



POA eBulletin



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Updating Our Communications FOR YOU!

The POA is excited to announce that we will publish a mid-month electronic Bulletin when needed!

News happens quickly and we want to be sure our members are getting up to date and ACCURATE information. Other print media can be misleading...be assured, our news will be accurate and objective!

We will publish our eBulletin mid-month, and will also post to our website. We are here to serve you!

Upcoming POA General Membership Meetings

December 19, 2023 • 7 pm

Laurel Manor Recreation Center

Speaker: Steve Lapp

Topic: Cutting the Cord

January 4, 2024 • 7 pm

Everglades Recreation Center

Speaker: Chief Brian Twiss

The Villages Fire Department

Topic: Update on Special Fire District



Donuts & Coffee will be available at the POA General Membership Meetings

Sumter County Commissioners Choose Fire District Board



The Sumter County Commissioners, following the selection process it had established, chose five members to serve on the first Board of Supervisors for the as-yet-to-be-created Villages Special Dependent Fire District. A public hearing will be held on the ordinance to establish the Special District at the Commission meeting on November 28. That meeting will begin at 6 pm and will be held at the Everglades Recreation Center.

Four of the five members selected were on the list submitted by The Villages District Manager Kenny Blocker. The only person not selected from his list was Fred Briggs, past chair of the VHA.

Serving 3-year terms are:

Stephen Bogle, retired Brigadier General with the Iowa National Guard and former executive officer of the Iowa Department of Public Safety.

Chris Christopolos, Senior Manager of Fire Protection Services for Universal Parks and Resorts and a former Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director from New Hampshire.

Dr. Kathleen Gowin, a banking consultant with a 40-year career in finance.

Serving 1-year terms are:

John Dean, a 40-year firefighter with 14 years as State Fire Marshall for Maine.

Dr. Maryanne Scott, a private practice physician who later become a vice president and medical director for a multi-specialty group in Washington state.

The Special Dependent Fire District would be created by an ordinance passed by the Sumter County Commissioners in accordance with Chapter 189 of the Florida State Statute. The proposed ordinance gives the new District several powers, including:

*"w. **The right to determine, order, levy, impose, collect and enforce non-ad valorem special assessments** to construct, operate, and maintain those District facilities and services provided pursuant to the powers described in this Ordinance, which shall constitute a lien on the property against which assessed from the date of imposition thereof until paid, coequal with the lien of state, county, municipal, and school board taxes; provided however, any special assessments that may be levied must be collected via the uniform method of collection prescribed in Section 197.3632, Florida Statutes.*

*x. **The right to levy and assess ad valorem taxes on all taxable property in the District** to construct, operate and maintain district facilities and services, to pay the principal of, and interest*

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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.

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on, general obligation bonds of the district, and to provide for any sinking or other funds established in connection with such bonds. **An ad valorem tax levied by the District may not exceed 0.75 mills or a millage authorized by law approved by vote of the electors therein, whichever is less.** Such tax shall be assessed, levied, and collected in the same manner as county taxes.”

The ordinance also provides that the Sumter County Commissioners will have oversight of the budget of the new district.

“No later than each July 15, the District’s final proposed budget shall be delivered to the County Administrator of the County. For any fiscal year for which the District does not propose to directly levy an ad valorem tax, the District may include with its proposed budget for that fiscal year a request that the County Commission levy an ad valorem tax which will produce revenues in an amount not to exceed 0.75 mills on the assessed taxable value of real property within the District as certified by the County Property Appraiser. The County Commission shall consider the requested

amount in determining, in accordance with Section 200.065, Florida Statutes, its millage for County General Fund or Municipal Service Taxing Unit ad valorem taxes levied with respect to real property within the District, with the intent that the County Commission will transfer the revenues arising from the millage that was imposed at the District’s request, if and when collected, to the District. The budget for the District shall be approved or vetoed by the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners no later than the September 15 immediately following delivery of the same to the County Administrator. The District shall operate in accordance with the provisions of its last approved budget until such time as the subsequent budget or amended budget is approved by the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners.”

It is possible that the new board could have an organizational meeting as soon as sometime in December if the ordinance passes on November 28. The POA will keep residents apprised of meeting dates and locations.

The new Special Fire District will be #1 on the POA’s Watch List for 2024. ●



JOIN THE POA TODAY!

The POA – Champions of
Residents’ Rights Since 1975

Appellate Panel of Judges Overturns Conviction of Former Sumter County Commissioner Oren Miller

An Appellate Court panel of judges has overturned the 2022 conviction of former Sumter County Commissioner Oren Miller on perjury charges stemming from phone calls he had with former Sumter County Commissioner Gary Search, who also faced perjury charges. Both Miller and Search were removed from their Commission seats by Governor Ron DeSantis, **prior to any conviction ever occurring.**

The charges against Mr. Search were eventually dropped. Mr. Miller spent both Thanksgiving and Christmas in the Sumter County jail last year after he was convicted by a jury on November 18.

Mr. Miller told POA President Cliff Wiener he was “elated” to be vindicated of the charge.

The Appellate Court panel found that Mr. Miller had been truthful and forthcoming during interviews and attempted to clarify the record, prior to being prosecuted. They said that “allowing an individual to clarify or correct previous false or erroneous statements advances the core of judicial function...Florida law has long recognized this enduring principal.”

They also noted that the statement on which Mr. Miller’s perjury charge was made was taken out of context. “A charge of perjury may not be sustained by the device of lifting a statement of the accused out of its immediate context and thus giving it a meaning wholly different than that which its context clearly shows.”

Finally, the ruling is clear:

“Accordingly, since Miller’s sworn statement viewed as a whole is insufficient to support the perjury conviction, we REVERSE the judgment and sentence, VACATE Miller’s conviction, and REMAND with instructions that the trial court enter a judgment of not guilty in favor of Miller.

One piece of justice has been served. Now Mr. Miller is entitled to full restitution for lost wages and benefits, legal expenses, and even his seat on the Board of Commissioners if that is what he wants. The POA endorsed Mr. Miller and remained confident that his conviction would be overturned. Unfortunately, nothing can atone for the time lost with his family, the unnecessary personal expenses incurred, or the damage to his reputation. ●



Stay Connected for the latest Announcements and to watch Membership meetings livestreamed!

We have 1,603 total page likes and 2,035 total page followers!

The POA now livestreams its meetings so residents can either attend in person, watch live from home or at a time more convenient. You will hear all parts of the meeting – announcements, open forum Q & A, and the program. **You will always be connected to your POA!**

Type **POA of the Villages FL** in the search on Facebook and you will find our page. Click **LIKE** and or **FOLLOW**, and then, suggest our page to all of your friends and neighbors that live in **The Villages!** Meetings and relevant information will be posted on a timely basis. *Please continue to send questions or comments via email or call the POA at (352) 418-7372.* ALL content will be monitored by the Administrator and posts containing opinion or debate will be removed. ●

VHA/Daily Sun Attempt to Manipulate Readers Setting the Record Straight – Again

Once again, *The Villages Daily Sun*, a.k.a., the Developer’s newspaper, in an article published on November 12 attempted to blame the POA for insisting on a fair process to select members of the appointed Board of Supervisors for the soon-to-be-created Villages Special Dependent Fire District. The Sumter County Commissioners received 25 applications from residents interested in serving on the Board. They considered those applications on Tuesday, November 14, at the Commission meeting.

In an article published on November 12, *The Daily Sun* cited the “established process” as being that the District Manager would vet and recommend candidates. While that may have been true in the past, the current Board of Commissioners had not identified a process before the District’s candidates were presented. County Administrator Bradley Arnold presented three scenarios that have been used in the past. Commissioner Andy Bilardello said they didn’t need to be “spoon-fed” candidates.

The article also cited the VHA – known to be a Developer-puppet organization – as having to “counter the misinformation campaign” by the POA.

Imitation is the highest form of flattery, as the saying goes. The POA has regularly had to “counter the misinformation campaigns” waged by the Sun and the VHA. In this case, their attempts to discredit the POA are feeble and laughable as they once again manipulated the words of the POA to create their own misinformation.

They say the POA summarily rejected the five candidates that were submitted by District Manager Kenny Blocker. This is categorically FALSE INFORMATION. The POA did not reject any of the candidates. It simply asked that they be considered with any other applicants.

They apparently also took the POA’s characterization that Mr. Blocker was attempting to usurp the process as an affront. However, while *The Daily Sun* and the VHA believed there to be an established process, clearly the Sumter County Commissioners did not agree. Usurp means “to seize or exercise authority wrongfully.” It seems that is what was attempted.

Does the POA believe that Sumter County oversight will be needed for this new board? The answer could not be more clearly YES, due to the continued machinations of the VHA. Until this new board is seated and can demonstrate that it will act in the best interests of the residents, there must be accountability.

They went on to say that the POA said the VPSD’s numbers in 2022 couldn’t be trusted. We assume they are referring to the formula that was used in the referendum question to determine the Special Independent Fire District. In fact, the POA asked questions that were never answered. Specifically, the POA wanted to know the full range, based on a budget, of what the cost to residents could be. These questions remain. Was there a \$34 million budget on which the estimates were given? If so, the POA was never given that information. To settle this question, we suggest *The Daily Sun* and the VHA go back to the District and get the actual figures based on the budget that was presented to the County instead of purporting the measure to save “most homeowners” more money. The POA would be happy to have an answer to this question once and for all.

The POA did not endorse any candidates for appointment to the Fire District Board. Its only purpose was to provide factual information to property owners they serve and advocate for a fair process. Period. And the POA actually trusts people to make up their own minds without attempting to manipulate them into believing half-truths or outright falsehoods. ●



In Case You Missed It...Highlights from November Meetings

New Paradise Recreation Center Rendering



District Unveils Paradise Elevations

People in attendance at the November meeting of the Amenity Authority District (AAC) were treated to District Property Manager Bruce Brown unveiling the finished plans for the new Paradise Recreation Center. He highlighted many of the features including the new and expanded library, the back porch with stunning views of the water and the resort style pool.

Mr. Brown reported to the AAC that the initial design phase is complete and the project will be ready to go out for bids soon. They are currently completing site plans and coordinating with SECO and District Utilities to relocate and pull power underground. They will be moving to the Construction Design Phase, as well as hardscapes and landscape designs.

Once the District finalizes the detailed design phase, they develop construction bid documents and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the bid phase.

Purchasing and District Property Management (DPM) will return with the recommended construction contract award to AAC and VCCDD to formally approve and execute the demolition and construction contract, with construction complete in Spring 2025.

Elevation view boards will be on display at Paradise Recreation Center for Resident viewing. DPM will be working with Parks and Recreation on communication to residents about relocating activities well in advance of demolition.

PWAC Gives Go-Ahead for Morse Bridge Island Revetment

After approximately seven years, the Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) gave the final green light for the Morse Bridge Island Shoreline project. The issue of erosion on the island came to light shortly before Hurricane Irma hit in 2017. After the significant rainfall from that event, the water levels in Lake Sumter were too high for the work to proceed. At the time a more costly solution had been approved.

Fast forward a few years and then-District Manager Richard Baier suggested that PWAC look at other options he was aware of that could be less costly and just as effective. A product called "ripraf" (rubble/rock) and a material to hold it in place can be used, and the Sumter Landing Community Development District (SLCDD) has agreed to donate the material, saving PWAC approximately \$400,000.

PWAC agreed to recommend awarding the \$1.2 million contract, despite the information that there has been no further shore erosion detected. However, the majority believed that there is no way to project the future and after years of waiting the work should be done.

Assistant District Manager Bruce Brown advised that the work would likely take about six months, and would begin during the busy season after the first of the year. He said there will be some disruption of traffic as materials are being delivered but hoped to minimize impact as much as possible.

Residents on the Hook for Rohan and Burnsed Recreation Repairs

The Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) recommended approval to spend \$525,636 for the installation of underdrain piping systems within the Burnsed tennis courts and the Rohan tennis, platform tennis and pickleball courts. The new under-drain systems will be connected to the existing drainage system with the purpose of improving the overall draining condition of the sports courts.

During a routine inspection of the sport courts, it was noted that the sport courts asphalt surface had begun to develop cracks and blistering of the courts surface. The cracking and blistering had caused the asphalt to rise in numerous areas and become detached from the courts limerock base, leaving the courts unplayable. District staff consulted and retained Andreyev Engineering Inc. to conduct a Geotechnical Engineering Investigation to determine the cause of the cracking and blistering. The geotechnical investigation determined that the excessive moisture just beneath the asphalt court surfaces with extreme heat was creating the observed cracking and blistering.

PWAC members expressed concerns about engineering studies that should have detected that the area could be subject to excessive moisture. They were assured that such engineering work was done, and nothing was noted at the time of the initial installation. The Developer has been made aware so that the location of such outdoor courts is looked at more carefully. ●