



## Farewell to (a Secure) Hot Springs Village

### Description

by [Andrew Kramek](#) – July 14, 2019

#### Andrew prepares to leave Hot Springs Village

As I prepare to leave Hot Springs Village for the last time, I look back over the past five-plus years with mixed emotions. At a personal level, it has not really been all that good for me. My wife of 20+ years passed away suddenly less than two years after we moved here. My experience as an [HSVPOA part-time employee](#) did not end happily but then I really couldn't care much about that anyway. I only took the job for something to do after my wife passed. I have since been lucky enough to find another partner to share what is left of our lives together and I am grateful for that. Enough of me, what of the Village?

#### Things used to be different

When we first came down here, from Ohio, just over five years ago it was an idyllic place. Beautiful scenery, warm and welcoming people with a feeling of tranquility and peace in a secure, gated, community. It did seem secure back then too. Not only were there manned gates at East and West ends, but even to get out through an unmanned gate you needed to use your resident's card. The Police Report in the Village Voice was a source of mild amusement at the (sometimes bizarre) antics of Villagers with little or no obvious criminal activity. "Tailgating" was something that I thought referred to one of the missile evasion tactics we used in the Navy! So we bought land, built a house and moved here. Since then, what?

#### Management of gates was outsourced

First, the management of the gates was outsourced. It was not entirely clear to me at the time why that was a good idea and I have still, to this day, seen no rational explanation of why that was done. Did it improve our security? It certainly does not seem to have done so. Just yesterday I stopped at the East gate to inquire about the proper procedure for our removal company to gain access. Obviously, I did

not know the driver's name, so I couldn't just call in a "visitor". The answer was stunning; "If it's a removal truck. I'll just wave them through" said the gentleman on duty, he didn't even ask where I lived or when the truck might be coming! (Note to self: if, after leaving, you want to get in here unquestioned, just ensure that your vehicle looks like a removal truck).

### **Removal of necessity to use a card to exit unmanned gates**

The next change was the removal of the necessity to use a resident's card to exit an unmanned gate. Again, it was not clear how that helped to maintain, let alone improve, the security of us all. Prior to that, anyone who entered without stopping had, at least, still got to go back out through a manned gate. Not sure that it really helped much, but at least it fostered the illusion of some level of security. Now, however, anyone can depart from any of the unmanned gates whenever they wish, without any risk of being spotted as an interloper.

### **Delay timing on unmanned gates was extended**

The third change was that the delay timing on the unmanned gates was extended. This, reportedly, was done so that vehicles with trailers could use the unmanned gates. Unfortunately, the gates are not smart enough to detect whether what is entering is a vehicle pulling a trailer, or just a second vehicle entering on the first one's card. As a consequence there is now no need even to risk being stopped at a manned gate, just tuck in behind a legal resident, enter the village at will, go wherever you want and leave whenever you want. Now I understand what tailgating means around here.

### **Replacement gate security fiasco**

Add to that the fiasco over the replacement gates security system that was supposed to be implemented over a year ago. I am not familiar with all of the details but I believe that we (i.e. fee-paying residents through our HSVPOA) paid a significant chunk of money to a company to install an enhanced security gate system. Then we (HSVPOA) messed around, changing requirements and eventually making it impossible for the company to complete the job. Then [we \(HSVPOA\) sued the company](#), who immediately counter-sued. A year later we still have no security system and the court case is on-going.

### **Chaos on July 4th**



### **Hot Springs Village July 4th Fireworks**

Just this year the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday and fireworks raised security in the level of consciousness for many people. To those of us who were at Balboa beach that day and evening, it was obvious that a significant minority, if not an actual majority, of people there, were neither residents nor guests of residents. There are numerous (possibly apocryphal) stories of people queuing at the unmanned gates to tailgate in, of people being bussed into the village through those same gates by one person with a card, and many other tales. True or not I have no idea, but there were certainly a lot of non-residents around that day.

### **Doesn't seem like a gated community anymore**

Maybe it's just me, but this doesn't feel much like a "gated" community anymore. Today the Village Voice records vehicles passing unchecked through the "manned" gates as a regular occurrence and there seems to be no action or concern on the part of the powers that be. Does anyone at the POA seem bothered by any of this? Not obviously. What seems to be more important is avoiding releasing information to residents, spending yet more money that we do not have and playing legal games with by-laws and governance. The security of the Village is obviously a low priority for them, despite the fact that almost everyone I know, or have heard of, cites the "Gated Community", and the level of security that it implies, as a major factor in deciding to come here. It certainly was for me, and the complete lack of concern over security now leads me to the conclusion that it is only a matter of time before the gates come down forever. My personal fear, for what it is worth, is that the gates will be gone before the next round of Board elections; a "fait accompli" that will not be reversible!

## Andrew votes with his feet



**Andrew Kramek votes with his feet (Photo for illustrative purposes, only)**

I may be wrong on all of this, but it matters not to me. I am voting with my feet! My house is sold, and in a few days, I will shake the dust of HSV from my feet forever. The sad thing is that I feel no regret whatsoever at leaving the Village, even though it is still a beautiful place to live and I have made many warm and lasting friends here. However, in under five years, it has gone from that tranquil and secure haven to an almost open environment where anyone can and does, come and go at their will to use amenities and facilities that they do not pay for and to which they are not entitled. This is not somewhere that I choose to live any longer.

Good luck and Goodbye.

Note from Editor: It is with a heavy heart that I publish this. We are beyond sad. You will be greatly missed, Andy. Good luck and thank you so much for everything you have done.

by **Andrew Kramek**, July 14, 2019

Edited and formatted by **Cheryl Dowden**

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**Category**

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1. HSV Villager's Opinion

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