

State of the Coalition, April 21, 2010
By Ken Lassiter, President

It is traditional that the just installed President of COBWRA reports to the Coalition on the recent progress of the organization and where we think we will go in the coming year.

We believe that **COBWRA continues to be the best-organized, most influential civic organization** in Palm Beach County. We believe Dr. Carrington would be pleased with the organization he founded almost 29 years ago. He would be proud of COBWRA's accomplishments over the past 12 months. Let me share some examples:

After talking about it for years, this past year **COBWRA has had two evening meetings** for working people who can't attend our morning meetings. We have the third evening meeting scheduled for June 14 and another for September.

In February, COBWRA had our first ever **Appreciation Breakfast** where we recognized the important contributions our volunteer Presidents, Delegates, Alternates, COBWRA Officers and Past Presidents have made to the success of COBWRA.

COBWRA has a stunning **new Web Site** designed by our Web Master, Lisa Riddle. People everywhere remark how easy it is to use and how attractive and informative it is. There is a lot of information there and many photographs for you. If you have not yet visited, you should click on www.cobwra.org.

COBWRA has a much **higher level of visibility** in the county. Our Media and Public Relations Chair, Sharon Geltner, succeeded in getting stories in the media almost every week. This has prompted communities – some inside the City – to call and ask if they can join COBWRA. We have no authority. Our visibility enhances and extends our influence.

COBWRA is prominent at meetings where COBWRA has been seldom seen. The City of Boynton Beach Commission. The Board of Directors for the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Boynton Beach, the Foundation Board at Bethesda Memorial Hospital, the County Legislative Delegation meetings. Tonight, First Vice President Stu Caine and I will attend the Leadership Awards Banquet in West Palm Beach where most of the leaders in the county will be.

Our **Growth Management Committee** remains busy with revised and new proposals from developers, an encouraging sign that the developers believe our economy is beginning to recover. Chair Gerry Morrison and Vice Chair Steve Slade run a very active committee.

Our **Health & Flu Shot Committee** ran TWO clinics this past year under the leadership of Joan Brunswick as Chair and Debbie Murphy as Vice Chair. Some 6,347 people from 47 communities received seasonal flu shots in September and October. Another 4,511 people received H1N1 vaccinations in January. This is a fantastic service to our members.

COBWRA has **renewed our working relationship with our sister civic organizations** in The South County Community Partnership. This group is affectionately known as the ABC Group. Membership is the Alliance of Delray, the West Boca Community Council and COBWRA. As reported previously, we have been working to attract a speaker of national prominence to a joint meeting of our organizations.

Today, I am pleased to announce that we recently completed arrangements for **General David H. Petraeus**, US Central Command, to be the first speaker in this series on **Friday, July 16 at the Spanish River Church**. FPL agreed to sponsor all costs for renting the venue. All COBWRA Presidents, Delegates and Alternates will be invited to hear General Petraeus. You will have some tickets for your community.

Last year I promised to have **lunch with the Past Presidents** from time to time. We have had 3 Presidents' lunches so far and it is time for another. I am grateful to the Presidents for being free with their advice, criticism and support.

We promised to **seek out more people to appoint to positions of responsibility** and to find **people from family communities** for the Executive Board and some committees. We made good progress here on both fronts and will make more progress in today's appointments.

We promised to **develop future COBWRA leaders**. Here's how that promise is being kept: Both Vice Presidents see copies of all the President's emails and letters and attend all possible meetings. The Vice Presidents are attending leadership programs. First Vice President Stu Caine attended the Palm Beach Leadership Focus in January. Second Vice President Eric Malkin and Director Mitch Rubin are attending the Boynton Beach Leadership program starting this month through October. Most committees have Vice Chairs in training to take over whenever needed. A side benefit to the Coalition is we have more people working in positions of responsibility. Some of these people may be future presidents of COBWRA.

Our membership continues to be strong. We lost one COBWRA member because they never paid their 2009 dues. However, we recently gained a new member – and today, we will vote on another.. This makes us **89 members strong**—a new high. Several other communities seem about to apply for membership so we expect COBWRA to continue growing.

We promised **more transparency for COBWRA**. Committee chairs are invited to all meetings of the Executive Board. Everyone has their own agenda at COBWRA meetings – not just the officers sitting at the head table. The Minutes of the Executive Board includes a list of and a short summary of all the meetings COBWRA officers are attending on your behalf every month. There really are no secrets.

A delegation from COBWRA joined the Alliance on a **trip to Tallahassee** to lobby the chairs of committees and legislative councils for better laws for our Homeowners and Condo members. We continue to track these bills as they wind their way toward passage or defeat in the legislature.

Under the leadership of First Vice President Stu Caine, COBWRA began work on **updating our West Boynton Area Community Plan and Boynton Beach Blvd-Turnpike Corridor Plan**. Reading the West Boynton Plan is fascinating. Even though this was written back in 1991, so much of it has come true exactly as planned almost 20 years ago. Amazing! The Turnpike Corridor Plan will be finished first and will be renamed Design Guidelines and made to apply to the entire COBWRA area. A new plan is being developed for the Ag Reserve area in conjunction with the Alliance of Delray – where part of the Ag Reserve lies. Palm Beach County Planning, The City of Boynton Beach Planning and three of the original authors of the West Boynton Plan are collaborating with us. These plans will guide development over the next 20 years. Our goal is to complete these plans for approval by next year.

There were **two promises made** last year that we never started but plan to accomplish in the coming year: We never created an **orientation handbook** for new Delegates and Alternates and we never had the **seminars with delegates** to listen to their ideas and suggestions. This we will do.

There are several **new goals** we wish to lay out for COBWRA for this coming year:

1. Revise the COBWRA Bylaws. Some Ideas:

- a. County Planning and the committee revising the West Boynton Plans are recommending that we change our **East Boundary** between Hypoluxo & Lantana Roads to Lawrence Road – instead of I95 and the Lantana City line. The area east

of Lawrence has no HOA or COA communities. It is mainly commercial with two school campuses – plus a Costco.

- b. Permit any COBWRA community member in good standing if and when they are annexed into the City to remain a member of COBWRA
- c. Ethics has been a hot topic in our county recently. We believe COBWRA needs an **Ethics Article** in our Bylaws: all work done by volunteers belongs to COBWRA. No one can be paid for work volunteered.
- d. It takes 7 months for COBWRA to elect its officers. That is a long time. Can we shorten the COBWRA nomination & election process?
- e. Is it OK for both a master association and one or more of their sub associations to be members of COBWRA? Some communities are asking this question.

2. A Seminar for Growth Management & the Executive Board – and anyone else interested: We want everyone to understand:

- a. County Approval Procedures and the roles of the different Boards
- b. Understanding TDRs. What are they? When are they good? and when are they bad?
- c. Workforce Housing and Affordable Housing Ordinances
- d. Green design goals

3. This year we believe COBWRA should take a more active role in the **County budgeting process**. So, we plan to attend the county budget meetings and will seek your input to relay back to the BCC.

4. On April 28, COBWRA will attend the first meeting between the County and the City to begin negotiations on future annexations by the City. COBWRA will continue to monitor these meetings and report back to you.

5. June 9, 2011, will mark the 30th anniversary of when Dr. Carrington invited representatives from nearby communities to a meeting at Greentree Villas to discuss founding a civic organization for the West Boynton area. He proposed an organization to voice local concerns before the County and City about the rapid growth predicted and the many zoning variances being granted by the Board of County Commissioners – without any input from nearby communities.

Dr. Carrington wanted an organization that made a difference. I believe we can say to you today that COBWRA is still making a difference for West Boynton. We hope you agree.

We believe COBWRA should celebrate our 30th anniversary next June, don't you? Stand by for an announcement of our plans.

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It is a high honor and rare privilege to serve as the 11th President of COBWRA over our 29 years. Thank you for your confidence and trust. I promise to do my best to listen, to work hard, and never to let you down. If you have suggestions or constructive criticism for me – OR – for any of the officers, please contact us directly – instead of complaining to others. We promise to listen and to consider your concerns.

I must thank my wife, Carol, for her support, her patience, for taking messages for me and for adjusting our supper times so I can attend all those meetings. I work for food and she works for free!

Now, let's get back to work.