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Town of Bluffton Receives “High Performance Government Award” After Implementing Asset-Tracking Software During Tropical Storm Irma

Bluffton Town Council recognized its Public Works Department at its August 14 Town Council meeting after Cartegraph, an asset management software company, honored the Town with a “High-Performance Government Award” for implementing its software during Tropical Storm Irma.

“Learning a new technology product in the middle of a critical incident requires great focus and organization. However, the data it yielded was definitely worth the effort,” Mayor Lisa Sulka said. “Town leaders and staff deployed this software in the midst of Irma to better track and document the human resources and equipment needed to manage and recover from this tropical storm. As a result, the Town has the data to make even better decisions in the future.”

Bryan McIlwee, the Town’s director of engineering, said the Town expected to implement the software after the storm, however, the storm presented a unique opportunity to collect data during a major weather event. McIlwee said the Cartegraph software gave Town staff members the venue to track each task on his or her mobile phone or iPad which ultimately produced detailed documentation for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

“Members of the Town’s Public Works team hit the ground running as they inventoried equipment, programmed FEMA hourly rates and documented what each task required in terms of labor hours and resources,” McIlwee said. “Using this software in ‘real time’ during Irma saved the Town countless hours of post-storm paperwork. The Town’s Public Works crew logged more than 200 hours of recovery work and filed for FEMA reimbursement as they accomplished each task.”

Town Manager Marc Orlando said he was impressed with the adaptability of each employee.

“Public Works employees gathered around an Apple TV watching a demonstration about how to install and use the software the night of the storm.

“We made and implemented a decision hoping it would work in our favor,” Orlando said. “We are very proud of the outcomes. This software greatly improved the Town’s efficiency in collecting data and documenting the Town’s recovery. This is a tool the Town will continue to use and will be established as a best practice during future weather and critical incidents.”

Cartegraph representatives said the software company received about 20 nominations from municipalities across the nation for the 2017-2018 High Performance Government Awards and it honored seven communities with this distinction. Representatives of the Dubuque-Iowa company said they were impressed Bluffton implemented this software during a major weather event and executed it with fewer employees compared to the other cities, which were also honored. The six other winners of this award are Arlington, Texas; Auburn, Washington; Buffalo Grove, Illinois; Kingsport, Tennessee; New Braunfels, Texas and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Cartegraph serves more than 500 clients across the nation’s cities, counties, parks and utility organizations.

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