

Many county projects coming online this spring

By Hector Flores

With the first quarter of 2022 already in the books, the calendar is filling up with many ribbon-cuttings for county projects, including two projects funded by the 2014 and 2020 1% percent local option sales tax extensions approved by voters. Look for more information about these events coming soon.

A ribbon-cutting is upcoming for Olean Boulevard in Parkside. The Olean widening is one of the final two projects to be completed with 2014 sales tax funding. The project improves public safety and traffic flow in one of the busiest commercial areas in the county.

The finishing touches are being put on the Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting training facility at the Public Safety Complex west of the Punta Gorda Airport. Funded with 2020 sales taxes and a state grant, the facility will allow Fire & EMS to meet Federal Aviation Administration certification for specialized training for commercial aircraft accident response. The training is in high demand across the country, with few facilities capable of providing it. We have already been approached by numerous fire departments around the country about scheduling training at our new facility.

Three new fire stations will be opening in the coming months. First up will be a replacement Fire Station 10 on Don Pedro Island, where a ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for April 21. Next up will be a replacement Fire Station 2 in Murdock and new Fire Station 5 on Burnt Store Road. Location and design of fire stations are critical to both response times and continuity of operations in the event of severe weather.

You can follow the progress of these and dozens of other projects on the county website. Visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/projects.

Last Saturday morning I participated in the Pedal & Play in Paradise bicycle ride around Punta Gorda and South County. The sidewalks, multi-use paths and bike lanes made for a safe and seamless route. We passed South County Regional Park, Carmalita Park and the Punta Gorda Charlotte Library. So many of the amenities — the tennis and pickleball courts, basketball courts, swimming pool, sports fields, horse arena, picnic pavilions — were being enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Public health and safety are a county government's primary responsibility, but quality of life is high on the list, too. Among the reasons we've been growing so much in recent years is people have discovered that beyond the beautiful weather and natural environment, Charlotte County offers such rich cultural and recreational amenities. It's a testament to both the leadership of this and past county commissions and the generosity of county residents who have voted to invest more than \$450 million in roads, sidewalks, pathways, facilities, parks, recreations centers, libraries, and public safety facilities and more since 1994.

Job Fair

The Charlotte County Human Resources Department in partnership with CareerSource Southwest Florida has scheduled a job fair from 3-7 p.m., Monday, April 11 at the Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, 75 Taylor St. in Punta Gorda.

This is a multi-agency event with employers from Charlotte County Public Works, Utilities, Building Construction Services, Recreation and Pools, Information Technology, Public Safety, Fire & EMS as well as the tax collector, schools and more. Potential on-site interviews and resume assistance will be available.

For information contact Charlotte County Human Resources www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/human-resources. For all jobs available at Charlotte County, visit www.charlottecountyfl.gov/jobs.

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