

Communication from Lynne Matthews, Mayor  
Punta Gorda City Council District 4

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The all new Harbor Bridges mural at Laishley Marina,  
to be dedicated next Wednesday, April 24 at 4 p.m.  
Photo provided by the Punta Gorda Historic Mural Society.

**Here is your Weekly Highlights Report for April 19, 2024.**  
For the complete report from the City, click [HERE](#).

**Southwest Florida Honor Flight** - What a phenomenal turnout for the welcome home celebration at PGD this week, celebrating all our incredible veterans, and to thank them for their service. There must have been 3,000 people at the airport Tuesday night! So many people had tears streaming down their cheeks as they watched the emotions of the vets coming home...many of them crying visibly. Thanks to PGD Airport for their warm and generous hospitality! They did an great job of offering free parking for everyone and helping to direct traffic to the massive crowds. It was a great showing of community support for the men and women who have served our nation. For more information on how to become a guardian or a participating veteran, click [HERE](#).



**City Manager** - In the City of Punta Gorda, where emergencies can strike unexpectedly and every second counts, there are silent heroes working tirelessly behind the scenes. They are the

calm voices in chaos, the unseen hands that guide responders to those in need. National Telecommunicators Week, observed annually during the second week of April, is a time to honor and appreciate these indispensable professionals who form the backbone of emergency response systems.



Public Safety Telecommunicators are the first and most critical contact our citizens have when reporting an emergency. Our first responders' safety depends on the quality and accuracy of the information obtained from callers to the Punta Gorda Police Communications Center. Public Safety Telecommunicators ensure the safety of our police officers and firefighters by monitoring their activities on the radio and providing information.

Our telecommunicators, often called dispatchers, are the lifelines between the public and emergency services. They are the first point of contact during crises, answering distress calls, assessing situations, and dispatching appropriate help. Whether it's a medical emergency, a fire, a crime, or any other urgent situation, these dedicated individuals remain composed under pressure, providing vital information and support to both callers and responders.

The significance of their role cannot be overstated. They are not merely conduits of information but also pillars of reassurance and stability during moments of distress. With empathy and efficiency, they navigate through intense situations, making split-second decisions that can mean the difference between life and death. Public Safety Telecommunicators of the Punta Gorda Police Department have contributed substantially to apprehending criminals, suppressing fires, and treating patients.

National Telecommunicators Week is an opportunity to recognize these unsung heroes' resilience, dedication, and professionalism. It's a time to acknowledge their sacrifices, often working long hours, holidays, and weekends, to ensure public safety around the clock. Despite their immense pressure, they remain steadfast in their commitment to serving Punta Gorda's residents.

One of the most admirable qualities of telecommunicators is their ability to remain calm and composed in the face of adversity. They undergo rigorous training to handle a wide range of emergencies, from mundane to catastrophic, all while maintaining professionalism and empathy. Their calm demeanor and clear communication are instrumental in coordinating emergency responses and saving lives.

Public Safety Telecommunicators of the Punta Gorda Police Department answered 30,546 administrative phone calls and 11,624 9-1-1 emergency phone calls. They placed 18,844 outbound phone calls in fiscal year 2023, contributing to a police officer average response time of six minutes and 37 seconds for all calls for service.

As National Telecommunicators Week comes to a close, let us take a moment to express our gratitude to these silent heroes who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep our community safe. Their unwavering dedication, resilience, and compassion embody the true spirit of public service. Let us honor their commitment not just this week but every day, recognizing the invaluable contributions they make to our society. Readers may reach City Manager Greg Murray at [citymgr@cityofpuntagordaf1.com](mailto:citymgr@cityofpuntagordaf1.com) or by calling the main office line at

941-575-3302.

**Synopsis of this week's Council meeting (and my apologies because this is somewhat editorialized, which I normally do not do):**

1. Cooper St. Rec Center contract review - After much discussion and debate, a motion was passed 3-1 (Councilmember Peterman recused herself to avoid any perceived conflict of interest due to her previous involvement with the YMCA board), to move forward with negotiating a contract with the YMCA, who was the only responsive bidder to the Procurement Department's bid proposal package. Two other organizations that attempted to also respond did not provide the required documentation and/or credentials to qualify as responsive bidders. The Council will now schedule a workshop where we can meet with the YMCA to discuss our expectations in a lease to be drawn up. The lease will need to satisfy the State Attorney General's requirements, which includes serving a public purpose, and also that there must be some level of oversight to the City of the operations. The discussion continued that we will expect the lease to specify that the day-to-day management must be by a LOCAL Charlotte County/Punta Gorda east side resident governing board, with emphasis on serving the needs of the east side community. More to come on this.
2. Discussion ensued regarding the General Construction Fund projects, as well as the 1% Sales Tax fund and the project list included in the program. Council requested unanimously that the list be reviewed to focus on public safety improvements projects as top priority, and they will come back with an update for us.
3. Due to an increasing number of issues with vehicles parking in motorcycle parking spots in the Herald Court parking garage, the PGPD requested that we close off the 13 motorcycle parking spots entirely to enhance safety rounding the corners in the garage. There have been numerous accidents and incidents on these corners due to the short turning radius in the garage. These parking spots will be striped off and signage added so that there can be enforceable rules and potential towing of vehicles who do not comply.
4. The Ponce de Leon Park boat ramp has also seen its share of issues, where people launch their boat and leave it at the launch ramp for extended periods of time, or they come in, park the boat and go and have picnics or go to the beach at the park, etc. The decision was to amend the rules of our park regulations, to allow a maximum of 20 minutes at the boat launch ramp dock with appropriate signage (to give enforce-ability to law enforcement if necessary), which will ensure everyone who needs to launch or pull their boats will have access to the ramp when needed.
5. Another long discussion took place regarding the dinghy day docks behind the Punta Gorda Boat Club. Several Council members wanted them removed completely, as privileges have been abused by some of the boat owners coming ashore. The dinghy dock permits have all expired, so people are leaving deflated dinghies on the docks, larger boats are accessing these docks and parking there, some of the boaters have engaged in arguments on shore, one person's moped was torched, etc. The Historic District property owners have concerns for their

safety, so they have asked for changes to be made. The City staff will look into what ramifications might occur as a result of the docks being removed entirely. In the meantime, staff will also conduct research on the requirements we might need to install a west mooring field in place off the Gilchrist Park shoreline so that boaters would be required to register with the City to pay for the use of a mooring ball, and we would have better control of those coming ashore. More to come on this as well!

**Congratulations to Becky's Garden Shop** - This week, we held a ribbon cutting at Becky's Garden Shop downtown, to celebrate her one-year anniversary at this location. Several dozen Punta Gorda Chamber members participated in the event. Thanks for being a part of our Punta Gorda business community, and we wish you much continued success!



**Swale regrading** - The swale contractor has completed Don Quixote Dr., Brazilia Ct. and Darin Dr. which have been finalized and turned over to the homeowner. The contractor will be watering the sod for the next 30 days weather permitting at Padre Island Dr., Casey Key Dr. (SW), Ussepa Ct. and Casey Key Dr. (SE). They have excavated approximately 58,000 SF this fiscal year. The contractor has begun excavating Turtle Dove Circle and will be excavating approximately 2,600 SF. Once the contractor gets the new grades established they will be installing new sod at the proper elevation. The next street to be excavated will be Sea Horse Ct.

#### **Right-of-way -**

- \* Vactor work continues around the City.
- \* Crews are repairing brickwork in the area of Taylor and Olympia.
- \* Crews continue to mow throughout the city. Currently in the area of Henry St. and other areas around the City.
- \* Continuing to patch potholes throughout the City.
- \* The renovation project at the Laishley gazebo located east of U.S. 41 continues. Crews continue to construct the rip rap wall to ensure the area is stable. The anticipation completion date is April 26.



**Reverse trade shows** - The City of Punta Gorda's Procurement team is a part of the Gulf Coast Association of Governmental Purchasing Officers, and one of the most important events that the association has is the Reverse Trade Show. Why is this event important? Not only do the funds raised from registrations and sponsorships go to the association's fund for scholarships that our members can utilize for further education, but this event also presents a unique networking opportunity for vendors from all over to come and meet with Procurement professionals from surrounding government agencies.



Procurement receives a lot of inquiries after these events from new and existing vendors to respond to our solicitations. The City of Punta Gorda's Procurement team is proud to be a part of the Gulf Coast Association of Governmental Purchasing Officers and to work at the Reverse Trade Shows.

**City Council** - City Council will meet on May 1 at 9 a.m. at the Military Heritage Museum.

**Splash Pad** - Construction/demolition continues at the Interactive Fountain area in Laisley Park. The underground plumbing has been completed, backfilled, and has passed inspection. Please use extra caution while driving or walking through the park due to construction personnel and equipment. To the highest extent possible the restroom facilities will remain open to the public. The access to the restrooms will be from the marina side of the building. There will be periodic temporary sidewalk closures immediately adjacent to the construction area as required for public safety. The construction area will be closed to the public at all times during this period. The enhanced fountain area is scheduled to reopen in late 2024. If you have any questions, please contact the Public Works Department at 941-575-5050 during the hours of 8 to 4:30.



**Fiber optic internet network** - The fiber optic internet provider Hyper Fiber has been issued permits for a portion of the construction project to install a citywide fiber optic internet network within the City right-of-way. This project will be under construction during the next several months as they install the network citywide. They are currently working in the areas highlighted in red below. The green areas are where the work is completed and their permit has been inspected for final by the engineering department. Additional areas are scheduled to be final in the next several weeks. The blue areas are where the installation will be taking place as the project progresses.



Initially you will see utility markings within the City right-of-way, followed by the directional drilling of the fiber optic conduit. Fiber optic boxes will be installed in the right-of-way or easement at the edge of your property. Once the installation of the underground and service points has been completed for the entire sector, crews will then return to individual locations for the restoration of sod. This will take place at the end of construction in each sector. Please be patient and allow time for the restoration. The City engineering department will be performing spot inspections during construction as well as a final inspection when the restoration is complete to ensure the contractor's restoration meets the City's requirements. Hyper Fiber has provided a telephone number to call if citizens have questions or concerns about the project and



installation. Please contact Hyper Fiber's Scott Jackson at 239-887-5379. Please use extra caution while driving through the project area due to construction personnel and equipment.

**Voting information** - This is going to be a big year for voting, from everything at the federal level for the President of the United States, to local elections at both the City and County level. Here are some important dates to put on your

<b>Election Days</b> Presidential Preference Primary Election: March 19, 2024 Primary Election: August 20, 2024 General Election: November 5, 2024	<b>Early Voting Dates</b> Presidential Preference Primary Election: March 4-17, 2024 Primary: August 5-19, 2024 General: October 21-November 3, 2024
<b>New Registration/Party Affiliation Change Deadline!</b> Punta Gorda City Election: October 10, 2023 Presidential Preference Primary Election: February 20, 2024 Primary Election: July 22, 2024 General Election: October 7, 2024	<b>Vote by Mail Dates</b> (F.S. 101.62) The initial batch of Vote by Mail ballots will be mailed out between the 40th and 33rd days prior to an election to those voters who have already requested them. Subsequent mailings will be mailed out daily as new requests are received.

calendar in advance of the upcoming primary and general elections. Make sure you update your Vote By Mail status, as you have to do it after every general election now by Florida statute. For information, click [HERE](#).

**Licensed/unlicensed contractors** - As a reminder, all contractors who will be performing structural work on your home (roofs, pool cages, soffits, etc.) must be a contractor licensed in the State of Florida - click [HERE](#) to check on a specific company, AND they must also be registered with the City of Punta Gorda in order to be able to pull a building permit, which is required by law. You can check on the status of a contractor's registration with the City by clicking [HERE](#) and typing in the name of the company you wish to check on. Failure for a contractor to have the appropriate licensing and registration could result in a felony for the contractor. Additionally, they may not have the required insurance and liability insurances that the state requires. Please do your homework before you sign anything!

**Seawall failure update** - Construction schedules have been updated and are posted on the Canal Maintenance website for the next six months look ahead. There are 44 projects in Punta Gorda Isles under construction with 69 projects completed, and 19 projects under construction with 15 completed in Burnt Store Isles. Maps indicating the location and classification can be found on the Canal Maintenance website - click [HERE](#).

**Vessel speeds** - Canal Maintenance is asking people to be mindful of the current situation in the canals with seawalls being damaged. City code states that the operation of vessels in the canals shall be Slow Speed Minimum Wake in the waterways within the City limits. The speed and operation in the Ponce Inlet, Pompano Inlet, Bass and Snook Inlets are Idle Speed and No Wake. Wakes from watercraft can cause additional erosion and damage to seawalls already compromised. And please remember that you are responsible for your wake. If your vessel causes damage to a property or another vessel, you may be subject to fines or penalties.

**Stabilizing erosion** - Just a friendly reminder for property owners to regularly check the condition of their tarps or plastic that is protecting the eroded areas. Tarps and plastic tend to become brittle in the sun and may start falling apart. Our area is still experiencing rain events and that plastic will help keep the soil in place preventing further erosion.

**Establishing sod after seawall replacement** - Placing the sod is the final phase of seawall replacement construction. As per City ordinance, property owners are responsible for establishing the sod after it has been placed and the City will not reimburse the owners for their water usage.

**Dock Match program** - The Punta Gorda Boaters Alliance (PGBA) has once again set up a program called *Dock Match*, which is to help facilitate relocation of boats that will need to be temporarily relocated from properties that had seawall failures. If you have a dock that is vacant and would like to make it available to another PGI or BSI boat owner, please click [HERE](#) to register your dock. Boat owners will have a list available to assist them in connecting with you to try and match their needs to your dock availability. I worked with the PGBA after Hurricane Irma to set this up in 2017 and it was used quite a lot by many residents. This program has been approved by the PGBA and the City of Punta Gorda.



**Dockside dredging** - Property owners that are listed on the Hurricane Ian seawall damage list will not be allowed to have dockside dredging performed adjacent to the seawall until the seawall has been repaired. Any kind of dredging along the damaged seawall may cause further damage.

**Answers to some of your questions** - I receive many questions each week from residents, asking all kinds of things about Punta Gorda activities. Here are some from this week:

I received several emails about the information provided last week regarding rules for bicyclists, and this one in particular was interesting and I want to share it with you.

*I read your weekly newsletter and have seen many questions and answers regarding bikes and stop signs. I understand that when bikes are driving on the road they must follow vehicle rules.*

*Does this mean when they enter a four-way (or any) stop sign, they should line up behind the last car in line? NEVER have I seen a bicyclist ever get on line. They always drive on the far right hand side of the road and drive up right next to the next vehicle in turn. I am correct? That they should get at the back of the line.* And here is the response from Police Chief Pam Smith:

There is nothing specific in the law that says a bicyclist cannot ride up alongside a vehicle at an intersection because the law allows them to share a lane with a vehicle if the lane is wide enough. Our City lanes are considered substandard-width lanes which is why the bicyclists can use the entire lane. However, most bicyclists still try to stay as far to the right as possible. Here is the section of the statute:

(5)(a) A person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing must ride in the bicycle lane or, if there is no bicycle lane on the roadway, as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway except under any of the following situations:

1. When overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.
2. When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.
3. When reasonably necessary to avoid any condition or potential conflict, including, but not limited to, a fixed or moving object, parked or moving vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, animal, surface hazard, turn lane, or substandard-width lane, which makes it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge or within a bicycle lane. For the purposes of this subsection, a "substandard-width lane" is a lane that is too narrow for a bicycle and another vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.

I think many bicyclists will ride up to the intersection on the side of the vehicles for safety purposes and because of this statute. I don't know many officers who would cite a bicyclist for doing this. I think the goal is safety and if they come up to the right of the vehicles at an intersection, it may be safer than not seeing a vehicle pull up next to them from behind. For these reasons, it would be difficult to enforce a bicyclist not staying in line. I also wanted to point out something about when people complain about several bikes going through a stop sign at once. The law allows this. If every bike in a large group stops at a stop sign, it would create a major traffic jam. I know people won't want to wait for 10 bicyclists to stop individually at a 4 way intersection. Here is the section from 316.2065 about this:

(b) When stopping at a stop sign, persons riding bicycles in groups, after coming to a full stop and obeying all traffic laws, may proceed through the stop sign in a group of 10 or fewer at a time. Motor vehicle operators must allow one such group to travel through the intersection before moving forward.

*Could you please share with me your plan for fixing the lamp posts along Marion Avenue from Cooper Street to Celtic Ray? We all knew it would take some time after the hurricane. It has been a year and four months and it looks like the City has primarily focused again on the downtown area. Citizens across Punta Gorda pay taxes and deserve to have the same resources dedicated to all parts of the City and not just downtown. The County is not responsible for the lamp posts or grass along Marion. Can you provide an update on when this will be addressed? Since these lights belong to FDOT and not the City, here is the most recent response we have from FDOT on this project. There was a recent press release from them, but this is the most current information we have from them. Essentially, we're nearing the final phase of the hurricane recovery as it relates to lighting. Here is a brief summary of the phases since Ian's arrival:*

\* After the storm hit, the damage assessment phase was undertaken for all of the Department's infrastructure. This was quite extensive for lighting, as there was damage in 9 of the 12 Counties in District 1 involving approximately 1,000 poles.

\* After the damage assessment phase, we prepared extensive documentation to FHWA to determine the amount of the repairs that would be eligible for federal reimbursement and secured funding.

\* Design plans were prepared to prescribe the repairs for the aforementioned damage.



- \* A Districtwide construction contract was put out to bid, awarded, and executed.
- \* We are currently in the Material Acquisition phase. We are finalizing some of the details between the Designer and Contractor to make sure the materials ordered are accurate. We anticipate placing an order in the next 1-2 weeks.
- \* Due to issues in the supply chain, it may take up to 30 weeks or more to procure all materials to perform the repairs. The primary issue at this point is material availability, not manpower.
- \* Once materials are procured, the construction phase will begin. Our contract length is 350 days to complete the damage in all 9 counties.

Editorial note: For those who may not know this, U.S. 17 (Marion and Olympia) in the downtown area from U.S. 41 east is all owned and maintained by FDOT, not the City. We do not have jurisdiction for infrastructure repairs and maintenance on FDOT owned highways. FDOT owns U.S. 17 and U.S. 41. In some locations, we do work with FDOT and Charlotte County for ongoing cleanup of the roads, but for the most part FDOT maintains those two highways. If you ever have a question you would like answered, please email me at [Imatthews@cityofpuntagordafl.com](mailto:Imatthews@cityofpuntagordafl.com). I respond to all emails that are personally directed to me, or I will ask a staff member to respond to you. Occasionally, staff needs to respond if it is a complex answer, and sometimes it takes a few days to research various subjects. Please be patient, as we will get back with you.

**Military Heritage Museum** - Stop in to see the fascinating interactive exhibits, and check out the schedule of wonderful entertainment in the Gulf Theater. Our mission is to promote an understanding and respect for the rich military heritage of the United States and the sacrifices made by all who serve, living and deceased, emphasizing that freedom isn't free. For more information, click [HERE](#). To check out the schedule for this season's fabulous shows in the Gulf Theater - click [HERE](#).



**Would you like to be on the mailing list for the Military Heritage Museum, and receive advance notice of upcoming events?** If so, please click [HERE](#). You MUST include your name and email address in your request in order to add you to the database.

**There are a lot of great events coming up in town, so don't miss out on these:**

April 20 - Taste of the World Food & Music Festival, Laishley Park. For information, click [HERE](#).

April 20-21 - Spring Home and Garden Show, Event Center. For information, click [HERE](#).

April 22 - Vertical Oyster Garden by Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Laishley Park docks.

April 27 - Strongman Competition, Laishley Park. For information, click [HERE](#).

May 3-5 - Punta Gorda Hibiscus Festival, Gilchrist Park. For information, click [HERE](#).

May 18 - Home and Hurricane Expo, Event Center. For information, click [HERE](#).

May 18 - Day of Celtic Music, Fishermen's Village. For information, click [HERE](#).

May 25-26 - Indoor Arts and Crafts Show, Event Center. For information, click [HERE](#).

June 1 - Island Vibe Music Festival, Laishley Park. For information, click [HERE](#).

June 1-2 - Punta Gorda Gun Show, Event Center. For information, click [HERE](#).

June 8-9 - Spirit Fest, Event Center. For information, click [HERE](#).

June 15 - Blues Fest, Fishermen's Village. For information, click [HERE](#).

July 4 - Fourth of July festivities, Fishermen's Village. For information, click [HERE](#).

For upcoming events and festivals from the City's website, click [HERE](#).

Punta Gorda Chamber's events page - click [HERE](#).

Charlotte County Visitors Bureau events page - click [HERE](#).

Gulf Theater at the Military Heritage Museum - click [HERE](#).

Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association - click [HERE](#).

Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, click [HERE](#).

Visual Arts Center events, click [HERE](#).

Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce events, click [HERE](#).

Fishermen's Village events, click [HERE](#). For all Fishermen's Village event information, you must go to the calendar under Events and click on the specific listing for details.

### **Police Department:**

**Volunteer proclamation** - On April 17, the Punta Gorda City Council presented the Police Department with a proclamation to recognize National Volunteer Week. This year, National Volunteer Week is recognized April 21-27.

In FY 2023, they volunteered 7,793 hours of their time assisting the Police Department provide the best service possible. The PGPD Chaplain assists the police department with spiritual support, death notifications, family support at death scenes and various department programs. He is frequently called out during the overnight hours and on weekends volunteering countless hours of his time. The Reserve Officer Program is also one of our key volunteer programs. We have three certified police officers who volunteer their time with us. Last year they contributed 1,258 hours assisting us with criminal investigations, parade escorts, traffic enforcement, and major events. These giving and dedicated group of volunteers are an integral part of the Punta Gorda Police Department and we appreciate all their hard work! In addition to our Police Department Volunteers, it is important to recognize the PGICA Marine Watch Volunteers. They conduct numerous patrols throughout the canals in PGI during the nighttime hours to assist us with deterring criminal activity. They are also very much appreciated and should be thanked for their tireless efforts.



### **Police Department has three volunteer programs:**

- \* Chaplain Program, Volunteers in Policing and Reserve Police Officers.
- \* The Volunteers in Policing program started in 1997 with a handful of members providing Marine Patrol services and the Chaplain program.
- \* The VIP program has grown significantly to its current membership of 67 members.

**There are five major program areas:**

- \* Marine volunteers
- \* Volunteers on Patrol - Car
- \* Volunteers on Patrol - Bicycle
- \* Records Volunteers
- \* Administration Volunteers.

**Honor Flight** - Police Senior Chaplain Bill Klossner had the opportunity to go on the Southwest Florida Honor Flight on April 16, with 99 U.S. military veterans. Klossner served as the Honor Flight chaplain for the day. Honor Flight Network was created in 2005 with a simple, yet powerful, mission - honoring our nation's veterans by bringing them to Washington, D.C. to visit the memorials built to commemorate their service and sacrifice.



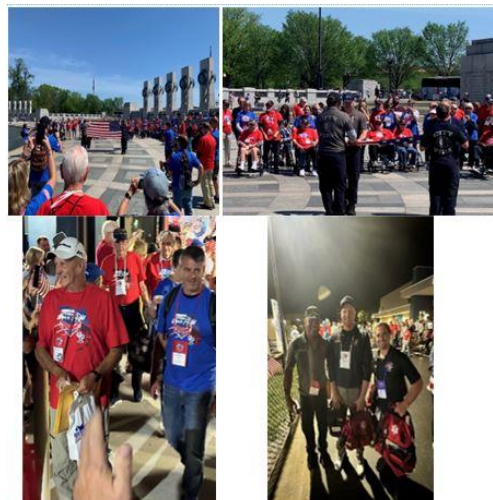
**Volunteers In Policing (VIP)** - Our volunteers are an absolutely vital part of this police department and we appreciate them greatly! Members of the community interested in volunteering may contact the Volunteer Staff Coordinator at 941-575-5536 or by emailing [vip@pgorda.us](mailto:vip@pgorda.us).

**Police Officer testing** - The Punta Gorda Police Department is currently accepting applications for the position of Police Officer. A virtual testing process will take place in June. Applications must be received by May 24. The written exam will be completed online between May 31 and June 7, and virtual oral board exams will be conducted via Zoom on June 18. The department is accepting applications from certified and non-certified candidates.

**Public Safety Dispatcher testing** - The police department conducts new hire testing continually in order to be prepared for future openings. We are currently accepting applications for the position of Public Safety Dispatcher. Applications must be received by May 3. The exam will be held on the morning of May 16, beginning at 9 a.m.

**Internship program** - The police department is currently accepting internship applications for the summer semester of 2024. Our internship program is open to college students and high school seniors interested in gaining educational experience in law enforcement, criminal justice, and small government administration. Spots fill up quickly and the selection process can be competitive, so we encourage potential interns to apply today!

**To apply for employment or for more information, please visit [www.pgpdjobs.com](http://www.pgpdjobs.com) or contact our Employee Development Coordinator at 941-575-5571 or by email at [employeedevelopment@pgorda.us](mailto:employeedevelopment@pgorda.us).**



**Fire Department: SWFL Honor Flight** - Special thanks to the Punta Gorda firefighters that provided medical support during the April 16 SWFL Honor

Flight. The honor flight carried 99 veterans from Punta Gorda to Washington D.C. to visit several memorials as well as Arlington Cemetery. Firefighters also performed flag folding ceremonies at several locations. SWFL Honor Flight's mission is to safely transport our veterans to Washington D.C. to be honored at their memorials and receive the welcome home they deserve.

**Planning Corner:** Bicycling and Pedestrian Safety Reminder Punta Gorda is a wonderful year-round place to ride a bicycle, but safety comes first. In Florida, the bicycle is legally defined as a vehicle and the bicyclist is a driver. Bicyclists have the same rights on the roadways and must obey the same traffic laws as the drivers of other vehicles.



Bicyclists are also permitted to ride on the sidewalk. If you find yourself sharing a path with a bicyclist or pedestrian, be sure to adhere to the following shared path etiquette:

- \* Bicycles ride slowly, especially when the path is busy or when approaching curves
- \* Stop at driveways and intersections
- \* Audibly warn when passing (example - "Passing on your left!")
- \* Keep pets under control
- \* Listen for audible warning from passing joggers and bicycles
- \* Groups or couples give way to passers of oncoming traffic

For more information on bicycle and pedestrian safety, click [HERE](#).

**Sanitation: Did you know?** - City of Punta Gorda Residents live within Charlotte County and are encouraged to use Charlotte County's facilities listed below. For more information and locations, click on links provided below.

**Mid-County Mini-Transfer & Recycling Facility** - Residents are allowed 12 free visits per fiscal year (October 1-September 30). Recycling and household hazardous waste do not count towards the 12 visits. Proof of County residency is required. Residents need to bring a valid form of identification to include name, photo, and local address. Photo identification from other areas must be accompanied by a current utility bill or document showing proof of residency at a Charlotte County residential address. P.O. Box addresses are not accepted as proof of residency. Click [HERE](#) for information.

**C.A.R.E's Project ReUse Stores - C.A.R.E. Project Reuse** - C.A.R.E. (Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies, Inc.) sells discarded, useable household items at both facilities. Donate, rather than discard usable items to C.A.R.E. Proceeds from the sale of reusable items help victims in Charlotte County. Call 941-624-3488 or click [HERE](#) for more information or to volunteer with C.A.R.E.

**Chemical Reuse Shop** - Visit the County's Chemical Reuse Shop at Mid County Mini Transfer & Recycling Facility located inside the C.A.R.E. Reuse Store. You can take home anything from motor oil, and furniture polish, to house paint for FREE. Residents must sign a waiver of liability to receive the products. These products are limited to availability and on a first come basis.

**Medication disposal** - Residents may bring their unused/unneeded or expired prescription and

over-the-counter medications to the PGFD - click [HERE](#).

**Needles and Sharps disposal** - free community service to assist the public with a safe and environmentally sound method for disposing of used needles or "sharps". Here's how it works.



- \* Stop by the PGFD - click [HERE](#). Office hours are Monday-Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- \* Ask for a new Sharps container and instructions on its use.
- \* Take the container home; keep it out of the reach of children.
- \* Dispose of your used syringes completely intact into the Sharps container.
- \* When the container is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  full, permanently close the top following the simple directions on the container.
- \* Once closed, return the filled Sharps container to the PGFD for proper disposal.
- \* Obtain a new Sharps container! FREE!

**JOIN OUR TEAM**

**Human Resources: Open positions** - The City of Punta Gorda offers a very generous benefit package to include medical, dental, vision, life insurance, and a defined contribution retirement plan with matching contributions. Currently hiring for a professional position in the Building Inspector - Single License - Building Department. Seeking a highly skilled technical position responsible for performing a variety of tasks associated with advanced technical building inspection and preliminary plans examining work for the purpose of enforcing building codes, regulations and ordinances for both residential and commercial construction. The City of Punta Gorda has a variety of employment opportunities available learn more by clicking [HERE](#).



**Sun safety tips:**

- \* Do NOT burn
- \* Avoid suntanning and tanning beds
- \* Generously apply sunscreen
- \* Wear protective clothing
- \* Seek shade
- \* Use extra caution near water, snow and sand
- \* Check the UV index
- \* Get vitamin D safely

**Facilities** - Crews have completed the replacement of the hurricane-damaged lights on top of the parking garage. The lights were replaced with a more modern style LED fixture. The replacement lights are noticeably brighter than the older lights.



**Administration** - The Citizens Academy completed its 2024 sessions. This year's sessions hosted 16 attendees. Attendees were provided with certificates of completion at



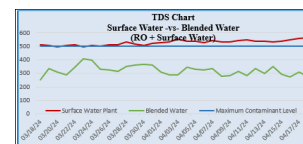
the April 17 City Council meeting. City employees provide attendees with an overview of their department functions across the City. The academy is a great way for citizens of the City to gain a better understanding of each department. Our employees take pride in their work and enjoy educating citizens regarding their specific roles. If interested in attending enrollment for the 2025 sessions begins on October 1. Information regarding the academy may be found on the City's website - click [HERE](#).

**Parks and Grounds** - Crews have completed the restoration of the Ponce de Leon fountain at Gilchrist Park. The base tile and fountain pumps have all been restored.



**Lot mowing** - The City will begin a new mowing cycle on April 22.

**Groundwater RO plant update** - Maximum total dissolved solids (TDS) allowable is 500 without a waiver. Our numbers are consistently way below the maximum allowable level with the R.O. Plant water in service.



**City Clerk: 2024 Election cycle** - The seats for Districts 1, 2, and 4 are scheduled for election this year. A general election will take place on November 5, if there are two candidates for one district. A primary election will take place on August 20, if we have three or more candidates for one district. The two candidates receiving the most votes would proceed on to the general election.

\* Candidate packets are now available for the 2024 election cycle. The packet can be viewed on the City Clerk page of the City website. Bound copies are available to interested parties who make an appointment with the City Clerk's Office to review the materials contained in the packet and to complete an acknowledgement of their receipt.

\* Filed candidates will be listed on the website upon submission of Form DS-DE 9.

**Update signature** - Did you know your signature can change over the years? Ensure the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections has an up-to-date record of your signature on file for the upcoming election. Stop by their office at 226 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda to update yours during regular business hours.

**Vote By Mail** - In order to vote by mail, you must have a valid request on file with the Supervisor of Elections Office. Requests for vote-by-mail ballots can be made in person, by calling 941-833-5400, or by visiting the Supervisor of Elections website - click [HERE](#).

**Board and committee vacancies: Volunteers needed** - Vacancies currently exist on the Building Board, Code Enforcement

**How did you become involved with volunteering on a City board?**  
After speaking during City Council public comments on a few utility related items, my former school teacher asked me if I would be interested in getting involved.

**What have you enjoyed about your experience as a board member?**  
Participating in a City address board was a change of perspective and gave me a greater appreciation of the hard work of City staff and the role of the Utility Advisory Board in helping the Council make the best decisions for the residents that are often not readily apparent from the news.

**What would you say to others considering applying to serve on a board?**  
The hardest part of participating on an advisory board is to do your homework between meetings. It takes time and effort to read and understand the issues and recommendations. Potential members should become familiar with a good understanding of the issues and should work collaboratively with other board members and staff to set forth recommendations for the collective good of the residents.

Interested in serving on a City board? [Apply on our website.](#)

Board, Historic Preservation Advisory Board, Donation Review Committee and Utility Advisory Board. If you are interested in applying for any position, please contact the City Clerk's office at 941-575-3369 or [pgclerk@cityofpuntagordafl.com](mailto:pgclerk@cityofpuntagordafl.com). You must complete an [Appointment Information Form](#) along with a resume and submit to the City Clerk's Office either in person to City Hall at 326 W. Marion Ave., or to email address above.

If you ever have a question you would like answered, please email me at [lmattthews@cityofpuntagordafl.com](mailto:lmattthews@cityofpuntagordafl.com). I respond to all emails that are personally directed to me, as long as the questions are not related to an upcoming public hearing. Elected officials are not permitted to discuss issues or offer opinions on items that will come before us for a vote. If I don't have the answers to your questions, I will get it for you.

Thanks for staying in touch with what's happening in Punta Gorda. I hope that you find this newsletter informative. If you would like to share it with others, please feel free to do so. If you know anyone else who may want to receive this, please have them email me their name, email address and zip code, and I'll be happy to add them to the distribution list. Also, if you change your email address, please let me know it is changed so you can continue to receive the newsletter - go to the bottom of the newsletter and "Update your preferences" to keep it current.

**A note to readers of this newsletter** - If you or your email server report my newsletter as having spammy content, it sends a message to Mail Chimp that you have not accepted receipt of the newsletter and it will automatically remove you from my subscriber list. Most of the time, this is unintentional. However if you somehow find you stop receiving it each week, this is the reason. Once you are removed from the database, you stop receiving it permanently. If I see that this happens, I will attempt one time to send you an email and let you know you need to accept a resubscribe request in order to get back into the database. Also, a few of my readers have experienced periodic problems with not receiving this newsletter. It seems that some of the virus prevention programs send the newsletter to spam from time to time, especially if the newsletter is lengthy. Please ensure you have the sending email address in your address book, which is [upstateone@comcast.net](mailto:upstateone@comcast.net). And if you suddenly stop receiving this, please be sure to check your spam folder. I never delete anyone from the subscriber list unless I am asked to do so. Apologies for any inconvenience.

If at any time, you would like to get in touch to ask a question, feel free to contact me.

**Lynne R. Matthews**

**Mayor, City of Punta Gorda**

**Punta Gorda City Council District 4**

[lmattews@cityofpuntagordaf1.com](mailto:lmattews@cityofpuntagordaf1.com)

and on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/lynnematthewspgcitycouncil/>



Florida's Harborside Hometown