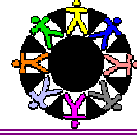


# CONA COMMENTS



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

[WWW.CONASARASOTA.ORG](http://WWW.CONASARASOTA.ORG)

President: Ann Kaplan

Editor: Bill Earl

Volume 7, Issue 8

October 2009

## Learn what's happening to property values at October 12 CONA meeting

Sarasota County Property Appraiser Bill Furst speaks on property values and his responsibilities as an elected official at the October 12 CONA meeting at 7 PM at the Sarasota Garden Club. Born in Pittsburgh, Furst graduated from Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. He was elected Sarasota County Property Appraiser in August 2008, but began his career as a real estate appraiser in Coral Gables, Florida. He is a licensed real estate broker, building contractor and mortgage broker. He resigned as Vice Chairman of the Sarasota County Planning Commission when he began his campaign for Sarasota County Property Appraiser.

Members of the public and the media, as well as CONA members, are invited to attend this event. The meeting will be at The Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota (Corner of US 41 and Blvd of the Arts).

### IN THIS ISSUE OF CONA COMMENTS:

2	<b>Four mistakes to avoid in condo or HOA elections</b>
2	<b>Can Englewood be protected when overdevelopment machine cranks up again?</b>
4	<b>Contact list for state legislators voting on oil drilling approval</b>
4	<b>CONA asks county commissioners to protect neighborhoods</b>

**Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, Inc.**  
**CONA**  
[www.conasarasota.org](http://www.conasarasota.org)

**If you care about Sarasota County and its neighborhoods, please forward this newsletter to your email list!**



This could this be Sarasota if Florida Legislature approves coastal oil drilling.

## Help stop oil drilling off Sarasota's beaches

By CONA President Ann Kaplan

Approving oil drilling in the Gulf off our beaches would be like purposely setting up weather conditions to create a strong hurricane to hit the Sarasota County area. To prevent that from happening, CONA has joined forces with the local Sierra Club, other environmental, civic and neighborhood groups, along with county and city governments to oppose the efforts of oil interests to pass state legislation allowing drilling close to our coastline.

The decision could be made as soon as this *November* by Florida legislators in a special session. Oil interests have been frantically lobbying. Those of us opposed also need to let our legislators know how we want them to vote on this issue (See contact information on page 4).

Many legislators and uninformed citizens are under the impression that oil drilling will bring new jobs, cheaper gas prices and less dependence on foreign oil. *However, the truth is that any jobs created for Floridians will be low paying and temporary and the oil obtained will*

**Kaplan, continued on page 2.**



**Kaplan, Stop oil drilling continued from page 1**

not even put a dent in our demand or prices we pay. It is estimated that the oil taken from the Gulf Coast area might supply our country for sixty days, ten years from now). So much for the potential benefits!

**The huge downside potential:** Florida, especially Sarasota, is very dependent on the tourism business. The number one reason visitors and residents come to the Sarasota area is the beautiful beaches and blue Gulf waters. First of all, when you build huge oil drilling rigs a few miles off the beach you can SEE them! They look like giant, industrial high rises out in the Gulf! That sight alone totally changes the ambiance of enjoying the beach, boating, etc. Add to that view the pipelines, tankers and land-side oil collection and transport facilities. For example of what you might see, look at views from the beaches in Long Beach and Huntington Beach, California.

Normal side effects of drilling can be seen at coastal areas in Texas. Globbs of black oil (tar balls) wash up on the shore where people get it all over their bodies and clothes. Normal oil drilling reportedly also brings up toxic muds containing heavy metals, arsenic, and other dangerous substances. This is why many areas along the Texas coast don't have a tourism industry.

**OIL SPILLS:** In the U.S. there has been very little coverage of the current, massive oil spill off the coast of Australia. This spill is very significant for us because the technology in use at these oil rigs is the same SAFE TECHNOLOGY that the oil companies brag they will use in Florida!

The Australian oil spill has been ongoing since August 21 and is estimated to be contained sometime in October. It covers more than 6,000 sq. miles of ocean and kills food sources and wildlife in its reach. These oil drilling platforms are hundreds of miles off the coast of Australia but the Florida Gulf rigs will be three to ten miles from our coast, if approved by the Florida legislature. Last week a Florida state representative said that the four "hot spots" oil companies want to drill first are off Long Boat Key, Charlotte Harbor, Naples and Big Bend.

We all can imagine the devastation we would experience if there were any kind of spill from a few miles off shore. Our coastal economy would be shut down instantly! If you think Red Tide is costly to our way of life then OIL SPILL(S) would bankrupt us and make this a miserable place to live!

Time is short so CONTACT YOUR STATE REPS RIGHT AWAY! Tell them NOT to take risks with our already fragile economy, environment and our chosen lifestyle! Please see contact information on page 4.

## Four mistakes to avoid in condo or HOA elections

Don't want your condo or HOA election voided by a disgruntled property owner? Be sure and avoid several common mistakes made by associations holding elections.

- 1. Failing to follow your own rules:** Association documents and bylaws usually provide how much notice of meetings must be given, what the notice should say, what a quorum is, and the number of votes board members must receive to be elected. Apply these rules.
- 2. Failing to send out proxies before the meeting.** Experts say one big mistake is that associations forget to send out proxy forms before the meeting. The result is that they find themselves at the meeting unable to proceed because they don't have enough attendance and don't have extra proxies so they can't elect a board.
- 3. Forgetting to check for a quorum and not documenting the presence of a quorum** Check what a quorum is, as defined in association documents or statute. Then document the presence of a quorum in the minutes and through the use of sign-in sheets before starting the meeting.
- 4. Allowing anyone and everyone to vote.** Letting whoever shows up vote can get your association election invalidated. Determine who is allowed to vote on particular issues and how many votes each unit has. Prevent double dipping by votes coming from both residents of the same property when only one vote is allowed.

### Reasons your association should join CONA

- Network with other associations at CONA.
- Receive CONA support when your neighborhood is threatened by incompatible development.
- Give your association and issues a county-wide voice.
- Hear and meet candidates for public office at CONA

CONA membership is *only \$35 per year for the whole group* or \$20 for individuals! How can you afford to not join CONA?

## Englewood, still in the overdevelopment bulls eye, needs help

By Don Schilke

I'm beginning to believe that living in the Olde Englewood vicinity is like having a mouthful of abscessed teeth. Each rotting tooth represents another developer rezone. And it is hard to find a dentist who will help with the never ending abscesses. There are four pending proposed county land use changes in the Englewood area that I am aware of. All of them represented by attorneys or former Sarasota County planners, who call themselves land development specialists, and other professional spear carriers for developers. These professionals work for hundreds of dollars per hour, pushing client's overdevelopment projects by lobbying staff and elected officials.

Developers and their spear carriers instantly enjoy a major advantage over the pick-up teams of neighborhood homeowners who are assaulted by major rezone petitions. The very same folks who when they worked for the county defined the land use regulations now present grandiose development plans to the county commissioners on behalf of developers.

Does Joe six-pack or most condo or homeowner associations have a chance against this formidable armada hired to change our landscape and Englewood style of life? Where can the impacted neighborhood turn for professional-level counseling and presentation to represent their interests? It seems to offer an opportunity for some foundation or a former land use professional wearing shorts and sandals to step forward and save us from more intense traffic congestion, hurricane evacuation choke points, water shortage, pollution, and habitat destruction.

In truth, Olde Englewood and other communities in Sarasota County need a team of public defenders to balance the scales against the forces of too much density and intensity. OEVHA is superb, but it can't go on forever. Out west those beset with evil had the Lone Ranger and Tonto and with great musical accompaniment. Around here we are happy to settle for journalists Steve Reilly and Zac Anderson who tell us afterwards what hit us and columnists Eric Ernst and Steve Baumann who interpret the real meaning of what just happened to us.

In addition to former planners lobbying for developers and one or more county commissioners apparently beholden to developer's campaign contributions, Englewood is home to Tom Minnich, the fascinating leader of the Southwest Alliance of Homeowner Associations.

*Englewood, continued next column*



Englewood is that it is one of the last resides of "Old Florida."

### *Englewood, continued*

The alliance Mr. Minnich leads has never endorsed local rezone projects, but you might not always know it from his remarks.

Tom usually makes sure that his audience or newspaper reporters know that he is the president of his alliance of 24 home owner associations. He then goes on to express his personal opinion which often turns out to be that he likes large development projects incompatible with historic Englewood.

Examples of such Minnich supported projects include Gottfried Village and the original Northern Anchor Plan. As a result, the mistaken impression is sometimes created that the Alliance supports such projects. However, the Alliance membership does know about or has not been allowed to vote on Tom's positions.

Tom can be a very effective speaker. So, if he won't do it himself, publications and public officials should clarify who he speaks for when he promotes big development projects.

Our Olde Englewood Village Homeowners' Association led the fight to stop the massive Gottfried Village Project on already unsafe River Road. The Alliance did nothing to help stop the proposed development of 7,000 new homes on River Road. Many of us in Englewood who watched or participated in parts of the Highway 776 Corridor Plan workshops and hearings have now found the results to be disruptive and incompatible with our neighborhoods. Those of us who retired to what was to be an active volunteer/recreational life have found ourselves torn apart and wearied by an endless stream of developer-issue defenses, mostly attributed to the Corridor Plan and other land use designations such as such as PED's and PUD's and other developer hired planners' invasions of our community.

Let's hope concerned Englewood residents who want to protect its future continue to make their voices heard and do not grow weary of the constant battles and do not flee when the growth machine cranks up again in Englewood. (Don Schilke is a resident of Englewood, and active participant in CONA member Olde Englewood Village HOA who has worked tirelessly to protect the historic character of Englewood. The views expressed herein are those of Mr. Schilke and do not necessarily represent those of CONA).



## Sarasotans Against Drilling Disaster (SADD)

CONA has joined forces with the local Sierra Club, other environmental, civic and neighborhood groups along with county and city governments to oppose the efforts of oil interests and their politicians to pass state legislation to allow drilling close to our coastline. (See article on page 1).

To add your organization's name and support to our group lobbying effort against oil drilling, please contact CONA President Ann Kaplan ASAP at [AnnHKaplan@msn.com](mailto:AnnHKaplan@msn.com).

### Tell your Legislators you don't want oil drilling off Florida's Coast

**State Senator Nancy Detert,**

Phone: 941-480-3547

Email: [detert.nancy.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:detert.nancy.web@flsenate.gov)

**State Senator Mike Bennett,**

Phone: (941) 727-6349

Email: [bennett.mike.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:bennett.mike.web@flsenate.gov)

**State Representative Doug Holder,**

Phone: (941) 918-4028

Email: [doug.holder@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:doug.holder@myfloridahouse.gov)

**State Representative Keith Fitzgerald,**

Phone: (941) 955-8077

Email: [keith.fitzgerald@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:keith.fitzgerald@myfloridahouse.gov)

**Are you or your homeowner or condo association CONA members? If not, go to our web site and get a membership application:**

[www.conasarasota.org](http://www.conasarasota.org)

Email us if you have any questions:

[conasarasota@comcast.net](mailto:conasarasota@comcast.net)

## CONA asks county commissioners to protect neighborhoods

In the September CONA Comments, attorney Dan Lobeck wrote an article warning of potential negative neighborhood impacts of a county staff proposal called the "Multiple Projects Strategy" aimed at intensifying allowable density at eleven locations throughout the County. Below are excerpts of CONA President Ann Kaplan's letter to county commissioners on that strategy:

*Dear Commissioners:*

*CONA is greatly concerned that this (strategy) could be used as a very expensive, anti-neighborhood tool to try to overcome valid public concerns about traffic, compatibility, intensity, etc. We encourage redevelopment which some of our commercial areas desperately need because they have become an eyesore and have heat islands for parking lots which also cause excess runoff and flooding. However, we need to encourage redevelopment that is PRACTICAL and will IMPROVE our environment and quality of life.*

*CONA urges you to review and examine the Multiple Projects Strategy with a critical eye and **give the public plenty of time** to express their opinions to you. After all, what is the hurry in this economic climate? I'm sure you don't want to make things worse for the majority of us!*

*Thank you for your service and consideration.*

*Sincerely,*

*Ann Kaplan, CONA President*

## Hometown Democracy Coming to Sarasota

Florida Hometown Democracy is the statewide organization which has been working several years to amend Florida's constitution to give you a vote on land use issues. They have gotten their measure on the ballot for the November 2010 general election. Leslee Blackburn, a founder of the organization, will be a speaker at Sarasota's Tiger Bay Club on October 8<sup>th</sup> at Michael's on East. She will be on a panel with local attorney Dan Lobeck supporting the measure while Senator Mike Bennett and a Florida Chamber of Commerce representative will speak against the proposed constitutional amendment.

**Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, Inc.**

**P O Box 15788**

**Sarasota, Florida 34277**