

CONA Newsletter

The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County

August 2006

President's Message

By Karl Nurse

Perhaps it is the weather, but I have never seen so many neighborhood associations worked up over an issue or problem as right now. The issues range from crime, to density and redevelopment, to traffic and environmental problems. The challenge for neighborhood activists is to figure out both priorities and which issues can we impact.

The reason CONA does a goal setting session at the start of each year is to try to allow everyone to help choose the issues that we will attempt move on for the year. Some issues like crime end up with areas where we can make a difference like Court Watch, crime watch, and other neighborhood level efforts to control crime. However, it also has the areas that can only be handled by policy makers like the Mayor and Police Chief or Sheriff. CONA spends a considerable amount of time lobbying for changes in staff levels, recruiting policies, priorities, and policing policies. Obviously, change happens only when the policy makers either have the ideas or buy into the proposed changes. Sometimes, we simply disagree. We need to raise issues so that the political leaders address our concerns. So if you have an issue, please speak up.

I believe the most serious problem is one of police staffing. The police department has a huge percentage, more than half, of officers who will be eligible to retire in less than five years. The department is losing much too large a share of officers after a few years. So we have a department heavily weighed towards rookies and near retirement veterans. We have to find a way to fix this before a majority of officers retire and we have a department of rookies. Community policing and the other pro-active efforts suffer greatly in this environment.

At the same time, we need to work on modest sized, neighborhood level problems and solve them one at a time. This is what we do best. It is the series of little victories in each neighborhood that can have a dramatic impact AND we can do this. So when you are frustrated with the big issues, please fix another little problem. This is how we can change the world!

CONA Board Meeting Wednesday, August 16, 2006

The **SUNSHINE CENTER, 330 5th St. N.**
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; meeting starts at 7:00 p.m.

Agenda Items:

CONA Business – Treasurer's Report
CONA Citizen of the Month
Progress Energy – Repowering the Bartow Plant
Updates – 2007 Nominating Committee
Candidates for City/County/State Offices

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CONA 101 – Political Nite



Political Nite gives your members an opportunity to meet and listen to the views of candidates running for office. Political Nite also gives your association a distinction as an organization that is well run and wanting to educate its members.

There are plenty of candidates when election time arrives to book at your meeting. There are city and county elections that come up at the same time.

The County Supervisor of Elections can give you the names of the candidates who are running and how to contact them. You should have an election committee to organize the evening. They should contact the candidates, write questions to ask, decorate the room and arrange for food.

Promotion is the key to get members to attend. Advertise Political Nite in your newsletter, St. Petersburg Times, utilize a phone tree, use your chat line and hand out fliers. The worst thing that you can do is have ten candidates and their entourage (which equals about 25 people) attend and have only 10 of your members there. If this happens, the candidates will write you off their list of associations to visit. They want to meet as many voting people as they can. Their time is valuable and their lives and the lives of their families depend on winning the election. Please be fair to them and get people to attend Political Nite. You might consider combining 3 or 4 associations to draw a large crowd. Depending on the number of candidates you invite it is a good idea to give them each 4 or 5 minutes to tell you about themselves.

After all candidates have finished bring them up front and have them seated facing the audience. The moderator can then ask them the questions that were submitted by the membership before the meeting. The answers should not take longer than 2 minutes. Listed below are some things that you can do to make your meeting interesting:

- Designate a meeting moderator.
- Designate a timer with a stopwatch to stop long winded candidates.
- Have greeters at the door with political hats and campaign buttons.
- Decorate your meeting room with red, white and blue crepe paper hanging from the ceiling. Balloons and noisemakers are good also.
- Have a noisy political tape playing before the meeting.
- Provide an amplified speaker system for the candidates to use.
- Have American flags displayed in various parts of the meeting room.
- Provide soft drinks and food, possibly pizza.
- Give a good door prize. Get something donated from a local business.
- Get cardboard cutouts of past National Elections



Have fun with Political Nite, get people involved and you will get new members.

Neighborhood Nite at Tropicana Field

By: Tom Killian

Twenty-one associations and 311 CONA members attended the July 21st. game at Tropicana Field. The Ray's were victorious 14-7 over Baltimore. The North Kenwood Association sold the most tickets (51). North Kenwood's VP Cass Rael threw the first pitch and President Phil Whysong caught it. For selling the most tickets they also received a large bag of gifts from the Devil Ray's management.

Friday night's attendance was 17,000. The Ray's have had a 31% increase in attendance in 2006. Many of our members visited the Ted Williams hitting museum which opened this year. The museum visit is free with your ticket purchase. Neighborhood Nite gives our associations the opportunity to visit with their counterparts and exchange ideas.

Our next outing at Tropicana Field is September 25, 7:15 against the NY Yankees. Tickets will be \$5.00 for upper deck seats – quite a savings over the \$19 price. Remember, parking is also free this season. Plan now to attend.

New School Crossing Walks and Signage

With both public and private schools now in session, motorists are asked to please slow down when approaching school yards. New highly visible bright yellow signs are now in place along with newly painted crosswalks.

Our St. Petersburg Police Department will be happy to assist motorists who do not comply with the School Zone 15 mph speed limits OR yield to students in the crosswalks. Tickets can be very costly. Remember, a child's life is never, ever worth the two or three seconds you save by speeding.

Please post this notice on your neighborhood association bulletin board, website or newsletter. Help us keep our children safe.

Knowledge is powerful medicine.

As part of our commitment to community education, Edward White Hospital offers FREE seminars on a range of topics, including stroke awareness and diabetes. We also provide free Blood Pressure Screenings and more.

For more information, contact Aimee Bennett, RN, Director of Marketing at 727-328-6245.

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CONA Neighborhood Picnic

Saturday October 28, 2006

11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Walter Fuller Park
7891 26th Ave N

*Live Bluegrass Music by
Bluegrass Southern Style*

*All Neighborhoods are invited
to the CONA Picnic*

*Bring a Covered Dish to
share with everyone*

Raffle Prizes needed

Call Tom Killian, Program Coordinator, for information 343-2041.

Neighborhood Nite at Tropicana Field

Monday, September 25 at 7:15 PM

Ray's vs. NY Yankees

\$5.00 per ticket (upper deck behind home plate) Remember - free parking at Tropicana Field

WOW !!! Great game, great seats, great bargain AND FREE PARKING !!!

Here is a great social event for all the baseball fans in your association and it only costs \$5 a seat.

Act fast as these seats will go fast at this price.

- Collect the ticket money from your association membership.
- Write a check to CONA for your tickets.
- Mail check before September 11th to CONA Treasurer at CONA, P.O. Box 13693, St. Petersburg, FL 33733-3693.
- Tickets will be delivered to each Association President who will distribute them to their own members.
- For further information contact Program Chair Tom Killian at 343-2041.
- **Remember – the Association that brings the most members will get introduced on the field.**



So sell lots of seats everyone !!!

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CONA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING MINUTES

The Sunshine Multi-Service Center - July 19, 2006

President Karl Nurse called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- ◆ Karl introduced David Baggs of the Devil Rays who announced that North Kenwood Neighborhood had sold the most tickets, (51), for Friday's game with Baltimore. He also announced availability for \$5. tickets to the Yankee's Game September 25th.
- ◆ Treasurer Annie McWilliams reported a balance of \$1,762.17 as of July 19th. She requested that all member associations inform her of changes in their officers or CONA representatives.
- ◆ The President reminded us that we are now able to cast our election ballots on-line and that we can request absentee ballots be mailed to us on a continuing, regular basis.
- ◆ Ingrid Comberg, (Court Watch), reviewed the Community Police Officer Program, (CPO), begun in 1992, that established 7 Community Resource Centers. Only three remain open, all in District 1. She appealed to our members to find additional office sites that would be available free of charge. We were also encouraged to enroll as volunteers for this program.
- ◆ We were reminded that Lorrie Lykins has been assigned the Neighborhood News Column. Our members should plan to report all of their events to her at SPTimeslistings@yahoo.com.
- ◆ Karl then introduced Ginnie Lomagno, President of the Fourth Street Business Association. She told us of their history, progress, and cooperation with police in fighting crime and with adjoining neighborhoods in preserving the character of our city.
- ◆ Pinellas County Commissioner Ken Welch spoke to us briefly of current county programs of expanded Human Services budgets, and funding for "Affordable Housing". Among current issues, he mentioned the Booker Creek water debate and the efforts to write ordinances to restrict the activities of merchants who sell drug paraphernalia.
- ◆ V.P. Tom Killian then presented the CONA Citizen of the Month award to Maureen (Mo) Eppley for her service as a web page and graphics designer for our CONA web site and for her major role in promoting our Pinellas Living Green Expo.
- ◆ Tom also reminded us of our CONA Picnic, October 28th in Walter Fuller Park. He urged our members collect contributed door prizes for this joint CONA gathering.
- ◆ Karl introduced and acknowledged our respect for two local leaders of Neighborhood Crime Watch whose homes had been attacked by vengeful area drug dealers.
- ◆ Steve Plice, (Jungle Terrace), then offered a review of crime statistics that he had compiled from various government resources, FBI, FDLE, and the city's Home Page. He noted that though the trends were for lower crime rates in general, cities seem do have enjoyed greater crime reductions placing St. Petersburg higher in crime ranking than in earlier years. Of particular note was the disappointing "Clearance Rate" for arrests following reported crimes, again comparing unfavorably with other Florida cities.
 - Several members commented from the floor that Police response to crime reports were so slow that frustration has caused many to ignore criminal conduct reporting
- ◆ Major Melanie Bevan, (speaking from the floor with colleagues Major John Gardner and Major Reggie Oliver), offered some defense and praise for our St. Petersburg Police Dept.
 - Drug arrests have risen sharply in recent years.
 - Speeding, a quality of life issue, has been combated with a massive traffic ticketing drive.
 - The St. Pete Times recently reported improved crime statistics including a reduction of citizen complaints to the Police Review Board.
 - Citizens should regard all patrol officers as their CPO. All 911 responders as well as a large team of specialists are always available to assist in combating neighborhood crime.
 - No resident should hesitate to report criminal activity. That is essential to our Police
 - It was suggested that a subsequent CONA meeting include an explanation of the role of Community Police Officers as currently defined by the department.
 - It was hoped that many neighborhood representatives would be able to attend an upcoming Police Department Retreat offering wide ranging small group discussions.
- ◆ Anxiety was expressed about the steep increase in murders here.
- ◆ Another voiced concern about the high number of retirements faced by the S.P.P.D. this year.
- ◆ It is noteworthy that many of the statistics voiced from the floor were challenged as inaccurate by others who spoke.

Unbalanced Power Current Can Hurt You

By Tom Killian

Have you ever had your lights flicker, electric clocks stop and start flashing? This sometimes happens when there is a storm and possible lightning. If your lights start flickering on a regular basis you may have a serious problem like I did.

In July our fan light would flicker on a regular basis. When I turned on another light in the house I heard a pop and smelled something burning. The surge protector that protected my computer had burned out along with my aunt's motor that ran her air mattress. Two days later the same thing happened. Only the new surge protector melted into a pretzel shape and filled the room with smoke and flames. I pulled the

smoking surge protector out of the wall socket and threw it outside.

This time besides the surge protector being ruined, it burnt out our microwave, our sprinkler system transformer and another air mattress motor. I called a local electrician who checked out all the wall sockets, pulled the cover off the main panel box and checked all the breakers with a tester. He could not find anything wrong. He called Progress Energy and their service man came out the same day.

The problem found by Progress Energy was that the neutral connection than balances the current into our house had broken on the pole. We were getting too much current in one of the two legs that entered our house.

He fixed the problem on the pole and solved the unbalanced current problem.

Progress Energy reimbursed us for all the ruined items. We were very pleased with their prompt service. The wires from the pole to your house are exposed to lightning strikes, humid weather and small animals which use them as highways in the sky. If you ever have flickering lights on a regular basis please call Progress Energy. They will come out at no charge to check your problem from the pole to the outside of your house. Another suggestion is to use surge protectors on valuable items such as computers and televisions. The best way to protect your valuable items is to unplug them when not in use.

CONA Minutes continued

- ◆ Some neighborhoods have developed multicopy crime complaint report forms of their own to track all crime incidents over an extended period. [One copy is provided to their CPO.]
- ◆ Carole Griffiths, (Disston Heights), reported on our Court Watch Program, urging neighborhood leaders to enroll in the Court Watch Alert Project that will seek to notify each neighborhood association, (by e-mail), of a court appearance by a defendant charged with a felony in their neighborhood. Hopefully, more will attend those hearings.
- ◆ Limited, (3 minute), presentations were given by several candidates currently vying for election.
 - Susan Bedinghaus, Candidate for County Judge, Group 17
 - Samm Simpson, (Democrat), Candidate for Congress, District 10
 - Liz McCallum, (Democrat), Candidate for Florida House of Representatives, District 52
 - Bill Heller, (Democrat), Candidate for Florida House of Representatives, District 52
- ◆ Addressing the Crime Situation, our President noted that a formal R.F.P. has not yet been issued to gather proposals for an outside review contract of our Police Department. He urged our members to support that project in contacts with their city Council Representatives.
 - He urged the Police Department to consider allowing a waiver of college credit requirements for returning combat troops as a means of filling the many retirements from the department anticipated this year.
- ◆ Phil Whysong, (North Kenwood), invited all to attend their neighborhood celebration of National Night Out. August first in the park by 13th. Avenue N. and 34th. Street. Phil also spoke proudly of a \$200,000. grant anticipated for development of Booker Creek Park.
- ◆ Susan Ajoc, (Director- Neighborhood Partnership) reminded us of several upcoming events:
 - The last Neighborhood Partnership Grant Workshop will be Tuesday, July 25th.
 - Only six weeks remain to submit grant proposals for this year.
 - The grant funding has been increased to \$250,000.
 - The State Neighborhood's Convention will be in Ft. Lauderdale, October 5 through 7.
 - Several new and revitalized neighborhood associations are in need of mentor support, please volunteer if you can help.
- ◆ President Karl Nurse closed with thanks to the visiting Police Officers with the hopes that we can continue those discussions at our meeting and at the Police Retreat.

Our meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM - Conrad Weiser, Secretary



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Frequently Called Numbers

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Mayor's Action Line: 893-7111
Codes Office: 893-7373

CONA Newsletter Deadlines

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CONA's Citizen of the Month

CONA's August Citizen of the Month Award goes to Progress Energy. We want to thank Progress Energy for its very generous support of our Pinellas Living Green Expo and our Neighborhood Leadership Program. Their guidance and assistance contributed to the huge success of both of these. Thank you Progress Energy.



Nomination Committee

Your inputs are solicited:

- Volunteer to serve on Nominations Committee.
- Nominate a candidate for our slate of officers.
- Offer your name as a candidate for office

Nominating Committee Chair

Cathy Wilson

823-0863 or catgwna@tampabay.rr.com



**The Council of Neighborhood
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