

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The
Villages

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Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

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Home Warranty Dept.: Intimidation, Delay, Deceit & Sloppy Work

The POA believes that the Home Warranty Department has decided to wage a two-tiered campaign:

First, against the POA trying to discredit its reporting of the Vinyl Siding problems, and,

Second, using delay, denial, and sloppy work tactics against homeowners reporting vinyl siding or other house problems after getting an inspection.

Its tactics are to attempt to discredit the work of the Vinyl Siding committee, deny that there are any problems with Villages-built homes, discredit the home inspectors finding problem-after-problem with these homes, and capitalize on The Villages Daily Sun as a propaganda machine for the developer. Then, the department stonewalls, denies, intimidates, stalls, and tries to focus resident attention elsewhere.

It seems that the Department is so concerned that someone might scrutinize The Villages homes and find some problems that it is trying to undermine the reputations of all home inspectors through articles in the Daily Sun. It appears that this is an effort to discourage residents from having their homes inspected by outside companies.

In two articles by Gary Corsair published in the Daily Sun on Wednesday, November 21st and Sunday, November 25th, Mr. Dennis Stradinger, manager of the Home Warranty Department, refers to these home inspectors as "so-called inspectors" because Florida does not require certification for this occupation.

We think Mr. Stradinger is indulging in a bit of scare-mongering. Most home inspectors are well-qualified, experienced, and conscientious professionals, who come by their credentials honestly, regardless of whether the state certifies their occupation.

Take AmeriPro, for example. This is an independent home inspection firm from outside of the area that the POA asked to get involved. Its qualifications include certification by both ASHI (American Society of Home Inspectors) and FABI (Florida Association of Building Inspectors), and it is a Certified General Contractor (CGC #058730) and Licensed Engineer. It is a member of SBCCI (Standard Building Code Congress Int'l.) and is a 203k Consultant.

With over 25,000 inspections completed throughout the state in over 15 years in

business, this company is well-qualified to inspect homes. Those of you who want to know more can visit its website at www.ameriproinspect.com. With credentials like these, we don't think that this firm should be labeled "so-called" as a way to denigrate their capabilities or services.

But certification is not the only thing we're looking for in a builder or an inspector. Certification is not the same thing as conscientiousness. In our opinion, conscientiousness on the part of a worker, a contractor, or an inspector are just as important as the piece of paper in their wallet or on their wall. And AmeriPro has proven that they are conscientious in performing inspections.

AmeriPro provides a thorough, written report with photographs of issues it feels need the homeowner's attention. They do not do repairs or refer "preferred" contractors, nor do they recommend contractors "in good standing" as does the Warranty Department. Contrary to what Mr. Corsair's articles imply, bona fide inspectors have nothing to gain by "finding 'problems.'"

Mr. Stradinger knows well that hundreds of homes have had vinyl siding problems and many also have framing problems. His department has sent crews out to do the repairs, sometimes as many as six times for the same house. We are talking about building a house right. And there's more to it than whether the structure will collapse in a tornado.

We have had reports from homeowners who have been told by Home Warranty reps that there is nothing wrong with their home or that the repairs have already been made. Yet when our Siding Committee volunteers look at the same home they find many workmanship flaws. Why aren't the Home Warranty reps pointing out the same things and correcting them? This would be the responsible and the honorable thing to do.

And why would Sumter County Building Official Bob Kegan, also quoted in Mr. Corsair's article, say that home inspectors finding issues in "cosmetic areas" is "creating a problem" for them? Home inspectors seem to be finding problems in many important areas, from what homeowners tell us.

And just because some of a homeowner's concerns may not be code-related does not mean those concerns should be disregarded. For example, the home with split insulation batts (code violation or not?), or ground wire and vent duct not hooked up (code violation or not?). Is better that these problems remained undetected?

Who is really creating a problem here? Isn't it the builder and inspectors who let these things slide by? As for "cosmetic areas," why wouldn't the county building department back up the Florida Building Code that says siding should be applied in accordance with manufacturers' instructions? How is bringing up any of these issues "creating a problem?" Perhaps the Building Officials, along with the builders, should be looking for a solution to improve quality control.

Our question for Mr. Morse, Mr. Kegan and Mr. Stradinger: Do you feel that residents of The Villages should accept shoddy workmanship just because their home is unlikely to collapse in a tornado? Why does Mr. Stradinger seem so set on keeping these inspectors out of The Villages? His protestations and name-calling are suspicious.

And, while we're discussing qualifications, we'd like to know more about Mr. Stradinger's, as well as those of Mr. Locke, the head inspector, Home Warranty Department.

It certainly appears that The Villages Home Warranty Department doesn't want anyone looking closely at their work.

Why? If there are few or no problems to find, as the Daily Sun articles suggest, The Villages should welcome and encourage inspections by independent, well-qualified inspectors. The developer and contractors should be constantly seeking to improve the quality of our homes rather than trying to hide problems by denying their existence.

If The Villages Home Warranty Department is so concerned about residents spending money "needlessly," as the second article indicates, perhaps The Villages should have given us a better quality product to begin with-or fixed the problems we bring to their attention without name-calling, arguments, evasions and denials-then we wouldn't need to spend money to back up our observations with qualified inspectors. Perhaps, if we hadn't paid top dollar for these homes, we wouldn't expect good quality workmanship.

We certainly do agree with Mr. Stradinger's statement in the first article: repairs cost "good money." But, as we said, bona fide home inspectors have nothing to gain by finding "problems." They earn the same fee regardless of what they find. And because of the potential cost of making repairs, that's all the more reason for homeowners to be diligent about locating any issues that exist and having needed repairs done as soon as possible, while your home is still under warranty, if you can.

We have to wonder why Mr. Stradinger is so adamant in both the articles about not having an inspector look at your home. Could it be because, Mr. Stradinger, you may be saving "good money" by not finding problems and not making repairs that would ultimately have to be paid for by the developer of The Villages?

Is that, perhaps, why you and your head inspector, Mr. Locke, continue to tell homeowners that there is nothing wrong with their homes when Vinyl Siding Committee volunteers are able to spot numerous problems within a few minutes?

If not, then what is your reason? Over 400 homes have been observed by our volunteers. There was not one that did not have problems. Not one. We observed these problems; we did not create them. Do you still want people to believe that we are just "troublemakers?"

Mr. Morse, Mr. Stradinger, Mr. Kegan: stop trying to focus our attention elsewhere, on tornadoes and hurricanes, assuring us our houses aren't going to collapse. Stop trying to deter home inspections. Stop the name-calling. Stop protesting so much. Just go back, fix the mess-make it right! That's customer service-Job No. 1, remember?-you said it. Then we can all move forward.

By all means, homeowners should call Home Warranty, as Mr. Stradinger suggests in the second article-but you might also want to get an independent opinion, from a reliable source, of course, or educate yourself so that you can recognize problems yourself.

For vinyl siding issues, the Vinyl Siding Committee volunteers will provide you with their observations at no charge. To make arrangements, call Eric at (352) 753-7745.

The Vinyl Siding Committee

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Support Hometown Democracy Now !

If you have been following the articles in previous Bulletins about the Hometown Democracy movement and petition, you might have considered it a tempest in a teapot, or, at the most, nothing to worry about.

Well, the issues in this debate are having an effect on you right now in your home.

The whole idea behind the Hometown Democracy movement is to bring some rational thought to the ongoing effort to develop Florida real estate. Now, local politicians make all the decisions about allowing developers to develop, develop, and develop. It is often said that local politicians (county commissioners, etc.) never saw a development plan they didn't like.

The result is more and more development, traffic-clogged roads, over-packed schools, higher taxes, muddy streets, reduced wildlife or natural areas, threatened or depleted or contaminated water supplies, and air that is often dirty, dusty, and sometimes unhealthy.

If you thought that you were insulated from all this in The Villages, think again.

One of the latest and best examples on how this affects Villagers came as a notice in our water bills last month.

First, the rates increase again. But, there was no explanation included with the bills.

Second, there is a higher rate coming for high-rate users that is intended to punish these excessive water users. Maybe this is a good idea, but, can you, the reader, see where this slippery slope is going?

Third, and most telling, we were asked to continue water-use restrictions. This applies to inside and outside use of water, and may be extended indefinitely.

Now, you ask how this relates to the Hometown Democracy movement?

Well, within the past 18-24 months, we have seen development approval of a variety of hotels/motels in our area.

There is the brand-new Waterfront Inn on Lake Sumter with about 100 rooms. Then there is the new Marriott behind the Rialto Theater with about 50 rooms. Then there is the new Hampton Inn with about another 100 or so rooms.

All these hotels rooms are nice and perhaps needed. But, can you imagine the water usage and the demands on the aquifer in central Florida right here in our own backyards due to these high water-usage facilities?

And, coming in the next few years is Freedom Pointe, a huge retirement and senior living facility. Can you imagine the water requirements for this immense building?

Our local politicians approved these development projects.

And, who has to bear the brunt of the sacrifices for the excessive water usage?

You, the residents of this community are hit with water-use restrictions right in your own homes.

Hometown Democracy wants to put the power to approve these development projects right back in the hands of the residents of a community.

Hometown Democracy wants to take the power to approve out of the hands of the politicians, who never saw a development project they didn't like.

If the Hometown Democracy referendum is approved in November, any significant deviation from a community's development plan would have to be approved by voters.

This doesn't mean that development will stop. Worthwhile projects will be approved. But, developers will have to make the case to the affected voters about roads, schools, water, taxes, air, etc. If they can make a reasonable and compelling case for their proposed development, then voters should see the benefits and the rationale for approval.

So, you can see that the Hometown Democracy proposal is not some foreign proposal that has no relevance to you and your life in The Villages. It addresses issues that significantly affect you and your way of life right here in The Villages.

The Hometown Democracy website can be found at its internet location:

<http://www.FloridaHometownDemocracy.com>

You can see the petition there, download a copy, and sign and return it. Please, consider doing it now. The time for gathering signatures on this petition is rapidly drawing to a close. You need to act now.

Your quality of life in Florida is literally at stake in this debate. And, the Hometown Democracy movement needs your support and contributions -- today.

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POA Elections

The annual POA elections for officers and directors was held at the November general membership meeting. The membership elected these positions in an open-meeting election rather than having these appointed by the board of directors in a closed meeting as is the case with the VHA elections.

Joe Gorman was re-elected as President. Mary Paulsboe was re-elected as Secretary. Frank Carr was re-elected Treasurer.

Re-elected as directors were Jack Ryan, Marty Rothbard, and Lynton Goulder.

In commenting on the election, President Joe Gorman thanked the membership for their vote of confidence and support over the years. He mentioned that it is an honor and privilege to serve the membership on the POA Board. Gorman is beginning an

unprecedented seventh term as president.

Please join in congratulating these elected POA officials for their decisions to volunteer their time and effort in support of your POA.

We still have director positions open for any member wanting to be more active in the POA. Call Joe Gorman at 259-0999 for details.

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The December Meeting Of the POA is In Laurel Manor

The next POA general membership meeting will be Wednesday, December 19, in the Laurel Manor Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m.

This is the annual Christmas party and we plan a special treat. We also will have the swearing-in ceremony for the officers and directors elected in the November meeting. We will also have the induction of Hall of Fame honorees. A special speaker has not been scheduled for this holiday party time.

We also plan to provide an update on the activities of the Vinyl Siding Committee.

If you haven't been to one of our meetings in the past, please join us on December 19. Coffee and donuts afterwards make for a nice social time. And, the discussions and opportunity to meet fellow Villagers add up to a thought-provoking and interesting evening.

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Journalism or Propaganda?

We were unhappy to read the recent article by Gary Corsair in the Wednesday, November 21st Daily Sun, "Village Homes are Built to Last." We feel this article was published because the POA has been recommending that homeowners may want to have home inspections performed by independent inspectors due to our Vinyl Siding Committee members' observations about sloppy workmanship.

It is our opinion that the Sun article undermines the reputations of all home inspectors

while artfully misdirecting the readers' attention to wind code issues-not the sloppy workmanship issues that we have been writing about all these months.

We have never stated or implied that any structural collapse can be expected or that hurricane codes are not being met, simply that there is no excuse for shoddy workmanship or disregard for manufacturers' installation instructions. Since there is no specific code for vinyl siding, the Florida Building Code simply states that vinyl siding is to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions (R703.11).

Vinyl Siding Committee members have often seen the siders' blatant disregard for the installation manuals of manufacturers.

For example, finish trim belongs on every vinyl-sided home. Just because Villages contractors did not want to use finish trim in the past does not mean that it wasn't required or needed. It should be installed for any homeowner that requests it.

The POA sought out an extremely well-qualified independent inspection company from outside of the area to recommend to Villages residents if they wish to have their home inspected. AmeriPro is not the only company fully qualified, but we have confidence in their credentials (detailed elsewhere in this issue) and their ability.

Encouraging homeowners to have home inspections is not scare-mongering as Mr. Corsair's article states. Home inspectors earn the same fee whether or not they find any problems with your home. An ethical inspection firm is not trying to sell you repairs like the water purifier salesman referred to in the article. They simply bring problems or potential problems to the homeowners' attention. And they will indicate whether each problem is a code issue or not.

Some examples of the many problems found in the attic of one home include crushed vents and sagging ductwork, which caused restricted air flow, and batts of insulation split horizontally rendering them less effective, causing energy waste and increasing homeowner costs.

Are we to believe that an engineer specified this or an inspector looked at it? How about the gas line ground wire that was never attached? Or the dryer vent that was never hooked up? These are serious safety issues, and it's very difficult to imagine that an inspector ever actually looked at the home and approved it before it was sold. But the homeowner was told they did.

We could go on, but residents need to understand that they must weigh the benefits of an independent inspection with the cost.

We feel that Mr. Corsair is being irresponsible and a discredit to professional journalists everywhere in trying to dissuade homeowners from having an inspection, or to refer to homeowners' concerns as "unjustified."

Mr. Corsair, in the interest of objective journalism, why is there not one word in your articles discussing the other side of the story? For example, the difficulty many residents have had in trying to get needed repairs done-and done correctly. Or perhaps interview residents who have had their requests for repairs denied by the contractors or have had to call repeatedly for repairs to be done over because they were incorrect or incomplete? How about the homeowner who was told to fix it himself? Those that were treated rudely by Home Warranty personnel; or those that were told by Warranty that repairs were completed but were still found to be incorrect by Siding Committee volunteers?

And, Mr. Corsair, why did you never contact any of the Vinyl Siding Committee to get the other side of the story? Members of the Vinyl Siding Committee would be willing to

meet with you and show you some homes with problems so you can see for yourself what we are talking about.

Unfortunately, the POA looks on the Daily Sun as being just a propaganda sheet for the developer. And, we feel Mr. Corsair is looking more and more like a cheerleader for the developer rather than a reputable, professional journalist.

The POA Bulletin is the only publication in which these concerns can truly be voiced. If we don't stand up for ourselves, no one will do it for us. We hope you will join in our efforts to make The Villages an even better place to live.

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Need to Return Materials

The Vinyl Siding Committee requests that anyone who still has one of the Alcoa Installation Manuals please return it to a Committee member or the POA so we can pass the information along to others. Call Eric at (352) 753-7745 if someone needs to pick it up. We frequently receive requests for this information from homeowners who want to learn more about proper installation.

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Inspections: Home Warranty Dept. Scare Tactics

The Tuesday, Nov. 27, 2007, issue of the Daily Sun carries an article by Gary Corsair, stating that the "My Safe Florida Home" grants are not available to Villages residents. Thus, the article implies, Villagers are wasting their time getting the Wind Mitigation Inspection.

This is a good example of a misleading Daily Sun article that deflects resident attention away from the main issue.

The Daily Sun is right that the State program grants are probably not available to Villagers. We never said they were. We think it unlikely that the State grants that were

designed to help improve, strengthen, and protect vulnerable homes, most of which are on the coasts, would be available to us in our inland residences.

The point of the POA discussions about the program was that reductions in our home insurance bills would be available to homes in The Villages which meet certain requirements for sturdy home construction. All of this to be determined by the FREE Wind Mitigation Inspections.

The problem arose when the state legislature allowed insurance companies to give premium reductions to homes that qualify under the inspection guidelines. However, the insurance companies didn't know which homes qualified. So, they just increased premiums to all homeowners figuring that the owners of homes that qualify would eventually provide proof through an inspection that their homes did in fact qualify for the reduction.

But, the insurance companies were lax in telling homeowners that they needed the inspection to qualify. In the mean time, the insurance companies collected the higher premiums.

Thanks should go to our Vinyl Siding Committee and the AmeriPro company for telling us about the program. Especially the part about the inspections being free and paid for by the State.

We know of several homeowners who got premium refunds of \$300-\$500 after the inspections showed that their homes qualified for the refund.

But, if you read the Daily Sun article, you read about: unqualified inspectors, additional inspection charges, voiding your warranty, exploitation by inspectors, bogus inspections, inexperienced inspectors, confusing inspections, etc.

You also hear about the high quality of homes built in The Villages and all the inspections that these go through by Villages and County inspectors. That sounds reassuring, until you realize how shoddy the workmanship is on some of The Villages-built homes, especially on the vinyl siding issue, and how lax the inspection process is.

So, please, read any Daily Sun articles on these issues with a good deal of skepticism because the Daily Sun has shown its stripes as a propaganda machine for the developer and its reporter, Gary Corsair, has shown himself, we believe, to be unprofessional in reporting just one side of a biased story.

And, get that Wind Mitigation Inspection - it could save you a good deal of money.

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Robert Locke Head Inspector Home Warranty

Mr. Robert Locke, the head inspector for the Warranty Department, apparently does his job well. That is to say, he excels at talking residents out of repairs that are clearly needed when it comes to the siding installations here in The Villages.

Mr. Locke, we believe, is a smooth talker, indeed. Just think, if he can convince all the homeowners who complain about problems that there's nothing wrong, Home Warranty won't have to fix anything!

WHY IS MR. ROBERT LOCKE STILL TELLING HOMEOWNERS THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WHEN SIDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS CAN FIND MANY FLAWS ON THE SAME HOMES WITHIN A FEW MINUTES OF OBSERVATION???

The Vinyl Siding Committee strongly suggests that Mr. Robert Locke attend the vinyl siding classes that we are told are now required for all installation personnel, AND THEN APPLY THE CORRECT PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES when conducting inspections. Maybe if he pays attention, he will start to see the obvious problems. Maybe he will then do the honorable thing and have the problems fixed properly, instead of pretending they don't exist

HOW MANY LAYERS OF EVASION AND DENIALS do homeowners have to fight through to get the proper fixes done???. Hasn't The Villages learned yet that it's better to do it right in the first place, or at least to own up and correct inferior workmanship instead of defending it and trying to get homeowners to overlook the mess?

We know of more than one home that had the vinyl siding repaired six times before they got it right. Siding Committee members are also looking at homes after repairs are supposedly finished. **WHY** is there still a problem? **WHY** do homeowners have to make callbacks so many times? **WHY** are they still being told that nothing is wrong, or that it has been fixed, when all it takes is a good eye to see the truth?

In a recent instance, Mr. Locke visited a home on St. George Avenue following a string of repair callbacks. He told the homeowners nothing was wrong, the repairs had been made and they would not be back. In addition, the homeowners have told us that certain Home Warranty personnel were nasty and disrespectful to them on the phone.

Luckily, this was a Carter built home. A Siding Committee member marked the home and listed 2 pages of the flaws that still remained, and Mr. Carter came out to look. He agreed that the home did indeed require further repairs and that all the listed items needed to be corrected. Finally, this home will get fixed! And that is because this one builder has the integrity to be honest about what he sees and to do what is right.

But the question remains: WHY DID MR. LOCKE, ON BEHALF OF HOME WARRANTY, TELL THE HOMEOWNER NOTHING WAS WRONG AND REFUSE TO DO THE PROPER REPAIRS?

Whatever happened to honesty and straight answers?

Whatever happened to standing behind your product?

Whatever happened to the "quality-built" image we had of The Villages?

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AmeriPro Responds

Michael Rowan, President and CEO of AmeriPro Inspection Corporation, confirms that like any industry, including the building industry, there are good companies and there are bad companies.

The inspection industry is more targeted, however, by builders defending their products, because it is unregulated. The fact remains however that professional inspection companies are exceptionally trained, continue to train, and strive to provide a better service every time. With over 50,000 satisfied customers since 1995 in the Florida market, AmeriPro has done their fair share to ensure they are providing a valued service to every one of our customers both in terms of customer service and peace of mind.

"As professional inspectors, we abide by the standards of practice of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), the nation's leading home inspection association, and the Florida Association of Building Inspectors (FABI), Florida's leading home inspectors' association," Rowan stated.

Michael Rowan is past president of the Florida ASHI, Director of both FABI and Florida ASHI and has spent many more years in leadership positions and committees to better the inspection industry overall, including the recent home inspection legislation committees.

"We do not perform any repairs nor do we benefit from the repairs that are found. This is a complete conflict of interest and not allowed by our standards of practice" Rowan states. "We are there to conduct an unbiased third party inspection, based on the visible conditions present at that time. That is it. We are not emotionally attached and if there is an issue or potential issue it will be recorded and reported."

Rowan also stated that he had a constructive meeting with the developers recently about the inspections being conducted. In a report to AmeriPro from the developer, there were only a handful of issues that were in dispute or where they requested the wording of the reports to be changed based on information they provided to AmeriPro. Rowan stated that some of these issues were opinion based and while the developer may not be in agreement with, they will remain on the reports should they become problems down line.

Please contact AmeriPro at its Internet address: <http://www.chooseameripro.com/>

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Vinyl By The Book

Let's just quote the 2004 Florida Residential Building Code, R703.11: "Vinyl Siding shall comply with ASTM 3679 and is permitted to be used in exterior walls in accordance with the manufacturer's approved installation instructions."

We can show residents the manuals from both Alcoa, the manufacturer of the siding materials used here at The Villages, as well as VSI, the Vinyl Siding Institute. Siding jobs here in The Villages are still NOT being installed IN ACCORDANCE WITH MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS. Repairs are still NOT being done in accordance with instructions, either.

Villages residents are getting "lip service" from Home Warranty instead of customer service. Some contractors are REFUSING to follow manufacturer's published installation instructions or the Florida Building Code.

Why are we STILL getting STORIES, EXCUSES and DENIALS? Todd King just REFUSED a proper repair requested by a homeowner regarding proper lapping of siding panels and complete installation of finish trim/undersill. This is NOT ACCEPTABLE. On another home, needed repairs that were approved by the General Contractor were not performed by the subs, yet the homeowner was told that the work was finished.

We are tired of this deceit.

The Vinyl Siding Committee

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From the POA Website Forum \$100 Wind Inspections

Nov 15: Someone is making a lot of money charging people \$100 for a siding inspection. It doesn't seem right ... especially when residents can get a free inspection. People are now scared to death that their siding is going to fall off their home. Was that the purpose of the POA's "watch dog" approach? To scare people? I hope not.

Editor's Note: At this time, residents should not be paying for the Wind Mitigation Inspection. The State of Florida set up a program, with certified inspectors, in which the State will pay the inspectors for performing a FREE inspection. There is no charge to homeowners for this inspection.

Unfortunately, there are local inspectors who are NOT certified by the State and charge approximately \$100 for the inspection. Homeowners can use these inspectors, but they will have to pay the inspection fee.

Second Thoughts On Recycling

Whoa !! Wait a minute !!

Let's spend some time thinking through in more detail this matter of Recycling before we get locked into something we may not really want !!

The basic proposal that appears to be close to implementation now includes the following:

- Once-a-week curbside pickup of a special bag we must purchase and into which we put all recyclables (paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, and aluminum cans),
- Only one pickup a week (rather than two) of all other household trash,
- An additional monthly charge on our trash bill of \$2.00,
- No passback to residents of any profits on the sale of the recycled materials.

This decision about whether to recycle or not is being made by the developer of The Villages. This is because all Villagers agreed to give the developer the exclusive (and assignable) right in our home's purchase agreement to collect our residential solid waste.

Recycling is a good way to do our part to make a better world. However, let's be smart, not foolish, in how we do this.

We have no problem with the idea of putting all recyclables into a bag for once-a-week curbside pickup. This seems a reasonable way to do things without requiring specialized trucks, containers, or procedures.

However, only once-a-week pickup for basic household trash is not a good idea. One of the reasons we have twice-a-week pickup now is that garbage deteriorates quickly in our heat and the smell can quickly get overpowering. Stretching out the pickup to once a week will aggravate the situation. And, if you miss a pickup, you have to hold trash two weeks rather than a few days for another pickup. This is not a good idea.

On the matter of the additional \$2.00 a month charge, why do we have to pay this when we will get one less general trash pickup a week? The additional \$2.00 fee is directed at the recycling effort; thus, the trash company will charge the same monthly fee and have the regular pickup effort and cost cut in half. Remember, also, that the tipping charge at a landfill will be reduced by the weight of recyclable materials that no longer have to be dumped in a landfill.

So, the trash company gets its workload and costs reduced by 50%, gets its landfill tipping charge reduced by x%, and gets an extra \$2.00 (a 12.9% increase) monthly.

Something is wrong here.

Now, what about the profits on the sale of recycled materials (paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, and aluminum cans)? Who gets that?

Please don't try to tell us that there is no profit on recycled materials. If there was no profit, then no company would be doing it.

Currently, newspapers are recycled by the local churches; aluminum cans by the Lions Club and a few others. These organizations would not be doing recycling if there was no profit in it. Incidentally, these activities can continue quite nicely, thank you, if we don't decide to recycle under this proposal.

So, if there is profit in the recycling business, then Villagers should participate in those profits. If there are no profits, then that is what the \$2.00 a month is for. If that does not cover it, then maybe we shouldn't be doing recycling in the first place.

Ok, how do we resolve these issues?

First, we ask that the appropriate agencies governing the recycle permit have public hearings that will allow full disclosure and give residents an opportunity to understand, question, and comment. We know the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) is involved and we ask that it have open hearings before issuing a permit for the recycling.

Second, we ask that the RAC (the Resident Advisory Council in The Villages) also have open meetings to address this issue. The RAC might decline because it was formed to only address Amenity issues. However, it is an advisory body and should consider this question of vital interest to all residents. The RAC can advise the developer on the resident's thoughts on this important issue.

Third, we ask that the trash removal company (OMI) disclose all pertinent financial information for review. We need to know what is done with the roughly \$1 million a year coming out of the \$2.00 monthly fee increase. And, we need to know what revenues come from the sale of the recycled materials and what expenses are involved with the recycling process.

In summary, recycling is a worthwhile idea that we should seriously consider. However, we as a community should insist on full disclosure and the opportunity to discuss this proposal in an open community forum before we decide whether to proceed.

Good ideas can tolerate open discussion of the pertinent facts and we don't need to have the wool pulled over the eyes of residents. And, we don't need backroom decisions forced upon us.

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Florida Hometown: The Final Push

Never before have the developers been so terrified of a simple reform that will finally begin to turn the tide and make growth decisions accessible to the electorate. We are under attack from all quarters by developers because the power structure is so threatened by the simple act of people voting!

Will we get to the ballot? That's the big question. We can with your help - if you will continue to get signatures on petitions a priority for these last few weeks of the year. Donations are urgently needed - from \$5.00 to \$500.00 - all to be spent on petitions. This opportunity missed would be tragic. A reform like this will not come again.

We have submitted over 500,000 petitions to the supervisors of elections for validation. Some of those are rejected so we must collect more so as to net the required 611,000 total.

Please, please help put this on the ballot. Send all petitions in weekly and then send more¹/₄.and send donations! This labor of love isn't cheap.

Lesley Blackner
President and Founder, HTD

HELP SAVE WHAT'S LEFT OF FLORIDA. LET THE PEOPLE VOTE to control growth!

Help put HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY on the 2008 ballot.

Please download and SIGN THE PETITION at the internet website:
<http://www.floridahometowndemocracy.com/>

PO Box 636, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32170-0636.

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Florida Hometown Newspaper Article

Here is a reprint of a news article entitled Community Voices published in the Daytona Beach News Journal on November 05, 2007:

Ripostes to Pro-Growth Alarmists By ANDREW BALEE

Living in Florida, a state that has more than quadrupled in population since I was born (no, I'm not the oldest man alive), has made me grow reluctantly accustomed to seeing things change: Wooded areas that I once played in have become gated communities; beaches you could drive along have severely restricted access; open ocean vistas have been blocked by walls of condominiums . . . And let's not forget the traffic congestion.

Therefore, it was with surprise and delight that I read about the Hometown Democracy petition for a constitutional change requiring voter approval of all Comprehensive Plan amendments by local governments. Having been fooled by many development schemes dressed in sheep's clothing, however, I waited for the catch. ("We will protect

this, but develop the heck out of that" etc.) But, I don't see a catch. The fact that the major (and minor) development interests in the state are scrambling to discredit this idea speaks volumes in favor of it.

Long-term planning, zoning and comprehensive land use decisions weren't made arbitrarily. Local governments spent thousands of dollars on consultants and no small amount of time deciding their own vision of the future of their communities. No wonder that so many residents have watched in frustration as these plans were changed, on a daily basis, as developers trotted in teams of lawyers and advocates, often either dazzling or simply fooling our local leaders. ("This 12-story tower on the beach will really do a lot to enhance the area," said one straight-faced lawyer to a public hearing in Flagler Beach, as the locals hissed and booed.)

I don't point fingers at the local leadership: They are ill equipped to deal with the big bucks that big developers can spend to forward their projects. The threat of a multimillion dollar lawsuit, which would bankrupt their community, often serves to wither all resistance. That's why an amendment to the Florida Constitution is so badly needed: It gives the local commissioners a way out.

Don't be fooled by the arguments against it. Here are a few, with the obvious ripostes:

Environmentalists are against it. But not many, I'll bet. The chief argument here is that agricultural landowners could (under existing rules) build one house on every five acres. So how would Hometown Democracy's amendment make that worse? *"We would have to have an election every time we needed a hospital, or police station or school built. We're growing fast, but not that fast. When's the last time you heard somebody say "we need a bigger hospital and we need it tomorrow"?"*

Most of these public facilities are planned over pretty large periods of time, plenty of time to wait until the next regular election. That 600-unit development in what used to be woods, however, needs immediate attention? Give me a break.

But the amendment would wrest control from our elected officials and give it to special electors: Yes, but those mysterious electors are actually only registered voters. It's not the Inquisition, it's plain old democracy. And believe me, it would take a lot of pressure off the local governments, freeing them up for designating scenic highways, installing pretty paving bricks all over and other necessary stuff.

It would harm development in the state: More likely it would harm over-development. I mean, how stupid do they think we are, anyway? (Wait, don't answer that one.)

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From the POA Website Forum: Recycling

Nov 10: This is my first time to view this Forum. Saw it in the POA Bulletin and investigated. Found it interesting and entertaining. RECYCLING: Undoubtedly a good thing. Some people are rabid about it. They'll travel as far as Ocala (maybe farther) to

dispose of their trash. St. Timothy and other churches accept newspapers for recycling. The Lions Club collects soda cans at the postal drops. All of this is a money maker for them, and free to the public. Now (I assume) we are going to have to buy the plastic bags, and pay an increased trash pickup bill for the "privilege" of sending our trash to someone else that will make money from it. Even if we don't participate, our pickup bill will increase. I prefer to "donate" my trash to local collectors who charge me nothing and uses the proceeds for charitable endeavors. And...they are accessible by golf cart.

Nov 13: Way to go. Why are we going to have to work separating recyclables and pay more for pickup in order to provide raw materials to a company who is going to make a profit. They should at least give us an incentive...lower trash fees.

Nov 25: Remember that the paper and magazines collected at St Timothy's benefits the St Vincent De Paul Society, a vital charity in he area, helping the needy. So, please don't send your papers and mags to the recycling company.... Bring them to St Tims.

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From the POA Website Forum: POA Supports Idea: Another Post Office

Nov 8: When is the POA going to endorse the effort to get a new Post Office for the Village?

Nov 11: I only wonder what a Post Office can do that The Villages Pack & Ship stores can't. In fact for the variety of supplies they beat the P.O. Just a question - please advise.

Nov 11: The first thing you need to do is compare Pack & Ship rates with either the USPS or UPS. Pack and ship has a very significant mark up on shipping costs. As far as all their supplies, compare them to the office supply stores or Wal-Mart. Two years ago I wanted to send a package to PA. The [Pack and Ship] cost was \$17.00 more than USPS. Be cautious, very cautious of their rates. The question is why the POA is not endorsing the effort to get one ... could it be because the Home Owners Association does support the effort?

Nov 11: In the previous entry: "The question is why the POA is not endorsing the effort to get one.....could it be because the Home Owners Association does support the effort?" Based on the POA's outright and vocal hostility towards the HOA, I can understand this question. However, in view of an obvious (to me) need for another post office for the Villagers, I would hope the POA steps forward and helps us toward that end. By the way, I do not understand the position the POA has taken towards the HOA. They are two totally different organizations with totally different methods of operation. Why the POA feels it should continually chastise the HOA is beyond me.

Nov 11: Want the POA to endorse the effort to get a new post office? Using what as their rationale?

Nov 12: A lot of people don't understand why the POA position is so hostile ... I guess it sells papers. [Now the previous entry] comes along with some sand for the gears. "And do you actually know how many want The Villages to have its own post office?" Won't the drive to get one demonstrate that. (Do I sense some negativity here?) The only problem I see to getting a new post office will be the endless debate as to where it should be built. That should be interesting.

Nov 15: I have heard many people indicate they would like another post office. I do not necessarily want "the Villages to have its own post office." I would just like to see another one somewhere between the one on the historic side and the one in Oxford. I believe the one in Oxford dates way back and the one on the historic side has been around since The Villages was much smaller. Meantime the area has grown tremendously. It seems to make sense there is a need for another. Where would it be built? I believe the cost of property has skyrocketed along with the growth in population. Maybe the POA could include an item concerning a new post office in one of their surveys.

Editor's Note: The POA does endorse the effort to get another post office in The Villages. It is just an issue that has not come up in the recent past, so we haven't commented on the proposal recently. We did miss the opportunity to include a question about the post office in the current, ongoing Survey. Sorry....

On the other comment about the alleged POA hostility toward the VHA (we assume this is the HOA referred to): Our thoughts about the VHA are this:

1. The VHA is a worthwhile organization in this community that makes some worthwhile contributions to the overall quality of life here in The Villages;
2. The VHA's blind support of the developer, and its ties to the developer, have made it unresponsive to residents on major issues of Residents' Rights.
3. The VHA president refuses to resign even though he has a serious conflict of interests, as shown recently with his blind support of the developer over the vinyl siding issue.

On the final comment that the POA and the VHA are "two totally different organizations..." we agree. The POA is for Residents' Rights and the VHA is for the best interests of the developer.

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Village Greens: Recycling Update

Looks like we will not see recycling before January first. The recycling permit will be considered by the DEP no later than November 30th. Once approved, The Villages will then let us know when it will start.

Thank you for all your calls about last months article on recycling.

Here are some questions ... and answers.

Do I have to wash out the bottles and cans? yes

Do all the recyclables go in one bag? yes

Where can I get the clear plastic bags? They are called Janitorial bags. I know that Sam's carried them. Once there is a need here the stores will start to carry them.

How often will the regular trash be picked up? Regular trash once a week, recyclables once a week, lawn cuttings once a week.

Can I still take my papers to the church or synagogue? Yes

Can I still give my cans to the Lions Club? Yes

Sue Michalson 259-1426

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Letter to the Editor: Recycling: The Other Side

It's ironic that the article on recycling ("Recycling Now! Village Greens") in the November issue ran alongside the main article on some residents being deprived of the right to vote in Village affairs. Why don't we residents have the right to vote on whether we want recycling?

There is another side to the recycling issue that isn't being discussed. When I moved into my home up north years ago, I had trash pickup every Monday and Thursday, just as I now have here. The county then made Thursdays a "recycling day," and trash was picked up only on Mondays. I lost a trash and garbage pickup day.

I later mentioned to an employee at the county recycling office that the politicians had promised the county would be paid well for the recycled material. She said, "Oh, no, they lied. It costs quite a bit to have it picked up and processed. It's very labor intensive."

The writer of the recycling article informed me that we really will lose a trash/garbage pickup day. Our garbage will fester in my garage for a week. I was also told that our additional household cost would be less than \$2.00 a month. From my experience with recycling, I doubt that figure. Recycling is very labor intensive and expensive.

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Fourth Annual POA Resident Survey

Below is the Fourth POA Residents' Survey. All residents are asked to spend a few minutes filling out this form, but, please, just do it once.

Please rate each question with your opinion on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 would be your highest, best, or most satisfactory rating - all the way down to 1 which would be your lowest, worst, or least satisfying rating. A rating of 5 would be an average, or middle-of-the-road, answer. If you have no opinion or no information about a question, or it does not apply to you, please put in "NR" (No Rating) for that question.

Then, either bring this form to the next POA membership meeting or you can mail it to: The POA Survey, P.O.Box 1657, Lady Lake, FL 32158.

Thanks in advance for your help in completing this survey. Results and commentary will be published in a future issue of the POA Bulletin.

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POA Survey Form

Click [here](#) for a printable version of this form.

Rating

1. _____ Entertainment Programs on the Town Squares
2. _____ Overall Safety and Security in The Villages
3. _____ Traffic in The Villages
4. _____ The Cleanliness of Villages Streets and Common Areas
5. _____ Landscaping in Common Areas throughout The Villages
6. _____ The Neighborhood/Villages Watch Services
7. _____ The Driving Situation on the Traffic Round-About Circles
8. _____ Emergency Fire Services

9. _____ Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
10. _____ The Monthly Amenity Fee
11. _____ The Villages Regional Hospital
12. _____ The Lifelong Learning Center
13. _____ Courtesy and Helpfulness of the Recreation Department Staff
14. _____ The Daily Sun Newspaper, in General
15. _____ The Daily Sun Newspaper, Objectivity of Reporting
16. _____ The Villages TV Station, in General
17. _____ The Villages Radio Station, in General
18. _____ The Reporter Newspaper
19. _____ The Property Owners' Association (POA), in General
20. _____ The POA Newsletter, The Bulletin
21. _____ The Villages Homeowners' Association (VHA), in General
22. _____ The VHA Newspaper, The Villages Voice
23. _____ The Developer of The Villages, Messrs. Gary or Mark Morse
24. _____ The SLCDD District Administrator, Mr. Pete Wahl
25. _____ The SLCDD Assistant District Administrator, Ms. Monica Andersen
26. _____ The VCCDD District Administrator, Ms. Janet Tutt
27. _____ The VCCDD Assistant District Administrator, Mr. John Rohan
28. _____ The Deed Compliance Director, Mr. Nick Xenos
29. _____ Suitability and Reasonableness of the Covenants and Restrictions
30. _____ If you live north of Highway 466, your VCCDD Government
31. _____ If you live south of Highway 466, your SLCDD Government
32. _____ The Local CDD or Government Unit in Which You Live
33. _____ If you live in Sumter County, Your Board of Commissioners
34. _____ If you live in Marion County, Your Board of Commissioners
35. _____ If you live in Lake County, Your Board of Commissioners
36. _____ If you live in the Town of Lady Lake, Your Board of Commrs.
37. _____ Condition and Administration of the Executive Golf Courses
38. _____ Condition and Administration of the Championship Golf Courses
39. _____ Greens Fees on the Championship Golf Courses
40. _____ The Priority Golf Program
41. _____ The Golf Tee Time System
42. _____ Ambassadors on the Executive Courses
43. _____ Ambassadors on the Championship Golf Courses
44. _____ Executive Golf Tee Times Reserved for the Sales Department
45. _____ Disclosure Information Given When You Bought Your House Here
46. _____ Performance and Service of the Home Warranty Department
47. _____ Use of Villages Facilities by the Charter Schools
48. _____ Resident Control of Decision-Making in your Central District
49. _____ Use of Radar to ticket Regular Golf Carts traveling over 20 mph
50. _____ Your Contributions for a state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center

General Comments: _____

Thank You ! Please, vote just once.

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Why Do Another Survey of Residents?

Some residents have asked why the POA does its periodic POA Survey when The Villages already does an annual survey and publishes partial results in the Daily Sun.

A related question is why even do a survey when most residents are perfectly happy with The Villages and wouldn't have moved here unless they were happy with what they saw.

On the first question, the POA has been disappointed with the annual survey done by The Villages. It just seems like that survey misses the opportunity to address some of the hard issues of concern to residents. We have often said that the survey seems to sidestep the important issues and whitewash the results of what is surveyed.

The POA has come to view The Villages' survey as much too general, incomplete, and lacking in enough details that can be measured on a continuing annual basis.

Hopefully, this POA Survey addresses some of these concerns. Take a look at some of the questions listed on the right. Don't you think that we should be asking these questions, getting the answers, and doing something about any problems uncovered?

On the second question, we agree that most people are happy living here. But, that doesn't mean that no issues exist that could be addressed and, if solved, would make our community an even better place in which to live.

So, let's do this POA Survey and see what we find. Let's not whitewash issues. And, let's be honest about what is good and what is not-so-good about The Villages. Maybe we can make this place better for all of us.

There are 50 questions. To complete the entire questionnaire, on two sides, should not take longer than a few minutes. Thanks in advance for helping on this survey.

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Past POA Surveys

The POA has conducted three previous Surveys. The first was conducted in late 2002 and reported on in the February, 2003, issue of the Bulletin. The second was conducted in April and May, 2004, and reported on in June, 2004. The third was conducted in October, November, and December, 2005, and reported on in January, 2006. All three of these are available for review on the POA website in the archived Bulletin section.

As we report on this 2007/2008 POA Survey in a few months, we will show comparison to the earlier Surveys where appropriate.

Rather than go into details right now on previous Surveys, and perhaps influence this year's results, let's just do these general comments listed below:

The earlier Surveys showed favorable opinions of The Villages on the general questions and various resident services.

The Villages Media Group generally showed good marks for the radio and TV station. The Daily Sun, however, didn't fare as well and was marked down for objectivity.

The golf program got so-so marks, but the executive golf program fared better.

The POA scored better than the VHA as an organization and for its newspaper.

The lowest scores in both surveys were recorded by various elements of our local governments.

Overall, the POA was pleased with the past results. But, we have been disappointed that the Central Districts didn't act on the several troubling scores or pick up the format for the annual survey done by The Villages. That is a shame because we feel The Villages' survey could benefit from the stronger format and more pointed questions used in the POA Survey.

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