

County Commission to Workshop Long-Term Capital Needs

By Hector Flores

The Charlotte County Commission has scheduled a workshop on capital projects and the 20-year Capital Needs Assessment. Twenty years may seem like a long way out, and it is, but the County Commission's strategic plan has a long-term focus on providing appropriate levels of public services, maintaining and investing in infrastructure to meet growing demand and operating county government in a fiscally sound manner. The public is invited to attend the workshop, which will be held at 9 a.m., Feb. 7 in Room 119 of the Administration Center in Murdock.

Planning for capital projects — water and sewer plants and pipelines, roads, county facilities, public safety buildings, roads, resiliency and mitigation measures — requires an understanding of developing needs, availability and timing of funding sources and coordination between departments to ensure maximum efficiency. For example, if the county is going to run a reclaimed water line along a road, we don't want to widen that road before running the line. That would add to the project cost and create additional traffic maintenance problems.

When it comes to funding, there are numerous sources, but availability varies and lead times on some funding is long. State and federal grants may take years from the initial request to receive. Projects we plan to fund with voter-approved sales taxes must wait until the referendum is approved. Commission policy has been to begin sales tax projects when the money comes in. Some projects are paid for from multiple funding sources, which must be coordinated between agencies, departments and policymakers over many years.

Long-term capital needs planning is also crucial because of the sheer volume and cost of the projects. For both utility and non-utility projects in the current 20-year Capital Needs Assessment through 2041, the estimated cost is nearly \$4 billion.

Long-term recovery

The workshop follows another effort by county staff and partners last week to ensure a successful long-term recovery from Hurricane Ian. The long-term recovery meeting brought together community members, including faith-based, non-profit, government, business and other organizations, working to assist individuals and families as they recover.

The attendees were members of task forces dedicated to meeting unmet needs, housing, health and human services and economic recovery. They reviewed ongoing disaster assistance efforts, identified areas of concern and updated each other on progress and success stories. Charlotte County remains committed to helping those impacted by Hurricane Ian to restore their properties and succeed in their long-term recovery.

Drop-off sites

Hurricane debris drop-off sites on Placida Road and the West and Mid-County Transfer Facilities will be closed beginning Saturday, Feb. 11.

The transfer facilities at 19765 Kenilworth Blvd. in Port Charlotte and 7070 Environmental Way in Englewood will reopen for normal operations on Tuesday, Feb. 14. The facilities are open 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Saturdays. Gate closed at 3:45 p.m. All waste unloading must be completed by 4 p.m.

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