

P I N E H I L L S[©]
P R E S S

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It Really Will Take a Village!

Orange County Charter Amendment on the November Ballot would allow for the formation of the Unincorporated Village of Pine Hills

There are no short cuts to good government, but one axiom that seems to hold true is that the closer government is to the people the better the governance.

Since the 1970s Pine Hills has sought unsuccessfully more than once to organize as a city only to learn that state requirements would be too daunting for an area with a very limited tax base.

So in 2004 when the idea of a Village was proposed by the Pine Hills Community Council, there was an immediate perception of a good fit. However, when the Orange County Charter Amendment question was placed on the 2004 ballot it failed--not because Pine Hills' voters did not approve it -- but because voters elsewhere in the county did not approve it!

Any change to the charter must first be voted on by all the registered voters in Orange County. The 70,000 people of unincorporated Pine Hills lost out to the municipalities who already have local governance. Pine Hills wanted it and passed it, but the rest of Orange County's voters said "no"!

With the help of Pinkie Freeman, local Pine Hills resident and Commission District 2 appointee to



the Charter Review Commission, the idea was reintroduced to the new Commission. Ms. Freeman brought her experience working within New York City and with their local Community Planning Boards to Orlando. Since 1991, she has helped to organize her HOA, the Pine Hills Safe Neighborhood Partnership, served on the board of the NAACP, and numerous Orange County
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CONGRATULATIONS GRADS!

COVER STORY, continued-

Boards and Commissions.

According to Ms. Freeman, "The key issue for citizens is to become more involved at the local level and have one place they can go to voice their concerns."

With this question now back on the 2012 ballot, and with some new language, geographical designations (CDP) and a defined process for success, citizens in the larger unincorporated areas of the county have a very good chance to engage local government on their home turf.

"The key issue for citizens is to become more involved at the local level and have one place they can go to voice their concerns."

A census-designated place (CDP) is a concentration of population identified by the United States Census Bureau for statistical purposes. CDPs are populated areas that lack separate municipal government, but which otherwise physically resemble incorporated places such as cities and towns.

Criteria established for the 2010 Census require that a CDP name "be one that is recognized and used in daily communication by the residents of the community" such as *Pine Hills* and recommend that a CDP's boundaries be mapped based on the geographic extent

associated with residents' use of the place name.

The question on the November ballot this year will read substantially as follows:

Shall the Orange County Charter be amended to provide that, upon petition and approval at referendum by the electors of an unincorporated Census Designated Place with a population exceeding 25,000, such area shall be designated an unincorporated "village" with an appointed village advisory board having such powers, duties and functions as set forth by charter and ordinance? Financial Impact Nominal.

The reason for the charter amendment is to allow these CDP's to form an unincorporated village, if their citizens so wish, in order to provide better access to county government at the local level and thus improve the focus on and servicing of the community's most pressing needs. Each unincorporated Village would have an appointed village advisory board to serve as a sounding board and a consensus builder to receive helpful local input and engage in ongoing interface with county administration.



The amendment sets up a petition process with 3% of registered voters (approximately 900) in Pine Hills required to qualify for the second ballot. Once the citizen's petition goes to ballot (which can be either mail-in or an election) the village designation is applied.

There are four such CDP's over 25,000 population in Orange County: Pine Hills, Alafaya, University and Meadow Woods. The village advisory board membership would be strictly voluntary and the board would have no taxing authority. Any financial impact would be nominal.

More information to follow! Once the final village amendment language and number placement on the 2012 ballot is finalized, the public will start to hear information coming forth from Orange County to inform citizens.

Members of the Pine Hills Community Council will also be available to speak to community groups and county-wide organizations regarding the Village Amendment. (email: info@pinehills.com) They hope to secure a broad-based support network to help inform citizens and to garner positive momentum to **Vote Yes for Unincorporated Villages!** - \$-

VOTE "YES" ON THE UNINCORPORATED VILLAGE QUESTION #4 IN NOVEMBER!