

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners Approves \$2.5M for the Improvement of 534 Housing Residences in Belle Glade

Press Release <PressRelease@pbcgov.org>

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At the November 1, 2022 Board of County Commissioner's Meeting, \$2.5M in Infrastructure Sales Tax funding was approved for the Belle Glade Housing Authority. The Infrastructure Sales Tax Program, where \$25.5M was designated for homeless, extremely low and low income housing, was approved by voters through a ballot referendum in November 2016. Anticipated sources of funding for this \$16.8M project includes \$10.6M from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), \$2.5M from the Belle Glade Housing Authority and other sources.

This \$16.8M project will fund the repair and improvement of the remaining 534 affordable farm labor housing units in the Okeechobee and Osceola Centers, including the restoration of 116 vacant units, 31 uninhabitable units, conversion of 24 handicap accessible units, and gap funding for the cost of completing the renovation of 363 occupied units.

Repairs to approximately 178 of the 712 total residences began in 2020 when the Okeechobee and Osceola Centers came under new management. In 2019, the self-managed Belle Glade Housing Authority was brought under scrutiny after reports of unsanitary living conditions. In January 2020, the USDA approved Nelson & Associates, Inc. to manage the Okeechobee and Osceola Centers under the purview of the Belle Glade Housing Authority. Other overall improvements include complete street and parking area resurfacing, replacement of asphalt pathways to the unit entries, installation of speed humps and the replacement of roofs, windows and aging HVAC systems.

District Commissioner Melissa McKinlay stated “This approval today will help close a disturbing chapter for farmworker housing at the Okeechobee Center in Belle Glade that came to light in 2019. I thank the brave young Mom who shared her story so we could fix it. This county funding combined with a proposed USDA grant will allow for the renovation of all remaining units! Thank you to the Belle Glade Housing Authority, USDA, Senator Rubio and the late Congressman Alcee Hastings for helping us get this started at the largest farmworker housing complex in the nation. All families deserve healthy housing. This will make that a reality.”

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