

Commission to hold ribbon-cuttings at Babcock Ranch

By Hector Flores

The Charlotte County Commission has scheduled a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Fire Station 9 and Charlotte County Sheriff's Office District 5 facilities for 10 a.m., May 6 at 17755 Curry Preserve Drive in Babcock Ranch. Tours of the new buildings will be conducted as part of the ceremony. The public is invited to attend.

The two facilities are the first of several fire and sheriff's office buildings to be built at Babcock Ranch as it grows. The community's population is expected to grow from 10,790 people today to 22,862 by 2030 and 33,642 in 10 years.

The new District 5 Sheriff's Office replaces a temporary modular facility the CCSO has been using. The three-bay Fire Station 9 replaces the existing station on State Road 31. The station will get a new ladder truck that was purchased by Babcock Ranch. Fire & EMS personnel will participate in a push-in ceremony after the ribbon-cutting program to mark the ladder truck's entry into service.

Event seating will be next to the District 5 facility and parking will be in the Station 9 and District 5 parking lots. To reach the event,

- take Interstate 75 south to Exit 143 (Bayshore Road)
- turn left onto Bayshore Road (east), proceed approximately 4 miles to the red light
- turn left onto State Road 31 (Babcock Ranch Road)
- turn right at traffic signal onto Cypress Parkway
- at the traffic circle, take the first exit (right) onto Curry Preserve Drive
- Station 9 and District 5 facilities are on your left, parking is available in both lots

Another ceremonial event will be set for the near future for a ribbon-cutting at the CCSO's District 4 training and K9 facility on Airport Road east of Punta Gorda. The parcel used to house the county jail and Charlotte County Transit offices. The project was funded by the local option sales tax, which was approved by voters in November 2020.

The facility features hurricane-hardened construction, which is in keeping with the county's efforts to improve its resiliency in the expectation it will face future storm events. It will be the second 2020 sales tax project to come online since the referendum passed.

Charlotte County voters have approved six local option sales tax referendums since 1994. These revenue generated (more than \$600,000,000) has provided funding for more than 150 city and county projects. Utilizing sales tax funds spreads the cost of these projects among residents, seasonal visitors and tourists.

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