Facts and figures about Charlotte County

By Hector Flores

Today marks the end of the National Association of Counties' County Government Month. Throughout April, we've been posting facts about the county on our social media channels. For those of you who don't get your county information there, let me share these with you here.

Charlotte County was created on April 23, 1921 when the Gov. Cary Hardee signed legislation dividing DeSoto County into five counties, Charlotte, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee and Highlands.

The county is governed by five commissioners elected countywide from five districts. Five independently elected constitutional officers provide elections, tax collection, property appraisal, law enforcement and court services. An elected school board operates local public schools.

The county employs 1,392 people in full-, part-time and seasonal positions.

The Community Services Department operates four public pools, four public libraries and six recreation centers.

The Public Works Department maintains more than 100 signalized intersections, 52 incident management cameras, 16 microwave detection systems, 60 video vehicle detection systems and 75 miles of buried fiber optic communications infrastructure.

The county has 219 miles of coastline along Charlotte Harbor, the Gulf of Mexico, the Peace and Myakka rivers and numerous bays, inlets, creeks and canals.

The archaeological record of Charlotte Harbor dates back some 3,000 years. The area's first inhabitants were mound builders who constructed numerous shell mounds and established settlements along the harbor.

The Utilities Department provides potable water, wastewater treatment and disposal and reclaimed water for irrigation, serving over 60,000 homes and businesses throughout the county.

Charlotte County Fire & EMS operates from 16 fire stations across the county's 693 square miles, serving a population of about 200,000 residents.

The county has five color-coded evacuation zones, red, orange, yellow, green and purple. The zone in which residents are most frequently ordered to evacuate are the red and orange zones. The learn which zone you live in, visit www.charlottecountyfl.gov/knowyourzone.

The Human Services Department is dedicated to improving the well-being, financial security and critical needs of the community through collaborative partnerships and direct services. The department is made up of four divisions: Intake Services, Veteran Services, Aging & Adult Services and Neighborhood Services.

The Community Development Department issued 3,102 single-family building permits in 2021.

The Public Information Office operates the county television channel, CC-TV, which airs government meetings and original programming on Comcast channel 20 (or 97) and online at www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/pio/cc-tv.

The Purchasing Division has been awarded the national Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award in 17 of the past 18 years.

The Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau reported that approximately 863,000 people visited the county in FY 2021, a 23.4% increase from FY 2020. Visitors spent more than $844 million, support more than 10,000 jobs and generate more than $248 million in wages and salaries.

The Facilities, Construction and Maintenance Department operates and maintains 210 buildings with 2.3 million square feet of space.

The U.S. Census Bureau put the county's official population at 186,847 in the April 2020 Census. That is a 16.8% increase over the April 1, 2010 population of 159,967. In July 2021, the bureau estimated the county population 194,843, a 4.3% increase, the fourth highest rate of growth in the nation. Since July 2021, the county population has likely grown to about 200,000.

The Solid Waste Division has been recognized by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for its efforts in recycling. The county exceeded the state mandated recycling goal of 75% and achieve the highest traditional recycling rate in the state in 2021.

The History Services Division maintains 21 historical markers detailing the sites, facilities, buildings and people who contributed so much to our history. To take a virtual tour of these markers, visit https://tinyurl.com/markertour.

The county recently updated its comprehensive plan, which guides the county's decision-making processes to create a better community and a higher standard of living for citizens. The plan establishes the vision of the citizens about how the county will grow in the future. It contains goals, objectives, and policies that reflect this vision and which guide development and preservation.

The county has nearly 22,000 veterans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Veteran Services office helps veterans and their families receive better access to services free of charge. To learn more about veterans benefits, visit www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/human-services/veteran-services.

Nearly 80,000 of the county's 194,843 residents are over the age of 65. Aging and Adult Services Division staff assist older adults and those caring for them to remain active, safe, independent, and in their own homes by exploring and seeking out goods, services, and in-home support they may need. To learn more about these services, visit www.charlottecountyfl.gov/departments/human-services/aging-and-adult-services.

County voters have approved six 1% local option sales tax referendums since 1994. The sales tax revenue has funded 132 projects valued at more than a half-billion dollars. Projects include roads, sidewalks, parks, recreation centers, pools, libraries, public safety facilities, school safety programs and water quality improvements.

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