

Quality sports facilities crucial to county's economy

By Hector Flores

The County Commission held a workshop Oct. 21 covering levels of service at our parks and sports fields. One item on the agenda related to our continued support of the annual Snowbird Baseball Classic. The BCC on Tuesday approved a grant application for the Florida Sports Foundation in the amount of \$25,000 that will help offset a portion of expenses related to putting on the event. The county has been receiving FSF grants for more than 10 years, and the games are played on our NCAA regulation fields at Centennial Park.

This event generates significant economic impact for the county. In 2025, the games brought in 500 out-of-state participants who stayed a total of 2,906 room nights and generated an out-of-state economic impact of \$3.6 million. The number of teams participating this year was considerably lower than in past years due to uncertainty about the event following a change in ownership. Next year's event is scheduled for Feb. 18 through March 27 and we look forward to welcoming the teams and visitors back to our area.

In a column earlier this year, Tourism Director Sean Doherty reported that in fiscal year 2024, the Punta Gorda/Englewood Beach Visitor & Convention Bureau was instrumental in recruiting or supporting more than 60 events spanning a variety of sports including baseball, softball, basketball, BMX, swimming and pickleball to name a few.

These events generated more than \$51 million in economic impact and produced more than 36,000 hotel room nights. Visitors to Charlotte County in fiscal year 2024 saved local residents an average of \$1,078 per household in taxes. Kudos to our Tourist Development team for their work in bringing such events to our area and our Community Services team for maintaining our facility at such a high level

During its discussion of levels of service for parks and sports fields, commissioners concurred that dropping levels of service would not only impact local athletes, but endanger our recruitment efforts to continue to attract these impactful events to the county.

MSBU/TU Info

Property owners in Municipal Service Benefit Units and Municipal Service Taxing Units can sign up for informational emails about their units. Emails will contain information about advisory board meetings, meeting minutes, annual reports, work programs and more.

To sign up to receive emails, visit the MSBU/TU page on the county website at www.charlottecountyfl.gov/msbu-mstu and click on the MSBU or MSTU to which you belong, then click the Sign Up For MSBU Notifications button. For information, call 941-575-3600.

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