

Update From City Hall

As most of you know we lost the Fire Station in the rising water from Hurricane Ian. Rather than just replace Station 60 Mayor Grimm asked the legislative delegation to request funding for an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to be constructed on the site of Station 60 but to be built above flood plain to house both the fire and EMS crews and serve as our EOC for all of our first responders. The budget request from Senator Kathleen Passidomo and Representative Lauren Melo was for \$13 million. After the conclusion of the Legislative session we received a call from Senator Passidomo on June 5th that the EOC was on the Governor's Veto List. Senator Passidomo explained that there were two issues, the first being some lingering concern about our performance by the previous administration and the second was the staff recommending no EOC's for municipalities. She also cautioned that we needed to act quickly since Governor DeSantis was likely to return at any time from his Presidential Campaign and sign the Veto List. Dottie and I immediately got on the phone to Daniel Magro, the sub contractor with CPH who contacted FDEP to assure the Governor's staff that the current administration was performing well and meeting all our obligations. Next, I contacted Casey Cook, the chief lobbyist for the Florida League of Cities and asked him to contact Chris Spencer of the Governors staff and explain that while we will be the landlord for the EOC it will be completely staffed by County and Fire District employees. City Attorney Zach Lombardo reached out to County Manager Amy Donovan for the County's support and I contacted Chief Stephanie Spell to request Sheriff Rambosk's support. The Sheriff's department explained both our distance from the County EOC and reminded the staff that the first responders in Station 60 covered all the way to the Dade County line. On June 15th Mayor Grimm received a call from Representative Melo and I received a text from Senator Passidomo that our EOC had been removed from the Veto List and we would be receiving the funds to construct our EOC. To put it in basketball terms, we put on a full court press and in 10 days managed to save this project which is so important not only to the residents of Everglades City but to all of our surrounding neighbors. We owe a great deal of thanks to all the individuals mentioned above but particularly to Senator Passisomo for alerting us to the possibility that our project was at risk of the veto pen.

We are currently researching a design build approach and the Mayor and Dottie have already visited the recently built Immokalee station and planning on visiting the Fort Myer Shores station to gather recommendations for our project