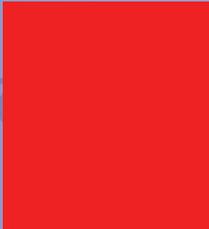




Hardee County

Annual Report 2007/2008
Creating A New Foundation
for Today's Challenges



Pride



Excellence



Heritage



Courtesy



Efficiency



Service



Honor



Teamwork



County Commissioners

Minor L. Bryant

District I

Clifton N. Timmerman

District II

Gordon R. Norris

District III

Bobby R. Smith, Chairman

District IV

Dale A. Johnson

District V

Lex Albritton
County Manager



Ken Evers
County Attorney

Annual Report prepared by the Office of
Management and Budget

Janice Williamson, Director of Finance
Aimee Smith, Budget Specialist

664

Messages from the

"Hardee County made great strides in 2008 and I was proud to be a part of it. While the days ahead will be difficult, I look forward to 2009 with great expectation of some smart growth."

-Minor Bryant, District I

"I maintain my commitment to make sure the growth that is coming to Hardee County is done in a well-planned and orderly fashion. It is vital that we continue to expand the employment opportunities available to our citizens and focus on further development in the county. I look forward to continuing my service to the citizens of Hardee County."



-Dr. Nick Timmerman, District II

"External forces have caused internal changes in Hardee County's budget process. As Commissioners we must address needs first and wishes second if our budget allows. The road map for recovery is not clear, local governments rising costs, increased service demands, and reduced resources place challenges for the upcoming year."



-Gordon Norris, District III

County Commissioners

"We have a good management team in place. The system is constantly changing for the better.

I will continue to do my very best to spend your tax dollars wisely to make sure our government operates efficiently and fairly to provide honesty and integrity and leadership to the best of my ability. Hardee County will remain a great place to live and play. I promise!"



-Dale Johnson, District IV

"It is our role as Commissioners to provide the leadership, services, and infrastructure needed to maintain the health, welfare, and safety of all Hardee County's residents. Accordingly, my top priority continues to be the support of commercial, residential, and economic development. I believe the completion of the four-laning of Highway 17 is an integral part of this mission and I will continue to fight for this until it is complete."

634 Bobby Smith, District V

A Message from the County Manager



Dear Fellow Citizens:

We are pleased to present the 2008 Hardee County Annual Report. It is the goal of this document to inform the citizens of Hardee County of the accomplishments of County Government over the past year. In these pages, you can see what your government is doing for you and your neighbors.

Hardee County was affected by the slowing of the national economy, and property values began to decline in FY 08. Like other local governments in the region and across the country, we faced major fiscal challenges to continue to provide vital public services to a growing community in the face of a declining revenue base.

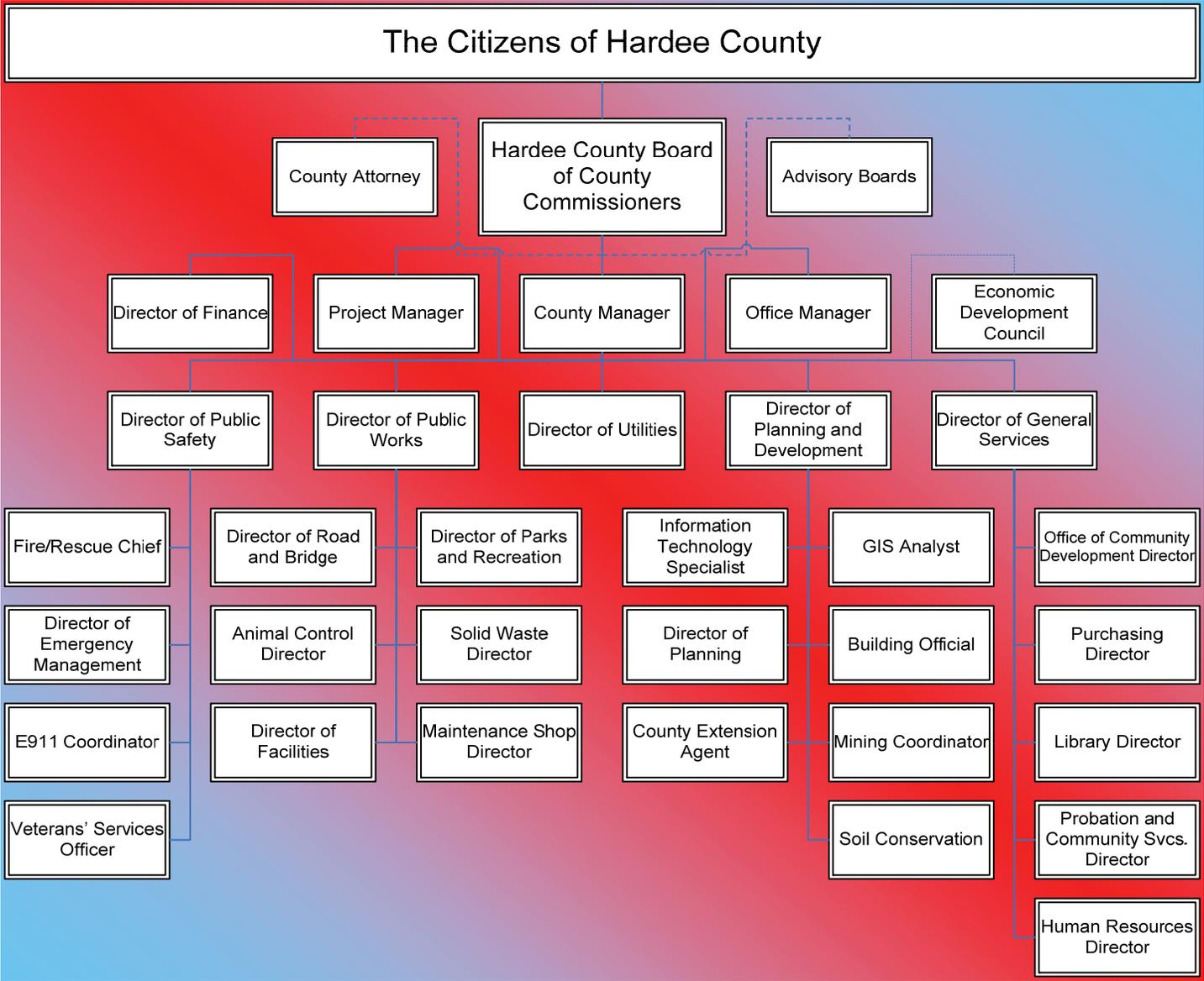
The Department Heads have answered the challenge and done a tremendous job of saving money while maintaining the quality of service in their respective areas. As County Manager, I applaud the efforts of the staff in dealing with this task.

As we continue to serve the needs of the community, we are also continuing to provide the infrastructure to encourage economic development. Even though there continues to be much talk concerning growth and specific land use changes in both the areas of industry and residential development, it has not, at this point, occurred. Previously, much of the delay was due to the lack of water and wastewater capacity, but great strides in this area over the past year; we have connected five commercial operations to the Wauchula Hills Collection and Distribution Center and increased the wastewater capacity at this facility 3-fold. However, it is now the downturn in the economy that is the main hindrance to this growth. Nevertheless, we are continuing to seek and receive allocations from the state to prepare for development to occur.

This year we will continue to work diligently on enhancing economic development opportunities for our community and continue to serve the citizens of Hardee County. As you read this report, we hope that you will be pleased by all that we have accomplished over the past year. By working together and staying focused, we will continue to ensure that the needs of the community are being met while maintaining the values that make Hardee County a great place to live and work.

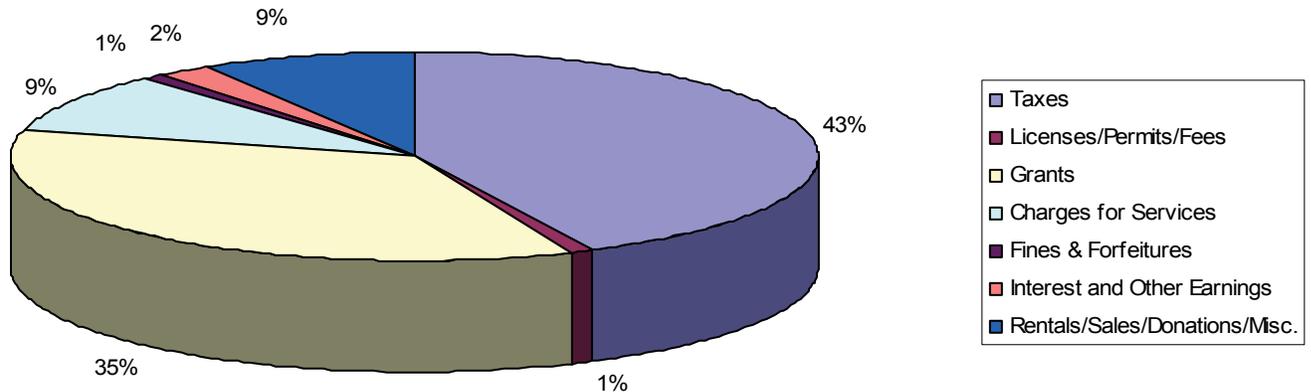
Sincerely,

Hardee County Government Organizational Chart

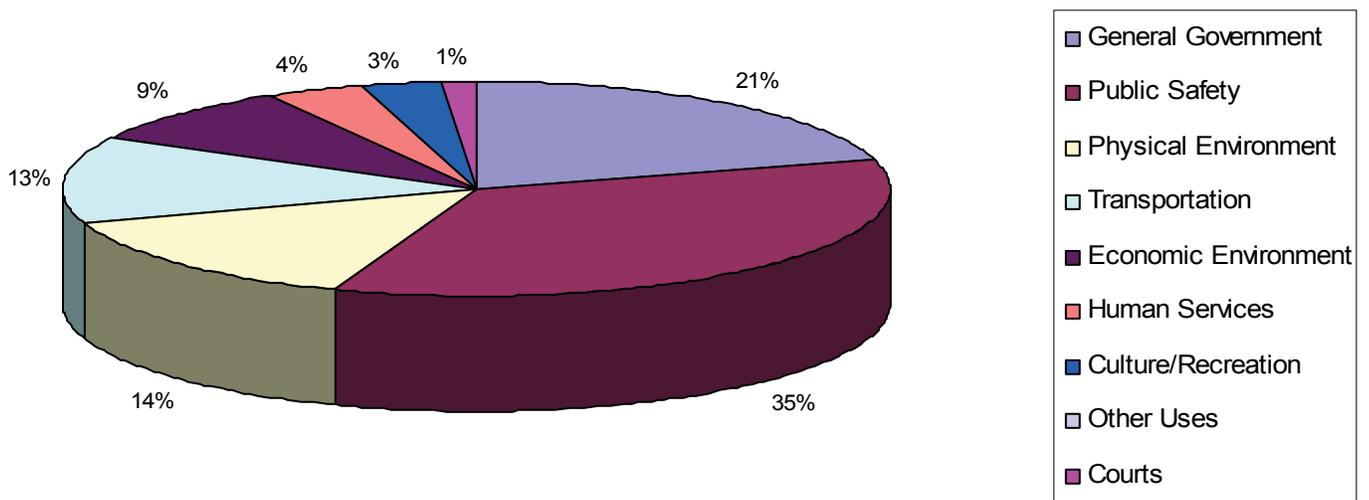


2007/2008 Financial Information

County Revenues



County Expenditures



Special Profiles

Employee of the Year:

Hinton Shackelford



Hinton “Shack” Shackelford was a faithful employee of the BOCC for nearly 22 years when he retired in December. As the Assistant Park Manager, he helped to oversee many of the events that take place in the County’s parks, and his knowledge and dedication showed in his work. While we will miss him, we are glad to honor him for all his hard work and wish him a peaceful retirement!

In Memoriam:

Mary Nicholson



Mary Nicholson spent 14 years as a dedicated employee of the County. We lost her to cancer November 19, 2008, but her warmth and kindness will live on in everyone she knew. We were lucky to have her as a colleague and a friend, and she will be missed by all.

Purchasing

The Purchasing Department is staffed by the Procurement Director, Senior Buyer, Purchasing Specialist and Store Manager, with a combined total of more than 45 years of public procurement experience. This department provides procurement services to the entire County, constantly striving to obtain the best value for the taxpayer's dollars.

The earliest known purchase order was issued between 2400 and 2800 B.C. Archaeologists in Syria found a red clay tablet ordering 50 jars of fragrant smooth oil for the price of 600 small weight in grain.

- Procurement activities as follows:
- Processed less than 3,000 requisitions, a 13% reduction from the past fiscal year
- Issued less than 2,500 purchase orders, a 16% decrease from the past fiscal year.
- Processed 3,600 invoices, a 28% reduction from the past fiscal year
- Administered 3,500 purchases made by credit card, a 12.5% decrease from the past fiscal year.

The Purchasing Department is charged with the responsibility of fairly and equitably awarding contracts for materials and services in excess of \$25,000 through the formal Invitation to Bid and Request for Proposals process.

As dictated by the economic restrictions forced upon us by our nation's financial crisis, during the past fiscal year Purchasing issued only 10 formal bids for goods and services, down from 32 in fiscal 2006-2007.

With increased focus on efforts to reduce spending, Purchasing reacted by reducing



Human Resources

The Human Resources Department ensures that employment practices and benefits of Hardee County's employees are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Board.

They provide support and guidance to all County Departments to ensure the



employees of the County are treated with fairness and have safe working environments.

HR consists of three full time positions that spend countless hours ensuring payroll is completed bi-weekly, labor issues are addressed and properly handled, as well as all types of insurance claims.

Some of the tasks that were accomplished by the HR Staff include:

Human Resources (cont.)

- Advertised 29 job openings
- Received 390 applications for employment
- Conducted 64 interviews for employment
- Hired 23 new employees
- Prepared 26 payrolls for BOCC staff
- Implemented compassionate leave program
- Investigated and filed 18 worker's comp. claims
- Investigated and filed 7 liability claims
- Investigated and filed 1 property claim
- Ratified two Union contracts
- Conducted annual health and benefit fair
- Initiated routine office visits to various County offices to assist in any H.R. issues that may arise
- Balanced 12 months of payroll deductions for payment

Office of Management & Budget

The OMB is staffed by the OMB Director and three Specialists responsible for Budget, Fixed Assets, and Special Assessments. This department is the County's point of contact for all budget issues, including preparation of the County Budget, revenue and expenditure forecasting, monitoring the Board's debt schedule, monitoring funds, and estimating cash balances.

In addition, this department has managed and recorded Fixed Assets to comply with Government Accounting Standards requirements and collected interim revenues and revised the tax roll as necessary for Special Assessments. Accomplishments for the OMB include:

- Led budget, asset management, and software workshops for County employees
- Processed 296 transfers and 48 budget amendments to meet each departments funding need and maintained a balanced budget
- Processed 91 requests for hardship exemptions, 160 certificates of occupancy and 171 pre-determinations for Special Assessments

- Improved the budgeting process through further development of budgeting procedures
- Enhanced the detailed budget document by adding additional historical and projection data
- Collected \$7,033.66 in interim billings for Special Assessments
- Inventoried over \$100 million in County's Fixed Assets
- Created a budget presentation document as a tool to increase public awareness and knowledge of the budget process and financial health of the County.



Information Technology Services



The IT Department is responsible for maintenance and upgrade of various county computer and telephone systems. It is also responsible for

maintaining and upgrading wireless connectivity to all the remote offices belonging to the BOCC, as well as updating the BOCC website. Accomplishments for the IT Department include:

- Installation and migration to a SAN (Storage

Area Network) to ensure data continuity and integrity, as well as ensuring disaster recovery for critical systems

- Implementation of a virtual server environment, in an effort to reduce capital costs of equipment and save energy
- Finished all required upgrades for the Fire Rescue Department to meet their National Emergency Medical Services Information Systems compliance standards
- Established system for remote connectivity to critical network systems during the event of a disaster

Geographic Information Systems



Through continued use of sub-meter GPS (Global Positioning System) equipment, the GIS Department continues to improve the accuracy of existing maps, and create new map data and digital management systems of drainage inventory (culverts, bridges, etc), fire hydrants, communication towers, landmarks, and other infrastructure.

GIS project support has been provided to Addressing, Pioneer Park Days, Emergency Management, Economic Development, Utilities, Engineering, and other County departments

During 07/08, the GIS Department updated and began the creation, debugging, and launch

of the new “Land Resource Data” website.

GIS provides digital tools that abstract and organize geospatial data, model geographic processes, and visualize these data and models with advanced computer techniques.

GIS has evolved into a technology that can help people plan, design, engineer, build, and maintain information infrastructures that improve our everyday lives.

On any given day, more than two million people around the world use GIS to improve the way their organizations see customers, evaluate situations, and conduct business.

Emergency Management

The mission of Hardee County Emergency Management is to safeguard and protect the lives and property of Hardee County citizens by preparing for, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating against natural and man-made disasters. Some notable accomplishments for Emergency Management include:

- Delivered 10 public education seminars providing education on natural and man-made disasters
- Prepared cold-weather and hurricane shelters
- Conducted annual hurricane exercise
- Conducted full-scale activation for Tropical Storm Fay
- Held 3rd annual Hazardous Weather Awareness contest for students in Hardee County Schools
- Designed and conducted a tabletop exercise on the impact of a tornado for the Hardee County School Board
- Distributed over 100 All-Hazards Alert Radios
- Installed a fully integrated weather station and post real-time weather data to the EM webpage
- Developed a Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan
- Developed a Comprehensive Debris



Management Plan

- Responded to 20 requests for assistance from other public safety agencies
- Our department also utilized over \$57,000 in state and federal grant funds to accomplish the following projects:
 - Upgrade security camera system in the EOC
- Purchased deployable security barriers
- Conducted a multi-discipline, full-scale exercise simulating active shooters at a local school, involving over 250 first responders, participants, and volunteers
- Provided basic and advanced Incident Command Systems training for first responders, public works, and leadership staff.
- Emergency Management Department Staff had several significant accomplishments during FY 07-08, including:
 - EM Coordinator certified as Child Safety Seat Installation Technician
 - Director appointed to Florida Emergency Preparedness Association Certification Commission
 - Director was a featured speaker at Florida Emergency Preparedness Association conference, Public Risk Management Conference, and the Crisis and Planning Management Conference

Enhanced 9-1-1

Hardee County E9-1-1 Office administers the Hardee County 9-1-1 Program in accordance with the state laws and the rules governing the program, thus making 9-1-1 service universally available and as effective as possible in providing immediate citizen access to

emergency services, thereby saving time for the caller, and assisting emergency services in their response activities. The E9-1-1 Coordinator is the addressing authority for all addresses within Hardee County and maintains the addressing database.

Enhanced 9-1-1 (cont.)

Some notable accomplishments for this department include:

- The backup Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) is fully equipped and operational for 9-1-1 services. This system is at the Wauchula Police department and will provide a backup dispatch in the event our primary dispatch has to evacuate for a major reason.
- Conducted a full scale evacuation exercise to backup dispatch. This was a success and will be conducted periodically to ensure our confidence in our Disaster Recovery Plan.

E 9-1-1 also utilized over \$256,000 in state

grant funds to accomplish the following projects:

- Installed new VIPER 9-1-1 equipment in our backup Public Safety Answering Point
- Purchased maintenance agreements on the new equipment and the logging recorder
- Provided training for 9-1-1 Coordinator and a Dispatch Supervisor on current and future issues involving 9-1-1

For 2007/2008 66.8% of 9-1-1 calls in Hardee County originated on cell phones.

Fire Rescue

The Fire and EMS services are combined into one department operating separate budgets for each. We are involved in much more than just fighting fires and answering medical calls, we ensure life safety for every county resident as well as the protection of their property.

The National Incident Fire Reporting Systems (NIFRS) year end call volume data for 2007 breaks down into the following:

Fire Calls	272
Overpressure/Explosion	2
Rescue/EMS	2,832
Hazardous Condition	108
Service Call	110
Good Intent	382
False Alarm/False Call	137
Special	11
Other/Unclassified	75



an average of 6% increase in calls so far for calendar year 2008.

Other notables include:

- Hardee County Fire Rescue received the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) Grant allowing for the purchase of 3 Thermal Imaging Cameras
- The Fire Prevention Division has successfully facilitated all mandated fire prevention practices within all schools and daycares located in Hardee County.
 - The Fire Inspector has also been able to visit several of the businesses located within Hardee County to ensure all patrons' life safety is being safeguarded. All of this while participating in the Developmental Review Committee, reading all new construction plans and making on-site inspections to all new construction properties

Comparative call volumes as of 10/01/08 equals

Animal Control

During this fiscal year Animal Control impounded 1,197 animals. There were 893 animals euthanized, 134 adopted, and 101 redeemed by their owners. The revenue generated from adoptions, donations, impoundment fees, boarding fees, and reimbursements was \$9,669.76. Services provided by Animal Control include the following:

- A surrender service at no charge to the public. There were 394 animals surrendered to Animal Control in the 2007-2008 fiscal year.
- Collaboration with Desoto County Animal Services and Hardee Animal Clinic to have 16 animals transferred to their shelter/clinic.
- Assistance to the Hardee County Sheriff's Department, Town of Zolfo Springs and City of Wauchula on an as needed basis.

Animal Control responded to 1,119 complaints and issued 108 citations for 2007/2008.



Animal Control has seen a decrease in donations, such as food for the animals which adds cost to the operating budget. Staff has been working diligently on posting animals on pet finder and doing a pet of the week for the local paper. Staff has also done a couple of

newspaper articles on how low our adoption rates are, how the public can become responsible pet owners, and what local and state laws are. Staff was invited to two Elementary Schools where students were able to pet either a dog or cat. Students also received an animal sticker and a card with the Hardee County Animal Control Ordinances. Students enjoyed a questions and answers session with the Animal Control officers.

Transportation

The Road and Bridge Department is the largest department within the County and is responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges in the County's road system. Within the County, there are 310.03 miles of paved roads and 201.58 miles of unpaved roads, as well as 70 bridges. The Road and Bridge Department provides and maintains all roadway signage and is also responsible for maintaining four overhead flashing traffic lights, one overhead signal light and seven flashing roadside lights. The department coordinates and issues permits for all utilities and driveway connections/culverts being placed in the County right of way as well

The Road and Bridge Department picked up 80.77 tons of bulk waste through out the county during 2007-2008

as all right of way inquiries and road closure requests. Activities and accomplishments of the Road and Bridge department for 2007/2008 include:

- Issued 72 utility permits and 73 culvert/connection permits
- Submitted 149 utility locate requests
- Completed drainage improvements, widening and resurfacing of South Florida Avenue from SR 64 W to Carlton Street through F.D.O.T.'s SCRAP funding in the amount of \$1,105,553.46
- Entered into two SCRAP agreements with F.D.O.T. for the resurfacing of College Hill

Transportation (cont.)

- Road and Steve Roberts Special Road and prepared contract for design services
- Entered into a SCOP/SCRAP agreement with F.D.O.T. for the resurfacing or reconstruction of North Florida Avenue from Carlton Street to US 17
- Coordinated with F.D.O.T. for repairs to damage caused from Hurricane Charley to Lake Branch Road Bridge and Heard Bridge Road Bridge over the Peace River
- Coordinated with the Utility Department to obtain a utility easement for the Wauchula Hills Service Area
- Reviewed numerous site development plans in conjunction with the Hardee County Planning Department
- Coordinated the preparation and layout of exhibitor and vendor booths for Pioneer Park Days and provided 14 employees to work the event
- Performed weekly bulk waste pickup
- Supervised weekly trash pickup by community service workers



Fleet Maintenance

The Maintenance Shop is responsible for providing safe, dependable equipment to all county departments. Through a reevaluation of the service intervals of Sheriff's Office vehicles, a considerable amount of time and money has been saved on maintenance of these vehicles.

The use of preventative maintenance also helped reduce:

- Road calls from 562 to 435
- Overtime service calls from 503 to 437
- Work orders from 2,373 to 2,222

Facilities Management

The Facilities Department is responsible for the maintenance of all County owned buildings and their adjacent areas. This department constructs new buildings and renovates old buildings as needed to accommodate the occupants. In-house staff is utilized for maintenance, as well as all phases of construction. This reduces the need for outside contractors which benefits the County monetarily.



- Completed the Third Phase of the HVAC Renovations at Annex II
- Brick Re-Pointing on Courthouse
 - Install lightening protection system at the Courthouse and Annex I
 - Painting at the Courthouse Complex
 - Installation of new air conditioning units at the Jail
 - Re-plumbed the Administrative side at the Jail
 - Replaced a large compressor on air conditioning system at the Health Department

Some accomplishments of the Facilities Management Department include:

Utilities

The Hardee County Utility Department (HCUD) is responsible for all facets of management and operational safety of the County owned water and wastewater service area treatment.

For 2007/2008 HCUD realized a 12% revenue growth over the previous year through continued service line expansion and connection projects. These projects were funded almost entirely through past year's State-legislated appropriations and one-time CDBG-Disaster Recovery Initiative funds. Other accomplishments include:

- The Wauchula Hills Sub Division Phase I was completed and 83 homes were

- connected to the system.
- Connected one existing and four new commercial operations along the US 17 and SR 62 corridors.
- Wauchula Hills Waste Water Treatment Plant expansion project was completed, increasing secondary level waste water treatment capacity threefold.
- Waste water service connection of the three remaining un-serviced MH/RV parks within the Wauchula Hills service area is currently in progress.
- Received state appropriations of \$740,000 for continued County waste water service line extensions and \$480,000 for waste water & reuse water in-progress regional system planning and Vandolah Rural Center facilities design.



Landfill

During the past fiscal year the landfill section of the Solid Waste Department opened Phase II Section 1 which was a five acre expansion of the County's Class I landfill. The Department of Environmental Protection approved certification of the expansion in May 2008 and landfill staff started placing waste in the new cell on May 29, 2008.

The landfill has multiple programs available to Hardee County residents. One program is the Household Hazardous Waste Collection. These collections were held quarterly and allowed the residents to bring in household hazardous waste to the landfill so that it could be properly diverted and recycled. The collections resulted in twenty-two tons of hazardous materials being disposed of at a cost of \$20,600.00. In addition, the Landfill also provides a safe method for residents to dispose of their unwanted needles through the Sharps Program. This program greatly reduces the risk of accidental exposure of infectious diseases to sanitation workers and

solid waste staff.

The tons of waste that the landfill staff processed are listed in the following categories:

The price of scrap metal skyrocketed for several months with people stealing all types of metal...and then when the stock market crashed in September so did the price of metal

Class I Disposal:	19,674.27 Tons
Wood and Yard:	1,055.00 Tons
Scrap Metal:	136.08 Tons
Tires:	203.24 Tons

The Solid Waste staff is responsible for the collection of tipping fees, daily accounting of cash customers, monthly invoicing of deposit account customers and collections. The total tipping fees collected for the fiscal year totaled \$634,534.70. The Solid Waste staff also applies for and manages the Small County Consolidated

Landfill (cont.)

Grant. The state awarded grant was for \$277,316.

The solid Waste staff maintains various contractual service agreements that include the treatment of leachate, groundwater and surface water monitoring, leachate and methane gas testing, household hazardous waste collection and disposal, and classification/verification inspections and training. The total amount of leachate hauled for treatment was 4,836,000 gallons. The cost of treatment was \$27,877.21.



The Solid Waste staff field and effectively resolve complaints received from unincorporated Hardee County residents who receive garbage pickup. Special pick up requests from unincorporated residents are also taken by solid waste staff and forwarded to Public Works. The staff is also responsible for the production and proper distribution of private road identification cards.

Other accomplishments made by the Solid Waste Department included diverting 278 tons of C&D materials to Waste Corporation in Fort Meade at a cost of \$16,196 while awaiting the certification of the new five acre expansion.

Recycling

Over the past fiscal year the Recycling section of the Solid Waste Department was responsible for recycling 105.34 tons of scrap metal, batteries, cardboard, newspaper, electronics, and pallets.

The Solid Waste Staff is responsible for finding markets for recyclables. A total of \$21,068.59 was earned in recycling revenues. An agreement was entered into with Desoto County where they bring their recyclables to Hardee County at no cost to them. In return, Hardee County will keep all revenue received for processing.

The Recycling section manages a variety of Solid Waste contracts. Consolidated Resource Recovery is used for the processing of wood and yard debris. They processed a total of 1,055 tons of wood and yard debris at a cost of \$6,346. Hardee Correctional Institution provided a trained corrections officer and an eight-inmate work squad to aid in resource

recovery at a cost of \$55,777. The Department of Environmental Protection mandates that there be no electronics disposed of in the landfill; therefore American Electronic Recycling provides the Solid Waste Department with a roll-off bin for the collections of electronics. Staff collected a total of 40.33 tons at a cost of \$7,700. The Department of Environmental Protection also states that you cannot put car or truck tires in a landfill, they must be recycled. Staff recycled a total of 203.24 tons of tires at a cost of \$12,522.44.

The Solid Waste Department continues to promote the value of all recycling programs available. Other accomplishments include crushing 227.07 tons of concrete that was brought in by the City of Wauchula and the County.

Planning & Development

One of the major services the Planning & Development Department provides to the general citizenry is zoning determination/information data sheets. Those sheets answer specific questions and cite regulations from the Unified Land Development Code and the Comprehensive Plan to help inquirers know what can be done with a parcel of land before development plans are finalized. Along with the zoning answers, information about floodplain areas and identified wetlands areas is provided.

For the fiscal year 2007-2008, the Planning & Development Department also processed the following actions:

Major Spec Exemptions	002
Special Exemptions	002
Rezoning	003
Variances	004
Site Develop Plans	016
Amend to SD Plans	002
Zoning Determinations	686
Minor S/D Plats	008
Amendments to Comp Plan	010
Amend to ULDC	002
Exceptions to Policy L1.15	002

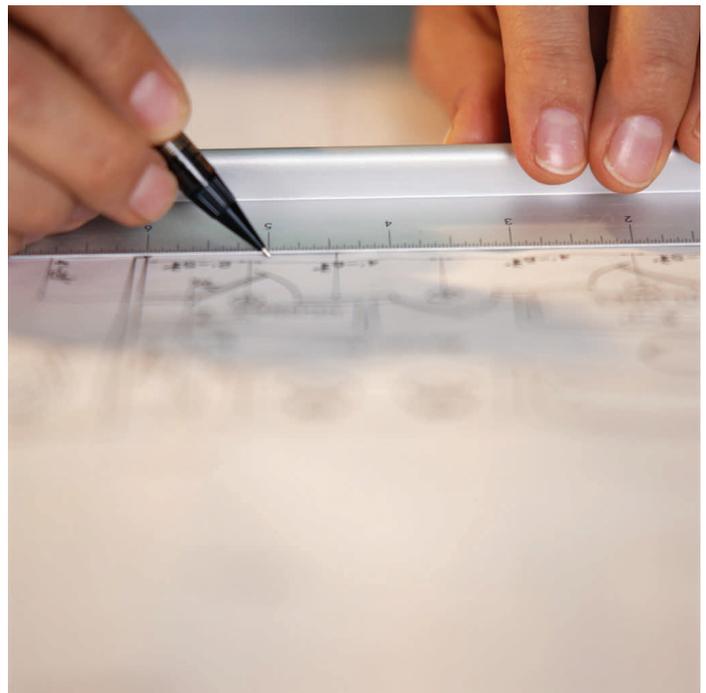
Amendments to the Comp Plan were approved to:

- Establish the Rural Village Future Land Use Element
- Create a Future Land Use Map designation entitled Residential Low
- Establish a 10-year Water Supply Plan for the Sanitary Sewer, Solid Waste, Drainage, Potable Water/Natural Ground Recharge Element

- Revise Policy L1.12 and Policy 2.4 to provide for a Variance mechanism for lots of record unable to meet 500 ft setback from protected water body when applying for development permits

The Hardee County Comp Plan's Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) was approved and transmitted to DCA.

The BOCC also acted on many issues pertaining to the Planning & Development Department. Ordinance No. 2008-20 was approved by the Board, amending the Unified Land Development Code for farmworker housing; Ordinance No. 2008-06 was also approved, amending the ULDC changing maximum lot coverage in C-2-zoned districts from 50% to 80%.



Buildings & Code Enforcement

The Building and Code Enforcement Department must ensure that all structures are constructed according to adopted codes and ordinances that are designed to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of County citizens.



Accomplishments include:

- \$7,932,662 worth of permits issued
- 163 new construction permits issued
- 1017 inspections completed
- 29 citations written
- 30 court appearances scheduled

Code Enforcement has also completed 6 Minimum Housing Inspections.

Mining

During 2007/2008 the Mining Department staff attended every Florida Department of Environmental Protection inspection for CF Industries and Mosaic within Hardee County, completed additional training in Water Quality Monitoring, Environmental Permitting and Water Use Permitting. Staff also attended the Florida Institute of Phosphate Research meetings and training sessions and the 23rd Annual Regional Phosphate Conference.

Monthly water quality samplings were taken at each designated sampling area and reviewed and responded to each monthly water quality report.



Mining and Reclamation Plan submitted by Mosaic for the South Fort Meade Extension. The plan was approved by the BOCC as well.

Coordination with State and Federal Agencies on all projects and activities related to Mining and DRI projects was handled by the Mining Department.

Staff completed several FDEP Reclamation Release Inspections and ensured that the proper procedures were followed.

The Mining Department completed the review process for the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) application from Mosaic for the South Fort Meade Mine Extension. The project is approximately 10,885 acres. The DRI was approved by the BOCC.

Also completed was the review of the Master

Monthly Clay Settling Area and Sand Clay Mix Area Dam inspections were conducted and reviewed and responded to each Dam Report.

The Mining Department has continued to assure compliance with the Hardee County Mining Ordinance and the Hardee County Comprehensive Plan.

Community Development

This past year, the Community Development staff obtained a National Certification in homebuyer education and launched the First Time Homebuyer Education Course that is offered monthly in Hardee and DeSoto Counties.

Through a highly competitive application process, the Community Development department successfully applied for and ranked #1 statewide and received a \$750,000 Grant to assist low-income Hardee County homeowners with eliminating substandard housing conditions.

Other Department Highlights Include:

- Expended over \$504,000 assisting local families in fulfilling the American dream of becoming homeowners.
- Expended over \$1.2 million for repair and alterations to improve the health, safety and well being of local families. Assistance also provided structural modifications to enhance accessibility for elderly and physically impaired occupants.
- Continued collection on defaulted liens to ensure continuity of the housing assistance programs, collecting nearly \$43,000 to assist other income eligible families.
- Continued budget management and regulatory compliance reporting from local, State and Federal levels regarding affordable housing, recreation, health care and Wastewater Infrastructure grants.

Community Development, in collaboration with the Hardee County Health Department offers

free comprehensive diabetes self-management education classes monthly for diabetics and pre-diabetics, focusing on diabetes prevention and control.

Community Development provided free counseling services for 61 Hardee County residents in the areas of Homebuyer Preparation, Foreclosure Prevention, and Financial Budgeting/Credit.

Home improvements are made available through our rehabilitation program which also increases Hardee County's tax base.



Extension Office

The Hardee County Cooperative Extension Service provides research based educational information and services in the areas of agriculture, family & consumer sciences and 4-H youth. Over the course of 2007/2008, the Extension Office performed the following services:

- Conducted Reproductive & Grazing Management Schools
- Conducted Goat Reproduction Workshop and Youth Agricultural Field Day to livestock producers and their families in Hardee County.
- Hosted the Annual Citrus Production School and instructed 5 classes in pesticide certification, 4 classes in equipment safety and 3 classes in worker protection standards.
- FCS Agent continues to facilitate Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance (TPPA) and Drug Prevention Coalition (DPC) educational events in an effort to reduce risky behaviors



among Hardee County's youth in the areas of teen pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse.

- Taught multiple nutrition classes to preschool teachers using the Color Me Healthy Train-the-Trainer, Food Guide Pyramid (MyPyramid), and the USDA Dietary Guidelines curriculum
- Published articles on health and nutrition in *The Herald-Advocate*
- Conducted annual six-week Back to Basics summer day camp for children and youth in Hardee County
- Representing the Extension, taught nutrition and 4-H curriculum to all 4th grade students (over 400) in Hardee County at annual Ag-Fest sponsored by Farm Bureau

Library

With a rich history that traces back many years the Hardee County Public Library has grown and evolved to fulfill its mission of maintaining and improving public library services to reflect the informational, educational and recreational needs of our diverse community.

The library provides quality customer service to the public including increased access to information, collection development and resource sharing. The county participates in an interlocal agreement with the Heartland Library Cooperative to provide resources to county residents from a shared database.

State Aid to Libraries Grant awarded the library

\$88,227 for 2007-08. The Florida State Library also funded \$8,000 for the "Hardee Goes Graphic" project. This project is a collection of Manga titles (Japanese style Comics) that are read "Backwards." By adding these titles to our "Young Adult Collection" during the summer of 2008 our circulation increased by 1,765 items which shows the impact that "Graphic Novels" can have on a library.

The Children's Story Time Program has seen a growth in the past year from an original group of twenty children per month to average of thirty-six, 2-5 year olds. A total of 1,646 children participated in some type of programming during the year!

Parks & Recreation

It is the responsibility of the Facilities Department to not only oversee the maintenance of county owned buildings, but parks as well.

The Director of Facilities, 31 full time employees and 1 part-time employee are there to see to it that not only does the county staff have adequate facilities, but that all of our parks remain beautiful and welcoming attractions.

Retail businesses reported an increase in their sales for the week of Pioneer Park Days. Therefore, Pioneer Park Days assists in the economy of Hardee County.

One of Hardee County’s biggest attractions is Pioneer Park Days. Held every year during the first weekend in March, this event blends the roar of old engines with the lively sounds of live entertainment.

The 40th annual celebration held this past March continued this event’s history of success. These accomplishments include:

- \$38,828 in ticket sales at the gate
- Over 400 antiques engine, tractor and farm equipment exhibits
- Florida Frontiersmen demonstrating frontier and pioneer living almost doubled in exhibits
- \$22,821 collected in camping fees
- Received a \$4,000 donation to enhance the entertainment at the Nickerson Ullrich building
- Collected \$36,600 for flea market spaces

In addition to Pioneer Park Days, Hardee County has seen an increasing number of events held at its other parks. In the newly opened Hardee Lakes Park, events such as privately sponsored fishing tournaments and Nature Fest have become regional attractions.

The Facilities Department staff is responsible for major improvement to Hardee Lakes Park which have made such events possible. Just in the past year, the Department has completed the following in our local parks:

- Constructed the Handicap Trail and a restroom at Hardee Lakes
- Installed playground equipment at Hardee Lakes
- Constructed 2 Fishing Piers at Hardee Lakes
- Installed playground equipment at Magnolia Manor Park
- Cleaned the river banks in Pioneer Park with the help of State Prison work crews



Animal Refuge

You do not have to visit a park during an event to have a great time, there are things to see and do year-round.

The Animal Refuge, located in Pioneer Park, offers a great way to see an abundance of wildlife all in one place. Their recent additions and accomplishments include:

- Construction and completion of the Sulcata Tortoise exhibit
- Acquisition of a Great Horned Owl
- Another year of USDA 100% compliance
- Successful relocation of twelve releasable deer

- State & National recognition of the receipt of Bond, an American Black Bear that was rescued from drowning in the Gulf of Mexico after being tranquilized by Florida Fish and Wildlife
- State recognition of the receipt of Miracle, the baby raccoon that was burned in a tar-heating machine at the Northside Hospital in Pinellas Park
- \$1,388.82 in donations received
- \$13,787.46 received in yearly gate admissions and sales
- 11,437 in attendance



Soil Conservation

The Hardee SWCD, voted in by Hardee County as authorized by Chapter 617.05, has worked in cooperation with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in assisting farmers and ranchers in Hardee County. The district has approximately 1,142 cooperators.

For 2008, the Hardee SWCD assisted in the obligation of \$521,332.63 of cost shared assistance for approximately 22,770 planned acres. Conservation practices were applied on 5,452 acres. The Field Office provided support

to the Mobile Irrigation Lab in providing assistance to 25 local producers and they also provided assistance to individuals in obtaining SWFWMD permits. Technical information was provided to roughly 300 individuals.

The District provides assistance to government and private landowners on environmental subject such as wetlands, endangered and threatened species, nutrient and pest management, soils, and technical help in managing natural resources.

Veteran Services

The mission of this office is to provide services with the highest level of sensitivity, compassion and understanding to veterans and their families.



It is through this department and the awareness and support of the community that those who have served their country, many with the physical and psychological wounds

of war, are able to receive assistance.

You may be eligible for VA benefits if you are:

- A Veteran
- A Veterans Dependent
- A Surviving Spouse or Child of a Deceased Veteran
- A Member of the Reserves or National Guard
- An Active Duty Service Member

Human Services

The Hardee County Board of County Commissioners participates in allocating county funds to various non-profit organizations that are established within the county. These organizations are thought to be a great benefit to the residents and they help to improve the physical and mental state of residents in need. They also provide many needed elderly services as well as promoting the economic strength and community environment that is necessary for a healthy community.

- Resthaven
- HARC (Hardee Association for Retarded Citizens)
- Tri-County Addictions
- ATC Intelitran



Human Services also includes funding that is mandated by the state for indigent health care, Medicaid supplements, and indigent burials.

The following non-profit organizations received funding from the County:

- Hardee County Health Department
- Peace River Center
- Hope of Hardee

Probation

The County Probation Department provides supervision services to the court system for misdemeanor cases in Hardee County. These services are provided in such a manner as to ensure compliance with court ordered obligations. Services are provided to ensure probationers assistance in living a worthwhile life style, thereby enabling them to stay in society and contribute, without putting extra burdens on the jail and welfare system. For 2007/2008, the Probation Office was responsible for:

There was a 45% increase in new County Probation cases over 2006/2007.

- 405 new probation cases were taken in, including, 53 community service only cases
- 127 warrants issued on non-compliers for failure to cooperate and abide by instructions
- 91 warrant cases apprehended and

probation status revoked, offenders usually given appropriate jail sentences

- 3,472 hours of community service accomplished by probationers at the Hardee County Road Department and Pioneer Park
- \$24,118.48 is the benefit to Hardee County for the hours, figured at minimum wage
- Additional community service hours accomplished at other non-profit organizations
- \$75,773.50 in probation fees collected during this time
- \$87,033.36 collected for the Clerk’s Office in court ordered obligations, mostly fines
- \$7,347.61 collected and forwarded to victims of crimes for restitution
- \$186,560.34 generated for Hardee County through collections of probation fees, assistance in collections for Clerk’s Office, and community service provided to Hardee County Departments.

Constitutional Officers



Sheriff Loran Cogburn

The Hardee County Sheriff's Office is the law enforcement branch of the County government. One of the primary objectives of the Sheriff's Office is to provide a safe, secure community environment for all residents. The Sheriff's Office serves the community by protecting life and property, preserving peace and order, preventing and detecting crime, managing the county jail, enforcing all laws and ordinances, and promoting the safe, efficient use of the County's streets and highways.

Tax Collector Zee Smith

The Tax Collector is responsible for the collection of ad valorem taxes and other taxes set at the local level, including those by special levying districts, state agencies, and county commissions. The Tax Collector also acts as an agent of several state departments, including the Department of Revenue, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, and the Fresh Water Fish Commission.



Property Appraiser Kathy Crawford

The mission of the Property Appraiser is to fairly and equitably discover, list, and value all real and tangible personal property for the purpose of creating the annual ad valorem tax roll in accordance with applicable Florida Statutes. The Property Appraiser is a constitutional officer elected every four years by the citizens of Hardee County.

Clerk of Courts Hugh Bradley

The Clerk of the Courts serves as an elected public trustee, providing a system of "checks and balances" at the county level which has proven to serve the public well. Established by Florida Constitution, the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court is responsible to serve the citizens of the County as custodian of all County funds and guardian of the public records.



Supervisor of Elections Jeff Ussery

It is the mission of the Supervisor of Elections office and all who work within it to serve the people of Hardee County and represent them with pride throughout the State of Florida and this great nation in which we live. Their open door policy ensures that everyone from the person passing through our community seeking directions, the elector in need of a replacement voter information card, the first time registrant wishing to cast their first vote, to the political candidate or parties in need of information, receives their request in a timely and courteous manner.

County Directory

Animal Control 773-2320	E911 773-0222	Maintenance Shop 773-6430
Animal Refuge 735-9531	Emergency Management 773-6373	Management & Budget 773-3199
Building & Code Enforcement 773-3236	Facilities Management 773-3419	Pioneer Park 735-0330
Central Dispatch 773-4144	Fire Control & EMS 773-4362	Planning & Development 767-1964
Civic Center 773-6698	Guardian Ad Litem 773-2505	Property Appraiser 773-2196
Clerk of the Court 773-4174	Hardee Lakes Park 781-2594	Public Defender 773-6758
Community Development 773-6349	Health Department 773-4161	Purchasing 773-5014
County Extension 773-2164	Human Resources 773-2161	Road & Bridge 773-3272
County Manager/BOCC 773-9430	Mining 773-0136	Sheriff 773-0304
County Probation 773-9323	Information Technology 767-9655	Soil Conservation 773-9644
Courthouse Security 773-0385	Landfill 773-5089	State Attorney 773-6613
Cracker Trail Museum 735-0119	Library 773-6438	State Probation 773-4777