September 13, 2022

To whom it may concern,  
  
This email is an attempt to provide the reader with some background and rationale for the HOA board decision to remove the existing lamp post mailbox combos from the 92 single-family homes in Vanderbilt Lakes One, install 92 new mailboxes at those residences and contract with FPL for 18 street lights to provide dependable neighborhood lighting for drivers and pedestrians, as well as neighborhood security.  
  
The problem:  
One of the biggest complaints we get is about the current state of our lamp post mailbox combos. At any given time at least 20% of them do not light at night and several of them are lit all day long. The paint is peeling, the cast aluminum is corroding. They are only now nine years old having been replaced in entirety in 2013. If anyone doubts this I have the receipt. They are in constant need of repair as they have many points of failure. Notably, up until late 2021 we had a volunteer doing these repairs for free. Since his retirement we have had to hire a handyman. The first one quit. Then we had a licensed electrician repair a number of them, some of which have since failed again. And now we have a handyman who we have sent out to repair some more. This is the reason why you see the $5000 line item for lamp post repairs. The electrician charges $125 an hour and the handyman $75. Were we to maintain them fully for example, repairing and painting and replacing corroded parts, the amount would be much higher.  
  
Options we considered were replacing all of the lamp post mailbox combos with similar ones at a very conservative estimate of $60,000.  We could then look forward to the cost of maintaining them going forward and replacing them again in 8 to 10 years.  Even when they are new they are prone to many points of failure, for example, the dusk to dawn sensor only lasts 2 to 3 years.  
The other option we considered was what we finally agreed upon. We decided to do away with them all together by providing mailboxes only (no light) at a cost of about 40,000, and providing lighting via street lights installed and maintained by FPL.   
  
Some points to consider:  
The upfront cost for the installation by FPL is $14,000. The ongoing monthly cost to FPL, based on current energy costs, is $530 monthly or $6360 annually. The $5000 budgeted for lamp post repairs will go away because the contract with FPL provides that they maintain them as part of our monthly charge. So if one fails to light or gets knocked over for any reason they will fix it at no extra charge. So the ongoing cost is a near wash.  
  
The community will have an improved daytime appearance, better sight lines, and less clutter.  
  
There will be improved light quality at night. The light will be coming from above rather than at eye level eliminating glare at eye level. The plan replaces 92 light polluting lamp posts with 18 eco-friendly street lights that are consistent with the City of Bonita Springs dark sky initiative.  The lights indeed face down.  
  
The $20,000 savings by replacing mailboxes only rather than mailboxes with lampposts more than covers the initial FPL installation fee.  
  
The wiring to the mailbox lamp post has always been the homeowners responsibility. There are at least 10 homes currently not providing power to the pole for reasons I cannot enumerate. I know from my personal experience and hearing from others that these lines are often compromised by time, landscapers, Xfinity and others. They have to be replaced at homeowner expense which can be in the range of $1000. Homeowners will be relieved of this responsibility going forward. They will also not have to pay to power the lightbulb.  
  
In the event of standing water at the base of any electrical fixture I suppose there would be a possibility that that water could become electrified. I will ask FPL what precautions are taken to prevent that in their installations.  
  
Bottom line, we believe that this plan will save money in the future, not cost more, and provide better service to the community at large.  
  
Respectfully,  
  
Cindy Judar

VCSA President