

Charlotte County update for 11/11/20

County thanks voters for sales tax approval

By Hector Flores

I want to thank Charlotte County voters for their resounding approval of the extension of the 1% local option sales tax in the Nov. 3 election. Nearly 68% of voters approved the six-year extension that will fund public safety, school security, road and utility infrastructure and quality of life projects.

The margin of the referendum's passage was nearly 25% higher than in 2014, which sends a strong message that voters trust their local government to deliver on its promise to invest the funds in a timely, efficient and effective way. As we noted in our outreach before the election, 25 of the 26 projects on the 2014 sales tax Tier 1 and Tier 2 project lists have been completed, are under construction or in the design phase. The last one, improvements to Toledo Blade Boulevard in Murdock Village, will be completed by the developers of Arredondo Point under an agreement with the county.

The projects to be funded with the 2020 extension include water quality infrastructure for the county's septic-to-sewer expansion, Phase 2 of the Family Services Center, Edgewater Drive improvements, the county's share of widening Harborview Road, a new fire station in South County and replacement fire stations in El Jobean and east of Punta Gorda, an aircraft firefighting training complex, a new sheriff's office headquarters, 911 call center, training center and District 4 office. Quality of life projects include a new recreation and events center at Port Charlotte Beach Park, new amenities at G.C. Herring Park in Englewood, further improvements to the William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park and additional sidewalks and trails for cyclists and pedestrians. The tax will also fund projects in Punta Gorda, which receives 10% of sales tax revenues.

To learn more about the projects to be funded with the 1% local option sales tax and past projects it has funded, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/salestax.

Veterans Day

Veterans Day is a day of gratitude for the service and sacrifice of those who wore the uniform of our Armed Services. In Charlotte County, it holds special significance because of the large number of veterans and their families who call this home. More than 25,000 county residents have served, including more than 150 county employees.

The County Commission on Tuesday proclaimed November 2020 as Veterans Appreciation Month and also adopted a proclamation designating Nov. 16-21 as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans 2020 Week. County staff have been working closely with organizers of a Nov. 21 concert at Charlotte Sports Park and a parade from Port Charlotte Beach Park to the William R. Gaines Veterans Memorial Park. For information about the week-long schedule of events, visit welcomehomevietnamvets2020.org.

Charlotte County honors veterans throughout the year in a variety of ways. Visitors to county facilities may have noticed Purple Heart parking spaces reserved for combat wounded vets. The County Commission also approved a proclamation declaring Charlotte County a Purple Heart County in remembrance and recognition of medal recipients. The commission also allocated funding to the Vietnam Wall of Southwest Florida in Punta Gorda.

County voters approved sales tax funding that built the Veterans Memorial Park at G.C. Herring Park in Englewood as well as improvements to Gaines Park. Sales tax money also paid for Veterans Boulevard that connects U.S. 41 to Kings Highway.

Our Veteran Services Division puts those gestures into practice by helping eligible veterans and their dependents access benefits to which they are entitled. Certified veteran services officers are available to help veterans and dependents navigate the application process for getting pension, disability, education, funeral, health care, job and survivor benefits. They can also help veterans apply for home loans and life insurance.

To speak to a veteran services officer, call 941-764-5579 for the Port Charlotte office or 941-681-3716 for the Englewood office. The Veteran Services Division offices are located at 1050 Loveland Blvd., in Port Charlotte and 6868 San Casa Drive in Englewood.

Readers may reach Charlotte County Administrator Hector Flores at Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.