

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Champions of Residents' Rights Since 1975

January, 2003

- [The POA President's Annual Report For the Year 2002 is Summarized For Villagers](#)
- [The VHA Corner](#)
- [April Fools Day Revisited](#)
- [Cattle Barron's Club Questions](#)
- [Any One For Polo?](#)
- [Cheers and Jeers](#)

The POA President's Annual Report For the Year 2002 is Summarized For Villagers

At the December POA General Membership meeting, Joe Gorman, president of the POA, addressed the membership with the President's Annual Report for the year 2002. Joe's comments are summarized below:

One of the most pressing needs the POA faced one year ago in early 2002 was the need to increase membership which had been declining recently. From a membership of about 700 members at the start of the year, we now have over 1,000 members. This over 50% increase is credited to our efforts to get the POA message about Residents' Rights out to all residents in a direct and positive manner.

The financial position of the POA was also a primary concern during 2002. The year 2001 was a difficult year that ended in a slight negative cash flow position. Cash reserves were at rock-bottom levels at the start of 2002. At the end of 2002, we have been successful in building cash reserves, and we finally have

some financial breathing room.

Membership dues are being held at \$6.00 per household membership. We briefly considered an increase during 2002, but we decided to hold the line at \$6.00. Many members chose to make an additional contribution with their membership dues payment. The average additional contribution during our membership renewal drive was \$5.00. Some amounts were \$1.00, some were \$10.00, a few were \$100.00. Thanks to all for your generous support of your POA.

We also focused on making the Bulletin financially self-sufficient. The Bulletin costs about \$8,000 per year. It is absolutely essential to the success of the POA.

Advertising revenue, however, amounted to only \$4,000 in 2002. Thus, we had to

subsidize about half of the costs of the Bulletin out of membership dues. We are addressing ways to increase ad revenue so as to make the Bulletin financially self-sufficient.

Any organization needs good people to volunteer for various officer and director positions. We were successful for 2002 in attracting a key group of people willing to roll up their sleeves and help to make this organization better. Thanks to these people. And, we hope to attract more people during 2003 to help on various projects and in officer and director positions.

We tried to project a more positive tone in the Bulletin and in monthly meetings. Residents have responded to this through increased membership sign-ups and in favorable comments to us. We still reserve the right to criticize – but, we are attempting to be more positive, less shrill, and always in the context of making The Villages a better place in which to live.

The Mission and Objectives of the POA are now spelled out for all to see on the second page of the Bulletin. We felt there was not a good understanding of the role of the POA, and we wanted to post this statement for all to see.

The concept of the Residents' Bill of Rights has also been firmed up. It is posted on page two of the Bulletin for all to see each month. This is the POA's idea of the principles and rights that should be exercised by residents, district administration, and the developer so as to make The Villages a better place in which to live.

We also tried during 2002 to sharpen the distinction between the VHA and the POA. The two organizations are not the same. The VHA will not support a Residents' Rights issue that is contrary to the will of the developer. The POA speaks for the residents and represents their best interests. It is important for all residents, new and old, to recognize this important difference.

The POA focus has been on CDDs (Community Development Districts) that effectively run all operations in The Villages. The POA feels that if only one change could be made in The Villages, it would be to have the VCCDD supervisors elected by all residents in a Villages-wide election. We are focusing on making revisions and closing loopholes in the Florida Chapter 190 law that created CDDs in 1980.

We now have POA Bulletin articles published on the web site of the Cyber Citizens For Justice (<http://www.ccfj.net>). This informative web site has a wealth of information about many homeowner issues.

The Bulletin is also available at five local stores each month for those who do not get home delivery of the Bulletin early in the month.

During the year we helped residents with the painted driveway issue, the roof deterioration issue, the gray pipe plumbing issue, and a variety of other issues too numerous to mention. We can't always solve problems, but we try. Incidentally, we plan to submit again the official driveway complaint forms to the State Attorney General's office during the first quarter. The new Attorney General campaigned on a platform of ending fraud and rip-offs. He may be interested in pursuing a fraud investigation of these many faulty driveway paint and staining jobs.

We conducted two surveys during the year. One, via e-mail, surveyed resident attitudes regarding new amenities. Another, in monthly meetings, surveyed attitudes about various Villages services. You will be hearing more about these in coming months.

Our membership database was re-structured during the year. Our old database was out-dated and not flexible enough to handle our tremendous growth during the year. We were fortunate to have a POA member, who is an expert in databases, complete the restructuring of the entire database. We are now better able to keep track of our member rolls and more efficiently handle memberships renewals.

We are working to build alliances with other Florida organizations which share our ideals on Residents' Rights and home ownership issues. Some of these include CHIP in Ocala, The Florida Silver Hair Legislature, and the Cyber Citizens for Justice in St. Augustine. Our combined voices will, hopefully, have a greater impact as we pursue revisions in CDD laws.

In late 2002, we were successful in identifying the first of our Select Sponsors, the financial planning firm of Hanby and Hanby. Select Sponsors are businesses that provide services or products of interest to our membership. Select Sponsors also advertise in the Bulletin and provide incentives for members to investigate their products or services. We hope to attract another Select Sponsor in early 2003.

Going forward in 2003, our main objectives will continue to be: Build membership, develop Bulletin financial self-sufficiency, and build alliances with other organizations. We will continue to speak out for Residents' Rights and focus on CDDs. Our Objective is to make the Villages an even better place in which to live.

The officers and directors of the POA extend a sincere "thank you" to the membership for its support over this past year. We could not have accomplished much of anything without your support. With your continued support, we hope to make the POA an even stronger organization that promotes Residents Rights and addresses the needs and interests of all residents in The Villages.

The VHA Corner

This Bulletin column will monthly report on items of interest regarding the VHA. Articles will attempt to publicize VHA positions and activities that are inconsistent

with its role as a homeowners' organization.

This month's column deals with a comment by the president of the VHA in the recent Orlando Sentinel three-part series about The Villages.

Mr. Chico Mir stated that The Villages is a "company town."

He apparently likes the idea of living in a company town.

But, what is a company town?

In a company town, the company makes all the major decisions.

In a company town, the residents have little say about the operations of their town.

In a company town, free thinking contrary to the will of the company is discouraged and perhaps even punished.

In a company town, you better not speak up with contrary ideas because the company would not like that.

In a company town, the company appoints or strongly suggests major government officials.

In a company town, you better blindly support the company.

In a company town, you better not get out of step with the company.

In a company town, you better do what you are told to do by the company.

In a company town, if you don't like it, you better move out and go somewhere else.

Now, is all of this what Mr. Mir actually meant? Yes, sorry to say, it probably is.

In that same Sentinel article, Joe Gorman, president of the POA, said the following:

"A government should be responsible to the people it governs. It should give them a voice in the big decisions and should not ignore their rights."

So, for you, the reader of this column, which homeowners' organization would you rather support? The one that likes the idea of conformity in a company town (VHA)? Or, the one that speaks up for your rights as a resident (POA)?

April Fools Day Revisited

(Don't Believe Any of This)

The Villages announced that it was changing the Gazebo and all nightly entertainment on the Square into a private club to be known as the Robber Barons' club. Anyone on the Square listening to entertainment must be a member or they will be arrested by the Neighborhood Watch police. Annual membership will cost an arm and a leg. As a special feature, a pet poop area will be set aside by the Gazebo. The Village Volunteers will be required to provide pet poop valet service each night for members. To continue the practice of using Spanish names for some things on the Square, club members will officially be known as "Los Pollos." The official greeting for members on the Square will be "cock-a-doodle-do."

Cattle Barron's Club Questions

Question # 1 – The letter sent to residents announcing the Cattle Baron's Club mentioned that "Residency does have Privileges." The question is: How has this new-found Privilege suddenly emerged from something that we previously had for Free? When we moved to The Villages, weren't we told about the features on the Square, including all of Katie Belle's? Now we have to pay for this feature? This is another example of an advertised free Villages feature that is being taken away by the developer.

Question # 2 – Do you really think that the quality of the food and service will improve in the Katie Belle's Private Club when residents have to pay \$1,500 a year minimum for the honor and Privilege of eating there?

Any One For Polo?

The recent three-part Orlando Sentinel article on The Villages mentioned that Mr. Gary Morse, CEO of The Villages development company, likes polo and that is why there is a polo field and grandstand within the Villages' boundaries.

The question is: What will happen to the polo field and grandstand when Mr. Morse gets tired of polo?

Yep, you guessed it – you, the residents of The Villages, will eventually be the proud owners of that white elephant after the VCCDD buys it for \$?? millions. Is this another Privilege?

Cheers and Jeers

Remember that we need material for this column of comments and opinions. Please write up your submission and either mail it to our P. O. Box number, give it to us at a membership meeting, or e-mail it to poa4us@aol.com. Be sure to sign your name to the submission.

CHEERS - To the Villages Entertainment department for bringing the Nutcracker to the Villages. It was great!!

JEERS - To the Villages Entertainment department for bringing West Side Story to the Villages. It was awful!! Some of the dance routines were laughable. Most high school productions are better than this. Doesn't anyone in the Entertainment department review these productions so as to insure a minimum level of quality? Or, do they look at us Villagers as a captive audience that will tolerate anything?

CHEERS - To the Daily Sun for a good job of reporting on the accident on the Square during the winter festival. And, to all the people and agencies who responded to the emergency.

CHEERS - To all Good Samaritans who help their neighbors and, in some cases, complete strangers.

JEERS - To The Villages for requiring part-time residents to pay for year-around trash service at the full rate even though the service is not used for the full year. Other utilities, like phone, cable, electricity, can be turned off or minimized in non-use months. Why not Villages trash?

CHEERS - To the Villages Entertainment department for the musical shows in

the Church On The Square. They are top-notch.

CHEERS - To Russ Day for his re-election as chairman of the CDD # 1 Board of Supervisors. Congratulations on an honor well-deserved.

CHEERS - To the Daily Sun for its coverage of the Senior Games. And, to The Villages for hosting and facilitating these activities.

CHEERS – To the Villages Hospital for signing up additional private insurance plans. Now, please work with the doctors to encourage them to also sign up.

CHEERS - To the new supervisors in all the CDDs who were elected by residents. Congratulations – and never forget that you represent residents, not the developer.

JEERS – To the district engineers for the poor job of fixing the narrow cart path in the Savannah tunnel under Buena Vista Blvd. If they went through the effort and expense of cutting out one foot of the walkway, why didn't they take it all out and just paint a walkway on the concrete for the few times a day when it might be used by walkers? It probably cost the district a few thousand dollars for a solution that adds up to not much improvement after all.

CHEERS – To all early morning and late evening walkers who walk against traffic, carry flashlights, and/or wear reflective tape.

This page is provided by:

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[BACK TO THE MAIN ARCHIVES PAGE](#)