



The Clerk's Report

October 2022

What a way to end September! In my 34 years here in Collier County, and almost 40 in Florida, this storm was the worst hit to our coast that I've experienced.

Hurricane Ian wasn't the first to rock our beautiful county. Many of our new residents may not remember that it was just five years ago that Hurricane Irma blew through our community and caused significant damage. And we've seen damage from storms like Hurricane Charlie and Hurricane Andrew. Though we lost power, and our community was challenged, we worked together to rebuild Southwest Florida into the paradise coast that we all know and love.

I want to thank the first responders and essential workers who are working to restore Collier County and Southwest Florida to the vibrant place to live, work and play. The Collier County Sheriff's Office, local Fire Departments, and EMS personnel stood to protect and serve during the crisis. Additionally, I want to thank our medical professionals, business owners, truck drivers, FPL linemen, waste collection professionals and thousands of workers on the front lines that are helping restore power, secure food and gasoline, and the everyday necessities that we take for granted. While many are still in need, we have great teams that have worked through the night to get us back online as quickly as possible.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the many "behind the scenes" workers at Collier County and at the Clerk's office for all that they continue to do for our community. Many may not know that September 30th marks the end of the fiscal year for Florida Counties. Year end is always a very busy time particularly for Clerk's Finance, County departments and the Budget offices as we close one year and open the next October 1. The workload rapidly increased due to the storm, not only did payroll process bank files early to make sure employees received their pay deposits during the storm, but the books were successfully closed, and October 1 opened for business to allow the county to get what will be needed during the cleanup. These workers were here to make sure the processes continued to support our community. A Big thank you to those who put in the hours!

On a more personal note, I want to also thank my neighbors Bob and Jennifer for offering a generator plug in until we were able, with the help of our other neighbors John and Jody, to get our generator working. This is truly what our community is about - neighbors helping neighbors! While we have seen the horrible damage caused by this storm, we have also seen at every turn the immense outpouring of support to help us recover.

Please take care, stay safe and strong! We will get through this together!



Crystal K. Kinzel

Collier County Clerk
of the Circuit Court
and Comptroller

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E-Services: CollierClerk.com



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Courthouse
3315 Tamiami Trail E.
Naples, FL 34112
(239) 252-2646

Satellite Offices
Airport Motor Vehicle
725 Airport Road South
Naples, FL 34104

Eagle Creek
6654 Collier Boulevard
Naples FL 34114

Everglades City Hall
102 Copeland Ave. N.
Everglades City, FL 34139

Golden Gate Gov. Center
4715 Golden Gate Parkway
Naples, FL 34116

Heritage Bay
15450 Collier Blvd.
Naples, FL 34120

Immokalee
106 South First Street
Immokalee, FL 34142

Marco Island
50 Bald Eagle Drive
Marco Island, FL 34145

North Collier Gov. Ctr.
2335 Orange Blossom Drive
Naples, FL 34109

Register for our
newsletter





Collier County Board of County Commissioners adopts \$1.9 Billion Budget

On [September 22, 2022](#) the [Board of County Commissioners \(BCC\)](#) adopted the **\$1,959,954,000 (yes, that is billions) Fiscal Year 2023 budget**. Adopting the annual budget and the associated tax rates are arguably the most important duties of a County Commissioner. It is important to recognize that the budget must fund service expansions required by the ever-growing population in Collier County, while also addressing the ongoing need to maintain aging infrastructure, further compounded by extraordinary inflationary pressures.

Following public input at the final budget public hearing, the BCC had lengthy discussions about the budget and whether the tax rate could be reduced, given the 16.85% increase in county-wide taxable value; current taxable value, as determined by the Collier County Property Appraiser, is \$122.3B. The annual tax bill is a function of two major components: the valuation of the property and the tax (millage) rate(s) adopted by the respective governmental units (City, County, School Board, independent taxing districts). As a side note, the Clerk of Courts administers the Value Adjustment Board (VAB) hearings, where property owners can contest the valuation placed on their respective properties. It must be noted that there were 1,156 VAB petitions filed this year, as compared to the 607 petitions filed in the preceding year.

The Save Our Homes constitutional amendment affords existing property owners some built-in protecting against dramatic increases in assessed value. Homestead properties are limited to a 3% annual increase in assessed value or CPI, whichever is less. A subsequent amendment to the Save Our Homes initiative limited increases in assessed values for non-homestead properties, commercial properties, and vacant land to a 10% annual increase. However, upon a change in ownership, the Save Our Homes cap is removed, and the property is reassessed at current market value, which may result in significant increases in the tax bill for the subsequent property owner.

The General Fund millage rate of 3.5645 (equating to \$356.45 in taxes per \$100,000 of taxable value) has been levied at this constant level since FY 2010. This constant millage rate is known as being “millage neutral”. In boom times, the millage neutral tax rate generates additional revenue to fund government services. Conversely, during an economic downturn, the millage neutral tax rate has the opposite effect as tax revenues are reduced commensurate with the reduction in taxable value. The adopted FY 2023 budget policy noted that during the recession taxable value dropped by \$24 billion, requiring substantial General Fund budget reductions between FY 2009 and FY 2013.

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(Budget cont.)

However, as the taxable value recovered beginning in FY 2014, the millage neutral policy provided funding to: restore programs cut or postponed during the recession, establish a long-term capital maintenance reserve, provide for strategic economic development agreements, make strategic property acquisitions, and pursue the location/relocation of certain County facilities to closely align with expanding eastern population while simultaneously updating/replacing those facilities.

Another issue raised by Commissioners is that government is a service business that requires a strong, stable workforce to deliver those services. There is competition for employees in Collier County, compounded by the relatively high cost of living in this community, particularly due to housing costs. Recruiting and maintaining a stable workforce is essential to government service delivery. The FY 2023 budget includes funding to upgrade the County's pay and classification system to ensure the County competitively recruits new employees, retains a current high-performing workforce, and motivates employee work performance.

Maintaining a stable workforce, continuing to re-invest in the infrastructure and amenities that distinguish Collier County as one of the most desirable places to live, and developing a measured response to provide new facilities to serve a burgeoning population, are all components of long-term fiscal sustainability. Financial decisions must continue to be made with a long-term fiscally conservative focus.

Expanded Legal Self Help Center Now Open

After months of renovation to improve our office and customer service area, the Collier County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller is proud to announce the opening of our expanded and improved [Legal Self Help Center](#) located on the 1st Floor of the County Courthouse Annex. The self-help center will be fully available to the public and is especially beneficial for people who need legal forms but are not represented by an attorney.



At the self-help center, residents have easier access to approved forms of various civil and family court matters including small claims, family law, child custody/child support, paternity, dissolution of marriage, name change, and landlord/tenant disputes. Instructional materials with detailed instructions are available in the center to help guide residents in filing these forms. Instructional videos are also currently in the work and will be added to the Clerk's website.

The available forms are automated for faster transactions and must be accomplished on the provided computers. Once done, residents can print these forms and have them signed and filed with the Clerk of Court. Residents may receive assistance with the forms but we cannot provide legal advice. The Self Help Center is open from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM every Monday-Friday.





After the Hurricane, Watch Out for Scams (Oct. 4, 2022)

Residents should be alert to scammers offering storm-related repairs or tree removal services, promising emergency grant funds, or alleging charitable intentions in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. Natural disasters create opportunities for fraud by scammers using phone, text, mail, email, and even door-to-door methods to target affected residents.

- Officials with government disaster assistance agencies do not call or text asking for financial account information, and there is no fee required to apply for or get disaster assistance. Remember that phone scams often use deliberately false information transmitted to your caller ID display to disguise their identity or make the call appear to be official.

If someone calls claiming to be a government official, you should take their phone number if available, end the call and verify the number listed on that government agency's official website. Never reveal any personal information unless you've confirmed you're dealing with a legitimate official. Workers and agents who knock on doors of residences are required to carry official identification and show it upon request, and they may not ask for or accept money. Applications for FEMA relief programs are free and can be accessed at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov) or by calling 1(800) 621-FEMA.

- If you get a phone call about an insurance claim or policy, don't give out any personal information or agree to any payment until you can independently verify that the call is legitimate. If the caller says they're from your insurance company, hang up and contact your agent or the company directly using the number on your account statement. Have an insurance company evaluate damage before arranging repairs to ensure that the work will be covered under a policy. Policyholders with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP Direct) can call 1-800-638-6620 or visit [floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov).
- Contractors and home improvement companies may also call claiming to be partners with your insurance provider, or contractors may come to your door to offer services:
 - Never give policy numbers, coverage details, or other personal information out to companies until you have vetted the contractor and are ready to sign a contract. Insist on a written contract that addresses all terms agreed upon.
 - Be wary of anyone who approaches you unsolicited or says they can conduct a "free" inspection or perform repairs at a discount with leftover supplies from another job.
 - Hire only licensed professionals who have a solid reputation, and get itemized estimates on bids or repairs, be sure to check with your insurer PRIOR to contracting for services, to verify your coverage and policy requirements.
 - Beware of contractors asking for prepayment or large deposits. Make checks payable to a company, not to an individual or to "Cash."
 - Make sure the contractor is licensed, insured and bonded with reputable agencies.
 - Insist on releases of any liens that could be placed on the property from all subcontractors prior to making final payments.
 - Door-to-door solicitations in Collier County are usually required to have a Home Solicitation Sales Permit, issued by the Clerk's office ([Recording forms](#)), ask for this permit.
- Under Florida Statute, unlicensed persons who perform work during a declared State of Emergency are committing a third-degree felony. Verify that the contractor has a license for the type of work you wish to have performed, or a Temporary Emergency Restricted Certificate issued by Collier County Contractor Licensing ([Collier building forms](#)).
 - Ask the alleged contractor for their name, license number, insurance certificate and bonding information, which can be verified at [myfloridalicense.com](https://www.myfloridalicense.com). If you have questions or wish to report unlicensed activity, contact Collier County Contractor Licensing at (239) 252-2431 or [Code Enforcement Complaint](#).





- Hire a contractor with a license specific to the type of work that you wish to have performed. For example, roof repairs may only be performed by a licensed roofing contractor.
- Beware of people who claim that you will save money if you do not obtain a permit. Most repair work requires a permit, which enforces compliance with building codes. Inspections of completed work may be required to close out a permit.
- A permit is not required for emergency storm mitigation that prevents injury, loss of life, imminent structural collapse, or other damage to the structure or its contents. Examples include roof tarping, water removal, boarding up openings, and securing pool barriers.
- Notices of Commencement of improvements in Collier County are recorded with the Clerk's office ([Recording Information](#)).
- Water mains and personal wells can be affected during hurricanes, and dishonest companies may insist upon pricey tests to determine water safety. Avoid falling victim by following these tips:
 - If someone claims to be a representative of a city, county or utility provider needing to inspect a water line or well, ask for proof of identification.
 - Check for water safety alerts as provided by local media and utility providers, such as: [Alert For All Private Well Owners in Collier](#). Seek advice from the state health departments to determine what tests should be performed and to help find certified testers nearby. [Private Well Testing \(floridahealth.gov\)](#)
- Consumers should also be aware of scammers posing as representatives of charities seeking donations for disaster relief. There are several steps you can take to protect yourself from this fraud:
 - Donate to trusted, well-known charities. Beware of scammers who create fake charities during natural disasters. Always verify a charity's legitimacy through its official website. Contact the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at [fdacs.gov Charities](#) or 1(800) HELP-FLA to check the legitimacy of a charity, or to see if there are any complaints recorded.
 - Verify all phone numbers for charities. If you need to contact a charity by phone, check the charity's official website to see if the number you have is legitimate. If you're using text-to-donate, check with the charity to ensure the number is legitimate before donating.
 - Do not open suspicious emails. If you receive a suspicious email requesting donations or other assistance, do not click on any links or open any attachments, as scammers regularly use email for phishing attacks and to spread malware.
 - Verify information in social media posts. Double-check any solicitation for charitable donations before you give. Crowd-funding websites often host individual requests for help, but they are not always vetted by the site or other sources.

Anyone who suspects price gouging can report it to the Florida Attorney General's Office by visiting [MyFloridaLegal.com](#) or calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.

The Clerk's Office of Inspector General is dedicated to preventing, detecting, and reporting on fraudulent activities related to Collier governmental operations or programs, and fraudulent filings made through the Clerk's office. Contact us at 1-844-253-7544 (844-ClerkIG), or locally at 23-252-8412, or visit our website at [Reporting Fraud, Waste, and Abuse – Collier Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller](#). We are not authorized to investigate private or personal matters unrelated to County government, the Sheriff's Office and other agencies noted are able to assist in illegal activities in Collier County, and there are numerous agencies available as noted above to assist with particular issues.





OCTOBER IS

domestic violence awareness month

Collier County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller's Office recognizes October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month

The Clerk's office is proud to partner with The Shelter for Abused Women and Children in Preventing, Protecting, and Prevailing against Domestic Violence in Collier County.

For the entire month of October, the Collier County Clerk's office will be observing Domestic Violence Awareness Month with a commitment to raising awareness in the community and providing safe, confidential services to those in need. The Clerk's office has held a long-time partnership with The Shelter for Abused Women & Children, to give victims support in filing protective orders, dissolution of marriage, and other court forms as needed.

Nearly one in every three women will experience domestic violence, which can take the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and even financial abuse. One of the most important in breaking free from the control of an abuser is to file protective orders, dissolution of marriage, and other court documents.

"Through our partnership with The Shelter for Abused Women & Children, we provide a safe and confidential space for survivors to regain control of their lives," said Clerk Crystal K. Kinzel.

In recent months, the Courthouse Annex went through extensive renovations to install a self-help resource center to provide the public with additional access to services. During the renovation, special care was taken to protect victims of domestic violence. A private space was included in the design to ensure protection and confidentiality while accessing those services. This office is staffed with a social worker that can provide additional resources and referrals for support.



OCTOBER 2022

CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH



Clerk Crystal K. Kinzel encourages residents to register for free Risk Alert Notification Program

In recognition of Cybersecurity Awareness Month, Clerk Crystal K. Kinzel encourages residents to register for a free Risk Alert Notification Program available on CollierClerk.com.

The Collier County Clerk of the Court and Comptroller reminds the citizens of Collier County to stay vigilant of possible digital threats, highlighting identity theft leading to fraudulent activities this Cybersecurity Awareness Month. The Clerk encourages the residents to register to the Risk Alert Notification Program which allows them to easily monitor suspicious activities on their official records and take the necessary actions to prevent further fraud.

In the first half of 2022, a total of 817 cases of data compromises were recorded with over 53 million affected US individuals. These data compromises vary from data breaches, data exposure, and data leakage which are some of the causes of online identity theft.

Property fraud is one of the fastest growing white-collar crimes in the US and is typically done by criminals through falsifying records and faking their identities. People are deceived to buying or renting the stolen properties while the real property owners remain ignorant of the crime until damages has already been done.

“Through our Risk Alert Notifications, residents can quickly take action to report suspected fraud and protect their assets. It is a simple step that can save residents valuable time and money in restoring their records,” said Crystal K. Kinzel.

The Risk Alert Notification Program is a free service provided by the Clerk’s office to prevent property fraud by allowing owners to monitor their property records. Upon registration, a link will be sent that allows them to add, edit, or delete party names and Official Records to monitor. Subscribers will receive an email if activity occurs on their records so that they can verify whether the transaction is valid.

Also, please refer to our website at Collierclerk.com for upcoming joint events with the Sheriff’s Office regarding fraud.

Scan to Register for Risk Alert Notification





Called to Service: What should you do when you receive a summons for Jury Service?

US citizens are obligated to appear for jury duty upon receiving a summons from a court via US Mail. As a juror, you are tasked to determine the facts and provide unbiased views on a criminal or civil case based on the pieces of evidence presented during a trial. Jury service is an essential part of our country’s judicial system and democracy while promoting civic participation.

On your day of service, make sure to arrive early in your designated location and dress appropriately. Business or business-casual attires are preferred and bringing sweaters is also highly encouraged. Once you arrived at the courthouse and advanced through the security, you will be given a Juror Qualification Questionnaire that you must accomplish. Afterward, a deputy clerk will take you to the courtroom to begin the jury selection.

For the selection process, you will be asked by the judge and lawyers about your qualifications to serve and your background. If they deemed you unfit to serve on the jury, you will be excused and asked to return to the assembly room. If you got selected as a juror, you will stay in the courtroom and the trial will begin once the required number of jurors has been met.

Scan to learn more



Join the Clerk’s Office Team of Professionals!

The Collier County Clerk of the Courts and Comptroller office offers competitive salaries and generous benefits package! Most importantly, you’ll join a team of energized professionals that are excited to work together in support of our mission through customer service, technology support, forensic analysis and more.

Courts Division

- Customer Service Court Clerk I
- Systems Analyst I
- Systems Analyst II

Management Information Systems

- Computer Support Technician
- SAP Project Analyst
- Senior Systems Analyst

Finance

- Board Minutes and Records Clerk I

Administration

- Internship Opportunities
- Volunteer Opportunities

Inspector General

- Forensic Auditor

Recording and Clerk’s Accounting

- Satellite Clerk I

Scan to learn more

