

Complete Interview with Board V.P. Joe Khoury

In April, *Highlights* reported that 24 of 50 owners who had signed a petition for a “special vote of members” retracted their signatures. Since that left an insufficient number to trigger a vote, the Board announced it would not conduct one. Several readers found the report confusing, so *Highlights* asked Board V.P. Joe Khoury to explain. A shorter version appears in the May 2015 *Highlights*.

H: Why did the signers want to have a special vote?

JK I spoke with half of the signers, and not a single one of them knew they were signing a petition calling for a special vote! They were upset about the way the revised parking rules were distributed and did not think that posting the notice at the Clubhouse entrance was sufficient. They assumed the petition would address that problem. Many of them said that they understood the Board’s desire to reduce printing costs but felt that the membership was being disrespected by the limited notice. This issue had been discussed at a Court Council meeting, and the signers were told that the petition was a result of that discussion.

H: Did the petition cause the Board to change its mind?

JK: The petition had no effect on the Board. But the concerns expressed in Court Council and several angry messages from residents had a tremendous impact and helped us see that the membership wanted more ways of getting notices about rule changes. We would have to either go back to the old, costly way of sending a paper copy to each owner or come up with something else. The Board decided to mail notices to offsite owners and distribute to residents through Court Council as well as continue posting them at the Clubhouse entrance.

H: *Why did the signers retract their signatures?*

JK: *All but one of the signers I spoke with agreed to sign the retraction when they learned that the petition they signed was not actually calling for the Board to distribute the new parking rules to every member, but was instead calling for the Association to conduct a special election about the parking rules. Simply put, it was not at all what they thought they were signing. They did not think that holding a special election was in any way a solution to this problem.*

H: You personally contacted all the owners who retracted their signatures. Why was it important to you to do that?

JK: I wanted to help save the Association the time and expense of conducting another election, especially since the revised parking rules made no substantial changes (except for a minor loosening of the definition of a “Guest”)

and are actually simplified and easier to understand. I thought that the vast majority of owners and residents would see the changes as a great improvement.

Moreover, in the election called for by the petition, 75% of the membership would have to vote in favor of the rule change in order for it to pass. That is roughly 470 “yes” votes. As readers may know, we never get many more than 330 members even casting a ballot in our annual election, so getting 470 “yes” votes would be almost impossible to achieve! And even if all 330 members voting said “yes” to the revised rules, the measure still would fail and we would be stuck with the old convoluted parking rules.

I saw this situation as an opportunity for me to dialog with owners to clarify some misinformation about the re-written parking rules as well as learn from them more about how they would like to be noticed about rule changes.

H. Now that some time has passed, what’s your take on the incident?

JK: One of the owners told me that they thought it was good to cause some pain for the board members so that they would learn their lesson. It is well known that this does apply in a global arena of politics and power struggles. But this is a neighborly HOA board. The Village Green Board is not “the man” doing the bidding of the 1%. Board members are no different from the rest of the owners. They’re just folks trying to figure out how to water the grass and fix the plumbing while minimizing the dues.