

2007 IN REVIEW

Wetlands

This issue followed us from Tallahassee to Tampa this year. Taking away local control of wetlands has been tried during session for the past three years, and will continue again this year. Once in Tampa, our EPC commission picked up the same mantra and tried to eliminate our wetlands division. After rallying enormous local opposition, sending two letters to the Governor, a trip to Tallahassee to meet with Governor's Legal Counsel and Charlie Gautier of the Department of Community Affairs, numerous meetings and public hearings (and oh, yes, let's not forget all the alerts sent) - we successfully stopped the commission from elimination of the wetlands division, but the hybrid is proving to be a tool to attempt weakening our rules. We will continue our vigilant watch. In 2008, EPC's legal staff is proposing language that mandates a local government to take over delegation from the state if they meet all requirements of the statute to do so. Rep. Kevin Ambler is co-chair of the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee and is seriously considering adding this into a committee bill. Since C4RG has taken a position to support the streamlining of the environmental permitting process, we finally have something positive to support in this session!

Transportation

As you are aware, we were very instrumental in getting 4 amendments added to the TBARTA bill that included public hearings, mediation process and accountability. With these added, we stood in support of the bill, which passed. I have been attending as many of the regional meetings on the regional transportation plan as possible. The TBARTA group hopes to have a plan by January 2009.

Reality Check

We are a stakeholder in the 50 year regional visioning process. After the initial meeting, this effort is now called One Bay. The Tampa Bay Partnership has been sponsoring this visionary effort, and we are keeping an eye on it.

Progress Energy

C4RG is also a stakeholder in a regional group making recommendation on utility transmission lines placement from the planned nuclear power plant in Levy County. So far, these lines in Hillsborough/Pasco County we are hoping to run in already existing corridors so as to not have to disturb additional neighborhoods and conservation lands. There is a bill being sponsored by Senator Bennett this session allowing these lines into conservation lands among other things. In looking at the location of existing lines, there are already many in conservation areas, so placing new lines in existing areas is not as critical as creating new pathways through environmentally sensitive lands. One huge recommendation we made at the Progress Energy stakeholder group was to stay out of these lands.

Florida Forever Act

C4RG is part of a dialogue on funding and tools for Florida's land and water conservation efforts. Specifically, we hope to file a bill this session to keep the Florida Forever land acquisition program in place, but possibly modified. This is one issue that all sides of growth management agree needs to be in place.

Hillsborough County's Neighborhood Conference 2007

We presented a lecture series on "2007 Legislative Session and What it Means to Neighborhoods". Through this conference we were able to get our message out, and added additional sponsors eventually.

Comp Plan and Land Development Code

As always we are watching those laws that directly affect the whole county. There are some very scary proposals in the current mix, and I'm sure there will be more.

USF Land Use History Project

I was interviewed this year as a land use citizen expert by the Patel Center for Global solutions. My 2 hour interview is now part of the Special Collections Oral History Section of the USF Library archives. Although this encompassed years of my growth management experience, C4RG was the conclusion of trying to work together as a community.

Denise Layne
Executive Director
C4RG