

Retired professor's book explores 'HOA crisis'

By GINGER MEURER

SPECIAL TO VIEW

Henderson scholar Gary Solomon pictures an urban world with management company-supplied drones zipping through neighborhood skies automatically leveling fines and fees.

"It's not too far off," he warned.

And if homeowners try to fight the airborne inspectors, he suspects proponents will say, "We own the air above our HOAs. So you can't stop us. They're going to win."

About six years ago, Solomon began studying the impact tangles with homeowners associations had on individuals in Southern Nevada and beyond.

Solomon coined the term HOA Syndrome to describe a disorder he said is similar to post-traumatic stress disorder with symptoms such as anger, fatigue from sleeping disorders and nightmares, irritability, hopelessness and paranoia.

The recently retired College of Southern Nevada psychology professor compiled his findings in the free online book "HOA: Crisis in America," which can be found at hoacrisisinamerica.com.

Solomon decided the book should be free to remove any barriers readers may face in accessing what he insists is vital information and any suspicions people might have about his motivations.

"I refuse to make any money on this," he said. "I will not accept money for anything related to HOAs. I don't want anyone pointing to me and saying I'm making money on this."

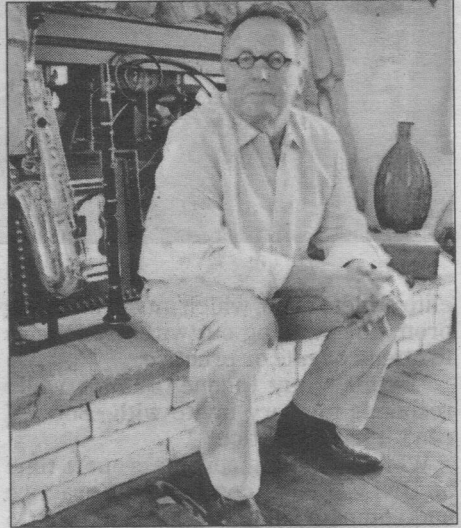
Solomon said HOAs became popular as a way to shore up cash-strapped municipalities. If groups of homeowners fund their own parks, roads and more, that leaves governments free to spend money elsewhere. Part of the problem, the author said, is that people living in HOAs still pay the same taxes as people who don't.

"Ostensibly, it is double taxation at its most fundamental level," he said.

But homeowner organization maintenance fees are only part of the problem, Solomon said. The real crisis, he said, is in allowing management companies and lawyers to level fines.

"Not all HOAs are bad," he said. "You can talk to HOAs that are not driven by management companies, and people will tell you they are having a lovely time, and they are. But those that are driven by management companies make money by being punitive."

Donna Toussaint, past president and current treasurer and board member for the Nevada chapter of the Community Associ-



SPECIAL TO VIEW

Dr. Gary Solomon is the author of the free online book "HOA: Crisis in America."

ations Institute, said while HOA members are double taxed, they benefit from membership.

"HOA communities have higher property values, and they maintain their values better than non-HOA communities," she said in an email interview. "The best example is in Green Valley. The development that was not in an HOA had significant degradation of fences and park areas, but the city had no reserves to maintain and restore these amenities. Right next door was an HOA community that looked great. HOAs are required by law to maintain reserves sufficient to maintain, repair and replace all common elements in the community."

Toussaint, who also served as president of her home HOA for 10 years, said she doesn't see drones peeping over back fences as inevitable.

"I believe the current thought is that drones are too invasive," she said. "People get upset enough when inspectors photograph their home and yards even though they're required to do so by law."

Solomon said it isn't too late to fix the HOA situation. He suggests awareness and getting HOA management out of the hands of private for-profit companies and turning instead to nonprofit groups overseen by municipal governments. He also suggested universalizing HOA governing laws.

As for his own plans, Solomon said he expects to keep writing, with work to include a novel with an HOA tangle at the center.

To reach View contributing reporter Ginger Meurer, email gmeurer@viewnews.com or follow her on Twitter: @gingermmm.