



NEWS

Dedicated to Quality Growth

P.O. Box 643868 Vero Beach, FL 32964-3868
www.indianriverna.com

VITAL ISSUES

- * ***Our Water Supply***
- * ***School Concurrency***
- * ***Mobile Home Parks***
- * ***Fellsmere Annexations***
- * ***The Need for Charter Government***

THE POWER OF PEOPLE

On November 16th, 2006 the IRNA sponsored a capacity crowd luncheon at the Carriage House for members and guests. The speaker was John Higgs, Chairman of IRNA. Here are highlights of his remarks:

“In a few short years, IRNA has grown into a countywide organization with close to 6000 members. We have accomplished a great deal in our short existence. With your support, we have made strong contributions to:

- * The election of a majority of the City Councils of Vero Beach and Sebastian
- * The election of a majority of the County Commission
- * The passage of the Urban Service Line referendum by 71%

We have accomplished this, because we are the voice of the majority of the people in this county. But to continue to speak for you, we need your 2007 IRNA contribution, because we are up against heavy expenditures by lobbyists and developers. With your support, we will continue to fight to get officials into office who share all of our objectives for our county.

Here are some of the most pressing issues we face in 2007 and beyond [each is addressed later in this newsletter]:

- * ***Our water supply is in danger***
- * ***Our schools are not scheduled to be able to handle the demand on them coming from currently approved developer plans***
- * ***Mobile Home owners are under attack from developers***
- * ***Fellsmere annexation program threatens county stability***
- * ***The need for a Charter giving control of our building codes to voters***

We are dedicated to making sure that the growth that's coming to our county is quality growth. To do this, the IRNA needs to be strong. And to be strong, you need to send your 2007 contribution now. Get involved-make a difference in preserving our quality of life.

Candidate Luncheon

February 8th

Meet IRNA's endorsed candidates for Indian River Shores, Sebastian and Vero Beach City Councils.

Save the Date! Notice forthcoming.

**You Need Us! We Need You! We Need Each Other!
Send your 2007 contribution in the enclosed postage paid envelope today!**

THE COUNTY'S WATER SUPPLY: EXPERTS ARE QUESTIONING WHETHER IT WILL LAST BEYOND 2013!

**Many suspected our county's water was becoming a serious problem,
But no one suspected it was so immediate.**

Our new county commission seems to be aware that Indian River County's uncontrolled growth is not sustainable. At the December 6th water resource workshop our Utility Department admitted we have a serious water problem. At the same workshop, the St. Johns River Water Management District supported the view that our county's water source may be adversely impacted by 2013—only 6 years away.

Problem: Indian River County has water resources, but is not in control of them.

The St. Johns River Water Management District owns one-third of Indian River County. The size of this water-resource property has been reassuring. It implied that there is a large amount of land that cannot be developed and that there is a source of water to help the county meet its growth needs. Unfortunately, during the past few months, it looks like such assumptions are wrong, and on both counts.

St. Johns has agreed to exchange valuable conservation land located west of I-95 and south of Fellsmere for land located in the western part of the county. There is little doubt that the private interests acquiring these conservation lands will seek to have the lands annexed by Fellsmere and rezoned for a large residential development.

Problem: Drilling new wells could have harmful consequences. New wells, with their increased pumping, also impose risks to the Indian River Lagoon. The Lagoon would be the repository of quantities of brine disposed from the reverse osmosis system, the process, which removes salt from artesian water.

These new developments are frightening for Indian River County residents. Our water supply is threatened and the proposed solutions to the problem pose additional problems. These issues will be extremely important to the County Commissioners in 2007 and the IRNA will keep you informed and represent your best interests.

The Fellsmere Annexation Issue

Under Florida law, a municipality has the right to annex contiguous property under certain circumstances. Furthermore, property contiguous to the annexed property becomes a candidate to also be annexed. There is no limit on annexation. Once done, the county loses control over zoning, density and height controls in the annexed property. As an example Fellsmere could annex much of the property outside the Urban Service Line and permit significantly more dense development. It has already annexed 3,700 acres, thereby increasing its size 8 fold, and has permitted one building that well exceeds County height restrictions. Fellsmere has also changed the zoning in the property it annexed from one unit per 10 acres to three per acre, thereby permitting up to 11,000 units where only 370 were possible before. Thus the fear that all the efforts to manage our county's growth could be defeated by the annexation route is not mere speculation. Moreover the County loses tax revenue in annexation and is responsible for infrastructure costs such as water, sewers, police and roads. The IRNA and others are very concerned and are working hard to persuade the city to be reasonable.

Mobile Homes

Because South Florida Manufactured Home Parks are being sold and converted into high density and high rise developments, the residents of these parks in Indian River County have serious concerns their lifestyles would also fall to the developers. These residents formed a Coalition representing 4149 of the 4700 manufactured home lots in the County. They sought the support of the IRNA as the single most effective voice in the County and received it. On October 24, 2006 the Indian River County Commission voted 5-0 to direct staff to prepare an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Use Plan establishing Manufactured/Mobile Home Parks as an Accessory Use limiting density to 6/8 units per acre. The process for acceptance of this Amendment is expected to take one year. The IRNA will continue to provide support to the Coalition throughout the process. We believe this proposal carefully balances the legitimate interests of the property owners and the residents.

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The Right Answer? Charter Government!

The major initiative of the IRNA in 2007 is Charter Government for Indian River County.

Charter Government will not alter the importance of electing good people to the County Commission or City & Town Councils; but it will ensure that extremely important planning and zoning decisions will be made through an open process with the consent of the voters, and not just by the vote of three commissioners or council persons.

The Charter for Indian River County should exactly mirror our current form of government, with the exception that any changes in the present height and density limitations, whether in an incorporated or unincorporated area, will *require voter approval in a county wide referendum*. This mirrors exactly the current Charter of the City of Vero Beach as it applies to the City. Moreover, if any incorporated area in our county annexes county land, any major zoning changes will require voter approval in a county wide referendum. Our county can be protected from the intense growth being experienced to our north in Palm Bay and to our south in St. Lucie County with this initiative. It would also protect us from high rises, which most of us do not want. Otherwise, every election leaves us open to irresponsible changes in density requirements. If you do not believe that – *just look south*. The County Commission at its first meeting following the fall elections voted 5-0 to explore Charter Government. A first workshop is scheduled for January 17, and no doubt there will be several additional workshops, all open to the public, to assure that all Charter Government questions are thoroughly explored. Only then will a proposed Charter go to public hearing and, if approved by the County Commission, to the voters for formal adoption.

Does the IRNA favor commercial and business development?

The answer is YES! We support commercial, health, research, educational, hi-tech or other manufacturing projects. They are good for everyone. We have recently favored a neighborhood clinic and a bank when others opposed them. Our position has been that concurrency requirements have nothing to do with local businesses, and in fact, local businesses probably decrease traffic. We strongly support expansion of the Piper facility in Vero and would welcome educational and hi-tech businesses in particular. The benefits of such growth in our county are obvious: good paying jobs, tax revenues, and support for our commercial businesses. One of our most active members runs a hi-tech business that is one of the largest private employers in the County. He knows that our unique life style benefits help him attract highly qualified people and permit him to compete favorably on a national basis. It's obviously also beneficial for him and his family and he is fully supportive of the IRNA efforts. The IRNA support for limited Charter Government also benefits businesses. Preserving existing height limitations and residential density will help protect us from all the evils of over-development that are so common in our state. In fact, it should make our community more attractive to the types of businesses we need and want.

What is Hometown Democracy?

Hometown Democracy is a state wide grass roots initiative to put growth decisions directly into the hands of voters rather than developers and special interests. The organizers now have 150,000 signatures and need over 600,000 to qualify to be placed on the ballot in 2008. The petition states that "Public participation in local government comprehensive land use planning benefits the conservation and protection of Florida's natural resources and scenic beauty, and the long-term quality of life of Floridians. Therefore, before a local government may adopt a new comprehensive land use plan, or amend a comprehensive land use plan, such proposed plan or plan amendment shall be subject to the vote of the electors of the local government by referendum—"

The Florida Hometown Democracy movement is consistent with the goals of the Urban Service Line referendum in Indian River County which was approved by 71% of the county voters and strongly endorsed by the IRNA.

The IRNA strongly supports the Hometown Democracy effort and urges its members to sign the petition. A petition can be obtained from the IRNA web site, www.indianriverirna.com. Learn more at innfo@floridahometowndemocracy.com or by calling 866-779-5513.

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IRNA Website: A Must Read! **www.IndianRiverNA.com**

Did you know that you can read the local paper anytime, just by clicking on our website and clicking - *Read the Press Journal?*

The left navigation bar includes the titles of several timely items:

Our Concern: Defines the reasons for our existence and perseverance.

Newsletters: Features all previous issues, beginning with July 2004.

Important Information: Contains articles impacting Vero Beach and Indian River County.

The Bulging Pipeline: A must read, series by Ralph King clearly identifies today's dilemma with growth.

Political Committee: Explains how you can make contributions to our political action committee, by check or online.

Membership: Shows the different categories, payable by check or online.

Elected Officials: State, county, city explains who they are and how to contact them.

Register to Vote: Tells the process and gives absentee ballot information.

SCHOOL CONCURRENCY

Schools will be added to the list of county services required to be built concurrent with development beginning in 2008. Indian River County was one of six counties chosen in 2006 to develop a model school concurrency regulation for implementation by other Florida counties.

The blueprint for creating the model is an Interlocal Agreement between Indian River County, the Cities of Fellsmere, Sebastian and Vero Beach, the Town of Indian River Shores, and the Indian River County School Board. It defines the process for coordinating and sharing information toward a determination of adequacy of school facilities when growth hits.

IRNA has been monitoring the process, analyzing drafts of the agreement, and providing input to the parties to ensure that the resulting regulation is an effective, fair, and legal tool for managing county growth and for ensuring that school facilities and resources are, in fact, in place at the time that the impacts of growth occur.

However, the IRNA has serious concerns that the school concurrency model, as it is now drafted, is more a growth enabler and facilitator than a tool for responsible growth management. IRNA will have a strong voice in the ultimate design of the regulation and its application in the management of county growth. Without our input, the result could be a disaster and would lead to unnecessary litigation, higher taxes and a force compelling residential growth without planning.


**INDIAN RIVER
NEIGHBORHOOD
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dedicated to quality growth

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