

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

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Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

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Our Hospital: What Villagers Really Want

There has been a great deal of discussion recently about The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH). Let's focus on what our Villagers really want.

Start Expansion Now - Residents want the hospital expansion to start now. Residents don't want to wait until 2006 for another vote on the hospital tax bill. There is so much opposition to the tax idea that a vote in the 2006 election would likely result the same turn-down. So, where would we be then? Still out in the cold with no expansion. Residents want the expansion to start now - no more excuses. Why should we tolerate a single moment's delay in starting the expansion of our hospital?

No Tax - Residents see no justification for the separate Sumter County hospital tax. In this area of favorable demographics and high demand, there is no need for a public tax handout. The hospital should be able to operate successfully in our community. If LRMC management says it cannot or will not proceed without the tax, then we need new owners for TVRH who are willing to proceed. A corollary here is that there should be no hospital tax on Villagers in Marion or Lake Counties if the Sumter County Tax idea is finally done away with.

No Foundation Give-Away - Residents don't want to give away 20% of revenues, taxes, or anything to a private foundation, especially one headed up by one of the wealthiest families in the state. The provision in the hospital tax bill by Representative Gibson to give 20% of the tax proceeds to the Morse family foundation was repugnant to most Villagers.

Better Management - There are just too many stories of poor management, inadequate training, wasted supplies, neglected patients, and those long waits in the emergency room. TVRH is apparently making progress in addressing these problems, but much more needs to be done. We don't want these problems, and we don't want excuses.

New Owners - LRMC and its unsatisfactory financial position appears to be the major obstacle to the expansion of the hospital. Furthermore, Mr. Harold Schwartz, as mentioned in the last issue of the POA Bulletin, considered that LRMC didn't really want to build a hospital in The Villages so as to protect its business position with the main LRMC hospital in Leesburg. The POA thinks we would be much better off with any one of many hospital management companies that would relish the opportunity to own and expand our hospital. Why should we put up with LRMC and its many problems and its irritating "no-can-do" attitude? LRMC's delays here are morally wrong because people could die waiting for LRMC to start the expansion. Let's get new owners now!

400 Bed Hospital - By the time The Villages is built-out in about 5-6 years with a population of 100,000, there should be a hospital with somewhere around 400 beds operating in The Villages. We can see the problems with the current under-built hospital and the inadequate emergency room. Residents don't want to go through the nightmare of long ER waits, diversions, and lame excuses again.

Geriatrics Department - Residents want a top-notch geriatric medicine department as one of the main specialties in the hospital. Let's focus on, as Mr. Harold Schwartz said, a "healthy lifestyle" for our residents. And, when we need health care, we want the best. TVRH should focus on the needs of our age-bracket residents in The Villages and be the best it can be.

Help From Representative Gibson - Residents want a solution now, and Representative Gibson may be in a good position to broker a deal. He is on the LRMC board and has easy access to LRMC directors. Voters are unhappy with his sponsorship of the tax bill and his efforts to pass 20% of the tax

proceeds back to the Morse family foundation. Actually, he may have gotten us into this mess by implying to LRMC that the tax would pass and/or suggesting to the developer of The Villages that there were goodies (the 20%) for the foundation. Well, now it is time for Representative Gibson to get us out of this mess by using his office and his powers of persuasion to find a solution. He should light a fire under LRMC management and directors and insist on an immediate solution for the benefit of Village residents. Perhaps he can enlist the aid of the developer of The Villages to help somehow with the financing.

Review Financial Statements - The POA has asked several times to see LRMC's 10-year financial forecasts for the TVRH operation. We have also asked to see the two Ernst & Young feasibility studies. LRMC has consistently refused to provide the information which we know it has. If this information could confirm its inadequate financial position, or even justify the need for the hospital tax, why wouldn't LRMC provide this information for community review? The short answer is that LRMC cannot justify the need for the tax and hopes to escape closer financial scrutiny by stonewalling the POA request. As Harold Schwartz suggested, LRMC appears to be protecting its Leesburg facility by avoiding building much of an operation in The Villages that would take business away from LRMC. LRMC apparently looks at The Villages as being just a "cash cow" to support the Leesburg hospital.

Summary - Residents should have the best hospital it can have - and, the expansion should start now. No more delays. No more excuses. No more self-serving comments from LRMC with its "no-can-do" attitude. Our advice to LRMC: Either start the expansion now ... or get out of the way and let someone else do it.

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Mock Vote Survey: Further Comments

The article in last month's Bulletin on the Mock Vote for Villages officials neglected to explain the details and rationale for the sampling size and procedure. Consequently, several questions were asked about the suitability of the 298-person sample. The POA provided the following information to several readers who questioned details of the survey:

Surveys like the Mock Vote 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 0.04% to 0.005%. Based on an estimated Villages population of 50,000, this would indicate a sample of no more than 20 compared to the 298 used in the Mock Vote 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 markets including 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 8 people for the Mock Vote Survey.

The Mock Vote Survey used a sample of 298 out of a population of about 50,000 for a sampling rate of 0.6%. That is a sufficient size when compared to these other studies just mentioned. We don't claim statistical accuracy - but, these results are representative for the subject matter surveyed based on adequate size and acceptable sampling techniques. The suggestion that a 10% sampling rate was needed would have produced unnecessary over-sampling.

With the answers coming back in an almost 9 or 10 to 1 ratio, the Mock Vote results are straightforward for a "no" vote on the basic retain vs. not retain questions.

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 on the pro and the con sides had an equal opportunity to vote.

Also, the questions in the Mock Vote Survey were not complex and required simple yes/no-type answers to just four 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 Mock Vote Survey was fairly simple which indicated a smaller sample size.

The results of the Mock Vote Survey were consistent with the survey results we found in two previous surveys. See the February, 2003, and the June, 2004, issues of the POA Bulletin in the archives section of the POA website. In these surveys, which asked for an evaluation ranking of various issues or people, Mr. Wahl ranked consistently at the bottom of the rankings. This tends to confirm the validity of the Mock Vote Survey and the low opinion of residents for Mr. Wahl. Ms. Andersen and Mr. Rohan were not surveyed previously.

We do acknowledge that the headline of the Mock Vote story should have read: "Huge Negative Percentage Vote...." The headline was perhaps open to misinterpretation and may have suggested to some a huge number of votes when we really were reporting a huge negative percentage vote.

Whether you liked the results or not, we hope that reporting this study will be helpful for everybody in the dialogue about our community's government.

We should point out that the article did mention that the POA thinks Mr. Wahl is a capable administrator and that The Villages runs well under his administration.

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

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Letter to The Reporter About VCCDD Debt

(Editor's note: The second line of the headline was erroneously labeled: "About the Hospital" in the printed version of the Bulletin.)

The Reporter newspaper printed a Letter to the Editor in its February 10th issue mentioning that the POA tried unsuccessfully to get an accounting from The Villages of the use of the monthly amenity fee. Actually, the POA finally did get the accounting statements and these are displayed on the POA's web site at www.poa4us.org on the internet.

In the October, 2004, issue of the POA Bulletin, located on our web site in the Archived Bulletin Section, the details of cash receipts and disbursements for the Recreation Amenities division are displayed under the section entitled "VCCDD Financial Statements."

The November, 2004, issue shows the use of the monthly amenity fee broken down by Maintenance & Administration and Debt Service. This shows that about 60% of the monthly amenity fee is used for Debt Service.

Debt service is being used to pay off the bonds issued by the VCCDD to enable it to purchase a variety of common properties and assets from the developer of The Villages. The supervisors of the VCCDD, effectively appointed by the developer, have agreed to the transaction with the developer. Residents were not able to vote their approval of these transactions or vote to accept the debt repayment obligation. So far, the principal amount of these bonds amounts to over \$400 million to be paid off over up to 30 years by residents.

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The Villages Hospital Emergency Room

Recent newspaper articles are reporting long lines and delays at hospital emergency rooms in Ocala and The Villages. Ocala hospitals are also reporting that the state Agency for Health Care Administration approves the idea of turning away non-emergency patients from their emergency rooms.

This is a healthcare crisis that affects all of us. We have to focus on solutions.

First, let's consider some of the reasons for the surge in patients:

- Local hospitals are understaffed and underbuilt. With only 60 beds, this is one of the main reason for the problems at TVRH.

- Too many people with no insurance go to emergency rooms where they know they can get service, sometimes at no charge.

- Too many people with just minor ailments go to emergency rooms because they have no regular doctors or means to pay.

- Certificate of Need laws in Florida have hampered building of new hospitals in the past. Remember also the Ocala CON lawsuit by Munroe and Ocala Regional against The Villages hospital that delayed the original start of the hospital expansion plans.

- At this time we have a large number of seasonal visitors to this area during the winter months.

- With a population of about 50,000, The Villages has been growing at about an 18% compound annual rate over the past five years.

We face an ever growing problem here in The Villages as more and more people move in and we grow to a population of 100,000 within 5-6 years.

So, what can we do now other than start work on the hospital expansion that will take us up to 400-500 beds?

Why not get smarter about how we deliver emergency and non-emergency services here in The Villages.

Remember the LRMC hospital facility built in 1998 on the east side of Highway 441/27? Yes, that is a hospital facility even if LRMC now says it isn't.

LRMC opened this \$15 Million, 56,000 sq. ft., three-story facility built to hospital standards on August 24, 1998, beginning with an outpatient surgery center, lab, radiology and pre-admitting services.

Why not require all non-critical or all non-insurance patients to go to an Urgent Care facility housed in that building? The staff could be either from the hospital or from a group of independent physicians specializing in urgent care. A grant of some sort might be required from TVRH, or the Morse family healthcare foundation, to subsidize the non-insurance patients.

Then the emergency room of TVRH would handle only the more serious cases, most of those with insurance. And, this would enable faster healthcare services with shorter wait times.

If you think about it, we really don't have an Urgent Care facility here in The Villages. We wonder why not? Could it be that local doctors, many recruited by the hospital or The Villages, have been discouraged from opening an Urgent Care facility that might compete with the hospital's emergency room? All of this to direct urgent care patients to a hospital that is already overloaded?

We should focus on doing something now - otherwise we may be strangled by the problem in the not too distant future. And then, we might have nowhere to go.

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POA Letter to LRMC Directors

The following is the text of a letter sent to the directors of LRMC by the president of the POA in early February: Dear Director:

Enclosed is the latest copy of the POA Bulletin.

Please note the front-page reprint of a story by Mr. Harold Schwartz first published in the Daily Sun in 1996. Mr. Schwartz made the point that LRMC seems to be protecting its position and Leesburg hospital business by dragging its feet on the issue of hospital expansion in The Villages. If this is so, I would urge the LRMC directors to stop this foolishness and either start the expansion of TVRH now or sell the hospital to a better-financed hospital management company that can.

Please also notice that my recent letter to Representative Gibson is reprinted starting on page 3. I mentioned this in my letter to you last month. The POA voiced approval of his decision to not revise the hospital tax legislation after recognizing that voters would never approve the tax proposal. So, I would again urge you to either start the expansion of TVRH now or sell it to a better-financed hospital management company that can.

Please see also the story on page 5 that calls for re-directing the tax proceeds you now receive from Lake County Villagers and providing these funds to TVRH immediately.

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

Editor's note: The POA has not received a response to this or any of the earlier letters sent to LRMC directors. LRMC seems to be stonewalling the POA on these issues. And, the losers so far are Village residents because the expansion has not yet started, and may not ever start as long as the hospital is owned by LRMC.

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POA Letter to The LRMC CEO

The president of the POA sent the following letter to Mr. Richard Wooten:

I have read in a recent newspaper article that the international accounting firm of Ernst & Young has completed an economic analysis of the proposed expansion of TVRH.

Would it be possible for you to send a copy of this analysis to me at the POA for review? As you know, the POA membership is keenly interested in having the expansion proceed now. We would welcome the opportunity to review this analysis so as to understand the situation that LRMC now faces. This important community issue deserves full and open review.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to your response and reviewing the document.

Editor's note: Mr. Wooten has not responded to this letter.

The Ernst & Young study is an important document that details the feasibility of expanding the hospital now. The conclusion was probably positive to the expansion. And, we suspect that the operating projections, even without the hospital tax, were also positive.

Villagers should be able to review this document, its underlying assumptions, and its financial forecasts.

Mr. Wooten's reluctance to share this document with residents shows bad faith and a distrust of residents in our community.

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VCCDD Agendas On a Web Site?

Richard Hoffman, newly elected Sumter County Supervisor, has a great idea for improved communication with the general public and county officials.

He suggested posting the weekly agenda of the Sumter County Commissioners meeting on a web site. And, he wants the agenda to be listed with enough detail to give county residents a good idea of what will be discussed.

This is a great idea that serves the objective of improving communication surrounding the operations of our county government.

Why don't we do this with the monthly agendas of all the various Villages CDDs?

This would be easy to do and not very expensive. The benefit would be that residents could view the agenda in advance and then decide if they wanted to attend the meeting. Residents would gain a much better understanding of the operations of the CDDs.

The posting could begin with just the VCCDD and the SLCCDD. The numbered residential CDDs could be added later if there was enough interest. We think there would be.

This suggestion could be viewed in conjunction with the POA's earlier suggestion that the VCCDD and the SLCCDD monthly meetings be televised by VNN in The Villages.

The POA would urge Mr. Wahl and VNN to seriously consider these two suggestions. The objective would be better communication with residents about the operations of their governments. Surely this would be a valued objective here in The Villages.

The related suggestion would be to also televise the twice-weekly meeting of Mr. Wahl's CDD school. That should be an absolute natural for TV coverage. If VNN was concerned about twice a week, why not just televise the school once or twice a month?

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Cheers and Jeers

Cheers - To the many dedicated volunteers and staff of the Villages hospital. With all the discussion about selling the hospital, the hospital tax, and management and service issues with LRMC, we should not lose sight of the many dedicated people that make the hospital work well in the overwhelming majority of cases. So, Cheers and thanks to all of them.

Jeers - To those disrespectful people stealing property from various Villages locations. The Savannah Center has had five copies of "Gone With The Wind" stolen from the lobby. And, various chairs and rockers have been stolen from the Spanish Springs Square. If you see someone taking something, please report the theft immediately to any Villages official. Get license numbers of any vehicle being used to cart away Villages property. Don't confront these people yourself - that could be dangerous - but note who they are and report them immediately.

Cheers/Jeers - Cheers to Pete Wahl for his Pete's Place column in which he described the problem with looting, pilferage, and vandalism to various property of The Villages. That was a good column that provided information that Villagers need to know. Jeers to Mr. Wahl for not telling us about this sooner. This apparently has been going on for some time. We need information like this, on a timely basis, so that we can protect ourselves as necessary.

Cheers - To Mother Nature for the mild winter with a minimum of freeze or frost nights. Remember that March 20th is the frost-free date in our area - that is the

latest official date that a freeze has ever occurred in the Lady Lake area. Time to prune those bushes.

Cheers - To the Golf Department for the great conditions of the greens. Let's hope they can keep it up for the summer months.

Jeers - To the developer for the proposed new hotel next to the Rialto Theater. The new hotel idea is nice, but parking is bad enough around the Square without complicating it with a new hotel taking up all those parking spaces. We need a parking garage building there with multiple levels to compensate for lost parking spaces.

Cheers - To all the entrance gatehouse guards who wave "hello" and smile to everybody coming through the gates. What a nice, friendly gesture that is!

Jeers - To golfers who sit in their carts at either the ninth or eighteenth greens adding up their scores rather than pulling up to get out of the way of approaching golfers. Please learn about golf etiquette.

Cheers - For the various county traffic departments conducting traffic surveys in The Villages in February. We need better traffic control measures around The Villages. A stop light at the dangerous entrance to the Village of Santo Domingo off El Camino Real is really needed. And, better stop light timing is needed at the El Santiago entrance off El Camino Real. Let's hope these traffic surveys identify appropriate corrective measures.

Cheers - To VCCDD for a new policy of removing chairs left unattended on the Square prior to entertainment events. Some people were putting out chairs in the early morning for evening events and then leaving them unattended for all that time. These chairs were a tripping hazard and a cluttering mess. Thanks to the VCCDD for starting this better policy.

Jeers - To the VCCDD for firing all those pool monitors and then expecting volunteers to take over every one of those positions. Thanks to all the good people who come forward to help and volunteer. But, the VCCDD action is just plain wrong. How crass and insensitive can they get?

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April Fool's Revisited

(Don't Believe Any of This)

The VCCDD is starting to place park benches at various locations along the cart paths on Buena Vista Blvd. and El Camino Real Blvd. However, nobody is using them. To encourage usage, the VCCDD is paying sitters \$5.00 per hour for sitting on the benches and waving at passers-by. To claim the payment, sitters have to produce a daily log of sitting, detailed by location, date, time of day, names and addresses of passers-by, and a count of waves generated. Payment will be made in Villages dollars, except that real dollars will be given

to Patron members plus a 10% premium.

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Happy St. Patrick's Day - March 17th

The person who was to become St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Wales about AD 385 as a pagan. He was sold into slavery at an early age by a group of Irish marauders that raided his village. During his captivity, he became very religious.

He escaped from slavery after six years and went to Gaul where he studied in a monastery for twelve years. During his training he became aware that his calling was to convert pagans to Christianity. He returned to Ireland as its second bishop.

St. Patrick was successful at winning converts. This upset the Celtic Druids. He was arrested on several occasions, but escaped each time. He traveled throughout Ireland, establishing monasteries across the country. He also set up schools and churches which would aid in the conversion of the Irish country to Christianity.

Much Irish folklore surrounds St. Patrick's activities. Little of it has been actually substantiated. He is said to have given a sermon from a hilltop that drove all the snakes from Ireland. Of course, no snakes were ever native to Ireland, and some people think this is a metaphor for the conversion of the pagans.

His mission in Ireland lasted for thirty years. After that, St. Patrick retired to County Down. There are several accounts of his death. One says that St. Patrick died at Saul, Downpatrick, Ireland, on March 17, 460 A.D. His jawbone was preserved in a silver shrine and was often requested in times of childbirth, epileptic fits, and as a preservative against the "evil eye." Another account says that St. Patrick ended his days at Glastonbury, England and was buried there. The Chapel of St. Patrick still exists as part of Glastonbury Abbey. Today, many Catholic places of worship all around the world are named after St. Patrick, including cathedrals in New York and Dublin.

Originally a Catholic holy day, St. Patrick's Day has evolved into a secular holiday.

One traditional icon of the day is the shamrock. And this stems from a more bona fide Irish tale that tells how St. Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.

Since the holiday began in Ireland, it is believed that as the Irish spread out around the world, they took with them their history and celebrations. The biggest observance of all is, of course, in Ireland. With the exception of restaurants and pubs, almost all businesses close on March 17th.

The St. Patrick's Day custom came to America in 1737. That was the first year St. Patrick's Day was publicly celebrated in this country, in Boston. In American cities with a large Irish population, St. Patrick's Day is a very big deal. Big cities and small towns alike celebrate with parades, "wearing of the green," music and songs, Irish food and drink, and activities for kids such as crafts, coloring and games. Some communities even go so far as to dye rivers or streams green!

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Hot - Cold - Wet - Dry

The highest temperature ever recorded in Lady Lake occurred on August 13, 1991, when the mercury hit 101.0 F. degrees.

The lowest temperature was 16.0 F. degrees recorded twice: first on December 13, 1962, and then again on January 22, 1985.

The wettest months are June, July, August and September with average rainfalls over 5.5" in each. August is the wettest month with average rainfall of 6.2".

The driest months are October and November with average rainfalls of only about 2.5".

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Will Rogers Said:

1. Never slap a man who's chewing tobacco.
2. Never kick a cow chip on a hot day.
3. Never miss a good chance to shut up.
4. If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.
5. The quickest way to double your money is to fold it and put it back in your pocket.

6. There are three kinds of men: The ones that learn by reading. The few who learn by observation. The rest of them have to pee on the electric fence and find out for themselves.

7. Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.

8. If you're riding' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

9. Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier'n puttin' it back in.

10. After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him. The moral: When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut.

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Limerick of the Month

When I take a dozen pills a day,
I wonder how each can find its way,
to my heart, liver, GERD, and private parts,
without ever having any false starts.
Well, I'm still alive - so it's OK.

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