

Budget preparation ensures beauty, sustainability of our community

“Happy is the person who knows what to remember of the past, what to enjoy in the present, and what to plan for in the future.”

— Arnold H. Glasow

As a resident, I'm sure you must enjoy the beautiful landscaping, smooth roads, numerous top-notch recreation centers, pools, executive golf courses, preserves and all the other components of this outstanding community.

Do you ever wonder how everything stays so well-maintained and operates at such a high standard? It is through the combined efforts of your District Board Supervisors, District staff and you.

The District Boards and District staff work diligently to prepare budgets to provide and sustain the wonderful quality of life that residents expect in the most efficient manner while also planning for the future.

And we have had a busy month of May, as numerous public budget workshops have taken place over the last few weeks.

During the May budget workshops, the District Boards and staff reviewed the line-item budgets, updated capital improvement plans, working capital and reserve balances, along with maintenance assessments rates.

The 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) outlines the replacement and major maintenance projects for the District's roads, fences, irrigation, etc. along with the funding sources.

The plan also provides the original recorded date and the useful life of the infrastructure, so while the replacement costs may not be reflected on the 5 Year CIP, an estimate can be made on when the infrastructure may need to be replaced.



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COLUMNIST

This plan is updated during the annual budget process with new contract prices and possible changes the year the work will be completed based on reviews by Property Management staff and road engineers.

If we had a crystal ball that would provide exact costs and dates for five or 10 years down the road, then this would be an easier process. But unfortunately, we don't, so we make the best estimates, evaluations and reasonable assumptions as possible.

District Boards have spent hours reviewing and discussing their budgets and capital improvement plans to prepare for the upcoming fiscal year, but also to plan three, five, seven and even 10 years into the future.

For a few Districts, the supervisors had to make the difficult decision to increase their maintenance assessment rates. The maintenance assessments are paid once a year on your tax bill reflected under the non-ad valorem section.

Maintenance assessments pay for the operations of the residential districts, including landscaping, road maintenance, water retention areas, storm/gutter facilities, rights-of-way, transportation paths, walls, fences and reserves for future projects.

Many District Boards decided not to increase maintenance assessments during the years when the economy was in a recession. However, an improving economy also generates higher prices, especially when

prices have been maintained at a low rate for multiple years.

This year, some Districts had major increases to their landscape contracts, which are renewed every five to eight years. During the workshops, supervisors in some Districts requested adjustments to their maintenance assessment rates to be included in their proposed budgets, so we could maintain the existing level of service and ensure the long-term integrity of the infrastructure in their District.

I would like to emphasize that these proposed annual Maintenance Assessment increases are NOT associated with your monthly amenity fee, which is paid with your monthly utility bill.

District 2 has had only one maintenance assessment rate increase over the last nine years and is proposing a 10 percent increase, which averages out to a \$14.79 annual increase for villa owners, a \$109.96 annual increase for Harmeswood unit owners and a \$27.20 annual increase for other unit owners.

They took this step after reviewing their additional landscaping costs of \$68,903, the need to upgrade their outdated irrigation system and convert to new technology to maximize water conservation, and the need for future road mill and overlay projects in five to eight years.

District 3 has had only one maintenance assessment rate increase over the last nine years also and is proposing a 15 percent increase. While the percentage may sound like a huge increase, the dollar increase for the year averages out to a \$26.89 annual increase for villa owners, a \$146.11 annual increase for Sunbury Place unit owners and a

\$45.14 annual increase for other unit owners.

The Board took this step after reviewing a \$67,507 increase to their landscaping contract, a need to upgrade their irrigation systems and to convert to new technology to conserve water, and the need for road mill and overlay projects in the next five to 10 years.

District 4 is proposing its first increase in six years with a 20 percent increase, which averages out to a \$48.47 annual

increase for villa owners and an \$81.67 annual increase for other units.

When District 4 was built, Marion County required any new development to be responsible for the maintenance of its collector, residential and villa roads, while the other Districts are responsible for only their villa roads.

Part of the increase is attributable to the CIP and future road projects such as rejuvenator application, resurfacing, mill and overlay, along with an additional \$100,000 in landscaping costs.

Again, I would like to emphasize that the amounts listed

above reflect the total increase for the year.

During the June regular Board meetings, each independent District will approve a Fiscal Year 2015-16 Proposed Budget and Proposed Maintenance Assessment Rates in accordance with state statutes. Check the District website – districtgov.org – for the dates and times your District will meet and feel free to attend even if you don't have any comments.

Once the proposed budgets have been approved, they will be posted on the District's website for your review and also will be available at the District's administrative office.

During the summer, residents within these Districts will receive a mailed notification outlining the reasons for the proposed increase and providing a date and time for the public hearing in September when the increase will be considered.

If you would like to provide input regarding the FY15-16 Budget and maintenance assessment rates, feel free to call Janet Tutt or myself at 751-3939 or email me at Barbara.Kays@districtgov.org, or contact your District Supervisors using the contact information on the District's website.

Please feel free to attend the

June meeting even if you don't have any comments, as it is a great way to learn how your District government works.

June also means that summer vacations are beginning and perhaps you will have grandchildren visiting you in The Villages and hopefully participating in the many fun Camp Villages activities. Enjoy the visits and we will see you again next week here at Our Place!

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