

Can't See the Forest for the Palm Trees (with apologies to John Heywood)

There has been a lot of press and interest surrounding our little slice of heaven lately. So, I decided to look back. Sometimes we need to look back to understand where we are at.

2004 – a bond package is passed allocating \$1.4 million to build a structure on the Island allowing water exchange under Park Road 22 (aka SPID)

2008 – a bond package is passed allocating an additional \$5.9 million. The water exchange structure is now a bridge.

2010–2012 – Discussions among developers to enhance the bridge as part of a Canal Walk, like the River Walk in San Antonio. The Walk would connect Schlitterbahn on the west side of SPID to the planned marina development on the east side.

2012 – Schlitterbahn breaks ground

2012 – a bond package is passed allocating \$500,000 for improvements to Billish Park

2014 – Schlitterbahn opens

2016 – Marina development begins

2017 – Marina development bankruptcy filing

So, what do we have today? Well, I looked around and here is what I see. Billish Park is still a sticker burr haven and the only thing regularly playing there are the pocket gophers. The bridge is just a gleam in an optimist's eye. The only thing present at the Marina site are sandstorms worthy of Lawrence of Arabia. Homeowners are having to go directly to the city to get help with the sand. Schlitterbahn is open, but homeowners had to go to San Antonio to put pressure on them to clean up the site and build a fence to hide the less desirable features of the park, a fence that is still not finished.

And where was the POA during all of this? Surely, they must have been on the forefront as advocates for our community? Surely, they must have applied pressure on Schlitterbahn to clean up the mess? Surely, they must be having conversations with the city about our daily sandstorms?

No, the POA was too busy for all of this. But they did find time to implement the new Compliance Program. Homeowners asked for help with these REAL issues and have received nothing but violation notices.

Now, as I have said before, I am not against a compliance program. We do need a level of community standards. But why for the life of me, in an otherwise picture perfect yard, would the POA require removal of a few brown palm fronds?

We all moved here for a variety of reasons. But once here, what many come to enjoy is the abundance of wildlife who also make this community their home. We all sit on our patios and decks and enjoy watching the antics of the pelicans in the canals. We love experiencing the thrill when a pod of dolphin swim by. We laugh as the seagulls swoop and catch the thrown bread mid-air. And we quietly watch the hummingbirds visit the feeders we provide. We treasure and want and encourage this life to live in our community.

So, is it so unreasonable that one of the choices a homeowner might make is to provide shelter and habitat in their palm trees?

Now, I understand the POA has many things to do and a myriad of responsibilities. But first and foremost, their responsibility is to protect the investment we have all made in our community.

And right now, their focus is not on our community forest.

So again, I ask the Board to rescind the palm tree trimming requirement of the Compliance Program. Why? Because it goes against the very Nature in and of our community.