

CONA Newsletter

The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County

March 2007

Solutions Sought to Homelessness

by Darden Rice, First Vice President

As a response to the high profile issues of homelessness and the Tent City crisis, the City of St. Pete and CONA co-hosted a Homeless Summit on Sat., Feb 24. It was a successful event in that it brought so many people together with different perspectives to discuss this problem in a round table dialogue.

The Summit also helped push the City to take action to move Tent City back to St. Vincent de Paul under a stricter framework while strengthening the ordinances that prevent camping on right-of ways. The tent city plan is proposed for no more than 90 days, while more housing and emergency shelters are secured by the City. There is a proposed Largo facility that may be available within weeks.

CONA President Barbara Heck summed up the importance of the Summit: "With almost 300 participants, it was a lot of work. Thanks to everyone's efforts, the summit went very smoothly. The diversity at each table led to productive interactions. It was interesting that with 30 tables and approximately 270 differing viewpoints, we could find so much common ground." Heck added, "Having someone at each table who was actually living on the street helped put a human face on the problem."

One of the results of the Summit was a surprising agreement about the future of Tent City. "Everyone agreed that tents are not a solution. We have to look at affordable housing and we have to look at emergency shelters to help people until they become independent," said Summit Co-Chair and St. Petersburg Council Member Leslie Curran.

Homeless activist Eric Rubin agrees that, "Tents are not the way to go." Often a critic of city policies, Rubin commented that he

was very impressed by the role that Chief Goliath Davis played in pulling people together for the Summit.

Kathy Hines, the nicknamed Mayor of Tent City, also added: "Hopefully we will be working and in our own place. No one wants to make homelessness our life history."

In 2005, the Homeless Policy Group put together a ten year plan to address homeless, which is available on the Pinellas County website, www.pinellascounty.org

The homeless problem has tested our city. Now it is our turn to show that we have the capabilities- through prudent policies, compassion, and cooperation- to get people out of tents, off the sidewalks, away from disturbing downtown businesses, and in their own beds under a safe roof. The Homeless Summit was a good start. The following leaders are to be thanked for their efforts in starting a much needed dialogue about homelessness in our community: Deputy Mayor Goliath Davis; Leslie Curran, St. Pete Council Member; Barbara Heck, CONA President; Don Shea, Downtown Business Partnership President; and 2007 Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, Ford Kyes.

As City Council Vice-Chair Jamie Bennett- who also chairs the Pinellas County Homeless Leadership Network, observed, "St. Pete is at a cross-road in handling the homeless issue. I believe that we are heading in the direction of assessment and assistance rather than pushing people from one neighborhood to another." Let's hope so, because a lack of responsible homelessness policy pits neighborhoods, businesses, and individuals against each other when we are left to deal with these issues on our own. We know we can do much better when we work together.

CONA Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

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 – Updates
- LDR Update – Bob Jeffrey
- Codes Department – Sally Eichler
- CONA 2007 Goals Retreat Summary
- By-Laws

Very Important Upcoming Events:

- April 18 – CONA Meeting
- May 16 – CONA Meeting
- June 16-17 – Pinellas Living Green Expo (PLGE)

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GLOBAL WARMING

by Darden Rice, CONA First Vice President

Global warming. The issue that once Americans struggled to come to terms with several years ago is now something people across the country talk about around water coolers at the office. More and more people realize that the cost of ignoring the problem is far greater than the cost to do something about it. Everyone has a stake in what it means. The success of last year's Pinellas Living Green Expo (over 5,000 attended) shows that there is a pent up market demand for products supporting a sustainable lifestyle that helps to curb the threat of global warming.

We've come a long way, and now we have before us a teachable moment. We are winning converts everyday, and people are eager to hear about what they can do and how they can get involved. Not just another fad, global warming education has won the hearts and minds of our public; demand for solutions and change is significantly touching every corner of the country.

And that's why I am so psyched to work with the 2007 Pinellas Living Green Expo planning committee. It is the coolest thing happening in June in Pinellas County. We are looking for volunteers that weekend, so please sign up, get involved, meet some great people, and get connected to the people who are working to make our community greener. We have most of the solutions to global warming possible; we just need the political will and the people behind it. Fortunately, as Al Gore said, people's hope and involvement is a renewable resource.

To volunteer for the Pinellas Living Green Expo the weekend of June 16-17 at the St. Pete Coliseum, contact Darden Rice at darden.rice@sierraclub.org or at 727-824-8813 ex 303. Also visit www.pinellaslivinggreenexpo.org

Bayou Highlands Neighborhood is holding it's 5th annual Funday Yard sale

Saturday March 31st 8am to 2pm location Lake Maggiore Blvd. South between 4th Street and Martin Luther Blvd. South at 6th Street.

The police Dept and fire dept will be present and we will be raffling 5 bicycles donated by the police department tickets are \$1. There will be music, hot dogs and refreshments along with a bake sale, yard sale items and paintings by a local artist and a raffle. We will be raffling off items all day. Activities for children, face painting, moon walk and games. We are having a talent show and everyone is encouraged to participate. There will be a dog parade at 11am with prizes for the best dressed and other categories. To reserve a space cost \$10 and is open to everyone. Please call Peggy at 866-0590 to reserve a space. For more information call Mary 865-1621 or email ladymerri@verizon.net.

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.

- 2323 9th Ave. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33713
- 727-323-1111 – Main
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www.callsunshine.com

City of St. Petersburg

Codes Compliance Assistance Department

Dear C.O.N.A. Members,

I am looking forward to the opportunity to speak to the Council of Neighborhood Associations on March 21, 2007. The time available in this upcoming meeting or even the space available in this newsletter is not enough to adequately describe codes compliance services and programs. Regardless, in this letter I hope to provide some very basic information that will help you to easily access our services whenever you need us.

The mission of the Codes Compliance Assistance Department is to maintain the quality and extend the life of existing housing, to stabilize neighborhoods and to protect the public. We do this by educating property owners and enforcing the City codes, including zoning issues and housing and vegetation maintenance standards. Our programs and services:

- Encourage voluntary compliance.
- Support neighborhoods and city teams.
- Refer citizens in need to volunteer help and loan programs.
- Support City Council to craft and administer ordinances which address community concerns.
- Address blighting issues such as overgrown vegetation, junk and rubbish in right-of-ways, inoperative motor vehicles and illegal dumping.
- Discourage unsafe maintenance and parking practices that may otherwise lead to criminal activity and vehicle accidents.

A few examples of the violations addressed through the codes compliance process include rotted wood and defective paint on buildings, fence disrepair, broken windows and screens, improper storage of domestic and commercial equipment, encroaching structures, and visibility triangle obstructions.

We also address violations at commercial property arising out of City development plans or agreements. For example, the Walmart Store at 34th Street South included landscape materials, features and an irrigation system in their original construction and landscape plan. These improvements became conditions of the City's approval to build the store. Should the property owners fail to properly maintain improvements in future years, this would be a violation of City code. Codes Compliance would require the owners to make necessary repairs and restore vegetation in compliance with the original development plan.

I encourage everyone to visit our website at www.stpete.org/codes where you will find even more codes information and resources that are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Since I know that most people contact the Codes department in order to report property violations, I have outlined some

considerations and options below for registering complaints.

To Report an Address or Location of a Violation - No matter which report method you choose, provide the address and a description of your concern. If there is no address, provide a location description such as "abandoned car on vacant lot that is one lot east of the house at 1485 66th Terrace North".

Anonymous Complaints - In most cases you may report a code violation anonymously. Any personal information you provide becomes part of the public record, which any other citizen has the right to review. Personal information is only required from a tenant or renter requesting an inspection of the inside of a rented home or apartment unit. In that case, the name and telephone number of the tenant requesting the inspection will become part of the public record.

Further, any written or email material received or generated by the City Staff or Council members becomes public record and state law requires the record be made available for inspection by any citizen who requests it. This means it is impossible to provide anonymity to anyone who writes to the City via email or letter containing any personal information.

Action Online - Report City code violations using Action Online at the www.stpete.org web site. This online service allows you to report violations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Your report is forwarded electronically to a Codes Technician who opens a case in our tracking database.

Please note that when the status of an Action Online complaint is "Closed", if a property address was provided and the complaint is within the jurisdiction of the department, a Codes case number is provided in the response. Use the Codes case number to Search the Codes database for case progress from the web site at www.stpete.org/codes. Case progress can also be obtained by calling the Codes department at (727) 893-7373.

Call Codes - at (727) 893-7373 to report a violation. The office phones are open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Wednesday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Send a Letter or Fax -

You may send in your complaint by mail or fax:

Codes Compliance Assistance
P.O. Box 2842
St. Petersburg, FL 33731-2842
Fax: (727) 892-5558

Thanks for your interest in codes compliance. I look forward to seeing you on March 21st at the C.O.N.A. meeting.

Sincerely,
Sally Eichler, Director
Codes Compliance Assistance
City of St. Petersburg



2007 CONA Membership

2007 CONA Membership fees are now due. Please complete the form below and mail it to CONA, or bring it to the next meeting.

We will be using these forms to update our mailing list so be sure to include phone numbers and email addresses. Please include the names and addresses of people to whom we should be sending the CONA Newsletter.

Please make a copy for your records. This serves as your invoice and receipt.

2007 CONA Membership Application

Time to renew you CONA membership for 2007!

2007 dues are due January 1, 2007. Fill out this CONA Membership Application and mail it along with the Membership Fee to: C.O.N.A., P.O. Box 13693, St. Petersburg, FL 33733-3693. Or you may bring it to the next Board Meeting.

Association Name: _____

Boundaries: _____

of Households: _____ # of Members: _____

Meeting Dates & Location: _____

President: _____ Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

CONA Representative: _____ Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Alternative Rep: _____ Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Add these names to the CONA Mailing List:

Name	Address	Zip
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Please include annual dues of \$35. If you would like to use the Bulk Mail Permit #, please add \$15 to your dues to help pay for the cost of the permit. Indicate below, the frequency of your mailings (monthly, quarterly, etc.), approximate mailing dates and # of pieces per mailing.

Frequency of Mailing: _____ (monthly, quarterly, etc.)

Approximate Mailing Dates: _____ # of pieces per Mailing: _____

St. Petersburg Police Department Notes

Auto Theft Trends in St. Petersburg

Auto thefts are an expensive problem for the victims of this crime in the Tampa Bay area. Many victims carry insurance policies with high deductibles or no damage coverage, and quickly discover the costs of replacing ignition cylinders, steering columns, broken windows or other damage to their vehicles can easily amount to thousands of dollars.

So, here is some information about St. Petersburg's auto theft trends to help you understand the problem more clearly and to provide you with some tips to help prevent these thefts from happening to you.

Unlike the national auto theft trends involving high-end vehicles that are resold, stripped for parts or shipped out of the county, the majority of auto thefts in St. Petersburg are committed by juveniles who use these cars for "joyriding", or use them to commit other crimes, such as burglaries, robberies or even more auto thefts. Many recovered vehicles are found next to the spot where another car is stolen.

Over half of the suspects arrested for auto theft are between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, and many of them are involved in multiple auto thefts. If the person arrested for auto theft is a juvenile with no prior criminal history, they are generally released to their parent(s) the same day. If the juvenile has a prior criminal history or was

on probation at the time of the arrest, he or she may qualify for a 21 day detention in the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC).

So, what can you do to help protect yourself?

- Always lock your vehicle. Nearly one-third of all stolen vehicles were unlocked.
- If you can, park your vehicle in a secure area or structure, such as a garage.
- When you purchase your next vehicle, consider one with a secure computer chip in the key.
- Acquire an alarm system that also disables the ignition system.

Obtain and use an anti-theft device, such as a steering wheel lock. City residents with select vehicles may obtain a free "Club" from the St. Petersburg Police Department. Call 893-7128 to see if you qualify for a free "Club".

William Proffitt, Division Manager
Community Awareness Division
St. Petersburg Police Department

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CONA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING MINUTES

The Sunshine Multi-Service Center - February 21, 2007

President Barbara Heck called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag.

- We were all encouraged to reserve our seats at the upcoming CONA Goals Meeting scheduled for March 10th at St. Petersburg College.
- Next the current class of the CONA Leadership Program introduced themselves followed by a show of hands of Leadership Alumni- many!
- Barbara insisted that the February labels on our Newsletters, alerting members whose associations had not yet paid their annual dues, was only a reminder not an act of coercion! It was an effort to bypass a separate mailing of our Treasurer's dues solicitation letters.
- Treasurer Keith Locke indicated some success from the label reminders in that we currently have 25 paid up member associations.
- Keith also reported a current bank balance of \$2,390.
- We learned that Will Michaels, (our 2nd. V.P.), from Bahama Shores, has volunteered to serve as the Facilitator for our Goals Seminar.
- Will then went on to appeal for CONA support in the effort to revise the LDR, (Land Development Rules), regulations be modified to prevent issuance of construction permits, that approve construction projects of extended duration that impose traffic, noise and pollution on adjoining neighborhoods over a period of several years.
 - Moved, (J. Ellis, Lakewood), that CONA request, of City Council, imposition of a limit on permits for construction, at a given site, be limited to two years and that subsequent permits for that site would be withheld for a 12 month hiatus for neighborhood recovery.
 - CONA appeal would urge no penalties for project delays.
 - Michaels will submit text to CONA Secretary
 - [Motion approved]
- We then heard from Carole Griffiths and Cass Rael, Chairs our new CONA Police Committee. They are working to implement a survey form on which member neighborhoods can report on performance of the new Community Service Officers.
 - The Committee has enjoyed discussions with 2 of the CSO Sergeants and several of their officers. Most of the reports regarding the new program have been favorable.
 - We were reminded that calls for the involvement of the CSO need to go to their special numbers in each of the three districts, (Dist.#1- 551-3181, Dist.#2- 551-3182, Dist.#3 551-3183), rather than to the general Non-emergency phone #- 893-7780.
 - Ingrid noted that the CSO commitment is to respond with a confirmation of your call, not necessarily a report of action taken.
- Barbara awarded a plaque to Tom Killian as our Citizen Of The Month.
- Deputy Mayor Tish Elston and County Commissioner Ken Welch jointly made a presentation supporting renewal of the Penny For Pinellas Tax which will be voted on March 13th. Early voting can begin on February 27th. They also shared a 7-minute video promoting the same theme.
- Councilman James Bennett then opened a major discussion of the homeless population in our city and county. Council Members Polson and Curran distributed flyers focused on this theme.
 - Mr. Bennett told us of the "Ten year plan to end homelessness" currently being implemented.
 - We also learned of The Homeless Network with 13 diverse Board Officers currently working for solutions.
 - We heard of comparisons with some other metropolitan communities who have had successes in dealing with this problem.
 - In anticipation of the city's Homeless Summit, this weekend, we were told of several promising solutions that are currently under development by county and city governments,
 - The genesis of the homeless problem, nationwide, was recognized to be the closing of numerous mental hospital facilities.
 - Outreach teams of Police and Social Workers must be backed up with housing facilities to win support of Court Judges.
 - We were informed that there are currently no available beds at any local homeless care facilities.
 - A recurrent theme of concern was the vagrants who refuse help.
 - One tent City dweller insisted that the tents are a method of self-defense, not an example of civil disobedience.
 - Our handling of this issue will define who we are as a community.
- Our meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Conrad Weiser, Secretary

President's Letter

By Barbara McCormick Heck

If I thought December and January were busy, I was in for a shock when February and March rolled in. Maybe one of our meetings should focus on organization skills and quick energy fixes for the permanently busy. What do you think? Again, I want to thank you all for "working together for a better St. Petersburg."

St. Petersburg's Homelessness Summit

On February 24th, over 270 business leaders, civic leaders, association presidents, homeless and homeless advocates met at USF to discuss the situation here in St. Petersburg. It was a lot of work, but thanks to everyone's efforts, the summit went very smoothly. The diversity at each table led to great interaction.

As Co-Chair, I was able to listen in on many conversations during the morning. It was interesting that with 30 tables and approximately 270 differing viewpoints, we could find so much common ground. Having someone at each table who was actually living on the street seemed to help put a human face on the problem.

Activists Eric Rubin and Bruce Wright both complimented us for making the extra effort to include those most affected. I think many came to our Summit expecting very little and were very surprised that we all listened and came up with suggestions that were mutually agreeable.

We are tapping the resources of government, business, faith-based groups, neighborhood associations and private

citizens to do this. There are no easy answers or quick solutions. With input and help from all, we will be able to make significant strides.

CONA 2007 Goals Decided at March 10th Retreat

A very big thank-you goes to all who participated in our March 10th Retreat. Goal setting is a difficult task at best. But you did it!!! We also want to thank Will Michaels for facilitating the process that morning. CONA's 2007 Goals are published on the CONA website. We will continue to update you monthly on CONA's progress with completing each of those goals.

Community Service Officers Program Review

Co-Chairs Cass Rael and Carole Griffiths have met weekly with their Police Committee. The survey has been distributed and is also available on the CONA website. Please complete and return prior to our March meeting. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with other CONA members.

June 16-17 Pinellas Living Green Expo (PLGE)

Please mark these dates on your calendar. Tell your family and all your friends. Come on down to our exciting 2nd annual Pinellas Living Green Expo. Now, more than ever, we need to be concerned about our environment. Learn how to do things in concert with our environment, not hurting it. Remember, there is a special Kids Korner to entertain and instruct in how to be "green." Come for an hour or stay for the day. You will have a great time and so will all your friends. See you there.

City Beautiful Commission to Award Annual Home of the Year

The St. Petersburg City Beautiful Commission has recognized excellence in landscaping and building design for local businesses and commercial properties in the city for more than forty years. This year, the Commission has announced the addition of a neighborhood component – a "Home of the Year" program.

The Home of the Year Award will recognize the contributions made by residents for outstanding efforts in landscaping and maintenance of their homes. Each Neighborhood Association may submit one nominee from within its boundaries to the City Beautiful Commission for consideration. Entries are due by August 1, 2007. The award will be given at the City

Beautiful Annual Beautification Awards held in October each year.

For more information, including program guidelines and a nomination form, please call the St. Petersburg Parks Department at 893-7335.

Robert J. Clydesdale
Marketing/Parks Public Information
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175 5th Street N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
EMAIL: robert.clydesdale@stpete.org
OFFICE: 727.893.7041



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522-5008
MAOAI999@aol.com

Treasurer

Keith Locke
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rkeith1084@yahoo.com

Frequently Called Numbers

Neighborhood
Partnership Office: 892-5141
Mayor's Action Line: 893-7111
Codes Office: 893-7373

SPPD Community Service Numbers:

District: 1 551-3181
District 2 551-3182
District 3 551-3183

CONA Newsletter Deadlines

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CONA's Citizen of the Month

CONA's March Citizen of the Month

Carole Griffiths

This month we salute Carole Griffiths, our Co-Chair of the CONA Police Committee. Carole has been long time leader in our neighborhoods. Just recently- along with her co-chair Cass Rael- she has put in some long, dedicated hours working with our neighborhood crime watch coordinators and the Police Dept. to better the communication between the public and the police during this time of change in management of community policing. On a personal note, it is interesting to note that Carole was born in Clarence Center, NY. Always an overachiever, she graduated high school at age 16. She immediately went to work as a secretary at Dairyman's Leag. Later she worked for the Town of Clarence Center as Secretary to the Building Inspector and later as Secretary to the Town Engineer, all while raising three sons. She retired from the town in 1997, and she and her husband of almost 54 years, Bob, moved to St. Petersburg in 1999.

Carole cares about the people in her neighborhood and in the City of St. Petersburg. Her accomplishments include:

- President of Disston Hights Civic Association (3rd term)
- Past Secretary of Disston Hights Civic Association (3 years)
- CONA Leadership graduate
- CONA Representative for Disston Hights Civic Association
- Co-chair, CONA Police Committee
- Crime Watch Coordinator Disston Hights Civic Association (3 years)
- Court Watch (3 years)