

Clearwater Neighborhood Coalition Monthly Membership Meeting

Minutes – January 3, 2022

Via Zoom

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by CNC 2021 Vice President Chris Michalek
2. Ms. Michalek presented Nominating Committee's following recommendations for 2022 CNC Officers

Carl Schrader – President

Bill Jonson – Vice President

Kelly Kelly – Secretary

Rudy Michalek - Treasurer

David Lillesand made a motion to accept the slate of officers and Kristin Langley seconded the motion. Those present unanimously accepted the slate.

3. Kathleen Beckman swore in the new officers.
4. Carl Schrader thanked the 2021 board and said they did a great job.
5. Special Presentations:
 - a. Clearwater's new city manager, Jon Jennings, was not present yet. Carl asked the next speaker to go first – David Margolis, Clearwater's new city attorney.

David Margolis said he is from Orlando, where he was a city of attorney. He gave a brief synopsis of his background. He said there were hospitality and environmental challenges there. He said Orlando ideas may not make sense for Clearwater. David believes in doing the right thing, being responsive to the citizens it serves. He believes that citizens have a right to be heard. His focus is on engaging several outside law firms. In his day-to-day, his staff are assigned to different departments, such as litigation or transactional lawyers. He believes first and foremost in putting square pegs into square holes. Each person has a different skill-set and he optimizes those skill sets. He believes you don't fix it if it's not broken. His team is open to possibilities and ideas. The previous city attorney did a good job, but maybe some questions have not been asked in a long time. He is not a micro manager. His message to his staff is if you do the right thing, I was always have your back.

- b. Carl Schrader next introduced Jon Jennings.

Jon Jennings said he especially wanted to thank Joanna Siskin (previous CNC President.) He said having a robust and very engaged neighborhood association is critical. He is from Portland, Maine and spent time in Boston

and Washington D.C., among other cities. He has private and public sector experience and will bring both to the forefront in his new position as Clearwater City Manager. He is passionate about municipal government. He worked in the United States Senate. He believes in making a difference and making things better.

He said, "I hit the ground running. My intent is for you to get to know me personally and get to know my heart. I like to be called Jon. I'm not into 'Mr.' I've been here seven weeks, I think, and what I found is that the city is very well-managed, but there are areas where we need to move the city forward. I believe in listening and getting things done. We may not be able to get everything done that you want done. We're going to start with sidewalks and streets – enhancing the community. Sustainability. Work with the Church of Scientology. I'm definitely developing a work-related relationship with David Miscavige. I've had about 10 phone calls and one in person meeting with him already. We're involved in talking about real estate. They own properties not just in downtown, but properties all over the city. Having a productive relationship is key to future growth.

"We currently have 211 sidewalk issues. We expect all of them to be resolved in four to six months.

"I'd like to reorganize the [city] departments to make them more efficient. Become more involved in neighborhoods. Bringing back neighborhood liaisons. I was told there were six or seven of them back in 2008 or 2009 and those positions were cut. We want to have dedicated people working with all of you and the rest of the community. It's critical to do these kinds of things. I'm so honored to be selected as the city manager. Government is not what it used to be. I'd like to re-establish trust in government."

As a senior, he said he was President of the student body and they took a trip to Washington D.C. and he was able to listen to President Reagan who said, "Government is not the answer to everything, but it certainly is a part of it."

Questions: Carl opened the floor up for questions and was the first to ask where Jon Jennings sees the city in five years? Jon said, "We won't all hold hands and sing Kumbaya, but we will be updating codes, getting more workforce housing, activating downtown. That's what I'm spending time on right now. We will need to spend on critical infrastructure, increase recreation facilities, libraries and make it a more unified city. Re-establish community links with all of us working together, not angry at each other."

Howard Warshauer said he treated himself to an electric bike this Christmas and he would like to know if there are plans to improve the Pinellas Trail. He said, "The Clearwater section is not looked well upon. I

challenge you to make it better.” Jon replied, “I want Clearwater to be the best at everything. I have a competitive background. I won't have all the answers. I need to hear from bikers – if there's a bike coalition or groups of bikers, I'd like to hear from them at my email, Jon.Jennings@MyClearwater.com.

Elizabeth Drayer asked, “What do you see as our biggest environmental challenges?” Jon said, “Right at the beginning when I came here, I was surprised there wasn't more in [environmentally friendly] infrastructure. Clearwater Beach in the future may be underwater. Kathleen Beckman has done a fantastic job in this arena. There are things we need to get caught up on – not just one thing.

Cheryl Acton said, “In Miami there is a lot of traffic. The Miami Metrorail is packed. There was an initiative here [Greenlight Pinellas]. There's a chance to develop some kind of rail to the airport or train stations.” Jon answered, “Some of that was voted down in this region. Tomorrow I have a meeting with somebody who is proposing a gondola project from downtown Clearwater to the beach. I've always been more partial to light rail. It has to be done together with the federal government. It would be ideal to unite various communities.”

Bill Jonson said, “I appreciate your dedication to getting things done. A former ULI study suggests that smaller projects be completed. Jon said, “That's certainly my hope. There are too many swings. I'd like to see a proposal for a new City Hall. Honestly, we just need to move forward. I want city staff to bring solutions too. Establish a relationship with the Church of Scientology. Getting sidewalks done. People deserve sidewalks that are not crumbling under their feet. Restructuring of how departments are organized. A lot of it doesn't make sense to me – when a department does not know what the other departments are doing. It's really about being responsible to the community. The council also has to be responsive to what we're trying to do.”

Kathleen Agnew said, “If you can't do things, the community needs to know. I'd accept things better if you tell me what's going on, if you can't do things you should tell us. Communications need to be better. If you tell me what's going on, I'm more likely to accept it. I wrote a letter to a department head three months ago and still have not received a response.” Jon answered, “Let me know what department. Better yet, attach that letter. I want to make those changes here. It may not mean we agree, but we can have those discussions. Neighborhood Liaisons will increase these communications. I respond to every letter.”

Carl Schrader said, “Communication does seem to be a problem. Thank you, Jon.” Jon said, “I can't talk about communication without

communicating with all of you. I'd like to be a regular part of these meetings and come back to speak as well."

6. Member Comments

- a. Paul J. said, "I want to become a member. I haven't personally written a check in years. There needs to be a way to make it easier, to join digitally [online.]

Kathleen Agnew typed in comments: But the old way of mailing in a check still needs to be kept as well.

7. Proposed Committees – Carl Schrader presented the following the proposed committees.

- a. Imagine Clearwater Committee. There is a city consultant on Imagine Clearwater Conservancy to manage the park. I'd like to see what she envisions. She will be giving a presentation to the City Council on January 31. David Lillesand is the Chair of that Committee. If you are interested in joining, you can contact him (David@LillesandLaw.com) or email clearwaterneighborhoods@gmail.com.
- b. Conflict Resolution Committee: We're carrying over the Conflict Resolution Committee. David Lillesand answered, "We are in the process of drafting the final report."
 - i. Chris Michalek said, "There are three positions on the Community Development board that are coming up in February. We may want to move sooner on this.
 - ii. Kathleen Beckman added, "I received notice today about openings on several Advisory Boards including the Environmental Board.
- c. Environmental Committee: President Schrader asked for members interested in this committee. The Environmental Committee will consist of Barbara, Glenna Wentworth and Chris Michalek
- d. Membership Committee: Carl Schrader said in reference to the Membership Committee, "I'd like to see ice cream trucks and invite neighborhoods to them. Find a common ground with younger people, like having Pizza with the PoPo." Barbara asked if there would be a Neighborhood Day in 2020.

Carl Schrader said, "We want to increase our presence of social media with Facebook, Twitter and MailChimp. We need to break down barriers with free ice cream and pizza in the park where it would be nice to have a table and pass out literature. We need a Neighborhood Coordinator. Neighborhoods Day is a good start with prizes and competitions."

Glenna Wentworth said, "Michael Lavery [with the city] is in charge of that day."

Maranda Douglas said, "We should take advantage of local businesses with Escape Rooms, SimCity and Axe Throwing to attract a younger membership."

Lina Teixeira added that reaching out on social media on all platforms is where to reach youth.

Carl Schrader said that he would be working with Kelly Kelly to get platforms such as TikTok.

- e. Legislative Committee: Carl brought up a Legislative Committee and working with Beth Rollins from the Florida League of Cities. He said, "Legislature wants to take away control from local government."

Elizabeth Drayer commented that a committee is not necessary with this. A letter may be all that is needed.

Kathleen Beckman said, "The Suncoast League of Cities encompasses all of Pinellas, Hillsborough, and some of Pasco. I'm the Vice President and a liaison. We have weekly and monthly meetings. Members don't share the same concerns, but we all agree on Home Rule. You can decide if you want this committee or just a regular report from me. There's a page on their website. We just need to be ready to push an email quickly and have a conduit."

Bill Jonson, "...To let us know about the different development projects."

Chris Michalek, "We could have a summary. Have one person go to the website and see what's coming up."

David Allbritton said, "The [Florida] Legislature listens to big groups. Not small groups. Make it known what your priorities are with the big groups."

David Lillesand said, "We could have a committee of one. Make one person responsible for this issue. I agree with what Chris said."

Someone added that there's an app on your phone that pings when something comes up that is adverse to Home Rule. Both Kathleen Beckman and Bill Jonson do not know the current status of that app.

Kathleen Beckman said, "Form letters [from sites or apps] are ineffective. It really needs to be your own statement."

Bruce Rector said, "Sam [Hutkin, President of the Clearwater Beach Association] is all over this. In the last session, things escalated very quickly. I can work with Sam to stay on top of this."

- f. Bylaws Committee: Rudy Michalek said, "The votes were 12 to 1 to approve the new Bylaws. We need to still have this committee because we may need to go into the Articles of Incorporation and modify them, or add to the Bylaws, so there should still be a committee."
- g. Events Committee: Carl Schrader said, "The Events Committee will encompass the Candidate Forum on January 23rd via Zoom because it

can reach a wider audience. On the Events Committee are Marcia Powell, Cheryl Acton, Karen Cunningham and Glenna Wentworth

Lina Teixeira said, "There will be several candidate forums: Morningside, East Gateway, the City's, the Beach, St. Pete College and North Greenwood."

Glenna Wentworth said that Morningside will only be informational. Cheryl mentioned in the Chat that her email is cheract@hotmail.com.

Cheryl Acton asked if there are any sports competitions between neighborhoods now? Carl Schrader said, "To my knowledge, no."

8. New Business

Marilyn Turman mentioned that there is a market right now on the first Saturday of every month at Tropicana Field in St. Pete and they are bringing that to Clearwater. The first one will be on February 26 from 3 p.m. – 8 p.m. at the Walter C. Campbell Complex next to Jack Russell Stadium. There will be entertainment [and food trucks and bounce houses, with over 100 vendors.] The person running it holds a Business Academy where the vendors can go through training.

9. The City Council candidates who were present were invited to present a one-minute elevator speech on why they were running.

Maranda Douglas said she is interested in helping small businesses and serving the community.

Lina Teixeira said, "I love and have a passion for Clearwater. I'm focused on the environment, small business, human trafficking and code enforcement. You should look at electing a councilmember as if you are hiring someone. I have first-hand knowledge of what the city is facing. I have experience, passion, education, knowledge, a track record. With all of that, I'm the person to hire."

David Allbritton said, "[As a councilmember], I did not raise taxes. I get things done. We saw Imagine Clearwater come to completion. We still need a parking garage for Imagine Clearwater. (He mentions another project on Myrtle Avenue.) We hired a new City Manager and City Attorney. My experience is in building [contracting.] We still need a customer-friendly Building Department. Clearwater is a tough place to get a permit. It shouldn't be. I was raised in Clearwater. I have family – kids and grandkids – here. Clearwater has a lot of potential and I'd like to see it grow."

Other City Council candidates – Gerry Lee, Jonathan Wade, and Aaron Smith-Levin – were not present.

10. Carl Schrader adjourned the meeting at 8:40 pm.