

APV Shakes Down Boy Scouts to solve budget shortfall

Osceola County spent taxpayer money to build the new Mary Jane Arrington Park and Community Center for the people of Poinciana to enjoy. Then they turned over control of the facility to the Association of Poinciana Villages.

Things started out fine with the Boy Scout troop holding weekly meetings in the community center. Suddenly they found themselves shut out, forced to hold their meetings in the parking lot because they were told by the HOA that in order to hold meetings they had pay to use the facility. They were told that they would need to pay between \$75 to \$120 to rent the room for two hours. That's a \$500 monthly cost to use the Mary Jane Arrington Community Center for a troop of 12 boy scouts paying dues of \$10 per month. On top of that, the Boy Scouts would need to make a cash deposit and provide proof of insurance in order to use the room. So now they must look for another place to hold their meetings.

Why do they need the money so badly?

Community center management told the troop it could apply for a sponsorship from APV – the private HOA that owns the Mary Jane Arrington Community Center. They would still need to pay the fees but if the APV Board approved, they might receive a grant to help cover part of the costs.

To qualify for a sponsorship the Boy Scout leaders would need to submit all their financial information and background information to the APV for approval. Even then there would be no guarantee they would be approved by the APV Board of Directors.

Everything depends on the budget

The APV Communications Coordinator said the Master Board – which is comprised of a representative from each of Poinciana's nine villages - made the decision to raise rates in June.

She said all current groups were notified by email about the new rates soon after. The Boy Scouts say they never received the Email.

According to the APV spokesperson "Everything that happens at APV is according to the budget." The rates charged to the Boy Scouts needed to be raised in order to make up for a \$1M shortfall in the APV budget.

A \$1 million shortfall

Several Poinciana residents, including APV Board members confirmed this.

Other Poinciana non-profit groups say they are seeing the same thing. Osceola County allowed the private APV to have control over Osceola County taxpayer built facilities. Not all Poinciana Osceola taxpayers are homeowners. They have no say over what happens in the APV HOA but they are forced to pay the private HOA to use the community center built with their taxpayer

dollars. Schools are being told they must pay increased fees to APV in order to use county owned soccer fields. Poinciana youth basketball teams are saying they can't use the outdoor courts at night because the lights can't be turned on. They are saying they must pay \$40 per hour to use the new Mary Jane Arrington gym.

How can this be happening? Poinciana is a very large and growing community. Like all other communities, recreation and programs for youth are part of the investment communities make to help kids grow up learning how to lead successful lives. Apparently in Poinciana this comes at a much steeper price than what everybody thought when the county spent the taxpayer money to build the new parks and community center. How could this happen? Even more important, what can the county do to help out the Boy Scouts, kid's soccer and kid's basketball teams in Poinciana? Only the Osceola County Commissioners can answer that question?