

**Property Owners Association of The Villages  
General Membership Meeting  
September 15, 2023**

**Called to order:** by Cliff Wiener, President, at 7:00 pm.

- Board members present: All, except: Jerry Ferlisi, Ken Knodel and Steve Lapp, excused.
- Members present: Approximately 70.
- Organizations present: Realty Executives and Seniors vs. Crime, plus a candidate for the Sumter County Sheriff position.
- Membership meeting minutes not reported. Will report on only “southern” membership meetings held at Everglades as they happen.
- Treasurer Report: Ash presented the report for August, Income: \$7,039; Expenses: \$20,123; Net Loss: \$13,084; and, Operating Funds: \$100,847.
- Membership Report: None provided.
- Raffle: Three winners of \$30 each announced.

**Announcements:**

- Cliff mentioned the POA is the only organization championing the rights of Village property owners and in fact won a lawsuit with the developer in 2008 for \$48 million regarding amenity fees. Contrary to what you hear and read in the local paper, we pride ourselves on ensuring we verify the information that goes into the Bulletin as being factual and with no bias.
- Cliff mentioned that if anyone is putting in a pool to first contact Seniors vs. Crime. There are reputable contractors, such as T&D Pools, etc., but there are a couple that have over 100 complaints against them. He added there is a scam ongoing regarding people’s property. Folks can sign up for alerts, via the county they live in, when someone might be trying to sell your property.
- Cliff went over what the Vial for Life program by Sumter County Sheriff and CHIRP by Community Watch are about; mentioning vials and whistles were available to take home.
- Deb Butterfield mentioned the POA Facebook page that can be referenced for key information. She added we will be updating the POA website and announced the start of a mid-month electronic POA Bulletin to provide information as it materializes in-between monthly Bulletin publishing’s.
- Member Meetings at Laurel Manor. Cliff mentioned Joey Hooten, Sumter County Property Appraiser, in September; Capt. Siemer, Sumter County Sheriff’s Department, in October; Solar Energy in November; Cut the Cord in December; Chief Twist, VPSD, and Dr. Curtis on Alzheimer’s in January (one of these speakers at Everglades); and The Villages Regional Hospital in March.
- Member Meetings at Everglades. Cliff mentioned meetings will be the first Thursday in January, April, July and October at 7pm.

**Questions:**

- Resident asked what does the \$15 annual POA membership dues get us? **Ans:** Cliff said the funds go towards keeping all residents informed on issues that impact them via the POA Bulletin. We have advertising in the Bulletin...usually a 24-page product, but going to 28-pages (more advertisers)...that helps defer a good portion of the costs with the membership funds contributing the rest needed towards the monthly production and distribution costs.
- Need a stop sign when leaving Brownwood Square going south, like the one in place when leaving Lake Sumter Square going south. **Ans:** Cliff will get with a Sumter County Commissioner on this, since he believes Sumter County owns the portion of road in question.

**Speaker:** Joe Rogas, Head of Union for Coleman Prison guards, and two Coleman law enforcement officers.

- Mr. Rogas said he represents the workers and has been at Coleman since it opened in 1995. He told the audience about the current issue of not enough guards, which resulted in a picket line in June to inform people of the shortage.

- Coleman has two high, one medium and one low-level penitentiaries plus a Prison Camp (work camp). There are approximately 7,500 prisoners. It is one of the largest prisons in the U.S. and sets the pace on operations at over 120 Bureau of Prisons' facilities.
- They are currently running about 69% staffed with law enforcement officers (200 short).
- Concern is mainly safety...of both its law enforcement officers and the community
  - With at times a ratio of 1 guard to 135 prisoners, guard safety a concern in case of a prison riot.
  - Ability for law enforcement officers to receive timely medical treatment if exposed to fentanyl, etc. Yes, fentanyl and other drugs are prevalent – resulting in 9 homicides this past year.
  - There is more potential for a prisoner – mainly from the Prison Camp - getting loose; a community concern with The Villages (plus now The Villages High School and Middle School) nearby – there was nothing around the prison in 1995.
- Mr. Rogas and the law enforcement officers said wages and benefits at the federal level for the guards must increase; adding also that a fence be installed around the Coleman Prison Camp.
  - Prison guards start at Government Service (GS)-5, Step 1...about \$46,000...with the highest level achieved of GS Step-8, Step 10...about \$65,000.
  - Modeled what guard pay and work environment should be off of the jail in Hillsborough County (Tampa), FL: would like to see GS levels increased – allow up to GS-10; and, would like to see better retention bonuses...not just the \$10,000 to join.
- Mr. Rogas said they are the whistleblowers and need community help at informing Congress of the law enforcement officer shortfalls and need for better pay.
  - Mr. Rogas stated he just got back from Washington, DC where he briefed Congressional members, to include Representative Webster and Senator Scott from Florida, on the shortfalls and best way to address the issues.
  - Mr. Rogas and the officers added that the Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (Colette Peters) is out of touch with what is happening within the prisons and the guard crisis.
  - Mr. Rogas mentioned HR4131 – legislation where the Director would be appointed by the President and confirmed by Congress. Currently requires only appointment by the President.
- Questions, some pertinent ones:
  - What is the inmate to guard ratio and how many guards short? **Ans:** Nationwide ratio is currently 120 to 1. Funding is for 20,466 guards, currently have 12,731 (13,000 in 2020). In fact, another question is where are the funds going for the almost 8,000 positions not employed.
  - Have heard there are more lockdowns at Coleman, why is that the case and is it causing more problems? **Ans:** Staffing shortage is causing more lockdowns along with more prison violence...assumed everyone heard about the stabbing of Larry Nassar, former Michigan State sports medicine physician and convicted sex offender and child molester. Definitely prisoner anger is up due to these necessary lockdowns.
  - How can work camp prisoners leave? **Ans:** Because of a lack of law enforcement officers. In fact, a couple were found at Publix's recently. These are prisoners about done with their time or serving for a crime that got a 1-to-2-year sentence. Yes, they are still criminals, but not of the same degree as in the high or medium level prisons.
  - Is The Villages looking to buy the land and have the prison moved elsewhere? **Ans:** No, too much money has been put into this prison and it is federally controlled – not state or local.
  - How can we help...can we get the Governor involved? **Ans:** Governor cannot do anything...only Congress. Please write to Representatives and Senators about Coleman staffing issues...there are form letters available from the Local 506 Coleman Facebook page. Deb said all this information will be put into the next POA bulletin

There was a Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm that was seconded and unanimously approved.  
Submitted by: Reb Benson, Secretary