

To: Residents of Plantation
From: Mayor Diane Veltri Bendekovic
Date: Friday, September 22, 2017

With the uninvited guest, Irma, to Plantation the landscape of Plantation dramatically changed from where the “grass is greener” to mounds of brown debris. As Mayor of Plantation, I felt it was imperative to provide the residents with an explanation for the unprecedented problem that has occurred with disaster removal.

The City of Plantation has historically contracted with several FEMA-approved, debris management contractors for natural disaster debris removal. These contracts are negotiated far in advance of storm season. These pre-positioned contracts provide Plantation with the ability to contact the individual contractor to begin the removal process immediately after the storm passes.

Plantation currently has agreements with three entities. We contacted them to activate immediately after the storm passed, and requested 60 trucks to haul storm debris to the assigned landfill. Plantation’s request wasn’t honored, nor have the contractors honored other cities throughout Broward County. This posed a severe problem for most Broward cities.

The contractors have indicated that since Irma caused widespread damage statewide, they are unable to meet the demands of the contracted cities. To add insult to injury, the contractors are “following the money” to other counties who negotiated and offered a higher price after the storm.

Almost immediately after the storm passed, it was evident to Broward city officials that there would be a “no show” on the part of the contractors to our individual cities. With that said all impacted cities have made a concentrated united effort during the past week to make local, state, and federal officials aware of the severity of the problem. The communication with local, state and federal officials has been ongoing with pre and post storm conferencing. This conferencing will continue until many of the issues are resolved.

Broward cities have requested Governor Scott, Florida’s Recovery Team, and the Attorney General’s office to allow cities to re-negotiate their contracts to compete with other counties who are offering a higher price per cubic yard. Plus it is imperative having the re-negotiated price honored by FEMA for reimbursement to the cities, otherwise the cities will be “on the hook” for an astronomical amount of millions of dollars. Plantation, as with other cities, can’t afford the expense without knowing FEMA will provide reimbursement. Even if the cities would be allowed to negotiate a higher price, this creates bidding wars between cities, which none of them want and ultimately the increase would be passed on to the taxpayer.

The debris removal process began a week ago. However, it started with significantly fewer vehicles than planned, and lack of removal is creating other issues for cities and their residents.

Presently, all the cities are working together to resolve the FEMA reimbursement pricing issue; a “stand-off” is unacceptable. Governor Scott and the Attorney General need to “step up to the plate” to request FEMA to determine a fair and equitable price per cubic yard, which would be reimbursable throughout the entire state. This would avoid pitting one city against another, would avoid a significant impact to the city’s coffers and taxpayers, and would ultimately clear the “mass of brown debris” from our cities.

Plantation will continue to work together with other cities throughout Broward County to resolve the FEMA funding issue. Hopefully, a resolution will be forthcoming from FEMA and the Governor's office in this matter.

Plantation adhered to all procurement procedures and did our due diligence in advance to provide immediate debris removal service to our residents. Unfortunately, the contractors failed us. However, Team Plantation hasn't failed you. I can assure Plantation residents from pre- to post-storm all our departments have worked to resolve storm issues as soon as possible.

There is some positive news for Plantation residents: bulk pickup starts October 2 according to the neighborhood's regularly scheduled pick up. Remember it is only BULK not vegetation/tree debris. WASTE MANAGEMENT WON'T PICK UP BULK ITEMS MIXED WITH STORM DEBRIS. Please separate tree debris/vegetation from bulk items.

Please refer to Plantation.org and Plantation Radio 1620 AM for the most up-to-date post storm debris information.

Thank you for your understanding and patience throughout the storm clean up.