



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL PALM BEACH COUNTY

John A. Carey
Inspector General



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“Enhancing Public Trust in Government”

Administrative Review

2020-08-0008

**Limited Review of
Custodial Services provided to
Palm Beach County during the
COVID-19 Pandemic**

May 26, 2021



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ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW 2020-08-0008

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REVIEW OF CUSTODIAL SERVICES PROVIDED TO PALM BEACH COUNTY

SUMMARY

WHAT WE DID

The Palm Beach County Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a limited scope administrative review of custodial contract services provided to Palm Beach County (County) during the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic.

We reviewed activities for the period from June 2020 to December 2020. The County cleaning contractors during the period were United Services, Inc. (United), Dammel Cleaning Enterprise, Inc. d/b/a Palm Beach & Broward Building Maintenance (Dammel), and Stockton Maintenance Group, Inc. (Stockton).

The purpose of the review was to assess the County's and contractors' response to a specific report that an individual working in a County facility tested positive for COVID-19; the contractors' compliance with COVID-19 cleaning requirements, Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 guidelines; the County's training policies and procedures; billing and payments for custodial cleaning services in response to COVID-19 infections; and the use of federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and

Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to pay for COVID-19 cleaning services.

We reviewed Invitation for Bid #19-047/KM for Custodial Services; vendor responses; invoices and total amounts paid for custodial services; Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) guidelines; and County COVID-19 training policies and procedures. Additionally, we conducted interviews of vendor management, custodial staff members, and a County Facilities Development Operations (FDO) contract evaluator.

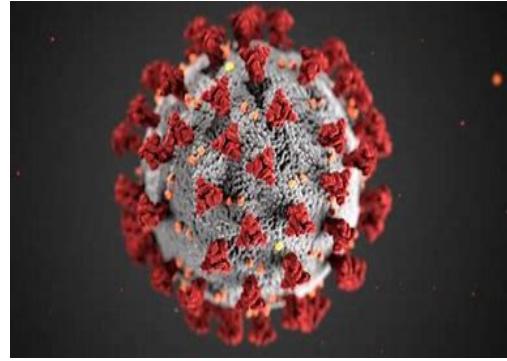
WHAT WE FOUND

We determined that custodial contractors generally complied with COVID-19 cleaning requirements and contract terms, and that the County provided sufficient guidance and training to contractors regarding the (CDC) COVID-19 guidelines and properly paid contractors in accordance with the contracts for custodial services.

We also found that the County and contractor's response to a specific report that an individual working in a County facility tested positive for COVID-19 was appropriate.

BACKGROUND

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic in March 2020. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. According to WHO, the best way to prevent and slow down transmission of COVID-19 is to be well informed about the virus, the disease it causes, and how it spreads. WHO recommends cleaning and disinfecting surfaces frequently, especially those which are regularly touched, such as door handles, faucets, and telephones.



On March 8, 2020, the State of Florida declared a State of Emergency for COVID-19 with Executive Order 20-52. On March 13, 2020, the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners declared a State of Emergency for COVID-19.

The County's custodial bid had been released on July 24, 2019 as Invitation to Bid 680-19-047/KM. County facilities to be serviced under the bid were divided into five lots based on their geographic location: Lot 1-North Region, Lot 2-Central Region, Lot 3-Governmental Center, Lot 4-South Region, and Lot 5-West Region. Custodial bids were unsealed on September 19, 2019. The award was made on a lot-by-lot basis.

The Board of County Commissioners approved the custodial contract award to three vendors: United, Stockton, and Dammel, on March 10, 2020. United was awarded Lots 1, 2, and 5; Stockton was awarded Lot 3; and Dammel was awarded Lot 4. The first contract year runs from June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021, with an option to renew for four additional twelve month periods.

The day after the County Commissioners declared a State of Emergency for COVID-19, on March 14, 2020, FDO issued guidance to the contractors titled "Advanced Preventative Measure and Operational Highlights for Responses to COVID-19 Incidents." The County Administrator also issued a message on COVID-19 policies and procedures, including a requirement for departments to contact FDO to clean and disinfect work areas and surrounding areas for COVID-19 positive or COVID-19 symptomatic employees.

On July 8, 2020, a department located in the Airport 1 building (Lot 2) notified FDO that an employee working in the building tested positive for the COVID-19 infection. On the morning of July 9, 2020, a worker contracted by United¹ disinfected the affected workspace by using a spray bottle and rag to wipe down the affected work area.

Thereafter, the OIG undertook a limited scoped review to assure compliance with COVID-19 cleaning contract specifications, and policies or guidance issued in accordance with

¹ A subcontractor employed this employee under United's County vendor contract.

the contracts. The OIG also reviewed communication between the County and its custodial vendors; reviewed cleaning protocols including CDC guidelines for COVID-19 cleaning billing and payments for custodial cleaning services; interviewed County and vendor staff; and reviewed the monitoring of COVID-19 services.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Palm Beach County Guidance: Advanced Preventative Measure and Operational Highlights for Responses to COVID-19 Incidents

The contracts approved on March 10, 2020 did not need to be modified in response to the County's declaration of a State of Emergency on March 13, 2020 and issuance of "Advanced Preventative Measure and Operational Highlights for Responses to COVID-19 Incidents" on March 14, 2020. The contracts already included specifications and line items to provide additional building daytime services, additional building project services, and emergency services, as needed. These line items detailed fixed hourly rates for services that were not included in the routine monthly service rates for the buildings.

The "Advanced Preventative Measure and Operational Highlights for Responses to COVID-19 Incidents" issued to custodial contractors included:

III. General Information

This document has been drafted based on guidance publicly made available by the Florida Department of Health and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is understood and acknowledged that COVID-19 is a new and emerging health threat, which implications are not fully understood at this time. As a result, guidance provided by the previously referenced agencies is constantly being updated...

IV. Custodial Services

Under the existing custodial services contract, the following areas are to be disinfected as part of routine services: all surfaces of furniture, wall, partitions, doors, drinking fountains and fixtures (washbasins, faucets, handles, valves, toilets, urinals, showers and adjacent surfaces).

As a preventative measure in response to the COVID19 emergency, the custodial contractor has increased the frequency of disinfecting for high touch surfaces (i.e. doorknobs, push bars, handrails at main entrances; elevator panels) in public areas.

The CDC *Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employee* indicates²:
Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the work place,

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

such as work stations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.

If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks, other work tools and equipment) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

V. Incident Reporting and Response

FDO will not intervene in the determination of operational response actions (e.g. activation of COOP plan, quarantining of visitors/employees, etc.) to be implemented in the event that a User Department/Agency of a County facility under FDO's jurisdiction needs to report a COVID19 incident. It is recommended that each User Department/Agency follow the Florida Department of Health and CDC's guidelines for matters involving employees and the public.

FDO will provide support in addressing building-related concerns. If cleaning/disinfecting services were required because of a COVID19 incident, FDO will follow CDC's guidance for environmental cleaning. Given the novel and evolving nature of COVID19, each incident will be addressed on a case-by-case basis as a function of the most recent guidance available at the time of reporting.

In the event of a COVID19 incident that requires a building-related response, the User Department/Agency will contact the corresponding Regional Manager from the Facilities Management Division (FMD) and will provide the following information:

- Date and time of incident
- Location of the incident (i.e. building, room, specific location, etc.)
- Corrective actions implemented by User Department/Agency
- Preventive measures recommended by Florida Department of Health (if any)

- Preventive measures recommended by the User Department/Agency (if any)

FDO will build on the information provided by the User Department/Agency and supplement it with additional guidance that might be obtained from leading agencies (e.g. Florida Department of Health, CDC), to implement any corrective actions needed (e.g. surface disinfection, general cleaning, etc.). FDO will notify the User Department/Agency of the actions (if any) implemented and their corresponding results.....

On July 16, 2020, the following additional language was added to the guidelines,³

In addressing cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility the CDC indicates:

At a school, daycare center, office, or other facility that does not house people overnight:

- *Close off areas visited by the ill persons. Open outside doors and windows and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area. Wait 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection.*
- *Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment (like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.*

OIG Review of COVID-19 Cleaning Delivery Orders

FDO issues work orders to contractors for COVID-19 cleaning services specifying the type and location of services required. The contractors submit an estimate of the number of personnel or hours required to perform services. The work order establishes a delivery order in the County's CGI Advantage system.

For additional COVID-19 preventative, and infection event cleanings, FDO uses the additional daytime, project, and emergency contract rates. These additional services are not part of the routine monthly cleaning service rates established for each building by the contracts.

FDO issued monthly delivery orders to provide daily COVID-19 cleaning services for preventative and infection-event disinfections of County buildings during the review period. The COVID-19 monthly cleaning delivery orders were issued separately from the routine monthly cleaning service (non-COVID-19) delivery orders.

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>.

For a COVID-19 cleaning at a location that was not covered by additional monthly services, FDO issues a one-time delivery order at the emergency services rate.

When the service is completed or the service month ends, contractors submit an invoice to FDO for payment.

COVID-19 Custodial Expenditures and CARES Act Funds

The OIG examined County records for COVID-19 pandemic expenditures under the custodial contract from June 2020 through December 2020. During this period, the County primarily used CARES Act⁴ funds to pay \$710,468.55 of those additional cleaning service expenses.

The following table details this funding:

COUNTY COVID-19 CLEANING FUNDING		
COMPANY	COVID CLEANING EXPENDITURES	COVID FUNDING FROM CARES ACT
United	\$397,567.37	\$395,227.37
Stockton	\$150,055.44	\$148,848.19
Dammel	\$168,207.99	\$166,392.99
TOTAL	\$715,830.80	\$710,468.55

We reviewed selected billing for all custodial contract vendors, and did not find any cause for concern regarding their adherence to billing requirements.

OIG Review of Delivery Orders and Payments

The OIG reviewed a sample of COVID-19 cleaning delivery orders and payments from June 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020 for both COVID-19 monthly and event cleaning to all three contractors. We found that the contractors consistently charged the appropriate contract rate.

COVID-19 Disinfectants Used

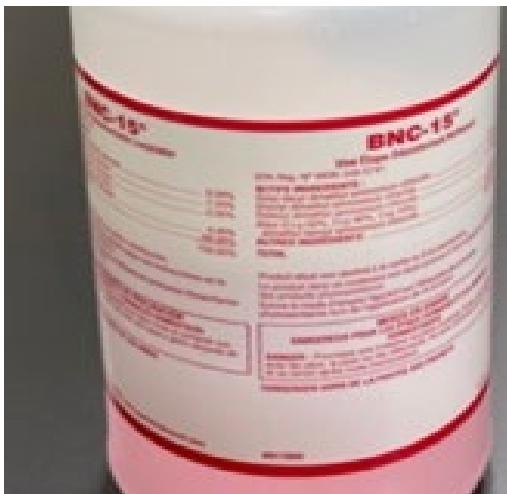
The OIG conducted a visual review of the disinfectants used by each of the three COVID-19 custodial contractors for compliance with CDC guidance issued by FDO. Stockton uses Orbio Multimicro 200 and Virex II 256 Onestep as their cleaning disinfectants, United uses Spartan-On the Go hdqC2 as its cleaning disinfectant, and Dammel uses Spartan BNC-15 as its cleaning disinfectant.

⁴ <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares> The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) ... provide(s) fast and direct economic assistance for American workers, families, and small businesses, and preserve jobs for American industries.

Per the CDC, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants are effective for COVID-19 cleaning and disinfection. Disinfectants used by all three contractors for COVID-19 are CDC and EPA approved.

Samples of these disinfectants viewed by the OIG as part of our review:

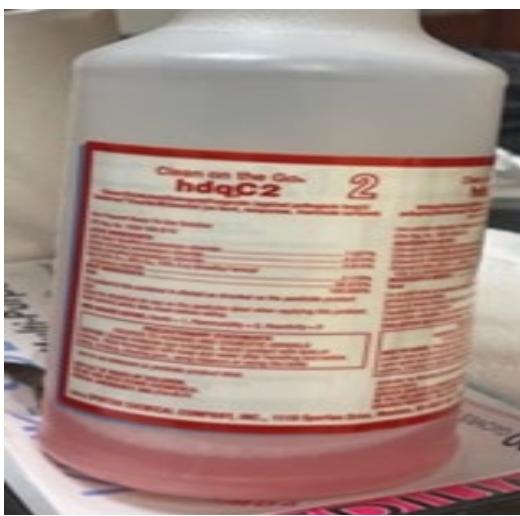
Dammel Cleaning Product



Stockton Cleaning Product



United Cleaning Product



OIG Review of FDO Processes

The OIG interviewed an FDO Contract Evaluator (Evaluator), who told the OIG that there were no modifications to the language of the overall County cleaning contracts for COVID-19 cleanings. However, he stated that the CARES Act allowed monies provided funding for additional staff hours for COVID cleanings. The Evaluator said that there was a clause

in the cleaning contracts that gave the County the right to add or subtract additional custodial services on an as-needed emergency basis. The hourly costs for additional COVID-19 services were established in the contracts.

The Evaluator stated that the original cleaning contract required contractors to provide daytime and routine custodial services, and that routine COVID-19 cleaning and disinfecting was performed from 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm. The Evaluator also stated that FDO follows procedures for COVID-19 cleaning from CDC guidelines and that routine custodial services met CDC standards for cleaning and disinfecting.

The Evaluator told the OIG that the notification process from a County department with an area frequented by a COVID-19 infected person begins with a manager from the affected user department/agency contacting an FDO Regional Manager or Assistant Director. The Regional Manager or Assistant Director then directs the COVID-19 infection notification to an FDO Manager, who then directs it to the Evaluator assigned to the region. The Evaluator then contacts a County cleaning contractor for COVID-19 cleaning. The instructions to contractors include directions to the infected location(s), the date of infection, and instructions to disinfect cubicles/work order areas, surrounding cubicles/work order areas, high touch areas, bathrooms, and breakrooms. FDO also issues a response email confirming receipt of instructions, crew redirection, and a final email confirming completion of disinfection. Once a COVID-19 disinfection at the assigned area has been completed, the contractor notifies the contract evaluator, who then notifies FDO.

The Evaluator stated that determination of how and what to clean is based on the information from the user department/agency's cleaning request to FDO. The Evaluator can add additional precautionary cleanings of areas within the affected agency on a case-by-case basis.

OIG Review of Contractor Procedures

United Services, Inc.

United managers told the OIG that there are different classifications of employees within United. Some workers perform daily cleaning and maintenance as directed by the Evaluators. Routine services staff perform most in-depth cleanings at night.

United told the OIG that a COVID-19 staff employee responds to COVID-19 infections by disinfecting high touch areas such as doors, phones, elevators, or door handles. Cleaning disinfectants used are CDC and EPA approved grade disinfectants made by Spartan Chemical. Nighttime United employees receive protective coats with their PPE. United disinfects with an electrostatic sprayer that applies a disinfectant mist. United provides in-service training and County COVID-19 protocol reminders throughout the year to their employees. United has given the County their policies and procedures for COVID-19 cleaning and the County has provided guidance to ensure all protocols are followed in accordance with CDC guidelines. United is notified by phone and email from an Evaluator

when a positive COVID-19 infection has occurred within a County facility. United managers told the OIG that they respond “immediately if possible,” and always within a day for COVID-19 infections.

According to United, County email notifications reflect the number of COVID-19 infections/possible infection cleanings, but there is not a count for notifications made through phone calls or in-person. Therefore, United does not have an accurate representation of how many COVID-19 infections/possible infection cleanings were performed from June 2020 through December 2020.

United Custodial Staff Interview

The OIG interviewed a custodial staff employee for United Services, who stated upon hire the employee was given cleaning procedures, policies and training. The employee’s cleaning became more detailed once COVID-19 cases increased in the County. During the COVID-19 pandemic, daily cleaning consisted of more disinfecting, new cleaning solutions and the wearing of PPE gear including gloves and masks. Prior to the start of the pandemic, staff used gloves to clean, but no mask. The United custodial staff employee said that emails from United with new instructions on COVID-19 daily cleaning reminders were sent to staff, and they were trained for COVID-19 daily cleaning by United supervisors.

The United employee remembered being called in July of 2020 to respond to the Airport Center 2 for a disinfection. On that occasion, the United employee disinfected a cubicle and the kitchen area next to that cubicle with the approved United disinfectant while wearing PPE gear. The United employee did not have a specific memory whether United management informed the employee that this cleaning was for an event where someone had tested COVID-19 positive.

United July 8, 2020 COVID-19 Cleaning Billing and Payment

We reviewed the documentation for the COVID-19 infected area-cleaning request made on July 8, 2020 for the Airport 1 COVID-19 infection cleaning. FDO issued work order 2020-035445-01 to United for additional monthly COVID-19 cleaning services for this event.

Delivery order 410.05292000000000014771 was issued for the monthly COVID-19 services from June through September 2020 for seven County buildings, including Airport Center Buildings 1 and 2. The calculated price for monthly service was \$3,307.20, calculated utilizing United’s additional daytime service rate of \$20 per hour. This calculation was as follows:

One (1) day porter x eight (8) hours/day x 20.67 days per month x \$20 per hour =
\$3,307.20/month.

The hourly service rate, and the calculated service costs were reviewed by the OIG and found to be accurate and in accordance with the contract rates. United submitted Invoice #31413 for monthly services for July 2020, and was paid on August 18, 2020.

Dammel Cleaning Enterprises, Inc., dba Palm Beach & Broward Building Maintenance

Dammel managers told the OIG that their custodial staff cleans and disinfects high-touch areas, restocks bathrooms, and empties garbage throughout the day. Day porters clean and wipe down surfaces and routine cleaning staff vacuum and deep clean at night. Their projects crew shampoos carpets and deep-cleans floors.

Dammel managers stated that they distributed County guidance to their employees and incorporated the County's COVID-19 guidance into their policy. Dammel managers claimed all Dammel employees signed a receipt for COVID-19 policies.

Dammel is notified by FDO email of COVID-19 infections, with instructions on where and when to disinfect. Dammel's response time for COVID-19 cleaning is generally the same day of notification from FDO. Dammel staff use PPE gear when conducting a COVID-19 related cleaning. The PPE gear includes a mask, gloves, and goggles. Dammel staff use electrostatic cleaners, disposable hazmat suits, and disposable shoe covers for COVID-19 infections. The electrostatic cleaning machine sprays a hospital-grade disinfectant mist throughout the facility. The disinfectants used by Dammel are approved by the EPA and CDC. Once a COVID-19 cleanup is completed Dammel emails notification to the FDO. According to Dammel, an approximate amount of COVID-19 infection/possible infection cleanings done from June 2020 through December 2020 is 20, but this number only accounts for cleanings which were notified to them by email. The notifications for cleaning came from FDO via email, phone call or in person.

Dammel Custodial Staff Interview

A Dammel custodial staff employee told the OIG that Dammel has a two-person COVID-19 cleaning crew that specifically conducts COVID-19 disinfections. They are responsible for disinfecting the entire courthouse several times a day. They wear PPE gear consisting of goggles, a facemask, gloves, and microfiber towels to conduct the cleanings with disinfectants provided by a Dammel supervisor. Dammel staff sign a document acknowledging COVID-19 guidelines upon hire. When a COVID-19 infection occurs, the COVID-19 cleaning crew is notified, and the site of the infection is closed off to the public and other employees until a couple of hours after the disinfection. Once the disinfection cleaning is complete, Dammel notifies building security. Dammel verbally notifies an FDO supervisor when COVID-19 disinfection cleaning and daily COVID-19 cleaning is complete.

Stockton Maintenance Group Inc.

The OIG interviewed Stockton managers, who stated that for County cleaning Stockton has day porters, routine service workers, and project workers. Daily cleaning staff have assigned areas for regular cleaning, and routine service staff cleans at night after County staff leaves. The project crew focuses on escalators, floors, carpets and special projects.

Stockton follows the County's COVID-19 protocol: entering/exiting through the same entrance for the building or area assigned, temperature checks being conducted by the user department/agency, answering the CDC guideline questions for COVID-19, and providing daily color bands that allow them access throughout buildings. An employee policy manual is given to all the cleaning staff upon hire. Stockton staff has not been given a policy manual for responding to COVID-19; however, Stockton and the County train staff in responding to COVID-19 infections. The training consists of how and what to clean, what their assigned areas are, and which types of disinfectants should be used.

If someone within a County facility tests positive for COVID-19, the department head where the infected employee works informs the FDO. FDO emails Stockton instructing Stockton to do a COVID-19 disinfecting. A Stockton supervisor then dispatches a special projects cleaning crew to disinfect the area using an electrostatic sprayer that applies a disinfectant mist. Stockton takes direction and guidance on COVID-19 cleaning from FDO, not from the infected agencies/departments. Disinfectants used to wipe down surfaces are CDC and EPA approved hospital grade disinfectants. According to Stockton, an approximate amount of COVID-19 infection/possible infection cleanings done from June 2020 through December 2020 is 216, but this number only accounts for cleanings which were notified to them by email. The notifications for cleaning came from FDO via email, phone call or in person.

Stockton Custodial Staff Interview

A Stockton cleaning staff employee told the OIG that upon hire, a Stockton supervisor trains Stockton custodial staff on COVID-19 daily cleaning and COVID-19 infection cleaning procedures. When a positive COVID-19 infection occurs, the area is blocked off with yellow tape, PPE gear is worn with an extra set of gloves, and a plastic face shield is used on top of a mask. A Stockton supervisor sprays the entire infected room with a disinfectant mist and the custodial staff then begins COVID-19 disinfecting. Once the COVID-19 disinfection is complete, the custodial staff discards their gloves, disposable rags are thrown away, and a Stockton supervisor who has been present monitoring the work affirms the disinfection cleaning as complete.

Conclusion

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, custodial cleaning services have increased throughout the County. Based on our review we found:

1. The custodial contract contained the necessary work scope and contract line items, and allowed for immediate implementation of CDC COVID-19 protocols for preventative cleaning and to respond to COVID-19 infections.
2. All three custodial contractors followed a similar cleaning process while abiding to the terms and specifications of their contracts. FDO has been diligent in drafting, updating and providing guidance from the Florida Department of Health and the CDC.
3. All contractors appeared to be properly training their employees, using approved disinfectants, following COVID-19 procedures, and properly billing the County.
4. We reviewed a specific report that an individual working in a County facility tested positive for COVID-19. We concluded that the County and vendor response for this event was appropriate.
5. The contractors were compliant with the contract COVID-19 guidance, and that FDO provides effective contract administration.

Therefore, we offer no recommendations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Office of Inspector General work like to thank the Palm Beach County Facilitates Department and Operations, and the custodial contractors we reviewed for their cooperation.

This report is available on the OIG website at: <http://www.pbcgov.com/OIG>. Please address inquiries regarding this report to the Director of Investigations by email at inspector@pbcgov.org or by telephone at (561) 233-2350.