



POA Bulletin



POA4US.org

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UPCOMING POA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

April 19, 2022 | 7 PM

EVERGLADES RECREATION CENTER

Speaker: Honor Flight

May 17, 2022 • 7 PM

LAUREL MANOR RECREATION CENTER

Speaker: Len Hathaway

Lightning Matters

June 21, 2022 • 7 PM

EVERGLADES RECREATION CENTER

Speaker: Candidates Forum

July 19, 2022 • 7 PM

LAUREL MANOR RECREATION CENTER

Speaker: Bradley Arnold

Sumter County Administrator



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UFHealth/The Villages Hospital Recovering from “Crippling” Two Years

Associate Vice President of Emergency Services for UFHealth/The Villages, Linda Cason, told POA members in March that the health system is starting to recover from a crippling two years of COVID and a more recent cyber-attack, but acknowledged that there is much work to be done to “fix” things.

Ms. Cason came to UFHealth four months ago with an extensive background in nursing, health care and emergency departments. She oversees the leadership and emergency departments for The Villages and Leesburg hospitals and the freestanding emergency department on CR 44.

COVID hit just as UFHealth had acquired The Villages Hospital, so all resources were directed to finding places for all of the really sick people. Then came the second and third waves of COVID, and in June 2021 a cyber-attack that left the hospital without any resources or communication. The new Chief Operating Officer Heather Long started the day of the attack. For two years the hospital has been in “survival” mode and is just beginning to recover.

Challenges during that period were the increased volumes of patients, where to put them and safely care for them and others who weren't sick with COVID. Because of the international need for nurses, many left to become travel nurses making significantly more money. The speed and pace of the work resulted in extreme fatigue.

Ms. Cason said that some good has come out of this period, with improved communication and thinking through changes needed to come back from it with a focus on quality and safety.

The new hospital leadership has created a “Mission Motivated Culture” that is patient centered by creating effective strategies to identify problems and barriers to fixing them. The hardest part is in the execution of the strategies, using them consistently and needing a team that is motivated by excellence.

The Priorities and Commitment are to utilize a team focused approach to 1) Elevate Quality, 2) Grow One UF Health, 3) achieve Financial Stability, and 4) create a Service Centric Culture.

Ms. Cason stressed that employees need to feel valued and supported. They have created opportunities for enhanced connection with an intentional focus on recognition utilizing techniques such as “sideline sessions with the COO,” team member rounding, and compensation adjustments. They have also

Hospital continued on page 2

Mission Statement

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.

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.

Goals 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	

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.

The *POA Bulletin* is published monthly by the Property Owners’ Association of The Villages, Inc. Articles represent the opinion of the POA or the writer, and Letters to the POA postings represent the opinions of the writers. Care is taken to ensure that facts reported herein are true and accurate to the best knowledge of the POA and are taken from reliable sources. The POA assumes no liability for any information published, opinions expressed, or delivery to any person or location. The POA does not endorse or recommend the products or services of any advertiser or discount partner. All publication rights are reserved. Publication or reprinting of any material contained herein is by written permission only. The POA reserves the right to remove and/or discontinue any advertisement or advertiser from its *POA Bulletin* at any time at its sole discretion.

Hospital continued from page 1

launched “Leader Essentials” to give leaders the training and skills needed to meet these challenges.

They have also stepped-up recruitment efforts to get staffing levels back to where they need to be by holding more recruitment events, strengthening relationships with area colleges and high schools, and offering competitive wages. They are recruiting internationally and have hired three dozen people from the Philippines who will start later this year.

To elevate care the goal is to improve throughput, decrease mortality rates, and elevate the patient experience.

A new “fast track” area with six beds has been created for patients with lower acuity issues such as sprains. They are seeing 12 – 15 patients daily in this area and 80 daily in the Emergency Department.

Sepsis – an infection inside of the body – is a leading cause of death. Ms. Cason said that every hour that sepsis goes undetected increases the chances of death. Early detection and giving fluids and antibiotics are critical. They are already seeing some improvements in this area.

One of Ms. Cason’s “pet peeves” is how patients are treated. She has responded to numerous calls and feedback and is always ready to hear from patients so improvements can be made. But she said that these kinds of sweeping changes don’t happen overnight, and it takes building the team to improve the results.

There have been seven new leaders at TV Hospital in the last eight months. They are all focused on making patient centered decisions. Ms. Cason has had experience with new COO Heather Long and said, “everything she touches turns to gold.” She described Cheryl Chestnut as a “breath of fresh air” with an Emergency Department background.

Ms. Cason stated emphatically that she knows the history, is going to fix it, and she’s not going anywhere. POA President Cliff Wiener invited her to come back in a year to report on the progress and she enthusiastically agreed.

Questions and Answers

Has there been an improvement in wait times in the Emergency Room? Ms. Cason said they are not there yet but have a “throughput facilitator” whose sole job is to look at every chart to see where the patient is at in the care continuum. Are they still waiting for test results, a bed, to be discharged?

Discharge practices between the primary care and hospital doctors is a major reason beds are not available. What is being done to resolve this process with the doctors?

This will be a challenging area to fix and requires discussions with physicians who also need beds.

How many doctors are on staff at the hospital? There are 400 doctors on staff – not contracted.

Have all of the Emergency Department doctors been replaced and are they ED certified? All Emergency Department physicians are employed by Team Health, a contracted service. Not all are ED certified.

Are appropriate systems now in place to prevent future cyber-attacks? Yes!

When will the same Operating Room staffing models used at Shands Hospital in Gainesville be used here? (*Surgeon, physician assistant, resident, etc.*) This is not her area, so she does not know those plans. ■

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The POA reserves the right to refuse any political advertising or content that is deemed to be inappropriate. ■

Roofs and Homeowners' Insurance – What's Going on in The Villages?

The POA is aware that there have been issues with some residents being dropped by their homeowners' insurance company if they have an aging roof. There have also been issues with solicitors going door to door offering to inspect roofs and replace them, promising homeowners' insurance would pay for it.

Roofs/Insurance continued on page 9

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Breaking News! Developer Submits Plans for Apartments at Katie Belles

As *The POA Bulletin* was going to press, and after interviewing Lady Lake Mayor Jim Rietz, the Developer submitted plans to the Lady Lake Zoning Board for apartments at Katie Belles in Spanish Springs. The plans are for three one-bedroom apartments, four two-bedroom apartments, and sixteen parking spaces.

Here is the process:

Zoning Board will consider the plans a meeting and make a recommendation to the Lady Lake Town Commission.

Lady Lake Town Commission will consider the plans and recommendation at its meeting. They will vote Yes or No on the submitted plans.

At press time it was not known at which meetings the proposal will be considered. The POA will send an email advising residents of any details that come out after publication.

Both meetings are open to the public and residents are encouraged to attend. The meetings are held at 7 PM at the Lady Lake Town Hall, 409 Fennel Blvd.

Q & A with Lady Lake Mayor Jim Rietz Part 1 “Spanish Springs”

The Spanish Springs Town Square in Lady Lake is “where it all began” when The Villages built its first town square with shopping, restaurants, and entertainment. A movie theatre, Katie Belles, and the Church on the Square (now the Sharon Morse Performing Arts Center) were highlights for residents of this newly created retirement mecca. Some residents are beginning to question The Villages’ commitment to the square, seeing the Rialto Theatre “closed for remodeling” for two years and the proposal to convert Katie Belles – once the “residents only” exclusive club – to apartments.

The Town of Lady has had its challenges with agreements with the Developer that had been in place for decades being terminated, being sued by the Developer for turning down the apartments proposal, and getting information about the status of building projects in the Square.

The *POA Bulletin* turned to Lady Lake’s current Mayor for insight. Following is “Part 1” of our interview. In the May issue, we will explore topics of growth and infrastructure.

Jim Rietz was appointed to the Lady Lake Commission December 21, 2020, filling the empty position in Ward 5, and was appointed Mayor on November 15, 2021.

Residents are curious about a number of things related to the Spanish Springs Town Square. First, can you tell us what the relationship is between the Town of Lady Lake and the Town Square? Who is “in charge”?

The Town Of Lady Lake Commission determines the future of the entire town including Spanish Springs Town Square. The Commission has the ability to say Aye and Nay to building permits, rezoning, and other changes that come before us.

Since I’ve been here, there have been changes by the Developer that previous Commissions have allowed to happen. I truly wish, as do all my neighbors to see the old version return. While I have my personal opinions, I will vote the way my constituents want me to vote.

Our Town Manager, Bill Lawrence, has been in contact with the new District Manager Kenny Blocker and has established a good communication path. The first person to congratulate me morning after I was appointed to the Commission was Gary Lester, Vice President of Community Relations for the Villages (the Developer.) The conversation was pretty much general information between both of us. I did share my feelings as our view included Katie Belle’s and the old Church on the Square.

When this Commission turned down the application for changes to Katie Belle’s and more, the Developer sued the town.

Is anything happening with apartments in the Town Square, specifically at Katie Bells?

The Developer dropped off plans last fall and expected to get permits right away. This is my understanding from talking to our Growth Manager Thad Carrol. This is not the way it works. The permit request must go before Planning and Zoning Board and, if they approve, it will come before the Commission. Both of these meetings are important to the residents of Lady Lake. Residents must attend, state the ward they live in, and recommend the board and/or

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Mayor continued from page 5

commission to vote to their recommendations as their representative. Any commissioner who votes differently from the residents they represent needs to be condemned for voting for their personal opinion. These meetings need to have a lot of Lady Lake residents - not only those living in The Villages. I will make sure the residents know when any issues are scheduled to come before the Board or Commission.

What is going on at the Rialto Theater? Residents have been told that because of the way the movie theater business changed during COVID, the Playhouse Theater in Lake Sumter is “meeting the demand.”

The Rialto Theater “remodeling” started before Covid-19 started closing businesses and quarantining the general US public. January 2020, the marquee displayed “The Rialto is now closed for complete renovation.” The remodeling permit expired early in 2021 and has not been renewed. I have been taking pictures of the inside starting early last December after I became Mayor. In a picture I took recently, you can see through a crack in one of the back doors that nothing has changed since I started. The carpet has been removed, the ceiling and walls have new unpainted drywall.

The lights are on in the hallway. I have been in contact with residents living in the villas in back of the theater who will let me know if they see any changes. If I find any construction happening before any permit is issued, I will have our Code Enforcement Officer pay a visit to red tag the building. The same residents are also watching Katie Belle’s for any activity.

Recently, the Villages terminated a contract with the Lady Lake police department for coverage at Spanish Springs. What service did the Lady Lake police provide that it now will not? If there is an incident at Spanish Springs does that mean the Lady Lake police will not come?

The Villages Gary Lester has stated to our Town Manager William Lawrence he would not renew the 30-year agreement to pay for 2 extra police officers at Spanish Springs Town Square. The agreement was signed 27 years ago and provided that The Developer is to pay \$100,000 per year and it was to be renegotiated every year. Mr. Lawrence could not find any previous negotiation by any previous Commission. The cost for the Town Of Lady Lake to provide two officers today is \$180,000. All residents should be aware that while this agreement will end in two years, our

Police Department will not stop servicing Spanish Springs Town Square.

I just want all residents of Lady Lake to know that Police Chief Robert Tempesta will not stand for anything less than great service for our town including Spanish Springs Town Square. Spanish Springs Town Square is in our town and will be protected as it has always been. Once the agreement ends, residents on the square may not see uniformed officers as much as they have, but they are nearby and can be called for any emergency as before by dialing 911.

Are there any other issues at Spanish Springs residents should be aware of or may be interested in?


Tervis store is closing the end of this month. It has been a pillar of the community for 15 years. High rent and demands to keep the store open late are the leading reasons for closing.

I see car shows starting in other squares and I’m concerned about the car show in Spanish Springs Town Square going away. The Developer seems to be focused on expanding to the South forever and it appears to be forgetting the original parts. ■

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In Case You Missed It...News Highlights from March Meetings

The Amenity Authority Committee (AAC) and Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) each held their preliminary budget workshop meetings in March. Departments made presentations about current fiscal conditions and needs for capital spending in the upcoming 2022-23 Fiscal Year.

Sobering news about inflation, wages and increasing costs exceeding inflation and supply chain disruptions made this year's budget discussions more difficult this year. The Developer raised the Amenity Fee Prevailing Rate – the rate at which the amenity fee begins for new homes and homes sold after January 1, 2022 – from \$164 to \$179, which will help offset some of the increased costs. Amenity fees are adjusted by the Consumer Price Index for existing homeowners on their purchase date anniversary.

The AAC is responsible for the Recreation Amenity Division (RAD) budget which spends resident amenity funds on amenity projects North of CR 466 such as Recreation Centers, Pools, Executive Golf Courses, Gates and

Community Watch Services, Common Areas Landscaping and Maintenance, Administrative Services and Public Safety Services, Debt Service and Reserves.

PWAC is responsible for the Sumter Landing Amenity Division (SLAD) budget spending resident amenity funds on amenity project South of CR 466 and North of CR 44.

The Project Wide (PW) Fund pays for Common Infrastructure Maintenance Costs for Community Development Districts (CDD) 5-13 such as Right-of-Ways Landscaping & Lighting, Water Retention Areas, Irrigation, & Drainage, Multi-Modal Paths & Tunnels and Entry Features – Walls, Fountains, & Fences. The PW cost allocation is based upon the proportion of assessable acreage in each District to the total assessable acreage.

Residents have the opportunity to review and make comments on budgets to members of both committees prior to approval of the preliminary budgets in May.

AAC Budget Workshop Paradise Recreation Center

The major item for discussion at the Amenity Authority Committee (AAC) Budget Workshop was the future of Paradise Recreation Center. AAC members wanted to wait until the new First Responders Recreation Center was substantially complete before delving into what will be its most expensive project to date.

Paradise is the oldest Recreation Center in The Villages (38+ Years). It underwent an interior renovation more than 16 years ago in 2006. District Property Manager Bruce Brown estimates \$17-\$20M based on current market pricing. District Property Management has been deferring major maintenance for the past 3+ Fiscal Years pending a decision on renovation.

Mr. Brown presented to two options for consideration, with concept and final design (Bid Documents) estimated to cost \$1.7 Million.

Option 1 would be a major Renovation at a cost of \$18.5 Million and is not recommended.

DPM Recommends Option 2 which is demolition of the entire facility and pool. The rebuild would include a new building, existing site improvements, resort style pool with a gas fire pit, a new parking lot, new furniture, fixtures and IT Systems, new porches, a library addition, and new shuffleboard at Paradise Park, across from the Recreation Center. The cost for Option #2 \$19.5 Million. The dramatic cost difference between the Paradise rebuild and the First Responders Center is because of the sheer size of the Paradise project as well as soaring construction costs due to inflation and supply chain disruptions.

Mr. Brown advised if the project is not executed, Paradise will require extensive maintenance investment. He requested AAC approval to proceed with Proposed Design Options for AAC review & approval.

In Case You Missed It continued on page 8

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In Case You Missed It continued from page 7

Other Major Project Focus Areas presented were:

- \$300K Recreation Center Flooring Replacement.
- \$270K Recreation Center Restroom Renovations.
- \$85K Renovation & Resurfacing of Sports Courts.
- \$180K Renovation & Resurfacing of Pools.
- \$650K Other Recreation Center & Amenity Upgrades & Improvements.
- \$350K HVAC Replacements.
- \$234K Seal and Stripe Recreation Center Lots.
- \$47K Paradise Dog Park Improvements.
- \$400K Recreation Center Wallpaper Projects.
- Cityworks Asset Management Program (Training & Implementation).
- American Public Works Association Credentialing & Accreditation (Multi-Year Initiative).

Director of Golf Mitch Leininger reported that the golf courses at Hill Top and Briarwood have met their useful life expectancies and are in need of revitalizing. Both renovations would encompass an overall renovation including new greens, tees, and fairways, and touch up on bunkers. Further pricing analysis is needed due to the dramatic price increases in the past year. Estimates are Hill Top \$900,000 and Briarwood \$800,000.

PWAC Budget Workshop

Sumter Landing Amenity Division Budget Funding Priorities:

- \$400K Recreation Center Wallpaper Projects.
- \$444K Renovation & Resurfacing of Sports Courts.
- \$554K Renovation & Resurfacing of Pools.
- \$700K Other Recreation Center & Amenity upgrades, improvements & enhancement projects.
- Cityworks Asset Management Program (Training & Implementation).
- American Public Works Association Credentialing & Accreditation (Multi-Year Initiative).

The construction of a unique flexi-pave walking/nature trail 6’ in width, 3500 linear feet in length along the picturesque Black Lake Preserve area of Lake Miona has been the subject of discussion at the regular March PWAC meeting and the budget workshop. The cost started at \$150,000 when initially proposed in 2020 and the FY 2021-22 construction budget estimate was \$380,709. District Property Management (DPM) reported at the March meeting the lowest bid on the project came in at \$767,853. While PWAC members considered delaying the project until inflation decreases, following further discussion at its regular meeting, the Committee directed Staff to negotiate the cost of the project with the contractor in attempt to reduce the cost. However, at the budget workshop, CDD 10 representative and PWAC chair Don Wiley and CDD 11 representative Don Brozik both continued to strongly oppose proceeding.

Executive Golf

Golf Director Mitch Leininger reported that the Churchill Greens Executive Golf course has also met its useful life expectancy and needs for revitalizing. Course renovation would include new greens, tees, fairways and touch up on the bunkers and is currently estimated at \$900,000 with additional pricing analysis needed due to dramatic price increases in the past year.

A serious on-going flooding issue at the Heron Executive Golf Course and is also affecting homeowners nearby has an expected \$100,000 cost to repair was presented. PWAC chair Don Wiley asked PWAC members to move quickly on the repair, stating that they can do a budget resolution if necessary.

Project Wide Fund

This year the District is budgeting for depression/sinkhole repairs versus “as needed” Budget Resolutions or an end of year Budget Resolution. District Property Management (DPM) may request Budget Resolution(s) if budgeted funds are exhausted, based on actual activity & costs.

The District is also continuing the Stormwater Inspection Program throughout all Districts. Acquisition of a “Deep Trekker” will allow for

faster and much lower cost Pipe Inspections complement DPM’s formal external contractor inspection program.

Costs in these major focus areas are \$750K for sinkhole and depression repair projects, \$250K for the stormwater pipe inspection program, and \$250K for cured in place sleeve and pipe repair/replacements.

CDD 7 Continues Quest to Negotiate PWAC 2

Despite receiving a letter from Attorney Kevin Stone representing the Sumter Landing Community Development District (SLCDD) rejecting any further negotiation of the Fourth Amended Interlocal Agreement, Community Development District (CDD) 7 instructed its attorney, Michael Eckert, to ask the SLCDD Board to attend a meeting with them.

Stone’s letter stated that he had provided the Board with a copy of the letter from CDD 7 dated November 19, 2021 regarding the Agreement that would create a second Project Wide Advisory Committee, and that the District does not desire to “organize modification” to the agreement at this time. The letter says the Board has not instructed him to negotiate further and will proceed with the status quo. CDD 7’s Chair Jerry Vicenti said the SLCDD has not shown CDD 7 Supervisors any respect and expressed skepticism that the SLCDD would accept the invitation to meet.

CDD 7 was the lone hold out in signing the agreement.

CDD 7 Attorney Eckert said the board could also ask the State’s Attorney General to render an opinion. ■



Roofs/Insurance continued from page 4

Has this happened to you? The POA is trying to get to the bottom of these practices to determine if they are isolated incidents or are more widespread.

Email TheBulletin@poa4us.org to share your information so we can investigate and provide factual information to others.



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Florida Legislature Approves Fire District Bill

Villagers will decide via referendum November 8



The Florida Legislature passed the bill to create a Independent Fire Control and Rescue District (District) for The Villages in Sumter County, and if signed by the Governor, residents will vote on whether

they want it via referendum on November 8.

In September 2021, the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved maintaining two distinct Fire operations and two distinct EMS transport operations, one in The Villages and one for the rest of Sumter County. In October 2021 the Sumter County BOCC formalized their support for the establishment of a District serving The Villages. “The creation of a District will allow transparency, independent Board oversight in providing more responsive urban services to the residents of The Villages,” said Edmund A. Cain, Fire Chief, The Villages Public Safety Department.

According to Kenneth C. Blocker, District Manager, The Villages Community Development Districts, the boundaries of the District will encompass only the Sumter County portion of The Villages and some surrounding areas of unincorporated Sumter County, as this represents approximately 94% of our fire department’s current response area. The balance of the response areas outside of Sumter County will

be addressed via various inter-governmental agreements and include portions of Marion County, Lake County, Lady Lake, Fruitland Park and the City of Leesburg. The bill also provides the boundaries may be modified, extended, or enlarged upon approval or ratification by the Legislature.

The District is authorized to hold and exercise all powers and duties set forth in Chapters 189 and 191, F.S. The bill restricts the District’s ad valorem taxing authority by requiring a majority of district electors voting in a referendum conducted by the Supervisor of Elections of Sumter County to approve the exercise of such authority. The District is also authorized to exercise other powers regarding the levy and collection of additional non-ad valorem assessments as provided in Chapter 191, F.S.

The bill creates an independent Board of Commissioners for The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District (Fire Control Board). The Fire Control Board consists of five commissioners and is elected, organized, and operated under Chapter 191, F.S. For the inaugural appointment of members, two members shall be appointed to serve an initial term of 2 years each and 3 members shall be appointed to serve an initial term of 4 years each. Thereafter, each member shall be elected for a 4-year term. Each member must be a resident living within the boundaries of the Fire District, according to Mr. Blocker.

Under the statute, fire control districts can levy ad valorem taxes on property. However, the bill provides for a referendum in November to limit taxes to not exceed 1 mil.

The referendum of qualified electors residing within the District is anticipated to be held on November 8, 2022. The bill provides a ballot question for the referendum. The ballot question provides for a blend of revenue sources to assure fairness, caps any ad valorem taxes at 1 mil and annual non-ad valorem assessments at \$124.00 per parcel plus \$0.75 per \$1,000 of value of improvements thereon. Unless the majority of the electors in the affected area vote to approve the creation of the District, the substance of the bill will not go into effect.

According to Chief Cain, The Villages Public Safety Department responded to over 24,000 Incidents in the 2021 – 22 Fiscal Year. 70% of those Incidents were Rescue and Emergency Medical Service calls for incidents such as Medical Emergencies, Medical Assists, Motor Vehicle Crashes, and Extrication. 17% of the Incidents were Service calls, such as persons in distress, water leaks, smoke/smell of smoke, and smoke detector assistance. The other 13% of the Incidents were calls related to Fires, Hazardous Conditions, False Alarms, Good Intent, and Severe Weather.

Chief Cain said “I believe there is good recognition in our community that this is a smart way to move toward improved and more urban EMS transport and fire protection. Of course, we will continue to work to inform so our electors can decide in November.”

Fire District Bill continued on page 13

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Following are FAQs provided by The Villages District Government. A spreadsheet that provides examples of the financial impact on various residential and commercial properties can be found on the District’s website **DistrictGov.org**.

What is an Independent Special Fire Control District (District)? Chapter 191 of Florida State Statutes provides for the establishment of independent fire control districts to provide greater uniformity in operations, financing, communication and elected governance specific to fire and medical transport services. There are currently 54 independent special fire control districts throughout the State of Florida.

How are Independent Special Fire Control Districts Created? The process for establishing a District is outlined in Chapter 191 of Florida State Statutes. The District must be approved by our Legislature, signed off on by the Governor, and, in the case of The Villages, placed on the General Election ballot for residents to vote on. As presented during the 2022 Legislative Session, the bill provides for the establishment of The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District

What is the reason to create an Independent Special Fire Control District in The Villages? In September 2021, the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved to maintain two distinct Fire operations and two distinct EMS transport operations. Furthermore, in October 2021 the Sumter County BOCC formalized their support for the establishment of a District serving The Villages. The creation of a District will allow transparency, independent Board oversight in providing more responsive urban services to the residents of The Villages.

How will an Independent Special Fire Control District benefit The Villages? A Chapter 191 independent special fire control district will be a more efficient and effective means to supply the availability of professional fire protection, suppression, and prevention services as well as more responsive emergency rescue, medical, and transport services. The District will provide the self-governance

and autonomy that better focuses on our planned community and independent financial sustainability of the services to The Villages, and surrounding areas.

Other benefits, to name a few, will include better risk ratings by insurers and a recognized and more equitable and proportional sharing of costs among the variety of properties served.

What are the specific boundaries of The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District? The proposed boundaries of The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District encompass only the Sumter County portion of The Villages and some surrounding areas of unincorporated Sumter County, as this represents approximately 94% of our fire department’s current response area. The balance of the response areas outside of Sumter County will be addressed via various inter-governmental agreements and include portions of Marion County, Lake County, Lady Lake, Fruitland Park and the City of Leesburg.

When will The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District begin providing services? The formal establishment of the District is contingent upon final passage by

Fire District Bill continued on page 14

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LIGHTNING MATTERS By Len Hathaway**A look back at the 2021 lightning experience nationally and locally and a look ahead to the 2022 lightning season**

Good News! A record was set last year as only 11 fatalities were recorded in the US breaking the 2017 record low of 16 deaths. Ten of the 11 were male. We have come a long way since the early 1940s where the US typically experienced over 400 fatalities a year. The awareness campaigns of numerous organizations over the years to educate the public about the hazard of lightning is paying off.

Florida continues to be the Lightning Capital of the Nation. Of the 11 fatalities four occurred in Florida - a roofer and two on a beach. The fourth occurred on a golf course. In fact, we had three fatalities on a golf course last year (FL, NJ, PA) after going three years with none.

Here in The Villages the number of days with lightning was down to 95 – below the eight-year average of 108 lightning days. The most significant lightning experience occurred in Monarch Grove in June when a home took a direct hit opening a two-foot hole in the roof but fortunately no ensuing fire. There were seven nearby nearly simultaneous strikes totaling 300,000 amps. About 30 homes experienced lightning induced

surges to appliances and electronics causing several thousand dollars in damage. There were no reported injuries.

Twenty homes have been either destroyed or rendered uninhabitable due to direct lightning strikes since 2004 and none since 2020.

The Villages Public Safety Department responded to 17 lightning events in 2021 – four less than the previous year. Two homes experienced holes in the roof but no fire, several experienced electronic damage including one where the thermostat was blown off the wall, while others experienced strikes to nearby trees.

If your club, organization, church, or civic group would benefit from a free non-commercial educational Power Point presentation, Lightning Tips for Villagers that addresses personal lightning safety, lightning surge protection for appliances and high-valued electronics, lightning protection systems, and debunking ten common lightning myths contact Len Hathaway at LHatha@aol.com or Frank Criste at psubull@aol.com. ■

Fire District Bill continued from page 13

the Florida Legislature, the Governor and then favorable approval by the areas residents during the 2022 General Election in November.

Who will serve on the Board for The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District? Once the District is formed, the District shall be governed by a Board consisting of five members initially appointed to staggered terms by the Governor and thereafter elected by registered voters in the District. Members must be residents living within the boundaries of the Fire District.

How will The Villages Fire Control and Rescue District be funded? For those residential and commercial properties in the boundaries of the District, a blend of non-ad valorem assessments, utilizing the 'Simplified Fire funding approach, and a limited amount of ad-valorem assessments will be utilized.

For properties outside of the boundaries of the District, various agreements are in place to ensure funding for services.

Will Residential and Commercial be charged the same? Yes, all parcels, both commercial and residential, within the District boundaries will be charged utilizing the same proportionate methodology. The methodology has been approved by the courts, and updates automatically each year as parcels change.

How do residents of the District boundaries currently pay for fire services? Under the current governance, The Villages Public Safety Department (VPSD) receives funding through a fire district municipal services benefit unit (MSBU) created by Sumter County for the service area of the VPSD. There is a transfer of funds from Sumter County to the Villages Community Center Development District (VCCDD) for contracted fire protection services. The funds that make up the transfers are currently a mix of a \$124 per rooftop non-ad valorem assessment (NAVA) and funds from the County General Fund. The current estimate of ad valorem property taxes received from Sumter County is .58 mills and will increase to an estimated .71 mills when the SAFER grant expires September 30, 2023.

Fire District Bill continued on page 15

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Fire District Bill continued from page 14

How much will be charged with the advent of the new The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District? The proposed The Villages Independent Fire Control and Rescue District would generate revenue with the allowance of up to one (1) mill in ad valorem tax assessments, and the simplified, non-ad valorem assessment of a \$124 fixed rate per parcel in one tier combined with \$0.75 per \$1000 of relative improvement value in (market or 'just' value minus land value) in a second tier.

Approval of the referendum will mean only the non-ad valorem tiers, by law, can increase annually by the growth in Florida personal income over the previous 5 years. However the one (1) mill ad valorem limit will not change. ■

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Sumter County Elections...



On Friday, March 18, Governor Ron DeSantis, by way of a brief press release posted to his website, announced two people to “fill in” for the two Sumter County Commissioners he suspended.

Diane Spencer, who currently serves on the North Sumter County Utility Dependent District (NSCUDD), and Roberta Ulrich were sworn into the seats held by Oren Miller and Gary Search. Ms. Spencer has resigned her position on the NSCUDD Board. Both appointees have stated they plan to run for re-election when their terms are completed.

After disassociating herself from the Developer, Ms. Ulrich asked for a workshop to discuss taking the repeal of the Developer’s “One Sumter” voting plan off the ballot in November. A workshop will be held on April 5 and Commissioners will likely vote on any proposal at their meeting on April 12. This will ensure that if either of the two suspended commissioners regains his seat, the replacements will be part of the voting block against allowing voters to weigh in on the measure in November. The question the POA has is “why not let the voters decide how officials are elected?”

A hearing was held on March 25 to determine whether charges against the two suspended commissioners would be dropped. The charges were not dropped so the cases will now move to trials. The two appointed candidates have indicated they will have run for re-election. We are working to clarify this process.

In other political news, the chair of the Sumter County Republican Party, John Temple, has filed the necessary paperwork to run for the new District 52 seat of the Florida House of Representatives, which includes Sumter and part of Hernando counties. The new district includes District 33, currently held by Villages Developer employee Brett Hage. Does this signal that Mr. Hage will not be seeking re-election?

One less person is running for the Sumter County District 5 seat. Billy Bowles has announced he has dropped out of the bid. ■

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by Anne Lambrecht Fanatical Gardener

I never saw a bulb I didn’t love. We Florida gardeners are blessed with bulbs. Bulbs can be a gorgeous addition to any landscape. With a little care when planting, bulbs will flower beautifully for years. But the number of bulbs here in North Central Florida is so great, the choice is not easy!

Bulbous plants have thickened underground storage units which enable them to survive unfavorable environmental conditions. There are basically five main structures we know as bulbs: True Bulb (has paper sheath), Corm, Tuber, Tuberous roots, and Rhizomes.

The bed preparation is critical for successful bulbs. Soil should be amended with lots of organic matter and well-drained soil is a must. Plant with “points” up, firm the soil around and water generously making sure drainage is not an issue, especially during growth and flowering. Fertilize once or twice during growing season with slow release.

Many bulbous plants grow best if left in the ground year after year while others may become crowded and bloom poorly. Digging and replanting usually encourages more uniform flowering and larger flowers.

Here are some examples of bulbous plants that will do well in our area:

Agapanthus - Rhizome

a/k/a Lily of the Nile. Organic Soil, Flowers best in full sun to partial shade. Likes to be crowded. Blooms in summer/early autumn.

Amaryllis - True bulb

Organic soil, tend to “sink” so dig up and replant every 2 years. Full and part sun. Blooms in spring but can be “forced” to bloom other times of the year. Amaryllis Belladonna is also known as “Bare Naked Ladies” because there are no leaves.

Butterfly lily – ginger family – Rhizome

Likes moist, organic soils. Partial sun/shade blooms in spring/summer.



Caladium - Tuber

Caladium - Tuber

Plant from Feb-May to bloom in summer to autumn. Grown for colored foliage. Some bred for sun; plant most in partial sun, shade. Leave tubers in ground here. Fertilize every 2-3 weeks during active growth.

Calla Lily - Rhizome

Blooms in spring. Plant in full sun to partial shade. Can remain in ground. Soil should be kept moist. The white ones can live in water.

Canna - Rhizome

Blooms May to first frost. Full sun to partial shade. Flower colors red, yellow orange. Divide and share aggressive rhizomes.

Crinum Lily - True bulb

Plant any time of the year but winter best. Blooms spring and summer. Full sun to partial shade. Blooms white to deep rose. Soil should be well drained although established plants can tolerate flooding. Can be grown as a potted plant. Many species are native to Florida.

Crocsmia – corm

Soils should be amended with organic matter at planting time. Tends to spread.

Daffodil – True Bulb

Narcissus, paperwhite, tazetta (means little cup)

Day Lily - Tuberous root

Blooms spring and summer. Plant in full sun to partial shade. Roots can be left in soil for 5-10 years. Varieties number in the thousands.

Elephant ear – Rhizome

Alocasia, Colocasia Plant full sun to light shade Sept-Dec. Grown for its large leaves. May be killed to the ground by frost. Moist soil essential.

Gladiolus - Corm

Plant any time of year in frost-free areas. Blooms 3 months after planting. Full sun. Many colors. Soils should be amended with organic matter at planting time. Corms should be dug when foliage begins to yellow.

Gloriosa Lily - Tuber

Blooms March through early fall. Plant in full sun to partial shade. Blooms crimson and yellow orange. Plants should be trellised.

Iris – Rhizome

Louisiana and African. Full sun, lots of water and can be grown in water.

Kaffir Lily - Tuberous root

(Clivia miniata) likes shade.

Rain Lily - True bulb

(Zephyranthes) native. Plant any time of year. Full and part sun. Plenty of water.

Voodoo Lily – Tuber

Amorphophallus. Very weird and stinky bloom like giant Jack-in-Pulpit.

Bulbous plants are susceptible to damage by many diseases and pests but if planted in the right place with good soil amendments and good drainage, full sun, these maladies are not so evident. I have never had a problem with bulbs at all but my soil is very rich which maybe is the key to success with bulbs.

Sources: Brent & Becky’s Bulbs and International Bulb Society

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The Dark History of Medicare Privatization



I plan to give a free lecture in the near future addressing the abuse private insurers have plundered with their substitute/alternative plans for Medicare. For those who have heard me speak, I don't hold back. I invite any insurers representing such plans to debate me during my presentation. Examples of care denied, as well as those favorably supported, will become very clear. Once I summarize, we all will be much more knowledgeable (and "less conned").

Health tomorrow depends on decisions today. Don't give your life away!

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