



September 23, 2022

Re: New Voting Location

Dear Residents,

By now you should have received a communication from the Supervisor of Elections, Mike Bennett, informing you of a change in your voting location for Precinct #117. This notice states "...the Home Owners Association of River Wilderness will no longer allow voting on their premises. This decision was not made by the Supervisor of Elections, but by the River Wilderness HOA..."

As you may know, Precinct #117 was redistricted, thereby, consolidating River Wilderness with several surrounding communities for the Primary Election. The HOA found out a few weeks prior to the primary about this consolidation and the security implications of a potential additional 900 voters arriving at our gates seeking entrance to vote. We rapidly set in place a protocol, ensured our guards would be able to handle the additional anticipated load at the gate by hiring a second guard for the election. Additionally, we created directional signs, ensured they were strategically placed, and created and distributed car passes to non-RW voters. HOA board members made themselves available throughout election day to ensure adherence to the security guidelines.

Michael Bennett was made aware of and agreed to the only requirement we made of voters coming through the gate; non-RW voters were required to provide a photo ID for scanning as per our

gated-community security protocols.

A majority of voters adhered to this requirement without complaint. We did receive a few questions. Unfortunately, one adamant non-RW voter rudely refused to provide identification. We did not initially allow him admittance to the community, as per our protocols. We were contacted by Mr. Bennett about this person when he called to complain. We were informed we must allow him to enter our gated community without showing identification. He returned and stated he was informed by Michael Bennett that he was to enter without showing his identification. Ultimately the guards allowed him to enter.

At no time did we try to deny anyone the right to vote, only that as a gated community, our security protocol is to identify anyone seeking access to the community. Following the Election, we attempted to rectify this difference between the Supervisor of Elections and the rules within our community. We were unsuccessful in doing so and requested Mr. Bennett attempt to secure a new location outside of our gated community. We suggested a possible location, which was ultimately chosen as the new location, North River Church. This location is very close to our community, has ample parking, and no identification is required prior to entering the voting location to vote.

Depending on your location within the community, the actual driving distance to access the previous voting location within our community is similar to the driving distance to the new location (1.5 miles from the Old Tampa gate to the church and 1.6 miles from the Old Tampa Gate to the Club). We recognize that our community enjoyed the convenience of access within our community on voting days for many years. However, we had to balance this convenience with adherence to our existing security protocols for admittance to our community.

Yours truly,
The River Wilderness Board

Att: [New Voting Location PDF](#)

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