

# The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Issue 31.07

Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

July, 2005

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## POA - What Have You Done For Me Lately?

It is a fair question to ask: What has the POA done for Villagers lately?

Any property or home owners' association should be able to list worthwhile recent accomplishments that related to its mission statement and the residents it serves.

A corollary question is: What are you going to do for me in the future?

Let's address both questions for the POA. Accomplishments are listed

immediately below and the next article in this Bulletin on page 2 lists Current POA Projects.

**1. Paradise Center** - The POA led the drive to have the deteriorated Paradise Center renovated. The Bulletin conducted and published survey results in the March, 2004, issue (see the Bulletin Archives section of the POA web site at [www.poa4us.org](http://www.poa4us.org)) showing that 62% of residents favored the complete demolition and rebuilding alternative and another 22% favored renovation and redecoration without any demolition. It is debatable whether the VCCDD would have moved on the complete renovation effort without the push and support of the POA. But, we spoke up and the renovation is now proceeding.

**2. Hospital Tax** - The POA strongly opposed the Sumter County Hospital Tax proposal on the ballot in the last election (see the late 2004 Bulletins on the web site). The POA felt then and now that The Villages hospital did not need the tax to be an operational success. We also spoke out strongly against the proposal to pass 20% of the tax on to a Morse family foundation associated with one of the wealthiest families in the state. Although we were against the tax, we advocated starting the hospital expansion as soon as possible or otherwise selling the hospital to a hospital management company which could start the expansion quickly.

**3. The One Sumter Proposal** - We opposed the One Sumter initiative on the November, 2004, ballot, but this initiative passed by a slim margin. We feel that the POA helped to advise residents about the issues and to make up their minds in a well-informed way. See the Bulletin article in the August, 2004, issue on the web site.

**4. Bob Evans Restaurant** - The POA helped to frame the debate in a positive way on this issue about building this restaurant in a residential area of The Villages. We felt it was important to recognize the rights and preferences of the near-by residents. Remember that the developer sent a heavy-handed letter to these residents demanding that they sign a notarized statement allowing a change in the covenants for the land in question from residential to commercial status. The POA was prepared to mobilize a legal challenge to any heavy-handed developer actions. See the July and August, 2004, issues of the Bulletin.

**5. Patron Program** - The Lifelong Learning Center had the original Patron Program that allowed special discounts for special people who made a special donation to the Center for events in properties owned by Villagers. The POA felt that these special discounts for events in our own properties were unfair to all of us that supported these properties through our monthly fees. The Center finally changed the policy to allow discounts for Patron members only for events outside Villages common properties.

**6. VCCDD Financial Statements** - We often hear questions from residents about the use of their monthly fees. "Where does all of that money go?" they ask. Neither the VCCDD, nor the VHA, nor the Daily Sun has published details of the use of the monthly fees. But, the POA obtained the 2005 fiscal year financials and published the details on the POA web site under the button for The Villages Government. Now we see that a substantial portion of our monthly fees (over 60% in the case of the VCCDD) is used for Debt Service to pay for purchases of common property from the developer at inflated prices.

**7. Mock Vote** - The POA has often noted that Villagers cannot vote for the Central District supervisors who make all of the big money decisions in The Villages. Nor can we vote for the top administrative people in the Central

Districts. In conjunction with the November, 2004, election, the POA conducted a Mock Vote for these officials that identified serious problems with the way these officials are viewed by Villagers. The POA also offered a series of recommendations on how to remedy the situation. See the Bulletins from November, 2004, and February, 2005, on the web site.

**8. Annual Survey** - The POA has often commented that the Annual Survey conducted by the VCCDD has only limited value and is basically a whitewash job that misses the significant issues that should be addressed. The POA published its Second Annual Survey of over 500 residents in June, 2004 that addressed these more significant issues. This showed a variety of good points and poor points and, hopefully, allowed residents to make up their own minds about the issues. Perhaps one day the VCCDD will eliminate the fluff and incorporate some of the POA questions about more significant issues into its own annual survey.

**9. Villages Government** - The POA article in the September, 2004, issue of the Bulletin suggested how alternate forms of government in The Villages might be better suited to the needs of residents in the future. Perhaps it was too early to start this debate - but, maybe not. See for yourself on the web site.

**10. POA Web Site** - We finally got this off the ground and the response has been heartening. No where else will you find this much relevant information about the POA, and The Villages, and the issues that affect us on a daily basis. We are adding features to the site often. Almost three years of Bulletins are displayed. And, there is a listing of recent relevant newspaper articles about issues in The Villages.

**Summary** - Hopefully, you agree that the POA lives up to its Mission Statement listed on page two of this Bulletin. We are advocates of Residents' Rights - and that means you and all the residents of The Villages.

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## Current POA Projects

These are just a few of the projects we are pursuing on your behalf under the banner of Residents' Rights for all Villagers.

**1. Hospital Expansion** - We plan to continue campaigning for the Leesburg Regional Medical Center (LRMC) to start the expansion of The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH) as soon as possible. We think it is morally wrong for LRMC to delay the expansion any further because people could die waiting for the expansion to be completed. If LRMC cannot arrange the financing of the expansion with its own resources and without the hospital tax, then it should sell TVRH to some other hospital management company that can. And sooner rather than later - it has been eight months since the November, 2004, voter

turndown of the hospital tax idea. This delay is unreasonable and disappointing.

**2. Chapter 190 Law** - The POA feels strongly that the Chapter 190 Florida Statute law that created Community Development Districts (CDDs) should be reformed to eliminate abuses that we see here in The Villages. Specifically, we think that residents should be able to elect the supervisors in the Central Districts (the VCCDD and the SLCCD). These are the supervisors who make all the big money decisions in The Villages - and they are effectively appointed by the developer of The Villages. Residents have no say in these matters. This is like Taxation Without Representation. The POA is working to change the Chapter 190 law.

**3. CDD Issues, Problems, Abuses** - The POA and the Bulletin perform a valuable "watchdog" function here in The Villages as it relates to the developer and the Central District governments. We go to these meetings. We track and publicize problems and issues that are important to Villagers. If not for the POA, you might not hear about many of these important issues. And, we voice our opinion - to help you understand and decide on the many issues that affect Villagers.

**4. VHA Differences** - We will continue to point out the difference between the POA and the VHA on key issues. There are many differences between these two organizations. The key point is that the VHA will never take a position on a Residents' Rights issue that is contrary to the will or interests of the developer. This VHA position puts residents at a disadvantage compared to the developer. The POA is independent of the developer and speaks out for your best interests - and always has, and always will.

**5. Residents' Rights** - The POA is an advocate of Residents' Rights as listed on page two of this Bulletin. If the POA doesn't speak out on these Rights, nobody will ... not the VHA, not the VCCDD, not the SLCCD, not the Villages Chamber of Commerce, not the CIC. But, the POA does and will continue to do so.

**6. The Next Community Issue** - We don't know what it is, but something will come up in the future for which the POA will voice an opinion and perhaps lead a charge. You may not always agree, but wouldn't you want the benefit of an independent opinion so that you can be informed and make up your own mind? If you say no, then you are embracing the "Ignorance is Bliss" position. We certainly hope not.

**7. Other** - The POA has several internal projects that are important:

- (a) building the membership,
- (b) identifying further candidates for the Hall of Fame honor,
- (c) expanding distribution of the Bulletin to all areas of The Villages,
- (d) making the Bulletin financially self-sufficient through advertising revenue,
- (e) funding a "legal action fund."

Perhaps the most important here is the first mentioned: building the membership. Without the broad support of Villagers, we would be unable to maintain these activities on your behalf. If you value these activities, please join the POA (see the membership form on page 7) and lend your voice to those of us trying to make The Villages an even better place in which to live. It is your community now - get involved and support the POA !

## **The Villages Regional Hospital**

One of the most important agenda items for the POA is to see the expansion of The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH) start now.

We have spoken out often and strongly that the Leesburg Regional Medical Center (LRMC) is morally wrong to delay the start of the expansion. If LRMC cannot start the expansion soon, based on its own resources and without the Sumter County hospital tax, then it should sell the hospital to any one of several hospital management companies that have the resources to start the expansion now.

With this in mind, Mr. Joe Gorman, president of the POA, recently met with Mr. Louis Bremer, the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of LRMC, to discuss these matters.

The meeting was cordial, informative, and productive. Mr. Bremer said that he was starting to get a handle on the job in which he had only served for about a month. He mentioned that the departure of the previous CEO caused a disruption of their expansion plan review efforts. But, Mr. Bremer was learning fast and has formed a review committee to examine all the expansion options. He made no promises, but thought that LRMC might have a better idea of how to proceed later this year.

After that meeting, Mr. Bremer send a letter to Mr. Joe Gorman as reprinted below:

Dear Mr. Gorman:

It was a pleasure meeting with you and I appreciate the time you spent sharing with me your perspective on the healthcare needs of The Villages. As I stated during our meeting, LRMC has served the area for over four decades and our goal is to continue to serve and meet the needs of the area through the provision of high quality healthcare services through the LRMC/TVRH healthcare system.

As to the expansion of The Villages Regional Hospital, unfortunately the departure of the previous LRMC CEO slowed the process. However, there has been progress but not the kind of progress that is visible to the community. When I arrived as the new interim CEO a few weeks ago, the LRMC Board shared with me their desire to quickly move forward to address the expansion issues and asked me to make it one of my priorities. Since that time, I have been working on the issue with my staff and with architects and a contractor. My goal is to present a recommendation to the LRMC Board within the next 90 days. I would anticipate that they would then move quickly to act on the recommendation.

In addition to the above, I am also working with the staffs at both TVRH and LRMC to look for ways to better accommodate the increased volume of patients at both hospitals. This has included the use of outside consultants to help us to better evaluate our processes and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Additionally, we will be evaluating your suggestion for an Urgent Care Center on the east campus of TVRH.

Again, it was a pleasure meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Louis H. Bremer, Jr. CHE  
Interim Chief Executive Officer

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## Chula - Gonna

It looks like the Chula Vista Club and Restaurant will go the way of the dinosaurs and dodo birds. Gone! Good-bye! So Long! Sayonara! Too Bad! Get Lost!

What a sad ending to a great place for dinner and dancing and meeting friends and having fun.

The VCCDD has all but finalized the transfer of the property's assets from the developer. The VCCDD plans to turn the facility into a recreation center, probably a pool and ping-pong facility.

Perhaps a plaque will be put up in a corner saying that friendly people used to love this place in the good old days when The Villages was our joy and our community and not a money machine for the developer.

What's disturbing is that the developer could have saved the club with a little community understanding and responsibility. It is said that the reason the club folded was that the developer substantially increased the lease charges to the operator of the club, thus forcing it out of business.

"Why should the developer financially subsidize the operation of the club?" some would say.

Well, the developer set up the swimming pools and shuffleboard courts and Boccie courts and tennis courts with no revenue coming in and these are fully subsidized. Why not also subsidize an extremely popular restaurant and dance club with lower lease charges that allow the operation to continue?

Isn't that the idea of what the monthly maintenance fee is for?

Another issue here is that the developer made this decision without any input from residents. It is almost as if the developer doesn't give a darn what residents think. This is a gross violation of Residents' Rights number 10 listed on page two of this Bulletin. This is our community and we should be consulted beforehand on any major change in or addition to our community.

And, on this point, several recent surveys of 562 people (see the last two Bulletins) confirmed that almost everybody surveyed on this issue wanted the Chula Vista Club to continue as it was as a restaurant and dance club for residents. We'll say it again: It is almost as if the developer doesn't give a darn what residents think.

So, what's next? The El Santiago Club is the last restaurant inside The Villages like the Chula Vista Club and the Silverlake Club that is not associated with a golf country club. The Tierra Del Sol restaurant always seems to be struggling. And, the Hacienda restaurants seem to be in trouble now that one of the two has closed. Which of these is next on the developer's Hit List?

Maybe that is why these restaurants don't take reservations - they are never sure day-to-day whether the developer will allow them to stay in business tomorrow.

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## **Elaine Dreidame Is New POA Director**

Elaine Dreidame has been appointed a Director of the POA. Congratulations, Elaine!

Elaine comes to the POA board with an interest in helping on the effort to reform the CDD legislation in Chapter 190 Florida Statutes. She has already identified 319 CDDs in Florida and will head up our effort to build a CDD database.

In Elaine's pre-Villages life she was an Associate Athletic Director at the University of Dayton. We look forward to working with her and to her contributions to our organization.

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

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## Pete's Column

The June 16, 2005, Pete's Place column by Pete Wahl, District Administrator, is a good example of a well-done Pete's Place article.

The column covered: Tropical Storm Arlene, the annual Villages fire assessment charge increase, the Sumter County Fire Assessment Program, the issue with minor gambling-type jackpots, the addition of Ms. Janet Tuff to the Villages central district staff, and the weekly CDD school.

All of these are worthwhile and timely subjects for reading by Villagers in the weekly column of our top administrative official.

We have criticized the column in the past for covering frivolous blather or trivial personal ramblings. Sometime, it seems as if Mr. Wahl does not have much to say.

But, not in this issue. The article was well done and contained worthwhile information. Thanks, Pete.

On the other hand, we would like to take issue with Mr. Wahl for playing loose with the district's budget numbers.

If you remember a few months ago, Mr. Wahl explained in the Pete's Place column the problem with the recent election vote that increased the minimum wage in Florida. If we remember correctly, he said that the impact on district budgets was easily over \$400,000.

This was the justification for increasing a variety of fees that Villagers have to pay as an offset to the minimum wage increase impact.

The Executive Golf trail fees went up, storage fees for the RV lots went up, residents are now charged for the Neighborhood Watch service, and a variety of other fees were increased to offset the money squeeze due to the minimum wage increase.

It sure sounded like our budget was being hammered by the increase in the minimum wage. To be sure, this appeared to be a real and serious problem.

Then, Mr. Wahl found \$50,000 in the VCCDD budget for part payment of sinkhole repairs on Richmond Drive in Sumter County. \*

Then, Mr. Wahl hired Ms. Janet Tutt to be a co-manager of the districts at a salary, benefits, office, and outfitting cost that probably approaches \$200,000.

Then, Mr. Wahl was arranging for a \$4 million 20-year mortgage to pay for the cost of the Paradise Center renovation at an annual charge of approximately \$350,000.

Where did all this money come from? Especially at the same time Mr. Wahl was crying wolf over the catastrophic increase in the minimum wage.

Either Mr. Wahl is playing sneaky with us - or some funny budgeting is going



on....

Perhaps Mr. Wahl could explain this in the next Pete's Place column.

\* (Please note that in the hard copy print version of this Bulletin, this was erroneously reported as repairs to a pond on the Nancy Lopez golf course.)

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## Hospital Foundations

At the time of the November, 2004, elections, Villagers were concerned about the 20% of the proposed Sumter Hospital District tax earmarked for a Morse family foundation. This was one of the most onerous details of the hospital tax proposal that was eventually defeated by voters at the polls.

Fast forward to today and the situation with the Monroe Regional Medical Center Foundation in Ocala. Now this is a murky situation involving allegations of misdeeds on the part of the Monroe foundation. But, that is not the issue to be addressed here. .

The issue to notice is that the foundation's role was to raise money for the Monroe Hospital. As a matter of fact, it had arranged for a \$5 million donation to the hospital for the naming rights for a new pediatric wing. Over the past ten years, the hospital figures it got a 32% return on investment for the operating funds and expense reimbursements it supplied to the foundation. .

So, the important thing to notice here is that the Monroe foundation was helping to raise money for the Monroe hospital. It was not looking for a 20% handout of tax money as was apparently the case with the Morse family foundation. And, that 20% was to one of the wealthiest families in the state. .

If the Morse family foundation wants to play a role in the operation or the future of the Villages Regional Hospital, it should consider raising money for the hospital rather than taking money from the hospital. .

And, we think that with its political and business connections, the Morse family foundation could do a super job of fund-raising for the benefit of the hospital. .

How about \$5 - \$10 million for the naming rights for the hospital?

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# What is "The Villages"?

A news story about a month ago stated that a new U. S. Customs office was being funded at the Leesburg airport by "The Villages."

We received a number of questions about this. The most often-asked question was whether Villager monthly maintenance fees were being used for this customs office.

The answer is "no."

This customs office is receiving funding from the developer of the Villages, actually from the developer's corporation, know as The Villages of Lake-Sumter, Inc. There is no funding coming from the residential community known as The Villages.

The problem illustrated by this is the confusion of what is meant by a reference to "The Villages." Sometimes it refers to the developer of The Villages; sometimes it refers to the community known as The Villages. These are two separate, but related, legal entities.

Furthermore, sometimes the Villages reference is to either the VCCDD or the SLCDD.

Local news sources should recognize these distinctions and use the proper reference.

In the case of the Leesburg airport Customs office, the reference should have been to "the developer of The Villages."

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## Paradise Financing

Financing for the renovation of the Paradise Center is close to being completed.

The financing recommended by the VCCDD involves a commercial bank mortgage of up to \$4.0 million over a 20 year term at an interest rate of 4.2%. The loan contains a balloon requirement after 10 years that will require refinancing. The annual principal and interest payment will be around \$350,000.

All demolition and construction work, as well as furniture, fixtures, and

equipment, is included. The principal amount covers a 15% contingency.

The VCCDD stated that this will be repaid out of the VCCDD's annual cash flow and no special assessment or increase in the monthly amenity fee will be required.

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## **Senator Baker Speaks to the POA At the June Meeting**

Senator Carey Baker, our senator for The Villages in the Florida Legislature, spoke to the POA membership at the June meeting.

The senator's remarks were well reported in the Ocala Star Banner and The Reporter - so we will not restate those comments here. Suffice to say that the senator gave a good talk and was able to comment on a variety of issues important to all Villagers.

We were happy to establish contact with Senator Baker - and we look to him as a friend of the POA.

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## **A Letter to Sarah**

A week before the battle of Bull Run, Major Sullivan Ballou, 2nd Rhode Island Volunteers, wrote home to his wife in Smithfield.

\*\*\*\*\*

July 14, 1861 Camp Clark, Washington DC

Dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days - perhaps tomorrow. And lest I should not be able to write you again I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I am no more.

I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the government and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing - perfectly willing - to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but omnipotence can break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly with all those chains to the battlefield. The memory of all the blissful moments I have enjoyed with you come crowding over me, and I feel most deeply grateful to God and you, that I have enjoyed them for so long. And how hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes and future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and see our boys grown up to honorable manhood around us.

If I do not return, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I loved you, nor that when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name...

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless, how foolish I have sometimes been!...

But, O Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they love, I shall always be with you, in the brightest day and in the darkest night ... always, always. And when the soft breeze fans your cheek, it shall be my breath, or the cool air your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for me, for we shall meet again...

\*\*\*\*\*

Sullivan Ballou was killed a week later at the 1st Battle of Bull Run.

\*\*\*\*\*

Source: Ken Burns Civil War TV series.

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## Garbage = Ornaments ??

The district administrator has determined that garbage bags left at curbside for pickup are actually lawn ornaments prohibited by the Covenants and Restrictions.

Therefore, residents will have to listen for the distinctive ring of the garbage trucks on pickup day and hand carry their garbage bags to the trucks.

If you miss the pickup you should take your garbage to your district office and deposit it there. Be sure to get a receipt.

If you fail to comply with these requirements, you will be arrested and sent to the new District Jail (above Café Ole) where you will be tortured by a dominatrix in black leather who will show no mercy.

(April Fools)

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