



Journal

Save Sarasota County

October, 2000 The Growth-restraint and Environmental Organization Vol. 11, No.2

Join GEO

If you are not yet a GEO member, or used to be, now is a great time to join.

If you are a GEO member, now is a good time to become more active.

In the months to come, local and state politicians will be voting on measures which will have tremendous consequences for the future of our homes and our families.

Help GEO be there for you.
Help GEO save Sarasota County !

RETURN CARD ENCLOSED

RU-77 Means Traffic Gridlock

Sarasota County's own opinion polls show the top public concerns are "uncontrolled development" and "traffic".

How then can any County Commissioner justify RU-77, which will make both worse by gutting concurrency?



"I'm amazed that the Chamber does not share our concern about traffic and that's a shame"— Jon Thaxton, commenting on the irresponsible endorsement of RU-77 by the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce.

On October 11, at 9:00 a.m., the Sarasota County Commission will hold a second public hearing and vote on RU-77, after a close September 26 vote to postpone it.

Concurrency requires the County to deny a development unless facilities needed to serve it are in place "concurrent" with that development.

Continued on Page 3

Attend GEO's Beach Picnic

Oct. 21

11:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Turtle Beach

Free To GEO Members and Their Guests

See Back Page

Reservations Required

Return Card Enclosed

Urban Sprawl Alert!

It could not be worse if the developers wrote it.

Sarasota County Administrator Jim Ley has announced an incredibly pro-growth plan for the future development of Sarasota County beyond

I-75.

Ley proposes to open up almost ever acre of undeveloped land in Sarasota County to intense urban sprawl, without limits on timing, at 500% the total density allowed today.

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GEO Journal

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and
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Organization**



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(Mon-Fri 9-5)**

**Annual Membership Dues
To GEO Are \$15 Per Year**

***Additional Contributions
Are Very Welcome
As Are Contributions
To GEOPAC
GEO's Political Action
Committee***



GEO

Board of Directors

Dan Lobeck, *President*

Judy Johnson, *VP*

Tom Price, *Treasurer*

Neil Bass

Les Inglis

Greg Nowaski

President's Message



GEO, Now More Than Ever

- Never before has Sarasota County had as great a need for the Growth-restraint and Environmental Organization. Never before has GEO had as great a need for the membership and participation of as many people as possible, to aid our mission of saving Sarasota County from the

consequences of irresponsible pro-growth policies and plans. GEO's membership is now greater than it has been for many years and is growing, as we reach out to former members and new ones to join our crusade for a better future. If we do nothing, we will end up choked in traffic from overdevelopment to the east, west, north and south, higher taxes to pay for growth, water shortages and degradation of our natural environment and rural lands, to our detriment and that of future generations. Please join with us as we work together for a better way. Please also join us as we come together to meet each other and enjoy the wonderful place in which we live, at our picnic on Turtle Beach on Saturday, October 21, and on other occasions. There's no reason that saving our future can't be fun.

We're Glad God Gave Us Gloria Rains - I was much saddened upon getting a phone call from a friend of Gloria Rains saying that she had died at the age of 72. For over 30 years, Gloria worked tirelessly for the environment and strong restraint of growth in Manatee and Sarasota Counties, with many successes as well as disappointments. As the attorney for ManaSota-88, I had the privilege of working closely with Gloria in her final months and grew even more to respect her wisdom, tenacity and principle. Gloria, our Environmental Hero and banquet speaker in 1996, was a GEO member, as is her successor, Glenn Compton, who we wish the best in leading ManaSota-88. We will miss Gloria Rains and are glad we had her with us for awhile to remind us all to be responsible stewards of God's creation. I'm sure He's thanking her right now.



RU-77 Would Cause Traffic Gridlock

(Continued From Page 1)

The County now considers roads and intersections concurrent if needed improvements are under contract or in the current year's budget. RU-77 would change concurrency to require development approval if the improvements are merely planned within **three years!** Three years of traffic congestion -- longer if successive projects each look three years ahead.

Developers and Chamber of Commerce officials say RU-77 is needed for "economic development". Nonsense. The County already has authority to waive concurrency for three years as part of a "development agreement", such as for a business headquarters. RU-77 would instead give that goody to all developers, with nothing in return. Nothing but annoying, polluting, dangerous and economically destructive traffic congestion.

The Planning Commission voted 4 to 3 to recommend denial of RU-77. Jon Thaxton and Joe Barbetta led the charge against the measure. Developer consultants Cathy Layton And Alan Maio (*see separate story on page 7*) and Englewood Chamber official John Fellin voted for it, without even attempting to offer any argument for it.

At the County Commission hearing on September 26, County

Administrator Jim pushed relentlessly for RU-77, falsely stating that RU-77 merely gives the Commission a "tool", an "option" and "flexibility" to "allow" a development to be considered concurrent (when in fact RU-77 would *require* the County to approve *all* premature development). Ley also argued that the Commission should approve RU-77 "to encourage the maximum use of your infrastructure," as if there should be no limits on that use to prevent traffic congestion.

Sarasota Chamber official Bill Couch was the only other speaker for RU-77, saying just that it is a "tool" needed for "economic development." RU-77 was opposed by representatives of GEO, ManaSota-88, the League of Women Voters and the Council of Neighborhood Associations.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson opposed RU-77, saying, "If you have the philosophy that the roads and the development should

match, this doesn't make sense." Shannon Staub, seen as a swing vote on the issue, also said she opposed RU-77 because "I just don't see that much good coming out of it." Bob Anderson also spoke against the measure, stating,

"Concurrency was put there for one reason and that's so we're not driving on top of each other."

However, Anderson ultimately voted with David Mills and Ray Pilon, who parroted Ley and Couch in endorsing RU-77, in voting 3 to 2 to delay a vote on RU-77 until October 11. At that time, County legal staff will report back on Anderson's inquiry as to whether RU-77 can be limited to a long list of land uses favored by the County for "economic development", such as warehouses, industry and many offices. The law does not allow that distinction, however, without the "developer agreements" the County already may enter.

Citizens should attend the second public hearing on October 11 to speak against RU-77 or call, fax or e-mail your County Commissioner. (*See page 8*). RU-77 must be defeated if we are to avoid even more excessive development and traffic out of control.

GEO Is *FOR*

- ★ **Proper Concurrency Standards, To Avoid Overcrowding**
- ★ **Strong Rules on Urban Sprawl and to Protect the Environment and Neighborhoods**
- ★ **Fees And Taxing Districts to Make Growth Pay Its Own Way**

Urban Sprawl Alert!

(Continued From Page 1)

the Sarasota County Commission will take public comment and an its initial vote on Ley's plan. It will then begin a process which will take several months until final adoption.

In December, a group of big city developers and planners from the Urban Land Institute (which Andres Duany calls "a developer-controlled think tank") visited Sarasota County and proposed a plan for the land beyond I-75.

Surprisingly, the initial ULI plan was reasonable, calling for extensive greenways and modest villages, clustered with "no overall increase in the gross density of the land east of I-75", with taxing districts to help make the villages pay their own way, commercial uses limited to those "supporting" the villages, extensive new rural low-density areas, no major new roads and villages approved based upon competing developer proposals, within the County's present ten year time frames for accommodating projected growth.

Jim Ley's plan, however, omits every growth restraint feature of the ULI plan.

Jim Ley's greenways are grossly inadequate. Instead of the broad swaths of natural

habitat depicted by ULI, Ley proposes what he now calls a "greenway spine", a thread of nature which developers would supplement by "open space", including golf courses, lawns, ball fields, cemeteries and retention ponds. Most of Ley's "greenway spine" consists of current public nature preserves.

Jim Ley proposes urban "village" development on almost every acre of undeveloped land beyond I-75, outside of his truncated "greenway spine". The only exception is any parcel of less than 200 acres surrounded by existing lots of two acres or more.

ULI proposed transfers of development rights out of greenways. Instead, Ley would simply *give* developers *five times or more* the total density allowed today. That would increase the total new population east of I-75 (at the current household size in that area of 2.79 persons per dwelling) from 32,643 under the current Comprehensive Plan to over 163,215 under Ley's Plan! Developers would get even more density if they agreed to provide affordable housing, restore natural areas or expand shelters.

Ley's plan also contains none of the County's present timing constraints on new urban land. At present, the County only opens up enough urban land to accommodate ten years of projected

population. Ley proposes instead that the *entire County* be opened up for urban growth at the same time, limited only to the availability of roads and other infrastructure to serve it, built either by the developer or by the taxpayers!

Under Leys' plan, agriculture is an afterthought, limited to the southeast corner of the County, where the County has already determined to buy the development rights from ranchers.

Even Ley's "villages" are more intense than those envisioned by ULI. Instead of a 1/4 mile limit for any residence from commercial uses, Ley would allow 1/2 mile, with no limit at all for 10% of the residences.

Ley's plan also calls for new highways in and through greenway spines, although he won't tell us where they will go. His only plan for the villages to pay their own way is for each developer to do their own study showing that the development will be "fiscally neutral" (by "increasing the tax base", etc.).

Where will we responsibly get water for all the new growth? What do we do with the added traffic on our present roads? Jim Ley doesn't seem to care.

We must all work together to urge our County Commission-

Meet The GEO Board of Directors



Dan Lobeck, co-founder of GEO, is serving his second stint as GEO President. He is an attorney whose full-service law firm represents over 300 homeowner associations, as well as ManaSota-88. He has been a leader of numerous organizations.

Dan Lobeck

Dan, his wife Joy and new daughter Lauren live in Hidden Oaks North, off Bahia Vista. E-mail : thelobecks@home.com



Judy Johnson is President of the Osprey Civic Association, where she lives with her husband Alva. They have several children and grandchildren. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood

Judy Johnson

Associations and is the Natural Resource Chairman of the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County.



Neil Bass lives east of the Interstate on Hackamore Rd. with his wife Kathy and has a daughter in college. He is Sales Manager of Nationmak Inc.

Neil Bass

Neil is a 23-year resident of Sarasota County and is originally from Atlanta. He is the Democratic candidate for Sarasota County Charter Review Board on November 7.



Tom Price, GEO's long-time Treasurer, is a barber who served on the state board for his profession. He was a candidate in 1998 for election to the Board of County Commissioners, District 4, and has been active in the National Estuary Program. Tom lives in Coral Cove

Tom Price

with his wife, Nancy.



Les Inglis

Les Inglis has been retired here in the Sarasota area for the past twelve years. Before that he ran a public manufacturing company in Cincinnati. He lives on Casey Key with his wife, Charlene, and their dogs and cats. He is a student of Spanish and Second World War History, and he has written two books on the vegetarian lifestyle.

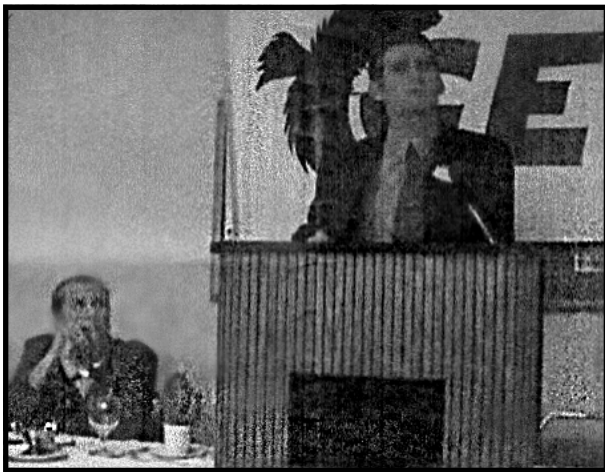


Greg Nowaski

Greg Nowaski, our newest GEO Director, has long been active in Sarasota County issues. Greg represents GEO on the Southwest Florida Water Management District Environmental Advisory Council. Before retiring to Sarasota, Greg lived and worked in New York. He lives in Sarasota with his wife Donna and three of his four daughters.

100 Attend April Meeting

The April 8, 2000 GEO luncheon and annual meeting was a great success, as 100 GEO members and guests gathered to hear speaker **Jon Thaxton** and GEO's Environmental Hero of the Year **Jono Miller**, as well as Sarasota City Commissioner (and past GEO President) **Mary Quillin**. Jon advised that Sarasota County's current plans are enough to accommodate planned growth for the next 50 years and opposed any further increase. Jono alerted us to plans to tap the Myakka River for water supply and other threats to the environment. We all learned much and an enjoyable time was had by all.



Bits and Pieces

Municipality Madness - As if it wasn't enough to combat plans to open up eastern Sarasota County to intense urbanization, the cities of Sarasota, Venice and North Port are all in various stages of pro-growth madness. Sarasota is considering proposals by Miami planner Andres Duany to turn the public bayfront over to developers and to allow commercial intrusion into neighborhoods, while ignoring the impending gridlock from its 1998 decision to exempt a square mile of the city from traffic concurrency restraints on development. Venice and North Port are charging ahead with huge annexations to add new urban development to the cities without adequate environmental protections or requirements that growth pay its own way. Although Sarasota County Commissioners could do more about bad annexations, they are to be congratulated for their recent votes to challenge North Port in court and to require it to apply County environmental regulations to the annexed lands.

Salivating About Desal - Our "way-to-go" award goes to the woman who, after hearing a SWFWMD Water District spokesman tout Tampa's desalination of seawater at a huge power plant as an example for Sarasota County, asked him, "On whose beach are we going to build this power plant?"

Keep Our Airport Elections - On October 11, GEO President Dan Lobeck will debate Argus Foundation Executive Director Kerry Kirschner on a proposal to take away the public's right to elect the Airport Authority. (Guess which side we're on). The debate, sponsored by the Better Government Association, begins at 7 p.m. at the South Gate Community Center. The measure will appear on the November 7 general election ballot.

***** ★ Bass, Thaxton and Atkins ★ *****

In the November 7 general election, GEO recommends **Neil Bass** for Charter Review Board and **Jon Thaxton** and **Fredd Atkins** for County Commission

Sea Mammal Defender To Speak - Floridians for a Sustainable Population and GEO are sponsoring a speech by Greenpeace founder Capt. Paul Watson, who has rammed several illegal whaling boats, on November 3 at 7:30 pm at the Airport Holiday Inn.

Time For School Impact Fees - Kudos to School Board candidate Sharon Mitchell, who was persuaded by GEO late in the campaign to advocate school impact fees — and almost won! Sarasota County now has impact fees for roads, parks, libraries, emergency services, water facilities and sewers. Aren't schools just as important? The School Board has dallied on school impact fees for years, as its members make campaign pledges to builders and developers to oppose them. Its time for the Sarasota County Commission to adopt school impact fees on its own, as they did in Orange County (Orlando), over the reluctance of the School Board. A year from now may be too late, if the Legislature passes a bill prohibiting school impact fees in any but the 15 counties that now have them.

Hold The Maio - GEO has called for the resignation of Sarasota County Planning Commissioner Alan Maio due to his repeated conflicts of interest as a planning consultant for local developers. On Comprehensive Plan amendments, rezonings and other matters, Maio consistently casts his votes in favor of development interests and against the public interest. At other times, Maio often leaves the room to avoid a vote in a matter where he is actively working for the developer. Maio, interestingly, was a restaurant owner when he was appointed to the Planning Commission. He also now serves on the Board of Directors of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce and the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council. Maio's current term on the Planning Commission ends in July, 2000. GEO believes it should end well before then.



Send Them A Message

Your Voice *Can* Make A Difference

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Longboat Key Observer

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Saturday **October 21** 11:30-3:30

Join Us for Our **GEO**
Picnic

Free To GEO Members
And Their Guests
(Join Now For \$15)



**Fun
&
Sun**

(Or Shade)



Take The South Bridge Almost To The South End

We Provide The
Burgers, Hot
Dogs, Brauts and
Drinks.



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



Bring Your Own
Beer or Wine If
You Like



Reservations Required — Please Fill Out And Return The Enclosed Card Or Call 364-8777