

# Property Owners'

CHAMPIONS OF RESIDENTS' RIGHTS SINCE 1975

## BULLETIN

# Association of The Villages



Vol. II No. II

AUGUST 1998

### THOUGHTS OF THE PRESIDENT

Back North, we used to call this time of summer 'the dog days of summer'. Down here, we are just in the throngs of a typical summer in Central Florida (no, not typical, this has been an extremely, hot humid, and very dry summer). In fact, I was wondering if we couldn't get the Native American residents of the community together and teach us some 'rain dances'.

I have been down here for about 13 years, and I'll tell you how I manage the summers. In my mind's eye, I have reversed the seasons. I consider summer in Florida to be winter up north.

My activities in the winter up north consisted of commuting back and forth from work and SHOVELING. Shoveling, in fact, left very little time for anything else. I remember getting up in the morning, much earlier than necessary, to clean off the car and shovel the driveway so I could get out. Oh, how many times the plow would go by and refill the entrance again. How about the times, your car had an inch of ice all over. There is nothing more beautiful than an ice storm - everything glistens like glass. The beauty is quickly lost while concentrating on the tricky business of driving on icy, snowy roads. Regardless of condition of the roads, I usually shivered all the way to work - cold cars do not warm up very quickly.

Now all this constituted a lot of work, but, remember, we also had to dress for the occasion - heavy jackets, boots, mittens, ear muffs, scarves around our faces, etc. When we returned to our cars after work, we faced the same obstacles (but we weren't dressed for them).

Summer up north had a lot of problems also. Not many homes had central air - just those little window units that gave me claustrophobia. Many, many times I dreaded leaving the air conditioning at work to go home. Not all cars had air conditioning, either (mine didn't). Open windows don't do a thing for you.

My summer down here (remember in my mind's eye this is winter up north) is much different. Granted we do very little outside - I still manage to get a couple of rounds of golf each week - like the skiers up north who ski in all kinds of weather. It is wonderful swimming weather. Sunsets are something to behold. But, when I do go out, I simply get in the car, with whatever clothing I happen to be wearing, turn on the air conditioner and by the time I leave the driveway, my car is comfortably cool. Road conditions are good, The only road hazard is the other driver. My home is comfortably cool - every place you go is comfortably cool. Most importantly, there is no SHOVELING.

So by reversing the seasons I am very content and really enjoy Florida. (But, I wish someone had told me about the thunder and lightening storms. WOW!!)

-- Joe Gottfried

### WHAT IS THE POA?

Many POA members have been asked by new residents, what is the POA? It is, THE PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION OF THE VILLAGES. Their reply is usually, "I didn't know there was another association in the Villages".

Yes, there is another association. However, we are "black-balled" by the Developer, his TV station, his newspaper, and the other association. We do not have access to the names of new residents so we cannot contact them.

In 1975, the POA was established when the Villages was a small retirement community on the East side called Orange Blossoms. The Villages grew and the POA grew with them.

All went well until the Developer decided to ignore his original contract with the home owners and withdrew specific free amenities that their contracts stipulated (free cable, free garbage disposal, no golf cart trial fee).

The residents asked the POA to help them. The POA did help them. We tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with the Developer but were finally forced to file litigation against the Developer. Practically at the court steps, the Developer conceded and reinstated the withdrawn privileges.

Shortly after this incident, a new association was established - one that is much friendlier to the Developer and to this day has not challenged the Developer on any issue.

Recently, the POA again was forced to file litigation against the VCCDD and Developer. They again tried to break their contract with a certain area of residents (the older section) by changing the date of increase in their maintenance fee. Again they conceded and reinstated the original dates of maintenance fee increases.

When you are attempting to settle a dispute and cannot negotiate a mutual agreement with the opposing party - what else can one do - but seek assistance from the courts.

This is why you did not know that another association exists in the Villages. The POA, is the only association that fights for the rights of the residents. --Carol Kope

### OUR VANISHING VILLAGE

Can hardly wait for the new 50+ two-story townhouses to be completed. The occupants will not pay the \$99/mo maintenance fee but will enjoy all of the recreation facilities we have (special deal). What kind of impact will this generate in OUR retirement village? Can't wait for ALL those renters using OUR golf courses, OUR swimming pools, our Village will be overrun by renters. Couldn't management be happy with the motel and the Patio Villas they rent now?

Why are THEY taking away our homey lifestyle? Why are turning the Villages into a city? WHERE DOES THE BUCK STOP??? WHEN DO THEY MAKE ENOUGH MONEY??? THANKS FOR NOTHING!!

**THE PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION OF THE VILLAGES** is open to all homeowners in the Villages of Lake/Sumter to join.

**Objectives:**

- 1) Support the rights of property owners.
- 2) Keep residents informed regarding:
  - Villages matters residents should be aware of
  - activities of the CDDs (Community Development Districts)
  - state legislation affecting our community
  - rip-offs and scams being perpetrated against residents (this may sound crude but is the most accurate way of stating the facts)

The above objectives are the reason we are called negative, fault-finding, knit-pickers, trouble makers, rabble-rousers, and I am sure many unprintable names. We would love to be positive and say things like: the VCCDD is building additional golf courses, putting lights on the tennis courts, adding additional meeting rooms, enhancing this and that - and without charging the residents. But, we can't because they do nothing for us. Even our present recreational facilities are not maintained as they should be. They have a surplus of 6-1/2 million dollars in the maintenance account and cry poverty. They must first pay the interest on the \$67 million bond issue which the residents are indebted for. Whatever is left over is used for the only purpose it is legally intended for.

We are in the hurricane season. Wouldn't it be nice to inform the residents that the CDDs and the Developer have developed disaster plans for evacuation routes and shelters within the Villages. But, we can't because they are mute regarding hurricanes. The POA had Sheriff Knuff speak at our last meeting. He told us where the shelters are for this area. I know - do you?

Is it negative to criticize the Developer for serious home construction defects? There are hundreds (perhaps thousands) of designer homes that require complete front replacements because of leaks. Many are dissatisfied because the replacement changed the 'look' of the house. How about the hundreds (maybe thousands) of houses that had ceilings on exterior screened porches made of wallboard without even a primer.

Is it knit-picking to criticize the VCCDD for spending our money recklessly and breaking contracts with residents? They recently tried to update the date of maintenance fee increase for Units 1-8 on the East side.

The POA had to hire a lawyer because they wouldn't negotiate with us. As soon as they realized we were taking them to court, they backed down and reverted to the original dates. It cost the POA \$2,000 in legal fees which they refused to reimburse us for. Believe me, this will not happen again. We'll continue to fight for the residents, but when we win, they will pay our legal fees.

Are we fault-finders when we have no voice in our 'quasi-type government'. We are told that they do not want any input or suggestions from us on any subject.

Is it being a trouble maker to question how our maintenance fee is being spent?

Are we #!\*#! when we ask questions? I.E, why should the Hacienda golf course get all the grey water FREE? What are they doing with all the money they are making from the increased water rates? Why can't we have some voice in this 'quasi government'?

Are we rabble-rousers when we print true facts concerning all of the above and more? You decide!! -- Joe Gottfried

**GREAT NEWS**

In the new 98/99 budget, it says that all you people who go over the allotted 12,500 gallons of water a month will pay the extra premium rate. They believe it will produce enough extra revenue to cover the new \$6 million bond they are getting to cover the cost of updating the sewer system and they will not have to raise the sewer rate.

How can they raise the water rate? Easily - they just did! Guess what? Nobody jumped up and down and fought it! Maybe, the attitude here is - "So what? I've got the money - what's a few extra dollars a month? Like the advertisement, I live like a millionaire here. Do I care?"

So folks, pay, and keep paying. However, the time will come when even you folks will feel it and yell "NO MORE".

**POA MEETING - AUGUST 19**  
Paradise Hall - 7:00 PM

At each meeting we have door prize drawings. Win \$50 cash and numerous gift certificates. Only qualification to win is to be a 1998 paid up POA member and present. Come to the next meeting and be informed regarding what's going on in the Villages that affect you. In addition you could go home \$50 richer.

**PEOPLE**

I suppose it is human nature to ignore and dismiss articles that are written by the same few people over and over again. I am one of that few. I do not write articles to see my name in print. I and the other few are sincerely trying to make things better here.

Village residents are mostly retirees. We have raised families. For 40-45 years we have fought to survive in the jungle work force. Now we are tired. We do not want to fight or cause any ripples. We just want peace and enjoyment in our declining years.

This passiveness is exactly what the Developer and the CDDs rely on. For example, when the CDD announced they were going to raise the water rate, Pete Wahl said people didn't complain so they went ahead with their plans. Every one should have jumped up and down and yelled NO. The select few did - but we were too few. There was no need to raise the rate. St. Johns Water District merely asked the Villages (as well as other District areas) to conserve water. But this was an opportunity they couldn't resist to make more money.

If we do not resist the Developer and the CDDs, they will do exactly what they want - that is to use our money to make the Villages more attractive to lure potential buyers.

Folks, we are not asking you to fight. We are asking you to state your opinions or feelings (negative or positive). When an issue arises or there is something you are dissatisfied with - just state it - state it loudly - phone - submit a short article. Actions such as these from many residents might make a difference in some of the decisions the CDDs and the Developer makes.

- One of the Few

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**REPORTS ON CDD MEETINGS**

**VCCDD MEETING - June 16th, 9:00 AM**

- 1) Proposed budget for 1989-1999 - public hearing set for Aug. 28 at 9:00 AM. (You have to be a CPA to understand this one.)
- 2) Approved a 6 million dollar bond to improve the sewer plant (they say it is not up-to-date).
- 3) Residents complained about the condition of the Executive golf courses. (No attention paid to these comments.)
- 4) Residents complained about the high water bills. (No attention paid to these comments.)

It was said that six anonymous business people who own the commercial land control the VCCDD. (Pres. Gottfried is working on this one - to determine the names of the owners.)

**CDD#1 Sumter Co. - June 26 at 10:00 AM -**

- 1) Proposed budget for 1989-1999. Public hearing set for Aug. 28 at 10:00 AM (We have no idea what the bottom line will be.)
- 2) Discussion on operating procedure for running the meeting. This procedure was described in last month's Bulletin. In effect, it means we have absolutely no voice. At the start of the meeting, the audience will be allowed to make comments - the board will listen but make no comments. After this portion of the meeting is closed, the audience can not make any comments! They do not want any suggestions from us.
- 3) Discussion of walled signs on all entrances to Rio Grande Village - four huge signs, costing \$24,000 for each street, was almost passed by the board. But, Joe Gottfried made a big fuss and the subject did not get to the point that it would be voted on. So, for the time being, we have saved almost \$100,000.

Manager, Pete Wahl's Report - There are 4,478 voters in Sumter CDD#1. (Sounds like they are making big plans to get their own people into the vacant seat on the Board of Supervisors.)

**CDD#2 - Sumter County - July 3 - 9:00 AM**  
Closed for holiday.

**CDD#3 Sumter County - July 3 - 10:00 AM**  
Closed for holiday.

~~~~~ Joe Gottfried

X

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**CDD TIDBITS**  
**(COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**DISTRICTS)**

1) Well, they did it again. The Central CDD (VCCDD) took out another \$6,000,000 bond - making the total bond debt \$73,000,000. They say this is needed to update the sewer system.

2) Operating Procedure for CDD Meetings  
At the start of a meeting, the chairman will ask for audience comments. They will listen to all, but, NO answers or comments will be made. The audience comments part of the meeting will then be closed. From that point on, no audience voices will be heard.

Last month, I was told by the Board, if you don't like the way we run meetings, don't come to the meetings. Vote us out at the next election.

New rules - is this the American way? We fought wars for freedom of speech but we have no say in the Villages regarding how they spend our money. Hogwash! Who do they think they are? Mightier than Thou?

3) If the residents allow it, the CDDs will spend all our money and be back for more which would mean raising our maintenance fee.

4) The Executive Trail Fee in addition to the monthly maintenance fee rakes in \$11 million a year. According to their own consulting firm, they only need \$5-1/2 million to operate the entire recreation department. So what do they do with the other \$5-1/2??

5) One can clearly see why the VCCDD will not eliminate the Executive Golf Course fee - can't you. What!! Loose all that nice money!!!

6) Priority Golf Courses - Members can play all the courses in the area free. The big man does not give the Executive Courses \$128 out of the \$330 golfers pay. The Executive Courses therefore lose out on this deal. (If the CDD needs money - here is \$600,000/yr not being collected.)

7) Residents who will be affected by the rezoning of Rt. 466 originally asked the VHA for help. They got nothing. Now they are asking the POA for help. We are quietly working on a mutually agreeable compromise. Will keep you informed.

8) Remember everything in the Villages centers around profits. If we don't stop them now - who knows what's next?

~~~~~ Joe Gottfried



**ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE EXECUTIVE GOLF COURSES?**

Are you happy with the Executive golf courses? Do you play the number of times a week that you want to? Or are you down to two times a week?

My calculation of 9,000 homes equals 18,000 people of which approximately 90% play golf - so that's 16,000 people who want to play golf and we have only 6 executive golf courses. Each golf course can play 240 per day. This allows 1500 people to play golf each day. (Of course, this does not count the visitors and spaces reserved for prospective buyers, and the new townhouses.) The rest of you, look for some place else to play golf.

The Developer could easily build two or three more executive courses at no cost to himself. Why no cost to him? Because he sells them back to the VCCDD which is supposed to be a government of the people (what a laugh) but is controlled by the Developer.

~~~~~

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Joe Gottfried	President	750-5469
"Win" Shook	Vice-Pres.	753-2928
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Frank Renner		750-0306
Sadie Woollard		753-0615
Ralph Yohn		750-1413



**BUDGET TIME**

It is now Budget Time for all the Village CDDs. Come and listen. Find out where all your money is going.

**Going, Going, GONE.**

Both Meetings are being held on **August 28**  
**VCCDD - Central Village**  
 9:00 AM - office of P. Wahl  
 2nd floor, above Citizen Bank  
**CDD#1 - Sumter County**  
 10:00 AM - Sumter County  
 Annex Bldg. Rt# 466

**WATER BILLS**

The Village VCCDD is taking out another bond for 6 million dollars for updating the sewer company. They say this will be paid for by all the people who use over 12,000 (10,000 for the residents of CDD#3) gallons of water per month and will not raise our sewer bill. These extra gallons are listed on your bill as "premium use".  
 Yes, "It's a beautiful place to live".  
 ~~~~~

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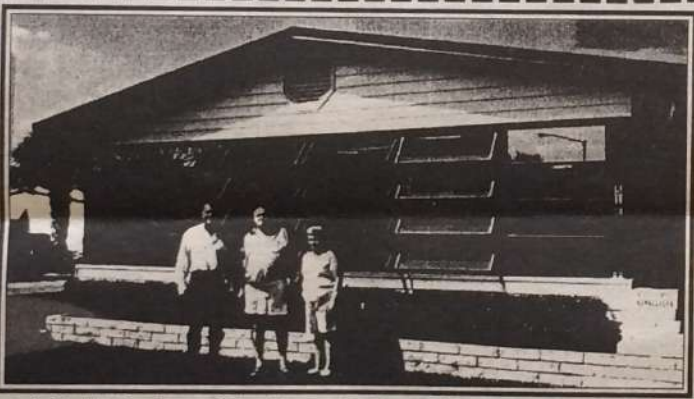
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