

# Civility, Sunshine Law, and aging with dignity

This was not an easy article to write, as Internet research on the topic of Florida laws and the elderly caused me much concern. Those of you who follow my writing know that I am not an attorney. The closest I have come to that status was enforcing the Uniform Code of Military Justice, a far easier task than implementing Florida Statue 286, the Sunshine Law.

Government officials apply the provisions of the law by setting rules for those attending meetings, i.e. setting speaking times allowed for supporters or opponents of items being addressed by a Board. Whereas speakers get only three minutes to make their case, I could find nothing limiting how long the governing authority had to speak, or how they had to act or conduct themselves.

The whole thing was a lesson in futi-



**HELPING SENIORS OF BREVARD**  
**JOE STECKLER**

ty. The more I read, the more I could see how the statute hinders those who wish to make a point for or against an item. As an advocate for the elderly, it bothers me that the whole process for educating our policy makers is so restrictive. It is difficult to make points in favor of non-profits that support the elderly if you can not discuss the issues, and doing so in three minutes is a non starter.

We seem to have forgotten what government should do. Is it a problem that

elected officials do not act as we think they should regarding the use of public dollars? Or is the problem that we cannot properly discuss the issues? Have we made it too difficult for those we elect to be informed on topics of concern to all?

Years ago we had County Commissioners who were well informed on the needs of their constituents. Today that has changed; support of organizations that serve the community is no longer in vogue. In 1996 I participated in a study that showed unmet needs in our county. Nineteen years later, these same needs were identified by Helping Seniors and presented in a paper to each Commissioner. Regrettably, not one Commissioner replied to the paper, even though four of the five had indicated support for the study.

We all know what civility is, but

should know more about the Sunshine Law. If we are to truly build a community that supports aging with dignity, we should mandate that those who set the rules insert a few words in Florida Statue 286 to make it apply equally to all. Our community has one of the highest percentages of elders of any in the nation. We can and must do better.

Contact Helping Seniors at 321-473-7770 or at P.O. Box 372936, Satellite Beach, FL 32937.

*Joe Steckler is president of Helping Seniors of Brevard, a nonprofit organization designed to advocate, educate, and fundraise on behalf of Brevard's senior citizens. Contact the group at info@helpingseniorsofbrevard.org or call (321) 473-7770.*

## Crime

From page 5

controlled substance, possession of marijuana under 20 grams, and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Dawn Carter, 47, of Melbourne, was arrested July 12 and charged with engage/commit/offer act of lewdness (3rd or subsequent offense).

Hagan Huber, 52, of Auburn, AL, was arrested July 12 and charged with possession of a controlled substance.

Hakima Jones Foster, 43, of Cape Canaveral,

was arrested July 12 and charged with assault on a law enforcement officer/firefighter/EMT, defrauding an innkeeper under \$300, disorderly intoxication, and resisting officer without violence.

Jose Lopez-Lopez, 51, of Palm Bay, was arrested July 12 and charged with sexual battery by custodian to victim over 12 years of age and less than 18 years of age.

Nicholas Megonigal, 29, of Merritt Island, was arrested July 12 and charged with battery on a corrections officer, and resisting officer without violence.

Ashlyn Primeaux-Flonory, 19, (address not listed), was arrested July 12 and charged with

grand theft shoplifting over \$300 and less than \$5,000.

Gary Barger, 44, of Titusville, was arrested July 13 and charged with possession of a controlled substance.

Christian Davidson, 37, of Cocoa, was arrested July 13 and charged with petty theft 2nd degree shoplifting (3rd or subsequent offense).

Dara Jones, 35, of Merritt Island, was arrested July 13 and charged with criminal attempt to solicit/conspire to commit 3rd degree felony (Level 3-10), sale of heroin, and use of two-way communication device to facilitate felony.

Jose Negron, 34, of Gainesville, was arrested July 13 and charged with possession of a con-

trolled substance, possession of heroin over 10 grams, possession of marijuana under 20 grams, resisting officer without violence, false ID given to law enforcement officer, and resisting officer without violence.

Shatonya Rathjen, 34, of Merritt Island, was arrested July 13 and charged with driving while license suspended with knowledge (3rd or subsequent offense).

Andre Thibault, 51, of Cocoa, was arrested July 13 and charged with fraudulent use of credit card over \$100 or more than twice in six months, grand theft larceny over \$300 and less than \$5,000, and petty theft 2nd degree larceny (1st offense).



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