

## Meet Commissioner Lawrence A. Sofield



Lawrence "Larry"  
Sofield was appointed to  
the City Commission in  
February 2009.

Since becoming a Sunrise resident in 1992, Commissioner Sofield has been an active and involved member of the community. As the founder and past president of the East Sunrise Residents Association, he has worked to boost safety and expand recreation opportunities in his neighborhood. In 2008, in an effort to further increase civic involvement, he founded the Central Sunrise Residents Association.

Commissioner Sofield is an advocate for quality education. He currently serves on the Village Elementary School Advisory Council, and is a past member of the Broward County School Board's Diversity Committee. He is also a past member of the Sunrise Leisure Services Advisory Board, and has been a volunteer coach in the City's t-ball and youth basketball leagues since 2003.

Commissioner Sofield is the president and founder of RealPost, Inc. - a successful Sunrise-based business. He is married to Katherine, and they have four children and four grandchildren.

Commissioners: Sheila D. Abu, Donald K. Rosen, Joseph A. Scuto and Lawrence A. Sofield  
Roger B. Wishner, Mayor;



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# SUNRISE COMBATS PROPERTY TAX FRAUD

*PLUS-*  
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Lawrence A. Sofield

April 2009

# Sunrise Combats Property Tax Fraud

The City of Sunrise, in partnership with the Broward County Property Appraiser's Office, recently completed an investigation into Homestead Exemption fraud in Sunrise. The results were eye opening: More than 230 cases of improper exemptions - representing a total loss of nearly \$457,000 in tax revenue - were uncovered. Of that amount, approximately \$119,000 was owed to the City.

"We need to be aggressive in pursuing property tax fraud," said Mayor Roger B. Wishner, who called a press conference in March to address the issue. "Every dollar we're not receiving makes it increasingly challenging to deliver the services our residents deserve and expect. Absentee owners who illegally claim Homestead create a financial burden for the City - and for all Sunrise residents who are rightfully entitled to property tax relief."

In the Sunrise investigation, City utilities accounts were compared with property records. When the names did not match, the Broward County Property Appraiser's Office made further inquiries. Often, it was discovered that renters were occupying Homesteaded property - constituting tax fraud.

Only permanent residents who own and occupy a home in Sunrise are eligible to claim Homestead in the City. A qualified Homestead Tax Exemption may entitle a homeowner to up to a \$50,000 reduction in assessed value - which results in a savings of hundreds of dollars in annual property taxes. In addition, owners of Homesteaded property can realize further savings from the annual property assessment cap, which limits assessment increases to no more than 3% a year.

Thanks to the investigation, nearly \$22 million was restored to the tax roll in Sunrise - values that will generate critical income for the City, as well as such Broward County agencies as the school board and the hospital district. Offenders were also presented with bills for taxes owed, and applicable penalties.

In an effort to assist those Sunrise residents eligible for Homestead benefits, the City has an ongoing partnership with the Broward County Property Appraiser's Office: Representatives are available at the Sunrise Senior Center on the second Friday of each month, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., to help with filing Homestead and other (Senior, Veteran, etc.) exemptions. This service is free, and appointments are not required. For more information call (954) 746-3670.

## The High Cost of Tax Fraud

As illustrated by an illegal Homestead Tax Exemption applied to one single-family home

| Tax Bill Information             | 2008 Tax Bill  | Actual Tax Owed | Revenue Lost   |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Just Value                       | \$230,600      | \$230,600       |                |
| Save Our Home                    | -\$125,000     | N/A             |                |
| Homestead Benefit                | -\$50,000      | N/A             |                |
| Assessed Value <i>City Taxes</i> | \$54,860       | \$230,000       |                |
| City Taxes                       | \$298          | \$1,254         | \$956          |
| Other Property Taxes             | \$849          | \$3,568         | \$2,719        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                     | <b>\$1,147</b> | <b>\$4,822</b>  | <b>\$3,675</b> |