

Final Public Budget Hearing Set for Sept. 23

By Hector Flores

The final public budget hearing is scheduled for 5:01 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 23 at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, 75 Taylor St. in Punta Gorda. The meeting is open to the public and input is welcome.

The hearing marks the end of our two-year budget process that included numerous workshops and meetings where the County Commission revisited its strategic plan, reviewed its capital projects list and timetable, added staff in critical areas and placed an emphasis on resiliency in the wake of two damaging hurricanes last fall.

The board revised their bold goals by adding a new one, to strengthen the resiliency and recovery capacity of the county. The county created three working groups to address environmental, infrastructure and financial resiliency and recovery. Among the new positions approved by the board were recovery project managers in key departments. Two additional working groups are addressing human and economic and business resiliency and recovery in the community.

The board also added two additional bold goals in its economic and community development focus area. The first one is to increase opportunities for industrial development in Charlotte County while balancing open space. The second one is to position Charlotte County as a hub for skilled professionals by expanding high-wage jobs in target industries, increasing workforce housing, and leveraging economic incentives for growth.

The strategy to achieve those goals is to identify the type of industries to target and where in the county they could be steered through zoning changes. A forecasting consultant the county retained found that by 2030, the county could support an additional 1.3 million square feet or 184 acres of industrial development. The county is already a hub for aeronautic companies and the school district has a robust curriculum and facilities to train the next generation of aeronautical workers.

Two more new bold goals are to manage and communicate the complexities of a changing organization and the provision of public services. The Human Resources Department implemented a new appraisal process this year to focus employees on the county's mission vision and values and allow them to perform a self-evaluation managers used in performing their appraisals. The Communications Department is creating an information-sharing project to better inform property owners in taxing units around the county using an email distribution product people can opt into to receive messages.

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

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