

County budget hearings scheduled in September

By Hector Flores

September marks the end of the county's annual budget process, with two public hearings scheduled for 5:01 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 4 and Tuesday, Sept. 23 at the Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center at 75 Taylor St. in Punta Gorda. The hearings are open to the public and input is welcome.

At these hearings, the County Commission will be presented with the final proposed budget and set final ad valorem millage rates and taxing district rates that will determine property taxes. Included in the budget are assessments for municipal services benefit units and taxing units that fund services, such as road and canal maintenance, fire/rescue, law enforcement and corrections, garbage and recycling collection and beach renourishment.

I am very proud of the work that went into preparing this budget and the programs and services it will fund. Coming off the two hurricanes we endured in 2024, the budget includes numerous recovery projects and programs, including staff who will be dedicated to a new recovery and resilience program launched last year. The complexity of the budget has been magnified by uncertainty around hurricane damage reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and our insurance carrier. But the board's foresight in creating a fiscal stabilization fund and hurricane fund has allowed us to develop and fiscally sound and conservative budget.

As you view the preliminary tax notice you recently received, you'll see numerous agencies and districts that your tax dollars fund. The dollar bill graphic included shows where your tax dollars go. We distributed it at recent MSBU/TU hearings and the preliminary budget hearing in July and it will be available at next month's budget hearings.

The graphic shows that out of every tax dollar you pay, the county gets \$18.44 for its general fund. Of that dollar, \$41.55 cents goes to Charlotte County Public Schools and \$31.04 cents goes to the Charlotte County Sheriff. The remainder of the money goes to the constitutional officers (tax collector, property appraiser, clerk of the circuit court and supervisor of elections), the countywide street lighting district, the voter-approved Environmentally Sensitive Lands fund, the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the West Coast Inland Navigation District.

Keep in mind, the school district is a separate constitutional entity with its own taxing authority. In other states, from which many of our residents migrated, local government budgets include school funding and the school board oversees curriculum and school operations. The Charlotte County School Board, which is an elected body, has scheduled its final public budget hearing for 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2025 at the district headquarters at 1445 Education Way in Port Charlotte.

The County Commission budget hearings will be videotaped and broadcast on CC-TV after the recording is processed for replay. The hearings will not be shown live on CC-TV or our social media portals.

Readers may reach Charlotte County Administrator Hector Flores at Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.