

Charlotte County update for 10/7/20

Monthly reports paint of picture of service, resilience

By Hector Flores

Communication is key in an organization with more than 1,200 employees serving nearly 190,000 residents. The county uses traditional and social media to share news and information with our stakeholders and multiple internal methods, including emails and an intranet to keep our staff informed.

Another way we communicate with both audiences is our monthly report, which includes one-page summaries highlighting each of our departments' operations. I find it useful in learning details about our organization and changes made to adapt to circumstances, seasons, emergencies and more.

For example, our Utility Department, which serves more than 63,000 people, handled 6,221 phone calls in August. That's more than 38 calls per hour. During the season, the call volume routinely exceeds 7,000. In January, the number was 7,668, nearly 50 calls an hour. To manage that kind of volume and maintain a high level of customer service, Utilities uses tracking software to measure wait times and dropped calls. We also record calls for training and quality control purposes.

Training staff and maintaining a culture of delivering exceptional service are a vital part of every manager's job. In another department report, Human Resources noted that more than 40 county employees retired this past fiscal year and an equal number entered the Florida Retirement System's program for employees who plan to retire in the next five years. Over a five-year period, that's about 200 employees we need to replace, train and put in the field. That's just retirees. They account for only 10% of "separations," a category that includes resignations and terminations.

Our Community Development Department earned a Digital Counties Survey award from the Center for Digital Government and the National Association of Counties for its use of technology in communications and operations. The survey identifies the best county technology practices, including initiatives that streamline government services, encourage collaboration and shared services, enhance cybersecurity and contribute to disaster response and recovery efforts. Among the initiatives adopted by the department is online permitting, which has been critical to keeping the construction industry going during the pandemic, and web-based surveys to gather public input on modifications to everything from our sign code to development regulations to comprehensive planning.

The data in the monthly reports paints a picture of resiliency for our county during the pandemic. For example, single-family home permits hit 225 in August. That compares favorably to the 226 issued in December 2019 and exceeds the 183 issued in January. Tourism development taxes paid by visitors who rent hotel rooms and short-term rentals were \$339,761 in July, up 44% over July 2019. That's on top of the \$374,896 collected in June, which was up 22% over June 2019. That kind of performance bodes well for the post-COVID world we're all looking forward to so much.

To give people the opportunity to delve into county metrics like the ones I cited above, we have been using the Constant Contact service to email the monthly report to more than 2,000 employees, residents and stakeholders. If you want to receive the report, email Brian.Gleason@CharlotteCountyFL.gov to be added to the distribution list. You can also view the reports on our new website, www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov. Click Administration under Departments and then Publications, or simply search for Monthly Reports.

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