

CONA Newsletter

The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County

April 2007

CONA GOAL SETTING RETREAT RESULTS

On March 10 at the west City Library, over 30 neighborhood groups convened to discuss and vote on CONA's priority issues for the next 18 months. Will Michaels facilitated the retreat. Resource persons included Karl Nurse, Barbara Heck, Darden Rice, and Bob Jeffrey. Each group was asked to identify 3 top goals or issues for CONA to work on as an umbrella organization. After each group presented their goals/issues the assembly as a whole prioritized the goals/issues presented. A thank you also goes to Dave Metz, who spoke at the beginning of our meeting. A big thanks also goes to our participants who helped make the day successful.

Results were as follow:

Top Goals/ Issues

1. Crime/Policing/Public Safety
2. Homeless
3. Affordable Housing
4. Improve Effectiveness of CONA by developing shared goals with the City, but with backup strategies.
5. Increase networking between neighborhood associations.

Other Goals/Issues Identified

1. Quality of Life/Historic Preservation (environment, Green City, Land Development Regulations, Vision 2020)
2. CONA develop/explore emergency notification system.
3. Address City's overdevelopment (displacement of people from affordable housing).
4. Increase CONA's membership/support.
5. Quality of Life (litter, homelessness, panhandlers, youthful offenders).

Committee

A committee was formed to restate these Goals in measurable terms, with objectives, and timeframes. Some goals may take as long as 18 months to accomplish. Others can be done much sooner. This will be presented at a CONA meeting soon.

CONA Board Meeting Wednesday, April 18, 2007

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

Agenda Items:

Mike Connors- Effects of Proposed Property Tax Cuts on City Services
CONA Business – Treasurer's Report – Updates
CONA 2007 Goals Retreat Summary – Will Michaels
CONA Historic Preservation – Will Michaels
By-Laws – Final

Very Important Upcoming Events:

May 16 - CONA Hurricane Preparation Meeting
June 16 - 17 - Pinellas Living Green Expo (PLGE)
June 20 - CONA's Presidents Reception Meeting

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Update on St. Petersburg Police Department's Emergency Notification System

The St. Petersburg Police Department's alert system automatically calls residents directly at home during an emergency situation. Developed by Dialogic Communications Corporation (DCC), this system is internet-based and represents the latest generation of automatic dialing technology. This new technology enhances our ability to quickly notify the public in times of emergency. The older system that we replaced averaged 500 calls per hour. Our new system can send up to 2000 calls per minute.

The new system also gives us the ability to send a message to every resident in the City, or to just those residents of a smaller geographic area within the City (like Evacuation Zones A and B).

These public safety messages will provide information or instructions for such things as evacuation routes and/or shelter locations in the event of a hurricane, missing person alerts, gas leaks, or any other event that represents a concern for the public's safety.

This system is equipped with our City's 911 database. This means that virtually every phone number in the city is stored in the data base. To ensure that the system does not go down in times of emergency, the servers for the system are located in Tennessee with additional backup servers located in Arizona. For this reason, residents will see a 615 area code when they receive a call from the system.

The St. Petersburg Police Department will also use this system for notifying police employees in the event of an emergency recall to duty. The person responsible for administering this system is Officer William "Chip" Wells. He can be reached at 727-893-4993.



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.

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www.callsunshine.com

Look Before You Leap: Property Tax Cuts Can Hurt City Services

Higher property taxes, rising adjustable interest rates on equity loans, and dizzying insurance costs have all of us scrambling for extra cash and seeking financial relief. The legislature in Tallahassee is especially eager to tackle property taxes and show some results for the effort. After all, higher costs - in part - are driving people into foreclosure, pushing landlords and businesses to pass on the higher rates to renters, and even encouraging many residents to move out of state altogether.

For me, it means the hard-earned raise and promotion I just got means I'm only a little bit back from where I was before. It is tough, and it does not particularly seem fair to measure progress by how much less you find yourself behind the eight ball. Working hard is something we can control, property taxes and insurance costs are not. That is why we have to take the process of the legislative approach carefully, and consider the impact of how cuts affect us all.

As we rush into supporting tax reform, we may be tempted by the most promising proposals. But it is a good idea to sort out what some of these tax cuts mean in our real lives when city services are cut. As much as I would like to see a break, I am at the same time concerned about how the sum of the current proposals affect concrete aspects of our everyday lives.

Just a few of the ideas floated around the halls of the capitol are: doubling the homestead exemption to 50k; capping the non-homesteaded properties; and rolling our taxes back to earlier rates. Another plan boldly proposes the abolishment of property taxes altogether only to recoup the lost revenue with a higher sales tax of an additional 2.5%. All of the measures mean big cuts to key city services. All of these cuts mean sacrificing some city programs, many of which we have grown to like these programs and want to keep around. Importantly, the total projected cuts also mean a sizable elimination of important city jobs. Where would you make the cuts if you were in charge? Look at the chart below.

Just a few examples of what proposed tax cuts would mean:

Services Reduced or Cut in the City of St. Petersburg	Double Homestead \$10.2 million IMPACT	Cap Non-Homestead \$14.0 million IMPACT	Roll-Back To 101 Rate \$22.7 million IMPACT
Reduce Funding for Police Comm. Youth Resources	1,906,699	1,906,699	1,906,699
Fire- Close Station & Reduce Min. Staffing	1,525,000	1,525,000	1,525,000
Reduce Code Enforcement Program by 1/2	1,583,000	1,583,000	1,525,000
Eliminate Neighborhood Partnership Program and Grants	754,690	754,690	754,690
Close Libraries and Reduce Hours Open	375,849	375,849	375,849
Eliminate Midtown Programs and Business Center			1,267,860
Eliminate Subsidies for Albert Whitted, Pier, Mahaffey Theater, Coliseum, & Sunken Gardens			3,322,000
• statistics provided by the City of St. Petersburg			

Who wants to close fire stations, reduce code enforcement, or shut the gates at Sunken Gardens? According to the City, these are the kind of choices we would have to confront, and they are not exactly crying wolf. Ask someone who has lived through California's Proposition 13, and he or she will tell you that popular property tax cuts can bring harsh, no-cure hangovers once tax cuts sink in. This is because the community investments and services we voted away are simply not there anymore. And we are talking sewage, schools, roads, you name it.

It would be tempting to prescribe a fix, if it were only so easy. (Not even gung-ho tax cutting groups are coming forth with realistic, specific recommendations to say which programs should face the glistening light of the budget axe.) CONA is not advocating for any particular measure of tax reform, but we do want to add facts to the discussion and draw attention to how proposals affect the general community issues we have a stake in. It has become very clear that the current Save Our Homes cap has produced an uneven, almost unworkable, tax structure today. We are stuck with either fixing that mess (don't count on it) or tacking on a tax reform that is a temporary band-aid that hopefully will not make things worse.

None of these issues are easy to untangle. We have to give a great deal of credit to our representatives in Tallahassee and the governor who are tasked to come up with something-that-better-be-good in an atmosphere that is desperate for solutions and intolerant of excuses. However, in our zeal for a solution, let us not jump on a train that is barreling in the wrong direction. Let us be aware of the real package of what we vote for and what we may have to lose. It may be time to defy an old adage. If Tallahassee offers something too simple, too brash, and too good to be true, then we need to look that gift horse in the mouth and say, "Thanks, but no thanks."

-Darden Rice, First VP, CONA



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: _____

President's Letter

By Barbara McCormick Heck

Mark your Calendars – Important upcoming May and June meetings

In preparation for Hurricane Season, we will devote much of our May meeting to “being prepared.” We will have the experts here to talk to you. We want you to take this information back to your neighborhoods. Put the facts in your newsletters, set up a neighborhood policy on how to deal with a catastrophe now while you have time to work out all the details. Better to be safe and ready now than very, very sorry later.

To honor our CONA heritage, we will be having a special President's Night for our June meeting. We are inviting all our past CONA Presidents and city officials to join us for a Social Night of Celebration. We want to share our history with all our newer members. Hopefully, our past Presidents can take 5 minutes each and tell us the major concerns they faced during their administration. Let's see what has changed in the neighborhoods and what “challenges” we still face.

CONA Meeting – April Programs

As part of our monthly City Department Program, Mike Connors will be here to discuss the Budget and the potential changes depending on what tax cut passes the Florida State Legislature. It is very important that we all stay informed and understand what the proposed changes will mean to our City and to each of our Neighborhoods.

CONA Service Officers Program Review

Thanks to each of the neighborhoods who turned in their survey. The Committee has received and tallied the results. We appreciate the time you spent answering the questions or making suggestions for additional assistance.

CONA By-Laws

Thank you to the Committee and CONA members for working to update our CONA By-Laws. We have added members to the Executive Board to help us keep up with the extraordinary workload this year. Please call any of your officers or Board members with your questions, concerns, issues. Also, where available, please use e-mail. It allows us to pass that concern on to the appropriate person or city department for a quick resolution to your problem.

As you can see, 2007 is going to be very busy. We need your help and your participation. Please join your CONA friends in “working together for a better St. Petersburg.”

PS – Please pay your overdue CONA dues now to Keith Locke, Treasurer.

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CONA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING MINUTES

The Sunshine Multi-Service Center - March 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.

- Barbara acknowledged the current CONA Leadership Class and the alumni of previous years.
- Treasurer Keith Locke reported a current balance of \$2,739.80.
- 2nd. V.P. Will Michaels gave a recap of our March tenth CONA Goals Retreat. The five most significant categories were- 1)Public Safety (Police), 2) The Homeless Issue, 3) Affordable Housing, 4) Improved relations with local government agencies, 5) More effective networking among CONA member organizations.
 - Will explained that a CONA committee is working to refine these goals and to identify measurable objectives for each category.
- Co-chairs of our CONA Police Committee, (Carole Griffiths, and Cass Rael), have been collecting data from the neighborhood survey forms that they distributed to all member organizations. The results of this evaluation, focused on the new CSO Program will be reviewed at our April CONA meeting.
- Keith Locke presented our Citizen of The Month award to Carole Griffiths, recounting her roles in several neighborhood organizations.
- We sang birthday greetings to Will Michaels and Tom Killian.
- Judy Ellis, (Lakewood Estates Civic Assoc.), reported on a developing homeless tent city developing on a church property in her neighborhood. Referring to the consensus rejecting tent communities voiced at the city's Homeless Summit, she appealed for CONA to support affirmation of the rejection of tent cities.
 - Moved, (Whysong), CONA endorses the ban on the development of tent cities in programs seeking to assist the homeless locally. [Approved]
- Barbara Heck reported attending a Pinellas Planning Council in Clearwater with Bob Jeffrey, (City Development & Historic Preservation). She mentioned several remaining steps of the new LDR's approval include public inputs on April 3rd and 16th, and May 1st, before the County Commissioners, (Planning Agency).
- The separate body of new LDR's, dealing with the downtown neighborhoods exclusively, will be the subject of City Council hearings April 5th, (9 AM), and April 19th at 6 PM.
- In anticipation of final approval of the new LDR's, Bob Jeffrey is planning a celebration for all of the many residents who have participated in drafting these new regulations during the past seven years dating back to the CONA 20/20 workshops and charettes.
- We heard an appeal for support of the Sunshine Fund, meeting April 21st at 7 PM.
- Dr. David McAlip gave a brief presentation for his organization, "Cut Taxes Now", in the hopes of winning support for their political position.
- Our next speaker was Sally Eichler of Codes Compliance.
 - She spoke of the wide variety of codes information, (state and local), currently included in their city web site listings.
 - Many departmental application forms are also available for download there as PDF files.
 - She urged that the first line of inquiry should be to your local Codes Inspector.
 - Much current development data for a given site can also be found on their web site.
 - The department staff will be very busy, in the immediate future, trying to coordinate their code texts with the newly approved LDR's.
 - Neighborhood associations should invite their local Codes Inspectors to attend their meetings and to provide a monthly report of the Codes activity from their area.
 - Reluctance was expressed, from the floor, that calling for a Codes Officer to inspect a specific problem might trigger a general inspection for violations throughout the neighborhood!
 - Codes call volume averages 150 per day, 27,000 cases last year.
 - Completed variance applications, submitted prior to June first, can escape the new provisions of the about to be approved LDR's.
 - Code ordinance 16-670 limits Snipe Signs to 1 per property.....and none on the "Right of Way".
[Suggested posting that ordinance in neighborhood newsletters- to "Educate" your neighbors.]

- Having a neighborhood Codes Committee similar to a Crime Watch Committee was suggested.
- Prior to commencing a discussion of proposed new CONA by-laws, the President confirmed that we had a quorum of member neighborhood representatives in registered attendance.
 - We were reminded that motions to revise the by-laws require a 2/3 majority to carry.
 - Only dues paid member association representatives are entitled to vote for By-law revisions. [See orange eligible lists at door.]
 - The Review Committee: Chair- Cathy Wilson, and Ingrid Comberg, Theresa McEachern, and Cass Rael was tasked with assuring that our new By-laws would be in conformity with the requirements of our application for 501(C)3 tax status.
 - Motion, (C. Rael), to approve revised B-laws as submitted by CONA By-law Review Committee.
 - Discussion of the motion followed.
 - Motion, (C. Griffith), was offered to amend the motion on the floor to add an Audit Committee to the proposed Standing Committees that would meet twice annually. [Motion Approved]
 - Motion, (D. Rice), was offered to amend motion on the floor, to limit CONA Standing Committees to only the Audit Comm., the Nominations Comm., and the CONA Leadership Comm. [Motion failed of approval]
 - Call for Motion as amended. [Motion Approved]
- All were invited to attend a gathering honoring newly appointed Judge Siracusa this Friday.
- Motion, (K. Locke), to elect the current CONA Committee leaders as interim members of the new the newly expanded Board of Directors Executive Committee. [These appointees to serve until the Nominations Committee can confirm their election as committee chairs.]
- Our meeting adjourned at 9 PM

Conrad Weiser, Secretary

Water Restrictions in Effect

January 16 – July 31, 2007

The continued lack of significant rainfall has increased demand for water in the Tampa Bay region, leading the Southwest Florida Water Management District to declare a Water Shortage. The City of St. Petersburg has restricted watering with potable (city) water, private well water and private connections to surface water sources (lakes, ponds, etc.). Here are the restrictions, days and times for watering and fines that can be assessed for watering violations. Check your sprinkler system/timer now and make the necessary adjustments.

Portable and Private Well/Surface Water

Addresses ending in Even Numbers (or letters A-M)

Addresses ending in Odd Numbers (or letters N-Z)

Irrigation is allowed ONCE only either 5-9AM or 7-11PM

ONCE A WEEK ONLY

Saturday only

Sunday only

Reclaimed Water

Even Numbers

Odd Numbers

(voluntary restriction so far)

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

Wednesday, Friday, Sunday

Fines are severe – Class II offense \$175 fine + Court costs. Subsequent violations can increase fines up to \$500 + Court costs. Please help by following these restrictions.



**2007 Officers and
Executive Board Members**

President

Barbara Heck
Snell Isle
894-6020
bg@racerrex.com

First Vice President

Darden Rice
Old Southeast
560-2479
Darden.Rice@hotmail.com

Second Vice President

Will Michaels
Bahama Shores
420-9195
wmichaels2@tampabay.rr.com

Secretary

Conrad Weiser
Edgemoor
522-5008
MAOA1999@aol.com

Treasurer

Keith Locke
Disston Heights
644-2195
rkeith1084@yahoo.com

CONA-CourtWatch

Ingrid Comberg

CONA-CSO

Carole Griffiths
522-7206
cgriff6721@aol.com

CONA-CSO

Cass Rael, Sr.

CONA Leadership

Patricia Guaveia

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

Copy Deadline:
30th of each month.

Publication:
2nd Monday of month.

Mailing:
2nd Wednesday of month.

Editor:
Darden Rice- 822-6241

**The Council of Neighborhood
Associations of South Pinellas County
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St. Petersburg, FL 33733-3693**

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CONA's Citizen of the Month

CONA's March Citizen of the Month

Bob Jeffrey

Assistant Director
of the Development Services Department
with the City of St. Petersburg

Words are not enough to capture the years of vision and dedication Bob Jeffrey has put into keeping St. Pete neighborhoods and downtown the distinctive and special place it is. Revamping our city's land use regulations has been years in the making and at times it has been a daunting task involving many stakeholders. These new changes will take effect June 1, 2007, a big day for St. Petersburg. Improving these codes has shaped the entire way our community looks and feels, and it is so much more than just a bureaucratic endeavor.

Bob Jeffrey is someone who has worked passionately to develop our LDRs, which will give the city a guide for growth while maintaining its charm. The new LDR's also enable us to go forward with a code system that makes more sense as our city redevelops. In addition to his dedication to historical preservation, Bob is a knowledgeable planner with great judgment and humor who understands and loves St. Pete's identity and special sense of place. Years from now, as St. Pete continues to be lauded as a beautiful place to live, the history books will name him along with Nolan and Bartholomew as one of our City's most visionary and dedicated planners.

We salute Bob Jeffrey, Assistant Director of the Development Services Department, for his years of commitment to making St. Pete neighborhoods a better place to live.