

Marine Flag Leads To Flap

Townhome Association Says Bylaws Are Clear

By **PRESTON KNIGHT**

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HARRISONBURG — Tyson- Holyfield, it is not.

In one corner stands Roxan Pulliam and her daughter, Wendi Dean, who are so proud of Wendi's son, Ty, a 22-year-old Marine from Harrisonburg, that they placed an official Marine Corps garden flag in the front yard of the Beacon Hill Townes home they moved into earlier this year.

Opposite them is the homeowners association, which like authorities similar to it around the nation enforce a set of guidelines to make the development as attractive as possible to entice buyers and sustain property values.

At Beacon Hill, those covenants include nothing "affixed to or placed upon any lot or dwelling ... without the prior written approval of the Board Directors." The development is off North Main Street, with another entrance off Vine Street.

In the past week, Pulliam and her daughter say they were told to remove the small garden flag — which hangs on a "Welcome" stand about three feet off the ground — from the front yard and place it in the back. They understand "rules are rules," they say, but don't see why a patriotic flag cannot be an exception. "To me, there's bigger fish to fry here than a flag," said Wendi Dean, 42. Trish Sayre, an assistant to the homeowners' board of directors, said the bylaws speak for themselves. That means no matter what Pulliam and Dean have on their garden flag — it could have been their favorite pet — it is against the rules to protect against a glut of such displays or from putting the board in a difficult spot of determining what's offensive and what isn't.

If residents want to seek permission from the board to have garden flags in their front yard, they can ask the panel for an exception, Sayre added.

Otherwise, the issue is just another in the line of residents and homeowners associations clashing. The argument sometimes has hints of patriotism, such as with the display of American flags.

Federal law says homeowners associations are allowed to place restrictions on the display of American flags, but they can't outright prohibit the display of them.

Garden flags, on the other hand, don't get quite the same respect, Pulliam and her daughter have learned.

"Why would people complain about a symbol of the United States of America if they live in the United States?" Pulliam said. "Our main point is, we don't think American flags should be offensive to anyone living in the United States of America. If they are, there are plane tickets to

get out of the country.”

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