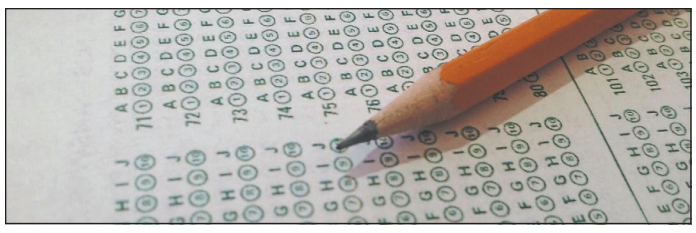

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Standardized tests

CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE
WEEKEND

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Whispering Pines at a crossroads

A workshop to discuss Whispering Pines Park is set for 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, at the council chambers in Inverness City Hall.
Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

Inverness leaders to outline park's future on Dec. 17

By MIKE ARNOLD
Chronicle Reporter

When city leaders meet at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17, they'll take on what City Manager Eric Williams calls one of the most consequential questions facing Inverness: how to preserve, rebuild and fund Whispering Pines Park as it enters its fifth decade of service.

The workshop, held in council chambers at City Hall, will outline the physical and financial problems now challenging the 300-acre park – a beloved community asset with aging facilities and a complicated ownership structure that has slowed long-term planning.

The state owns the land and leases it to the Florida Forest Service. The Forest Service in turn subleases it to the city, allowing Inverness to operate it as a public park.

Williams said the partnership has worked for many years, but now needs a complete update, as does the park.

Most of the park's recreation infrastructure was built during the late 1970s and 1980s. After more than 40 years, Williams said,

See **PARK**, page A6

County directs staff to craft new, neutral library display policy

Proposed rewrite comes amid ongoing tensions over politically charged exhibits

By MICHAEL D. BATES
Chronicle Reporter


KINNARD


DAVIS


BAREK


BAYS


FINEGAN


CHANG

County commissioners voted 5-0 Tuesday to accept a motion by Commissioner Jeff Kinnard directing staff to return at a future meeting with a proposed policy that sharpens the county's library display rules.

Kinnard's motion calls for merging existing policy with his proposed guidelines, eliminating outside applications for displays and refocusing all exhibits on the library's core mission of local, community-centered content. The updated policy will come back later for more discussion.

Kinnard emphasized the need to de-politicize the process, saying commissioners must stick to their role as policy makers, keep displays as neutral as possible and place responsibility for handling them with the library advisory board.

But reaching agreement required navigating concerns about micromanaging library staff.

Commissioner Holly Davis said she opposed creating an entirely new policy on library displays, arguing that an excellent one already exists.

She said that getting involved as a political board "will end up fanning those very flames of division that we don't want."

Commissioners, she said, shouldn't be telling the advisory board and staff how to run their business.

"None of us up here have a masters in library science."
HOLLY DAVIS
Citrus County commissioner

"None of us up here have a masters in library science," she said, adding that the best course of action is to "butt out and let them do their job."

Davis said she was open to codifying the display procedures Library Services Director Adam Chang has already implemented, with

See **LIBRARY**, page A5

Photos by Casmira Harrison / Chronicle Reporter
Citrus County Sheriff law enforcement presents Cpl. Marcial Rodriguez' wife and sons with folded flags during a memorial service on Saturday at Crystal River High School.

Students lead heartfelt tribute to 'Deputy Rod'

Crystal River High's SRO remembered for lifting spirits, offering guidance, and protecting those he loved

By CASMIRA HARRISON
Chronicle Reporter

On a warm Sunday on the field at Bramlett Stadium, hundreds of students, deputies, educators, family and friends gathered to honor Citrus County Sheriff's Cpl. Marcial "Rod" Rodriguez – the Crystal River High School resource deputy whose sudden death Oct. 24 left what many described as a deep void.

Rodriguez, 54, died shortly after his shift following a health emergency. The community response, though heavy with grief, overflowed with gratitude for a man widely remembered as joyful, steady and profoundly committed to the students he served.

A Citrus County Sheriff's deputy escorts Cpl. Marcial Rodriquez' mother Luz Rodriguez, right, and his sister Lourdes Hodge.

At the memorial service, Citrus County Sheriff David Vincent posthumously promoted Rodriguez to the rank of corporal.

His mother, Luz Rodriguez, spoke through emotion as she reflected on

See **DEPUTY**, page A6