

There is a reason it takes a long time for projects to come to fruition

Each week, the District department directors work hard to determine what to include in their assigned Our Place column. For some it is easy, as their departments are visible and have a number of topics you find interesting.

For some, it is a more difficult task. Often, behind the scenes, they provide a very valuable service. Although their work may not seem as interesting as parades, sanitation schedules, resurfacing projects and staffing a gate, it is critical to our success.

All the District departments are part of a mechanism that makes sure this community runs as well as it does. Our more than 1,000 employees are committed to the Districts' core values and exhibit this commitment daily. I am proud to be associated with all of them!

During a recent meeting, one of the boards directed staff to move forward with a project. Comments from the audience were made about the time it takes staff to get things accomplished. This is not the first, nor will it be the last, time there is frustration that something cannot get done "tomorrow" and it seems like things take forever before a decision or project is accomplished.

Fortunately – or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it – there is a process within our local government, and in adherence to state statutes, which often takes some time. However, I believe it is in your best fiduciary interest that there is a process.

The delay in local government results from making sure residents have adequate input, information is fully vetted and,



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finally, the statutory requirements for bidding, proposals and awarding of business is followed.

While it may seem unnecessary, the process allows for better decision making both for the future of this community and for stewardship of your assessment or amenity fee revenues.

Yes, projects may seem to take a while, but the outcome can be well worth it! Just take a look at the recent opening of the El Santiago Recreation Center. While the Amenity Authority Committee could have taken the more expedient lower-cost approach of just renovating the old building, which would have resulted in a more quickly built new recreation center, they chose to look at a number of issues pertaining to the project, which included, but were not limited to, the benefits of expansion, the cost of gutting the building versus new construction and the opportunity to reposition the building. The result: another gem in this community's recreation facilities!

And, of course, a good portion of last year was spent on the discussion of "striping." Yes, it seemed to go on forever and forever. However, considering there were 50 elected officials and the six AAC members involved, along with input from thousands and thousands of residents, the topic was fully vetted.

And a valuable lesson was learned: input from residents on issues affecting this community is critical. Staff and your elected officials will do our best in the future to make sure there is a forum at the beginning of a decision instead of responding to it when it becomes an "issue."

Due to a number of different reasons, there have been openings on some of the District boards over the last few months. It is refreshing to see so many residents stepping forward to put their name on the list of candidates to be considered.

Community involvement on the District boards, on the Architectural Review Committee and volunteering time as leaders in the some 2,300 resident lifestyle groups is unprecedented and speaks to the commitment you have to the future of The Villages.

If you have not learned about your District Government, there are a myriad of ways to do so: District Orientation every Thursday at 10 a.m. in the Lake Sumter Landing Office, 984 Old Mill Run; Welcome Wednesday every Wednesday at 11 a.m. in the Lake Sumter Landing Office, 984 Old Mill Run; and Resident Academy – just call 751-3939 to get signed up.

And, of course, our 15 different government meetings held each month. Check out our website at districtgov.org for meeting times, locations and What's Happening in the Districts. And you can always email me at janet.tutt@districtgov.org.

Finally as this is the beginning of 2016, I would like to

restate what I shared with our employees this month in my letter to them, as it is my new year's wish for everyone:

Let me wish you a healthy, safe and happy 2016! During this last year, we have lost employees, many employee family members and friends and a board supervisor. This year has been filled with tears, prayers for the sick and,

thankfully, happiness for the births of employees' children and grandchildren!

While it is all part of life, it still affects us: Our District Family.

That is why, perhaps now that I am getting older, it is

so important to hold dear every day, enjoy each other's company and friendship, and my former long list of New Year's resolutions is narrowed to just one: Be happy for this moment. This moment is your life. ~ Omar Khayyam

May you be happy for your moments in 2016!

See you next time, here, at Our Place!

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