

County implements department transitions focused on people

Hector Flores

The County Commission approved three changes to how the county is organized on Tuesday.

The first change was to break out the Office of Emergency Management into its own department. Previously it was a division within the Public Safety Department. The division has grown in scope and complexity, particularly in light of increased storm activity, disaster recovery demands, and intergovernmental coordination requirements. Elevating Emergency Management will enhance organizational focus, improve preparedness and response capabilities, and ensure dedicated leadership attention to mitigation, response, recovery, and resilience efforts.

Emergency Management Director Patrick Fuller will continue to lead the newly created department. The Marine veteran previously served as regional coordinator for the Florida Division of Emergency Management. He is a Florida Professional Emergency Manager, a Florida Certified Public Manager, and holds a FEMA Advanced Professional Series certificate.

Matthew McElroy was named Public Safety Department director and fire chief, removing his acting designation. Since assuming the acting role in October, Chief McElroy has demonstrated consistent leadership, operational stability, and strategic vision across Fire & EMS and Public Safety functions. Formalizing this appointment will provide continuity of leadership, reinforce accountability, and support long-term planning within one of the county's most critical service areas.

Chief McElroy served our country as a Navy corpsman in the Marines. He joined the county in 2002 and rose through the Fire & EMS ranks, serving on the special operations and marine operations teams. He was promoted to lieutenant, then battalion chief and deputy chief.

The former Human Resources Department has been renamed as People Operations, a strategic shift designed to strengthen how we support employees, leaders, and departments across the organization. This model enhances partnerships, responsiveness, and consistency by aligning People Operations professionals directly with departments while maintaining centralized expertise in key functional areas, which enhances the employee experience from hire to retire.

Lastly, Charlotte County Transit Division has been moved to the Human Services Department to more closely align it with that department's mission to empower individuals and families to achieve stability by connecting them with vital programs and services. The door-to-door service provided by Transit provides free rides to patrons who don't own vehicles or choose not to drive.

Tax reform

At its workshop this Tuesday, the County Commission will be briefed on the current status of potential property tax reforms currently being discussed by the Florida Legislature and governor. The board will discuss possible impacts on county funding, programs and services if reforms are put on the November 2026 ballot and approved by voters.

Other topics to be discussed include the county's Animal Welfare League contract for sheltering stray pets and a proposed Public Safety Academy for training firefighters and paramedics to meet growing staffing needs.

The academy would help the county meet staffing needs that have become an issue throughout the state. It would grow a "homegrown" candidate pool, reduce travel and scheduling barriers and create a predictable pathway from hiring to future advancement and training. It would also shorten the timeline to fill vacancies and standardize recruit onboarding and field readiness.

The workshop is open to the public and will be streamed live on the county television channel, CC-TV (Comcast channel 20) and on our Facebook and YouTube pages. It will also be livestreamed on the county Roku channel.

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