

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Issue 34.02

Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

February
2008

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POA Survey Results: Some Good, Some Bad

The POA has repeated its Survey of residents' attitudes that it conducted previously in February, 2003, May, 2004, and most recently in December, 2005.

The objective of these POA Surveys was to quantify and assess Village residents' opinions about a variety of questions and issues of importance in our community.

The POA Survey grew out of our disappointment with the annual Villages survey conducted by the Central Districts and the developer. The POA views this Villages survey as much too general, incomplete, and lacking in essential details that can be measured on an annual basis. This annual Villages survey ducks the hard issues that should be in the evaluation. And, the resultant stories in the Daily Sun seem like a general whitewash of often frivolous issues.

In the POA Survey a total of 991 respondents in the three-month period from October thru December, 2007, rated fifty (50) different questions or issues on a numerical scale between 1 and 10. A score of 10 represented the highest, best, most satisfying, or positive rating; and a score of 1 represented the lowest, worst, least satisfying, or negative rating.

The scores for all 50 questions were tabulate and averaged individually for only the responses for that particular question. Respondents were asked to only rate subjects with which they were familiar and to put "NR" (No Response) whenever they were unsure or had no familiarity with the subject.

New questions were added this year to get the total of 50, compared to 46 in the previous POA Survey. The "-" shown in the ratings below indicates that the question was not included in the Survey for that year.

Generally, scores over 9.0 could be considered "excellent," although no factors in any of the four Surveys rated at 9.0 or above. Scores can be judged in the following terms:

10.0 - 9.0	Excellent
8.9 - 6.0	Good
5.9 - 4.0	Poor
3.9 and Below	Disastrous

The 991 Surveys returned this time compared to a total of 983 returned last time. In each year, the questionnaires were distributed to Villages residents through home delivery to resident driveways in issues of the POA Bulletin. The Bulletin is now distributed to most occupied homes in The Villages.

These Survey responses are considered representative of the views of Villagers since the questionnaires were distributed to Villagers without consideration as to whether they were POA members, VHA members, or non-members of either organization.

This year's Survey may still be too small a sample to be statistically accurate. However, it is large enough to be representative and informative about the views of all Villagers. (See the accompanying article in this Bulletin about the Survey sampling rationale.)

The ratings are listed below for this year's (12/07) and last year's (12/05) Surveys. The POA summary and comments are shown immediately after each grouping.

Ratings

<u>General Questions</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
Common Landscaping	8.6	8.7
Villages Cleanliness	8.5	8.6
Entertainment on Squares	7.9	7.8
The Villages Hospital	7.0	6.6
Overall Villages Safety	6.5	6.1
Traffic in The Villages	5.2	4.9
Traffic Round-About Circles	4.4	-
The Learning Center	7.7	7.3

Residents rated common landscaping, Villages cleanliness, and entertainment on the Squares in the high end of the "Good" range. All three were roughly comparable to the results of the previous Survey. The Villages administrators should take pride in these favorable ratings.

Overall safety in The Villages and the Villages Regional Hospital also showed improvements and were in the "Good" category. Safety is always an issue, especially lately after the home burglaries that seem to happen occasionally in The Villages. Although The Villages Hospital has had its share of bad publicity over the continuing long waits in the emergency room, residents gave it a slightly improved rating.

The ratings for traffic in general and on the round-about circles remains in the "Poor" category, but traffic in general showed minor improvement.

Villagers are unhappy with the traffic situation, and the recent rapid growth of our community is no excuse for this undesirable situation. With our population now over 67,000, traffic improvements are needed soon - otherwise, we face

traffic gridlock when the population approaches 110,000 in 4-6 years.

The round-about circle situation is serious and dangerous and rated just above the cutoff for the lower "Disastrous" category. This is a serious and dangerous issue that needs to be addressed.

The Villages Learning Center showed a rating in the middle of the "Good" category and was a slight improvement from the previous Survey. Villagers seem to look favorably on this unique feature of our community.

Ratings

<u>Fees in The Villages</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
Monthly Amenity Fee	5.7	5.0
Annual CDD Assessments	-	4.5
Original Construction Bond	-	4.2

None of these bread-and-butter money items are popular with residents and rate in the "Poor" category. Perhaps that should have been expected. But, this points out that the developer and the Central District administrators do a poor job of explaining the rationale for these charges. It does take money to run this place. But, residents don't seem to understand the details or feel good about the charges. The developer and the administration should make an effort to better explain these details.

Ratings

<u>Resident Services</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
Emergency Fire Serv.	8.7	7.6
Emergency Health Serv.	8.8	8.1
Trash/Garbage Services	-	8.7
Water Utility Service	-	8.2
Neighborhood Watch	6.0	5.9

Emergency Fire and Health services rated at the high end of the "Good" category and showed nice improvements from the earlier Survey. These were the highest ratings in the Survey this year. Villagers should be proud of these results.

Neighborhood Watch services showed a slight improvement barely into the "Good" category. This continuing low mark may be a reaction to the administration's decision to start charging for the service, a very unpopular move with residents.

The Trash and Water Utility Service questions were not asked in this year's Survey but generally rated quite well last time.

Ratings

<u>Property Owners' Associations</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
The POA in General	7.7	8.2
The POA Newsletter	7.7	8.3
The VHA in General	5.5	5.4
The VHA Newsletter	5.4	5.4

The POA scored in the middle of the "Good" range with scores of 7.7. These ratings are down slightly from the previous Survey. Perhaps these high ratings reflect the POA's efforts to speak up for Residents' Rights, such as the sinkhole repair on the Nancy Lopez golf course, the vinyl siding workmanship situation, the aborted Activities Policy that tried to restrict our Constitutional Rights of Freedom of Speech and Assembly, support of the Straw Vote, opposition to the Sumter County Hospital Tax, etc.

The VHA continued to rate in the "Poor" category with scores of 5.5 and 5.4.

It appears that many Villagers recognize that the VHA has a strong relationship with the developer and often speaks for and supports his positions. The VHA didn't score lower because Villagers apparently acknowledge that the organization has many worthwhile activities and services that are beneficial to our community. Now, if it just supported the POA concept of Residents' Rights....

Ratings

<u>TV, Radio, Newspapers</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
Villages Radio Station	7.1	6.9
Villages TV Station	5.9	5.7
Daily Sun Newspaper	6.5	5.8
Daily Sun Objectivity	4.6	3.9
Reporter Newspaper	6.8	-

The ratings for the Villages Media group are generally not outstanding.

The radio station scored in the middle of the "Good" category; the TV station saw its rating continue in the "Poor" category. Both the TV and the radio station

need to better understand their customers so as to be more responsive. The TV station, especially, ought to investigate its low score to see what remedies might be needed.

The Daily Sun newspaper in general improved to a "Good" rating of 6.5, up from a "Poor" rating of 5.8 last year. For objectivity of reporting, the Sun scored a "Poor" rating of 4.6, up from a "Disastrous" rating of 3.9 last year. This is still an embarrassing showing for the Daily Sun. The Sun just doesn't get it - that Villagers want better and more objective reporting from their community newspaper. This objectivity issue has been a black mark on the Sun's credibility record for many past Surveys. The Daily Sun has an obligation to this community to do a fair and balanced job of reporting the news. Fortunately, Villagers see the biased and slanted stories for what they are.

The Reporter newspaper scored in the "Good" category. Too bad the Reporter suspended publication recently.

Ratings

<u>Villages Golf Program</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
Exec. Course Conditions	7.4	7.1
Champ. Course Conditions	7.7	7.7
Championship Greens Fees	5.6	4.8
Priority Golf Program	5.3	4.7
The Tee Time System	6.8	-
Ambassadors Exec Courses	7.8	-
Ambassadors Cham Courses	7.6	-

Golf scores generally showed minor improvements since the last Survey.

Residents seem basically happy with the Executive Golf program and give a rating this year of 7.4 in the "Good" range and slightly improved from the previous Survey.

Championship golf course conditions showed a rating in the middle of the "Good" category. The ratings for greens fees and the Priority program show improvements this year, but still only into the "Poor" range.

The Tee-Time system and the Ambassadors show ratings solidly in the "Good" category.

The golf program should be a shining star in the recreational programs of The Villages. The "Poor" ratings for the Priority program and the championship golf fees are troublesome and should be carefully reviewed. The developer should investigate these further to identify specific complaints and what might be done to further improve the ratings for the next Survey.

Ratings

<u>Local Governments</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
Janet Tutt	6.0	-
Pete Wahl	4.7	4.0
Monica Andersen	5.1	4.0
Nick Xenos	5.3	-
John Rohan	5.7	4.6
Courtesy of Rec Dept Staff	8.0	-
The VCCDD	5.7	4.0
The SLCDD	5.8	4.2
Residential CDDs	6.0	4.8
Lake County Government	5.7	4.4
Marion County Gov't	6.1	4.7
Sumter County. Gov't	6.4	4.8
City of Lady Lake Gov't	5.6	4.9

This category shows some improvements from the previous Survey, yet most ratings are still in the disappointing "Poor" category. It is sad to see our local governments and administrative officials held in such low regard. Most of these ratings are in the "Poor" category. This is unacceptable.

The several better-scoring elements here include the new administrator of The Villages, Ms. Janet Tutt, and the courtesy and helpfulness of the recreation department staff. Both rated in the "Good" category.

Also showing improvement into the "Good" category were the residential CDDs and the governments in Sumter and Marion Counties, both of which showed significant improvements. The improved ratings for Sumter County may reflect the supervisor's actions for property tax relief.

All of these local governments and officials should attempt to improve their images and raise these ratings. This would be good public relations as well as good government. This should be viewed as a mandatory requirement and not something that "might" be worked on.

Ratings

<u>Miscellaneous</u>	<u>12/07</u>	<u>12/05</u>
Developer - Morse	5.2	4.0
Original Disclosure	5.1	3.9
Covenants/Restrictions	6.2	-

Home Warranty Performance	6.2	-
Sales Dept Gets Tee Times	3.4	-
Charter School Use Facilities	4.6	-
Resident Control Decisions	4.1	-
Contribute to Perf. Arts Ctr.	5.3	-
Radar to Catch Golf Spedrs	6.5	-

This is a miscellaneous category that we included to get comments and reactions from residents on various topics.

The developer, Messrs. Gary and Mark Morse, faired about as well as the Central Districts and the senior staff in the "Poor" category, although improvements were shown. It is disappointing to see the developer held in such low regard. The developer needs to recognize that he has a public relations problem, in spite of the wonderful community that he has created here in The Villages. Perhaps this is due to the ever increasing and higher prices for everything in The Villages. It might also be due to the developer's habit of doing various things in The Villages without telling us about these actions beforehand. The developer needs public relations help to overcome a poor image.

People rated the original disclosure information given to them at the closing of their homes as "Poor," which was a significant improvement from the "Disastrous" categorization given previously, but still disappointing. The developer and the Central District administrator need to take this to heart and do a better job of providing information to residents, most notably at closing.

The Covenants and Restrictions also scored at the bottom of the "Good" category. Residents apparently understand the value of the Covenants and Restrictions, but they do not especially like them.

The performance of the Home Warranty department also scored at the bottom of the "Good" category. We originally thought the department would score lower after the controversy over the vinyl siding issue. But, this mark still leaves room for improvement, and this department should score much higher. After all, the Home Warranty department should emphasize Customer Service.

Residents gave the lowest score of the Survey to the developer's practice of taking available tee times on the executive golf courses for the use of his sales department for sales prospects. The 3.4 rating here was clearly in the "Disastrous" category. This appears to be a serious public relations problem for the developer. Residents feel that our amenities are for residents.

Also scoring low in the "Poor" category was the Charter's School's use of Villages' facilities, like golf courses, swimming pools, tennis courts, etc. Again, residents seem to feel that our amenities are for residents who pay to maintain the facilities.

On these matters of the tee times and the Charter School's use of facilities, the developer and Central Districts need to do a better job of making the case, or start restricting these outside uses.

Residents had "Poor" ratings for the idea of having decision-making power in the hands of residents and also for the idea of personal contributions to an independent Performing Arts Center. However, the POA feels that these two questions were poorly phrased and ambiguous as read. Thus, we tended to discount these responses.

Using radar to catch speeding golf carts only got a low rating in the "Good" category. Some responders thought it would be good for safety reasons; others apparently thought the police had better things to do.

Summary - The POA feels the Survey is a valuable tool used to gauge the thoughts and opinions of Villagers. It will be a periodic feature of the POA Bulletin. Hopefully, it will identify issues that need to be addressed. Ultimately, the hope is that the insights and suggestions provided here will be used to make The Villages an even better place in which to live.

In addition to these rated factors, we provided room in the Survey form for open-ended comments from respondents. We were almost overwhelmed by the volume of written responses from this section. We plan to reprint many of these comments verbatim in the Bulletin in the coming months, probably over several issues.

Overall, the POA is pleased with the results of this Survey. We are especially hopeful that when District Administration and the developer read these comments, they will try to address some of the issues and concerns identified here. Perhaps questions like these should be included in the annual survey conducted by District Administration. The POA would be happy to assist the District in preparing the questions.

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Statistical Points For the Survey

This article addresses the details and rationale for the sampling size and procedure used in the Annual POA Resident Survey. Specifically, this addresses the suitability of the 991-person sample size.

Surveys like the Annual POA Resident Survey are often done with a very low percentage sampling of the population. The U. S. Census Bureau, for example, routinely does national surveys with sample percentages in a range of 0.005% to 0.04%. Based on an estimated Villages population of 67,000, this would indicate a sample of no more than 27 people compared to the 991 used in the Annual POA Resident Survey.

In another example, the Nielsen Media Research Company routinely studies households in major metropolitan markets for TV viewing. Sample sizes are usually about 800 homes in major city markets such as New York and Los Angeles with populations in excess of 15 million. Sampling rates for these are usually around 0.016% of all households in those cities. Using this 0.016%

sampling rate in The Villages would suggest a sample of 11 people for the Annual POA Resident Survey.

The Annual POA Resident Survey this year used a sample of 991 out of a population of about 67,000 for a sampling rate of 1.5%. That is a sufficient size when compared to these other studies just mentioned.

The POA does not claim statistical accuracy - but, these results are representative for the subject matter surveyed based on adequate size and acceptable sampling techniques. Any suggestion that a larger sampling rate was needed would not be accurate.

Furthermore, the population in The Villages is rather homogeneous in terms of age, income, lifestyle, family situation, and other demographic factors. This substantially reduces the need for a larger sample size. And, everybody had an equal opportunity to vote.

Also, the questions in the Annual POA Resident Survey were not complex and required a simple rating response to the questions. The survey would have been much more complex if we had asked, for example, about TV viewing in the 8 p.m. hour. Individual answers here could easily have numbered more than 50 for each question and would have required a much larger sample to be accurate. The Annual POA Resident Survey was fairly simple, which indicated the suitability of a smaller sample size.

In summary, the Annual POA Resident Survey was not perfect and was not designed to be statistically accurate. But, it was representative of the thinking of Village residents.

Whether you liked the results or not, we hope that reporting this study will be helpful for everybody in the dialogue about good points and bad points in our community.

Finally, the Bulletin article devoted space to a discussion of solutions to the problems. Rather than dwell on some of the really embarrassing results, the POA proposed some common sense solutions that might help to address the issues and make changes for the better. We hope that these suggestions are implemented by our Central Districts. If they are, we could make worthwhile progress on solving many of the issues noted.

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Letter to the Editor:
**Inferior Workmanship by Builders and
Superintendents In the Village of Largo**

The POA has commented in many of the Bulletin issues over the past year that there seems to be a lack of good quality control in the developer's building

operations. We have commented extensively about the Vinyl siding problem. Now, we are seeing similar comments about sloppy workmanship in other aspects of building construction here.

Notice the following comments about the plight of ten homeowners in the Village of Largo. The builders of these designer homes were Hess and Lamar. The scope and number of problems is truly astonishing. And, the feeble and sometimes negative and argumentative response of the builders and the warranty department is both aggravating and disheartening.

The homeowner who wrote this commented that there were many more residents with similar complaints and that their comments may also be documented in the future.

- Four out of the ten homeowners had to have air conditioner coils replaced in their units.
- Two had to have wall-to-wall carpeting replaced in all the rooms of their homes.
- One had bathroom cabinets installed in their kitchen instead of kitchen cabinets.
- Three replaced inferior GE washer and dryers due to loud sound and dissatisfaction with performance.
- One found that 1/4" wallboard had been installed. They had hot water coming out of the cold water faucet. The garbage disposal unit was installed incorrectly.
- One had to have the posts in the dining room replaced. The exterior wall was not finished outside close to the roof and an opening was left. The toilet in the guest room had to be replaced. The toilet backed up because construction debris was found in the main line and the toilet backed up into the house (this happened to two homes). When the warranty office was notified and a plumber was sent, he billed the resident for his service, was very rude, and it took many phone calls to have this taken care of. The counter top in kitchen had to be replaced along with the ceiling in the master bedroom. Tiles were chipped in the bathroom. In the kitchen 52 chipped tiles were reported to the warranty office but the builder refused to replace them and patched them instead.
- Another home had their bathroom shower re-tiled twice due to sloppy workmanship. Their kitchen floor had tiles installed and some were high and others were low, grout was painted instead of being grouted properly, and it is now peeling. When the repair people painted the tiles they left a mess and damaged a kitchen cabinet and the door had to be replaced. The lanai door has defects in it and has been looked at but the warranty department refused to replace it.
- Another resident had large holes in their attic plugged due to workers bringing lumber through this area for construction. There was an opening in the peak of the garage roof that ran the full length of garage. Painters were very sloppy.
- A list was provided from another resident, as follows:

REPLACED: Rugs throughout home, front door, bathroom exhaust fan, two walls that were crooked, fire hydrant, the outside electric transformer four times due to loud humming, switch for garbage disposal was on the opposite wall.

REPAIRED: Bathroom caulking twice, vinyl siding, cracked cement in lanai, broken cement driveway, dedicated plug (golf cart line hooked up to outside lamp), and main water line. Drain under sink, roof shingles, ceiling rafters, cracked walls, air conditioning coil replaced, French drain placed around house, storm drain needs to be lowered because it cannot catch rain and causes flooding and it still is not repaired for over a year. Shower door and bathroom cabinet had to be repaired. Walls in kitchen all concave.

- Another resident had to have all kitchen cabinets replaced; some were installed upside down, and all counters had to be replaced. A French drain had to be installed. There were cracks in walls throughout house.
- French drains are still needed for most homes to solve flooding problems. However, until residents complain, the warranty department will not install them, according to one supervisor that installed a drain around a home. He commented: "The Villages is aware of this problem but will not fix it unless someone complains." One resident on Westwind Way had to have everyone that was affected sign a complaint petition before the warranty office would install their French drains. These drains, however, have not yet been installed.

Another Home: There was no bracing in cutout hole, and the roof holes were not cut out with hole saw but a hammer was used instead to cut the holes. The kitchen cabinets were put in upside-down and the sides were cracked. Counter tops had bubbles in them. A sink had to be replaced due to stress lines. Screens were replaced in the lanai. Furnace seals had to be replaced. Electrical box in the garage was not secured. The bathroom had to be re-caulked. There were cracks in the ceiling. The second bathroom had to have tile replaced. The mirrors in the bathroom also had to be replaced. Shower door molding had to be replaced.

Note to The Developer, Warranty Department Builder and Superintendents:

How would you feel if this was your new home? You stressed the fact more than once that we did not need independent inspectors. Boy were you wrong. We as homeowners have gone through all the necessary channels in trying to resolve these construction problems and have been treated in an unfair and rude manner.

In a recent article in the POA, "Open Letter to the Morse Family," you were thanked for making such a beautiful place for us to retire in. I wish I could thank you also, but I cannot. This has been such a stressful time for all of us that have lived here for the past year that we did not have much time to enjoy the concept of an ideal retirement community.

In summary, the residents feel that they bought homes in good faith and these problems were overwhelming and took most of their first year of residence to be fixed and in some cases the problems still exist.

Some residents were told by the builders that they did not need to have outside inspectors come in and look at their homes. As a group these residents did have their homes inspected and the cost to them was \$200.00 each. The residents felt it was well worth it because, if they had not had the inspections, many of these defects would not have been found.

They are left with the feeling that the Villages did not live up to their commitments, and that the builders and the warranty department in many cases treated them disrespectfully and in an unfair and unresponsive manner.

In all probability this may be last house these residents will invest in, and they expected that it would be built properly without having these overwhelming problems that took most of their time in The Villages to have corrected.

We came here to take advantage of a life style that was promised to us, not to make phone calls and wait for repairs that often had to be redone. For most of us it has been and still continues to be very frustrating. The residents feel that developer and the contractors should give us what we paid for: the quality

home we thought we were investing in.

C.A. Martin

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POA February Meeting Is In Laurel Manor on a new Day: Tuesday

The next POA membership meeting will be on Tuesday, February 19, in the big room (Lincoln) at the Laurel Manor Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m.

We have changed meeting days (from the third Wednesday to the third Tuesday) in order to have our meetings in the bigger room. This should eliminate the "standing room only" situations we have had in the past.

Sumter County speakers will be Tom Swain, Tax Collector, and Ronnie Hawkins, Property Appraiser, discussing what to do now after Approval of the Property Tax Proposal on January 29th.

Please join us for this important meeting. Coffee and donuts afterward make for a nice social time. And, the discussion and opportunity to meet fellow Villagers add up to a thought-provoking and interesting evening.

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From the POA Website Forum: The Villages Hospital

Jan 11: I grow weary of reading about all the Villages Hospital awards they supposedly get. About 2 out of 3 people I talk to would never go back. I gave it a try myself for a simple blood test. Experience was horrible. Wait time was way too long for a simple blood draw. Charges were way too high (over 4 times the highest charge I have ever had for this test). They also tried to bill me for the network discount to which I was entitled; it took about 2 months and help from my insurance company and the network compliance department to get this straightened out. After that they tried to bill me for the related professional

component which is never required for this test. It took a week to straighten this out. I spent my whole career in the health insurance field so I know something about how network contracts with hospitals are supposed to work. Had I not known, I probably would have paid the bills and been out \$271.33. What about the patients who do not necessarily understand it -- I wonder how much is being overpaid to TVRH.

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From the POA Website Forum: Burn Nightmare in Our Hospital

I would like to inform residents of the absolutely horrid experience I endured at the Emergency Room after receiving 2nd & 3rd degree burns. I am sending a letter to The Village Daily Sun, but I really don't think it will get published. The waiting room was almost empty, but no one was at the desk or window. They would not give anything for the pain until I filled out paper work (my husband said he would do it, just help her). No, that wasn't good enough. Then onto the woman who inputted on the computer (still no pain medications) then into a room and told the doctor was busy and would see me when she was finished. Still nothing for the pain and by this time I am screaming in agony. Finally in she comes and looks at my throat, eyes, ears but never at my hands which by now feel as though they are on fire. She leaves and after 15 or 20 minutes someone comes in and proceeds to put on some salve which makes everything burn more. Finally an injection to try to relieve the pain.

Well, at that point, my husband says "we are out of here" and we head to Shands Hospital. They are wonderful! Their waiting room was full, but they took me right in and had a nurse and doctor see me within 15 minutes. A PA came down from the burn unit and I was given 3 injections for pain relief.

They could not identify the salve that was put on at The Villages and they immediately removed it. Then they proceeded to cut away all the burnt skin, knowing and understanding the pain I am in and acting in a caring and professional manner.

What is happening at The Villages Emergency Room? There are too many elderly folks living here to have to worry about not getting the correct treatment at the emergency room and dealing with people who are indifferent to your suffering. What a disappointment this was for me!

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The VHA Corner: Red Herrings

This month's VHA column deals with Red Herrings.

What, you say, are Red Herrings?

Red Herring is a slang term used to describe a 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 groups 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, let's be clear: a homeowners organization should focus on homeowners issues and concerns. Right?

But, the VHA has a Spaghetti Dinner.

The Spaghetti Dinner may have a noble purpose of raising scholarship funds, and we do applaud the VHA for this effort. But, it is a Red Herring in the sense that the VHA avoids comments on the important resident issues while it serves up Spaghetti.

For example:

Did the VHA support the POA on its call for the developer to pay the \$165,000 repair cost for the pond sinkhole on his Nancy Lopez golf course rather than sticking residents with the bill? No!

Did the VHA support the POA on its comment that the passed Activity Policy of our Central Districts was an unconstitutional violation of the Resident Rights of Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Assembly? No!

Did the VHA support the POA on its call for defeat of the Sumter County hospital tax and the related giveaway of 20% of the tax off the top to the developer of The Villages? No!

Did the VHA accept the POA's invitation to its president for an open forum discussion/debate about issues in The Villages as a way of informing residents about these important issues? No!

Did the VHA support the POA on its support of the Straw Vote for residents north of Hwy. 466 to take over decision-making for their own amenity programs? No!

Did the VHA support the POA call for the developer to fix the vinyl siding problems that his contractors caused through sloppy workmanship and poor quality control? No!

Did Roger Kass, president of the VHA, ever respond to the POA's call that he resign over his conflict of interests relating to his employment by the developer and his questionable favorable comments about the developer's vinyl siding workmanship? No!

These are very important 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.

If you think the POA is being too critical here, just ask yourself why the VHA avoided supporting the POA position on these important topics mentioned above. Don't you think that a homeowners' organization should support or at least comment on the issues that are important to its residents?

Perhaps the VHA can also serve some real Red Herrings at its Spaghetti Dinner. Bon Appétit!!

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From the POA Website Forum: Orange Blossom Restaurant

Jan 23: Have you noticed the run down condition of the once beautiful Orange Blossom Garden Country Club Restaurant? I always loved this place and I still do. The food is the best in the area. The prices are affordable for Senior Citizens who are on a fixed income like me. You can't find a nicer guy than Chip, and his waitress and workers are dedicated. The same furniture has been there for 20 years. The chairs are worn out and show the wear and stains. The walls need sprucing up with a fresh coat of paint. The ceiling tiles need cleaning; what about the carpet? The bathrooms are outdated and need a lot of attention. At lunch time, I would suggest plain white paper to cover the tables and at dinner time the use of white table cloths. Make the residents proud again of Orange Blossom Garden Country Club Restaurant.

Jan 24: And what did Chip (I assume he is the manager) say in reply to your suggestions on the tables? I agree the food has gotten better in the recent past.

Jan 24: I haven't been to that establishment in some time. However I do hear good things about it and they seem to have a sizeable and loyal following. Have you ever asked yourself why the prices are that favorable? Could it be because they are maintaining the status quo and not pouring money into upgrading? If they were to go to the expense of upgrading, who would pay for it? The few times I have been there the friendliness of the management and staff were very evident.

The El Santiago Club restaurant is another friendly location. It's only drawback

is the noise level. That notwithstanding, it is my place of choice for fish and chips. Bon appetit!

Editor's Note: We hate to say it, but the run-down of the physical plant of the Orange Blossom restaurant (walls, carpet, ceiling tiles, paint, chairs, tables, restrooms, etc.), all owned by the developer and leased to the restaurant operator, follows the typical pattern of the developer when he wants to eliminate the restaurant, turn the building into a recreation center, and dump it off on the VCCDD.

Remember, he tried this once before with Orange Blossom Restaurant. He wanted to make a library and pool hall out of it.

And, it is the same technique he followed with the run-down of the Chula Vista Club and the Silver Lake Club prior to those popular clubs being closed and turned into recreation centers.

The best thing residents can do to improve the chances of keeping the restaurant open is to support it often and then more often. If the restaurant is successful, then the developer will be able to justify keeping it open and making the improvements and re-decorations that are needed.

Please note that we have no information that this is being considered. But, let's not wake up again to hear that the developer has not renewed the lease (again) and is turning the facility into a recreation center (again). We aren't sure that another rescue petition by residents would be successful in keeping this jewel of a restaurant open if it isn't supported by all of us.

So, some night next week, when you want to have dinner out, patronize your local Orange Blossom restaurant.

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Letter to the Editor: Property Tax Speaker

Great turnout at the January POA meeting. Good thing we are in a bigger room. We really needed it.

I just wanted to let you know that the speaker who addressed the amendment on the ballot regarding property tax exemptions left my wife and me cold. The property assessor [Ed Havill] was portrayed as a knowledgeable person of integrity. We expected an impartial in-depth analysis of the proposed amendment, pro and con, as was given beautifully by the last person who addressed this subject at a previous meeting, before the wording was changed and the amendment resubmitted. Instead, we got something like: "This will never work, and here is why."

It kind of goes without saying that a property assessor would not be anxious for

any measure that means he collects less money. But, we found the talk, up to the point where we just walked out, to be extremely one-sided. I admit that he could very well have redeemed himself toward the end of the talk, but I just couldn't wait it out.

This is a confusing issue for a lot of us, and I feel that this man was regarded by the attendees as a person who could provide us with some guidance. This opportunity to educate us was instead used by this man to further his personal point of view, and I am very disappointed in him.

That's all I have to say about this subject. I want to let you know we think you are doing a great job and we look forward to seeing you next month.

Lois Lyon

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Letter to the Editor: Golf Cart Safety

We need to slow down and become more aware of cars and golf carts when driving. I speak from my heart as my husband of 51 years was taken from me while driving his golf cart. This tragic accident has left me without a husband, soulmate, and best friend. When are we going to realize we are RETIRED and need to slow down - so it takes an extra minute or two to get where you're going. Better to get there than not. My life will never be the same, so I beg ALL drivers to please slow down and live.

Betty Coyne

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From the POA Website Forum: Speed Trap?

Jan 3: Just to let you know, I have three friends who have received a ticket for passing a golf cart on Parr Drive, behind the financial area south of Rt. 466. The tickets are for passing with a double yellow line, so plan on going 19 miles/hour or get a ticket! Could we call this a trap?

Jan 7: Doesn't look like a trap to me. The double yellow lines are clearly marked. The space between the two sets of double lines is clearly marked with arrows to indicate a turning lane. Whether passing a golf cart, auto, pedestrian or whatever, crossing a double yellow line into a turning lane is an obvious violation. I have seen an increase in the disregard of traffic regulations in The Villages and I think the police have seen it too. Hats off to them for stepping up enforcement.

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Letter to the Editor: Bulletin Not Delivered

The January issue of the POA Bulletin was delivered to our street yesterday (1/10) but apparently to only one side of the street. We saw them in all of the driveways on one side but not on the other (our) side. We had to borrow a copy from a neighbor across the street.

Since I think the POA performs an incredibly valuable service to our community (especially by exposing the developer for the greedy, dishonest right-winger that he is, and The Daily Sun for what it really is -- the developer's propaganda tool), I would be upset to know that some residents aren't receiving their copy of The Bulletin.

Thanks, and keep up the great work you're doing!

Jim & Cheryl Koelmel

Editor's Note: We have driveway distribution to most of The Villages now. But, if we sometimes miss for whatever reason, please pick up a copy of the Bulletin at our retail pick-up points as listed on page 13.

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Letter to the Editor: Pools Open Late

I was just reading the POA Bulletin for January. I enjoy it very much. It tells us a lot of stuff about what is going on with the developer that we don't know about. Keep up the good work.

Can you please tell me what pools are open later than dusk?

Jerry

Editor's Note: The pools open later are primarily on the east side of Hwy. 441: Hilltop, Southside, Paradise, and Chula Vista on the west side.

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Vinyl Siding Update

About 400 homes have been checked during the last year, either by our Siding Committee volunteers or by Ameripro, an independent home inspection. Not even one home observed was found to have few or no flaws in the installation of the siding. Many homes had framing problems as well, which can cause the siding to be bellied.

Nailing through the panel is a definite no-no as it restricts the expansion and contraction of the material in changing temperatures. And stuffing scrap material behind the panel to try and create retention by friction is a ridiculously unreliable and unprofessional method that has had widespread usage in The Villages. Homeowners should insist that this be corrected.

Another common problem we have repeatedly observed is inadequate fastening. Nails or staples should be 16 inches apart-not 24, not 36, not 72 inches or more as we have often found. Please note that siding panels should be removed carefully and replaced properly. We have seen results of "lifting and nailing" where damage is caused to the panels by bending them too far. And we've seen the results of siding panels being removed then reused, resulting in a patchwork appearance on a home that was supposed to have been repaired. There is just no excuse for sloppy work like this!

Siding panels should also be lapped properly. Too much overlap can cause ripples and buckling when the vinyl expands on hot days. Too little overlap and there may be a gap in cooler weather. Why don't the installers just make the overlaps the way the manual says to do it?

There are many more issues with the siding installations, and most of the problems we have found are due to sloppy workmanship.

We do not understand certain contractors' continued resistance to doing the job right-resistance to going "by the book" and making proper repairs when it comes to homes that have already been paid for. One would think The Villages would act immediately to ensure that all of the contractors correct the problems in existing homes to bring our homes up to their highly touted standards of excellence.

In the words of Dennis Stradinger, head of Home Warranty, "Repairs can be costly." We agree. That is why it is so important that homeowners speak out and make the effort to have their home checked and repaired properly.

We are shocked and disappointed that The Villages loose leaf publication, "The Path to Becoming a Villager," which every new homeowner receives at closing, is filled with repeated references to the high quality standards and inspections that builders are supposed to abide by. Yet the evidence we see makes it obvious that there is little follow up on what is stated within the pages.

The Vinyl Siding Committee

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Good Vinyl Siding

The Vinyl Siding Committee would like to make Villages residents aware that during the past year and a half of observing siding installations and repairs here in The Villages, in our opinion only one siding contractor has consistently done a great job by giving homeowners what they paid for: good quality workmanship.

That company is New Look Exteriors in Summerfield (phone: 288-3040). We are relieved to know after all this time and so many repeat repairs by more siders than we care to mention that yes, one can get the job done right-the first time.

So, if you need repairs, we think this company does good work at reasonable prices for Villagers with vinyl siding issues.

The Vinyl Siding Committee

From the POA Website Forum: Tired of Vinyl Siding

Jan 8: I just finished reading the monthly vinyl siding rehash. Four pages of the POA Bulletin devoted to rehashing, retelling and repeating the same information. Why not one concise report of NEW information? It's not even worth reading the same thing every month.

Jan 13: I too thought this months POA Bulletin was a waste of time hashing over and over the same subject on vinyl siding. How many months are we going to have to read about this stuff? I really look forward to the POA Bulletin ... tell us some thing that we don't know.

Letter to the Editor: Sumter County Road Repairs

I was told that the roads in my Santiago Village area would be maintained by Sumter County and that my tax dollars paid to the county would provide that service.

Then Janet Tutt, our District Manager, made a comment at the District 2 meeting that the Sumter County Board of Commissioners has decided that the county will not be responsible for major repairs to The Villages county-owned roads except for the collector roads (Buena Vista Blvd, El Camino Real and Morse Blvd). Other roads will receive repairs only for minor problems, such as potholes. This is a quote from the VHA Voice minutes for District 2.

I called Janet Tutt to confirm and she explained that in 2006 Sumter County passed an ordinance that allowed the county to assess property owners for repair of community roadways. The intent was to give the County the power to assess individual homeowners for major road repairs such as resurfacing.

Dick Hoffman and Mike Francis, Sumter County Commissioners, stated that the County has in place an ordinance that does provide for imposing an assessment to gain the necessary revenue to repair and maintain county roads. To date, the County has not utilized this ordinance. In the long term,

impact fees and gas taxes will be insufficient to maintain county roads.

The Daily Sun stated that the County Commissioners see the funding required for repair of 158 miles of collector roads at \$113 million. There was no discussion regarding major repairs of the community roads. I believe they intend to assess the homeowners in the future and it will be too late for us to do anything about it.

If Villagers have to maintain our community roads then why did the County strong-arm us into opening our gates to the public in order for them to maintain the roads. If we have to pay additional money for maintaining our roads then we should go back to being a gated community.

According to Janet, FEMA will not help us if we were to have a major disaster like tornadoes, if we are a gated community and not open to the public.

Ms. Tutt assured me that if the County did decide to assess individual homeowners for road resurfacing there would have to be a change in policy that would require a discussion with public input.

Why wait until our roads are crumbling to address this issue? If the County doesn't have money to repair the roads that they have committed to in the past, then why are they cutting property taxes? I pay a lot of money in taxes and receive very little in return. I do not impact on the public school system, public health system or judicial system. My existence here contributes to the success of hundreds of businesses. I do not expect to pay extra to resurface the roads which are public roads now that the gates are no longer secure.

I would like Sumter County to be proactive on this issue and understand that it is their responsibility to budget for future repairs of roadways in anyway that is fair and equitable except for assessing the homeowners. Maintenance of our roadways should be their top priority and not putting it on the backs of homeowners. Placing an assessment on the Villages homeowners after we have contributed so much for the growth and success of this county is unacceptable.

I am trying my best to get the word out to you. So far the Property Owners Association has agreed to publish this letter. Unfortunately, Roger Kass, president of the VHA, declined to publish the letter in the Village Voice. He said: "We just don't do letters." Furthermore, he wouldn't let me send him the letter via e-mail or even read it to him. When I asked him how do his constituents express their concerns, he said they have to go through regional directors.

I hope that this information helps you to understand what is occurring and that all of you express your concern through appropriate channels. Let our Commissioners know how you feel and let's keep a close eye on their response.

To help you get started here are some e-mail addresses:

dick.hoffman@sumtercountyfl.gov
michael.francis@sumtercountyfl.gov

Both are residents of The Villages.

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From the POA Website Forum: Recycling

Dec 8: My thought on recycling? It's about time. The packaging of most things we innocently purchase adds up to a tremendous amount of solid waste. What are we to do with all the "stuff" we discard? Ignore it? Or dispose of it in a helpful healthier way? Those who wish to continue giving cans and papers (as I do) to help charitable groups raise funds can do so. A few dollars a month is a small price to pay. For those who have had limited experience with recycling it will take some getting used to and it may initially seem like a chore. But that will soon pass. I remember the myth that was spoken as a truth when I moved here. I was told by well-meaning residents that ALL our trash was separated by convicts after it was picked up. This was not correct.

Dec 9: I'm so amazed that this recycling activity just popped out of the box and nobody was told of any options as to pick-up. Nobody had an opportunity to vote on it. Not one bit thrilled about the once-a-week idea AND the additional charge. Thought shoving stuff down residents' throats was something POA didn't take too kindly to?

Dec 13: It's an idiot who would not feel pride in being able to recycle. That's not the issue. The issue is, that it has been put together, this recycling, without giving time for discussion as to options, prices, etc. Now, Curt Hills, in our morning's paper (12/13) states: "Being able to separate those materials at the processing facility will equate to a cost savings for Villages residents."

With a shoved-down-our-throat contract with Sumter Sanitation and Waste Management Inc., and The Villages residents told that they will be paying higher trash pick up fees, just how in the world does this translate in Hills' contention that there will be "...cost savings for Villages residents?"

Dec 15: Do I interpret your remarks correctly? You think we are idiots if we don't feel proud to recycle but you are unwilling to recycle if it means an increase in fees? A bit of an inconvenience and additional cost is well worth it. As to having it crammed down our throats all I can say is we do not get to vote on every matter that requires a decision. Our elected officials make those decisions. I realize in our CDDs it can be said that those elected officials are not elected by the residents but that's what we accepted when we signed our closing documents.

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Recycling in Lake County

The Leesburg Daily Commercial recently published a story entitled: Profiting From Papers: Lake County Learning How To Turn Trash into Treasure with Recycling Program.

The article explains how Lake County took over recycling in the area and forecast revenues from the sale of recyclables to be \$500,000 in the first year and more than \$750,000 starting in the second year. Its first month net income from the operation was \$78,951.

County Commissioner Jennifer Hill said: "We're making money."

Daryl Smith, director of environmental services for Lake County, said the program will save space in the landfill as well as create additional cash flow for businesses which participate in the program.

"We think the revenue will be good," said Smith. "You save on disposal costs and make some money recycling. It's kind of a double whammy."

Bulletin Editor's Note: Why can't we do this in The Villages? It looks like recycling can be profitable if done right. And, Lake County is doing it without a \$2.00 surcharge per month on homeowners. Do you get the impression that Villagers are again being taken advantage of by the developer in the latest recycling proposal ?

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Letter to the Editor: Reverse One Sumter For County Voting

This county has seen many changes in its long history, some good and some not. In the interest of fair and equitable treatment of all Sumter County residents, the county has gone from at large voting to single district voting, then back to at large voting again. All of this done in an effort to be fair in the way all

citizens are represented.

Although "One Sumter" was designed and promoted as a way to give all residents fair representation in county government and heal a county divide, the opposite has occurred. Now, more than ever in the history of Sumter County, the residents are divided, one against the other.

Most of the animosity stems from the realization that the fair and equitable treatment desired by all citizens has not happened, but serves as a barrier to the unification of our citizens.

With the expansion and development in the north of the county, and the tremendous influx of residents and businesses, the modernization and improvement of the county is an undeniable fact.

The benefits of The Village development for the county as a whole are tremendous. With the population in that area growing as it has, no one can deny the need for those residents to receive fair representation. That same concern should be extended to all citizens.

With an at-large voting system in place, all the voters of Sumter County question the fairness in the loss of the ability to duly elect a local representative, who will represent their best interests.

As a result those concerns we are seeking to add a referendum to the November 4, 2008, ballot to address this imbalance.

A vote to rescind the at-large voting initiative and reinstate the district only voting procedure is an effort to reestablish the fair and equitable treatment of all Sumter County citizens.

We are witnessing this process of getting back to single district voting in several counties in our state. This is being done by citizens in an effort to regain their constitutional rights, privileges, and representation, and to return county government to the people.

John Campbell
Reverse One Sumter

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Letter to the Editor: Water Heater Warranties

I read an article by a Village resident in the Daily Sun complimenting the Warranty Department for their help in resolving a problem he had with his water

heater.

In fact, I read it three times in order to determine exactly what the Warranty Department did that deserved recognition in this article and for a clue that perhaps there was something left out in the article that the Warranty Department did that would change a readers view.

Because, according to the article, all the Warranty Department did when this resident called was to refer him to the Plumbing Company that had installed the unit. The Plumbing Company then referred him to the manufacturer.

I am confident the Warranty Department handled this call with tact and diplomacy and I am also confident that this is what the Warranty Department believed was all that they were required to do.

Water heaters should last at least 10 years and most last longer than the 10 year guideline. But, it is reasonable to conclude that there are circumstances where a system can fail early than the arbitrary guidelines.

A properly managed Warranty Department/Customer Service Department should have begun their call from that resident with "I am so sorry you are having this problem," followed by "Let me call the Plumbing Company and have them get back to you. We recognize that the water heater should not have failed and we will find out what options are available to you." "For informational purposes only, keep in mind that if you did something or failed to do something that caused this unit to fail then their might not be a remedy." We make this disclaimer only because we are moving forward without full knowledge of the facts surrounding this situation but desire to address your needs.

A company can never go wrong by working toward delighting a customer by going above and beyond what is expected of them. However in this specific case, contact by the Warranty Department to the Plumbing company and any further and necessary follow up to ensure the resident problem was resolved is not above and beyond expectations

Why? Because there was the possibility that the resident would have gotten caught up in bureaucratic bounce.

While I am not an attorney, it would seem that incorporated into any product is its warranty for its intended use and fitness. It would also appear that, absent any contracts to the contrary, The Villages product in fact includes the house you buy and all of the amenities that came with it. If this is correct, it would behoove The Villages to remember that they are included in the stream of commerce as both seller and/or distributor and as such have an obligation to ensure that all warranties are honored.

As such the Warranty Department needs to take a guiding role in some situations, a more active role in others, and in some cases a leading role, in providing remedy to home buyers legitimate concerns about products and the contractors who installed them. But assurances are needed that the resident's concerns and problems are being addressed and the resident isn't getting the run around.

It's the right thing to do and doing the right thing is just good business and otherwise is a deterrent to "buyers remorse."

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