



**The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County
P.O. Box 13693 St. Petersburg, Florida 33733**

Ms. Leslie Curran
Chairman, St. Petersburg City Council
P.O. Box 2842
St. Petersburg, FL 33731

March 25, 2010

Madam Chairman:

Thank you for attending the C.O.N.A. Board meeting on March 17th. It was a pleasure to have you and your fellow Council Members join us.

The C.O.N.A. Board has given due consideration to the February 25, 2010 draft proposal to swap out non-conforming static billboards for eight new digital billboards within the City, receiving presentations from C.O.N.A.'s Land Development and Historic Preservation Committee and Clear Channel Outdoor, Inc.

After hearing from both parties and allowing for Q&A and discussion the CONA Board has reaffirmed our previous position **AGAINST** the city's adoption of the proposal at this time, for the following reasons:

- There remains a grave concern about the impact of these electronic signs on traffic safety. We believe the Council should at a minimum defer action until after the pending FHWA Driver Attention study is complete.
- Digital billboards could have significant negative implications for our city's look, character and quality of life for residents and visitors. As one of our Board members said "St. Petersburg is not Tampa", and we should not strive to model their appearance.
- These signs consume large amounts of energy and would add significant pollution to our environment. A study by a chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council in San Antonio, Texas, found that the yearly carbon consumption of one digital billboard was equivalent to that of 13 average homes.
- If the City allows installation of these signs and later wants them moved, removed or otherwise limited, the cost to the city could be substantial and unaffordable.
- There are unknown legal risks and the billboard industry is noted for its use of litigation to overturn municipal sign ordinances. Local examples include litigation resulting in settlements in Tampa, Pinellas County and the City of Clearwater, as well as lawsuits that were later dismissed against Manatee County, Pinellas Park, Pinellas County, and New Port Richey.

As our sign code currently stands the City of St. Petersburg has a 'de-facto ban' on new billboards, digital or otherwise. C.O.N.A. asks that that Council maintain our existing sign ordinance for now, while simultaneously undertaking a comprehensive review of both on and off-premise sign regulations.

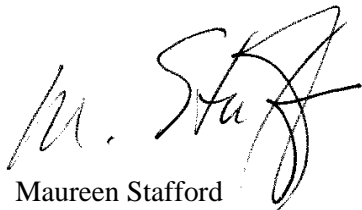
This review of our sign ordinance is supported by Mayor Foster and is necessary to protect our residents and visitors from inappropriate signage that is out of keeping with the character of our community.

Please contact the undersigned if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,



Travis Jarman
Chairman, C.O.N.A. Cityscape subcommittee



Maureen Stafford
Chairman, C.O.N.A. Land Development and Historic Preservation Committee



Will Michaels
President, Council of Neighborhood Associations

cc: Council Members
Mayor Bill Foster