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# The Bulletin

The POA – Champions of Residents' Rights Since 1975

OCTOBER 2019

POA4US.org

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## UPCOMING POA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday

October 22, 2019 • 7 P.M.

Eisenhower Recreation Center

**Fair Government Initiative**

Come to the meeting and find out how you can get involved in restoring "Fair Government" to Sumter County

Donuts & Coffee for All After the Meetings! All Residents Welcome – Come and Join Us!



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## YOUR POA Rallies Hundreds to Protest Sumter County Commissioners 25% Tax Hike *and Launches Fair Government Initiative*

Last month we asked if it was "Poor Planning" or "Poor Management." This month we have concluded it is both, with a good measure of smugness and arrogance to go along with it. Even after hundreds attended both public hearings held last month, the Sumter County Commissioners disregarded the pleas of citizens from every part of the county and passed the 25% increase in property taxes for 2019/2020. The POA has been working nearly non-stop to gather information so residents could understand what's really behind the increase, and to launch a new initiative.

**THIS MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT BULLETIN  
YOU WILL RECEIVE. PLEASE READ EVERY PAGE!**  
**We want to tell you about:**

- The POA's new Fair Government Initiative **page 2**
- One Sumter – What is it and Why the POA believes it should be reversed **page 3**
- The Sumter County Election Process. Districts 1, 3 and 5 will be elected in 2020 **page 6**
- The POA's "Truth Meter" – A different interpretation of the "facts" **page 15**
- The Options the Commissioners Could Have Considered but Didn't **page 17** ■

The Property Owners' Association, Inc. (POA) is the original property owners' group in The Villages. Established in 1975, the POA operates with complete independence from the Developer of The Villages. Membership is open to all property owners and residents of The Villages. The POA is committed to acting as a watchdog to ensure that the Developer and local government are responsive to the needs, interests, and rights of residents.

### The POA Declaration of Independence

The POA is free of any outside influence. This is the only way we can assure our members of absolute autonomy to act on their behalf. From the very beginning in 1975, we recognized this need for independence, and we've cherished and nurtured it ever since.

**Vision** The Property Owners' Association, Inc. (POA) is a champion for the rights of residents of The Villages. Guided by member input, investigation and determination, the POA brings attention to and acts on issues that may impact property values and quality of life.

**Mission Statement** The POA provides 1) a forum for discussion of issues; 2) research and analysis; 3) programs of interest; and, 4) is a conduit for objective and accurate information. Specific attention is given to resolving housing, community and local government issues.

### Values

- Independence
- Honesty
- Fairness
- Objectivity
- Respect

## POA Launches Fair Government Initiative

POA President Cliff Wiener told the standing room only crowd at the September General Membership meeting that the POA is launching a "Fair Government" campaign to encourage residents to continue to protest the actions of the currently elected Sumter County Board of Commissioners, and develop strategies to elect officials who will be responsive to and engaged with the property owners in Sumter County.

Clearly, the Commissioners and the County Administrator have only paid lip service to explaining its approach to funding \$100 Million for new road extensions south of CR 44 and improvements to Buena Vista and Morse Boulevards that began this year. Administrator Bradley Arnold gave the same overview of "the need" and the "accomplishments" to warrant the increase. Among his hollow words were (again) that there hasn't been an increase in 14 years and Sumter County still has among the lowest millage rates in the state.

What he didn't explain, and what we've never heard any commissioner ask for was what, if any, other methods to pay for the roads was considered – leading to our conclusion that they didn't consider any others (but many alternatives were raised at the first public hearing by citizens – see page 17 for a review of some pretty good options.) He also didn't explain, nor has any

commissioner, why the County offered to pay for road extensions (Buena Vista, improvements to CR 501 and "Warm Springs Blvd., a.k.a. Morse Blvd.) that the Villages Developer has paid for in every other developed area of The Villages.

"The residents of The Villages have worked long and hard to achieve retirement here in The Villages, and they are being taken for granted," Cliff said. "They have been sold down the river to pay for \$100 Million in road improvements for growth that County officials asked for. The residents didn't ask for this, but the Commissioners have given no regard to the impact this increase will have on those with fixed incomes and the rest of the people in Sumter County who don't even live in The Villages. It is shameful," he said.

**For more information contact Wiener at 352-418-7372. Residents who are interested in getting involved can send an email to [FairGovernment@poa4us.org](mailto:FairGovernment@poa4us.org).** ■

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## What is “One Sumter?” POA Supports Reversal to District Voting

For a good explanation of what One Sumter is and how it originated we turn back to the August 2004 Bulletin. The POA at that time recommended that residents vote “No” on the proposal, for solid reasons that now, in 2019, seem to be proving true.

One Sumter was a proposal to have all five Sumter County commissioners elected in a county-wide election rather than just by the voters in their individual home districts. Candidates would still have to live in their respective districts.

Proponents said that commissioners make decisions for the entire county and therefore should be elected by all voters in the county. The suggestion was that Villagers would be disadvantaged or denied equity if One Sumter was not passed.

Opponents said that the five districts have issues and situations particular to their separate localities, and they needed their own commissioners to represent their local views. This is the way the Florida and U. S. Senates and Houses are elected.

The reasons the POA gave at the time seem to ring eerily true today – read on.

**Possibly Not Good for Residents** - The POA believed that the One Sumter would be good for the developer of The Villages but not necessarily good for the residents of The Villages.

The POA cited a controversial proposed 1,100 unit apartment complex on the west side of The Villages that it suspected the Developer was behind. A large number of residents were adamantly opposed to that housing development and demonstrated strongly at the Sumter County commissioners meeting. The project defeated 3-2. Had One Sumter been in effect, the apartment complex would likely have been approved by a developer-backed board of commissioners in a 5-0 vote.

*One Sumter continued on page 4*

## Renew or Start Your POA Membership!

✱ Join thousands of other Villages property owners who belong to the ONLY Independent advocacy organization – Champions for Residents’ Rights Since 1975!



### POA 2019 AND BEYOND MEMBERSHIP & CONTRIBUTION FORM

The POA, 8736 SE 165th Mulberry Ln, PMB 111, The Villages FL 32162  
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(Please Select One):       Two years – 2019/2020 - \$20 per/household  
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**ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION IF DESIRED: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

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Please mail my Membership Card to me.

Please hold my POA Membership Card for me to pick up at one of the monthly POA Meetings.

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## POA PAPER SHREDDING EVENT

**Saturday, October 19, 2019  
9:00 to Noon**

**Lowe's Parking Lot  
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### NO TICKET/NO SHRED

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A few tickets are still available for POA members ONLY – first come first served.

Your best bet if you are just joining or for late-renewing members is go to **POA4us.org** and sign up online.

You can then send an email ticket request to SHRED@kencopp.com

**Want to volunteer to help on shredding day? Call Bill at 352-552-1059 for more info.**

### *One Sumter continued from page 3*

The POA believed that One Sumter would result in five commissioners voting the developer's party line and what would be good for the developer rather than good for residents. Sound familiar? It seems the POA was right on point with the \$40 Million road agreement the Commissioners signed in 2018 with the Developer to build the new roads for the Villages south of CR44.

**Counterbalance to the Developer** - Villages residents need a counter-balance to political power of the developer. This is a matter of trust. The POA would trust an independent board acting in good faith for the benefit of all.

An example in 2004 was the commissioners' opposition to the developer's ideas on fire stations, fire safety, and set-back requirements that would have compromised safety for all Villagers. On this matter of trust, we like an independent board of commissioners looking over the shoulder of any developer. Why else do you have building codes, electrical requirements,

and standards that are now enforced by county officials? What if a developer could change these at will suit his own purposes to accommodate cheaper or faster building activities?

**Disenfranchise Voters** - One Sumter would effectively disenfranchise voters in most parts of Sumter County outside The Villages. The POA doesn't think this would be fair or equitable for those residents. In 2019, Sumter County residents outside of The Villages expressed these sentiments at the September 10 public hearing, and the POA supports their frustrations.

Finally, the POA thought One Sumter would work this way:

Within one or two elections after implementing One Sumter, it would become obvious that any candidate wanting a chance to be elected would have to come to The Villages seeking votes and would have to genuflect in front of the developer and seek his approval.

*One Sumter continued on page 5*

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*One Sumter continued from page 4*

Only approved candidates, willing to vote the developer's interests, would get the benefit of the developer's political "machine" that would mobilize Sumter County employees working for The Villages, or one of its business partners or suppliers, for help in getting out the vote for the favored candidate.

Also, the VHA would be mobilized for the same vote. Remember that Don Burgess was then president of the VHA and was also on the board of the One Sumter organization. (And now he is chairman of the County Board of Commissioners – imagine that!)

And then The Villages media machine would kick in with massive advertising, editorial, and routine news reporting favorable to the anointed candidates. (Similar to the Property Taxes 101 propaganda in 2019 to help voters "understand" the 25% increase.)

**The predictable result:** 5-0 votes on every developer favorable issue. (The recent votes 1 & 2 on the Property Tax Increase Resolution.)

In the November 2008 Bulletin, the POA made this observation of a full-page ad in The Daily Sun that said, "Keep One Sumter", paid for by a political action committee at 2710 Posada Dr., in The Villages. The ad said in bold lettering that going back to the old Sumter County practice of electing commissioners out of single districts would "lead to higher property taxes!"

Apparently this Board of Commissioners and County Administrator don't even care enough to keep up that argument anymore!

Seems the POA got it right in 2004, and today we support the efforts to get the Reverse One Sumter question on the ballot in 2020. It won't affect the elections in Districts 1, 3 and 5, but it can help restore Fair Government after that. To obtain a petition email [orenmliller@centurylink.net](mailto:orenmliller@centurylink.net). ■

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## Sumter County Commissioner Districts 1, 3, 5 Open for Election in 2020

A major part of the POA's Fair Government Initiative is to help elect local representatives that will be interested in serving ALL taxpayers in Sumter County, not just the largest (The Villages.) Resident after resident went to the podium at the first public hearing held on September 10 asking for and even proposing options other than a 25% increase in property taxes (see page 17 for other ideas.) All five commissioners either sat stone-faced or with a creepy smile, while Board President Don Burgess superficially said, "Welcome to the Podium."

At the second public hearing on September 24, hundreds went to the podium and simply asked them to vote "no." Again, the residents' pleas fell on deaf ears.

Now it is time to start the real campaign, which is to elect other qualified candidates to serve these important positions. The current commissioners have demonstrated they are not here to serve you: District 1, Al Butler; District 3, Don Burgess; District 5, Steve Prinz.

*Election continued on page 7*

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*Election continued from page 6*

**Here are the steps to follow if you are interested in running:**

- Determine what district you live in – review the general descriptions below:  
**District 1** includes the general areas of the Villages - North of 466A to 466 and East of Buena Vista Boulevard to the county line  
**District 3** includes the general areas of: The Villages - North of C-466E and East of CR 101, Village of Tall Trees, Village of Bonnybrook  
**District 5**, includes the general areas of The Villages - West of Buena Vista Boulevard to US-301, Wildwood and Adamsville.
- Visit [sumterelections.org/Candidates-Committees/Candidates](http://sumterelections.org/Candidates-Committees/Candidates) and complete the online Candidate Info Request Form to have information and resources emailed to you. Or, if you prefer, please contact the Candidate Qualifying Clerk by calling 352-569-1540 (Select (1) for Directory, then (2) for Candidates).
- **Know the Forms and Deadlines**  
**Noon, May 11, 2020** - Petition submission deadline (State/County)  
**May 26, 2020** - “Pre”qualifying paperwork submission (STATE/COUNTY)  
**May 29, 2020** - resign to run deadline (STATE/COUNTY)  
**Noon, June 8, 2020 - Noon June 12, 2020** - QUALIFYING (STATE/COUNTY)  
**The Primary Election will be held August 18, 2020, with early voting August 8-15.**  
**The General Election is November 3, 2020, with early voting October 20-31. ■**

**What About the 3% Cap?**

One of the frequent questions we have heard is: what about the 3% cap on property tax that owners with homestead exemption are supposed to have. Applying for a homestead exemption means that you are declaring your Florida home your primary residence, and you do not receive a homestead exemption in another state.

According to the Florida Department of Revenue, after the first year a home receives a homestead exemption and the property appraiser assesses it at just value, the assessment for each following year cannot increase more than 3 percent or the percent change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is less. This is called the “Save Our Homes” (SOH) assessment limitation. Even if the value of your home decreases, the assessed value may increase, but only by this limited amount. The assessed value will never be more than the just value of your home.

**This 3% cap is different than raising the millage rate, so you technically are getting double whammy** – the county can raise your assessment no more than 3%, but they can also raise the millage rate In Sumter County’s case, the millage rate is being raised from 5.03 to 6.70. (which is actually a 33% increase!)

If you are moving from a previous Florida homestead to a new homestead in Florida, you may be able to “port,” all or part of your homestead assessment difference. You can also file an Assessment Appeal if you disagree with the assessment of your property. Unfortunately, it must be filed within 25 days of receipt of your tax notice, which occurred around August 23.

For complete information about Florida property tax laws and very helpful information at [floridarevenue.com/property](http://floridarevenue.com/property). ■

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## AARP Driver Safety now offers a 6 hour “Smart Driver” course for seniors; it is designed for those 50 and older.

In The Villages, there are at least 4 classes each month. The classes are either two days, 9 A.M. to Noon or one day\* 9 A.M. - 4 P.M. Fee is \$15 for AARP members, \$20 for non-members. Select your class and call the instructor to register. Instructor will give instructions and time to arrive to complete registration.

AARP now offers a 90 minute Smart Driver Technology (SDTEK) program for mature drivers.

For more information: [aarp.org/findaworkshop10](http://aarp.org/findaworkshop10) or 352-430-1833.

All available courses are listed at [aarp.org/findacourse](http://aarp.org/findacourse) or call 877-846-3299.

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October 21 & 24	Savannah	Charlie Webb	352-693-2562
October 19 & 26	Paradise	Art Donnelly	631-792-2203
October 22 & 23	Rohan	John Shepard	352-399-2344
October 30*	Freedom Pointe	Brenda Oleksa	610-392-9552



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Please provide your last name, address, Village and let us know the DATES you will be away, at least 2 W#EKS before departing, and we will stop delivery of *The Bulletin* during that time.



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## In Case You Missed It...News Highlights from September Meetings

### Districts, Committees Pass Budgets

Every numbered Community Development District (CDD) gave final approval to the 2019-20 Maintenance budgets, while the Village Center Community Development District (VCCDD) and Sumter Landing Community Development District (SLCDD) approved the Amenity Budgets after favorable recommendations by the Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) and the Amenity Authority Committee (AAC).

There were no increases in annual maintenance fees by any CDD, except in CDD 12 where some adjustments (mostly decreases) were made as new properties were brought online.

The Recreation Amenity Division budget (RAD), administered by the AAC for amenities north of CR 466, saw a slight 1.5% decrease in total allocations, with the most significant decreases in Community Watch and Recreation. The Sumter Landing Amenity Division budget for amenities south of CR 466 reflected a 3.3% increase, as a result of increases in the Community Watch expenses.

Every detailed district budget and the amenities budgets can be found on [districtgov.org](http://districtgov.org). Click on the 'Departments.' tab across the top and select 'Budget.'

### Joint Meeting on Guest ID Policy Tabled

The Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) tabled its request for a joint meeting with the Amenity Authority Committee (AAC) to discuss the current Guest ID policy, so it can have more discussion at the October PWAC meeting to determine if there are issues that need to be addressed. The topic was raised after a resident attended a previous meeting and questioned the "in-area" guest policy that allows children and grandchildren of Villages residents who reside in Lake, Marion or Sumter County to be granted a 1-year guest pass. Other issues have been raised about enforcement and other issues.

The current Guest Policy was established in 2008-09 after a lengthy resident/staff task force

reviewed and made recommendations. An article on the policy appeared in the September issue of *The Bulletin*.

PWAC member Jerry Vicenti believes a review is still warranted since the policy is now 10-years old.

### Government Day Set for November 2

District Manager Richard Baier announced that the 24th annual Government Day will be held on Saturday, November 2, from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. at Eisenhower Recreation Center. Representatives from each Community Development District, other boards and committees, utilities and other levels of government will be available to meet residents, provide information and answer questions. More information about shuttle parking will be available on [districtgov.org](http://districtgov.org).

### District Scorecard

After his first year as District Manager, Richard Baier has provided a review of achievements to all boards, directors and committee members.

Mr. Baier described his original goals to

- Streamline communications within and between departments and our customers,
- Foster transparencies to enable our customers to interact and understand their government, and,
- Reassess the processes & systems we utilize and how we utilize them, in order to execute organizational decisions.

The "Balanced Scorecard" report is available on the home page of [districtgov.org](http://districtgov.org). The scorecard provides detail of improvements in each of these areas, as well as each department with annual savings from various cost-cutting measures and interlocal agreements. The total savings reported are \$3,170,260.

Mr. Baier said that the report will be updated bi-annually so that officials and residents alike will be informed on a regular basis of progress that is being made.

**NOTE:** More than \$1M of the savings comes from Interlocal Agreements with Sumter County, and while we applaud these savings at the District level, we wonder what impact these agreements that Sumter County has with the District and other municipalities in the county has had on the 25% increase in Sumter County property taxes. We wish that the County Administrator would be as transparent in his reporting to residents as our District Manager is!

### NSCUDD Considers Asset Purchase from Developer after Raising Rates in August

At its September meeting the North Sumter Community Utility Dependent District (NSCUDD) agreed to move forward in a process to purchase the Central Sumter Utility Company (CSU) currently owned by the Developer and several affiliated people. That company owns and operates a potable water treatment and distribution system and wastewater collection, treatment and disposal system and provides services to a portion of The Villages in unincorporated Sumter County, Wildwood and Fruitland Park.

The board voted 6-1 to move ahead with the 30-day due diligence process of buying the utility, which will require two firms to perform valuations of the proposed sale to be performed by Oct. 15. However, one board member expressed concern that the company to be used by NSCUDD had recently purchased the company that the Developer used in the valuation of CSU in 2015 when NSCUDD first considered its purchase. At that time, the valuations were so far apart that an agreement was never reached.

The process is very specific: If the lesser of the two preliminary valuations is not greater than 5 percent less than the higher preliminary valuation, the purchase price will be set at the lesser of the two figures. If the lesser of the two preliminary valuations is greater than 5 percent lower, but not greater than 10 percent lower of



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*In Case You Missed It continued from page 9*

the higher of the figures, the utility boards will agree to set the purchase price at the average of the two valuations. If the lesser of the two figures is greater than 10 percent lower than the higher of the valuations, the utilities will instruct their valuation firms to meet and agree upon a determination of value.

NSCUDD will have 30 days to investigate CSU. the purchase price is set, the process to issue bonds to finance the purchase will proceed. NSCUDD will have the right to terminate the agreement by providing written notice to CSU by Oct. 5.

NSCUDD is the provider of solid waste sanitation services for Marion and Sumter County, and the Fruitland Park portion of The Villages, and at its August meeting voted to raise its rates by 8% in order to pay current bond debt.

What will the potential hit be to residents if the purchase of CSU goes through?? Stay tuned! ■

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## POA President Cliff Wiener Speaks Up for Property Owners

On behalf of the POA membership in The Villages, President Cliff Wiener made the following statement at the September 10 Public Hearing of the Sumter County Commissioners.

“Residents are rightfully enraged by the irresponsible action this board plans to take, and the POA fully supports the residents in their outrage. Shame on all of us for being lulled into complacency with our Sumter County officials because of 14 years of no tax rate increases.

“And shame on the County Administration and every member of this Board of Commissioners for what you are doing to the residents and property owners of Sumter County. We expect and deserve better government, and the POA will work tirelessly with the residents to ensure that we get it.

“We call on Mr. (Bradley) Arnold (County Administrator) and this Commission to come back to the September 24 public meeting with a revised budget that will substantially decrease the proposed \$50+ Million property tax increase on the residents of Sumter County.”

**His pleas on your behalf fell on deaf ears. ■**



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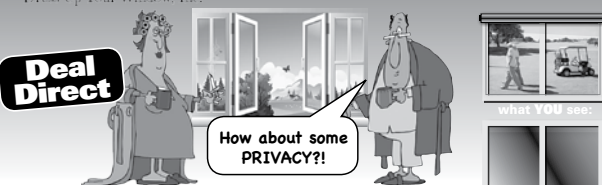
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RESPONSE BY COMMISSIONER STEVE PRINZ TO COMMENTS...

# POA'S TRUTH METER

After the lengthy public hearing held on September 10, Commissioner Steve Printz was apparently the designated commissioner to read prepared remarks and to present “facts” in response to information printed in previous Bulletins, on social media and in social circles. What we found were opinions and half-truths more than facts, but we’ll let you be the judge.

“Two words – tax increase; it gets everybody’s attention. We hate those words. We get upset; we get angry and we demand answers. We want to know why. However, we all know there are times when a tax reset is required. For the last couple of months, everyone has had the opportunity to review the details of the budget letter, the budget and supporting line item details with total transparency. (audience heckles) Many of the citizens took the opportunity to contact the County Administrator or Commissioner to get specific answers...Before we discuss and vote on the tentative millage rate and tentative budget I want to address some specific comments that have been the subject of many conversations, lots of printed material and posted on social media.

**COMMENT: The Commissioners are getting excessive pay raises, enriching themselves at the expense of the citizens.**

**FACT:** The State of Florida, by law, sets the salaries for Commissioners in all 67 counties. These salaries are updated annually. The FY 2019/20 salary for a commissioner in Sumter County is \$58,907 -- that is a 1.8% increase over the current year salary. Simply stated, that is an increase of \$1,040 before taxes.



**POA TRUTH METER – HALF TRUE.** There is a formula for salaries that is set by the State.

However, since 2009, the State also provides that elected officials may choose to forgo any part or all of an increase over the previous year.

**COMMENT: The Board of County Commissioners gets a huge retirement contribution from the County.**

**FACT:** The State of Florida by statute mandates that each county pay 51.8% of an elected official’s salary into the Florida retirement system. The elected official contributes 3% and the county pays 48.8%. The elected official generally receives 4% of that county contribution for retirement or 401K, with the remainder of the payment goes to to maintain the solvency of the Florida retirement system.



**POA TRUTH METER – FALSE.** According to the Florida Retirement System (FRS)

Financial Guidance Program, elected officials including county officials, can be included in the Elected Officials Membership Class. However, the handbook explicitly states, “Elected officials may elect not to participate in the FRS.” Wow.

The comment about the County’s contribution to the special school for school safety is not included. The POA has no objection to funding for safety for children or staff at schools.

**COMMENT: Regional road constructions. Why isn’t the Developer paying for this?**

**FACT:** The Developer is paying. Regional road construction costs are being handled as it has been in prior years. We’ve talked about it. The cash to construct the regional roads is being funded by the Developer and invoicing to the County over 5 years at no interest term for payment for the construction costs only. This is a much better option than financing through a loan or bond which requires additional interest by the county. The Developer, not the County is paying for right of way acquisition, design, and stormwater management...



**POA TRUTH METER – FALSE.**

In all previous development north of CR 44, the Developer paid for new roads before turning them over to the County. This includes Buena Vista Boulevard that the County is now including as a “regional road”

and paying for its extension south of CR 44. The POA also believes that the reconstruction of CR 501 and the additional lanes on Warm Springs Road (a.k.a. Morse Boulevard) are roads that clearly are for the benefit of new development and residents in that area. Mr. Printz made NO mention of the purpose of impact fees, how much is being used, and what the specific shortfall is from the discounted rate given to the Developer.

**COMMENT: The Board of County Commissioners should have had a better handle on road maintenance, vis a vis, the example of Buena Vista and Morse Boulevard.**

**FACT:** The County engaged in a thorough engineering study to determine the specific remediation required for each of these roads. The results of the study revealed that there are different requirements for different segments of these roads...The condition of Buena Vista and Morse Blvd has been the #1 complaint I have received since becoming commissioner.



**POA TRUTH METER – MOSTLY TRUE.** It is certainly true that people have been

complaining for years about the condition of both Morse and Buena Vista Boulevards. It is also true that the county conducted an extensive engineering study. It is a matter of opinion whether the Commissioners could have/should have had a better handle on the situation.

**COMMENT: The Board of County Commissioners sold out the residents by encouraging the Developer to continue development south of SR 44.**

**FACT:** The BOC recognizes the need for the continued economic development of Sumter County, and in this specific discussion, in the City of Wildwood. In my view, if a county isn’t growing it begins to stagnate and die. BOC did encourage the Developer to continue south of 44 if, and when, landowners were willing to sell, and the Developer was willing to pay for the land acquisition costs. As a result, some property owners did sell their land. The Developer continues to invest, buyers continue to enjoy the lifestyle, and the county continues to grow jobs, businesses and services as well. This will provide

*Truth Meter continued on page 16*

Truth Meter continued from page 15

a growing property tax base for both residential and non-residential properties over time. Growth has enabled all the improved services in Sumter County over the last 15 years. Growth has paid for better fire and EMS, a better funded sheriff’s department, better funded schools, new libraries, better agricultural facilities, and it has been growth that has created so many job opportunities for all the citizens of our county. It is because of growth that we have the lowest taxes in the tri-county area...growth has been overwhelmingly positive for Sumter County.



**POA TRUTH METER – THIS IS OPINION, NOT FACT.**

And, we’d like to point out that the POA is not against growth. But, the POA expects that growth will pay for itself as it has in every other area of The Villages.

**COMMENT: The Commissioners all have a really cozy relationship with the developer.**

**FACT:** We have a positive but arms-length relationship with the Developer and many of the community-focused organizations (a.k.a. VHA) ...Positive relationships help solve problems and provide better solutions for citizens of the county.



**POA TRUTH METER – FALSE.**

The positive relationship does not have the appearance of being at “arm’s length.” Don Burgess, the chairman of the County Commissioners is the former president of the VHA, which receives a county tourism grant (not paid by property taxes) for its annual Hoedown. Mr. Burgess is also formerly on the board for One Sumter, an initiative passed in 2004 that gave The Villages control of the commissioners through an at-large voting system. (See article on page 3.) He was also appointed to fill a vacant seat in 2009, which seems more than just coincidence. The Developer also receives a tourism grant for entertainment at the squares.

*The POA agrees that positive relationships can accomplish many positive outcomes. It is the “arms-length” that we believe does not exist, and the relationships do not include all residents or resident groups in the county.*

**COMMENT: The BOC obviously didn’t have adequate planning for this expansion.**

**FACT:** Actually, as our county administrator said in his presentation, there is a very solid planning process used by the county that includes state, regional and local governments. However, from my perspective, there were also two specific issues that created budget uncertainties which

directly impacted the decision not to raise taxes for the 2018-19 budget. The outcome of the 25,000 additional homestead exemption ballot initiative was unknown – was it going to pass or fail? Also, we didn’t know any of the details of a regional road agreement. This agreement wasn’t approved until July 2018.



**POA TRUTH METER – HALF TRUE.**

There is a planning process in place, but it doesn’t seem that it aided the county administration in preventing this massive property tax increase. If the plan is reviewed on an annual basis, why wasn’t the question of revising impact fees looked at? What other planning tools could have provided other financing options? Mr. Printz’s reference to the other two factors seem to justify not increasing taxes in the current fiscal year rather than looking at how to spread the costs for expansion beyond the next 5 years. The county administrator’s letter to the Commissioners with the final hearing budget packet said, “In short, the proposed property tax increase for the FY 19/20 budget ensures the level of service provided to the customers remain resilient over the next five years as Sumter County strives to stay in front of the rapid growth rather than behind it.” It seems that the County has not been in front of the growth it asked for. ■

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# The Options the Commissioners Could Have Considered but Didn't

The Sumter County Commissioners did not spend any time explaining to residents what other options they considered prior to voting to pass the 25% property tax increase. None of the supporting documents – which they and County Administrator Bradley Arnold said is the transparency in the process – discuss any other options.

The letter from Arnold to the Commissioners with the September 24 meeting packet (381 total pages in the packet!) says, in part, “This letter provides additional clarifications based on input from the public following the Tentative Millage, and Tentative Budget Public Hearing held on September 10, 2019. In short, the proposed property tax increase for the FY 19/20 budget ensures the level of service provided to the customers remain resilient over the next five years as Sumter County strives to stay in front of the rapid growth rather than behind it.” **NOTE: The rapid growth was requested and apparently not planned for by the County Administration or Commissioners.**

We thought residents came up with some pretty good ideas, none of which are addressed in Arnold's 23- page follow up letter.

**Pass a Continuing Resolution** that allows the County to continue operating under the current budget while continuing to explore other funding options for the road projects. If Florida law allows, the County should have passed this type of resolution in order to fully demonstrate to taxpayers that it had considered all options before implementing a tax increase. If it is NOT allowed, the County should provide evidence that the statute does not allow it.

## Issue Bonds for Capital Projects

instead of the short-sighted “pay as you go” funding through property taxes over a short period of time. Infrastructure is a depreciable asset and should not be funded through operating expenses, which places an unwarranted burden on taxpayers.

**(NOTE: The County's own Impact Fee Study states that “The roadway facility life used in the impact fee analysis is 25 years, which represents the reasonable life of a roadway”).** The Developer offered a \$40 Million interest-free loan to the County in exchange for the County paying for the infrastructure/road improvements for the new development south of CR44.

POA Vice President Jerry Ferlisi explains that the Secondary Trust (#106) proposes to spend \$64.1 million over the next 3 years (2020-2022) on major Capital Expenditures which are being financed by only \$40 million in debt which is being repaid over an 8- year period commencing in 2020 at the rate of \$4.7 million a year. In addition, the proposed budget projects Regional Road Repayments of \$41 million in years 2023 & 2024.

### Recommendations:

1. The \$40 million borrowing should be increased by another \$24 million which would reduce the proposed tax increase.
2. Each year from 2020 to 2024 this fund has approximately a \$22 million in reserve which should be eliminated by approximately \$20 million thereby again reducing the proposed tax increase.
3. The \$35,271,484 Debt repayment in 2024 should be financed through a tax- exempt bond for at least a 10- year period which would in part be necessary because the \$20 million reserve has been eliminated & the repayment of debt should be spread out over the useful life of the asset being constructed.

**Impact Fees** were most mentioned as the mechanism for growth to pay for itself. Impact Fees are probably also the most complicated to understand. Here is the definition:

An impact fee is a one-time charge applied to new construction. *The purpose of the fee is to fund capital projects for roads (such as construction, land acquisition).*

Impact fees can be charged for parks, schools, jails, ambulances and other infrastructure needs that may occur due to new development. Funds collected cannot be used for operation, maintenance, or repair to capital facilities.

Section 20-48 of the Sumter County Code of Ordinances requires that the data upon which road impact fees are calculated be reviewed at least once every five years to ensure that a **valid and equitable basis** for the assessment of such fees is maintained.

The County's FAQ page says that Impact Fees were adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in order to collect money from new development to pay for the new facilities required by growth. New development brings more traffic on our roads and need for fire / rescue services.

Development impact fees are a **financial tool to help reduce the gap between the money required to build new public facilities to serve new residents and the money available for that purpose.**

The last Impact Fee study was completed and passed in 2015. It is a complicated 85- page document that takes an engineer to understand (which this writer is not.) It establishes the fee schedule for every type of residence, commercial, professional and industrial building that is constructed. Page 14 of the study says It is important to note that capacity projects eligible for impact fee funding include not only new construction and lane additions, but also associated intersection improvements, traffic signalization, and other amenities and technology improvements that allow for additional vehicle capacity.”

Options continued from page 17

**The Impact Fees for residential construction (per Dwelling Unit) are:**

- 210 Single Family (Detached) \$2,600
- 220 Multi-Family (Apartment); 1-2 Stories \$1,779
- 230 Residential Condominium/Townhouse \$1,649
- 240 Mobile Home Park \$1,017
- 251 Retirement Community/Age-Restricted Single Family \$901
- 252 Assisted Living Facility \$544

The POA cannot pretend to evaluate the complicated calculations from which these fees are derived. However, the evident question is whether The Villages \$901 fee, at 35% of the single-family residence, is an accurate reflection of the costs associated with the new development. The POA concludes, resoundingly, NO!

Maintenance costs cannot be projected into the establishment of the Impact Fee, so we can't count the resurfacing of Buena Vista, Morse or other roadways, but it is pretty evident that the Buena Vista extensions, and other roadway improvements South of CR 44 are not covered by the Impact Fees.

The question that has not been answered is WHY? If impact fees are supposed to provide gap funding to pay for improvements, then in 2020, when the next Impact Fee Study is conducted and fees are reviewed, there MUST be an adjustment to take the burden from taxpayers throughout Sumter County. If the Developer paid even 50% of the Impact Fee paid on single

family residences – or \$1800 per dwelling – for every 30,000 homes built \$39 Million would come from impact fees. Double that for the projected new 60,000+ homes and the costs are paid for!

Village property owners are right to be angry that these Commissioners and County Administrator have disregarded resident pleas, suggestions, and questions, and have not come forth with explanation of any other scenarios. ■

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*\*Individual responses may vary.*



## Medicare Annual Election Period (AEP) Begins October 15 – What You Need to Know

Medicare's Annual Election Period (AEP), also known as Open Enrollment Period (OEP), is October 15 – December 7 each year. During this time, one needs to review their coverage and make changes needed. If one has a Part D, that needs to be checked every year to make sure all your prescriptions are covered, and you have the best plan to meet your needs. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, you want to verify that your providers will be in the plan the following year. If the providers are not, you can select other providers or change your plan.

Fortunately, there is an invaluable resource available for free consulting called Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE), a program administered through CMS's Department of Elder Affairs. Our local SHINE holds sessions at the Lake Miona, Eisenhower, and Chula Vista and Colony Cottage Recreation Centers during the enrollment period.

Counselors do not make recommendations. "One size does not fit all" and it is very important for each person to review their individual circumstances every year. Spouses will likely NOT have the same needs, and each should look at their plans individually, especially the Part D Prescription Medication Plan.

### There are different "Parts" to Medicare:

Part A (Hospital insurance) covers inpatient care in hospitals, skilled nursing facility care, hospice care and home health care. Part B (Medical insurance) helps cover services from doctors and

other health care providers, outpatient care, home health care, durable medical equipment, and some preventive services. Part C (Medicare Advantage) includes all benefits and services covered under Part A and Part B, is run by Medicare-approved private insurance companies, usually includes Medicare prescription drug coverage (Part D) as part of the plan, and may include extra benefits and services for an extra cost. Part D (Medicare prescription drug coverage) helps cover the cost of prescription drugs, is run by Medicare-approved private insurance companies, may help lower your prescription drug costs and help protect against higher costs in the future.

Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) is from October 15 – December 7. During this period, you MUST make any desired changes to your Plan(s) or wait until the next year's AEP, except in the cases of "life-changing events", which can include a move to another state.

*Medicare continued on page 20*

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# Gardening Spot

## Easy Ornamental Grasses

by Anne Lambrecht Fanatical Gardener mrsanne04@gmail.com

Easy to grow, beautiful and stately, ornamental grasses are a wonderful addition to our southern landscapes. And luckily for us, there are so many cultivars to choose from. Grasses are easy to grow because they can tolerate, and are easily adaptable to, a broad range of environmental conditions such as what we have: dry and wet.

Grasses are a part of large group of flowering plants called monocotyledons—or monocots for short. The largest family in this group are the orchids. True grasses come next and include grains like wheat, corn, and rice, pasture grasses, sugar cane and bamboos. Other groups in this family are palms, bananas, ginger and onions. But instead of getting too technical (and boring) we will call anything that looks like a grass, an ornamental grass. True grasses have evolved to become highly specialized for wind pollination.

The first most important thing to consider when choosing a grass for your garden is the size it will be when it grows up. For instance, many people like the look of Pampas grass—those tall and regal white fluffy plumes look so pretty. But it grows to 8' high and when the seeds in the plumes disburse, they stick to everything. The leaves are sharp as razors and it makes a great hiding place for rodents. And it's just too big for a small garden area. Pampas grass does look handsome, however, in the landscape where there's lots of room.

Other characteristics to look for are color, if the grass is winter hardy, and time of flowering (plumes). The foliage of grasses can come in such wonderful colors from greens, gray, blues and browns to yellows and creams. Ornamental grasses can provide contrasts of color, create an accent or focal point or they can provide subtle contrast colors as background plantings.

Grasses are ever changing and will not keep their original shape or structure during the season. In the spring they appear upright and narrow and may become a vase-shaped plant by summer while flowers in the fall may make the plant

appear more rounded. Each October, I'm sure you've noticed the fluffy pink grass (called Muhly grass) along our roadsides and golf courses. Muhlys are not much to look at in the spring, summer and winter, but that glorious pink fluff is worth having them around. My Garden Buddy has a magnificent Muhly.

Many grasses retain their seed heads for many weeks and even months. The seed heads are where the "flowers" were. Pruning seed heads right after "flowering" is not recommended (plus you'll want the seeds for the birds during winter). Pruning grasses should be done right after winter or early spring, just prior to new growth. Most grasses really do not need pruning at all but sometimes you can see grasses that have been pruned to look like bullet-shaped domes which is the correct way of pruning.

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Call: 352-325-1540

Consider also their texture and feel (fluffy, soft, stiff, curly), movement, and sound they make in the wind and how they look with light shimmering in and out.

In small gardens or space challenged areas, grasses can look sharp in containers with other plants.

Here are some wonderful grasses for our area:

Sand cordgrass—*Spartina bakeri*

Elliot's Love grass—*Eragrostis elliottii*

Fakahatchee grass—*Tripsacum dactyloides*

Muhly grass—*Muhlenbergia capillaries*

Fountain grass—*Pennisetum setaceum*

Lopsided Indiangrass—*Sorghastrum secundum*

Narrowleaf Blue-eyed grass—*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*

Chalky Bluestem—*Andropogon capillipes*

Wire grass—*Aristida stricta*

Northern Seaoats—*Chasmanthium latifolium* ■

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*Medicare continued from page 19*

If you are receiving Social Security, you will automatically be enrolled in Parts A and B at age 65. If you are not receiving Social Security retirement benefits and want Medicare, you need to enroll through the Social Security office or [socialsecurity.gov](http://socialsecurity.gov) 90 days before your birthday month. Otherwise, when you want it, you will have to enroll voluntarily during a Medicare special enrollment period.

**Medicare Supplemental Insurance** (“Medigap Insurance”) is designed to fill coverage (payment) gaps in Original Medicare. It is provided by independent health insurance companies, and while costs may vary, coverage is set by Medicare and cannot vary. (See Medicare Booklet; can be obtained through SHINE).

**Medicare Advantage** (Part C) does not have a supplement but may include the Part D prescription plan. A Medicare Advantage Plan covers everything that Original Medicare covers, but Medicare pays directly to Part C (the insurance company) instead of to the individual.

**Prescription Drug Coverage** (Part D) is available to all people with Medicare and is provided through stand-alone Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (PDP) or Medicare Advantage Plans with Prescription Drug Coverage.

**Be aware of these potential pitfalls:**

- Possible increased out-of-pocket expenses due to no Medigap coverage (Medicare Advantage plans are intended for healthy people)
- If you drop an employer supplemental coverage, it is likely you will not be accepted back into the plan; check your employer plan carefully before you drop it!
- If you drop Original Medicare and go into Medicare Advantage, and then go back to Original with Medigap, your Medigap premium may be higher. Florida is an “age of issue” state, meaning your premium is based on your age at the time you take the coverage.
- If you feel that your out-of-pocket expenses will not go outside of Medicare Advantage deductibles, you may save money by opting into that plan. However, if your circumstances

change, you will have to wait until the AEP to go back to Original Medicare and may incur significant out-of-pocket expenses.

**Be sure to ask yourself these key questions:**  
Does my doctor accept the plan? Are all my drugs covered? Am I covered if I travel outside the area?

**SHINE is your best local resource. Expanded Hours During AEP:**

The Villages Sites-

Chula Vista: Friday 3 – 5:50 P.M. Oct. 4, 18 & 25  
Nov. 1, 8\*, 15 & 22 Dec. 6

\*Nov. 8t 1 – 4 P.M.

Eisenhower: Wednesday 9 – 11:50 A.M. Oct. 2, 16,  
23 & 30 Nov. 6, 13 & 20 Dec. 4

Lake Miona: Tuesday 9 – 11:50 A.M. Oct. 8 & 22  
Nov. 12 Dec. 10

Colony Cottage: Tuesday 9 – 11:50 A.M. Oct. 15 &  
29 Nov. 5 & 19 Dec. 3

Other Locations:

Cooper Memorial Library – Clermont -  
Wednesday 9 – 11:30 A.M. – Oct. 9, 16, 23 & 30  
Nov. 6, 13 & 20 Dec. 11 Downstairs in Room 108a  
or 108b – Read Shine Sign in Front of Door

Eustis Library: Tuesday 1:30 – 3:30 P.M. Oct. 8,  
15, 22 & 29 Nov. 5, 12 & 19 Dec. 3 & 10

Lady Lake Library: Wednesday 2 – 4 P.M. Oct. 9,  
16, 23 & 30 Nov. 6, 13 & 20 Dec. 4 & 11 Room 204  
Upstairs On 2nd Floor

Leesburg Library - Tuesday 9:30 – 11:30 A.M. Oct.  
1, 15, 22 & 29 Nov. 5, 12 & 19 Dec. 3

Mount Dora Library (W. T. Bland) Thursday 1:30  
– 3:30 P.M. Oct. 10, 17, 24 & 31 Nov. 7, 14 & 21 Dec.  
5 & 12

Tavares Library: Thursday 10 A.M. – 12 Noon  
Oct. 10, 17, 24 & 31 Nov. 7, 14 & 21 Dec. 5 & 12

You can always do your own research through Medicare’s website [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov). Other sites that may be helpful are SHINE [floridashine.org](http://floridashine.org), Social Security [socialsecurity.gov](http://socialsecurity.gov) (benefits & options), Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) [opm.gov/insure/health/Medicare](http://opm.gov/insure/health/Medicare). For help with prescriptions: [needymeds.org](http://needymeds.org), [rxassist.org](http://rxassist.org), [pparx.org](http://pparx.org), [goodrx.com](http://goodrx.com). ■

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## Seniors vs. Crime

### Your Right To Post Honest Reviews

Whether your plans include replacing your air conditioning, installing new flooring, riding the range, or taking a cruise, you will probably read customer reviews to learn what people say about their experiences with a business or product. Shoppers benefit from knowing what others have to say. The Consumer Review Fairness Act (CRFA) protects your rights and ability to share your truthful experiences and opinions with others.

Businesses are not always happy to have the truth about their products or services exposed to the public. This is especially true when the consumer's experience may not have been a positive one. Their contracts may seek to limit your ability to share your experiences, especially a negative one. They may also harass you by phone, email or text message in order to get you to withdraw a negative review.

Bridget Small, a Consumer Education Specialist with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), wants consumers to know that the FTC actively enforces the CRFA. It recently sued three businesses (and two of their owners) for violating that law. According to the FTC, the companies used form contracts that barred customers from sharing negative comments and that imposed financial penalties against

customers who did so. Under proposed agreements with the FTC, the businesses — including an HVAC and electrical contractor, a flooring seller, and a company that takes people on horseback rides — will stop using, and will not enforce, those contract provisions. They will also inform people who signed the contracts that the provisions can't be enforced.

The CRFA protects your ability to share your honest opinions about a business's products, services, or conduct in any forum, including online social media. You can publish your honest review even if you say something negative about a business or the services it performed for you. If you have a signed form contract that restricts you from sharing reviews or penalizes you for doing that, the business may not be able to enforce those

restrictions. If a business tries to enforce a restriction or penalty, let the business know about the CRFA, and please report it to the FTC, your state consumer protection agency, and Seniors vs Crime.



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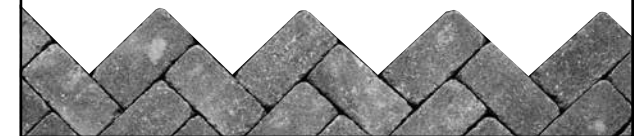
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#### Seniors vs Crime can be reached at:

**The Fruitland Park Police Department Annex in the Moyer Recreation Center in The Villages – (352) 674-1882**

**The Marion County Sheriff's Office in The Villages – (352) 753-7775**

**The Sumter County Sheriff's Office in The Villages – (352) 689-4600, Extension 4606**

**The Wildwood Police Department Annex at Brownwood in The Villages – (352) 750-1914**  
*(temporarily located at the Moyer Recreation Center while the Wildwood Police Department wrestles with repairing fire damage at their main police station).*

Volunteers at all four offices are ready, willing and able to assist you. To keep up with the latest scams, LIKE 'Seniors vs. Crime Region 4' on Facebook. Hablamos Español. Por favor pregunte por Yolanda. Martes a Viernes: 10:00 A.M. a 2:00 P.M., (352) 689 4606. ■





# DISCOUNT PARTNERS

Another benefit for POA members is this Discount Partner program.



Most vendors will ask you for your current POA Membership card to receive the offered discount. If you have a favorite business who is currently not offering a POA Discount, tell them about our program. Please say "thanks" to our Discount Partners for their participation.

The up-to-date list of Discount Partners can always be found on our website [poa4us.org](http://poa4us.org). Click 'Discount Partners' on the left menu.

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Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger was an experienced aviator: a former Air Force F-4 'Phantom' pilot who wrestled military aircraft when engine "flame-outs" happened. Years of training prepared this hero to exhibit unnerving skill when the ultimate situation demanded. With his team of co-pilot and crew, Sully ensured that every passenger would walk (not swim) away from death's door.

Certainly the aircraft on that day was well designed and maintained. But that "bird" did not make the difference: rather, it was the combined knowledge of those professionals strapped within that fuselage. Radiation cancer care truly differs from the portrayal of a treatment machine somehow transformed into a life-saving "craft" whose performance and price tag cause spell-bound viewers to expect something magical to happen: it won't!

Put decisions for care where they count. Let's compare "flight crews" and experience. **The Robert Boissoneault Oncology Institute** (RBOI) has four Villages radiation oncologists whose total expertise approaches 150 years, a nurse practitioner with almost 20 years, three PhD physicists where local competition has none, and 12 physics staff personnel. RBOI continues to hold American College of Radiology accreditation, the most respected recognition awarded a comprehensive cancer center. Since Moffitt's departure, we are now the only radiation facility on The Villages campus with such accreditation...an honor we have attained for over 22 years.

This is your life. Sound medical decisions are only found when you interact with physicians. With that in mind, bring this article to our office, and be scheduled to meet with one of our physicians for a second opinion...without cost.



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