



# SpringLake BREEZE

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



## World Record?

On March 11th, Duane Palmer Boulevard could become the site of a new cycling world record. The Growing For Inclusion Foundation, an organization that works to create opportunities in sport for people with disabilities, is attempting to break several world records over the course of about 30 hours.

Ricardo Paván, president of the Growing For Inclusion Foundation, and Raúl Villalba, a cyclist with visual impairment, will be using Duane Palmer Blvd as their course for this world record-breaking attempt. The cyclists will occupy the road starting at 7:00 AM on March 11th, and ending in the early afternoon of March 12th. There will also be a nearby checkpoint where the support team will be stationed under a tent, and there will be a car following the cyclists, specifically at night.

We thank all the neighbors in this area for supporting our attempt to make history.



## Fire Station Update

Highlands County is moving closer to the construction of the long awaited fire station and EMS facility for Spring lake. A Florida Legislative Appropriation of \$3.5 million was approved in 2022 and the project is finally expected to begin

The architect is currently in the design development phase of construction documents. The civil engineer is currently at 60% complete in the site and drainage phase, and geotechnical testing will be completed soon. Pending the final site plan, Haywood Taylor Blvd. will be widened. The County will have all final construction documents by the end of March.

The facility is being located adjacent to Water Plant #2 off of Carroll Shelby Road. This close access to Spring Lake will be life saving in many situations by tremendously decreasing the amount of time it takes to reach our residents in need of service. This close proximity will also decrease the cost of your homeowners insurance.







## Water-Sewer Billing Web Portal

Spring Lake is excited to announce our **NEW Customer Web Portal**, enabling you to manage your utility account and make **payments online 24/7/365**. Creating your account is simple. First, start by navigating to the NEW Customer Web Portal using one of the three options below.





1. Go Online to the Spring Lake's Website: [www.springlakefl.com](http://www.springlakefl.com)  
Click "**Customer Portal**"
2. Or navigate to the portal by going to <https://springlakefl.epayub.com>
3. **Scan the QR Code below** using your smartphone camera.

Once you have navigated to the Customer Web Portal, select "**Register**" to create an account. Once your account is created, you can pay your water-sewer bills, view your payment and usage history, and much more. Under the User Profile section, you can also sign up for text notifications. For example, you can receive text alerts once your bill is generated each quarter to let you know it is available to be viewed and paid online.

You can also select "**Quick Pay**" to make a payment online without creating an account.

Currently, Spring Lake Improvement District accepts the following Credit Cards/Debit Cards: Visa, MasterCard, and/or Discover. A per transaction Service Fee of 3% or \$2.25 minimum will be charged by the payment processing company for this service.

# SAVE **TIME**. SKIP THE **LINE**. PAY **ONLINE**.

-  **VIEW USAGE HISTORY**
-  **VIEW PAYMENT HISTORY**
-  **SET UP RECURRING PAYMENTS**
-  **SIGN UP FOR PAPERLESS BILLING**



Spring Lake Improvement District  
115 Spring Lake Boulevard  
Sebring, FL 33876-6143





## Water Plant Update

Water Plant #1 is referred to by the District as the original water plant that is located just off of Duane Palmer Blvd. next to the maintenance facility. Water Plant #2, located on the west side of the District, was acquired several years ago and has been going thru a rehabilitation. While WP#1 has been going thru some upgrades, WP#2 has been used as a back-up and we have experienced some issues in pockets of our District that has impacted several dozen homes. By the end of February all issues should be resolved, WP#1 should be fully back on line, and WP#2 will continue to be monitored. Once a second well is installed at WP#2 the District will have two independent systems that will provide quality drinking water for generations to come. As an aside, we do NOT use Flouride in the water; a question that is often asked.

Pictured on the left is our Utility staff repairing a major break. With a 45 year old infrastructure, breaks are very common. On the right is the upgraded generator for WP#1.



## New State Transparency Law

A new State Statute mandates that beginning 2025, all Special Districts have goals for each of the programs and services that are assessed each fiscal year to residents, via the non-ad valorem assessment. These must be on the website at [www.springlakefl.com](http://www.springlakefl.com) and under the SERVICES tab we have listed those goals for each department. Over and above these goals, residents can submit work orders and requests for service that will be addressed within one business day. Per the Statute, beginning December 1, 2025, the results of all goals must be published and reported to the residents on the website. We will also publish the results in The Breeze and via e-mail blasts.

### FISCAL YEAR 25 GOALS

#### Drainage

All operational and maintenance tasks will be performed on a regular basis. Residential requests will be addressed within two business days.

AQUATIC SPRAYING is an integral part of maintaining proper drainage by eliminating evasive vegetation. All areas will be sprayed on a regularly scheduled and mapped plan. Residential requests will be addressed within two business days.

#### Mowing

Mowing of vacant lots enrolled in the District program will be conducted a minimum of 5 times per season.

#### Parks

A daily operational and maintenance plan will be overseen at all parks. All requests for service or repairs will be addressed within two business days. Community Center rentals will be available year round, with daily O & M schedules. The District will monitor and oversee the Parks and Recreation master plan, as well as the McKenna Plan, on a monthly basis.

#### Mosquito Control

All requests for service will be performed within 24 hours, depending on rain or wind conditions.

#### Water

All Utility emergency calls Monday thru Friday by 2:00 p.m. will be responded within one hour, and repairs will begin within 24 hours. Weekend repairs will be addressed within one hour if severe, on or the following Monday. Requests for new water service will be handled within 5 business days. Water turn on and turn off requests will be handled within 48 hours. All fire hydrants and utility infrastructure will be monitored daily.

#### Wastewater

All emergency calls Monday through Friday by 2:00 p.m. will be responded to within one hour, and repairs will begin within 24 hours. Weekend repairs will be addressed within one hour if severe, on or the following Monday.



# SEBRING INTERNATIONAL GOLF RESORT SPRING LAKE COMMUNITY UPDATE



**IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU, SPRING LAKE!**

My name is Joel Schachter, and I am thrilled to introduce myself as the new majority owner of Sebring International Golf Resort (SIGR). My journey with this remarkable community began in late 2021 when I originally served as, what you may think of, as "bank" for the refinance of the resort purchase by Signature H. Over time, I fell in love with the incredible people of Spring Lake, which motivated me to invest even more into your community!

As I write this today, I am proud to say that I have made the single largest personal investment into Spring Lake, ever. And while I reside in Tampa with my wonderful wife, Kim, and our three adult children, I have been making the weekly drive for more than a year and with the the goal of fulfilling the mission that began in 2021... to elevate SIGR to a level of excellence never seen before by this community!

A LITTLE ABOUT ME... in the late 90s, I owned, built, and subsequently sold a mail-order pharmacy (before people had heard of this!) in St. Louis. I moved to Tampa in 2001 so my wife and children could be closer to family. I then spent 14 long years building, from 5 to 125+ employees and subs, a specialty construction company that I sold in 2016. Though I then retired, I have always had a passion for and have been involved in real estate... so I took up a new hobby and began a private real estate lending business that lives on today.

**CONFESSION #1** - I will be the first to admit that, over the past 5 years, things at the resort haven't gone exactly as planned. YOU THOUGHT IT, BUT I SAID IT! Great, now that this is out in the open, I also want to tell you that my team and I have spent thousands upon thousands of hours working on the SIGR project, often with sacrificing weekends and time with our families. SO... WITH MY RIGHT HAND RAISED, I promise YOU that every decision made over the recent years has, absolutely and without a doubt, been made with the best intentions in mind and based on the information, opportunities, and funding that was available at that time.

**CONFESSION #2** - I'm NOT a resort developer, a golf course developer, or restaurateur... but, I also didn't know anything about prescription drugs or construction and, well, that turned out OK 😊.

**CONFESSION #3** - I'm NOT right 100% of the time... just ask my wife (it's more like 95%)! For one moment, I ask you to think back and remember what SIGR looked like 5 yrs ago, 3 yrs ago and now today. Was that A SMILE ON YOUR FACE? With an investment that EXCEEDS THE COMBINED TOTAL OF ALL FORMER OWNERS, I hope you are proud of where we are today and anticipate you will be even prouder as we CONTINUE our progress... and we don't want to stop until it is complete!

Unfortunately, SIGR has not been a profitable business for the past decade and WE RELY ON YOU, OUR RESIDENTS, to support our golf course, Speakeasy restaurant and bar and to embrace the land development that must occur in order to sustain SIGR and boost your property values! You see, OUR SUCCESS IS YOUR SUCCESS and SIGR's longevity and upward trajectory is based on ALL of these components together.

Spring Lake, I leave you with ONE PROMISE... we truly have YOUR best interest at heart (even if you may not know it) and that I will always communicate our progress and challenges!

Thank you for welcoming me into your community! We are excited about the future and look forward to continuing this journey to make Spring Lake an even more incredible place to live and play!

Warmest regards,

Joel Schachter



SCAN TO  
LEARN MORE  
ABOUT OUR  
PLANS





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## Outside Funding To The District

Much of the improvements to the District's stormwater projects, as well as all the utility and parks projects, have come from outside sources; saving a tremendous amount of money for residents, resulting in low assessments. In 2014 the District assessment was \$312.27 per unit. Since 2014 Spring Lake projects have totaled over \$17 million, yet the 2025 District assessment is still being kept low, at \$319.85 per unit. Outside funds totaling \$15,024,944 have come from Florida State Legislative Appropriations, Florida Department of Environmental Protection grants, Florida Recreation Program grants, Highlands County Recreation grants, and 30-year no interest loans from the Florida State Revolving funds. These 30 year loans are for more than \$7 million, but because they are spread out over 30 years the burden to repay this debt does not fall on the backs of residents currently living here. People who move into Spring Lake and take advantage of all our improvements will also pay for the loan. This is the major reason that we have been able to keep our assessments low.



District staff continues to work with funding sources to help provide the financial resources needed for our Master Parks Plan, the updated 10-year water control plan; septic to sewer projects; and utility force main expansion.

In 2024 alone, the District secured funding from the following sources:

Florida Recreation Fund	\$287,500	Arbuckle Creek Park & Bark Park
Highlands County	182,250	Arbuckle Creek Park & Bark Park
Highlands County	<u>50,000</u>	Parks Maintenance
Highlands County	25,000	Medians Maintenance
	<b>\$544,750</b>	

**SAVE  
the  
DATE**

# Spring Lake Festival

*Saturday*  
**October 25**

**10 am - 4 pm**

# Pine Breeze Park

## Festival A Huge Success

Thanks to Improvement District Supervisor Phil Gentry and his TEAM, the October 26<sup>th</sup> Festival was the largest ever, approaching nearly 3,500 people.

Mark your calendars for next year, **October 25, 2025**.





## ***Current and Planned Development Has A History***

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It has been over 50 years since commercial development came to Spring lake, as well as plans for additional residential communities. The last four years has seen a myriad of projects begin, as well as planned. The map below shows the various projects.

Most people don't realize that the amount of development has been controlled in Spring Lake by Highlands County since 1971. The very first area approved by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners occurred on July 21, 1970, when Village One was approved for 516 residential lots and 20 acres of commercial. Throughout 1971 the County approved the plats for Village II (773 residential, 22 acres commercial), Village III (873 and 27), and Village IV (530 and 47). In 1972 approvals were given for Village V (694 and 0), Village VI (875 and 68), Village VII (2,098 and 0), Village VIII (167 and 0), Village IX (769 and 0), and Village X (522 and 0)

All the above approvals equal 7,817 residential lots originally permitted, and 184 acres of commercial development approved.



Over the years the County, thru their land development regulations and comprehensive plan, have approved zoning changes and other modifications. Any change from the original plat must go thru the County's Planning and Zoning Commission as well as a vote from the Board of County Commissioners. Most recently,

changes have been solicited for areas referred to as Crown Jewel, The Highlands, and The Farm.

For those concerned that Spring Lake will be wall to wall homes and commercial development, that is far from reality. Since the original 7,817 lots were permitted, many areas are now listed as wetlands, the golf course takes up a lot of acreage, we have numerous parks such as the ECO, Bark, Pine Breeze, and others. We currently have just under 4,500 assessed units, and that includes all the homes and acreage within the District. We are adding 21 acres west of the ECO Park that was gifted to us by the County; 10 acres are being developed on the southeast side of the ECO Park with shaded areas and an overlook; 3 acres is being added to the Bark Park with a playground, shelter, and trailhead for a walking trail; and doubling the usable space at Arbuckle Creek Park.

With Commercial development mainly on Rt. 98, and new residential units and communities within the permitted areas, Spring Lake should continue to be a very desirable place to reside, as well as enjoy the vast greenspace and recreational opportunities that will always be here to improve our mental and physical health.

## ***Wastewater System Field Test Begins***

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The long awaited start to the new and innovative wastewater system that has been installed next to our current plant on Rt. 98 is in operation. This is not a replacement for our existing plant, but will allow the District to expand its capacity at a tremendous savings rather than building another plant. Test results will be available within the next six months and then production of the system by ECO Water can begin. Spring Lake was chosen as the only location in the United States to test the system. Interested residents can tour the system by contacting the District office.







**IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

115 Spring Lake Blvd.  
Sebring, FL 33876  
863.655.1715 phone  
863.655.4430 fax

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**Budget Process Begins**

The District Board of Supervisors takes its financial oversight responsibilities seriously, and a very transparent and open budgeting process has been in place for the last 15 years. The process calls for individual department presentations prior to the first draft, and gives Supervisors and the public a good picture of what is going to come in the next fiscal year's budget. The timetable is part of the Financial Policies document, Section 10.02.02:

February Board Meeting	Utility operations, fees, future plans
March	Equipment and vehicles
April	Personnel
May	Field Services
June	First draft of budget presented
July	Second draft presented
August	Public Hearing
September	Budget approved, sent to Tax Collector

As stewards of District funds, Supervisors spend the majority of their time discussing and analyzing projects and activities that impact the yearly budget.

**Medians**

With the help of a \$50,000 allocation from the County, the District is removing all existing trees from the medians and will be planting smaller trees that will be consistent and aesthetically pleasing. Most trees were planted over 40 years ago and their growth has been doing damage to the County owned roads. This rehabilitation will make it more feasible to pave the remaining roads and improve ongoing maintenance. This project is a priority for 2025.



**Force Mains Being Extended**

Sewer lines are being extended from our current plant, along Duane Palmer Boulevard towards the Bark Park. A future second stage will go all the way to the entrance to Blue Heron.

With water lines already in place, future development will be able to take advantage of both water and sewer. The cost of these projects are borne by the developer thru what is known as connection fees. There is also an opportunity for existing homeowners along the extension route to abandon their septic system and convert to the District sewer system. As the State Legislature continues to move Florida from septic tanks to sewer, you will be seeing more and more expansion within our community.

