

THURSDAY

TODAY & next morning
HIGH 83
LOW 68
 Windy, showers and storms developing.
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CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE



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IN BRIEF

Clerk of the Court offering savings event

For those with overdue traffic or criminal fees and fines, the Citrus County Clerk of the Court annual Operation Greenlight savings event will be occurring the week of March 28 – April 1 at both the Courthouse in Inverness and the Clerk Customer Service location at the West Citrus Government Center (WCGC) in Crystal River.

The staff is ready to assist customers who want to pay their account in full. By doing so, they will be able to avoid the collections surcharges of 25 percent and reinstate suspended driver's licenses.

To participate, go to the Citrus County Courthouse, 110 N. Apopka Ave., Inverness, or Clerk Customer Service at WCGC, 1540 N. Meadowcrest Blvd., Crystal River. Customers can also call 352-341-6424, option 8. There will be extended hours until 6 p.m. on March 31.

There are three different payment methods: visit in person, go online at citrusclerk.org/payonline or call 352-341-6424, option 1.

Boat launch passes available

As of Jan. 1, boat launch fees took effect at the following County-maintained boat ramps: Fort Island Gulf Beach, Fort Island Trail Park, Hernando Beach, and MacRae's. No other County boat ramps currently require launch fees.

Customers will have the option to pay the fees by downloading the Premium Parking app, using a QR code located at the ramps or contacting the customer service payment line at 844-236-2011.

To purchase a daily or annual pass, visit the Premium Parking website at premiumparking.com/city/citrus-county or call 844-236-2011 and dial "0" to speak to a representative.

PetMeals seeks donations

Citrus County's PetMeals program is seeking help from pet lovers throughout Citrus County.

Each month, the PetMeals program provides dog and cat food to the companion pets of senior homebound clients who receive Meals on Wheels. The program is currently in need of unopened bags of dry dog and cat food, as well as cans of wet cat food.

Monetary donation can be mailed to: Citrus County BOCC, Citrus County PetMeals Program, 2804 W. Marc Knighton Court, Key #3, Lecanto, FL 34461. Call 352-527-5975.

CRAB seeking new members

The Citrus County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) is seeking applications for the Code Review and Appeals Board (CRAB). Applications can be submitted online at: citrusboecc.com/board application. Completed applications should be sent to Citrus County Administration, 3600 W. Sovereign Path, Suite 267, Lecanto, FL 34461.

Traffic signal goes up at roundabout site

Construction could be completed around December

By MICHAEL D. BATES
 Chronicle Reporter

If you haven't driven by the U.S. 98 and County Road 491 intersection in awhile, get set for a surprise.

Construction of a roundabout has begun and it's a bit unrecognizable with new traffic patterns and huge mounds of dirt.

To help matters, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) on Wednesday made operational a new traffic signal, which had been in flash mode since late November 2021.

"Drivers should be alert to the new, temporary signal and be prepared to stop in all directions, said FDOT representative John McShaffrey. "The signal will be used to control traffic safely until construction of the new roundabout is completed in spring 2023."

McShaffrey said drivers should be alert to traffic shifts on U.S. 98 in the project area and drive within the posted 30 mph speed limit.

Two weeks ago, FDOT closed County Road 491 (also called Citrus Way) on the south side of the intersection through around December 2022. It's completely blocked off.

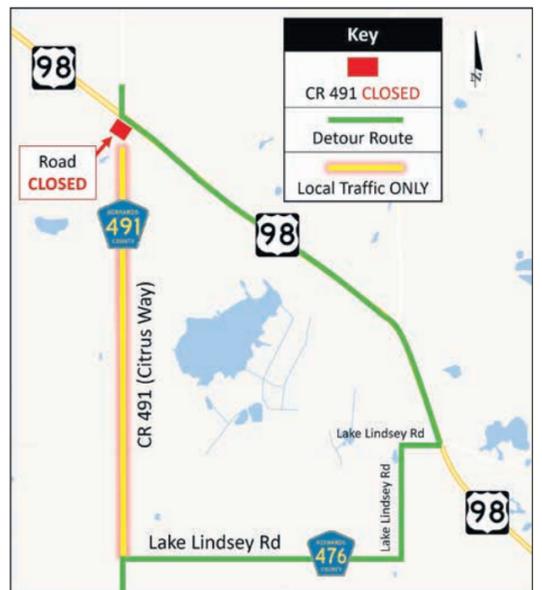
Public sentiment was high against installing a roundabout at that location, giv-

en the high rate of speeds of trucks. But the Federal Highway Administration said such traffic-calming devices reduce high-speed right-angle crashes and resulting fatalities.

St. Augustine-based Watson Civil Construction is doing the work on the \$3.5-million project.

County Road 491 is closed on the south side of the U.S. 98 intersection in Hernando County. There is no access to or from County Road 491 on the south side of U.S. 98 while a roundabout is being built. Drivers will be directed to use U.S. 98 and Lake Lindsey Road as a detour route. Visit <https://www.fdotampabay.com/project/779/439448-1-52-01>.

Florida Department of Transportation



Photos by Chronicle

Tier Four Business Solutions worker Scott Gustafson installs cable Tuesday, March 29, at the new hotel under construction on South Seminole Avenue in downtown Inverness. The project is expected to be complete in July.

Downtown hotel rising

Material and labor shortages continue to plague construction sites

By FRED HIERS
 Chronicle Reporter

It's doubtful that visitors to the future Inverness downtown hotel will be aware of the real estate and construction headaches its owner and builder had to endure to get the three-story structure built.

The latest is the rocketing material costs, labor shortage, and supply chain delivery problems that have plagued most construction across the country. Hotelier Dr. Paresh Desai, of Citrus County, has not gone unscathed with his latest Inverness project as he waits for materials that have pushed the hotel's cost up about 15 percent and pushed back its opening at least a month and maybe two.



Dr. Paresh Desai is the driving force behind a new hotel being built in Inverness.

But sitting in the hotel construction trailer next to the partially completed hotel to meet with DI Construction, LLC superintendent John Dungan, Desai is optimistic about the 72-suite hotel and its progress despite industry problems.

"We are struggling like most of the builders," Desai told the Chronicle.

But Desai said he included a cost buffer that will be enough to cover rising ma-

terial and labor costs.

And banks are working with builders about repayments, knowing there have been construction delays, he said. But Desai smiled and said he didn't think this project would need a meeting with the bank.

"I hope we don't get to that level," he told the Chronicle.

Originally thinking the

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Photos by Hannah Sachewicz / Chronicle Reporter

Lecanto High School senior Elise Leturno is the 2022 Grand Champion exhibitor in the Pen of Meat Poultry exhibition. She is pictured with her White Leghorn Bantam, which won a blue ribbon in the Rose Comb Clean Legged Bantam exhibition.

Nothing foul about this show, it's strictly for the birds

Youths show prized poultry at county fair

By HANNAH SACHEWICZ
 Chronicle Reporter

Pens upon pens of poultry were entered in the Citrus County Fair by local youths on Sunday afternoon.

According to Marnie Ward, 4-H youth development extension agent, poultry is arguably the most difficult showmanship. Between large fowl poultry and bantam poultry, youths are expected to have an extensive knowledge on breeds.

During shows, judges can ask exhibitors up to 10 questions about their bird, such as class, variety, common parasites and how to treat them. "There's a lot more that goes into poultry knowledge," Marnie said.

One of the categories in poultry showmanship is the Pen of Meat exhibition, which Marnie said had a record number of entries this year.

Lecanto High School senior Elise Leturno was named Grand Champion for Pen of Meat Poultry. "This week, I have several competitions," she said.

Aside from her Pen of Meat Poultry, Leturno showed her blue ribbon White Laggard Bantam in the Rose Comb Clean Legged Bantam exhibition.

Bantams are smaller versions of full-sized birds, Leturno explained. "Her eggs will also be smaller."

In addition, Leturno competed in Sunday's Open Beef Show, Monday's Youth Beef Show and Tuesday's Swine



Marnie Ward holds one of Elise Leturno's Grand Champion Pen of Meat Poultry. The Cornish Rock is a hybrid chicken, selectively bred to grow faster, according to Will Ward.

Show. She is president of Lecanto Levi's 4-H Club and Lecanto FFA.

Citrus High School junior Will Ward was named the Reserve Grand Champion for Pen of Meat Poultry. Will explained the Pen of Meat Poultry are a hybrid of the Cornish chicken and White Rock chicken.

"They are selectively bred to grow faster," Will said.

In addition, Will's Rhode Island Red was entered in the Single Comb Clean Legged Bantam. "He didn't win, but he got a blue ribbon." Will also won the Poultry Senior Showmanship on Monday and exhibited his steer.

Will is the vice president of Lecanto Levi's 4-H Club, president of the Citrus 4-H County Council and vice president of the Citrus High School FFA.

Leturno and Will will have their Pens of Meat Poultry up for auction at 6:30 p.m. Thursday. All other Pens of Meat Poultry will be on silent auction at 5 p.m.

Marnie said a typical Grand Champion Pen of

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