

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

POA Logo

Issue 30.09

Champion of Residents' Rights Since
1975

September, 2004

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The POA Bulletin is published monthly by the Property Owner's Association of the Villages, Inc. Articles in the Bulletin represent the opinion of the POA, except Letters to the Editor, which represent the opinions of the writers. Care is taken to insure that all facts reported herein are true and accurate to the best knowledge of the POA and are taken from reliable sources. The POA assumes no liability for any information published, opinions expressed, or delivery to any person or location. All publication rights are reserved. Publication or reprinting of any material contained herein is by written permission only.

How Should the Villages Government Be Organized Within Another 8-10 Years?

What should The Villages government look like in 8-10 years when the build-out is complete and the population of The Villages is 100,000? This will be a population roughly equal in size to that of Gainesville and double that of Ocala.

At that time, we should have roughly three or four major CDDs (like the VCCDD or Sumter Landing CDD) with a total of 15-20 individual CDDs under them.

What is the problem?

The developer will still effectively control the major CDDs and make all the major decisions in The Villages without input or approval from residents.

The supervisors of the major CDDs will still effectively be appointed by the developer with no input or approval from residents.

The various district administrators will still effectively be appointed by the developer with no input or approval from residents.

The super district administrator (the Pete Wahl position) will still effectively be appointed by the developer with no input or approval from residents.

The complexity of local government will be overwhelming. Each of the 15-20 regular residential CDDs and 3-4 major CDDs will have monthly meetings. Each will have operating budgets, assessments or fees (to levy, collect, and spend), five supervisors each, supporting staff, etc. We could easily have over 125 elected and appointed officials involved in the decision-making process throughout our community. Words like "balkanization" and "fragmentation" come to mind to describe this situation.

And, the process may be unworkable due to the sheer size and complexity of the whole organization.

What is a better government structure?

The POA thinks that The Villages will eventually need to become a formal "city" with no continuing involvement of the developer.

The city governing structure would be a common council with 15-20 councilmen elected by popular vote from residents in the "districts," the previous residential CDDs. There would be an elected mayor and a hired city manager reporting to the mayor and the council. All assets and obligations previously owned by the three or four major CDDs would be transferred to the city corporation. Large spending programs in the city would be subject to referendums put to voters.

The developer could continue to run its own major CDDs, where nobody lives or votes, but it would have no control powers over the new city council. Any remaining developer assets within the boundaries of the new city, i.e., the championship golf courses, etc., could continue to be run by the developer as businesses chartered within the boundaries of the new city.

How would all of this come together?

Each CDD within The Villages would have to send one or two delegates to an "organizational meeting" to consider the question. Each CDD would have to authorize its own participation in the new city organization after dissolving its

own operations. Residents would have to vote on these questions.

A team of delegates would have to negotiate with the major CDDs and the developer for the transfer of common assets and obligations to the new city.

What would be the advantages of this?.

Government would be streamlined, decisions could be made faster and with better consideration for all, residents would have a voice in what government did, and all basic government officials would be elected. Overall governmental expenses would be less than with the current situation. .

Government would be responsive to the needs and interests of residents.

When could this all come together?

We should start thinking and talking about this now. The longer we wait, the harder it might be to pull this all together. Supervisors in the individual CDDs should start talking to residents now about the advantages of this structure. The individual CDDs should not wait for the developer to take the lead in moving this along, because the developer will never take that initiative to lessen its control over our community.

Summary

This is our community and we will need to take the initiative to set up our own government to serve our needs. The current situation we now have was perhaps good for the initial phases of our community development. But, that time has passed and the problems with the current government are more noticeable now than ever.

We need to be concerned about the long haul. And, if you are one of those individual who says that you won't be here for the long haul, and therefore you don't care, please don't stand in the way of those of us who want to make our community better.

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Golf Money Could Cover Lost Road Maintenance Fees

Three Sumter County CDDs are losing a payment of roughly \$300,000 from the county for the roadside maintenance agreement revision.

A preliminary estimate was that our annual CDD assessments might have to go up by as much as \$50.00 per household because of this. As it turns out, it now looks like the final impact on CDD budgets for this coming year will be closer to zero. This is after some tough cost-cutting and elimination of duplicate

expense items.

But, the \$300,000 shortfall in revenues is still there. The questions is: Where can we quickly find \$300,000 to cover the shortfall?

What about the golf tee times on the executive courses given free to the developer of The Villages? These are in turn given without charge by the developer to visitors to our community to allow them to sample the life style in The Villages. Some free tee times may also be used by Villages executives.

The key point is that these times are given free to the developer by the VCCDD administrative staff.

Anybody playing the executive courses knows how hard it is to get tee time reservations in the winter months when tee times are at a premium. But, these free tee times are removed from the tee time reservation system and are given gratis to the developer even at times of heavy usage of the courses.

Well, consider the calculation below. Take, for example:

- two tee times a day
- each tee time for a foursome
- on the 12 courses accepting non-residents
- at a value of \$10.00 per person per time
- for a full year

You get \$350,400.00 as the total dollar value in this calculation.

How much?

Three Hundred and Fifty Thousand and Four Hundred Dollars and no cents !!!

This would more than cover the shortfall from Sumter County on the roadside maintenance issue.

And, this calculation is based on two tee times per course even though up to six per course are now being reserved. If six times were used in this calculation, the total would be \$1,051,200.00.

The VCCDD should start charging the developer for any tee time reservation held out of the normal tee time reservation system for the benefit of the developer, the developer's sales department, the hospitality program, and/or executive management usage. These charges would apply even if the times were not used by the developer and were released to residents

.What other freebies given to the developer by the VCCDD could be used to offset other CDD operating expenses? These freebies might include free room rentals for meetings in various Villages facilities or even free tickets for various other activities for which residents are charged. These might be worth examining.

After all, don't these facilities belong to us, not the developer? Why should the developer get free usage of these facilities? - at our expense?

The Grinch That Stole Christmas

The annual Lions Club Christmas Parade in The Villages has been cancelled. The decision was made by Mr. Pete Wahl, district administrator of The Villages.

In spite of many protests by Villagers, there is no appeal. Several resident groups have sought ways to move the parade and have it elsewhere. However, it looks like time is running out, and there appears to be no reasonable way to put the parade on this year at any other location.

The reasons cited by Mr. Wahl for the abrupt cancellation include the following:

1. The parade became too big and unwieldy for The Villages to have on Town Square.
2. The previously used staging area on Oak Meadow Lane is unavailable due to construction for a new shopping center.
3. Local merchants objected to the loss of business during the parade time.
4. There were just too many people coming to the parade on Town Square. Let's examine each of these issues:

1. The parade organizers offered to scale back the parade to accommodate concerns voiced by The Villages. If it took scaling it back to one third, it would have been done. This is a bogus issue.

2. If Oak Meadow Lane were unavailable, then Avenida Central could easily be used as the staging area. This is a bogus issue.

3. Local merchants loved the extra business before, during, and after the parade time. Besides, how is the Christmas parade any different in terms of people and business compared to Mardi Gras, Cinco de Mayo, St. Patrick's Day, Oktoberfest, or classic car shows? This is a bogus issue.

4. Too many people is another bogus issue. There are often huge crowds in the Square for many parades and festivals. Isn't this one of the reasons for having a Square and all its related activities? More people means more business for downtown merchants and restaurants.

In the final analysis, there are no good reasons for canceling the Christmas Parade. In a spirit of reasonable people working together to solve the problems, the parade could have been saved.

It looks like Mr. Wahl just decided to cancel the parade and did so without any inputs from residents. This is another example of unilateral decision-making from the district administration with no opportunity for residents to voice alternate ideas. And, the reasoning was bogus.

Mr. Wahl is truly the grinch that stole Christmas.

Bah! Humbug!

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Letter to the Editor: We Miss The Christmas Parade

To the Editor and Village Residents:

I am writing this to tell you of my concerns regarding the cancellation of the Village's 2004 Christmas parade after 16 previous years of existence.

My wife and I moved here last year, not for the house, but for the lifestyle that existed here. Much of that 'Lifestyle' that we sought, revolved around the Town Square and the activities that the Square hosted. We have participated in other Village's parades and were enthralled with the enthusiasm of the participants, as well as the joy of the thousands of folks that lined the parade route.

We decided, however, not to participate in the 2003 Christmas Parade, but rather to seek out a choice piece of sidewalk to observe all the folks that fired up our Christmas spirit, with their floats, carts and music.

We were so impressed with the 1 3/4 hour parade presentation, and the Christmas joy that permeated the crowd, we were determined to bring our grandchildren to the 2004 parade.

But it is not to be!

For reasons that have not been advertised, the 2004 Christmas parade has been canceled by the Villages.

Has the Grinch invaded the Villages?

I understand that its sponsor, the Lions Club, has pursued various dates, locations, and magnitudes, only to be told by the Villages, "No Parade!"

I believe that the sponsors, participants and observers of the parade, have a right to know why this, of all parades, has been taken from our lifestyle.

What will we tell our children and grandchildren?

What has happened to Harold Schwartz's creed of "Give the people what they want"?

I pray that it did not die with him.

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Pete's Corner

The previous issue of the Bulletin, in the front-page article on the One Sumter issue, commented on what the POA feels was a Smear Campaign run by The Villages developer and the VCCDD against two Sumter County commissioners. The point was made that the commissioners were demonized and unfairly attacked by The Villages media machine.

Consider this example from a Pete's Place article, written by district administrator Mr. Pete Wahl, in his July 22, 2004, column in the Daily Sun supplement:

The column was entitled: "New proposals are a sneaky way to get cash." Mr. Wahl was writing about Sumter County officials considering a "tourist tax" as a way of paying for programs to promote tourism in the county. In his column Mr. Wahl writes about:

- ...ways to pick your pocketbook.
- ...sneaky way to get cash.
- ...ingenious new ways to get additional money out of the wallets of Villagers and their visitors.
- ...stays by your children, grandchildren and guests....
- ...every time your kids come down....
- ...the ... "Bushnell Boys."

It is not too difficult to see the bias and inflammatory language used here. Bringing your "kids" and "grandchildren" into the discussion is a classic emotionally-charged tactic that is unreasonable and displays a simple-minded approach to the issues.

What is the truth here?

It is true that the Sumter County commissioners are considering the tax. The objective would be to fund programs that would encourage tourism in Sumter County. The Lake Sentinel reported on August 24th that the proceeds would be used for sponsorships, special events, advertising, and refurbishing of recreational and cultural facilities.

The tax is proposed at 2% on tourists who stay in hotel rooms and RV parks for less than six months. Lake County has a tourism tax at 4%; Marion County has the tax at 3%. Currently, 48 of the 69 counties in Florida have the tax.

Does this sound like a worthwhile and accepted way to build tourism in our county?

So, armed with this information, go back and re-read Mr. Wahl's comments.

He wrote about: "... sneaky ways to get cash ... pick your pocketbook ... your children, grandchildren, and guests ... every time your kids come down ... add to the coffers ... the "Bushnell" Boys...."

The POA believes that Mr. Wahl has engaged in a classic "Smear Campaign," so as to discredit Sumter County commissioners, with the objective of advancing his views about One Sumter.

It is too bad Mr. Wahl didn't have something factual to say - guess he just wanted to scare you into voting for One Sumter.

It is also too bad we have to put up with his obvious bias. His actions do not reflect well on Villages administration that should be fair, reasonable, and unbiased. Mr. Wahl should be above the fray rather than down in the gutter slinging mud.

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POA Web Site

The new POA web site is getting bigger and better. Check it out at <http://www.poa4us.org>.

We have just added a link to the Chapter 190 Florida law that created CDDs (Community Development Districts) in 1980 and which continues to regulate CDDs to this day. Many have asked how to access this statute in the past, and we are happy to provide this link. This is extremely helpful if you want to learn more about how CDDs are organized and regulated.

If you have any suggestions or comments you wish to pass on to the POA officers or directors, there is detailed information on the site as to how to contact the POA via e-mail. The easiest way is to contact us at the web site at poapresident@poa4us.org.

We also have a need for someone familiar with the Internet to help us with some of the maintenance of the information provided on the site. Please contact us at the e-mail address listed above if you would like more information on this.

Hospital Taxing District Board

The five governor appointees to the North Sumter Hospital Taxing District board were announced recently.

The appointees all have valuable backgrounds. All five are Villages residents. Three have business backgrounds, one military, one government. Three said they have a college degree. All seem interested in this community and the hospital. All seem willing to work hard to figure out the tax issues.

On the negative side, at least three voiced preconceived notions in a recent Daily Sun article that the hospital taxing district and the related tax were both necessary. We are disappointed to see that these conclusions were reached even before confidential financial information from the hospital was reviewed. Furthermore, detailed financial forecasts supporting growth and expansion plans also need to be reviewed before a decision can be made as to whether the tax is needed.

These appointees should come to these responsibilities with open minds and no preconceived notions as to the need for the district or the tax. If their minds are already made up, then we are saddled with a stacked deck on the tax issue before we even start.

Let's hope it is not so.

Owls, Foxes, Cats and Manure

The VHA newspaper last month carried a comment by Mr. Chico Mir about the owls in the Sharon Morse Owl Preserve. Chico said that there were no more owls in the preserve. He said the reason for their absence is a lack of manure, required for nesting.

Actually, the reasons for the absence of the owls is the perennial problem with foxes and feral cats during the nesting season. When the last fox was seen out there in the spring, it took a month of calls to district maintenance and another month for a licensed trapper to catch and dispose of the fox. During those two months in the critical nesting season, the fox never went hungry. Good-bye

owls!

What we need now are two actions:

1. The district should contact the Florida Department of Wildlife and inquire about an owl restocking program.
2. District maintenance should publicize the problem and have a fast-action phone number for residents to call. Then, the foxes/cats should be captured and disposed of as quickly as they are identified. Action here should be in hours rather than in days or months. Maintenance should also do a better job of monitoring the preserve for problems.

So, let's get the foxes and cats out first and then get the owls back before we try the manure solution.

(P.S.: This isn't a trial balloon on behalf of the developer to put Buffalo and their manure into the Owl Preserve, is it??? No way!!! - They wouldn't be that devious!!?? Or would they???)

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Property Tax Relief

A previous issue of the Bulletin ran a story headlined: "How Would You Like a \$500 Reduction in Your Property Taxes?"

As it turns out, the Florida Supreme Court said that the measure wrongly promised the benefit or outcome of a \$500 reduction. The court reasoned that any reduction like this would require higher taxes on other classes of property to offset the estimated \$2 billion reduction in property taxes. Thus, the measure, as written, was not allowed to be considered for placement on the November ballot.

Furthermore, the measure did not have enough verified signatures (489,000 required) to make it onto the November ballot by the August 3, 2004, deadline.

So, we hope you haven't spent the \$500 yet. Sorry about that....

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April Fools Day Revisited

(Don't Believe Any of This)

During the recent scare about Hurricane Charley, the developer moved the entire buffalo and/or bison herd into the Hacienda Center's main auditorium for protection. The developer was concerned about the safety of the herd, and he didn't want them to get wet or frightened by the wind. When several residents protested that people should come before buffalo in the building, the developer said that the Hacienda Center was not designed as a people shelter and that residents were on their own. Besides, he said, buffalo are expensive animals. Villages Volunteers should come to the Hacienda Center next Wednesday to help with the clean-up.

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Cheers and Jeers

Cheers - To the POA membership for an impromptu collection at the August meeting for Hurricane Charley Disaster Relief. We collected over \$225.00 on short notice. Thanks to Jeanne Regnier for bringing up the idea.

Jeers - To Gary Lester, VP of Community Relations for the Villages, and president of the Villages Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Lester doesn't like to talk to the press, and it is amazing the number of times that newspaper articles mention that his office didn't return calls for comments. These are evasive tactics that do not serve The Villages very well. If Mr. Lester is going to function as the primary source of information about developments in The Villages, he should make himself available to reporters for comments.

Jeers - To the Rialto Theater and the developer for deciding not to show the Michael Moore film, "Fahrenheit 9/11." No matter what your politics, you should be upset by this blatant censorship in our community. Residents should have the opportunity to choose whether or not they pay to view this documentary film in our community theater.

Cheers - To the VCCDD administration for extending hours to renew Villages ID cards to accommodate working people. This is a big help to people who work a 40 hour week out of town.

Jeers - To the animal control officer who clumsily tried to catch a mother duck and six ducklings on Bichara Blvd. in front of Shoe Biz. She only served to separate the family when she roughly netted just the babies and took them away. How sad.

Jeers - To Villages maintenance for allowing grass and shrubs to die in too many locations on the east side of 441/27. The common landscaping is

starting to look shabby. Maintenance needs to devote more attention to these areas.

Cheers - To the One Sumter PAC for advocating sending a message to politicians with the line: "No Taxation Without Representation." The POA has long used that line in reference to the VCCDD's spending of our amenity fees when we have no chance to vote for or against the supervisors or their lavish spending plans. That certainly qualifies under the "Without Representation" part of the quote. Although the use of the line in the One Sumter debate is arguable, we trust that the One Sumter PAC would agree with the POA in using the phrase about VCCDD spending activities.

Cheers - To Tom Poss, former resident of The Villages and past POA president, who has just assumed the role as CEO of the Florida Silver Haired Legislature. Tom is also serving as Speaker Of The House. Congratulations, Tom, on a well-deserved and great honor. For more information on the FSHL or Tom's new challenges, log on to the FSHL's web site at www.fshl.org.

Cheers - To Dorothy Cheshire, POA director, who was recently re-appointed to another term as a director of the Lady Lake Library Board. Congratulations to Dorothy for a great honor.

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The POA Hall of Fame

POA members are reminded that nominations for the Hall of Fame are due October 1, 2004. Nomination forms are available at each POA general membership meeting. Five members must jointly nominate a person who has made a significant contribution to the POA in the past, but no earlier than five years ago. Nominees can be current POA members, or not; in the Villages area, or not; and living or passed on. Don't wait much longer; the submission deadline is near.

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VCCDD - TV ??

The television station of Lake-Sumter Community College (LSCC-TV) is covering meetings with candidates running for various Lake County posts,

including: the county board of commissioners, the superintendent of schools, the supervisors of elections, various state representatives, and the property appraiser.

The shows will last 30 minutes each and will be broadcast a various times over the LSCC-TV station, available in The Villages.

So, wouldn't it be wonderful if VNN, the Villages Television station, covered important government meetings here in The Villages?

The most important meeting in our community is the monthly meeting of the VCCDD at 9:00 a.m. on the last Friday of the month. Most meetings last 30-45 minutes and are scheduled once a month. Since VNN repeats the same programming on a three-hour cycle during the day, it should be easy for VNN to find a time, once a month, for a one-hour broadcast of the meeting.

Most VCCDD meetings are sparsely attended. Perhaps this is because of the somewhat out-of-the-way location of the district offices. Whatever the reason, it would be extremely valuable for all residents to have access to these important community meetings through their own TV.

This would be a most appropriate community service for VNN to perform. Why Not?

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POA Elections

The POA annual elections are coming up within a few months. All officer and director positions will be up for a vote and open to all active members.

Nominations are first due at the October meeting. Elections will be held at the November meeting. Officers and directors are sworn in at the December meeting. The term of office begins in January.

Please take a moment to consider how you might participate in the activities of your POA. We need more people to take an active role in the management of the POA by running for these officer and director positions. In many cases, you may find that the time commitment is less than you might think and the rewards are truly satisfying on a personal basis.

So, please consider running for one of these positions and joining the other officers and directors in helping to make The Villages an even better place in which to live.

If you want more information, please call Joe Gorman at 259-0999 or talk to any other officer or director. Phone numbers are listed on page 7.

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Bob Evans and Paradise Center Updates

We have heard nothing new on the Bob Evans restaurant issue. The developer has not said if he will abandon the Wales Gate site and build elsewhere, or if he will push the issue and try to force the restaurant on residents at the Wales Gate. If he tries to push it, it will take a court challenge that all affected residents will hear about in advance.

We have heard that the Bob Evans company is interested in building a restaurant in our community. However, they recognize the concerns of residents and would not want to push an unpopular location that would be contrary to the wishes of any involved group of residents. We feel that the most likely alternate location is somewhere in the Highway 466 area of The Villages.

On the Paradise Center re-building effort, the VCCDD has approved preliminary plans and has authorized the architects to prepare final construction drawings and cost estimates. Hurricane hardening of some of the structures is being considered.

The current plan calls for a supplemental budget request to be reviewed by the VCCDD in about March, 2005. The final cost estimates will be reviewed at that time. It is anticipated that the project will be financed through borrowings which will spread the cost to residents over more than just a single year. In today's climate of low interest rates, this probably makes sense. However, nobody knows what interest rates will be next year. The POA would have preferred nailing down the financing costs this year. No date has been set for the start of construction.

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Money

The Subject is Money!

Money!

It can buy a house - But not a home

It can buy a clock - But not time

It can buy you a position - But not respect

It can buy you a bed - But not sleep

It can buy you a book - But not knowledge

It can buy you medicine - But not health

It can buy you blood - But not life

So you see, money isn't everything

And it often causes pain and suffering

I tell you this because I am your friend

And as your friend I want to

Take away your pain and suffering!!

So, Send me all your money

And I will suffer for you!

Cash only please.

Anonymous

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Limerick of the Month

I really like my Creme Brulee.

But, oh, my gosh, I have to say:

I bet my life span is shortened a week

For every dish of Brulee that I eat.

But, it's too good to skip today.

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