

SUN 'N LAKE OF SEBRING IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT  
ANNUAL LANDOWNERS MEETING

Friday, January 24, 2014

MINUTES

The Annual Landowners Meeting of the Sun 'N Lake of Sebring Improvement District was held Friday, January 24, 2014, at the Community Center, 3500 Edgewater Drive, Sebring, FL 33872.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

President Halbig called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. There were approximately 6 people in attendance. Acknowledgement of quorum present. President Halbig requested nominations for Landowner Chairman.

**Member of audience (speaker unknown) nominated Dick Diotte Chairman and David Halbig seconded the motion. There were no other nominations; nominations were closed. Dick Diotte was approved as Landowners Chairman by acclamation.**

Chairman Diotte requested nominations for the position of Landowners Secretary.

**Member of audience (speaker unknown) nominated Julixa Robinson as Secretary and was seconded by Rick Hulbert. There were no other nominations; nominations were closed. Julixa Robinson was approved as Landowners Secretary by acclamation.**

Chairman Diotte announced the election results, which consisted of Larry White being acclaimed the new Board Supervisor, as he was the only candidate. Julixa Robinson administered the Oath of Office and swore him in.

Landowners Secretary, Julixa Robinson, read the minutes from the 2013 Annual Landowners Meeting.

**Member of audience (speaker unknown) moved to approve the minutes, second was received. With no discussion on the motion it was put to a vote and the motion was approved.**

General Manager, Michael Wright, presented the 2013 Annual Landowners Report. The report included the following:

1. There were a number of capital projects completed, assessment rates are the same as prior years and the District's financial condition remains strong.
2. The most noticeable improvement in the District was the work performed on Turtle Run: the greens were reconstructed, certain tees were expanded, cart paths were repaired and extended, and storm water ponds on the course were cleared of growth. The most important work done included the removal of invasive vines and other undesirable plants in the protected scrub jay habitat that borders most of the course. In addition, 500 oak trees of various sizes were planted to enhance the aesthetics and environment surrounding the course.
3. The driving range was reconstructed and an artificial grass mat was installed to enhance the serviceability of the range during heavy use and inclement weather.
4. For the first time, the District was the American host to the Latinoamerica Qualifying Tournament for the PGA where the top 20 players in the four day tournament are awarded "cards" to play on the Latinoamerica tour, which consists of 16 tournaments in 10 different South American countries. The other qualifying tournament is held in Lima, Peru. The event here was so successful that the PGA again awarded the District the qualifying tournament where 132 players from 13 countries will participate in this year's event.
5. The District spent more than \$200,000 renovating the existing tennis courts and converting two of them into eight pickleball courts. The public response has been very positive and 100 new members are expected to join the racquet club by the end of January and the District is already fielding responses regarding holding pickleball tournaments on the District courts.
6. The District spent more than \$800,000 on improvements to the utility system and wastewater plants to ensure reliability and efficiency. A \$1million contract was awarded to replace the 3600 water meters which were aging and, in many cases, non-transmitting as well as approval for a water interconnect with the Town of Avon Park to ensure water reliability for all District residents.

7. The District continues to systematically replace failing storm water culvers. The design was completed for the major storm water improvements to the Unit 4 area that should reduce nuisance flooding to the Maronda Homes area as well as along Frontage Road and the north entrance to the district. Once the improvements are complete, the District plans on spending a quarter of a million dollars in landscaping improvements to the three entrances as well as the approaches to the two golf courses.
8. Sun 'N Lake Boulevard was reconstructed by Highlands County at a cost of more than \$800,000 as well as having the traffic patterns changed at both circles. District streets continue to be resurfaced on a consistent basis from a "worst to best" priority list. The goal is to have all District roads with a rating of "60", which is a nationally recognized measurement meaning the roads are in good shape from a driving and drainage perspective.
9. For the second year in a row, the District will see a new Supervisor take his place on the Board of Supervisors as a landowner representative. Larry White will replace outgoing Supervisor Gene Gangemi, who did not seek reelection.
10. A major operational change occurred with the decision to contract for fire and first responder services from the West Sebring Volunteer Fire Department after an independent study demonstrated reliability and liability issues with the way the District had provided fire services for years. The District is contracting services from West Sebring for one year while Highlands County goes through the legal process of permanently expanding the West Sebring territory to include all of Sun 'N Lake. West Sebring currently maintains two fire apparatus in Town hall with the idea of relocating the equipment to a new Fire/ EMS station that is anticipated to be constructed on Frontage Road in a joint venture with Highlands County during the current fiscal year.
11. The District acquired a billboard on US 27 near the Ponce de Leon entrance. The structure was accidentally constructed on District property, instead of the adjacent lot it was intended for. The billboard owners decided to give it to the District in lieu of relocation or tearing it down. The District is currently using the billboard to advertise District services and events being updated every two months, or so.

12. A new assessment study has been authorized to look at the methodology used levying assessments, the District's primary source of general fund revenue, and the results are expected prior to the development of the budget in late spring.
- B. The greatest unknown and possibly the greatest challenge facing the District this year is what will happen to some 1500 properties that now reside on the County's land available list. In 2009, several thousand property owners did not pay County ad valorem taxes on vacant property in the District and no one purchased tax certificates on the property. After three years on the land available list the County takes the title free and clear of all debt and encumbrances and can dispose of the property in whatever manner it chooses if the valuation is above \$5000. In about nine months, the first of the parcels initially acquired by the County reach the three year milestone. District staff requested a meeting with County officials to discuss how to deal with this unique circumstance. Regardless of the County's course of action, it will have a profound effect on the future of the District.

Chairman Diotte called for any comments or questions on the Annual Landowners Report.

Richard Miller questioned whether the fate of the aforementioned 1500 or so properties would be addressed in the assessment study and/ or the financial analysis and what the District's options are. General Manager Wright affirmed that this issue had been addressed with the consultant and that he would be addressing it in his work and predicted that this item would be the most discussed item in front of the board for the coming year.

Tom Kosty requested clarification on the \$5000 threshold for the county taking the property or not and inquired as to how many of the referenced lots had valuations of \$5000 or above. Mr. Wright explained the law on the valuation and clarified that all of the referenced lots were valued at \$5000 or greater and also stated there were an additional 1000 lots that the County would not touch.

**Audience member (speaker unknown) moved to approve the general manager's report and the motion received a second. Motion was approved.**

Richard Miller drew attention to the fact that the Landowner Meeting has become a "non event" and cited the attendance disparities from four years ago until today. He questioned what efforts the District staff made in advertising the meeting. Mr. Miller reiterated his stance from last year that this meeting needs to be treated as a major event and there needs to be more of an effort made to advertise it.

Chairman Diotte spoke to the fact that he saw no mention of the Landowners meeting except when reading through the meetings from the regular meeting and seeing that a recess was taken for the meeting. He stated that he had seen no advertisement for it. Julixa Robinson stated that the meeting was advertised 10 days prior in the legal's section of the Highlands Today.

Tom Kosty noted that the landowner meeting was not advertised on the community center billboard, town hall or on the calendar of events.

Chairman Diotte attributed the low attendance of the Landowners meeting to contentment in the District but also acknowledged that the lack of advertising attributed to poor turnout.

**Curt McCullough moved to adjourn the meeting and received a second. The meeting was adjourned.**