

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Champions of Residents' Rights Since 1975

June, 2003

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The POA Calls for the District Administrator and the VCCDD Supervisors to Stand For Elections

The POA Bulletin believes that one of the major problems in The Villages is that the five VCCDD Supervisors and the District Administrator are effectively appointed by the Villages developer.

In the case of the five Supervisors, each is effectively appointed by the developer. And, each is either an employee or a business associate of the developer. The POA believes this is a serious conflict-of-interests, either in fact or appearance.

In any government situation, a conflict like this should not be tolerated by the electorate.

Can you imagine a situation like this in the state of Florida where the legislature would be appointed by special interests rather than elected by the electorate?

No, something like this should not be tolerated either in the state of Florida or in the government of The Villages.

In the case of the District Supervisor here in The Villages, this individual is also effectively appointed by the developer and appears to serve at the pleasure of the developer. The POA believes that this is another conflict-of-interests. The POA believes that the District Supervisor effectively owes his allegiance to the developer, rather than the residents of our community, often ignores the Rights of Residents, and is often insensitive to their needs and interests.

Can you imagine a situation like this in the state of Florida where the Governor would be appointed by special interests rather than elected by voters throughout the state?

No, something like this should not be tolerated either in the state of Florida or in the government of The Villages.

Now, both of these situations are allowed by the Chapter 190 law that created and continues to regulate Community Development Districts (CDDs). The POA has often spoken out about the need to reform this law to allow residents to directly elect the Supervisors and the District Administrator in a special Community Development District like the VCCDD.

But, it is not easy to change a state law. The Florida Legislature meets for only a short time each year and is often preoccupied with what it considers to be more important issues.

The POA is working with other organizations throughout the state to build resources and membership so as to get some of these changes made.

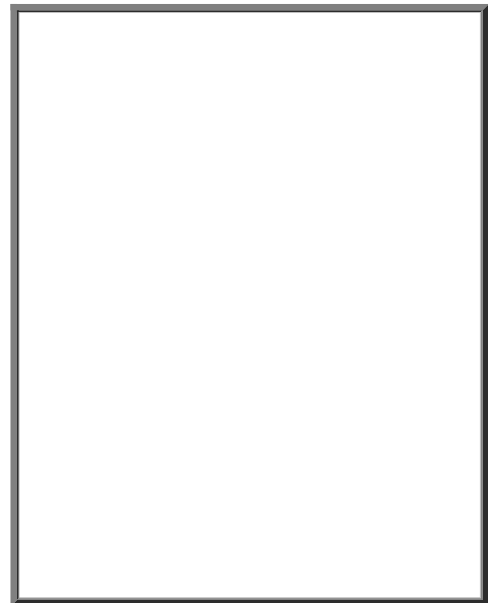
We do not expect to be successful in any short period of time.

So, in the absence of formal changes in the law now, the POA has an alternate proposal.

The POA proposes that the Villages developer allow all voters in The Villages to vote in the November, 2004, general elections for the five VCCDD Supervisor positions and also for the District Administrator position.

Current incumbents would be allowed to run for their positions. The Supervisors of Elections in our three counties could establish the procedures and qualifications for any other candidates to run for these positions in this open election.

The rationale here would be to promote good government in The Villages. Good government derives its legitimacy from the consent of those governed. The residents of The Villages do not have this right at this time.



The developer might argue that this proposal would be contrary to current Chapter 190 law.

No, it would not be. The developer could still appoint the winners of the voting to these six positions. The only difference would be that the voters in The Villages would select the appointees for the developer to appoint. This would not be a violation of the law and the developer could still effectively make the appointments consistent with the Chapter 190 law.

The developer might argue that the cost of this voting arrangement might be excessive. On the contrary, general elections are already scheduled for November, 2004, and the incremental cost to implement this plan would be minimal.

The developer should also consider the very positive public relations benefit that this arrangement would produce. Many people are choosing not to buy into CDDs because of heavy-handed developers and Taxation Without Representation issues like we have here in The Villages.

The developer should consider the positive public relations aspects that would accrue to The Villages if we had a system here that allowed good, local government by the people.

Is it too idealistic to talk about "Government By the People...."? Where have you heard that phrase before?

So, Mr. Developer, please do the right thing for residents of The Villages and allow us to govern ourselves and make the important decisions in our lives. This is not a company town where you, the developer, makes all the important decisions. It is our community and we are big enough and mature enough and smart enough to make these decisions on our own.

Complaint Forms For Painted Driveways Are To Be Submitted Soon

The POA is preparing a formal submission of the Stained/Painted Driveway complaint forms to a Florida consumer anti-fraud group.

The problem with defective painted and stained driveways has been discussed by the POA in the past. Many POA members have filled out the required state complaint forms which were submitted to the office of the State Attorney General in Ocala. The earlier submission was deferred with the change in administration after the elections last November.

We are now working with an consumer anti-fraud group that has reviewed the original complaint forms and thinks that there is merit to the complaint. But, we have to re-submit the original complaint forms to this group.

In the past, some residents who filled out a complaint form sent it directly to Tallahassee but did not make a copy for the POA. We are asking everyone who filled out the form last year to call either Mary Paulsboe at 259-7172 or Russ Day at 750-3108 to see if we have your form on file. If not, we would ask that you get a blank form from either Mary or Russ and fill it out again. The form should be returned to either Mary or Russ to ensure that the POA has the complete file for submission.

We will report back on this in coming months.

THE VHA CORNER

The VHA recently hosted the developer of The Villages as a guest speaker for its May meeting.

This was a good event for the VHA, the developer, and residents.

The VHA showed that it can be a worthwhile conduit for the information flow in The Villages. The developer recognized the need for good communication with residents and agreed to speak. And, residents got first-hand information about our community right from the horse's mouth.

But, the VHA showed its deference to the developer by requiring that all questions for the developer be written and submitted in advance.

This was a nice way to avoid embarrassing questions. This was a nice way for the VHA to control and censor the questions. This was a nice way for the VHA to hold everybody in line.

The VHA and the developer apparently like this kind of information control and censorship.

If you come to a POA meeting, you will see that we have an "open discussion" session in the meeting. Any question is fair game -- about anything. We don't avoid embarrassing questions. We don't censor residents. And, we don't ignore you or stifle your questions.

What we do is stand up for Residents' Rights in The Villages.

Come to a POA meeting one of these days. You might enjoy it and you will get straight answers to your questions – on anything. And, they won't have to be submitted in advance.

POA Questions For the Developer

The developer of The Villages recently spoke at a VHA monthly meeting. No questions were allowed from the floor. Questions had to be submitted in advance and be pre-screened by the VHA. Questions that the developer chose not to respond to were censored and discarded.

If the POA had the opportunity to question the developer, without censorship, it would have asked at least these five key questions:

1. Why don't you allow residents the opportunity to vote for the VCCDD supervisors and the District Administrator?
 2. Why didn't you allow residents the opportunity to vote approval of your recent \$60 million sale of facilities to the VCCDD?
 3. Why didn't you allow residents the opportunity to vote approval of the \$64 million bond issue that must ultimately be repaid out of resident's monthly fees?
 4. Why did you charge \$60 million for property that had a title insurance policy value of \$10 million?
 5. Why don't you order your newspaper, the Daily Sun, to objectively report all the news?
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We Need Your Help

The POA needs more people to get involved in this organization. If you are interested in working on committees, helping with coffee at meetings, working on the Bulletin, helping in membership drives, helping with typing, mailing, or other administrative activities, or serving as an officer or director, we need you to speak up. Call Joe Gorman at 259-0999 for more details.

Cheers and Jeers

CHEERS - To The Villages Fire Rescue staff, the OMI maintenance people, and Joan Boehm for coming to the rescue of a mommy Mallard duck and her brood of six babies. Joan called The Villages rescue phone number after seeing the baby ducklings fall through a sewer grate. Fire Rescue and OMI showed up with about a dozen rescuers. Some of the rescuers crawled into a nearby sewer entrance to flush the babies into the waiting hands of other rescuers. When the babies were finally pulled out, the mother took the brood down to the nearby Lago Santo Domingo. Thanks to all for a wonderful act of kindness to save that family.

Pete Wahl and The Lago Bonito Debate

In a recent Pete's Place article, Mr. Pete Wahl criticized an out-of-town reporter for suggesting that the \$127,000 cost of a liner for Lago Bonito would require an increase in the maintenance assessment for CDD #2.

Mr. Wahl suggested this is not true and that funds for this purpose are already in the reserve fund of CDD #2. He then criticized the reporter for a lapse in fair, accurate, ethical reporting.

This illustrates a problem with what the POA feels are misleading comments coming from the District Administrator's office. One has to carefully study comments like these for the real truth. One should not take comments from the District Administrator at face value without knowing all the facts.

It is true that a substantial reserve fund exists in CDD #2 to pay for the cost of the liner.

But, this reserve was built up by charging residents excess assessments over the years. So, residents have already paid, effectively, the \$127,000 in the building of this fund.

Now, the reserve fund will be depleted through payment of the current \$127,000 charge. Consequently, residents will have to replenish this required reserve and be charged a higher assessment (than would normally be needed) in the future to accomplish this.

Therefore, residents either paid the \$127,000 in the past (to build the fund), or they will have to pay it in the future (to replenish the fund). One way or another, the residents of CDD #2 will have to pay the \$127,000 for the liner.

Mr. Wahl says that the money "IS" already available to pay the \$127,000. It sounds to us like he is suggesting that there is no current cost to residents since the \$127,000 is available, and that an increase in the assessment is not needed.

But, the assessment will have to be higher (than otherwise needed) to replenish the reserve fund; and, CDD #2 residents will have to pay the \$127,000 cost for the liner, one way or another.

Can you, the reader, see how misleading Mr. Wahl's suggestions appear to be? One

has to carefully study comments like these for the real truth. One should not take comments from the District Administrator at face value without knowing all the facts. One needs to be skeptical.

Villagers deserve honesty and straight facts from their government officials – nothing less.

Pete Wahl Sits On Key Information

Mr. Pete Wahl used his Pete's Place column on May 22nd. to criticize the POA Bulletin for printing a recent story. This was the lead story in the May POA Bulletin about the \$60 million purchase of facilities from the developer.

What was particularly disappointing in the story was Mr. Wahl's childish reference to the POA Bulletin as a "throwaway" publication rather than referring to it by name. Mr. Wahl insults all Village residents who value this publication as a messenger of truth about the dealings of the VCCDD and the developer. Mr. Wahl should have the courtesy to refer to this publication by name. It is the POA Bulletin.

Second, Mr. Wahl missed the point again and tried to "spin" the issue to his advantage.

No one is denying that the detailed information in question is available at Mr. Wahl's office for all interested parties to review.

The point of the Bulletin story was that Mr. Wahl had the information and did not take the initiative to make that detailed information available to the various news organizations in our area for review, analysis, and publication.

Where was the press release explaining the details of the \$60 million transaction?

Furthermore, why did Mr. Wahl not take the opportunity in his Pete's Place column to explain the transaction details for residents? His claim that space is limited in the Pete's Place column is a downright laughable excuse.

Let's be clear about this: The \$60 million purchase of facilities from the developer is significant news in this community. Residents have a right to know the details. Mr. Wahl should have publicized the details with a press release. His failure to do so shows an arrogant disregard for the rights of residents in this community and disappointing job performance.

One has to wonder why Mr. Wahl is being so obstinate on this issue. He brings many good qualities to his job. Thus, it is a mystery why he chooses to serve residents so poorly when he really should know better.

So, Mr. Wahl, remember our name – we are the concerned residents of the POA. Our messenger is the POA Bulletin. We are the 29-year-old Champions of Residents' Rights in The Villages ... and we are watching your job performance all the time.

April Fools Day Revisited (Don't Believe Any Of This)

The recreation division announced the newest activity club to be approved in The Villages. The Snooze Club will meet every afternoon in the main auditorium of the Hacienda Center from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. for a nap. Residents are reminded to bring their own pillows, blankets, teddy bears, and anti-snoring devices. Floors will be provided.

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