

Week in Review

The Best of Bartow

Aug. 20 - Sept. 3, 2024



LEFT TO RIGHT; DEPUTY CHIEF BYRON MOORE, LIEUTENANT MATT MURPHY, CADET MAKAYLA JONES, CADET ALEX MUIRHEAD, CADET CADEN STORTS, DEPUTY CHIEF JIMMY SCHAILL, ADMIN ASSISTANT YADLIH TORRES, OIC SHANE EVANS AND CHIEF JAY ROBINSON

FIRE DEPARTMENT ADDITIONS, PROMOTIONS

Big things are happening at the Bartow Fire Department, and, at the last City Commission meeting, Chief Jay Robinson shared some wonderful personnel news.

James Schail, who began his career with BFD as a volunteer in 1993 and began working full-time for the agency in 1998, was promoted to Deputy Chief in April with primary duties to include Fire Department Operations, Fire Training and coordination with Fleet maintenance.

Yadlih Torres assumed the role of the Fire Department's Administrative Assistant last week, a job that had been vacant since 2008. Yadlih will perform roles in Fire Public Education, Risk Management, along with her administrative duties with the Fire Department. Matt Murphy, who joined BFD in Feb. 2010, was promoted to the position of Lieutenant/ Shift Commander in July.

Shane Evans, who began his career with BFD May in 2017, was appointed OFFICER In Charge in July.

Cadet Makayla Jones graduated from Bartow High Fire and Medical Academy in May and is attending Florida State College AND is the Bartow Fire Department's first female cadet. Cadet Alex Muirhead attended Bartow High School Fire Academy until the program was disbanded. He then signed up for virtual high school and graduated a year early. Alex will begin Fire Standards in Jan. 2025 and soon after will turn 18. Cadet Caden Storts graduated from Bartow High Fire Academy in May and is currently attending South Florida State College's Fire Program.



CITY CELEBRATES LINeworkERS APPRECIATION DAY

The City of Bartow has owned and operated a municipal electric system since 1903 that, today, consists of approximately 250 miles of overhead power lines and 75 miles of underground lines, serving 13,600 electric customers.

This system is maintained by three four-person line crews, two troubleshooters, and three substation electricians who work with 14 other employees to provide electric service to the residents of the City. These front line crews risk their lives daily in extremely dangerous situations to ensure the reliable delivery of electric energy.

The Mayor and City Commission were proud to honor these staff at their last meeting, and to designate Aug. 26 as Bartow Lineworkers Appreciation Day. The proclamation was accepted by Director of Electric Utilities Michael Poucher and Lineworker Advocate Tracy Moore, who lost her husband to an accident while he was on duty.

Pictured from left to right: Jose Avila, Adolphus Carter, Billy Leal, Tony McDuffie, Roger Murphy, Michael Poucher, Tracy Moore, Trish Pfeiffer, Caden Dunlap, JJ Garcia, Jimmy Lewis, Uriel Cortes-Olivera, Dustin Deese.

CITY CUTS THE RIBBON ON BARTOW SQUEEZE SHUTTLE

The City and the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) hosted a ribbon cutting to officially announce the launch of the Citrus Connection's Squeeze shuttle to Bartow. The ceremony was held on August 20 at Tom's Chicken Shack, 901 E. Main St.

The golf cart shuttle runs every 10 minutes Monday through Friday from 10:30am until 2:30pm with stops at the Cookie Jar, Polk County Tax Collector, the Florida Dept. of Citrus building, Polk County History Center, Bartow City Hall, Polk County Courthouse, the FDOT District 1 building, Polk County Public Schools building and Tom's Chicken Shack.



COMMISSION HOLDS BUDGET WORKSHOP

On Aug. 23, the City Commission held a Workshop to review the proposed FY 2024 - 25 Budget including the general, special revenue and enterprise funds as well as the Capital Improvement Plan. The meeting is available for viewing on this page - or view written highlights on the City's website at <https://www.cityofbartow.net/departments-services/finance/proposed-budgets/2024-25-proposed-budget-highlights>

COMMISSION VOTES TO PLACE AQUATICS CENTER AT CIVICS CENTER

The Bartow City Commission voted at their Aug. 19 meeting to construct a new municipal aquatics center at the City's Civic Center, located at 2250 S. Floral Ave. The decision followed a months-long process of information gathering that included multiple Commission Workshops, a Community meeting and survey of residents and business owners.

The Civic Center is the site of the City's old pool, which was closed several years ago due to infrastructure and mechanical issues. That pool will be filled in to accommodate a more modern aquatics center design that will include additional amenities.

The more than 960 residents who responded to the survey and the 50 individuals who attended the Community meeting were overwhelmingly in favor of the Civic Center location.

Construction of the aquatics center, which will include a main pool with six 25-yard exercise lanes, a zero-depth entry children's pool with play structures, a splash pad with interactive water features, a shaded event pavilion and the necessary pump and filter equipment, will cost approximately \$3.93 million. Annual operating expenses are expected to amount to nearly \$500,000. The construction costs will be taken from the City's reserve funds.

Construction is projected to begin next summer with the center opening to the public in July or August of 2026.

NEW EDITION OF BARTOW NOW COMING SOON

While we're waiting for the September - December 2024 Bartow NOW to get back from the printer, check out the online version and see what programs and recreational opportunities City of Bartow Parks, Recreation & Cultural Arts is planning for the fall. View the new issue here:

<https://www.cityofbartow.net/home/showdocument?id=13679>



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

The City and the Bartow CRA are very excited to partner with Polk County Government Florida and the Polk County History Center to mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which will be celebrated on July 4, 2026.

"One Nation, Many Stories: Polk County" is an exhibit that will be located at the Bartow Civic Plaza, 200 E. Davidson St., adjacent to the History Center.

The exhibit will consist of 16 unique lamp post banners, each with unique thematic elements and vibrant colors, along with 16 unique digital exhibitions, each expanding on the thematic elements represented by the banner and including visual elements such as historic images and a variety of video content.

A dedication is scheduled for 4pm on Tuesday, Sept. 17, at the Bartow Civic Plaza. The public is invited.

TAX HOLIDAY IN EFFECT THROUGH FRIDAY

It's back. The Disaster Prep Tax holiday that is. Hopefully our near miss with Hurricane Debby drove home the importance of being prepared BEFORE a storm threatens. Consumers can purchase items related to disaster preparedness exempt from sales tax through Friday, Sept. 6. Eligible items include:

- portable generators
- tarps or waterproof sheeting
- smoke detectors or smoke alarms
- portable power banks
- gas or diesel fuel tanks
- batteries
- pet supplies

For a complete list, go to <https://floridarevenue.com/DisasterPrep>.



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