility and a substantial reduction in our document storage requirements.

An additional feature of this program that will be activated in January is the ability to create automated paperless workflows. In the past, large numbers of plans, blueprints, applications and affidavits were copied and distributed to the various departments for review and approval. This will no longer be required, and will result in time and cost savings for both the City and the applicant.

Through SIRE Workflow™, documents can be added, deleted and commented on, allowing an employee to view, understand and correct any problems that have been noted. Tracking capabilities will allow the City to ensure timely processing of an application.

The City of Cape Coral is now in the process of introducing automated forms to its website in preparation of the first quarter implementation. These forms are easy to use, can be completed online, and saved or printed. In some cases, the forms can be emailed directly to the City, saving the applicant the need to deliver the document. In the future, most, if not all of the documents, will be transferred electronically. We are currently in the process of developing and programming the required workflows, which are necessary to automate the process. Of course, we will always have Customer Service Representatives on hand to assist applicants.

At this time, SIRE Workflow™ is being used mainly by the Department of Community Development. When the program is working smoothly, other departments and divisions within the City will enjoy the benefits of this automated system. The ultimate results will be a reduction of costs and an increase in quality performance with faster turnaround times. Look for future articles which will keep everyone updated on our progress.

Single-Family Home Permits Drop Significantly in FY 2006

Single-family home permits declined to 4,313 in FY 2006, down 56 percent from the previous year’s high of 7,694. The total number was the lowest since FY 2004, which saw 3,819 permits issued. A slowing housing market due to soaring property values and higher interest rates contributed to the decline.

The decline is continuing into FY 2007. Only 203 single-family home permits issued were issued in October, which is the lowest number for that month since 2000.

On the positive side, commercial permitting continues to be going well, with more than $100 million of commercial construction reported for FY 2006.
Projects Coming to the Cape

A number of commercial and major residential projects are underway.

**KINSEY VETERANS COUNTRY CLUB CORNER**
This is a 1.3-acre parcel located at the southwestern corner of Country Club Boulevard and Veterans Parkway. The PDP has been submitted with the intent of developing the site into a 3-story office building consisting of a bank, support offices and professional offices.

**PARK IV**
This 7-acre site is surrounded by four city streets (Ceitus Parkway, SW 6th Street, SW 5th Street and SW 35th Place). The City is proposing to develop a Neighborhood Park which will include two tennis courts, a shuffleboard court, a horseshoe court, a 10-foot-wide multi-use path, fitness stations, two age-specific play areas, two pavilions, restroom facilities and a lake with a fountain.

**BELLA VISTA VILLAS**
Bella Vista Villas, LLC, has requested approval of a 54-unit multi-family development consisting of four buildings, a pool and recreational facilities. This 3.4-acre site is located at the corner of SW 20th Avenue and SW 28th Terrace.

**CAPE CORAL HIGH SCHOOL HHH**
The Lee County School District has submitted a PDP application to construct a 152,772-square-foot high school and athletic field on a 52.7-acre site located at East Gator Circle and DeNavarra Parkway.

**FAMOUS DAVE'S**
Application for this 1.55-acre parcel, located at 1450 Pine Island Road, near the intersection of Chiquita Boulevard was submitted in October. This restaurant encompasses approximately 7,962 square feet.

**ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER WEST**
This project is currently under construction at 1426 Del Prado Boulevard on a 9.77-acre site. The school will be 23,234 square feet and will include 23 portables.

**BOCA BAY BLOCK 2072**
Boca Bay, located at NE 12th Avenue, consists of 13 buildings totaling 185,250 square feet. The applicant is requesting approval to construct a multi-family development. There will be a total of 312 units and a clubhouse that will be built in three phases. Phase I will consist of buildings 1, 3, 12, 13, the clubhouse, pool and deck, parking, internal roads and lake. Phase II will consist of buildings 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, parking and roads. Phase III will consist of buildings 6, 7, 8, parking and internal roads.

City Council Approves Zemel Land Annexation

On October 23, the City Council adopted four annexation ordinances, which comprise the Zemel Annexation area. The area consists of 2,543 acres of land in four tracts, located north of the city. This annexation is important for Cape Coral because the entire area consists of unplatted, undeveloped property. Some of these annexed properties are located on U.S. 41 and Burnt Store Road, which would be very appropriate for the future commercial and office development that the City desperately needs, given the current imbalance of residential and non-residential lands.

The City spent two years working to bring the Zemel Annexation area into the City of Cape Coral. Various departments coordinated with the applicant to identify areas that could be transferred to the City for future public services. As a result, the City received four acres of land to be developed for two separate fire stations, 13 acres of land off of Burnt Store for additional widening of the right-of-way, a 13-acre tract to be used for City fire and police department training, and a 100-foot wide right-of-way to connect Andalusia Boulevard north to U.S. 41. There remains the possibility of the City obtaining an additional 185 acres of land for a major park, just north of the Festival Park site in north central Cape Coral.

The next step for integrating the Zemel Annexation area into the City of Cape Coral is to have these newly-annexed properties undertake the large-scale future land use map amendment process, which is anticipated to take place this spring. Following this step, the City needs only to rezone these properties to a zoning designation consistent with the City's Land Use and Development Regulations and the properties can be fully integrated.

Global Distributor Leases Cape Coral Warehouse

Exel Inc., part of the Deutsche Post World Net group and sister company of DHL, inked a deal for 38,400 square feet of warehouse/office space in Cape Coral. Exel will occupy the entire building at 71 Mid Cape Terrace. The industrial building was built earlier this year. The building is owned by McGarvey Development Company.