



Tucker weighs in...

Description

By **Tucker Omohundro**, January 16, 2020

My name is **Tucker Omohundro**. I am running for the HSV POA Board.

Before deciding whether to trust me with your vote, it is important to understand what I think and believe regarding Hot Springs Village. So, here are my viewpoints – based on 20+ years of experience personally helping create this community we call home.

But before answering the question “who is Tucker?” here is some critical background on the original purpose of the Hot Springs Village POA, and what it has since become.

Hot Springs Village was built for Retirees

John Cooper started building retirement communities in the 1960s. Although none of his communities were age-restricted, the majority of those who bought into them were retirees.

Since, he built his communities in the middle of nowhere, the locations were perfect for retirees. This was the case for Hot Springs Village – and that’s why he never marketed to 30 or 40-year-olds. HSV was created for people who had already made their living, and no longer had to work to support themselves. There were simply not enough employment opportunities in or near Cooper’s communities to sustain younger, working residents.

Today we are debating over whether HSV is a retirement community. That is exactly what it was – and what it is... there is no debate needed.

Let’s Get the POA Back to Its Original Purpose!

Developer John Cooper established a Property Owners’ Association (POA) in each of his communities. These POA’s were created for administrative purposes, and to maintain the infrastructure. That has always been the purpose of the POA It was formed to manage the assessments collected, and to take

care of the infrastructure. That is dramatically different than the role we are seeing today.

We need to get the POA back to what it was designed to do; and that design did not include Presidents, CEOs, CFOs, and the top-heavy staff in place today. We have simply lost sight of the purpose of the POA.

I Raised My Children in Hot Springs Village

At the time I made the choice to work for John Cooper, it meant bringing my family to Hot Springs Village, where the options for my children were few. But I didn't expect Cooper to build swimming pools or theme parks simply because my children were here. I knew this was a retirement community. The kids were happy and fine. The Village was safe. And the area was absolutely beautiful with many recreational opportunities inside and outside of the gates.

This was – and is – my home; and my family is better for that.

Take Care of the Village FIRST!

POA management should not be concerned with developing lodges or any other amenities. Those decisions need to rest with the elected Board. The staff's job is to take care of the administration and maintain the Village.

Let me say that again – The staff's job is to take care of the administration and maintain the Village, it does NOT include community development.

The POA's responsibility is to maintain the golf courses, streets, community- owned buildings, water, waste, current amenities like tennis courts, trails, etc., and all the other infrastructure – most of which were handed to us from the developer. And the buildings housing our POA staff should probably be called 'Maintenance and Administration' offices – because that is what the POA is, and where our focus should be.

HSV is NOT *The Villages* in Florida

Some people compare Hot Springs Village with *The Villages* in Florida. Although *The Villages* also draws retirees, it is an entirely different style of community; a for-profit organization, not a POA. In *The Villages* over 120,000 people reside on basically the same amount of land that 15,000 of us consider as our home. And, how they pay for their community (including how much) differs dramatically from what we pay here.

Simply put, there is no 100% comparison to Hot Springs Village and another retirement community across the U.S. There are many different types of retirement communities, some standard, some unique. Hot Springs Village is unique and was built to be that way; residents have loved its uniqueness and affordability for 50-years! The organizational structure and decisions of the POA over the last several years has caused a rift in that love. Let's go back to HSV residents loving where they live and what we have here vs. trying to change HSV into something it should not be nor could it sustain.

We Don't Need to Change It; We Need to Maintain It!

Most everyone moved to Hot Springs Village knowing the amenities were already in place – not what was envisioned down the road. For all practical purposes, we have added very little to those amenities over the last 15 years — except for the Pickleball Courts, and some additional trails. But that's OK – because what we have is what Villagers wanted then and still want now.

When we did add an amenity, (such as those Pickleball Courts), it was not done to increase the population; but rather to provide an additional amenity current Villagers wanted and use daily. That model has served us well.

Tomorrow's residents will come to HSV for its existing facilities. There is no need to add a lodge, town centers, or a new golf course. We don't need to add buildings and parks. We simply need to concentrate on maintaining what we have... and do that well, within clear cost centers – with amenity-based Profit & Loss accounting – and within set budgets.

Should we ever add new amenities? Certainly. But only when we have surplus funds, and then only when we are serving a majority of the community.

Of course, we also need to accept that dollars spent on amenities will not raise our property values. That will only result from the dollars we spend on effectively marketing Hot Springs Village to the outside world.

Stop the Waste!

We are not a government, with a seemingly endless supply of money. And, a line of credit is not a reserve fund. We need to stop wasting money on real estate offices and development plans, etc. And we are not a developer, nor will we ever be. The recent gate debacle is simply one more example of how we have mismanaged our funds.

Although our current leadership and POA have made it tremendously complicated, our situation is really quite simple... Maintain what we have, for those who want to be here.

How Should We Market Hot Springs Village?

Attracting potential Villagers and visitors is important. We need a marketing plan that works. With today's technology, we should be able to accomplish that.

Will it totally fix our problem? Perhaps not. But it has to be done; and it needs to be done at the direction of the Board of Directors – rather than within the POA.

Marketing should not fall to the POA. That is a development task; not administration and maintenance. It needs to stand on its own.

As our Developer, John Cooper directed all HSV's marketing. We are now in a position that we need to tackle that task all over again. The only way that marketing effort will work is totally separate from the POA.

Concentrate Marketing Efforts for the Highest Return

HSV's marketing focus should be concentrated on where we get the biggest bang for our buck. That 'pot of gold' is our current and future retirees. That was John Cooper's strategy, and it needs to be ours!

This is still 'Jessieville / Fountain Lake, Arkansas' – with limited employment opportunities – and moderately paying jobs in the local business community, or in maintaining our infrastructure. There is no thriving industry here or within a 20-mile radius... therefore, HSV is not an easy place to thrive for a younger, working person. **Retirees are the answer.**

That's not to say that we don't welcome younger residents – particularly in a world where 'working from home' is an option. We do! HSV has never been age restricted nor should it ever be; but the simple fact is retirees flourish here. And, since we only have so many marketing dollars, we need to concentrate on where we will get the highest return – retirees.

Hot Springs Village is North America's Largest Gated Community

I retired in Hot Springs Village because of what was already here, inside of our gates. How many times have we heard that HSV is the largest gated community in the United States? Those gates are a big selling point.

There was a time when passing through our gates required you to be a guest of a property owner, a recognized worker, or someone with a qualified purpose. The gates meant something – HSV was not open to the public. That's not the case today – If you currently approach the gates, the simple phrase "*I am on my way to a garage sale,*" will get you in, no questions asked. And if you come up to the gates proclaiming, "*I am here to play golf or swim in a lake,*" the Village is yours!

Of course, we will never be airtight. People will always have valid reasons to enter HSV – such as church, dining in our restaurants, visiting a property owner, or maintaining what we have and resident services like heat & air, plumbing, etc. But there needs to be better procedures to vet those visitors.

Property Owners made the decisions to purchase lots and homes here because of HSV's gates and security. Today's 'casual' gate policy needs to stop.

It Is Very Simple – Return to the Basics!

What needs to happen is very simple. We – starting with the POA – need to return to the basics. People moved here for a variety of reasons. If those reasons disappear, they will leave; (some *are already leaving due to the toxic environment the POA has created and the fear of HSV becoming something it should never be*).

We have a great community – which we are at the risk of losing, if we don't tackle it now!

I have met with Lloyd Sherman and Dick Garrison on many occasions and we agree on many of the same issues. They both have my support.

Thank you for your support and vote. Now let's return Hot Springs Village to what it once was!

Sincerely,
Tucker Omohundro

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