

FEMA releases additional recovery funding to county

Hector Flores

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is releasing an additional \$7.3 million to Charlotte County in response to Sen. Ashley Moody's meeting with Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem. This is in addition to the \$2.8 million announced on Monday and the \$37 million announced last month.

Thank you to Sen. Moody for her diligent effort to secure this recovery funding and her pledge to continue to push for the release of additional funding the county has applied for.

The new funds will go towards two hurricane safe rooms and generators. One will be built at the Public Safety Complex on Airport Road. The 39,720 square feet safe room will be designed and constructed to provide protection against 200 mph winds. The facility will accommodate 1,655 essential staff during a disaster. The other will be 48,000 square feet and accommodate 2,000 vulnerable residents and will be built at Bissett Park south of Punta Gorda.

The money will fund early management costs including surveying, engineering, design, plans preparation, permitting, and bidding for the proposed project. The county will continue to seek additional funding for the construction phases of the projects.

School zone cameras

Charlotte County is implementing school zone speed enforcement cameras to enhance safety. The first phase of the program went live on Feb. 27. During a 30-day warning period, violators will receive a warning notice by mail if they are caught speeding.

Starting April 1, citations will be issued. If a vehicle is detected exceeding the speed limit by more than 10 mph, the registered owner will receive a notice of violation with a fine of \$100 approximately three days after the violation occurred. For example, if you are driving 31 mph in a 20-mph school zone, you will be cited.

Each violation will be recorded by the camera system. Before any citation is issued, a law enforcement officer or traffic infraction enforcement officer will carefully review the violation.

If you receive a violation notice you have three options: Pay the violation, submit an affidavit explaining an exception to liability under Florida State Statute 316.1896(8) or request a hearing before the code enforcement special magistrate.

Cameras are installed in school zones of nine Charlotte County schools in the first phase: Lemon Bay and Port Charlotte high schools, Port Charlotte, L.A. Ainger and Murdock middle schools and Peace River, Neil Armstrong, Liberty and Deep Creek elementary schools Middle

School.

Cameras will only operate on school days. They will be active 30 minutes before arriving at a regularly scheduled breakfast program to 30 minutes after the start of the school day and 30 minutes before and after school ends. Times will be posted in each school zone, specific to that school's schedule.

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