

Now that annual assessment invoices have been, or are in the process of being, sent out, many owners have been calling with questions regarding the increase in their assessments. Below are responses to the frequently asked questions most owners who have called would like answers to.

Q. *“Why did my assessment go up so much?”*

A. The simple answer is, many of the amenities that owners enjoy have seen some of the largest percentage cost increases over the past couple of years. Things like fertilizers, asphalt and petroleum-based products, gasoline, paints, chemicals such as chlorine and ice melt products, and even seemingly simple items such as filters, cleaning supplies and light bulbs have all seen double-digit price increases. Labor continues to increase as the job market continues to tighten. Skilled tradespeople now can earn as much working in the fast-food service industry as they were making only a year or two ago in their chosen professions. Add to these pressures the need to repair and upgrade existing amenities, most of which are now decades old. In the past two years, concrete has seen a 33% increase, asphalt has gone up over 28% since February of this year, lumber has begun to stabilize over the course of the year but, it saw double-digit price increases since the end of 2021. Add in the substantial increase the association has seen in insurance rates due to natural weather-related claims and claims around the country due to structural failures. We understand this sounds like a broken record, but it is simply a product of the economic environment we are in at this time.

Q. *“Since the POA isn’t funding the Sheriff’s Office, where is that money going?”*

A. In 2011, the POA began contracting with the Sheriff’s Office to provide “Enhanced Law Enforcement”, along with several other specific responsibilities, in place of a full-time security department. At the time, this agreement helped bridge the transition from the former “Security Department” responsibilities to the newly-formed “Owners’ Services Department”. Since then, Camden County and Horseshoe Bend itself have seen the expansion of several recreational party venues and growth in the area. These factors do require more of the Sheriff’s Deputies’ time for law enforcement services. The POA opted to take the resources dedicated to the contract with the Sheriff’s Office and utilize those funds to bolster the Owners’ Services Department, by adding personnel to allow for dedicated staffing on both Horseshoe Bend and in Porto Cima, 5 days a week. The POA also added to the ACC, allowing an additional staff member to constantly patrol active jobsites in an effort to better maintain roadway and property conditions, often damaged during the construction process. This was not a case of “Saving” or “Diverting” the funds previously spent with the Sheriff’s Office, but rather a case of looking at the allocated funds and choosing the best method of providing the best service to the community.

Q. *“Are my assessments being used to pay for the new indoor pool?”*

A. Yes, of course some of your assessment is used for the Aquatic Center. All of our amenities require money to operate and this facility will be no different. The Board has worked on this project in earnest since 2016 when it was apparent that one of our smallest pools needed a significant repair. From the beginning, a significant part of the planning process has focused on the operational costs and many options were considered. While the Board was able to secure a low interest loan and not require a special assessment, once the facility is completed, there will be loan payments. Ultimately, the overwhelming belief of the Board was, and is, that this beautiful amenity should be enjoyed by all of the members of the association and, thusly, all of the members should be assessed for their share of operating, maintaining and, as the years go by, updating and improving the amenity.