

Charlotte County update for 12/2/20

County Facilities Department meeting growing needs

By Anthony Maddox

The Charlotte County Facilities Construction and Maintenance Department is responsible for the erection and the renovation of county buildings, building daily operations, and long-term maintenance of these facilities. The department currently provides these services for more than two million square feet of property and more than 700 acres of park and recreational space. The most recent accomplishment of the department is moving into the design and construction phases on the last two projects on the 2014 sales tax Tier 2 approved list. By 2021, Facilities will have completed 17 sales tax projects on the 2014 approved list with a construction value of \$79 million. This November, Charlotte County citizens approved the extension of the 2020 Sales Tax referendum. This new sales tax yields the potential for Facilities to manage an additional 16 projects with a construction value of \$100 million.

The new sales tax projects will help provide efficient and effective infrastructure to county residents, such as the strategic placement of sheriff's office precincts and fire stations for safety; new and additional amenities to parks and a new recreational facility for better quality of life; along with the expansion of general services to the county with the second phase of the Family Services Center and new South County Annex to match our growing community. Like a duckling, county departments remain steady above the water with the election now behind us, but under the surface Facilities has now started to paddle in high gear preparing for another round of projects.

Facilities must perform a series of actions before starting new projects. As part of the unveiling of the county's project governance program, Facilities has developed a new description of needs form to ensure department needs are not lost in the programming and design of projects. We are also reviewing the project phasing to ensure the appropriate staff are align with the appropriate projects to maximize success. Facilities continue to work with county administration and the various departments to ensure we're meeting not only the citizen's needs, but the department operational needs to deliver exceptional service to the community.

While Facilities pressed forward to provide safeguards to deliver quality projects within approved budgets and timelines, there are other influences that are out of our control. With the change in recent trade policies and COVID-19, material logistics and costs in the construction industry have become unstable at times. Whether it's the sporadic shipment of materials due to factory shutdowns or the increased pricing of lumber and concrete, which causes the fluctuation of project estimates, Facilities must manage these unforeseen conditions while still meeting the building programming needs of the various departments. While some markets and industries have seen an economic downturn, construction has surprisingly maintained an upward trajectory with construction permits and certificate of occupancies soaring in Southwest Florida. With such a strong construction climate, it is an indication that more general contractors may seek private sector versus public sector projects. This effect can also translate to labor shortages, sending highly skilled workers to the highest bidder. Facilities has always sought to establish relationships and trust with local vendors, contractors, and employees to ease the likelihood of

the previous mention scenarios. We are encouraged that we have fostered trust and clarity of scope to provide quality contractors to bid on our projects to meet the county's construction backlog.

Whether meeting the needs of a pandemic or facing a strong economy, Facilities is adequately skilled to meet the needs of the county to provide exceptional service and deliver quality, sound projects for today's and future generations.

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