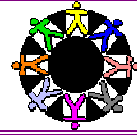


CONA COMMENTS



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

WWW.CONASARASOTA.ORG

President: Ann Kaplan

Editor: Bill Earl

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Learn how you can protect your assets during bad economic times at January 12 CONA meeting

A panel of financial experts will discuss and explain how best to protect your assets in tough economic times at CONA's Monday, January 12, 7:00 PM meeting. The guest speakers include:

Bruce Mullin; Sr. V.P., Portfolio Manager, Bank of America; *John Freeman*; 2nd V.P., Wealth Manager, Citi/Smith Barney; *Amanda Panico*; Pres./Owner, Financial Planner, Tidemark Financial; *Allen Hegener*; V.P., Private Wealth Manager, Robert W. Baird.

The speakers will field questions after their presentations. Members of the public and the media, as well as CONA members are invited to attend and ask questions. The meeting will be at The Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota (Corner of US 41 and Blvd of the Arts) at 7 PM on January 12.



CONA President Ann Kaplan presenting Bill Zoller with CONA's Man of the Year award at December meeting (Loren Mayo photo, courtesy of Sarasota Observer) See story page 2.

CONA helps members follow important zoning changes

CONA provides a vital link helping to alert your neighborhood to important zoning changes. That's needed because neighborhoods often do not get involved in important zoning issues until it's too late and the train has left the station. Ordinary citizens, unlike land planners, developers, consultants and government employees; don't get paid for or profit from reading hundreds of pages of proposed ordinances and attending dozens of public meetings and hearings so as to have a voice in new zoning laws.

CONA President Ann Kaplan, and Lourdes Ramirez, President of CONA member Siesta Key Association, have devoted countless hours to reading proposed new laws, attending dozens of meetings and hearings and drafting provisions more protective of neighborhood interests. Now Kaplan has been invited by Ramirez to join a new watchdog group being put together by Ramirez to follow complicated zoning proceedings impacting neighborhoods, especially Siesta Key. Ann will continue to monitor and alert CONA members throughout the county to important zoning developments as she works with this new group. If you are interested in helping Ann on this important project, please email her at Annkaplan@msn.com. That's another reason why your association needs to join CONA or renew its existing membership.

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Has your neighborhood joined CONA? Costs \$35 per year. Go to CONA's website for info on

www.conasarasota.org

Email: conasarasota@comcast.net



Zoller is CONA's Man of the Year

By CONA President Ann Kaplan

The CONA honor for exemplary dedication to the welfare of the neighborhoods and residents of Sarasota County was awarded this year to CONA director and past president Bill Zoller. His contributions over many years have had such a positive impact on the well being of all who live and visit Sarasota County. The leadership Zoller has demonstrated has been invaluable to our quality of life here and so we salute him as the "CONA Person of the Year".

As a civic volunteer Bill has been active in many organizations, most recently as founder and current president of Citizens for Sensible Growth. This group developed and sponsored the three popular county charter referenda that passed to help limit growth to that which is sustainable in Sarasota County. These hugely successful efforts changed the face of unrestricted growth here and showed the community the political will of the voters.

Bill was born in Manatee County, got his architecture degree from MIT and after working in New York City and Brussels returned to Sarasota to practice architecture where he has also devoted himself to community service. In addition to CONA and CSG, Bill was a founder of Sarasota Rural Heritage, a member of Multi-Stakeholders Group and has participated in numerous other community working groups. Bill and his wife Janice have three children and five grandchildren

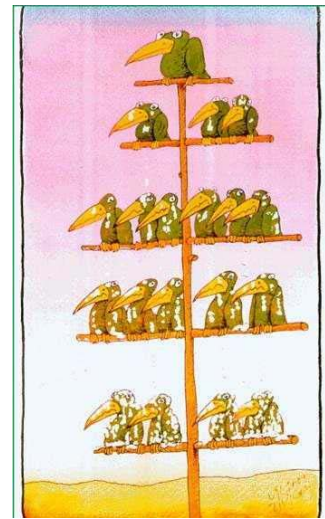
The CONA board of directors is so proud to have Bill Zoller on our team and we thank him for making Sarasota County a better place to live!

John Krotec has volunteered to be our new program chair for 2009 allowing Zoller to retire after many years in that position. *Bill Earl* will continue as our web master and newsletter editor for 2009. We are so grateful for the efforts of all our top notch volunteers!

We are looking forward to new challenges and adventures in 2009 and I don't think we'll be disappointed!

John McBride nominated to be CONA Director

John McBride, president of CONA member OaKleaf HOA has been nominated to be a CONA director. If he is confirmed by the Board, he'll start serving in February.



PAC formed to oppose changes to Sarasota City Commission structure

The Citizens Voice PAC, an issues PAC, has been formed by concerned citizens to fight efforts to expand the Sarasota City Commission from five to seven members, one of whom would be an elected mayor at double the salary of a commissioner. The CONA board and the board of CSG have voted unanimously to oppose this approach because of their view that such an approach would provide less representation to minorities and neighborhoods and could allow special interests to use paid, expensive mass media (television, radio and newspaper) advertising to reach low information voters to support candidates favoring special interests.

For those who wish to help efforts to oppose this major change in city governance, the PAC requests that you send contributions to:

The Citizens Voice PAC
c/o Gerry Swormstedt, Treasurer
1100 Imperial Drive, #204
Sarasota, FL 34236.

The amount of a contribution is not limited, inasmuch as this is an issues PAC, not a PAC supporting a particular political candidate.

King appointed to county planning commission

In December the Board of County Commissioners appointed Dr. Chris King of Englewood to serve on the Sarasota County Planning Commission. Dr. King an optometrist practicing in Englewood has a long record of community service and for being a supporter of sustainability in the planning process. He is also a member of citizens for Sensible Growth which sponsored the passage of several sensible growth management initiatives in Sarasota County. His appointment brings some balance to a planning commission now heavily weighted towards fast growth.



Community Thoughts.... By Bill Zoller

Hope for the New Year

We always seem to hope that each New Year will be "better than the past one". If we think about that idea, it tells us that we don't rate each year very highly ... that we think each year we have just "endured" has not necessarily been filled with joy. I wonder when we will begin to enjoy each moment ... in that moment. Each year is filled with events good and bad, happy and sad. Some years may pass easily and comfortably for us, and some years can be more difficult. Each year, whether comfortable or tough, still usually has many, many moments of the opposite. In these times, we need to be aware of the many good moments we have each day ... and enjoy them to the fullest! Some of my hopes for the New Year include the hope that:

Our elected officials and staff will make wise decisions that will protect our environment and our economy at the same time, and that neither will be sacrificed for the other;

We will pay attention to those decisions and we will make sure we hold those elected officials to the highest standards;

We will take full advantage of the "lull" created by the economic collapse to think about Sarasota's future;

Our community will come together to find long-term solutions to the many problems of how our community will change over time ... and to articulate the vision to shape that change;

We will work to keep our neighborhoods viable.

I have beaten the drum over the past year about the coming impacts of a collapse of our "house built on sand", and now we will be dealing with those impacts for a long time to come. You see them around you every day, and it is not a pretty sight. We need to think about all the things that went into that "house of cards", and we need to learn from those mistakes. This is the reason for my hopes listed above. Again!

Zoller continued next column

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



Hope your New Year is even better than last one.

Zoller, continued

Our government, our lending institutions, and we individuals all have had a part in the debacle. Perhaps our part was simply an investment in some of those "securitized debts", but that investment enabled the craziness to continue to move forward. So now we need not to focus on blame, but on how to crawl out of the mess and how not to fall back into the old patterns "once things turn around". Florida has long been the land of speculators and con men, and they will be back... we just need to work hard not to become their victims

Dare I say, "Happy New Year"?

Classes for the green application and use of fertilizers

Following the Sarasota County Commission's adoption of an environmentally friendly fertilizer application ordinance designed to minimize pollution, classes have been announced on Best Management Practices (BMP's) for the application and use of fertilizers in Sarasota County.

When: January 27, February 24 and March 24

Time: 8:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Where: Twin Lakes Park, Green Building, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota, FL 34241.

Registration is required. To register go to

www.regonline.com/BMPsCertification or contact

Jolynne (Jodi) Williams
Sarasota County Extension
941.861.9817
or
Don Rainey
Commercial Horticulture Agent
Sarasota County Extension
941.232.6882 or drainey@scgov.net



CONA asks county commissioners to appoint Sunshine open space citizens advisory committee

In a January 7, 2009 email to county commissioners, CONA President Ann Kaplan requested that the BCC appoint an advisory board representing diverse citizen interests.

"It is very important to the future of our OPEN SPACES/ENVIRONMENT that the recommendations you receive from a citizen committee be from those who do *NOT* have any *financial/business conflicts of interest*, and that this advisory board operate under the provisions of the Sunshine Law, as your other advisory boards do.

"Ms. Schiller's and Reynolds' request to change the make up of the previously STAFF APPOINTED "Open Space Working Group" to a BCC APPOINTED advisory board with members that have *no conflicts of interest on this subject* needs to be taken seriously. From what I have read, if these changes are to be made, it would be up to one of the commissioners to bring up for discussion at the January 13th BCC meeting.

"CONA sees no reason why any of you would NOT want to appoint an advisory board to work in the sunshine made up of volunteers that have the BEST INTERESTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT as their top goal. Therefore, we hope to see ALL of you bring up this recommendation for serious discussion on January 13."

Elections to be held at January meeting

The nominating committee for the board has proposed a slate of candidates for 2009 officers which will be voted on at the January 12 meeting. Nominated are Ann Kaplan for president, Carolyn Pope for vice president, Bill Duerig for secretary and Barbara Tisdale for treasurer. I'd like to thank Duerig and Tisdale for serving so well in those same positions for 2008.

Eight reasons your association should join or renew your CONA membership

- Receive CONA support when your neighborhood is threatened by incompatible development. No need to reinvent the wheel! CONA's sole interest is protecting and assisting Sarasota County neighborhoods as they deal with issues of county-wide concern.
- Network with other associations at CONA. Again, don't reinvent the wheel! Join CONA and learn how other neighborhood and condominium associations have successfully dealt with the very same issues your neighborhood is facing.
- Give your association a county-wide voice. By joining CONA your association gains a bigger, stronger voice in lobbying and helping set a neighborhood friendly agenda for Sarasota County.
- Hear and meet candidates for public office at CONA: During every election cycle CONA holds Candidates' Nights at which you can meet and question candidates about issues affecting your neighborhood and quality of life.
- Attend monthly CONA membership meetings to learn about issues of importance and interesting monthly programs with guest speakers useful to member orgs.
- Read CONA's monthly newsletter with practical, informative articles about neighborhoods and issues affecting them throughout Sarasota County.
- Access to CONA website full of helpful information with room for each member association to have their own page. www.conasarasota.org
- CONA membership is only \$35 per year for the whole group or \$20 for individuals! How can your neighborhood afford NOT to join????

Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, Inc.
P O Box 15788
Sarasota, Florida 34277
www.conasarasota.org

Get involved: Join CONA