As Dry Season Arrives Early, Residents Reminded of Watering Schedule

Conservation is necessary now to ensure limited watering supplies last through the dry season

Cape Coral has seen an early start to the dry season, which means it is imperative that our residents strictly adhere to the watering schedule. The City has a limited supply of irrigation water, and proper conservation now will help avoid the possibility of tighter restrictions down the road as the dry season continues into next spring.

A two-day irrigation schedule is in place year-round for watering lawns in Cape Coral. Residents who use wells or the dual-water system have a specific four-hour timeframe on their designated days for watering. The watering schedule will help ensure the limited watering supplies last through the dry season.
City of Cape Coral Council Members

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**City of Cape Coral Administration**

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<tr>
<th>City Manager</th>
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<td>Connie Barron, Director</td>
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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 email to newsletter@capecoral.net.
Mayor’s Message

Most of us look forward to this part of the year as it seems to bring a new sense of hope and rejuvenation to the city. Many think it is the holiday season or perhaps the impact of our friends returning from the north. Many residents believe the city is continuously improving, growing and becoming a better place to live.

There are many people in our community who do great things for Cape Coral. We are blessed that these people have the determination and spirit to make our city a better place to live, work and play. We are lucky to live in a city that has so many great community events, initiatives and ideas. Yet many citizens believe that simply having the right attitude is just as important as having the right idea.

One person who has shown what hard work, determination and perseverance can do is JP Terrasi. Terrasi has been working tirelessly to develop a sports team that could have a positive impact on our city. About a year ago, he introduced the Cape Coral Hurricanes premier men's soccer team to the community. Many people watched and enjoyed the team first exhibition season this year, and Terrasi just informed us that his team has been awarded a franchise in the National Premier Soccer League, which is the 4th Division of U.S. Soccer. This is exciting news!

The Hurricanes will play spring and summer games in 2013 against teams from high-profile markets in Florida: Miami, Tampa and Jacksonville. The amount of positive exposure the team has garnered is tremendous. This team adds another key element to our culturally diverse events. We now have a semi-professional sports team to call our own.

We all know that the City of Cape Coral has been going through a positive image change in recent years. With the growth of some of our community and ethnic events, and the addition of national chains to our market, we are poised to build on that image. The Cape Coral Hurricanes not only will provide a great opportunity for local players and be an excellent entertainment value for the whole family, but it could have a direct economic impact as well. If you look at how these teams have impacted similar-sized markets, the social and economic impacts have been significant. At the very least, we surely can hope they will make Cape Coral a more fun, attractive city to current and future residents.

We have often stated that one of the City’s goals is to provide our residents with the best municipal services at the best value possible. When our community supports this team, we keep Cape Coral moving forward as a thriving and vibrant city.

For more information about the team, visit their website at www.CapeHurricanes.com.

On another note, as we celebrated Veterans Day this year, I wanted to share with our community a kind letter I received from a British citizen grateful for America. You can find the letter on page 10 of this newsletter. I am sure it will touch all of you as it did me when I read his words.

Thank you for your time.

John Wellon

City Manager’s Message

Welcome to our winter issue of On The Move. I know many of you had left for your northern homes when I arrived as your new city manager in May, so I just want to welcome all of you back to our wonderful city.

There are a number of important issues to address in this message. The first issue is the recent change in oversight of the Community Redevelopment Agency that occurred in November. Because the CRA was economically unsustainable, the City Council voted to dissolve the existing board of directors. They appointed themselves as the governing body for the CRA and me as the executive director of the agency. Please know it is a common practice in the state of Florida to have the City Council and city manager serve as the CRA Board and CRA director.

Here is where we are today with the CRA. I am in the process of reviewing the current staff responsibilities and other contractual obligations to determine the best direction to recommend to the CRA board (Council). Let me reassure the business owners in the CRA that any recommended change in direction most certainly will place the priorities of the businesses at the forefront. We want to reinvest CRA funds into capital projects that bring maximum benefit to the businesses in the CRA. Sidewalks, stormwater improvements, pedestrian-friendly enhancements are some of the many investment options we can pursue with the revenues for the CRA. We intend not only to invest these dollars back into the downtown but we want to ensure that business growth is met with reasonable and predictable permitting and licensing processes. While I know change is difficult, I am confident that our partners in the CRA will be pleased with the new direction.

This leads into the next task we are taking on at City Hall, which is organizational and process improvement. One area we hear recurring complaints from customers is with our planning, building and engineering processes. As city manager, I want to know if there are inefficiencies in our process, and if so, how can we fix them? To answer these questions, I have enlisted the services of professional consultant Paul Zucker with Zucker Systems. Zucker specializes in process management for planning, building and engineering departments. Zucker will be reviewing and evaluating how we deliver these services to our customers. Our goal is to ensure that Cape Coral has a permitting process that is fast, fair and predictable, and our City staff will work closely with Zucker to achieve this goal.

Another topic essential to the future of Cape Coral is property tax reform and creating fairness in how City services are provided to the community and paid for by our citizens. To that end, we have brought in financial experts, Burton and Associates, to develop revenue strategies that identify more equitable options for delivering and funding our City services other than increasing property taxes. The goal is to set Cape Coral on a path toward financial stability that will not be significantly impacted by wild swings in property values in the future. Of course, we will continue to engage in best practices to ensure cost-efficient, cost-effective service delivery.

As you can see, we have a lot on our plate, and we will need your input and support as we move forward with these projects. Thank you for your time. To our citizens and their families – please have a safe and happy holiday.

Best regards,

John Wellon
CRA Board ............................................. from page 1

of money in 1-2 years. While the CRA staff attempted to recalculate its budget and remain solvent until 2017, a majority of Council decided it was time to return oversight to the City Council.

“Whether you run out of money in 2013, 2014 or 2017, at some point in time, that’s going to happen,” said Councilmember Rana Erbrick at the special meeting. “This is a financial business decision.”

“The TIF funds are not there to sustain the overhead of the CRA,” added Councilmember Marty McClain, who sponsored the ordinance to change the makeup for the CRA board. “All we are simply trying to do is to keep the foundation in place.”

Watering ............................................... from page 1

days depend on the last number of the home address.

Here is the two-day schedule that is in effect for all of Cape Coral:

- Monday & Friday: Midnight to 4 a.m. for addresses ending in 0
- Monday & Friday: 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. for addresses ending in 1
- Wednesday & Saturday: Midnight to 4 a.m. for addresses ending in 3 and 5
- Wednesday & Saturday: 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. for addresses ending in 7 and 9
- Thursday & Sunday: Midnight to 4 a.m. for addresses ending in 2 and 4
- Thursday & Sunday: 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. for addresses ending in 6 and 8

Non-residential, duplexes and other multi-family units can water on Monday and Friday from midnight to 8 a.m.

Volunteer Trash Pickup Program

The Cape Coral Parks Division is starting a Volunteer Trash Pickup Program for the City’s parks. Cape Coral parks have many visitors who come at various hours of the day and week, and these volunteers will assist Parks staff in helping keep our parks clean. Volunteers will help during the hours when parks staff is off-duty.

For several years, our youth and adult leagues have assisted with litter pickup in the parks facilities they use. This has helped keep the athletic parks free of litter. The new volunteer program mainly will help keep the other City parks clean.

Volunteers can be individuals, groups, clubs or associations, as well as college or high school students who are required to work volunteer hours in the community. If you or your group would like to help keep our parks clean, please call the Parks & Recreation Department at (239) 573-3120. Work gloves and trash bags will be supplied by the Parks Division.

Blood Drive Scheduled at City Hall on December 19

Public invited to stop by and give “the gift of life.”

The City of Cape Coral will be hosting a blood drive on Wednesday, December 19 from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. The Lee Memorial “Blood-mobile” will be parked at City Hall, and the City is encouraging not only City employees but Cape Coral residents to come by and donate much-needed blood to help our local hospitals.

City of Cape Coral employees give blood throughout the year during various blood drives. The City works with Lee Memorial because unlike other blood buses, the Lee Memorial “purple” bus keeps all blood donated here in Lee County for local use.

Through the Lee Memorial Health System, blood donations will help save lives at our community-owned hospitals: Lee Memorial Hospital, HealthPark Medical Center, Children’s Hospital of SW Florida, Gulf Coast Medical Center and Cape Coral Hospital. In addition to these five hospitals, the Lee Memorial Blood Center provides blood supplies to the Level II Trauma Center at Lee Memorial Hospital and the new Regional Cancer Center at the Sanctuary.

Just one pint of blood can help save the lives of several people. Blood donations can be separated into different components. The platelets may go to a child with leukemia, the plasma to a patient with a clotting problem and the red blood cells to an accident victim.

To donate blood you must:
- Weigh at least 115 lbs.
- Be at least 17 years old, 16 years old with parental consent
- Be in general good health – no colds, flu, sore throat, etc.
- Photo ID, with Date of Birth, if new donor

When you donate blood, you will receive vital health checks at no cost. You will be checked for the following:
- Pulse Rate
- Blood Pressure
- Body Temperature
- Hemoglobin (iron level)
- Blood Type
- Cholesterol level

If you have questions about donating blood, please call 343-2333.
**Code Corner – Code Enforcement Must Follow “Due Process”**

“**What takes Code so long to address code violations at a property?**”

This is a common question/complaint our Code Compliance officers hear from people who report code violations and expect an immediate resolution. However, the City’s code process is governed by Florida law and the U.S. Constitution regarding requirements for servicing and processing code cases. Florida State Statute Chapter 162 outlines the requirements specific to “due process.” If someone is going to challenge a code case, it most likely will be for “due process.”

“Due process” in its most simplest of terms is the process by which the violator and/or the property owner of a violation is advised. If code enforcement does not meet these requirements, the case cannot be processed.

**What does this mean?** Code must follow the process outlined in Chapter 162 and properly notify the violator and/or property owner before taking any action. The violator/property owner must be told what the violation is, what they need to do to correct the violation and then be given a reasonable time to correct the violation. This “reasonable time” requirement often is the point where the complainant becomes frustrated. The complainant thinks Code Compliance can “cite” people immediately; however, Code does not operate the same as law enforcement, and not every code violation can result in an immediate citation.

(Note: Code can issue citations for violations that are irreparable and irreversible, repeat offenses as defined in State Statute, major health and life safety violations and crime-related violations.)

Due process can be a long procedure. Code is required to serve notice to the violator/property owner. This means if Code cannot get hand delivery, they must send a certified letter with a return receipt required. If the certified letter is not accepted and signed for, Code must wait 30 days and post the notice on the property for 10 days. After this point, Code can forward the case to a hearing.

The notification process can take up to 60 days and be very expensive. Code most often uses the legal owner of record; however, in today’s world, Code must also research property ownership and foreclosures, which adds another layer to the system.

The process is designed to protect the property rights of the owner as they ultimately are responsible for their property. If there is no resolution, Code can place a lien on the property, which can result in a foreclosure action.

These steps must be followed for Code Compliance to enter someone’s private property and take action to remedy the violation. A missed step can make the jurisdictional liable, and at a minimum, render the case invalid and unenforceable. The pace of “due process” can be frustrating but Code has no legal authority to speed it up or cut corners.

The fundamental objective of any effective code enforcement program is voluntary compliance not the imposition of fines. To be successful, our community should be familiar with the City’s codes and ordinances. Our Code officers can assist our residents in learning these codes and how to comply. Remember, actual citations and fines are a last resort, and Code prefers voluntary compliance over issuing citations and fines.

Sometimes the educational process is difficult because codes deal with private property, and the issue can become emotional. This is yet another reason we try to work with property owners and use informal methods such as emails, door hangers, business cards, phone calls and personal contact before sending official notices.

For more information on Code Compliance, residents can enroll in the Citizen’s Academy or contact Code Manager Frank Cassidy by email: fcassidy@capecoral.net.

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**Four Seats on the Ballot in 2013 for Cape Coral City Council**

Four seats on City Council will be on the ballot in 2013. Cape Coral voters will elect the mayor and Council members for Districts 1, 4 and 6. The election is non-partisan, which means there are no party affiliations.

The Primary Election will be Tuesday, September 10, while the General Election will be Tuesday, November 5.

All candidates must be continuous, full-time residents of the city for an entire calendar year preceding qualification for office. Candidates for Districts 1, 4 and 6 must reside in the respective district. The terms for the mayor and council members are four years. All terms begin the first regular Council meeting after the General Election.

A candidate may announce his/her candidacy at any time. However, pursuant to the Campaign Financing Laws of Florida, F.S. 106.1, forms must be filed with the City Clerk’s Office showing the “Appointment of Campaign Treasurer” and “Designation of Campaign Depository” before accepting any contribution or making any expenditure. This action officially opens a campaign file. A candidate may open his/her campaign file with the City Clerk’s Office any time prior to the “qualifying period,” which typically occurs the first week in July. However, certain documents pertaining to a candidate’s campaign only can be finalized and submitted to a candidate’s file during the qualifying period.

During the qualifying period, candidates can pay the required fees and complete all necessary paperwork in the City Clerk’s Office. A Financial Disclosure Form must be completed and candidates must show valid voter registration cards.

For more information about the upcoming election in 2013, please contact the City Clerk at (239) 574-0417.

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**CRA Board Appoints City Manager John Szerlag as CRA Executive Director**

The City Council met as the CRA Board on November 7 and appointed City Manager John Szerlag to serve as the CRA’s executive director. The Board officially placed previous director John Jacobsen on leave until February 1, at which time his contract will be terminated. Jacobsen had served as the CRA’s executive director for the past four years.

The Board selected District #5 Councilmember Rana Erbrick as the Chairman and District #1 Councilmember Marty McClain as the Vice Chairman. In addition, City Clerk Rebecca van Deutekom was appointed the recording secretary for the CRA Board to handle administrative responsibilities for CRA meetings and recordkeeping.

Szerlag will be reviewing the operations of the CRA and making recommendations to the CRA Board on ways to proceed with the vision of the downtown agency.
Check for Water Leaks to Avoid Billing Issues

Anyone on City water, sewer and irrigation service can experience a leak. These leaks create involuntary use, which can result in costly repairs and water bills.

Water loss as a result of a leak, .63 cm diameter (1/4”) can mean a loss of 14,952 gallons per day. If undetected for a period of 34 days, more than 500,000 gallons are lost, not to mention the resultant water damage or underground water undercutting. Even a pinhole leak can mean an average loss of 18,000 gallons of water per quarter, equaling normal demand from the average family home. The following table shows leak sizes and their approximate loss in the gallons from a pressurized 60 psi pipeline.

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<th>Pipe Leak Size</th>
<th>Gallons Lost Per Day</th>
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<td>360</td>
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<td>8,424</td>
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<td>14,952</td>
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If you have been advised of or suspect a possible leak, here are some steps you can take before calling a plumber. While it is a good idea to work with a licensed plumber, there are some things you may do to identify and fix the source of the leak. Even a small leak can be found by following a few easy steps.

- **Toilets**
  Toilets are one of the most common causes of involuntary use. Check the toilet for leaks by removing the top off the tank and listening very closely. If you hear any hissing at all, try to locate the source of the sound. If you are able to locate the leak, then assess the problem and determine if you can fix the leak. If nothing is noticeable, try putting a couple drops of food coloring in the tank – not the bowl. Wait several minutes. If the coloring moves from the tank to the bowl, you have a leak in the flapper at the bottom of the tank. The seal at the flapper is allowing water to seep in. At this point, you can decide if you want to complete the repair yourself or call a licensed plumber. If you have more than one toilet, repeat this process with each toilet to ensure all flappers and seals are working properly.

- **Hot water tanks**
  Check the pressure relief valve on the hot water tank. Sometimes these valves are plumbed directly into a drain and may be leaking without your knowledge. If you cannot remove the drain pipe to check for a leak, try to listen carefully for a hissing sound, which may indicate a leak. You can decide if this is something you can repair or would prefer a licensed plumber to fix.

- **Automatic pool fill devices**
  When a pool is equipped with an automatic pool fill device, this causes water to be added to the pool automatically. If the pool has a leak, and water is automatically added to maintain the pool level, you could be incurring additional consumption without realizing it. If you suspect the automatic pool fill is not working properly, simply turn off the unit. If there is a water leak in the pool, the water level in the pool will go down. At that point you or your licensed pool repair service may be able to identify and repair the source of the leak.

- **Other Sources**
  Watch and listen for leaks from outside plumbing (i.e. meter lines and hose bibs). Do the same for inside plumbing fixtures such as sinks, shower valves, washer and dishwashers.

**What to do if you find a leak and fix it?**

The good news for residents with City-provided water service is that when sources of leaks are found and repaired, the City of Cape Coral shares in the financial burden created by the leak.

If the leak causes the monthly consumption to double the average consumption at the location and is at least 10,000 gallons, the City may provide an adjustment to the water and/or sewer bill up to once a year. The leak must be repaired and the invoice provided to the City.

For more details, please contact your Customer Billing Services team at (239) 574-7722, press 3 then 5 to speak with a helpful Customer Service Technician who will be glad to assist.

Winter Wonderland Camp

Youth Services will be hosting its annual Winter Wonderland Camp. This program includes festive arts and crafts, seasonal games, and holiday activities. Children will enjoy field trips, guest speakers, and special events.

Please provide your child with a lunch, two snacks and drinks each day. A pizza lunch will be provided the last day of the week. Please register your child in advance. The deadline for registration is December 14.

- **Dates:** December 24 – January 4
- **Location:** Oasis Elementary (3415 Oasis Boulevard)
- **Cost:** $75 per week
- **Hours:**
  - December 24: Hours are 6:30 a.m. – noon
  - December 25: Closed
  - January 1: Closed
Cape Coral was recognized as one of the safest cities in the state as well as the nation as a whole according to the 2011 FBI National Crime Report released in October.

“We remain the safest city as it applies to crimes of violence,” said Police Chief Jay Murphy. “Our residents are least likely to fall victim to a crime of violence than any other city in the state of Florida with a population exceeding 75,000 residents.”

Chief Murphy attributes these favorable statistics to the hard work of the department’s police officers and the relationships they have built with the community.

On a national basis, there are 9,315 cities that report crime statistics to the FBI. Of these cities, 155 have a population exceeding 150,000 and Cape Coral ranks as the 144th most populous reporting city. Among this group, Cape Coral is the 6th safest as it pertains to violent crime and 32nd for property crimes, resulting in an overall Index Rate ranking of 27th in the United States.

“We also cannot overlook our agency’s success in solving crime,” add Murphy. “We have experienced notable success in identifying and holding accountable those who commit crimes.”

The City’s Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) is composed of four regular members and one alternate member from City Council. They serve for one year and are eligible for reappointment. TAC members are appointed by Council at their first regular meeting in November after the election of Council members to City Council.

The TAC serves as an advisory commission to City Council. Among its duties, the TAC works with staff in establishing the 6-year major road improvement program, including road widening, resurfacing and addition of bicycle/pedestrian facilities. This commission holds at least six public meetings a year and typically meets the Wednesday prior to the monthly meeting of the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The primary role of the MPO is the coordination of the transportation planning process promoting the active participation of all jurisdictions within Lee County. The MPO is responsible to facilitate the preparation of the long-range transportation plan for Lee County, and the allocation of federal and state funding for multi-modal transportation projects. It has been the practice that the City’s TAC members also are appointed as the City representatives before the MPO. This way, the TAC meetings represent a suitable venue under the Sunshine Law for members to openly discuss, among themselves and with staff, upcoming MPO issues.

The City of Cape Coral was one of 17 communities recognized by the International City/County Management Association for their use of citizen surveys to influence service quality. The awards were announced at the ICMA’s annual conference in Phoenix on October 8.

The ICMA presented two sets of awards: One for service excellence and one for significant improvement in service.

Cape Coral received a “Voice of the People Award for Transformation” for quality ratings improvement within the Cape Coral Fire Department. This award reflected a service quality rating improvement that was significantly higher than the rating from the City’s most recent prior survey and larger than improvements shown in all other eligible jurisdictions in 2011.

All of the communities winning awards participate in The National Citizen Survey™, which enables local governments to gather high value citizen data on budgeting, goal setting, performance measurement, and program planning.

The ICMA is the premier local government leadership and management organization. The ICMA partners with the National Research Center, Inc., to provide a low-cost survey tool for municipalities. The NRC is the nation’s leading survey research firm for local government. Cape Coral has used the NRC’s survey tool since 2005 and will again use the NRC to conduct the City’s next Citizen Survey in March/April 2013.
City’s Special Populations Help Keep Our Waterways Clean

Participants assemble "mini-bin" containers for monofilament line

Floirda is known as the fishing capital of the world and a popular destination for anglers. However, fishing line often is discarded carelessly and finds its way into the environment. The City’s Special Populations participants have been helping the Environmental Resources Division provide information to area fishermen about the hazards of monofilament line. Special Pops has been converting empty tennis ball canisters into containers for use to properly dispose of monofilament fishing line.

Monofilament fishing line, whether thrown overboard or tangled in trees, creates problems for wildlife and people. Animals can become entangled in stray line or ingest it, which can lead to fatal injuries. Fishing line can entangle boat engines and result in costly repairs.

To help inform anglers about the hazards associated with discarded fishing line, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Sea Grant, Mote Marine Laboratory and Pure Fishing Inc. (manufacturer of Berkley fishing line) have supported monofilament fishing line recycling programs throughout the state. The program is known as Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program or MRRP. Cape Coral has several recycling bins located throughout the city, and a “Monofilament Madness” coastal cleanup is held each year.

Empty tennis ball canisters are collected from the Cape Coral Yacht Club tennis courts and Cape Coral Racquet Club. Special Populations assembles the “mini-bin” by pulling off tennis ball labels, adding the MRRP logos, and filling the mini-bins with maps and brochures. When monofilament fishing line needs to be discarded, place line in the mini-bin, then drop off the full mini-bin at any of the recycling locations shown on the map.

Lori Blydenburgh, Planning Technician for the Department of Community Development, distributes an average of 100 mini-bins per month to visitors at City Hall. The containers are free and can be carried on boats or carried as part of the tackle gear.

The mini-bin project has provided an excellent opportunity to involve Special Populations in an effort to help the environment. Six participants in the program work together and assemble the mini-bins. “It is a lesson in recycling and environmental education as well as a focused social time for the participants, and it is fun,” said Lonnie Steinhauer, Recreational Specialist with Special Populations.

“This MRRP program provides valuable information for our fishermen, and helps protect the environment,” said Harry Phillips, Environmental Biologist with the City.

The City of Cape Coral encourages fishermen to consider the environment and not discard monofilament fishing line. If you enjoy fishing, or know someone who does, you can pick up a mini-bin at City Hall, Rotary Park Environmental Center and at nature festivals such as the Burrowing Owl Festival and the Under the Sea event. For additional information about MRRP, contact Harry Phillips at 574-0785.

Burrowing Owl Festival in February

There is one bird species known throughout Cape Coral, and people will visit the city just to see Cape Coral’s burrowing owl. The official bird of Cape Coral, the burrowing owl is fearless and curious, and they will watch people as much as people watch them.

The burrowing owl is a “species of special concern,” which means the bird has special protections. Cape Coral is home to one of the largest concentrations of the burrowing owl. They are birds of prey, and feed on insects, anoles, frogs and mice. These small owls make their home in the ground or sometimes in a culvert. They bring bits of trash to place about their burrows to dissuade predators from approaching their homes. Many city residents have created their own burrowing owl nests on their property, and each year, they will have a family of owls sharing their space.

Residents and visitors can learn more about these fascinating birds at the Annual Burrowing Owl Festival sponsored by Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife and Cape Coral Parks and Recreation. The festival will be Saturday, February 23 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Rotary Park located at 5505 Rose Garden Road.

Bring your family and friends and enjoy the day. There will be educational programs, children’s crafts, guided walking tours, bus tours to nearby owl burrows, butterfly house, live animals and food. The cost is $5 per person, and children under 16 years of age are free. For more information, call Rotary Park at (239) 549-4606.
Cape Coral Police Department collected 2,627 pounds of food at their 2nd annual food drive to help the Harry Chapin Food Bank. The drive was hosted in time for the holiday season. This year’s campaign was called the “Holiday Heroes Food Drive” and was held November 13 at the Walmart Superstores on Del Prado Boulevard and Pine Island Road.

Spearheaded by the Cape Coral Police SWAT Team, this year’s one-day collection exceeded last year by more than 1,000 pounds. Cape SWAT was assisted by officers with the Marine Unit and District Resource officers. They collected non-perishable food items for the Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida.

“We were very excited and feel really good about the outcome this year,” said Carlos Mena, SWAT Team Leader. “It’s nice to take a break from our usual duties and give back to help those less fortunate in our community.”

“The Police Department is grateful for the partnership with the Harry Chapin Food Bank and Walmart for continuing to be a strong ally with us in community events,” added Lt. Tony Sizemore. “Most of all we thank the citizens of Cape Coral for their generosity. We truly live in a great community full of holiday heroes.”

Students at Oasis High School Excel in Academics

Students at Oasis High School recorded excellent scores on their SAT and ACT tests, exceeding district, state and national averages in most categories. SAT scores for Oasis students were higher than district and state averages in Math, Reading and Writing. In fact, the Math and Writing scores were the highest in the West Zone of Lee County public school districts.

The ACT composite score of 21.5 at Oasis High School was the highest in the school district and exceeded the national average of 21.1.

The City of Cape Coral Charter Schools was established in 2003 and is the municipal charter school system for the City of Cape Coral. The system includes Oasis Elementary, Christa McAuliffe Elementary and Oasis Middle School. In addition to academics, our students are involved in a wide variety of arts programs, athletics and community service projects.

Please visit the website at www.capecharterschools.org for more information on the City of Cape Coral Charter School System and enrollment guidelines.

Christa McAuliffe Raises $13,000 at Jump Rope for Heart

Christa McAuliffe Elementary raised more than $13,000 through their Jump Rope for Heart program. Teachers and the school principal took part in the fundraiser by agreeing to be “slimed” as an incentive for donations. All of the City’s charter schools conduct drives to help less fortunate parents and citizens have a more joyous holiday.

History of Florida’s Open Records

The state of Florida has been in the forefront on open records and public transparency. On March 3, 1845, Florida became the 27th state of the United States of America. In 1909, the state enacted the country’s first open records law and was the first state to pass the open meetings law in 1967.

Even as far back as 1889, there is evidence of a Florida Court deciding whether a record is public in the case Bell v Kendrick, 6 So. 868 (Fla. 1889). It states, “[W]hen ever a written record of the transactions of a public officer is a convenient and appropriate mode of discharging the duties of his office, it is not only his right, but his duty, to keep that written memorial...and, when kept, it becomes a public document — a public record — belonging to the office, and not the officer.”

It is the tradition of our state to keep the public informed of the workings of their government. A basic principal to adhere to is that the records a governmental agency possesses have been paid for by the taxpayer. It would be only logical to think that a purchaser of goods would want to be able to know what they are paying for. It is our duty as a governmental agency to provide these documents when requested in keeping with the rich tradition of our State.

For more information on public records, contact the City Clerk’s Office at 574-0411.
Thank You, America from a British Citizen

Mayor John Sullivan received this letter from a grateful British citizen in his office about a year ago. He recalled the letter as we celebrated Veterans Day in November and wanted to share the words with Cape Coral citizens.

I am British living in Belgium, sixty four years old and a retired police chief inspector. (1968 - 2002). Father was a private in the Royal Army Service Corps and died when I was seven. During world war II he was in Egypt (Al Alamein) - Libya - Tunisia and Italy (Monte Cassino). I am very interested by the Great State of Florida and especially by the City of Cape Coral.

I grew up in the 1960’s as America, led by President Kennedy, looked to the heavens and saw not the endless void of the unknown, but a new frontier to dare, but America did it. And twenty years later, in the 1980’s, America, led by President Reagan refused to accept the fate of millions trapped behind the iron curtain and insisted instead that the people of eastern Europe be allowed to join the ranks of nations which live safe, strong and free.

Now I want to thank you because throughout a whole century the American people stood liberty’s ground, not just in one world war, but in two. And I want you to know that we will never forget the sacrifices and the service of the American soldiers who gave their lives for people whose names they never knew, and whose faces they never saw, yet people who have lived in freedom, thanks to the bravery and valor of the Americans who gave that last full measure of devotion.

Of remembrance within Britain that is not also a commemoration of American courage and sacrifice far from home.
And let me pay tribute to the soldiers, yours and ours, who today fight side by side in the plains of Afghanistan just as their forefathers fought side by side in the sands of Tunisia, the beaches of Normandy and then on the bridges over the Rhine.
Almost every family in Britain has a tie that binds them to America. So I want you to know that whenever a young American soldier, or Marine, or sailor, or airman is killed in conflict anywhere in the world, we, the people of Britain grieve with you. We know that your loss is our loss, your families’ sorrow is our families’ sorrow and your nation’s determination is our nation determination that they shall not have died in vain.
And after the terrible September morning when your homeland was attacked, the Coldstream Guards at Buckingham Palace played the Star Spangled Banner. Our own British tribute as we wept for our friends in the land of the free and the home of the brave.
And let me therefore promise you our continued support to ensure that there is no hiding place for terrorists, no safe haven for terrorism.

Friendships can be shaken, but our friendship is unbreakable. Treaties can be broken, but our partnership is unbreakable and I know that there is no power on earth that can even drive us apart.

I admire very much your great work as Mayor. Allow me to wish you, your family, your staff, the members of the City council, the Police Chief and the people of Cape Coral a very Happy and Prosperous New Year 2012.

With best regards from Europe.

Respectfully

Kenneth J. NESCOOWOOD
Emile Bouverlot Street 2
BE - 1050 Brussels
BELGIUM

12 Jan 2012.

Cape Coral Receives Certificate of Excellence for 26th Consecutive Year for CAFR

The Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting has been awarded to City of Cape Coral by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). 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.

The City’s CAFR has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association serving approximately 17,500 government finance professionals with offices in Chicago, IL, and Washington, D.C.
Take Pride in the Cape Volunteers Reach Milestone
Program cleans 1,000 properties since its inception; now looking for new leader

Take Pride in the Cape volunteers have reached a major milestone – they have cleaned and mowed 1,000 properties.

The award-winning volunteer program has been working for several years cleaning and mowing vacant and foreclosed homes in Cape Coral. As the city was at the forefront of the foreclosure crisis in 2008, a band of “itinerant landscapers” stepped up to the plate and said “we will help.”

After reaching the 1,000 milestone, team leader Ray Nicholson decided to call it a career and step aside as the group’s organizer. According to Ray, he helped clean up about 1,000 more properties than he imagined when he initially retired from the City. Now, Ray wants to enjoy his retirement.

With Ray stepping down, the City and the Take Pride group are in the market for new team leader. There still remains a core group of volunteers, who are ready and committed to keeping Cape Coral clean. The project has the support of Waste Pro to fund the program, and Keep Lee County Beautiful, Inc. Although there will be some changes to the program internally, it is important for our community to know Take Pride in the Cape will continue their efforts into the future.

Thank you to all of the volunteers, Waste Pro and Keep Lee County Beautiful. We appreciate their time, relentless energy, donations of equipment and the overwhelming positive impact they have had on Cape Coral.

If you would like to become a volunteer or are interested in leading the group, please contact Code Compliance at (239) 574-0613.

Sun Splash Wraps Up 20th Anniversary Season

Thanks to everyone in the community who came out for Sun Splash Family Waterpark’s 20th Anniversary Season. The park hosted 20 events to commemorate its 20th Anniversary season. Some of the highlights included:
- 20th Anniversary souvenir cups given out to the first 20 people entering the park
- Hosting a “BIG” Birthday Party on June 30 where every person who entered the park received a piece of birthday cake
- The return of SpongeBob SquarePants in July
- Back by popular demand was the Mother’s Day and Father’s Day weekend specials where moms and dads could visit the park for free with a paid child. Added this year was Grandparent’s Day where grandparents could visit the park for free with their grandkids.

Sun Splash also celebrated five “Family Fun Nights” and three “Aqua Theatre Nights.” These nights were our discounted admission nights so that everyone could have a chance to enjoy the park. Due to the popularity of these discounted nights, they will be back next season.

Sun Splash wrapped up the season by charging a $7 admission fee the last two weekends. These weekends were a big success with 5,920 guests taking advantage of this great deal.

During the off season, Sun Splash will be painting the pools and many of the other structures within the park. This year is a major maintenance year, and staff is busy gearing up for next season.

Sun Splash will reopen on March 9, 2013. If you are looking for a job, Sun Splash will be posting job announcements in December. Go to the City’s website at www.capecoral.net and select “Jobs” under the “Find” option. Orientation for new employees is scheduled for the weekend of March 2 and March 3.

Some of the changes coming in 2013 will be the ability to book all swim and camp sessions, and birthday parties online. “Early Bird” season passes also will be offered March 1 – April 7.

For more information on the upcoming events at Sun Splash in 2013, visit the Sun Splash website SunSplashWaterpark.com or call the park at (239) 574-0558.

City Employees Surpass Fundraising Goal for United Way Campaign

The City of Cape Coral employees surpassed their fundraising goal for the 2013 United Way Campaign. The campaign team for the City departments had set a goal of $14,000. When the campaign concluded, City employees had slightly exceeded the goal.

“Last year, we got a later start to the United Way campaign and still managed to surpass our goal of $12,000 in contributions,” said Karen Ramos, the City’s lead United Way campaign coordinator. “This year, we set the target a little higher, and our City employees reached into their pockets to give money to help those in our community who are less fortunate.”

The City had two Keel Club members who contributed more than $1,000, and 26 employees who contributed $240 or more. Many thanks to those who participated and donated dollars to the City’s annual United Way campaign.
Registration Coming in 2013 for Girls Softball Spring Season

Parents who are looking for a fun sport for the girls in the family are encouraged to consider girls’ Little League softball. The organizers for the girls’ softball league are trying to attract more girls to the sport, and the spring season is just around the corner.

Grab your bat, glove and daughter, and come register for Little League Softball Spring Season at Burton Field in Cape Coral. The league is for girls ages 4 – 16, and the softball season is January through May.

Spring Season is the “regular” softball season. Girls are selected to teams, receive full uniforms and compete in games against other teams in their respective divisions. Aside from teaching the sport of softball, Little League prides itself on strengthening the self-esteem of its participants, and promoting team work and sportsmanship.

Advanced registration is required and will be held at Burton Field at 1502 NE 3rd Terrace, off Del Prado Blvd, behind the Racetrac gas station.

REGISTRATION DATES:
- Saturday, December 15 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- Saturday, January 5 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- Tuesday, January 8 from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- Thursday, January 10 from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- Saturday, January 12 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- Tuesday, January 15 from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- Thursday, January 17 from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- Saturday, January 19 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

- COST: $125 per person (cash/check). Players who participated in the Fall Season will receive a $10 discount. Sibling discount is available.
- MUST BRING: Birth certificate and three proofs of residency

For more information about girls’ softball, please contact Jeffrey Gazlay at (239) 281-7334 or via email at jeffrey.gazlay@gmail.com.

Fleet Management and Facilities Return to Public Works Department

City manager accepts recommendations from review committee to move services from Finance to Public Works

City Manager John Szerlag has moved the City’s Fleet Management and Facilities operations to the Public Works Department. The two divisions had been operating under the Financial Services Department for the past two years after the prior city manager decided to reorganize operations.

The review committee consisted of the police and fire chiefs, finance director, union presidents, and Fleet and Facilities division managers. The committee discussed the existing processes and determined that the two operations more appropriately belonged under the Public Works Department. They provided their recommendation to Szerlag, who accepted the committee’s decision and made the move effective immediately.

Kayak Shack at Four Mile Cove Open for the Season

This is a great time of year to be spending some time outdoors. The Kayak Shack at Four Mile Cove Ecological Preserve is open for the season on weekends through May 26, 2013.

Paddle quietly though mangrove tunnels to portage where you can stop for a picnic lunch at the Eagle Scout picnic area, and then launch your kayak on the other side of the portage to see the best areas of the preserve. Paddle away the stress of the outside world in the secret tunnels of this beautiful mangrove preserve. You may encounter a variety of wildlife, including many bird species, turtles, raccoons, otters, sting rays, manatees, and the occasional bottle-nosed dolphin (if you paddle all the way to the river). This is a perfect outing for anyone interested in exploring undeveloped, natural areas of southwest Florida.

Four Mile Cove Ecological Preserve is a 365-acre preserve located at the east end of SE 23rd Terrace, just north of the Midpoint Bridge. Single kayak rentals are $20 for two hours or $30 for four hours. Tandem kayaks are $30 for two hours or $45 for four hours.

The Kayak Shack is open Saturday and Sunday only from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. All the boats must be returned by 4 p.m., so the last 2-hour rental departs no later than 2 p.m. For more information about kayak rentals and upcoming kayak programs and adventures, please contact the Environmental Recreation Division of Parks & Recreation at (239) 549-4606.

Special ‘Teddy Bear Tea’

Grandparents and grandchildren can enjoy a special “tea time” with goodies, storytelling, conversation and a teddy bear parade. Children can bring a teddy bear as a guest of honor; grandparents bring your favorite china teacup and pot. There also will be a clown and face painting. The cost is $4 per person.

December 27: 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at the Tony Rotino Center

The Tony Rotino Center is located at 5817 Driftwood Parkway. Please stop by or phone (239) 574-0807 for further information.
Sidewalk Plans and Construction for FY 2013

The City of Cape Coral continues to be successful in receiving grants from the Florida Department of Transportation for the construction of sidewalks. Public Works design staff prepares plans in accordance with the applicable State criteria. Upon approval of the plans, Public Works maintenance staff constructs the improvements.

In late-2012, construction began on sidewalks along both sides of Savona Parkway, between Chiquita Boulevard and Agualinda Boulevard. There will be some delay in completing the project until after May 15, 2013 because the western half of the project falls within a Bald Eagle Protection Zone. Typically, the eagle fledglings do not leave the nest until mid-May. At that point, construction activity can continue without concern for disrupting the nest and occupants. During the delay, crews will begin construction of sidewalks along both sides of Academy Boulevard between Veterans Parkway and Nicholas Parkway. This project is expected to take six months to complete.

Stormwater Project for Diplomat

Public Works staff recently completed the design of drainage improvements along Diplomat Parkway, between Santa Barbara Boulevard and the Ralston Canal. During the rainy season, intense rainstorms overload the drainage system along Diplomat Parkway causing stormwater to pond and overflow onto the travel lanes. The City prepared plans for the addition of cross pipes, swale re-grading and upsizing of drainage pipes. Once permits are received from the South Florida Water Management District, Public Works staff will install the improvements. It is anticipated the work will be completed before the next rainy season. This work is funded through your Stormwater utility dollars.

Did You Know Crossing the Median is Illegal?

How many times have you seen a car drive across a grassy median to make a turn? While this may seem like a quick solution for drivers, crossing a grassy median is illegal. In addition, these illegal crossing areas are expensive for the City to repair.

Crossing the median where no legal pathway exists will destroy the grass and other vegetation. This creates loose dirt, which can be carried by stormwater into the swales, catch basins and storm drains, and ultimately into the canals.

When these illegal crossings are created, the City must spend dollars to re-grade the swales, and clean the basin and drain of sediment. If the dirt flows into the canals, dredging also may be needed. When the swale, basin and drain are full of sediment, there is an increased chance of localized roadway flooding.

Using a grassy median also increases the chance of a traffic crash as other vehicles are not anticipating that a vehicle will stop to cross at an illegal location.

While the City can place warning signs in the grassy medians, we prefer not to clutter the median with stakes or signs. City staff would like to keep your neighborhood medians as pleasing to the eye as possible. You can help by staying out of the grassy medians and using only the paved median crossings.

City Reminds Boaters to Watch for Manatees

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

Biologists will begin their annual manatee counts in January to ascertain the Florida population of this endangered mammal. In 2011, manatees swam to warm Florida waters in significant numbers. During the state’s annual week-long manatee survey last year, biologists counted 4,840 manatees statewide. This number was down about 200 from 2010 but still was one of the highest counts on record. (Note: There was no count conducted in 2012 due to warmer than average weather, which affects visibility.)

More good news is that only 306 manatees have died through October 31 this year. Of these total deaths thus far, 73 have been caused by boaters. In 2011, there were 453 manatee deaths, and 88 were the result of boat/manatee collisions. More than 100 deaths were due to cold stress brought on by cold weather.

It is important for Cape Coral 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/ and click on “Manatee Protection.”

Cape Coral Festival of the Arts

The 28th Annual Cape Coral Festival of the Arts will be January 12-13. The popular festival is held on Cape Coral Parkway in Downtown Cape Coral from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. both days. More than 300 juried artists will be participating. For more information about the festival, visit the website at http://capecoralfestival.com.
Army Corps Abruptly Changes Direction and Does Not Extend City’s Permit Authority for Marine Improvements

City and stakeholders stunned by decision as they had worked with Corps to address potential impacts of smalltooth sawfish

Just three days before the City’s permit was set to expire, the Army Corps of Engineers notified the City of Cape Coral and various stakeholders that the City’s permitting authority for marine improvements would not be extended. The decision by the Army Corps caught the City and stakeholders by surprise as they had been led to believe an extension would be granted.

For several months, representatives from the City, Lee County, the Cape Coral Construction Industry Association and the congressional offices of Sen. Marco Rubio, Sen. Bill Nelson and Rep. Connie Mack had been meeting in good faith with the Army Corps to extend the permit. By taking proactive steps to address the smalltooth sawfish concerns, the City and stakeholders hoped to ensure that the permitting authority granted under SAJ-91 would be extended beyond its expiration date while a “biological opinion” was being completed by the National Marine Fisheries Services. At the last minute, the Army Corps backed off of their assurances.

The Army Corps now will be responsible for reviewing all applications for marine improvements (e.g. seawalls) and issuing permits. The Army Corps permit reviews can take from three months to 18 months. Under the City’s review, permits were being issued within 2 – 4 days. The longer timeline for acquiring permits to build docks and seawalls will have a detrimental impact on construction in Cape Coral. The City and stakeholders are continuing to pursue all options available to regain the permitting authority previously granted to the City.

The smalltooth sawfish (Pristis pectinata), also known as the wide sawfish, is found in shallow tropical and subtropical waters in coastal parts of the Atlantic.

The smalltooth sawfish is classified an “endangered” species. Two critical habitats have been identified for the sawfish based on scientific research – Charlotte Harbor Estuary Unit and Ten Thousand Island/EVERGLADES Unit. These two designated critical habitat areas cover five counties in the Gulf of Mexico in Southwest Florida. The species recovery plan focuses on habitat protection.

Give the Gift of Golf from Coral Oaks

With the Christmas holiday fast approaching, there’s no better way to make someone’s day than by giving the gift of golf. Coral Oaks gift cards can be purchased at the golf course or over the phone at any amount of $10 or more. The gift cards can be redeemed for greens fees, driving range balls, golf lessons, Pro Shop merchandise, and food and beverages in Knickers Pub.

Coral Oaks Golf Course has established itself as a leader in the Southwest Florida golfing community by offering a wide variety of playing and instructional programs as well as the most competitive pricing in the area. The course is in great condition for the winter season, and players continue to enjoy the beauty and playability of the layout.

Coral Oaks PGA professional golf instructors have more than 75 years combined experience as PGA members. They offer weekly clinics, golf schools and individual lessons. Golf Schools are five-session comprehensive programs that include fundamentals, ball flight laws, full swing review and all short game aspects. Golf School sessions are 75 minutes, and there is a 5-to-1 student to instructor ratio. These sessions can improve a golfer’s game.

Personal instruction is always the best way a beginner should start learning the game. Personal lessons are tailored to each golfer’s needs, and the beginner is the only focus of the professional.

Coral Oaks offers Men’s and Ladies’ Golf Associations, junior golf programs, tournament play and special outings for group play. If you have interest in any golfing programs, golf outings, group bookings or would like to hold a banquet or party at Coral Oaks, call Coral Oaks at (239) 573-3100 or visit the website at www.CoralOaksGolf.com. Don’t forget – Tee times can be booked five days in advance and online at the website. Remember every day is a great day at Coral Oaks.

City to Conduct 2013 Citizen Survey

The City of Cape Coral will be conducting the biennial Citizen Survey in March next year. The City will use the services of the National Research Center, Inc. once again. The NRC has conducted the past five Cape Coral surveys. The NRC has created a “National Citizen Survey” that many municipalities use to acquire public opinion.

The Center is associated with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), and staff members employ scientific methods in conducting the research for the city. By using tried and true methods of data collection and analysis, the City is assured of receiving good and valid results.

About 1,200 residents will be selected randomly to participate in the mail survey. If you receive a survey from the Center, please take the time to respond to the questions. Each person who receives a survey represents more than 125 citizens, so your input is very important as we move forward with gathering opinions from the community.

Once the survey is complete and the results tabulated, the findings will be presented to City Council. The City anticipates completion of the project and a final report from the National Research Center by May.
Fire Safety During the Holidays

The upcoming holidays mean parties, family gatherings and an increased potential for fire. Here are some tips for keeping your holidays fire free:

**Turkey Fryers**
- Many units can tip easily, so place turkey fryers outdoors on a firm, level, nonflammable surface away from any buildings or other flammable materials.
- Take care not to overfill the pot with oil as the oil may overflow when the turkey is placed into the cooking pot. This could cause significant damage if the oil contacts the burner or flames.
- Always make sure the turkey is completely thawed. Partially frozen turkeys submerged in hot oil can cause an explosion and spill.
- With no thermostats, the oil can overheat to the point of combustion, so never leave the fryer unattended.
- The lid and handles on the pot can get extremely hot and pose a severe burn hazard.
- Keep children and pets away from the fryer even if it is not in use. The oil will remain hot for several hours.

**Live Christmas Trees**
- Always select a fresh tree. The needles should be green and firmly attached to the branches, and the trunk should be sticky to the touch.
- Place your tree in a cool area out of direct sun and away from heat sources. Make sure the tree stand is filled with water at all times.
- Do not keep the tree up for more than two weeks.
- Never place lit candles on a tree.
- If you choose an artificial tree, make sure it is flame retardant.

**Holiday Lights**
- Always inspect for frayed wires, bare spots, broken or cracked sockets, and excessive kinking before putting them up.
- Use only UL-listed or similar lights.
- Do not link more than three strands together unless the directions indicate that it is safe to do so.
- Use grounded 3-wire outdoor rated extension cords.
- Never leave your lights on unattended.
- Check the lights periodically. The wires should not be warm to the touch.

**Candles**
- Even though candles can bring the holiday feel to a home, avoid using if possible.
- If you do use candles, make sure they are in stable holders, placed where they cannot be knocked over easily, and kept away from combustibles such as fabrics, curtains or furniture.
- Do not leave a candle lit when you leave the room.
- Never allow children to use candles.

**Working Smoke Alarms**
- Are always in season.
- Should be installed on every level of your home, tested monthly, kept clean and filled with fresh batteries at all times.
- Have a family escape plan, complete with a family meeting place outside the home, and practice it twice a year.

City Experiencing Backlog in Mowing Work

Even though the economy is improving and home sales have ticked up in Cape Coral, the city still is challenged by the continuing effects of foreclosures. The most visible sign of these properties is overgrown lawns. The good news is that the City now is working on “hundreds” of foreclosures vs. “thousands.”

The ability to preserve a high quality of living throughout this economic downturn has helped create a very active real estate market. This means there are fewer abandoned properties today than a year ago; however, this means they are more visible now that there are fewer foreclosures.

Be assured that Code Compliance remains vigilant and dedicated to addressing these properties as quickly as possible. There are three factors that influence the amount of time it takes to mow these properties.

1. **The process requirements.** As outlined in the “Code Corner” article in this issue, the process already was lengthy, and the state Legislature extended the process this year;
2. **The challenge of locating responsible parties.** These properties usually are in the foreclosure process and some properties are in bankruptcy stage. This adds to the process time for legal issues.
3. **Our contractors.** Every rainy season, our contractors experience a large volume of mows. Some contractors found that their equipment could not handle the work, and they pulled out of their contract. This is why the City has a list of contractors rather than just one. This created a backlog of 80 properties at the end of September. The City has engaged other contractors to work through the list of properties to be mowed and “catch up” on the ones the previous contractors did not complete.

The City’s Code Compliance Division is working on these overgrown properties and following the proper procedures to get them mowed. They are being addressed as quickly, legally and efficiently as possible.

FASTER Software Will Improve Fleet Services

The Fleet Management Division has completed the implementation of its new fleet management software called FASTER. This software will allow Fleet administration to track all City assets, repairs, costs, down time and technician productivity. For the first time, Fleet will be able to gather valuable data from one location, which will enable managers to set quantifiable performance measures to better serve their customers and the community.

The City’s fleet service area had been using antiquated tracking methods for several years, which limited the City’s ability to account for fleet assets and maintenance histories. FASTER is one of the top fleet management systems in the country, and is a powerful and technologically advanced fleet management system developed by experienced fleet professionals.
“True Story of an American WWII War Hero” Wins Two Crystal Reel Awards

Awards presented at FMPTA’s annual gala in November

The World War II documentary feature about Cape Coral resident Harry Beeman won two Crystal Reel awards at the 23rd Annual Crystal Reel Awards ceremony on November 9-10 in Orlando. The feature film, produced by the City and 1Pro Media, won the Crystal award in the category for “Best Special Programming/Documentary – Feature.” Jozef Lenders, 1Pro Media and Connie Barron, the City’s Public Information Director also won “Best Director” awards in the “Special Program/Documentary” category.

“We knew Harry had a good story to tell, and we are pleased that the film about his WWII service onboard the USS Ellet has received recognition from the Crystal Awards,” said Barron.

Lenders and Barron worked with Beeman, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, to capture on film his WWII experiences onboard the USS Ellet, a U.S. Navy Benham-class destroyer assigned to the Pacific Theatre. The 71-minute documentary had its world premiere at the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival on November 11.

The Crystal Reel Awards honor and highlight outstanding achievements in motion picture, television, audio recording and digital media productions created in Florida during the past year. Florida Motion Picture & Television Association, Inc. is the oldest trade organization in Florida, founded June 25, 1974. Its mission is to promote motion picture, television, audio recording and digital media production in Florida.

Give the Gift of Fun with Parks & Recreation Gift Cards

This holiday season, give the gift of fun with Cape Coral Parks & Recreation gift cards. The gift cards are available for purchase in any amount of $10 or more at all of our recreation centers and at the Parks & Recreation counter inside City Hall.

The gift cards can be used for a variety of fun activities offered through the Parks & Recreation Department. The recipient can use the card to slide into fun at Sun Splash Family Waterpark or hit the links at Coral Oaks Golf Course. The card can be redeemed for a class at the Cape Coral Arts Studio or Four Freedoms Park, or to attend a senior excursion with Lake Kennedy Center.

To find opportunities for using gift cards, check out the Winter/Spring program guide at www.CapeParks.com, or pick up a copy at any of our recreation centers after December 10. For more information about Parks & Recreation gift cards, call (239) 573-3128.

Council Approves Tetra Tech Contract

Firm will provide construction, engineering and inspection services for SW 6/7 utilities

City Council approved a contract with Tetra Tech to provide program services for the SW 6/7 utilities extension project. Tetra Tech is one of the top design/engineering firms in the country. Tetra Tech will be reviewing the existing design plans for SW 6/7, which were completed prior to the project being stopped in 2008. Tetra Tech will recommend design modifications, if required, and look for opportunities for cost reductions.

The City is using a different process for SW 6/7 from the previous “program manager at risk.” The City will provide the oversight of the UEP project with a Utilities Extension Manager who works within the City Manager’s Office.

A kickoff meeting was held in November. The next steps are to bring forward a final design plan and begin the process of securing the dollars necessary to fund the project from Florida’s State Revolving Fund. These dollars traditionally have a much lower interest rate and could save property owners significant interest costs. These steps should be completed sometime next spring.

Citizen’s Action Center

Having a City Related Issue?

You Call... We Act!

574-0425
Watch for Motorcycles on the Roadways

Cooler temperatures and return of snowbirds requires greater alert when driving.

As our snowbirds return and motorcyclists take advantage of the cooler winter weather, drivers and riders need to be aware of how their actions can impact their safety. Drivers need to learn to share the road safely with motorcyclists. A large portion of motorcycle crashes involves two key components: 1) poor speed and spatial judgment of other drivers; and, 2) poor motorcyclist visibility. In 2010, there were 7,484 crashes involving motorcycles in Florida. These crashes resulted in 6,686 injuries and 350 fatalities. The good news is that the number of fatalities has been trending down since the high of 561 in 2006.

Here are some tips for motorists and motorcyclists to ensure safe passage on roadways.

Safety Tips for Motorists

- Search the traffic around you and expect to see motorcycles.
- Check your blind spots before changing lanes or merging, especially in heavy traffic.
- Double-check traffic at intersections before turning or pulling into the intersection.
- Motorcycles easily can be hidden in traffic. Look for a helmet above, tires below or a shadow alongside a vehicle you cannot see around.
- Leave at least a four-second distance between your car and a motorcycle ahead of you. Note when a motorcycle passes a point in the road. If your vehicle passes the same point in less than four seconds, you are following too closely.
- When passing a motorcycle, give a full lane to the motorcycle. Do not share lanes.
- Keep a watchful eye at all times. Single motorcycles may blend into a larger group and may be closer than you think.
- Watch out when turning left because most crashes between cars and motorcycles involve left turns at intersections.
- Distracted driving is a major cause of car-motorcycle crashes. Stay attentive and focused.
- Make sure to always signal when changing lanes to ensure the motorcyclist knows the action you intend to take.
- Remember that failing to yield right of way can result in the death or serious injury of a motorcyclist.
- Make sure to observe and obey all traffic laws, signs and signals.

Tips for Motorcycle Riders

Motorcyclists should make sure they can be seen in the crowd because riders who are visible, or “conspicuous,” are less likely to have their right of way violated. There are easy ways to make yourself and your ride visible.

Following are some tips that will keep you safe on the road:

- Consider wearing a brightly colored helmet. From white to red to silver stripes and safety orange, helmets are available in a variety of colors and styles that make your head, and you, easier to see. While helmets are not required in the state of Florida, riders are encouraged to wear this protective gear.
- Use reflective stickers on helmets. This makes the highest part on your bike – your head – more conspicuous and helps other motorists see you. Add flames, stripes, thunderbolts, flags, skull and cross bones or whatever you might prefer. These reflective stickers and tapes look cool during the day and glow at night.
- Wear a reflective vest. Reflective vests now come in many styles in addition to the standard orange-and-yellow mesh vests familiar to most riders.
- Wear clothing on your upper torso that is visible such as light- or bright-colored shirts. These colors are more visible than gray, brown or black.
- Wear a jacket with reflective patches or tape. Many jackets now come with stripes and patches that become reflective at night to increase the wearer’s visibility.
- Add reflective patches to dark colored jackets. Embroidered patches come in a variety of styles to help bikers be seen at night. If your jacket is solid black or another dark color, consider adding reflective patches.

Make Your Motorcycle More Visible

- Make sure daytime running lights are operational and on. This is the law in Florida. Most motorcycles have automatic daytime running lights but if you are riding an older model, always ride with low beams on.
- Equip your bike with a DOT-approved headlight modulator. Modulators draw attention by altering the frequency of your headlight beam, which makes it appear to get intermittently brighter and dimmer.
- Add reflectors or reflective tape to your bike. Custom reflectors are available for most motorcycles and can be added without sacrificing appearance. Reflective tape on saddlebags and panniers glows bright white when hit by headlights. Some “stealth” tapes are designed to be almost invisible during the day yet appear white at night.

Drive Defensively

- Make sure there is plenty of room between you and all vehicles around you.
- Stay out of vehicle blind spots.
- Assume that drivers coming from side streets do not see you. Expect them to pull out in front of you and take precautionary measures.
Submerged Vehicle Self-Rescue
Stay calm and assess the situation

With 400 miles of canals in Cape Coral, the potential exists that a vehicle may leave the roadway and plunge into a canal. While the depths of canals vary throughout the city, even the shallowest of canals may prove deadly in the event of an auto accident.

This year, the City has seen at least two deaths as the result of a vehicle veering off the roadway and traveling over a canal bank and into the water. If the driver and passengers in a submerged vehicle are conscious, they can escape from the vehicle if they take immediate action.

Above all else, stay calm and assess the situation. The vehicle normally will float at least 30 seconds and possibly up to four minutes.

1. Check your passengers and unbuckle your seatbelt.
   Advise passengers to follow you out. For children in car seats, the car seat may be cut loose from the seatbelt and removed from the vehicle with the child still secured in the car seat. Most child seats will offer some floatation.

2. Power or roll down your window.
   If you are unable to power or roll down the window:
   Break the glass. If necessary, use a Life Hammer escape tool or sharp object and try to strike the window at one of the lower corners.
   Push glass/window tint out.

3. Wait for the water to equalize inside the vehicle.

4. Swim out of the vehicle.
   Use caution not to become entangled while exiting the vehicle.

5. Swim to shore.
   Do not attempt to open the door unless you are unable to break the window. The door will move very slowly and appear to be very heavy (similar to a bank vault door). The door will not open until the water equalizes inside and outside of the vehicle.

   Do not attempt to break the front windshield. The windshield is made of safety glass and will be difficult or impossible to remove.

Assisting in a Submerged Vehicle Rescue

If you witness a vehicle entering a canal and want to help, please use caution and follow these guidelines. Above all else, do not exceed your abilities and become a victim yourself!

1. Call 911 (get help coming).
2. Assess the situation.
3. Determine what you can safely do to help.

If you decide to enter the water, then follow these steps to ensure your safety as well as the safety of the potential victims.

1. Remove loose clothing, belt and shoes
2. Position yourself above the vehicle
3. Take a deep breath and swim down to the vehicle
4. Break window glass if windows are up
   Do not attempt to open the door unless you are unable to break the window. Do not attempt to break the front windshield.
5. Using a one-arm search, attempt to locate a victim
   Use your other arm to anchor yourself on the outside of the vehicle to ensure you do not enter the vehicle.
   Do not penetrate too far into the vehicle.
   Keep your head out of the vehicle at all times (if your head enters, your body will follow).
   Break all windows and search all window openings except the front windshield.
6. If a victim is found with seatbelt attached, use a seatbelt cutter to remove seatbelt
   A seatbelt cutter or pair of scissors will allow you to cut the belt without reaching too far into the vehicle.
   Seatbelt may need to be cut in two places, shoulder belt and lap belt.

   7. Assist the victim out of the vehicle and to the surface
      Remove the victim’s head first, if possible.
6. Ask the victim or bystanders if anyone else is in the vehicle
9. If no victim is found in the vehicle, search the area around the vehicle

Locating the vehicle and flagging down the Fire Department can save enough time to make the difference between life and death for the victim.

What Does Cape Coral Fire Department Recommend?
The Cape Coral Fire Department uses the Life Hammer escape tool, which has proven to be very effective. The Department recommends rehearsing these emergency procedures with little or no visibility before an emergency occurs. The escape tool holder should be secured within reach so that the tool is immediately available.

In the event the Fire Department responds to a submerged vehicle call, the Department is staffed with highly trained rescue personnel.

RESCUE SWIMMER
Every Cape Coral firefighter is trained in water rescue skills. All department fire engines, rescue trucks and aerial trucks are equipped with rescue swimmer equipment. This equipment includes a rescue tube, mask, fins, snorkel, life vest, Life Hammer, waterproof light, search line, etc.

RESCUE DIVER
Each fire apparatus is equipped with a scuba tank, full face mask and weight belt. This additional equipment allows our specially-trained Rescue Divers to more effectively perform underwater searches.

RESCUE DIVER TECHNICIAN
Our Diver Technicians are centrally stationed in the city and are equipped with Haz-Mat chemical protective drysuits and underwater communication equipment.

BOAT OPERATORS
Along with our fleet of boats, our specially-trained Boat Operators are ready to assist boaters in distress. We are equipped for search and rescue, medical emergencies, boat fires and for supplying water to land-based operations.

For more information on the Cape Coral Fire Department, please visit our website at www.capecoral.net/citydept/fire or email ccfire@capecoral.net. You also can call (239) 574-0501.
Cape Coral Fire & Rescue Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we have paramedics on fire trucks?
All Cape Coral firefighters are Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) and many have chosen to become paramedics to bring a much higher level of medical service to the public. As First Responders, our paramedics are often first on the scene and can begin administering life-saving drugs and procedures in advance of the ambulance’s arrival, often leading to a better outcome.

Why does it take so long for you to arrive when I call 9-1-1?
The response standard that we follow is to arrive on scene within 6 minutes of receiving a 9-1-1 call. Traffic, access to the location, and staffing levels contribute to delays in reaching that standard. Currently, our success rate of arrival is less than 90 percent but we are still ahead of the national average.

Why do we cut open garage doors and vehicle hoods with power saws?
Gaining access to the fire as quickly as possible is key to saving lives and minimizing property loss. If we cannot get to the fire, we cannot put it out. Cutting the garage door gives quick access to the home. If a car is on fire and we cannot release the hood lock, cutting the hood allows us to reach the engine, stop the fire and prevent an explosion.

Why are there multiple units at an auto accident?
A vehicle accident has many potential elements. There is patient care, which may mean removing the patient from the vehicle. This might require the Jaws of Life to cut open the car. Chemical leaks and spills present an environmental concern, and there is the potential for fire. Multiple crews are dispatched in expectation that all of these tasks will be required. Once an evaluation of the needs is completed by the first arriving unit, only the units necessary will continue to the scene. All other units return to their stations.

Why does more than one fire truck respond to a fire call?
There are many tasks at a fire scene such as incident command, search and rescue, fire suppression, accountability, ventilation, safety, salvage and overhaul, water supply and rehab. These tasks take manpower and equipment. We send multiple units and crews to get the work done quickly and, most importantly, safely.

Why do you send a ladder truck to a medical call?
We have various types of apparatus located strategically throughout the city for firefighting. These units also can be dispatched to other emergencies such as medical calls. In such instances, it is the trained personnel in the unit closest to the call that is vital, not the vehicle in which they arrive. In any emergency, time is critical. How help arrives at the scene is not as important as their ability to provide assistance.

Why do we have so many fire stations?
Cape Coral has 10 stations. The number of fire stations is determined by the size of the city and the area to be covered.
Next Citizens Academy will Begin in February

The Citizens Academy is a 12-week class that will teach citizens about City government and how the processes work. The City offers two opportunities each year to participate, and the first class will start in February.

The academy focuses on what is involved with running one of the largest cities in Florida. Participants will spend about 50 hours learning about each City department, the City’s charter schools and the Community Redevelopment Agency.

Take the challenge and discover for yourself. Sign up at www.capeacademy.com. Enrollment is open to Cape Coral residents, and class size is limited. Additional information is available by contacting the program coordinator at 574-0446 or by email at citizensacademy@capecoral.net.

Council Reestablishes Human Resources Department

City Council has reestablished the City’s Human Resources Department as an official City department, and City Manager John Szerlag will be recruiting for a director for the department. The department “designation” had been removed by the prior City Council/city manager in 2011, and HR responsibilities were moved to the Financial Services Department.

After reviewing the City organization, Szerlag determined that Human Resources needed to be an autonomous department and separate function from Financial Services. During the FY 2013 budget process, he recommended that Council return the department to its previous status as an official City department and include funding for an HR director in the budget. The budget was approved by City Council in September, and the ordinance to reestablish the HR Department was approved on November 5.

CapeTV Operations Contract Awarded to 1Pro Media

City Council awarded the contract for CapeTV operations to 1Pro Media, a Cape Coral company. 1Pro Media will provide the video and audio services to broadcast meetings and other programming on CapeTV Channel 98 (Comcast cable). 1Pro also will provide additional video production services to the City as part of the new contract.

“This continues a successful public-private partnership that we have developed over the years,” said Public Information Director Connie Barron. “Joe Lenders always has stepped up and provided services beyond the scope of his contract for CapeTV, and these production projects have resulted in some award-winning videos.”

Lenders produced an animated fire safety video, “Time Squad Kids,” in cooperation with the Cape Coral Fire Department. Lenders will be working with the Fire Department to update the video this year. He also worked with Barron to produce “The Missing Man Tribute” video to those who served our country. Both of these productions won Telly Awards and Communicator Awards.

Lenders and Barron worked together more recently on the war story of World War II veteran Harry Beeman. This 71-minute documentary premiered at the Ft. Lauderdale Film Festival on Veterans Day, November 11 and won two Crystal Awards from the Florida Motion Picture & Television Association.

Special Events on Tap for Cape Coral

The Parks and Recreation Department’s Special Events team organizes various special events throughout the year to bring the residents and visitors together to celebrate and have fun. Special events also provide an economic engine for many businesses in Cape Coral.

The events conducted in the downtown area drive the economy of many of Cape Coral’s small businesses, which results in hotel stays and patrons visiting restaurants.

Special Events help facilitate more than 20 events per year.

The Annual Coconut Festival, Tour de Cape, Holiday Festival of Lights, the Annual Cape Coral Art Festival, and Bike Nights are just a few of the events.

December Events

Four Freedoms Park is home to the land activities for the Annual “Boat-A-Long” boat parade, which will take place on Sunday, December 16 with the unique boat parade beginning at 7 p.m. in the Bimini Basin. In addition, “Santa Land” will be held at Sun Splash Festival Grounds again this year from December 14-16 and 21-23.

January Events

Several additional events are planned for Cape Coral in 2013, beginning with the 28th Annual Festival of the Arts on January 12-13, sponsored and organized by the Cape Coral Rotary Club. Be there when the South Cape and Cape Coral Parkway is transformed into a cultural Mecca with this popular festival that attracts more than 300 juried artists each year.

The following weekend will be the City’s annual “Tour de Cape” with a 5K run on Saturday, January 19 and Bike Tour on Sunday, January 20, both originating from Cape Harbour Resort. Regardless of your fitness, there is a perfect ride for everyone.

February Events

The popular Cape Bike Night returns on Saturday, February 9 from 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. along SE 47th Terrace. Thousands of motorcycles travel to the downtown Cape decked out from the handlebars to the wheels. Bike Night features live music, food and vendors.

Movie in the Park

Special Events offers a free “Movie in the Park” event at neighborhood parks throughout the year. Winter dates include Saturday, January 12 and Saturday, March 9. This event features a family-friendly movie shown on a giant inflatable movie screen. Grab your neighbors, and bring a blanket or chair to enjoy a fun evening under the stars.

For more information about these events and how to participate or volunteer, please call (239) 573-3123 or visit www.CapeParks.com.