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THE VILLAGES AT



WEST NECK

*An Active Adult Community*

**June 8, 2023  
Special Edition  
Rebuttal to PA article**



### **Notes to the Community from the Board Liaison to the City**

In the last edition of the Princess Anne Independent News, Harrison & Lear, the Hampton developer who has an option to purchase the golf course property briefed the newspaper editor on their plans for the property. (The article can be accessed at [princessanneindy.com](http://princessanneindy.com) for those who haven't seen it.) I contacted the paper upon seeing the article and stated my displeasure in their publishing Harrison & Lear's flowery presentation without any challenge and asked for the opportunity to write a rebuttal. My original rebuttal submission was subsequently restricted to a 750 words letter to the editor. I agreed to the reduction because I believe it is important to get a rebuttal out as soon as possible even if some details were lost. However, I'm forwarding my original to all homeowners in the enclosed attachment. Additionally, the renderings Harrison & Lear allowed to be published failed to show where the 153 new dwellings were to be placed. They did however show some on hole #13 at the corner of Legendary & Cadence and some to the rear of Carrollton homes facing the golf course on hole #17.

I anticipate Harrison & Lear will soon make an application to the city for a zoning change. I hope this happens soon so we as a community can step up before Planning and City Council and get beyond this attempt to destroy our wonderful community. More on how homeowners can help when the rezoning application is made, and hearing dates are set.

Tom Luckman  
Vice President





## Rebuttal Page 1

This Article is a rebuttal to the one that appeared May 28th, 2023, concerning redevelopment of the golf course at West Neck. In the article the president of Harrison & Lear, Inc., a development company from Hampton Virginia, and their landscape consultant, briefed The Princess Anne Independent News on their upcoming plan.

Although I did not receive the brief and the two renderings published showed little of the actual plan, I will attempt to address the key issues that were included in the article.

First, there is the contention stated throughout the article that the golf course failed and cannot be returned. This is not borne out by the facts. The golf course's long-time General Manager has provided financials which showed the golf course was making a profit. The golf course's positive cash flow was simply insignificant to meet the original owner's total debt requirements. Additionally, the new owner's requirement for a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) by those seeking to purchase the golf course restricts our discussion on how many of these offers were made and simply turned down or not addressed. What is known is the superbly designed and sculptured Arnold Palmer Signature golf course with all its necessary infrastructure less greens, bunkers and grass remain in place. Rumors abound that offers will come once the rezoning issue is defeated. The fact remains that there is a zoning ordinance in effect that requires a golf course to be developed on the land.

Second, the fact that there are not enough golfers in the area to make a go of the golf course is also not supported by the facts. Ask any local golfer and they will tell you play is up, preferred tee times are harder to get and since COVID the dynamics of who can play when has changed markedly. The National Golf Foundation whose research has measured the health and vitality of US golf industry for more than 80 years and measures golf participation as a core measure of golf's vitality states that 3.3 million people played golf for the first time in 2022, that the industry has had nine straight years with more than two million beginners with the past three years topping 3 million rounds and that play has increased significantly in the US in 2020, 2021 and 2022. This resurgence is due to many factors. The pool of 17M new golfers over the past three years is attributable in part to the growth and popularity of off-course golf. The recent rise of interactive golf experiences that go beyond the typical 18-hole course has also helped golf grow, especially to new audiences. The growing



## Rebuttal Page 2

popularity of TopGolf, virtual trainers, both entertainment and high-level golf training, as well as golf simulators, have been proven to be new entry points for golf.

Third, that Harrison & Lear's option to buy and repurpose the golf course into 5 villages of 153 dwellings "is a long-term solution to a problem that no one else has been able to solve", is frankly hyperbole. Simply stated, developable land is worth more than golf course land and until there is a no vote by City Council to a request to redevelop of the property, David L. LaClair the out of state land speculator who owns the property, will not entertain legitimate purchase offers from golf course operators.

Fourth, that the plan was shaped by a steering committee of thirty residents from West Neck and Indian River Plantation. This is approximately 1% of these communities' residents. The identity of these "steering" committee members has never been made known nor was any community wide input requested by them. This is nothing more than the developer's attempt to demonstrate community involvement. It is fact that the vast majority both Indian River Plantation and West Neck homeowners through their Homeowner Association Boards have documented opposition to this type of development.

Fifth, that the development plan would convert 120 acres of fairways requiring watering, fertilizing and pesticides into "environmentally friendly and sustaining uses" ..." taking one of the highest polluting uses out of the Southern Rivers Watershed", is simply not true. The West Neck Villages and the golf course property are an enclosed storm water system serviced by the lakes on the property. A proffer requiring a comprehensive stormwater/lake management plan to address the Southern Watersheds Management Ordinance was required by the original developer/owner. There is no storm water run-off, even the 200-year storm in 2016 proved this point. As a related point, modern golf course turf management is very environmentally friendly.

Sixth, that 120 acres of meadows, trails, gardens, passive areas, and dog parks would be a dramatic expansion of amenities that could be used by everyone in West Neck and Indian River Plantation. Additionally, that the ponds would be expanded into lakes for kayaking, plus pickle ball courts and exercise stations and recreation areas will be for the use of residents, not the public and that access would be



## Rebuttal Page 3

controlled with key fob entry at gates and folks from communities immediately surrounding the area could buy a key fob for access loses the primary point of the original West Neck development. The increased housing density needed to offset the construction cost of a high-end golf course (the Arnold Palmer Signature GC) amenity available to all the citizens of Virginia Beach and their guests was the prime reason for the approval of the original development. Without the golf course's return the citizens of Virginia Beach have lost a major amenity open to all.

Seventh, that the additional homes create the revenue stream for a solution is suspect. The homeowner assessment required to properly maintain the stated amenities and 120 acres of meadows, trails, gardens, passive areas, and lakes along with special key fob entry areas will be significant. These new homeowners could routinely choose to forgo some maintenance.

Eighth, that West Neck was rezoned under a different set of rules and that rezoning might not set a precedent is again, not supported by the facts. The Transition Area guidelines of one acre per dwelling has remained over time. The fact that the golf course has already been counted in the 1999 development approval is significant to all Transition Area residents. If the golf course, which has been counted in the approval of the West Neck development, can now be counted again to add 153 additional dwellings, then the Transition Area will in effect have no density requirements that are enforceable.

Nineth, that the development plan would please most of the residents, improve the quality of life of those around the former golf course and increase neighboring property values is absurd. There are 506 homeowners near the golf course property line with homes designed to maximize golf course views who would permanently lose their paid lot premiums. As measured by land assessment losses they range from \$4,400 to \$46,100 totaling more than \$7,500,000. These residents will now have public trails behind their homes, or buffer area and some may have new homes or pickleball courts or dog parks, none of which will increase their property values or add to their quality of life.

And finally, just think a moment about the West Neck homeowners whose average age is over 70, who purchased their retirement home in an age restricted, quite golf course community. would now have 153 new homes appear around them. with

children playing and basically anyone walking, biking and skateboarding, constantly



## Rebuttal Page 4

traversing the many new trails by their homes. Additionally, new daily school and activity buses and teen-age drivers along with the general increased activity of the young, will create more noise and distractions. Simply stated, approval of this proposed development will forever destroy the unique character and charm of the Villages at West Neck and since the Transition Area density requirements would be lost, over time the entire Transition Area would be forever changed. The City Council must not let this happen.

Tom Luckman  
Vice President  
West Neck Community Association, Inc.

Please direct any comments/responses you may have **directly to Board of Director members**. You can find their email addresses on our website. Using the eNews 'reply' will only reach the eNews submission inbox. Thank you.

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