

CONTROL GROWTH NOW

News

Save Sarasota County

February 25, 2006

Formerly GEO, the Growth-restraint and Environmental Org.

Vol. 17, No.1

GO JOE GO!

Join Us

Sarasota County is at a crossroads and Control Growth Now can make a difference.

Let us together take the road to a better tomorrow.

We need your help to do it.

Join Control Growth Now. Please do it today.

Return
Card
Enclosed



Sarasota County Planning Commissioner **Joe Barbetta**, long an advocate for sensible control of growth and protection of neighborhoods and the environment, is running for County Commission.

Barbetta Runs For County Commission

Barbetta will address the members of Control Growth Now at our March 18 annual meeting and luncheon.

He will outline his platform for positive progress, with a focus on closing the projected deficit in meeting our needs for transportation, schools, water supply and other facilities in the years to come.

Come Hear Joe Barbetta, **Jon Thaxton** and Gayle Reynolds

Control Growth Now Luncheon Meeting

March 18

11:30 AM Ramada Inn Osprey

See Back Page - *Reservations Required*

Return Card Enclosed

Continued on page 3

Also In This Issue

Sarasota County At A Crossroads

Page 2

Sarasota Developers On The Dole

Page 5

School Board Breaks Its Promise To Update Impact Fee

Page 6

Bits and Pieces

Page 7

Control Growth Now News

Is A Publication Of
Control Growth Now

P.O. Box 277
Osprey, FL 34299-0277
(941) 364-8777
(Mon-Fri 9-5)



Annual Membership Dues
Are \$20 Per Year

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Are Very Welcome
As Are Contributions
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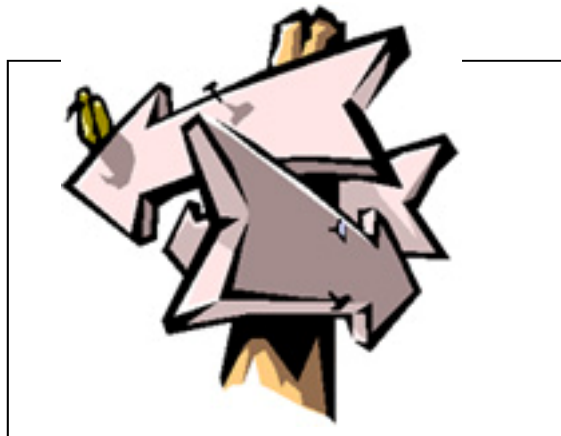
Tom Price

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President's Message



Sarasota County is at a crossroads.

The decisions made today by our local representatives will determine whether our roads are gridlocked, our schools inadequate, our water supply threatened, our air polluted and our taxes insufferable, all as a result of growth out of control.

We all have a duty to ourselves, our friends, neighbors and families to be engaged and to help elect those with the courage to stand up for the public interest rather than pander to the powerful who would lead us down the road to ruin, at our expense.

Joe Barbetta's candidacy for Sarasota County Commission offers one of those rare chances to help a principled person be elected to public office, as Jon Thaxton did by standing for election in 2000 and 2004.

Please help Joe by contributing what you can on the form provided on page four, up to the \$200 per person allowed (or whatever you can afford) and by volunteering to help.

Please also rejoin or join Control Growth Now and, if you can, attend our March 18 annual meeting and luncheon, by returning the card enclosed with this newsletter for that purpose.

We have a chance to take the road to a better tomorrow. Let's do it together.

President, **Control Growth Now**

Joe Barbetta Runs For County Commission — Ctd. From p.1

Joe Barbetta is an attorney, admitted to the New York and Florida Bars, and also admitted to practice before the US Supreme Court. He was a member and Chair of the Sarasota County Planning Commission for 14 1/2 years, before resigning recently to run for County Commission.

He was the recipient of Control Growth Now's Citizen of the Year Award in 2002 and speaker at that year's annual meeting and luncheon.

He is a member of the Sarasota County Bar Association, Urban Land Institute, Sarasota County Civic League, Sarasota Tiger Bay Club, Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Florida Planning and Zoning Association, Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, League of Women Voters, a Board member of Rebuild Sarasota (a division of Habitat for Humanity). He is also a founding Board member of the Sarasota Area Sports Authority and is active in SCOPE (Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence) and other various civic organizations in the Sarasota County area.

Born in upstate New York in 1946, Joe graduated from LaSalle Military Institute, Troy, NY; received a Bachelor of Science degree from Fordham University, Bronx, NY; and received a Doctor of Jurisprudence (JD) degree from Union University-Albany Law School, in Albany, NY. He practiced law in Clifton Park, NY for approximately 13 years, engaging in real estate development, planning, zoning, and land use.

Joe moved to Sarasota in 1983. He is married and resides in the City of Sarasota with his wife, Mary, and son, Sean. Their daughter,

Mary Lynn, and grandson reside in Atlanta.

Joe Barbetta is running for the Commission seat being vacated by David Mills.

Quotes from the candidate:

"I think Sarasota County is at a juncture now where some strong direction is needed as to how we develop. The makeup of the County Commission is going to be very important for the next five to ten years.

"Our quality of life is being challenged. It runs the risk of being deteriorated. That's a concern of mine. I'm worried that the quality of life is at a pinnacle right now where, if we're not careful, it can slide down the wrong way and start affecting people's property values, tourism and our air quality and environment."

"It's obvious when you travel Clark, Bee Ridge, University or Fruitville heading east in the afternoon or heading west in the morning toward downtown, that traffic's getting worse and worse. It's becoming a nightmare. It's not getting any better and we can't really build ourselves out of that problem."

"I'm big on urban infill and urban redevelopment. We've got a lot of areas up and down U.S. 41 and heading out on those roads I just mentioned that are all ripe for revitalization and redevelopment. We need to be proactive on all of these issues."

**Please Help Joe Barbetta's
County Commission Campaign**

**Please complete and return the form on
the next page with your contribution.
You can help even more by photocopying
the form and sharing it with others.**



Control Growth Now News

Thank you for your support and for your contribution to the Campaign of Joseph A. Barbetta, Candidate for the Sarasota County Commission, District 2. The maximum contribution from an individual may not exceed \$200.00 per election. A person may not make any contribution Through or in the name of another, directly or indirectly, in any election.

Please provide the following to accompany your contribution:

Amount of Contribution \$ _____

Your Full Name _____

Street Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Occupation _____

Optional Information:

Email Address _____

Phone: _____ Volunteer? Yes _____ No _____

Contributions must be by check and made payable to: Campaign Account of Joseph A. Barbetta — Mail Contributions to: John Dowd, Treasurer 1521 S. Tamiami Trail, Suite 303, Venice, FL 34293 941-493-5299

The publication of this form and promotion for the election of Joseph A. Barbetta, Candidate for Sarasota County Commission, District 2, paid for by Control Growth Now PAC, 2033 Main Street, Sarasota, FL 34237



Attend Control Growth Now's March 18 Annual Meeting and Luncheon



Please fill out and return (with your check, as soon as possible) the enclosed form for membership renewal and for our March 18 luncheon meeting. The event will be at the new and improved Ramada Inn in Osprey.



Let's meet or beat the attendance of 100 at our last two luncheon meetings in 2002 and 2004! Call your friends and family and bring them with you!



The menu features a choice of herb roasted chicken or blackened tilapia, with rice and vegetables, or a roasted vegetable salad wrap with French fries. Salad, bread and butter, coffee, tea and water are included. Speakers include Jon Thaxton, Joe Barbetta and Gayle Reynolds, Control Growth Now's Citizen of the Year. Local officials and candidates have also been invited. This is an event you will not want to miss! We'll see you there. (Please note we must receive all reservations by 5 pm March 10).

Sarasota Developers On The Dole

The Sarasota City Commission's approval of the Pineapple Square project is just the latest example of developers on the dole and the City leaders' disregard for the impacts on parking and traffic.

Despite a severe parking shortage downtown, the City Commission has agreed to sell to the Pineapple Square developer, to build condos and businesses, a one-acre parking lot on State Street. Even worse, the developer is paying only \$1 million for the lot despite a City appraisal of almost \$11 million. That's a virtual giveaway of valuable City property!

While the developer is building 350 public parking spaces, it's doing it at a cost to the City of \$7.6 million. Even then, the City's consultant reported, "We believe this project would create a net deficit of 217 spaces" because of the increased public parking required by the huge development. "So", the consultant says, "you would not be picking up any additional parking to help in the immediate area." Indeed, it will be worse.

Part of the problem is that the City has amended its code to reduce the parking requirements for new development. For example, in all of the new condos going up, only one parking space per unit is required.

That is all they're providing, for example, in the massive condominium being completed at Main Street and Palm Avenue — in which the City also donated its valuable air space over the sidewalk. That development is one of the first to take advantage of the City's increase of maximum density from 50 to 200 units per acre.



With all that added density and inadequate parking, the parking problem will worsen severely.

The City's subsidies of the Pineapple Square developer are even more amazing in light of the public outrage at the multimillions of dollars given by the City commissioners to other developments, including Whole Foods and the new Herald-Tribune building.

Now, the Sarasota City Commission has agreed to do it yet again, in a deal to give 18

acres of City land on prime US 301 frontage to Wal-Mart. In return for the land, Wal-Mart would have to clean up soil pollution but even then the City would be on the hook for up to \$1.7 million in clean-up costs.

The Pineapple Square deal was rushed through without adequate staff and committee review or any serious effort to bargain for the public interest. Same with Wal-Mart. City leaders are even now expressing regrets about the Whole Foods building because it was approved without adequate study.

In addition to turning a blind eye to parking problems caused by uncontrolled growth, the Sarasota City Commission is doing the same with impending traffic gridlock for miles around the City. Wal-Mart is no longer constrained (as it once was) by lack of adequate capacity on US 301 and the City Commission is looking at ways of eliminating all traffic constraints on development in a square mile area that includes US 41 near the bay.



School Board Breaks The Promise

In signs posted around Sarasota County, allies of the School Board and Superintendent are urging voters to "Keep The Promise" March 14 by voting for many millions in more taxes for schools.

However, the School Board and Superintendent have for over a year broken their promise to update school impact fees so that growth pays its own way for the schools required by growth.

Its no idle promise. Its part of an Interlocal Agreement (a contract) between the School Board and the Sarasota County Commission.

On February 10, 2004, the County Commission entered into an Interlocal Agreement with the School Board to adopt a school impact fee, which charges new growth for the costs of new school facilities required by that growth.

The Agreement provides that prior to January 1 of each year, the Superintendent of Schools shall prepare a report to the County Commission which includes an update of all of the information which determines how the impact fee is calculated and any needed change in the impact fee amount.

The Superintendent of Schools has failed to provide the school impact fee update report which has been required and due since January 1, 2005. It is now over one year late. Two required annual reports and impact fee updates are now missing.

Did the Superintendent's dog eat the reports? Or does this failure by the Superintendent and School Board reflect more concern for the pocketbooks and political power of developers than for the needs of the school system or the interests of the taxpayers?

Although one report on the collection of impact fees was submitted in December, it is not the report required by the Interlocal Agreement and does not provide the basis for an impact fee update, as required.

Annual changes in the school impact fee are inevitably justified and appropriate, just as they have been in other Sarasota County impact fees. That is because the data which drives the methodology changes from year to year and in some cases even more frequently.

Indeed, when the school impact fee was adopted two years ago, it was already based on old data and as such was way too low. The adopted fee is \$2,032 for a single family home rather than the updated figure of \$2,675 that the School District's consultant said was justified two years ago.

The consequence of this continuing neglect by the Superintendent, School Board and County Commission is that growth is falling further and further behind in paying its fair share of the schools and other education facilities required by that growth. The result is more inadequacy of school facilities, more subsidies of growth by the taxpayers, or both.

This lack of diligence compares unfavorably with Manatee County, where school and county officials have adjusted their school impact fee from \$2,587.50 for a single family home (at the time Sarasota County first adopted its school impact fee), to \$4,080.25 and again recently to \$5,886. Other counties are much higher.

Why should the public be asked to pay more and more taxes for schools while our politicians and officials give the developers a free ride?



Bits and Pieces

Adequate Road Impact Fees At Last?

Kudos to the Sarasota County Commission for finally agreeing to hire an expert consultant to advise on its road impact fee. Inevitably, that expert will determine that the present fee is only a fraction of what it would be to make growth pay its own way. That has been the result after other counties hired an expert.

Sarasota County's present road impact fee formula has been designed by local development interests, to keep it artificially low. The fee remains essentially what it was 15 years ago, despite huge increases in the cost of roadbuilding and right of way purchases.



The result of inadequate road impact fees is gridlocked roads, excessive taxes or both. The County Commission has made a wise move in finally addressing the problem, as Control Growth Now has long recommended.

EAR Amendments Remain a Big Problem

The Evaluation, Appraisal and Review (EAR) amendments to the County's Comprehensive Plan (a seven-year "update" required by state law) have been transmitted by the County Commission for state agency review.



When they return for final adoption hearings, the County Commission should take another look at many changes that remain needed despite many months of advocacy by Control Growth Now. As it now stands, the EAR

amendments would severely weaken numerous important controls on development.

They would gut the present policy against development that creates neighborhood traffic problems by exempting all residential development and any development where the traffic problem is "mitigated" (which can mean doing something that makes it not quite as bad as it could be).

The EAR amendments would also allow large scale commercial development in areas now limited to office parks and industry, increase densities west, south and east of I-75 and weaken control and provide subsidies for "redevelopment" in place of existing structures.

Watch Out For A Rental Tax Hike

In a good example of a bad idea that just won't die, local movers and shakers are renewing their push for a large hike in the local tax on rentals of less than 6 months.

Among the proposals for spending the tax hike: a convention center to benefit a few well-connected hoteliers and businesses, remodeling a fairly new baseball stadium and advertising to bring more people to Sarasota County from around the country.

Venice and North Port Bow To Developers

Venice is pursuing aggressive plans to annex lands to its north and east and grant higher land uses than the County, as well as allow greater heights and density downtown. North Port is granting permits on the Thomas Ranch before reaching agreement on how to pay for growth and refuses to protect trees. The developers have owned these two cities for years and apparently continue to do so.

*The Pleasure of Your Company
Would Be Appreciated*

**At the Seventeenth Anniversary
Control Growth Now Luncheon**

Saturday, March 18, 2006

11:30 AM To 1:30 PM

Ramada Inn South

**1660 South Tamiami Trail, Osprey
(Just North of Oscar Scherer State Park)**



Jon Thaxton
Sarasota County
Commissioner



Gayle Reynolds
Control Growth Now's
Citizen of the Year



Joe Barbeta
Candidate For
County Commission

Reservations Required - Not Later Than 5 pm March 10, 2006
Please Fill Out And Return The Enclosed Card

Or If Late Call 364-8777 Or 955-5622 - \$17 Each (Chicken, Tilapia or Vegetable Wrap)