
CONA COMMENTS



SARASOTA'S ONLY COUNTY-WIDE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS

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County commissioners debate challengers at June 14 CONA meeting

County Commissioners **Nora Patterson** and **Joe Barbetta** will debate their primary challengers at the June 14 CONA meeting at **7:00 pm** at the Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota (Corner of US 41 and Blvd of the Arts). Barbetta, who holds the District 2 seat, will debate Stephen Aiken. Patterson who holds the District 4 seat will debate Mark Smith. Mark Hawkins who is now unopposed in the Democratic Primary for District 4 is unable to participate due to a prior commitment.

CONA, the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, is a county-wide coalition of over seventy neighborhood and condominium associations and individuals organized around making Sarasota County more neighborhood friendly.



Here comes a very busy hurricane season: Advice from a roofer

By Nick Zoller

On June 1st, hurricane season begins. With experts predicting numerous storms, many condo and HOAs with common roofs need to ask themselves or their boards, "What can we do to protect our homes?"

The most obvious first step is to provide hurricane-rated coverings for windows and doors. Just as important but often overlooked is a visual inspection of your roof to see if there are any missing, loose, cracked, or broken tiles/shingles. As a part of that inspection check your attic to ensure the rafters and/or hurricane clips are properly fastened. If you find a problem or don't know what is required or should be there, contact a licensed roofing contractor *before* the rainy season rush. This can shorten the wait time for any needed repairs to be addressed.

Ask him or her to provide you with a report on what should be done to keep your roof on during a hurricane. If you don't need additional work ask the roofer for a wind mitigation report which can be provided to your insurer to seek lower insurance premiums.

Roofer, continued on page 4

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We need jobs, but issue is how to get them and whether they should override all other community goals?

By Bill Zoller

We seem to have a lot on our plates at the moment. I wonder if our own elected officials are not perhaps taking a lead from Rahm Emmanuel, following his advice "never to let a crisis go to waste". Suddenly the mantra, "jobs, jobs, jobs", seems to be the justification for forgetting about our rules and laws in a rush to approve massive new developments that will magically be an instant solution to the Sarasota recession. Only County Commissioner Jon Thaxton had the good sense to cast a lonely "NO" vote on the misguided Lakewood Ranch Village project. Mind you, my concerns with the approval are not whether the Lakewood Ranch Village might or might not be a decent Sarasota 2050 Village; my concerns are that the BCC seemed to ignore the 2050 requirements (especially fiscal neutrality, which is one of the fundamental keys to the acceptability of any village) that were put in place specifically to assure the citizens that these villages would not just be more sprawl and would not impose a financial burden on us taxpayers.

The next two items on our plate also revolve around the "jobs" mantra. On 26 May, the BCC approved placing on the August ballot a proposal to offer property tax reductions or abatement to businesses in an effort to encourage more businesses to locate here. Ostensibly, this proposal is aimed at "high-wage", clean manufacturing, but the proposal has very few specifics, and it is possible that these sorts of tax breaks could be given to almost any sort of business that I suspect that there will be a lot of heated rhetoric between now and the August referendum.

Next comes the proposal for the EE Zone on SR 681 (the connector from I-75 into US 41 near Laurel; this connector is just south of Oscar Scherer State Park). This seems to be a proposal by the county to create a very large development that would be geared to a live/work New Urbanist notion. The idea would be to attract high-wage "green" manufacturing or other "green" jobs to this parcel. This proposal is destined to become very controversial due to its huge scale, proximity to Oscar Scherer, traffic concerns, and all the other concerns associated with large developments plopped down in (currently) rural, pristine areas far from urban centers (even though this land is within the Urban Services Area).

Jobs, continued right column

HOA Tip: Preventing fraud in collecting members' payments

- * Have a predetermined process for collecting and depositing members' payments to association.
- * Contact your bank to establish a direct deposit mechanism for payment of assessments, dues, and fines.
- * Don't accept cash payments -- they disappear too easily.
- * Obtain and use a lock box to hold paper checks from members and deposit them as soon as possible.
- * Keep copies of all checks sent and received so your HOA's finances can be audited.

New law gives association boards more power to collect dues and allows upgrade delays

A new Florida law going into effect on July 1 authorizes community associations to go after up to twice the amount of member dues owed to them. It also allows association boards to deny access to common amenities such as pools, when dues are in areas. The law is designed to help condos and HOAs deal with defaults, abandoned units and required upgrades in the face of declining values and unpaid dues. The law is called **Florida Senate Bill 1196**. Under the new law, many associations will not be required to retrofit buildings with fire sprinklers or install fire alarms, both expensive propositions given the record number of foreclosures and budget shortfalls. In most cases elevator upgrades can be put off for five (5) years. While the act doesn't protect buyers that acquire title after July 1, 2012, it will impact condominium associations for a number of years with respect to warranty, construction, accounting claims and the like. For more information look at Florida Senate Bill 1196

Jobs, continued

Former Sarasota City Commissioner David Merrill sees a wrong-headed direction for our economic development efforts. He argues that the strongest economic factors we have are tourism and retirees. He also believes that, instead of chasing manufacturing, we need to focus on keeping Sarasota the sort of community that will attract the "creative class," because this creative class will lead the way in 21st century business development.

Can we conceivably be a center for manufacturing? Can we attract a younger, creative class? Where ought we to put our money to encourage...what? One fact is clear: our old model based on real estate and unending, sprawling development that gobbles up our green places will no longer work to make us the community we want to be.



New Venice Plan seeks to avoid sprawl and overdevelopment

By **SUE LANG**

It is fitting that the PBS special on John Nolen, "Moving Forward by Looking Back," aired the same week that Venice City Council held its first of two adoption hearings for our comprehensive plan. It has taken two years to overhaul the draft plan submitted in 2007 that many felt was not in keeping with Nolen's vision.

While there has been general consensus that residential "sprawl" development is not desirable, and Florida statutes mandate that municipalities should not engage in such development, there are widely differing opinions on how to grow but not "sprawl." Some felt, and still feel, Venice never should have annexed in the manner it did, but since that is water over the dam, a joint planning agreement executed with the county now memorialized in our proposed comprehensive plan, will limit future annexation.

Another opinion on how to grow but not "sprawl" is to require higher densities and taller buildings, which would appear to be in keeping with Nolen's compact "new urbanist" communities. But Nolen's towns were based on English "garden cities." In his book "New Towns for Old," he lays out a recipe for the ideal town or community.

His plan for the new town of Mariemont, Ohio (referred to as "Nolen's purest realization of the garden city"), calls for "759 homes on 111.52 acres," with a density of "6.81 houses per net acre"; "stores and apartments on 10.04 acres," with "a density per net acre of 11.09"; "semi-public properties (such as) a garage, filling station, hotel, bank, two churches and a cemetery," occupying "4.51 net acres"; and "public properties (such as) a post office, town hall, fire station, market, library, community buildings, two schools, a stadium, parks and playgrounds" and "streets" occupying "132.02 net acres."

The total of the above amounts to "253.58 acres." When factored as a percentage of this total, residential density averages about 3.4 units per acre.

Venice Plan Continued right column

Venice Plan continued

But 253.58 acres is not the whole town. Nolen mentions an additional 25 acres for a hospital and 70 acres of river bottom lands, not included in the above. Also not included but mentioned are the railroad, farms and industry, which would employ many of the town's residents. If all of these, plus other major infrastructure, utilities, waste and recycling sites, large retail, which are standard inclusions in a town today, were factored in, the residential density would average significantly less than 3 units per acre citywide. Coincidentally, Venice's citywide average density as of 2008 was roughly 2 units an acre.

As we can see from Nolen's plan, it's not highly dense, or tall, when viewed overall. Heights typically were one to three stories. It's a mostly lower, "human-scale" type of community.

This is what really resonated with me when I read Nolen's book. Having lived in the city most of my life before coming to Venice, Nolen's vision to refashion the dreary, unhealthy neighborhoods that had sprung up in American cities during the industrial age, into places that were green and healthy yet functional and affordable for working families and seniors, is why Nolen deserves a special place in the history of American planning.

Venice's proposed comprehensive plan furthers the "green" principles of Nolen through objectives and policies that have been added to preserve and protect our environment, promote energy conservation and encourage development of clean, renewable energy. A notable feature also is policies for transitioning from more intense or dense, taller and larger-scale development to less-intensive uses, smaller scale, along with provisions for better buffering. Potential annexation areas will transition down as they meet existing rural and natural habitat areas.

The plan allows for densities in some areas up to 18 units per acre with a provision to go to 25 units an acre for affordable housing; some heights above Nolen's original design in order to provide for such things as hospital campus expansion and new hotels, and, for the first time, allows existing higher-rise structures that currently are nonconforming to rebuild instead of becoming substandard, especially in regard to new hurricane and energy-efficiency codes.

In a nutshell, Venice's proposed plan, to quote another planner and environmental economist, Eben Fodor, is all about "better not bigger" growth, which is what Nolen's vision was truly all about.

Sue Lang, a Venice City Council member and former CONA board member, writes about Venice's proposed new comprehensive plan.



CONA on vacation July and August

See you in September!

It is once again time for CONA's summer break. There will be no newsletter or meetings in July and August.

Advice from a roofer, continued from page 1

If your existing roof is reaching the end of its life, replacing it is an option you may want to consider before hurricane season reaches its peak in the fall. By installing a new roof that includes a secondary water barrier and bringing your roof up to current code, you may significantly lower your insurance premiums. This savings over time can be more than the price of a new roof. Also you'll be protecting lives as well as possessions in your home.

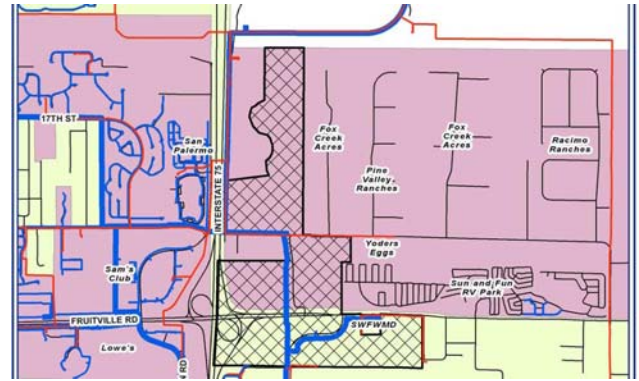
Nick Zoller is President of Zoller Roofing Inc., in Sarasota

Sarasota County Siesta Beach ranked No. 2 in country

For the second year in a row, Sarasota County's Siesta Beach has been ranked the second-best beach in the country by Dr. Stephen Leatherman, also known as Dr. Beach.

In his review of Siesta Beach, Dr. Leatherman says, "With some of the finest, whitest sand in the world, Siesta Beach has clear, warm waters that serve for ideal swimming. This beach is great for volleyball and other types of recreational fitness."

Attracting more than 1 million visitors each year, Siesta Beach is one of Sarasota County's most popular destination spots. "Siesta Beach has been consistently ranked in the top 10 for many reasons, including a great balance between natural beauty and recreation, it's 99.9 percent pure quartz sand, has great public access, and, most of all, because it's just a great place to be," said John McCarthy, general manager Sarasota County Parks and Recreation.



Cross checked area is a proposed comprehensive plan amendment. Existing Rural Heritage neighborhoods' streets shown in upper right quadrant.

Neighborhoods need more protection in new Fruitville Development Plan

Comprehensive Plan Amendment 2010-02-G, a County-initiated economic development amendment to the Future Land Use Chapter adding a Special Planning Area #3 to the east and north and south of Fruitville Road immediately east of Interstate 75. It also extends the Urban Service Area in one area of the project. The Plan would surround a long standing collection of residential neighborhoods designated as "Rural Heritage" Subdivisions, to be protected under Sarasota's Comprehensive Plan, with intense mixed use -major employment center development on the 325 acres of land considered.

CONA representatives attended public input meetings and have been briefed on the Plan by the representative of the several landowners involved in the project. CONA does not yet support or oppose the project, but believes there are many unanswered questions about impacts on existing neighborhoods, already inadequate roads, and safety concerns. Although the Plan briefly mentions buffers and "edge" properties, but county staff failed to give much space or to assuring protection of Rural Heritage Neighborhoods.. , while almost exclusively stressing the employment benefits. We urge the Planning Commission and subsequently the County Commission to give more attention and assured protection to these existing neighborhoods.

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