

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

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The 2024 DARE program graduation ceremony  
at Sallie Jones Elementary School Friday morning.  
Photo provided by me.

**Here is your Weekly Highlights Report for May 17, 2024.**

**For the complete report from the City, click [HERE](#).**

**Sallie Jones Elementary School DARE graduation** - I had the honor of speaking at Friday morning's DARE graduation ceremony at Sallie Jones Elementary School here in Punta Gorda. These kids are all fifth graders who completed the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, headed up by our own Police Officer Joe Angelini, who serves as the school SRO officer. What a nice bunch of kids they are! Thanks to Principal Hoke and her entire staff, and to Officer Joe for offering this very important program. (photo at the top of this newsletter)

**Welcome home to Sgt. Brandon Rethmel and his family** - Saturday morning, I had the distinct pleasure of attending a kickoff event for Army Sgt. Rethmel and his wife Sylvia, as the Homes for our Troops organization handed over the keys for a newly built home that is completely ADA compliant. St. Rethmel served only a few days in Afghanistan in 2009, when a rocket hit his guard shack and he was severely injured. He lost his leg, and had severe injuries to his right arm. After numerous surgeries and physical



therapy at Walter Reed Medical Center, Brandon was able to recover. Thanks to HFOT, he now has a home that is fully accessible for him to use his wheelchair when he is unable to stand and walk around. It was truly an honor to speak at this event and to meet Brandon and Sylvia to welcome them to our community. Welcome home, soldier, and thank you for your service. In the photo is me, Sylvia, Brandon and Karen Whaley from Sen. Albritton's office.

**Re-election news** - I have been asked by many people if I am planning to run for re-election this year. The answer is yes, I am. I will be reaching out to the residents who have supported me in previous years to ask for your support once again. City Council qualifying is June 10 at noon to June 14 at noon. If you are a resident in my district and a registered voter in the City of Punta Gorda, I invite you to come to my petition signing event. If you would like to register for this, you must live in District 4 (mostly the southern half of PGI and BSI north of Monaco Dr.), please click [HERE](#) and I will add you to my invitation list. Please provide your name, address, email and a phone number. Details will be sent to you upon receipt regarding date, time and location. More information will be shared in coming weeks. Thank you all for your continued support.



**Hurricane tips** - Each year, I publish a list of hurricane tips I have compiled from living here over 27 years. I am happy to share this document with all of you, and thanks to the City for posting it on the City's website! Please stay safe this hurricane season. Hurricane season is soon upon us, so please be prepared! Click [HERE](#) for this year's tips!

**City Manager** - National Public Works Week is celebrated this week. In the City of Punta Gorda, the efforts of our Public Works staff are evident. Public Works staff is still dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. In the past couple of weeks, the wooden boxes in the downtown that look like Christmas packages were removed. They had covered the broken wayfinding poles. Both the boxes and the poles have been removed and the city is working towards installing new wayfinding signage. If you traveled past the post office after Hurricane Ian you likely noticed the large pile of Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) signage and poles from the hurricane destruction. The Public Works Department contacted FDOT to obtain permission to have city staff load up all of this debris and transport it to the Public Works yard for storage until they complete their replacement project. FDOT ultimately granted this permission, and the signs have been relocated to restore walkability in the downtown. There were also sections of sidewalk on East Olympia Ave. that suffered damage from the roots of city trees that fell during Hurricane Ian. FDOT first asked the city to repair these areas and then requested that the repairs be made as a joint project. Due to the delay in the process of a joint project, the city has moved ahead with replacing



sidewalks.

On a daily basis, the city Public Works staff has broad responsibilities. The Sanitation/Refuse Collection Division collects refuse and yard waste from approximately 12,150 residential accounts and performs approximately 660 services on commercial accounts. The yard waste is currently hauled to a private operation (SLD Landfill) in Punta Gorda, and the refuse is hauled to Charlotte County Landfill. The city's contractor Waste Management collects the recycling. A 48-gallon cart "single stream" curbside recycling program has been implemented for all residential units.

The Canal Maintenance Division is responsible for the maintenance of seawalls and dredging of canals located within the Burnt Store Isles and Punta Gorda Isles canal districts. Other duties include depression filling, seawall patching, cap patching, cap replacement, maintenance of aids to navigation, inspections, and related tasks.

The Engineering Division is responsible for drainage and stormwater management. They also design, serve as project management, and inspect the construction of Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). Infrastructure improvements and maintenance projects are led by Public Works staff. Engineering staff reviews commercial construction projects. Street lighting coordination, traffic signals, signs, and striping coordination are all functions of this division.

The Parks and Grounds Division is responsible for maintaining City parks, municipal grounds, downtown streetscape, street trees, playgrounds, tennis courts, pickle ball courts, city and community entrance features, and medians. Division responsibilities include irrigation design, installation and maintenance, herbicide spraying, fertilizing, cul-de-sac supply deliveries and all related tasks. They maintain 14 public buildings, 110 miles of seawall, 23 parks totaling 130 acres, and nine miles of Pathways (harborwalk, linear park, multi-use recreational trails).

Public Works professionals provide essential services that lead to healthier, happier, more vibrant communities. Thank you to all of our Public Works staff members for all of their efforts to preserve and enhance Punta Gorda's identity as a vibrant waterfront community, unique in character and history, and as a desirable place to live, work and visit. Readers may reach City Manager Greg Murray at [citymgr@cityofpuntagordafl.com](mailto:citymgr@cityofpuntagordafl.com) or by calling the main office line at 941-575-3302.

**Lawn watering** - Currently, residents are permitted to water lawns twice weekly, based on your street address. City Council will be discussing reducing that to once per week at the next Council meeting, to conserve water due to the excessive drought we've been having, and to ensure we have an ample supply of fresh water for our residents. In the meantime, here are some basic rules to follow in addition to the rules outlined in the link - Click [HERE](#) for the link:



\* Before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

\* Hand watering and micro-irrigation of plants (other than lawns) can be done on any day and at any time using a shut-off nozzle on their hose, so water isn't wasted.

**Florida sales tax holidays** - The Governor has once again signed a tax break package authorizing an annual sales tax holiday for Florida residents.

Hurricane supplies - June 1-14 and August 24-September 6 will be tax free for hurricane season supplies, such as tarps, batteries and flashlights.

Back to school - July 29-August 11. No tax on pens, pencils, computers, clothing priced at \$100 or less and other school supplies.

Tool savings - September 1-7, no sales tax on power tools, hand tools, toolboxes and other items.

Outdoor items - July 1-31, no sales tax on items such as fishing supplies, pool floats, outdoor equipment. Also, admissions to museums and state parks are sales tax free.

For more information, click [HERE](#).

**Lashley Park Splash Pad** - Construction continues at the Interactive Fountain area in

Lashley Park. This work includes rehabilitation and upgrades to the splash pad/play area. The shade structure support columns are being erected, and electrical work is beginning. 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 for 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.

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

\* Crews are removing dead trees on the east side of town on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and E. Charlotte Ave.

\* Crews are continuing to repair sidewalks on E. Olympia Ave. near Booth St.

\* Crews have completed the repair to the catch basin at the corner of E. Retta Esplanade and Booth St.

\* The catch basin on Milus St. next to the Harborwalk is being repaired. This should reduce the buildup of water collecting on E. Marion Ave. and Milus St.

**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

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| <b>Election Days</b><br>Presidential Preference Primary Election: March 19, 2024<br>Primary Election: August 20, 2024<br>General Election: November 5, 2024  | <b>Early Voting Dates</b><br>Presidential Preference Primary Election: March 4-17, 2024<br>Primary: August 5-16, 2024<br>General: October 21-November 3, 2024  |
| <b>New Registration/Party Affiliation Change Deadline!</b><br>Punta Gorda City Election: October 10, 2023<br>Presidential Preference Primary Election: February 20, 2024<br>Primary Election: July 22, 2024<br>General Election: October 7, 2024 | <b>Vote by Mail Dates</b><br>(P.S. 101.62)<br>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. |

at both the City and County level. Here are some important dates to put on your 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 24 projects in Punta Gorda Isles under construction with 83 projects completed, and 10 projects under construction with 17 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 is one from this week:

*I saw someone post on social media that you "scolded" someone at the Council meeting for clapping after a citizen comment? Why did you single that person out for clapping? Since I serve as the presiding officer of the Council meetings, I have the fiduciary and legal responsibility of keeping order in the Council Chamber. Part of that is to read into the record housekeeping notes that the City requires me to read. To clarify, yes, we do allow applause during the awards and recognitions portion of the meeting and while proclamations are read. However immediately after that, before public comments are allowed to commence, I am required to read the housekeeping notes...which I did. At that time, there is also a large screen behind me that has all of that same information up on the screen. When a resident (who coincidentally is now my opponent in the upcoming election) got up to voice comments and while doing so, twirled around at the podium talking to the audience, another resident (who happens to be the wife of another City Council opponent) clapped. My response: "Please, no applause. I'm sorry." And now, on social media I am being accused of scolding the person who clapped, when clearly there are rules of decorum that were not followed. I've also been accused on that same thread of not being patriotic! SHAME on those who have said that! My grandfather, my father, my first husband (God rest his soul) and my current husband all served in the military, my current husband served in the U.S. Air Force in Vietnam. I currently serve as the president of the board for the Military Heritage Museum. So please do not ever accuse me of being unpatriotic! Nothing could be further from the truth. I was just doing my job. Rant over!*

*Thank you for not listening to the attorneys for the receivership and denying the extension for property bought by Jon Larmore. I watched the Council session You Tube. Council left the door open for these attorneys to come back before August 22, 2024 and ask for extension. The receiver seemed to imply that he may have to go to the judge to talk about this and thus implied that the judge has jurisdiction over this matter. I believe the receiver attorney is attempting to bully and intimidate you. Please do not cave in and grant the extension. Your agreement was made almost 9 years ago. Remember, lawyers are trained to talk out of either side of their mouths even for the most dastardly of situations. One option I see is to deny any extension and tell the receiver that they can tell any potential buyer that they can negotiate with the city for the purchase or lease of that land for a huge parking garage or the like. We had to give the attorneys the date of August 22, 2024, as per the terms of the amended contract they have with the City. Otherwise, we would have immediately invoked our legal rights to basically revoke the agreement and take the land*

back. I don't know how serious they are about asking us again, but I also don't believe the Council will support an extension, based on this week's conversation. The attorneys argued that there were two acts of God that occurred during the last few years that prevented the owner from developing the property as per the land purchase agreement. I argued back that the owner had at least five years before COVID or hurricanes or anything else. We have had well over 100 residential homes and dozens of commercial properties built in our City since 2015, so that was not a viable excuse. We will have the right to execute the reverter clause in the agreement, and upon doing so, we will once again own the vacant parcels at Fishermen's Village and they will need to pay the City lease payments once again, as they did before 2015's land purchase agreement if that happens. If the property is sold to someone else, the new owner would need to re-negotiate an agreement with the City in the future. More to come on this!

*I have been trying to get an update on the lock widening project between Alligator Creek and BSI. I have contacted Public Works a few times with no response. The project is way behind. Can you update us?* The City Manager provided the response to this question: FEMA and the IAN seawall replacement has just consumed staff resources for the last year and a half that this one hasn't been completed with all the necessary activity in the canal system. The number one priority has been to get the seawalls repaired and supply FEMA with the requested info to acquire funding, which still has not been obligated. For the lock widening project, adjustments to bid language were started by Cathy Miller and BSI Canal Advisory Board Chairman Rick Daugherty is engineer qualified and volunteered his time to provide us with comments on this also. The BSI advisory board is helping to get the contract proposal back on the streets for bidding. The hope is to have a package back to procurement within the next 30 days so that they can work on getting this again. I think a reasonable estimate of start date would be by October because the BSI seawall repairs should be near completion by then.

If you ever have a question you would like answered, please email me at [lmattews@cityofpuntagordafl.com](mailto:lmattews@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:**

May 18, Mental Health Walk, Laishley Park, for more information contact

[kpomerville@cbhcf.org](mailto:kpomerville@cbhcf.org)

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](#).

May 25 - Downtown Bash. For information, click [HERE](#). contact [jwright@puntagorda-chamber.com](mailto:jwright@puntagorda-chamber.com)

May 27 - Memorial Day 5K, Laishley Park. For information, contact

[acappuccilli@ymcaswfl.org](mailto:acappuccilli@ymcaswfl.org)

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:**

**Police Week 2024** - In 1962, President Kennedy proclaimed May 15, as National Peace Officers Memorial Day and the calendar week in which May 15 falls as National Police Week. Established by a joint resolution of Congress in 1962, National Police Week pays special recognition to law enforcement officers who lost their lives in the line of duty for the safety and protection of others. On May 1, the Punta Gorda City Council proclaimed May 12 to 18 as Police Week in Punta Gorda. While Police Week is primarily meant to be a time to honor those officers who made the ultimate sacrifice with memorial services, we also realize that many people take this opportunity to



show their support for law enforcement. Citizens often bring treats and notes of appreciation for the officers. This year, Congressman Greg Steube's office sent several boxes of donuts to the police department to show his support.

**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. The exam will be held virtually between June 14 and June 21. Applications must be received by June 7.

**Internship program** - The police department is currently accepting internship applications for the fall of 2024 and spring of 2025 semesters. 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: Fire rescue training** This week fire department crews participated in a multi-jurisdictional training module with Charlotte County Fire Rescue training on search and rescue techniques in a large commercial structure. Crews used an old Sears at the Murdock Mall to conduct the training. They used ropes, thermal imaging cameras and additional equipment to set up search grids to find victims who had been overcome by smoke in these large open buildings. Crews also had to overcome communication and equipment issues that departments from different entities have to deal with. Departments that share common neighborhoods must train regularly.



We were also able to send three of our future leaders to a week-long Fire Officer Development Academy hosted by Charlotte County Fire Rescue. Firefighters Rhett Anderson, CW McLeod and Kyle Raymond volunteered to put themselves through this rigorous program to prepare themselves for future advancement within the ranks. They also were



treated to many guest speakers within the County government to give them a better understanding of the inner workings of the department and County government. This invaluable experience will serve them well when they are called upon in the future to lead.

**Planning Corner:** Within the Special Residential Overlay District (SRO), which includes Punta Gorda Isles, Burnt Store Isles and Burnt Store Meadows, parking on the grass, front or side yards, is prohibited. All vehicles must be parked properly upon the driveway or in the garage. Chapter 26, Section 3.13, (i). Parking on Developed Property. No vehicle may be parked in the front, side or rear yard of any developed property zoned for residential purposes, except in those areas designated as parking strips, drives or paved areas on the plot plan of the approved building plans and specifications for such property.



The overnight parking of commercial vehicles is prohibited at all residentially zoned properties throughout the City. Chapter 26, Section 8.10 (b) It shall be unlawful for any person, company or corporation to park trucks, recreational vehicles or trailers which have multiple axles (or two rear wheels per side) overnight on public or private property, in other than SP Zoning Districts for which a valid Local Business Tax Receipt has been issued for vehicle storage.

If an alleged violation (parking on the grass or commercial vehicle parking) occurs during normal business hours, the complainant can contact the Code Compliance office at 941-575-3352, however the complainant needs to be aware that anonymous complaints can no longer be submitted, (Florida Statute 162, 162.06(1)(b) and 162.21(3)(b), adopted July 1, 2021). If the violation is after normal business hours, the non-emergency police number can be used, 941-639-4111.

**Sanitation: Trash, recycling and yard waste must be placed curbside by 6 a.m. on the day of collection** - Our sanitation workers strive to maintain a routine in which residents would be serviced roughly around the same time each collection day. However, sanitation encounters problems from time to time such as trucks being down for service, staffing issues or weather conditions. In order to maintain the best level of service, we kindly ask residents to have trash, yard waste and recycling curbside either the night before or prior to 6 a.m. on the day of service. Staff is not always available to return the same day to collect a late put-out during these instances. Thank you for your continued cooperation. For more information regarding solid waste, click [HERE](#).

**Loose yard waste clamshell collection delays** - Due to the enormous amounts of requests and limited staff, loose yard waste collection with the clamshell truck might be delayed. If you have a landscaper that maintains the property, please ask them to haul away the debris. Most reputable companies haul away the debris themselves. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

**Small loose yard waste** - Palm fronds, limbs, and other debris must be cut into four foot

sections and tied or bundled for collection. The bundle must not exceed 35 pounds. Staff has brochures that are left for residents that are unaware of the guidelines. If your debris is left with a brochure, please follow the instructions for next yard waste collection. The rules have NOT changed.

**Yard waste containers** - Small loose yard waste, leaves and grass clippings may be placed inside of a container or paper bag. Containers should not exceed 32-gallons in size or weigh more than 35 pounds and must have handles. We would prefer the containers to have a lid, wheels and metal bar across the front to be compatible with the tippers on the trucks. If your yard waste container is not picked up on your regular yard waste day, please check the weight. It is commonly left behind if the crew members are unable to safely lift the container and it exceeds the weight limitations.

**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. A skilled laborer position responsible for maintenance and repair of water treatment plant equipment and systems. Perform plumbing repairs, construction and maintenance of treatment facilities and grounds. The City of Punta Gorda has a variety of employment opportunities available learn more by clicking [HERE](#).

JOIN OUR TEAM

**The American crocodile** - Alligators have inhabited Florida's marshes, swamps, rivers, and lakes for many centuries and are found in all 67 counties. In recent years, Florida has experienced tremendous human population growth. Many residents seek waterfront homes and increasingly participate in water-related activities. This can result in more frequent alligator-human interactions and a greater potential for conflict.



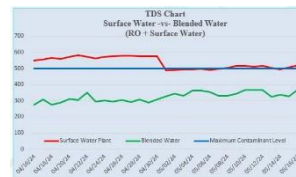
American crocodiles are primarily found in south Florida, living in brackish and saltwater habitats such as ponds, coves, and creeks of mangrove swamps. Recently, crocodiles have moved northward within their range and even inland into freshwater areas of southeast Florida. The American crocodile is an endangered species success story. Since 1975, their numbers have increased from less than 300 to more than 2,000 adult crocodiles. Today, they are classified as a threatened species. The number of crocodile complaints has risen as a result of their recovery and the increasing number of people living and recreating in south Florida.

- \* Keep a safe distance if you see an alligator and never feed one. When fed, alligators can lose their natural wariness and instead learn to associate people with the availability of food.
- \* Swim only in designated swimming areas during daylight hours. Alligators are most active between dusk and dawn.
- \* Keep pets on a leash and away from the water's edge and never let them swim in fresh or brackish water. Pets often resemble alligators' natural prey.
- \* Call the FWC's Nuisance Alligator Hotline at 866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286) if you

believe an alligator poses a threat to people, pets or property and the FWC will dispatch a contracted nuisance alligator trapper to resolve the situation. The FWC places the highest priority on public safety and administers a Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) to proactively address alligator threats in developed areas, while conserving alligators in areas where they naturally occur.

**Lot mowing** - The City will begin a new mowing cycle on May 20.

**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.



**Welcome to new or transferred businesses in the City this week** - Kahala Vacation Rental, 2201 W. Marion Avenue.

**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, Burnt Store Isles Canal Advisory Committee, Code Enforcement Board, Historic Preservation Advisory Board, Donation Review Committee, Planning Commission 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**

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



Punta Gorda

Florida's Harborside Hometown