

City

A star spangled banning -- Mini U.S. flags don't fly with Fox Creek homeowners board

MIKE HINKEN

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MORTON - The miniature American flags appeared overnight, lining the sidewalks of Linden Street in the Fox Creek subdivision.

But by 7:30 a.m. Friday, the two dozen flags were gone, plucked out of lawns by the president of the Fox Creek Homeowners Association and several others.

The flags were meant as a sign of support this Memorial Day weekend for Roland and Bev Flanagan, condo owners in Fox Creek who have been fighting to erect a backyard flagpole to fly the American flag.

Their request was denied in April by the Fox Creek Homeowner's Association board, but they plan to appeal to the subdivision's entire membership in a meeting expected sometime within the next six weeks.

Roland Flanagan said he got an anonymous call later in the day Friday morning taking credit for that day's display, which included a black POW flag encircled by American flags near the subdivision entrance.

The flags came down, however, because Friday was not one of the 14 holidays designated in association bylaws when condo owners are allowed to fly the American flag, said Fox Creek Homeowner's Association president David Betteridge.

Moreover, the way in which the flags were displayed also ran afoul of the association's guidelines, which state that flags should be flown on a standard attached to each resident's mailbox pole.

"Everything outside the walls of the condominiums belongs to the homeowners association, and people have to abide by the rules we have designated," Betteridge said.

"My interpretation is that (the flags) were put up for Memorial Day weekend. We had to remove them, though, because somebody thought they could change the rules and display the flags however they wanted," he said.

Betteridge stressed that the board voted against the flagpole, not the American flag, when it rejected the Flanagans' request in April.

"Not a soul in this subdivision is against the flag," said Betteridge. "For (the Flanagans) to hide behind the flag in this situation is improper. Why don't they display the flag like everyone else? If they don't want to be a part of the association, why not move?"

But the Flanagans want to display the flag every day of the year to honor their two grandchildren, who serve in the military.

"I don't want to fly the flag only on special days. Our grandchildren may not visit on those days, for one thing. But also, their commitment is 365 days a year," said Bev Flanagan.

In the association's pending appeal, each of the forty occupied units in the subdivision will get one vote. A two-thirds majority is needed to overturn the board's decision.

But the Flanagans are not hopeful. Roland Flanagan said that although the couple has gotten plenty of letters and phone calls of support from outside the subdivision, their Fox Creek neighbors have been quiet.

"The silence is deafening," he said. "If people supported us, we would have heard by now."

The Flanagans will soon launch a Web site dedicated to garnering support for "legislation to prevent homeowner's associations from stopping American citizens from flying the American flag."

Fox Creek condo owners weren't the only Morton residents greeted by American flags poked into their front lawns Friday morning.

Across town, in the neighborhoods surrounding Jackson Street, small American flags appeared on hundreds of lawns. By afternoon, most were still waving in the breeze, with the business card of a local real estate agent stapled to the handle.

Tim Cooper said he has distributed the flags as promotional gifts around the holiday weekend for years.

"Nobody has ever complained to me," said Cooper, who planted more than 500 flags in the front lawns of Morton homes early Friday.

But he didn't venture into Fox Creek, Cooper said.