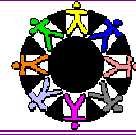


CONA COMMENTS



SARASOTA'S ONLY COUNTY-WIDE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS
SINCE 1961

[WWW.CONASARASOTA.ORG](http://www.conasarasota.org)

President: Ann Kaplan

Editor: Bill Earl

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Sarasota history comes alive at January 11 CONA meeting

It is said that if you don't learn from history, you will repeat mistakes of the past. Learn about Sarasota's history at CONA's January 11 meeting, 7 pm at the Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota (Corner of US 41 and Blvd of the Arts). Listening to Howard Rosenthal of the Sarasota Historical Society, you will learn about the history of Sarasota County, from the arrival of the first settler, to the plotting of the murder of the local postmaster, to the Scottish immigrants who brought golf to the area, to the arrival of Bertha Palmer (whose influence turned Sarasota into a winter destination for mid-westerners, and whose centennial anniversary we celebrate this year).

Howard Rosenthal is a member of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Sarasota County, and is the coordinator of its docent program. He is a graduate of Temple University and the George Washington University law school.

CONA, the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, is a county-wide coalition of over 70 neighborhood and condominium associations and individuals, organized around making Sarasota County more neighborhood friendly.



CONA board member Ted Koszarski (on left) welcomes new board members Bob Burrus and Lourdes Ramirez to December CONA meeting.

Neighborhood leaders Burrus and Ramirez elected to CONA Board

At CONA's annual membership meeting, Lourdes Ramirez, President of CONA member Siesta Key Association, and Bob Burrus, President of CONA member Sorrento Ranches HOA, were elected to CONA's Board of Directors. Burrus has years of neighborhood leadership experience and has appeared before both the Venice City Council and the County Commission as an advocate of neighborhood issues and the need for new development to be compatible with the character of existing neighborhoods. Lourdes Ramirez, representing thousands of Siesta Key Residents, has made herself an expert on local zoning issues before the county commission.

After the election, CONA President Ann Kaplan said, "both Lourdes and Bob bring valuable neighborhood leadership experience and in-depth knowledge of county and city government that will enhance CONA's ability to work with and help protect Sarasota County's neighborhood and condo associations and neighborhood groups in all areas of Sarasota County.

Happy New Year from CONA President Ann Kaplan and the entire CONA board.

IN THIS ISSUE OF CONA COMMENTS:

2	CONA President: Help CONA help your neighborhood in 2010
3	Tisdale named CONA's Citizen of the Year
4	CONA urges county commissioners to deny zoning change on Gulfgate Golf Course
4	Thank fast growth folks for foreclosure crisis

Has your neighborhood joined CONA? Costs \$35 per year. Go to CONA's website for info on www.conasarasota.org
Email: conasarasota@comcast.net



What has CONA done for you lately? What can CONA do for you in the future?

By CONA President Ann Kaplan

This month CONA's 2010 Membership Drive will begin and members will receive their renewal packets. PLEASE send them in to us ASAP before it slips your mind! It's a very small price to pay for the peace of mind your CONA membership will bring to your neighborhood!

In case you need some extra incentive to join us, let me mention a few of the many different projects we worked on in 2009 to benefit our members. The important issues of neighborhood compatibility, safety, environmental protection, transportation, economic stimulation and the unique problems that crop up for our individual associations are always top priorities for CONA.

CONA's Board of Directors who represent all geographic areas of the county, participate in seminars and workshops on neighborhood, environmental and leadership improvement projects so that we can pass on the knowledge to our members. We serve as volunteers on county and city advisory boards and committees to keep the needs and desires of our members front and center with the governments' staff and elected officials.

CONA does research for and advises our members on zoning and land use changes that threaten the quality of life in their neighborhood and guides them through many of the processes necessary to protect their interests. CONA lobbies our elected officials and testifies at many hearings on behalf of our members.

CONA publishes a monthly newsletter and web site featuring our honest insight and advice on city, county and state current events that most affect our members. CONA sponsors monthly meetings featuring debates and forums to inform our members about important ballot issues and candidates for public office. We provide an invaluable source of information and experience in the civic arena and a unique opportunity to network with a vast array of inspirational sources. CONA helps neighborhoods organize to become an effective force in dealing with their specific needs.

CONA's goal in 2010 is to continue to expand our membership to give us all a stronger voice with the decision makers.

continued next column



County Commissioner Nora Patterson (center) discusses neighborhood issues with CONA Board member Carolyn Pope (left) and Dawn Moore of Englewood at December CONA meeting.

Kaplan, joining CONA continued

Protecting the quality of life in our neighborhoods is becoming more difficult because of the recession as there is much more competition for resources. In 2010 CONA's role as advocate for our members will take on even more urgency and we are prepared to step up to the challenge. Check out our new mission statement and see if reflects your views on what a neighborhood coalition should be doing to make Sarasota County more neighborhood friendly. If so join us and make a difference.

Help us help your neighborhood by joining CONA. Please join with us and send in your 2010 membership dues NOW.

Has your neighborhood joined CONA?

- Costs only \$35 per year for neighborhood group or association.
- Personal memberships are available for individuals for only \$20 per year.

Go to CONA's website for membership forms and more info:

www.conasarasota.org

Email us any questions or comments:

conasarasota@comcast.net

NEW CONA MISSION STATEMENT

CONA exists to: (1) further the overall interests and provide a voice for homeowner and condominium associations and neighborhood groups throughout Sarasota County, Florida; (2) provide practical association-related information to and encourage networking between member associations on common concerns and issues; (3) urge local and state government to encourage sensible growth and protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible development, adverse environmental impacts and other actions adverse to Sarasota County's neighborhoods and the overall public



Community Thoughts.... By Bill Zoller

Has your neighborhood joined CONA for 2010?

In 2009 CONA worked tirelessly for you and our community. You may not be aware of it, but CONA works on issues big and small, local and state-wide, that affect us all. Recently, CONA's board voted unanimously to oppose oil drilling in state-owned waters (out to 10+ miles from shore). Representing as we do, HOAs, condo associations, and neighborhood organizations who in turn represent tens of thousands of homeowners (and voters), CONA's voice is a strong one... one politicians pay attention to. CONA's board has also voted to support the Florida Hometown Democracy proposed State of Florida Constitutional Amendment 4 that will be on the ballot this coming November. Having fought for responsible, sensible growth patterns and limits here in Sarasota since CONA's formation in 1961; and having seen that as the makeup of our county commissions changes with election cycles there is no predictability as to the mindset of these elected bodies, CONA has concluded that major changes to our growth management roadmap (the Comprehensive Plan) definitely need to be put to the Sarasota County voters for final approval or denial.

On the local level, members of CONA's board, representing neighborhood groups in every area of the county, study proposed zoning ordinances, Comprehensive Plan amendments, and changes to our Land Development Regulations in order to understand potential impacts to our neighborhoods. We then give testimony at the Planning Commission and County Commission hearings on these proposed changes, in order to avoid or head off bad provisions.

From the perspective of a CONA member organization, perhaps CONA's most powerful and valuable service is to help when a particular neighborhood or area is threatened by a proposal from the private or public sector that would bring undesirable impacts (such as incompatible buildings or land use, traffic increases, crime, etc.). CONA can assist that member organization in organizing an effort to oppose the threat, to educate its members, and to appear at the appropriate hearings to voice their objections in the proper way in order to get the respectful attention of the commissioners. These are not easy tasks, and CONA's long experience can be invaluable.

Continued next column



CONA President Ann Kaplan presents Barbara Tisdale (left) with her award as Citizen of the Year.

Barbara Tisdale named CONA's citizen of the Year

CONA President Ann Kaplan announced on December 12 that neighborhood activist and long time CONA board member Barbra Tisdale was voted CONA's Citizen of the Year. Barbara, as President of Pine Valley Ranches HOA, led a multi-year battle to prevent a large RV Resort from expanding into her neighborhood by marshalling residents and finally convincing county commissioners to adopt a law prohibiting RV parks within 500 feet of an existing neighborhood. She later went on to form Save Richardson Road HOA and is very active in supporting elected officials who protect neighborhoods.

Zoller, Joining CONA continued

CONA currently has 70 member organizations throughout the county. While CONA's board has dedicated members who care deeply about the long-term future of Sarasota, our voice is only as strong as our membership. In addition to the particular benefits that your HOA or neighborhood might reap in terms of help with a specific threat, your membership will add power and strength to CONA's voice in each matter we undertake to influence or affect. Read our Mission Statement elsewhere in this issue and you will see the significance of our efforts.

I hope in this new year of 2010, which promises to be filled with many difficult issues with which we must grapple, that you and your organization will add your voice to CONA's. Help us grow even stronger as we seek to protect and enhance our community and our lives.

Send us an email with your thoughts ... we'll start publishing some of your concerns in upcoming newsletters. Send to: conasarasota@comcast.net.



Thank fast growth folks for foreclosure crisis

Excerpts [from Sarasota Herald Tribune: Monday, December 21, 2009](#) at 1:00 a.m.

By Larry McCabe

Currently (o)ne out of 12 residential units in Florida is in foreclosure. Twenty-six percent of Florida home loans were either delinquent or in foreclosure at the end of the second quarter of 2009.

[T]he following conditions cumulatively created the toxic stew of massive foreclosures in Florida:

Speculative over-construction, combined with speculative investor purchases.

Highly volatile, adjustable-rate mortgages and even riskier low-documentation, payment-option, negative-amortization financial instruments granted to anyone with a pulse.

Wall Street's design of a separate, secondary mortgage market of high-risk loans packaged as securities with triple AAA ratings that were marketed to unsuspecting investors, increased capital available for additional risky mortgage loans.

Failure of municipalities to exercise restraint on unbridled growth requests.

Rose-colored hype and fluff advertising by Florida's real estate sales and marketing community and economic growth business associations.

Florida is in the midst of the first decline in population since 1943.

Unemployment is now 11.5 percent, more than double the rate in 2005, and will increase into 2011.

More than 10 million adjustable-rate mortgages, primarily negative amortization, payment-option -- and toxic -- financial instruments, are yet to reach first term adjustments that will require higher payments on properties worth much less than mortgage notes.

Refinancing of mortgage debt on Florida properties is difficult if not impossible to acquire.



Golf course owner wants county commission to drastically increase allowed zoning which will eliminate green space, existing neighborhood character and yet another golfing venue for local golfers.

Will another Sarasota golf course be surrendered to development?

CONA urges denial of Gulf Gate Golf Course owner's request for a 700% increase in zoning density

If you have driven past the old Forest Lakes Golf Course on Beneva Road you know that proposed development plans can destroy an existing golf course and the character of an existing neighborhood. That may well happen again on January 15 when Sarasota county commissioners consider a request to increase zoning density by 700% apparently to allow even more unneeded residential development.

CONA member, Gulf Gate Community Association, is opposing an owner's request that the county commissioners change established zoning from 1 unit /2 acres to 3.5 units/acre. This will directly impact the character of Gulf Gate/Gulf Gate Woods, a residential community of 1,550 homes. This long established neighborhood is exemplified by well kept homes on large lots surrounded by an abundance of green space which has made it a sought-after area since the mid-1960's. The development of 104 homes on the land occupied by the golf course will have a drastic impact on the character of the neighborhood.

In a letter to county commissioners, CONA has urged commissioners to deny the request because, it is believed:

1. There are no substantial reasons why the property cannot be used in accordance with existing zoning.
2. There is no demonstrated need for additional residential units which the applicant seeks.
3. The proposed change is incompatible with and will adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood.
4. The proposed change will negatively alter conditions in the neighborhood, including traffic and flooding.

Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, Inc.

P O Box 15788

Sarasota, Florida 34277

www.conasarasota.org