

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Issue 34.08

Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

August 2008

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The POA Is Seeking New Leadership

In the POA general membership meeting on July 15, President Joe Gorman announced that the POA is in urgent need of a new generation of leadership to guide the organization for the years ahead.

The organization has always been short on qualified people and has been hampered all along with too many things to do and too few volunteers to help on the important work of the POA on behalf of all residents.

Thus, the POA needs a new generation of leadership for the years ahead.

The problem is that there are no interested individuals now standing in the wings who represent this new generation of leadership.

Gorman has put out an urgent call for individuals wanting to continue the traditions of the POA to come forward now and voice their intent to run for officer and director positions in the POA elections in November. The new leadership of POA leadership will be elected at the November general membership meeting, installed in office in December, and officially take over their duties in January, 2009.

It is possible that no qualified individuals come forward to take over the reins of the organization. If that occurs, Gorman feels that the POA Board of Directors will have to carefully assess what options are available for continuing the organization in coming years.

Several of the options to be considered offer extreme measures. And, the officers and directors of the POA recognize the significance of what might be tough and unpopular options. But, without new leadership, it will be difficult to continue the POA organization in its present form.

Gorman, in particular, has given considerably of his time and energy to the organization for almost eight years. Now, he feels it is time to get on with his life and pass the banner to others. Several of the other officers and directors have also announced their desire to move on.

The POA Board believes there are qualified individuals in The Villages who can carry the POA banner and lead the organization in the future. Now is the time for them to come forward and serve. We view this as an urgent call.

Gorman and the other board members have indicated their continuing availability for a transition period to provide guidance to the new leadership and information on the operation of the organization. Gorman will be available to continue his editing and layout activities for the Bulletin during that transition period.

The POA Board is hopeful that a new generation of leadership can be identified. If any member has an interest in considering serving as either an officer or director, please contact Joe Gorman at 259-0999 or any other board member at the numbers listed on page 15.

Gorman made another point in the membership meeting: potential new leaders of the POA should not necessarily try to emulate Joe Gorman's personality. Everybody has their own personality and will eventually establish their own working character, rapport with the membership, and way of guiding the operation. Change happens and life goes on. With good people coming forward to guide the POA, it can continue. And, no individual is indispensable to the organization.

We would ask that any member who has not renewed their membership for 2008 do so without regard for these looming changes. When we planned our operations for 2008 and developed a budget, we planned on membership renewals and new members' dues to provide funding for, essentially, the Bulletin for the whole year. If this funding were to dry up prior to the end of the year, we might not have the funding to complete publishing of the Bulletin through year-end. So, if you haven't done so already, please renew your POA membership for 2008

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Status of the Hospital Project

The POA Hospital Project is proceeding, and there is some minor progress to report at this time.

We know that both the state and the federal agencies responsible for accrediting hospitals have spent time at TVRH doing basic reviews as a result of the letters we sent to each. We haven't yet heard officially about the results of the reviews. The unofficial comments we have received suggest that the hospital has not been cited for any violations of procedures, staff training and licensing, facilities, protocols, etc.

As we hear more, we will report in the Bulletin and at the monthly POA meetings.

The pertinent and burning question now is how to resolve this situation and move forward.

The POA would like to propose the following as a way to resolve the

issues and concerns thus far uncovered:

We propose the formation of an independent review committee made up of community representatives and medical professionals not affiliated with TVRH.

This committee would review the 133 stories sent to the POA in response to our request for comments from Villagers about their experiences in the Emergency Room. The committee would assess each story and investigate the details (only with permission from the submitter of the story which we would request later).

The committee would ultimately provide a summary of its findings and suggestions for consideration by the management of The Villages Hospital and for review in our community.

The objectives of the committee for the hospital would be to:

- Assess the 133 stories and the related hospital records,
- Provide suggested direction to the hospital for any further follow-up,
- Provide feedback and suggestions in general to the hospital, etc.

The objectives of the committee for residents would be to:

- Respond to the 133 stories received thus far,
- Provide suggested direction for further follow-up,
- Help inform the community as to the use of the ER versus urgent care centers, and
- Inform residents how to evaluate medical care and how to file complaints with the appropriate officials, etc.

A reputable and knowledgeable community leader, independent of the hospital, should be recruited to act as the chairman of the committee.

The POA hopes that the management of TVRH will consider this potential committee to be an important way to address the many stories presented to us. We hope that, if and when more details of the committee's work become available, our Villages community will agree on the procedure and recognize that a sincere, thoughtful, and objective effort is being put forth.

In the final analysis, both the POA and the hospital have the same objective - to provide the best medical care available for the benefit of our residents. With the help and support of residents, and a thorough effort by this proposed committee, we hope to accomplish that.

Finally, we should make the point that the many stories we have thus far received represent only a very small percentage of the many patients already served by TVRH in the ER. The vast majority of patients served have been satisfied with the care provided. We feel that the hospital has a dedicated staff trying to do its best in often crowded and hectic surroundings. We acknowledge this effort and its worthwhile contribution to our community.

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The Next POA Meeting is on Tuesday, August 19

The next POA membership meeting will be on Tuesday, August 19, in the Laurel Manor Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m.

Please note that we are back to the Laurel Manor Recreation Center and our regularly scheduled meeting day on the third Tuesday of the month.

This month we will have an Open Forum in which you can ask any question about any Villages issue and we will attempt to answer it.

Please join us for this important meeting and coffee and donuts afterward. And, the discussion and opportunity to meet fellow Villagers add up to a thought-provoking and interesting evening. Non-members of the POA are always welcome.

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Highlights and Accomplishments of The POA Over the Past Seven Years

In the July 15 POA membership meeting, President Joe Gorman addressed a question which has often come up.

The question is: what has the POA accomplished in the past for the benefit of Villages residents?

Gorman explained in summary the major accomplishments of the POA during his presidency as including the following:

- **The Lawsuit Settlement with the Developer** - This settlement, in which the developer of The Villages contributed roughly \$43 million to the amenity funds of the residents north of highway 466, was perhaps the major accomplishment of the past seven years.

And, the POA played a major role in making this happen.

The POA used to talk about "Taxation Without Representation" to identify the fact that the VCCDD Board of Supervisors, which made all the major decisions in The Villages, was appointed by the developer, and five out of the six supervisors did not even live in The Villages. These supervisors were not elected by residents and residents could not challenge any decisions affecting residents.

With the Lawsuit Settlement, residents north of highway 466 will be able to elect their own resident supervisors on the AAC (Amenity Authority Committee) who will make all the decisions about amenity matters.

This is a significant development for Residents' Rights in The Villages. And, this is perhaps the one great accomplishment of the POA in its 34 year history.

- **Stopping the Sumter County Hospital Tax** - When our hospital expansion was being considered four years ago, residents had to vote on whether to form a taxing district to support the expansion of our hospital. The tax would have amounted to several hundred dollars a year on the average Villages home. And, 20% of the tax off the top was to be given to the developer's foundation.

The POA vigorously opposed the tax saying that our hospital never made the case that it needed the tax to fund the expansion (although it was willing to accept the tax if offered). Additionally, we opposed the idea of taxing resident to give 20% of the tax off the top to the Morse family, one of the richest families in Florida. The tax proposal was defeated in a 74% to 26% vote.

- **Expansion of The Villages Hospital** - After the hospital tax proposal was defeated, the parent corporation of our hospital, the Leesburg Regional Medical Center, considered waiting for another two years to try again to get voter approval for the hospital taxing district to fund expansion of the hospital.

The POA took the position that this was morally wrong, especially given that LRMC had the ability to proceed with its own resources, because patients would die waiting for the expansion to be completed. The POA at one point proposed that LRMC sell The Villages Hospital if it was not willing to start the expansion asap.

The Board of the LRMC eventually gave in and started the expansion which expanded the hospital from 60 to 198 beds.

- **The Nancy Lopez Pond Sinkhole** - A sinkhole developed in a pond on the developer-owned Nancy Lopez golf course. The developer proposed to have residents pay about 90% of the \$165,000 repair bill. The POA took the position that the developer should pay the bill and not burden residents to repair a pond on his golf course. We publicized and argued this point aggressively and the developer eventually agreed to pay the full repair bill.

- **Vinyl Siding** - Although this is still a continuing effort for the POA, we feel we have made substantial progress in the year-and-a-half that this issue has been open. The POA has helped to inform residents about these problems and many have taken the opportunity to get their houses repaired, thus avoiding potential serious problems. And, we remain hopeful that the developer will eventually agree to stand behind his product and fully pay for the needed remedial work.

- **The Hospital Emergency Room** - Again, this effort is still on-going. However, we have heard from over 130 residents about problems in the ER. And, we proposed a plan to hospital administrators to address the concerns and issues voiced by these 130 plus stories. With a dedicated group of medical professionals helping us, we are prepared to take this as far as necessary to achieve improvements and reforms in our hospital. We have made considerable progress thus far - but, some of the heavy lifting may still be ahead of us.

- **The Paradise Center** - This rec center was an absolute disgrace in The

Villages. It was termite and rat infested, raccoons lived in the ceiling, mold was growing in many places, wallboard and ceilings were falling down, floors were bouncy, furniture was decrepit, and the VCCDD supervisors were almost oblivious to the pleas of residents to renovate. The POA campaigned strongly with Bulletin stories, a survey of residents, and strong advocacy in VCCDD meetings. The VCCDD eventually decided to proceed with a smaller-scale renovation than advocated by the POA, but, nevertheless, suitable. Today, the Paradise Center is beautiful.

- **The Activity Policy** - The two central district governments in The Villages decided to pass an "Activity Policy" which substantially restricted our Constitutional Rights of Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Assembly. The policy required that any demonstration by two or more residents had to be approved in advance and the demonstrators had to provide a \$1 million liability policy to the central districts 30 days in advance. The POA publicized this and argued strongly against it. The central districts quickly rescinded the policy.

- **Restaurant Closings** - Although we were not successful in preventing the developer from closing the Silver Lake Club or the Chula Vista Club, both very popular with residents, we gave it a mighty try. Perhaps our advocacy on these helped us prevail when the developer, in a very heavy-handed way, tried to force the Bob Evans restaurant on residents on the east side of highway 441/27 against their will. Perhaps our efforts have also made the developer think twice about closing other popular clubs and restaurants in The Villages.

- **The Bulletin** - In 2001, the POA Bulletin was a four-page newsletter put together in a cut-and-paste operation. Now it is a fully computerized 16-page document. Back then, we published about 8,000 copies; now we publish about 33,000 copies and distribute to all areas of The Villages with our own route distribution people. Love it or hate it, people read the Bulletin to learn about many things they would never hear about from other media sources in The Villages.

- **Membership** - Seven years ago, POA membership stood at about 500-700 members and the numbers were stagnant at best. Membership has now passed 5,000.

- **The Residents' Bill of Rights** - We articulated the Residents' Bill of Rights in every issue of the Bulletin for the past seven years on page two. We feel good about this. This is our community now, not the developer's, and we have Residents' Rights.

- **The POA versus the VHA** - We think we have been successful in pointing out the essential difference between our two organizations. The POA is an independent organization which has no ties to the developer which would compromise our ability to speak out about Residents' Rights. The VHA was started with the encouragement of the developer and continues to be closely aligned with the developer. The VHA will never take a position on a Residents' Rights issue that is contrary to the will or the interests of the developer. We hope the POA legacy is that residents understand this important distinction.

- **Other Items** - In years gone by, the POA sued the developer over the developer's refusal to honor contractual promises of free amenities and utilities to some residents. The POA won that 1988-1991 lawsuit on behalf of residents. The POA was on the losing side of the mid-90s lawsuit over the use of the monthly maintenance fee (as the monthly amenity fee was called then).

- **Summary** - The POA was always there, fighting for Residents' Rights. We

won a few, and we lost a few. But, we were there, and we spoke up for our fellow residents. We were acting as the Voice of the People.

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Hospital Complaint Information

Please continue to send to the POA your stories about your experience with the Emergency Room at The Villages hospital. We have thus far received 133 stories or complaints describing the experiences and/or issues of Villagers with the ER. Thanks to all those who have chosen to tell us their stories.

We are still accepting stories, so please send us yours. These stories, all 133 of them, are a worthwhile assessment of the services of TVRH's ER. Please, tell us your story and help us address this issue.

The more stories we gather, the more comprehensive will be the review that we will be able to make. And, we may just make a difference in the quality of services provided by the hospital. We will protect your confidentiality. We will ask you specifically for permission, if later needed, to share your story with any of these investigating and review committees.

Based on many of the comments received, we can see that most people are unclear on the way to file a complaint. So, here is the listing of who, what, and where:

· **For comments about The Villages Regional Hospital, contact:**

Mr. Tim Menton
Administrator of TVRH
1451 El Camino Real
The Villages, FL 34748
Phone: 352-751-8000
tmenton@cfhalliance.org

· **For comments on LRMC or to Mr. Menton's boss, contact:**

Mr. Lee Huntley
CEO, Central Fla. Hospital Alliance
600 E. Dixie Highway
Leesburg, FL 34748
Phone: 352-323-5762
lhuntley@leesburgregional.com

· **For comments about procedures, policies, staff, and medical care in general, contact the state agency:**

Holly Hunter, Secretary
Florida Agency For Healthcare Adm.
1717 Mahan Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308
Phone: 1-888-419-3456

· **For comments about procedures, policies, staff, and medical care in general, contact the federal agency:**

Mark Chassin, MD, President
The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Blvd.
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
Phone: 630-792-5000
www.jointcommission.org

· **For comments about the actions of specific doctors and nurses, go to:**

Dr. Ana M. Viamonte Ros, Secretary
The Florida Department of Health
2585 Merchants Row Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Phone: 850-245-4444
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us>

If you do decide to file a complaint with any of these locations, please also copy the POA on any correspondence so that we may coordinate our activities on these matters

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Duties of a POA Director

In light of the POA Board's decision to seek new leadership for the POA, the question has come up as to what is involved in being a director of the POA.

POA Directors are elected by the membership in the November general membership meeting. Nominations are opened at the October meeting.

A POA director has to plan on attending monthly the general membership meeting and the additional POA Board meeting. There may be projects or duties coming out of those meetings.

In addition, each Board member will generally take on at least one special project during the annual term. These special projects usually take only a reasonable amount of time during the month.

The opportunity to do more is always there because we have a variety of projects that could be done, if only we had the volunteers...and the time.

Overall, however, one might find that the time requirement is less than one might think and the rewards are truly satisfying. And, you have an opportunity to contribute to a significant and meaningful activity in The Villages.

If you would like to consider serving as a POA Director, please call Joe

Gorman at 259-0999 or speak with any director listed on page 15 of this Bulletin.

Next month we will have a description of the duties of the POA President.

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Pruitt vs. O'Toole And the Daily Sun

The POA has been concerned that the primary election race for the Republican seat being vacated by Hugh Gibson because of term limits would eventually suffer the yellow journalism of the Daily Sun. Yellow journalism is defined as: mis-representations, smear tactics, lies, innuendo, unethical or unprofessional practices, and highly slanted and biased reporting.

Well, it's happening now. Right here in our own community. And the Daily Sun's yellow journalism tactics would make William Randolph Hearst proud.

We saw the developer's media machine hitting on all fours in the race two years ago against the two independent Sumter County commissioner candidates. The Sun didn't miss an opportunity to hammer the commissioners with false facts, lies, innuendo, and one smear after another. Now, against Will Pruitt, it's like deja vu all over again.

Will Pruitt is running against Marlene O'Toole in the August 26 Republican primary. Pruitt has no ties to our developer; O'Toole is the chosen and blessed candidate of the developer.

Whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, or whether you are for Pruitt or O'Toole, you have to be shocked at the outrageous and slanted reporting of the Daily Sun.

We think that Matt Dixon, a Daily Sun reporter, has taken on the task of destroying the candidacy of Pruitt in favor of O'Toole. He's been taking small bits of fact, ignoring contrary information, and presenting his findings (?) about Pruitt in the most damaging light possible. We have heard of Dixon's practice of accepting damaging and negative facts without question and ignoring reasonable and factual explanations to the contrary.

The people now bashing Pruitt are closely associated with the developer. The first thing that should come to one's mind is what they want or what they want to hide.

Are they concerned that the developer's influence in the Legislature might be diminished with the retirement of Hugh Gibson and the defeat of O'Toole? (Remember that it was Gibson who wrote the hospital district tax law four years ago to give 20% of the tax out of our pockets to the developer's family foundation.)

What if the developer and his associates can't get their way with favorable tax legislation, friendly CDD rules, permissive labor laws, and ineffective disclosure rules?

Are they concerned what the Pruitt "No Amnesty" policy might do to the workforce in The Villages?

Are they afraid Pruitt might be able to pass legislation to require better disclosure information for people when they purchase their homes in CDDs like The Villages?

Or are they planning to have O'Toole follow through on her pledge to do what she is told. Her chief supporters are the developer, his contractors, and employees of the developer. They will tell her what to do. She will do it. O'Toole had a feeble response at a recent political forum when given an opportunity to spell out her own program for the benefit of residents. O'Toole doesn't appear to have any good ideas of her own.

We think this yellow journalism tactic, used so successfully in the past, will backfire this time around. There are far too many intelligent residents in The Villages to be deceived with such blatant untruths. Village residents deserve better. We deserve a race that talks to the issues facing our community and the plans of each candidate to address them. Instead, Pruitt's opponent hides behind her wealthy benefactor and his "attack dog" newspaper to conceal her lack of ability, experience, and ideas.

For us residents, we should read the other newspapers circulating in The Villages for a fairer and more balance reporting of this race. And, we should view anything we read in the Daily Sun with a skeptical eye.

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How About Golf Cart Access for Everybody?

The Daily Sun ran a front page article on Sunday, June 22, entitled: "Broadening Golf Cart Access Creates Concern." The article commented on the possible use of our golf and recreation trails by outsiders. Quotes from Villages representatives and VHA officials were included. Some Villages officials see plans for increased golf cart access as an undue burden on current Villages residents.

Gary Lester, Villages Information Czar, said: "I suspect that our residents will be very concerned about opening up their recreation trails to outside traffic¹/₄. With all the challenges we already have with non-residents using our amenities and accessing our pools, executive golf courses, etc, I can't imagine our residents wanting to grant them even easier access."

Allowing outside golf cart access, he went on to say, also would hamper the community's goal of providing residents with priority golf cart parking at special

events at the town squares, Polo Club and other venues.

"That priority parking is a convenience and a privilege Villagers enjoy, and I'm not sure how they could work if just anyone can drive their golf cart into our community," Lester said.

Dan Hahnfeldt, vice-president of VHA, was quoted as saying: "If the idea of allowing golf cart access picked up steam ... the membership of the VHA would ask its leadership to take a stance against the concept in order to achieve the VHA's mission of protecting and enhancing The Villages lifestyle." Hahnfeldt said that The Villages community certainly lays out the welcome mat to visitors, but allowing others to utilize services that residents solely pay a premium for would be "an encroachment on those privileges."

We find it a bit interesting that no one has expressed any concern about the Properties of The Villages' new Bison Valley development located on CR 101 just north of highway 466. They are building homes there with golf cart garages and have provided a golf cart path from a subdivision street to Woodridge Drive so that all of their residents can access The Villages golf cart paths. These residents do not make any contribution to our amenity fund, yet they are permitted to access our recreation trails, special parking, etc.

Given the VHA's support of the developer of The Villages, we wonder if the VHA will make an exception for properties developed or encouraged by the Villages developer or will they step in here and seek some curtailment of the golf cart access from Bison Valley? Perhaps Mr. Hahnfeldt could clear this up for us.

Who knows how much additional property along Woodridge Drive the Villages developer owns that will potentially add golf cart access to The Villages? Also, how about that development on highway 42 just west of the Marion County portion of The Villages being developed by Mr. John Wise, CFO of The Villages and buddy of the Villages developer -- will that development also have golf cart access? It already has an arrangement for sewer and water service provided by our central district, which we paid for.

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Vinyl Siding: Tell It Like It Is

Our thanks to Jean Santoro-Hitch, Mary B. Farrell, Carole Hannigan, Glenn Pannell and all the many others, who took the time to write letters-to-the-editor last month and earlier to tell us about their experiences with regard to vinyl siding, the home warranty department, and other issues.

It is gratifying to know that The Vinyl Siding Committee and the POA are acknowledged and appreciated for their efforts on behalf of Villages homeowners, and for the positive results that have been achieved on many issues.

Vinyl Siding Committee volunteers have visited well over 1000 homes, which resulted in most of those homes being cited for repairs and saving the homeowners a significant amount considering the potential out-of-pocket expense for repairs in the future.

While this is by no means the end of the siding issue, and there presently appears to be some backpedaling on the extent of repairs homeowners now receive from Home Warranty. But, we are proud to have achieved some success thus far.

Remember, our success is your success. We are retired Villages residents, just like most of you, and we have been volunteering our time and experience in an effort to make things better for all -- to get the value and quality that we purchased -- for ourselves, to avoid costly repairs during our lifetimes, as well as for our children and heirs and enjoyment while we spend our Golden Years in The Villages.

The POA and all of its committee members work hard to make our community a better place and it's good to get some "positive" feedback, rather than just hearing the "negatives" about our efforts -- like being called a "troublemaker," for example....

We don't think that we're troublemakers at all. We are just trying to resolve problems that have been found -- very real problems that can be costly to resolve properly -- and are reporting on the level of cooperation that has been experienced along the way.

We ask the hard questions, and we expect the developer, Home Warranty, the contractors, subcontractors and all other Villages personnel to act with honesty and integrity with regard to the quality of the homes we have purchased and the community in which we live.

The Vinyl Siding Committee has been asked to be less 'vocal' in publishing information about the Vinyl Siding issues for a time. In the spirit of cooperation, we have agreed to do so. But, please be assured that although you may not hear as much about vinyl siding in The Bulletin, we have not dropped this cause -- we are still working on it for the benefit of all Villagers.

Thank you again for your continuing support. Your inquiries, your letters, and of course, your contributions to the POA Legal Action Fund are always welcome.

The Vinyl Siding Committee

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**Letter to the Editor:
Thanks to the Vinyl Siding Committee**

I want to express my appreciation to the Vinyl Siding Committee for assisting me in resolving the issues I had with the vinyl siding on my home.

I recognized that there were problems with my siding i.e.: panels fell off, others merely slid out of place; some panels bulged, others rippled; the shutters were nailed so tight the vinyl was dented; the siding on one area of my house melted every summer; etc., etc.

My attempts to discuss these issues with the Warranty Department or the siding contractor made me wonder who ever named the Villages "America's Friendliest Home Town." The Warranty Department always had a reason why The Villages was not responsible for these problems. Rather, I was referred to the siding contractor, F & R Siding, who never returned phone calls.

After attempting to resolve these issues for over two years, I felt I had no choice but to solicit the assistance of The POA Siding Committee. Ray Micucci and his team confirmed the problems I could see, and found even more. If it weren't for the determination and expertise of the Siding Committee members, I would still have the same problems.

I do want to say in closing once the decision was made by the Warranty Department to repair my house, the work, new siding and insulation I had originally added, were all replaced. I had been told that the repairs would cost over \$7000, but there was no charge to me. There are a few lingering problems though; the siding is melting again this summer. The letter I have written to Alcoa has, to date, fallen on blind eyes. I'll plan to keep working on this important remaining issue.

Carolyn Reichel

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Letter to the Editor: Warranty Woes

We have had many problems with the Warranty Department. Our vinyl siding has been fixed three times and it's still not right. We have also had a home inspection by Ameripro and a re-inspection and there are still things not repaired properly.

We have spent hundreds of dollars on the inspections, certified letters to the builders, the Warranty Department and the Villages. In their latest correspondence they have advised us that all repairs have been done according to the warranty and that we should go to the arbitration section of the warranty if we do not agree.

We will not back down. If necessary, we will go to arbitration. We have worked long and hard toward our retirement and we expect the honesty and decency that we deserve.

Ken & Lucy Moir

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Letter to the Editor: Vinyl Warranty

I have lived in The Villages for almost three years and have read your Bulletin for the whole time.

I, like many others, recognize the good you do, but you need to exercise control when the dog has the rat in its teeth.

This letter addresses the vinyl siding issues.

After returning from New York in April, after seven weeks, my neighbors advised me that there had been activity in this area and I should call the Warranty Department. The very next day I did so, and after a very courteous response I was told that my builder (Larry Dasher) would call to visit within 5 to 7 days. He did, indeed, show up but I was out. He inspected my house and told my next-door neighbor that someone would be out within 10 to 14 days to fix the problems he had found. Sure enough, within 3 weeks a member of ROCK SOLID called to set up an appointment and three days later a crew of 6 or 7 showed up and, by my observation, did a very thorough fix, including a complete redo of the wall from my garage to the front porch.

My purpose in writing this saga is to advise you that: 1) there are more than two proficient siding fixers, and 2) the Warranty Office and builders are not charlatans trying to wash their hands of the problems. I do not know nor will I judge the position of The Developer, but someone influential is okaying and paying for all these fixings which in anecdotal conversation has been explained to me as being a total of \$50 million, with The Villages picking up the tab.

If you are to continue to be a value to us Villagers, you need to show more respect for the good, more compassion for the efforts, and less bias towards the issues. Otherwise, I am afraid your efforts will simply assume the first four letters of your publication.

David Ham

Editor's Note: We feel that if members of the POA Vinyl Siding Committee and the POA Bulletin had not taken up the issue of the vinyl siding problems, the issue would have been ignored by the developer.

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Letter to the Editor: Vinyl Installation

It seems like in every issue of the POA paper Vinyl Siding is written about.

This week I was playing golf at Havana and I observed a Vinyl Siding installation. The siding was being installed using a air nailer, and in my opinion, this is a problem.

I have been a carpenter for over 40 years and have installed more siding than I care to remember. I am a licensed General Contractor in Florida and several other states.

In all my installations of Vinyl Siding never did I use or let anyone use a nail gun. The Vinyl Siding has slotted holes designed for nailing. I always used 1 1/2" galvanized roofing nails placed in the center of the slotted hole in the siding. This allows the siding to expand and contract without buckling.

And never install Vinyl Siding over aluminum foil insulation sheeting. If the house has the aluminum exterior sheeting then a house wrap like Tyvek should be used before the Vinyl Siding is installed.

I know the installers will say it takes too long to hand nail, and my only response is what my instructor wrote on the black board on the first day of my apprenticeship: "There are fast carpenters, and there are good carpenters; but there is no such thing as a good fast carpenter."

Robert M. Landrum

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Letter to the Editor: Thanks to Ray

I would be most appreciative if you could pass on my sincere appreciation to Mr. Ray Micucci, a member of your Siding Committee, for his time and efforts inspecting our home. He devoted his personal time and resources to satisfy my request and performed the inspection in a professional manner. He was extremely knowledgeable about all aspects of proper building codes and provided me with results that made me somewhat comfortable although the synopsis revealed minor discrepancies.

It is comforting that many Village members experienced in construction are keenly interested in the overall welfare of all Villagers and sacrifice their personal time while sharing their expertise. Once again, many, many thanks.

Louis Vargo

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Vinyl Siding Repair Firms

New Look Exteriors, Steve Justice
9860 SE 145th Place, Summerfield, FL
352-288-3040

Brix & Stix, Terry Poortenga, Vice President
P.O. Box 384, Oxford, FL 34484
352-330-1817, 352-516-0505 cell
www.BrixandStixFraming.com

Scott Smith Roofing
2105 NE 19th Avenue
Ocala, FL 34470
(352) 867-0044
(877) 296-0898

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Letter to the Editor: Villages Hospital Is Pretty Good

I am writing this letter to describe the medical care that I received at The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH).

Over the past several months, I have been admitted as a patient at TVRH approximately five times and I am happy to say that the care I received was absolutely top notch.

From the professional and courteous administrative staff, to the proficient and caring nurses and doctors, the staff at TVRH provided me with truly outstanding medical care.

While any visit to the hospital is a stressful and traumatic situation, the staff at TVRH made me feel safe, calm and secure. The doctors accurately diagnosed my illness and along with the capable nursing staff, helped restore my health.

I have read several reports from others who have received medical care at TVRH who did not experience the kind of quality care that I received. I am sorry to hear about those reports but my only response is simply - you can't please everyone.

I am truly grateful to the staff at TVRH for all they did for me and am thankful that we have such a quality medical facility right here in our own backyard in the Villages.

W. Cutting

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When to Go To the ER vs. Urgent Care

Doctor's Office, ER, Urgent Care? Where do I go?

Have you ever experienced the dilemma of feeling really bad, you can't get an immediate appointment at your regular doctor's office, and you've been frightened away from the ER with a possible long wait and the moral dilemma of "is this really an emergency?"

There are "walk-in" facilities which usually offer about the same as your regular doctor but don't require an appointment and there are "urgent care" facilities which may offer more services than a walk-in clinic but not as many as the ER. They don't require appointments either. How do you decide?

You need to educate yourself. You need to keep information handy. First, you will need to decide how emergent your situation is. If you wake up with a bad sore throat or a urinary tract infection, you can be very uncomfortable but most people would agree these situations do not need the ER. You have a bad chest cold and you have a tendency to develop bronchitis or pneumonia. You want help right away. A walk-in facility or an urgent care would work for you. Which of these do you choose?

In general, your decision between a regular visit to your doctor and a visit to a walk-in will be decided by availability. They tend to provide the same services. If the situation is more serious, your decision is between urgent care and the ER.

The Paramount Urgent Care on CR 466 in the Villages, for example, will accept patients with less critical conditions that might be helped at a walk-in. But they can also treat more serious problems that would typically be sent to the ER. Some conditions treated there are: upper respiratory infection, sore throat, allergic rhinitis, sinusitis, earache, toothache, fracture, muscle strain, mild dehydration, lacerations and removal of stitches, headache, back pain, urinary tract infection, and fibromyalgia flare up. A few things they advise to take directly to the ER include: chest pain that goes into your arm, arterial (bright red, pulsating) bleeding, bleeding in the stool, or head injury with loss of consciousness.

At the very least, they will evaluate any patient who comes in and, if necessary, have that patient transported to the proper facility. You can think of that as the triage you may have waited hours for in the ER. Each of the staff there has trained in the ER so you would be in good hands. In addition, if you need to be admitted to the hospital, you will be admitted directly by a call from Paramount to a hospitalist on duty.

Contact facilities near you for the same information. Get directions and keep them posted so anyone who may be driving you will know where to go. Get lists of warning signs of such things as heart attack, stroke, allergic shock, or dehydration and keep them handy in case someone else has to make a decision. Err on the side of caution; this is your health, maybe even your life. By all means, do not let a fear of wait time in the ER be your guiding force. If you need the ER, go!

If we can keep non-emergency situations out of the ER, the people who REALLY need the ER, even the patients who MIGHT need the ER, will be able to get help more readily and the wait times will decrease. Fear of long waits will dissipate and the patients who REALLY need the ER will get the help they need more quickly.

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**Letter to the Editor:
Paramount Urgent Care**

We are writing to inform members of POA and The Villages Community about the Grand Opening of our new urgent care clinic, PARAMOUNT URGENT CARE, at Santa Fe Crossing, 8640 East CR 466, Suite A.

We appreciate your continued effort to find a solution to the current healthcare issues concerning our community. PARAMOUNT URGENT CARE (PUC) shares the passion of providing immediate access and prompt healthcare to residents of The Villages. We will be offering extended hours of operation, opening seven days a week, 6:00AM to 10:00PM. Our goal is to provide an alternative to long waits in emergency rooms; to serve you when you need it most.

We are familiar with many of your common concerns regarding medical care and empathize with you. PARAMOUNT URGENT CARE (PUC) would like to be part of the solution. We feel there is a great need for urgent medical care. Many of our neighbors who seek emergency room care can in fact be treated in a smaller, more familiar, and friendlier environment, such as an urgent care clinic. Upper respiratory infections, sore throats, allergic rhinitis, sinusitis, earaches, toothaches, fracture care, muscle strain, mild dehydration, lacerations & sutures removal, chronic migraine and headache flare ups, chronic or acute back pain, urinary tract infections, fibromyalgia flare-ups, are examples of conditions that we can treat.

Additionally, we also offer preventive care, wellness checks, physical exams, flu, pneumonia, and shingles shots. We have On-Site Labs, X-Rays and EKG's. We are also able to assist our patients and arrange for prompt intervention at the emergency room if the condition merits. We will notify your primary care provider if you are transfer to the hospital. If you do not have a local provider, we will use our friendly hospitalist to care for you during your stay in the hospital. Furthermore, we can assist you in times when your Primary Care Physician is not available.

PARAMOUNT URGENT CARE (PUC) is headed by an experienced and seasoned board certified emergency room physician, Dr. William Goellner, M.D. Dr. Goellner is a graduate from Duke Medical School (1974), followed by three years of surgical residency. Dr. Goellner, started working in emergency medicine shortly after his residency as the medical director for Homestead Regional Medical Center in Homestead, FL. Our three Physician Assistants have experience in multiple emergency room settings and are passionate about quality patient care. Combined, they bring over 30 years of Emergency Medicine care to our community. Paramedics are also an integral part of our staff.

The Paramount Urgent Care staff

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Letter to the Editor: Movies on the Square

We should have the opportunity to go to the [Spanish Springs] Town Square for some good movies. It is not fair for all of the good movies to be at Sumter Landing. It costs us gas to ride there. Please give us a break. My suggestion is that the movies play for so many days and then are brought to the Town Square movie theater. Let's be fair about the movies.

Sally Iva Ross

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Letter to the Editor: Please Cut Those Ugly Palm Fronds

In our exploring [our new home in The Villages] we found the country clubs, golf courses and the other town square, Spanish Springs. The flowers and oak trees are lovely, but the large palm trees look awful! Many look like they have NEVER been trimmed. The worst area we found was around our beautiful hospital. The unkempt palms made the beautiful hospital look a lot less beautiful. The area around the Saddlebrook soft ball diamonds, the polo fields, Buena Vista all the way to Highway 42, and Morse Ave. north of 466 are lined with palm trees that look more dead than alive BECAUSE of the dead untrimmed palm fronds.

These trees make the area seem unkempt and it gives one the impression that the people in charge do not really care about the way the palms look. We have had visitors comment on the unkempt palms, and their unkempt condition leaves them with a bad impression of our Village.

If I could plead with the powers that be, PLEASE, PLEASE take care of the unkempt and untrimmed palm trees in our area!! One of my concerns is that when our palms (south of 466) grow they, too, will look as awful as the older palms north of 466. If the developers do not want to maintain these palm trees, then CUT THEM DOWN. Furthermore, don't plant what will not be maintained!

Margie Howd

Editor's Note: We also think the dead fronds are a fire hazard.

Our New Monthly Column: Gardening in The Villages

I love living in Florida. It's my new adopted state. And I love living here in the Villages. We are all so lucky to live in such a beautiful place. To the outsider, the place is manicured with care and forethought. To the insider, our yards can be beautiful, luscious pieces of heaven. My plot of heaven is growing into a botanical garden, a plant collector's paradise.

Most of us are from somewhere else and gardening in Florida may seem a bit strange, but it's not rocket science. In this monthly column, I hope to impart a little bit of wisdom; some little bit of advice, some tips, some facts. I hope to share my love of what was a weekend hobby and is now a passionate obsession. Once I wished I had a bloom in my yard all year. Here is where I got my wish!

Yes, Florida is strange: it's hot, it rains a lot in the summer, and we've got sand or clay instead of dirt. When we come to Florida, we want tropical plants. Did you know that we are in Zone 8B? We are in the northern part of Central Florida. True tropical plants will be knocked back by Jack Frost. (Granted, they will grow back because the ground doesn't freeze, but who wants to start over with a dead looking shrub?) The solution? Bring your plant inside (bummer), cover it up with blankets each time a frost is predicted (who wants to do that?). Or you can look at the Zone tag on the plant at the nursery before you plant. Zone 9 to 11 is for Orlando and south to the Keys.

It's important to realize that all plants will grow. There is no such thing as a maintenance-free yard. I know this lady who told her landscaper that she wanted all color and no maintenance. He suggested she get plastic flowers. It's just as important to plant the RIGHT PLANT IN THE RIGHT PLACE, for plants selected to suit a specific site will require minimal amounts of water, fertilizers and pesticides. Do your homework on plants. If you were to buy one book on gardening, it should be The Southern Living Garden Book. Trimming and pruning can be therapeutic for both you and your plant.

Grow summer heat resistant plants: marigolds, pentas, lantana (stay away from the all yellow-they are invasive), petunias, agapanthus, canna lily, crinum lily, gaillardia or blanket flower, summer sage, black-eyed Susan, society garlic, echinacea, golden dewdrop. Even drought tolerant plants and natives must be watered every day until they are established.

It's humid this time of year, even at night. Irrigation set to go off in the evening encourages fungus to settle in on our lawns and ornamentals and fungus is the worst and most prolific kind of "disease" our plants can suffer. Set your irrigation system to go off between 4 AM and 8 AM. Fungus will not have a chance to set in.

Well, I'm out of time and space. Until next month, keep cool and happy gardening!

Anne Lambrecht is a Master Gardener in Marion County and a member of the Sumter chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. She is the president of the Villages Garden Club North.

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Letter to the Editor: Drip, Drip, Drip

I am writing about a problem which has been on going for at least 2 years. I have written and called numerous individuals, which has gotten MY problem resolved, but other homes with the same problem have not. I want to bring attention to the issue. Below is an e-mail to Lois Sorenson of the Southwest Florida Water Management District:

Ms. Sorensen: I spoke with your assistant on November 9, 2007, requesting some help on bringing the following problem to someone's attention. I have attempted to bring this to the attention to anyone who has the authority in The Villages to correct this problem, but since this is a construction flaw since 2005 (when I purchased my home) no one wants to pay attention. Your agency is the overseer of conservation in this area. I hope you can assist me in correcting this problem.

Hot water heaters have two lines at the top, one cold and one hot. The cold line has a T, which a watch valve has been installed and this line goes to the outside of the home. The problem is that this line has a continuous drip, which is caused by 79-psi water pressure from the push from water company to the home. The valve is factory set at 75 psi. The plumbing contractor (4-H Plumbing), which placed the water heater in these homes, came out and reset my watch valve per instruction of the warranty company. The line is still dripping. I am now losing one quart per every twenty-four hours instead of the three gallons every twenty-four hours that I was losing previously.

I have contacted homes in the following areas and they also have the same problem:

Richmond Villas Elizabeth Villas
Janeann Villas Hampton Villas

The warranty department stated that the drip was normal which is not true. Homeowners are paying for this drip, and due to the

severity of the water shortage in Florida, I would say this is a REAL PROBLEM.

Bill Berry

Ms. Sorenson did not even give me the courtesy of calling or e-mailing to let me know she had received my e-mail. By the way, I sent this THREE TIMES WITH NO RESPONSE. I hope this letter does bring attention to the situation.

Bill Berry

Editor's Note: This leaking is wasting our valuable water. This appears to be either a product defect or a water pressure problem that should be within the control of the developer. This is another widespread problem that the developer should solve for residents. Add this to the list of poorly installed vinyl siding, defective lighting switches, sloppy workmanship in general, etc.

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Letter to the Editor: Mystery Recycling

Thank you for the great job of keeping us all informed as to what is really going on in The Villages.

We have Waste Management for our refuse collection. The first week, the regular big green truck came by to pick up the regular trash, and later a white recycle came by to pick up the recycle trash. All went fine.

Since then, the regular trash truck has come by and picked up the trash in the black bags and the recycle in the white bags and thrown it all in the same regular trash truck.

I contacted Waste Management about it all being picked up on the same truck. I was told that the recycle truck is out of commission at this time so they are just picking it up together and separating it at the waste station? I asked how they could do that when they mash it all together to pack it down and cannot be separated and the lady told me that they do not mash it, and it is separated at the waste station. I told her that I found that hard to believe and thanked her and hung up.

What is going on with the recycling? We were forced to pay more money for the trash collection, but in Lake County Waste Management is not using separate trucks. Do we have recycle or not? Should we be wasting our time and money separating and cleaning and buying recycle bags if it is all going to

the same place? Do you know what is going on with the recycle in Lake County or was this just another ploy to increase the trash pick-up payment?

Judy Reeves

Editor's Note: We have asked the developer for an accounting of the finances and an explanation of the workings of the recycling program. So far, nothing...

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From the POA Website Forum: Keep One Sumter

Jul 5: Well I guess I have lived here too long (4 years) as I have seen this One Sumter issue come back again. I can remember the problems we had with the old way of electing our commissioners, where the people from each district elected their own representatives. The system sounded fair but when it came to spending the taxes it was not. Each commissioner worked to get funding for his own district. Seeing the bulk of the funding, in the form of property taxes, came from The Villages they did not care how much they spent. After all, "those old people have lots of money." Property taxes were very high. Then came One Sumter. It was passed after a lot of in-fighting. Now we all vote for all commissioners. They now have to answer to all of us on their taxing and spending. Guess what, the taxes went down this past year for the first time since I have lived here. Wonderful. Now what comes up but "Repeal One Sumter." Guess who is bringing this back? The people in south Sumter that want the power to take our money again. They had to come to The Villages to get support to get this on the ballot. A lot of our people that were not here during the first go-around with One Sumter were fooled into believing this was good for us. Some heard that the developer supported One Sumter. OK, He pays taxes in this county also. I would expect he would support it. So what? It is good sometime to have him on our side. By the way, I have no connection with the developer except I bought one of his Vinyl-sided homes, which I had inspected and found it satisfactory. If Villages people support the Repeal One Sumter proposal, you can expect your property taxes to increase and very little of the funding will be spent here for our people, the people that provide most of the tax revenue in the county. As far as fairness in representation for the other people in the county, what is fairer than everyone votes for every commissioner? It makes them responsible to all voters in the county, not just one little district. So when you see Repeal of One Sumter please vote against it.

Jul 5: This re-vote is a waste. We should not be voting again. Whether the "developer" is for or against....common sense and history tells you not to vote for repeal.

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From the POA Website Forum: **Bikes, Bikes, Bikes**

Jul 17: I'm getting fed up with many of the individual and group bicycle riders in The Villages. I've been observing them for quite some time now, so it isn't a matter of one instance that drove me to write this. They seldom (if ever) stop at stop signs. They apparently think they own the recreation trails too. One time I was coming out of the tunnel approaching Glenview and a large group of riders were evidently congregating before the beginning of a ride, and had the golf cart path blocked. One person who perceived he was in charge told me to "hold up a bit." I told him to clear the path as there was plenty of room for them in the adjoining grassed area. They very grudgingly moved off the path. Another time I was headed to Hacienda Country Club and was in my golf cart on the road near the mail drop. As I approached my turn by the Hacienda Pool a group of riders came out of the Morse Blvd. tunnel and loudly chastised me for not stopping in the middle of the road to let them pass, even though I had the right-of-way and they had a stop sign. I live near a "T" intersection that has a stop sign. I don't think I have ever seen a bicycle stop at that sign, but very few cars or golf carts stop either. I also ride a few times a week with friends, but we obey traffic signs and rules. In fact one day we were stopped at the light by the bank in Spanish Springs and a lady in a car pulled up beside us, rolled down her passenger side window and commended us for stopping at the light. She remarked that she had never seen that before from a bike rider.

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