

Venetia

Community Association Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 7

November December 2007

Message from the President

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It has now been almost two years since a Community elected Board of Directors has been responsible for the operation of your Association. I am sure that all of us have learned a great deal about running a neighborhood. Whether you are a Board Member, a Volunteer, an Interested Resident or just a Critic, you know that it takes people with a variety of talents to get things done.

By the time that you receive this message, we will have had our Community Town Hall Meeting. I hope that in the next newsletter it can be reported that there was a large turnout, there was a great exchange of ideas and everyone acted in a civilized manner.

A lot of things have taken place in the last couple of years including such items as the clubhouse refurbishing, an upgrade to the fitness center, a security system for the clubhouse, a new pedestrian gate, an upgrade to the irrigation system and the purchase of the street lights. These are just a few of the accomplishments of the past couple of years.

Does that mean because money has been spent on some of the big cost items which will not reoccur in the next year that dues will go down? No, that will probably never happen unless the residents do not want to maintain the neighborhood to the high standards that existed when they purchased their unit.

Venetia began as a neighborhood in late 1998. The clubhouse was opened in the Spring of 2001. There are about five miles of roads in Venetia that were constructed between 1998 and 2003. Much of the Community landscape was also installed during that period. All of these items are getting older and like you and I they require more maintenance.

Annual Meeting

December 3 , 6:30 PM at Trinity Presbyterian Church

As the president of the Venetia Homeowners Association, I received a letter from Sarasota County in regard to Watering Restrictions and Violations,

“Recently it was brought to our attention that violations of Sarasota County Ordinance 2006-053, Sarasota County Resolution 2006-182 and the Southwest Florida Water Management Water Shortage Emergency Water Shortage Plan have occurred in the Venetia Subdivision.

“Sarasota County has been under severe watering restrictions since 1993. Since 2001 Sarasota County has had watering restrictions that limit irrigation to one day a week. Should a code enforcement officer observe a watering violation, you could be issued a written warning or a citation with fees from \$100 up to \$500.

Addresses ending in even numbers may water only on Tuesdays.

Addresses ending in odd numbers may water only on Thursdays.

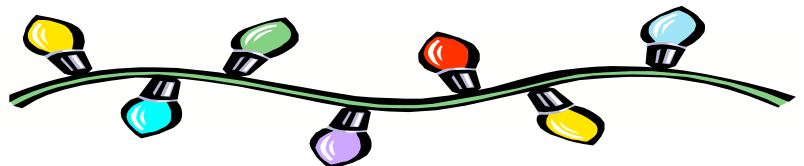
No Landscaped area may receive more than one irrigation application each allowable day.

Other restrictions and condition may apply.

If you would like additional information on landscape care and maintenance, please call 861-5000 and ask to speak to a Master Gardener from the University of Florida/FAS Extension Service. This person can provide you with information on how to set your automatic timer, how to use an automatic shot-off device and how to have a landscape that is not only attractive , but conserves water.

*For more information on current water restrictions call our customer service number (941)861-6790, email us at utilitybill@scgov.net or visit our website www.scgov.net. “ **George Sperry***

VNA One



For those of you just returning, welcome back... for those who never left... hello again.

Things have been fairly quiet in the neighborhood, something we should all be happy about. Unlike many area developments construction continues here in Venetia, with one home recently completed and another now under way. It seems that we have been spared from the hurricanes only to be amid a terrible drought. It is amazing to see how quickly things do turn green with the rare showers that we have had.

The Community's Neighborhood Security Team has recently been beefed up with nearly a dozen new members. They have all been through the training and some have had the opportunity to do patrols. On behalf of everyone in the entire Community I would like to thank them. All the members of the team, old and new contribute to making Venetia a better community for all of us. If you would be interested in giving a couple of hours every once in a while, your time would be welcomed. Just contact Lou Lebron at 497-1369 or e-mail him at retpdman@comcast.net.

If you haven't kept up with the summer problem effecting hibiscus bushes, and have returned to find yours damaged or dead you can give me a call at 408-7923 or e-mail me at nshotz211@comcast.net. I can update you on the situation. Also watch for upcoming information of the back-flow testing. I have already been in touch with the same supplier that many of you used last year. His price would be the same at \$25.00 per unit. Watch for further details in the VNAOne newsletter coming out soon and on the web at www.venetiaincommunity.com

Norman Hotz



It is a busy time of year here in the Treasurer's office. I have been hard at work reviewing the preliminary budget and comparing estimated prices of just a couple of months ago to actual figures and new contract proposals.

As one might expect, things have been running a bit over budget in some areas this past year, and we are busy trying to adjust accordingly so that we have a proper budget in place for the coming year.

The financial picture for real estate continues to be bleak at best. Mortgage companies and banks already own three properties in Venetia and we have been served with foreclosure papers on two more properties, and one resident, an owner of two properties, has filed bankruptcy. Not only are we not collecting our dues on these properties, we will have to write off amounts owed as bad / uncollectable debt. To better protect ourselves from losses, we must anticipate greater legal fees, so that the Association can move quickly and be the first filer for foreclosures. This will put the Association in a better position to collect the dues and legal fees associated with these actions.

As each of you individually have been affected by rising insurance costs, so has the Association.

Many of these items were treated quite differently in the past when the developer was responsible for the operating budget. Their intent was to keep costs low to increase sales.

Please remember that our Association has only been under member control for a short time and we do not have years of data that reflect true costs when preparing our new budget.

I recently attended a seminar in Venice held by the Community Associations Institute regarding preparations of budgets for associations. Many horror stories circulated from associations that found themselves with insufficient funds due to low assessments, all resulting in special assessments for a variety of under budgeted items. Many association representatives spoke of how neighborhoods deteriorated because they did not plan ahead. Hopefully, I can use what I have learned to develop a sound budget proposal for our community.

The proposed budget will be available on line at the Venetia Community web site: www.venetiacomunity.com

Ronnie Hotz



The 2008 Venetia Community Directory will be available In January 2008. All residents will receive a letter from the publisher so that you will be able to correct any errors that occurred in the first directory, as well as "opt out", if you prefer not to be included. You will be able to respond to this letter via email, and will be have the option to include your cell phone numbers if you would like.

Legal Matters

The Community Board has received many inquiries regarding the lawsuit between the Community Board and Mr. John Scolaro.

The Board is reluctant to file any actions against a member. In this particular case, Mr. Scolaro has chosen to ignore a number of the Covenants that all others have agreed to and have adhered to. Furthermore, it has been the Board's position to try and do nothing to embarrass Mr. Scolaro, but we are obligated to convey what information we can legally make public at this time.

Mr. Scolaro, like each of us, is obligated to abide by the Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions for Venetia. If he had done what each of us was required to do this situation would not exist. He has chosen not to abide by this obligation. It is clearly stated under Article XII, Architectural Standards, Sections 1 and 2, that no construction shall take place without prior approval.

Mr. Scolaro's individual problems have all been self-created. In regard to his pool and pool cage, no plans were submitted for approval prior to construction. He was instructed by the developer, prior to turn over, first to stop construction, then later to remove or lower it so it is not visible from the road front. This request has been continued, by the Board through the mediation process.

It was not until after receiving the notice to stop construction that Mr. Scolaro submitted a plan for the pool and cage. The pool was accepted, but the cage plan was "denied".

In Mr. Scolaro's February 10, 2006 response to that denial, he apologized for the resulting pool cage, and stated "I am afraid that altering the pool cage now will set our move in date back at least a year. I would much rather fix it if necessary after we have our CO." This request was denied, and again he was asked to remove or lower it. More than a year has passed since receiving his CO, there has been no visible evidence that he has complied with the wishes of the developer, the association nor his own words. It is by his choice that this legal action has become necessary. Again, if Mr. Scolaro were to comply, the issue would disappear.

There have been other situations at the Scolaro residence, all self-created. Mr. Scolaro landscaped the bank of the pond behind his home with rip-rap. It was all placed several feet onto Community property and altering the bank of one of the retention ponds. A situation that could have been costly for the Community to restore. Mr. Scolaro submitted a plan for landscaping that was approved. He proceeded to landscape not in accordance with the plan submitted.

.In an attempt to simplify things for Mr. Scolaro, the Board offered at mediation, that if he agrees to remove the rip rap from Community property, they would in return approve the landscaping. Mr. Scolaro did agree, and eventually moved the rip rap onto his own property.

The Board has attended three mediation sessions in an attempt to get all matters resolved. Our attorney has been in touch with Mr. Scolaro's various attorneys on many occasions when it appeared that there would be an agreement. Our attorney has attended one of the mediation sessions at no cost to the community to help keep the expenses down.

Unfortunately, the issue of the pool cage has not been resolved.

It was the decision of the Board to move forward with the suit against Mr. Scolaro for breach of contract and for recovery of all legal fees. The height of the cage is the result of that breach.

Mr. Scolaro recently sought to have the case dismissed in the Courts. His motion was denied and the Courts ruled in favor of the Association, acknowledging the Board's position.

As long as this Board is here it will take whatever actions necessary to protect against the abuse of these important documents, as well as protect the investment of every member. It is this process which will increase the property values of all homeowners. **George Sperry, Art Apicello, Ronnie Hotz, Bill Cummings, Joe Kent and Colette Sears**

Clubhouse



Our community celebrated the re-opening of the clubhouse on August 31. More than 80 residents joined us for a most enjoyable social happening hosted by the Clubhouse Committee and the Social Committee. Two lucky residents won a bottle of wine, compliments of the Clubhouse Committee, and the Bingo Group, headed by Wayne Hart, donated an American flag to the clubhouse.

We recently have added a bulletin board outside the clubhouse to the right of the front door for posting notices of upcoming events hosted by the Social Committee. Be sure to check on the events scheduled so you can take part in our many community activities.

There is a new dispenser in the fitness center to provide towels for our residents to wipe down the equipment after use to ensure that the next user has a clean and sanitary environment.

The sun is setting earlier as fall is here and winter is approaching. For your own personal safety, the pool closes at sunset and your key fob will not open the pool gates after hours.

Property owners who sell their property are advised to return their fobs to a member of the Clubhouse Committee or to Lighthouse Management, as we deactivate all sellers' fobs when we are notified of the property transfer. The buyer should contact the Clubhouse Committee for clubhouse access and information. We appreciate getting to meet our new residents, and we explain how to access our facilities and to use them in the proper manner.

The Clubhouse Committee is looking for new members to assist us in the overall administration of our recreational facility. Volunteers are needed who are reliable, energetic, and willing to assume responsibilities. Candidates must be team players and able to work within a committee. To be considered, please send a letter of interest to any of our present members.

Clubhouse Committee Members

Casa Di Amici

It was a very quiet summer in our neighborhood. The CDA Board, in its September meeting, appointed Dave Heller, Vicenza Drive, to fill out the term of former Board member Mary Maillette who resigned in July.

Secondly the Board has found a major discrepancy in the water billing practices from Sarasota County, Commercial Water and Commercial Water Energies. This issue will be addressed by Dennis Smith, Lighthouse Property Manager for Casa Di Amici, at the October Board meeting.

Bill Cummings



Visit our website at www.venetiaincommunity.com/casadiamici

Villa Vivaci

A Villa Vivaci website is coming! Thanks to Wayne Hart for volunteering to "make it happen." When this project debuts, it will be a part of the official Venetia website (www.venetiaincommunity.com). This will be a great way to keep track of all the terrific happenings in our neighborhood.

Your neighborhood is looking for a few good men and women! Please consider nominating yourself for a seat on the 2008 board. It's a great way to get to know your neighbors, and it's a nice way to make a valuable contribution to our neighborhood. Please fill out the form and return it to Lighthouse, or accept a nomination from the floor at the December meeting. "Many hands make light work."

Villa Paradiso



It was a long hot summer without much rain and it looks like it may continue like this well into the month of November, rain still continues to be very scarce. But, for those of us who are motivated and go out into the "less heat and humidity" of the early morning hours to exercise walk -- mother nature sometimes gives us a special treat. One early a.m., this hot summer Linda Kent and Lori Sekey, who go out there every day and do the right thing, came upon fellow bike rider exerciser, Norman Hotz, standing completely stunned watching a mama bobcat coaxing her two babies out of the preserve across Natale Street to the preserve on the other side - what a sight that must have been how I envy them. I must take up walking again. All I ever see are snakes in the grass. Paradiso residents talked about this event for days, this was our highlight of the summer.

A big welcome to our new neighbors Frank and Jo Ellen Whipple and their daughter.

Now we are all slowly returning to our nests and our snowbirds are also coming home to settle in for the winter months. A special welcome to all our residents that have been away, you've been missed. We look forward to seeing you around the community. Happy Holidays to all. **Ida Lebron**

Environmental Concerns

Our *Conservation Lands* are showing the effects of a two year drought. We are now facing the beginning of our dry season and the probability of an extension of the drought. We live in Florida and we must do what we can *to modify natures attempt to reclaim her lands and (now) our home sites.*

Or should we be making that attempt? Our ponds and Littoral shelves are man-made and designed to collect and disperse excess surface waters and, under controlled conditions, direct those waters to the Myaka River and eventually to the Gulf. Without a protective cover of water (drowning out weeds) our preserves and buffer areas have matured to a point of natural invasiveness.

Sinking additional irrigation wells to re-charge the ponds and flood the shelves is both expensive and impracticable. Augmenting the waters within our ponds would defeat the very purpose of the collection areas.

Our Littoral Shelf areas have been overrun with invasive weeds and now are an eye-sore. It has been suggested that we lower the elevation of the shelves to a proper *adjusted height commensurate with correct surface water elevations.* What height would be appropriate?

Is one foot higher than the mean low water appropriate? Would two feet higher than the max low water elevation be better? Would three feet lower than the high water mark be best? In dealing with State and County Regulations, the permitting process itself would be a nightmare. Engineering costs would be significant. Approval would be doubtful. Replanting of wetlands vegetation destroyed would be an additional expense. *Case closed!*

Just how we can we adjust to natures demands?

One: We are planning a thorough thinning of the 30ft buffer zone.

Two: With the continuation of the drought, we will selectively "mow" portions of the Littoral Shelf areas overrun by weeds.

Three: Our contractor has completed the removal of excess weed growth surrounding the ponds. Larger drainage areas will be cleared as soil conditions allow for machine access.

Four: Our contractor is now using a less toxic chemical treatment to treat weed and algae growth. While each application is more expensive, the toxicity effect is longer negating the higher cost.

Five: We are seeking additional funds for these programs.

Jeremiah Seely

Infrastructure

The Infrastructure Committee, comprising seven of your dedicated and hard-working neighbors, has worked on many community projects this year and saved Venetia significant dollars in labor costs. Since May 2006, when the Infrastructure Committee was established, we have logged 1,972 man-hours of labor. If an outside contractor had been hired to do this work, it would have cost the community in excess of \$185,000.

Some of the major projects undertaken in 2007 were:

- Maintenance of our waterfalls and fountains, including routine inspection of pumps and intake pipes; replacement of pumps, timers, and other parts as needed; cleaning of pumps and fountains; and repair of outlet pipes.

- Repair of our entrance and exit gates, pool gates, and the pedestrian gate to the shopping center. We replace motors, openers, and other parts as needed.

- Fabrication and installation of a gate at the right-of-way behind Wal-Mart and installation of a barricade behind Books-A-Million to prevent people from dumping trash on Venetia property.

- Conversion of the Hess Gate to manual operation, which included installing locking mechanisms and a steel fence.

- Installation of concrete generator pads and setup of generators on the berm adjacent to Hourglass Lakes and Circlewoods.

- Inspection and maintenance of our streetlights.

- Repair of landscape lighting and irrigation pipe.

- Rebuilding of nine baffles in our wetlands.

- Removal of eight dead palm trees.

- Repair of several potholes in our roads.

- Installation of signs at several locations: our recreational complex; the RT 41, Jacaranda, and Hess gates; and the pedestrian gate to the shopping center.

- Installation of clubhouse upgrades, including 8 ceiling fans and variable speed switches; several receptacles; shelf, coat hooks, and towel dispenser in the exercise room; and several locks.

- Repair of the spa hot water heater.

- Replacement of bulbs and associated hardware as needed in streetlights, landscape lighting, the clubhouse, and the pool area.

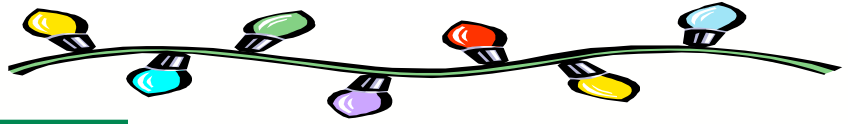
- Installation of concrete pads and bicycle racks at the RT 41 and Jacaranda entrances.



The members of the Infrastructure Committee who do so much for you are Art Apicello, George Sperry, Bill Sheffer, Stan Kroll, Dave Heller, Bill Crocker, and Roy Bingham. When you see them around, please let them know how much you appreciate their efforts and how glad you are that they are helping Venetia reduce its operating costs.

Arthur J. Apicello, Chairman, Infrastructure Committee

Mark Your Calendar



- Second Monday Book Club 9:30 AM
- Third Monday Movie Madness
- Tuesday Mah Jongg 10 AM
- Tuesday Men's Poker 7:00 PM
- Wednesday Artist Studio 9:30 AM
- Wednesday Mah Jongg 1:00 PM
- Wednesday Bingo When Announced
- Second Wednesday Ladies Out to Lunch
- Thursday Canasta 10AM
- Thursday Bridge 7 PM
- Fourth Monday VCA Board 9:00AM
- Last Friday Monthly BYOB 5 PM

- Nov. 7 Bingo - 6:45
- Nov. 14 Theatre Party - Ft. Myers
- Nov. 17 Holiday Decorating (volunteers needed)
- Dec. 6 Holiday Dinner Dance
- Dec. 12 Bingo - 6:45
- Dec. 16 Holiday Cocktail party at Clubhouse

Further details of all social events can be found on the website, or by calling a social committee member.

January -- Casino bus trip -details later

February -- Progressive Dinner -details later

Flu Shots

Flu shots will once again be available to Venetia residents on Saturday, December 1 from 10 AM to 11 AM, at the Clubhouse.

Venetia Community Association
4545 Canello Grande Avenue
Venice, Florida, 34293

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