

CITY OF CLEWISTON

STATE OF THE CITY REPORT

December, 2023

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 appropriately acknowledges the significant positive impacts of this industry on the city, Hendry County and surrounding areas as 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 located in south Florida approximately 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. Clewiston is uniquely positioned among Florida municipalities in being centrally located by waterways and highways between the coastlines. 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 bicycling, 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 and 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 & leisure services 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 a worthwhile endeavor to document an end-of-year assessment of municipal progress, as well as, offer a brief prognosis for the coming New Year. This annual 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.

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 2023 with a view to 2024:

PART ONE: PROGRESS

a) Emergency Management, States of Emergency & Associated Funding Updates:

Significantly influential upon the city during 2020 & 2021 was the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). The implications significantly impacted practically every element of city operations as well as the community-at-large. This dynamic shifted dramatically in a positive direction in 2022. As was the case in the prior year, this report does not dwell on negative aspects during the pandemic period. Alternatively, this report focuses upon applicable outside agency interactions and city directed responses & implications for states of emergency in general.

As reported in 2020, a significant development was the prior adoption of a new Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) by the City prior to the pandemic

period. This allowed the city's pandemic response to be better organized than would have been the case under the previous CEMP. In cooperation with county emergency management in 2021, management was also able to complete the important revision process for the Clewiston relevant provisions of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) required Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) document. The LMS 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. This mandated 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. The new LMS document was concurrently approved by the Clewiston, LaBelle and Hendry County Commissions and officially accepted by FEMA in 2021 and is compliant until 2026. 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 timely authorized new disaster debris removal & monitoring contracts in January, 2022 consistent with county and LaBelle selections. The new CEMP, the LMS update and updated disaster debris contract actions completed during this period were essential to the ability of the city to adequately and efficiently respond to the 2022 hurricane season declared disaster events impacting the Clewiston community to varying degrees in the form of Ian and Nicole. These actions preserved a path to full reimbursement of city costs associated with FEMA eligible expenses and open the door to potential post-disaster hazard mitigation type funding eligibility in the future. **In 2023, the city renewed the disaster debris removal & monitoring firm contracts consistent with the terms of the previously approved agreements. In 2023, Clewiston staff continued the pursuit of disaster fund reimbursements for prior eligible Hurricane Ian expenditures with success in receiving full reimbursement of the debris removal and related costs incurred. In an attempt to address deteriorating conditions predominantly related to storm impacts, the City prioritized public building resiliency improvements including roof replacements in the wake of the storms and included a request for \$1.777 million in the annual legislative appropriation requests submitted in 2023 for FY 2024-2025 funding. In an effort to improve upon public safety regulatory enforcement & overall effectiveness, another achievement in the realm of enhanced resiliency of property during storm events accomplished in 2023 was review & adoption of identified modifications to the city storm shutter requirements for private properties before, during & after storm events.**

It is well documented that the pandemic adversely contributed to revenue losses for state and local governments. This had negative implications for Clewiston in both FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021. Fortunately, the city was less impacted economically overall than municipalities that were more reliant upon tourism dollars. By comparison, this translated to fewer private sector job losses and permanent business closures locally. In a positive vein, 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 the pandemic that in the case of Clewiston resulted in the receipt of \$890,000 in reimbursements 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 essential to future declared state of emergency response. 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 directly received \$4 million in two equal installments from the ARPA funding with the first half received in 2021 and the balance received in 2022. The city allocated a major portion of the first installment for the water utility elements of the automated Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project as further described later in this report. In 2022 and **continued through 2023, the city has designated ARPA funds for eligible expenditures including all three phases of the downtown area Alverde/Commercio water line utility infrastructure project, technology upgrades, facility improvements including a new library roof replacement & emergency equipment enhancements as further detailed in this report.** In terms of specific equipment upgrades utilizing ARPA funding for CSLFRF eligible expenditures, post-pandemic **the city and county replaced outdated technology including shared communications equipment consistent with the terms of an ILA for the Clewiston Commission Chambers, which the County Commission shares for meetings, that improved public access to live streamed meetings and had the additional benefit of enhanced cybersecurity safeguards while also addressing new legislative mandates and city liability insurance requirements. The full spectrum of these improvements were completed during 2022 & into 2023.**

b) Public Safety Initiatives & Activities: As reported in 2020, management and staff in collaboration with Hendry County completed a final draft of the outdated (circa 1980's) Inter-local agreement (ILA) between the parties for the East Hendry Fire Services provided by the Clewiston Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD). The updated East Hendry Fire Services ILA was approved by the county and City Commissions marking a major long term

priority achievement in 2021. Due to the ability to redirect resources as a result of the flexibility provided by the CARES Act public safety reimbursements described earlier, a second major priority initiative was accomplished the same year when the city completed the E-911 communications system equipment upgrade which benefitted all public safety service efforts in the Clewiston community as well as portions of eastern Hendry County served by city services. This had been identified as the highest priority need for a number of years by the Clewiston Police Department (CPD) but took on new urgency to achieve countywide emergency communications interoperability in compliance with a 2020 legislative mandate. In cooperation with the county, this digital platform communication equipment upgrade ensures that all city public safety delivery agencies can seamlessly and efficiently communicate. The system replaced aged, analog based, radio equipment that had served its useful life thus enhancing first responder efforts and the public's safety in the process.

In 2020, the CPD realized another long sought priority capital project with completion & formal closeout of the \$1.5 million state grant funded initiative originally begun in 2016 to acquire, renovate and relocate the CPD to its new and improved facilities at 300 South Berner Road. In 2021 & throughout 2022, this process continued with additional exterior and interior upgrades to the new facility location including: re-location of the city's primary Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to the 300 South Berner Road facility from its secondary location at the public utilities office located at 141 Central Avenue, building floor & wall finish replacements, completed bathroom upgrades, as well as, final relocation of all evidence storage to the new facility. The later item allowed the former police facility located at 205 West Ventura Avenue to be entirely vacated permitting other uses of that facility. To this end, a preliminary engineering structural evaluation on the 205 West Ventura Avenue location was undertaken & an administrative assessment of potential future use options for that site other than temporary emergency equipment storage remains in process. In the meantime, **a short-term Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) contractor rental of a portion of the office area in the 205 W. Ventura facility was initiated in 2023 & expected to end in early 2024. In 2023, remaining CPD facility improvements were completed at the new 300 South Berner location including the erection recently of additional EOC essential emergency communication antenna redundancy equipment. The remaining identified facility priority need for primarily exterior resiliency improvements including roof replacement is encompassed within the scope of the 2024 legislative funding request referenced earlier.** An additional major priority CPD equipment need began being addressed in 2021 with the utilization of CARES Act reimbursements to purchase 9 replacement vehicles in the aged police fleet. The CPD used local funding to replace 1 of the two aged animal services vehicles as well. The equipment upgrade process continued in 2022 with 2

additional vehicle and emergency equipment replacement purchases utilizing ARPA funding reimbursements & other grant funds consistent with the adopted multi-year City Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The CPD grant funded 2022 technology advancements included Panasonic Toughbook laptop computers for patrol officers which are Global Positioning System (GPS) enabled & are now location tracked “live” in dispatch which is another major officer safety enhancement. **The progress to replace aged vehicles & equipment continued in 2023 with another 2 replacement vehicles acquired in like manner utilizing a combination of ARPA funding & miscellaneous grant funding sources. An agreement to upgrade police officer Taser equipment over a five year period was approved & implemented in 2023.**

As reviewed in 2021, the CPD administration was reorganized with a new command staff structure implemented. In other efforts, the CPD: in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, continued the community outreach program (“Coffee with the Chief” events) to increase transparency and public communication; **continued participation into 2024 with approval of an intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the 20th Judicial Circuit of Florida Narcotics Task Force** led by the State Attorney’s office & involving other law enforcement agencies aimed at fighting drugs and related crimes on a regional basis (i.e. **NETFORCE initiative**); **renewed another state MOU ensuring continued Law Enforcement Agency Access to the Drive And Vehicle Information Database System (DAVID) which provides critical officer safety enhancement information including real time driver license status, vehicle registration & warrants outstanding data; re-entered through the State of Florida, the Federal LESO Surplus Property 1033 Program in 2023; initiated participation in an MOU with the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Department South Florida Task Force for Burglary Apprehension & Vehicles Crime Unit.** Also in **2023**, the CPD **approved a new contract for improved restricted information database access for investigative purposes with an authorized lower cost alternative service provider;** strengthened partnerships with local & regional law enforcement agencies including most importantly the Hendry County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO), joined a Multi-Jurisdictional Traffic Task Force Voluntary Cooperation Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement, continued participation in 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 HCSO. **The CPD completed 3 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) emergency services equipment upgrades in 2023 in cooperation with Hendry County government & the HCSO;** as well as, on-going enhanced officer training efforts to implement NARCAN use, continued comprehensive firearms equipment replacements & improved certification efficiency. A significant 2022 public safety achievement was final adoption of the emergency communications ILA between

the HCSO, county emergency services agencies and Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) providers including the CPD which satisfied legislatively mandated interoperability requirements. This action completed a process that had been discussed since prior to 2019 without resolution. **Other emergency training & equipment upgrades in 2023 included grant funded placement of AED devices in multiple public buildings with necessary training of staff in affected city departments. Lastly, the major CPD public safety achievement, for the first time in its almost a century of existence, will be successful designation as a state accredited law enforcement agency culminating after a nearly two year planning & evaluation process which entailed extensive policy/form reviews/updates, related equipment upgrades, approval of the required accreditation agreement, provision of necessary accreditation staffing and independent mock & final assessment session reviews completed in late 2023. The latest development in this process was hosting of the on-site peer review team comprised of three designated representatives of other Florida accredited agencies. This team just completed their assessment and advised during the exit interview with department leadership & management that they will be unanimously recommending Clewiston for approval of the accreditation request. The final decision will not be announced until February, 2024, but based upon the feedback received, management anticipates the CPD will be approved and accredited.**

Beginning in 2021 and continuing into 2022, the animal services division completed a staffing reorganization as well as significant facility improvements through staff efforts, targeted city resources & 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 specifically including student volunteers in cooperation with Career Source resources; 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 and participated in a review of the (circa 1980’s) ILA with the county for the provision of animal services outside the city limits. **The Animal Services facilities also saw several additional facility improvements completed in 2022 and continued into 2023 in like manner to the CPD**

facility. Most of the labor provided for the improvements at both facilities was accomplished by department staff including notably the Chief and Command personnel. In other departmental achievements in 2023, Clewiston Animal Services was recognized this year as the Small Jurisdiction Animal Services Agency of the Year in Florida and regionally at the Career Source Awards celebration as the Southwest Florida Champion Award winner for the department's participation & success utilizing youth volunteers at the shelter facility in a program coordinated by the local Career Source agency. The Clewiston facility has had two unscheduled inspections from state regulatory officials in 2023 with no identified deficiencies reported.

As previously requested by CVFD 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 Hendry Fire Services district to meet operating and identified CIP needs going forward. This change provided necessary funding flexibility to revise the CVFD budget to enhance personnel benefits (i.e. cancer & expanded accident coverages) for CVFD volunteer firefighters effective October, 2020. After completing an actuarial analysis, benefit considerations were further expanded in 2022 to include the provision of a pension plan for volunteer firefighters. Utilizing the county ILA established cost sharing formula, the city formally initiated the process to establish the pension plan consistent with state guidelines that allow the city for the first time to access state levied property insurance proceeds to offset a portion of the city's pension fund costs. The state has collected these funds from individual ratepayers' insurance premiums long term and distributed proceeds to participating departments that provided eligible benefits. **The addition of the fire volunteer pension plan benefit enhancements are aimed at improving CVFD's ability to retain and attract sufficient qualified individuals to continue providing an acceptable level of fire protection and first responder emergency medical services exclusively with volunteers. In 2023, the newly constituted independent Clewiston Fire Pension Board fully organized and took various actions which when required were endorsed by the City Commission & the CVFD volunteers to finalize & initiate the pension program and secure receipt of the Clewiston share of the aforementioned insurance premium proceeds assessed and collected by the state to offset pension costs going forward. The effort was successful with two qualifying volunteer retirements occurring during 2023 & local receipt of initial period annual state distributions of insurance proceeds.**

County & city officials agreed in 2020 to pursue consideration of two initiatives related to fire & 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 benefited to some degree from the fire assessment updated analysis, because it provided necessary information that allowed the city at a much reduced cost to consider 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 utilized. The fire assessment update from the county consultant was completed in 2022, but not in time to allow the city to consider the method of taxation change for the next fiscal year. The county portion of the assessment update was deemed adequate to allow use of study results in the FY 2022-2023 budget process. Regarding the EMS MSBU creation process, consent from the cities of Clewiston and LaBelle was required for an EMS county MSBU change to be effective within the city limits. With both cities' consent, the County Commission could have pursued the change effective October 1, 2022. The Clewiston Commission approved its consent to this change on first reading and was scheduled to consider final action at the December 20, 2021 regular meeting. Unexpectedly, 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. In other fire services matters, the Clewiston Volunteer Fire Department was able in 2022, with funding support of the city & county, to complete additional priority equipment updates including the phased 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. **Equipment & facility enhancements accomplished in 2023 included the addition of on-site fueling capabilities. On behalf of the CVFD, the City has also requested 2024 legislative funding of \$1.4 million for acquisition of Clewiston's first aerial firefighting apparatus capability in the form of a 75-78 foot Quint Aerial truck to replace the current aged CVFD pumper.** In 2022, Clewiston pursued completion of the necessary city specific analysis to complement the county fire assessment update previously prepared. **The City procured the services of the same independent consultant engaged by Hendry County with the 2023 completed plan utilized to prepare relevant elements of the proposed annual budget reflecting the impact of a fire protection assessment Uniform Method of Collection effective beginning in Fiscal Year 2023-2024. The Commission subsequently took final actions to implement for the first time the assessment method in lieu of ad valorem taxes to fund fire protection & first responder emergency medical services within the city limits. This method of funding essentially mirrors the MSBU funding method utilized by Hendry County for areas served by the CVFD outside the City and within the East Hendry Fire Services District by virtue of applicable provisions of the city/county ILA. To comply with statutory changes, the Commission adopted golf cart**

regulations in 2023 consistent with applicable legislative changes aimed at improving public safety.

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 initially developed in 2019 & subsequently refined annually including 2023 with focus 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 aggressively pursuing available state and federal grant opportunities to address accumulated demand. This has resulted in the pursuit of a new record number of grant seeking efforts for the city and a very impressive amount of approved grant funding resources with several major project applications still pending. As annually reviewed in detail during the budget development process & updated accordingly, **the city and its partners have cumulatively applied for \$71.4 million in grant type funding & donations from all sources with \$54.9 million approved to date. To give additional perspective, this is a one year increase of \$20.2 million in additional approved funding since last year's report. By any measure, it was quite a successful year!**

To further capital needs planning and expedite project design and completion, an important goal was achieved three years ago with Commission approval of multiple firm contracts for the provision of professional engineering services. From the dozen qualified responses, a staff review committee narrowed the list to four recommended firms. The city has subsequently been positioned with sufficient firms under contract to simultaneously pursue multiple capital projects in compliance with state regulations requiring separation of design and inspection type services on certain major projects specifically including FDOT administered efforts. In 2021 and 2022, the city utilized the services of all the approved firms to varying degrees for established stages of planned capital projects. **As scheduled, the initial contractual agreements became eligible for extension in 2023. The contractual agreements were successfully extended this year for three of the four originally selected firms by mutual agreement.** The city's lead consulting engineer, with 3rd party assistance, completed design and permitting requirements for the FDOT approved **\$6 million C-21 bridge canal crossing project** after the city was awarded additional legislative funding in 2021. Upon receiving a formal release for the HHD rehabilitation project recreation area (which includes the bridge site) from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in 2022, the city awarded a contract with construction commencing for the C-21 bridge project late in the year. **The**

C-21 bridge construction was substantially completed in 2023 with final project closeout scheduled in early 2024. Despite the extensive scope & considering some of the uncertainties involved, **this project will be completed on schedule & within budget.** Since being placed into public use recently, the improved access has functioned extremely well in replacing the former S-169 at grade crossing which is now closed and scheduled for demolition and removal by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) in 2024 which will provide the opportunity for future boat access to the canal west of the C-21 location & improved access to Lake Okeechobee as that area develops. The long awaited **partially FDOT grant funded East Ventura Avenue pavement repair and resurfacing project, as well as, the associated grant funded East Ventura Avenue & vicinity storm water infrastructure improvements were completed in 2022 with the combined \$1.3 million project closed out in 2023** utilizing a single qualified contractor. Thanks in large measure to the efforts of the design engineer, **these much needed improvements were also completed on schedule and within budget** despite unanticipated third-party communication utility conflicts.

The city was awarded Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) State Revolving Fund (SRF) grant and a combination of low 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 FDEP consent order decree requirements the terms of which the city originally agreed to in 2018. These completed project phases resulted in reduced Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) flows which positively impact operating costs and free up permitted plant treatment capacity for future 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 available for deployment throughout the collection system for use during power outage events to avoid wastewater backups, overflows or bypasses. In spring 2022, the city completed installation of adequately sized permanent WWTP generator equipment utilizing additional state grant funding also secured in 2021. Phase 3 funding was approved by FDEP in 2021. **Contract awards were finalized in 2022 reflecting project scope modifications to match available funding for the 3rd phase of another SRF grant and no interest loan funded effort to address additional identified i & i related needs. Although currently behind schedule for completion which necessitated a project amendment to be approved by FDEP in 2023, substantial progress was made during the year on the Phase 3 i & i project scope which is in large part focused upon prioritized replacement of identified electrical panels & pumps at lift stations while addressing other equipment & facility deficiencies.** The

phased i & i projects completed to date and the backup power improvements and other WWTP operational efforts addressed key elements of the 2018 FDEP consent order agreement between the city and state & an important aspect of the more comprehensive planned renovation of the WWTP facility. Subsequently, in late 2022, the city was notified that the requirements of the 2018 consent order were satisfied. This achievement allowed full focus on the WWTP upgrade project going forward to hopefully avoid future FDEP consent order consideration for WWTP flows. Such improvements cannot be completed soon enough, however, as recent inspections of the WWTP facilities have resulted in increasing state regulatory pressures to further improve treatment processes & outcomes & expected full compliance with operating permit conditions & effluent flow considerations and limitations. Despite these pressures, the city made timely application and was successful in receiving state approved renewal of its multi-year required WWTP operating permit from FDEP in 2022. In collaboration with the county, the city has over the past few years submitted grant applications to multiple sources for funding to complete the planned comprehensive renovation and expansion of the aged WWTP to meet modern reuse quality standards and provide additional capacity to serve new development & redevelopment of unserved areas including the funded extension of 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) site, as well as, other adjacent underserved areas. Regarding the need to provide essential wastewater services to the 27 highway corridor and AIA, the county completed the first phase of the AIA wastewater force main project in 2022 utilizing a portion of the previously received state legislative appropriation for the project. In 2022, the county secured additional legislative funding to complete the remaining scope of the AIA wastewater force main project. **In 2023, the county pursued next steps to complete the balance of the wastewater force main project design, easement acquisition & construction after which the city will accept maintenance responsibility once the connection to the WWTP is accomplished. The county has applied in 2023 and the city endorsed the request to the legislature for 2024 funding to complete a similar project to extend services to the Hookers Point area of Hendry County in the vicinity of the SFWMD's current operations facility via a new force main that would also connect to the city WWTP.** In another cooperative effort to expand wastewater services, the USACE and city agreed in 2020 to design and construct a septic-to-sewer project to connect USACE facilities, located outside the city limits but adjacent to the eastern boundary, to the city wastewater system with the USACE responsible for fully funding the project. Project design & the procurement process were completed in 2021 after the USACE secured \$956,254 in funding. The city awarded a contract in 2022 for **the septic-to-sewer conversion project to connect all USACE owned facilities to city sewer. The project construction was successfully completed during the first quarter of 2023 and**

all the disconnected associated aged septic systems were eliminated which is great news for water quality in this strategic area located adjacent to the lakefront canal system.

Concerning the referenced necessary comprehensive WWTP improvements, the city applied for congressional funding for the WWTP rehabilitation and initial expansion project in 2022. Thanks to the support of Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart who represented the city at the time before redistricting was effective, the federal congressional budget appropriation process included a \$3.0 million Community Project Funding (CPF) allocation for the WWTP project. **In 2023, the Commission approved a grant agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) for this initial WWTP project “seed money” with next steps initiated to complete environmental reviews, begin project design steps & initiate the state permitting process. The city made a December, 2022 funding request to the Hendry County state legislative delegation for the \$11.0 million balance of funding needed for the bulk of the estimated WWTP facility enhancement & initial expansion project cost. This request was approved in 2023 providing a cumulative authorized \$14.0 million for the WWTP project. As a contingency, in case the state request was not fully funded, scoping factors necessitated additional resources, or to allow flexibility in expansion capability & reclaimed water effluent distribution infrastructure for irrigation type uses, the City filed a \$4.7 million request in early 2023 with Congressman Scott Franklin. Congressman Franklin, who now represents Clewiston following redistricting, agreed to include the city’s request in the 2024 CPF budgeting process which has not yet been completed. City staff, with assistance from the Southwest Florida Planning District Council (SWFPDC) as an additional contingency, also submitted a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) \$5.085 million grant application for further expansion beyond the scope of the state grant funded initial expansion of the WWTP capacity & reclaimed water distribution system to accommodate future economic development growth.**

To complete the necessary utility infrastructure required to adequately serve AIA and the associated 27 corridor development, the city applied in 2021 for state legislative funding to upgrade the water line infrastructure along the 27 highway corridor west to AIA. In 2022, the city received the requested legislative funding for the water line project. **The city successfully completed the process of finalizing the \$4 million AIA water extension project grant agreement with FDEP in 2023 and awarded an engineering contract to initiate project design. Utilizing \$1.4 million in ARPA funding in 2022, the city contracted the priority comprehensive upgrade of water service lines in the Alverde & Comercio area of downtown to enhance fire suppression capabilities & improve customer service with increased water pressure. The first two phases of the project were completed in 2022. The third and final phase of the project was completed in 2023 & already considered a success with positive customer feedback & the construction of 58**

new apartments recently commencing in the impacted area. In cooperation with Hendry County, the city applied in 2023 for \$1.7 million in 2024 legislative funding to replace an aged city maintained cast iron material water main line in the Harlem community with a PVC material line sufficiently sized to provide enhanced fire protection capability and improved water service to affected customers in the vicinity.

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 the referenced AMI utility metering system conversion, assist in 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. Despite adverse supply chain impacts on material delivery schedules, the AMI utility metering project preparation phases progressed in 2022 & into 2023 when the third and final implementation phase began. **In 2022 and continued into 2023, the city with FMPA assistance initiated the planned public education effort for the AMI project, as well as, unrelated, but important, customer education efforts to explain increased power cost adjustments (PCA) experienced during the last couple of years as a result of escalating natural gas prices worldwide. Fortunately, natural gas prices moderated during 2023 and the associated PCA portion of utility bills have declined appreciably. In a major accomplishment, the online customer utility metering portal included as a customer service enhancement in the AMI project was activated in early December, 2023 for customers with previously completed AMI meter installs.** The \$2.8 million AMI project is being financed with an FMPA low interest loan for the electric portion and with the water portion being funded through the earlier referenced federal ARPA allocation with no appreciable impact on rates resulting. The advance study completed for operating budget economies to be realized from the AMI system implementation are projected to offset net costs to the city within the first 3-4 years of operations. **The current project status of AMI meter installations is at 90% plus of all electric customers and over 21% for water customers with an expectation for the less difficult electric meter transition to be essentially complete in 2023 while the more involved water meter installations will likely require all of 2024 to be completed.**

Given the amount of pending utility project activity of late, the priority need for development of a Comprehensive Utilities Master Plan for Clewiston's water, wastewater & future reclaimed water infrastructure became readily apparent to city officials in recent years. To this end, management, staff & engineers scoped a project in 2023 to initiate master plan development & presented it to the Commission which

subsequently authorized pursuit of state FDEP grant funding to develop the initial phases of the master planning effort.

In 2020, the public utilities department completed an electric system analysis and initiated electric distribution resiliency maintenance including transfer station and transmission line improvements. Staff will continue to identify & pursue state grant opportunities to reduce the potential and duration of power outage events particularly related to extreme weather, but efforts have not yet been funded. Concurrently, **the city has continued in recent years to emphasize maintenance efforts the results of which contributed to reduced outage times and a lesser extent of damages during 2022 hurricane disaster declaration events. In 2023, the city budget for such activities was again increased to continue the use of professional contracted services resources.** Of course, not all capital needs of the city can be satisfied with grant & donation type funding. **In 2023, three very aged major public works vehicles utilized in the solid waste collection activities were replaced by virtue of a \$982,209 financing effort. Service efficiency & reliability have significantly improved as a result.**

In 2023, the city continued its successful marketing collaboration with the county Economic Development Council (EDC) with progress aimed at encouraging private investment and job creation opportunities in the vicinity of Clewiston. This effort has contributed to increased activity which helped accomplish the city's completed sale of all city-owned properties within the Commerce Park Industrial District (CPID) in 2021. This was a milestone achievement for the city as the development of the properties is already 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 fund for the initial business development in Commerce Park. The construction of an initial commercial structure in Commerce Park was completed in 2022 marking the first such construction activity in well over a decade. Additional projects continue to be planned based upon continued contacts and discussions with developers.

d) Community Development/Redevelopment Areas, Code Enforcement/Regulatory Reform & Other Quality of Life Considerations: During workshop discussions over the last several years, the Commission determined development and redevelopment of the 27 highway corridor a priority particularly regarding the downtown and older sections of the city. Several years prior, the Planning & Zoning Board and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Advisory Committees initiated a review of development and regulatory tools with a draft ordinance recommended for consideration. With the primary exception of an

FDOT visioning effort further described in this report, initial 27 highway corridor planning efforts stalled in the period after 2015 due to concerns about various elements of the previously proposed comprehensive draft ordinance rewrite. More recent efforts initiated in early 2020 to revisit the scope and specific provisions were not finalized in 2020 or 2021 due to pandemic impact delays. The restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic also adversely affected code enforcement efforts throughout the City particularly the Special Magistrate process during the period. In 2021, code enforcement efforts returned to pre-pandemic levels, and with the Commission's support management reemphasized a commitment to pursuing the 27 highway corridor initiatives. To this end, the previously recommended 27 highway corridor zoning ordinance provisions were modified & adopted by the Commission in late 2022 after a series of workshops and public meetings. **In May, 2023, consistent with the comprehensive plan amendment designations done over seven years earlier, the initial zoning of properties along the 27 highway corridor was completed. This was a major achievement for the city that had been on hold for years but which is now expected to further redevelopment goals for the corridor.**

In a related matter, CRA funding has significantly increased in the last three budget cycles for the first time in a decade prior. These funds have been held in reserve since 2019 to accumulate and once again begin addressing priorities. **During the 2023 budget development process, it was determined that funds were sufficient to initiate the process of prioritization of potential projects for reactivation of the CRA plan implementation process effectively dormant since 2011 when available funding was entirely expended. The Commission recently held an initial CRA workshop discussion to this end with more to follow.** Since 2019, the city completed the first four phases of a 27 Corridor FDOT grant funded beautification project to install mature Royal Palm trees along the highway. The city was approved for additional funding during 2021 from FDOT to complete another phase of the planned installations along the remainder of the 27 Corridor within the city limits. **Beginning in 2022 & carried over into 2023, the staff and engineer completed the planning process with FDOT representatives to finalize the grant agreement & modified plans to allow the fifth phase to proceed to construction. Also in 2023, the city applied to FDOT for additional grant funding to continue this beautification project further west along the highway corridor installing Royal Palms in the median area out to the western city limit.** With community & agency support, the city was approved to receive a FDOT funded Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) sidewalk construction project grant which will provide pedestrian facilities on designated street sections along Clewiston school routes. At the City's request and consistent with regional priority transportation infrastructure planning processes, FDOT also approved a project to construct other sidewalk additions to the Clewiston system. The FDOT administered corridor sidewalk & drainage improvement project funding was authorized in 2021-2022. The city staff &

engineer then collaborated with FDOT on project scoping & design details to construct grant funded sidewalk sections filling voids along portions of the corridor and adjacent feeder street sections. **The Commission subsequently approved a modified scope contract with FDOT for sidewalk & storm water improvements including portions of: Royal Palm, Ponce de Leon & Balboa in the vicinity of Civic Park. FDOT contracted for sidewalk & storm water improvements on San Luiz; and, along the north & south sides of the US 27 right-of-way in the western section of the City adjacent to shopping centers, hotels, restaurants & businesses in the vicinity. In 2023, FDOT awarded the modified scope contracts for the \$1.4 million project with construction beginning in August and project completion projected in the first quarter of 2024. The City completed the iconic west end 27 Corridor median flagpole project in 2023 with the long anticipated dedication ceremony recognizing local veterans held on Memorial Day in cooperation with the county and the Hendry County Fair Board who raised funding for the project.** As reported in 2020 and referenced herein, the city was approved for timely FDOT funded professional highway corridor planning assistance. FDOT's Planning Studio division utilized the services of a consultant to complete a 27 Corridor Vision Plan (CVP) for the city and portions of the highway outside the east and west city limits into Hendry 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 CVP was approved by the city & county Commissions in 2021. **In 2022 & 2023, staff continued the FDOT collaboration for inclusion of recommended 27 CVP elements in future state funded corridor improvement projects. The initial FDOT improvement project for the 27 corridor east of the city limits to include resurfacing and drainage improvements to the eastern Hendry County line was begun by the contractor in late 2023 with completion scheduled in 2024. The City applied in 2021 and was approved in 2022 for a congressional CPF appropriation & in 2023 was awarded separate funding from FDOT to improve the remaining section of Ventura Avenue from Deane Duff to W.C. Owen with a comprehensive multi-modal "super street" type streetscape upgrade consistent with the CVP document recommendations for the downtown commercial area. In 2023, the City approved the required grant agreements and engineering services contracts for the combined \$1.8 million project. Two 2023 workshops aimed at establishing the design criteria for efforts to proceed were recently held with additional actions to follow.**

With the leadership and assistance of the SWFRPC, the city was also selected for a Florida Boating Improvement Program (FBIP) grant project to develop a Waterfront Master Plan within and near the expanded CRA area with access through the CVP corridor. The project progressed in 2021 utilizing SWFRPC resources, a stakeholder group for input and staff with the services of a consultant to do the necessary study to develop the master plan. Due to the need for scope review and consideration of modifications following

receipt of initial public input, storm season impacts and other administrative demands, the master plan development process was not completed in 2022. **The Waterfront Master Plan development process was wrapped up in 2023 with Commission approval of the FBIP plan allowing closeout of the grant project by SWFRPC.** Relevant elements of the plan are influencing the update of the boat ramp area parking & access modifications necessary as a result of the C-21 bridge project coming to a close & the pending removal of the at-grade S-169 canal crossing, as well as, the next step considerations for the approved supplemental legislative funding and the now authorized FDOT SCOP funding for the improvement of the N. Francisco Street section providing access from the 27 corridor to the waterfront area. Legislative funding to supplement the N. Francisco project resulted from a Commission action in 2021 to pursue funding which was approved in 2022. This funding has been held to complete complementary improvements in coordination with the pending N. Francisco FDOT SCOP project which is yet to be designed. The Commission has authorized the project engineering agreements. The engineers & staff recently met to develop project scoping for the design effort. **The City also submitted a FDOT SCOP application in 2023 to provide additional funding to improve the remaining “gap” section of Herbert Hoover Dike Road between the N. Francisco Street project scope and the new bridge approach.** In cooperation with the USACE, the city was involved throughout the year in coordination activities to address impacts on the adjacent city managed waterfront recreation area as the HHD project contractor completed their major dike rehabilitation contract. Although the HHD project was predominantly completed within Clewiston in 2021, the USACE contractor continued to address punch list details in 2022 culminating with the removal of the temporary canal construction crossing utilized during the lengthy project. In addition to the very important dike safety enhancements the project provided Clewiston, it also resulted in complete USACE funded resurfacing of the street sections in the HHD recreation area. LOST was reopened in total for the first time in over two years in December, 2022.

In cooperation with the USSC, the city renamed the public golf course facility 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. 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 also received additional in-kind support from USSC at the golf course that assisted with resolving some minor irrigation system deficiencies and reducing chemical costs. **In partnership with USSC and First Bank of Clewiston in 2023, the city tackled the long identified major facility enhancement need at the golf course to replace the 40 plus year old irrigation & pumping system that**

provides essential water distribution to maintain course conditions. The effort resulted in agreement to finance the installation of a \$1.4 million comprehensive irrigation system upgrade for the entire historic golf course. The project is currently underway with construction expected to be complete in the first quarter of 2024. In terms of other major facility enhancements, an initiative begun in 2021 and **completed in 2022 was a much needed renovation of the Charles E. Wetherald Youth Center facility made possible through another USSC and city partnership. The range and frequency of uses, as well as, recreational programming (e.g. the recent 2nd Annual Christmas Tree Lighting event, the return of the October fall festival, the Halloween Trunk or Treat event, the inaugural Public Safety Agency Showcase event recently held & the expanded Easter celebration activity held in 2023) of this and other adjacent city recreational facilities continues to evolve now with community input from the dedicated volunteers serving on the 2023 organized Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services Advisory Board** collaborating with management and the mid-2022 hired Director of Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services. In terms of activities, the renovated youth center allowed expanded community organization & general public type rental uses, the reactivation of the YMCA provided summer camp program & **in late 2023, discussions of a collaborative after school program utilizing the youth center & library facilities with support from the Hendry County Schools.**

USSC and the city partnered to complete a cost shared renovation & successful 2023 reopening of the historic C.S. Mott Municipal Swimming Pool facilities. The pool had been closed for the past four years during the pandemic period and after due to deteriorated structural conditions needing repairs & related health department safety guideline considerations. **In another 2023 collaboration, the city utilized generous donation funding to complete a playground renovation & equipment upgrade project at the “triangle” park located on Esperanza. The necessary equipment to do a second similar equipment upgrade at the Ridgewood park location is on site and will be completed within early 2024.** The City Commission and Hendry County School Board approved renewal of the expiring multi-year school recreation facility use ILA in 2022. **Additionally, Hendry County, the Hendry School Board, the Cities of LaBelle and Clewiston in 2023 collectively approved a long needed update to the School Concurrence Inter-local Agreement for school facility planning and coordination which was initially adopted in 2003 and last updated in 2006.**

With major implications for funding future capital needs related to impactful growth throughout the county on identified priority public services including: public school construction, transportation infrastructure, law enforcement facility needs, fire & EMS capital needs & capital needs of public libraries, Hendry County & the Hendry County Public Schools collaboratively pursued a 2023 study on the implementation of impact fees. The School Board & County Commission recently received the study & the county

has requested input from the cities of Clewiston & LaBelle on the topic. The city expects to begin workshop discussions on the topic that was initially discussed during the budget development process this past year.

The Hendry County Library Cooperative Long Range Plan & Annual Plan of Service were updated in 2023 and the state aid grant agreement with Clewiston as the administering agency was approved once again.

In the latter half of 2020, the city approved a revised Planned Unit Development (PUD) master plan amendment for Clewiston 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 & first responders. In 2021, developer progress continued on the Gateway South PUD project with survey, site tree removal, environmental clearance & engineering design activities undertaken. The required Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) process was pursued for the project beginning in 2022. **In late 2023, the Clewiston Gateway South PUD project received the required ERP which allows development next steps to proceed in 2024.** 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. **Progress was made in 2022 and accomplished in 2023 as USSC filed and received City PUD approval for their property referenced as the Clewiston North & Marina project** to expand commercial retail opportunities along the 27 highway corridor, further address housing needs & include development of a hotel/marina site with canal access to the lake. **Later in 2023, progress continued with the developer initiating pursuit of the ERP permit process on this much needed project.** To address commercial, light industrial and warehousing type uses, the city **received and initiated plan review in 2022 for the proposed Clewiston 440 project. The plans advanced in the review process in 2023 with the current focus and substantial progress on completing required steps to finalize voluntary annexation requests from USSC and other adjacent property owners for this project site currently located outside the city limits along the 27 highway corridor adjacent to the western city limit boundary with rail access available.** In terms of other lesser scale projects to address housing needs that have progressed, **the city approved zoning actions in 2023 to allow the earlier noted 58 much needed new apartment units in the downtown vicinity. The city also approved a zoning action to allow rehabilitation of the former Lakeside Detox facility in the hospital area to provide for the addition of 12 small unit apartments in the renovated building. These two projects already under construction will provide 70 new housing units.**

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

begun in 2020 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 long term 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 last year satisfied FDEP's NPDES permit renewal requirements with additional responsibilities for updated mapping to be completed on an approved schedule in future years. **Beginning in 2022 and continued into 2023, the Commission held workshops to further discussions with staff and engineers on storm water initiatives and review of required maintenance assessments and municipal responsibilities for existing infrastructure (e.g. culvert crossings engineering analysis & cost estimates, BMAP requirements specifically related to septic to sewer efforts & compliance progress, storm water storage potential opportunities & funding sources).** The city received Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) grant assistance & entered into a collaboration in 2023 with Florida Atlantic University to complete preparation of the first Watershed Master Plan for the city. 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 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. In 2022, the city received state approval of the water supply plan which satisfies requirements for the next decade unless the state modifies requirements or the need for local amendments becomes necessary. This achievement is important particularly at this time as the review process for new development approval timing locally can be adversely impacted by an outdated water supply plan document. This effort was slated for completion several years prior based upon an agreement with the state, but it was not accomplished until this past year. With technical expertise assistance from USSC staff resources and the city consulting engineer, success was realized as well with completion of the steps necessary to achieve timely WWTP permit renewal as noted earlier.

e) Fiscal Management, Oversight, Compliance & Reporting: In terms of adverse economic conditions, the decade prior to 2019, took a significant toll on city financials which became an essential priority for the city to address beginning in late 2019. Reserves were largely depleted and fiscal compliance type conditions resulted in the need to take corrective

actions. In each of the city's enterprise funds and operations, 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 and implemented corrective measures beginning in 2020. It was expected to take multiple years to accomplish established financial goals and restore full 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. Specifically, the user fee based rate structures were modified for the first time in most cases in more than a decade. To prevent this condition from being repeated, management recommended and the Commission implemented steps to ensure that regular cost-of-living type analysis occurs with rates adjusted accordingly. **In 2023, this utility rate review process was again followed with necessary adjustments implemented in affected funds.** 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 plagued city financials for years while addressing additional audit identified improvements in financial management going forward. **Financial management progress continued in 2023 including timely audit reporting for the prior year with no adverse findings reported & a "clean" opinion received. The city also sought new auditing proposals resulting in a multi-year extension of expiring contracts.** The Finance Department continues to implement and refine enhanced 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 during the annual budget process. The department also continued to provide 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 simultaneously with the Finance Department experiencing a major increase in its workload resulting from the city's success in the receipt of additional grant resources. While certainly a blessing to the community in terms of meeting needs, grant programs

inherently increase the degree of financial management related efforts necessary to comply with grant agency requirements. In terms of administrative actions to improve efficiency of operations & service delivery while achieving regulatory compliance, steps included initiating a **review and update of the 2023 organizational structure, personnel pay & classification plans in compliance with new minimum hourly wage legislation schedules and significant progress on a comprehensive review & redrafting of the personnel policies and procedures documents prioritized by the Commission.** In 2021, the Commission approved a number of organizational & personnel related changes including the first in an anticipated series of cost-of-living adjustments to the pay plan & benefit modifications with additional actions to follow to achieve legislative mandate minimum wage standards compliance while attempting to attract & retain the most qualified employees possible.

f) Intergovernmental Cooperation: Local governments achieve their optimum potential when developing cooperative working relationships with peers and other influential organizations and agencies. Clewiston made historical progress during the last several years in terms of intergovernmental cooperation. Representatives from the cities of Clewiston and LaBelle during the period joined Hendry and Glades counties to collaboratively communicate with legislative leadership, local delegation members and select federal and state regulatory agencies in a unified advocacy effort for designated priorities, projects and funding assistance for topics of mutual interest and benefit. Based upon the reaction of outside agency officials, this unprecedented cooperation has been productive. Results have been outstanding in terms of increased funding and other positive outcomes specifically in the highly competitive state budgetary allocation process. As for interagency cooperation on a local level, as referenced throughout this report and evidenced by a number of less notable examples, positive city interactions with county agencies have steadily improved interagency relations in the last four years with even higher expectations for continued success in the New Year and beyond. Management believes past and future progress is reliant upon continued excellent communication outcomes.

Examples included continued progress with expanded programming and facility enhancements in the city administered county, city & state grant funded three-branch library system. As noted earlier, beginning in 2021 and since has seen enhanced cooperation between the city police department and the sheriff's department thanks to the concerted efforts of agency leadership. Outreach to federal and state agencies in all departments to foster improved relationships is a priority. Other prominent examples where the city has enhanced its relationships and standing are the USACE, FDOT, SFWMD, SWFRPC, Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), FMPA, as

well as, improved communication with 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), FEMA, FDEM and the EDA among others. In a new initiative begun in 2021, the city, county & LaBelle agreed to partner with the Florida Attorney General's office in a MOU implementing a unified plan regarding opioid litigation. The City has continued providing use of its facilities for monthly office hours for staff of U.S. Congressman Scott Franklin and to allow weekly office hours for Florida House of Representatives member Lauren Melo.

PART TWO: PROGNOSIS

Looking ahead, attention will continue to focus upon enhancing the city's improving track record of achieving predominantly positive outcomes. **Based upon prevailing economic indicators, management is extremely optimistic on local economic prospects as 2024 unfolds.**

Completion of a number of major activities and projects was achieved this past year with **expectations very high for additional success in 2024 as follows: subject to the results of the pending final assessment, achieve & maintain police department accreditation status;** in cooperation with the county, **continue collection of service data and pursue any recommended updates as deemed necessary to the city & county animal services ILA;** in cooperation with Hendry County, **take required action to renew previously approved contracts for future year disaster debris removal & monitoring firms;** **negotiate necessary change orders and complete final details of the C-21 bridge project including parking area modifications & related multimodal transportation connectivity enhancements utilizing remaining legislative grant funding with FDOT oversight;** complete project design, permitting & contract awards for **grant funded streetscape improvements to upgrade the remaining unimproved section of Ventura Avenue from Deane Duff to W.C. Owen;** **complete contract details & initiate design, permitting & procurement steps for the approved FDOT SCOP funding of the North Francisco Street project resurfacing & related improvements including drainage;** then coordinate with FDOT oversight, design, permitting & procurement steps for the approved supplemental legislative funding for additional improvements to enhance multimodal access in the vicinity of North Francisco Street into the waterfront area from the 27 highway corridor; continue to pursue FDOT SCOP funding for improvements to the section of Herbert Hoover Dike Road between N. Francisco & the new C-21 bridge approach; utilizing Clewiston's share of county boating fees allocation, **complete boating facilities maintenance improvements;** coordinate with FDOT the current improvement project to the 27 Corridor east of the city to the county line which is slated for completion in early 2024; **pursue funding for other priority 27 highway corridor**

improvement projects identified in the FDOT Planning Studio CVP documents for areas along the corridor both within the city limits & west of the city; recommend approved 27 CVP elements to the extent CRA funding, potential legislative funding, grants & other sources are available; complete next steps associated with expanding the mapping designations & related actions to include additional recommended properties near the eastern city limits & implement the adopted 27 Corridor Comprehensive Plan & regulatory ordinance provisions consistent with relevant CVP recommendations including actions to establish & zone targeted properties into the Downtown Commercial District as previously designated & recommended; in collaboration with the SWFRPC, pursue grant/donation type funding sources to implement select priority recommendations included in the approved Waterfront Master Plan; work cooperatively with property purchasers & the EDC to facilitate Commerce Park additional private investment and job creation efforts; continue until complete construction activities of the AMI utility metering project; complete FDEP funded phase 3 i & i wastewater system improvements; continue efforts seeking grant funding & other resources to complete a Comprehensive Water, Wastewater & Reclaimed Water Utilities Master Plan for the city; as an element of the master planning effort, review in-city & out-of-city water & wastewater rate structure including an analysis of impact fees and other available alternative options for infrastructure funding with consideration of Hendry County's concurrent impact fee study efforts; comply with the approved state schedule for the city to address FDEP enforced BMAP standards & NPDES permit requirements for storm water system mapping submittals; evaluate adoption of SFWMD requested water conservation model ordinance; continue study & pursuit of compliance with unfunded legislature mandated storm water requirements which took effect in mid-2022 including additional analysis of infrastructure needs while pursuing identified priority grant funding sources; complete FDEM grant funded Watershed Master Plan for city utilizing assistance of Florida Atlantic University; facilitate commencement of private construction on the approved & permitted Clewiston Gateway South PUD project on USSC owned property to address housing demand needs; in cooperation with Hendry County, facilitate completion of the remaining phases of the grant funded & county administered wastewater force main project from the WWTP to AIA; complete design, permitting & construction of a water main line to enhance service particularly fire flow capabilities along the 27 highway corridor west of the city to connect with the county owned water tank located at AIA; facilitate & support the pursuit of required next step state permitting actions for the planned phase of PUD development referenced as the Clewiston North and Marina project on USSC property located on the north side of the 27 highway corridor in the vicinity of the Walmart area & western section of the city including both commercial and residential development with future lake access available to portions of the property via the canal system; finalize actions on voluntary annexation requests, review plans and next step

permitting actions related to USSC and other adjacent properties seeking access to city utilities to effect commercial and warehousing type use development referenced as the Clewiston 440 project on properties adjacent to the western boundary of the city limits also along the 27 highway corridor with available rail access; **coordinate completion of the FDOT funded sidewalk & drainage improvements project underway on San Luiz & street sections** located along both sides of the 27 highway corridor in the vicinity of adjacent shopping centers to fill voids; **coordinate completion of the additional FDOT funded modified scope sidewalk & drainage improvements project underway along portions of Royal Palm, Ponce de Leon & Balboa** in the vicinity of Civic Park; **coordinate with FDOT & pursue additional grant funding to complete remaining gaps in the sidewalk system & associated drainage improvements particularly along the remaining sections of the 27 corridor within the city limits & west of the Berner Road & San Luiz intersections;** **complete contractual requirements, design & construction of the FDOT SRTS 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** in compliance with current FDOT modified right-of-way location standards; **complete the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) grant & USSC donation funded Trinidad Park playground replacement project;** **complete other USSC donation funded upgrades to the second small designated neighborhood playground facility;** **complete budgeted library facility ARPA funded roof replacement 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; analyze feasibility and value of re-establishing county/city/schools East Recreation Board relations to include funding formula considerations going forward; continue review, monitoring & next step collection actions to resolve outstanding property liens particularly for non-homestead properties; **consider identified surplus property disposal & public building use options;** 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, **evaluate marketing strategy & infrastructure improvement feedback, as well as, pending retail recruitment recommendations from the EDC administered & grant funded downtown strategy and retail assessment efforts** initiated in 2022 and still ongoing.

CONCLUSION

As observed in an abbreviated 2019 partial year state of the city report, considerable pessimism had developed over the prior decade within the community regarding elements of the general state of affairs in Clewiston. Whatever the triggers, community confidence levels were

lower than desired. Fast forward to the present, it is apparent a more optimistic view has emerged in the community. **There is increased private investment and development interest in the Clewiston area as evidenced by economic development and new investment activity over the past year as well as commercial and residential redevelopment & development initiatives described in this report. Interest in the entire county and particularly in the vicinity of the AIA corridor has incrementally increased especially in light of recent progress toward realization of essential infrastructure improvements to support development. In terms of the expansion of housing stock, new opportunities are inching closer to becoming reality and will support a boost in commercial investment along both the highway corridor and within the city's central business district. Management is determined to build on the momentum begun in prior years and sustained through 2023. With the success of late, management is convinced that 2024 and beyond will see continued progress on priority goals and objectives & advance efforts to further build the foundation for a sustainable enhanced quality of life into the future for "America's Sweetest Town".**

Respectfully Submitted,

Randy Martin, City Manager

Enclosure

CITY OF CLEWISTON
2021-2022 GRANT PROJECT SUMMARY (by Fund)
(Updated: December 7, 2023)

FUND	SOURCE	APPLICANT/STATUS	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	GRANT AMOUNT	OTHER FUNDS	TOTAL
ELECTRIC	(Placeholder)	(Placeholder)	(Placeholder)			\$0
WATER & WASTEWATER	State/Legislature	City/Request submitted & approved; Grant agreement executed; Design underway	WWTP Upgrade & Expansion; Phase 1	\$11,000,000	(No Match)	\$11,000,000
	Federal/ Congressional Appropriation	Federal Budget Adopted; Funding Approved; Design Underway	WWTP Upgrade & Expansion - Phase 1	\$3,000,000	(No Match)	\$3,000,000
	Federal/ Congressional Appropriation	Federal Budget Request pending; application stage	WWTP Upgrade & Expansion - Phase 2 including re-use distribution facilities	\$4,708,840	State Grant Match	\$4,708,840
	Federal EDA Grant	Federal Grant Application submitted	WWTP Expansion Phase 2 including re-use distribution facilities	\$5,085,000	State Grant Match	\$5,085,000
	State/LP FY2019-2020; SRF admin by FDEP	City/administration (project complete)	spill prevention/emergency power backup	\$381,032	(No Match)	\$381,032
	State/SRF admin by FDEP; FY2020-2021, FY 2021-2022 & FY2022-2023	1. phase 1/funded (50% grant) (project complete)	Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) - manhole seal, plugs (phase 1)	\$267,500	\$267,500	\$535,000
		2. phase 2/funded (80% grant - 20% no interest loan) (project complete)	Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) - collection pipe lining (phase 2)	\$1,704,000	\$526,000	\$2,230,000
		3. phase 3/(80% grant - 20% no interest loan) funding approved & contracts executed; project under construction	Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) - pumps, panel replacements, lift stations upgrades/modifications (phase 3)	\$2,364,000	\$591,000	\$2,955,000

FUND	SOURCE	APPLICANT/STATUS	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	GRANT AMOUNT	OTHER FUNDS	TOTAL
	Federal/USACE Septic to Sewer Conversion FY2020-FY2021, FY2021-2022 & FY2022-2023	Federal Budget Appropriation	USACE owned facilities connection to city wastewater system	\$956,254	(No Match)	\$956,254
	State DEP Grant Application	City/Application submitted	1st Phase Comprehensive Water & Wastewater Utilities Master Plan	\$200,000	(No Match In-Kind)	\$200,000
	Federal/ARPA; FMPA Loan	City/ARPA funding received; FMPA loan approved & received	AMI Utility Metering Project	\$1,471,940	\$1,390,000	\$2,861,940
	State/Legislature	County & City/Approved Phase 1 complete; Design, Bid & Construction of remaining phases underway	US 27 Corridor to Airglades Utility Improvements (Wastewater Forcemain)	\$1,800,000 (2022) \$3,000,000 (prev. year appropriations)	(No Match)	\$4,800,000
	State/Legislature	City/Request Approved (2022) Agreement approved; design underway	US 27 Corridor to Airglades Utility Improvements (Water line improvements)	4,000,000 (2022)	(No Match)	\$4,000,000
	State/Legislature	City Request Submitted	Harlem Water Line Replacement Project	\$1,700,000	(No Match)	\$1,700,000
GENERAL (Police)	State/Legislature (State FDLE administer)	City/Funded (Project Complete)	Acquired Building & Renovated for Police Department Ops. & E-911 Communications	\$1,500,000	\$22,431	\$1,522,431
	State/County EM Donations (multiple sources)	City/Funded & complete/implemented upgrades	Police Department grants for equipment, service & facility upgrades	\$186,663	(No Match)	\$186,663
	County EM/Donations (multiple sources)	City/Funded & complete	Animal services donations for equipment, service & facility upgrades, supplies	\$9,775	(No Match)	\$9,775
(Fire)	State/Legislature	City Request Submitted (2024 cycle)	75-78 ft Quint design Aerial Ladder Apparatus	\$1,400,000	(No Match)	\$1,400,000

FUND	SOURCE	APPLICANT/STATUS	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	GRANT AMOUNT	OTHER FUNDS	TOTAL
(Public Works)	State/Legislature (State DOT administer)	City/Funded (Design & Permit Complete; Project under construction) FDOT admin oversight	C-21 Bridge Construction Project	\$2,000,000 (2020 grant) \$3,652,000 (2021 supplemental grant)	(No Match)	\$5,652,000
	State/SFWMD	City/Funded (Closeout Complete)	C-21 Bridge Project Planning & Partial Design Services	\$350,000	(No Match)	\$350,000
	State/FDOT-SCOP	City/Application approved; agreement approved; design underway	Ventura Avenue Project (Phase 2 - West)	\$812,857	(No Match)	\$812,857
	State/FDOT-SCOP	City/Funded (Design & Permit Complete/Project Construction Complete)	Ventura Avenue Project (Phase 1 - East)	\$460,000	\$388,665 (additional local funding)	\$848,665
	State/FDOT-SCOP	City/Application pending review	Herbert Hoover Dike Road Project	\$1,231,795	(No Match)	\$1,231,795
	State/Legislature	City/Funding request pending	Facility resiliency improvements to several public bldgs (including roof replacements)	\$1,777,965	(No Match)	\$1,777,965
	State/FDOT	City/Funded (Partial Design complete)	Ventura Avenue Project Planning & Partial Design Services (Phase 1 - East)	\$21,300	(No Match)	\$21,300
	State/FDOT	City/Application Stage	Final Phases of 27 Corridor Beautification (Palm Trees)	\$200,000	\$20,000	\$220,000
	State/FDOT	City/Funded/Agreement pending	Phase 6 of 27 Corridor Beautification (Palm Trees) (Grant Approved)	\$116,444	\$22,265	\$138,709
	State/FDOT	City/Funded; /Design underway, Agreement Approved	Phase 5 of 27 Corridor Beautification (Palm Trees) (Contract & Construction Pending)	\$100,000	(In-Kind)	\$100,000
	State/FDOT	City/Funded (Project Complete)	Phases 1-4 of 27 Corridor Beautification (Palm Trees)	\$381,916	\$35,000	\$416,916

FUND	SOURCE	APPLICANT/STATUS	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	GRANT AMOUNT	OTHER FUNDS	TOTAL
	State/FDOT	City/Funded (Project Complete)	Sidewalk section West Ventura Avenue (between Berner & Lopez)	\$221,385	(No Match)	\$221,385
	State/FDOT	City/Funded (Design complete; Project under construction)	Sidewalk sections along U.S. 27 Commercial District & San Luiz (2021 construction)	\$819,004	(No Match)	\$819,004
	State/FDOT	City/FDOT Funded (Design underway; scope modified; Project under construction)	Royal Palm, Ponce de Leon & Balboa (portions) sidewalk project	\$350,000	(No Match)	\$350,000
	State/FDOT-SRTS	City/Funding Approved/Design & Agreement phase	SRTS Project Package of Street Sections (Located near Schools)	\$911,624	(No Match)	\$911,624
	Fed/Congress	City/Approved Appropriation; Contract Approved; Design underway	Ventura Avenue Project (Phase 2 - West)	\$999,858	(No Match)	\$999,858
	State/DEP Grant #LPQ0027	City/Funded (Project Construction Complete)	East Ventura Avenue Water Quality Stormwater Project	\$461,000	(No Match)	\$461,000
	State/Legislature	City/Funded, Grant Agreement Phase; FDOT admin oversight	N. Francisco/27 Corridor Gateway Enhancement Project (Design phase)	\$500,000	(No Match)	\$500,000
	City/First Bank/USSC	City/Corporate Donation & Financing support (construction underway)	Golf Course Irrigation Replacement Project including Pump Station	(No Grant Funding)	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000
	State/FDOT	City/Application approved (2024 funding cycle)	N. Francisco Resurfacing & Improvement Project (Preliminary Design)	\$950,000	(No Match)	\$950,000
(Planning)	State/Fish & Wildlife (Boating Improvement Fund)	City/Consultant Assistance phase (SWFRPC assistance)	Lakefront District Master Plan Development (Complete & design approved)	\$175,000	(No Match)	\$175,000
(Recreation)	State/County/Boating fees	County/City Application Funding approved; pending	Boating Facility Improvements	\$40,000	(No Match)	\$40,000

FUND	SOURCE	APPLICANT/STATUS	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	GRANT AMOUNT	OTHER FUNDS	TOTAL
(Golf Course)	State/County/ Boating fees	City/Application (project complete)	Boat Basin East T-Dock Improvements/Repairs	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$12,000
	State/FRDAP Donation/USSC	City/Funded (Matching Grant) Project Construction Pending	Playground Improvements @ Trinidad Park (Replacement)	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000
	Donation/USSC	City/Donation Funded (1st site complete, 2nd starting soon)	Playground Improvements @ smaller neighborhood parks	\$60,000	(In-Kind)	\$60,000
	Donation/USSC	City/Funded (Project Complete)	Youth Center Interior Renovation Project; Exterior Upgrades	\$155,621	In-Kind & \$47,239	\$202,860
	City/Donation/USSC	City/Project Complete	Swimming Pool rehabilitation	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$160,000
	Donation/USSC	City/Funded (Project complete)	Clubhouse/Country Club Upgrade & Signage	\$25,000	(In-Kind)	\$25,000
	Donation/Multiple Patron Donors	City/Completed Project	Greens turf repairs & replacement	\$25,000	(In-Kind)	\$25,000
Summary Fund Totals:						
Electric Fund Projects				\$0	\$0	\$0
Water & Wastewater Fund Projects				\$41,638,566	\$2,774,500	\$44,413,066
General Fund Projects				\$20,034,207	\$2,067,600	\$22,101,807
ALL FUNDS						
CARES Act	Fed/State DEM (County administer)	City/Application Approved for Funding (Expenditures complete)	Reimbursement for COVID-19 Spending & Eligible Response Projects	\$890,000	(No Match)	\$890,000
ARPA	Fed/State DEM (Direct pass through)	City/Congress Appropriated (Projects/expenditures ongoing)	COVID-19 Direct Assistance to Cities (for eligible project expenditures)	\$2,008,423 (2022) \$2,008,423 (2021)	(No Match)	\$4,016,846

FUND	SOURCE	APPLICANT/STATUS	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	GRANT AMOUNT	OTHER FUNDS	TOTAL
*GRAND TOTALS:				\$66,579,619	\$4,842,100	\$71,421,719
* [Note 1: Of the Grand Total of grant and donation amounts being sought, to date \$50,191,273 has been awarded or approved.]						