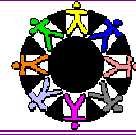


CONA COMMENTS



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

WWW.CONASARASOTA.ORG

President: Ann Kaplan

Editor: Bill Earl

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Experts explain what homeowner and condo associations can do about foreclosures and abandoned homes at November 10 CONA meeting

Whether abandoned or being foreclosed on, empty houses adversely impact association budgets and neighborhood values. Learn what the banks (who hold the mortgages) are doing, who is responsible for what, and what governmental code enforcement agencies can do, at CONA's November 10 meeting. The panel of experts will help HOA's and condo associations deal with such problems in neighborhoods, subdivisions, and condos all over our county. The meeting is on November 10 at the Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota (Corner of US 41 and Blvd of the Arts) at 7 PM.

Panelists include **property manager Julie Trimpe-Steed** who is knowledgeable about problems such as uncollected dues and maintenance of abandoned homes; attorney **Dan Lobeck**, who advises many HOA's and condo associations; and **HOA President Bob Cotumaccio**, President of the Woodmere Lakes Homeowners Association in Venice. Bob will offer the perspective of an association and association board in dealing with these problems. ###



CONA December 8 election meeting honors member associations and leaders

Association presidents, CONA delegates urged to attend meeting and get involved

CONA President Ann Kaplan has announced that CONA's December 8th election meeting will honor the leaders of CONA member associations. The meeting will be held at the Sarasota Garden Club 1131 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota (Corner of US 41 and Blvd of the Arts) beginning at 7 PM. "We hope most member association presidents or designated CONA delegates from such associations can attend", said Kaplan. "We need fresh ideas for the coming year as well as more participation by local leaders," Kaplan added.

Directors and officers for 2009 will be elected at this meeting. Under CONA bylaws only member association designated representatives can vote at CONA's Board of Directors elections. After the new board is elected, it will briefly convene to elect officers for 2009. We look forward to seeing as many neighborhood leaders as possible at this meeting.

Koszarski elected to CONA Board

CONA is proud to announce that Venice Neighborhoods Coalition officer Ted Koszarski has joined CONA's board to fill an existing vacancy. CONA President Ann Kaplan, in announcing Ted's election, said, "We are glad to have someone with Ted's talent and abilities on the board." ###

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Has your neighborhood joined CONA? It only costs \$35 per year. Go to CONA's website for info on www.conasarasota.org

Email: conasarasota@comcast.net



We can protect neighborhood assets!

By CONA President Ann Kaplan

We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore! Sometimes we reach this point with persistent problems and that has happened for many of us with Florida Power and Light's (FPL) power line clearing methods around trees.

The "revolution" began several weeks ago when I saw the Asplundh trucks (FPL's tree trimming contactor) in my Canopy Road neighborhood, which is one of my worst nightmares! I followed them to a nearby street and saw that they had already hacked away all the substantial tree canopy near the power lines on that street which abuts 2 canopy roads. After finding the one person that spoke English on the crew of about 8, I was given the same old FPL response that this is how they must cut the trees to keep them away from the power lines.

I went home and immediately started to contact those in power who could help make the necessary changes to this age old problem. Apparently, there are lots of very frustrated citizens and FPL customers who agree with me as I had an immediate and tremendous response.

We (CONA, SKA and other neighborhood groups, county officials and county Tree Advisory Council -STAC) have since met with FPL officials 3 times and have other meetings planned. We have begun to discuss alternate ways to approach line clearing (as we have seen in other states and FL communities) that is much less radical and less destructive. We are working on several proposals through STAC that would be county sponsored remedies. We are researching the under-grounding of power lines and sheathing of lines with a protective coating which eliminates the need to cut the trees around these lines.

FPL is regulated by the State of FL so Sarasota County has no authority to regulate them. So we must initiate change through FPL and the State with the assistance of the county and the residents (FPL customers). We must have the support of the county environmental groups, neighborhood associations and concerned citizens to accomplish this tremendous undertaking. As you know, we are a dedicated and persistent bunch who will NOT be distracted from reaching our goal. Please contact us to pledge your support, Annkaplan@msn.com.

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Dealing with angry owners in an association can be taxing and even dangerous.

Dealing with angry association owners

Even in good financial times HOA or condo board members sometimes have to deal with very angry or even potentially violent owners. Financial hard times can bring out even more problems. The most dangerous situations often arise when a board votes to increase assessments. If you find yourself confronted by an angry owner, here are a few tips for dealing with the situation; but remember to be alert for real danger and protect yourself.

Listen to their concerns. Listen carefully to determine whether Suzie or Sam owner are just venting or whether they're asking you to do something. If they're just venting—and you are not being threatened—tell them you understand their complaints. Don't try and persuade her that the board acted correctly, just make her understand you recognize her frustration.

Offer to help in some other way. If an owner is asking you to do something, offer to help in some way, even if it's not what they're requesting. You might say, "I understand your concern, and I'm sorry that we're all in this tight situation. We can't overturn the vote, but if you want to propose other ideas for reducing costs, we can add an item to our next meeting agenda."

Know when not to argue. If arguing won't make the situation better, don't argue. Agree to disagree. For example, if Sam repeatedly reargues budget items to avoid the assessment increase, don't argue but say something to the effect of, "Sam, I appreciate your suggestions, but the board determined they wouldn't work and we can't change the board's decision. I guess we will have to agree to disagree."

Recognize real danger and take action. If an owner is so angry that you feel uncomfortable, leave the scene of the confrontation and or call the police. If necessary, seek a protective order prohibiting the owner from approaching you. ###

CONA needs webmaster and newsletter reporters

CONA can sure use your help if you have internet or journalistic skills. If you want to get connected and get involved with what's going on in our community, contact Bill



Community Thoughts.... By Bill Zoller

Solid foundations for future growth

As I wrote last week, the house of cards has fallen, and the debris continues to collect around us. Another local bank has failed. Collateral damage. In all probability, it will not be the last. Restaurants and businesses are closing, jobs are evaporating, and our neighbors are losing their homes to foreclosure. Folks are abandoning homes that are worth far less than what is owed on them, and adjustable-rate mortgages have reset, taking monthly payments to an impossible level. Government revenues are down and heading lower yet. Is there any good news out there?

There may actually be some good news, if we can just get ourselves in a mindset to see it. At least the political season is over. We have new elected officials at every level, and whether our favored candidates got elected or not, the government at all levels will continue to function. Each of us may have thought, ahead of some of these races, think that the world would end if our candidate didn't "win"; it won't. So one of the first things we all need to do is figure out how we are going to support the "winners" in bringing about the things that matter most to us. In other words, after all the horrendously negative campaigning we have had to endure at every level, I encourage each of you to reframe your own views into a positive outlook. We have a lot that we need to work on right here in our own region, and now is our opportunity.

Our focus now needs to be on rebuilding on a firm foundation, not speculative greed. As real estate prices continue to decline (and they will), they will eventually become consistent with actual values. Financial institutions, along with the federal government, are beginning to recognize that there is truth to the old saw that you can't get blood from a turnip... in other words, someone other than the homeowner alone is going to have to take a hit for the "air" that was pumped into home prices and mortgages. There are moves afoot for lenders to reduce principal, lower interest rates (instead of jacking them up via the adjustable-rate terms), and help folks keep their homes.

It became obvious that lenders' ownership of untold thousands of foreclosed homes was a recipe for disaster for the lenders, and so, pushed to the wall, they are beginning to bite the bullet, write down the values on mortgages, and bring some relief to the system.

Continued next column

Honoring all those who served: Veterans Day Nov. 11



Joe Rosenthal's epic photo of U. S. Marines raising the flag on Iwo Jima symbolizes the sacrifice made by all those who have served their country in uniform, who we honor on November 11 each year, and for all current and former Marines who also celebrate the USMC birthday on November 10. Semper Paratus.

Solid foundations continued from left column

Mind you, none of this will be a quick fix! It will take longer to get out of the mess than it took to get into it.

Another bit of good news I read the other day was that the Peace River Water Authority facility will now have far more capacity than will be needed ... at least for quite awhile. In other words, while the pain that many have experienced is very real, the collapse of the real estate market has removed the extraordinary pressures on all our systems that the unbridled growth of the past years has brought. Instead of the frantic effort by local governments to catch up to (never mind getting ahead of) the growth, there is now time to consider more carefully just what needs we want to address. With the passage of the USB Charter Amendment, there is a lot more focus on rebuilding and redeveloping our existing urban areas, and one SCOPE group is studying the Bee Ridge corridor from US 41 to I-75, in what I call the Bee Ridge Boulevard study. This group is working to envision how to turn what is surely one of the ugliest roads in the county into something beautiful, efficient, and economically improved. This is just one example of the possibilities out there for improving the quality of this community instead of destroying it.

I hope each of you will turn your mind (now that it is clear of election stuff) to what you see as opportunities to improve our community. Instead of having to spend so much energy fighting bad proposals that seemed to pop up in every area without surcease in the speculative days, we can use our energy to build a better foundation, a better framework... so that, just maybe, when we rebuild, we will not build another house of cards, but a solid, beautiful house which will endure and of which we all will be proud. ###

Mason wins county commission seat, smart growth candidate wins Venice city council election

Republican Carolyn Mason easily defeated highly favored Jono Miller for the County Commission District 1 seat on November 4th. Most observers credited attacks ads run by the Republican Party and an unusually low key campaign by Miller who received the endorsements of almost all newspapers in the county. Even many "super voters" noted they had not received any direct mail from Miller's campaign, but lots from Mason. Miller, despite raising the most money of any county commission candidate in county history, ran few if any ads introducing himself to the electorate, while Mason's campaign had very effective ads introducing her to low information voters. Mason campaigned as a pro-business candidate.

It was a different story in Venice City Council elections where smart growth candidate Kit McKeon defeated two fast growth candidates to take Rick Tacey's seat on the council. ###

Sarasota County government closes for Veterans Day.

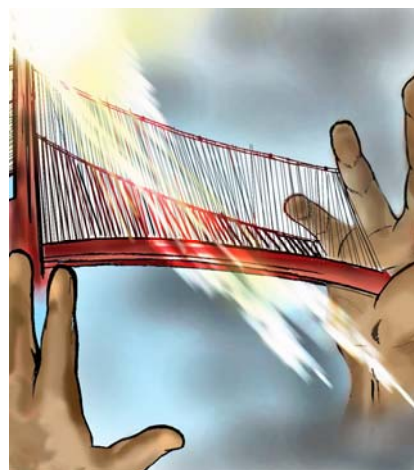
All Sarasota County Government offices, including libraries and recreation centers, will be closed Tuesday, Nov. 11, to observe Veterans Day. In addition, the Sarasota County History Center will be closed.

The following Sarasota County Parks and Recreation facilities will be open:

- Lido Pool, noon-5 p.m.
- Arlington Park, noon-5 p.m.
- Payne Park, 7 a.m.-9 p.m.
- Knight Trail Park, regular hours

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) bus service will operate on its regular schedule on Veterans Day. Garbage collection will not be affected for residential customers of Waste Management. Both the landfill at 4000 Knights Trail Road and the Citizens' Convenience Center at 4010 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis will be open Nov. 11, but the landfill administration office will be closed. The chemical collection centers at 8750 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, and 250 S. Jackson Road, Venice, will be closed Nov. 11.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000. ###



CONA board member initiates forum to build bridges and trust within the community

CONA board member John Krotec who heads the Fruitville 210 Community Alliance has collaborated with representatives from Sarasota County Neighborhood Services and the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce on an event intended to open positive dialogue, The Olive Branch Forum. John says the intent is to bring together leaders from the citizen, business, and government sectors to find common ground. The exercise is not designed to discuss specific issues but rather to create an environment for building relationships and developing a teamwork mentality. John believes that only with positive dialogue, open collaboration, and teamwork will we be able to face the challenges that lie ahead. The event organizers have worked together to create a list of participants and hope that this inaugural event leads to future collaborative meetings. The forum is scheduled for Tuesday, November 25th, from 6-8 pm at the Fruitville Public Library. Snacks and refreshments will be provided. ###

Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, Inc.

P O Box 15788

Sarasota, Florida 34277

www.conasarasota.org

Get involved: Has your association joined

CONA yet? It only costs \$35 per year. Go to CONA's website for info on benefits and how to join.

Web site: www.conasarasota.org

Email us at: conasarasota@comcast.net