

MONDAY
TODAY & next morning
HIGH 87 Mostly sunny, warm, stray PM shower inland.
LOW 63
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CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE



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IN BRIEF

CF Foundation holding meeting and workshop

The CF Foundation would like to announce two upcoming meetings to be held during March.

The CF Foundation Executive Committee will be having a meeting at 4:30 p.m. on March 9 at the College of Central Florida, Enterprise Center, Foundation Office, 3001 SW. College Road, Ocala. The meeting will cover general business of the CF Foundation Executive Committee.

The CF Foundation Board of Directors and College of Central Florida District Board of Trustees will be holding a joint workshop to give a preliminary 2021 update of both groups. It will be held at 6 p.m. on March 24 at the College of Central Florida, Webber Center at the Ocala Campus, 3001 SW. College Road, Ocala.

River Alliance to hold monthly meeting

The Homosassa River Alliance will hold its monthly meeting at 7 p.m. on March 10 at the Old Homosassa Civic Club, 5330 S. Mason Creek Road, Homosassa.

This month's guest speaker will be Captain William Toney, fourth generation fishing guide in Homosassa. Anyone interested is welcome to attend.

St. Patrick's Day parade and festival in Inverness

Inverness Parks & Recreation is having the St. Patrick's Day Parade & Festival in Historic Downtown Inverness on March 12.

Parade begins at 4 p.m. with a Fairy and Leprechaun Costume contest to follow at 5 p.m. There will be a performance by Lochlann from 6 to 9 p.m. along with games, kids' activities and face painting.

The School of Dance Arts will be performing at 6 p.m., 7 p.m., and 8 p.m. in the Valerie Theatre, 207 Courthouse Squ., Inverness.

For more information, visit <https://inverness.gov/552/St-Patricks-Parade>.

To participate in the parade, complete a registration form and waiver by March 8.

Substitute teacher wages up for increase

Citrus County School Board to meet Tuesday

By HANNAH SACHEWICZ
 Chronicle Reporter

Citrus County's substitute teachers may see a pay raise as soon as Wednesday if all goes well at the next Citrus County School Board meeting.

The board will meet at 4 p.m. March 8 at the Citrus County School District administrative office, 1007 W. Main St. in Inverness. A public hearing will follow at 5 p.m.

After a discussion at Febru-

ary's special meeting and workshop, the district is asking the board's approval to increase the daily pay rate for substitute teachers.

If approved, pay will increase to the following rates for short term substitutes:

Daily pay rates would also increase for long term substitutes who have taught continuously for 10 or more days in the same position:

Long-term non-degreed substitute teachers would see their daily rates increase to \$105 per day.

According to the district, the projected cost for pay increases

is approximately \$180,000 per year budgeted from the general fund. For the remainder of the 2021-22 school year, funds remain in the substitute budget to move forward with the increase effective immediately, March 9.

School board officials will also vote on the approval of an access agreement with Positive Behavior Supports, Corp. (PBS), which grants access for community agencies to deliver services to students.

PBS staff will therefore be able to provide therapy services to students on campus with the

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Short term substitute pay rates

	Daily rate
Non-degreed or associate's	\$90
Bachelor's or higher	\$100
State certified	\$110

Long term substitute pay rates

	Non-certified	Certified
Bachelor's	\$131.73	\$136.73
Master's	\$141.98	\$146.94
Specialist	\$147.04	\$152.04
Doctorate	\$152.14	\$157.14



The Boys & Girls Club members gathered for a photo.

Special to the Chronicle

Nonprofit Spotlight: Boys & Girls Club

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE
 Georgia Sullivan

Editor's note: Every community depends on the resources and support that nonprofit agencies provide people, whether physical, material or emotional.

The Chronicle's ongoing series, Nonprofit Spotlight, profiles the nonprofit agencies in Citrus County that exist to help make life better for us all.

To have your nonprofit organization considered for a spotlight, here's the link to an online form you can fill out: https://www.chronicleonline.com/site/forms/nonprofit_spotlight

When did the Boys & Girls Club of Citrus County start?

The Boys & Girls Club of Citrus County began in 1992 when local Crystal River residents saw a need for a youth program for youth after

school, according to Chief Executive Officer Travis Anderson.

"Kids were noticed walking down the streets and many times getting into mischief because there wasn't a productive activity or venue for them," Anderson said, noting the Boys & Girls Club of Citrus County is celebrating 30 years of impact locally, with clubs in Homosassa, Beverly Hills and Inverness. Officials hope to add a fourth location in Crystal River soon to expand its outreach and impact in the community.

How does BGC make a difference?

The goal of BGC is to inspire young people to reach their full potential as caring and responsible adults by providing safe before and after school programs for youth in Citrus County to keep kids entertained while still learning valuable skills, Anderson said. BGC offers several activities including homework help, personal enrichment

or mentoring, fitness and even a healthy snack. BGC currently serve youths between ages 6-18 from most schools in the area with activities for all.

In 2021, BGC served 35,452 FDA approved snacks to their members while 76 percent of them received free or reduced lunch at school. According to 91 percent of members, the organization helped them solve problems in a positive way, with 74 percent having increased a letter grade in Math, Science or Language Arts.

BGC creates this kind of lasting impact for the community while being completely free of charge to all members in the after school, holiday camps and summer camp.

This year, the club is pushing to expand due to waiting lists at most of its club's locations since it is only able to

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Board to discuss Oliver's separation agreement

By MICHAEL D. BATES
 Chronicle Reporter

The dissension involving County Administrator Randy Oliver's performance evaluation gets a public airing Tuesday when commissioners discuss what role they should play in the process.

Commissioners will also discuss a separation agreement between Oliver and the county.

Commission Chairmen Ron Kitchen Jr. asked the item

be placed on the agenda because he believes there is behind-the-scenes maneuvering going on by certain commissioners to get rid of Oliver.

It's so bad, Kitchen said, that Oliver has threatened to leave this month and not stay until November to ensure a smooth transition.

Commissioner Holly Davis blamed Oliver for purposely suppressing a somewhat negative employee morale survey and that ignited a heated exchange at the last board meeting.

Kitchen said Davis is using that survey to further her ends to remove Oliver.

"Randy's fed up with it, I'm fed up with it and we're going to get it all out in public," Kitchen told the Chronicle.

Davis said there is no underlying plot to get Oliver to leave early and she's got the county's best interests at heart.

"I have never been anti-Randy," she told the Chronicle. "I see his strengths and I see his weaknesses."

The county commission meeting is at 1 p.m. March 8 at the Citrus County Courthouse, 110 N. Apopka Ave., Inverness.

Kitchen scheduled the Oliver item for a time-certain of 1:40 p.m.

To see the complete agenda, visit <https://bit.ly/3sAhqYs>

Affordable Housing workshop

Prior to the afternoon meeting, commissioners will hold a workshop on affordable housing

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Lawmakers chipping away at ballot initiative process

By DARA KAM
 The News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — With a week to go in the 2022 legislative session, Florida lawmakers are considering a series of measures to propel Republican leaders' years-long battle to make it harder for groups to change the state Constitution.

Floridians have relied on the ballot-initiative process in recent years to legalize medical marijuana, increase the minimum wage and limit the expansion of gambling in the state.

But for more than a decade, Republican lawmakers consistently have erected hurdles to the process in an effort to block measures from going before voters and amending the Florida Constitution.

Bills passed by the GOP-controlled Legislature

have increased the number of signatures required for initiatives to be placed on the ballot and banned sponsors from paying petition gatherers by the signature — a move that experts say has dramatically driven up the cost of amendment drives.

Another election law shrank the length of time signatures are valid from four years to two years, meaning they can only be used for one election cycle. Critics say that law also has made the cost of petition drives skyrocket.

Proposals up for consideration this year include a campaign-finance bill that, in part, would place a \$3,000 limit on contributions from out-of-state donors to political committees trying to collect enough petition signatures to move forward with citizens' initiatives. The Senate

approved the measure (HB 921) Friday night but made some changes that will send it back to the House.

A separate proposal tucked into a sweeping Senate elections package deals with Florida Supreme Court reviews of proposed constitutional amendments, a process that takes place after sponsors of measures submit 25 percent of the signatures required to make it on the ballot. Court reviews are needed to ensure that the proposals' wording meets legal standards to go before voters.

The Senate bill (SB 524) would require the attorney general to withdraw requests for court reviews if proposals don't submit enough overall signatures to qualify for the ballot before a Feb. 1 deadline. The attorney general could request that the ballot language be

reviewed if initiatives receive enough signatures for future elections.

Initiative experts maintain that the proposed changes would impose another burden on groups seeking to place proposed amendments before voters. Currently, sponsors often pause fundraising efforts while awaiting Supreme Court decisions about proposals' constitutionality. The court's approval can help draw donors and volunteers.

Glenn Burhans, an attorney who has worked on several ballot initiatives, called the Senate plan problematic.

"This has been probably a 15-, 20-year push on killing the citizens' initiatives, and this latest measure is just the next step," he told The News Service of Florida in a phone interview Friday. "All of these so-called

reforms, which are not reforms at all, are designed to prevent billionaires or well-funded special interest groups from amending the Constitution, but the legislation has the opposite effect, making the initiative process so expensive that only big-money interests can participate."

Abdelilah Skhir, voting rights policy strategist for the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, said his organization is opposing the proposed change.

"It's the death by a thousand cuts," Skhir told the News Service.

The citizens' initiative process, which Skhir said

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BURHANS