

# Week in Review

The Best of Bartow

Aug. 6 - 19, 2024



## COMMUNITY MEETING ADDRESSES RISING RIVER

A Community Meeting was held at Carver Recreation Center last Thursday to discuss the plans in place for potential flooding of the Peace River. Many residents who live in the vicinity of the river, as well as some concerned about the safety of the City's Waste Water Treatment plant, attended the meeting to get more information and express their concerns.

There is no imminent threat of flooding at this time, but City leaders are taking a proactive approach to ensure the best possible outcome, particularly in regards to health and safety, as Florida enters peak hurricane season.

Last week the City Commission declared a local state of emergency so that some necessary precautions could be taken and an appropriate response plan put in place should the River rise to dangerous levels.

Mother Nature is also doing her part, bringing hot, dry weather for the past few days which has resulted in a slight decrease in the water levels.

The situation received considerable media coverage, both before and during the community meeting, to include WFLA, WTSP, BayNews 9, ABC Action News, Telemundo and *The Ledger*.



## WITH RISING WATERS COMES RAPID CURRENTS

Not surprisingly, the rising waters of the Peace River are accompanied by more rapid currents. Last week, the Bartow Fire Department and the Polk County Sheriff's Office teamed up for a water rescue on Peace River, when a kayaker needed assistance south of Hwy 60.

Boaters should note that with the higher water can come swifter currents. Happily in this case, all's well that ends well.



Notes Fire Chief Jay Robinson, "Any use of the Peace River should be done with extreme caution due to the increased flow.

"Kayakers and canoeists should file a float plan at [uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/floating-plan.php](https://www.uscgboating.org/recreational-boaters/floating-plan.php) and let a friend or family member know where they are putting in, duration of the excursion, when and where the expected take out will occur."



## ASSISTANT CITY CLERK ACHIEVES CAREER MILESTONE

Asst. City Clerk Donna Donaldson graduated and received her CPM (Certified Public Manager) designation on August 8 at Hillsborough Community College in Plant City. She was one of 168 graduates. Donna, left, is pictured with Bartow City Clerk Jacki Poole. Congratulations on this great achievement!

## BARTOW SQUEEZE SHUTTLE RIBBON CUTTING TOMORROW

Have you heard? The City and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) have partnered to bring the Citrus Connection's Squeeze shuttle to Bartow. Our friends at Spectrum Bay News 9 took a spin on the shuttle, which is being financed by the CRA. See their story here: [https://baynews9.com/fl/tampa/news/2024/08/14/bartow-squeeze-launches-to-get-workers-around-downtown/?cid=share\\_fb&fbclid=IwY2xjawEwc3RleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHTlagIRZ3pxI7OJlbESPhY8zs8SdI0p4QC7q65VcV1lkw4d-iklo0pw\\_Q\\_aem\\_t87X\\_4L-Fk0qUSXoNRJ5uw?cid=share\\_clip](https://baynews9.com/fl/tampa/news/2024/08/14/bartow-squeeze-launches-to-get-workers-around-downtown/?cid=share_fb&fbclid=IwY2xjawEwc3RleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHTlagIRZ3pxI7OJlbESPhY8zs8SdI0p4QC7q65VcV1lkw4d-iklo0pw_Q_aem_t87X_4L-Fk0qUSXoNRJ5uw?cid=share_clip)

Look for the sandwich board signs designating Squeeze stops and hop aboard!

The CRA and the City will host a public celebration and official ribbon cutting at 9:30am Tuesday, August 20 (tomorrow!) at Tom's Chicken Shack, 901 E. Main St. See you there!



## THREE CHEERS FOR THE ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT!



This from Polk County Manager Bill Beasley: *It's not often that we get to share heartfelt good news items about local governance issues, especially when it comes to relationships between county and municipal governments. But the recent joint efforts on this event represents the "poster-child" towards the cooperative spirit that exists between Polk County and the City of Bartow. As you may know, earlier this week we had an electrical failure serving the courthouse, where the power disruption was detected about 9:00 PM on Tuesday evening. While the power service was re-established by about 6:30 AM the next morning, the various state/clerk staffs assigned to the courthouse and the general public had no clue as to what occurred "behind" the scenes to make that happen. As a result of the cooperative efforts of county and city staff, the overall coordinated efforts to restore electrical service to that major county facility were superb !! On behalf of the County Commission, the 10 Judicial Circuit, my office, and our Facilities Division,*

*I wanted to extend our sincere appreciation to Bartow City employees Mr. Roger Murphy, Mr. Willie Cruz and Mr. Uriel Cortes-Olivera. These guys were instrumental in re-establishing that service and are an outstanding representation of the City of Bartow's public service commitment.*

## CRA TEAMS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO BRING AI TECH TO ALL

The Bartow Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), Black Unicorn Education and Liberty Link Foundation 360 have joined forces to launch an innovative artificial intelligence literacy program called GenAI for All Generations. This cutting-edge initiative aims to demystify AI technology for residents living in low-income neighborhoods and tech deserts in Bartow. The project is made possible through support and funding from a Placemaking and Residential Outreach grant program designed to create meaningful and positive change within the community.

"We're excited about bringing this transformative program to Bartow," says Howard Smith, Executive Director of Bartow CRA. "GenAI for All Generations is an opportunity to expose our community to AI technology and inform residents about advancements of the future."

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## BRINGING AI TECH TO ALL *(continued from previous page)*

The bold initiative features a series of three dynamic events:

- **GENAI FAMILY FUN NIGHT** on Aug. 30: An engaging introduction to AI basics for families and residents with activities that focus on social impacts and ethical issues of AI.
- **GENAI CREATIVE ARTS CHALLENGE** on Sept. 27: A hands-on studio session with instruction and discussion on how to responsibly use AI tools to generate art, music, and text.
- **GENAI DEEPFAKES GALLERY WALK** on Oct. 25: An eye-opening “learning exhibit” that informs residents about AI scams and strategies to combat them.

“We’re here to ‘make tech make sense’ by any creative means necessary,” states Ora Tanner, CEO of Black Unicorn Education and the creator of the GenAI for All Generations. “The goal of the project is to help residents of all ages understand they have a say in deciding how artificial intelligence gets used in their community. No one else gets to do that for them.”

For details and registration information for these FREE AI events visit [www.eventbrite.com/o/black-unicorn-education-68025688733](http://www.eventbrite.com/o/black-unicorn-education-68025688733).



## COMMUNITY POLICING AT ITS BEST

Last month, Officer Duane Paul and Henry Clagett with the Bartow Police Department teamed up for some quality interaction with the community, handing out groceries and engaging in some light-hearted water battles as part of Block Party at the Woodlawn Apartments.

The PD was joined by the Church Service Community Center, Nuevo Comienzo and Baycare (a nurse tested blood pressure and distributed medical resources) in providing some mid-summer fun for the residents.



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