

Charlotte County update for 4/29/20

Commission approves sales tax extension project list

By Hector Flores, Charlotte County Administrator

The Charlotte County Commission on Tuesday approved six projects for inclusion on the second tier of the proposed six-year extension of the 1% local option sales tax. The \$41.3 million list of projects will be funded if voters approve the extension in November and revenues exceed projections.

Two weeks ago, the board approved 15 Tier One projects worth \$128,450,000. The next step in the process is for the board to approve ballot language to be sent to the supervisor of elections. That goes to the board in May.

We're thankful to the members of the citizens sales tax focus group who worked so hard to review the project list and provide a recommendation to the commission. The 21-member focus group met 11 times between August 2019 and January 2020, vetted 33 projects and recommended 16 Tier One projects and 16 Tier Two projects.

Charlotte County voters have approved five sales tax referendums since 1994, funding buildings, roads, fire stations, libraries, parks, school safety projects and more. The \$500 million investment in our community has been transformative. The county would not be the same if not for the trust voters put in their local government to fulfill the promise of delivering these projects. In Punta Gorda, which receives about 10% of the revenue, the sales tax has funded \$44.6 million of that total.

In past years, county staff have conducted a series of educational presentations about the project list to homeowner, fraternal and civic groups. With the uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus, social distancing and meeting restrictions may prevent us from doing so for now. We will be developing alternative ways to communicate with voters, including articles like this one, online presentations, virtual town hall meetings, surveys and other methods to ensure voters know what they'll be voting on.

We want to thank you for your past confidence in entrusting the county with this responsibility. If you have opposed the sales tax in the past, I hope seeing the impact it has had on our community convinces you to keep an open mind about this extension.

Below are the projects and prices the commission approved:

Tier One

- School security upgrades – \$5,000,000
- Water quality infrastructure – \$7,000,000
- Family Services Center Phase 2 – \$10,900,000
- Edgewater Drive Phases 3-5 design; Edgewater Drive Phase 4 construction – \$28,500,000
- Harborview Road – \$8,250,000
- Fire Station 17 – \$5,500,000
- Airport Rescue Firefighter training prop Phase 2 – \$5,000,000

- Radio management warehouse – \$750,000
- CCSO administration building/Hardened 911 – \$19 million
- Port Charlotte Beach Complex Recreation Center renovation – \$10 million
- G.C. Herring Park – \$2.5 million
- William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park – \$1.75 million
- Bicycle, pedestrian sidewalks and trails – \$6 million
- Fire Station 6 – \$4.5 million
- Fire Station 3 – \$4.5 million
- CCSO District 4 office and training complex – \$9.3 million

Tier Two

- Water quality projects – \$3 million
- CCSO District 2 office – \$5.6 million
- South County Annex – \$11.2 million
- Edgewater Drive Phase 3 – \$10 million
- Port Charlotte Beach pool – \$4.5 million
- Libraries renovation – \$1 million
- Charlotte Sports Park – \$6 million

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