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IRNA Celebrates Five Years of Accomplishments And Is More Relevant Than Ever

The Indian River Neighborhood Association has been in existence for five years and to quote from our first newsletter in April 2004, “The purpose of the Indian River Neighborhood Association is to ensure that the tradition of controlled growth, which has made Indian River County the envy of the Treasure Coast, is continued.”

Our principle issue in 2004 was getting growth under control and trying to inform the voters that building an economy based on a boom and bust industry was not sustainable. We didn’t prevent what we called in 2006, a “bubble”, but we like to think that we prevented it from getting much worse. In the process, we made a number of contributions to preserve neighborhoods and the environment and to make the county and municipal governments more responsive to the needs of the majority of the residents rather than to out of town developers and special interests

Fortunately for the IRNA and the county we have a very strong and dedicated group of volunteers who have diverse talents, technical skills and experiences who are willing to work to make the county a better place for all of us to live. IRNA members analyze the issues, attend almost all the county and municipal meetings and speak out for positions which voters tell us are important.

We have represented you in the past and will continue to represent you in the future and we need your support!

The IRNA Political Committee

The IRNA Political Committee is our main source of funds for the support of candidates in the upcoming 2010 elections. In the last election, we were outspent, plain and simple. Money provides visibility and voice to the issues that we have come to regard as critical to the continued quality of life we enjoy in this county. **Your contributions are vital to this effort. Please, be as generous as you can, at least as generous as you have been in the past and give more of you can. Your support has been the lifeblood of quality growth decisions then and is even more important today.**



THANK YOU!

**You Need Us! We Need You!
We Need Each Other!**

Send your 2010 dues in the enclosed postage paid envelope today!

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The Perfect Storm

Why the IRNA Is Needed Now, More Than Ever!

Many government officials, from the municipal and county level all the way to the halls of Tallahassee are operating in panic mode. Some have the “deer in the headlights” look. The worldwide recession and the bust in residential housing has led to an historically high unemployment rate for the county. Housing prices have fallen and tax revenues are dwindling. The mid-term elections find candidates faced with an angry constituency. This is a perfect storm for bad decision, quick fix legislation and more shady back room deals. Be afraid citizens... be very afraid!

The county’s landscape regulations we put in place a few years ago are a prime target. So are the Land Development Regulations (LDRs) concerned with setbacks and open space. On the state and local level, politicians are exploiting the public’s fear, calling for dismantling the Department of Community Affairs, making deals with business buddies and campaign contributors. The result will be a disaster for our environment, our long term economic health and our quality of life.

We cannot and we must not let this happen.

The Indian River Neighborhood Association has joined with other organizations to properly plan for our recovery. There are no silver bullets and no quick fixes that can turn the recession around. It takes hard work and persistence. The IRNA monitors our local governments by attending meetings of their elected officials as well as their appointed committees. We communicate regularly with our membership on issues that are important to them and through our contacts and relationships with these lawmakers and their respective staff, we are able to speak to our members’ concerns in addition to heading off legislation detrimental to the citizens of Indian River County.

A great example of this was a recent attempt by developers and others to give authority to county staff to grant Permanent Exceptions to various LDRs. This was to be done without public notice of any kind or even any notice to adjoining landowners. Proponents of this ordinance quoted high unemployment and excessive government regulations (mostly landscaping regulations) as the cause of all our maladies. The IRNA vigorously opposed the bad portions of this proposal, made clear and cogent arguments at public meetings, and debunked the faulty logic. When the final ordinance emerged, it contained all of the IRNA’s suggestions: public hearing, proper notice to adjacent landowners and approval at the County Commission level. No secret permanent exceptions by staff!

Had we not prevailed in this effort, landowners who bought property with the expectation of the benefits of the landscaping LDRs, and paying for proper landscaping, would suddenly discover themselves in a situation where their neighbors were NOT held to the same high standards. The result would be a potential loss of property value and a diminished quality of life. This would have been patently and grossly unfair.

Thus, the IRNA was able to bring reason and good law out of what could have been a gross injustice.

The Indian River Neighborhood Association knows that proper planning and preparation are the tools to take advantage of the recovery, when it will surely come. The IRNA’s mission is more important than ever now. The proposed Tax Abatement program, TEMPORARY suspension of PARTS of impact fees and an investment in Indian River State College are examples of planning designed to bring about a sustainable and diversified economy, without destroying the very things about our community that we cherish.

The IRNA needs your help as the sole, non-partisan, non-profit voice of calm and reason in a time of government panic. Please help us with your contributions and your voice.



The IRNA This Summer

It was a busy summer, indeed! The IRNA attended every Indian River County Board of County Commissioners meeting as well as many municipal council meetings. Our legislative efforts tracked and lobbied against state house and senate bills that would have lifted impact fees and dismantled the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). We were unsuccessful in stopping Senate Bill 360 (elimination of state mandated transportation concurrency in urban areas) and House Bill 2080 (Establishment of five “Water Czars” that now grant water rights instead of the district’s governing boards). However, our lobbying has called for the legislature to revisit both bills in the coming session. On the local level, the IRNA was instrumental in preventing the county from by-passing hearings and notice to exceptions to our Land Development Regulations and ensuring County Commission approval for any exceptions. This odious ordinance would have opened the door to much mischief in the county building and landscaping codes. The City of Vero Beach brought up the issue of building heights on Cardinal Drive during the summer, hoping to catch many members of the public unaware. Our visits and phone calls to the City helped put this effort on a schedule for the coming winter session, if at all.

The IRNA also participated in a planning session with the City of Fellsmere, took part in the City of Sebastian’s 4th of July celebrations with a booth in the park, as well as the annual Hibiscus Festival in downtown Vero Beach. The IRNA’s website has undergone a major facelift and is easier to navigate than ever. We encourage you to visit the website at www.indianriverna.com

Our IRNA Executive Director, Brian Carman invites your calls and comments on the issues you feel are important and would like to hear your suggestions about how we can better represent you with a better, more influential organization. 772-794-IRNA (4762)

Membership

As an organization, growth is essential to our ability to make a difference in the community. Below is a paraphrased note from our Membership Committee Chair, Buzz Herrmann on how to approach your neighbors about the IRNA.

My name is Buzz Herrmann and I live in our community. I would like to tell you why I am an active supporter and member of the Indian River Neighborhood Association. The IRNA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization made up of citizens in neighborhoods throughout Indian River County. As I trust you would agree our county is quieter and less congested than most others in Florida. This is, in part due to the county and municipal ordinances which protect and preserve our unique quality of life.

The IRNA has remained active in county and city governments to support decisions regarding the welfare of our natural resources and to provide controls on taxes and the economic burden on our citizens that uncontrolled growth brings.

If you do not become involved in the political process, you are leaving it up to those who do get involved... and you may not like the outcome.

I encourage you to become a member, to support those in the IRNA who spend their time and efforts to keep Indian River County the jewel of the Treasure Coast. Please visit our website www.indianriverna.com or call our office at 772-794-4762.

We encourage our members to make their annual contribution to membership now. You may do so with the envelope provided in this newsletter. Thank you for all your support!