

Park play area poles removed, for safety and cost issues

The CDD board recently voted to spend \$4,500 to remove the six poles holding up the cover above the children's play area in Ballantrae Park – rather than spending \$20,000 both to have them straightened plus buying and installing a replacement cover.

Without the cover, the Board was concerned about the stability of the free-standing poles.

The board noted it had already spent close to \$4,000 on repairs, mostly due to cover wind damage and vandalism that included cuts into the cover fabric and burns through it. They had to be repaired to stabilize the cover.

The Board also compared the cover structure to those across Ballantrae Blvd. at the day care. They noted those cover structures were not as tall and were protected on three sides from wind damage by taller trees and a building. The day care also does not appear to have vandals climbing the poles and damaging the covers.

The Board noted that, within the next few years, it expects to plan for a new clubhouse and converting the existing one into a free fitness center for residents. Potential sites for the



The poles that held up the cover above the children's play area in Ballantrae Park were recently removed. Note inside of circle the thin flange at base of pole that held it in place at ground level with six large screws.

new clubhouse are the areas now occupied by the children's play area and/or, possibly, the volleyball court.

Board members agreed it did not make sense to spend \$20,000 in landowner funds on cover repairs if the play area might be relocated and/or replaced in just a few years.

Some parents say they would support a relocation of the play area if for no other reason than to distance it – and their young children – from the off-color shouts and obscene remarks sometimes emanating from some of

the users of the basketball court.

Board members also noted there was presumably more support for the covers to be replaced than that expressed by just the one couple who came and spoke at a Board meeting on the issue. The couple said that, among other reasons, the covers were important to prevent children from burning their legs going down the slides. While Board members empathized with the parents' concerns, they believed they were overridden by safety and cost issues. 📷

Parking is never permitted on the three S's

Sod, Streets & Sidewalks

Sod Parking on the sod or landscaping of any property in Ballantrae is prohibited. This means the road verge between the street and sidewalk of each property is also off limits to vehicle parking. The HOA has and will continue to fine any homeowner that allows vehicles to park on non-paved surfaces visible to any neighboring homeowner within the Ballantrae community.

Streets It's against HOA and Pasco County law to park on any street within the Ballantrae community without a permit issued by Pasco County. Pasco County Sheriff's deputies have been ticketing vehicles for parking in the right-of-way within the community. Most offenders are parking overnight, parking for extended periods of time or obstructing traffic within the community. Be a good neighbor and save yourself a ticket at the same time by parking in your garage or driveway.



Sidewalks Our beautiful community has miles of sidewalks that shouldn't be obstructed or occupied by parked vehicles. Not only is it against HOA, county and state law, it becomes a safety hazard when pedestrians are forced off the sidewalk on to our community's busy streets. Remember to take into special consideration children or citizens with handicapping conditions that depend on the availability of an unobstructed path.

The Ballantrae HOA wants to thank the residents who follow these important rules to help make our community a safe and enjoyable place to reside.

CDD sued because of claim its website is not ADA-friendly

A lawsuit has been filed against the Ballantrae CDD Board because of a claim its website is not ADA-friendly.

This matter has been referred to the District's insurance carrier and an attorney (paid for by the insurance company) has already made an appearance on behalf of the District.

The District's attorney requested a shade (or closed) meeting with the CDD Board, to be held Monday, Sept. 17, at 6:30 p.m. at the clubhouse. By law, the shade portion of that otherwise public meeting is not open to the public. That's because it will include discussion of the Board's legal strategy for a pending lawsuit.

According to current information, it appears that it is recommended that websites, among other things, be developed to enable the disabled to use special programs to have the entire website read aloud or to have text read on a Braille reader pad.

Ballantrae is the only Pasco CDD

among the two dozen CDDs statewide that the same Miami plaintiff and attorney are suing alleging their websites aren't ADA-friendly.

So far, no one has identified a fully ADA-friendly website operated by even one of the 650 CDDs in Florida.

Shortly before the lawsuit was filed, the CDD Board began discussions on how it could convert to an ADA-friendly website.

The Board came up with three options it is currently exploring:

- The first – and most expensive – would be to convert to ADA-friendly the existing site at ballantraecdd.org.

In technical terms, that website has approximately 27 pages. Experts say it costs an average of \$700 per page to convert an existing web page to ADA-friendly.

After that, prices vary to convert the many PDFs and other documents on the site to ADA-friendly. Some prices range up to \$3 per page. There

are hundreds of such pages on the Ballantrae CDD website.

- A second option would be to create a new, ADA-friendly website of only one or two pages.

That website would be populated with only the few documents state law mandates be available on a CDD website. That's about 10 percent of what is on the existing website. The documents would all be ADA-friendly

That would mean some documents, now available for free on the CDD website, would only be available, if at all, from the district manager whom the law allows to charge for making or distributing copies.

- The third option would be to have district manager DPF use its website template to create a new CDD website. Sharing with others the cost of the template and its management would help reduce some costs.

It, too, would severely limit the documents available to residents. 🏠

Murphy's Law affirmed ... and beaten!

CDD maintenance staff didn't really need affirmation of Murphy's Corollary, roughly translated as "If anything can go wrong, it will – and at the most inopportune time."

They were busy working at the end of June to get park amenities ready for the Fourth of July celebrators who would fill them. But instead:

Breaks started to appear in the floor of the park pool Marcite lining. It was closed on Monday, June 25.

It took four garden hoses the next two days to pump water out of the pool to accommodate floor repairs.

Repairs (shown at lower right) were completed on Friday for \$600.

That afternoon, the CDD used a fire hydrant meter from the county (at right) and a 3-inch hose to refill the pool by 8 a.m. on Saturday

Of course, it rained later Saturday morning, requiring the pool be closed only a few hours after it reopened.

But it was open for a nice July 4th!

Then, extensive repairs also had to be made in late July to the splash pad surface (below left).

Repairs were covered under warranty at no cost to landowners. 🏠





PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID HICKS OF SWAN VIEW TOWNHOMES

'It was a dark and stormy night' in Ballantrae

This archival photo shows a thunderstorm in 2008 above Ballantrae, in background behind tree line. It was taken from Concord Station on the south side of Mentmore Blvd. Later construction of homes on the north side of Mentmore near Ballantrae filled in this open space.

Lightning myths versus facts affect safety in Ballantrae

Florida is arguably “the lightning capital of the U.S.” But that depends upon the way you count ... or argue.

According to the **National Weather Service (NWS)**:

- Texas had an average of 2,929,012 cloud-to-ground lightning flashes from 2008-17, more than doubling Florida’s 1,170,979 over the same period.

- But Florida has far less land mass than Texas. So those same numbers translate into 20.4 lightning strikes per square mile in Florida, compared to a paltry 11.0 in Texas.

Florida averages 4.7 deaths annually from lightning strikes, the NWS says, which average five times the heat of the sun or 300 million volts of energy.

But there were already five lightning-related deaths this year in Florida by the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

Those statistics are all good reasons for Ballantrae residents to know and respect the differences between myths and facts when it comes to lightning.

Not surprisingly, most of the myths and facts listed about lightning by the NWS can be applied directly to the safety of residents of Ballantrae. They include:

- **Myth:** Some people think lightning never strikes twice in the same place. As a result, they are safe in the CDD pools, Ballantrae Park and other outdoor areas after one lightning strike in the area.

Fact: Lightning often strikes the same place repeatedly, especially if it's tall (like a park tree), pointy (like the clubhouse roof), or an isolated object.

- **Myth:** Some residents believe there is no justification to close the Ballantrae pool just because of a lightning strike in a thunderstorm miles away.

Fact: Lightning often strikes more than three miles from the center of the thunderstorm, far outside the rain or thunderstorm cloud. “Bolts from the blue” can also strike 10-15 miles from the thunderstorm.

- **Myth:** If outside in a thunderstorm, such as in Ballantrae Park, you should seek shelter under a tree to stay dry.

Fact: Being underneath a tree is the second leading cause of lightning casualties. Better to get wet than fried!

- **Myth:** If you're caught outside during a thunderstorm, you should crouch down to reduce your risk of being struck, even if you are on the pool deck or in the park.

Fact: Crouching doesn't make you any safer outdoors. Run to a substantial building or hard topped vehicle. If you are too far to run to one of these options, you have no good alternative. You are not safe anywhere outdoors!

- **Myth:** If thunderstorms threaten while you are outside playing a game, like in the park or in a pool, it is okay to finish it before seeking shelter.

Fact: Many lightning casualties occur because people do not seek shelter soon enough. No game is worth death or life-long injuries. Seek proper shelter immediately if you hear thunder.

Continued on page 16



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... Lightning myths versus facts affect safety in Ballantrae

Continued from page 15

• *Myth:* If trapped outside and lightning is about to strike, I should lie flat on the ground.

Fact: Lying flat increases your chance of being affected by potentially deadly ground current. If you are caught outside in a thunderstorm, you should keep moving toward a safe shelter.

• *Myth:* Rubber tires on a car protect you from lightning by insulating you from the ground.

Fact: Most cars are safe from lightning, but it is the metal roof and metal sides that protect you, not the rubber tires. Remember, convertibles, motorcycles,

bicycles, open-shelled outdoor recreational vehicles and cars with fiberglass shells offer no protection from lightning. When lightning strikes a vehicle, it goes through the metal frame into the ground. Don't lean on doors during a thunderstorm.

• *Myth:* A lightning victim is electrified. If you touch them, you'll be electrocuted.

Fact: The human body does not store electricity. It is perfectly safe to touch a lightning victim to give them first aid. This is the most chilling of lightning myths. Imagine if someone died because people were afraid to give CPR!

• *Myth:* If you are in a house, you are 100 percent safe from lightning.

Fact: A house is a safe place to be during a thunderstorm as long as you avoid anything that conducts electricity. This means staying off corded phones, electrical appliances, wires, TV cables, computers, plumbing, metal doors and



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID HICKS OF SWAN VIEW TOWNHOMES

Archival 2008 photo of thunderstorm over Concord Station.

windows. Windows are hazardous for two reasons: wind generated during a thunderstorm can blow objects into the window, breaking it and causing glass to shatter.

• *Myth:* Structures with metal, or metal on the body (jewelry, cell phones, Mp3 players, watches, etc), attract lightning.

Fact: Height, pointy shape, and isolation are the dominant factors controlling where a lightning bolt will strike. The presence of metal makes absolutely no difference on where lightning strikes. Mountains are made of stone but get struck by lightning many times a year. When lightning threatens, take proper protective action immediately by seeking a safe shelter. Don't waste time removing metal. While metal does not attract lightning, it does conduct it so stay away from metal fences and railings – like those around the pools and park amenities in Ballantrae! 🏠