

Sarasota County At Risk

Will We Face Traffic Gridlock, Tax Hikes ?



Attend

Control Growth Now's
25th Anniversary
Annual Meeting
and Luncheon
Saturday
March 15

More Information on
Pages 5 & 6

Return Card Enclosed
— Only \$20 —



★ Come Hear and Honor ★

Randall Reid

**Former Sarasota County
Administrator**

CGN Citizen of the Year

Now as never before, Sarasota County is at risk of development out of control, east and west, north and south.

County Commissioners appear poised to gut the Sarasota 2050 Plan to allow uncontrolled urban sprawl, void measures that would make growth pay its own way, allow unbridled traffic and otherwise give developers free rein at the public expense.

They have fired Administrator Randall Reid for daring to stand up for sensible growth management and have hired a real estate developer to replace him.

Continued on page 4

Also In This Issue

25 years of Progress and Challenges

Why We Honor Randall Reid

Follow The Money

Attend Our 25th Anniversary Luncheon



Page 2

Page 3

Page 5

Pages 5 and 6

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**Annual Membership Dues
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Are Very Welcome***

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President's Message



25 Years of Progress and Challenges

We like to think that Sarasota County is a better place for our 25 years of advocacy for sensible controls on growth, since our group was founded in 1989.

We have spoken out for limits on urban sprawl east and north of I-75, for protecting neighborhoods from incompatible development, for preserving the natural environment, for keeping strong standards on the traffic a developer can add to crowded roads and for making growth pay its own way.

We have had mixed results but significant progress over the years, holding the line at I-75 and then seeing that replaced with tough controls of the Sarasota 2050 Plan, finally managing to see impact fees edge up (until they were cut) and writing policies for neighborhood compatibility that survive today, as well as fiscal neutrality.

I personally am a refugee from Ft. Lauderdale, having moved to Sarasota County in the 1980's to escape the traffic jams, sprawl, pollution and higher taxes there in favor of the much higher quality of life here. I'm sure many others have similar stories.

Now, the threat to that quality of life is greater than ever before, as big developers exercise unprecedented control over our local politicians and seek to undo many of the good constraints on development in our codes and plans. Now more than ever, working with other community groups and leaders, we need to strive to protect the goose that lays the golden eggs, so that 25 years from now Sarasota County remains a community of which we can be very proud.

President, Control Growth Now

Why We Honor Randall Reid

This year's choice for CGN's Citizen of the Year was a easy one. The local citizen who has done more this past year to exemplify the spirit of service to the public interest is former Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid.

Randall Reid was a County Administrator for all the people of Sarasota County, not just the privileged few. He listened to all concerned voices, as shown by this picture here of him speaking with Audubon Society leader and former CGN Citizen of the Year (and member) Wade Matthews. One of his first acts upon taking office was to meet with a broad cross-section of the community to obtain input that he used to inform his actions on important issues.

Randall Reid was hired for his ethics and he was let go by the County Commission because of his ethics.

He dared to ask for a report on the public funds used for the Benderson rowing facility (a sacred cow due to its ties to a politically connected developer), to see if the taxpayers were getting their money's worth. He refused to curry cozy relationships with influential developers and to work behind the scenes to line up actions by County Commissioners which favored them, as was done by his predecessor, Jim Ley. And as the final straw, he dared to openly propose that any analysis of the fiscal neutrality requirements of the Sarasota 2050 Plan be done by a neutral expert academic rather than by biased political consultant Donna Arduin, as the Commission and developers wanted.

Randall Reid served as Sarasota County Administrator for almost two years, hired in January, 2012 and terminated in October, 2013. It was a moment in the sun for a County government scandalized by the previous administration.

In March, Mr. Reid will begin a new position as Southeast U.S. Regional Director for the International City/County Management Association, providing training for local government officials and organizations in performance initiatives, including with regard to ethics. As put by one person who posted comment to a news article, this means that when the Sarasota County Commission needs the internationally recognized go-to guy on how to run a County administration, Randall Reid will be the one to call.



Mr. Reid will have a Florida office, as well as traveling to Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. We hope that office is in Sarasota, where he and his wife have a home.

Randall Reid has 36 years experience in local government management and left his job of 12 years as Alachua County Manager to work as Administrator for Sarasota County. Prior to that, he was Deputy and then Acting County Administrator of Martin County, Titusville City Manager, City Administrator of Green River, Wyoming and Assistant City Manager of Vandalia, Ohio. Early in his career, he worked as a City Manager's intern in a variety of blue-collar laborer jobs and was also a college professor and an Ethics Trainer for the Florida City and County Management Association.

Randall Reid is widely recognized as a leader in planning for sustainable development as well as ethics. We celebrate his all-too-brief legacy in both regards for the benefit of all citizens of Sarasota County.



County Is Poised to Drop Reins on Growth - Ctd. From Pg. 1

The County Commission packed the Planning Commission with people who make their living in the development industry, thereby changing the body from one which often sided with the public interest into one which instead routinely supports whatever the developers want.

County Commissioners have eviscerated rules on all kinds of things to favor developers. Gone are standards that kept all stores of a brand (such as Walgreens or McDonalds) from looking exactly the same. No longer are areas zoned and designated for industrial development limited to industry and offices, with their higher paying jobs, but instead extensive commercial retail development is allowed, and soon housing too.

Road impact fees — charges on new development to pay for road improvements needed to serve that development — were slashed in half during the development downturn. The Commissioners did that even though their own expert consultant reported that where that had been done elsewhere, it had no effect on stimulating construction. Now County Commissioners have prejudged their coming public hearing by deciding to extend that huge cut “indefinitely”, despite development having returned to levels not seen since the real estate boom. And they even plan to repeal all limits on a developer’s traffic, in a “mobility fee” scheme the County Commission will consider in May.

Fiscal neutrality — that is the key rule in the Sarasota 2050 Plan to make urban growth in rural lands pay its own way — is about to be eliminated. They won’t admit that, but the biased pro-developer consultant who recommended that fiscal neutrality be eliminated is now writing standards that will guarantee developers don’t pay a dime.

The School Board and County Commission have also entirely suspended school impact fees, despite rising school enrollments and consequent future needs for capacity improvements.

What the slashing of impact fees and the effec-

tive elimination of fiscal neutrality will mean is inadequate roads and other infrastructure to handle the demands of the new growth — resulting in traffic gridlock, crowded schools and other problems — or huge tax hikes to make up the difference, or both.

The Sarasota 2050 Plan is also being gutted to effectively eliminate the requirement for Greenways, large expanses of newly preserved environmental land that were supposed to separate the Vil-



lages, as well as to severely cut back on the environmental open space, buffers and setbacks required within Sarasota 2050 developments.

Also on the chopping block are requirements for substantial mixed use and walkable communities that were designed to keep a lot of the traffic within the Sarasota 2050 developments rather than traveling outside on the roads. Instead, what we will get is massive, standard urban sprawl, at the expense of the public and at the expense of the vitality of our cities.

By selling out the public interest to the developers who bankroll their campaigns, our County Commissioners risk destroying the quality of life that makes our community the special place it is today.

Follow The Money

Ross Perot once said, "Follow the money" to explain how public policy is in reality determined by those who fund the policymakers' campaigns.

So whether it is the gutting of Sarasota 2050, the slashing of impact fees on developers, the approval of Pat Neal and Rex Jensen developments denied by the Planning Commission or the many favors to Benderson Development (eliminating square foot limits on commercial centers, relieving their mall of mixed use and affordable housing requirements or \$67 million in public funding for facilities to benefit the developer), all we need to do to understand is to follow the money.

Local development interests give tens of thousands of dollars to County Commission candidates (those that always vote with them and Nora Patterson who sometimes does not). This year they are bankrolling Alan Maio and Paul Caragiulo for the two open seats on the ballot. They routinely get around the \$200 campaign contribution limit in the County Charter by giving numerous contributions in the names of different corporations they control.



Jon Susce of *The Sarasota Phoenix* did a service by analyzing contributions in the most recent elections of the following County Commissioners and found the following from four big local developers:

Rex Jensen gave \$200 to Carolyn Mason 10 times, \$200 to Nora Patterson 7 times, \$200 to Christine Robinson 10 times and \$200 to Charles Hines 10 times. **Pat Neal** gave \$200 to Carolyn Mason 10 times, \$200 to Nora Patterson 10 times, \$200 to Joe Barbetta 19 times, \$200 to Christine Robinson 14 times and \$200 to Charles Hines 7 times. **Carlos Beruff** gave \$200 to Carolyn Mason 24 times, \$200 to Nora Patterson 13 times, \$200 to Joe Barbetta 5 times and \$200 to Christine Robinson 22 times. **Randy Benderson** gave \$200 to Carolyn Mason 6 times, \$200 to Joe Barbetta 19 times, \$200 to Christine Robinson 5 times and \$200 to Charles Hines 50 times. And there are others.

For these developers, this is an investment in outcome that they would not keep making if it did not succeed. It is our job to vote for candidates who are not bankrolled this way so that we succeed instead.



Attend Control Growth Now's Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Saturday, March 15



Please fill out and return (with your check, as soon as possible) the enclosed form for membership renewal and for our March 15 luncheon meeting. The event will be at Marina Jack, 2 Marina Plaza in downtown Sarasota.



Marina Jack

Register with the enclosed card or online with easy payment by credit card through Eventbrite, at www.controlgrowthnow.org. Bring your friends and family!

The menu features a choice of Oscar Grouper, Chicken Caprise or Vegetable Plate. The grouper and chicken include a vegetable and specialty rice, and dessert is included, as well as coffee or tea. Our speaker is Randall Reid, former Sarasota County Administrator. County Commission candidates will also speak. This is an event you will not want to miss!

*The Pleasure of Your Company
Will Be Appreciated*

At The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

Control Growth Now Luncheon

Saturday, March 15, 2014

11:30 AM To 1:30 PM

Marina Jack Restaurant

2 Marina Plaza, Sarasota



Featuring Randall Reid

Former Sarasota County Council Administrator

Control Growth Now Citizen of the Year

**Reservations Required - Not Later Than 5 pm March 13, 2014
Please Fill Out And Return The Enclosed Card**

If Late Call 364-8777 Or 955-5622 - \$20 Each (Oscar Grouper, Chicken Caprise or Vegetable Plate)