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New EOC, road project delays among items on today's commission agenda

By Larry Hannan

Monday, April 23, 2007

Collier County commissioners are expected today to approve a \$38.5 million construction contract to build a new Emergency Operations Center on Lely Cultural Parkway.

The contract is with Kraft Construction. Contract approval means the county is on schedule to try to get the new EOC built and operating before the 2009 hurricane season.

Until then, Collier emergency personnel will remain in a cramped 900-square-foot emergency operations center on the county's government complex at the intersection of U.S. 41 East and Airport-Pulling Road.

The new EOC will be between Edison College and Lely Elementary School. It will be a 90- to 100-foot building with a 185-foot communication tower. Between 8 and 10 feet of fill will be added to elevate the structure above sea level.

The center would be the county's headquarters during a hurricane and could withstand winds in a Category 4 or 5 storm, the two most powerful classes. It also would have a Collier sheriff's substation, administrative offices for emergency medical services and a 911 dispatch center and backup offices for the information technology department.

Until July, county leaders had been intent on building the structure on Santa Barbara Boulevard. But opposition from residents of the Countryside subdivision, across the street from where the Emergency Operations Center was supposed to be located, led county officials to look at Lely Cultural Parkway as a new site.

The Lely site hasn't drawn opposition.

Today's meeting starts at 9 a.m. in the commission chambers at the Collier County Government Center at the intersection of U.S. 41 East and Airport-Pulling Road in East Naples.

The agenda also calls for commissioners to:

- Hear a report by the county's Productivity Committee offering suggestions to reduce the costs of road projects.

Road projects often have come in months behind schedule and cost taxpayers millions of extra dollars when utility lines showed up in places that didn't match plans, and companies didn't promptly move their lines.

A policy is being developed that could allow county government to seek monetary damages or withhold

permits for utility companies that don't move lines in a timely fashion for county road projects.

- Consider settling a lawsuit brought against county government and Commissioner Fred Coyle by former Collier Comprehensive Planning Director Stan Litsinger. Litsinger was demoted last year and he alleges that the demotion violated county policy and defamed him. He is seeking undisclosed damages.
- Consider a request by the Immokalee Master Plan and Visioning Committee to cease enforcing zoning provisions in Immokalee for 18 months or until the approval of a new master plan and land development codes.
- Consider creating a Fire Review Task Force to examine issues related to fire inspections and building reviews.

Staff Writer John Henderson contributed to this report.

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