

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Issue 31.04

Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

April, 2005

CLICK ON THE ARTICLE NAME BELOW

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <u>Is the Daily Sun Really Fair and Objective?</u> | <u>LRMC CEO Resigns Position</u> | <u>POA Letter to LRMC Directors</u> |
| <u>Eva Hawkins' Letter</u> | <u>Pete's Hip</u> | <u>What Do Our Residents Want?</u> |
| <u>Renew 2005 POA Membership Now</u> | <u>Residents Want The Christmas Parade</u> | <u>Citizen's Bank</u> |
| <u>April Fool's Revisited</u> (Don't Believe Any of This) | <u>125 Room Hotel</u> | <u>Spruce Creek Softball</u> |
| <u>The POA Needs Your Help In Selling Bulletin Ads</u> | <u>Let's Get Money From Villagers</u> | <u>POA Bulletins by Mail</u> |
| | <u>Limerick of the Month</u> | |

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.

[Return To Main POA Page](#)

Is the Daily Sun Really Fair and Objective?

In the follow-up commentary about The Villages' Annual Survey, the Daily Sun has given itself a compliment that the POA thinks is not justified.

The POA believes that the critiques of the Annual Survey by various department in The Villages operations are vague, self-serving, and a whitewash exercise that avoids the really important issues that should have been addressed in the Survey.

In the Media Group's comments, Mr. Larry Croom, Executive Editorial Manager of The Villages Daily Sun, said that the newspaper doesn't practice blowing up "...some stories out of proportion and creating a stir in the community when the story simply doesn't warrant it."

Mr. Croom is whitewashing the issue to counter a general belief of many residents that the newspaper is slanted toward a favorable view of The Villages and that it routinely censors news to the benefit of The Villages.

He also asked that we bring alternate views to his attention. OK - here are some alternative views:

The CEEB Articles - Resident living here about three years ago will remember the legal fight with Dan Farnsworth, an Oxford farmer, over whether the Villages developer should be allowed to build south of highway 466.

An organization of suppliers, vendors, workers, construction firms, Villages employees, etc., formed a group known as CEEB. The group's main function was to agitate and demonstrate for proceeding with the development and construction work. Many believed that the developer of The Villages was ultimately behind the group. Many, if not most, of the CEEB members were from outside either The Villages, Sumter County, or even the state. Most had a direct financial involvement with the planned construction.

You could scarcely not pick up a copy of the Daily Sun without seeing story after story describing the CEEB goals of starting the construction and discrediting Dan Farnsworth. Farnsworth was effectively ridiculed for his belief that the development would destroy the rural way of life in Sumter County that he and many others valued. Many residents could see what appeared to be the Daily Sun's one-sided coverage. Farnsworth's reasoning was never given much if any coverage in the paper. You might not have agreed with his reasoning, but you never saw it fully explained in the Sun

Was this fair and balanced? Don't think so!

Commissioner Roberts - The Daily Sun went out of its way to demonize Sumter County Commissioner Jim Roberts over a variety of issues, most notably the library for The Villages. Roberts correctly pointed out that the developer of The Villages had promised to build a library in its original development plan and appeared to be reneging on that promise. Roberts was right - but the Daily Sun printed story after story that mercilessly criticize Roberts for his position that Sumter County should not be the one to build the library. The developer apparently does not like Roberts on the Sumter Board, and we think it shows in the articles in the Daily Sun.

Was this fair and balanced? Don't think so!

One Sumter - This ballot initiative in the 2004 election looked to be a number one priority of the Villages developer. Article after article in the Sun campaigned for passage of the One Sumter initiative and explained the

rational in detail. The POA can't remember one balanced article that fully explained the reasoning for voting against the initiative. Furthermore, there were many officials associated with The Villages who argued for support of the One Sumter initiative. Various CDD supervisors or officials actually solicited support for the One Sumter position in CDD meetings. There were actually signs for One Sumter displayed in the District Administration office windows. All of this apparently in lock-step with the wishes of the developer. And, it showed in the coverage of the Sun.

Was this fair and balanced? Don't think so!

The 2002 Elections - The newspaper's leanings toward the Republican candidates was noticed by many. The lack of coverage of Democrats was equally noticeable. Democrats complained about obstacles in even placing ads in the paper. Favored candidates for the developer looked to be the darlings of the newspaper and its frequent stories. These attitudes throughout The Villages operation, apparently engendered by the developer's ideals, were so pervasive that Democrats even complained about their roadside signs being taken down by Villages officials.

Was this fair and balanced? Don't think so!

The Villages Hospital - Why do you think the Daily Sun has never fully investigated the issues identified by the POA about the expansion of the Villages hospital and the related tax? We think it is because the developer wants the tax and its 20% off the top and the Daily Sun doesn't want to rock the boat on these issues against the will of the developer. Frankly, any journalist organization worth its salt would have jumped head first into this story because these are important community issues and the main community newspaper should have investigated every aspect of the tax and the expansion for its readers. This would have been a great investigative reporting series for the Sun. Why didn't the Sun do that?

We think it wants to support the developer's line and not rock the boat.

Is this fair and balanced? Don't think so!

The POA and The VHA - Do you ever wonder why the VHA is favored by the developer and has its stories published in the Daily Sun, whereas the POA does not? We think this is because the developer favors the VHA and actively and aggressively shuns the POA. If the Daily Sun was really fair and balanced, you would think that it would at least publish the full notices of POA monthly meetings in the paper. But, it doesn't. It has even in the past excluded mention of the POA in the obituaries of POA officers or directors. The POA led the fight for the remodeling of the Paradise Center. You would think that somewhere along the line the paper would have mentioned this. It hasn't. The Daily Sun even distributes the VHA newspaper. Why? We think the VHA is developer-friendly and the Sun likes to promote that fact and accommodate the VHA whenever possible. When the POA advocates Residents' Rights issues, the Daily Sun makes a point of ignoring the POA.

Is this fair and balanced? Don't think so!

Summary - Some might say that the developer owns the paper and that our national tradition of a free press allows the developer to say whatever he wants. The POA thinks this is OK on the editorial page; objectively reported facts should be the rule in news stories.

The POA thinks that the newspaper has an obligation to this community to report the news in a fair and balanced manner with integrity and objectivity. Less than that breeds the propaganda and misinformation that is seen in totalitarian states. Are we coming to that?

So, Villages Daily Sun, please don't preach to us about fair and balanced reporting and don't tell us that the paper is a model of integrity and objectivity in this community. Many people would laugh at this assertion. The Sun should be ashamed that its journalistic integrity is so easily compromised.

This community deserves a fair, balanced and objective newspaper and media to serve the interests of residents. Maybe if enough people speak up about this issue, we will see some changes. Hope so!

[Top](#)

LRMC CEO Resigns Position

The CEO of the Leesburg Regional Hospital System (LRMC), Mr. Richard Wooten, has resigned his position.

The POA viewed Mr. Wooten as the main obstacle in the effort to start the expansion of The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH) soon and without the tax.

The POA believes that one of the reasons Mr. Wooten resigned was that he set his feet in concrete on the tax issue. We further believe that he was inflexible in the face of overwhelming community opposition to the tax.

We believe that LRMC no longer needs the tax now that the objectionable 20% payment off the top to the Morse family foundation was eliminated.

We have said often that there should not be a need for a public tax handout in our community where there is high demand and favorable demographics.

The POA also believes that any further delay in starting the expansion is morally wrong because people will die waiting for the expansion to be completed. To reemphasize, further delays are morally wrong.

We would ask that the LRMC board now honor a request that the POA originally submitted to Mr. Wooten. This is: to provide to the POA copies of the two Ernst & Young feasibility studies that examined the financing requirements for the expansion. It would be a sign of good faith for the LRMC board to provide this information for community review.

The POA is hopeful that wiser minds will now prevail and that the LRMC board will start the expansion in the near future.

POA Letter to LRMC Directors

The following letter was sent to LRMC directors by the POA president in early March along with a copy of the March POA Bulletin:

Dear LRMC Director:

Enclosed is the March, 2005, copy of the POA Bulletin.

This lead article summarizes the wishes of Village residents for the hospital. Foremost on this list is the desire that the expansion of TVRH should start as soon as possible.

The resignation of Mr. Wooten was announced after this issue was printed. I am hoping that with his departure, the Board will be able to decide to either start the expansion now or to sell TVRH to some other hospital management company that can start the expansion now.

We feel it is morally wrong for you and LRMC to delay the expansion because of your inability or unwillingness to proceed now. People will die waiting for LRMC to overcome its indecision on this issue. Please, either start the expansion now or sell TVRH to a better-financed hospital management firm that can.

Please also note an article on page 3 about TVRH emergency room. We think the existing facility on the east side of highway 441 should be converted into an urgent care facility to relieve some of the delays and backup that now exist with the ER in TVRH.

Please contact me in confidence if you have any questions or comments.
Sincerely,

Joe Gorman
POA President

We received this letter from Eva Hawkins from her home in Arkansas. Eva is a past president of the POA and one of the first inductees into the POA Hall of Fame:

Please forgive me for not sending this note sooner. I was sick for some time after the January meeting. Leo and I returned home safely and now that mail has been read and taxes prepared, I can gather my wits about me to do some writing.

The POA has always been dear to my heart. It was and is a tool for the people and Lord knows in this time of powerful forces imposing their wishes, despite the consequences on anyone else, it is not only refreshing but wonderful that a group such as the POA will work for all of us who would not otherwise have a voice. The POA has always been our voice.

It was my honor to lead the POA, with a lot of help from other dedicated members, for three terms. Now you have honored me with that beautiful (Hall of Fame) plaque. Thank you all and keep on in the spirit in which this group was formed because there are a lot of us little people who need a champion to protect our rights and benefits.

Keep up the good work, Joe. I enjoyed watching you conduct a few meetings.

A message to the membership, your dues help, but your attendance and support are also needed.

Very truly, your forever member,

Eva

[Top](#)

Pete's Hip

The POA has often commented on the Pete's Place column written in the Thursday supplement to the Daily Sun. We believe that Mr. Wahl's comments are often worthwhile and helpful but are many times inappropriate or frivolous.

The latest case in point is Mr. Wahl's March 10th column in which he described his hip surgery. Approximately 90% of that column discussed various aspects of the surgery, preparation, recovery, etc.

The POA suggests that if Mr. Wahl wants to write feature articles about his life and personal issues, then he should submit those stories separately to the Sun's feature story editor.

On the other hand, the Pete's Place column should be reserved for Mr. Wahl's

comments on our community and the operation of our governments in The Villages.

If Mr. Wahl needs some story ideas, perhaps he could address some of the following:

- Why the Christmas parade was canceled with no apparent good faith effort on his part to address the problem issues and find a solution to save this popular annual event,
- Why residents cannot vote for Mr. Wahl or the supervisors of the VCCDD or the SLCDD in any election,
- What future purchases of common property from the developer at inflated prices are planned by either the VCCDD or the SLCDD,
- How the developer and the VCCDD decided to cover the recent \$174,000 sinkhole expense when it "should have been the responsibility of the (Sumter) County in the first place," according to Sumter County Commissioner Mike Francis,
- Why Mr. Wahl and two of his senior staff scored so poorly in the recent POA Mock Vote and what they plan to do about it,
- How would Mr. Wahl justify about \$400 million of debt obligations forced on residents to purchase common property from the developer and paid back out of the monthly amenity fees (which could be much lower without the debt service),
- The thinking of the VCCDD and the developer when they tried to stampede the supervisors of CDD #1 into allowing The Villages Water Treatment Plant to pump sewer treatment discharge into Lago Del Luna for irrigation storage.

In summary, the Pete's Place column can be a worthwhile vehicle for providing information about the workings of our community. But, it should not be a vehicle for self-gratification of Mr. Wahl's ego.

[Top](#)

What Do Our Residents Want?

The POA is initiating this monthly column that will list ideas submitted by residents describing what they would like to see in The Villages. This is your opportunity to tell us what you want. This could be a new feature or amenity; or a fix-up; or whatever.

Just send us a note via email or snail mail. Please include your name, in case we have to verify your comments, but we won't publish names in these short paragraphs of wants.

So, here is the start of this column. We can't guarantee results; but we can at least publicize these various issues and wants:

1. Path To Wal/Mart - We should have a golf cart path established that would allow someone from the northwest corner of the east side of The Villages to go to Wal/Mart by golf cart. This would involve getting the permission of various businesses that need to be passed. But, this might be a good thing for these businesses to have Villagers traveling close-by, whereas we don't do that now.

2. Christmas Parade - Please bring back the Christmas Parade on the Spanish Springs Square.

3. Post Offices - Please get auxiliary post office stations in Southern Trace and Mulberry Square where packages can be mailed and stamps purchased.

[Top](#)

Renew 2005 POA Membership Now

We are sending out POA 2005 membership renewal letters now. We would ask all members to respond with their renewals if they are satisfied with the efforts of the POA to pursue Residents' Rights on your behalf.

You can either use the form enclosed with the renewal letter or the form in this issue of the Bulletin on page 7. Either way, your generous support of your POA will be greatly appreciated.

Memberships run annually from January 1st to December 31st. Dues are \$6.00 per household and cover all residents in the household.

If you enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope with your renewal form and check, we will mail your card back to you. If you don't enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope, we will hold your card for pick-up at one of our monthly meetings.

Remember that you need your 2005 card to take advantage of various discounts in our Discount Partner Program (see the Bulletin's page 6 or the POA web site for details).

Our Bulletin printing and distribution expenses will increase by \$3,000.00-\$5,000.00 this year as we expand our distribution into the newer areas of Marion County and Sumter County west of Buena Vista Blvd and south of Highway 466. So, any additional contribution you can make will be a big help to us and greatly appreciated.

Thanks again for your support of your POA.

[Top](#)

Residents Want The Christmas Parade

We recently heard of an impromptu resident survey of about 260 Villagers regarding the annual Lions Club Christmas Parade. This parade had long been an annual tradition.

You may remember that this parade was cancelled last year on short notice by Mr. Pete Wahl, District Administrator. Mr. Wahl claimed that the parade was too big and too unwieldy and lacked support of merchants on the Spanish Springs Square and had no good place for staging. Many residents viewed this reasoning as bogus baloney.

The informal survey was done in three small groups totaling about 260 Villagers. When asked if they support the return of the Lions Christmas Parade and the Christmas Decorations displayed in previous years, all 260 people responded "yes." Not one "bah humbug" was heard in the entire group.

The sponsors of the survey plan to poll additional clubs during April and the Bulletin will publish these results when available.

It's very disappointing when our non-elected VCCDD officials determine without our input to cancel such an important event.

As a result of the survey, Village residents would like the VCCDD to work with the Lions club to bring back the annual Christmas Parade and make it a success. If there is ever again a VCCDD intention to cancel the Christmas Parade, Village residents should be allowed to vote on the issue beforehand.

Also noticed was that many of the Christmas Decorations put up by the VCCDD in previous years were not put up in 2004. The people in the survey were clear that these decorations should be put up in 2005 as before.

If residents would like to comment on this issue, please contact the POA with your thoughts.

[Top](#)

Citizen's Bank

The Citizen's First Bank's (CFB) president, Mr. Mike Killingsworth, commented on the bank's evaluation in The Villages Survey.

The POA concurs that the bank is doing a nice job based on a good customer service.

However, one question that it should have asked in the Annual Survey concerns ATM machines. Why is it that there are no other banks' ATM machines located in various postal stations? How is it that the Citizen's First Bank has a 100% monopoly? Do you think that our residents would like to have a choice of other banks and the convenience of having their bank's ATM machine located close-by?

In the spirit of customer service to our community, would CFB be willing to allow some of the other banks in the area to provide their ATM machines in our postal stations?

So why wasn't this question included in the annual Villages Survey?

[Top](#)

April Fool's Revisited

(Don't Believe Any of This)

The Villages recreation department announced the formation of the Bridge Fishing Club. Membership is open to all residents who like to fish and won't start crying when putting a worm on a hook.

The Bridge Fishers plans to travel to at least one bridge a month in the state of Florida over either fresh or salt water. Residents will fish from the bridge for whatever local denizens of the deep are there. Prizes will be given for the biggest fish and the ugliest fish.

Unfortunately, several charter members of the club decided to try out their bridge fishing skills on the golf cart bridge spanning highway 27/441. One of the anglers got his line snagged on a semi traveling under the bridge and was jerked away, never to be seen again.

[Top](#)

125 Room Hotel

The Villages developer announced plans to build a 125 room hotel northwest of the Rialto Theater across from the Church on the Square.

Although this might seem like a good idea on the surface, we are concerned about the great loss of parking spaces behind the Rialto.

Parking is already scarce during regular nightly events as well as special events. We would not want to complicate this further by eliminating many parking spaces for the footprint of the hotel, not to mention the needed spaces for the hotel's operations.

Before this idea goes too far, we suggest a study of parking and traffic patterns in the Square's general area. This should be done, at the developer's expense, by an independent traffic consultant. We might need a multi-story parking structure build at developer's expense to replace the lost parking spaces.

In a bigger sense, however, we see this hotel idea as a violation of the Residents' Right number 10 (see page 2) which calls for consultation with residents before any major change is made to our community. After all, this is our community, not the developer's.

And, frankly, a five or six story hotel building would be out of character with the architectural themes already established for the square.

But, let's ask why this hotel has to be crammed into the already congested Square area? Why not put it in the new Target shopping center? Why not in the Villages Financial Center on highway 466 (we don't need all those banks)? Why not on the Polo Club grounds (lots of parking out there). Why not on the land next to the Village of Homewood on the corner of el Camino Real and Clemente Ct.? Or at the southwest corner of the Morse Blvd. and highway 27/441?

There are many alternatives. Why cram it into an already congested area?

[Top](#)

Spruce Creek Softball

The POA has suggested recently that the Daily Sun do a better job of reporting on the VCCDD and the SLCDD meetings, as well as the various residential CDD meetings in The Villages. What is a better use of the newspaper than to report on the operations of our local governments?

The Daily Sun has not told us why its coverage is so spotty. We don't know if it is because the paper does not have the staff to cover these meetings, or the cost would be too much, or they don't have the space, or they don't want to do it, or what?

So, we think it is surprising that the Daily Sun has a periodic column in the paper about the Spruce Creek softball leagues.

We think the Daily Sun has a distorted sense of priorities when it covers the softball leagues of a non-related community and then skimps on coverage of important government meetings in our community.

Wouldn't you like to see a timely report on these meetings written by professional journalists and published in our local newspaper?

[Top](#)

The POA Needs Your Help In Selling Bulletin Ads

We still have the position open for an advertising manager to help sell advertising for the POA Bulletin. This is a part-time position with a generous commission. You can work your own hours contacting local businesses about advertising in the Bulletin. Previous ad selling experience would be helpful but not necessary. Please call Joe Gorman (259-0999) for details about how you can help the POA and also make some money for yourself.

[Top](#)

Let's Get Money From Villagers

Listed below is a Letter to the Editor:

Well here we go again... now Sumter County is in trouble with what to do with all the trash they are collecting. And, of course, the natural thing to do is raise the fees for trash pick-up to the residents of Sumter County so that the County Trash system can be fixed, right? I mean they are only 3.5 million dollars in debt over this issue and the fastest easiest fix is to raise the fees to the residents, right?

Wrong....

I have only been a resident of the Villages for just over a year now and it is becoming quite clear to me that every time there is a shortage of funds to accomplish something in this area, (they) go straight to the residents and charge them or raise their respective fees as a solution to the problem.

First it was "let's ask the County residents to approve a 1% tax on their property to fund an expansion of the Villages Hospital," which is a completely private business that should be self-sustaining and shouldn't have to come to

the public for help.

Then it was "raise the amenity fees for the new people in the Villages because more money is needed to pay off the ever increasing debt we are being asked to pay back to the Developer" (\$400 Million and growing).

Then there is "let's raise the trash pick-up fees because the County trash program is in trouble and needs to have us come up with another \$3.5 Million to fix their problems".

And now it's "oh by the way, we the Sumter County Commissioners have deemed it necessary for County residents to also pick up the cost of fixing the latest sink hole too" (\$150,000).

Between private business, the Villages Developer and the Sumter County Commissioners we, the residents, don't stand a chance.

As a new resident to Florida, I have to ask the question: what is wrong with you people? Don't you want us to live here? Do you honestly think the Village residents are so wealthy that you can come to us every time there is a problem and ask us to bail you out financially?

We are retirees on fixed incomes for crying out loud! Not everyone who moves into the Villages is super wealthy. Why are you doing this to us?

If you want to punish somebody, how about punishing the ones responsible for the problem in the first place? What ever happened to the policy of holding those in charge of such programs responsible for their outcome?

If the trash program was not adequate why didn't someone do something about it before now? Why wait until \$3.5 Million is needed to fix the problem? The County has been working on this trash thing since 1990 and they are just now finding out there is a real problem? Hellooo ¼ maybe we need new Commissioners to direct County services. Perhaps we have the wrong people in place to handle these jobs. Maybe those in charge should be tried in court for mismanaging the County's budget and sent to prison for their failure to do the job right. I'll bet you would see an immediate turn around in behavior on the part of people taking these jobs if they were truly held accountable.

The same applies to the Villages Developer. When was the last time someone in authority audited him to see if all he has been charging the residents was on the up and up?

All I know for sure is that if private business, the Villages Developer, and the Sumter County Board of Commissioners keep coming to me to pay for all their incompetence at handling major civic functions such as Hospital expansion, "over charges for land development", trash pick-up, and sink hole repairs, etc., they will force me to move elsewhere.

Take heed my friends... just as quickly as the Villages has grown, it could also quickly become one of Florida's biggest ghost towns with it's bogus "over-inflated" price tags on typical houses, property, golf, food, and furniture. We are just plain tired of being asked to fix your financial woes. There may come a point in time when the residents here will have had enough and will begin to evacuate this area, leaving you all holding the proverbial bag with all your greed and financial misery! At this late stage in our lives, we don't need all this BS

[Top](#)

POA Bulletins by Mail

We can mail the POA Bulletin to you anywhere in the U.S. This is especially good for part-time residents who might like to receive the Bulletin at their out-of-town address. Cost is just \$1.00 per issue for as many issues as you want to receive. So, for example, for 6 issues, the cost is \$6.00. Just send us your check and your address. Alternatively, you can always follow the POA Bulletin on our web site, which is at www.poa4us.org .

[Top](#)

Limerick of the Month

The Daily Sun has a lot of fun
With slanted news stories it doth spun.
But residents want facts and analysis
Without the Sun's objectivity paralysis.
Perhaps our reading of the Sun should be done?!

[Top](#)

[Top](#)

**For a full copy of the POA Bulletin via mail, please send
a check for \$12.00 for a one year subscription to:**

**The POA
PO BOX 1657
Lady Lake, FL 32158-1657**

Contact Information : POB 1657, Lady Lake, FL 32158
Phone: (352) 259-0999

[CLICK HERE TO SEND E-MAIL TO POA BULLETIN](#)

[Return To Archive Page](#)

[Return To Main POA Page](#)