

State budget includes funding for county projects

By Hector Flores

The state budget Gov. Ron DeSantis signed recently included a number of allocations for Charlotte County projects and those of our regional partners.

The Ackerman wastewater project received \$2 million. Ackerman is the third phase of the County Commission's septic-to-sewer master plan. When completed, it will replace 1,300 aging septic systems.

The county's flood monitoring and response network project received \$2.5 million. This project, conceived by Water Quality Manager Brandon Moody, will install remote sensors to monitor, measure and transmit real-time data on water levels in key tidal areas like the Myakka River, Charlotte Harbor and Lemon Bay. The project will enable the county to track exactly how much water is coming in and how fast it's moving.

The South Gulf Cove lock tender house project received \$6.1 million. The tender house will replace the temporary facility currently staffed by the Public Works Department. The new tender house would enable staff to better monitor the existing lock and a proposed parallel lock if that project moves forward. The new tender house would also improve visibility for spotting manatees in an around the lock area, where they are at risk for getting injured or killed.

Two intersection hardening projects received \$2.5 million. The new traffic signals at Education Way and Murdock Circle and Education Way and Cochran Boulevard will improve the resiliency of the road network in an extremely busy part of the county that is home to two schools, a technical college, the school district headquarters and the county administration center.

The budget includes \$825,000 for a high-water rescue vehicle for the Public Safety Department. The rescue vehicle will improve the county's ability to reach residents in flooded areas. The storm surge caused by hurricanes Helene and Milton highlighted the need for equipment that can operate before storm water recedes. This vehicle will also serve as brush truck to allow more resources to help during our busy brush fire season.

The Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority, which provides most of Charlotte County's drinking water, received \$7 million for its surface water expansion project, which will add a new intake valve on the Peace River and construct a new 9 billion gallon reservoir. The water authority also received \$3 million for its regional transmission system expansion.

I want to extend my appreciation to Sen. Ben Albritton, who serves as Senate president, Rep. Vanessa Oliver, who represents part of the county in District 76, and Rep. Danny Nix, who serves part of the county in District 75. We're grateful for their strong support of the county's legislative agenda.

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