

Chiefland preps for 2018 hurricane season

By Jeff M. Hardison © June 12, 2018 at 9:48 p.m.

CHIEFLAND – Chiefland City Commission members present for the Monday night special meeting (June 11) spoke about improvements since Hurricane Irma affected the city last season.

Levy County Emergency Management Assistant Director David Peaton started the hurricane preparedness discussion.

Joining in the discussion were Mayor Betty Walker, Vice Mayor Chris Jones, and city commissioners Teresa Barron and Donald Lawrence. City Commissioner Rollin Hudson was absent from the special meeting and the following regular meeting that night.

The county is ready to assist all of the municipalities, he said, in the event of an emergency like Hurricane Irma.

As the city finds its resources are depleted or inadequate, the county will be there to help refill those resource needs, Assistant Director Peaton said.

Hurricane Irma presented exceptional effects, especially in the City of Chiefland, Peaton said, as a result of the traffic of evacuees from areas south of Chiefland as the people went up U.S. Highway 19 and U.S. Alt. 27 through Chiefland.

“Chiefland definitely got hit the worst, for sure, out of the entire county,” Peaton said. “Every place in the county had the same issues – fuel supply, heavier than normal traffic, power outages, things like that.”

With U.S. 19 going through the city, that traffic created a dramatic impact on the city, he said.

Hurricane Irma was a unique storm, because it ran the whole length of the state, Peaton said.

City Manager Mary Ellzey brought the City Commission up to date on improvements.

She said communications are being improved by Police Chief Scott Anderson to repair a repeater, and he has purchased a new VHF radio system with 14 new portable radios for the CPD, Ellzey said. City Hall will be the Emergency Operations Center for the city if that situation arises again, where the city needs an EOC.

As for fuel, the Police Department has purchased a 300-gallon portable fuel trailer, she said.

The Florida Department of Transportation grounds in the city will house 30 traffic signal electric generators for use along the U.S. Highway corridor in the event of a storm like Irma in the future. Traffic signal cabinets are being upgraded throughout the city by the FDOT as well, she said.

Overall, considering the limits of number of personnel in the CPD, Chiefland Fire-Rescue and the other departments, there was across-the-board commendations made for every Chiefland city employee working as part of the team that helped the city get through Hurricane Irma extremely well.