

## **PRESIDENTS MESSAGE**

July 1, 2026

I'd like to begin my remarks tonight with a little history. Many people may have forgotten that prior to 2022, the Pine Ridge POA did not hold Candidate Forums. In fact, our governing documents prohibited the use of the Community Center for political functions. As potential changes affecting Pine Ridge began to emerge, the POA became politically engaged in order to defend the character of our community.

At the time, I was serving as Vice President of the Association with Mike Perry as the President. Together we recruited Pete Cuccaro to establish and Chair the Roads Committee. Bill Hunter, who was part of that committee went on to Chair the External Affairs Committee. Pete's background as a police chief working with local governments and later political campaigns was a plus. Bill Hunter, who has since passed away brought his expertise from Monroe County. Together they worked to build the Pine Ridge political profile. Candidate forums were an outgrowth.

Our roads were in terrible condition, and we were also facing the proposed Suncoast Parkway interchange. We needed to improve equestrian safety and reduce traffic incidents as just two of many priorities. What Pete and Bill started Mark Svetska continued with Roads. But there were many other questions needing answers.

Could we be a gated community? What would it cost if we paved our own roads? What was the process? Why was it necessary to have an interchange at 486 when it wasn't part of the original FDOT plan? What about development in and around Pine Ridge? Why wasn't there more traffic enforcement? And more.

A number of us believed we needed to awaken the political strength of a community the size of Pine Ridge. The Board amended our governing documents to allow political functions—a change that was later mandated by the State. With the help of Pete and Bill, the first Candidate Forum was conducted in 2022. This was followed up with the second forum in 2024. This time Pete was asked by President Sue Wasserman and then he recruited Brenda Roberts, Joey Valinoti, Keith Landers, Bill Miller and Mark Dupuis. Candidates were already aware of the voices they were hearing from Pine Ridge---not only at the forums but in BOCC meetings, workshops and other County and State gatherings.

This year the process needed to be expedited. A review of candidate questions already provided by residents and previously screened by Joey, Brenda and Pete were as relevant today as they were two years ago. In the interest of time, ours and candidate schedules, Pete was recruited again---and this time the written format was established. Now the POA will have two options for all future elections. Now that the foundation is established, we hope future residents can build on it.

Everyone should know that the process, timelines, questions and candidate responses will all be sent to the membership in total via SIT and CINC and will be available on the website. We expect to reach more residents as they won't have to navigate. It will be in their inbox, and in writing. We have already heard from some of the candidates they appreciate this new model and are looking forward to providing answers.

Final discussion of the Board will occur at a properly noticed public meeting. The endorsement of any candidate shows the Board is meeting its duty in the best interest of the Association. We need elected officials who are going to hear and understand the matters important to Pine Ridge. Every voter can rely on the guidance as professionally put together by the POA---and/or vote based on their own conscious.

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**Presidents Message**

Now I'd like to change direction and talk about our volunteers.

We have approximately 80 volunteers who support the Board and our staff. They serve in many capacities, from the Architectural Design Committee to the Dog Park, Equestrian facilities, Tennis and Pickle Ball Committees. They review our governing documents, conduct our internal elections, maintain our website, and lobby the County for road maintenance and other improvements on behalf of Pine Ridge.

However, as a large and growing community, we've become too dependent on our volunteers---maybe to a fault. An example: after pointing out a problem area regarding ruts and potholes one resident wanted to know the whereabouts of our Roads Committee? The inference was it was the responsibility of this Committee to somehow fix the problem. Roads does a tremendous amount for our community, but they are not responsible for inspecting roads or repairing potholes. Those responsibilities belong to the County. Resident are encouraged to contact the appropriate county department and any such issue can also be brought to the Manager who has a rapport with the County.

We ask everyone to take a few minutes to learn what each of our committees actually does. Their charters are available on the Member Portal. Please also remember that committee members are volunteers—not POA employees. When it comes to potholes, deed restriction violations, or County code issues, it helps tremendously when every Member takes the time to report problems through the proper channels.

But here is the bottom line. Sometimes matters important to everyone can't always be completed as quickly as we'd like because they depend on a single volunteer---who may be unavailable or away on vacation. To improve consistency and ensure Members receive the level of service they expect, the Board will begin exploring the use of part-time or contract employees to perform certain functions that currently rely solely on volunteers. As our community continues to grow and expectations increase, we will also need to identify responsible ways to meet the expectation for these additional services. We'll keep you posted.

Finally, if you have skills or expertise that could benefit the POA, I encourage you to contact a Board member. Pine Ridge is fortunate to have residents with a tremendous amount of professional experience and talent. Your knowledge and willingness to serve can make a real difference in helping preserve and improve our community.