

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The
Villages

Champions of Residents' Rights Since 1975

November

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The Paradise Center Needs To Be Replaced With A New Showcase Facility

The time is now for the old Paradise Center to be demolished and replaced with a new, showcase facility.

The POA calls on the VCCDD and/or the developer of The Villages to make the commitment to get this done in a reasonable time frame.

The problems with the current Paradise Center are many:

- It is a shabby-looking structure
- It has termites
- The roofs leak
- Ceiling tiles are often stained by leaks
- There are rats
- There are persistent mildew problems
- Some walls have peeling paint
- Some floors are deteriorating
- The kitchen is small and substandard
- The performing stage is inadequate
- Performance storage areas are meager
- Partition soundproofing is poor
- There are musty odors in places
- Some rooms/offices are dark and gloomy
- The snack bar is closed
- Drainage problems exist
- It is a maze of make-shift construction



The building has served a fine purpose for the thirty or so years of its existence. Early residents of The Villages have many happy memories of activities and friendships there.

However, time and conditions have caught up with it. And, it is out-of-character and dingy compared to the really handsome new Villages facilities being built by the developer, such as the Chatham Square Recreation Center and the Mulberry Grove Recreation Center.

Residents need to be “proud” of Paradise Center – but, it is harder and harder to be “proud” of this run-down and deteriorating facility. Actually, it is an embarrassment now.

It would be in the best interests of the residents and developer to have a showcase facility, like those at Chatham or Mulberry, on the East side as the “new” Paradise Recreation Center.

The developer would certainly see a benefit for its image and sales activities by demonstrating its resolve to keep The Villages facilities top-quality and up-to-date. Residents would benefit from having an attractive and better activity center, and East side property values would receive some needed support.

There has been talk for some time about doing “something” about the Paradise Center. The POA thinks that it is time to move forward on the demolish/replace idea. Stop-gap repair measures are just perpetuating the many problems.

The cost of the facility should not be a problem. The developer has built many attractive facilities here in The Villages and then sold these to the VCCDD based on the “income approach” appraisal technique. Thus, the developer’s cost is nil and the developer can actually make a profit on building these facilities. Residents end up paying for these facilities out of their monthly amenity fee. If this works for the Chatham

Square Recreation Center and the Mulberry Grove Recreation Center, then it can work for a new Paradise Recreation Center.

Preliminary analysis suggests that a \$5 million facility built by the VCCDD would cost each Villages household \$1.97 per month to amortize bonds as part of the monthly amenity fee.

The POA invites all Villages residents to its monthly meetings where this idea will be discussed and our activities in this regard will be explained. It is important for all residents to be involved in and support these activities.

The POA also calls on the VHA to join us in support of this idea. This is an important issue for residents, and the VHA can use this opportunity to speak up for residents. That is what homeowners' organizations do. And, the POA would be happy to work with the VHA on this project for the best interests of all Villagers.

CDD #1 Supervisor Withholds Important Information

The VHA newspaper reports monthly on various CDD meetings. However, a serious problem has just occurred with this VHA reporting that residents should be aware of.

Ms. Betty Ruth Leech, a board supervisor of CDD #1, reports the minutes of CDD #1 meetings in a monthly VHA newspaper column.

However, she omitted important information in her article in the VHA's October issue -- the fact that the CDD #1 board voted itself a pay increase in the September 26th meeting.

The CDD #1 supervisors voted to double their pay to \$200 per meeting and added special meetings to the list of paid meetings. The vote was 4 to 1 in favor of the increase with supervisor Russ Day voting against the motion.

Supervisor pay in the 2004 fiscal year could amount to \$24,000 in total for all five supervisors, or about \$4,800 for each.

When asked about this, Ms Leech commented that this was not an important enough of an issue to have been reported on in the past, and thus it was not mentioned by her in the VHA article.

The argument that supervisors may or may not be worth the pay is not the issue here. The issue here is that this important information was excluded from her VHA report and withheld from residents. And residents have a right to know this important information.

Ms. Leech said this was not important enough to mention in her article. She did, however, mention grass carp in retention ponds, gophers chewing on irrigation tubing, the flowers on Morse Blvd., and painting of villa walls. It is difficult to see that increased money payments to supervisors, approved outside the regular budget process, were not important enough to mention.

Do you the reader see the problem here? A CDD board supervisor withheld important information from residents, and this was carried by the VHA in its monthly newspaper. This withholding of information is a serious problem for the credibility and integrity of Ms. Leech as well as the VHA.

To address this problem, the following steps should be taken:

1. Ms. Leech should resign from the board of CDD #1. Her action here is a violation of the trust that residents need to have in one of its board supervisors. Any future comments or reporting by her about CDD activities would certainly be suspect.
2. The VHA should stop reporting the minutes of these government meetings. Its failure to provide sufficient oversight has also compromised its credibility. One does not know if its reporting of other meeting minutes can be trusted.
3. The Daily Sun should cover each and every CDD or VCCDD meeting and objectively report the facts and discussions at each. At least the Sun has professional journalists who should be able to recognize the important facts and report them accurately.

Residents deserve the highest integrity and credibility from its CDD board supervisors. The same goes for the VHA and the Daily Sun.

As for the CDD #1 supervisors, what ever happened to the spirit of volunteerism and civic pride that should be their motivation to serve? Maybe they are just in it for the money.

Pete's Place

Pete Wahl writes an informative column in the Daily Sun Supplement each Thursday entitled "Pete's Place." It is usually a worthwhile source of information about activities of the District Administrator.

However, Mr. Wahl often strays into areas that are not appropriate for his office as District Administrator.

For example, in the October 2nd column, he spent 60% of the column (17 column inches out of 28) leading the cheer for a variety of football games including the Villages Gridiron Classic.

The POA believes that Mr. Wahl should focus his attention on his area of responsibility, namely, government issues in The Villages. This is the more appropriate concern for Mr. Wahl, rather than being a cheerleader for local football games.

If someone has to lead the cheer for the Gridiron Classic, let it be someone else in the sports or advertising sections of the Daily Sun newspaper.

If Mr. Wahl needs material for his column, perhaps he could explain the recent purchase of facilities by the VCCDD from the developer for \$60 million. Or, why the recent amenity fee increase was unjustified because maintenance and administration expenses, identified as the reason for the hike, actually decline in the 2004 fiscal year to \$13.6 million from \$13.7 million in 2003.

The Pete's Place column is worthwhile; but, it needs to focus on Pete's job, not his personal ramblings about non-job-related matters.

Something Was Fishy About This Story

The POA has often voiced its opinion that the Daily Sun newspaper at times covers frivolous stories and ignores important stories that residents need to know about. The POA believes the best recent example of ignoring important news is the Sun's failure to report details of the VCCDD purchase of facilities from the developer for \$60

million. The bond issue of \$64 million will be paid back by residents out of their monthly amenity fees.

Residents need to know about stories like this that describe our government's spending activities and the debt obligations forced upon residents. The Sun should cover stories like this.

As for the frivolous story, consider a page two story in the October 10, 2003, issue of the Sun entitled: "Study shows Maine lobsters are getting fat on herring bait." Good job, Sun!! – You have a real nose for news!! And, yes, there was something fishy about that story.....

THE VHA CORNER

The previous issue of the Bulletin carried a brief article in this VHA Corner about the POA and the VHA getting together in an effort to reconcile conflicting opinions on a few issues. This followed up on a article written by Mr. Robert Balfour in the Reporter newspaper.

The POA thought this suggestion had merit.

We felt it would be worthwhile for our two organizations to talk about our differences to see if any common ground could be identified.

We felt that any talks would have to be within the context of what's best for Villages residents. We felt that the best interests of residents should be foremost in the minds of both organizations.

The POA approached the VHA to see if it wanted to talk. Sadly, there was no interest. We hope it is clear to readers of this column that the VHA sees no advantage in talking about the rights of residents or what is in their best interest.

When the VHA was founded with the developer's blessing, it was made clear that the developer would not support the VHA if it became a sounding board for complaints by residents. The developer apparently wanted nothing to do with Residents' Rights issues. The VHA has followed those explicit instructions from the developer. It is clear that the VHA attitude has not changed.

What a disappointment – and, residents lose the opportunity to build a stronger organization that recognizes their rights as residents.

Cheers and Jeers

Too many stories and not enough space in this issue of the Bulletin. So, the Cheers and Jeers column is on vacation for this month. See you next issue...if there is a next issue^{1/4}.

HOA Reform

Officers of the Cyber Citizens For Justice recently participated in Task Force meetings of the Florida State Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR). The Task Force was created at the request of Governor Bush to investigate and suggest suitable changes in Homeowner Association (HOA) laws so as to address a variety of complaints. The first meeting was held in Tallahassee.

Mr. Jan Bergemann, President of CCFJ, is a member of the Task Force. He presented material that summarized the Most Important Criteria for Legislative

Changes and the Most Common Violations by Homeowner Associations.

More details of the meeting, and Mr. Bergemann's presentation materials, can be found on the CCFJ web site at <http://www.ccfj.net>.

Joe Gorman and Russ Day attended the Task Force meeting in Tallahassee as representatives of the POA.

CCFJ is an internet-based consumer rights organization with which the POA is affiliated. Membership information can also be found on the CCFJ web site.

POA Elections

POA elections will be held at the general membership meeting on November 19th. Any paid-up member is eligible to run for any officer or director position. Please contact any POA officer or director before the meeting if you have an interest in serving in any of these positions.

Nominations for officers thus far include incumbents Joe Gorman for President and Mary Paulsboe for Secretary. There are no nominees yet for Vice President or Treasurer.

Nominations for directors thus far include incumbents Pete Cacioppo, Dorothy Cheshire, Jim Creek, and Bill Snyder. Additional director nominations can still be made.

Please bring your 2003 membership cards to the meeting if you plan to vote.

Members are urged to consider serving the POA in any of these positions. We urgently need actively involved members to help advance the ideas and programs of the POA. The time commitment is not excessive – and, the opportunity to serve is rewarding. Please join with us to make the POA an even better organization.

Marion County We Need Your Help

The POA Bulletin is available in various supplemental distribution points such as supermarkets and drug stores (see back page of this Bulletin for complete list). These outlets offer a convenient pick-up point for residents who either do not get or miss the distribution of the Bulletin into their driveways.

However, the Bulletin is not now distributed into Marion county as it is into Sumter and Lake Counties. So, we are considering adding another distribution point or store in the Mulberry Grove area where the Bulletin can be picked up early in each month.

Before we add this distribution point, however, we would like to find someone who can "service" that store with a supply of Bulletins. Typically, this would involve visiting the store a few times a week to make sure that a supply of Bulletins is available, and adding additional copies as needed.

The time involvement here is not great – but, it would be a big help to the POA and residents to have this distribution point in Mulberry Grove.

If anyone in the area is interested, please contact **Pete Cacioppo at 259-9774** for details of the time requirement and duties. Thanks in advance for your help.

POA Holiday Party

The POA's Annual Holiday Party will be held at the membership meeting on December

17th. Please plan to attend and bring a food dish. This is a wonderful holiday party and a good time will be had by all.

Sadie Woollard is coordinating this event. Call her at **753-0615** for details. Helper sign-up will be at the Nov. 19th meeting. See you then.

POA Membership Cards

If you renewed your POA membership recently, and provided a stamped self-addressed envelope, your POA membership card will be returned to you by mail.

If you did not include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your renewal, your card is being held at the membership sign-up table at monthly meetings and can be picked up there.

April Fools Day Revisited (Don't Believe Any Of This)

The developer has decided that it is too much trouble and too expensive to build any more executive golf courses, especially since the golf on these is "free." Therefore, in place of executive golf courses in the future, the developer will only build "putt-putt" miniature courses. When a group of residents protested, the developer said that "golf is golf" and that there never was a promise to build regular size golf courses. This golf will still be "free," but residents will be charged a \$2.00 per round "convenience" fee.

This page is provided by:

Jan Bergeman

President of Cyber Citizens For Justice (CCFJ)

<http://www.ccfj.net>

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