

THAN
TAMPA HOMEOWNERS, AN ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS
ACTIVITIES OF THE YEAR 2008

Happy New Year, THAN People:

1. In December, looking back on what the old year brought seems to be a necessary prelude to entering the New Year. It seems that we feel a need to get a sense of where we are to avoid blindly stumbling into the future. With this in mind, I culled the minutes of the 10 meetings THAN had this year to select highlights. My criterion for choosing the items mentioned was to explain what THAN does and how it is involved in monitoring the care of the city. Not only do the people of THAN need this perspective, but they need to explain to the members of their neighborhood associations what THAN means and how it functions. The city officials and others who are on our e-mail list should also be aware of THAN's long involvement of citizen input into city decisions. They should know about the expertise THAN has accumulated and its willingness to help in any project proposed for the public good. We urge city administrators to include THAN as a valuable ally in forwarding an agenda of public improvement. THAN welcomes this cooperation.

As this is a synopsis of the minutes of 10 meetings, I selected representative items to explain THAN. More detail can be found in the minutes themselves. If you need copies of any of these minutes, let me know and I will e-mail them to you.

Remember that the Office of Neighborhood & Community Relations keeps a calendar of events on their web site: www.tampagov.net/neighborhoods. Inform them of your neighborhood activities and consult the calendar to see what others are doing.

THAN President Wofford Johnson has set up a THAN web site on the Neighborhood Link. The address is www.tampathan.org. Please look at it for information of interest to us all. Contact Wofford to praise or suggest modifications.

Sincerely yours,

Fredric Zerla, Secretary

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Our meetings are held at Union Station unless otherwise indicated.

The officers for 2008 were

President:	Wofford Johnson
Vice President:	Randy Baron
Treasurer:	Bill Duval
Secretary:	Fredric Zerla

As the year began, the Treasury contained \$8522.42. The balance at the last regular meeting in November was \$6162.69.

This report does not contain all of THAN's activities through the year, only those the Secretary considered representative of THAN's mission.

The January Meeting featured no outside presenter, but was used to discuss THAN issues. The Zoning Committee explained the proposed changes to the Zoning Code and its reaction to them. The first recommendation asked that S1 (administratively approved Wet Zoning) only be granted for temporary use. Next, that the requirement that crematoriums not be within 500 feet of a historic district be expanded to include residential areas. Finally the committee recommended removing the requirement for access walkways from trash cans to the street. THAN's Board of Directors voted to support these recommendations. THAN also heard an explanation of the proposed Green Ordinance for Tampa. This ordinance would encourage conservation and increased energy efficiency in Tampa's buildings.

In February, Councilman John Dingfelder discussed two major issues, the first of which was the need for campaign Finance Reform. He proposed an amendment to the City Charter to limit spending in campaigns for seats on Tampa City Council and possibly for Mayor. He contended that these campaigns have become far too expensive with the danger that they are being usurped by special interests. His second concern was the proposed Green Building Ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is to encourage developers to build environmentally friendly (green) projects. While the members of THAN applauded this initiative, they had reservations about some details. A lively discussion with Councilman Dingfelder followed.

At the March Meeting, representatives from the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) gave a power point presentation of regional transportation problems and their response. At this meeting, also, we were warned that City council was considering eliminating Public Comment at Workshops or Mascotte Room discussions. THAN responded by informing Council that it wants public comment of at least 3 minutes per person at Workshops. Worried that cost-cutting in the city administration would eliminate the Office of Neighborhood & Community Relations, THAN went on record asking the Mayor and Council to include the Office in the City Charter. The Mayor later responded that although she felt that the office was not large enough to include in the Charter, she had no intention of eliminating it. She values the many contacts this office has with neighborhood organizations and the community in general.

At the April Meeting, we were told that THAN's opposition to the elimination of public comment at Workshops has had an effect. City Council Chairman Tom Scott proposed a compromise. On the announcement of a coming Workshop, the decision as to whether public comment will be permitted will also be told. Council contends that Workshops are for Council to communicate with its staff, not with the public. On the contrary, THAN contends that the earlier public input is allowed in the process, the better. A bill has been filed in the Florida Legislature (HB 991 and SB 2276) that supports our position. Called *Vox Populi* (The Voice of the People), this legislation would guarantee the right of public comment at all official meetings of governing bodies of local governmental authorities. THAN went on record supporting this legislation to the Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation. Council has been concerned that unlimited public discussion at any meeting would cause meetings to be interminably long and even bump into each other. Council later relented by ruling that Workshops include 30 minutes of Public Comment with a maximum of 3 minutes per speaker.

Our May Meeting consisted almost entirely of a Celebration of THAN's 20th Anniversary. At a banquet held at Stetson Law School in Tampa Heights, Mayor Pam Iorio proclaimed May 14, 2008, THAN APPRECIATION DAY. We also received a certificate proclaiming THAN the "2008 officially recognized civic homeowners or neighborhood umbrella organization for the City of Tampa".

At our June Meeting, Jake Slater, the new Director of the combined Department of Code Enforcement and Business Tax Collection, told of the responsibilities his department and the reorganization necessary because of the merging of the two areas. At the meeting, also, we received a report from our Zoning Committee on the proposed revisions of the MPO Comprehensive Plan. The Committee noted several points of concern with the revision. THAN elects officers for the year at the June Meeting. The same officers who served last year were selected to another term. These are listed at the beginning of this document.

As THAN does not meet in July, the August Meeting begins its year. Representatives of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) discussed the transition from analog to digital television scheduled for February. The Zoning Committee continued to be involved with the revision of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission formed a committee to resolve the conflicts. It asked THAN to send six members, including its president, to this group. A representative of the Utility Capital Improvements Projects (UCIP) told of the improvements to Tampa's underground infrastructure the group is doing. These involve four major projects, the first of which is the replacement of long lines of pipes, some over a century old, in the heart of the city. Tampa Electric Company (TECO)'s 30% rate increase elicited a protest from THAN. Letters were sent to the Public Service Commission, the Mayor, and Council objecting to this increase.

As has been her custom, Mayor Pam Iorio visited THAN at its September Meeting held at the Kate Jackson Center in Hyde Park. The Budget Process has begun and she discussed the dire state of the city's finances. Her remarks were followed by a discussion of many topics of general concern.

A representative from the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) visited at our October Meeting to give an update on TBARTA activities. The representative encouraged input from the public at several open house workshops TBARTA is holding. Tonja Brickhouse, the new Director of the Department of Solid Waste & Environmental Program Management, visited to discuss with us the program modifications in her area.

Our guest at the November Meeting was Jake Slater, Director of Code Enforcement. He brought the supervisors of the three districts into which Code Enforcement partitions Tampa. Each gave a presentation followed by a discussion of neighborhood issues with the audience.

In addition to these regular meetings, the officers of THAN and its administration liaison met with the mayor in private session twice this year. THAN members attend Council meetings and Workshops and many meetings of other decision making bodies. They report what they learn to the other members of THAN to make THAN members the best informed citizens of Tampa on administrative issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Fredric Zerla, Secretary