



Elected mayor proponents say the new position would not result in a Boss Tweed type mayor in Sarasota.

CONA votes to oppose Sarasota elected mayor—at large city commission initiative

Neighborhoods and minorities would lose voting power and accountability of commissioners

City of Sarasota voters need to pay close attention to the up-coming referendum on changing the basic structure of city government. The press has focused on the proposed change to an elected mayor, but the March referendum would also create a seven-member city commission! There would remain three seats elected by district, but the other four seats (the two current at-large seats, the new mayor, and the new at-large seat) would all be at-large with no requirement that candidates live in different districts. Under this proposed scheme, it could be possible to have up to five commissioners elected from *one district* thus reducing minority voting power and accountability of commissioners to neighborhoods and particular areas of the city. While this might not be the intent, it could well be the unintended reality.

The county commission manages a much larger area and budget than the City, and is able to do it with five commissioners. In the County's case, each commissioner, while elected by all the voters, must live in a particular district. This would not be the case in the city if this referendum should pass. The city referendum is about far more than whether there should be an elected mayor. Several of CONA city-neighborhood members are quite concerned about this proposal, so please give this issue a lot of thought and be sure all your city-resident friends understand the broad implications of this referendum. Let's hope "high-information" voters will carefully study these far reaching changes and that the press will explain the ramifications of these issues to "low information" voters long before election day on March 10.