

## Commission receives sales tax status report

By Hector Flores

At Tuesday's County Commission meeting, Capital Projects Manager Jared Bickham presented an update on 2014 and 2020 1% local option sales tax projects. The local option sales tax was first approved by Charlotte County voters in 1994 and renewed five times since, including last November.

Since it was first approved, the sales tax has generated more than \$500 million to fund investments in parks, recreation centers, libraries, roads, school safety, fire stations, sheriff's offices, the county jail and Justice Center and more. In addition to the 85 projects funded by the tax, another 33 have been funded in the City of Punta Gorda, which receives about 10% of the revenue generated. The 2020 sales tax extension approved by voters in November 2020 will fund another 24 county and 14 city projects.

Bickham reported that 14 of the Tier 1 2014 projects have been completed, including recreation centers at Centennial Park and Ann and Chuck Dever Regional Park, the Mac V. Horton West County Annex, the Family Services Center and the Punta Gorda Charlotte Library. In addition, the widening of Olean Boulevard is nearing completion and the expansion of the Placida boat ramp is under design.

Multi-use paths, sidewalks, trails and crosswalks funded by the 2014 extension are under construction in multiple areas of the county and additional projects are on the 2020 sales tax list. These projects will improve neighborhood walkability and safety and provide routes for cyclists, pedestrians and runners in 18 locations.

Projects to be funded by the 2020 extension include three new or replacement fire stations, an administration and hardened 911 building and a new District 4 facility for the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, a new Port Charlotte Beach Park recreation center, further widening of Edgewater Drive, improvements at G.C. Herring and William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial parks, water quality projects and the county's share of the Florida Department of Transportation's Harborview Road widening.

Work is already underway on the Public Safety Department's airport rescue and firefighting training facility at the Public Safety Complex. The project is expected to be completed in May 2022. The school district has already received its funding for security upgrades. Demolition is nearly complete on the former Family Services Center building to make way for the second phase of the new center.

We are dedicated to delivering on the promises made when voters approved the sales tax and subsequent extensions. The 2020 extension received nearly 68% of the vote in November, with more than 75,000 people voting for it. That represents a tremendous vote of confidence in our ability to executive these investments in the safety and quality of life of our community.

For information about sales tax projects, visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov) and click I Want To and then Project Status Updates under Find.

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