

# SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## Emergency Services

To BCC  
FYI  
JAL  
5/13/19

**TO:** Jonathan R. Lewis, County Administrator  
**THROUGH:** Mark Cunningham, Assistant County Administrator *(MC)*  
**FROM:** Rich Collins, Director, Emergency Services *(e)*  
**DATE:** May 13, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** Mid-County Hurricane Evacuation Center Update

This memo provides a brief update on the County's efforts to establish additional Hurricane Evacuation Center space for mid-county residents. Staff has worked to develop a cooperative project with Sarasota Memorial Hospital (SMH) to construct a 35,000 sq. ft. Enhanced Hurricane Protection Area (EHPA) evacuation center for up to 1,000 occupants during an emergency event to be located on the new hospital campus located at Laurel Road near I-75 in mid-Sarasota County.

The evacuation center would be made available as a regional and statewide asset for sheltering when Sarasota County is not an impact county. It was envisioned that the building would have multiple uses during non-emergency settings. Specific types of non-emergency uses would include training, meeting, and other governmental needs such as Health & Human Services, Health & Wellness, etc.

County staff has met several times with SMH staff to develop parameters for the development of terms and conditions, and an eventual Interlocal Agreement. SMH has been in the development/design phase of their project including moving through the development process with the City of Venice. This has precluded their availability to meet regularly.

The SMH project team toured the County EOC to review and discuss ancillary spaces for the proposed Hurricane Evacuation Center, including culinary space, storage, restrooms, and emergency power generation. The SMH team has provided an outline of a draft Interlocal Agreement for continued development of terms and conditions. County staff has provided various documents to assist both teams in identifying space needs and allocations for use in the proposed building.

### Project Constraints:

Based upon current conditions and directions, there are several constraints that may limit this project including:

- **Funding:** Current County CIP allocations provide \$3 million for the project. SMH is providing construction-ready land for the project, which reduces the overall cost; however, based upon initial estimates of \$12M - \$14M for construction only, this leaves the project well below the required funding. Unfortunately, a legislative request for \$5M

was unsuccessful during this year's legislative session. The SMH team communicated that the hospital would not provide any funding beyond their original commitment.

- **Building Ownership/Use:** To date, the SMH team is committed to building uses (outside of hurricane evacuation center operations) that are limited to government uses such as meetings, symposiums, training, and education. While these types of spaces are needed, the limited uses decrease synergies potentially available to other county needs such as community use, sports, recreation, etc. SMH would also prefer an interlocal agreement (ILA) that gives ownership and oversight of the proposed building to SMH upon completion of construction with shared use as identified in the ILA and leasing of the building to the County during disaster activations.

**SMH Hurricane Evac. Center Recommendation:**

Funding a project of this nature requires the ability to connect as many services to citizens as possible to ensure fiscal viability. Constructing a building for the potential infrequent use as only a hurricane evacuation center limits effective use of CIP funding. Identifying other potential uses beyond government use for meetings, maximizes community use, and potentially allows for additional funding mechanisms to facilitate project costs. County staff recommends meeting with SMH to identify agreement on additional building uses and funding to increase project viability. If staff cannot come to agreement on additional uses, it is recommended to notify SMH that the County will seek other options for a Hurricane Evacuation Center.

**Hurricane Evac. Center Recommendation:**

Since Hurricane Irma, the Emergency Management staff have undertaken multiple pathways to identify additional hurricane evacuation center space in mid-county. Staff from Emergency Management have been working with the State Division of Emergency Management in an attempt to reduce the shelter space deficit that exists in our region. Staff is pleased to report, the State has determined that Taylor Ranch Elementary along with several of our current locations qualify for the funding of retrofits and additional hardening to increase safety and usability. This project clearly enhances the ability to shelter evacuees during potential storm threats.

Taylor Ranch, located at 2500 Taylor Ranch Road in Venice, at an elevation of over 18 feet, is eligible to receive approximately \$455,000 of State funding for hardening retrofits to mitigate risk factors at the site. This will increase Sarasota County's Evacuation Centers from 11 to 12 for the 2020 hurricane season and add approximately 1280 spaces for evacuees. This additional space will support multiple areas within mid-county and increases potential shelter space beyond the 1,000 spaces identified in the SMH project.

Taylor Ranch is located four miles inland of the coast and is located in a Level "C" evacuation area (Attachment #1). The main issues of concern for use of the building include the lack of hardening as well as potential issues with flooding of the Myakka River in a post event. The County utilizes schools in other areas of the County that are situated in similar areas, such as Riverview High School. If a storm is projected to impact the County, with a greater than 20 foot storm surge expected in that area, the decisions on evacuation will affect the sheltering decisions; however, in absence of a catastrophic storm surge, all listed Hurricane Evacuation Shelters will open at the same time as identified in the Hurricane Irma After Action Review. Staff appreciates the State's support and assistance in funding this hurricane evacuation center hardening project in a key area of the County.

Based upon the State review, and the project as developed with Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), staff recommends moving forward with the grant and funding for this project. The project would be a joint project with the School District. The County will approve the grant and funding will be directed to the School District for hardening retrofits. Currently, staff is waiting for final documents from the state, and will move forward with agenda item for BCC approval. Staff may also work with the School District to utilize some of the current CIP funding to support additional efforts as needed, and staff will provide regular updates on the progress of this hardening project.

**Additional Mid-County Hurricane Evac. Center Recommendation:**

Based upon the mission to develop a project that meets the need for Hurricane Evacuation Center support as well as a mechanism to enhance community services, the Emergency Services team has held multiple meetings with the following departments and organizations to consider various options and locations for a center in the mid-county area:

- Capital Projects
- Planning & Development Services
- Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources
- Public Utilities
- General Services
- Public Works
- Florida Power & Light (FPL)

This team was asked to review the project and to identify additional potential uses for Hurricane Evacuation Center that would increase uses outside of disaster activations. Additionally, the team is reviewing potential synergies that may be created with various projects currently in development such as county fleet service center, fire department training, park uses, and planned government infrastructure. The team has identified the potential uses for a multi-use sports center, shared site support for parking and training related to both fleet and fire department needs, and various other uses. Given these increased uses, the ability to identify additional funding sources assists in the viability of the project.

The major issue for this project is related to the topography of mid and south county (Attachment #2) and finding a viable site. This entire area provides limited options due to the lack of elevation. The team continues to review multiple county owned sites within the mid-county area for this purpose. The team is also extending the search to non-county owned parcels including discussions with FPL regarding property along Laurel Road. Areas reviewed included sites such as Wellfield Park, which is only 12-13 feet above sea level, and without extensive mitigation would not work for this purpose.

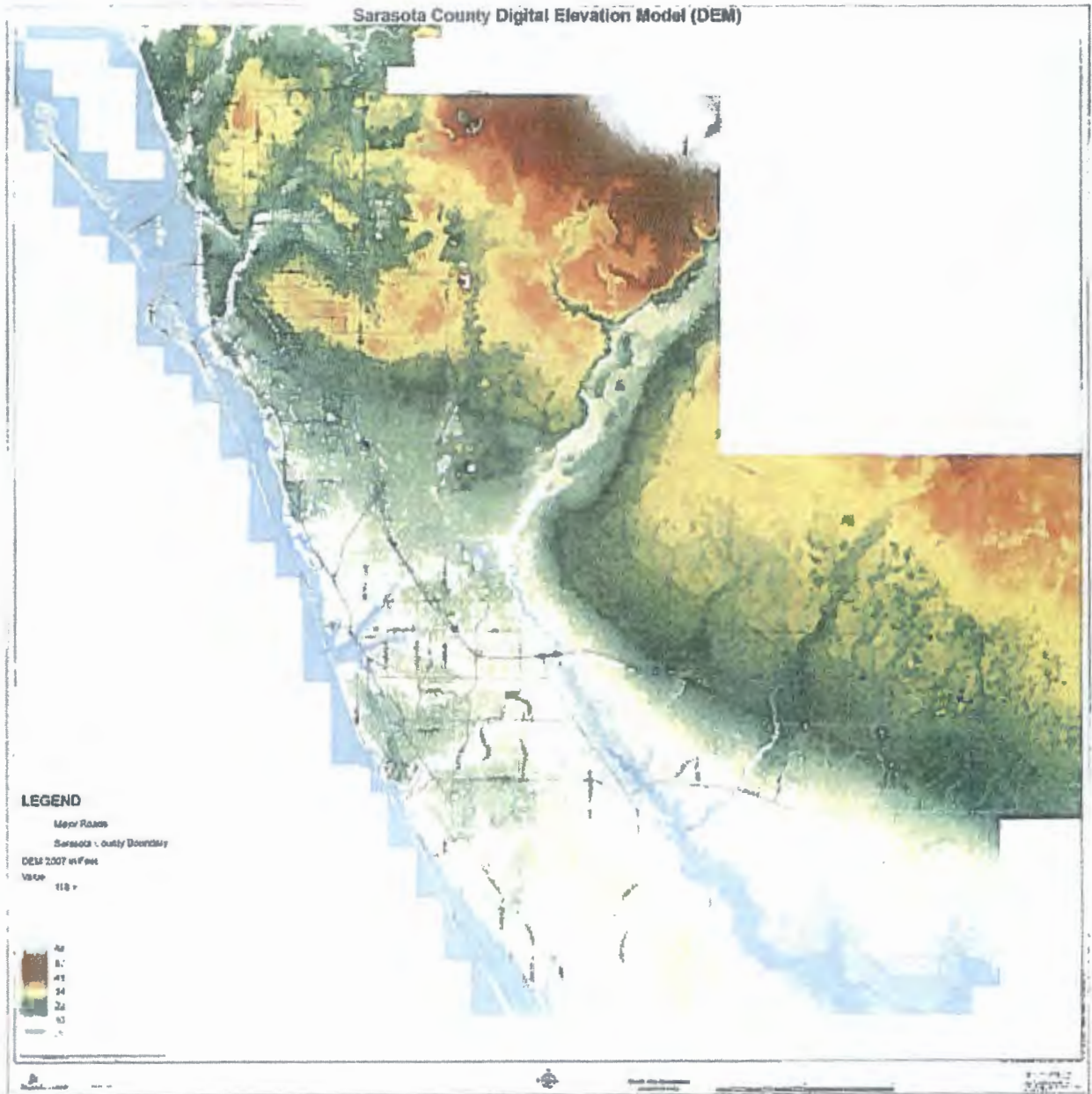
Currently, the team is reviewing possible sites along Knight's Trail Road within the boundaries of the Pinelands Reserve. Specifically, the area is being reviewed to determine applicable zoning district and environmental standards (Attachment #3). The team is working through the various steps needed to evaluate further development of the capital project for this purpose. Staff continues to aggressively pursue these options to identify and further develop a project for BCC consideration. Emergency Services will continue to provide regular updates on this process and bring forward a project for your review within the budgetary process.



# Taylor Ranch Elementary School Location



# County Elevation Map





# Knights Trail/Pinelands Map

