

Administrator's Update for 10/21/15

Budget approval not the end of strategic plan

By Gordon Burger, Charlotte County Budget Director

On Sept. 24 the Charlotte County Board of Commissioners adopted the 2015/16 budget which went into effect on Oct. 1. However, the budget process is not over, in fact some of the most difficult work will occur over the next six months.

Here in Charlotte County, we have integrated our strategic planning into the budget process that began in February of 2015 when the board held workshops to establish their goals for the next two years. Going into those workshops the board had data from citizen surveys, employee surveys and input from subject area experts from each of their nine strategic focus areas

- Water Resources
- Efficient & Effective Government
- Quality of Life
- Fiscal / Financial Planning
- Growth Management
- Public Safety
- Economic Development
- Human Services
- Infrastructure

Armed with this data the board first developed a set of priorities which then served as filters for selecting specific initiatives over the next two years. These priorities were:

- Encouraging economic and demographic diversification
- Building consensus on community identity
- Improving community attractiveness
- Ensuring the county has a competitive infrastructure

The commissioners used these priorities as guidelines for evaluating and establishing specific goals. In all the board established 59 unique goals to be addressed over the next two years. A complete copy of the Strategic Plan for 2016-2018 can be found on the county's website (www.charlottecountyfl.gov) under the "Transparency" tab.

One of the most ambitious goals was the development of a comprehensive capital development and maintenance plan for the next 20 years, including roads, bridges, waterways, utilities, facilities and parks. A preliminary list indicates more than a billion dollars of unfunded needs, with the most urgent projects being the completion of Burnt Store Road, the expansion of the Justice Center and the construction of the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office District 4 substation. In addition to these unfunded expansionary projects the county has an overwhelming inventory of capital assets that need to be maintained on an on-going basis.

Miles of road	2,200
County street lights	1,800
Traffic / street signs	85,000
Bridges	138
Miles of canal	168
Miles of sewer lines	923
Miles of water lines	1,345
Lift stations	310
Number of Buildings	115
Square feet of space	1,698,319
Number of Parks	79
Number of Sports Fields	44
Acres of preserved land	2,500
Acres of parks	2,400
Piers, decks & boardwalks (sq ft)	85,000

Over the next six months the board will conduct a series of workshops to address capital needs in three phases. In the first phase (October through January) the board will review and update capital policy and prioritize projects. Phase two (January through March) will involve developing funding scenarios and options. The outcome of the final phase in April will be a road map of decision points and the applicable years.

We are very proud of the amount of effort and thought that goes into the development of the board's strategic plan but developing a strategic plan is just the beginning. We are just as proud of the accomplishments that resulted from the work on the last two-year plan. That progress can also be seen on-line in a document labeled "Focus Areas Update 2013-15."

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