

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

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FRONT PAGE HEADLINE

Resident attendance poor

RCSC officials believe members satisfied

By Rusty Bradshaw, Independent Newspapers

Like many governing bodies, Recreation Centers of Sun City Board of Directors sees sparse attendance at its meetings, with some occasional exceptions.

During its regular December meeting, the Sundial Auditorium seating was nearly filled because there were three items — a club expansion, golf car rules and assessments — on the agenda that drew a larger number of members out than the majority of RCSC board meetings. Members expressed their concerns about all three issues.

However, quarterly and annual meetings have not been conducted for more than a year because a quorum of at least 100 members is required to conduct business at those meetings. The next annual meeting is 9 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 29 at Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave. The only item on the agenda is approval of the minutes of the January 2006 annual meeting minutes — the last time there was a quorum for an annual meeting.

Since a lack of a quorum only prevents approval of minutes of the January 2006 annual meeting, RCSC officials are not concerned that member attendance is not high enough to constitute a quorum at annual and quarterly membership meetings, according to Tim Gallen, RCSC spokesman.

“RCSC believes members do not attend the quarterly and annual meetings because they are satisfied with the way RCSC operates,” Mr. Gallen said. “Plus, since RCSC officials provide numerous opportunities to share an opinion and raise concerns routinely, members may not see a need to attend quarterly and annual meetings.”

In addition to RCSC officials, Independent sent e-mails to 212 Sun City residents seeking their input on quarterly and annual meeting attendance. Some residents offered agreement with
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RCSC officials' position

Sun City resident Beverly Bruce believes the people on the board have the best interests of Sun City in their hands and she trusts them to do the right thing.

“Believe it or not I have lived in Sun City since December 1979, and I have never attended an RCSC board meeting because when it comes to the kind of decisions they have to make, I feel I don’t know enough about this sort of thing to spout off at the mouth, or even just listen and say nothing,” she said. “I never realized that so many other people must feel the same way, which I assume is the reason they have never had a quorum.”

Sun City resident Marybeth Ferrell believes the lack of attendance boils down to apathy.

“People who do not attend probably will never attend,” she said. “The majority are snowbirds and are not fully vested in the community. This is a vacation home for them and they don’t care about the details of running it.”

However, other residents have little confidence their voice will be heard by the board in quarterly, annual or regular meetings. Sun City resident Elizabeth J. Rohn-Nelson called RCSC operational methods a tyranny.

“They won’t listen to the people,” she said. “If you try to speak up, one is banned from attending. They spend money, just like our government, and then raise our fees.”

Sun City resident Anne Randall Stewart can attest to expulsion. She claims she had her attendance privileges removed by the board following the Sun City Formula Registry’s attempt to recall board members in the January 2006 meeting. She said meeting attendance dropped dramatically after that and it led to few board candidates and low voter turnouts in RCSC elections.

“In December 2008, there wasn’t any opposition to the regime at all, resulting in the lowest voter turnout ever,” she said. “Folks we talk to don’t want to serve alongside this mindset.”

Ms. Rohn-Nelson claims a couple of board members keep control and pass it around among themselves.

“This is why people don’t want to be on the board,” she said. “You are controlled and must become a puppet.”

Sun City resident Kenneth Svec believes part of the problem is lack of communication from RCSC officials about meetings and their importance for residents. He believes RCSC should take more steps to inform residents about upcoming meetings and encourage their involvement.

“I think that they have to stress to the membership that involvement and enforcement must be continued or we could end up like Youngstown,” he said. “They also used to be a 55-and- older community.”

It may also be a case of residents not understanding their role at quarterly and annual meetings, he added. While annual and quarterly meetings are to allow residents to discuss issues, RCSC members also have the ability to place items on the meeting agenda and all members in attendance, not the board, vote on issues at quarterly and annual meetings, according to Mr. Gallen.

“Quarterly and annual meetings are important because they provide RCSC members an opportunity to take action,” he said.

As with regular board meetings, agenda items for quarterly and annual meetings must be posted in advance, he added.

Ms. Stewart believes RCSC members, including investor property owners who do not live in their Sun City homes, should attend all RCSC meetings.

“Attendance, despite members’ powerlessness, is still important for two reasons,” she said. “First, to get to know the board and committee members to reveal their agendas that squander our resources on their personal wants not needs and second to let us know what they see and hear so we can alert victims so they might show up in force to oppose them.”

She said RCSC’s December meeting showed how member involvement can make a difference. Board members delayed action on two issues after hearing several members speak against allowing a racquetball court to be eliminated in favor of the Bell Metals Club expansion plans and rules requiring all golf car seats be filled on Sun City golf courses.

“When crowds form, it does have an impact on the board’s decision making,” she said.

However, there remain residents who believe attendance does not have much impact on board decisions.

“From personal experience in attending the board meetings when I first moved to Sun City in 2004, I discovered the board will do what they determine they will do regardless of input from the residents of Sun City,” said Sun City resident Joan Adair.

She is not alone in that sentiment, she added.

“In talking with my neighbors and at various gatherings in Sun City, the same statement is made over and over: ‘You are talking to a wall when you talk to the

board so why bother going to the meetings. The board is going to do what it wants to do!” She said it is sad this perception exists in the community.

“It is so important that residents have their voices heard, but they have given up,” she said.

However, Sun City resident Marv Worthen, Sun City Taxpayers Association president, encourages RCSC members to get involved in all Sun City governing body decision-making. “It is better to know what is going to happen and why things did happen rather than getting all excited about something if it only affects you as an individual,” he said.

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