

# CHARLOTTE ASSEMBLY 2013

## POLICY STATEMENT



Sponsored by  
The Charlotte County Board of Commissioners

Planned by  
The Charlotte Assembly 2013 Steering Committee

Convened at the  
Cultural Center of Charlotte County  
Port Charlotte, Florida  
October 16-17, 2013

# POLICY STATEMENT

## CHARLOTTE ASSEMBLY 2013

**At the close of their small group discussion sessions, the participants of this assembly reviewed and adopted as a group the following statements. These statements represent general agreement. However, no one was asked to sign it. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to every suggestion.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. With the support of the Charlotte County Board of Commissioners and the County Administration, many active citizens in Charlotte County have been working together for nearly two decades to forge and refine a blueprint for the County's future and to put their ideas into action. This report is from the Charlotte Assembly 2013. Earlier Assemblies in 1996, 1998, 2001 and 2007 laid the foundation for the present discussion. Virtually all of the recommendations from these previous assemblies have been addressed. The citizenry is committed to sustained involvement in County politics, planning, and action.
- B. Each of the preceding Assemblies had major impacts on Charlotte County plans, policies, and public-service priorities. The County's Assembly in 1996 led to significant improvements in County policies for managing growth and protecting the natural environment. Shortly after the 1996 Assembly, the County's comprehensive plan was revised to reduce the size of the County's Urban Service Area. Also flowing from the Charlotte Assembly '96 were policies to, among other things, address the County's platted lands problem, attract new businesses, and make growth pay its own way. The 1998 Assembly brought forth new initiatives to purchase platted lots, improve drainage, build new regional parks, extend sidewalks, support performing arts at Charlotte High School,

and expand economic development activities. The Charlotte Assembly 2001 focused primarily, but not exclusively, on human services, especially childcare, healthcare, and housing. The Assembly resulted in many improvements in these programmatic areas and also many partnerships between government, business, civic groups, and philanthropists.

C. The 2007 Assembly identified several major issues:

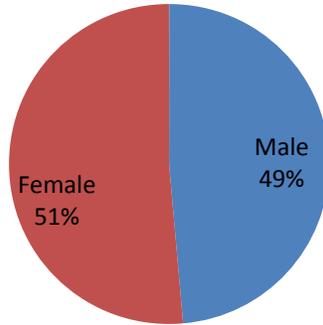
- The need for the County to develop new and dependable supplies of water motivated the County to increase its regional water supply within Sarasota and Desoto counties from 12.578 MGD to 16.1 MGD.
- The County should promote conservation and wastewater reuse. The County is in its phase 3 of expansion of a reclaimed water transmission system to deliver reclaimed water to a broad range of future commercial customers in central and west parts of the County.
- The County should establish timelines for establishing sewer lines to infill areas within the Urban Service Area served by septic tanks. Recent public hearings have been held to discuss expansion of the wastewater system beyond East and West Spring Lake, but no direction has been given to proceed.
- For agricultural areas within the county, the County should regulate or offer incentives to: reduce the amount and types of fertilizer used, avoid excessive or wasteful water use, control water runoff, and increase water reclamation and reuse.
- The County should continue posting business facts and information to the County's website, providing basic data on the area economy, workforce, cost of living, business relocation incentives, and quality of life.
- The County should look to modify impact fees, taxes, and other charges to provide exemptions or reductions for new businesses coming into the County and remaining for a specified time.



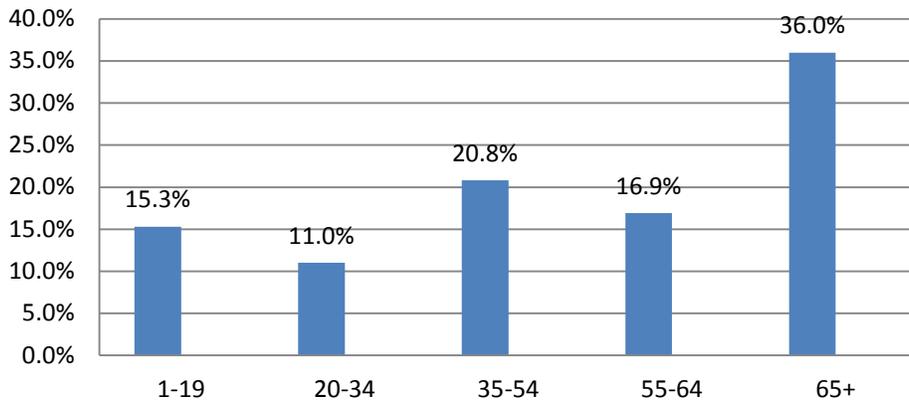
- D. The Charlotte Assembly 2013 was held at the Cultural Center of Charlotte County on October 16-17, 2013 with approximately 100 people participating. The Assembly was planned by a Steering Committee of 25 members (appointed by the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners) with diverse backgrounds and interests. The Steering Committee nominated 58 participants to reflect many aspects of the County, including geographic area, business, government, civic groups, religion, minorities, retirees, the environment, education, and others.
- E. Members of the county were given an opportunity to apply to take part in the Assembly and 48 people signed up to participate.
- F. The following charts depict demographic data for Charlotte County as of 2012:

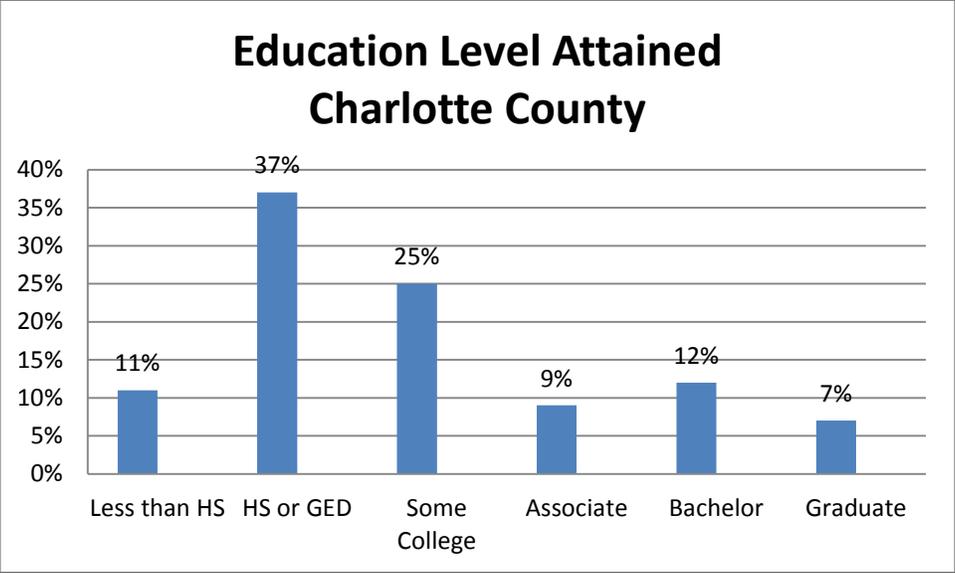
## Charlotte County Demographic Data:

### Charlotte County Demographics: Gender



### Age Ranges Charlotte County





G. The questions covered at the Assembly were developed by the Steering Committee and were designed to address the participants' vision for the County's future, economic development, public safety, growth management, quality of life, and water quantity and quality. The five topical areas listed were the ones requested by the Commissioners.

- H. The following ideas and suggestions came from the Plenary Session and received a majority of votes indicating acceptance by those attendees.

## II. VISION

- A. Charlotte County continues to be a retirement community where people can come to live, work and play. That being said, the County should work to diversity its economic base beyond being just a retirement community.
- B. Assembly participants saw the County becoming a vibrant, diverse, economically healthy, proactive community where residents and visitors can enjoy the natural beauty of the county. Today's retirees are looking for active lifestyles that are more in line with the needs of younger residents.
- C. For this to happen, the County needs to be more friendly toward businesses—to keep the ones that are already here as well as to attract new ones.

## III. Economic Development

### 1. When asked *“What should our community brand be,”* Assembly participants responded with the following comments:

- “Where business and leisure go hand in hand.”
- Harbor and beaches, what’s not to like?
- Waterfront community
- Nature lovers’ paradise
- Unique coast
- Great place to live, work and play
- Active arts community
- Affordable place to live

- Low crime, safe environment
- Strategic location for economic development supported by air, rail, roads

**2. Assembly participants were asked “*What are the best ways to project that image to future residents, business and visitors*”?**

- Participants suggested the county should advertise through all appropriate channels, including print, television, radio, and internet.
- The comments then turned towards suggesting the County needs to get out of the way in trying to attract people and businesses to come to the area saying it often is perceived as too much of a hindrance. Some suggestions were:
  - Have fewer and simpler regulations for both resident and commercial properties and concentrate on the prompt issuance of permits.
  - Make fees and costs predictable and known up front—often there are too many hidden or unknown fees charged.
  - Diversify the tax base for more business and commercial growth.
  - Reduce the amounts of the fees charged by the County.
  - Revise Smart Charlotte 2050 and update land use regulations.
- It was also felt the County should do a better job of supporting the agricultural community.

**3. Participants were asked “*How can Charlotte County improve on our goal of being ‘Open for Business’*”?**

- The first recommendation was to get rid of this slogan. The County should not have to say it is ‘Open for Business,’” but should show it by doing it.
- There were numerous comments that during the permitting process, County staff should be more helpful to the customer rather than be a hindrance which is how it was currently viewed.

- It was felt staff attitudes when approached about a project should be “start with ‘yes, let’s make this work’ and then work towards a ‘no, current codes do not allow that.’”  
Currently, many participants felt staff “starts with a no and the customer has to work very hard to get to a yes in order to get a project approved.”
- It was suggested county employees receive training in customer service to provide better assistance to their customers as well as technical training to better understand the County’s regulations and policies.
- It was suggested the County do a better job in communicating to builders, developers and other citizens the purpose of those regulations when they are passed.
- Another suggestion was for the County to create customer service standards for every employee and, as part of the appraisal system, evaluate each person’s customer skills and performance.
- Although the County says it has “one-stop shopping” for permitting, many of the builders in the Assembly said that was not true. This should be investigated to determine if this is the case or not.
- The County should conduct a satisfaction survey of all the businesses in the County.
- Every time there is a completion of a project, the County should ask the customer to fill out an evaluation of the services received from the County.
- The County should consider hiring an ombudsman to act as a liaison between the County and business persons who may run into difficulties or have problems with projects.
- The County needs to improve its ability to attract new business and work to retain those that are already in operation within the county.
- Government offices should be open through lunch.

- The County should conduct a study of best practices of other Florida counties to see what they could learn and apply here.
- The County should stay out of the real estate speculation business and leave that to the private sector.



## IV. Public Safety

- A. When asked “How can Charlotte County ensure that public safety will remain at its current level of service while maintaining economic balance,” Assembly participants indicated they were satisfied with the current level of public services they were receiving at the funding levels they were paying.**

Members of the Assembly recommended the County should encourage more citizens to participate in the Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) as well as having various County offices make volunteer opportunities available for citizens. With the large population of retirees in the county—many with strong technical and managerial backgrounds—this could provide the County with some valuable human resources at virtually no cost.

- B. Assembly participants were asked “*What should Charlotte County’s role be in minimizing the impact before, during and after natural disasters and security threats? What can be done now to minimize future impacts?*”**

- Assembly participants agreed the County should be concerned about fire safety.
- They indicated the County needed to do a much better job in educating citizens on the Fire Wise Communities Program which provides homeowners with simple and easy steps to reduce their home's wildfire risk through advance preparation before a wildfire.
- It was also recommended the County provide funding for special grinding machines to be used for mulching or mowing a 30-foot wide area around a business or home to help protect properties against wildfires.
- Participants also suggested the County needs to improve communications among Public Safety agencies when a prescribed burn is going to take place.
- The County should seek federal monies to pay for a "Fire Wise" program and could coordinate with the Division of Forestry the mulching or mowing a 30-foot wide area around a business or home to help protect properties against wildfires.
- In order to minimize future impacts of natural disasters and security threats, the Assembly recommended an evaluation be done of current evacuation routes throughout the County. As population densities have changed over the past several years, do the current designated evacuation routes provide the best means to clear people out of the County?
- It was also suggested the County use the best available technology when sending alerts notifying people concerning safety concerns—including e-mail, automated telephone calls, local television and radio announcements, sirens, etc.
- Additionally, it was suggested the County needed to carefully consider increasing the number of available emergency shelters. Currently there are 18 emergency refuge sites within the County—3 in Englewood, 1 in Rotonda, 1 in South Punta Gorda, 3 in Punta Gorda and 9 in Port Charlotte.

**C. When asked “*What should the County government’s role be in addressing the issue of substance abuse and crime prevention,*” there were a number of responses from members of the Assembly.**

Those responses could be broken into 6 specific areas.

- It was suggested the County continue using the United Way as a conduit for funding of Nonprofit organizations. It was suggested the process be depoliticized and there should be an increase in the funding provided by the County.
- It was suggested the County provide higher funding for the homeless shelter.
- There needs to be more education on drug usage at all levels in order to make citizens aware of the harmful effects of drugs. The County should create effective and structured rehabilitation centers to assist people in coping with and purging drug usage.
- It was recommended the County continue its current efforts in placing zoning restrictions for drug clinics.
- The Neighborhood Watch program should be expanded throughout the County. With the large number of retired people living here, personal safety for individuals and their property is a very high concern.
- Citizens—especially the elderly—should be made more aware of scams or attempted scams occurring within the County.

## **V. Growth Management**

**A. The Assembly was asked “*What should the County’s philosophy be toward managing growth and development*”?**

In general, the Assembly encouraged growth including the re-building and re-development of older areas of County. However, it was emphasized that any growth plans should be kept simple and easy to follow.

**B. When asked “*What changes, if any, are needed to our existing capital infrastructure to accommodate future growth without reducing the quality of life for our existing residents,*” several very specific suggestions came forward.**

- Improvements along Piper Road, Edgewater Road, Burnt Store Road, and Winchester Road need to be addressed.
- The extension of the road projects south from Port Charlotte Boulevard (sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, and sewer) should be continued.
- The County should identify the areas where it wants commercial development to be and then should extend water and sewer service to those areas.
- The County needs to identify the areas for Gateway corridors within the county and add the necessary infrastructure needed.

**C. When asked “*In what ways, if any, should Charlotte County government be more restrictive than the regulations of other agencies,*” the participants responded strongly saying the County should not be more restrictive.**

## **VI. Quality of Life**

**A. Numerous responses were provided when asked “*What types of community infrastructure and cultural improvements could we pursue to improve the quality of life for our residents*”?**

- The County should continue to develop and pursue County wide cultural initiatives. It could incorporate marketing of all cultural arts as part of its image/marketing plan. This would be in line with the County’s branding initiative.
- Additionally, the County should consider developing an outdoor arts facility through a public/private partnership. This could include a Band Shell where musicians could

perform. It could utilize Charlotte Harbor and Parkside CRA as well as private funds to expand the arts.

- There needs to be more attractions for young people and families.
- It was suggested the County establish an enterprise zone for recreational activities to include mixed use areas to encourage walkable communities. It should explore the opportunity to build a public/private unique entertainment sporting center/softball complex to not only expand the recreational activities within the county, but to also attract regional softball teams to come to the county as part of an economic development program.
- Additional suggestions included providing more bike path development—similar to what the City of Punta Gorda has done—so residents and visitors can explore various areas of the county.
- For all of these suggestions to happen, the County needs to make regulations, fees, and permits for special events less restrictive.
- The County should expand and improve the county-wide Library System including doing a better job of marketing library events and programs.
- Public transportation is certainly an important part for Quality of Life. The County should make better use of the Dial-a-ride and Sunshine car service/transportation and ensure the service is more reliable. There are too many instances where residents have tried to utilize these services, but the service showed up very late and sometimes not at all.

**B. When asked “*What changes should Charlotte County make to our codes to improve our community image related to architectural design, signage, landscaping and other land development standards,*” participants gave several suggestions.**

- A major issue identified was the lack of code consistency among commercial signs

within the County—excluding the City of Punta Gorda. It is recommended the County create a stakeholder group made up of commercial business owners/operators to review sign codes and recommend changes and additions to these codes.

- It is suggested the County maintain landscaping in road way medians—particularly long major roads into and out of the county—state routes 41, 776, and 17—and to use sustainable plantings to avoid periodic re-planting. This could also apply to cleaning up the gateways and medians into the county.



## VII. Water Quality and Quantity

### A. Assembly participants were asked *“How does Charlotte County execute and pay for a county wide sewer system”?*

- The County should prioritize the geographic areas in which the sewer system will be expanded.
- The sewer system should be paid for using a combination of MSBU, bonding, and funding from the 1% local option sales tax extension.
- The County should develop an educational program to educate voters about the benefits of having sewers in population dense areas so there would be less opposition to their installation. It was pointed out that it would be far more beneficial to start the

program now rather than wait until the county is required to make the installation from either a federal or state agency. If the County goes forward voluntarily now, there is potential grant funding that may be available for part of the installation costs.

Additionally, if there is a plan in place for sewer installation, the County would be in a far more favorable position to apply for grants.

**B. The Assembly also discussed *“How should Charlotte County work towards implementing the state mandated goal of 75% reuse of wastewater”?***

- A major problem with the reusing of waste water within the county is the distance from the water treatment plants to the areas where the treated water could be used. Laying the pipelines from the water treatment plants to either golf courses or agricultural sites would be extremely costly to do.
- It was suggested the County look into the feasibility of utilizing reused water in high density areas. The water could be used for watering lawns and recreational areas in developments and neighborhoods.
- The County should also consider reusing the waste water in road medians, green spaces and perhaps some commercial usage.
- The County should also develop a marketing program for re-use water where it could be sold for commercial purposes.



## VIII. Local Option Sales Tax Extension

A. When the Assembly came to discuss the topic on *“How effective was the usage of the current 1% sales tax revenues in meeting citizens’ expectations,”* a high number of participants expressed they were satisfied with the usages of those revenues because many of the projects were well selected and people could see there were a number of tangible projects which had been completed and there were a number of additional projects soon to be started.

- The local option sales tax provides the broadest tax base and contributes to infrastructure projects that most likely would not have been built—e.g. fire station.
- Information on the status of projects covered by the sales tax needs to be communicated far better by the Commissioners and County staff. This information, in addition to being on the County’s website, should be published in the local newspaper as well as using other non-internet types of communications—especially keeping in mind the age of many of the residents of the County. Most participants indicated they had little idea of the current status of many of those projects.
- As the vote on the Local Option Sales Tax Extension approaches, the County should do a more thorough job of educating the public about how the county has received a great return from the 1% sales tax from the previous years. This would include identifying all the projects throughout the County that were completed as well as those that will be completed in the next year.
- It was suggested the County put signs up at the actual project sites indicating the funding for that project came from the 1% sales tax. This would help make citizens more aware how their tax dollars were being spent.
- It was suggested that if a Citizen’s Advisory committee is formed to review and

recommend specific projects for funding by the Sales Tax Extension, this should be done early in the process and not ask the Committee to rubber stamp projects already selected by County staff.

**B. When asked “*What are the pros and cons for extending the 1% sales tax,*” reasons given for extending the tax were:**

- Revenues from the tax would increase monies available to the County for a variety of capital projects and would provide an opportunity to fund these needed items.
- Monies received from this tax would be a valuable source of revenue which could be used for improving or expanding parks and libraries.
- This type of tax provides the broadest tax base as full-time residents, seasonal residents, visitors and guests of residents would all be contributing monies to the County.
- This type of tax historically provides up to 30% of the total tax dollars received from seasonal residents, visitors and guests of residents which expands tax base beyond ad valorem taxes paid by residents.
- Having this issue on the ballot gives county residents the opportunity to vote to decide whether they want this tax or not and provides community input on projects selected for fast-tracking. This is one of few opportunities where citizens have a direct opportunity to choose if they want a particular tax or not. Additionally, many of the capital projects funded contributed to the quality of life of people living in and visiting the County.
- This tax provides monies for improvements enhancing the County infrastructure with funds that would be otherwise unaffordable in the operating budget. It provides a ready source of money for rapid funding of capital improvement projects without increasing ad valorem taxes.

***Reasons given for not extending the tax were:***

- The fact is this is a tax, and with this tax everyone pays 1% more on purchases made within the County. This can have a highly negative impact on the poor and disadvantaged persons living within the County. This tax could cost taxpayers up to \$200 per year. Several people felt residents in the County were already taxed enough.
- On the contrary, removing the tax benefits the economy and provides the opportunity for those dollars used to pay the sales tax to come back to the businesses in the County in the form of additional sales.
- Because several neighboring counties do not have this additional sales tax, some people felt this encourages Charlotte County residents to go out of county to make particularly high dollar purchases and discourages residents from other counties to come to Charlotte County to make those same purchases. If the sales tax in the County were lower, could this attract more people to come to the County to make purchases?
- Does this additional tax factor into a person or family not moving into the County? No one knew of measurement data about the effects of a tax like this on increasing (or decreasing) the population.
- Some participants commented that as the County keeps extending this tax, it becomes more dependent and reliant on those monies coming in. More taxes equal more maintenance—and it increases government overhead. The more money brought in the more waste there is in government.
- One concern voiced was since some of the projects funded are in phases, when a particular phase is completed but the total project has not been funded nor completed residents—at times—have a perception of “sidewalks going nowhere.”
- What is the effect on the economic expenditures if we don't have the tax?

**C. The question was asked of the Assembly participants: *“If the local option sales tax extension is approved by voters, what projects should be funded by the tax revenue collected”?***

A number of suggestions were made:

- All athletic fields should be evaluated (improve Carmelita Park Pop-Warner fields) and monies could be used for necessary improvements.
- Create bike lanes and sidewalks on Olean.
- Existing libraries should be expanded and new ones built where needed—especially in the south county area.
- The Burnt Store Road corridor needs to be finished.
- Hurricane shelters need to be built—especially for persons with special needs—and make them pet friendly.
- Use some of these monies to start the sewer system expansion to help defray some of the costs to the property and homeowners impacted by this.
- Less money should be spent on infrastructure projects and more money spent on marketing of the County. 15% of the tax dollars collected should be used for economic development.



- Infrastructure/Upgrades
  - The Piper Road project should be completed.
  - There should be a beautification project along Route 41.
  - The landscaping of the Gateway areas within the County should be improved.
  - The street lights and sidewalks project south of Port Charlotte Road should be added.
  - Taylor Road from Airport Road to Jones Loop Road should be widened.
- Quality of life
  - The north end of the Peace River bridge on the west side of US 41 should be tied into the park area on the east side of the bridge.
  - There should be a new Library building in the southern part of the County. The existing Punta Gorda Library is too small to meet the demands of its patrons and there is no room for expansion on the current site.
  - The County should extend the bike paths from Punta Gorda over the bridge into Port Charlotte.
  - The County should build additional boat ramps and fishing piers throughout the area.
- Economic Development
  - The County should increase the number of public access to waterways to the Harbor, Gulf, Peace River, and Canals. This can be done by adding boat and kayak ramps.
  - The County should expand the Terminal building at the Airport to accommodate the boarding/departing from larger planes at the Terminal building rather than having passenger board/depart from the tarmac area. This may mean adding a second floor to the Terminal building

- Public Safety
  - The Burnt Store Road Phase II project should be completed.
  - For numerous safety reasons, the Kings Highway road east of 75 to the County line should be widened.
  - Improvements should be made to the evacuation route along Toledo Blade Road to Edgewater Road.
  - More sidewalks should be added throughout the County—particularly in high traffic areas.

## **Special Motion**

At the end of the Plenary Session, there was discussion about whether the County could use monies from the Local Option Sales Tax to assist in funding capital projects of the County School Board. A motion was made by Julie Mathis to research to see if any monies from the Local Option Sales Tax could be used to fund County School Board capital projects, and if they could be used that way, the Assembly was recommending that up to 20% of sales tax money collected from the Local Option Sales Tax Extension should go towards School Board projects. The motion was seconded and carried 35 yes to 23 no.

# Appendices

- 1. Minutes from the Assembly**
- 2. Approved Slides from the Plenary Session**

**Charlotte County American Assembly at The Cultural Center of Charlotte County  
Minutes**

**Wednesday, October 16, 2013**

8:30 AM – Elaine Jones (Public Information Office) introduced Ray Sandrock, County Administrator. Mr. Sandrock spoke about the history and importance of the Assembly process, then introduced the Lead Facilitator. Dr. Bob Peterson, Lead Facilitator, addressed the group regarding the process and agenda for the two days of Assembly. Janette Knowlton spoke briefly about the Sunshine law.

9:10-10:35 AM – Following a 10 minute break, participants and facilitators and scribes (attendees) dispersed into assigned groups and rooms and discussed “What is your vision of Charlotte County in 5 years?”

10:45 AM-12:10 PM - Following a 10 minute break, attendees discussed “Economic Development” in their session rooms.

12:10-12:30 PM - Attendees had a Boxed Lunch, and then returned to session rooms to finish lunch and discuss “Public Safety.”

2:05-3:30 PM - Following a 10 minute break, attendees discussed “Growth Management” in their session rooms.

3:40-5:00 PM - Following a 10 minute break, attendees discussed “Quality of Life” in their session rooms.

**Thursday, October 17, 2013**

8:30-10:00 AM - Attendees reconvened in their session rooms and discussed “Water Quantity and Quality.”

10:15 AM-12:00 PM - Following a 10 minute break, attendees discussed “Local Option Sales Tax Extension” in their session rooms.

12:00-1:30 PM - Attendees had a Boxed Lunch in the banquet room.

1:30 PM - Public Input was taken, there was one speaker for 3 minutes:

1. Dave Kesselring-Mr. Kesselring spoke against the extra percent sales tax as discussed in assembly. He also states he is against the CCU sewer project. Mr. Kesselring speaks regarding the Parkside District project stating that he is against beautifying the Parkside community district. Lastly, he also states that this assembly only represents this assembly not the Charlotte County residents.

2:00-5:55 PM - Attendees gathered in the banquet room and drafted the final policy statement wording, voting on wording for each topic.

Motion by Julie to research that up to 20 % of sales tax money can go to school board projects. Second. 35 yes 23 no

5:55 PM - These minutes were voted on and approved by the participants.

5:55 PM - Adjourn

# 2013 Charlotte Assembly Summary of Citizen Input

## Vision

- Continue to be a retirement community where people can come to live, work and play
- Need to diversify the economic base beyond being a retirement community
- Be a vibrant, diverse, economically healthy, proactive, attractive community where we can enjoy the natural beauty. Today's retirees look for active lifestyles that are more in line with the needs of younger residents.
- Must be business friendly. YES: 68 NO: 9

# Economic Development

## **What should our community brand be?**

- “Where business and leisure go hand in hand.”
- Harbor and beaches, what’s not to like?
- Waterfront community
- Nature lovers’ paradise
- Unique coast

YES: 60 NO 17

- Great place to live, work and play
- Active arts community
- Affordable place to live
- Low crime, safe environment
- Strategic location for economic development supported by air, rail, roads

YES: 69 NO: 8

**What are the best ways to project the brand to future residents, businesses, and visitors?**

- Advertise through all appropriate channels

YES: 71 NO 6

- County needs to get out of the way—too much of a hindrance
- Diversify tax base for more business and commercial growth
- Support agricultural community
- Fewer and simpler regulations with prompt issuance of permits
- Reduce fees
- Make fees and costs predictable and known up front
- Revise SMART Charlotte 2050 and update land use regulations

YES: 68 NO 9

**How can Charlotte County improve our goal of being “Open for Business?”**

- One-stop shopping for permitting
- Stay out of real estate speculation
- Use retention analysis of the businesses that are still here to learn from them in order to improve attraction of new businesses and retain what we have
- Hire ombudsman for problem-solving and act as county liaison for projects/businesses
- Learn from other counties’ best practices

YES: 67 NO:10

**How can Charlotte County improve on our goal of being “open for business?”**

- Get rid of slogan “Open for Business”
- Create customer service standards for government employees
- Train employees in customer service
- Government offices should be open through lunch
- Communicate purpose of government regulations
- Technical training for employees
- County needs to be a help, not a hindrance
- Start with “yes” and not a “no”

YES: 72 NO: 5

- Upon completion of a project have the customer complete an evaluation of the services received from the County.
- In the appraisal system for County employees, evaluate each person’s customer service skills and performance.
- County conduct business-satisfaction survey of all the businesses in the county

YES: 63 NO: 14

## Public Safety

**How can Charlotte County ensure that public safety will remain at a high level of service ( or current level of service), while maintaining economic balance?**

- In general Assembly participants satisfied with current level of public safety services

YES: 59 NO: 18

- Encourage more volunteer training CERT

YES: 60 NO: 17

- Make greater use of volunteers

YES: 62 NO: 16

**What should Charlotte County's role be in minimizing the impact before, during and after natural disasters and security threats? What can be done now to minimize future impacts?**

- Wildfires – prescribed burns—need to educate citizens on the fire-wise communities program
- Funding for special grinding machines and cost effectiveness of prevention vs. inter-county agreements to assist
- Improve communications between agencies if a burn is going to take place.
- Be concerned about fire safety

YES: 50 NO:27

- Evaluate the evacuation routes throughout the County
- Use available technology for alerts to notify public of safety concerns
- Need to carefully consider increasing the number of available emergency shelters.

YES: 58 NO: 19

**What should Charlotte County government's role be in addressing the issue of substance abuse and crime prevention?**

- Educate the elderly on scams etc.
- Expand Neighborhood Watch program
- More education on drug use at all levels—use resource officers to help
- Create effective and structured rehab centers
- Educate individuals on harmful effects of drugs

YES: 47 NO: 25

- Continue current efforts in zoning restrictions for drug clinics.
- Provide higher funding for homeless shelter
- Continue using United Way as conduit for county funding of non-profits (depoliticize the process) and increase funding of United Way

YES: 55 NO: 17

## Growth Management

### **What should the County's philosophy be toward managing growth and development?**

- Encourage growth including re-build and re-development of older areas of County
- Keep it simple and easy to follow

YES: 55 NO: 17

**What changes, if any, are needed to our existing capital infrastructure to accommodate future growth without reducing the quality of life for our existing residents?**

- Piper Rd., Edgewater Rd., Burnt Store Rd., Winchester Rd., improvements must be addressed.

YES 55 no 17

- Continue the extension of road project from South Port Charlotte Blvd. (sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, sewer.)
- Determine where you want commercial development to be and extend water and sewer service.
- Identify Gateway corridors within the county to add infrastructure.

YES: 60 NO: 12

**In what ways, if any, should Charlotte County government be more restrictive than the regulations of other agencies (federal and state)?**

- Not more restrictive

YES: 64 NO: 8

# Quality of Life

**What types of community infrastructure and cultural improvements could we pursue to improve the quality of life for our residents?**

- Continue to develop and pursue County wide cultural initiatives.
- Have county incorporate marketing of all cultural arts as part of county's image/marketing plan.
- Develop an outdoor arts facility through a public/private partnership.
- Utilize Charlotte Harbor and Parkside CRA to expand the arts

YES: 44 NO:26

- Develop Band Shell with private funds
- Make better use of Dial-a-ride and Sunshine car service/transportation and make the service more reliable.
- Explore the opportunity to build a public/private collective entertainment (Unique) Sporting Center/develop softball complex

YES: 51 NO: 19

- Have more attractions for younger people
- Need for less restrictive regulations, fees, permits for special events to encourage them

YES: 58 NO: 12

- Establish an enterprise zone for recreational activities
- Provide more bike path development
- Mixed use planning to encourage walkable communities
- Need rich cultural life
- Expand and improve libraries
- Better marketing of library events/programs

YES: 41 NO:29

**What changes should Charlotte County make to our codes to improve our community image related to architectural design, signage, landscaping and other land development standards?**

- Create stakeholder group to review sign codes
- Maintain landscaping in medians – plan sustainable plantings to avoid re-planting
- Minimum code requirements for landscaping new houses
- Clean up gateways and medians

YES: 51 NO: 19

## Quality and Quantity Of Water

### **How should Charlotte County execute and pay for a sewer system?**

- Prioritize County wide sewer system plan using MSBU, bonding, and partial funding from the 1% sales tax.
- Develop an educational program to educate voters about the benefits.
- Do program now before required to do it
- If we go forward there is potential grant funding for the sewer system. If we have a plan it's easier to apply for grants

YES 48 no 12

**How should Charlotte County work to implement the state recommended goal of 75% reuse of waste water?**

- Look at feasibility of high density use of reused water
- County to pay for reuse water in medians, greens space & commercial usage
- Marketing program for re-use water

YES 42 no 18

## Local Option Sales Tax Option

**How effective was the usage of the current sales tax revenues in meeting citizens' expectations?**

- High number of participants were satisfied because there were tangible projects with accountability
- Provides the broadest tax base and contributed to infrastructure that would not have been built. E.g.-fire station.
- Communicate what projects and status of incomplete project, publish in newspaper in addition to website

YES 52 no 8

- Information on projects needs to be communicated much better by Commissioners and staff
- Education of the population about how the county has received a great return from the 1% sales tax already
- Put signs up that the 1% sales tax is being used for existing and complete projects.
- Need to do a better job communicating with the general public. Especially using non-internet types of communication.
- Need Citizen's Advisory committee early on—not to rubber stamp.
- YES 55 no 4

**PROS:**

- Increase Revenue
  - Opportunity to fund needed items
  - Source of revenue for parks and libraries
  - The broadest tax base
  - Expands tax base due to renters, visitors-do projects with 30% discount
  - Gives county residents the vote to decide
  - Helps drive the budget down
  - Enhances county infrastructure
- YES 51 no8

- Good source of rapid funding for capital improvements
- Ready source of money
- Does not increase ad valorem
- Pays for improvements that are otherwise unaffordable
- Capital projects which are funded contribute to quality of life
- Allows for community input on projects selected for fast-tracking
- Taxes all people equally
- Projects have been well selected
- YES 47 no 12

**CONS**

- Everyone (disadvantaged & wealthy) pays 1% more
- Removing the tax benefits the economy
- Budget is overblown-way overtaxed
- What is the effect on the economic expenditure if we don't have the tax?
- More extended-more dependent
- More money-more waste
- Discourages other county's residents from buying in Charlotte County
- More taxes equal more maintenance
- Lower tax could attract more people?
- It is a tax.
- Cost to taxpayers up to \$200.00 per year
- Perception of sidewalks going nowhere.
- YES 47 no 12

- Taxed enough already
- Government has over-reliance on this tax
- Increases government overhead
- No measurement data about effects on increasing population
- YES 48 no 11

**If tax extended, what projects to fund? (Must be capital projects)**

- Less money spent on infrastructure and more money on marketing 15%-economic development
- Evaluate all athletic fields, improve Carmelita Park Pop-Warner fields: create bike lanes on Olean and sidewalks
- Expand existing libraries and build new ones
- Finish Burnt Store Road corridor
- Build hurricane shelters including special needs and pet friendly
- Fund community infrastructure and cultural improvements under QUALITY OF LIFE
- Start sewer system
- YES 46 no 13

- Infrastructure/Upgrades

- Complete Piper Road
- Beautification of Route 41
- Improve Gateways Landscaping
- Street lights and sidewalks Port Charlotte Road South
- Widen Taylor Road from Airport Road to Jones Loop
- YES 51 no 8

#### Quality of life

- North end of Peace River bridge on west side to tie into park on East side
- Need South County Library
- Expand bike paths from Punta Gorda over the bridge
- Boat ramps, fishing pier
- YES 46 no 13

#### Economic Development

- Promote public access to waterways for the Harbor, Gulf, Peace River, and Canals. Add Boat ramps and kayak ramps
- Airport Terminal Expansion
- YES 43 no 16

## Public Safety

- Burnt Store Phase II
- Kings Highway widening east of 75 to County line.
- Evacuation Route Toledo Blade Road to Edgewater
- More sidewalks
- YES 48 no 9