

# What We've Learned – Storm Prep - Habitat (Bella Terra) Community Development District (CDD)

By Mark Novitski, Chairman, Habitat CDD

The last 10 months the CDD has prepared for, experienced, and recovered from 2017 Hurricane Irma. At our Nov 2017 CDD Board meeting we authorized our management company to spend up to \$20,000 to facilitate storm cleanup. This authorization sped the cleanup process. At the same time, we ensured all hurricane recovery/clean-up costs were documented for submittal to our insurance company. To date we have submitted nearly \$40,000 to our insurance company for reimbursement. Any amount not reimbursed by our insurance company will be submitted to FEMA.

The Board discovered the roads in Bella Terra were designed to become rivers in a one-hundred-year rain, or in our case, 2 twenty-five-year rain events within 2 weeks. The roads are typically 3 – 5 feet lower in elevation than our garage floors. When the lakes, retention areas, and preserves are full of water, there is no place for the rain water to flow off our streets. On the same note, there is no place for us to "... pump the water out of the lakes ..."

We planned and had divers check the storm sewer inlets to our lakes. By this time most of the construction debris had been cleaned in previous clean-ups. Any pipes that were 25% or more blocked were then cleaned. This happened in Jun and July 2017. We had our maintenance man clean out the catch basins at the street storm sewer inlets. This has become less of a task since the community received recycle trash cans rather than bins (where the plastic bottles blew everywhere in the wind).

We awarded a contract at our Jan 2018 CDD Board meeting to scope (remote camera) all the storm sewer drains and pipes. This will allow us to clean any clogged/blocked drains and pipes. This should be accomplished by July 2018. The results will also determine how often we scope the drains/pipes to ensure they remain clear and flowing. We've contracted to sweep the curbs and gutters of the 21 miles of roads in Bella Terra on a regular basis. It is amazing what is swept up and no longer going into our storm sewers. We are ever cautious of pool and landscape contractors to ensure they clean any construction or landscape debris and do not allow materials or debris storage on our streets. Please report any construction or landscape debris concerns to the Bella Terra Management office.

Over the last couple of years, the CDD paid to install Variable Flow Drives (VFD) on our irrigation pumps within the 6 pump stations. This allows the pumps to be remotely shut down and conversely restarted. This is crucial in the event of a power outage and protects the pumps from power spikes that could damage the pumps. We amended our irrigation contract to monitor the weather and take the appropriate action to shut down the pumps in the event of a storm. Irrigation Specialists also maintain and monitor the 2

replenish wells and are responsible for safe shut down and restart in the event of a storm.

The Clock Tower pumps have a unique shutdown sequence that must be followed to ensure no damage to the system. We have investigated replacing these pumps with VFD's, and at this time it is not economically feasible. We'll continue to review a pump replacement time. We've amended the contract for clock tower maintenance to include a complete shutdown before a storm, and start-up with 5 days after electricity is restored.

Although the CDD owns the gate shack, the Master HOA manages the gate entry and control contract. The contractor operates out of the gate shack. We are working with the Master HOA to install a back-up generator to provide gate entry and control during emergencies and power outages. This includes powering up the gate arms.

The preserve areas are just that, preserve. Our zoning requires we maintain our designated preserve areas as preserve. Most preserve boundaries are marked by green stakes. We are working throughout the community to trim the preserves to the property line. We don't clean the preserves or create fire breaks in the preserves. We do treat and remove nonnative invasive species in the preserves. Please don't dump anything in the preserves. They are required to be ecologically balanced with what falls in the preserve. Upon monthly inspection, we identify and remove any trees in danger of falling out of the preserve onto private property. After Hurricane Irma we removed trees and stumps that had fallen out of the preserve. The preserves are not for trails or campfire rings. They are required to be established to help restore the balance of nature we destroyed when Bella Terra was built. In the summer they flood and the winter they dry up. There is an abundance of wildlife in our preserves and we want to keep it that way.

The CDD will install additional solar lights that work without power. They have batteries that charge during daylight and allow lighting at night. We are concentrating on crosswalks across Bella Terra Blvd as the speed limit is mostly 30 mph. We've witnessed many vehicles speed and some do not look out or yield for pedestrians.

As we live in sub-tropical SW Florida, we will see storms and excessive rain. As the CDD prepares, you too should prepare. Don't drive through standing water. Don't drive on the median to avoid standing water. Don't park your car on the road because you cannot get to your driveway. Working together we can survive and thrive in challenging times.

Part of our success weathering Hurricane Irma was a responsive management company. Our current company, *PREMIER DISTRICT MANAGEMENT, LLC*, is a local company that understands our expectations and works to anticipate and solve any issues. As we all learned from Hurricane Irma, we are documenting lessons learned and instituting processes and procedures for the future.

Everything we, the CDD Board, do is with the thought process of understanding and analyzing the issue to determine the best long-term solution at an appropriate cost. To see the Board in action, you can attend the Habitat CDD Monthly meetings, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month, 1600 (4pm), Bella Terra Clubhouse. For more info visit our website: [www.habitatcdd.com](http://www.habitatcdd.com) .