

Who's In Charge?

In light of what transpired at Robinson High School in October, I would very much like to know exactly who is in charge here. Who is in charge of making the ultimate decision about what happens on Gandy Boulevard? I had been under the impression that the MPO was in charge of making a recommendation to the FDOT and that this body was awaiting the results of a PD & E study. That was the reason given for the long delay in answering the question that brought us to the MPO in the first place: What will be done with Gandy Blvd.? We delivered a petition signed by nearly 500 residents who oppose any type of elevated structure on Gandy to Ken Hartmann in the belief that he would make the final decision. We are still collecting signatures in opposition. Are the wishes of the residents now to be ignored?

At the session at Robinson High School, I got the impression, based on his behavior, that perhaps Senator Sebesta, as chairman of the Florida Senate Transportation committee is in charge. Or maybe, as advisor to Senator Sebesta and main proponent of an elevated on Gandy, Pat McCue of the Tampa Expressway Authority is in charge. Maybe even the head of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce has authority over this decision; he certainly gave that impression.

As a result of the revelations coming from Robinson High School, we find that we may have been spinning our wheels by coming to MPO meetings month after month, hoping for some information we can rely on. Now, it would seem that the MPO has handed over their authority to others who do not have the best interests of the residents of the Gandy neighborhoods on either side of the bay at heart. We need to be able to separate window dressing from bona fide authority. Gandy residents whose property values are hanging in the balance are entitled to know who really is in charge here.

Sincerely,
Anne O'Hara