

By **Bill Parsons** Vice Chairman, Seven Oaks CDD

# Does the CDD Need Attorneys?

**A**t each CDD meeting, the CDD Board makes decisions that impact the operation and maintenance of hundreds of acres of land that contain over a hundred ponds, numerous parks with playground equipment, storm water system, mitigation areas, and last but not least a multimillion dollar clubhouse. The CDD also hires and manages people to operate and maintain these resources. Therefore, decisions need to be based on "Advice of Counsel".

Our law firm, Straley and Robin, is not our largest subcontractor as it only has five employees and is not our most expensive subcontractor, but it is definitely one of our most important subcontractors. Its services are vital to keep the CDD within legal guidelines and avoid very expensive problems for the CDD members. So the unequivocal answer to the question "Does the CDD need attorneys?" is a resounding -- yes we need attorneys.



A second question might be, "Is Straley and Robin the right law firm for the Seven Oaks CDD?" The primary reason to employ them is because of their experience with CDDs. Mark Straley has been practicing law in Tampa since 1976 and for the past 20 years has focused on representing CDDs. He was one of the first CDD attorneys in Florida. Tracy Robin worked in the title insurance industry from 1975 to 1986 and then attended

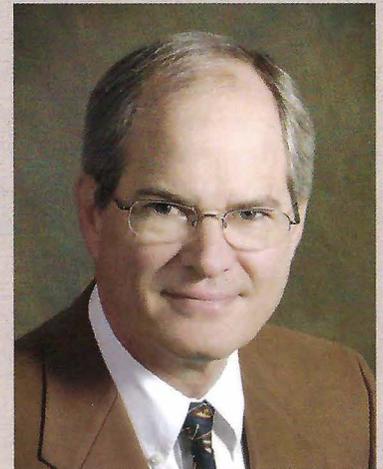
law school and in 1991 became an attorney. John Vericker was hired in 2005 by Straley and Robin, just a year after they established their law firm. Mr. Vericker received a Juris Doctor, cum laude from the University of Florida. Focusing on CDDs has brought them 75 clients. Most CDDs in Pasco County use them, but some clients are as far away as Ft. Myers.

Continued on page 12

## Seven Oaks CDD Attorneys



Mark Straley



Tracy Robin



John Vericker

Being a small company has many advantages and can be passed to customers. The Straley and Robin Law Firm can offer a lower hourly rate to its clients. Straley and Robin Law Firm has a staff with three levels of experience/training so work can be allocated effectively to do a good job in a timely manner. If the work does not require an attorney, it is completed by the paralegal whose hourly rate is not as high as the attorney's rate. If the work requires an attorney but does not require the broad experience



Barbara Williams, legal assistant, makes a copy of documents for the attorneys.



Mark Straley asks Lynn Hoodless, Paralegal, to research an issue one of their CDD clients has requested them to work.

of Mr. Straley and Mr. Robin, they assign the task to Mr. Vericker, who is well qualified and knowledgeable. Our Seven Oaks legal bill is tens of thousands of dollars each year. Without this three tier wage charge, the cost would be substantially higher. Some of the issues our attorneys have worked for us include merging the two CDDs, reviewing contracts, insuring all CDD property was transferred from the developer, advising the board members on the requirements of the Sunshine Law, and refinancing the developer's dirt bond. ❖



John Vericker (left) and Tracy Robin (right) discuss a problem one of their CDD clients asked them to resolve.