

# CONTROL GROWTH NOW

# News

## Save Sarasota County



March 5, 2009

Twenty Years Working For A Better Community

Vol. 20, No.1



## March 10 and April 14

Vitally Important

## Sarasota City Elections

See Article On Page 3

## March 28

# Free Picnic

For CGN Members and Their Guests



## Watch Out!

Politicians Want to Worsen Housing Glut,  
Taxes, Traffic and Environment by Gutting  
Controls on Development

See Article On Page 4

## Join or Renew Your CGN Membership Today !

Please fill out and return the form on page 8

# Control Growth Now News

*Is A Publication Of*  
**Control Growth Now**

**P.O. Box 277  
Osprey, FL 34229-0277  
(941) 364-8777  
(Mon-Fri 9-5)**



**Annual Membership Dues  
Are \$20 Per Year**

***Additional Contributions  
Are Very Welcome  
As Are Contributions  
To Control Growth  
Now PAC***



**Control Growth Now  
Board of Directors**

**Dan Lobeck - *President***

**Neil Bass - *VP***

**Tom Price—*Treasurer***

**Herb Levine—*Secretary***

**Greg Nowaski**



## President's Message



In the deepening economic downturn, now is not a time for government to be wasting money.

Families are tightening their budgets. Those who spend our tax dollars must do the same.

The City of Sarasota should scrap plans to spend 50 million dollars to build risky and unproven roundabouts on US 41 (at a thousand dollars for each man, woman and child in Sarasota), at the same time the City is slashing police protection. The same goes for giving away \$40 million dollars in public resources to the developer of a private convention center.

The Sarasota County Commission should reverse Jim Ley's hire of a new so-called Smart Growth Director to push his plans to increase densities and gut traffic limits west and south of the Interstate. The County can't afford these ill-conceived schemes, or the annual salary of over \$120,000 (\$152,000 with benefits) at a time that it is cutting back library hours and other public services.

For those who are pinching pennies, however, we offer a free lunch to members of Control Growth Now and their guests at our picnic and annual meeting on March 28. It may cost you \$20 in annual dues but we promise to make it worth your while.

Including by our efforts to get the politicians to spend your money wisely.

President, **Control Growth Now**

## Farmer and Harrington for Sarasota City Commission

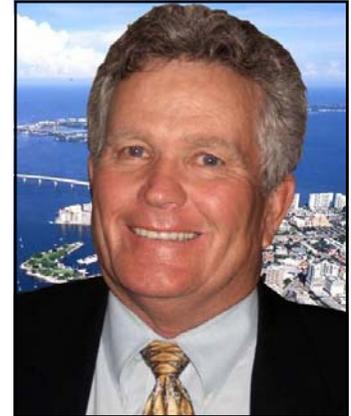


**Rick Farmer**

**Want to help the candidates or learn more about them? Check out their web sites**



[www.farmerforsarasota.com](http://www.farmerforsarasota.com)  
and  
[www.robinharrington2009.com](http://www.robinharrington2009.com)



**Robin Harrington**

On March 10, Sarasota City voters will go to the polls to choose two candidates to at-large seats on the City Commission. There will then be a run-off election on April 10 among the three top vote-getters, in the likely event that no candidate gets a majority of the votes.

Control Growth Now enthusiastically endorses Rick Farmer and Robin Harrington. Rick Farmer is a computer programmer and consultant with deep ties and involvement in the community. Robin Harrington is a Realtor who has also has a good history of service, including as vice-president of the City Council of Neighborhood Associations.

Both candidates have clearly stated positions which we share on important City issues. They oppose the weakening of traffic concurrency regulations to allow developers to overcrowd bayfront US 41, Fruitville and other major roads. They want to ensure neighborhood compatibility in any new development and oppose giveaways of taxes and public land to developers for private projects, such as a convention center.

We also like Pete Theisen but Farmer and Harrington seem to be running stronger campaigns.

Terry Turner supports allowing developers to overcrowd our roads and is open to taxpayer subsidies of developers. Ken Shelin, the incumbent, is the worst member of the present Commission on these and other issues that matter to us. Suzanne Atwell and Jay Berman are also on the wrong side and Paul Caragiulo declines to take stands. Ray McKinon is not actively running.

We ask our members to support Rick Farmer and Robin Harrington and to urge City voters to do so.

### **Bad Charter Amendment Seeks Power Shift**

Control Growth No urges a “no” vote on the March 10 City of Sarasota referendum to add two at-large seats to the City Commission and to directly elect a mayor with expanded powers.

This is yet another thinly-veiled attempt by Michael Saunders and other real estate interests to tilt power towards them and away from the neighborhoods.

City voters have rejected such efforts in the past and should do so again.

## Developers Seize an Excuse to Gut Controls



State Senator Mike Bennett, himself a developer, has long sought to undermine the ability of local governments to set reasonable controls on growth and development.

He pushed a bill to prohibit cities and counties from putting any limits on building heights. He attempted to prevent them from making growth pay its own way through impact fees. He has sought to limit state and regional review of development.

Now, Senator Bennett sees an opening.

With growth slowing to a standstill, opinion polls obviously show less public concern about growth. And, Bennett will argue, anything that stimulates construction will be good for the economy.

On that basis, he has filed two bills which would gut growth management. He would exempt Sarasota and other cities as well as some counties from concurrency, the rule that a developer should not be allowed to add more traffic than the roads can handle. He would reduce state and regional oversight and review of development plans and would set a three-year ban on impact fees, thereby shifting the cost of any growth which does occur onto the backs of the taxpaying public.

There are two major flaws in the reasoning the Senator presents.

First, it is very likely that all he will do is open

the door to uncontrolled development not now but in future years after the economy improves. Developers will sit on permits obtained under the weak standards and extend them until it is profitable to build. Even the ban on impact fees does not sunset if the economy improves before three years.

Then, developers will build without adequate growth management, clogging roads, destroying the environment and raising our taxes in the process.

Even worse, if the legislation does spur construction that will actually make the economy even worse by adding further to the oversupply of housing and other development on the market.

The national, state and local economic downturn started due a bursting of the development bubble, when supply far in excess of demand eventually caused values to plummet. The economy will improve only after foreclosures turn over ownership and the market gradually absorbs the oversupply, causing real estate values to rise once again.

A delay to this correction by adding even more to the oversupply of houses and condos, offices and retail space that cannot be rented or sold may provide a few construction jobs but beyond that will just postpone the economic recovery and make the current downturn more severe.

At the local level also, we need to be vigilant against calls by politicians and their staffs to weaken concurrency, suspend impact fees and make other changes in the name of encouraging more development.

As in the doctors' Hippocratic Creed, the primary principle of politicians should be to "Do no harm." In these troubled times, that policy is more important than ever.



## Herb Levine To Be Honored at Annual Meeting

At our March 28 annual meeting, Control Growth Now will honor Herb

Levine, the longtime and retiring president of the Venice Taxpayers League and a Director and Secretary of Control Growth Now, as its Citizen of the Year for 2009.

Under Herb's leadership, the Venice Taxpayers League have been instrumental in taking control of Venice City government away from what he calls "the growth gang", a cadre of developers, their attorneys and others bent on overdeveloping Venice at the expense of its ambiance and charm. Today instead, a majority of the Venice City Council is dedicated to controlling growth at a reasonable scale so as to protect neighborhoods, the environment and the public interest.

Herb was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1927 and grew up at his grandparents' farm in southern New Jersey and then in Camden. He served his country in the Pacific during World War II and again, following college, in the Korean War. He then returned to college and earned a degree in Liberal Arts.

While working, Herb attended night classes in Industrial Engineering, learning skills that he then used in an advancing career. He worked for three corporations, ending up as vice president of one. He then started his own company and sold it nine years later.

Herb was married in the early fifties to a woman he had known for many years, with whom he had four children. Two of them live in Sarasota County along with one twelve year old grand daughter who attends Pineview School.

Herb and his family visited Venice about twenty five years ago and bought a lot on the island, where they built a home a few years later.

Herb was asked to attend a Venice Taxpayers League meeting about ten years ago and did. He was then asked to become a Board member and did. He was then asked to run for the VTL presidency and has led the group since.

Under his leadership, the VTL has grown from 35 to 550 members, As Herb describes it, he and the VTL have over the past several years greatly increased the consumption of Roloids within Venice City Hall, culminating in the recent election of reformists who largely share the VTL philosophy. The Good Ole Boy crowd still can't figure what happened.

## Venice Comp Plan Update Protects Neighborhoods

The City of Venice is re-writing its Comprehensive Plan, which guides all growth and development in the City. So far, the news is good for neighborhoods and the public interest.

The current draft is a complete revision from the radical pro-development version completed by the previous City Council, before the election of the current pro-neighborhood majority, and rejected by the state growth management agency.

The new draft includes strong and clear policies to protect existing and new neighborhoods from incompatible development.

The City Council is still conducting workshops and will then have its first public hearing, to transmit the Plan for state review, followed by a final adoption hearing a few months later.

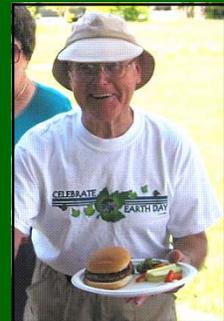


Saturday **March 28** 11:00-1:00

Join Us for Our  
*20th Anniversary*



**PICNIC** & Annual Meeting



**At Colonial  
Oaks Park**

**5300 Colonial  
Oaks Blvd.**

**Just off Honore  
Avenue north of  
Bahia Vista Rd.**

**See Enclosed  
Map For  
Directions**



**Free To  
Control Growth Now  
Members And Their  
Guests**

**We Provide The  
Burgers, Hot  
Dogs, Veggie  
Burgers and  
Drinks.**



**Bring a Side  
Dish or Dessert  
to Share, If You  
Can**

**Reservations Required — Please Fill Out And Return The Enclosed Card  
Late Reservations Call 364-8777 - 9 to 5 Mon. Thru Fri.**

# We Look Forward To Seeing You At Our **20th Anniversary**



# PICNIC

Saturday, March 28  
11 to 1  
Colonial Oaks Park  
Sarasota

Free to Members  
and All of Their  
Guests!

Please mail in your reservation on the  
form on page 8 or if late, call 364-8777

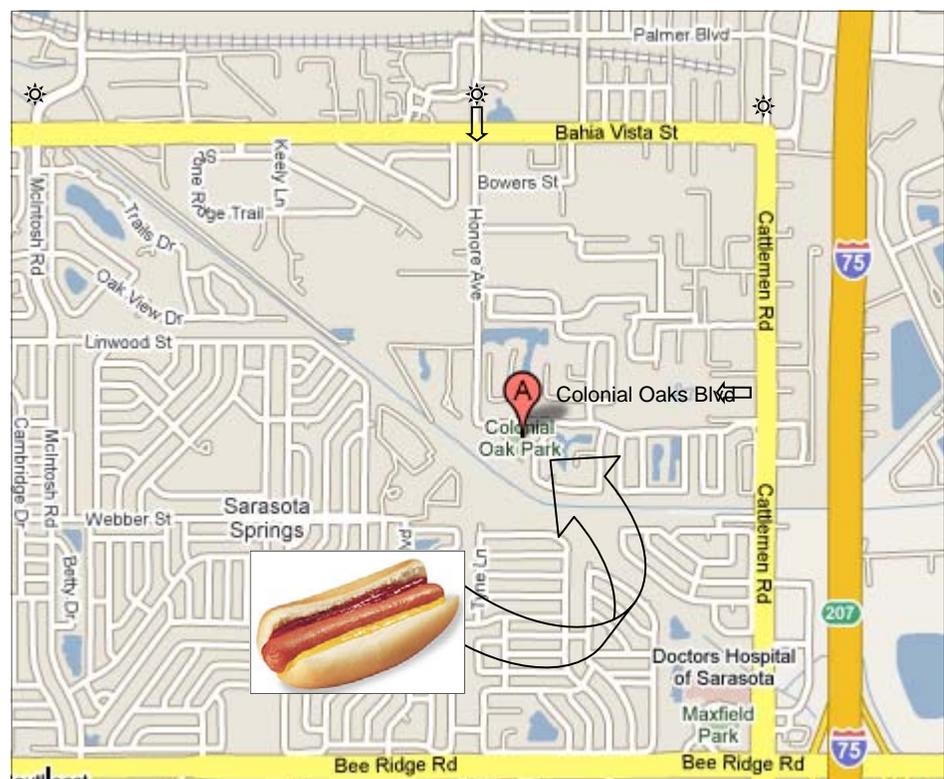
## Directions to Colonial Oaks Park:

Go east on Bahia Vista St. (which is between Fruitville and Bee Ridge), past the light at McIntosh Rd., take a right at the light at Honore Ave. and follow Honore to its end.

OR - Take I-75 north to the Bee Ridge Road exit, go west (left) on Bee Ridge, turn right (north) on Cattlemen Rd. Cut through Colonial Oaks left on Colonial Oaks Blvd. to the park OR continue on Cattlemen to Bahia Vista St., turn left onto Bahia Vista to the light at Honore Ave., turn left onto Honore Ave. to the end.

Colonial Oaks Park is on the left off Honore Ave. right near its end. Park and walk past the buildings to the picnic structures next to the open lawn area.

See you there! (Bring a side dish or dessert to share, if you like).



# Join **CONTROL GROWTH NOW**

## And Attend The March 28 Picnic If You Can

(More Information About The Picnic On Pages 6 and 7)

This year, we're moving our picnic to the beautiful and spacious **Colonial Oaks Park** in Sarasota. See the enclosed map for directions. We also have a room there for our annual meeting after the picnic. Come and enjoy the fellowship, food, good weather and fun!



*Please sign me up*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my/our check to CGN in the amount of \$20 per person (or more) for CGN membership  
Please Check One:

I will not be attending the CGN Picnic

OR

I'll see you on March 28. With our guests, we'll need \_\_\_\_ hamburgers, \_\_\_\_ hot dogs and/or \_\_\_\_ veggie burgers

Please mail this form and your check for \$20 per person to **Control Growth Now**  
P. O. Box 277, Osprey, FL 34229-0277

*Thank You!*