



**2026 Sales Tax Focus Group
Charlotte County Administration Center, Room B-106
18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte, FL 33948
3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
March 12, 2026**

Members Present: Donna Barrett, Gary Bayne, Bob White, Steve Vieira, Larry Yerger, Mark Vianello, and Sean McLaughlin.

Members Excused: Eric Axelson, Cindy Marsh-Tichy, Kathi Obendorfer, and Ray Laroche. Unexcused: Lucienne Pears.

Others Present: Claire Jubb, Assistant County Administrator, Tommy Scott, Director of Community Services, Travis Perdue, Director of Facility Management, John Elias, Public Works Director, Pam Kirchner, Financial Manager, Kim Phillips, Financial Analyst, Francine Lisby, Assistant Budget Director, Denise Kolarski, Senior Financial Analyst, and Chief Matthew McElroy.

Welcome: Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator, opened the meeting at 3 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance. Ms. Lewis informed those members missing from the last meeting that their scores were being tabulated and will be presented in the recalibrated scoring sheet for today's ranking. Ms. Lewis reminded the Focus Group Members and Citizens to please sign their names on the Sign-In sheets.

Approval of February 19, 2026, Minutes:

MOTION WAS MADE BY SEAN MCLAUGHLIN, SECONDED BY STEVE VIEIRA TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 19, 2026, MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED 7:0 UNANIMOUSLY.

Public Comment: Ms. Lewis opened the floor for Public Comment on Agenda items only. Out of the six citizens who attended, two spoke to the committee. Jack Vanderheyden inquired why there are no options for two- or four-year Sales Tax extensions or why has not half a percentage been considered? He added that he was not in favor of the eight- or ten-year extensions and asked when will the results of this recommendation be made public? Richard Van Ackerman spoke against the Myakka Park project saying there are many negative issues about this location and that there are other park amenities close by that could be used by the Public instead of investing tax dollars at this park.

Note: Gary Butler arrived at 3:08 p.m.

Final Review and Ranking of Projects: Ms. Lewis reviewed today's Agenda for completing Tier 1 and Tier 2 for eight- and ten-year Sales Tax terms. She also spoke about the progress of the Focus Group from the meeting in February. She stated that The Focus Group completed the Six-year ranking of projects for Tier 1 and Tier Two, however the Focus Group did not finalize the Six-year ranking and had not voted to adopt a final list. Ms. Lewis informed the group that if there were any questions, concerns or if the group wanted to open the discussion again, it was their decision to do so.

Member Donna Barrett brought up a concern that there are no West County projects under the six-term stating that there are several worthwhile projects to discuss. She also reminded the Focus Group to remember who will eventually be voting for these projects. Ms. Barrett felt that Fire Station 19 would be vital to add to Tier 1 for West County due to its ability to provide rescue operations on the water. Ms. Barrett continued by informing the group that upon doing some research she found that 50 counties in Florida have Sales Tax where they designate half a percentage to infrastructure, they do not do project specific. Ms. Barrett mentioned her concern about the length of the two different extensions that might limit the county should a needed project arise to the forefront in 2-4 years. Ms. Barrett continued with her concern about the Cultural Center cost. Knowing its importance to the community, she asked if the cost could be split. Ms. Lewis responded that the concern about West County projects was valid and warrants some additional conversation from this committee even though it was touched upon at the last meeting. Travis Perdue, Facilities Management Director, spoke about phasing the Cultural Center Project. During a recent presentation to the Board of County Commissioners, (BCC) the Master Plan for the Cultural Center, Library and Theater (conceptually) does allow for phasing. It would be up to the BCC to decide what order that would be. The Master Plan was developed to be phased and not required to do everything at one time. Ms. Barrett mentioned her concern about the cost of the Cultural Center project, and should that cost be cut in half, the Bissett Park Phase 3, (which provides a needed Hurricane Shelter), could be moved into Tier 1.

Member Yerger spoke about how he viewed the projects stating his process in ranking projects was based upon the benefit of Charlotte County as a whole. He further stated that according to the BCC directive we should consider every part of Charlotte County. Ms. Lewis replied that yes, the BCC was looking for geographic diversity. Member Yerger stated that the amount of park projects was abundant and considered the needs of the Fire Department and the Sheriff to be more important. Mr. Perdue responded by saying everything in our Capital Needs List is a definite need and not a want. All the projects are backed by a Master Plan and are needed for the future growth of this community.

Member Steve Vieira spoke about the high price tag of the Cultural Center. He inquired if the money can be allocated initially and dedicated as a whole in the phasing? Ms. Lewis informed the group the BBC typically follows "pay as you go" for projects and do not typically bond sales tax. Member Barrett again addressed the high cost of building and concern about the 10-year plan. Member Gary Butler raised how difficult it would be to dictate what funds we phase, and stated we need to focus on whole projects as that is what the citizens will vote on and not tie the hands of those who make the final building decisions. Mr. Butler also stated we should focus on projects which should get the highest priority and agreed that the Focus Group should look at moving one of the West County Fire Station projects up to Tier 1 projects. Member Butler also commented that many citizens in the community

want to see the Cultural Center resurrected. Member Sean McLaughlin asked for an explanation on how this group was selected. Ms. Lewis explained that first, members were chosen by Districts so there was geographic diversity by their representation. The second group was chosen by industry groups that represented the community at large such as the School District and the different Chambers. Member McLaughlin stated he understood then that he should be judging the projects from the perspective of the group he represents. Member Yerger agreed that the entire county should be represented and that while initially the cost was not important in his decision making, we should not be micromanaging the projects but choosing which is most beneficial for the County. Ms. Lewis stated that why everyone was chosen was to provide for diversity of thought and opinions for a great outcome. She encouraged everyone to vote for what you are representing and make the best recommendations to the BCC.

Note: Denise Kolerski, Senior Financial Analyst presented the updated raw scores stating that the Public Safety Academy score increased and Taylor Road decreased. Ms. Lewis read the raw scores for the projects for the 6-year term Tier 1 and Tier 2 into the record. Member Barrett ask for an explanation about the "filler project", Bicycle, Pedestrian Trails and Sidewalks projects. Ms. Lewis explained that historically this project was used to fund odd amounts of remaining available funds in that Tier. Member Barrett asked if this was something to be voted upon. Ms. Lewis replied that it does if it is moved into a Tier 1 or 2 ranking but the entire amount does not need to move. The Master Plan in this category has several projects that can be chosen to be funded from odd amounts to fill a Tier. Member Yerger asked to have the new scores sorted to reflect the actual ranking of scores. Ms. Lewis complimented the Fiscal Team skills in managing the tracking of scores of these Capital Projects to support this Focus Group. (See Attachment A).

Member Barrett spoke about the history of how the County acquired the Cultural Center property and building and commented on how the new price tag to restore it with taxpayer dollars was difficult to accept. In the 2020 Sales Tax review the amount asked for was \$9.75 million, this newer request is a huge increase. Member Yerger asked if we could scale back the Cultural Center. Member Barrett commented on how other places and organizations in the county have stepped up to provide amenities that used to happen at the Cultural Center. Ms. Barrett stated the price tag of \$60 million for something not yet developed is difficult to recommend and asked about starting smaller. Ms. Lewis commented that the Cultural Center replacement in the Capital Needs assessment has been listed at \$50 million for quite some time. The costs include both the Library and the Cultural Center according to Mr. Purdue.

Ms. Lewis asked the Committee for their direction after this discussion. The consensus was to move forward and add a project from West County, specifically a fire station and a shelter. Bissett Park Phase 3 would provide this shelter. Ms. Lewis announced that a grant for design has been awarded by the Hazard Mitigation grant program at the Federal level for Bissett Park Phase 3. It still needs to filter through the State before it is received by the county. Member Vieira asked if the grant gets degraded as it moves through the system and Ms. Lewis replied no, it did not, however it just covers the design. Member Barrett suggested the Focus Group look at Bissett Park Phase 3, Fire Station 19 and Tringali Replacement as projects for West County to add to Tier I. Ms. Lewis requested Mr. Purdue give a breakdown of cost for the individual projects at the Cultural Center. Member Yerger suggested the Parking Garage in Punta Gorda be reconsidered. Discussion followed.

MOTION WAS MADE BY LARRY YERGER TO REMOVE OUR RECOMMENDATION FROM TIER 2 OF THE PUNTA GORDA CONFERENCE CENTER PARKING GARAGE. Motion failed due to lack of a second.

After research, Mr. Purdue stated to build a Library at the Cultural Center location would cost \$25 million if the plan was to phase out the Cultural Center. Member Barrett asked if the Babcock Ranch Community Library and Annex could also be phased. Ms. Lewis responded that the Babcock Ranch project is proposed to be one facility. Member Barrett questioned the cost difference in the 2 different spreadsheets for this project. Discussion followed.

MOTION WAS MADE BY DONNA BARRETT TO MOVE BISSETT PARK PHASE 3 TO TIER I, MOVE FIRE STATION 19 TO TIER I AND MOVE TRINGALI COMMUNITY CENTER REPLACEMENT TO TIER I. Motion failed due to lack of a second.

MOTION MADE BY DONNA BARRETT TO REMOVE THE CULTURAL CENTER FROM THE TIER 1 LIST. SECONDED BY GARY BAYNE. No discussion. **MOTION FAILED 3:5. VOTING NAY:** Larry Yerger, Bob White, Steve Vieira, Mark Vianello, and Gary Butler.

Member Gary Bayne suggested not removing the Cultural Center but scaling it back and leaving it on the list. Ms. Lewis stated something needs to be removed from the Tier I list before adding in the West County projects. Member Butler commented the library portion was most important and other non-profits could step in to provide the services provided by the Cultural Center if needed. Member Barrett said the Cultural Center focus is to be a centralized hub rather than different entities providing services and that is what it is missing. Member White suggested taking the library portion out.

MOTION MADE BY DONNA BARRETT TO CHANGE THE CULTURAL CENTER REPLACEMENT TO CULTURAL CENTER LIBRARY REPLACEMENT FOR \$25 MILLION DOLLARS. SECONDED BY BOB WHITE. Discussion followed by Bob White concerning the value of keeping the Theater and Cultural Center over the Library. Ms. Lewis reminded the group that the Cultural Center Library is at end of life and will be demolished with the demolition of the other Cultural Center buildings. Tommy Scott, Director of Community Services, affirmed that this library is heavily used, especially until the Mid-County Library is reopened. Ms. Lewis stated the demolition of the Cultural Center Library is on hold until the Mid-County Library is reopened. Mr. Purdue stated the BCC has approved the demolishing of the whole site and at some point, the library must be rebuilt. He stated that during the public input process, all three components were included to see what the public wanted the county to focus on. He advised the Focus Group to review the January 27th presentation to the BCC to see more detailed information. A consultant did affirm that that area could use a theater, but the need did not rise as high as the Library and Cultural Center plus adding additional cost. \$25million is a fair estimate to build the Library and the Cultural Center having a similar size and footprint would also cost \$25 million. He advised that there would be economy in cost to build all at once rather than individually. Both members Barrett and Butler commented on the many different venues providing entertainment in the county such as the Military Heritage Museum, CPAC, Visani Comedy Club and others. **MOTION CARRIED 8:0. UNANIMOUSLY.**

MOTION MADE BY BOB WHITE TO MOVE BISSETT PARK PHASE 3 TO TIER I, MOVE FIRE STATION 19 TO TIER I AND MOVE TRINGALI COMMUNITY CENTER REPLACEMENT TO TIER I. MOTION AMENDED BY BOB WHITE TO JUST ADD FIRE STATION 19 TO TIER 1. SECONDED BY LARRY YERGER. No discussion. **MOTION CARRIED. 8:0. UNANIMOUSLY.**

Member Barrett mentioned the importance of an additional shelter in West County and the Tringali Community Center replacement should be considered. Member Yerger asked what type of life expectancy would be expected in the new building. Mr. Scott replied 40-50 years.

MOTION MADE BY STEVE VIEIRA AND SECONDED BY DONNA BARRETT TO MOVE TRINGALI COMMUNITY CENTER REPLACEMENT TO TIER 1. No discussion. **MOTION CARRIED. 8:0. UNANIMOUSLY.**

Member Bob White, referring to the low ranking of the Clerk Record Warehouse replacement, questioned what happens if our county records are destroyed. Ms. Lewis responded by saying that all these projects are in the County's CIP and it would be a BCC discussion and direction to reorganize the priority plan and look for other funding sources to develop this project.

Member Barrett asked for a discussion on Bissett Park Phase 3 since it would contain a shelter. Ms. Lewis suggested an adjustment to the cost of the Babcock Ranch project if it was split between Tier 1 and 2. Member Barrett asked if the Bissett Park project was a mandated project. Ms. Lewis stated no, however, the Bissett Park project may have grant constraints if we don't go forward with construction.

Members Sean McLaughlin and Bayne raised and discussed the issue of removing the utility portion of a road project from the Tier 1 list. Member Bayne indicated the county would not construct a road without adding utilities at the same time. Member Butler mentioned the BBC direction to recommend 50% roads/infrastructure. Claire Jubb, Assistant County Administrator, affirmed that if the county is constructing a road, a way will be found to fund the utility portion, whether from Sales Tax or not. Funding will come from grants, connection fees, rates, or an additional project that goes down the priority list. There are other options, but the staff would have to review how to move forward with funding.

MOTION WAS MADE BY DONNA BARRETT AND SECONDED BY GARY BAYNE TO REMOVE CCU EDGEWATER AND JAIL RENOVATIONS. Discussion followed. Member Yerger asked for an amendment to leave the Jail Renovations. **MEMBER DONNA BARRETT AMENDED THE MOTION TO JUST REMOVE CCU EDGEWATER. GARY BAYNE SECONDED THE AMENDMENT.** No discussion. **MOTION CARRIED. 8:0. UNANIMOUSLY.**

Regarding the Bissett Park project, Member Butler asked can we approve a project that is short of funds and let the County find the funds? Ms. Lewis replied yes. The BCC will go through all the projects and make their own recommendations. Member Vieira asked Mr. Scott how many residents can fit into the shelter. Mr. Scott replied the building is roughly 40,000 square feet so approximately 3,500 people can fit but as the time comes to close the doors we take in whoever comes. Member

Barrett asked how many citizens were housed during Hurricane Ian. Mr. Scott estimated that we housed approximately 5-6,000 citizens in all our facilities during Hurricane Ian. This new Shelter would add 50% more shelter spaces.

MOTION MADE BY GARY BAYNE TO APPROVE THE TIER I LIST – MOTION PULLED.

MOTION WAS MADE BY DONNA BARRETT TO SPLIT BISSETT PARK PHASE 3 COST WITH THE AVAILABLE BALANCE OF \$10 MILLION PLACED IN TIER 1, THE REMAINING COST OF \$18,755,195 PLACED IN TIER 2. (AN UNFUNDED BALANCE OF \$6,344,000 MILLION WILL REMAIN). SECONDED BY STEVE VIERIA. No discussion. MOTION CARRIED. 8:0. UNANIMOUSLY.

MOTION WAS MADE BY LARRY YERGER, SECONDED BY GARY BUTLER TO SUBMIT THIS FINAL 6-YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS OF TIER 1 AND TIER 2 PROJECTS TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS. (see Attachment B). No discussion. MOTION CARRIED. 8:0. UNANIMOUSLY.

Meeting Adjournment:

MOTION TO ADJOURNED MADE BY STEVE VIERIA at 4:20 P.M. The finalized Rankings for the 6-year Project List will be emailed with the Minutes from this meeting. Due to lack of time to finish 8- and ten-year Tier 1 and 2 rankings, an additional meeting was scheduled to discuss project ranking. The final meeting of the 2026 Sales Tax Focus Group will be March 26, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Emily Lewis,
Charlotte County Deputy Administrator

Date Adopted: April 9, 2024

Minutes recorded by Andrea Yerger,
2026 Sales Tax Focus Group Administrative Assistant

ATTACHMENT A

Project	Location	\$ Request	Score	6yr Total	
Public Safety Academy	South County	\$ 11,850,000	53.80	\$ 11,850,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
CCU Edgewater	Mid County	\$ 10,000,000	51.73	\$ 10,000,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
CCU Harborview	Mid County	\$ 16,300,000	51.61	\$ 16,300,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
CCPS Safety	County Wide	\$ 10,000,000	51.36	\$ 10,000,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Harborview Road Widening	Mid County	\$ 52,452,000	50.42	\$ 52,452,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Edgewater/Flamingo Corridor Phase 5	Mid County	\$ 41,040,000	48.74	\$ 41,040,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
CCPS Career and Technical	County Wide	\$ 5,000,000	48.55	\$ 5,000,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Babcock Ranch Community Library and Annex	Babcock Ranch	\$ 25,652,000	48.19	\$ 25,652,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Cultural Center Replacement	Mid County	\$ 60,498,000	48.11	\$ 60,498,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Blissett Park Phase 3	South County	\$ 35,100,000	48.09	\$ 35,100,000	
Fire Station 18 New (Edgewater Dr.)	Mid County	\$ 9,597,000	47.99	\$ 9,597,000	
Fire Station 21 New (Babcock Site 3)	Babcock Ranch	\$ 9,597,000	47.97	\$ 9,597,000	
Fire Station 20 New (Babcock Site 2)	Babcock Ranch	\$ 9,597,000	47.70	\$ 9,597,000	
Fire Station 19 New (Gasparilla Rd.)	West County	\$ 9,597,000	47.64	\$ 9,597,000	
Bicycle, Pedestrian Trails and Sidewalks	County Wide	\$ 7,500,000	47.53	\$ 7,500,000	
Fire Station 4 Replacements	West County	\$ 8,387,000	46.84	\$ 8,387,000	
Mid County Operations Facility	Mid County	\$ 27,060,000	46.10	\$ 27,060,000	
William R. Gaines Veterans Memorial Park (Phase 3)	Mid County	\$ 3,300,000	45.63	\$ 3,300,000	
Centennial Park Phase 2	Mid County	\$ 6,800,000	45.11	\$ 6,800,000	
Charlotte Sports Park Parking Improvements	Mid County	\$ 3,773,000	45.11	\$ 3,773,000	
Tringali Community Center Replacement	West County	\$ 5,600,000	44.41	\$ 5,600,000	
Bissett Park Phase 2	South County	\$ 4,500,000	44.31	\$ 4,500,000	
South Murdock Community Park	Mid County	\$ 12,800,000	44.27	\$ 12,800,000	
G.C. Herring Park Phase 2	West County	\$ 3,850,000	43.49	\$ 3,850,000	
Fire/EMS Vehicle Maintenance Warehouse Expansior	South County	\$ 2,750,000	43.38	\$ 2,750,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Myakka River Park Phase 2	West County	\$ 8,100,000	42.78	\$ 8,100,000	
Centennial Park Recreations Center Renovation	Mid County	\$ 7,300,000	42.74	\$ 7,300,000	
Placida Passive Park	West County	\$ 14,000,000	42.67	\$ 14,000,000	
Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center Parking	Punta Gorda	\$ 3,700,000	42.59	\$ 3,700,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Burnt Store Road Area East/West Connector	Burnt Store	\$ 46,176,000	42.48	\$ 46,176,000	
Maracaibo Kidspace Park	Mid County	\$ 8,800,000	41.71	\$ 8,800,000	
South County Regional Park Recreation Center Renov	South County	\$ 10,800,000	41.66	\$ 10,800,000	
Centennial Park Phase 3	Mid County	\$ 11,600,000	41.56	\$ 11,600,000	
Park Renovations	County Wide	\$ 7,300,000	41.28	\$ 7,300,000	
Taylor Road Widening	South County	\$ 11,296,000	40.05	\$ 11,296,000	
Mid County Annex	Mid County	\$ 42,080,000	39.89	\$ 42,080,000	
Care Expansion / Grace Street Annex	South County	\$ 3,000,000	39.48	\$ 3,000,000	
SO Warehouse Loveland	Mid County	\$ 6,524,000	39.36	\$ 6,524,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
SO Jail Admin. Renovation (with Kitchen & Laundry)	South County	\$ 6,234,000	37.88	\$ 6,234,000	board motioned and approved for Tier
Fleet Management Building	Mid County	\$ 22,675,000	36.36	\$ 22,675,000	
Clerk Records Warehouse Replacement	Mid County	\$ 9,108,000	33.58	\$ 9,108,000	

**Proposed 2026 Sales Tax Project List
With Finalized Rankings for 6 year Extension**

as of 3.12.16

36,000,000 annual collection			
# of years	Tier 1	Tier 2	Total
6	\$ 216,000,000	\$ 36,000,000	252,000,000

Project	Location	\$ Request	Score	6yr Total <i>(cumulative)</i>	2.19 mtg	changes 3.12 mtg
CCPS Safety	County Wide	\$ 10,000,000	51.36	\$ 10,000,000	Approved T1	no change
CCPS Career and Technical	County Wide	\$ 5,000,000	48.55	\$ 15,000,000	Approved T1	no change
CCU Harborview	Mid County	\$ 16,300,000	51.61	\$ 31,300,000	Approved T1	no change
Harborview Road Widening	Mid County	\$ 52,452,000	50.42	\$ 83,752,000	Approved T1	no change
Edgewater/Flamingo Corridor Phase 5	Mid County	\$ 41,040,000	48.74	\$ 124,792,000	Approved T1	no change
Public Safety Academy	South County	\$ 11,850,000	53.80	\$ 136,642,000	Approved T1	no change
Cultural Center Replacement	Mid County	\$ 25,000,000	48.11	\$ 161,642,000	Approved T1	Approved T1 - \$25M library only
SO Jail Admin. Renovation (with Kitchen & Laundry)	South County	\$ 6,234,000	37.88	\$ 167,876,000	Approved T1	no change
Fire/EMS Vehicle Maintenance Warehouse Expansior	South County	\$ 2,750,000	43.38	\$ 170,626,000	Approved T1	no change
Fire Station 19 New (Gasparilla Rd.)	West County	\$ 9,597,000	47.64	\$ 180,223,000	did not rank	Approved T1
Tringali Community Center Replacement	West County	\$ 5,600,000	44.41	\$ 185,823,000	did not rank	Approved T1
Babcock Ranch Community Library and Annex	Babcock Ranch	\$ 9,953,000	48.19	\$ 195,776,000	T2 partial	Approve \$9,953,000 in T1
SO Warehouse Loveland	Mid County	\$ 6,524,000	39.36	\$ 202,300,000	Approved T2	
Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center Parking	Punta Gorda	\$ 3,700,000	42.59	\$ 206,000,000	Approved T2 50%	
Bissett Park Phase 3	South County	\$ 10,000,000	48.09	\$ 216,000,000	Approved T2	Approve \$10m in T1
Babcock Ranch Community Library and Annex	Babcock Ranch	\$ 17,244,805	48.19	\$ 233,244,805	T2 partial	Approve \$17,244,805 in T2
Bissett Park Phase 3	South County	\$ 18,755,195	48.09	\$ 252,000,000	did not rank	Approve \$18,755,195 in T2
CCU Edgewater	Mid County	\$ 10,000,000	51.73	\$ 262,000,000	Approved T1	Remove from the ranking

ATTACHMENT B

Notes:
Ranking Notes from the 2-19-26 meeting and 3-12-26 meeting.

The CCU Edgewater project is in the summary but grayed out so it can be seen that the project was included in the original ranking but not in the final.