

CITY OF CLEWISTON

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December 20, 2021

To: Mayor & Commissioners

From: Randy Martin, City Manager

Subject: City Manager Report on the "State of the City"

Continuing a long standing practice to provide an end-of-year assessment and New Year's prognosis, management offers an administrative perspective on 2021 progress made and a view of what is expected to lie ahead. This has proven a worthwhile endeavor in past experiences both professional and personal and a productive exercise thus far in Clewiston. Since 2019, a standard of regular weekly updates to the Commission has been maintained, but a collective assessment and reflection is believed to be a worthy complimentary effort. In 2019, the report provided a limited update to the Commission and community which was shared in the City's FYI publication. Since my tenure with the City was limited to six months of that year, it focused less on achievements and more on an introduction to perceived priority goals and objectives at the time. In 2020, the report was expanded accordingly to a full year assessment.

Management will again provide an executive summary of this assessment and prognosis for distribution to the public through a City FYI publication and by other means including a highlighted summary at the conclusion of an upcoming Commission meeting. The next suggested step will be to continue efforts to identify, review and refine Commission established priorities going forward into 2022. Over the past couple of years the Commission has considered and provided guidance to management on municipal priorities in Commission workshops. To further this effort, management suggests this practice continue.

CITY OF CLEWISTON

STATE OF THE CITY REPORT

December, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The City of Clewiston, Florida was founded in 1925 and incorporated as an independent Florida municipality in 1931. The Clewiston General Plan as it is referenced was initially designed by nationally prominent land planner John Nolen. As such, the city has consistently valued its rich heritage and desires to honor the basic principles of the Nolen plan in future development considerations while recognizing that the vision will likely require adjustment to adapt to modern development standards. The city is virtually surrounded by sugarcane fields and thus historically known as “America’s Sweetest Town”. This designation also appropriately acknowledges the significant positive impacts on the city, Hendry County and surrounding influence area of being the corporate home for the U.S. Sugar Corporation (USSC) which is widely recognized as an agriculture industry leader in south central Florida’s heavily ag-dependent region.

Clewiston is centrally located in south Florida about 60 miles east of Fort Myers on the Gulf of Mexico and 60 miles west of Palm Beach on the Atlantic Ocean. Through almost a century of growth, Clewiston has retained its charm and beauty as the gateway community to Lake Okeechobee which is Florida’s largest and the continental United States’ second largest freshwater lake. Centrally located by inland waterways and highways between the coasts, Clewiston is uniquely positioned among Florida municipalities in this regard. Visitors are attracted to Clewiston in large part due to excellent freshwater fishing in Lake Okeechobee which is widely acclaimed as the “Bass Capital of the World” and offers the best in black bass and pan fishing including crappie and bream. The 109 mile Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) circles the lake’s perimeter and, as part of the Florida Trail system, passes through the Clewiston community along the ridge of the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) which connects the city with the body of the lake. This access provides a lakeside recreational area and excellent biking, running and walking opportunities. It is also a favorite location for the many visitors in the region to enjoy bird and wildlife observation. The primary transportation connector route “Sugarland Highway”, as it is affectionately known, is a combination of U.S. Highway 27 and State Road 80 which runs east to west through the community to form an axis point for the city.

Clewiston is a full-service city providing all major municipal services including: police, emergency dispatch, animal services; fire protection & first responder emergency medical; public utility operations encompassing potable water treatment & distribution, wastewater collection & treatment and electric utility distribution; community development, planning, zoning, permitting & code enforcement; public works activities encompassing solid waste collection & disposal, street, sidewalk, & storm water system maintenance, park & public building maintenance, street lighting, mosquito control & public boat ramp facility maintenance; parks & recreation programs & facilities; public facility rentals (e.g. playgrounds, picnic shelters, splash pad, pool, auditorium, youth center); public golf course operations; public library services & facilities; finance & administrative services, human resources, risk management & personnel administration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From an administrative perspective, it is deemed a worthwhile endeavor to document an end-of-year assessment of progress, as well as, offer a brief prognosis for the coming New Year. This exercise is intended to be a reminder of achievements with appropriate recognition of shortcomings, so that limited resources can be strategically targeted going forward to enhance outcomes recognizing that forces beyond the city's control often impact on scheduled plans necessitating modifications. This information is also beneficial for future reflection especially when updating and refining goals and objectives going forward.

This synopsis is intended to document significant items, but is not a comprehensive listing of all activities of the prior year nor should it be interpreted as being presented necessarily in priority order. Details have been organized by service area or related functions to the maximum extent possible. This summary is further provided to capture and highlight many other documents, resources and activities which are available by reference for more in-depth critique. The following review is offered in this context to highlight 2021 with a view to 2022:

PART ONE: PROGRESS

- a) **Novel Coronavirus Pandemic Impacts & Response (COVID-19) - PART 2:** By any standard, one of the items most influential upon the city during most of 2020 and carrying forward throughout 2021 has been the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). The implications have been far-reaching and significantly impacted practically every element of city operations as well as the community-at-large. Despite significant positive shifts in recent months, implications continue now as they have for the last twenty plus months to varying degrees. This document does not dwell on obvious negative aspects during the period. Instead, focus in this report is on some of the things

that occurred which helped the city prepare to respond or which will be occurring near term as a result of the process and its outcomes. As reported in 2020, a significant development was the adoption of a new Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) prior to the 2020 COVID-19 events. This made the city's response to the pandemic better organized than would have been the case under the previous CEMP. In another positive step, despite all the distractions and negative influences at work, management in cooperation with county emergency management **in 2021 was able to complete the revision process begun late in 2020 of the Clewiston relevant provisions of the FEMA required Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) document.** This is a necessary multi-jurisdiction planning tool for use in emergency management type activities that qualifies local jurisdictions to remain eligible for federal financial assistance programs including flood insurance. The LMS update was presented to the Commission in January and approved in concurrence with the county and LaBelle. This required five-year cycle update reflected the provisions of the new city CEMP document and was Clewiston's first meaningful update to the LMS since it was originally adopted more than a decade earlier. **After local approval, the new LMS document was officially accepted by FEMA in 2021 and is compliant for the next five year period.** Also in 2021, city, county and LaBelle representatives cooperatively sought Requests for Proposals (RFP) from qualified firms to provide FEMA compliant disaster debris removal & monitoring services following major storm events. The prior multi-year RFP effort expired in 2021, necessitating the pursuit of new contractual relationships. The Commission **authorized negotiation of disaster debris removal & monitoring contracts in 2021 with the review team's recommended highest rated firms consistent with county selections** and action is expected to finalize city agreements in early 2022. The city and county Commissions also **approved an ILA partnership agreement with the county to cost share audio-visual equipment improvements to the city's Commission Chamber** which the county Commission also uses for meetings.

Early on, the pandemic adversely contributed to revenue losses for state and local governments. This had negative implications for Clewiston particularly in the prior fiscal year and in the eventual budget adopted for the FY 2020-2021 budget year. Fortunately, the city was less impacted economically overall than municipalities that were more reliant upon tourism dollars. This translated to fewer private sector job losses and permanent business closures locally. On the positive side, the state allocated federally approved **Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to counties who in turn shared those revenues with municipal governments to offset eligible expenditures in response to COVID-19 that in the case of Clewiston resulted in the receipt of \$890,000 in reimbursements to the city for eligible public safety expenditures.** This funding allowed the city to redirect available resources to address

much needed expenditures particularly in the area of public safety upgrades to communications technology & other equipment that will be essential in dealing with conditions imposed by local government response to this and future declared states of emergency. In 2021, the federal government also provided local government funding in the form of an **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for revenue replacement and other eligible uses including certain infrastructure projects under the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CSLFRF)**. As a non-entitlement city, Clewiston is slated to receive **\$4,016,846.00 in two equal installments with the first half received in 2021 and the balance to be received in 2022**. The city allocated a major portion of the first installment for the water utility portion of the automated **Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project** as further described in subsection “c)” of this report.

b) Public Safety Initiatives & Activities: As reported in 2020, management and staff in collaboration with Hendry County completed a final draft of the long outdated (vintage 1980’s) Inter-local agreement (ILA) between the parties for the East Hendry Fire Services provided by the Clewiston Fire Department. In 2021, **the updated East Hendry Fire Services ILA was approved by the county and city Commissions marking a major long term priority achievement**. A second major priority initiative with the Commission’s approval was accomplished this year due to the ability to redirect resources as a result of the flexibility provided by the CARES Act public safety reimbursements described earlier. The city finally **completed the long needed upgrade to E-911 communications system equipment**. This was identified as the highest priority need for a number of years by the police department and took on new urgency to achieve countywide emergency communications interoperability in compliance with a 2020 legislative mandate. In cooperation with the county, this communication equipment upgrade ensures that all city public safety delivery agencies can seamlessly and efficiently communicate, and it replaced aged portable radio equipment that has served its useful life thus enhancing first responder efforts and the public’s safety in the process.

As was also reported in 2020, the police department realized another long established priority capital project with completion and formal closeout of the state grant funded initiative begun in 2016 to acquire, renovate and relocate the police department to its new and improved facilities at 300 South Berner Road. In 2021, this process continued with **additional exterior and interior upgrades to the new facility including: completion of initial steps to locate the city’s primary Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to the new facility from its secondary location at the public utilities offices located at 141 Central Avenue, as well as, final relocation of all evidence storage to the new facility** allowing the former police facility located at 205 West Ventura Avenue to be entirely vacated permitting consideration for other uses. To

this end, an engineering structural evaluation on the 205 West Ventura Avenue location and an administrative assessment of potential future use options for that site other than temporary storage are in process. The other major priority police department equipment need addressed in 2021 primarily utilized funds made available due to the flexibility provided by the CARES Act reimbursements for eligible expenditures to **purchase 9 replacement vehicles in the aged police fleet.** The department used city funding to **replace 1 of the two aged animal services vehicles.**

The police department administration reorganized in 2021 with a new command staff structure implemented. In other efforts: the Commission approved an intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the 20th Judicial Circuit of Florida Narcotics Task Force led by the State Attorney's office and involving other law enforcement agencies aimed at fighting drugs and related crimes on a regional basis (i.e. NETFORCE initiative); **strengthened partnerships with local & regional law enforcement agencies including most importantly the Hendry County Sheriff's department,** a Multi-Jurisdictional Traffic Task Force Voluntary Cooperation Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement, the South Florida Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force & with the area's Abuse, Counseling and Treatment (ACT) shelter organization for domestic violence services; **entered into an updated mutual aid agreement with the Hendry County Sheriff's Department;** made progress toward police department accreditation goal with extensive policy/form reviews/updates & related equipment upgrades; and, enhanced officer training efforts to implement NARCAN use, updated Taser hardware & firearms certification efficiency.

In 2021, the **animal services division completed a staffing reorganization and recently saw its shelter facilities significantly improved as well through staff, city resources and enhanced volunteer support efforts.** The division also: modified its philosophy and title to "animal services" from the historical "animal control" effective June 2, 2021; transitioned its shelter facilities to a "no-kill" status effective June 2, 2021; altered hours of operations for enhanced customer service; expanded relationships with animal rescue & humane society agencies; revised policies & forms based upon American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) industry standards; implemented the Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release (TNVR) program aimed at reducing feral cat populations; expanded the volunteer services program; improved accountability related to service call response & tracking via police dispatch (CAD), implemented a Shelter Manager software upgrade which provides statistical data analysis & enhanced reporting capabilities to improve compliance while providing breakdowns for types of service calls and county/city response area tracking purposes; modified financial processes for fine/fee collections; and, in cooperation with county

agencies, initiated the review process to update the (vintage 1980's) ILA with the county for the provision of animal services outside the city limits.

As previously requested by fire department leadership on behalf of volunteer firefighters, the county and city continued the collaboration begun in 2020 to equitably increase the county's Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU) funding support assessed to out-of-city beneficiaries of the East Fire Services district to meet operating and identified Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) needs going forward. This change provided necessary funding flexibility to revise the Clewiston Fire Department budget to enhance personnel benefits (i.e. cancer & expanded accident coverages) for the department's volunteer firefighters effective October, 2020. In 2021, **benefit considerations were expanded to include the provision of a pension plan for the volunteer firefighters.** The Commission took action earlier this year to formally initiate the process to establish the pension plan consistent with state guidelines that will allow the city beginning in 2022 to access property insurance proceeds, which have been collected and distributed by the state for decades to other participating departments, to offset a portion of the pension fund associated costs. All these benefit enhancements are aimed at improving Clewiston's ability to retain and attract sufficient numbers of qualified individuals to continue providing an acceptable level of fire protection and first responder emergency medical services exclusively with volunteers.

The county and city agreed in 2020 to pursue two initiatives related to fire and emergency medical services and the method of funding for each. The county initiated the procurement of **professional services to assist in completing the necessary study to evaluate the current fire services MSBU's utilized to fund county fire protection costs and to consider the addition of a new emergency medical services (EMS) MSBU** to fund that county service in lieu of the current ad valorem method of taxation as the funding source. The city will benefit from the **fire assessment updated analysis**, because it **will allow the city to proceed with consideration of using the special assessment funding method for the city share of fire protection services in lieu of the city ad valorem method of taxation** historically used. The fire assessment update from the county consultant is expected to be complete early in 2022. Regarding the EMS MSBU creation process, the cities of Clewiston and LaBelle must consent to the county MSBU change within the city limits for that change to become effective. The Clewiston Commission recently approved its consent to this change on first reading and was scheduled to consider final action at the December 20, 2021 regular meeting. With both cities' consent, the county Commission could then proceed to make the change effective October 1, 2022. In a surprise move, **the county Commissioners elected to not further proceed with the EMS MSBU at their December 14, 2021 meeting thus eliminating the need for further city action this year.** In other fire services matters, the

department was able to complete additional priority equipment updates including the planned **acquisition of replacement firefighter Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) system equipment** also utilizing funds made available due to the flexibility provided by the CARES Act reimbursement funding for eligible expenditures.

c) Infrastructure Needs, Accomplishments & Economic Development Progress: During preparation and development of each fiscal year budget, considerable energy is exerted by the Commission, management and staff to update and refine the city's earlier referenced CIP process. Every impacted department is engaged in this endeavor requiring annual review and updating of the longer term ten-year planning document developed in 2019 & updated in 2020 with focus primarily upon the first five-year period in terms of more immediate needs for capital funding. As one of the primary means of addressing immediate and shorter term identified capital outlay needs, management and staff continued its focus upon aggressively pursuing available state and federal grant opportunities to address long accumulating demand for priority capital improvement and infrastructure needs. This resulted in the pursuit of a record number of grant seeking efforts for the city and thus far an impressive number and amount of approved grant funding resources with several major project applications still pending. As reported during the later stages of the current fiscal year budget development process on August 30, 2021, **the city and its partners have applied for \$51.7 million in grant type funding from all sources and awarded \$26.6 million to date.**

To further capital needs planning and expedite project design and completion, an important goal was achieved last year with Commission approval of multiple firm contracts for the provision of professional engineering services. From the dozen qualified responses, a staff committee narrowed the list to four recommended firms. The city is now positioned with five firms under contract to pursue multiple capital projects simultaneously going forward in compliance with state regulations requiring separation of design and inspection type services on certain major projects specifically including grant funded projects. In 2021, the city utilized the services of all the approved firms to varying degrees on specific stages of planned capital projects. The city's lead consulting engineer, with 3rd party assistance, **completed design and permitting requirements for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) approved C-21 bridge canal crossing project** after the city was awarded additional legislative funding in 2021 for the project. Upon receiving a formal release for the Herbert Hoover Dike (HHD) rehabilitation project recreation area (which includes the bridge site) from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) expected in early 2022, the city will be prepared to initiate the procurement process with actual construction expected to take approximately a year. Likewise, the partially FDOT

funded **East Ventura Avenue pavement repair and resurfacing project plans and contract were finalized in 2021** with construction scheduled to begin early in the new year. These timely efforts completed this past year secured the legislatively authorized C-21 bridge funding already allocated as well as the additional funding awarded, and the FDOT approved grant funding for the East Ventura Avenue street project. In 2021, the consulting engineer **completed the design for the grant funded East Ventura Avenue and vicinity storm water infrastructure improvements.** Based upon these plans, the paving project contractor submitted a proposal to add the scope of the storm water elements as a change order to the larger project that is within the available grant funding. With negotiations complete, a change order recommendation to the Commission will be presented for December action.

The city was awarded grant and zero interest loan funds in prior years to complete critical aspects (phases 1 & 2) of inflow & infiltration (i & i) improvements to the wastewater collection system throughout the service area which satisfied major elements of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) consent order decree requirements the terms of which the city originally agreed to in 2018. These completed project phases are already resulting in reduced Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) flows which positively impacts operating costs and frees up permitted plant treatment capacity for future new development and redevelopment use. An additional element of the broader i & i utility project using FDEP funding was completed which satisfies a consent order requirement by providing two stationary generators strategically located on the wastewater collection system to operate major lift station bypass pumps and four portable generators all available to be utilized during power outage events to avoid wastewater backups and overflows. **A 3rd phase of the FDEP grant and loan funding to address i & i related needs was approved in 2021 and additional grant funding secured for a permanent WWTP generator upgrade** slated for installation in Spring, 2022 completing additional key elements of the consent order and the more comprehensive planned renovation effort of that facility. As required, the city made timely application and was **successful in obtaining a draft of its required WWTP operating permit renewal from FDEP this year.** In collaboration with the county, the city once again submitted grant applications to multiple sources for funding to complete the planned complete renovation and expansion of the aged WWTP to meet modern reuse quality standards and provide additional capacity to serve new development and redevelopment of unserved areas including extending a wastewater force main from the plant to serve areas west of the city along the U.S. 27 highway corridor to the Airglades International Airport (AIA) location. The county has already **awarded a contract this year for completing the first phase of the AIA force main project, and it was recently announced that grant funding sufficient to complete the entire scope of**

the project has been secured. The city applied this year for legislative funding to upgrade the water line infrastructure along the 27 Corridor west to the AIA project. The city also completed design for the long planned upgrade of water service lines in the Alverdez & Comercio area of downtown to enhance fire suppression capabilities and improve customer service.

In cooperation with the Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA), of which Clewiston is a member, the city obtained the services of an independent consultant to evaluate the feasibility of an automated AMI system conversion, assist in completion of a procurement process to select a qualified firm to complete the project and advise the city during the project itself. The initial two phases of this process were completed in 2021 when the city **awarded a contract to modernize the electric and water utility system operations by converting to an AMI system.** The AMI project is now in its final phase and is expected to be completed during a 12 to 16 month period. The AMI project is being financed with an FMPA low interest loan for the electric portion and with ARPA federal grant funds for the water portion as earlier referenced.

In 2020, the public utilities department completed an electric system analysis and initiated electric distribution resiliency maintenance including transfer station and transmission line improvements. To further these efforts, staff completed a grant application to reduce the potential and duration of power outage events particularly related to extreme weather, but the effort has not as yet received funding. In cooperation with the USACE, the city was involved throughout the year in coordination activities to address impacts on the adjacent city managed recreation area as their HHD project contractor completed the major rehabilitation contract. As noted, the HHD project was essentially completed within Clewiston in 2021 and, due in part to the city's efforts, resulted in USACE funding and **completed resurfacing of the street sections in the HHD recreation area.** In another cooperative effort, the USACE and city agreed in the prior year to design and construct a septic-to-sewer project to connect USACE operations facilities to the city wastewater system with the USACE responsible for funding the project. Project design and the procurement process were completed in 2021. Upon the USACE securing all the necessary funding in September, 2021, the city **awarded the construction contract for the USACE septic-to-sewer project,** and it is scheduled to get underway in early 2022.

With community and agency support, the city applied and received **approval of a FDOT funded Safe Routes to Schools sidewalk construction project grant** which will provide pedestrian facilities on several streets in close proximity to Clewiston schools. The project design, bidding and construction activities will be pursued in the New Year. FDOT has also **funded & completed steps necessary to construct new sidewalk sections along additional portions of the U.S. 27 highway corridor on the west end of the city**

including portions of San Luiz & the McDonald's restaurant site and other connector streets in the vicinity. FDOT had previously approved funding for sidewalk improvements in a future year along portions of Royal Palm & Ponce de Leon with the city contract with FDOT scheduled for action early in the New Year. In cooperation with the USSC, the city renamed the public golf course facility to the J. Nelson Fairbanks Clewiston Golf Course and installed new directional signage & landscaping areas along San Luiz Avenue at the intersection of Sugarland Highway and near the entrance to the golf course property. In 2021, the city **continued improvements at the golf course by replacing remaining signage on the pro shop and country club buildings with the new logo design and by repairing & repainting the entire exterior of the pro shop and country club buildings utilizing USSC donations.** The city received additional in-kind support from USSC at the golf course that assisted with resolving irrigation system deficiencies and reducing chemical costs. In terms of other facility enhancements, a 2021 initiative saw significant progress on a much needed **interior renovation of the youth center facility** made possible by yet another USSC partnership.

The city continued its successful marketing collaboration with the county Economic Development Council (EDC) this year with considerable progress made to encourage private investment and job creation opportunities in the vicinity of Clewiston. This effort contributed to increased activity which helped accomplish the city's **completed sale of all remaining city-owned properties within the Commerce Park Industrial District (CPID) in 2021** including additional lots created by the subdivision of the larger 10 acre tract completed earlier in the year. This is another long awaited milestone achievement for the city as the **development of the properties is expected to be impactful with the potential creation of an estimated 300 new jobs, private investment projected in the \$30-40 million range and the city garnering \$1.7 million in gross receipts on the land sales which bolstered reserve funds.** In 2021, a **portion of the proceeds were utilized to repay the water & wastewater utility fund for previous inter-fund loans** for the initial business development in Commerce Park.

- d) Community Development, Redevelopment Areas, Regulatory Reform & Code Enforcement efforts:** In workshop discussions, the Commission previously determined development and redevelopment of the 27 Corridor a priority particularly the downtown and older sections of the City. The Planning & Zoning Board and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Advisory Committees initiated a review of development and regulatory tools which is ongoing. With the primary exception of the FDOT visioning effort further described later in this report, initial 27 Corridor planning efforts, stalled in large part due to COVID-19 impacts. The restrictions imposed in response to the

pandemic also adversely impacted code enforcement efforts throughout the City particularly the Special Magistrate process.

In 2021, **code enforcement efforts returned to pre-pandemic levels**, and management remains committed to the pursuit of highway corridor initiatives going forward. To this end, **the CRA has seen increased funding in the last two budget cycles for the first time in a decade prior to address priorities**. At the Commission's direction, the city also **applied to the legislature in 2021 for funding to improve the highway corridor access via North Francisco Street to the lakefront area**. The city completed in the prior year the fourth phase of a 27 Corridor FDOT grant funded beautification project to install additional palm trees along the highway. The city was **approved for additional funding during 2021 from FDOT to complete another phase of the planned installation of palm trees along the remainder of the 27 Corridor within the city limits and to complete sidewalk sections to fill voids along portions of the corridor** as noted earlier. The city saw **progress on the west end 27 Corridor median flagpole project in cooperation with the county and fair board**. In 2021, engineering design was completed, the long awaited FDOT permit was secured and pole specification & pricing was obtained. Parties are now pursuing contractor pricing to be followed by completion of the project when funding agreements are finalized. As referenced above and reported in 2020, the city was approved for timely FDOT funded professional planning assistance. The agency's Planning Studio division utilized the services of a consultant to complete a 27 Corridor Vision Plan for the city and portions of the highway outside the east and west city limits into the county. The scope of work included a robust public participation component and was completed during 2020 & early 2021 despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19. The **completed 27 Corridor Vision Plan was approved by the city & county Commissions in 2021**. Staff and FDOT representatives are now pursuing implementation next steps for inclusion of recommended plan elements in future state funded corridor improvement projects. The City also **applied for a congressional appropriation and to FDOT for separate funding to complete the remaining section of Ventura Avenue from Deane Duff to W.C. Owen with a comprehensive multi-modal "super street" type upgrade consistent with the vision plan** document recommendations for the downtown area. With the leadership and assistance of the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC), the city was also **selected for a Florida Boating Improvement Program grant project to develop a Lakefront Master Plan within and near the expanded CRA area with access through the vision plan corridor**. The project progressed in 2021 utilizing SWFRPC resources and staff to procure a consultant to do the necessary study to develop a master plan for the area. The master plan development process utilizing a stakeholder group for input is scheduled for completion in 2022. In the latter half of 2020, the city approved a revised

Planned Unit Development (PUD) master plan amendment for Gateway South, on USSC property on the south side of the 27 Corridor at the western end of the existing city limits, to address housing needs focused on creating workforce residency opportunities for professionals such as teachers and first responders. In 2021, **progress continued on the Gateway South PUD project with survey, site tree removal, environmental clearance & engineering design activities begun.** The city continued preliminary discussions with USSC representatives on plans for other undeveloped properties located within and outside the city limits for commercial, residential & warehousing type uses. To protect the community's interests, the city and other **regional partners including Hendry County, Glades County and the City of Moore Haven, continued their relationship a second year with a consultant to monitor USACE regulatory reform efforts specifically including the agency's Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) development.** In the name of water quality protection, the city implemented a 2020 adopted ordinance regulating fertilizer use to address nutrient level considerations in surface waters. In response to state actions which expanded the scope and applicability of Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) regulations and to address the city's resulting obligations to FDEP, citywide storm water processes were reviewed and ordinances modified to meet the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) standards. These changes and other steps taken this year satisfied FDEP's NPDES permit renewal requirements with additional responsibilities for updated mapping to be completed on an approved schedule in future years. After several years of delays, **it was a major achievement late in 2021 when the state agreed to issue the NPDES MS-4 permit which meets the city's obligations until the next renewal cycle in 2026.** In 2021, significant **additional progress was made toward environmental regulatory compliance with the city in the final stages of state approval of the required 10 year water supply plan.** This effort had been slated to be completed several years prior based upon an agreement with the state. With technical expertise assistance from USSC staff resources and the city consulting engineer, significant progress was realized as well on the steps necessary to achieve timely WWTP permit renewal as noted earlier.

- e) Fiscal Management, Compliance & Reporting:** The past decade, in terms of adverse economic conditions, took a toll on city financials which, for a number of reasons, became an essential priority for the city to address in late 2019. Reserves were largely depleted and fiscal compliance type conditions resulted in the need to take actions aimed at reversing trends. In each of the city's enterprise funds and operations, for example, priority steps were identified to recommend actions to the Commission. Utility rate structures were a focus with independent analysis of the electric, water &

wastewater funds and interdepartmental analysis of the solid waste fund undertaken and completed. Based upon the results, the Commission adopted plans and implemented corrective steps beginning in 2020. It was expected to take multiple years to realistically accomplish established financial goals and restore full city financial policy compliance in all funds. The effort utilized a very deliberate and transparent process which in large part was adequately justified to the public based upon the minimal negative feedback received in response. Specifically, the user fee based rate structures were modified for the first time in most cases in over a decade. To prevent this condition from being repeated, the Commission agreed to implement steps for regular cost-of-living type analysis to occur with rates adjusted as necessary. Another important step was accomplished when the Commission established a well-qualified private sector advisory committee to make recommendations on the auditor selection process. The Commission subsequently accepted the committee and management's recommendation to procure the services of a highly experienced municipal accounting and financial management firm to conduct the city's annual required financial audits going forward. Due to the concerted efforts of the city's capable and dedicated finance department, the two subsequent audits for FY 2018-2019 & FY 2019-2020 were completed with the important **goal accomplished of eliminating past audit findings that had plagued city financials for a number of years while addressing additional audit identified improvements in financial management going forward.** This progress continued in 2021 with **additional achievements including timely audit reporting & completion of initial steps in recommended pooled cash financial management modifications** cited in last year's report. The Finance Department has during the period implemented enhanced monthly internal financial reporting processes providing monthly reports to the Commission and the public on current fiscal activities reconciling revenue and expenditures with budget projections. Finance staff continued an expanded role in internal auditing, reporting & analysis functions by taking the lead to evaluate solid waste fund fee structure recommendations during the budget process. The department also completed a detailed financial analysis of golf course operations and budget review. The city budget process has been refined to improve review efficiency and policy oversight efforts including the updated CIP development process. Fiscal policy compliance levels have improved with reserve fund policy procedures a priority. All these efforts have been accomplished while the Finance Department has experienced a major increase in its workload resulting from the city's recent success in the receipt of additional grant resources. While a blessing to the community in terms of meeting needs, grant programs inherently increase the degree of financial management efforts necessary to comply with grant agency requirements. In terms of administrative actions to improve efficiency of operations & service delivery while achieving regulatory

compliance, initial steps were undertaken by the city to review and update the organizational structure, personnel pay & classification plans in compliance with new minimum hourly wage legislation. In 2021, the Commission **approved a number of organizational & personnel related changes including a cost-of-living adjustment to the pay plan & benefit modifications with additional actions to follow.**

f) Intergovernmental Cooperation: Experience supports the notion that no local government achieves its optimum potential without developing cooperative working relationships with peers and other influential organizations and agencies. By most accounts, Clewiston has made historical progress during the last couple of years in terms of intergovernmental cooperation. Representatives from the cities of Clewiston and LaBelle joined Hendry and Glades counties to collaboratively communicate with legislative leadership, local delegation members and select state regulatory agencies in a unified effort to advocate for priorities, projects and funding assistance on several topics of mutual interest and benefit. Based upon the reaction of state officials, this unprecedented cooperation has been well received. Results have seen increased funding and other positive outcomes during extremely competitive fiscal years in terms of state budget allocations to localities. As for interagency cooperation on a local level, as noted throughout this report and evidenced by a number of other less notable examples, **positive city interactions with county agencies became much stronger during 2020 & continued to advance throughout 2021** and are expected to flourish into the New Year on several important initiatives of mutual interest. This progress can be attributed primarily to improved communication efforts. As reported earlier, most notable in 2021 has been enhanced cooperation between the city police department and the sheriff's department thanks primarily to the concerted efforts of the leadership of the two agencies. Outreach to federal and state agencies in all departments but particularly in the case of the police department to foster improved relationships and interactions have been significantly advanced as well. Prominent examples where it is perceived that the city as a whole has enhanced its relationships and standing are the USACE, FDOT, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), SWFRPC, Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), FMPA, as well as, fostering improved communication with other important federal and state agencies including the FDEP, the 20th District State Attorney offices, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), federal Small Business Administration (SBA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) and the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) among others. In a new initiative **approved by the Commission in 2021, the city, county & LaBelle have agreed to partner with the Florida Attorney General's office in a MOU implementing a unified**

plan regarding opioid litigation. The City has also continued use of its facilities for monthly office hours for staff of U.S. Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart and to allow weekly office hours for Florida House of Representatives member Lauren Melo.

PART TWO: PROGNOSIS

Looking ahead to 2022, much attention will **continue to be focused upon further enhancing the city's track record of achieving predominantly positive outcomes which are expected to be minimally impacted by further adverse effects from the COVID-19 virus and the need for state of emergency type conditions.** Vaccines have resulted in minimization of virus impacts locally and remaining implications are projected to continue to diminish. Based upon economic indicators, management is very bullish on prospects for the local economy as 2022 unfolds.

Substantial progress or completion on several major activities and projects are expected in 2022 as follows: **final adoption of the emergency communications ILA agreement between the sheriff's department, county emergency services agencies and PSAP providers including the city police department & the Big Cypress Seminole Reservation to satisfy legislatively mandated interoperability requirements;** continued incremental progress in a multi-year effort to achieve police department accreditation; **complete audio/visual equipment upgrade of Commission Chambers per county/city ILA;** **complete other planned upgrades to city computer technology utilizing ARPA funding for CSLFRF eligible priority expenditures which will enhance cybersecurity safeguards;** in cooperation with the county, **complete an update of the (vintage 1980's) city & county animal services ILA;** **take additional actions necessary to implement the firefighter pension plan benefit program;** during the budget process, **consider final adoption of the city fire assessment method of funding in lieu of ad valorem funding effective FY 2022-2023;** in early 2022, **finalize negotiated contracts for disaster debris removal & monitoring firms;** **bid & construct initial phases of the Alverde & Comercio water main improvement project to enhance fire suppression capabilities & customer service in the affected area utilizing ARPA funding for the city share of project costs;** complete bidding and **substantial construction of the C-21 bridge project utilizing legislative grant funding with FDOT oversight;** **complete construction of the East Ventura Avenue partially FDOT grant funded repair and resurfacing project including the separate state grant funded storm water elements;** contingent upon grant funding final approval, design, permit & contract for streetscape improvements to upgrade the remaining unimproved section of Ventura Avenue from Deane Duff to W.C. Owen; in cooperation with FDOT, pursue funding for priority 27 Corridor improvement projects identified in the FDOT Planning Studio Vision Plan documents; recommend any approved 27 Corridor Vision Plan elements to the extent CRA

funding, potential legislative funding, grants and other sources are available; develop management recommendations, vetting & Commission adoption of prioritized 27 Corridor Comprehensive Plan & regulatory ordinance upgrades particularly those recommended for consideration in the vision plan; in collaboration with the SWFRPC, **complete the grant funded lakefront district master plan** while pursuing various funding sources to implement recommendations; work cooperatively with property purchasers to **facilitate planned Commerce Park private investment and job creation efforts**; substantially **complete construction activities of the AMI utility metering project utilizing ARPA funding for the water portion & FMPA loan proceeds for the electric portion**; **complete installation of the west end 27 Corridor median flagpole project** in cooperation with the county & fair board as a funding partner; **complete FDEP funded phase 3 i & i wastewater system improvements including the WWTP permanent generator installation**; **achieve full compliance with the FDEP Consent Order decree** to address identified wastewater system deficiencies previously cited by the agency; **pursue next steps to effect timely renewal of the city's WWTP operating permit with FDEP**; closeout of the USACE funded HHD rehabilitation project within the Clewiston recreation area in early 2021 clearing the way for the C-21 project to proceed; **complete construction of the USACE federally funded septic-to-sewer project to connect all facilities to the city wastewater system**; review in-city & out-of-city water & wastewater rate structure; comply with approved schedule for city to address FDEP enforced BMAP standards & NPDES permit requirements for storm water system mapping submittals; **state approval of the city's required 10 year water supply plan**; evaluate and consider adoption of SFWMD requested water conservation model ordinance; continue pursuit of new unfunded legislature mandated storm water requirements taking effect beginning in mid-2022; **facilitate commencement of private construction on the approved Gateway South PUD project** on USSC owned property to meet housing demand needs; review plans & collaborate with partners on utility service expansions to additional USSC owned properties within and outside the city including along the 27 Corridor to AIA; **complete grant funded & county administered wastewater force main project from the WWTP to AIA**; contingent upon legislative funding approval, design & construct water main to enhance service to the 27 Corridor west of the city to AIA; continued planning for the next phase of PUD development on USSC property on the north side of the 27 Corridor in the vicinity of the Walmart area & west of the city including both commercial and residential development with the provision of lake access to portions of the property via the canal system; **coordinate construction of FDOT funded sidewalk improvements project for San Luiz & the McDonald's restaurant vicinity along both sides of the 27 Corridor to fill voids**; **complete contractual requirements, design & construction of the FDOT Safe Routes to Schools grant funded sidewalk sections to fill voids in the vicinity of school locations in the city**; **complete the next phase of the FDOT grant funded**

27 Corridor landscaping project further west toward the city limits; complete the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) grant & USSC donation funded Trinidad Park playground replacement project; complete the USSC donation funded youth center interior improvement project; continue progress in code enforcement activities and results utilizing the Special Magistrate hearing process particularly focused in the downtown & older sections of the City and in close proximity to the 27 Corridor; **negotiate renewal school recreation facility use ILA & pursue re-establishing county/city/schools East Recreation Board relations to include funding formula considerations going forward;** recommend storm shutter ordinance amendments; continue review & monitoring of outstanding property liens particularly for non-homestead properties; **complete evaluation and consider identified surplus property disposal & public building use options and agreements including a city-owned rental property cost-benefit analysis;** continue participation in lakeside communities combined efforts to monitor USACE regulatory reform LOSOM process aimed at protecting regional and local interests in Lake Okeechobee; and, consider a strategy to achieve City “brand” enhancement & community marketing efforts.

CONCLUSION

In an abbreviated partial year report prepared in December, 2019, management observed that considerable pessimism existed within the community regarding elements of the general state of affairs in the city. Whatever the reasons, community confidence levels were lower than desired. Fast forward to the present, it is increasingly apparent that a more optimistic view has emerged in the community. **There continues to be private investment and development interest in the Clewiston area as evidenced by the Commerce Park transactions over the past year.** The EDC also reports that **interest in the entire county and particularly in the vicinity of the AIA corridor have dramatically increased as well.** In terms of the **development of housing stock, new opportunities are on the horizon to accommodate growing interest in the Clewiston area which will support a needed boost in commercial investment in the city’s central business district where available sites exist.** Management is determined to build on the momentum begun in prior years and sustained through 2021 which is expected to produce desired results if the city continues to progress in getting its house in order. With the success of 2021, management is even more optimistic that 2022 and beyond will realize many goals and objectives and further build the foundation for a sustainable quality of life into the future for “America’s Sweetest Town”.

Respectfully Submitted,

Randy Martin, City Manager