

CONA Newsletter

The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County

June 2007

Bahama Shores Wins City Council Appeal

The City Council voted unanimously on June 7th to uphold the Bahama Shores appeal. The Council decision overruled the previous City Environmental Development Commission approval of a near 100,000 square foot, six-story building being proposed between the Bahama Shores and Bonita Bayou neighborhoods only 40 feet from Little Bayou.

While a number of reasons were given to support the appeal, the primary objection was that this huge building did not meet the requirement of the City Code that the building fit the neighborhood and "harmonize" with adjacent development (City Code Chapter 29-90. (c) (6)). The proposed building would not only have been the most massive building by far on Little Bayou and in the surrounding neighborhoods, but in fact for miles around. The development would have fundamentally changed the character and "look" of the adjacent neighborhoods and potentially been detrimental to property values. This was also a central argument used to defeat the proposed Westin Hotel project for 5th Ave. N. adjacent to the Historic Old Northeast. In the case of Bahama Shores the development was additionally sensitive as the project was to face the waterfront, and would have affected the views of persons living on Little Bayou. An additional concern was that the devel-

opment application was submitted just prior to adoption of the new Land Development Regulations, as is the case with a number of other recent applications. This would mean the higher standards of the new LDRs would not be met. In this case the new LDRs would require a setback of at least 75 feet from the water and adjacent parkland, rather than the 35 to 40 feet proposed by the developer.

Bahama Shores had successfully challenged in Court an earlier proposal by the developer calling for 6 high buildings, some as high as 7 stories, on the same site. The developer's most recent proposal for a single building was viewed as but a part of the previous application, and an effort to get approved one building at a time what was not approved as a package. Some City Council members were concerned that the Council was being asked to consider what was in effect an incomplete and partial application.

The earlier successful Court Challenge by Bahama Shores and our neighbor Bonita Bayou also established the right of neighborhood associations to have "standing," or the right to sue in court.

The City Council challenged the developer, Westminster Shores Retirement Community, to rework their application in consultation with the Bahama Shores

neighborhood. Bahama Shores' residents have not objected to Westminster Shores redeveloping their complex, only the manner in which the project was proposed with buildings too high and massive to fit the neighborhood.

Both the Bahama Shores and Westin cases are landmark decisions establishing the rights of neighborhoods to control their character and growth.

The role played by CONA and the neighborhood associations was most important. I believe the message was given that this is not just a Bahama Shores concern, but that a great many other neighborhoods would have the same concern were such a development to be proposed for their areas.

A special thanks to CONA and all the individual neighborhood associations that supported the Bahama Shores appeal. Not only did you write letters to the Council but also many of you took the time to personally appear at the hearing. All of us at Bahama Shores are most grateful. Also a special thanks to our attorney and Bonita Bayou neighbor Paul Scherer, and to CONA's former Vice President Steve Plice who provided invaluable advice throughout this struggle.

Will Michaels, CONA 2nd VP
Bahama Shores

CONA Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

The SUNSHINE CENTER, 330 5th St. N.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; meeting starts at 7:00 p.m.

Refreshments provided

Agenda Items:

CONA Business – Treasurer's Report – Updates
Pinellas Living Green Expo Summary
Open Forum

(Check CONA website for last minute program changes)

Very Important Upcoming Events:

July 18 – CONA's General Membership Meeting
August 15 – CONA's General Membership Meeting
(The President's Social is being rescheduled to a later date)

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May 19 Clean up & Block Party

At the Clean Up & Block Party on May 19 neighbors from around the city came together to celebrate our achievements and to do outreach to others. A team of 14 neighborhood volunteers were joined by 13 CONA leaders who picked up 32 bags of trash covering 5 miles of alleys & streets from 13th Ave S to 17th Ave S between 9th St & 4th Street. We also placed signs near the storm drains warning of the danger to wildlife from trash thrown into the street.

The Bartlett Park Crime Watch & Neighborhood Association organizations would like to thank everyone for taking time out of your busy schedule to volunteer at our Clean Up & Block Party on May 19. Our neighborhood has many challenges to overcome but

these types of activities have always served as a positive step toward improving the cleanliness of our neighborhood, reducing crime, and increasing membership in our Crime Watch & Neighborhood Association organizations.

Special thanks to CONA President Barbara Heck, and the Police & Sanitation Departments who assisted us in countless ways to help organize this event. We hope everyone had a great time on May 19 and we look forward to attending a Clean Up & Block Party in your neighborhood soon!

-Bartlett Park Neighborhood Association



CONA LEADERSHIP GRADUATION 15TH ANNIVERSARY

THE 2007 CONA Leadership class celebrated its graduation on May 17th with a dinner at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club. 2007 marks the 15th anniversary of the Leadership program. The purpose of the program is to train individuals for leadership positions in their neighborhoods and to assure a continuing base of knowledgeable and talented neighborhood leaders. There are nearly 500 graduates of this program to date, with 28 graduates this year.

The evening began with Committee co-chairs Ingrid Comberg and Patricia Guaveia welcoming the guests, congratulating the students and thanking the mentors and sponsors for their dedication to the Leadership Program.

One of the founding members of CONA Leadership, Mayor Rick Baker, attended this milestone anniversary event. He reminded the new graduates to make the most of the networks of contacts that they developed during the program.

The keynote speaker, Bill Maxwell of The St. Petersburg Times, encouraged active participation in the neighborhoods. Barbara Heck gave a welcome from CONA, and graduating student Wallace Guthrie spoke of the value of the Leadership program and of the CONA organization.

Special recognition was given to Dr. Raymond Arsenault for his dedication to the Leadership Program and his 15 years of Historic Bus Tours. A plaque was presented to his wife, Kathy, as Ray was out of state on sabbatical leave.

All the sponsors were thanked: Progress Energy for their continued support, and new sponsors CONA and Bright House Networks,

Here are the graduates of the 2007 CONA Leadership class :

Taylor Adams
Lari Averbeck
Rania Bahdouchi
James Donelon
Barry S. Edwards
Susan Farias
Pam Gaylor
Mike Gulley
Wallace N. Guthrie, Jr.
Hal Hammer, Jr.
Don Jenkins
Joseph I. Lansberry
Gerald M. Lembke
Roy Locke

Will Michaels
Jacqueline Mills
Jamie Ostrand
Penka Pesev-Lukac
David Shafer
John Sullivan
Scott J. Swift
Tallulah Taylor
Velma Thompson
Mike Tobias
Charlene Tomas
Melinda Warren
Robert S. Watts
Shane Whitlatch

Applications for the 2008 Leadership class will be available in the fall.

President's Letter

By Barbara McCormick Heck

The last few weeks have seen a flurry of challenges for our neighborhoods. We have been bombarded with looming tax cuts, looming staff and services cuts, looming high rise condos, looming dissection of a Preserve and on and on.

As we move forward on these issues, let's take a moment and B-R-E-A-T-H-E. Yes, I mean, stop what you are doing and breathe in a deep refreshing breath of fresh, wonderful Florida air. OK. Now that we are a bit calmer, here is what I think we need to do to be successful.

Tallahassee and Proposed Tax Cuts

CONA and the neighborhoods have some very challenging days ahead of us. Impending tax cuts from Tallahassee mean counterbalancing budget cuts and possible staff reductions here in our beloved city and county.

Each neighborhood needs to decide what is most important to them that might be slated for cuts or elimination – and do that very quickly. Once decided, bring those concerns forward to your state representatives, City Council persons and your County Commissioners. Call, fax and write letters and e-mails. Make certain your voice is heard. CONA can also help. Check our CONA website for further contact information.

Brooker Creek Preserve

CONA voted at the May meeting to join with our North County neighbors to ask the Board of County Commissioners to “preserve the Preserve.” We need your help to let each of our County Commissioners know that we in south Pinellas County are just as concerned about this issue. It is not just a small group from north Pinellas County – this plan affects all of us. Again, please call, fax and write letters and e-mails to tell them to “please do not disturb the Preserve.”

Inappropriate Development

I would like to see City Council place a moratorium on all site plan requests until the new LDR's are in place. By trying to squeeze in under the old and outdated LDR's, some developers are submitting very inappropriate plans that do not reflect the character or the

ambiance of the surrounding neighborhood. Within a few weeks, the new LDR's will be law. These new LDR's were crafted over the past 7 years with input from everyone and truly reflect what we want to see St. Petersburg become as outlined in our Vision 2020.

CONA CAN – do it !!!

In the months ahead as the City and County make their budget adjustments, there will be programs that are reduced or deleted. CONA is asking the neighborhood associations to work in partnership with the city, each other and CONA to help find volunteers, golden angels or whatever it takes to support those programs we want to keep up and running. We do not yet know what they are, but we do know there will be a substantial need for help. Our new motto is going to be – CONA CAN . . . do it. With your help, CONA CAN.

Hurricane Preparation

You heard it all at our May meeting. PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE. Neighborhoods, please look at working on a neighbor to neighbor appeal in your areas. The first two to three days you may be on our own until help can arrive. Be safe, but be ready for whatever my come your way.

EDC Turns Down Westin Proposal

CONA thanks the EDC for their vote to turn down the Westin proposal on 5th Ave North. Our community - and many stakeholders - have put years of work into the creation of the new Land Use Regulations (LDRs). These regulations are important because they shape the way the community lives, builds, and operates. We continue to urge the EDC and City leaders to reject last minute proposals that fly against the spirit of the upcoming Land Use Development Regulations. It is an affront to the fine efforts we have all worked on for years to accomplish. Thank you for the vote.

-Darden Rice, 1st VP, CONA

Upcoming Events

June 22 • St. Pete Shuffle.

St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Courts, 559 Mirror Lake Dr. N. 7 to 11 p.m. A hip twist on an old game with music and art. Free. www.stpeteshuffle.com or 727-867-7228.

June 22 • The Valerie Gillespie Trio.

Mahaffey Theater, 400 1st St. S. Blend of vocal and instrumental styles to produce energetic music that encourages the audience to tap their toes and sing along. \$20. www.mahaffeytheater.com or 727-892-5767.

June 22 to 24 • Tampa Bay Devil Rays vs. Los Angeles Dodgers.

Tropicana Field, One Tropicana Dr. www.devilrays.com or 888-FAN-RAYS.

June 23 • Unveiling of Governor Charlie Crist's Portrait.

St. Petersburg Museum of History, 335 2nd Ave. N.E. 4 p.m. St. Petersburg's own Charlie Crist will make an appearance at this very special event. The 44th Governors portrait will be displayed in the lobby of the museum. Free. www.spmoh.org or 727-894-1052.

June 25 to 28 • Tampa Bay Devil Rays vs. Chicago White Sox.

Tropicana Field, One Tropicana Dr. www.devilrays.com or 888-FAN-RAYS.

June 27-29 • 72nd Annual Miss Florida Pageant.

Mahaffey Theater, 400 1st St. S. 7:30 p.m. Preliminary competitions where contestants compete in Talent, Swimsuit, Evening Wear and On Stage Question segments. \$22. www.missflorida.org or 727-892-5767.

June 29 • St. Pete Shuffle.

St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Courts, 559 Mirror Lake Dr. N. 7 to 11 p.m. A hip twist on an old game with music and art. Free. www.stpeteshuffle.com or 727-867-7228.

June 30 • St. Pete Pride Promenade and Street Festival.

Central Ave. between 22nd & 28th St. Promenade 10 a.m. to noon, street festival 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Annual festival and parade celebrates diversity and raises awareness of GLBT communities. Free. www.stpetepride.com. or 727-365-0544.

June 30 • 72nd Annual Miss Florida Pageant Final Competition.

Mahaffey Theater, 400 1st St. S. 7:30 p.m. Ten contestants will be selected for the final round and will compete in Talent, Swimsuit and Evening Wear segments, culminating with the crowning of Miss Florida 2007. \$52. www.missflorida.org or 727-892-5767.

June 30 & July 1 • Artwalk at BayWalk.

BayWalk, 2nd Ave. & 2nd St. N. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Show and sale of work by local artists. www.baywalkstpete.com or 727-384-6000.

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CONA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING MINUTES

The Sunshine Multi-Service Center - May 16, 2007

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

- She then welcomed all, recognizing City Councilman Herb Polson. She also called on CONA Leadership Alumni to identify themselves.
- Treasurer Keith Locke reported a current CONA balance of \$2,366.68, and a Leadership balance of \$700.52.
 - Keith also noted that application for 501(C)3 not-for-profit tax status has been applied for with regard to the Leadership Alumni Fund.
 - There are immediate prospects of charitable contributions for the Alumni Fund when the tax status is approved.
 - Moved, (Griffiths), CONA funds will be temporarily loaned the Leadership Alumni Fund to cover their immediate banquet expenses pending anticipated contributions. [Approved]
- We then heard a presentation by two officers on the Coalition of North County Neighborhoods (CNCN), Jim MacDonald and John Miolla.
 - Their group is in a formative stage trying to establish a common voice for many of the upper Pinellas, unincorporated neighborhoods. They cited several areas of concern, calling for better resident representation foremost of which are the flawed plans for the Booker Creek Preserve.
 - They requested support from CONA for preservation at Booker Creek as well as moral support as they get organized.
 - Moved, (Michaels), CONA will send a letter to the Pinellas County Commissioners indicating our support of the efforts to maintain the Booker Creek Preserve without reduction of its original grant area. [Approved]
 - Will Michaels agreed to chair a committee to support our goal of park preservation.
- We learned that Largo is also working to develop a coalition of area neighborhood associations.
- Our next event was the presentation of an award plaque to Cass Rael Sr. our CONA Citizen of The Month.
 - Cass took the opportunity to thank Susan Ajoc and her Neighborhood Partnership Office for help in organizing.
- We next heard from Phillip Stager of the City Beautiful Commission. He described the organization as being active here for 40 years.
 - Urban Forestry and other grant programs were mentioned of interest to our neighborhoods.
 - Mr. Stager appealed for an opportunity to speak at any monthly meetings of our member neighborhoods.
- The very active "Big Brothers Big Sisters" Program was discussed for us by Kimberly Davis.
 - Appealing for volunteers, she noted they have a waiting list of over 230 youngsters seeking to enroll.
 - They embrace a variety of outreach programs some of which are faith related. Neighborhood associations can help the activities of this organization.
- Scott Swift, of Bartlett Park, invited volunteers from all neighborhoods to join him in a massive clean up and block party Saturday May 19th. Food, fun, and party will follow.
- Barbara Hawkins of Greater Pinellas Point invited all to their annual Picnic June 9th.
- Returning to the Agenda, Barbara Heck, reported an appeal from Deputy Mayor, David Metz, asking CONA's support with the Department Of Transportation, (DOT), for the establishment of a pedestrian cross walk on Fourth Street by Sunken Gardens. [The city's application has been denied!]
 - Barbara referred pursuit of this issue to our Public Safety Committee, who can seek collaboration from other contiguous member neighborhoods.
- Susan Ajoc, (Neighborhood Partnership Office), opened the next phase of our agenda, "Neighborhood Storm Preparations."
 - Sgt. Mike Preshur, (S.P.P.D.), began by telling of a statewide conference on Hurricane Preparation currently in session for Florida Public Safety personnel.
 - He explained that county government is responsible for which storm shelters will be open and when.
 - The County Emergency Management Center announces mandatory evacuations and for which threat level. They have promised to give advance warning, not repeating the middle of the night mandates of last year.
 - All mobile home parks will be called to evacuate with any wind forecasts exceeding 75mph.
 - Some multilane highways will be declared "All one way" to expedite evacuation on major arteries.
 - The police are not directed to evict/arrest residents who refuse mandatory evacuation calls.
 - The county's P.S.T.A. Bus System will assist in evacuation whenever possible.
 - Police patrols will always know what shelters are open.
 - Richard Feinberg of our Fire & Rescue Department then added some comments from their perspective.
 - His department staff includes emergency management analysts who work all year on issues of storm preparation. He urged all residents to spread their planning and preparation tasks over the whole year.
 - He described, in some detail, their "Special Needs Program" that includes early evacuation with city vehicles and designated shelters where electric and

oxygen supplies are guaranteed; [only 3 this year in contrast with 12 during previous seasons].

- Phone 464-3500 to enroll for "Special Needs". The department will visit to appraise the medical needs. [Must be visited annually.]
 - The department has a legal responsibility to assist all who registered for evacuation. [Lack of a car is deemed an adequate qualification for department assistance.]
 - Those with acute medical needs should plan to evacuate to a hospital rather than the "Special Needs Shelters".
 - If sustained surface winds reach a critical level, public safety vehicles will not be dispatched to respond to calls for assistance.
 - City, County, and FEMA web sites always have extensive, updated storm information.
 - St. Petersburg will purchase and distribute thousands of copies of the "Tampa Bay Hurricane Guide" when it is printed next weekend, (St. Pete. Times).
 - Mention was made of the Fire & Rescue "Telemedic Program" for posting medical needs in one's home. Contact: 893-SAFE (7233), to enroll.
 - We were reminded that shelters should be last resort for evacuees.....and that exit from shelters is restricted until the county declares an all clear.
 - We next heard from Zachary Cornett, an Eagle Boy Scout from Fossil Park.
 - He recounted how his scout troop had visited all 800 homes in his neighborhood with a survey to identify the evacuation plans, (or lack thereof- 36%), by neighbors.
 - They distributed storm preparation info packets whenever they were invited in. [Police Officers made the visits to registered sex offenders.]
 - The scouts assisted 35 neighborhood residents with enrolling in the Fire & Rescue "Special Needs Program".
- We were reminded of the special Florida Sales Tax Exemption for purchase of storm readiness materials

between June first and June 12th. [It was urged that all neighborhood newsletters should advertise this special program]

- Past President Karl Nurse rose to discuss the prospect of asking the Pinellas Sheriff's Department to contract with the city to operate the St. Petersburg Police Department. He spoke in the context of major tax revenue reductions anticipated under Tallahassee tax cuts due to be announced about June 22nd. [Our city budget draft is due 2 weeks later.]
- Operation of our Police Department is currently the largest line item of the city budget.
- If a contract with the Sheriff can be negotiated, we need those figures for our new city budget draft A.S.A.P.
 - It is known that the Sheriff is also planning cutbacks in response to the Florida tax reductions.
 - Moved, (Locke), that CONA petition City Council to request a quotation from the Pinellas Sheriff's Department to assume operating responsibility for the St. Petersburg Police Department. [Approved as modified below]
 - Moved, (Heck), to substitute referral of the sheriff's contract to our CONA Public Safety Committee prior to submitting the request to City Council. [Motion rescinded]
 - Moved, (Michaels), to modify Locke motion to include parallel study by CONA Public Safety Committee. [Approved]
 - Moved, (Michaels), urges approval of the CONA Goals for 2007-2008, as evolved, including action items and measurable results. [Approved]
- After some debate, it was concluded that our voting attendees did, in fact, constitute a quorum for our meeting.
- A brief raffle was conducted to distribute free tickets to the May 22nd. Devil Ray's Game.
- Our meeting concluded at 9:20 p.m.

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

Reclaimed Water

Even Numbers

Odd Numbers

ONCE A WEEK ONLY

Saturday only

Sunday only

(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**

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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.

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Darden Rice - 822-6241

**The Council of Neighborhood
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CONA's Citizen of the Month

June Citizen of the Month

Scott Swift

Scott Swift is the current Vice President of the Bartlett Park Neighborhood Association. Scott has lived half his life in St. Petersburg, and arrived in Bartlett Park in 2005 after working closely on neighborhood issues in Pennsylvania for 7 years.

Bartlett Park is a neighborhood that has seen its share of successes and challenges, and has relied on a group of people who have built their community by fostering a sense of a connected neighborhood, making it safer, and making it cleaner. Scott's greatest contribution to the community is to work with others, to learn to listen, and reach out to find the hopes and goals of a community. It has not always been easy, but recent successes show that the hard work is coming to fruition. The recent May 19 Bartlett Park Clean-Up and the success of the Crime Watch program -calls for service have grown from 400+ to 630 per month - are successes that are the result of many helping hands.

Scott's vision as a community organizer is that the more we work together in a democracy; we find we have no limits. He will be the first to tell you that his contribution is one of many, but because he's been so visible as a leader we honor him as an individual this month for his hard work.