

Presidents Message for 2012

Can you believe we went through another year and like a fine wine we seem to improve with age? While doom & gloom continues outside the gate, I'm happy to say that everything is going well on the inside. Village Walk remains the "Showcase Community" of North Naples. Our reputation as a "can do" community continues to earn the respect and recognition from our neighbors, visitors as well as our County officials. As my grandkids would say, "that's awesome"!

Our continued success can be primarily attributed to one main factor, **our people**, it's that simple. I don't want to take anything away from other communities; however, we seem to be somewhat unique. We began as a development and through the years the efforts of many homeowners, volunteering their time and effort has transformed our development into a first class community. At the same time those who could not volunteer were on the sidelines providing valuable support for their neighbor's efforts. All this comes under the heading of "teamwork and appreciation." As we say in Brooklyn, "that aint chop liver."

When our friends up North ask "why did you move to Naples?" Our response is rather straight forward, "We didn't move to Naples, we moved to Paradise" and this past year I would add, "We moved to get away from those earthquakes and hurricanes."

It's been an odd year as we look back. My Yankees let the World Series go to the birds and my Giants watched a bunch of "cheese heads" jump for joy. I guess it could be worse, we could have the Cubs or the Vikings! Speaking about Illinois, it looks like another former Governor will be purchasing a monopoly set hoping to "get out of jail free". Then again, we had a former NY Governor resign because he got caught with his pants down.

Once again, we got through another hurricane season without a scratch. We continue to maintain a solid bank account, with our reserves remaining strong. Our foreclosures are minimal, well below the Collier County & Nationwide foreclosure average.

While our economy continues to wobble, there may be some light at the end of the tunnel. Let's hope it's not a locomotive. I am the eternal optimist and continue to have faith in our nation's ability to turn things around. Towards this end another famous Brooklyn quote would be in order "Wait till next year!"

By the way, this is my first year in the last seven years that I did not have any surgery. However, don't laugh as my wife did. I tried playing golf for the first time in 5 years and on the third hole broke a finger. I told you not to laugh!

Ok let's get on to business and take a quick trip through 2011 and review some of the initiatives that were started or completed in our continued quest for continuous improvement.

Shape Up!

In January the Fitness Center renovation was completed. Our goal was primarily directed towards improving the safety for our residents and their guests. We now have more room to exercise and some new state of the art equipment. I have received a number of atta boys since it opened. Once my back, shoulder, elbow and finger heal, you might even see me shaping up, however, don't hold your breath.

The heat is on!

We began the New Year by turning on the newly installed Geo Thermal for our pools. I've been advised that it's performing quite well and we continue to count our savings. As a matter of fact it should be paid off in less than 3-1/2 years. A great return on investment.

Not in our neighborhood

Village Walk took the lead, as usual, by hosting and conducting a series of meetings to ensure that any proposed businesses for the Northeast corner of Vanderbilt Beach and Livingston Roads will not be an eyesore or objectionable to the surrounding communities. This entailed a number of challenging negotiations with the Bank that owns the land, their engineering firm and their attorney. We remained steadfast in our position throughout all these meetings and were able to reach agreement without compromise. We successfully eliminated numerous types of businesses that we believed would be inappropriate to ensure that our pristine look would continue. Our recommendations were subsequently approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

TV or not TV that is the question

As most of our homeowners are aware, after months of discussions, meetings, negotiations as well as evaluating proposals in response to our well defined RFP, our Cable committees chose to withhold any action at this time. To do otherwise would have resulted in locking our community into a long term arrangement for an antiquated infrastructure. We are continuing to keep a close and cautious eye on the market place and will certainly move forward when and if the market conditions are right. We appreciate everyone's patience and will continue to keep you informed.

Putting Pen to Paper

Once again our homeowners came through in the clutch by overwhelmingly approving a re-write of our documents. We are now up to date on recently amended or added state statutes and included a few substantive changes that are intended to improve the welfare of our community as well as our quality of life.

Water Watchers

Our Lakes Committee and Town Manager have and continue to monitor the condition of our lakes. They have tapped into the knowledge and expertise of outside professionals to determine how best to control the weeds, algae and muck while offering a variety of birds a nice place to visit and our fish a clean place to swim. Due diligence will continue while we explore all our options to help make our lakes cleaner and more attractive.

Have a seat

We made our Resort pool even more attractive and functional by adding some appealing furniture under the covered patio.

Ramp it up

We Listened to our homeowners and installed ramps at the Town Center & Parking lots for disabled residents. This action was taken in response to a homeowners request at a Town Hall meeting.

Going Green

We have undertaken an extensive landscape improvement initiative which includes the replacement of over 100,000 sq. ft. of sod as well as new shrubs around our parking lots and tennis courts.

Keeping us clean

As I write we are in the process of cleaning our sidewalks and swales, otherwise known in Brooklyn as gutters.

What's it costing me?

Our maintenance fee was reduced by \$78.00 per quarter, per home, primarily resulting from the elimination of the bulk cable contract. However, there was no increase in your maintenance fee. In fact, over the past four years our maintenance fees were raised in only one year and that was for \$10.00 per quarter. That amounts to a total increase of \$40.00 over a four year period. Despite this minimal increase as well as no special assessments, during this same time period we undertook over \$260,000.00 in Capital Improvements. This included the Fitness Center expansion, the Bocce resurfacing, the lake fountains, and Geo Thermal installation. Not bad for a 15 year old community that gets newer every day.

What about next year?

Good question. I'm glad you asked. Certainly we don't intend to rest on our laurels. Our pursuit for perfection continues. Our primary goal has continued to be to be directed towards keeping our community looking great, our cost of operation down and our homeowners happy.

To meet these goals we must continue to place a high priority towards maintaining our landscaping and lakes which has set our image as a "show case" community. There are certain elements that may be out of our control. I'm referring to Mother Nature, cold & hot spells, drought & heavy rain & wind. However there are a number of factors that we do have within our control. If you asked me, "how does our landscaping and lakes look?" My answer would be "fine, the grass is green, the shrubs & trees are growing and the lakes are full". However, ask the same question to our Lakes & Landscape committee and you won't get the same answer. These two dedicated committees as well as our Town Manager are committed towards continuous improvement. Through their efforts, by staying vigilant and on top of our contractors we will be seeing even greener grass, healthier shrubs and trees, less weeds and bugs and cleaner water, less algae as well as more fish.

We know of no other community that has established well defined purchasing policies and procedures. These procedures include checks & balances for all acquisitions as well as established policy for receiving, inspecting and accepting goods and services. Competition is the preferred method for almost all our contracts and purchases and no bill gets paid without the necessary review and oversight. Our procedures help ensure that the integrity of our procurement process is never compromised. These procedures, together with effective and efficient management of Association business has and continues to keep our costs down.

We will continue to remain focused on the cable industry. Our cable committees are still intact and are keeping a close eye on where the industry is going and what if any changes are taking place. We will not tie our community into a long term contract that can end up as a costly investment into obsolescence. Sometimes a decision to do nothing has its merits which would apply in our case. At the present time, based upon current market conditions, we don't see any attractive opportunities for considering a bulk arrangement. If such an opportunity presented itself, it would take at least 8 months to a year to move forward with a competitive solicitation for a new community bulk contract. Therefore those homeowners who entered into contracts that expire on or about July 1, 2012 may want to consider negotiating an extension prior to their expiration. That's your call. Stay tuned.....

I mentioned earlier our greatest asset is our people. I'd be remiss if I failed to extend a special thanks to our Activities Committee. Through their combined efforts they continue to build upon our community spirit and add to our quality of life. They have a number of new members who have done a tremendous job in supporting our Activities Director by assisting and coordinating a host of well received functions at our town center as well as outside the gate. All of us can look forward to a number of new and exciting events that have been scheduled for the coming year. Your support and participation in these events is truly appreciated.

I realize that on almost every issue there will be a few who may not be happy with the Board's decision. Guess what? There are times that I'm not happy with certain Board decisions as well. However, once the decision is made, I go with the flow. Why? Because that decision was made by a group of caring individuals who volunteer their time to help do what they consider is in the best overall interests for our community.

Before I finish my windy message I'd like to pay a special thanks to the most highly qualified, motivated, dedicated, and loyal staff that any community could possibly wish for. They are truly the best and we are fortunate to have them.

A few weeks ago, my stepdaughter, Amie, had brain tumor surgery for the second time in thirteen years. Before going into the OR and after coming out of the ICU, she said, to my wife, "Don't worry mom, things are going to work out." Over the next several weeks she sounded like the song, "Don't worry, be happy." She's a trooper and despite the enormity of the situation, she remained positive and optimistic. She's completed her radiation, is taking oral chemo and we pray that she's on the road to recovery.

Having witnessed her positive attitude, I said to myself, "How can I complain when I see a few weeds in our grass or algae in our lakes, a cracked sidewalk or a dead tree." Sometimes we need a wakeup call to realize what a true problem is.

I believe we are blessed to live in a terrific community with wonderful people and our quality of life continues to improve with every day. Your Board is honored to have the privilege to serve in some small way towards making Village Walk a community that we can all be proud of. We will continue to remain committed towards fulfilling the trust that our homeowners have bestowed upon us.

So as Amie would say, **don't worry, be happy.**

Doris and I would like to extend our best wishes to all of our community by wishing each of you a Happy and Healthy New Year.