

Background paper – Blast E-Mails 4/22/12

For purposes of this paper, a “blast e-mail” is defined as an unsolicited e-mail that is sent to everybody in the community at one keystroke. You would receive it even though you would not necessarily know the sender. It can be a touchy issue in as much as many people consider any unsolicited e-mail to be nothing more than spam.

When we move into the community, we are asked to give our contact information to the POA which, in turn, puts it in a directory for the use of all community residents. The directory can be downloaded off the POA web site. Alternatively, the Resident Resources section of the web site has a very functional copy of the directory that allows you to search by name, lot number or street. Most have found it to be a very useful tool.

The availability of this information has come with conditions such as those currently on our web site; which are the following:

The information provided in the Governors Club Directory is solely for the private use of Governors Club Property Owners. Its intended use is to provide information to assist residents in becoming acquainted with, and communicating with, one another. It is not intended that the Directory be used for any type of promotion, commercial or otherwise, that generates unsolicited mail, emails or telephone calls by Governors Club community members or others. We specifically request that the information in this Directory not be used by anyone for purposes not intended. Your cooperation is appreciated.

There was apparently a violation of this policy in September 2009. A resident couple sent out an e-mail against the proposed deer culling program; which was being considered and debated at that time by a POA sponsored committee. It is not clear how many people received this e-mail or how many others were sent. However, enough people complained to the POA that the Board sent out the following notice:

There have been a few incidents within the last 6 weeks where residents have sent unsolicited emails to their fellow residents about community issues. The latest example is an email regarding the community deer issue. We have received complaints from other residents that they should not be subject to unsolicited blast emails regarding any issue from fellow residents, and have asked us to try to stop this practice. This note is to remind all of us of the Disclaimer on our POA website for use of its Directory that states that the Directory is not intended to be used for any type of activity that generates unsolicited mail, email, or telephone calls by Governors Club community members. Such activity runs counter to the atmosphere of privacy and respect that Community members expect from their fellow residents. The Board never anticipated that they might have to consider penalties for abuses of this policy, but repeated misuse of our Website directory will prompt such action. Hopefully, these incidents will stop.

In November, 2009, another e-mail was sent out by STAND; a group of people strongly opposed to the deer culling program. It is not clear if this went out to people on an unsolicited basis. Although it was clearly sent as a blast message, it possibly went only to people known to those who were part of this group. Since the STAND web site never gave the names of any members, it is impossible to know.

However, in 2010, we had the first unsolicited, blast e-mail intentionally sent to the entire community. It came from a group of people vehemently opposed to the Branch Meadows annexation. They felt the need to inform the entire community why they were opposed to the project and wanted to encourage people to pressure the Board to reject the proposal.

These e-mails started with an open letter to the Board from a number of residents. The originator of subsequent e-mails morphed into Neighbors Concerned About Annexation (NCAA); which started out as an anonymous group but later divulged the names of those on the steering committee; Barry Fine, Joe Hunt, Kelley Hunter, David Revere, David Rosenberg, Susan Rosenberg, Jim Trimm.

E-mails were sent to all residents, and, at the very end of the message, recipients were given the option of unsubscribing from future e-mails. Numerous unsolicited e-mails were sent until the Branch Meadows proposal was rejected by the Board.

Some questioned how NCAA came up with a complete e-mail list of community residents. Since none of the NCAA steering committee members has offered that information, nobody knows for certain. However, that is something of a moot point. The information is there for any resident to obtain, and creating an e-mail list simply requires a little diligent work. The information undoubtedly came, in some form or fashion, from the POA directory information, so it is clear that the policy was violated. NCAA doubtless felt that the violation was for a good cause.

The next blast e-mail occurred in late 2011. In this case, several people supporting the candidacy of Kelley Hunter for the POA Board felt compelled to e-mail the entire community explaining why they felt she would be a good director. This type of unsolicited electioneering had never occurred before; and certainly not by using POA directory information. In an effort to be fair, the Board offered the other candidates an opportunity to send unsolicited e-mails through the POA system promoting their candidacy. None accepted the offer, as they apparently respected the policy outlined by the Board and POA.

The people who sent this blast e-mail about Kelley Hunter called themselves “Neighbors Concerned” and signed their names: Ray Auwarter, Skip Bollenbacher, Lee Cheney, George Cohen, Bob Drake, Mary Lou Drake, Sharon Goldenberg, Bruce Ladd, Dolly Ladd, David Revere, Stephanie Revere, David Rosenberg, Susan Rosenberg, Bob Schrock, Carolyn Schrock, Peter J. Smith, Caroline Szymeczek

Given the name of the group and those signing the letter, it seemed fairly obvious that the e-mail list was the same as that used by the NCAA steering committee; which included Kelley Hunter.

Digression for a factoid: Another interesting point is that many of these same people were also actively supportive of and/or involved in STAND; the group that is strongly opposed to the deer culling program.

In fact, Skip Bollenbacher and David & Susan Rosenberg were among those who sued the POA over the issue of No Hunting signs; which resulted in POA legal expenses of over \$60,000 ([Related article](#)). Kelley Hunter is also opposed to the deer culling program. Although her electioneering material repeatedly stressed her support of openness and transparency, it never mentioned her opposition to this program.

So, now we had two instances of unsolicited e-mails; both seemingly originating from the same e-mail list.

The third and most recent unsolicited blast e-mail was sent in late 2011 subsequent to the proposed marketing program informational meetings sponsored by the POA Board. This one gave numerous reasons why the author felt the proposed program was a bad idea. Since it was sent anonymously, there is no way to confirm the origin of the e-mail list that was used.

However, given the timing, the fact that only one other group had sent out unsolicited blast e-mails and the fact that several of the members of “Neighbors Concerned” publically spoke very strongly against the marketing proposal, it is probably safe to assume it came from somebody who had access to the same e-mail list. Since the sender never had the courage to reveal his or her identity, we can only work with these clues to form that conclusion.

So, it is these last three situations, all involving unsolicited e-mails to the entire community, that prompted the Board to address the issue.

Editorial Note: Although those sending these unsolicited messages are not forthcoming as to the source of their e-mail data, all of it is most likely coming from the same list. In fact what we appear to now have is a small group of like-minded people within the community who share the e-mail list whenever one or more of them feel that the rest of the community needs to be enlightened as to what they think on any particular subject. It doesn't take much to see that this practice could be very irritating if several hundred people acted the same way. We all have opinions, but most don't think that theirs are so important that they need to be sent to everybody in the community on an unsolicited basis.