Digital Communications Report details messaging

By Hector Flores

Charlotte County's Public Information Office published its inaugural Digital Communications Report earlier this month as part of a new strategic communications plan. The report includes metrics on the ways we communicate with residents and stakeholders via our website, social media portals, emergency alerts and television.

Some highlights from the report include analytics from our redesigned website, which was launched in August 2020. In the first full year the website has been active, users viewed 5.45 million pages in 1.9 million sessions. For a community of 186,847 people and nearly 9,700 active businesses, the number of website pageviews shows how critical it is for users seeking information or doing business with the county.

Among the most searched topics were utilities, construction, jobs, permits and libraries. Because the website went live during the pandemic, COVID-19 information was also among the Top 10 topics.

The Charlotte County FL app is another digital resource we offer. The app is free to download to your iPhone or Android device. It enables users to report an issue or ask a question on numerous subjects. You can also submit reports or questions via the website by clicking Contact Us. The top four submission topics were mosquitoes, roads and drainage, illegal dumping and code enforcement. For information, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click I Want Tom, then Register Charlotte County App.

Social media is an increasingly important component of government communications. Our strategy is to reach people how they want to be reached. The report details how the county's 30 social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Nextdoor, LinkedIn and YouTube and TikTok, generated 16 million impressions, which is the number of times county content was delivered to users' feed. Our various accounts have nearly 125,000 followers. We added a social media manager to our PIO staff this year and it has paid immediate dividends. Social media impressions have increased 192% since June 2021.

Our AlertCharlotte emergency notification system enables us to provide residents with critical information quickly in a variety of situations, such as severe weather, road closures, boil water notices, mosquito control spraying schedules, missing persons and evacuations of buildings or neighborhoods. Users receive time-sensitive messages however they specify, such as home, mobile or business phones, email addresses, text messages and more. The system also ties in with the National Weather Service. To register, visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click I Want To, then Sign Up For Alert Charlotte.

Charlotte County makes it easy for residents and stakeholders to stay informed about important decisions being made by their elected and appointed officials. All County Commission meetings and workshops are televised on CC-TV (Comcast channel 20 or 97). The meetings are also streamed live on Facebook and the county website (click CC-TV at the top of the homepage).

Meetings of the Planning and Zoning Board, Board of Zoning Appeals, Construction Industry Licensing Board, Code Enforcement Special Magistrate and Metropolitan Planning Organization are also televised and streamed. A digital archive of meetings is available on the CC-TV page.

The archive allows viewers to click on agenda items to quickly find the video segments in which they are interested.

Dozens of readers who read my recent column about our Monthly Report being available via Constant Contact signed up for the email service. Here's another reminder, just email PublicInformation@CharlotteCountyFL.gov and ask to be added to the distribution list. You can also view past monthly reports on the county website. Visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and enter "monthly report" in the "How may we help you?" search bar.

Local government exists to provide safety, services and infrastructure to its citizens. Communicating with the public about what we do is almost as important as doing it. The Digital Communications Report tells us how well we're doing that. You can see for yourself by visiting www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/pio/digital-report.stml.

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