

July 17, 2009

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Sarasota County plans meetings to update flood insurance maps

New floodplain maps for Sarasota County will be discussed in a series of public meetings beginning this fall. Sarasota County, with support from Southwest Florida Water Management District, will present updated preliminary floodplain information and explain the basis for the findings.

The meetings are part of an initiative to revise Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). The county uses floodplain information for land use and zoning decisions, to help manage development in and around floodplains and wetlands, reduce flood risks, preserve land and water resources, and plan for emergencies. The maps also provide valuable information to the public for decisions about purchasing and protecting property.

Most of the current FIRMs are 10 to 30 years old and are outdated by natural and physical changes caused by land use, development and erosion. The updated FIRMs will replace paper flood maps for the unincorporated and incorporated areas of Sarasota County.

Upon receipt of the preliminary FIRMs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will begin its FIRM adoption process, which includes:

- A technical review by FEMA.
- Review by Sarasota County.
- Public input.
- A 90-day appeals period.
- Issuance of a letter of final determination that informs Sarasota County and the public of the date when the FIRMs will be considered effective.

A Regional Floodplain Management Planning and Coordination Committee (RFMPCC) that includes staff from North Port, Venice, Sarasota, the Town of Longboat Key and Sarasota County, has developed a Web site to keep the public informed about progress.

Adoption Schedule:

- Public meetings to review preliminary results – fall 2009/spring 2010
- Draft maps produced, appeal and protest period – summer 2010
- Local and federal review – fall/winter 2010

- Digital FIRMS adoption – fall/winter 2011

For more information, visit the web site at www.scgov.net/floodmapupdates.com or call Sarasota County at (941) 861-5000 and ask for information about the flood map update.