

# CONA Newsletter

The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County

November 2009

## CONA November Meeting Nov 18th - 7 to 9PM Sunshine Center

### Offshore Oil Drilling Commissioner Ken Welch

### 2009 - Transition - 2010 Mayor Rick Baker

#### CONA Board Meeting Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2009

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

#### Agenda Items:

Introduction of New Council Members  
Officer and Board 2010 Nominations  
Old Business - New Business

#### Important Upcoming Events:

Dec 16 - CONA General Meeting  
Dec 31 - Waterfront Park Centennial Celebration & First Night

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# November President's Message

By Barbara McCormick Heck

**Congratulations to our newly elected officials – Mayor and City Council Members.** Thanks to all who ran for office and for devoting the past many, many months to campaigning for what you believed in for our wonderful city. We know it has not been easy. We know the months ahead will present many challenges. But we are ready.

We just want you to know that CONA and the neighborhoods will work closely with you on all city problems. We ask for transparency in all you do. We ask you to hear our voices loud and clear. We live with these problems/challenges daily. We can be your best eyes and ears out in the community. Together, we can solve any problem confronting this city.

I stress the word t-o-g-e-t-h-e-r. Together we can help you find the best solution and together we can build that neighborhood consensus. Together we can and together we will !!!

**Thank you Neighborhood Associations.** Over the past months, CONA has worked cooperatively with a number of different groups to bring the neighborhood voice forward – very dramatically too. Many of us sit on these boards and bring the neighborhood perspective forward. Here are just a few of them:

- ABC-Coalition Board, Affordable Housing, AWAPS, Citizen Police Council, Florida Neighborhood Conference, KaBoom Playground Committee, Low Income Housing, Neighborhood Grant Committee, Pier Committee, Pinellas Living Green Expo Board, St. Petersburg Preservation Board, Transit Funding Committee, Waterfront Centennial, Weed and Seed.

We continue to meet regularly with various city/county/state officials on a variety of subjects dealing with county, city and neighborhood issues:

- Codes, Court Watch, Crime Watch, Gang Task Force, Anti-Litter Campaign, Tone Down Program, Curbside recycling, Event recycling, Land Development Regulations (LDR's) and Glitch ordinances, Median restriction, Green issues, Environmental issues, Water issues and many others.

**Special Thank-you's to CONA Officers and Committee Members.** Without your help, CONA would never, ever be able to accomplish all that it has over the past years. We literally would cease to exist. Thank you for all the time you have put in to work on issues of concern to our neighborhoods. You make a huge difference and we certainly do not say thank you often enough. So here are the thank you's.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you . . . and many more !!!

**One final note at this time of Thanksgiving.** Take a moment to forget your troubles and your concerns and just stop and say "thank you". Life could be better, but it could also be so much worse. Show a random act of kindness to someone. Say "thank-you" to someone not expecting it. Help someone in need. Do a good deed. Be that really nice person we all know you are deep down inside. Have a very happy and blessed Thanksgiving wherever you may be and thank you for being part of our CONA family.

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## Current workings in City and County

**Here are your November updates on issues affecting all of us.**

**www.crimereports.com** The online crime information service, updated daily, provides crime information for every area of the city. The website contains the past six months of "calls for service" information. Locations are mounted on the familiar "Google Maps". You select the dates, the crime categories and the location. There is also an additional link (not SPPD) to the FDLE sex offender database maintained by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE).

Dr. Gene Webb, SPPD IT manager, will visit any neighborhood association to train your Crime Watch group how to use the website. CONA's Public Safety Committee also will assist in setting up trainings for the neighborhoods and Crime Watch coordinators.

**Waterfront Park Centennial:** Peter Belmont and Cathy Martin are chairing the Steering Committee planning this 2010 year long event. New Year's Eve will start the celebration with a family oriented fun event highlighting some of the historic features of our waterfront parks. In partnership with many other groups, activities will be taking place in all of the waterfront parks from North Shore to Poynter Park. Volunteers are needed for all these events. To get

involved, volunteer or donate monies or resources, contact waterfrontcentennial@gmail.com

**Pier Task Force:** CONA VP Will Michaels and DNA President Marilyn Olsen are serving on this 20 member Pier Task Force. Will chairs the Design Sub-committee. The Task Force is charged with providing multiple re-development alternatives for the Pier, identifying the estimated operating subsidy, reviewing the status of the Pier and identifying funding estimates for alternatives. The Task Force recommendations are due to City Council no later than February 25, 2010.

**ABC-Coalition:** All Committee Interim Reports and summary are available for viewing. Please check the ABC website at [www.abc-baseball.com/news/presentations](http://www.abc-baseball.com/news/presentations) and also for the next scheduled meeting.

**REMEMBER Free Foreclosure Counseling:** Neighborhood Housing Services provides "free" counseling assistance to help homeowners in foreclosure manage their foreclosure or remediate their mortgage. They also provide Home Buyer Education courses designed to help people achieve the dream of home ownership. Go to <http://www.stpetehs.org> for more information.

# Make saving energy a Thanksgiving tradition.

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Thoughts of Thanksgiving often conjure up sights, smells and tastes reminiscent of a holiday meal like no other. While you're working up a sweat in the kitchen this November, take a few simple steps to make sure the only thing that's sizzling is your roasting turkey.

- Admit it. You like to watch food cook. This Thanksgiving, resist the urge to open the oven door, as doing so will decrease the temperature inside by 25 to 30 degrees. Use your oven light instead to keep the oven hot and the kitchen comfortable.
- The turkey may be the star of the show, but don't forget about the supporting cast. Insist your turkey shares space in the oven with the sides and pies and you'll reduce the overall amount of time your oven is on – saving energy and money in the process.
- Even on Thanksgiving, your microwave can be a valuable tool. By using microwaves and toaster ovens to cook or warm smaller items like veggies and rolls, you could save up to 30 percent of the energy required to cook in a conventional oven.
- Play an energy-saving matching game by pairing your pots with equivalent-sized burners. Heat is lost when small pots are used on large burners. Increase your savings while shortening your cooking time by using tight-fitting covers on pots and pans.
- Food keeps cooking even after you turn off the burner. When food is almost ready, turn off the oven or burners and let existing heat finish the cooking for you.
- Want the family to gather around a new TV to watch this year's Thanksgiving football matchup? Look for an ENERGY STAR model — it will be up to 30 percent more energy efficient than non-qualified models.
- Allow yourself room in the kitchen while keeping refrigerated goodies cold by putting your guests' drinks on ice. Using a cooler can reduce trips to the fridge, cutting down on the number of "cooks" in the kitchen while giving your largest kitchen appliance a break.

Long after your family is full, you'll be glad that you took the time to cook efficiently. After all, the energy you saved in the process could help pay for your next feast with family and friends.

For more than 100 energy-saving tips or to sign up for a free Progress Energy Florida Home Energy Check, visit [www.SaveTheWatts.com](http://www.SaveTheWatts.com).

LOOKING AT POWER IN A NEW LIGHT



# CONA BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING MINUTES

## The Sunshine Multi-Service Center - October 21, 2009

- President Barbara Heck welcomed our members and guests leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag. She then introduced Tom Killian, of Jungle Terrace, who will be the Moderator of tonight's Candidates Forum.
- Tom promoted the CONA Leadership Program for 2010. He explained that this class meets twice each month, starting January through May, with varied venues. The tuition is \$75. if paid before November 15th.
- Tom then invited our guests, the 10 candidates for our City Council, to introduce themselves with brief, (2 minute), résumés. The Candidates for Council Districts #2, #4, #5, #6, and #8 each spoke to our audience.
- Moving on to our forum for the two candidates for Mayor, Kathleen Ford and Bill Foster, Tom began by inviting Bill Foster to present a 5 minute summary of his candidacy.
  - Bill offered several examples from his "Foster's 40 Initiatives" he envisions. He mentioned Codes Compliance, Education Interns, Free I.D. cards for our libraries and neighborhood Rec. Centers, and an expanded City Crime Watch Program.
- Kathleen Ford next offered a 5 minute summary of her candidacy.
  - She displayed several large data charts that depicted doubling of our Property Tax Revenue, noting that increased crime confirms inadequate Police Department funding.
  - Preservation of our Waterfront is a theme of special concern.
  - We heard that taxation continues to inhibit the development of businesses in our city. Even reduced parking meters would do much to help downtown businesses.
  - We must restore some of the support for our developing neighborhoods that have been reduced to accommodate reduced city income.
  - High technologies will be the goals of our future business development and the key to sustaining our services in the face of declining budgets.
- Our Moderator then began to read a series of 19 questions that were submitted in writing to present to each of the Mayoral Candidates. Each were allowed 2 minutes to respond, though on certain more complex questions, the candidates were granted 3 minutes for their response.

**Ques. #1:** There has been a decline in many city services and neighborhood support stemming from the current reduced tax revenues. What can you do to restore these reductions?

**Ans. Foster-** Fundamental= What do we want versus what do we need? We need to expand the volunteer work force and the student interns. We will cooperate with CONA to build stronger neighborhoods. We will continue to build new neighborhood facilities.

**Ans. Ford-** We will restore funding for the Neighborhood Partnership Office and their Grant Program. We will revive the "Neighborhood Plan Program". We will leverage the work with more volunteer programs. The City Budget should be zero based, not heavy with reserves. The City Planning Staff must be restored

**Ques. #2:** What is your position with regard to gulf drilling for oil off of our Florida Coast?

**Ans. Ford-** No, no, no, no! Recall the oil residue cleanup at the Galveston Beaches. Our Fort Desoto Beach is a world class treasure. Other oil recovery schemes and alternate energy sources will relieve the oil demand.

**Ans. Foster-** I oppose any off-shore drilling. We cannot risk our #1 Industry Tourism. There are developing alternate energy sources.

**Ques. #3:** Our City has lost several elements of our architectural heritage. What steps will you propose to protect our Historic Landmarks?

**Ans. Foster-** Our Historic Preservation Board must be revitalized. More financial incentives must be provided for historic preservation. It is essential that we preserve the unique character of our city.

**Ans. Ford-** We have not continued the earlier plan of designating at least two historic preservation candidates every two years. Our reassigned City Planners must be returned. We must preserve the balance between neighborhood preservation and redevelopment opportunities.

**Ques. #4:** Would you continue the office of Deputy Mayor?

**Ans. Ford-** There is no need for Deputy Mayors. There are 64 city staffers earning over \$100,000. salaries.

**Ans. Foster-** We do not need Deputy Mayors. Many city functions can be accomplished through consolidation with Pinellas County Programs. Volunteer and Intern staffing should be increased.

**Ques. #5:** What improvement in our St. Petersburg Public Transportation System will you promote?

**Ans. Foster-** I support the work of TBARTA. A rail link to Orlando, (for Tourists), should be our top priority. We look forward to a link between Tampa Airport and Clearwater, with a light rail spur to down town St. Petersburg.

**Ans. Ford-** I have served on the MPO Board. The southbound light rail link will likely follow Fourth Street or the Interstate Corridor. Such long range plans must always have inputs of local preferences. Future transportation links should be funded from Ad Valorem Taxes, not Sales Tax.

**Ques. #6:** What is your position on municipal property transfers as in the Tierra Verde Annexation or in the Baywalk Sidewalk Vacation?

**Ans. Ford-** Our Municipal Planning Document includes plans to annex Tierra Verde as well as the Feather Sound Area. We should not have vacated the Baywalk Sidewalk. The failure of Baywalk was rooted in poor public perception of the scene there.

**Ans. Foster-** The Mayor must legally defend City Council measures even if he disagrees. The Tierra Verde agreement, (0063), was ultimately thrown out by the court. We have had too many property transfer law suites. There should be a more cooperative resolution in our relations with county government.

**Ques. #7:** What is your vision for the future of the Midtown Neighborhood?

**Ans. Foster-** The City has done much to improve Midtown. Dale Holmes Park was the key to development. More affordable housing is our primary goal with assistance to home buyers rather than to renting tenants. Establishing a new tax district might be a viable economic remedy.

**Ans. Ford-** Midtown crime impacts our whole city. It drives away business people and their customers. The city should more selectively seek purchase bids from local firms. More stimulus grants should have been sought for Midtown. More sidewalks need paving to promote pedestrian traffic. The pumping problems at Maggiore Lake should be repaired.

**Ques. #8:** Do you favor return to our former Community Police Officer, (CPO), Program?

**Ans. Ford-** I liked the CPO Program, it worked very well for our neighborhoods. Under the new scheme, the CSO Officers are "Run ragged".

**Ans. Foster-** The current program is better, but lacks the trust that the CPOs enjoyed. We need to assure that all neighborhoods have a functional crime watch. The new e-mail alerts from the Police Website, [CrimeReports.com], will be a big step forward in fighting crime.

**Ques. #9:** What will you do to create more jobs in St. Petersburg?

**Ans. Foster-** The prosperity of our city depends on Public Safety. We need a better interface between the public and police- out of the patrol cars and on the street. Our Codes need to be streamlined to facilitate starting new businesses. Our local education facilities, (schools and colleges), need to provide the work force that new businesses and industry look for- especially in the high-tech areas. If we develop more affordable housing, workforce and industry will grow, with less risk of losing what we have.

**Ans. Ford-** Too high tax rates are inhibiting local business development. Improved high-tech education at Votech and college level is the key to more jobs. Our job market should depend less on service jobs with more industrial development. Eliminating downtown parking meters will do much to stimulate many small business owners.

**Ques. #10:** Do you envision expansion of Marine Sciences along our waterfront?

**Ans. Ford-** We enjoy a close collaboration with USF New uses of our Pier may include more of a Marine Science Theme. That would improve the tourist draw. More can be done to win grants for Marine Science in our city.

**Ans. Foster-** Pier renovation will not provide many opportunities for Marine Science. What does the public want to see at the pier- not just the tourist interests? The facilities of S.R.I. will continue to grow. Though St. Pete. will never be a cruise ship port, we will have Marine Science floating labs like "Port Discovery"

**Ques. #11:** How would you define "Transparency" in government?

**Ans. Foster-** Our city has seen some hiding of facts from our taxpayers. Some secrecy is essential when luring new business prospects and the tax benefits that have been offered. All discussions with Baseball teams should be public information.

**Ans. Ford-** There were many months of secret discussions about the dome. My administration will have no secret committees.

**Ques. #12:** Do you favor blocking the streets in a storm, (e.g. Shore Acres)?

**Ans. Ford-** At times the Police sought to prevent looting. Calls for evacuation in the middle of the night is unacceptable.

**Ans. Foster-** This is usually a county level decision. Beyond immediate threat of flooding, Police traffic control can do much to avoid "Wake Damage" by cars driving in flooded streets. I support the installation of the \$44,000. Backflow Valves used in low areas like Shore acres.

**Ques. #13:** What are the qualities you bring to the Office of Mayor?

**Ans. Foster-** Trust. I am a consensus builder. I listen to all factions, Consumers and City Council. I believe in bridge building negotiations.

**Ans. Ford-** I cooperate with neighborhood leaders. I am willing to tackle the big problems of our city. I prefer working in small committees that can resolve issues through negotiation. I believe in setting clear goals. I will reduce taxes. I will tackle our current crime problems.

**Ques. #14:** What can be done to bring more culture and art to our city?

**Ans. Ford-** More can be done to improve the aesthetics of our community beginning down at the level of Neighborhood Plans. More local artists should be utilized in city projects. Judgment of art submissions should be at the local level.

**Ans. Foster-** I have long supported our local arts scene. Expanding the visual and performing arts offerings will attract additional tourists. The city should provide arts endowments as an incentive to our talented artistic community. Wiki Watchee funding is available because only half is committed to recreation.

**Ques. #15:** What is your position on Curbside Recycling?

**Ans. Foster-** The challenge is to the County Commissioners. Will they still offer curbside collection at a price we can afford? I favored the Rainforest Café concept proposed in 2004. Curbside recycling should be a voted issue.

**Ans. Ford-** Good, if the county makes an affordable offer. A countywide program will increase the demand for recycled goods.

**Ques. #16:** What is your position on city slumlords and our city codes ordinances?

**Ans. Ford-** The Compliance Board should be especially strict with out-of-town landlords. Enforcement is not easy with foreclosure often the only option.

**Ans. Foster-** Enforcement should be more prioritized to deal with absent landlords. Assessment cards should be updated more frequently.

**Ques. #17:** Would you support a vote to spend over \$50M for a new Pier and Science Center?

**Ans. Foster-** Yes, if the public is in favor. I think retaining the Pier as an icon of our city is important. \$50M would not be sufficient to replace the current Pier.

**Ans. Ford-** When originally proposed, \$50M was enough to build a new Pier and approach roadway. There should be a public vote to decide the nature and the funding for a new Pier Project.

**Ques. #18:** It appears that the 2011 Budget will even be more difficult to fund. What will be your response?

**Ans. Ford-** We saw a chart of four St. Petersburg Reserve Funds. Two of these don't even have a defining policy. I will use our clearly excess Reserve Funds. These are the difficult times reserves are set aside for.

**Ans. Foster-** Some significant cuts and sacrifices will be made. Again, not what we want, but what we need. It is not wise to use reserve funds for any recurring expenses. Remember that there are restrictions on many of the reserve accounts that limit the uses they can be put to.

**Ques. #19:** What policies will you confirm when you first meet Police Chief Harmon as our new Mayor?

**Ans. Foster-** I will assure him of my 100% confidence in his department leadership. We will focus on crime prevention. We will restore the CPO Program on foot or in cars with the windows down! Certain neighborhoods need to implement the "Broken Window" strategy.

**Ans. Ford-** There will be no special discipline for any city department. We all share a responsibility for public safety. No one should escape investigation of criminal activity. Public Safety and jobs must be our primary foci. Baseball Stadium issues are a distraction.

■ Our Moderator then called for closing summations from both candidates.

• Mrs. Ford's comments: Thank you for coming out this evening. I have enjoyed my work on City Council. We have significant problems including the loss of \$15M from faulty investment management policies. Our city depends on our neighborhood association. The Neighborhood Partnership and CPO Programs should be restored. Jobs and Public Safety are our most important challenges at this time.

• Mr. Foster's comments: You already know the problems, I have solutions to offer. My opponent speaks too much of what is wrong. Even though our investment management resulted in some losses, the portfolio, as a whole, earned a profit. My vision for the future includes a "Seat for you at the table". I will always be willing to "Own my mistakes".

# WE'RE LOOKING AT POWER IN A NEW LIGHT.

## INTRODUCING A **BALANCED SOLUTION** FOR THE FUTURE.

At Progress Energy, we're using innovative and environmentally responsible solutions to meet our area's growing energy needs. We are expanding our energy-efficiency programs to help you save energy and money.

We are supporting advanced technologies like solar power and plants fueled by vegetation waste. We are investing in existing power plants to

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about our bright thinking,  
visit [progress-energy.com](http://progress-energy.com).





**2009 Officers and Executive Board Members**

**President**

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**Treasurer**

April Gausman - Historic Uptown  
244-1896 - april@realestatebyapril.com

**CONA Leadership**

Ingrid Comberg - Historic Uptown  
821-2192

**CourtWatch Committee**

Carole Griffiths - Disston Heights  
522-7206 - cgriff6721@aol.com

**Membership**

Barbara Hawkins - Greater Pinellas Point  
866-1747 - be.hawkins@verizon.net

**Nominating Committee**

Judy Ellis - Lakewood Estates  
864-3957 - jellis5610@tampabay.rr.com

**Public Safety Committee**

Jeff Frank - Live Oaks  
322-0488 - kirstenjeffinn@yahoo.com

**CONA General Meetings**

*3rd Wed of each month*

**CONA Board Meetings**

*2nd Wed of each month*

**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 (NEW):*  
25th of each month

*In Hand:*  
2nd Wednesday of month

*Layout: Mo Eppley 686-2146*  
*Coordinator: Mike Gulley 244-8374*

**The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County**  
**P.O. Box 13693**  
**St. Petersburg, FL 33733-3693**

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**CONA's Citizen of the Month**

**Kevin Gordon**

A 1982 graduate and now Principal of Gibbs High School, Kevin Gordon is turning this school around both academically and socially. Thank you for making a difference.

**CONA ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP**

The Nominating Committee is presently putting together the slate of those who wish to run for office for 2010. If you've never been part of the Executive Board, perhaps this is the time to consider pitching in to help run this very important organization. Consider running for:

**President**

**Second Vice President**

**Treasurer**

**First Vice President**

**Secretary**

Or consider heading one of the committees: Membership, Audit, Public Safety, Nominating, Leadership.

The slate of candidates will be presented at the November meeting, and the election will be at the December meeting. The Board meets at 6:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month.

**City of St. Petersburg Garbage Pick-up Holiday Schedule**

Holidays will sometimes change your scheduled garbage pick-up day. Here is the schedule for November and December, 2009.

**November** - Thursday, Nov 26 collection will be on Wednesday  
*Monday, Tuesday and Friday will remain the same*

**December** - Friday, Dec 25 collection will be on Thursday  
*Thursday collection will be on Wednesday*

*Monday, Tuesday collections will remain the same*

**Brush sites are closed on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day**

You can also access this information at  
[www.stpete.org/sanitation/residential\\_collection/index.asp](http://www.stpete.org/sanitation/residential_collection/index.asp)