

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Issue 31.06

Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

June, 2005

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POA versus the VHA:

Which is Better?

The question comes up often in conversations among Villages residents: What is the real difference between the Property Owners' Association (POA) and the Villages Homeowners' Association (VHA)?

There are fundamental and important differences between the two organizations. And, these differences drive right to the heart of the definition of what a homeowners' organization should be.

Consider the stated mission and objectives of the two organizations:

The POA Organization - The POA is an independent organization devoted to the home ownership needs and interests of the residents of The Villages.

The Vision/Objective of the POA is to make The Villages an even better place in which to live, where Residents' Rights are respected, and local government is responsive to the needs and interests of residents.

Specific POA attention is focused on housing, community, neighborhood, and local government issues. Special emphasis is directed at Community Development Districts (CDDs) and the Florida Chapter 190 law that regulates CDD operations in The Villages.

The POA serves Villages residents through programs of education, research, analysis, representation, advocacy, and legislative action.

The POA has no ties or obligations to the developer of The Villages that might compromise the POA position or its advocacy of Residents' Rights.

The POA was founded in 1975 as the original homeowners' organization in The Villages. Membership is open to all residents of The Villages.

The POA is dedicated to maintaining or improving the quality of life in The Villages for the benefit of all residents. Specific objectives are as follows:

1. Reform the Florida State Law, Chapter 190, that created Community Development Districts, to achieve the following:

- Popular election of the District Administrator by all residents in The Villages,
- Popular election by all residents in The Villages of the supervisors in each of the two main central districts (VCCDD and SLCCDD),
- Resident approval for any significant spending programs or purchases of facilities,
- Resident approval of any bonds issued to purchase common facility for which residents will be obligated for the payoff,
- Market-based appraisal system for the purchase of any properties or facilities from the developer,
- Conflict-of-Interest regulations applied to developers, lawyers, consultants, commissioners, supervisors, vendors, government officials, and other involved CDD operatives,
- Code-of-Conduct regulations applied in all business dealings with the districts,
- Full disclosure for Monthly Fees and use only for the designated and resident-approved purpose.

2. Promote Objectivity in the news reporting function in The Villages as performed by the local newspaper, TV station, and radio station.

3. Support and promote the efforts to improve full disclosure and explanation of monthly and annual charges for bonds, assessments, fees, taxes, etc., in The Villages.

The VHA Organization - The VHA was formed in 1991 to represent homeowners in The Villages. The organization's blue tri-fold publicity brochure states that:

- The VHA board meets with the developer and the Village Center District Government (VCCDD) to suggest community improvements, resolve issues and concerns of the membership, and promote harmonious relationships with the developer and the VCCDD.
- The VHA works to promote good relations between Village residents and local governments.
- The VHA is a constructive, informed, positive thinking organization. In addition, the VHA sponsors a variety of programs to welcome new residents and helps to instill a sense of welcome, community, and belonging for the many new residents.

The VHA also facilitates the information flow between the developer of The Villages and residents. It has sponsored fund-raising activities that have benefitted the new hospital as well as the Sept. 11th fund. It runs valuable safety clinics. The VHA has sponsored scholarships for local students. It has identified improvements in Village facilities and used its influence with the developer and the Central District government to get these passed or implemented.

Historical Background - The POA was formed in 1975 as an independent homeowners' organization representing the residents in the early days of The Villages. The POA at that time had almost all residents as members and a good working relationship with the developer, Mr. Harold Schwartz.

However, the POA and Mr. Schwartz had a falling out over the issue of promises made to residents as inducements to buy houses in the Villages. The developer reneged on the promises in the late 1980s and tried to charge residents for amenities that had originally been promised for free.

The POA organized a legal challenge to the developer's decision. The result was a settlement that allowed those early residents to continue receiving the promised amenities.

A further result was that Mr. Schwartz and the developer's organization cut all ties with the POA, advised new residents to avoid membership in the POA, and eventually formed the VHA in 1991 as an alternative to the POA. The developer also started a policy of refusing to meet with the POA on any subject.

The developer helped establish the VHA as an alternate to the POA on the explicit understanding that the VHA would not confront the developer with any complaints of Villagers. The developer did not want another pro-active, pro-resident owners' association comparable to what the POA was at the time.

Essential Differences - To summarize the key differences: the POA is an independent organization that represents Residents' Rights; the VHA is a

developer-sponsored organization that avoids any issue that might be adverse to the interests of the developer, even if issues of Residents' Rights are involved.

The VHA position goes against the very idea of what a homeowners' organization should be - that the Rights of Residents should be the primary objective of a homeowners' organization rather than the rights or best interests of the developer.

Some examples over the years of the VHA avoidance of Residents' Rights issues and opposition to the POA and its positions are:

- The VHA did not support the POA call for a moratorium on VCCDD purchases of various assets from the developer at inflated prices.
- The VHA did not support the POA call for popular election of the District Administrator in an effort to make that individual more responsive to the needs and interests of residents.
- The VHA did not support the POA call for resignation of VCCDD supervisors with potential conflict-of-interests ties to the developer.
- The VHA did not support the POA call for election of central district supervisors by all residents in The Villages.
- The VHA did not support the POA call for the right of residents to approve the purchase of new facilities and the related assumption of the debt repayment obligation by residents.
- The VHA did not support the POA call for use of the comparable properties appraisal techniques, rather than the income-approach appraisal technique (which inflates prices), for purchases of facilities from the developer.
- The VHA said nothing about the series of articles in the Orlando Sentinel in October, 2000, that documented abuses of the Chapter 190 law that created the Community Development Districts. Many of the examples were based on the situation in The Villages. The POA featured these articles in the Bulletin (see the August, 2003, issue of the Bulletin in the Bulletin archives section of the POA web site).
- The VHA did not support the POA in its call for defeat of the Sumter County Hospital Tax proposal.
- The VHA did not support the POA in its call for defeat of the One Sumter proposal that increases the political influence of the developer in Sumter County politics. The VHA actually supported the proposal.

Conclusion - It looks like the VHA ignores any Residents' Rights issue that it thinks might offend the developer or go counter to the developer's interests. And, Residents' Rights are often ignored as a result of this VHA support for the developer.

The question for you, the Village resident reading this article, is whether you want to belong to an organization that represents your rights (POA) ... or whether you want to belong to an organization that ignores your rights and best interests in an effort to coddle up to the developer (VHA).

The POA general membership meeting is held on the third Wednesday of each month in the Ricardo Montalban room of the La Hacienda Center, until the renovation of the Paradise Center is completed.

Come join us and lend your voice to the effort to promote Residents' Rights and make The Villages a better place for all of us. Stand up for your Rights. And, stand up for The Villages - it's your community now.

Residents Want the Chula Vista Club

Closing the Chula Vista Club is a very good example that the Villages developer and the administration of The Villages are out-of-touch with what Villagers want.

Residents in overwhelming numbers want the Chula Vista Club to continue as a restaurant and not to be turned into a recreation hall.

It is notable that not a single person in a recent survey voted in support of turning the Chula Vista Club into a recreation hall (see the Letters to the Editor on page five of this Bulletin).

The people assisting with the Chula Vista survey heard many comments from the people doing the survey such as:

- The developer has gotten too greedy.
- Mr. Wahl and the developer do as they please without considering the people.
- They squeeze the restaurants with too high a lease charge so that the clubs can't make a profit.
- Did the rent just double at Orange Blossom Hills which could be the next to close? Is this a rumor or the truth?

It is probably too late to save the Chula Vista Club -- the decision has been made. Too bad for residents.

A pattern has been established and the developer will raise the rent until he pushes them out so he can sell the empty clubs to us at an inflated price.

The developer evidently made a comment at the last VHA meeting that the Villages would keep open those facilities that Villagers supported. If this is true, the POA certainly doesn't believe the developer's eyes and ears (Mr. Wahl and the VCCDD board members) have kept the developer updated on the number of people going to the Chula Vista Club and the old Silver Lake Club.

Or is it that the developer, Mr. Wahl, and the VCCDD don't care about what the residents want? Why should they think about what residents want when they have dictatorial power to do as they please?

It is very obvious Villagers want a place eat, drink and dance. Too bad the powers in The Villages don't listen to residents.

Bulletin Delivery

The POA Bulletin is now home-delivered into all areas of The Villages. This is a considerable achievement for the POA, one that we are proud of. We have doubled the circulation of the Bulletin since early 2004.

This is important in our goal of getting the POA message to all Villagers. The more people we reach, and the more members we have, then the stronger voice we have in dealing with the issues here in our community.

We are distributing through our own route delivery staff or contract delivery people. We will no longer be distributed with either the Lady Lake Magazine or Villages Spectator.

As we gear up this effort, we ask the membership to contact us if there are any delivery problems. Also, if you see the Bulletin delivered to the driveway of an unoccupied house, please be a good neighbor and either pick up the Bulletin and hold it or discard it rather than leave it sitting there.

Thanks again to all members for supporting our efforts to expand our distribution.

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New POA Director

Beverly Drennan has been appointed a Director of the POA. Congratulations, Beverly!

Beverly has helped considerably with the effort to distribute the Bulletin to various retail outlets around The Villages. And, she helps with the coffee and rolls at the monthly membership meetings. Beverly is a take-charge person and we look forward to working with her and to her contributions to our organization.

Please offer Beverly your best wishes and congratulations when you next see her.

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POA Has a New Meeting Room

The meeting room for POA monthly meetings has been changed during the renovation of the Paradise Center.

Starting in June, the POA will meet in the Ricardo Montalban room of the La Hacienda Center.

Meeting time will stay the same at 7:00 p.m. And, coffee and rolls will still be served after the meeting.

A feature that we are trying to have in each meeting is an open forum question and answer period. We will take any question from the floor - you will not be required to submit questions beforehand that are censored by the POA leadership.

So, come and join us for these important meetings.

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What Residents Want

The POA Bulletin lists ideas submitted by residents describing what they would like to see in The Villages. This is your opportunity to tell us what you want. This could be a new feature or amenity; or a fix-up; or whatever.

Just send us a note via email or snail mail. Please include your name in case we have to verify your comments, but we won't publish names in these short paragraphs of wants.

We can't guarantee results; but, we can at least publicize these various issues and wants:

1. Path To Wal-Mart - We need a cart path established that would allow Villagers to go to Wal-Mart by golf cart.

2. Christmas Parade - Please bring back the Christmas Parade on the Spanish Springs Square.

3. Post Offices - Please get auxiliary post office stations in Southern Trace area and the Mulberry Grove Shopping Center where packages could be mailed.

4. Traffic Light - We badly need a traffic light at the intersection of Morse Blvd. and San Marino Drive.

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POA Membership

Remember to renew your membership for 2005. You may have received a letter indicating that it was time to renew. If not, you can use the Membership Form on page 7 of this Bulletin to renew, or to sign up for the first time. Memberships are \$6.00 per household per year, from January 1st to December 31st.

Also, we need the help of members in the effort to get new members. Please talk to your friends and neighbors who are not members of the POA and tell them about the importance of supporting the work of the POA by being a member. The new POA Brochure is helpful in explaining these points. Get one of the new Brochures at our monthly meeting or by calling 259-0999 for a copy to be sent to you.

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Sexual Offender Database

The previous issue of the Bulletin had a story on the Florida Sexual Predator/Offender database maintained on the internet.

The database listings can be accessed at
http://www3.fdle.state.fl.us/sexual_predators/

Enter either your zip code or your county to see a listing with pictures of all sexual offenders in that area. You can click on any person to see a more detailed listing and picture.

The database shows 9 individuals with addresses in The Villages. A total of 80 are living in or around The Villages.

The POA has assembled a folder with most of the printouts for our local area.

This folder will be available for examination at any of the regular monthly POA membership meetings.

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Bulletin Pick-Up Locations

If the Bulletin is not delivered to your driveway in the first ten days of the month, remember that you can pick up the Bulletin at the following locations:

Plaza Grande Shopping Center

Ace (Sweets) Hardware
Publix Supermarket
Winn-Dixie Supermarket

Spanish Springs Shopping Center

Albertsons Supermarket
Ollie's Frozen Custard Store
Walgreens Drug Store

Mulberry Grove Shopping Center

Publix Supermarket
Walgreens Drug Store

Southern Trace Shopping Center

Ace Hardware
Dunkin Donuts
CVS (formerly Eckerd) Drug Store
Publix Supermarket
76 Gas Station

If for some reason the Bulletin is not delivered to your home, and you do not have a copy of the Bulletin to read this list, you can also see this list of pick-up points on the POA web site at www.poa4us.org on the internet.

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Seniors vs. Crime

Senior Sleuths

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

Sumter and North Lake Counties

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

Marion County

Sheriff's Annex
8230 SE 165th Street -- CR 42
The Villages, FL 32159
352-753-7775

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

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The POA Needs Help Selling Bulletin Ads

We still have the position open for an advertising manager to help sell advertising for the POA Bulletin. This is a part-time position with a generous commission. You can work your own hours contacting local businesses about advertising in the Bulletin. Previous ad selling experience would be helpful but not necessary. Please call Joe Gorman (259-0999) for details about how you can help the POA and also make some money for yourself.

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Your CDD Meetings

The various CDDs in The Villages meet once a month for meetings as follows:

Last Friday of the month at the Sumter Landing Offices, 1894 Laurel Manor Drive:

VCCDD at 9:00 a.m.
CDD # 5 at 9:45 a.m.
CDD # 6 at 10:15 a.m.
CDD # 7 at 10:45 a.m.
CDD # 8 at 11:05 a.m.

First Friday of the month at the VCCDD Offices, 3231 Wedgewood Lane:

Sumter Landing CDD at 9:00 a.m.
CDD # 2 at 9:45 a.m.
CDD # 3 at 10:30 a.m.
CDD # 1 at 11:15 a.m.
CDD # 4 at noon

These meetings are worthwhile and show our local governments in action. Residents wanting to know what's going on or to give input into any of the governments' decision making processes should attend.

Also, the District Administrator's office conducts a two-hour CDD school once a week during the summer at the district offices on Wedgewood Lane, on Mondays at 10:00 a.m. Call 753-4508 for more details.

CDD school is informative and provides a good overview of how CDDs work and are organized. The POA recommends the program. However, the POA also recommends that, after going to this, you come to a POA meeting for the rest of the story. You will not get the whole story at CDD school.

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Letter to the Editor: Monitors in the Pools

Since there are no longer monitors at the Southside Pool, we have many outside people using the facility on a regular basis.

We also have young people using the Jacuzzi and pool. The sign that states residents only and 30 years of age do not mean anything if no one is there to enforce these rules.

There should be adequate funds to provide at least a part time monitor.

Now when security is called to stop the flagrant abuse of the rules, all they do is drive by and do not get out to ask for ID cards.

Anyone, be they residents or not, is given directions to the pool by the guards at the Shay gate. What good is having guards when all they do is wave all cars on through?

When I purchased property in the Villages I was told we were in a gated and secure facility. But now we have absolutely no restricted access at some gates and very little at others.

Don Joyner

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Letter to the Editor: Nancy Lopez Sink Holes

I am angry about District 4 wanting to increase assessment fees for District 4 to pay for a sink hole on Nancy Lopez Golf Course.

The sink hole repair should be paid by the owners of this golf course since it is a private course. No one can walk or use the golf paths unless you have paid to play golf. We were told two years ago not to use the golf paths on Nancy Lopez as this was private property.

If District 4 has to pay for this sink hole, then the residents should be allowed to use the golf paths at night to walk on as this makes this area a non-private course.

If this is private property then the owners need to pay for this sink hole. They must have insurance to cover such problems.

Karl Fairbanks

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Letter to the Editor:

Changes in The Villages

I wish to commend you and your POA staff for an outstanding job in keeping the residents informed of the REAL facts behind some of the recent actions that have adversely affected our lives here in the Villages.

I purchased a home when Village lots were reasonably priced and construction affordable. Life in the Villages was a dream come true.

I would occasionally talk with Harold Schwartz whom I often would meet at the OB Hills Club. His greeting was invariably followed by a question "How do you like Orange Blossom Gardens and what can we do to help you enjoy your life more with us."

I consider myself a good judge of character and I would rate Harold as a true prince of a gentlemen who sincerely had the well being of his residents at heart. Since his passing, things have really changed.

Although the explosive growth of the Villages has provided more and varied facilities such as the town squares, restaurants reachable by golf cart, and theaters, the growth has been accompanied by increased amenity and other fees, and an unbelievable, ever-increasing debt brought about primarily by sale of facilities at inflated prices and unrealistically appraised values.

Harold's dream of making life more enjoyable for the residents has been turned into what I have been told is the greed for more wealth for the Developer.

I have already personally witnessed the sad departure of some of my dearest friends who could no longer afford to pay the higher prices demanded by inflation of all their living costs here in the Villages. I guess that "bigger is better" is not always true.

In closing, thanks for your POA battle and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Col. D. J. Shearin (Ret.)

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Letter to the Editor: Chula Vista Restaurant

I often go to the Chula Vista Club with friends to enjoy the friendly atmosphere. While there we would have a drink or two, a bite to eat, enjoy a friendly conversation with the people we knew or complete strangers. We loved to

listen to the live music and dance until closing time.

I was there when the manager of the Chula Vista Club announced the closing of the club. This came as a complete surprise to the patrons and the employees of the club. I find it very difficult to believe Chula Vista was closed for lack of business. On most occasions when I went Chula Vista Club there was a waiting line to get into the restaurant and the bar area was very crowded. I believe the VCCDD or developer was charging too much rent for the leaser to make a profit. It seems to me the developer has gotten very greedy.

When I purchased my home here in the Villages, one of the key factors in making this decision was the friendly atmosphere of the Chula Vista and Silver Lake Clubs. A neighborhood meeting place to meet friends and get acquainted with new people. This has now been taken away.

I'm asking for the POA to help the residents get the Chula Vista Club back as a part of our community. I have noticed over the last two years in the Bulletin that the POA has fought several issues dear to the hearts of many Villagers. The POA Bulletin has been the leading force in getting a new Paradise Center, termination of Patron program, defeat of the hospital tax, to mention a few.

I and others have collected the signature of 562 Villagers who want the Chula Vista Club re-opened. I consider it a waste of time to send this letter to the VCCDD or developer.

Let the people know what can be done to save the Chula Vista Club.

Irma Greenawalt

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Letter to the Editor: El Santiago Restaurant

Your recent mention of us in your 'Jeers and Cheers' column was brought to my attention (current owner of The El Santiago restaurant) by a customer who felt the article unjust in both content and inference.

Our burger price is only marginally more expensive than two other restaurants in the Villages, OBH and Tierra del Sol, and in fact less expensive than no less than ten others, all of which are within the Villages.

The article was a topic of conversation inside the restaurant, and I can tell you that all our customers felt that our food was of an excellent standard and fairly priced. As hard as we try there are occasions when our standards may slip, but on those few occasions, if we are informed, we do our best to rectify it, if possible, and recompense when justified.

El Santiago is responsible for the employment of over forty people, we also play a very active role in the Village community. We sponsor local village teams and many Village charity events. The restaurant and its customers helped raise over \$4,000 in 2004.

Your mention of our restaurant was one column away from your article about the unfortunate Chula Vista Club. El Santiago is a privately owned restaurant trying to give its customers a fair balance between quality and value. I stress the word fair as it seems to be what your own article neglected: "fairness." If we were forced to close our doors, and be turned into a recreation center, would your publication feel it should shoulder any blame for the Villages losing another of its founding restaurants. One which has always had a commitment to providing a fun and relaxed environment for all the Village residents, their families and friends alike.

Sometimes its easier just to throw the stone rather than to aim at the right target.

Robin Lewis, Owner

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Villages ID Cards Needed at POA Meetings

Checks are starting for Villages ID cards at a variety of Village activities. For now, the checks are only preliminary to see how many users of any facility carry their cards. The issue is more pertinent in some facilities like the swimming pools, the tennis courts, Boccie courts, etc., where non-Village residents have been found using the facilities in the past.

At a future point in time, residents without their Village ID cards may be asked to leave a facility or activity.

So, the message is clear - start carrying your Villages ID cards.

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Ronald Reagan A Father

Patti Davis, daughter of former president Ronald Reagan, wrote the following about her father in the July 16, 2003, issue of Newsweek. This has been condensed for space requirements here.

Sometimes I think we need to look no farther than the pattern of footprints stretched out behind us to understand the lives we've lived.

We can follow the first tentative steps of our infancy through the long, defiant strides of adolescence and young adulthood -- the running away years, the years of putting distance between ourselves and our families, of burning up time -- to the more solid footprints, set down as we grow older.

These are the tracks we leave on the earth. If we look closely we can also see our parents' footprints, often close to us, as they guide and lead us, at other times far behind, as they wait for us to turn and remember them.

We slow down, finally, to look longer and more carefully at our parents. My father, who strode confidently onto the stage of history ... was always polite - achingly so - and even in the depths of his illness, still (was)... I didn't stop to linger on the sweetness of that quality, or to learn from it.

There are people who would say that my father's footprints are larger and deeper than those of other parents because his political legacy gives them weight, creating indelible marks in the halls of history.... I see his footprints pressed into the wet sand of the beach as he walked toward the sea to catch steep waves and ride them back to shore. His stride was as smooth and certain as it was when he walked into the White House, and onto the stage of history. I see a small girl on that beach as well, pressing her feet into the shapes that her father's feet have left to see how much bigger his footprints are.

I have gotten lost in those footprints during my life; I have fought hard and bloody battles to pull myself away. These are the tracks I have left on the earth.

But now I look for my father's tracks on every beach, every trail. Because they mark the way home.

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Church on the Square: A Pool Hall?

The Church on the Square might be sold by the developer to the VCCDD and could be turned into a pool and ping-pong facility by The Village's recreation department. A spokesman said the church was not producing enough income to justify the developer keeping it open or subsidizing it any longer.

A \$100 million price tag has been mentioned by the developer and his hand-picked board of VCCDD supervisors. Bonds would be issued to allow immediate payment in cash to the developer of the \$100 million price.

Since the monthly amenity fees are already fully committed for repayment of bonds issued for previous purchases of common property from the developer, a special assessment of \$25.00 per month would have to be added to each resident's monthly amenity fee to cover the cost of this bond repayment.

Villagers would have no say in this matter - but, they would be compelled to accept the bond repayment obligation anyway.

When asked whether residents would like this transaction, a spokesman for the VCCDD and the developer said: "We don't care what the residents like or don't like. We can do whatever we want."

April Fool's - Don't Believe Any of This!
Gets You Thinking, Doesn't It...
Does This Sound like the Chula Vista Club? Silverlake Club?
What's Next?

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