

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE DILEMMAS
OF
PRIVATE GOVERNMENT

by
Karl J. Ingebritsen

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A recent visitor to Reston associated with a national foundation remarked that the citizen leadership of the Reston Home Owners Association would not behave responsibly until it was given full responsibility for the organization. This is a dilemma of private government which challenges Reston where the Developer has granted a larger measure of control over the homes corporation's affairs to Reston citizens than is the case in any other large U. S. development of which I have knowledge.

How is the Developer to protect his legitimate interests in the homes corporation and at the same time respond to the desires of residents for control over their own affairs. The Columbia Association has a carefully worked out plan for turning control of their Board of Directors over to the residents, but neither Columbia's developer nor the citizens are completely happy with this scheme. In Reston, the Developer has no published plan for turning control of the Reston Home Owners Association over to the citizens. There are presently three citizens on the nine-man Board of Directors and a citizen serves as President of the Association, but the number of citizens on the Board is not set forth in the Association's basic documentation, nor is there anywhere spelled out a plan for turning control of the Association over to the residents. In spite of the very considerable citizen involvement in the Reston Home Owners Association and the efforts made by myself and others to convince Reston residents that Reston Home Owners Association belongs to them, is their vehicle, the feeling is widespread in Reston that the homes corporation is just an arm of Gulf Reston and not worth much citizen interest and effort.

Homes corporations appear to work quite satisfactorily in small planned unit developments inhabited by relatively affluent and well educated homeowners. One of the dilemmas facing Reston Home Owners Association and private governments in other large developments where apartments and rental townhouses form part of the mix is how to grant representation in what is a quasi municipal structure to all residents. How should the fifty percent or more of the residents of a community who may be renters be involved in its management? How do you structure a planned community containing renters as well as homeowners in order to minimize conflict between these two groups? Presently, only homeowners vote for citizen members of the Reston Home Owners Association Board of Directors. How does this practice square with one man

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one vote court decisions. Don't renters have a stake in the management and operation of Reston parks, common lands, pools, tennis courts, lakes, etc.? Gulf Reston and other large developers must address themselves to these important questions or it is predictable that there will be trouble in the New Towns paradise.

Management of a community is difficult enough today in most old towns in the United States. Management in America's New Towns, with the notable exception of Columbia, is a largely neglected area. Here in Reston for example, with 13,000 people already on the property and a growth rate pushing Reston's population rapidly upward, we are presently engaged in a struggle to define roles for the homes corporation, lines of authority within the structure, to establish professional position descriptions, etc. An important piece of recent Reston history included the consolidation of the two original homes corporations set up before the first residents moved in. I have held the job of Executive Director with Reston Home Owners Association for nearly two and a half years and there is still no Board approved position description covering my job. This is a dangerous way in which to operate for both the Executive Director and for the Association. Reston has many unresolved questions with regard to such unexciting but vital matters as land management. How the homes corporation is organized in the New Town to perform tasks such as these is critical from the standpoint of community values in both the short and long run.

The financing of the homes corporations is a dilemma for both the Montgomery Village Foundation and for the Reston Home Owners Association. I am not a financial man, but it takes no financial expert to see what some of the problems are. I have recommended to the Reston Home Owners Association Board of Directors that a Financial Director be employed by the Association no later than January 1, 1972 to begin work on the multitude of financial matters to which the Reston Home Owners Association needs to address itself including debt financing of capital items.

What kind of programs should the homes corporations sponsor? Columbia has a recreation budget which this year will run a deficit--that is excess of expenses over income--that is larger than the entire Reston Home Owners Association 1971 budget. The Reston Home Owners Association is spending about \$10,000.00 on Recreation programs of one kind or another this year. Columbia obviously has

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a philosophy with regard to recreation expenditures and is pursuing it vigorously. Reston Home Owners Association is still developing a philosophy in this area. The leadership in Columbia in developing their approach has come from the Rouse Company. In Reston, Gulf Reston, Inc. expects the citizens to take the lead. Which approach is the right one? Do both have merits?

Finally, I want to comment briefly on citizen participation. In my opinion, none of the Washington area New Towns, Columbia, Montgomery Village, Reston, have satisfactorily solved this problem. Gulf Reston, Inc. has gone further than any of the developers in giving the citizens a voice, but the structure that was set up in June 1970 to give Reston residents more of a say in the management of the homes corporation is so complicated that Spring 1971 finds numbers of thoughtful Reston residents lobbying for changes that will simplify the structure. A single Town Council elected at large by all residents, homeowners and renters alike, is a recommendation I have recently made in order to move Reston Home Owners Association in the direction of a more understandable organization and thus encourage meaningful citizen participation. The New Town's citizens must feel that they belong and have some say in the community or the best architectural plans will not succeed in bringing the better life which is an objective the developer pursues, hopefully with HUD assistance, in undertaking the highly complex task of building a New Town rather than in putting his money to work in other areas where profits are more likely.