

River Country

NEWS COURIER

ESTATES

OCT 2026

ISSUE 10 • VOL 25



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THERE WAS A
CONTAGION IN
THE VERY AIR THAT
BLEW FROM THAT
HAUNTED
REGION; IT
BREATHED FORTH
AN ATMOSPHERE
OF DREAMS AND
FANCIES INFECT-
ING ALL THE
LAND.

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President.....	Cliff Moody
Vice President.....	Andrea Fusco
Secretary.....	Mary Weigly
Treasurer.....	Marissa White
Directors.....	Mike Lutman
.....	Marybeth Ulsaker
.....	Jonathan Worthington

RCEOA OFFICE

Office Administrator Michelle McDermott

5331 Commercial Way, Suite 106, Spring Hill, FL 34606

Phone: 352-596-0740

Email: rivercountry79@gmail.com

Website: www.rivercountryestatesfl.org

Office Hours:

Tuesdays, 1pm - 5pm

Wednesdays and Thursdays, Noon - 4pm

Saturdays, 9am-noon

Board meetings are held on the 2nd Monday of each month at 4:00pm in the Board office.

*All
New!*



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Hernando County Sheriff Department	352-754-6830
Emergency	911
Emergency/General Info	352-754-4083
Florida Highway Patrol.....	352-754-6767
Hernando County Fire Rescue	352-540-4353
Hernando County Health Department	352-540-6800
Hernando County Animal Services	352-796-5062
Hernando County Utilities.....	352-754-4037
Withlacoochee River Electric.....	352-596-4000
Hernando County Code Enforcement	352-754-4056
Florida Statewide HELPLINE.....	800-227-8678
Referral Line	211
FEMA Tele Registration.....	800-621-3362

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From the President of River Country Estates HOA

Dear Neighbors,

Our next General Membership Meeting will be held Monday, October 19, at 6:00 p.m. at Christian Church in the Wildwood, 10051 Country Road, Building D, Weeki Wachee. We will hold the Board election, share the Board's latest updates, and give residents time to ask questions and share their thoughts. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us.

Halloween falls on a Saturday this year, so please drive carefully throughout the day as children of all ages may be trick-or-treating. Residents who wish to welcome Halloween visitors should leave their outdoor lights on. If you are not participating, please turn them off. Parents, please remind children to skip homes with darkened lights and avoid ringing those doorbells. The Board wishes everyone a safe and enjoyable Halloween.

The annual Community Garage Sale will take place Friday, November 6, through Sunday, November 8, 2026. This is a great time to start gathering items you no longer use or need. The Board will publish the dates on local social media, and we encourage residents to share the information so we can welcome a strong turnout.

As daylight hours begin to shorten, please take a moment to check your outdoor lighting and make sure your house number is clearly visible from the street, especially in case of an emergency.

Your involvement matters, and every neighbor has something valuable to contribute. Together, we can continue building a neighborhood that feels connected, welcoming, and proud.

Cliff Moody
President, RCEOA Board

WELCOME OUR NEW OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

The Board welcomes Michelle McDermott as our new office administrator. Michelle started on September 1 and will be working the following hours:

Tuesdays, 1pm-5pm

Wednesdays and Thursdays, Noon - 4pm

Saturdays, 9am-noon



ANNUAL ASSESSMENTS

With your General Membership Meeting notification, you will receive your annual assessment invoice. There will be no increase in assessments this year. The fiscal year ends October 1, 2026, making that the due date for assessment payments. Please pay your annual assessment by that date. After January 1, 2027, a \$25 late fee will be applied to each invoice. Credit card payments are accepted with an administrative fee.

~Although the publisher may run paid political advertisements in this newsletter, RCEOA does not endorse any candidate running for office.~

WELCOME TO RIVER COUNTRY ESTATES!

Inside this issue: General Membership Meeting details, Board election information, annual assessments, committee updates, park news, ARC reminders, deed restriction education, county safety updates, October events, astronomy highlights, and a seasonal story for Halloween.

River Country Estates is a DEED RESTRICTED scenic community on the Nature Coast beside the Weeki Wachee River and State Park. The neighborhood features over 480 properties with large parcels. Businesses are found at the entrance. A private park at the south end of the community has a children's play area, a bird sanctuary lake, basketball and pickleball courts, mature trees, and a gazebo for relaxing in nature.



A NOTE TO REALTORS

Realtors, contact our office for a Welcome Packet with key selling information about our community.

"FOR SALE" signs must face the same direction as the road (parallel to the road) and clearly show a sign or sticker saying, "Deed Restricted."

Please review our Governing Documents on our website at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org.

FACEBOOK



The Board has created a Facebook Group, **River Country Estates HOA Board**. This group will be run from the RCEOA office, not a personal account. Mary Fletcher, the name associated with the account, was one of the original Weeki Wachee Mermaids!

This private group is for current River Country Estates homeowners and residents to connect with the Board, neighbors, share community news and events, ask general questions, and stay informed about what's happening in our neighborhood.

Please note: This Facebook group is not an official communication channel for the River Country Estates Owners Association. ARC applications, deed restriction concerns, violations, and other official HOA business should be directed to the HOA office by either phone or email.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **October 12:** RCEOA Board Meeting, 4:00 p.m., RCEOA office board room
- **October 19:** RCEOA General Membership Meeting, 6:00 p.m., Christian Church in the Wildwood, 10051 Country Road, Building D, Weeki Wachee
- **November 6-8:** Community Garage Sale



BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

At the upcoming General Membership Meeting, RCEOA will hold its annual Board of Directors election for open and term-limited seats. The Board recently voted to keep seven seats. Two current Board members are running and hope to earn your support. At the time of the election, three Board seats will be vacant due to expiring terms.



The Nominating Committee was led by Board Member MaryBeth Ulsaker and included members of the Welcome Committee. The following candidates are running this year:

Jonathan Worthington: My wife, Holli, our daughter, Abby, and I moved to RCE after 30 years in South Florida, where I operated a successful disability advocacy firm. Holli works for HCA as a speech pathologist, and I now run a smaller boutique firm with a select group of attorneys. Since April, I have been working with the Board and am encouraged by the opportunity to continue serving with such a dedicated group. My main focus is, and if elected, will be improving the park by addressing vandalism and enhancing the family-friendly atmosphere we all enjoy. I hope I can count on your support come election time.

Mike Lutman: My wife Debi and I moved to River Country in 2006 after my 33-year career with the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department. I served on the HOA Board as Director, Vice President, and President, and I was recently appointed Deed Restriction Committee Chairperson. Deed restrictions must be applied fairly, consistently, and in compliance with Florida law. I am committed to helping the Board meet those standards while keeping River Country's best interests in mind. I believe our current Board is highly qualified, and I hope to continue working with this team. With residents' support and involvement, we can keep making progress for our community. Thank you!

Ballots will be mailed soon. Please contact the office if your contact information has changed or if you would like to confirm that the office has your current information.

RCEOA Bylaws: ARTICLE V

Nominations and Election of Directors

Section 1: Nominations for election to the Board of Directors shall be made by a Nominating Committee. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the General Meeting. The Nominating Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, who shall be a member of the Board of Directors, and two or more members of the Association. The Nominating Committee shall be a standing committee appointed by the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee shall make as many nominations for election to the Board of Directors as it shall in its discretion determine.

Annual Assessments

With your General Membership Meeting notification, you will receive your annual assessment invoice. There will be no increase in assessments this year. Please pay your assessment by the November 1, 2026, due date to avoid late fees. Credit card payments are accepted with an administrative fee.

OCTOBER 19TH, 2026 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Mark your calendars for Monday, October 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is to update the community on events since the April meeting, to collect votes for Board members, and to call the election.



The Board also plans to present information and gather community feedback on the park dock, including needed repairs, estimated costs, and next steps.

To help more neighbors attend the General Membership Meeting, we would like to coordinate carpools for residents who prefer not to drive in the evening. If you are willing to offer a ride, or if you would like help arranging transportation, please contact the office so we can connect interested residents.

The General Membership Meeting will take place at Christian Church in the Wildwood, 10051 Country Road, Building D, Weeki Wachee.

GENERAL MEETING MAILING

Prior to the General Meeting, residents will receive a mailing from RCEOA with meeting information, the annual assessment invoice, and the ballot for the Board of Directors election.

- Mark your calendars for the meeting.
- Contact the office if you'd like to carpool with another resident to go to the meeting.
- Pay your annual assessment. The Fiscal Year ends October 1, 2026, making that the due date for assessment payments. After January 1, 2027, a \$25 late fee will be applied to each invoice.
- Fill in your ballot for the Board of Directors election. You may mail the ballots to the office or bring your ballot to the meeting to vote in-person.



Call the office if you do not receive the mailing prior to the meeting. The office will prepare a packet for you.

Reminder: If you are past due on your assessments, you will not be able to vote for election candidates or on any topics at the meeting.

COMMITTEE NEWS

RCEOA aims to build a vibrant neighborhood through community participation. We invite you to apply your skills to aid in our committees' tasks. Opportunities are listed on our website at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org. Email the office at rivercountry79@gmail.com to volunteer for a committee or with an idea for a new committee.

WELCOME COMMITTEE



This month, the Welcome Committee, consisting of Joyce Moody, Janise Torres and Sandra Wall, distributed seven (7) welcome kits to new neighbors, and more are expected soon. If you are new to the area and have not received a welcome kit, please contact the office so Joyce, Janise and Sandra can greet you and provide one. Welcome new neighbors!

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Social Committee helps bring neighbors together through events, activities, and opportunities to connect.

We are seeking residents who enjoy helping plan and support community events already in progress.

Next year's 45th anniversary of RCEOA is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our community's history and accomplishments. We are looking for residents to provide us with stories from the past, help plan celebrations and create commemorative items for this special milestone.

To get involved, sign up on the committees' page at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org or email the office at rivercountry79@gmail.com.

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THE LEGEND OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

On a quiet autumn evening in Sleepy Hollow, schoolteacher Ichabod Crane was riding home after visiting a wealthy farmer's family. The night was dark, the woods were silent, and local legends about a headless ghost began to trouble him.

As Ichabod crossed a bridge, he heard hoofbeats behind him. A terrifying rider appeared—a figure dressed in black, carrying what seemed to be his own severed head beneath one arm. Ichabod urged his horse forward, but the rider followed closely.

Desperate to escape, Ichabod raced toward the safety of the bridge, where legend said the ghost could not cross. Just as he reached it, the rider hurled his "head" at him. Ichabod fell from his horse and was never seen in Sleepy Hollow again.

The next morning, villagers found only his hat, his horse, and a shattered pumpkin. Some believed the Headless Horseman had claimed him. Others suspected a clever prank by Ichabod's rival, Brom Bones. To this day, the truth remains part of Sleepy Hollow's enduring mystery.

ANNUAL COMMUNITY YARD SALE

Friday-Saturday-Sunday
November 6, 7 and 8, 2026



Mark your calendars for the annual River Country Estates Community Garage Sale, happening November 6–8. This neighborhood-wide event is a great opportunity to clear out gently used items, find new treasures, and connect with neighbors. Residents are encouraged to participate from their own homes and help spread the word so we can welcome plenty of shoppers throughout the weekend.

FLORIDA SPACE COAST

Florida Space Coast launch schedule for October 2026:

- Oct 30, 2026: Falcon Heavy — NROL-97.
- Oct 30, 2026: Falcon 9 Block 5 — Bandwagon 5 (Dedicated Mid-Inclination Rideshare).

Launch dates and times can still shift. visitspace-coast.com

October Florida Astronomy

Here's a simple Florida astronomy calendar for October 2026:

- **Oct 4:** Saturn at opposition — best viewing all night.
- **Oct 7–9:** Draconid meteor shower — best viewing shortly after dark.
- **Oct 10:** New Moon — darkest skies of the month.
- **Oct 12:** Mercury at greatest eastern elongation — best viewed low in the west after sunset.
- **Oct 21–22:** Orionid meteor shower — best viewing after midnight to dawn.
- **Oct 26:** Full Moon (Hunter's Moon) moonrise after sunset. A few extras: Saturn is especially good all month, and the Orionids may be somewhat washed out by moonlight in 2026. agenaastro.com



Interested in star gazing? There are apps that you can use that provide you with what is where and when.

- Stellarium is a great all-around choice. It's accurate, works for beginners and more advanced observers, and can show stars, planets, comets, satellites, and deep-sky objects in real time.
- Star Walk 2: prettier and very beginner friendly.
- Sky Guide: often a favorite on iPhone for simple use and clean design.
- Sky Tonight: good for "what can I see tonight?" planning.

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COUNTY NEWS

HCSO S.A.F.E. PROGRAM

In Hernando County, there are currently over 21,500 citizens who lawfully possess concealed weapons permits in compliance with FS 790.02. It is in the public's best interests for citizens who are legally carrying to also be armed with basic knowledge and skills related to possessing said firearms. Therefore, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office has created a one-day course entitled Situational Awareness Firearms Education (S.A.F.E.) on Friday, October 23, 2026, from 8:00am – 4:00pm.

Course Details

- An informative discussion on Florida's "stand your ground" laws and situational awareness.
- An interactive scenario-based instruction using our Laser Shot shooting simulator.
- A live fire instruction from our team of experienced firearms instructors.
- Instructor led tactical shooting scenarios with participants using live ammunition.



Requirements

- Each participant must be a full-time resident of Hernando County as verified through driver license or other form of current ID.
- Each participant must possess a current, active Florida Concealed Weapon Permit or Firearm Safety Certificate.
- Each participant must submit to a current criminal history check and verification of participant's concealed weapon permit.
- A \$50 registration fee online.
- Each participant must bring for use a personally owned firearm. Each firearm will be subject to a safety inspection by Hernando County Sheriff's Office firearms instructors. (Only .38 caliber, 9mm, 40 caliber, and 45 calibers are allowed.)

- Each participant must bring for use 100 rounds of factory ammunition for their firearm. (Reloads are not permitted.)

Registration Process

- Complete the online application which can be found at hernandosheriff.org. Be sure to include your Concealed Weapon Permit Number.
- Choose a date you would like to attend. Once your application is submitted, you will receive an email to notify you that your application is being processed.
- The Hernando County Sheriff's Office will conduct a criminal history check and verify your Concealed Weapon Permit.
- Once your application has been processed, you will be emailed a link to remit the \$50 registration fee. Cash or checks are not accepted.
- Once your registration fee is received, a confirmation email will be sent showing you are registered for the class and where to

HERNANDO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 10/2/2026 – Campbell & Company, Shred it and Forget it Event, 11AM-1PM, 7211 Hiawatha Parkway
- 10/3/2026 – Hernando County Vet-Toberfest 2026, 2PM – 9PM Anderson Snow Park
- 10/3/2026 – Harvest Howl, Pet Friendly and Rescue Partners Event, Food trucks, bands and other entertainment are scheduled. Tom Varn Park, 10AM – 5PM
- 10/16/2026 – Tampa General Hospital Trunk or Treat Event – TGH Brooksville, 5PM-9PM
- 10/24/2026 – Halloween Howl and HCSO Safety and Fun Fest, 4PM-8PM Downtown Brooksville.



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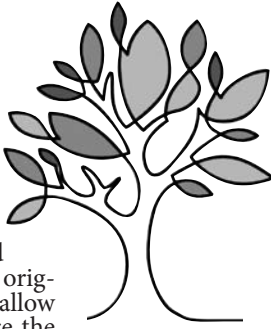
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PARK NEWS

Friendly reminder: The only entrance to the Park is on Jomel Drive. Entering from any other location means crossing a neighbor's private property, so please use the Jomel Drive entrance only.

The Board has prepared a formal Request for Bid (RFB) for the dock repairs. We shared it with the original companies that provided estimates. This will allow for a more accurate one-to-one comparison. Since the cost of this repair will exceed 10% of our budget, the Board plans to present this information at the General Membership Meeting so the community can vote on how to proceed.

To get involved in park upkeep, repairs and activities, sign up on the committees' page at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org or email the office at rivercountry79@gmail.com.



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC)

The ARC would like to remind residents that HOA exterior rules apply to many changes that affect a home's appearance. If you are replacing your roof, installing new windows or doors, putting up a fence, adding a shed, playset, or greenhouse, or repainting your exterior, please submit an ARC form before work begins so your project can move forward smoothly.



DEED RESTRICTION EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURAL—

For any outdoor structure you are planning, please submit an Architectural Review Form.

SECTION 3 ARCHITECTURAL CONTROLS

Architectural Approval

No dwelling, fence, wall or any other structure or external improvements shall be permitted, nor shall any exterior addition or alteration to any structure or dwelling be made, until the plans and specifications showing the location on the survey plan, dimensions, elevations and materials have been submitted with the RCEOA Application for Architectural Review and approved in writing as to conformity and harmony of design with existing structures in the subdivision by the DRAC.

B. ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

1. Application for Review: All applications for architectural improvements shall be submitted to the DRAC with the RCEOA Application for Architectural Review form. No application shall be accepted for review unless all attachments, as specified in the instruction sheet, are included.
2. Application Review Standards: The standards used by the DRAC shall be uniformly applied and conform to the harmony of design of existing dwellings and structures.
3. Variances: Any owner may apply for a variance using the RCEOA Application for Variance form and submitting it to the DRAC.

Definitions: Structures –

• **Decorative and Recreational Structures**

Structures of a temporary or permanent nature that are designed to be used for decorative or recreational purposes, such as, but not limited to, swing sets, in-ground swimming pools, jungle gyms, gazebos, trampolines, bird baths, bird feeders, bird houses, driveway pedestals, sun dials, flag poles and light poles, and basketball backstops. Screen enclosures are not included as decorative or recreational structures for the intent of this definition.



• **Detached Structure**

Any construction that is not physically connected to the dwelling by full height walls (walls that run to the bearing elevation of the roof on all sides).

• **Utility Buildings**

Structures of a temporary or permanent nature used for storage or utility purposes, such as a barn, shed, shack, tent, carport, screen enclosure, greenhouse, well house, cabana and doghouse.

• **Detached Storage Building**

A detached storage building is a permanent building used for storage or utility purpose built behind the rear building line of the residence which does not include metal or plastic sheds, shacks, dog houses, tents or other structures of a non-permanent nature.

The Board strongly encourages you to read the Deed Restrictions in full for a better understanding. If you need help maintaining your property, please call or email the office. As a community, we are willing to support residents in need.

The DRAC team continues to patrol the community. To avoid issues, please review and follow the Deed Restrictions. All governing documents are available online at www.rivercountryestatesfl.org.

WATERING SCHEDULE:

One day per week watering restrictions apply to all sources of water in Hernando County. This includes all private wells, rivers, lakes and streams. If your house number ends in 0 and 1, you can water on Monday; 2 and 3, Tuesday; 4 and 5, Wednesday; 6 and 7, Thursday; 8 and 9, Friday. No watering days on Saturday and Sunday. Watering Times: Morning Hours 12:01 am – 8:00am OR Evening Hours 6:00pm – 11:59pm.



STREETLIGHTS OUT?

Report it to Withlacoochee River Electric at 352-569-4000 or go to their website at WREC.net, click the Outage Center tab, then Street Light Repair. A lighted street is a safer street!



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CRIME WATCH

In mid-September, there was an incident involving a non-resident experiencing a mental health crisis and attempting to enter homes in the community. Homeowners contacted the Sheriff's Office, and the person was quickly apprehended.



Nearby in Berkeley Heights, HCSO SWAT deputies served a drug search warrant. According to Sheriff Nienhuis, the suspect allegedly fired through the front door as deputies approached. Two deputies were injured, including one struck in his body armor and upper leg. The suspect was arrested. Deputies are recovering.

Sheriff's Quarterly Crime Watch Meeting - Highlights

- Sheriff Nienhuis discussed Flock cameras and Gov. DeSantis' recent decision, noting that deputies will rely more on vehicles with license plate readers. Without Flock cameras, similar vehicles reported in crimes may be stopped more often.
- Vehicle break-ins are down in Districts 1 and 2, but residents can help reduce them further by locking vehicles and removing valuables and firearms.
- This summer, staff monitoring social media identified planned teen takeovers in Hernando County. Deputies arrived early as a deterrent, and the teens left.
- Construction has caused some encampments to move. Law enforcement arrests those committing crimes, while others are offered available resources.
- The scam-prevention discussion encouraged residents to place fraud alerts on property records, freeze credit with Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion, and stagger free credit reports throughout the year. Residents were also warned that AI can clone voices from social media and use them in family-emergency scams.

Report any suspicious activity to the Sheriff's Department at 352-754-6830. "If you see something, say something."

Interested in joining River Country Estates Crime Watch? Email the office and we will get you in touch with Mike Lutman, our Crime Watch coordinator. Or attend a Crime Watch meeting, usually held on the first Thursday of the month, 7:00PM at 5999 Patricia Place.

**Please note that RCE Crime Watch is overseen by the Hernando County Sheriff's Office, not RCEOA.*

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