

POA Bulletin



POA4US.org

DECEMBER 2024

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Outgoing Commissioner Miller Tanks Fire Funding

Despite stating his unwavering support of firefighters, outgoing Sumter County Commissioner Oren Miller single-handedly tanked the Municipal Benefit Taxing Unit funding for both the Villages Public Safety Department Dependent District (VPSDDD) and the Sumter County Fire Department.

Upcoming POA General Membership Meetings

December 17, 2024 • 7 pm
Laurel Manor Recreation Center
SPEAKER: Charter One Research Group
TOPIC: Alzheimer's Disease

January 2, 2025 • 7 pm
Everglades Recreation Center
SPEAKER: Jerry Anderson, President SECO Energy
TOPIC: Pole Rentals, LED Lights & More

January 21, 2025 • 7 pm
Laurel Manor Recreation Center
SPEAKER: Sumter County Sheriff Pat Breeden

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

The VPSDDD funding will decrease by a half million dollars, and according to VPSD Fire Chief Brian Twiss, will likely result in the delayed opening of Fire Station 49, currently under construction on CR 470. District Manager Kenny Blocker said the savings will come from personnel who would have been hired for both Fire Station 46 and 49.

Sumter County will suffer more severely, having to cut approximately \$1.1 million, which Fire Chief Rob Hanson said will come from new positions that were needed so current firefighters would not have to work double shifts. He expressed his disappointment that the firefighters will have to continue, as they have for the last two years, to work harder and more hours.

Fellow commissioners and POA President Cliff Wiener implored Commissioner Miller to change his vote, to no avail. His rationale for voting “No” was that in his opinion the county has supplemented The Villages Fire Department for too long. **The POA does not believe he is correct in that thought process.** Sumter County has, and under the dependent district, will continue to benefit by continuing to partner with The Villages.

Miller’s “No” vote also jeopardized more than \$9 million in state sales tax revenue; however, the Commission was able to pass a 0.00 MSTU rate to prevent the loss of revenue. Miller voted in favor of that motion, making it a unanimous vote. Sumter County disagrees with the interpretation of the Florida Department of Revenue’s rule that a unanimous vote is required, and Commissioners directed the County Attorney to seek a declaratory judgment in the matter. 🟢



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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.

Multi-Modal Path Discussion Group to Meet in January

The Multi-Modal Path Discussion Group (MMPDG) will continue to meet, despite pushback from some members of the Project Wide Advisory Committee (PWAC). POA President and Community Development District (CDD) 4 Chairman, Cliff Wiener, visited every CDD meeting during the month of November and obtained agreement to participate from all except CDDs 6 and 11.

Cliff will continue to chair the meeting with the focus being safety on the paths. The group will meet at Savannah Center on January 21 at 2 pm.

Residents are encouraged too attend their own CDD meetings as well as the MMPDG meeting to express their concerns about safety issues on the multi-modal paths. ●



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2024 In Review – POA Watch List



Villages Public Safety Dependent District (VPSDD)

It was nearly a year ago, on December 15, 2023, that the Villages Public Safety Department Dependent District (VPSDDD) Board of Supervisors were seated and began the process of organizing their work. The primary function was to develop the budget and funding mechanisms that would be submitted to the Sumter County Board of Commissioners for approval.

The ordinance passed by the Commissioners gave the VPSDDD the authority to levy and collect special assessments to construct, operate, and maintain facilities and services. This does not include Emergency Medical Services (EMS) or ambulance transport. Residents saw the new assessment fee on their tax bills for 2024.

There are two components to the fee. The first is “Readiness.” The VPSDDD maintains the facilities, equipment and personnel necessary to provide fire protection services on a 24 hour a day, seven days a week, year-round basis to all parcels in the VPSDDD. This state of availability of response

readiness is provided by the fixed costs of the system, capital and administrative costs as well as personnel costs associated with creating the state of readiness. These costs are incurred to maintain service availability, a constant state of readiness, to serve every parcel of real property in the VPSDDD and these costs will be incurred regardless of that parcel’s character or use.

The second is the “cost for suppression.” The costs associated with demand for fire suppression and rescue, including protection from loss of structures on property and loss of use and enjoyment and all other costs that are not identified in the Readiness Benefit. These costs include the portion of personnel costs involved in actually responding to calls for service, plus other costs that are incurred relative to operations. Those costs can be variable, such as fuel, equipment maintenance, and other operating costs.

Each parcel of property in the VPSDDD service territory map is assessed \$239.14 for Readiness, and \$81.57 per the Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU). An ERU is based on a 1,700 square foot residential property, so all other properties are

based on total square footage and category divided by the \$81.57 ERU. In addition, a Municipal Service Tax Unit of .0272 was originally passed, along with the preliminary budget for the VPSDDD, however that piece was derailed when the Florida Department of Revenue said the final vote had to be unanimous. At the final budget approval meeting in September, Sumter County Commissioner Oren Miller voted “No” on all of the county budgets. See the related article on page 1.

Of note is that the District had previously proposed to finance capital improvements via vehicle leases and by leasing back new fire stations that the Developer will build. Repeatedly, District Manager Kenny Blocker has said that the VPSDDD does not have the authority to consider Fire Impact Fees to pay for new stations that result from growth. It is correct that the ordinance does not provide this funding mechanism, but the VPSDDD can ask the Sumter County Commissioners to amend the ordinance to give them that authority.

However, in October, The Villages Community Center Dependent District (VCCDD) voted to purchase Fire Stations 47 and 48 from the Developer and authorized a bond issue or financing of up to \$30 million for the purchase of the two stations and equipment. An appraisal was presented at the November meeting with Station 47 valued at \$5,060,000 and Station 48 valued at \$8,320,000. Seacoast National Bank has offered to finance the Direct Placement Fire Improvement

Watch List continued on page 5



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Watch List continued from page 4

Bonds, Series 2024 in the amount of \$15 million. The proposal is for a 30-year financing package at a 5.6% fixed interest rate.

As The Villages continues to grow, the POA will remain firm in its opinion that new fire stations and equipment should be paid for through a fire impact fee. Growth should pay for growth, just as it does with the road impact fee.



Elections

Election season is over, thankfully, for another 2 years. Residents and candidates will enjoy a much-needed break, while those elected and re-elected will settle in and hopefully work together to make The Villages and Sumter County a better place for all.

Elections in Review:

Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller – Erin Munz. Ms. Munz, while a long-time employee in the Clerk's office, will have a learning curve to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Department and its many complexities.

Sheriff of Sumter County – Citizens are in safe hands with Sheriff-Elect Pat Breeden as the new Sheriff. Breeden currently serves as Under Sheriff and has led virtually every department of the agency.

Other Constitutional Officers Re-Elected – Randy Mask, Tax Collector, Joey Hooten, Property Appraiser, and William Keen, Supervisor of Elections.

Superintendent of Sumter County Schools – Logan Brown defeated Allen Shirley, the son of the current Superintendent, Richard Shirley. Mr. Brown will also have a learning curve but brings a fresh perspective to the role. He will also be challenged with an institutional culture that seemed to favor the current administration. The POA hopes that the school board will support Mr. Logan in his efforts to take the Sumter County schools to new achievements.

Sumter County Commissioners – Deb Butterfield, District 1 and Todd Coon, District 3 are newcomers to the Sumter County Board of Commissioners. Butterfield has extensive experience in local government and has been very involved, while Coon, coming from the private sector, will have a longer learning curve. Don Wiley, District 5 was re-elected to the position he

held when appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis after Oren Miller was convicted on perjury charges. When his conviction was overturned, Miller was reinstated to his seat. Wiley won soundly in the primary and was selected to serve as Chair of the Commission.

Wildwood City Commission, Group 5 – Incumbent Julian Green was re-elected to his fourth term when he defeated Villages resident Phil Montalvo. Much of Wildwood now lies within The Villages, and the City has been challenged by keeping up with growth.

Contested Community Development Districts (CDDs):

CDD 2 – Incumbent Judy Biebesheimer defeated Kenneth Mann.

CDD 7 – Incumbent Jerry Vicenti defeated Gilbert Windsor.

CDD 8 – Wayne Anderson defeated incumbent Kevin "Mac" McDonald. Anderson has been in a longtime legal battle with CDD 8 over the placement of a white cross in his yard, a violation of the deed restrictions.

CDD 13 – John Kerrigan defeated Richard Pastor.

Watch List continued on page 6

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Watch List continued from page 5**N Morse Boulevard Safety Issues**

Residents have been sounding the alarm for years about safety issues on North Morse Boulevard with the proximity of the golf/bike lanes next to the vehicle lanes on the road.

Last year, the Sumter County Sheriff's Department received a grant that allowed it to step up enforcement. Two deputies were assigned to that area, and it seems to have helped.

Some residents, however, are not convinced and still believe other changes need to be made. James Vaccaro has been outspoken about his concerns. Community Development District (CDD) 1 conducted an updated engineering study that offered solutions that most residents felt were just too expensive. They believed most of the issues are related to people speeding and not paying close enough attention to sharing the road.

Sheriff-Elect Pat Breeden said the grant money and enforcement efforts will continue in 2025. He said they have a new and enhanced program that will allow them to track more detailed information.

Mr. Vaccaro continues to lobby Sumter County, who owns Morse Blvd., to redesign the road into what he refers to as a "City Street."

**UF Health Spanish Plaines**

Quality measurement organizations continue to show mixed results for UF Health Spanish Plaines. The

CMS Hospital Star Ratings released in October continue to show an overall rating of just one star. However, there are some positives to report with patient satisfaction surveys ticking upward, along with significant improvements in Emergency Department wait times.

Leapfrog uses a letter "grading" system, and the August 2024 rating continued to show a "C." In March, the hospital's Chief Clinical Officer Chery Chestnutt predicted they would still be at a "C" this summer but hoped by Fall to move up to a "B." The report itself shows improvement in several areas, which hopefully will be a continuing trend.

Ms. Chestnutt said there is a lag time of 2-3 years before old data begins to fall off and reflect improvements. She said at that time that patient satisfaction remains the Number 1 issue and the hardest to resolve.

Ms. Chestnutt is scheduled to present to the POA membership again in March 2025.

Watch List continued on page 8

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Watch List continued from page 6



Property Insurance

Obtaining or renewing property insurance continues to be a concern for residents throughout Florida, including Villagers. The

State implemented legislation in 2023 and 2024 to tighten regulations on roofing contractors that caused a big part of the escalating premiums and cancellations. Thousands of people went to Citizens Insurance, the state-owned insurer of last resort, but the state has been methodically moving property owners to other companies as they come online to provide coverage.

Some of the highlights of the 2024 legislation that was effective July 1 include:

Citizens Property Insurance Corporation

- Removes the statutory provision that allows Citizens to charge up to 50 percent above the established Citizens rate for policyholders who previously were insured by an insurance

company that was determined to be unsound or placed into receivership.

- Policyholders who obtained coverage through Citizens under these conditions will be subject to the Citizens rate increase limitations imposed by statute.

Property Insurance Policy Cancellations and Non-renewals

Prohibits surplus lines insurance companies from cancelling or non-renewing personal or commercial residential property insurance policies that cover a dwelling or a residential property that sustained damage in a hurricane for 90 days after the dwelling or residential property has been repaired.

The dwelling or residential property must have been subject to a declaration of emergency.

There are exceptions to this prohibition that would allow a surplus lines insurance company to cancel or non-renew a policy before repairs have been made including:

- With 10 days' notice to the policyholder for non-payment of premium
- With 45 days' notice to the policyholder:
 - For material misstatement or fraud related to the claim.
 - If the insurance company determines that the insured has unreasonably caused a delay in the repair of the dwelling or residential property.
 - If the policyholder fails to adequately respond following an insurance company's reasonable written inquiry regarding the status of repairs.
 - If the insurance company has paid the policy limits.

House Bill 7073 establishes property insurance discounts for policyholders.

- Requires insurance companies to provide a deduction of 1.75 percent of the total premium charged on homeowners insurance policies.

Watch List continued on page 9

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Watch List continued from page 8

- Requires insurance companies to provide a deduction of 1.75 percent of the total premium charged on personal or commercial flood policies.
- Requires insurance companies to provide a deduction on the total premium charged on residential properties in an amount equal to the State Fire Marshal regulatory assessment charged for such policy under s. 624.515, F.S.
- These deductions apply only to policies with coverage for a 12-month period and with an effective date between October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025. The deduction amount must appear separately on the policy's declaration page.

The POA continues to recommend that property owners seek quotes and consider the 4-point inspection when trying to renew a policy or especially if they receive a cancellation notice. ●

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Don Walker	352-430-0610	Mon	12/16/24	Thur	12/19/24	Savannah
Jack Haughn	352-603-1420	Tue	12/10/24	Fri	12/13/24	Laurel Manor

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 or call (877) 846-3299.

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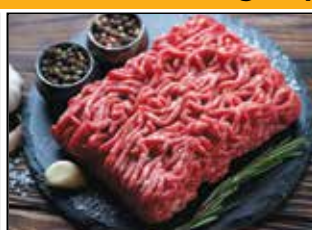
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In Case You Missed It...Highlights from November Meetings

Griffin Road Fence Project

In the back-and-forth discussion about residents' requests for a privacy fence along Griffin Road in Lady Lake, the project is back on the Amenity Authority Committee's (AAC) table. Earlier this year a survey was conducted with a small percentage of residents responding. However, several residents attended the November meeting, expressing their strong wishes for the fencing for safety reasons as their stretch of Griffin Road continues to grow with non-residential projects. Those present were clear that they do not expect anything fancy; they will be satisfied with a simple vinyl fence for privacy.

Cost estimates previously provided were:

- PVC Fence: \$140,000 Landscaping and irrigation for PVC Fence: \$150,000 (Design services by a Landscape Architect are required)
- 7-Foot Permacast Wall: \$375,000 (Engineering design services required are additional)
- Stack Block Wall: \$650,000 (Engineering Design services required are additional)

Deputy District Manager Carrie Duckett suggested that if the AAC wants to go forward it will want to proceed in an aesthetically pleasing way that fits with the rest of The Villages. Questions remained about whether landscaping is actually needed, whether a beige vinyl is available, and what actual engineering costs are associated with each option. District Property Manager Mike Harris said they would review again and come back in December with specific costs.

The reason this project falls under the AAC's purview is that Lady Lake does not have a Community Development District (CDD) with a maintenance fund. So, any work done in this area would be paid with Amenity Fees.

Duct Cleaning for El Santiago Kiln Room

AAC members approved an expenditure of \$73,000 for duct cleaning work for the El Santiago kiln room. The Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget included \$512,611.00 in the Recreation

Amenities Division Fund for the El Santiago HVAC Ventilation Replacement project. It was determined after an additional engineering study that the total HVAC will not need to be replaced for another 6 years.

This project consists of removal, disposal, and replacement of the existing kiln room ventilation duct work. The new kiln exhaust ventilation ductwork shall be routed to the building's exterior and a new wall-mounted packaged terminal air conditioning unit will be installed in the kiln room, replacing the existing louver. These ventilation modifications will significantly improve the heat removal and fresh air exchange in the existing kiln room.

Nelson & Company Engineered Service, LLC submitted a bid at \$73,000.

Discussion of the project included concerns raised about the timing from Judy Biebesheimer, who is in charge of the glass fusion program held at El Santiago. She implored District staff to make sure that the room would not be closed during the upcoming busiest time of year when snowbirds are coming back. Staff indicated they will work with the club to minimize disruptions to programming.



PWAC Asks Again for Developer Contribution to the Proposed LSL Waterfront Project

Project Wide Advisory Committee members were presented with a request to approve a design contract with K2M for the proposed Lake Sumter Landing Waterfront Project.

District staff sprang the project on PWAC earlier this year and after obtaining direction to proceed, a video appeared on The Villages website that very afternoon, causing some members to bristle that their input wasn't really needed. They also asked at that time that the Developer contribute financially to the project as well since it is clearly a marketing tool for their business, but Assistant District Manager Bruce Brown said they received no response to the request. Staff pitched the proposed expansion of the Lake Sumter Landing Recreation Boating Facility & Marina to make the Villages water-based recreational amenities more accessible, and user friendly to all who want to enjoy them with easy to launch Dragon Boats, Kayak Rentals and more.

The design services proposal is for \$222,108, which PWAC ultimately approved. They also asked Mr. Brown to resubmit the request for funding assistance to the Developer.

Highlights continued on page 14

Highlights continued from page 13



Shade Structure at Tierra Pool

Resident and CDD 1 Supervisor Judy Biebesheimer expressed concern that there is no shade structure at the Tierra del Sol pool. She noted that all pools have covered areas except this one. There is nothing covered by the restrooms. District Property Management and Parks and Recreation departments will take a look and report back.

Expenditures for New HVAC Systems

PWAC members were asked to approve a contract for \$1.6 million for the replacement of five HVAC systems at Allamanda Recreation Center, Bridgeport Recreation Center, Churchill Recreation Center, Hibiscus Recreation Center and Pimlico Recreation Center. The project will consist of the removal, disposal and replacement of five (5) direct-expansion split systems with high-efficiency split system units with dehumidification capabilities via variable speed fans and multi-stage compressors. All new life safety components will interface with the existing fire alarm system, new supply air smoke detectors and will be included on all new supply units. All five locations will be completed within forty-five (45) days per location. ●



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Inquiring Minds Want to Know – Is COSTCO Coming or Not?

According to Sumter County Administrator Bradley Arnold, the company is completing its due diligence and nearing the conditional approval of their building and site plans before closing the deal with the property owner.

There is not yet a date announced for construction to begin.

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SHINE Offers Medicare Help

For the remainder of the year, **SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders)** volunteers will be available to assist clients with Medicare related questions including Medicaid, Medicare, and Medigap plans, financial assistance, and scams. The service is free and unbiased, and reservations are not taken.

Counselors will be at the following locations to assist area residents for one-on-one counseling on the indicated days.

Lake Miona Rec Center, 9:00 – 11:30 am
Tuesdays, Dec. 3 and Dec. 10

Eisenhower Rec Center, 9:00 – 11:30 am
Wednesdays, Dec. 4 and Dec. 18

Chula Vista Rec Center, 3:00 – 5:30 pm
Fridays, Dec. 6

Lady Lake Library, 2:00 – 3:30 pm
Wednesdays, Dec. 4 and Dec. 11

Leesburg Public Library, 9:30 – 11:30 am
Tuesdays, Dec. 3 and Dec. 17

“Understanding Medicare,” a group presentation geared toward those turning 65, will be made at 1:00 pm at Aviary Recreation Center on Wednesday, December 11, 2024.

In January, SHINE will revert to its normal year-round counseling schedule.

For more information, go to **FloridaShine.org** or call (800) 963-5337. ●



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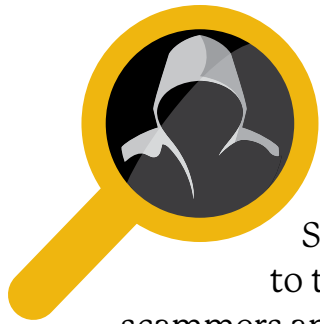
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Phone Calls and Scams

SENIORS VS CRIME

So, the election is over and the onslaught of robocalls and texts is over too...right? Not according to tech guru Kim Komando who noted there are fewer political calls and texts but there are always scammers and spammers. It may actually be easier for them to reach us now that the political calls have ended.

If you see these, don't answer

It's surprisingly easy to spoof phone numbers. A scammer can make it look like they're calling from your bank or doctor's office, so you are more likely to hand over your info. What they don't want you to know is these spoofed calls come from some area codes more than others. If you get a call from any of these area codes and don't recognize the number, let it go to voicemail:

216: Cleveland, Ohio

469: Dallas, Texas

657: La Palma, California

332, 347, 646: New York City

218: Northern Minnesota

712: Western Iowa

Some specific numbers to watch for:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 865-630-4266 | Wells Fargo scam telling you your account has been locked. |
| 469-709-7630 | Callers will tell you that you have a package waiting delivery. |
| 805-637-7243 | Hooray! You've won the Publisher's Clearing House....NOT! |
| 858-605-9622 | Callers say your bank accounts have been hacked. |
| 312-339-1227 | This number has numerous scams tied to it from weight loss supplements to failed package delivery attempts. |
| 917-540-7996 | An automated robocaller advertising things you don't want. |
| 347-437-1689 | This is associated with tax and sweepstakes scams. |
| 301-307-4601 | These guys pretend to be your local post office. |
| 878-877-1402 | More "frozen debit card" scams. |
| 202-221-7923 | "Kelsey" calling about student loan debt forgiveness. |

What can you do about this?

The obvious one is to put yourself on the DO NOT CALL Registry but don't expect a lot to happen to the number of calls you receive.

Block numbers: On an iPhone, you can block a caller by clicking on the INFO Button (lower case "i" icon) next to the call, then tapping "Block this Caller." On Android, select the call in your Phone App, tap the three dots > Block/report spam. Blocking a number doesn't really do much; spammers will just jump to a new number.

There are some excellent apps for cell phones such as You Mail, True Caller, Robokiller, and HiYa. They are available in the App Store for iPhones or in the Google Play Store for Androids.

The best and cheapest way to avoid robo calls and scam calls is to NOT ANSWER THE PHONE UNLESS YOU ABSOLUTELY KNOW WHO THE CALLER IS. That's why we have voicemail.

If you have any questions or concerns, call your nearest Seniors vs. Crime office. ●

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2025 POA Board Nominations

POA Officers and Board member nominations were made at the November General Membership meeting, with installation scheduled at the December 17, 2024 meeting.

Officers

- Cliff Wiener, President
- Gilbert Windsor, Vice President
- Reb Benson, Secretary

Board of Directors

- Tita Dumagsa
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