

July 17, 2019 CONA Membership Meeting
Prepared by: Kate M. Thorpe-Eddleman,
Secretary

The meeting began at 7:05pm.

City updates:

The Parks and Recreation Department opened registration for before and after school programs this week.

Robert Barto noted that Carefest events are scheduled from Sept 21 to Oct 6, with the main day being Sept 28.

Rob Gerdes provided an overview of the composting program, and advised people to apply for a bin on the City's website. He noted that 1300 bins have already been requested.

Aaron Carmella discussed the upcoming utility rate changes and asked people to contact him if they had any questions.

The SPPD reminded everyone that the next Coffee with a Cop event is scheduled for August 13.

Jennifer Joern reminded everyone that new security measures are being put into place and to please allow for extra time when arriving for meetings, to go through security. She noted that the City does not charge CONA to rent the building, so to please not arrive before 6pm and to vacate by 9pm, out of respect for the staff who work late to accommodate meetings.

Marlene Murray and Travis Jarmin discussed their recent meetings with the Alan DeLisle, Liz Abernathy and Don Tyre, of the City, to discuss citizen complaints about the building, permitting and zoning departments. She requested people to submit opinions to build a "Top 10" list of items to address, broken into 2 categories: Building/Permitting and Zoning/Planning.

An audience member requested information on tree removal issues, and Marlene noted that the State recently changed the law and that the City's legal department is reviewing ordinances and has raised the fine for removal without a permit to \$1,000.

Chris Claus of the City noted that she is a certified arborist and landscape architect, and can approve tree removal. She noted that she recently attended a tree related webinar with other

cities and municipalities in Florida, and that Tampa has recently removed their tree ordinance from the City website.

An audience member requested clarification on the tree removal process and asked how urban trees helped with wastewater treatment.

Chris Klaus provided an overview of the Water Conservation Office and its programs, initiatives, regulatory programs, education and outreach efforts, economic incentives operational programs, departmental efficiencies and partnerships. She provided an overview of watering restrictions and requested that people contact the department at 727-892-5900 to report any issues. She discussed the Sensible Sprinklers Program, the Rain Sensor Program, and the Toilet Rebate Program.

Questions from the audience:

Q: Is there a list of plants that don't need a lot of watering?

A: Yes: floridayards.org is a good resource and you can contact the Pinellas County Extension office for guidance on Florida friendly landscaping.

Q: If you are putting in a lawn, can you request an increase for the amount of water you use?

A: Yes, call the office for the approval process.

Q: What is the average life expectancy of palm trees?

A: It varies based on the type of palm.

Claude Tankersley of the City's Public Works Administration provided an overview of the upcoming stormwater utility rate changes that are being implemented on Oct 1. He discussed the difference between pervious and impervious surfaces, and discussed how the City conducted a survey of the entire city using infrared lights. He noted that of the 95,000 parcels in the city, over half of the single family homes fall into Tier 2. He noted that non single family homes are calculated by converting their square footage to that of a single family home, to determine the rate that they fall under. He provided an overview of the fee tier and noted that you can request an appeal on your assigned tier, via a portal on the City's website: stpete.org/ratechanges. He discussed the video on the portal and noted that over 4,000 people have already visited the site, and that 100 of the 225 submitted appeals have been approved. He noted that credits can be granted for mitigation, as well. He noted that this is the first stormwater update since 1989 and that if your initial appeal is denied, to appeal again when additional supporting information is available.

Questions from the audience:

Q: Is the rate on home or property square footage?

A: It is on impervious areas only.

Q: Is it on the entire home's square footage for 2 story homes, or only the 1st floor?

A: Only the 1st floor.

Q: How are reevaluations done?

A: Permit requests trigger a surface area review.

Q: Can you provide proof of a peaked roof or prove that the water doesn't go to stormwater runoff?

A: That is hard to prove, and the rates are based on large amount storms that produce 5-7" of rain, not the average daily storm runoff.

Q: What is the difference between condos and single family homes and how does that affect the rates?

A: In condo buildings, there is an average of 53 families who live over a 5,000 square foot area, versus the average single family home that covers a 2,000 square foot area and houses only 1 family.

Chris Claus provided an overview on stormwater credits, including the incentives such as rain barrels (free) and totes (\$100), and that you must attend a class to receive the credit. She noted that the Rainwater Guardian program begins in Mid-Sept. She provided an overview on rain gardens and noted that if you attend a class, you can receive a one time, \$100 rebate on your utility bill. She noted that the first reading will be on Sept 5 and the second reading would be on Sept 19.

Neighborhood Updates:

Susie Ajoc reminded everyone to request their composter.

Disston Heights is holding a get together for realtors on July 28.

There were no committee updates.

Jennifer Joern provided an overview of her recent Coffee Klatches. She discussed Green Bench Monthly's upcoming spotlight on CONA and Crefest, and that neighborhoods would be featured on a rotating basis going forward. She noted these upcoming events: Chamber of Commerce Sunrise Sale, TASCOCO Mud Wars, League of Women Voters' candidate forum, Albert White's Masterplan open house, Dog Swim Day at Fossil Park, and Fiscal year budget meetings. She noted that the September CONA meeting would be a candidate forum, October would be on Affordable Housing, November would feature USF OPEN and December's meeting would be CONA Executive Committee elections, a holiday party, and would announce the winners of the Shopapalooza Christmas Tree Contest. She reminded everyone to enter the contest. She advised that the CONA Goals retreat will now be held in January, with details to come. She noted the CONA Night at the Rays, discussed the Skyway Marina's upcoming cornhole tournament, and provided a brief overview of the USF OPEN project to entice Tom Hanks to an event in St. Petersburg, surrounding his upcoming movie, A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.

David Roman motioned to adjourn, Elaine Hartin seconded.

The meeting ended at 8:37pm.

There were 38 attendees.

