

# SpringLake BREEZE

*Florida... the way it should be!*



## Board Update

Gary Behrendt, Chairman



Pictured left to right: Brian Acker, Leon Van, Tim McKenna, Bill Lawens, Gary Behrendt

After serving three years as Board Chairman, Bill Lawens has stepped down but remains on the Board. Under Bill's leadership the District completed the STA and ECO Park, secured funding for a new waste water facility, participated in several projects overseen by staff, attended numerous meetings and District events, and a myriad of other activities. We thank him for his involvement and commitment to Spring Lake.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection prepared an article on our Storm Water Treatment Area (STA) and ECO Park and submitted it to a National Water Solutions publication. Our STA was highlighted in the December issue of 2018 Outstanding Water Projects and appeared with a dozen other projects from across the country. The STA continues to receive accolades not only for water retention, storage, and water quality, but also for its unique adaptation into a Park.

The Board has commissioned studies to review our Assessment Methodology; waste water asset management plan for future rates and fees; water utility rate and fee schedules, and an evaluation of all our physical assets for future insurance needs. All this information will keep us in a proactive position to ensure the financial health of our District in the years ahead.

We are hopeful that this is the year our Legislative Appropriation gets approved by the State Legislature and our new Governor in the amount of \$1.2 million to expand sewer lines along Rt. 98. This would generate a new corridor for both residential and commercial development and promote economic development for the District.

In this issue of The Breeze, enjoy reading about the upcoming Bark Park, new sewer plant, water angels, the bits and pieces section, the budget process, and an array of pictures.

## Pine Breeze Park a busy place for fun and birthday parties

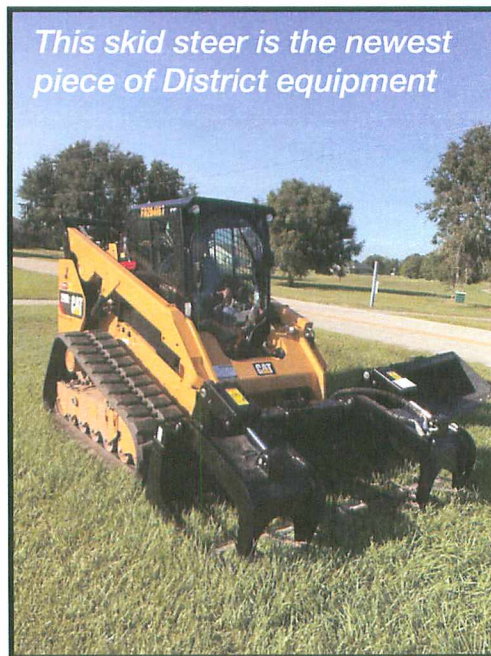


## BITS AND PIECES



- Plans continue to move forward on the Memorial for slain Sheriff Deputy William Gentry, who was a resident of Spring Lake, and whose family still lives here. The ECO Park will be the site for this memorial and several community events will be held to raise funds for the project.
- Village IX has been sold in its entirety, 325 acres. The land is located south of Rt. 98 and lies between Thunder Road and Arbuckle Creek, all the way to the Lake. The new owner does not plan any large development and will use it for his own future residence and enjoyment.
- 2019 telephone directories produced by the Spring Lake Property Association are now available at both the District and SLPA offices free of charge.
- The District web site continues to average approximately 350 visitors per month and includes residents who pay their utility bills on-line. New accessibility guidelines have been established and are posted for those needing assistance.

- The Florida Rural Water Association has assisted the District in establishing utility rates for the past 7 years. They have completed a major financial study that will help determine future residential and commercial waste water rates and will focus on water rates in the Spring. The Board will be reviewing these studies during the upcoming budget process for FY '20.
- Public Risk Insurance Trust is providing the District with a complimentary Asset Management Review of all our facilities and equipment. This process enables the District to have adequate coverages and protect against any loss. Spring Lake was chosen from a long list of clients.
- The widening of Rt. 98 project continues to move forward. The Florida Department of Transportation is in the process of selecting the engineering firm to oversee the project. The District has had communication with DOT and is actively involved in the process.



## Budget Process Begins



Beginning with the FY 2006 budget process a set of optimum financial goals, and a timetable, have been followed to assist the Board of Supervisors with the development of a yearly budget for the District.

### **Financial Goals include:**

- The District will have a budget reflective of a sound staffing pattern, a progressive salary administration program, and organizational goals and objectives to determine expenditures.
- The District will maintain adequate reserves to protect it against unforeseen circumstances and situations.
- The District will have sound financial management and reporting including investments, controls, adequate insurance coverage, and utilization of appropriate external counsel and assistance as needed.
- The District will have a budget process that involves the Board, management staff, working groups, and public input.
- The District will develop a budget process timetable and chart of work for each fiscal year

### **Fiscal Year Projected Timetable:**

April-June	Manager, Administrator, and working groups gather financial data
May	Finance working group develops projected budget
June	First draft of budget projection presented to Board
July	Second draft of budget projection presented to Board
August	Public Hearing
September	Budget approved by Board and assessments sent to Tax Collector

The development of the District Budget is an open process that is thoroughly discussed and reviewed at the monthly Board meetings, held the second Wednesday of each month at the District Offices, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Additional information can be secured and discussed by contacting the District Office at 655-1715 and making an appointment.



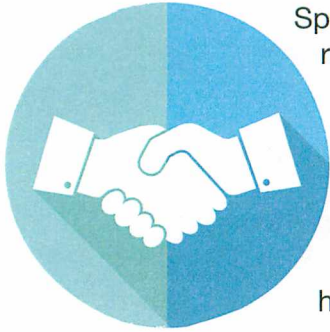
*A bird watching group from the Audubon Society at the ECO Park*



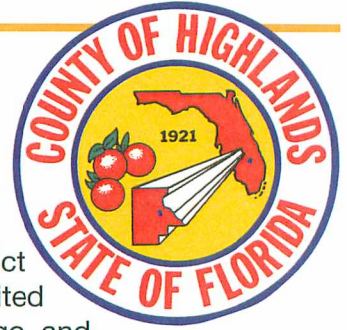
*A young family and friends enjoy a day at Arbuckle Creek Park*



## District – County Partnership



Spring Lake has been most fortunate to have an exceptional relationship with Highlands County Board and Staff. There are numerous services, activities, and projects that the District works hand in hand on with the County that makes a positive impact on our community. Commissioner Don Elwell is a Spring Lake resident and stays in constant contact with District staff. County Administrator Randy Vosburg has personally visited Spring Lake numerous times since he took office 15 months ago, and he meets with District staff on a regular basis.



We have on-going contact with all Departments within the County, especially Engineering; Road and Bridge; Planning; and Emergency Services. The District has a seat at important County committees such as Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) that impacts funding such as FEMA; the Recreation committee (RPAC), that has provided close to \$140,000 for the ECO Park, Pine Breeze Park, and the Dog Park; and Lake Iskotopoga Management Committee; to name a few.

Highlands County owns and maintains all the roads in Spring Lake and thru an inter-local agreement the District mows and maintains all the right of ways and medians. County Road and Bridge annually inspects all roadways and determines which ones need repair or repaving. The County also supports the District with the replacement of culverts and other infrastructure that impacts proper drainage.

The County oversees all aspects of construction in our District thru the issuance of permits, and they inspect all properties prior to occupancy. Their Code Enforcement Department frequents Spring Lake to ensure compliance with County standards as well.

During the construction of the STA the County removed hundreds of tons of fill that was used at the land fill and supplied the asphalt that was needed for the ECO Park. They install shell rock on the entrance road to Arbuckle Creek every few years, trim trees on medians and right of ways, and assist the District on a myriad of special projects and activities.



## Water Angels

It is never too late to become a water angel. Many of our residents have made contributions to a special account that is used to help those in need pay their water bills. All donations are kept confidential and are credited to the recipient's water bill anonymously. In the past year we have been able to collect over \$1,500 and here are a few examples of how water angels have helped:

- Resident leaves hospital and goes to nursing home for several months
- 94-year-old grandmother struggling financially to raise her grandkids
- Recently widowed woman caught in hard times and looking for a job
- Man loses his job and water was about to be shut off
- Woman hospitalized with no other family near-by to help
- Single mom very sick and teenage kids working part time jobs after school to help pay bills

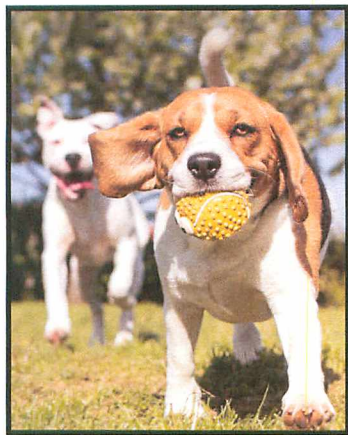


Both Cindy and Diane in the District Office monitor water bill credits to recipients. They are diligent in making themselves aware of people in need, and the extent of help that is required. They have many heart warming stories of the appreciation these recipients have, some of which are very emotional, as you could imagine.

If you are led to help people in our community, simply make out a check to SLID and put Water Angel fund in the memo. Your gift will be greatly appreciated and used appropriately.

## Bark Park Coming

Last Fall a group of residents inspired by Monica Griffith, Linda Kithcart, and Priscilla Cutler approached the District about the establishment of a Dog Park. Within a month, petitions were signed by 347 residents in support of a Park. The project was brought to the Board of Supervisors and they supported the initiative.



The District had land available adjacent to the pump station entrance that was not being used for the STA and was vacant. The County's Recreation Committee, that previously supported the ECO Park and Pine Breeze Park restroom, was going to be approached to fund the Park. The District was going to provide the land and all excavation, clearing, and transporting of fill; the County was being asked for \$35,770. The proposal was unanimously approved at the Committee's November meeting, and work has already begun.



The **BARK PARK**, as it is being called, will have two fenced in areas for both small and large dogs, approximately 20,000 square feet for each area. A shelter, picnic tables, benches, and grilles will also be installed, like the structures at the ECO Park. Water fountains will be available, as well as washing areas for the dogs.

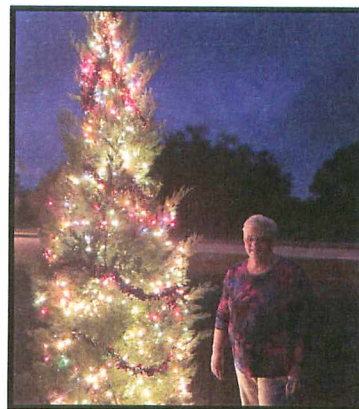
The land is cleared, seed has been spread, and additional trees will be planted. The 40,000 square feet of fencing will be installed by Brooker Fencing once the grass takes hold and all the other amenities are completed. We hope to have the Park ready to open in April. Operation and maintenance of the Park becomes a District responsibility, and we are counting on residents who use the Park to help keep it clean and maintained.

The **PAWSitively Spring Lake Dog Club** has been established and is on Facebook. It is free to join, and for additional information you can call or text (863)381-8052. They currently meet at the ECO Park, anxiously awaiting their new location at the **BARK PARK!**

*Spring Lake resident Craig Cardinal enjoys time at the ECO Park*



*Spring Lake resident Karen Palino and the Property Association organized the first Annual Christmas Tree Lighting.*



# SPRING LAKE

## IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

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### Waste Water Plant Update



Excavation Point, Inc. continues to make progress on the construction of the District's new waste water plant. Thru the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the State's Revolving Fund Loan program, the District has secured up to \$3.2 million at no interest over 30 years. Only the users of the sewer system are paying the costs to build and operate the plant.

The plant location, just off Rt. 98, allows the District to run sewer lines all the way down the highway both east and west, to acquire new users. A Legislative Appropriation for \$1.2 million has been applied for, and it is being sponsored and endorsed by Representative Cary Pigman and Senator Ben Albritton. The funds will be used to continue sewer lines on Rt. 98 as far west as Haywood Taylor Blvd. The Legislative Session begins in March



and Spring Lake staff will be attending several important meetings that will determine the outcome of this request.

