

COUNCIL REPORT 2013

It was business as usual for the administrative staff of the Clarendon Parish Council in 2013.

We went diligently about honouring our commitment to the citizens of Clarendon as best we could by providing, regulating and maintaining various services and amenities, which are indispensable to the economic and social welfare of our citizens. Our sustainable development planning agenda remained top priority.

We enjoyed a busy year at Council approving some 771 new building plans in the last twenty-two months; issuing 210 licenses to our small business operators including barbers, hairdressers and butchers and registering 1147 outdoor pools on our roll up to October.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

However as at September 30 the Council is behind on some of its fiscal targets.

Several factors can account for the performance. The construction industry in the parish, for one, has experienced a

downturn in recent times due to the sluggish economy and this has caused a decline in the number of building applications submitted to the Council.

Additionally we continue to be plagued by the general problem of **compliance**. Many of our customers and tenants are unwilling to pay for the services we provide them with. The Council has in turn either ramped up their **enforcement** efforts to collect the outstanding amounts or is working on devising appropriate collection drives.

However quite importantly we have a clear idea where these activities have left the Council since our final accounts for financial years 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 are complete with our team of accountants currently working hard on completing 2012/2013's.

Director of Finance, Mr. Wayne Brown, says this not only distinguishes the Clarendon Parish Council from other councils, but it is no small feat and without the knowledgeable and dedicated team he leads, this would not have been possible. Knowledge of its financial standing allows the Council to make

informed decisions in how it allocates funds among its areas of responsibility.

ROAD AND WORKS

Road Works

As is customary, cumulatively the Council's largest spend came by way of our roads and works projects.

As at October just under one hundred million dollars was spent on ninety-nine (99) road-related infrastructural development projects across the parish.

The Roads and Works department rehabilitated and maintained some 80, 043 square kilometres of road surface, verges and drain network up to October and work is still ongoing.

A ten million-dollar road work project is currently underway in Crofts Hill where 4800-square metres of the Hickory Road in the division are being rehabilitated at cost of 10 million dollars.

Minor Water Supply

The Clarendon Parish Council is responsible for a number of small, social water supply mechanisms in several rural

communities where the Council is the only entity providing the service.

Partnering with the Clarendon Parish Development Committee Benevolent Society, the Council completed and handed over a rehabilitated and larger capacity rainwater catchment tank to the community of Pleasant Valley in October, which now supplies residents with an additional 6000 gallons of water.

The new facility is equipped with a solar-powered pumping system, the first social water resource in the parish to be outfitted with the technology.

1. The communities of Smithville and Jericho too, were beneficiaries of improved water supply as their systems were updated with PVC pipes.
2. Ten springs and five tanks throughout the parish were repaired under the routine maintenance program.
3. 424 loads of water were trucked to almost every part of the parish during the last drought season (November 2012 - April 2013) at a total cost of 5.9 million dollars.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Planning and Development Unit faces a formidable task in regulating and guiding the orderly expansion of Clarendon's built environment as the parish continues to grow at lightning speeds.

However the department managed to approve 85% of the development plans it received since January of last year as it strives to honour the 90-day turn-around time for all development plans.

Ms. Nikala Thompson heads the Planning and Development unit and attributes the department's emergent efficiencies to the introduction of the Application Management and Data Application (AMANDA) software and its complimentary Help Desk.

AMANDA

AMANDA is a web-based application, which allows planning officers to track and monitor the approval process from a central database. The Clarendon Parish Council joined the network in August 2012 and has so far enjoyed:

1. A more timely processing of development applications;
2. Improvements in the development approval process as electronic files allow for easy retrieval and update and
3. An insight into the total value of investments coming to the parish by way of building and subdivision developments

The Planning Department is looking forward to the added efficiencies AMANDA will provide when our customers are allowed remote access to the building approval process as intended.

Help Desk

The physical Help Desk, which was originally created to assist planning clients, is generally regarded as having the greatest impact on service delivery as:

1. The Help Desk now serves all clients and customers doing business with the Council,
2. Planning clients spend less time in the planning department processing their applications and

3. The number of plans deferred each month has been reduced making it more likely to meet the 90-day approval target

So impactful is our Help Desk that the Ministry of Local Government has sought information on its operation to possibly instruct other parish councils on how they can follow suit.

Street Signs

Through a partnership with Sigtex, an estimated 350 street signs has so far been erected in communities across the parish.

Mineral Heights, Frankfield and Race Course are the latest to have received street signs, but several more communities are slated to benefit under the program.

The project is significant as a number of roadways in Clarendon were without proper street designations and as Planning Manager, Nikala Thompson puts it residents feel a sense of pride when they are able to tell persons *'I live on John Street'*, for example.

Local Sustainable Development Plan Secretariat

The parish's Local Sustainable Development Plan secretariat will be in place by mid-December. The parish council is keen on

getting the planning process off the ground as we seek to explore the parish's development potential comprehensively.

We are the third of fourteen councils and municipalities to have progressed beyond the envisioning stage and eagerly await the Secretariat's report on how best we can concentrate our resources in driving Clarendon's development.

The Secretariat's work is being supported in part by the European Union, the Sugar Transformation Unit and the National Housing Trust.

POOR RELIEF

The Inspector of the Poor reports over one thousand persons on the parish's register of outdoor poor, while an additional 138 men and women are being cared for in the Clarendon Infirmary.

We have ambitious plans regarding how we treat with the parish's poor, vulnerable and destitute population.

1. The Council has outlined in its draft Corporate Plan, the hope to rehabilitate 10% of its indoor poor in future and reintegrate them into the community through the provision

of income-generating skills such as farming and animal husbandry.

2. The services of an in-house doctor were hired at the infirmary in April, which has greatly improved patient care as previously patients had to be transported to the neighbouring May Pen Hospital for care.
3. Our outstation poor relief services will be vastly improved with the official opening of the brand new Poor Relief Office building in Rock River later this year.
4. Six students registered on the parish's outdoor poor roll were successful in their academic pursuits this year with two receiving scholarships.

DISASTER MITIGATION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

As we approach the end of the year and the 2013 hurricane season fortunately so far neither Jamaica nor the parish has experienced any major disasters. Nevertheless the parish remains in a state of readiness should a disaster strike.

1. Shelter inspections are on-going. The majority of shelters are at an acceptable standard and are outfitted with proper facilities in case of a disaster.
2. The parish's approximately 110 shelter managers are prepared. This includes a complement of 50 newly-trained shelter managers and 25 agency representatives who have received Initial Damage Assessment training.
3. The unit continues to focus its public education efforts on our young constituents through high school visits sensitizing students across the parish about hurricane and flooding mitigation and earthquake awareness.
4. The community of Mitchell Town's resilience against flooding have been strengthened as the Council reconstructed a drain in the community, through a partnership with the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management.

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

The Commercial Services Department has made several strides in the past year. We are taking a more vigilant approach to

ensuring that our commercial environment is the place of choice to do business.

While our team has placed emphasis on increasing revenue inflows we have invested even greater effort in reducing our expenses.

Our efforts have borne fruit.

1. Water consumption at the Spalding Market has been reduced by half through the relocation of the stand-pipe inside the market ensuring that only registered market users have access.
2. We anticipate a marked reduction in our electricity costs in short order with the introduction of electricity contracts with market vendors which commenced on October 1.

The Commercial Services Department wants to provide a comfortable experience for all users of our parks and markets so:

1. In September 2013 shower stalls, urinals and toilets in the May Pen Market were tiled and upgraded.
2. In an effort to improve the quality of structures in our markets the processes to obtain and/or construct shops have been streamlined where approvals are subject to the recommendation from the Commercial Services Committee and the Roads and Works Department.

3. Building officers have been assigned to our commercial entities in an effort to improve enforcement and monitoring.

We have also had tremendous success with the vendor registration program which has seen over 600 vendors being registered across the parish. This will allow the Council to better track our receivables and improve our enforcement efforts.

However, low user fee collection continues to severely impact our ability to improve service delivery.

The department is however energized and remains steadfast to improve the standard of the commercial entities owned and operated by the Clarendon Parish Council. We hope to achieve this by placing greater emphasis on enforcement, anti-vending, public education campaigns and infrastructural improvement.

The Council through our various units, departments, outstations and field officers has ambitious plans to improve the infrastructure of the parish in 2014 and to increase our revenue flow.