

Note to readers

Due to the Juneteenth holiday on Friday, there will be no postal delivery, so the Friday edition of the Citrus County Chronicle will not be delivered until Saturday, along with the Saturday edition. The paper will be available for purchase from local merchants, and Friday's e-edition will be available as normal on Friday.

LOCAL

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Two events for veterans with PTSD to celebrate the nation's birthday



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TAX REFORM FALLOUT

Echoes of the past: City confronts public safety funding questions

Crystal River braces for possible tax shifts

By **MIKE ARNOLD**
Chronicle Reporter

In 2007, Crystal River saw the train coming. State tax reforms reduced local revenues. Political pressure to cut taxes was mounting. City leaders trimmed positions, eliminated administrative costs and searched for savings. Then they made the decision

that would reshape public safety in the city for generations: they dissolved the police department. Nearly two decades later, another train may be approaching the tracks. A proposed constitutional amendment backed by Florida lawmakers could significantly reduce municipal property tax revenues while requiring cities to maintain current law-enforcement spending levels. For Crystal River, which is simultaneously expanding a larger professional fire service, the question is not

whether another police department shutdown is possible; it already happened. The question is whether the city is once again entering an era where public safety decisions are being driven by Tallahassee rather than City Hall. The comparison is not exact. Unlike 2007, there is little political appetite to reduce public safety services this time around. Several current officials have spoken favorably about one day restoring a municipal police department. Yet the financial pressure facing local governments has created a

familiar dilemma: how to fund police, fire and other essential services if state actions reduce one of the city's largest revenue sources. The proposed constitutional amendment would give homeowners a larger property tax break on their primary residences. While that could lower property tax bills, it would also reduce the amount of property tax revenue collected by cities and counties, potentially leaving local governments with less money to pay for services such as police, fire protection, parks and road maintenance.

While the city has not calculated a firm loss projection, staff say, changes will likely be needed to maintain current levels of public safety services.

Fire, police costs

The city currently pays about \$1.3 million for its annual contract for "enhanced" law enforcement. The agreement provides dedicated deputies, a supervisor and other resources focused specifically on policing within city

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PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Building stability after homelessness

Faith-based programs teach life skills, savings and responsibility to help clients stay housed

By **NANCY KENNEDY**
Chronicle Reporter

Many, if not most, of the men and women who find their way to places like The Path and The Sanctuary Mission arrive homeless. They've burned bridges and hit rock bottom. Organizations like these prioritize helping people with addictions, destructive habits and poor life choices. Using Christian principles and faith, their goal is to help people find a transformed life. That includes learning the skills they need to avoid becoming homeless again once they finish the program. Clients also leave with resources they need – money in the bank and sometimes even a vehicle so they have transportation to get to work. It's not a guarantee, but The Path and The Sanctuary Mission – which includes Grace House for women – have strong track records.



Photos by Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

Dakota Judy stacks wood onto a large pile that will be sold later in the year. Judy is a resident at The Sanctuary Mission in Homosassa.

enough, then they're not going to return to homelessness, and that's what we allow them to do."

More than recovery

The Sanctuary Mission in Homosassa was founded in 1997 by a couple as an extension of the 12-step meetings they attended. There, they met people who were down and out and often homeless. They opened their home to those individuals and helped them get back on their feet. Today, it is a full faith-based recovery program with the goal of helping clients re-enter society, with an emphasis on returning to work.



SIPPER

Of the thousands of people who have completed the programs, hundreds have remained in the community, working, paying taxes, raising families and making positive contributions to society, said DuWayne Sipper, The Path executive director. "We buy them time – it's the best thing we do for our clients," he said. "My theory is very simple: You keep people sober enough, long



Two wood-splitting machines are used to make large pieces of wood into more manageable sizes.

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CHILD PORN

Man sentenced to more than 2 centuries of prison time for crimes

Cops found 37.4 gigabytes of child sexual abuse material after a 2024 cyber tip

By **CASMIRA HARRISON**
Chronicle Reporter

A 76-year-old man was sentenced Tuesday to 215 years in prison after being convicted on multiple child pornography-related charges stemming from a 2024 investigation by the Citrus County Sheriff's Office. Michael Francis Coburn was sentenced in Citrus County on 23 felony counts, including 10 counts



COBURN

of possession of child pornography involving 10 or more images, three counts of possession of child pornography and 10 counts of transmission of child pornography by electronic device, according to the Office of the State Attorney for the 5th Judicial Circuit. The images contained sex acts of children as young as 2 years

old, according to court. Coburn was arrested back in October 2024 after Citrus County Sheriff's Office Detective Patrick Martin worked with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force on an investigation. According to the State Attorney's Office, the investigation began after Martin received a report from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children indicating potential child pornography linked to a Citrus County residence. Investigators

"To put this into perspective, if you were to use this much data on a cellular plan, it would allow you to browse the web for nearly 4,000 hours."

WILLIAM GLADSON
State Attorney

subsequently determined Coburn possessed numerous images and videos depicting the sexual abuse of children. Detectives with the Citrus County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigations Division later sought a search warrant for Coburn's res-

idence and ultimately seized multiple digital storage devices. According to an arrest warrant issued at the start of the case, Coburn uploaded several videos of adult men having sex with girls

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