

Fenney Lauded; Homes Building Quickly

By David R. Corder, Daily Sun Senior Writer | Posted: Monday, June 19, 2017 10:38 am

Hundreds of residents enjoyed the festivities Friday at the Village of Fenney.

It was a fun-packed morning with the grand opening of Blue Heron Recreation Area, Fenney Recreation Center, The Villages Sales & Information Center, Fenney Grill and the Orange Blossom Cafe.

Villagers, guests and dignitaries marveled at the Old Florida theme that projects a home-like ambience.

Not far from the recreation center, home-building continues at a brisk pace with more than 100 homes now sold in this 1,048-acre development just east of U.S. Highway 301 and south of County Road 468.

All of this growth at Fenney, and the neighboring Village of Southern Oaks, also is enhancing the lives of existing Sumter County property owners.

Increased construction south of State Road 44 in Wildwood accounts in part for why Sumter Administrator Bradley Arnold will recommend at upcoming budget workshops that the Sumter County Commission for the 13th consecutive year adopt a 2017-18 property tax rate at or below the rolled-back rate, the state's demarcation for a tax decrease or increase.

"The Sumter County Board of County Commissioners continues to stay focused on its core services and limits expansion of services beyond those mandated by law," Arnold said in explaining how the commission is able to hold the line on property taxes. "The board's cost containment allows the new construction growth, dominated by The Villages, to offset natural increases due to inflation and volumetric increases such as a rise in the number of individuals detained at the county jail or increases in law enforcement to serve the expanding urban areas."

In other action related to Fenney, the commission agreed in consensus at its Tuesday meeting to back The Villages Developer in his decision to abandon development of an interchange at Florida's Turnpike and County Road 468 at Southern Oaks.

"Recently, the county has completed a study by VHB which shows the proposed interchange interfering with a series of planning actions of several of the agencies to create north-south and east-west roads in the Southern Wildwood area," Nancy Linnan, an attorney who represents the Developer, wrote in a June 8 letter to the Florida Turnpike Enterprise. "As a consequence, neither the county nor The Villages is currently interested in continuing either a requirement or option of an interchange at that location ..."

To expedite the widening of CR 468 at Fenney, the project's development representatives conveyed to the commission about 2.5 acres.

Commissioners unanimously agreed to accept the additional acreage that will be needed as part of a critical realignment that links CR 468 to U.S. Highway 301.

Also: The Villages Developer continues to pursue a multimodal path bridge to cross State Road 44 at Morse Boulevard for pedestrian, bicycle and golf cart use. The idea still requires state and local approval. The

Developer also is pursuing a vehicle-multimodal bridge that would connect Buena Vista Boulevard at the Brownwood area to Fenney and Southern Oaks.

Also: SECO Energy continues foundation work on the \$3 million expansion of its electrical substation on CR 501 adjacent to Southern Oaks. The upgrade will add enough capacity for 25,000 homes and nearby businesses.

Also: The Villages is moving forward with a new 150-room hotel next to Grand Traverse Plaza that will include an upscale full-service spa, a resort-style pool, 10,000 square feet of conference space and a Wolfgang Puck-licensed restaurant. A large advanced medical center — roughly 250,000 square feet — will be built next door.

Also: The Villages Developer still seeks resident feedback through the annual survey at thevillages.com on how future growth should take shape.

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