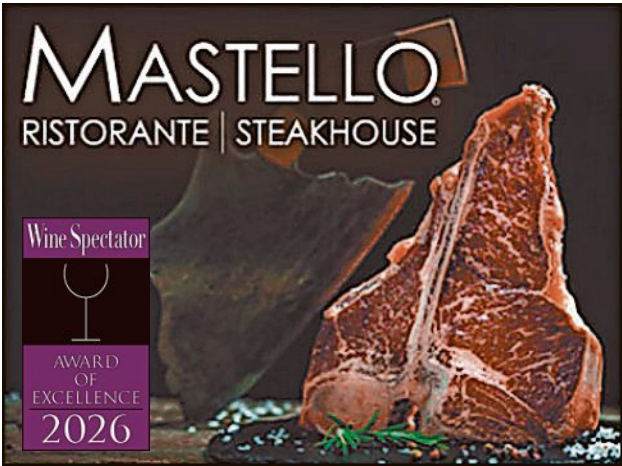




Fort Myers teacher faces child pornography charges

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THE NEWS-PRESS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2026 | NEWS-PRESS.COM

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Tax hike squeaks by under new law

Fort Myers council OKs 10% millage-rate ceiling

Charlie Whitehead

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Fort Myers City Council members met the requirements of a new state law on establishing property tax rates. But just barely. When the council approved a not-to-

exceed 10% boost in property tax rates at its Aug. 3 meeting the members needed a 5-2 vote to establish that rate, thanks to a new state law passed just this year. They got it. But one council member was on the fence. “Hopefully, we can keep it down,” said a clearly unconvinced Councilman Liston Bochette. “But I’ll vote yes.” The vote establishes the maximum rate at 7.3112 mills – about \$7.31 for every \$1,000 of a property’s assessed value.

That rate could be lowered, but not raised, during public hearings in September, a fact stressed repeatedly by council members. The city millage funds, at least in part, all city services from fire and police protection to roads and sidewalks to parks and recreation. City employees from police and firefighters to administrative staff and maintenance workers are paid mostly from property taxes. Councilman Fred Burson and Councilwoman Terolyn Watson voted

against the increase. Under the new state law, the property tax rate can only be raised 10% over the rollback rate by a super-majority vote. On the 7-member Fort Myers council that’s 5-2. The rollback rate is 6.6465. That’s the rate that would produce the same property tax revenue as in the current year. The new rate is exactly 10% higher. Anything more would require a unanimous vote. See TAX, Page 7A

Storm-tested Cafferata school opens its new era



Principal Jason Kurtz is congratulated after the ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly constructed Hector A. Cafferata Jr. K-8 School in Cape Coral on Wednesday, Aug. 5.

New \$125M Cape campus welcomes students Aug. 11

Vanessa Norris

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Nearly four years after Hurricane Ian shredded through Southwest Florida, Hector A. Cafferata Jr. K-8 School has reopened with a new makeover. In a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Aug. 5, the Cape Coral school officially opened at its new location, 214

NW 20th Ave.

The ceremony is just in time for the new school year, with students returning to class on Aug. 11. “The last time any of us gathered here, we were holding shovels, and today, we are holding scissors,” Jada Langford Fleming, the School District of Lee County’s District 6 board member, said.

See CAFFERATA, Page 12A



ELECTION 2026

To help voters prepare for the Aug. 18 primary, The News-Press & Naples Daily News are publishing a series of Q&As with candidates who will appear on the ballot. The Supervisor of Elections offices have begun to send Vote-by-Mail ballots and early voting begins Aug. 8. See Page 3A for today’s Q&As.

DeSantis, district celebrate gains

Lee County schools leave D’s and F’s behind

Mickenzie Hannon

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Standing inside Tortuga Preserve Elementary, a school that improved from a “D” to a “B” grade in a single year, Gov. Ron DeSantis and Superintendent Denise Carlin on Thursday pointed to Lee County’s rising school grades as evidence of academic momentum heading into the new school year. The School District of Lee County earned 752 points on Florida’s accountability scale, its highest grade point total in a decade.

See SCHOOLS, Page 9A

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