

New year dawns with optimism, momentum

By Hector Flores

As the new year dawns, I want to extend to members of our community my best wishes for good health and prosperity.

We have good reason to be optimistic for what the new year brings. Our economic outlook is strong, with new businesses opening in the hospitality, retail, distribution, manufacturing, housing and aviation sectors. A newly adopted land use policy will be bringing redevelopment to the Port Charlotte Town Center in Murdock. West Port and Babcock Ranch are booming. Tourism continues to rebound from the COVID-19 slump.

On the government side, we're opening Phase 2 of the Family Services Center in Port Charlotte. Design will begin this year on a new fire station serving South County and two replacement stations in El Jobean and South County. The Airport Rescue and Firefighting training facility at the Public Safety Complex is attracting city and county fire department personnel from around the country. All five projects are fully or partially funded with revenue from the 2020 1% local option sales tax.

The Tampa Bay Rays will kick off their spring training at Charlotte Sports Park in February after devastating Hurricane Ian damage prevented them from training here in 2023. The One Water, One Charlotte water quality plan will be completed. See below for more information.

It will be a busy year for us and I am confident my colleagues will do their best to continue to deliver exceptional service to the community.

Water survey

Charlotte County is conducting a survey in preparation for the upcoming One Charlotte, One Water Town Hall. To participate in the online survey, visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/OneCharlotteOneWater. The survey closes Friday, Jan. 19, 2024.

The Town Hall is scheduled for 9 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 31 at the [Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center](#), 75 Taylor St., Punta Gorda, FL 33950. County staff will present an overview of the past, present and future of water management.

Staff will provide information on a variety of topics, including:

- Our Water Story — A brief history of water in Charlotte County
- Water Quality — What we know, what we're learning, and what we plan to do next
- Storm Water Management — Where does stormwater go, how do we manage it, and possible changes on the horizon

- Drinking Water Management — The story of your drinking water, from source to tap, wastewater treatment and disposal, and the future of water availability
- Water Policy and Planning — The intersection of comprehensive planning and water, and how the county is identifying vulnerabilities to flooding and sea-level rise
- Education and Outreach — Opportunities for you to learn more and get involved
- Tying it All Together — A preview of the One Charlotte, One Water Plan

Throughout the Town Hall, participants will have opportunities to provide feedback on the county's water activities and direction of the One Charlotte, One Water Plan. If you have any questions about this event, please contact Brandon.Moody@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.

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