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## Gulf Hammock wins



**Levy County Public Safety Director Mitch Harrell explains how Computer-Assisted Dispatch helps first responders reach the correct addresses in Levy County.**

### Story and Photos

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Aug. 23, 2017 at 8:47 p.m.**

**LEVY COUNTY** -- Emily Cason and Tom Ashley led a relatively large group of Gulf Hammock area residents who received on Tuesday (Aug. 21) an agreement from the Levy County Board of County Commissioners to support those residents as being recognized as living in that community, rather than in Morriston, Montbrook, Inglis or Yankeetown.

Gulf Hammock residents do not receive rural route delivery service. All 300 or so residents must accept their mail at the Gulf Hammock Post Office -- 32369. The County Commission is sending a letter to the Post Office to show support for the Gulf Hammock residents' request to make maps show all of Gulf Hammock in that Zip Code, just like before the revised maps moved that Zip Code to only be at that Post Office.

The County Commission sent a letter to the United States Postal Service in support of the people's movement to delineate the entire area as being in the Zip Code of 32369, rather than having all maps show only the Gulf Hammock Post Office itself as being the only place where that Zip Code applies.

County Commissioner Matt Brooks mentioned that he had spoken with State Rep. Charlie Stone (R-Ocala Dist. 22) and United States Rep. (Dr.) Neal Dunn, M.D. (R-District 2 Florida), and both of those gentlemen had said they will do what they can to assure the USPS agrees to the return to an understanding by all parties that 32369 is an area that is bigger than one building.

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**County Commissioner Rock Meeks tells about finding an address in Gulf Hammock from a map used by the Levy County Mosquito Control Department. Commissioner Meeks has volunteered several nights of his time to drive mosquito spray trucks to help fight mosquitoes and at the same time saving taxpayers' money that would be spent on a paid worker. Commissioner Meeks said Levy County has no control over any system other than its own Computer-Assisted Dispatch. It cannot change Garmin's reading or any other GPS program's readings. At the left in this picture is Levy County Attorney Anne Brown.**

And while the return to that designation being as it used to be seems to be happening, another issue the people from that part of the county mentioned was what appears to be a 9-1-1 system failure.

Cason said deputies, firefighters and Emergency Medical Services personnel have a high failure rate for finding addresses that are in the Gulf Hammock area.

Levy County 9-1-1 Coordinator Mike West and Levy County Department of Public Safety Director Mitch Harrell have promised to work with people to test the 9-1-1 system. If county staff are using the 9-1-1 Computer-Assisted Dispatch (CAD), then in theory they should be locating addresses.

Garmin, Tom Tom and other GPS units are not as reliable as the CAD system, which the county has had for a few years now.

Nonetheless, there were several minutes spent during the meeting and many people recounted specific and exact instances where their loved ones waited longer than they should have had to wait for first responders, because those deputies, or firefighters or medical professionals drove to Inglis or Morriston or somewhere other than Gulf Hammock, before being redirected to the correct address.

Ashley said his address of 4751 S.E. Levy County Road 326 has been "messed up" in the county's system, new and old, for 23 or 24 years now. Part of this issue, he surmised, may result from the county owning 62 acres across the street from his residence.

Levy County Tax Collector Linda Fugate said that Levy County Commission Chairman John Meeks may have been told the CAD system works, but that is not correct.

"I am telling you that an ambulance that was coming to get my Daddy was going down past Lebanon Station," Fugate said, "on the way to Inglis."

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Fugate said that driver was reportedly using GPS (Global Positioning System). Chairman Meeks said this is a human error. Chief Harrell and other emergency service leaders may be reminding staff members to use the CAD system rather than Garmin or other GPS programs.

County Commissioner Lilly Rooks mentioned that the people of Levy County can express their feelings about federal matters to United States Sen. Clarence William "Bill" Nelson (D-Fla.).

Sen. Nelson is scheduled to be at the Suwannee River Fair Pavilion, located near the southeast corner of U.S. Highway 19 and State Road 26, on Aug. 29 starting at 4 p.m.