

**Status Report on Recommendations
from the
Charlotte Assembly 1996**

Dear Participant:

I would like to bring everyone up to date with the status of the work you did June 6 through June 8. I asked the thirty member Steering Committee, who had identified the issues, reviewed position papers and selected participants, to prioritize the 68 recommendations in the 1996 Charlotte Assembly Policy Statement. Since a high percentage (65%) identified the need for continuous involvement, the Steering Committee elected a Chairman and Vice Chair. Dave Powell is the Chair and Darryl Casaneuva is the Vice Chair.

The highest ranked recommendations were the need for citizen participation in the Comprehensive planning process (87%) and the need to provide incentives to encourage new building permits on sewers and disincentives for building permits on septic systems (87%). The Committee drafted a list of fourteen "Priority Recommendations of the Charlotte Assembly of 1996", which was sent to you prior to the meeting with the County Commission.

On July 23, 1996, the Steering Committee formally presented these recommendations to the County Commission. I believe it would be fair to summarize the comments of Commission members as: a) They found general agreement with the fourteen priority recommendations. b) It was stated that the action today was the first step of a larger outreach program that is needed in our community - the expression 'a deeper and broader consensus' was used; one suggested that one benchmark of the success in spreading the community consensus may be a referendum on some of these issues. c) The Committee should continue its work on implementation. Although there was a lack of clarity on how the Committee should interface with the County Commission, it was stated that the Committee and the entire Charlotte Assembly, should be actively engaged in the larger outreach efforts. d) There was some concern about the tight timelines facing the Commission on some issues and the Administrator was directed to develop and return with workplan and timetable.

After the Board of County Commissioners reviews and comments on the proposed workplan, I will meet again with the Steering Committee to coordinate implementation.

Sincerely

Jan Winters
County Administrator

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Status Report on Charlotte Assembly Recommendations (Apr 97)

The Steering Committee met on July 18, 1996, prioritized the 68 recommendations to fourteen and approved an implementation strategy. The following is the strategy to implement the top fourteen priorities and comments on the progress made.

Comprehensive Planning.

1. Increase and improve Citizen Participation.

A. BCC appoint Steering Committee as 'Citizens Advisory Committee' for Comprehensive Plan (Sep 96).

B. BCC approve six months extension in review schedule for Plan (Sep 96 - Submittal date moved from Nov 96 to Apr 97).

C. Steering Committee determines approach for review (Oct 96).

Comments: All above items were accomplished. The Chairperson of the Local Planning Agency informed the County Commission at the public meeting to transmit the County Comprehensive Plan to the State that it was remarkable that so few last minute changes had to be made by the LPA and that the process went so smoothly. The Steering Committee, working with interested residents met in over 60 meetings on the Comprehensive Plan.

2. Use many of the Assembly's Recommendations as 'Backbone' to Plan.

A. Consider major issues raised: Strengthen neighborhood identity, develop distinction between 'urban service area' and 'non-urban service area', develop mechanisms for dealing with platted lots, provide for Economic Development, protect Charlotte Harbor, and give attention to urban design. (Steering Committee - Oct 96 to Feb 97)

Comment: The adopted Comprehensive Plan reduced the 215-mile Urban Growth Area by more than half and provided policies to address platted lot issue, to protect the Harbor, and to encourage neighborhood planning efforts.

New Development: Sewers / Urban Services.

3. Provide incentives for building on public sewers.

A. Consider reduction in connection fees and compare with potential impact on rates (CCU Oct 96 -Feb 97).

B. Develop analysis of true cost for local government services in urban service area. (Oct 96- Mar 97, Budget Dept).

C. Develop differential impact fees - urban and non-urban. (Sep 96 through Apr 97 - Budget/Attorney/Consultant).

Comment: An analysis comparing Charlotte County's impact fees and utility connection fees was prepared for the BCC in November of 1996. A study on the current impact fees rates will be conducted as part of the settlement with the Homebuilders. The County staff is also requesting a review of the 'differential' factor in the Impact Fee study. Staff has prepared levels of service standards for the Infill, Suburban, and Rural areas in the Comprehensive Plan.

4. Provide disincentives for building on septic systems.
 - A. Institute septic system monitoring and maintenance program and charge back cost to users. (Jan 97 - Environmental Health/Budget).
 - B. Consider lot repurchase agreement for non-urban lot owners who build on sewers. (Budget/Attorney - Dec 96).
 - C. Determine ultimate requirements for septic systems in non-urban areas, where there will be no plans to install public sewers. (Environmental Health - Dec 97).
 - D. Charge true cost for services. (Budget - Apr 97).
 - E. Develop differential impact fees. (Apr 97).
 - F. Consider interim measures. (Notify new building permit applications that they are in area targeted for public sewers, etc. Dec 96).

Comment: On April 8, 1997, the County Commission reviewed recommendations to strengthen the requirements for new septic systems. The BCC gave direction to proceed with drafting utility policy policies containing these new requirements, which will then be reviewed throughout the community.

Budgeting.

5. Recognize financial limitations of community.
 - A. Focus on essential services, engage in prioritization exercise. (BCC / Budget / Administration - Apr 97).
 - B. Nurture public confidence, establish greatly improved two way communication with the community. (Surveys, focus groups, newsletters, etc. - Admin - immediately).
 - C. Seek to make dollars go further. (See issue 6 below.)

Comment: The County Commission has set a community outreach program as one of their top priorities for 1997. Various programs are underway including the first ever Annual Report published as in insert in both local newspapers in February 1997, a Speakers Bureau was set up, and a 'Government in the Mall' has been scheduled. In January, at their first workshop on the 1997-1998 budget, the County Commissioners discussed the priorities of various County departments and programs.

6. Evaluate the County's budget and services over a period of years.
 - A. Conduct Study that includes: available revenue sources, expenses, level of service

provided, bench marking with similar counties, and community surveys/feedback on desirability of service level and willingness to pay. (Budget/Admin - May 97)

- B. Devote a special focus to CCU rates and develop a plan to reduce rates. (Admin / Budget / Utilities - Sep 96).

Comment: The proposed 1998 fiscal year budget will include benchmarking with nine other Florida counties. A multi-year revenue summary was reviewed by the BCC at their January budget workshop, and direction was provided to examine revenue sources. A customer survey on satisfaction and willingness to pay for service levels will also be part of the budget process. CCU developed a management plan and so far this year has already reduced their operations and maintenance fund in excess of 9%.

7. Privatization.

A. Consider privatization for: Utilities, select Public Works projects, management of jail, vehicle maintenance, boat ramps and docks, mosquito control, EMS, landfill operations, and others. (Budget - May 97).

Comment: The Board of County Commissioners appointed Citizens Committee to investigate the potential for privatizing Charlotte County Utilities. Their preliminary report on privatization was given on March 11, 1997, and the Committee requested an expanded charge to include considering the feasibility of privatization and to review other approaches to reducing rates (which may include expansion). The County has invited bids from private contractors on a sewer lateral project in CCU, on MSBU roadway, on portions of our vehicle maintenance operations, and on some Social and Senior Services programs.

New / Expanded Revenues.

8. Reconsider the Three Percent 'Cap'.

A. Engage community in dialogue on need for fiscal limitations, growing needs of Charlotte County (\$3 M per year to operate new Courts/Jail), range of options available, and comparisons with other counties. (BCC/Admin - Aug thru Nov).

- B. Consider straw ballot for November 96 (BCC -Aug 96).

Comment: Straw ballot placed on November 1996 election and voters supported amending the 'cap' to reflect population, inflation, operating costs for new facilities and federal and state mandates.

9. Consider an increase in the Gas Tax.

A. and B. - Same as above. (BCC elected not to place on ballot - it is within their authority).

Comment: Board of County Commission directed staff to prepare a road program for the use of additional gas tax. This item will be on the April 22, 1997 BCC workshop.

Economic Development.

10. Streamline Permitting procedures.
 - A. Examine reasons for and benefits of present system. (Community Dev - Jun 97).
 - B. Comparisons with others. (Budget/Com Dev - Apr 97).
 - C. Consider reducing amount of items required for DRC, substituting performance standards for discretionary reviews. (Com Dev - Jan 97).

Comments: County permitting staff meeting directly with Homebuilders to review procedures in an effort to streamline County processes. County staff also reviewing selected Industrial properties for 'pre-approvals' for certain category of uses.

11. Re-examine Impact Fees. (Budget/Comm Dev /Admin)
 - A. Examine reasons for and benefits of present system (Oct 96).
 - B. Comparisons with others (Oct - Nov 96).
 - C. Consider waivers based upon cost-benefit analysis (Admin - Dec 96).

Comment: Staff has reviewed the incentive programs in Lee and Sarasota counties and will present recommendations to the Board in May of 1997. The recommendations will entail new funding to replaced any waived fee and will be effective, if approved, for the 1997-1998 budget year.

12. Continue working toward economic diversification (EDC serves as lead agency - ongoing).
 - A. Seek to attract businesses that provide better paying jobs.
 - B. Build on growing higher education institutions.
 - C. Showcase positive attributes, such as sun, water, and beaches.

Comment: The new County Commission continued the funding commitment of \$125,000 for this year. The EDC has appointed subcommittees to focus on target industries, brochures, existing industry, sites, etc.

Infrastructure Priorities.

13. Continue Drainage studies.
 - A. Complete Storm water master plan and address water quality as well as water quantity issues. (BCC/Public Works - BCC Meeting Oct 96).
 - B. Preliminary measures (Spring 97).
 - C. Develop funding source and implement. (Budget/Admin/DPW - Spring 98).

Comment: County has hired a Stormwater Director and a new RFP is on the street for completion of the drainage study. The study will be completed in 1997-1998, with recommendations for project priorities and funding for 1998-1999.

14. Continue to address sewer system issue.

- A. BCC approve non-ad valorem revenue source (Sales tax) to make program more affordable for homeowners (Nov 96 ballot).
- B. BCC adopt policies for use of Sales tax (Sep 96 - see attached).
- C. Conduct study of impacts from existing septic systems. (Environ Health - Jan 97).
- D. Initiate public sewer program in phases. (BCC policy creates revolving fund and initially targets 1B1, which uses existing engineering plans, and is area of pre-1983 septic systems, higher build-out densities, and has proximity to water bodies).
- E. Completion of first phase, Jan 99, results in projected 20% reduction in CCU's rates.

Comment: Sales tax issue was placed on the November 1996 ballot and failed by less than 1%. County is moving forward with 'mini-expansions' and re-engineering the plans in house. In the first quarter of 1997, the equivalent of 550 residential units are in the process of being added to the County's sewer system. On April 9, 1997, the BCC received a presentation on adding 2,275 ERUs over the next five years at a per unit cost of under \$4,000, with the expansion program using primarily existing excess system capacity and funded through CCU internal operational reductions. The Board directed staff to proceed with a policy to be workshopped in June of 1997.

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