

## **Commission workshop to focus on capital needs**

By Hector Flores

On Tuesday, the County Commission will hold a workshop to discuss the county's 20-year capital needs assessment, the Utilities Department's 20-year capital needs assessment, and the capital improvement policy. The discussion is a key element of the county strategic plan and helps determine budget priorities in the near-term and long-term.

At this point in the county two-year budget process, departments will review projects in a six-year window and identify new projects to be included in the 20-year CNA. A critical part of this effort includes identifying changes in project costs, which has been a challenge in recent years due to inflation and higher bids from vendors who have other job opportunities performing hurricane recovery work in the private sector.

Projects in the capital needs assessment include fire stations, sheriff's offices, staff offices, operations facilities, park improvements, building replacements, warehouses, roads, sidewalks, water and sewer treatment plants, pipelines, technology and more. As our county grows, so does the demand for new facilities to serve our residents.

Funding for the projects comes from a variety of sources, including property taxes, sales taxes, and state and federal funding. The 1% local option sales tax has been a critical source of funding since it was first approved in 1994 to build the Charlotte County Justice Center and the new jail on Airport Road. Voters have approved extensions of the sales tax five times since then and have funded or will be funding 97 county projects. The City of Punta Gorda funded more than 40 projects with its share of the tax revenue.

The CNA review is an important part of the county's selection of projects to be funded by a sales tax extension in 2026, if approved by voters. Once a draft list is created, a focus group of citizens will review the projects and make a recommendation to the commission on which should be included in the referendum.

The workshop is scheduled for 9 a.m., Feb. 18. If you can't attend, you can watch it on CC-TV, the county's local government television channel (Comcast 20) or on the county website at [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/cctv](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/cctv). The workshop will also be livestreamed on the county's Facebook page at [www.Facebook.com/CharlotteCountyFlorida](https://www.Facebook.com/CharlotteCountyFlorida). The recording of the workshop will be available for viewing on the CC-TV webpage the next day and on Facebook shortly after the meeting ends.

### **Water plan**

Also on the topic of strategic planning, Charlotte County has scheduled a public meeting for public input and discussion about the draft One Charlotte, One Water plan at 5 p.m., Feb. 20, 2025 at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, 75 Taylor St., in Punta Gorda.

Learn about the background and purpose of the plan, proposed activities for water protection and improvement, and next steps in the process. Bring your questions and insights into how we can work for and with you to protect our waters now and into the future.

For more information about the One Charlotte, One Water plan, visit [www.charlottecountyfl.gov/one-charlotte-one-water](http://www.charlottecountyfl.gov/one-charlotte-one-water).

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