



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

2/7/2024

What is The Villages Public Safety Department Dependent District (VPSDDD)?

The VPSDDD is a dependent special district of Sumter County, established pursuant to Chapter 189 of Florida State Statutes and Sumter County Ordinance 2023-18. Under Florida law, a district is considered dependent if a single county or municipality has the authority, among other things, to appoint members to the special district's governing body and approve or veto the special district's budget.

Why was the VPSDDD established?

Sumter County voted to proceed with the creation of a dependent fire district to support the separation of services provided by Sumter County Fire & EMS and The Villages Public Safety Department. This also separates the revenues to independently fund each fire department. The VPSDDD is charged with providing fire, rescue, and EMS transport service facilities, infrastructure, and other public facilities to the property owners within the established boundaries.

How does this impact the existing Villages Public Safety Department?

It doesn't! The Staffing, equipment, locations, and overall operations of The Villages Public Safety Department will remain with the Village Center Community Development District (VCCDD). To maintain continuity of services, the VPSDDD approved an Interlocal Agreement for VCCDD to provide fire, inspections, advanced and basic life support emergency medical, and EMS services in the established boundaries. The VPSDDD will serve as the general oversight for services within the established boundaries and funding authority.

Who serves on the VPSDDD?

Governance of The Villages Public Safety Department Dependent District is accomplished by a five (5) member Board of Supervisors initially appointed by the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners. Following the expiration of the terms of office of the initial members of the VPSDDD, each member will be elected by qualified electors and hold office for a term of four years until a successor is elected and qualifies. The first election cycle for two seats is in 2024, and three seats in 2026.

What are the established boundaries of the VPSDDD?

The geographic boundaries for the VPSDDD include and incorporate all property within The Villages of Sumter County, inclusive of areas in the City of Wildwood, in addition to some immediately surrounding areas within the county. Exhibit A is included to view the boundaries.

I live outside of Sumter County in The Villages – will I still receive services?

Yes! The VCCDD has Interlocal Agreements in place with Lady Lake, Lake County, Fruitland Park, and Leesburg to provide services via The Villages Public Safety Department. These benefiting property owners are paying for services received as outlined in the respective agreements. Marion County Fire Rescue is the primary service provider for both fire and EMS transport to The Villages of Marion, and The Villages Public Safety Department will respond if Mutual Aid is requested.

Will my level of service change?

No! Property owners will continue to receive exceptional service and care from The Villages Public Safety Department in the form of fire, rescue, and EMS transport services. The VPSDDD will simply enhance the focus of governance and permit the Board to assess benefiting property owners in a fair and equitable manner.

How will the VPSDDD fund services?

The VPSDDD is authorized to determine, order, levy, impose, collect, and enforce non-ad valorem special assessments to operate and maintain fire and rescue facilities and provide services. They intend to accomplish this through a non-ad valorem Fire Assessment. In addition, Sumter County has authorized the VPSDDD to utilize ad valorem taxes on all taxable property not to exceed 0.75 mills or a millage authorized by law approved by vote of the electors therein, whichever is less.

Can the VPSDDD charge Impact Fees?

As a dependent district, the VPSDDD does not have the legal authority to charge impact fees. That function remains with the general-purpose government, the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners.

What is the difference between ad valorem and non-ad valorem assessments?

Ad valorem is a Latin phrase meaning "according to value". This form of taxation is based on the value of your property. The rate is determined by multiplying your property's taxable value by a tax rate, or millage, set by the levying body.

A *non-ad valorem* assessment is a special assessment or service charge which is not based on the value of the property. The levying body determines the unit of measure for the benefits or other services performed. Examples of non-ad valorem taxes are storm water utility, solid waste, security and fire and rescue.

What is millage?

A millage rate is the rate of tax per thousand dollars of taxable value. To determine the ad valorem tax, multiply the taxable value (assessed value less any exemptions) by the millage rate and divide by 1,000. For example, \$100,000 in taxable value with a millage rate of 0.75 would generate \$75.00 in taxes.

What is taxable value?

The taxable value is the assessed value of your home determined by the County Property Appraiser, less any exemptions provided by law.

What is a Fire Assessment?

Fire assessments are used to fund fire services through a special assessment which ensures property owners that benefit from the service share in the cost of the service. These services are often accomplished through a Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU). A fire assessment is a charge imposed against real property - land and improvements to land, including permanent structures - to fund *only* the **fire services** provided to the property.

A Fire Assessment cannot fund Advanced Life Support (ALS) and ambulance transport services?

No, the courts have upheld that a fire assessment is just that – to support the protection of property based on readiness, staffing and demand. ALS and transport services do not directly support physical property, but instead support the individual. The assessment methodology to determine a fire assessment for VPSDDD will specifically exclude ALS and transport related services.

The ALS and transport services provided by VPSD are funded by myriad of sources including,

1. Revenue billed to individuals, private insurance and, primarily, Medicare.
2. Safety Fund Working Capital and Reserves
3. Lake County Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU)
4. Sumter County General Fund - Ambulance Readiness Funding
 - a. 70% of unit hours, per ambulance, at a \$190 per hour

What is a MSBU and/or MSTU?

These are methods a County can use to fund a particular service in only a portion of the County.

Municipal Service Benefit Units (MSBU) are funded by the collection of non-ad valorem special assessments or charges for specified boundaries. The assessment may be applied in a variety of ways such as per parcel or lot. The main distinction is that a MSBU benefits physical property.

Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTU) are funded by the collection of ad valorem taxes to support essential facilities and services within a specific boundary. As noted previously, ad valorem taxes are based on the assessed value of the subject property and supported by millage rates.

To put it more simply, an MSBU benefits the property and an MSTU benefits the people as a whole.

How much will it cost residents and commercial property owners?

The VPSDDD has engaged a consultant, PFM Financial Advisors, LLC (PFM), to undertake an analysis to determine special assessment rates and millage requirements within The Villages Public Safety Department Dependent District boundaries. The key deliverable will be establishing a fair and equitable assessment methodology and associated rates for all benefiting properties, including appropriate capital funding, to cover operating expenses.

Specifically, PFM will conduct an analysis of budgets, incidence reports, and property data. This will support the establishment of 2024-2025 assessment rates by land use, with a 3–5-year projected average to accommodate growth and stabilize capital acquisition.

Once proposed rates are established by the VPSDDD Board, a legal notice is required to be mailed to all property owners twenty (20) days in advance of Public Hearing held in accordance with Florida State Statutes. The public hearing is anticipated to be held in June 2024.

Once the rates are set, how will I receive my bill?

The VPSDDD will utilize the uniform method of collection in accordance with Chapter 197 of Florida State Statutes. This allows the VPSDDD to utilize the Sumter County Tax bill as an avenue for the collection of ad valorem and non-ad valorem assessments.

EXHIBIT A

The Villages Public Safety Department Response Area

