

By: Joyce Ross
Public Information Office

Charlotte County Government, both officials and employees, spends a great deal of time listening to residents. The Board of County Commissioners has a large number of advisory groups that help to guide their decisions. Citizens come to the microphone at each Board meeting during citizen input to share their concerns. County employees interact with the public across business counters, working out in the field, and at public events. This continuous information flow is a very important part of our daily operations and we can't function effectively without it.

Recognizing the importance of listening to our residents, as well as engaging them in active participation, the County Commission has declared communication as a top priority for themselves and all employees. Over the next year the public will see this continued commitment emerge in a variety of ways.

We have established a number of new activities that will enable the public to participate more effectively in County decision-making. Commissioners will be holding town hall meetings on a recurring basis, where they, and County staff, will be available to answer questions and discuss issues in depth. In the spring we will hold a Commission meeting in the evening. Individual commissioners have also created small discussion groups that will meet regularly. All of these interactive settings will assist the commissioners in making decisions regarding the levels of service the County should provide, what the community is willing to pay for those services, and how to best deliver customer satisfaction.

Internal communication is also being strengthened. The departments within the organization are being realigned to foster a better flow of information and to create more efficiencies. As a first step, support functions, such as purchasing, budget and information technology, have been assigned together under a new Financial Services Division. Accountants and fiscal managers will also be brought together under this division, instead of being spread out over many departments. The Communications & Marketing Department has been placed under the Administrator's Office and will become the County's new Public Information Office. This change will bring all of the County's communications and outreach efforts under centralized oversight, in keeping with its importance to the Commissioners. Over the next year there will also be significant changes made in other County departments with an eye toward greater efficiency and increased communication.

Making Charlotte County a great place to live requires a strong partnership between County employees, elected officials and residents. Communicating effectively is key to making the partnership successful.

How can you be involved in the important decisions being made by your commissioners? You can get tuned into government news in a variety of ways. Subscribe online to Charlotte Alert, our messaging service that delivers newsletters, meeting notices, emergency notifications and other important bulletins directly to your e-mail inbox. Watch Commission meetings and other informative government programming on CCTV-20, the government TV channel. Our website (CharlotteCountyFL.com) is available around the clock for all manner of publications, videos, and e-commerce opportunities and is home to Rumor Central, where you can receive answers to the hot topics of the day. We also have a well-staffed speaker's bureau comprised of County employees who give presentations on dozens of topics to community organizations, schools, and homeowners groups.

Residents who would like to express their concerns directly to their commissioner, and can't attend one of our events in person, can contact the Commission Office. Call 743.1300 or send a message to bcc@CharlotteFL.com.

Joyce Ross manages the County's Public Information Office. She can be reached at 941.743.1316 or Joyce.Ross@CharlotteFL.com.