The River Club was opened in 2004 and has had no significant updates other than new carpeting in the intervening 13 years. Acting upon the recommendation of the Facilities Advisory Committee the Board has authorized the creation of a refurbishment design plan.

At the July 3, 2017 meeting the VCDD Board of Supervisors approved a contract in the amount of $15,000 with Noller Design Group of Bonita Springs, FL for the creation of a preliminary design for the refurbishment of The River Club. Information on Noller Design Group, complete photos of their previous design and refurbishment projects, may be found on their web site at: http://www.nollerdesign.com.

A preliminary budget for the refurbishment has been estimated to be as much as $650,000. Initial funds for the refurbishment have been provided for by reserve funds in the 2017-2018 fiscal year budget. This does not mean expenditures for the proposed refurbishment have been approved, but rather provisions have been made in the upcoming fiscal year budget to provide funds in the event the Board and the community decides to move forward with the proposed refurbishment once a design plan has been finalized. The annual increase per household for the 2017-2018 fiscal year budget for River Club Reserves is $64.89.

The refurbishment design will be created over the next several months with an eye towards possible completion of the project over the summer of 2018.

Given the large amount of potential funds to be expended, at the September 25, 2017 meeting of the VCDD Board of Supervisors the Board approved the creation of a Resident Committee to advise the Board on the design and refurbishment process. The Committee will function under the Florida Sunshine laws and consist of five members who will select their own chairman. It is anticipated the committee will meet on an ongoing basis with Noller Design Group and River Club staff to assist in creating a preliminary refurbishment plan to present to the community at large for input and comment before the plan is presented to the VCDD Board for approval.

Venetian residents who wish to be considered for appointment to the River Club Refurbishment Advisory Committee should send an email along with a brief background summary to Belinda Blandon at bblandon@rizzetta.com by October 20. It is anticipated the committee will be appointed at the October 23, 2017 VCDD Board of Supervisors meeting.
Lennar to consider the sale of the Welcome Center

The VCDD Board has been contacted by Lennar to see if the community might have an interest in purchasing the Welcome Center.

Presently both the VCDD and the POA have offices in the Welcome Center that Lennar has provided rent-free. Should the Welcome Center be sold it is anticipated the new owner will likely charge rent for these offices or even terminate the use of this space by the VCDD and POA.

The possible sale of the Welcome Center raises several questions:

First, does the community have an interest in owning the Welcome Center?

There has been talk over the years about using the Welcome Center for expanded fitness facilities, card and game rooms, meeting rooms, banquet facilities, permanent offices for the VCDD and POA and a variety of other purposes. If the community does have an interest in the Welcome Center we would need to determine how it might be best used for the benefit of Venetian residents. Once a consensus is reached on how the facility might be used the next question is:

How much will it cost?

This is actually a three part question. The first is the cost of acquisition. The second is the cost of remodeling to suit the community’s needs. And the third is the cost of ongoing operation and maintenance.

Once the Board has the answers to the cost of acquisition we can ask for community feedback as to what uses may best benefit our residents. When this is determined we can estimate the cost of refurbishment to meet those requirements.

Finally, the Board would then need to estimate the ongoing operational and maintenance costs.

Once all costs are estimated it would then be up to the community at large to communicate its viewpoints to the Board about acquiring the Welcome Center. Like the process used for acquiring The River Club several years ago this would involve multiple public meetings to disseminate information and gather community input.

At this early stage the VCDD has simply expressed an interest to Lennar in learning about their plans to dispose of the Welcome Center. The Board will keep the community fully advised and informed as we receive more information.
Meeting Dates

VCDD Board of Supervisors has regular meetings the 2nd and 4th Monday of every month. Meetings are open to the public and are held at the Venetian River Club, 502 Veneto Blvd., North Venice, FL 34275, at 9:30 am. The following fiscal year 2017-2018 meeting dates have been established.

October 9, 2017
October 23, 2017
November 13, 2017
November 27, 2017
December 11, 2017
January 8, 2018
January 22, 2018
February 12, 2018
February 26, 2018
March 12, 2018
March 26, 2018
April 9, 2018
April 23, 2018
May 14, 2018
June 11, 2018
June 25, 2018
July 9, 2018
July 23, 2018
August 13, 2018
August 27, 2018
September 10, 2018
September 24, 2018

2017-2018 Budget Adopted

At the August 24, 2017 Board meeting the fiscal year 2017-2018 VCDD budget was formally adopted.

The preliminary (TRIM) budget estimated an annual increase per household of $281.13, however the Board is pleased to report the actual adopted annual increase will be only $152.96 per household. This increase is made up of an increase of combined operations and maintenance expense for The River Club and the CDD of $84.25 per household; $3.82 increase per household of CDD Reserves; and $64.89 increase per household of River Club Reserves to fund the refurbishment project.

The lower increase was due to the following:

1. The cost of the new gate entry system was lowered from $45.69 per household to $27.41 per household;
2. The removal of $116.61 per household for the one-time estimated cost of the refurbishment of The River Club, and removal of $54.00 of contingency funds;
3. The increase of The River Club Reserves from $118.79 to $183.68 per household. This will be a permanent annual increase to fund the ongoing maintenance and repair of The River Club as well as the River Club refurbishment.
Lessons from Hurricane Irma

Hurricane Irma swept through The Venetian on September 11 and 12, 2017.

Due to the advance planning of the Venetian Golf and River Club Community Association and its Hurricane Response Team (HRT) the Venetian was well prepared. The number, frequency and content of email blasts before, during and after the hurricane kept communication lines open. Volunteers were assigned specific tasks like staffing the guard gate once the privacy staff left the premises. Communication with the Venice Police and Fire Departments was maintained throughout the storm.

There were challenges for some residents with putting up storm shutters. One lesson learned is it is best to have a plan for putting up storm shutters well in advance of a storm. If you are physically unable to do so yourself it is advisable to have a neighbor, friend or paid contractor on standby to assist you.

While most residents lost power and water for only a day or so there were residents on Martellago Way and Asti Court who were without power for nearly a week. Residents should be prepared for power outages that can last for long periods of time, even weeks.

There was some confusion as to why The River Club was not opened as a storm shelter. Residents should be aware The River Club does not have a backup generator, was not designed as a storm shelter and is not safe to be utilized as one. When The Venetian was first developed plans required one structure in the Venetian to be designed with hurricane shelter protection features. WCI determined that structure to be The Golf Club. And, in fact, the Golf Club General Manager opened the Golf Club as a shelter for Venetian residents and 31 individuals took refuge at that location. There can be no guarantee The Golf Club, which is still privately owned by Lennar, will be available as a storm shelter in the future.

Therefore, Venetian residents are advised and encouraged to make appropriate plans to evacuate before a hurricane hits, to shelter in place in their residences, or to seek protection in an approved shelter as provided by local government authorities.

Given the fact all of our homes were built since 2003 we are fortunate they were constructed under the revised Florida building codes. Most of the damage incurred at The Venetian involved downed trees and vegetation and lanai screens. Falling trees and limbs damaged some properties, but general wind damage to structures was minimal. We were also very lucky that when Irma hit it had weakened to a category 2 hurricane. Had it been a category 3 or 4 storm damage might have been much worse.

The most important lesson learned is preparation works. Our community works. Neighbors here look out for each other. Being prepared and taking care of one another is the best line of hurricane defense.

Special thanks to Roger Effron and the entire group of HRT volunteers, as well as our Field Manager, POA Property Manager, River Club General Manager and staff, for their leadership, planning, support and execution of the Venetian hurricane emergency plan. Well done!