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# Don't Give Up Fight for Future of Poinciana

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Questions of service and safety surrounding the villages of Poinciana will not go away despite a pretty definite decision by legislators Tuesday at a hearing **not** to file an incorporation bill next year.

Those problems affect almost everyone in that area - those who wanted incorporation and those who did not.

A Saturday meeting was called for the incorporation supporters. Understandably, they are angry and frustrated, and there have been many suggestions on how to incorporate without legislative help.

But the time for fuming is over.

You aren't going to get a vote on incorporation next year. Take the word of someone who has covered the Legislature for 25 years. It isn't going to happen.

So, what do you do now?

Simple, you get to work.

The pro-incorporation advocates proved one thing to themselves in all of the studies and in last Tuesday's hearing: Working together, you will get attention for your problems.

And the people in nearby enclaves need not pat themselves on the back because they stopped incorporation vote next year. The problems of violence and poor services are still nearby.

The Rev. **Alvin Maldonado** noted in his remarks at the incorporation hearing last Tuesday that gated communities in California found out rapidly that the deterioration from outside their gates could affect them as well if not dealt with.

While the attention is still on the issue, both sides need to get to work. There should be no repeat of the drug-related slayings there two weeks ago.

As one forum writer noted, the hearings have "turned the attention of many to the inadequate services provided by the Association of Poinciana Villages (APV) ... Poinciana has a great and diverse population with people of different needs, experience and education, together we can make a difference to obtain the services that our citizens need."

If you want change, you must follow the example of other communities.

Residents who showed up for the meeting need to keep in constant contact with their respective county commissions. Attend agenda study sessions for both commissions because Poinciana straddles the Osceola and Polk county line.

Then follow up when commissioners have their official meetings a day or two later.

If you wait until the issues have been tentatively decided in agenda study sessions, sometimes with a wink or nod, there often is little hope of getting elected officials to change their minds in the official meetings.

Those agenda sessions are open to the public as well. Also lean on the county managers. Call, visit, sit in their offices until they have to see you. Get the county services you are paying for.

In some areas of the Poinciana Villages, people complained of the lack of street lighting. One told of her daughter's being struck by a car in the dark on the way to school.

Because they were going to be paying a little extra to an incorporated city anyway, go the county commission and ask to form an MSTU (municipal service taxing unit), which would pay for street lights and their upkeep by the proper county, with residents' paying slightly higher taxes for those services.

If there is a rental house that is causing problems, call the sheriff's office, of course, but hound the absentee landlords about the misbehavior of their renters. You can find the owners of rental homes by going to the property appraiser in each county.

Most importantly, where there are neighborhood watches affiliated with the sheriff's office, volunteer. Where there is not one, form it.

Roaches can't stand the light. Shed a little light in your neighborhood by working with the sheriff's offices and you can cut down on the number of human roaches.

Insist to elected leaders in both counties that they lean on the bad places with their code enforcement departments and get them fixed up. Relentlessly insist that your elected officials do their job.

It is in everyone's interest to solve the Poinciana problems. What happens there affects two counties and affects Kissimmee and St. Cloud as well as Lakeland and Bartow.

The villages are two miles from Haines City and are next to the Kissimmee city limits. The deterioration and crime now encroaching in some of them won't stay there.

On the Polk County side, Sheriff **Grady Judd** has several task forces working and has worked with neighborhood volunteers as well.

There is a Neighborhood Watch program in Poinciana Village 7 and Judd is looking to expand to other areas in Polk County.

Also there are Citizens Assisted Patrol (CAP) programs in Poinciana Village 3 and 7, and also in Solivita.

"CAPs are like Neighborhood Watches on steroids," said sheriff's spokesman Scott Wilder.

The squeaky wheel gets the oil. Even without incorporation, you can get the thing oiled and the villages safe and back to life. It takes work and cooperation.

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