

Hendry-Glades SUNDAY NEWS

25 cents

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*“The state has not funded us enough money to add S.R.Os.
“You’re not going to know who these people are. I guarantee we have enough veterans, we have enough law enforcement retired personnel, and people who have been in this business, to go into this business.
“Even then, they have a right to say ‘no, I don’t want to do it.’ I have personally taken myself out because I want everybody to know that if they say, ‘No,’ it’s okay. The superintendent’s not doing it, so if I don’t want to do it, it’s okay.’
“But if the state says there’s funding, and the state can’t even give us enough money to buy the textbooks we need, if the state gives us money for S.R.Os, the Guardian Program’s ‘toast.’”
—Hendry County
Supt. of Schools Paul Puletti*



Benefactor pays for septic service

SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY NEWS

HOOKERS POINT, FL (Thursday, April 12, 2018) --- With no sign of action by the county administration of Charles Chapman, a private anonymous donation was made today to pay for septic service at the home of an octogenarian resident, living alone with septic system malfunction, who had resorted to hand-servicing it with a bucket.

Neighbors of the resident in Ridgdill Subdivision had made known to Hendry County government in writing months ago, and in person Tuesday at a commissioners meeting, that their neighbor was still posing a health hazard.

County Admin. Charles Chapman, whose government first received written notice of it last July, said he would attend to it, following expressions of indignation by the commissioners.

County takes no note of septic overflow, despite complaints, over six months



Flat ungrassy area at center, with bucket at left, where Hookers Point resident cared for septic overflow by hand

to learn. For such a tiny government, Chapman is permitted by county commissioners to do an extraordinary amount of ‘delegating.’

Emblidge is supervised, but apparently at a comfortable distance, by Chapman who by choice or convenience, is the model of ‘hands-off administration that can barely be called ‘management.’

A septic problem raising complaints six months long in the county is a problem being ignored, not attributable to a ‘management style’ or by ‘mistake,’ it is symptomatic of no management at all.

Concerns raised by Commissioners tonight each had some truth, but once again none produced any unanimity for action, nor did Chapman call for it: Darrell Harris correctly identified the problem as a failure to bring in the Health department. Commissioner Mitchell Wills speculated that code enforcement staff hadn’t been properly managed. Commissioner Mike Swindle declared that such matters undermine major efforts at development.

BY RAOUL BATALLER

HOOKERS POINT, FL (Tuesday, April 10, 2018) — An octogenarian resident living here alone with septic system malfunction, whose struggles at hand-servicing it with a bucket were long ago made known to Hendry County government in writing, still is posing a health hazard, neighbors reported tonight to County commissioners.

County Admin. Charles Chapman sat by silently as county commissioner after commissioner expressed indignation, then at the end Chapman said he would attend to it.

Failure to react so long to word of a septic health hazard would normally appear symptomatic of sluggish commissioners and/or their sluggish staff, or both, ceasing all but routines of government management.

If such a thing exists as a kind of county policy of rarely acting on a project the commissioners themselves initiated of their own volition, it’s here. These county commissioners can point to precious little they can say they themselves initiated that ever reached the level of County wide unanimity.

Communication failures can’t be attributed to there being too many layers of supervision, which are minimal. If there’s anything too much of it’s systemic verbiage soothing elected officials to crawl into their jobs and repose there.

After Hendry commissioners’ long unproductive history of either divisiveness or indifference to each other’s district’s issues, they’ve settled comfortably after five years with a staff administrator skilled at verbiage, a government generalist professional with the executive secretary’s slick

veneer, and a verbose vocabulary that easily subdues his commissioners.

Explanations come of why there’s remained unchanged residential conditions allowing too many farm workers per room, or why Hurricane Irma communications were a debacle, or the inexplicable, finding an old man living alone who goes out to his overflowing septic tank carrying an empty bucket.

The commissioners went last week as a delegation to meet their counterparts in a ‘can-do’ county, Glades with its new facilities in need of skilled development, and arrived in Glades conspicuously empty-handed, except for some cash. Having wasted an estimated \$2 million over two decades on flawed and fruitless programs for Hendry County’s own sluggish economic development, with today nothing to show for all that money. Commissioners took no note this year as Hendry county’s Economic Development council, a creation of the County commissioners, threw in the towel entirely, phased out and converted itself into a grant-writing office.

But a chronic septic overflow problem should get swift referral to the Health department inspector without the communication

becoming lost in other paperwork.

A small handful of people, some well paid, are tasked with Hendry County code enforcement. The reports-of-call filed by code enforcement employees apparently go no farther than to their supervisor, planning/zoning director Margaret Emblidge. She joined the county staff several years ago and is not completely familiar with some neighborhoods. Hendry county is substantially different from Emblidge’s prior assignments and takes time



An instance of flushing two dozen second-story occupants of a building on fire two years ago, the Sweet Town Cafe, in Clewiston, above, prompted County Commissioner Karson Turner to press for a countywide effort to find and control overcrowded housing. Other commissioners were indifferent, County staff threw in the towel and cooperative efforts with Clewiston languished, leaving slum conditions in town (below) more crowded than ever.



SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY NEWS

LaBELLE, FL, High School (Monday, April 9, 2018) — More than 300 community parents and teachers conducted tonight a two-hour Q&A on training and arming school district staff including remarks by fifth grade Hendry County teacher, Bret Mayo, above, who is an active duty soldier as well.

Mayo had been in “many, many” gunfights, “and there is only one thing that stops a man with a gun; that’s another person with a gun,” he declared. “I’m a teacher; I taught this morning. I taught fifth grade math; I taught the heck out of it. Two weeks from now, I’ll be jumping out of an airplane into the water in the middle of the night with an automatic weapon, and scuba diving up to a banyan and simulating engaging an enemy that we’re training to defeat if they so happen to reach our shores.

“We do have students with needs, and as a teacher I want to provide for those needs. And as a soldier, I want to protect the citizens of my country.

“Now will you tell me, or can anyone tell me, at what point in the day do I leave being a teacher and transition into being a soldier? Where does one end and the other begin? I’m trained in both. Superintendent Puletti and Sheriff Whidden agree. You’ve got to be willing, you’ve got to be able.

Mayo pointed to the plans of the course of training for school ‘guardians.’ “I look at that syllabus, and not everyone is going to make it. I guarantee you, not everyone’s going to make it. I remember, I wonder if anybody does, *The Green Berets? One hundred men will test today, but only one will win the green beret.*

“There are a lot of people who want the power, or whatever. Those are not the people who are going to make it through that program — I guarantee you. I guarantee that from experience . . . my experience as a soldier.”



In Clewiston, nearly 100 royal palms being trucked in over a week ago to line Rte 27 funded entirely by a grant