

County presents legislative priorities to delegation

By Hector Flores

Charlotte County officials delivered the county's priorities to local legislative delegation members Monday at a meeting in Tallahassee.

Three longstanding principles were reinforced in the county's presentation:

- Support for state policies which benefit the economic development, environmental and social health of Charlotte County and its citizens.
- Opposition to legislative changes or fiscal decisions which impact county revenues such as unfunded mandates, revenue limitations, trust fund diversions or cost shifts.
- Support for local flexibility to address problems by honoring home rule and avoiding unnecessary preemptions of local authority.

The county also sought delegation support for funding a number of capital projects, including Charlotte Sports Park renovation and expansion, septic-to-sewer expansion, water quality monitoring, mental health and substance abuse services and Harborview Road expansion. To view the complete state legislative agenda, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/commission-office and click Legislative Affairs.

The county also expressed support for legislative assistance and funding support for local partners, including the school district, sheriff's office, the county clerk's office, the Charlotte County Airport Authority, the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority, the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Program, Charlotte Behavioral Health Care and the Boys and Girls Club of Charlotte County.

A specific partner project for which the county expressed support was for the sheriff's office headquarters and a hardened 911 dispatch center. The facility is on the county's 2020 local option sales tax list. State funding would help cover higher construction costs or enable money allocated to the project to be used for Tier 2 projects to be funded by sales tax revenue exceeding the county projection.

As several items listed above demonstrate, the county's legislative priorities have a broad emphasis on water quality and water supply. The county supports the water authority's request for funding for its Integrated Loop Phase 2B Pipeline project and construction of Peace River Reservoir No. 3 at its DeSoto County plant. On the water quality side, in addition to septic-to-sewer support, the county supports funding for water quality monitoring for the Peace River, Myakka River and Charlotte Harbor, beach renourishment and inlet management, preservation of groundwater, development of alternative water supplies and reclaimed water expansion.

The Florida Legislature convenes for its regular session on Jan. 9. The session ends March 8. County commissioners, administrators and its legislative manager will be monitoring the session closely for bills that may impact the county and its residents. Commissioners have been

frequent visitors to Tallahassee before and during legislative sessions to keep county priorities on the top of lawmakers' minds.

I want to express our appreciation to the legislative delegation for its support of the county in its hurricane recovery efforts and for its continued work on behalf our Charlotte County residents, businesses and stakeholders.

*Readers may reach County Administrator's Hector Flores at
Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.*