

# The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

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Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

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## VCCDD Backtracking On Straw Vote Results

The VCCDD isn't so sure that it wants to proceed with the formation of the Resident Authority Board (RAB).

At least that is the sentiment of Gary Moyer, VCCDD board member and Vice President of Development for the developer's corporation. Mr. Moyer is also the architect of the developer's idea for the Straw Vote as well as for the concept of the Central District governments in The Villages.

At the December 1 VCCDD meeting, Mr. Moyer showed visible irritation with comments and questions from residents about details surrounding formation of the RAB.

**Current Board Members?** - The first point of contention was whether the initially appointed RAB board members have to be current members of the various boards which will appoint these initial board members. Thus, whether the appointed RAB board member from, for example CDD1, had to be a current board member of CDD1.

Mr. Moyer contends that they must be a member of the appointing board. He contends that it was always planned that the initial appointed RAB board members would be on the boards of the appointing residential CDDs.

The POA has reviewed the pertinent material, including the original two letters printed in the Daily Sun, as well as the official ballot used in the election.

We can see no requirement stating that the appointed board members must currently be on the appointing boards.

Some of the arguments made by residents in that December 1 VCCDD meeting were that there is such a great pool of talent here in The Villages, that the RAB could benefit from selecting the appointed board members from outside the appointing boards.

It was pointed out by audience members that current CDD board members are busy with ongoing official duties on their own boards, and that it might be an overload for them to take on the additional and probably time-consuming responsibilities of the RAB.

The comment was made for Mr. Moyer's argument that the appointed board members should be selected from existing board members who weren't so busy. It was quite disappointing to hear this insulting comment.

The POA believes that the VCCDD should be willing to accept qualified non-board candidates who come forward, show a commitment to serve on the RAB, and are in favor of the concept of resident-controlled decision-making. The POA views this as most important.

And, we would urge all residents to contact their CDD representatives to campaign for appointing initial supervisors who exemplify these ideals. The alternative of having Naysayers on the RAB is unacceptable.

**Conflict-Of-Interest?** - The second point of contention was whether Florida State Conflict-Of-Interest regulations would apply to the new RAB board members.

The basic point here was that the RAB would be created under Chapter 163 F. S. which does not have the Conflict-Of-Interest exemption as does Chapter 190 F. S., which governs and regulates Community Development Districts (CDDs). It is this Chapter 190 exemption that allows employees and business associates of the developer to serve on the VCCDD board in what would otherwise be a Conflict-Of-Interest situation.

So, without the exemption, the question was whether developer employees and business associates would be allowed to serve on the RAB? The residents at the December 1 meeting suggested that this should not be allowed in what at the very least would give the appearance of a Conflict-Of-Interest.

If the VCCDD agreed that the Conflict-Of-Interest issue was real and important, then VCCDD supervisors such as Mr. Moyer should not be allowed to serve on the RAB.

This is compounded by the fact that Mr. Moyer is an employee of the developer. If he were to serve on the RAB, he would be, in effect, negotiating with himself as a member of the VCCDD and also with his employer, the developer of The Villages.

Several in the audience recognized that as a compound Conflict-Of-Interest situation.

Mr. Moyer and other VCCDD supervisors countered that the Conflict-Of-Interest regulations are meant to address situations like, for example, embezzlement. Since this kind of situation is not anticipated in serving on the RAB, Mr. Moyer suggested that the regulations would not need to apply to VCCDD members or developer employees serving on the RAB.

Several audience members questioned this reasoning as being flawed, too permissive, and ultimately controlling..

It was suggested that the VCCDD request a written opinion from the board's attorney. The attorney, Mr. Bruce Duncan, voiced the opinion that the Conflict-Of-Interest regulations would apply to the RAB and there would be no exemptions.

Mr. Moyer said at this point that "he" would not want to establish the RAB if this was the case. He then withdrew his motion that would have started the process to form the RAB.

The attorney has been asked to research the issue and may have the written opinion ready for review at the January 5 meeting.

**Sunshine Laws?** - The third point of contention was whether the initial appointed supervisors of the RAB would be covered by Florida Sunshine laws that require full open-door discussions about all board matters.

The feeling expressed by the VCCDD was that Sunshine laws would apply.

However, the point could be made that the initial appointed board is not yet an official board under Chapter 163 F. S. and the Sunshine laws might not apply.

It was not clear what the situation or requirement really was.

**Disenfranchisement?** - A fourth point of uncertainty was brought up by Mr. Chico Mir about the disenfranchisement of Villagers who are foreign nationals or did not have their voting registration in The Villages.

These people pay their property taxes and amenity fees, but were denied the opportunity to vote. This was because the VCCDD decided to have the three counties put the Straw Vote measure on the election ballot on which only registered Florida voters living in the Villages could vote.

Mr. Mir may have been signaling a legal challenge based on this disenfranchisement argument. It is curious now that the VCCDD has, so to speak, lost the Straw Vote, that one of its sympathizers tries to advance this argument. Especially given that the VCCDD was well-advised of this disenfranchisement problem on several occasions prior to the vote.

The VCCDD could have handled the Straw Vote via the monthly amenity billings that go to all residents or through the same process used for the annual survey. Both of these methods would have allowed everybody to vote. Apparently, the VCCDD wanted to save the processing costs by pushing the responsibility and expense off onto the three counties.

We'll just have to wait and see what surfaces in the coming months about a possible legal challenge.

**Summary** - It is disappointing to see this backtracking on the part of the VCCDD.

It is even more disturbing to recognize the threat of Mr. Moyer's argument that "he" would not want to follow thru on the Straw Vote concept if "he" doesn't get his way about how "he" thought the RAB was meant to be organized.

It is clear that the residents have spoken and want to proceed with the formation of the RAB and actually take over decision-making for various functions from the VCCDD.

Furthermore, residents want to proceed without any suggestion of a Conflict-Of-Interest problem with developer-influenced or developer-controlled supervisors.

And, residents want to proceed even if Mr. Moyer doesn't like it.

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## **POA Forum About The Straw Vote**

Below is a comment posted on the POA Website Forum regarding the recent Straw Vote:

The "Straw Ballot" decision was very close, but the residents voted "NO" meaning that they did indeed want changes made to the current governance system.

One long-time VCCDD employee who is also a Department Head conducted a regularly scheduled monthly meeting with the staff just after this November election.

The "head" told that staff that the vote results probably meant that the residents did not understand the question or they did not know what they were voting for. Presumably, in the head's opinion, if the residents had any brain power left, they would have voted to keep the system "as is."

This statement and others like it, is illustrative of the continuing and glaring disconnect between the present VCCDD staff and the majority of Village residents.

I am told that an associate who is another full time employee agreed with and repeated these same observations from the "head" to the rest of the attendees even though several of the staff are not residents.

The "head" is supposed to have concluded his remarks to the staff by saying that this election result would not change the current status of employment that this person and other top staffers enjoyed.

As a resident, I am no longer surprised by these comments, but I am still appalled that some staff members in high positions of authority continue to demean the Village resident's intellect in front of paid staff.

My question is: Do you think Janet Tutt, VCCDD Manager and the Head's immediate superior, should investigate the conduct described above in order to potentially identify the kind of leadership we are getting from the paid VCCDD staff?

Your comments would be appreciated.

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Editor's note: If any residents would like to respond to these comments about the recent Straw Vote, please go to the POA Forum on our website at [www.poa4us.org](http://www.poa4us.org). Click on the "Forum" button.

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## POA Bulletin December MisPrint

We really goofed-up big time with the printing of the December issue of the Bulletin.

Somehow or another, the printer pulled together the December issue layout with half the pages from December, 2006, and the other half from December, 2005.

Only about 1,000 copies were distributed, primarily in the historic district of The Villages, before we noticed the problem.

We stopped all distribution activities and had to junk the entire press run. The corrected Bulletin was re-printed and distributed about a week later.

A fair number of people, however, chose to respond to the POA Annual Survey questionnaire that was printed on the December, 2005, pages. This reminds us that we should do this popular annual survey another time soon.

The December, 2005, survey was summarized in the January, 2006, issue of the Bulletin for those of you who might want to review the results. This is available on our website in the Bulletin Archives section. It is a year old, but it is still good reading. It really tells you something about how various issues and features of our community are viewed by residents.

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**The POA Forum**

The POA now has a Forum on its website, [www.poa4us.org](http://www.poa4us.org).

A Forum is a cyberspace meeting place where residents can leave comments on any topic they wish to comment on.

If you want to comment on the recreation trail issue, you can on the POA Forum.

If you want to comment on the recent Straw Vote, you can on the POA Forum.

If you want to comment on the Villages Hospital, you can on the POA Forum.

If you want to start a new topic, you can on the POA Forum.

Just go to the POA website, click on the POA Forum, and follow the directions. Just select a topic, review the previous comments, and then, if you want to, leave your own comments. Start a new topic if you want to.

If this Forum idea is popular, we will continue it for the indefinite future.

So, if you have something on your mind that you want to talk about, the POA Forum is the place for you. Or, if you just want to see what your neighbors are saying, the POA Forum is still the place for you.

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## Hometown Democracy

The Florida Hometown Democracy petition aims to give the voters control of the comprehensive plan revision process at the local level. Below is a series of questions and answers from the Hometown Democracy movement's internet website:

[www.floridahometowndemocracy.com/](http://www.floridahometowndemocracy.com/) .

**Q. Florida Hometown Democracy is launching a petition drive behind a proposed state constitutional amendment. What does it say and why is it needed?** This amendment lets voters decide whether their city or county comprehensive land use plan will be changed or adopted. Currently, city and county commissions make those decisions. One goal of Florida's 1985 Growth Management Act is to encourage citizen participation. Some citizens are active in local planning; many more do not participate in the current process. The current process has failed Florida repeatedly. Florida's Hometown Democracy Amendment will guarantee local "ownership" of community plans at the ballot box. Because Floridians are stuck with the consequences of comprehensive plan changes, it makes sense that they should have the final say over proposed changes that can determine the destiny of their communities for generations to come.

**Q. What is a Comprehensive Plan and what is it supposed to do?** A. In 1985 Florida adopted the "Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act," popularly known as the Growth Management Act. This law was adopted to save Florida from bad, uncontrolled development and the parade of problems that

inevitably follow it:

- overcrowded schools
- grid locked roads
- overwhelmed municipal services like fire, police, garbage, sewage, hospitals
- higher taxes, fees and utility costs
- paved over open space and the wildlife habitat
- declining, polluted water supply
- widespread environmental degradation
- eroded quality of life for the average Floridian

The Growth Management Act states that a proposed development that is not consistent with a comprehensive plan should not be approved by a local government. For example, if a proposed development will contribute to the overcrowding of a road or a school, or stress a community's water supply, or devour wildlife habitat or green space, the proposed development is not consistent with the comprehensive plan and it should not be approved.

**Q: How can I learn more about my local comp plan & what it means for my future?**

Each of Florida's counties and municipalities has a local comprehensive land use plan. Some localities post the plan on the internet. Plans are widely available at public libraries, planning departments, and commission clerk's offices. You can contact your local planning officials by telephone for more information about your local plan.

**Q. Why aren't Comprehensive Plans working?** Each town, city and county has a comprehensive land use plan that is designed to make sure uncontrolled, bad development does not ruin Floridians' quality of life and the environment. But comprehensive plans can't work if they can be easily changed. That's what has happened in Florida. Comprehensive plans are being changed willy-nilly by vote of city or county commissions to accommodate development that shouldn't happen. Changing a plan designation from agricultural to single-family residential, or increasing density on a parcel, or changing height restrictions on beachfront parcels to allow skyscrapers - all those require comp-plan amendments. It is well documented that developers are among the biggest campaign contributors to local politicians. The result has been predictable: most elected officials have never seen a development they wouldn't approve. They just can't say no to bad development proposals. Did you know that when your city or county commission votes on a comprehensive plan change, those officials are exercising the people's power? When a city or county council votes to approve a land use change, they are supposed to do so on the grounds that the change will not harm the public interest, which is defined very broadly to include all those concerns that make a place a good community: protection of public health, safety, quality of life, the beauty of a particular place and the environment. Too often local officials in Florida define the public interest as being the developers' economic return. And other values for the community- quality of life, uncrowded schools, managed population growth, clean water - are not being given any consideration. Too often our local officials forget that they are standing in the shoes of the people, forget that they are supposed to represent the entire community when a proposed land use change comes up for vote. Land use decisions affect people and communities more than almost any other governmental decision.

**Q. How does Florida's Hometown Democracy Amendment work?** Florida's Hometown Democracy Amendment simply replaces county or city commission votes to adopt or change a comprehensive plan with votes by the citizens in a referendum election to be held at the same time as the general election. No special elections will be necessary. If a community so desires, a referendum could even be held by mail. Florida's Hometown Democracy Amendment gives greater stability and certainty to comprehensive plans by locking in existing land use categories and giving the keys to the voters.

THE VOTERS WILL DECIDE IF A PROPOSED CHANGE WILL MAKE THEIR COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE. IF THE MAJORITY VOTES YES, THE CHANGE HAPPENS. IF THE MAJORITY VOTES NO, THE CHANGE DOESN'T

HAPPEN.

**Q. Doesn't the Amendment conflict with our representative form of government-under our system aren't these types of decisions supposed to be made by our elected officials?** The United States Supreme Court and the Florida Supreme Court have consistently held that there is no conflict between direct democracy and our representative form of government, and that the two have co-existed throughout our history. Voters are often called to vote directly on issues, e.g., bonding and taxing issues. It makes sense that voters should have the final say over decisions that will directly impact their community for years to come. Moreover, voters have a right to protect themselves when their elected officials make harmful decisions that do not reflect the public interest.

**Q. What can be done about existing bad Comprehensive Plans?** Any citizen can propose a good comp-plan amendment now. Citizens will be able to use the Florida Hometown Democracy amendment pro-actively to protect or improve their area in some positive way, not simply to allow for more density. People will be interested in these proposed comp-plan amendments, though they feel disenfranchised in their own communities now. The public doesn't view the exercise of their democratic rights as a burden. Comp plan amendments are "where the rubber hits the road", and have a direct and daily impact on the lives of the people. People will be able to take responsibility for their communities. Florida is living proof of what happens when there's no accountability for what goes on. To get real growth management, the power structure is going to have to change, and there's going to have to be more accountability for decision-making.

**Q. Why will putting the people in Charge make Comp Plans work?** Our amendment is important because land use decisions are often the most important decisions that local governments make. Land use decisions determine the fate of a community for generations to come. That's why the people who live in a community should have the final word. Both the Florida Supreme Court and U.S. Supreme Court have consistently recognized that local land use decisions can be made directly by the voters instead of by local elected officials. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in March of 2003 that voters are presumed to be competent about matters of local government. The court said if voters so choose, they can demand to vote on local land use issues, that power is delegated by the voters to local government and voters can take that power back if they so choose.

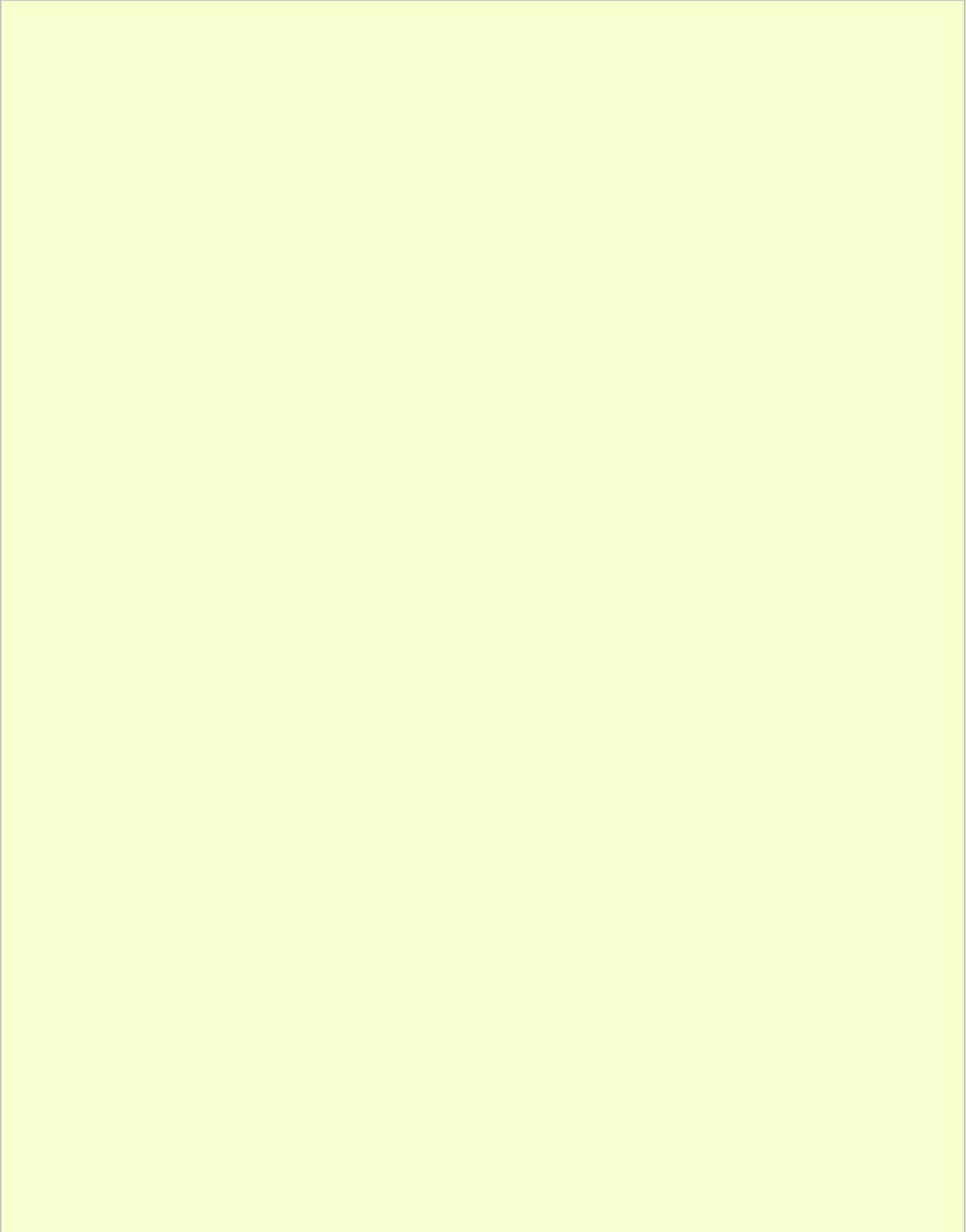
The Florida Hometown Democracy Amendment deals directly with the allocation of power. It's not a special bill benefiting a special-interest group. It's aimed at re-allocating and redistributing power in a local community. We Citizen-voters delegate powers to government, and we can take those powers back, especially if our elected representatives misuse those powers. The Florida Supreme Court has long recognized that referenda are an appropriate way to make land use decisions. In Florida Land Company v. City of Winter Springs, the Court recognized that the Florida Constitution reserves power to the people in Article I, Section 1, and stated: The concept of referendum is thought by many to be a keystone of self-government, and its increasing use is indicative of a desire on the part of the electorate to exercise greater control over the laws which directly affect them. There is no legal impediment to the use of referenda in land use decisions. Land use decisions affect you and your community more than almost any other governmental decision. Florida's Hometown Democracy amendment puts the people back in charge of the places where they live.

**WE PUT OUR TRUST IN THE PEOPLE, NOT THE POLITICIANS !**

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# Hometown Democracy Petition Form

Click [HERE](#) For Printable Form.



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## Straw Vote Letter

I recently received a copy of the POA Bulletin and, as always, look forward to reading it as it sometimes provides information not available elsewhere.

On the first page of the December Bulletin, it states in effect, the POA position is that anyone who was not for the change as indicated by the Straw Vote should not be included in the setting up the program.

I am very offended by this and feel the POA owes those who do not follow your "party line" an apology. This attitude reeks of the very concepts the POA had expressed themselves against over the years, and those being "Following the Party Line" and "Taxation without Representation."

Is it the intent of the POA to exclude the residents that voted for the status quo (48% in Lake, 54% in Sumter and 39% in Marion counties) from being part of the Residential Authority Board? In case the POA has forgotten, this is America not a banana republic where a person is either "for or against," and those "against" are not acknowledged or allowed to hold public opinion.

In America, most of the time, after the election regardless of the outcome both sides do come together and make "it " work for the betterment of the entire community.

Apparently the POA has decided the area of the Villages north of CR466 is their fiefdom and no one should be allowed to express a contrary opinion. It is disheartening that the POA has chosen to disallow much of the very talent and expertise they previously stated was available in the Villages to set up a residence council to manage the amenity fees and the programs that it supports.

Perhaps the intent of the POA is to become the RAB. Is this an attempt by the POA to control the \$30 million collected yearly in the amenity fees paid by the residents? Should we all remember the golden rule: "He who has the gold, rules"?

Do we want an authority board that is so eager to disallow participation and silence the voice of such a large portion of the population? I would hope all residents of the affected areas would be able to actively and honestly work for the betterment of OUR community.

We all live in the Villages and even though the vote didn't turn out with the desired outcome for many, all residents in the affected areas should be allowed to express their opinions and be an active participant in the change if they so desire. The POA should make an effort to foster the relations with the entire community not just who follow the "party line."

A published apology would be a good start.

Robert M. Makela

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Editor's note: The POA stands by its earlier comment that "Nay-Sayers" should not serve on the new Resident Authority Board.

It makes no sense to put the fox in charge of the chicken house.

If one voted against the change before, but now supports the idea and the decision of the majority for resident control, then OK.

Furthermore, a prominent Villager was quoted in the press as hoping that the effort goes nowhere to negotiate an agreement with the VCCDD for the set-up for the new RAB. With an attitude like that, this person certainly should disqualify himself from serving on the RAB.

We'll say it again: Nay-Sayers should not be allowed to serve on the new RAB.

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## Renew POA Membership

Our new membership year for 2007 has started. It runs annually from January 1 to December 31.

So, this is a good time to renew your 2007 annual POA membership. Our dues are still \$6.00 per household per year.

If you want to renew now, it would be a big help to us. Just use the membership form on the top right edge of page 15 in this Bulletin. If you mail in the form with your check and a self-addressed, stamped envelope, we will mail your membership card back to you. If you don't enclose a stamped envelope, we will hold your card for pickup at a meeting.

If you are not yet a member of the POA, this is a good time to join. Just use that same form on the top right corner of page 15 in every Bulletin.

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Editor's note: If any residents would like to respond to these comments about the recent Straw Vote, please go to the POA Forum on our website at [www.poa4us.org](http://www.poa4us.org). Click on the "Forum" button.

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## VCCDD Financial Statements

One of the most-asked series of questions at the Open Forum part of the POA monthly membership meetings is about the financial statements of the VCCDD. The questions typically focus on the use of the Amenity Fee and asks: "Where does all the money go?"

We have followed the financial information going back to 2002 and present the VCCDD financial statements on the page at the right for your review.

This table shows the VCCDD Receipts and Disbursement details from the 2002-2003 fiscal year (ending September 30) all the way through the proposed budget for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

This table is for the Recreation Amenities Division of the VCCDD. It is this division that the recently-passed Straw Vote addresses. In addition to the Recreation Amenities Division, there are additional parts of the overall VCCDD financial consolidation for Utilities and the Fire Rescue Service which are not shown here.

Twelve line items are shown for Recreation Amenity Division Receipts. Notice that Amenity Fees account for \$31.1 million, or 86% of total revenue of \$36.2 million.

The next biggest revenue line item is for the Management and Maintenance Supervisory fees for services provided by VCCDD staff.

The third biggest line item is for guest fees charged on the executive golf courses.

Revenues show a 4% increase for the 2007 fiscal year. Going back to the 2003 fiscal year, revenues have shown an average annual increase of 13% (15% for Amenity Fees and 5% for All Other).

The listing of Cash Disbursements shows a total of 31 line items. Disbursements show a increase planned for 2007 of 8% and an average annual increase going back to 2003 of 13%.

Debt Service for 2007 is the largest item of Disbursements, accounting for \$16.5 million, or 53% of the Amenity Fees total of \$31.1 million. Debt Service includes principal and interest on the bonds sold to finance the purchase of common properties from the developer. This also includes debt service on the \$4 million debt assumed by the VCCDD for the renovation of the Paradise Center.

The POA has long focused on the percentage of the Amenity Fees going for Debt Service, now standing at 53% after being as high as 59% in recent years. The basic POA belief is that our Amenity Fees could be a lot lower if the money paid for common property purchases from the developer wasn't so high based on inflated valuations for the property.

After Debt Service, the next largest disbursement, at \$5.2 million for 2007, is for Salaries and Benefits for the VCCDD staff.

After these items, large disbursements are planned for Repair and Landscape Maintenance (\$2.6 million) and for Golf Course Maintenance (\$2.5 million).

One of the concerns the POA has is that the VCCDD is not properly providing reserve funding (\$1.2 million for 2007) for the inevitable Repairs and Replacements that will be needed in the future. We saw with the Paradise Center that the VCCDD had no funds available for the renovation and had to borrow about \$4 million for the job.

Had the VCCDD properly planned for Repairs and Replacements in past years, the additional debt load might not have been needed. Had the VCCDD not paid so much to

the developer for the purchase of the common properties in earlier years, the additional debt load might not have been needed.

The VCCDD believes that its Revenues are so large, that it is able to accommodate large Repair and Replace expenditures as required. However, we have seen with the Paradise Center that that is not the case.

This financial statement is available on the POA website at [VCCDD Financial Statements](#). Also available with this statement is a companion statement showing a summary of these details coupled with the tabulation of Debt service as a percent of Amenity Fees going back to the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

We also have the same analysis for the SLCDD area on the website. We will reprint that table here next month.

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## Village Dollars

We would like to give a special "Jeers" award to the developer of The Villages for his clever scheme of taking advantage of Villagers again.

Specifically, we are talking about the very small ad in the December 15 Daily Sun announcing the expiration and voiding of the developer's Villages Dollars. The ad was half the size of a Village Dollar, and so small that it looked like the developer was trying to sneak this one past us.

The developer's suggestion on what to do with the voided currency: Make paper airplanes and give them to your grandchildren.

The POA's suggestion: The developer should honor Villages Dollars for as long as people have them to use or redeem.

By the way, how many real dollars will the developer pocket by terminating this popular program?

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## Seniors vs. Crime

If you have a problem related to financial losses due to scams by dishonest vendors or salespeople, you should consider contacting the Senior Sleuths for help at these Villages locations:

### **Sumter and North Lake Counties**

Sheriff's Annex -- Sumter County  
8035 E. County Road 466  
The Villages, FL 32162  
352-753-2799, ext. 4253

### **Marion County**

Sheriff's Annex  
8230 SE 165th Street -- CR 42  
The Villages, FL 32162  
352-753-7775

The hours at both locations for the offices and for phone calls are only on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Assistance is only available at these times.

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## **The POA Hall of Fame**

Three POA members were inducted into the POA Hall of Fame at the December 20 general membership meeting. The new honorees are:

Charlie Harvey  
Carol Kope  
Frank Renner

These three join six members of the POA Hall of Fame inducted previously. These six previous honorees are:

Russ Day  
Eva Hawkins  
William Rich, Jr.  
Glen Swindler  
Jean Tuttle  
Sadie Woollard

This honor is given annually to members, past or present, living or passed, who have made

a significant contribution to the POA through the years.

This is a substantial honor for a select few of the more than 20,000 members of the POA in the 31 years since its founding.

In commenting on the contribution of this year's honorees, POA President Joe Gorman said of each:

**Charlie Harvey** - Charlie has been a member of the POA for over 15 years. He served as a Director for many years. He was one of the many really committed volunteers who delivered the Bulletin in the early days on a "door to door" basis. He was always there to help on any activity of the POA. He is still active in the POA and has volunteered again to help with Bulletin delivery. Charlie can be seen at many of the monthly VCCDD meetings with his wife Rose commenting on conditions in his community and the Rights of Residents.

**Carol Kope** - Carol passed away in 2001, but her cheerful personality and dedicated work for the POA are remembered. A long-term member, she served as POA Secretary and was the editor of the POA Bulletin for many years. She coordinated the writing of Bulletin articles and the proofreading task. She loved to polish and rearrange articles submitted by members, much to the chagrin of the submitters. We had many late-night meetings at her home. She was always smiling and pleasant and was a likeable person. She was a significant factor in the recruitment of Joe Gorman as a POA member. Her husband Mike continues to be active in the POA for the 50-50 drawings at our meetings.

**Frank Renner** - Frank is another long-term active member of the POA for over 12 years who is still involved with POA activities. He served as a Director for many years and continues as a trusted advisor to the POA Board. He is wise, an overall good person, well-liked, and shows good judgment. He organized the successful fund-raising effort for the 1996 legal action against the developer on the use of the monthly maintenance fee. He continues to advise the POA on financial matters. He continues to administer the oath of office each year to the newly-elected officers and directors of the POA. Although he actively heads-up the Hall of Fame Nominating Committee, his nomination was made in executive session by the POA Board and was unknown to Frank before the announcement at the December meeting.

**Summary** - Being named to the POA Hall of Fame is a great honor for these select individuals. Please join with all POA members in congratulating these new honorees and remembering how dedicated they were and are to our organization. These people are some of our best.

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## Cheers and Jeers

**Cheers** - To the VCCDD for finally trimming the old and brown palm fronds on the palm trees on the Square. Finally! And, the palms look so much better now. It surely would be nice to see this trimming of palm trees elsewhere in The Villages.

**Jeers** - To the Rialto movie theater for the squeaky and weak springs in their chairs. Please, get some WD-40 on those springs.

**Cheers** - To the Sumter County traffic department for putting the traffic light at Morse Blvd. and Rio Grande Ave. Hopefully this helps with the huge backups previously at that stop-sign intersection.

**Jeers** - To Paneras on Main Street for its boring and uninspiring selection of soups. We get really tired of seeing Vegetable soup or Turkey Noodle on the menu. What happened to old but great favorites like Beef Barley, Cream of Mushroom, Clam Chowder (both kinds), Seafood Chowder, Shrimp Bisque, Tomato Herb, etc.? Or, how about that great Mushroom Brie from the SonRise Café in Southern Trace?

**Cheers** - To the VCCDD for finally putting on a well-received Christmas Festival. If this was Festivus, where was Frank Costanza?

**Cheers** - To the Reporter newspaper. We like the new format. And, there appears to be more news about The Villages. But, we are still confused. Will this continue to come to us free in the mail? Or, do we have to subscribe for \$28.00 a year to continue getting the paper in the mail? PS: Thanks for doing a great job of covering news in The Villages.

**Cheers** - To the new McDonald's in front of the new Wal-Mart. It is great to have you here. Now, please do something about the trans-fat.

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## VHA Spaghetti

This month's column deals with Red Herrings.

What, you say, are Red Herrings?

Red Herring is a slang phrase used to describe an irrelevant argument used to divert attention away from a more important issue.

The usual example is of a group of people debating an important issue when someone throws a real Red Herring onto the table. All discussion stops as the group's attention is diverted to and focused on the Red Herring.

In this example, the Red Herring is the irrelevant distraction from the main topic of importance.

The VHA has a big Red Herring that it refers to as its Annual Spaghetti Dinner.

Now, a homeowners' organization should focus on homeowners' issues and concerns. Right?

But, the VHA has a Spaghetti Dinner.

Let's consider what the VHA didn't do recently that it should have done in its position as a homeowners' organization.

Did the VHA support the POA on its call for the developer to pay for the sinkhole repair on the Nancy Lopez golf course rather than trying to stick CDD4 residents in Marion County with the bill? - No!

Did the VHA support the POA on its call for the Central Districts to rescind the oppressive Activity Policy which tried to restrict the Free Speech and Free Assembly Constitutional Rights of residents? - No!

Did the VHA take a Resident's Rights position on the Straw Vote and support residents in their efforts to take over VCCDD voting authority north of highway 466? - No!

These are three very important Residents' Rights issues.

What does the VHA do instead? - It has a Spaghetti Dinner!

This is the VHA version of a Red Herring.

The VHA avoids the important homeowner issues - while it serves up Spaghetti.

The VHA calls itself a homeowners' organization - yet it fails to do what a homeowners' organization should do.

What does it do? It serves up Spaghetti.

Perhaps it can also serve some Red Herrings at its annual Spaghetti Dinner. Bon Appétit!

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## VHA Elections

The VHA will soon have an election for its officers.

Well, not exactly.

The VHA will soon have the appointment of its officers.

The VHA administrative board will actually select and appoint the new officers of the VHA.

To start this process, a slate of directors, hand-picked by the VHA hierarchy, will be elected unopposed by the membership in March. Then, these directors will meet in a closed door, backroom session to pick the new officers. The VHA membership will not be invited to or allowed into this meeting.

**The problem here is that the VHA has grown into a self-perpetuating, monolithic,**

**regime of buddies which ignores Residents' Rights in favor of support for the developer.**

Furthermore, alternate views are not tolerated in meetings, and area reps that sympathize with the concept of Residents' Rights can be drummed out of the organization.

The VHA needs to change its election procedure to allow all resident members of the VHA to vote for officers and directors in an open and free election.

We believe that the VHA should follow the example of the POA in which the POA officers and directors are elected by the general membership in an open meeting. And, the POA allows open nominations for any officer or director position.

Furthermore, the POA membership is not constrained at monthly meetings from voicing their views or even criticizing the officers or directors. Members at these meetings can bring up for discussion any topic they want, with no restrictions.

Why does the POA elect officers this way? Because the POA is a homeowners' organization for resident members and represents their best interests.

Why does the VHA elect its officers and directors in carefully controlled and/or backroom sessions? Ask them sometime in a VHA monthly meeting. See if they tell you why they don't trust the membership to elect officers and directors.

Actually, the POA believes that the VHA is afraid that a reformer, sympathetic to the Residents' Rights ideals of the POA, might be nominated and elected by the general membership in an open meeting.

If this ever happens, this could be the best thing that ever happened to the VHA.

What could be better than having the VHA officers and directors elected by residents and championing Residents' Rights rather than the developer's best interests?

The VHA plans to have its administrative board elected at its March meeting. Why not allow the membership to also vote for officers at that meeting?

The VHA should announce this change at the January meeting and allow nominations starting with the February meeting.

This is the way to make the VHA truly representative of its members' best interests.

**Or, does the VHA want to remain a self-perpetuating, monolithic, regime of buddies which ignores Residents' Rights in favor of support for the developer?**

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