



POA Bulletin



POA4US.org

OCTOBER 2023

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Upcoming POA General Membership Meetings

October 17, 2023 • 7 pm

Laurel Manor Recreation Center

Speaker: Captain Robert Siemer
Sumter County Sheriff's Department
Law Enforcement Update

November 21, 2023 • 7 pm

Laurel Manor Recreation Center

Topic: Solar Panels

December 19, 2023 • 7 pm

Laurel Manor Recreation Center

Topic: Cutting the Cord

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

Process for Dependent Fire District Moves Ahead



At the meeting on September 19, Sumter County Commissioners directed the County Administrator to move forward to prepare an ordinance that will create a Special Dependent Fire District. That district will be governed by a separate Board with tax levying authority, much like the North Sumter County Dependent Utility District (NSCUDD). (See article on page 21.)

Three proposals for appointing candidates to the Board were presented. Commissioners decided to use the same process already established for committees and boards, where applications will be received from residents within the fire service area regardless of the Commissioner District boundaries and considered by the Board as a whole to determine the five appointees for the dependent fire district. Two members will serve a one-year term and will have to run for the position in 2024. Three members will serve 3-year terms.

Applications will be accepted through October 31. Residents may apply online at sumtercountyfl.gov/apply.

Prior to the Commission meeting, The Villages District Manager Kenny Blocker submitted a list of his five "preferred" candidates. It came as no surprise that at least four of the five candidates have direct or indirect ties to the VHA, the Developer's bought-and-paid-for puppets who espouse themselves to be advocates for homeowners. It was also no surprise that Mr. Blocker did not contact POA President Cliff Wiener to ask if he had any input on potential members for the new board.

Fred Briggs, past president of the VHA, was quoted in the Developer's *Daily Sun* (see article on page 8) as "finding solutions that would not damage businesses..." Nothing was said about any burden on homeowners. Mr. Briggs leads Mr. Blocker's list of VHA affiliated "preferred" board members.

All five of Mr. Blocker's candidates submitted applications before the Sumter County Commissioners meeting and before a process had been defined. Fortunately, the Commissioners, with Commission Chair Craig Estep absent from the meeting due to hospitalization, rejected a motion made by Vice Chair Roberta Ulrich and initially supported by Don Wiley, to accept the puppet Board and opened the process for all residents in the proposed territory to apply. Both Ms. Ulrich and Mr. Wiley were appointed by Governor DeSantis and have shown their support for the business community not paying its fair share. Commissioner Andrew Bilardello, who the POA endorsed in his bid for the Commission Seat in 2022, said he did not think they needed to be "spoon-fed" a list of candidates by the District. "There may be better people out there," he said. ●

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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.

Property Tax Appraiser Joey Hooten

At its second POA Membership Meeting in September, Property Tax Appraiser Joey Hooten and his staff presented information about how property taxes are appraised for tax purposes. Mr. Hooten said that education is important because property tax appraising is tricky. He cannot go out and do as he chooses; he is governed by state statutes. He cautioned that misinformation is dangerous and that if residents ever have any questions they can call and speak directly to him.

There are two types of appraisals – fee and mass. Fee appraisals are conducted by independent appraisers for banks to ensure that the property being purchased is worth what is being paid or financed. They are based on “highest and best use.” Those appraisals have nothing to do with appraisals for tax purposes.

Mass appraisals are conducted by Mr. Hooten’s office and are based on categories of properties. He said there may be five levels of value and they kick out the top and bottom values and settle somewhere in the middle. Mr. Hooten’s Chief Deputy, Shauna Jordan, said mass appraisals are based on “like” homes and fair market value (purchase price).

The real estate market that has been at all-time highs since 2019 is starting to show signs of slowing but is still performing at high levels:

2019 6,991 sales

2020 7,453

2021 10,782

2022 9,320

Mr. Hooten said that in the last 18 months, 1,685 properties that have sold multiple times sold between \$100,000-\$500,000 higher than the previous sale. He said the Sumter County Assessor’s office certifies an average of 92-93% of the total assessed value. Anything less than 90% is not accepted by the State. Since 2013 assessed values have increased by \$12,807,050,760 – that is \$12.8 BILLION!

The appraiser’s office does not set taxes; that is the job of the county commissioners. The assessor’s office provides the assessment on which the taxes are based.

Ms. Jordan explained how the Assessor’s office website – sumterpa.com – has been redesigned and can be used. It is searchable by address, name, or parcel number. It can generate sales “comparables” by price, size, location, and many other criteria. It can estimate taxes based on types of exemptions and has a popular map feature.

There are many myths about tax exemptions.

1. You have to live in Florida/The Villages 6 months and one day to get the Homestead exemption. **FALSE.** You have to have closed on the purchase of your home by January 1 in order to get the exemption for that year.
2. There is an age requirement for Homestead exemption. **FALSE.** You can get a 65+ exemption if you meet certain income requirements.
3. You don’t have to re-apply for Homestead when you buy a new house. **FALSE.** You have to make a new Homestead application when you sell and purchase a new home. The Homestead exemption does not follow you to your new home, but you can transfer your Portability (Save Our Home) if you have sold your home within the last three years.
4. You need a Florida Driver’s license or Florida ID and a Florida registered vehicle (if you have

Tax Appraiser continued on page 3

Tax Appraiser continued from page 2

one) to apply and qualify for the Homestead exemption in Sumter County. **TRUE.**

5. You cannot have an "out-of-state" Homestead exemption anywhere else in Florida or in another state if you wish to receive a Homestead exemption in Sumter County. **TRUE.**
6. Sumter county does have an additional \$15,000 (per BOCC adopted ordinance) "65 and older "Exemption" for "low income" families whose household income does not exceed \$35,167 Adjusted Gross Income. **TRUE.**

Portability allows you to transfer up to an additional \$500,000 of Homestead Portability, also known as the Save Our Home credit. They will ask you at the Property Appraiser's office if you have any portability so the application can be filled out at the same time as the Homestead Exemption. It is intended to help keep the property taxes from going up when property sales values have been running up. Form DR-501T is very detailed and anyone who was on the deed of the home has to sign the form. Ms. Jordan said it is a more valuable asset than the Homestead exemption itself.

Tax Appraiser continued on page 4

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Tax Appraiser continued from page 3

There are 25 days from the time you receive your TRIM (Truth in Millage) notice to file a petition with the Value Adjustment Board (VAB). Mr. Hooten said that they sent out more than 93,000 TRIM notices and only received 58 petitions. Most counties in the area get hundreds. There were only 2 residential petitions and none in The Villages. Mr. Hooten promised that if they get it wrong, they will fix it. If they don’t think they got it wrong, the Magistrate will decide.

There was much more information to present, but time did not permit at the meeting. The full presentation will be posted on the POA website.

Residents had many good questions.

Fair Market Value is the amount it would sell for on the open market. Is it fair to say that assessments would be based on all sales?

No, it is based on “like” homes. Each type is given a style code and it may be based on age.

The property tax appraiser doesn’t have anything to do with levying or collecting taxes. Isn’t it true that the total assessed value does impact the overall tax rate that all properties are levied?

Yes.

Will another TRIM notice be sent since the Fire Assessment Fee has changed?

No, another notice will not be sent.

Editor’s Note: The TRIM notification of the proposed Fire Assessment Fee that was denied was based upon the change the Commissioners were contemplating. The public hearings were required by law. Since the proposed rate was not passed, the Commissioners reverted to the maximum rate that had already been allowed, going up from \$124 to \$125, which did not require a second notice or public hearing.

Does Sumter County have Title Theft Protection?

Ms. Jordan referred residents to the Clerk of the Court’s office.

When will tax rates be certified?

They will be certified and sent to each taxing authority on October 2. They have 3 days to get back to the appraiser and then she can certify. Mr. Hooten said their valuation is not going to change.

How do you ensure that all properties are fairly and equitably appraised and there aren’t any outliers?

There are always outliers in mass appraisals but the State Department of Revenue audits the tax roll and there are certain statistical measures that they have to comply with that will ensure the equitability of the tax roll.

What about some of the Morse family, who appear not to be assessed as fairly and equitably as others. (Examples are shown in the table that follows.) How does that happen?

Ms. Jordan asked the resident to call the office so they can look into the claims.

The POA appreciates Mr. Hooten and his staff attending the meeting and providing as much information as time allowed. Since there are many questions that remain about how to ensure “fair and equitable” appraisals, the POA will follow up with the Assessor and/or his staff to clarify and add to the information presented. ●

Owner	Mark Morse President/CEO The Villages	Jennifer (Morse) Parr VP, Sales & Marketing The Villages	Tracy (Morse) Matthews VP, Design Division The Villages	Whitney Morse Artistic Director Performing Arts Center sold her home in May for \$2.45 million
Base SF	4,815	5,368	8,075	3,693
Acres	21.47	26.97	26.25	9.51
2022 Market Value	\$840,640	\$802,160	\$1,229,950	\$66,570
2022 Taxable Value	\$668,250	\$312,130	\$602,490	\$1,190
2022 Taxes	\$6,900.86	\$3,345.37	\$6,244.31	➡ \$11.88

Coleman Prison Union Reps Tell of Understaffing Dangers

In a lively Q & A with residents at the September 15 POA Membership Meeting held at Everglades Recreation Center, Coleman Prison's Union President, Jose Rojas, and co-workers gave information about understaffing conditions at the prison that could spell potential dangers inside the prison and in the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Coleman Federal Penitentiary is the largest federal prison in the country located south of CR 44 in Sumter County. One of The Villages newest areas, DeSoto, backs up to the prison. The prison opened in 1995 and has five areas – 2 maximum security penitentiaries that house the “baddest” inmates serving life sentences; 1 medium security with prisoners serving 20 years or less; 1 low security with sentences between 5-10 years; and one prison camp for those with 2-3 years left on sentence before release. ALL prisoners are convicted felons. There are no death row inmates at Coleman.

Mr. Rojas has been in law enforcement for 30 years with the last 28 at Coleman. He was there when it was opened and was surrounded by cows.

Now it is surrounded by The Villages' homes and the brand-new charter school. His union #506 is one of the largest in the country and sets the pace for other prison unions. They are sounding the alarm for severe understaffing at Coleman and around the country.

Coleman has over 7,500 prisoners and is short at least 200 staff, meaning they are staffed at only 69%, according to Mr. Rojas. He said that officers are working mandatory overtime of up to 60 hours a week. Senior Officer Specialist Josh Archy works inside the prison. He said he recently worked a shift where he was inside a locked housing unit with 130 prisoners with no other officers present.

The union held an informational picket on June 22 at Magnolia Plaza that was cut short when The Villages suddenly denied a permit that had been previously approved. The picket was intended to talk about violence, staffing shortages, and staffers getting hurt. Two weeks later the infamous inmate, Dr. Larry Nasser, was stabbed multiple times. Mr. Rojas said there are gang members, weapons, drugs and even the deadly drug, fentanyl, has made its way into the prison. In 2017, Mr. Rojas said a prison inmate attacked one of their guards and instead of being prosecuted he was released. Two weeks later he broke into an apartment in Washington D.C., raped a young woman and smashed in her head.

The prison camp is another concern, as there is no fence to keep inmates from wandering out into the neighborhoods. Prisoners have been found at the Publix at Magnolia Plaza. The union is pushing to get a fence around the camp area, as has been done in Homestead, Florida.

Having just returned from Washington D.C. and a Senate Committee hearing where the national director of prisons, Collette Peters, came under fire, Mr. Rojas said that nationwide the prison system only has 12,731 prison staffers with funding for more than 20,000. Ms. Peters could not answer the question when asked how many staff were in the system. Ms. Peters is reportedly scheduled to visit Coleman in November.

While in Washington, Mr. Rojas was able to meet with Congressman Daniel Webster and encouraged him to visit Coleman again, describing the severe staffing shortages. When residents asked what they could do to help he said contact the Congressman and Senators. Contact information is listed at the end of this article.

Funding is not the issue. It is pay scale, benefits and working conditions. Guards start at \$46,500 and max out two pay grades higher at \$65,000.

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Prison continued from page 5

One impact of staffing shortages is that the prison goes on lockdown, meaning that inmates cannot come out of their cells for exercise and other activities. Visiting is cancelled. Coleman was on lockdown this past Father's Day so family members could not visit. Mr. Rojas said this obviously makes inmates angry and increases the potential for violence.

The week before the presentation to the POA, Mr. Rojas said there were two homicides at the prison. These are incidents the public doesn't hear about. The public heard about the Nasser stabbing because of the notoriety of the prisoner.

Mr. Rojas said the rumor about The Villages buying the prison is false. He said there has been much too much invested in Coleman for it to be sold.

Residents were especially concerned about the school and the public being notified in the event of a breakout. He said there are procedures in place that are handled on the management side. He advised that if the sirens are going off outside the prison, residents in the area would be able to hear them.

Mr. Rojas said neither the State nor Governor DeSantis have any authority over the prison as it is part of the federal prison system. He said the Director, Ms. Peters, is the only Director in the Department of Justice that is not confirmed by the Senate. The union is working with legislators to pass HR4131, the Federal Prison Accountability Act. An inquiry was requested by Senator Joe Manchin in September because of numerous reports of prisoners walking away from Hazelton Prison in West Virginia.

When residents asked what they could do, Mr. Rojas said to contact the Congressional delegation with the concerns about understaffing. Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Daniel Webster can be reached at the addresses/phone numbers listed on page 7. It is also likely there will be representatives from these offices at the District's annual Government Day on November 4 at Eisenhower Recreation Center. ●

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Contacts for the United States Senate and House of Representatives

Senator Marco Rubio

United States Senate
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0908
Capitol Phone: (202) 224-3041
Fax: (202) 228-0285
<https://www.rubio.senate.gov/contact/>

No local office hours or location is listed.

Congressman Daniel Webster

Washington, DC Office

2184 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-1002
Hours: 9:00AM-5:00PM
<https://webster.house.gov/email-me>

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VHA, Villages Daily Sun and District Manager Dispute the POA’s Reporting on Fire Department Funding

In what can only be described as an effort to confuse the public and begin the political season a year early, the Villages “most trusted news source”, a.k.a. *The Daily Sun*, has attacked the POA’s reporting of the Sumter County Commission’s vote not to raise the Fire Assessment Fee. The POA fully expects these attacks against the POA and Sumter County Commissioners Craig Estep and Jeffrey Bogue, the two Commissioners the Developer does not control, to continue. Three County Commissioner seats are up for election in 2024, including Mr. Estep’s.

In a series of articles recently published in *The Sun* after the vote last month, the VHA’s past president Fred Briggs took aim at the position the POA took regarding establishing an Independent Fire District last year. In addition, District Manager Kenny Blocker more subtly made remarks and was prominently featured with Mr. Briggs and VPSD Fire Chief Brian Twiss as they “work rapidly” to solve the funding problem.

This article will set the record straight and remind residents of why the POA is the ONLY independent advocate for property owners in The Villages. The POA’s goals are to provide 1) a forum for discussion of issues; 2) research and analysis; 3) programs of interest; and 4) a conduit for objective and accurate information.

The items that follow in quotation marks are taken from the *Daily Sun* articles with the POA response.

“Some groups are fixated on fearmongering and sowing division,”...

We can only assume Mr. Briggs is referring to the POA. However, while the VHA describes itself as bringing solutions, the POA continues to ask, “What is the FAIR solution?” where residents and businesses each pay their FAIR share. Mr. Briggs and the VHA appear to be more interested in “not damaging the businesses upon which we rely” than the Homeowners for whom it professes to advocate.

Where was the VHA at the County’s budget workshop when the report on the Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU) was received and **every commissioner** agreed it was the best solution, scheduling the public hearing for August 22? The POA was at the budget hearings, studied the report, provided a link for readers to study it themselves, and reported on it in the August *POA Bulletin*. Additionally, every July the POA hosts the Sumter County Administrator and Commission Chairman to present the upcoming budget and answer questions from residents. The Fire Assessment Fee was discussed this past July at that meeting.

What does the VHA do to educate its members?

A quick check of the archives of the VHA’s “Voice” (printed and distributed by the Developer’s Daily Sun) didn’t find any education or meetings that addressed the Fire Assessment Fee issue.

While the VHA promotes itself as a “Villages Homeowners” advocacy group, perhaps its real function is as the Developer’s advocate and it should therefore change its name to the DHA. It was only after the business community organized itself in protest and the Commission voted down the funding that the VHA has come forward with its commitment to “help.”

“The POA has published materials telling residents the failed tax hike will result in the county laying

off 30 firefighters, closing four fire stations and eliminating its hazardous materials team.”

The minutes of the Sumter County Commission’s August 22 public hearing on the Fire Assessment Fee increase will reflect that Sumter County Fire Chief Rob Hanson stated that these would be the cuts if the increase did not pass. Sumter County Administrator Bradley Arnold stated that he had signed off on the plan. The minutes will also reflect that a similar plan presented by VPSD Fire Chief Brian Twiss stated that programs and staffing would be cut. Mr. Arnold stated that his counterpart, Mr. Blocker, had signed off on the VPSD plan.

“Who voted to support that tax hike?

Chairman Craig Estep and Commissioner Jeff Bogue, both of whom accepted the endorsement of the Property Owners Association of The Villages, the group that spearheaded opposition against VPSD’s prior request for independence.”

Mr. Estep and Mr. Bogue were the only commissioners with the courage to vote for a plan that all five had agreed to in the budget workshops. The other three lamented and wrung their hands while conceding to the pressure in the room.

Every year when there is an election the POA hosts a candidates’ forum to give voters the opportunity to hear directly from the candidates at the same time on issues. The POA asks questions it believes voters are interested in knowing more about. Sometimes the POA endorses candidates it believes will represent the interest of the residential property owners. Regardless of who the POA might endorse, every candidate is invited to submit a biography for publication in our Bulletin and to participate in the candidate forum. And residents are always encouraged to do their

VHA continued on page 9



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VHA continued from page 8

own due diligence and make up their own minds.

"This is why we wanted to have our own independent fire district," Blocker said. "We wanted to be in control of our own destiny instead of allowing our destiny to be directed by the county commission."

In every step of the process the POA reported about and fulfilled its goals to provide research and analysis and forums to discuss the formation of the Independent Fire District. The POA attended every meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee that was formed to address the ambulance response time issue and reported after every meeting. We note that the VHA did host an informational meeting about the Fire District that reportedly went so badly that a second scheduled meeting was cancelled. Its "Voice" also included a column from District Manager Kenny Blocker urging residents to support the initiative.

Mr. Blocker's comment about controlling their own destiny, absent the approval of the county commission, puts the blame in the wrong place. Shame on the District for not coming forward to adequately educate people about the financial need. Education. Education. Education. People need to understand what such a jump in the budget is for and the best/most fair way to pay for it. The POA hopes that when/if a dependent fire district is established there will be more transparency.

"What about reviving the idea of an independent special fire district that failed at the 2022 ballot by 49-51 margin?"

The District has not indicated that it wants to endure another attempt. Its 2022 proposal earned unanimous approval from the state legislature, a greenlight from Gov. Ron DeSantis and the support of the VHA.

But opponents, including the POA and a political action committee that backed commissioners Bogue, Estep, and Andy Bilardello, lobbied heavily against it...

In a campaign blitz that countered District information sessions and VPSD open houses, the POA wrote that, "Funding for The Villages Public Safety has been provided as a part of the Sumter

County budget for years without issue. The POA does not believe the Special District is needed at this time.

It claimed that VPSD's numbers shouldn't be trusted, even though for all but the owners of the most expensive homes, the annual cost of an independent district would have been more affordable than the current POA-backed tax increase."

It is categorically false that the POA lobbied heavily against the Independent Fire District. The "campaign blitz" to which the article refers was our own POA Bulletin which has a circulation of 60,000 plus households.

The POA at no time said the VPSD's numbers should not be trusted. What the POA said was that based on the question on the referendum, the formula that was being proposed and estimates of what homeowners would pay could not be trusted. The numbers the District gave were based on the minimum of the .1 mil rate while the referendum would have given an unnamed board to be appointed by the Governor up to 1 full mil rate. Homeowners, when voting on a new tax, should be given the maximum they would pay, not just the minimum.

The Independent Fire District proposal came

as a surprise to the Ad Hoc Committee when then-Chief Edmund Cain presented the idea, as it had nothing to do with ambulance service. Nonetheless the POA listened, asked questions, and explored the referendum question from every angle. Early in the dialogue the POA even published a special Fire District section of the POA Bulletin. In the end, the POA said "Not yet." The POA did believe, especially after a study was commissioned and came out of the Sumter County budget hearings with a favorable recommendation by every Commissioner, that Sumter County would support the Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) proposed budgets.

In the September printed issue of the POA Bulletin, the lead article about the public hearing was just going to press. A portion of the article stated, **"Clearly, the Commissioners backing down on the increase came as a surprise to the public safety officials. No doubt they will be working non-stop to see what they can do to minimize the negative impacts this will have on citizens. The information in this article is as up to date as can be within our print deadline. It is also likely that the topic of a Special Fire District may come up again."**

VHA continued on page 10




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VHA continued from page 9

As reported, VPSD, the District and Sumter County have been working non-stop to minimize the impact and have assured residents that services such as the fire alarm battery replacement and AED programs will not be cut. Nor will any current positions be cut. Only the 57 future hires that were presented in the budget will be put on hold, as will the construction of new fire stations.

Mr. Blocker has said recently that he will be looking at increasing the amount of funding for the Fire Department that comes from Amenity Fees. There would be no increase in Amenity Fees paid by residents. Currently \$4.08 per rooftop's Amenity Fee is allocated to the Fire Fund. Mr. Blocker stated that has not changed since 2007. An increase in that allocation would reduce Amenity Fees available for other areas and would have to gain approval/recommendation from the Amenity Authority Committee (AAC) and the Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC).

The District has also asked Sumter County to begin the process to establish a "Dependent" Fire District that is similar to the North Sumter County Community Utility Dependent District (NSCUDD). At its September 12 budget public hearing the Sumter County Commissioners directed the county administrator to begin the process. The article on page 21 in this issue is included on how a Dependent District can be created and funded.

It is difficult to respond to comments from an organization (VHA) that the POA has tried to work with on numerous occasions over the years. As recently as last month a meeting was held between the two organizations' presidents (requested by the POA) in an effort to put aside differences and find common ground. The funding for fire and safety could have been one of those issues. **But neither the VHA nor the District Manager reached out to the POA. They didn't ask the POA to be part of the solution.**

The POA has repeatedly expressed its full support of The Villages Public Safety Department and Fire Department and recognized there would be a significant cost associated with turning over emergency response and transport to them. The POA was the ONLY organization that not only provided education on the issue, but also SUPPORTED the funding.

You can be assured that the POA will always give you the full story and both sides of the story. It may not always be what people want to hear and that's okay. We will not tell you half-truths. We will not try to paint an inaccurate picture. Occasionally we may offer an opinion. We trust you to read the facts and make up your own mind.

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

CDD 1 Holds Town Hall Meeting on Morse Blvd. Safety Improvements

Most residents who attended the Community Development District (CDD) 1 Town Hall meeting on September 7 were not impressed with the Kimley-Horn Study of Alternatives for Morse Boulevard. Many expressed they thought the alternatives were too costly and were unrealistic.

Residents seemed to be more interested in solutions that would slow people down by putting up stop signs or lights. They also criticized the Sumter County Sheriff’s office for not having enough patrols and not writing enough tickets.

However, CDD 1 Supervisor Ellen Cora urged them to think outside of the box and go for the best solutions, no matter the cost. She said that there is no way to make the roadway safer for golf carts unless they are separated from the road.

CDD 1 Chair Rocky Hyder said that while he has been critical of the Sumter County Commissioners for not being engaged in finding solutions, he was pleased to receive a phone call from Commissioner Craig Estep asking him to meet to have discussions. The meeting is to take place later in September.

AAC Passes FY 2023-24 Budget

The Amenity Authority Committee approved the Recreation Amenities Division (RAD) budget of \$76.8 million at its meeting on September 6. The budget includes \$28.75 million in capital projects with the majority going to the reconstruction of the Paradise Recreation Center (\$20 million). Other improvements were allocated for La Hacienda Recreation Center (\$2.75 million) and golf facilities and maintenance (\$2.65 million.)

After the preliminary budget was approved in July, the Developer terminated the golf management contract and the AAC agreed that it would pick up approximately 1,000 employees that work at both the executive and championship golf courses. At the time it had been stated that the Developer charged approximately \$90,000 as a management fee, however, Ms. Duckett clarified that they did not know what management fee was being charged. They were given a lump sum contract. The District will now manage all the employees, including those at the championship (private) courses for which the Village Center Community Development District (VCDD) has approved a contract. No amenity fees will be used to pay employees on the championship courses.

CDDs 12 & 13 Say “No Thanks” to Joining Eastport Maintenance Advisory Committee (EMAC)

Earlier this summer Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) Chairman Don Brozick, CDD 11, raised the question again about whether CDDs south of CR 44, specifically CDDs 12 and 13, could consider joining the newly created Eastport Maintenance Advisory Committee (EMAC). It would require the agreement of all of the CDDs on the current PWAC – CDDs 5 – 13. The proposal was derailed two years ago when CDD 7 wanted to open up the Project Wide agreement.

PWAC members Jon Roudabush, CDD 12 and Tina Williamson, CDD 13 each went to their boards, who decided there would be no benefit for them to move from PWAC to EMAC. This essentially ends any further discussion of a change to PWAC.

Meetings continued on page 13

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Meetings continued from page 12

PWAC Gets Lower Aquatic Weed Control Contract

When the current contractor for aquatic weed control, Solitude Lake Management, asked for a \$15 per acre increase in its contract, PWAC said “not so fast.” The committee instead directed District staff to see if there were any other contractors in the business that could provide the service. District staff went out for bid and found a new contractor that came in \$25 per acre lower than the current contract, saving PWAC \$164,185. CDD 4 also turned down the requested increase, however, the AAC approved the increase.

The aquatic weed scope of services includes the chemical and herbicidal treatment of all ponds and retention areas to keep them clear of any exotic and/or nuisance species of aquatic submersed, floating and/or emergent plant, algae, weeds, or any other type of unsightly and or nuisance vegetation based on a set application schedule as decided by District Property Management (DPM). Services also include the manual removal of plants, algae and weeds, litter control and water quality testing services based

on an as needed basis, or as directed by DPM. This contract will also provide biannual maintenance services for the diffused aeration systems and quarterly maintenance services for the circulation (fountain) systems.

PWAC Approves Maintenance and Amenity Budgets

The Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC) recommended approval of both the maintenance and Sumter Landing Amenity Division (SLAD) budgets to the Sumter Landing Community Development Committee (SLCDD).

The maintenance budget was approved at \$20.5 million. A decrease from the proposed budget in June of \$183,405 is good news for the participating CDDs 5-13, whose allocation will also decrease 1.1%. The lion's share of the budget is spent on recurring landscape maintenance at a cost of \$12 million.

PWAC also recommended approval of the SLAD budget of nearly \$95 million, an increase of \$650,000 from the current fiscal year. Recreation centers will get more than \$7 million in capital improvements while golf maintenance will receive \$3 million.

CDDs Set Final Maintenance Rates

Each year the residential Community Development Districts (CDDs) pass General Fund budgets that are used for general maintenance, some capital improvements, and for CDDs 5-13 to fund the Project Wide Fund that is used for common maintenance throughout those districts. The budgets are funded by the annual maintenance fee assessment that each CDDs' Board of Supervisors sets. A preliminary budget hearing is held in June, with a final budget and assessment fee approved in September after a second public hearing. Following are the General Fund budgets for CDDs 1-13 as well as the percentage change for each district's maintenance assessment fees.

CDD 4 is different from all other districts in that it is responsible for all of the maintenance on all of the roads. In every other district, all roads except villa roads are owned by the respective county.

CDD 7 lowered its original projected increase in maintenance fees from 20% to 15%. CDD 10 reminded residents that while their maintenance assessment is going up by 15% the refinancing of infrastructure bonds has saved them more than 16%.

Detailed budgets will be on [DistrictGov.org](#). Click on your individual district under the 'Your District.'

General Fund Budgets & Maintenance Fee % Changes

CDDs 1-13	General Fund Budget	% Change Maintenance Fee
1	1,797,927	-0.26
2	1,379,523	10
3	1,658,117	0
4	4,596,772	25
5	3,698,695	0
6	4,193,355	0
7	2,703,127	15
8	3,512,880	0
9	3,254,108	-5
10	4,302,100	15
11	1,599,000	0
12	4,298,984	0
13	4,087,441	-0.25

Meetings continued on page 15



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Meetings continued from page 13



CDD 10 Say No More Amenity Fees for Fire Department

As the Villages Public Safety Division looks for alternative funding sources for the Fire Department after the Sumter County Commissioners failed to pass the proposed increase in the Fire Assessment Fee, one source that District Manager Kenny Blocker has proposed is increasing the \$4.08 rooftop allocation from Amenity Fees. Mr. Blocker has not said what the proposed increase would be.

Community Development District (CDD) 10's Board of Supervisors said they are opposed to the idea, saying they believe Sumter County should find a solution. Members of the Amenity Authority Committee (AAC), who oversee the Amenity Division fund north of CR 466, has also said they don't believe their amenity fees should be used to fund growth South of CR 44 where new fire stations and staffing are needed.

Assistant District Manager Bruce Brown warned the CDD 10 Supervisors that residents may see cutbacks and/or reductions in response times if funding is not found. Both he and Mr. Blocker have said there could be less firefighters per truck.



CDD 3 Ready to Eliminate Anonymous Complaints

ARC Approval Won't Be Needed for Tree Removal

Soon residents will have one less step to go through to remove unwanted trees from their property when the numbered residential districts no longer require Architectural Review Committee (ARC) approval. Deputy District Manager Carrie Duckett said that going to ARC is really a moot point since the State of Florida has passed a law that only requires the homeowner to get an arborist's report.

When the change goes through after public hearings, homeowners may remove oak, magnolia, elm, maple, and holly trees without ARC approval.

Residents have always been allowed to remove palm trees without approval except residents living in the Lady Lake portion of The Villages where they were required to get permission.

CDD 2 Doesn't Bend on Stone Policy

The Community Development District (CDD) 2 Board of Supervisors is not wavering from its stance that residents living in patio villas who have been found in violation of the stone landscape policy must correct the situation or fines will be levied.

A public hearing was held in June for eight homeowners from La Cresenta Villas who had been found in violation. The eight were part of a larger group that had been turned in. Supervisors upheld the violation and gave the homeowners 90 days to bring their properties into compliance.

Last month Supervisor Tom Swiers tried one more time to grandfather the homeowners who had unknowingly purchased the properties with the stone landscape already in place. But the other supervisors would not go along, insisting they must maintain consistency in applying the rules.

The battle over stone landscape, specifically in the front yards of patio villas, has been contested over the last several months. District staff has not been able to produce documents that substantiate the rule that was supposedly put into place when the Developer originally submitted Development plans to the Southwest Florida Water

Management District (SWFMD). The \$50 per day fines were to begin on September 23.



Nationwide Insurance is no longer "on your side."

Florida's fourth-largest homeowners' insurer, Nationwide Insurance of Florida, has announced that it will drop from 25,000 to 30,000 homeowners' policies as part of a strategy to "reduce its overall exposure," according to Florida Insurance Commissioner Kevin McCarty.

Nationwide becomes the seventh company to announce it is leaving Florida, or not writing new policies in the state since last year's devastating hurricane season. The company had already announced it would not write new policies after September 1. ●



POA Honors Board Member Sal Torname

The POA honored Board member Sal Torname by posthumously inducting him into the POA's Hall of Fame. Sal passed away in July after a lengthy illness. His wife Kay attended the POA's membership meeting in September to accept the award before she moves away from The Villages to be with her family.

POA President Cliff Wiener expressed his personal friendship with Sal and deep gratitude for all that Sal did for the POA and residents who lived in his District 8. Sal spearheaded the POA's annual Shred Event, helped with the establishment of neighborhood AED programs, and served as a Supervisor on the Community Development District (CDD) 8 Board of Supervisors. ●

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3:00 – 5:30 pm • Fridays

October 6 through December 1 except November 24

Lady Lake Library

2:00 – 3:30 pm • Wednesdays

October 11 through November 29 except November 22

“Understanding Medicare,” a group presentation geared toward those turning 65, will be made 1:00 – 3:00 pm at Aviary Recreation Center, Wednesdays, November 8, and December 13

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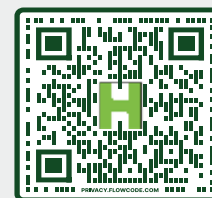


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Y0040_GHHLNVMEN24_M

Meet the Water Oak Sales Team!

By now you've read a lot of information about the wonderful things happening at Water Oak Country Club Estates. From the beautiful rolling hill landscape to the expansive amenity options and lifestyle program, we truly believe we have something to offer everyone. Now let us introduce you to Water Oak's onsite friendly and professional sales team.

Connie Lewis - Connie is currently a part-time sales representative with Water Oak. Connie is our newest team member, and comes to us with over eight years of experience with Sun Communities, Water Oak's parent company. She has been an invaluable community manager at several Sun properties and in the past her communities have won distinguished awards, like Best in Sales, which not only gave her and her team well deserved recognition it won her a tropical vacation! Connie comes to Water Oak as a part-time salesperson with full-time talents.

Karen Rose - Karen comes to Water Oak as a licensed realtor. She has sold homes in the Claremont - Eustis area for over 11 years. Aside from being a successful realtor she owned a local coupon business where she traveled all over Central Florida selling savings to grateful Floridians. Her experience and knowledge of the area and the real estate industry is majorly impressive. But her bright smile will make her stand out in a crowd.

Brian Baumeister - Brian is Water Oak's secret weapon and biggest fan! His family was among one of the first to pick out and purchase a home in Water Oak almost 40 years ago. Keeping close to his family, he has worked on and off in a variety of positions at Water Oak. Originally from Buffalo, New York Brian was a successful

businessman. Who's a bit famous in his hometown for being the top "Delivery/Salesmen of the Year". He won that title in a national competition. As winner he was featured in many local newscasts, newspapers, and radio spots. We are so grateful to have Brian and his whole family as a part of the Water Oak family. He brings incalculable knowledge and history to Water Oak and the sales team.

Dana Hall - Dana has been a member of the Water Oak sales team for over 10 years. She came to Water Oak from a variety of marketing positions and as manager of independent living communities in both Virginia and Florida. She joined the Water Oak team as the Sale Office Coordinator. She helped the sales agents and assisted the sales manager with permits for new construction. She began selling at Water Oak six years ago and has never looked back! She still loves greeting everyone, making them feel comfortable and getting them excited to live at Water Oak.

Water Oaks residents are very familiar with the sales team as they see them driving future residents around the community in golf carts all day. The Water Oak sales team only sells in Water Oak so they are vastly experienced in the many various floor plans, construction features, great amenities and wonderful residents. Not only does the team love working at Water Oak; Brian, Dana and Karen all live at Water Oak too! Connie has not yet moved to Water Oak but she does reside at different Sun Community, so we believe it is only a matter of time. When the team tells you how great life is at Water Oak, you can believe it, because they are living it too. Come let us show you why you should be our neighbors and friends!



Brian Baumeister



Karen Rose



Dana Hall



Connie Lewis



WATER OAK

Country Club Estates

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www.wateroaksales.com



What is a “Dependent” Fire District and How Does It Differ from an “Independent” District?



In the wake of the Sumter County Commissioners turning down the recommended increase in the Fire Assessment Fee, the Sumter County Fire Department and The Villages Public Safety Division's (VPSD) Fire Department have had to tighten their belts to fund operations for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24 budget year that begins October 1. Both departments have scrambled and in less than a month found ways to continue operating without layoffs or decreasing services. Sumter County's fire union employees, fire department chiefs and the County Administrator in Sumter County have accepted concessions to avoid layoffs in the upcoming year. The POA applauds these dedicated public servants.

The Villages District government is now proposing the creation of two separate Dependent Fire Districts to fund future operations. What is a “Dependent” District and how is it different than the “Independent” District that was defeated last year?

Special districts, both Dependent and Independent, are allowed by Florida Chapter 189, the Uniform Special District Accountability Act. Chapter 189 states, “It is the specific intent of the Legislature that dependent special districts shall be created at the prerogative of the counties and municipalities and that independent special districts shall only be created by legislative authorization as provided herein.” The primary difference is that a Dependent District is created by local government and an Independent District is created by state legislature. The statute further states that, “special districts cooperate and coordinate their activities with the units of

general-purpose local government in which they are located.”

A special district, both Dependent and Independent, is created to serve a special purpose. In this instance the special purpose would be Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The primary difference between a Dependent and an Independent District begins first in its creation either by the local ordinance (Dependent) or by the State Legislature (Independent). An Independent Special District requires a referendum, as was conducted in 2022.

A Dependent District will have its governing board appointed by local elected officials, in this case the Sumter County Commissioners. Any member of a local board, as stated below, can be removed by the governing body of the County. An Independent District board would have been appointed by the governor.

A Dependent Special District is defined in Chapter 189:

(2) “Dependent special district” means a special district that meets at least one of the following criteria:

- (a) The membership of its governing body is identical to that of the governing body of a single county or a single municipality.
- (b) All members of its governing body are appointed by the governing body of a single county or a single municipality.
- (c) During their unexpired terms, members of the special district's governing body are subject to removal at will by the governing body of a single county or a single municipality.
- (d) The district has a budget that requires approval through an affirmative vote or can be vetoed by the governing body of a single county or a single municipality.”

Fire District continued on page 22

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Fire District *continued from page 21*

Sumter County Administrator Bradley Arnold explained to the Sumter County Commissioners at the public hearing held on September 12 that a Dependent Special District would be created by ordinance passed by the Commission. Mr. Arnold said that in order for a Dependent Board to be operational by the Fiscal Year 2024-25 which would begin on October 1, 2024, an ordinance would need to pass by the first meeting in December 2023 at the very latest. The ordinance must contain the method of financing for the Dependent District. He also said that since a portion of the Dependent Special District territory is within the City of Wildwood, the City’s governing board would also have to sign off on the district.

The POA thinks this could be a viable solution since the Sumter County Commissioners will have some oversight. The devil is in the details and as reported on Page 1, the POA is watching the process carefully to make sure residents’ rights are being protected. As noted in the article, the POA is concerned that the VHA and District are trying to stack the Board that will be appointed to set policy and rates that will work to keep rates lower for businesses instead of residents.

Dependent special districts are nothing new to The Villages. The North Sumter County Utility Dependent District (NSCUDD) was established pursuant to Chapter 189 of Florida State Statutes and Sumter County Ordinance 2010-10 on July 15, 2010.

NSCUDD consists of a seven-member Board of Supervisors representing Districts 5-10 and one at-large seat. The members are elected by registered voters residing in Districts 5-10.

NSCUDD is the water, wastewater and non-potable irrigation water service providers to properties within District’s 5 – 11 and is also the provider of the solid waste sanitation services for the Marion, Sumter, and Fruitland Park portions of The Villages. In addition, the services are provided to Sumter Landing and Brownwood.

Effective December 27, 2012 The North Sumter County Utility Dependent District (NSCUDD) became the provider of the solid waste sanitation services for the Marion and Sumter County portion of The Villages located in VCDD Nos. 1 thorough 10 when it purchased Sumter Sanitation. Sumter Sanitation also provides services to VCDD No. 11 in Lake County. The Sumter Sanitation services are contracted through CH2M HILL/Jacobs.

The POA will continue to keep residents informed as this process moves forward. ●



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POA Bulletin

Updating Our Communications FOR YOU!

News happens quickly in The Villages, 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 electronic Bulletin on the 15th of each month and will also post it to our website.

The printed version will continue to be delivered to driveways on or around the first Tuesday of each month. **We will print the articles that appear in the mid-month issue so those residents who are not on our e-mail list do not miss any important information.**

We are here to serve you! 🟢



POA Board & Volunteer Recruitment

October 24, 2023 • 9 AM

**Laurel Manor
Recreation Center**

The POA is the largest, oldest, and ONLY independent property owners' advocacy organization in The Villages. The POA researches and provides information on issues that may affect the property values and quality of life for residents of The Villages.

Want to join our efforts? Come to this informational meeting to learn about volunteer opportunities and how to become a member of our Board of Directors!

Coffee and donuts will be served.

Beacon College Salon Speaker Series



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The History and
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Driver Safety

AARP now offers a Free 60–90-minute Smart Driver Technology workshop for those thinking of either leasing, purchasing or just upgrading to a newer vehicle.

Local presenters would be available to attend organized social / club meetings to share this information. Please contact (352) 430-1833 to arrange a presentation for your Club.

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

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

In The Villages, there are at least 4 classes each month. The classes are either two days, 9 AM to Noon or one day* 9 AM - 4 PM. Fee is \$20 for AARP members, \$25 for non-members. Select your class and call the instructor to register. Instructor will give instructions and time to arrive to complete registration.

October 2023 Schedule						
Instructor	Phone #	Day	Date	Day	Date	Location
Wanda Smith	972-358-9757	Tuesday	10/3/23	Wednesday	10/4/23	Colony
Jack Haughn	352-603-1420	Tuesday	10/10/23	Friday	10/13/23	Laurel Manor
Don Walker	352-430-0610	Monday	10/16/23	Thursday	10/19/23	Savannah
Art Donnelly	631-792-2203	Friday	10/20/23	9 am 4 pm	One Day	Buffalo Crossing
Art Donnelly	631-792-2203	Saturday	10/21/23	Saturday	10/28/23	Paradise
Wanda Smith	972-358-9757	Tuesday	9/26/23	Wednesday	9/27/23	Rohan

Volunteers Needed! Contact Chet Kowalski, Zone 19 Coordinator – 352-430-1833 or 352-348-4946



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Join Dr. Craig Curtis for a FREE Seminar where you will learn about:

- Causes of memory loss and proper diagnosis
- Memory, Forgetfulness and Aging - What is Normal?
- Differences between Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia
- New FDA approved treatments to slow Alzheimer's Disease
- A brain healthy diet and lifestyle
- ALL are welcome to this educational event

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Creating Strong Passwords and Sets of Passwords

SENIORS VS CRIME

Our friends at The Daily Scam say it is no surprise that many people create passwords that are extremely easy to crack or guess. And many of us use the same password for many of our important accounts like our email, banking, credit cards, and social media?

Criminals depend on this fact! That’s why they try so hard to phish for passwords at social networking sites or through bogus emails pretending to be everything from Amazon notices to Apple ID resets to banking notifications. They hope that those captured or decrypted passwords, along with account holder’s names, will get them into lots of financial accounts or, at the very least, into email accounts. People don’t realize that their email accounts typically represent the center of their digital universe. Afterall, if you “forget a password” you can have an email sent to you so you can reset it. Therefore, email accounts are extremely valuable to criminals. Our collective lame approach to creating passwords has got to stop! It is time to do something about this! We know you can do better and we’re here to help! Creating multiple strong passwords is not difficult. Take this set of examples. Using **HowSecureIsMyPassword.net** or the checker at **Passwords-Generator.org**, look at how long it takes for today’s password crackers to figure out passwords on the following list:

Password Sample:	Evaluation:
crispy	Hacked instantly
crispybacon	Hacked in less than a day
crsipybacon12	Hacked in 7 months
crispy=bacon12	Requires about 400 years to crack
(crispy)=Bacon12	Requires more than 17 centuries to crack

Passwords Should Contain:

Random use of letters, numbers, non-letter, non-number characters such as = or! or \$ or) and you should mix UPPER and lower case and they should be at least 14 characters long! Five years ago, the length was 8 and three years ago, it was 10 but faster computers and better password crackers now make short work of short passwords.

Tips And Tricks To Create Sets Of Strong Passwords For Multiple Accounts:

a) Begin with simple phrases and then modify them! But make sure they are at least 12 characters long. For example, Makeitbetter! becomes mak31TB3ttr!

b) Create an acronym from song lyrics and then modify it. For example...

“When I get older, losing my hair” From the Beatles song released in 1967 becomes “w1GO1mh=1967”

“I got this feeling inside my bones” from Justin Timberlake’s song Can’t Stop This Feeling, released in 2016, becomes “JT16=!gtf!MB”

c) Make up a word and modify it: “flomacious” becomes “f1OMAc10U\$” and the capital MA is easy to remember if you live in Massachusetts. Kids are especially great at doing this! But if you are not, you can use a fake word generator to help you such as Wordoid or WordGenerator.

d) Never use real words in your passwords, no matter what language or even backwards, because they are easier to crack by simple dictionary attacks.

e) For your different accounts, add a letter or 2 that relates to your account. “bk” for bank, “MU” for mutual fund, “fb” for Facebook, “ig” for Instagram, etc. Use a “+” or “=” symbol to connect them. Or put your base-password in parentheses, for example:

(w1GO1mh=1967)bk

FB=(w1GO1mh=1967)

MU=w1GO1mh=1967

e) Assign “mountains and valley” rules to your passwords. This is just a silly way of saying “alternate CaPiTaL and lOwErCaSe letters” in your password.

If you get hacked or think you have become a victim of Identity Theft because of a hack, you can contact any of the Seniors vs. Crime offices for assistance.

Sumter Co. Office – (352) 689-4600, ext. 4606.
Mon. – Wed., 10 am – 2 pm; Thu. 9 am – 1 pm

Marion Co. Office (352) 753-7775
Tue. 10 am – 2 pm

Wildwood Office (352) 753-0727
Tue. – Thu., 10 am – 1 pm

Fruitland Park Office (352) 674-1882
Wed., 10 am - 2 pm ●

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Email your name, village, and phone # to **poa4you@gmail.com**. Put “**delivery driver position**” in the subject line.



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 or scan the QR code below. Click ‘Discount Partners’ on the left menu. ●



QR CODE TIP: Using your smartphone or tablet, open the built-in camera app. Point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears on your phone or tablet. That will lead you directly to the linked website.



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For medicine in general, but especially for a cancer specialist, these two obligations remain constant. “Taking out” the target becomes the primary goal, whether it be an infection, a diseased/

malfunctioning organ...or cancer. But the second goal, avoiding collateral damage, is just as important: for a patient’s health, eliminate unacceptable side effects that can be avoided.

Patients should be protected with both...every time!

Our medical practice breathes such faith. We don’t exist in a “mill” that maximizes profit while feeding an assembly line. If the treatment you desire resembles a family...we are your hope. That choice has been...and always will be...yours! You shouldn’t have to pay for that comfort: it ought to blend inseparably

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