

# Culinary delights

World Equestrian Center in Ocala opens new dining, events venue



## Deal fails

Spirit Airlines prepares to shut down. **Local & State, Page 3**

## Magic-Pistons

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## Criminal probe into Sloth World launched

Uthmeier announces investigation into deaths of dozens of animals

By **Cristóbal Reyes**  
ORLANDO SENTINEL

Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier confirmed Friday that a criminal probe is underway into the deaths of sloths at Sloth World, a planned International Drive attraction that will not open after animals

languished and perished in warehouses owned by the company in Orlando.

The criminal investigation is being led by the Orange-Osceola State Attorney's Office with assistance of a statewide prosecutor with expertise in "animal welfare law," who will consider possible charges, including those under Florida's animal cruelty laws, Uthmeier said in a letter Friday.

"Our office is unwavering in its commitment to pursuing justice on

behalf of those who are unable to protect themselves," he wrote. "We will ensure accountability wherever the evidence requires."

A spokesperson for State Attorney Monique Worrell did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

The probe comes as state Rep. Anna Eskamani, D-Orlando, and animal rights groups called for a criminal investigation into the deaths of at least 32 sloths imported by Sloth World from Guyana and

Peru. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission initially declined to pursue criminal legal action after several inspections at Sloth World's facilities, the most recent on March 24.

The sloths' deaths were first reported by Inside Climate News.

Last week, Sloth World gave its 13 remaining sloths to the Central Florida Zoo, one of which arrived in very poor health and died Wednesday. The others, though some needed intensive treatments, are

stable, the zoo said.

On Thursday, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an animal rights group, sent a letter to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement urging the agency to criminally investigate owners Ben Agresta and Peter Bandre for aggravated animal cruelty. The group said Bandre, described on Sloth World's website as "one of the most respected sloth experts

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A worker tills the greens at the Winter Park Golf Course WP9 on Friday. **RICARDO RAMIREZ BUXEDA/ ORLANDO SENTINEL**

## Winter Park employee killed city golf greens

Course has closed after inadvertent use of herbicide-tainted fertilizer

By **Stephen Hudak**  
ORLANDO SENTINEL

Winter Park's highly-regarded municipal golf course has fallen victim to "an inadvertent chemical application" that killed the grass on many of its verdant greens, and the nine-hole historic venue now faces months of repairs, Mayor Sheila DeCiccio announced in her weekly newsletter Friday.

DeCiccio expects the public

course, known as WP9 and running prominently through the tony city, to be completely closed until May 18, when temporary greens will allow limited play.

A full re-opening is pegged for mid-July.

Neal Thompson, 23, who tries to play golf once a week and at least monthly at WP9, noticed a problem about a month ago.

"The greens, when they're in good condition, can be a little

tricky, and that makes it a fun, challenging, little course to play," he said. "But they went from pretty nice to pretty bad in a pretty short time...I wouldn't even call them greens. It was more like browns."

He described himself as "definitely disappointed" in the April 27 closure of the course which is comparatively affordable — \$20 most weekdays, \$26 Fridays and weekends for Winter Park resi-

dents — and quick paced. Most players can finish a round of nine in less than two hours.

The narrow layout imposes a special challenge on golfers with a hook or slice: the 2,480-yard course is nestled in an idyllic neighborhood with some tight fairways no farther than an errant chip shot from houses, two churches and a cemetery.

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## Trump rejects War Powers deadline

Letter says ceasefire ended hostilities, but Iran remains threat

By **Mary Clare Jalonick, Stephen Groves and Seung Min Kim**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The White House asserted to Congress in a letter Friday that hostilities with Iran have "terminated" despite the continued presence of U.S. armed forces in the region.

The message from President Donald Trump effectively skirts a May 1 legal deadline to gain approval from members of Congress to continue the war with Iran. That deadline was already set to pass without action from Republican lawmakers who are deferring to the president.

The letter brings into stark relief the bold but legally questionable assertion of presidential power at the heart of Trump's war, which he began without congressional approval two months ago.

"The hostilities that began on February 28, 2026, have terminated," Trump wrote House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., and Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, the Senate president pro tempore.

Yet he also made it clear in the letter that the war may be far from over.

"Despite the success of United States operations against the Iranian regime and continued efforts to secure a lasting peace, the threat posed by Iran to the United States and our Armed Forces

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## New district maps cut up Central Florida

Redistricting creates new quirks: 'There's zero in common'

By **Ryan Gillespie**  
ORLANDO SENTINEL

Residents of Orlando's high-tech economic engine of Lake Nona have little in common with landowners in rural communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee and the citrus farmers of Indian River. Yet under newly drawn congressional maps, they'll share a congressional representative.

Those who live in the south Orange County bedroom community of Hunter's Creek will share



The entrance to the Pinewood Reserve neighborhood in Orlando on Friday. The Orlando neighborhood was carved off from the rest of the city in the mid-decade redistricting and is slated to be in District 8, a coastal district represented currently by Rep. Mike Haridopolos.

**RICH POPE/ORLANDO SENTINEL**

their member of Congress with retirees in The Villages. One southeast Orlando city council district, represented by Commissioner Tom Keen, was chopped into pieces, with sections falling into the new Districts 8, 9 and 10.

"There's zero in common," said Keen. "It's not a compact district anymore."

Such are the strange quirks of Florida's new Congressional map.

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## Virtual school spent millions in failed lawsuit

Federal judge rules FLVS leaders pursued action in 'bad faith'

By **Annie Martin**  
ORLANDO SENTINEL

The Florida Virtual School relentlessly pursued a lawsuit against a private competitor in "bad faith," a federal judge has ruled, censuring the state-funded institution that spent millions of taxpayer dollars on a case with "no evidence."

Judge Gregory Presnell said in April order that as a result the Orlando-based virtual school and its attorneys will have to pay the company it sued, Stride, Inc., a yet-to-be-determined portion of what it spent to defend itself against the virtual school's years-long lawsuit over trademark infringement.

Stride is a private online education company based in Virginia.

Presnell in his April 9 order rebuked Florida Virtual School for its pursuit of nationwide damages, writing that its lawyers had presented no proof that the school had suffered financial harm, an essential element of trademark infringement cases.

"The trouble for plaintiff is that it was never the 'innocent party,'" said Presnell in the signed order. "This court warned plaintiff at every step that it was pursuing claims for which it had presented no evidence of damages or harm."

The Florida Virtual School, often known as FLVS, is a national pioneer in online education. It sued Stride in a trademark infringement case in 2020, claiming \$6 billion in damages. The public school took issue with

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