

THE SARASOTA

January 4, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

THE CHALLENGE STIFFENS

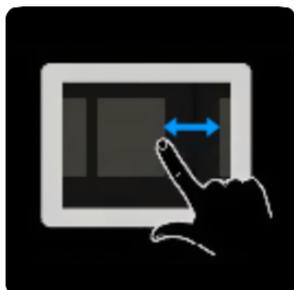
THE NEED TO CATCH UP

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

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Inside

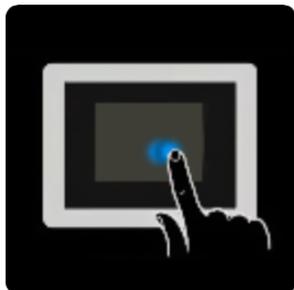
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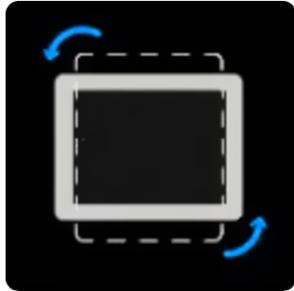
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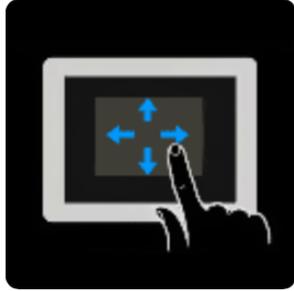
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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

First, we want to wish all of you a very Happy New Year!

And this year is off to quite a busy start, I have to say.

With numerous local government meetings on the calendar for next week, we offer you a preview of some of the big topics expected to be addressed — from an appeal regarding the Walmart proposed for the Ringling Shopping Center to concerns about the status of a Sarasota County advisory board member who was arrested in December to public hearings on two variances related to construction on Siesta Key's beach.

For Stan Zimmerman fans — and everyone interested in getting better acquainted with new City Manager Tom Barwin — Stan has written an in-depth piece reflecting a 90-minute interview he conducted as Mr. Barwin prepared to mark his first 100 days on the job. It is exactly the type of article we love to present in this digital format, because most publications in this day and age would eschew it simply on the basis of its length.

Our columnists David Staats and Harriet Cuthbert this week also have provided very different but very thoughtful commentaries. David spent quite a bit of time himself talking with psychiatrists to try to understand what turned Adam Lanza into a mass murderer. On the lighter side, Harriet will entice you into wanting to work off those extra holiday pounds.

In Sarasota Leisure, Tyler Whitson is sure to make any beer aficionado start to salivate as he describes Cigar City Brewing in Tampa. It is an exciting tale of a business that seems poised to make a major national name for itself.

And our dear feathered friend Otus tackles a subject I cannot ever recall seeing in the average newsweekly: Think of the birds and the bees, but focus on the birds. Otus begins a series you will not want to miss!

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



CONTENTS

THE CHALLENGE STIFFENS



WHAT KIND OF PRECEDENT?



 [Click Any **Headline** To Go Directly To That Article](#) 

NEWS & COMMENTARY

THE CHALLENGE STIFFENS

12

No lobbying of city commissioners documented in advance of their Jan. 7 scheduled vote on whether to hear an appeal of the Walmart decision — *Stan Zimmerman*

THE NEED TO CATCH UP

16

Sarasota County Commission expected next month to address ways to accelerate its schedule for resurfacing roads in poor condition — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

20

Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin reflects on his first months on the job — *Stan Zimmerman*

WHAT KIND OF PRECEDENT?

31

Protests are mounting as the County Commission prepares to vote next week on whether to allow construction on Siesta Key beyond the Gulf Beach Setback Line — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

HOW TO PROCEED

36

Commissioner grapples with Waechter's role on county boards — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

FALLING FURTHER BEHIND

38

County impact fee tabulation mistake leads to staff member's resignation, concerns about Florida Statute violation — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

A NEW FINANCE DIRECTOR

40

John Lege coming to Sarasota from City of Ocala — *Stan Zimmerman*

UPWARD TRENDS

42

Sarasota County's housing market continues to improve and the county exceeded its revenue projections for the 2012 fiscal year — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

REMEMBERING NEWTOWN

44

Sarasota vigil participants seek stricter gun controls — *Staff Reports*

NEWS BRIEFS

46



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CONTENTS



Click Any **Headline** To Go Directly To That Article

OPINION

EDITORIAL

Don't doom Sarasota to the 'Sounds of Silence

58

COMMENTARY

The psychological portrait of a killer — *David Staats*
I call it 'The Club' — *Harriet Cuthbert*

59

SARASOTA LEISURE

BEER PIONEERS

Cigar City Brewing expands as it garners national recognition for Florida-inspired and innovative craft brews — *Tyler Whitson*

64

ASK OTUS

So you want to know how birds do it — *Otus Rufous*

72

SIESTA SEEN

County not expected to take over Key roads from FDOT; USA Today asking for votes on best Florida beach; Eat Here opens — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

75

ARTS BRIEFS

80

RELIGION BRIEFS

88

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

91

SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

92

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THE CHALLENGE STIFFENS

No lobbying of city commissioners documented in advance of their Jan. 7 scheduled vote on whether to hear an appeal of the Walmart decision — Stan Zimmerman

On Monday, Jan. 7, the Sarasota City Commission will be asked to consider hearing an appeal of the City Planning Board's decision permitting a Walmart to be built in the nearly abandoned Ringling Shopping Center.

The agenda item will focus only on whether an appeal will be heard. While the City Commission would not be able to schedule a hearing until February at the earliest, the Alta Vista Neighborhood Association is providing a peek at what it will argue if the appeal is granted.

A cover letter on neighborhood association stationary says, "The requested appeal is based on the outstanding contention and expert finding that the proposed use of the site for a Walmart store is not a permitted use in the CSC-N zone"

The "expert" is Mike Taylor, who retired last October as the city's general manager of neighborhoods, redevelopment and special projects. ([Full story here](#))



THE NEED TO CATCH UP

Sarasota County Commission expected next month to address ways to accelerate its schedule for resurfacing roads in poor condition — Rachel Brown Hackney

To maintain an "Excellent" rating for the pavement on two-thirds of its roads, the County Commission would have to authorize about \$9 million per year for resurfacing, the county's chief engineer, James K. Harriott Jr., says in a recent email exchange with

the past commission chairwoman, Christine Robinson.

For the 2013 fiscal year, the County Commission budgeted \$6,889,291, Harriott added in a follow-up email to Commissioner Nora Patterson on Dec. 26.

Harriott noted in a Dec. 21 email to Robinson, "[A]t the current prices for the resurfacing work it would cost about \$60 million to bring today's roads that have an OCI of 60 to an excellent rating of OCI 90 or greater."

"OCI," which stands for "Overall Condition Index," is the standard rating system for roads, Harriott and other Public Works Department staff explained to the commissioners during a May 7 budget workshop. ([Full story here](#))



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THE FIRST 100 DAYS

Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin reflects on his first months on the job — Stan Zimmerman

Last month as Sarasota's new city manager, Tom Barwin, neared the 100-day mark on the job, he sat down with *Sarasota News Leader* City Editor Stan Zimmerman for a wide-ranging interview.

The transcription is long, but it provides two sets of broad insights.

First, Barwin views the city with a pair of new but professional eyes. He has been in public service for more than three decades, starting as a Detroit cop and concluding as the city manager of Ferndale, MI, (a Detroit suburb) then Oak Park, IL, (a Chicago suburb).

The second group of insights concerns Barwin's goals and management style. While the past two city managers were short-timers, their predecessors served long tours and had wide-ranging powers. Thus, Barwin could serve a long career in the top administrative position at City Hall. His goals and styles could be with us for many years. ([Full story here](#))



WHAT KIND OF PRECEDENT?

Protests are mounting as the County Commission prepares to vote next week on whether to allow construction on Siesta Key beyond the Gulf Beach Setback Line — Rachel Brown Hackney

With more than 20 email protests having shown up in the Sarasota County commissioners' inbox before noon on Jan. 3, opposition is mounting to requests for county variances to allow two homes to be constructed on Siesta Key about 200 feet beyond the county's Gulf Beach Setback Line.

As those protests mount, Siesta Key Association President Catherine Luckner says the County Commission will be facing a potentially precedent-making decision during its regular meeting in Sarasota on Jan. 9: If the commissioners approve the variances for 162 Beach Road and 168 Beach Road, will they essentially be nullifying their own construction setback ordinance?

"They are sitting right now in a very, very precarious place," she added during a Jan. 3 interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*. ([Full story here](#))



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HOW TO PROCEED

Commissioner grapples with Waechter's role on county boards — Cooper Levey-Baker

What to do about Bob Waechter? That is one question some county commissioners are grappling with in the wake of the former Republican Party of Sarasota County chairman's arrest.

Waechter, charged with impersonating Republican activist Lourdes Ramirez and donating in her name to the congressional campaign of Democrat Keith Fitzgerald, withdrew from his post on the Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority board shortly after his arrest. But he also serves on two county advisory boards, the Board of Zoning Appeals, which he chairs, and the Tourist Development Council.

Newly elected County Commissioner Charles Hines tells *The Sarasota News Leader* he has heard from constituents who want to know how the county plans to deal with Waechter's presence on those bodies. ([Full story here](#))



FALLING FURTHER BEHIND

County impact fee tabulation mistake leads to staff member's resignation, concerns about Florida Statute violation — Cooper Levey-Baker

A spreadsheet error cost one Sarasota County employee his job shortly before Christmas, and, according to at least one commissioner, it leaves the county even further behind in complying with state law.

The County Commission was all set to consider new road impact fees — the charges billed to developers for projects that increase demand on county infrastructure — at its Jan. 16 meeting, but a late December announcement from County Administrator Randy Reid put the kibosh on that. Reid's message revealed that Transportation Director Clarke Davis had discovered an error in the spreadsheet tables used to calculate the new impact fees and that the numbers could not be corrected in time for that Jan. 16 session.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta wrote to Reid, "It seems that excuses keep being made when in fact this should have all been resolved correctly quite some time ago, not only because of the Florida Statutory requirements, but also Board direction"

Those state rules Barbetta's fretting about? They can be found in Florida Statute 163.31801. ([Full story here](#))



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THE CHALLENGE STIFFENS

The Sarasota City Commission will be asked to weigh in on whether a Walmart can be built on the Ringling Shopping Center site. Photo by Norman Schimmel

NO LOBBYING OF CITY COMMISSIONERS DOCUMENTED IN ADVANCE OF THEIR JAN. 7 SCHEDULED VOTE ON WHETHER TO HEAR AN APPEAL OF THE WALMART DECISION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

On Monday, Jan. 7, the Sarasota City Commission will be asked to consider hearing an appeal of the City Planning Board's decision permitting a Walmart to be built in the nearly abandoned Ringling Shopping Center.

The Monday agenda item will focus only on whether an appeal will be heard. Neighbors of the site paid a \$1,400 fee to ask for the appeal. While the City Commission would not be able to schedule a hearing until February at the earliest, the Alta Vista Neighborhood Association is providing a peek at what it will argue if the appeal is granted.

A cover letter on neighborhood association stationary says, "The requested appeal is based on the outstanding contention and expert finding that the proposed use of the site for a Walmart store is not a permitted use in the CSC-N zone"

The "expert" is Mike Taylor, who retired last October as the city's general manager of neighborhoods, redevelopment and special projects. During his 30 years as a Sarasota city planner, he rose to the level of deputy director, in which capacity he supervised the updating of the city's comprehensive plan. He also was

the primary author of the zoning code the city now uses.

The neighborhood association says the appeal would provide the opportunity to “clarify and correct the city’s deficient zoning analysis.” The letter adds that the city’s Walmart zoning analyses “have implications for all aggrieved neighbors, but indeed for anyone who resides or owns property in the City of Sarasota”

It will take an unusual 4-1 or 5-0 supermajority vote of the City Commission to schedule the hearing. In legal terms, it would be a *de novo* hearing, meaning “afresh,” “anew” or “from the top,” and not just a review of previous testimony before the city’s Planning Board.

A check Wednesday, Jan. 2, showed no representative of Walmart and no neighborhood delegation had scheduled or spent office time in the past month with individual commissioners to lobby for or against a vote to hold an appeal.

TAYLOR’S EXAMINATION

Taylor produced a 42-page document that is very critical of the city’s analysis of current zoning and code issues. It says, “The CSC-N zone prohibits department store structures and does not recognize any other retail structure type.”

This point was raised during the Nov. 14 Planning Board discussion by member Jennifer Ahern-Koch. She described the Walmart store

as “a department store,” adding, therefore, that it was not permitted by the site’s zoning.

Planning Board member Susan Chapman said the Ringling Shopping Center was excluded consciously from downtown zoning and was limited to small-scale development.

“There is nothing about this plan that is small scale. I will not support it,” she said during the Planning Board discussion.

“*Only those uses specified shall be permitted, and if a use is not specified in a zoning district, it shall be prohibited.*”

Mike Taylor
Sarasota City Planner
Retired

But Ahern-Koch and Chapman were outvoted; the plan was approved by a 3-2 margin.

Member Vlad Svekis put it bluntly before the vote: “It’s 350 jobs versus a derelict shopping center.”

Walmart representatives have contended since August that their store is a simple 98,000-square-foot replacement for the existing 97,000-square-foot shopping center. The company plans to raze the former Publix supermarket and other structures, remove the parking lot and start construction from scratch.

“This parcel is appropriately zoned commercial, and we need only administrative approve of the site plan,” said Michelle Belaire, a Walmart corporate relations executive, who briefed site neighbors on Aug. 15.

However, Taylor’s document questions her assertions. The buildings on the site do not conform to the current “neighborhood commercial” zoning. If they are torn down, “Only

those uses specified shall be permitted, and if a use is not specified in a zoning district, it shall be prohibited,” Taylor’s report notes.

A 98,000-square-foot department store is not one of those “permitted uses.”

Walmart’s plans breezed through an Oct. 3 meeting of the city’s Development Review Committee, comprising senior employees of all city departments touched by development or redevelopment. No objections were raised, and everybody signed off on the project.

Courtney Mendez is the city planner assigned to the Walmart project; she had a baby on New Year’s Eve and will be on maternity leave until March; therefore, she has not been available for comment.

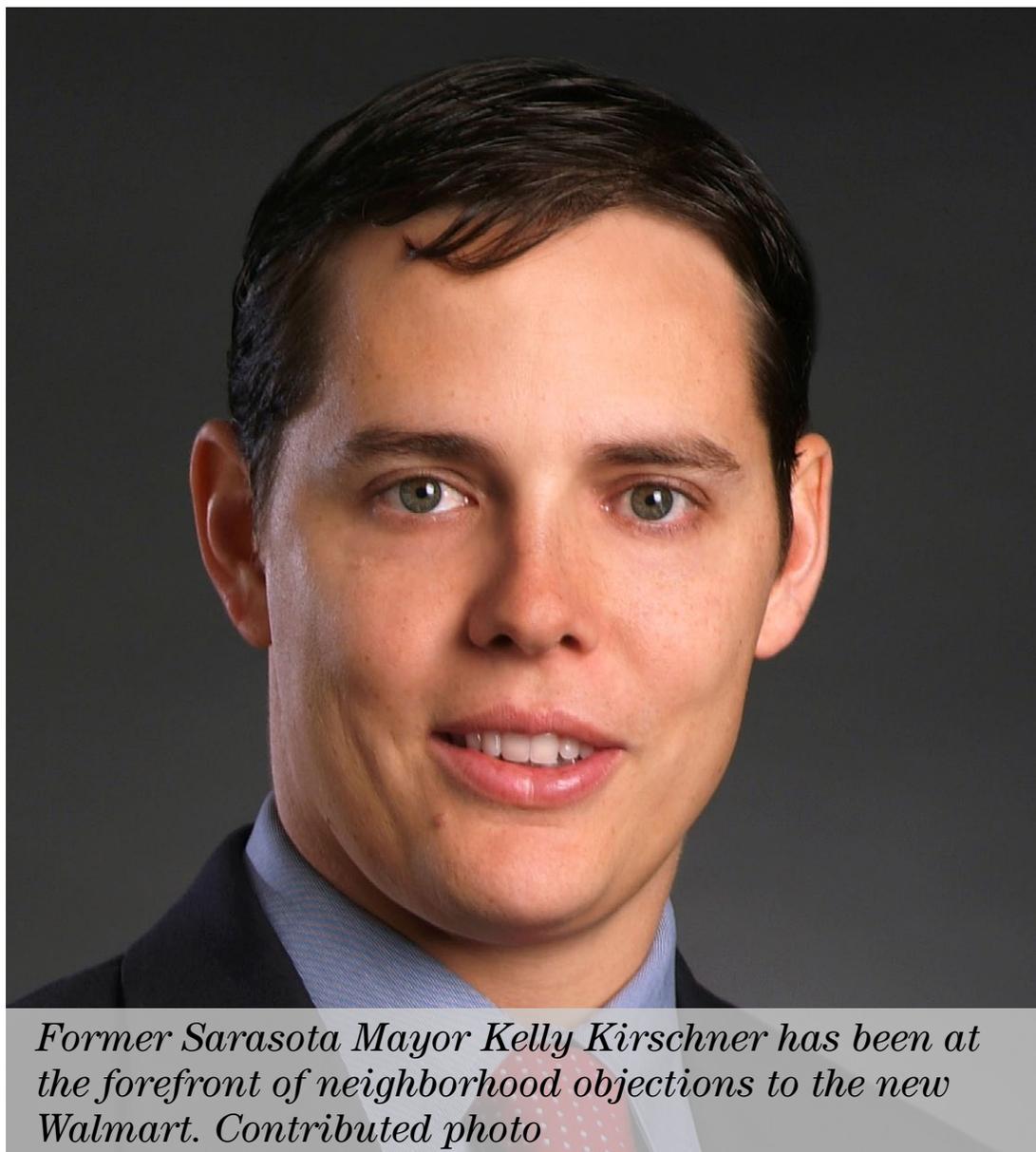
The neighborhood group says city staff should never have given the project the go-ahead. “[T]his plan should not have been forwarded to the planning board for consideration of approval,” the cover letter states.

Members of the planning staff are not willing to talk on the record about the department’s review of the Walmart ap-

plication or their failure to address the “department store” issue or the square footage swap from the old CSC-N zone to the current Neighborhood Commercial designation.

When objections were raised before the Planning Board, Walmart Attorney Jim Porter said during rebuttal, “This is not a rezoning. It is not a site plan approval. The evidence presented is this use meets the criteria in the code, including the types of uses inside the Walmart. That’s the only competent and substantial evidence on the record.”

Porter also managed to get in the last word before the Planning Board prepared to take a vote. “Your expert planner says this is allowed,” he said, referring to Mendez and the staff report.



Former Sarasota Mayor Kelly Kirschner has been at the forefront of neighborhood objections to the new Walmart. Contributed photo

If the city commissioners allow an appeal, it appears at least one more “expert planner” will weigh in on what is or is not allowed. If they decline to hear the *de novo* appeal, the neighborhood group can sue in Circuit Court — an expensive and time-consuming process against an opponent with access to aircraft proverbially full of cash and lawyers. 

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black top, holding a large sandwich. The sandwich is made with a crusty, golden-brown roll and is filled with lettuce, tomato, onion, and a dark meat patty. The woman's hands are visible on either side of the sandwich, holding it steady. The background is a plain, light color.

This may take a while.

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Webber Street
Between Beneva and RR Crossing

Woodrow Road



THE NEED TO CATCH UP

Photos from a May 2012 PowerPoint presentation show two sections of roads rated as needing resurfacing — Webber Street, between McIntosh Road and the railroad tracks; and Woodrow Street, which is between Beneva and Sawyer roads. Both are in Sarasota. Images courtesy Sarasota County

SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSION EXPECTED NEXT MONTH TO ADDRESS WAYS TO ACCELERATE ITS SCHEDULE FOR RESURFACING ROADS IN POOR CONDITION

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

To maintain an “Excellent” rating for the pavement on two-thirds of its roads, the County Commission would have to authorize about \$9 million per year for resurfacing, the county’s chief engineer, James K. Harriott Jr., says in a recent email exchange with the past commission chairwoman, Christine Robinson.

For the 2013 fiscal year, the County Commission budgeted \$6,889,291, Harriott added in a follow-up email to Commissioner Nora Patterson on Dec. 26.

Harriott noted in a Dec. 21 email to Robinson, “[A]t the current prices for the resurfacing work it would cost about \$60 million to

bring today’s roads that have an OCI of 60 to an excellent rating of OCI 90 or greater.”

“OCI,” which stands for “Overall Condition Index,” is the standard rating system for roads, Harriott and other Public Works Department staff explained to the commissioners during a May 7 budget workshop that focused partly on the county’s roads. An OCI of 60 or lower indicates a road needs to be resurfaced, according to that May presentation.

During that May workshop, Harriott also pointed out that it would take \$15 million a year over 24 or more years to reach the goal of having no county road with an OCI below 60.

“That’s a pretty unsustainable goal and target,” he said at the time.

He added that the county needed to spend about \$7 million a year to stay close to the target of keeping no more than one-third of its roads at an OCI rating of 60 or below, “and it’s going to be very difficult to do that.”

According to current budget data, Harriott pointed out in his Dec. 26 email to Patterson, the road resurfacing funding for the next four fiscal years has been allocated as follows:

- FY 2014: \$1,820,000.
- FY 2015: \$4,550,000.
- FY 2016: \$4,550,000.
- FY 2017: \$6,550,000

“We have wants, needs and immediate needs” in terms of resurfacing issues, Robinson told *The Sarasota News Leader* in an interview on Dec. 28. “I would classify [resurfacing] as an immediate need.”

After reviewing the numbers Harriott had provided to her in an initial email in December, Robinson added, she was uncertain whether all of her fellow commissioners realized “what it would take to catch up.” She joined Patterson in requesting more information from him.

Robinson pointed out to the *News Leader*, “If we don’t do something, we keep getting into a bigger hole that might not affect this commission,” but it would affect future boards. “We need to not pass the buck on this,” she added.

On Feb. 12, the County Commission will hear another presentation on the status of its resurfacing projects, Harriott noted in the email exchanges.

At that time, Commissioner Joe Barbetta told the *News Leader* on Dec. 28, the board members need to figure out how best to address the matter. He referenced the Dec. 26 email exchange between Harriott and Patterson, noting Patterson had asked Harriott to “calculate the break even point” for resurfacing funding to keep the percentage of county roads needing attention from continuing to climb.

“If we need to do a one-time budget adjustment” of several million dollars to take care of the problem, Barbetta said, “then let’s do it. ... The risk of serious injury on these roads is going to be a bigger issue.”

Barbetta said he was uncertain how the county had reached the current situation. “I think we should have been kept more in the loop” by staff, he added.

During the May 7 budget workshop, Barbetta voiced complaints about the fact that Richardson Road, near Interstate 75 in the eastern part of the

county, had not been paved since 1983. Its OCI already had dropped below 40, he pointed out at the time.

Harriott explained that residents previously had requested the widening of Richardson Road, because its lanes are so narrow. However, a couple of years ago, after the county

“If we need to do a one-time budget adjustment ... then let’s do it. ... The risk of serious injury on these roads is going to be a bigger issue.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

began improvements of Fruitville Road east of I-75, residents began requesting Richardson Road be maintained in a more rural condition, Harriott said. Those shifting priorities had kept the road from being resurfaced, he added.

“This thing’s fallen through the cracks,” Barbetta replied. “We blew right through the 20-year mark in 2003,” he added, referencing a staff remark earlier in the presentation that the county goal was to make sure roads were resurfaced at least every 20 years.

THE ROAD NUMBERS

As of Dec. 21, Harriott noted in his email to Robinson, the county had about 790 miles of roads below an OCI of 60. The county has

been working on 86 of those miles, for which funding was budgeted in the 2012 fiscal year, Harriott added. Over the next five years, he continued, “we have a little over 300 lane miles budgeted” for repaving.

During the May 7 presentation, he pointed out in that email, “staff reported that 33.6% of our roadways are categorized at undesirable (Overall Condition Index, OCI of 50 to 60) or marginal (OCI of less than 50). In other words, 66.4% are classified as satisfactory or better.”

Public Works Department staff runs a full OCI report twice a year, Harriott added — in October, to coincide with the start of the fiscal year, and in January, for state reporting purposes. After work was completed on the 86 lane miles budgeted for resurfacing in

Transportation Infrastructure – Pavement

OCI 90 – 100



Beneva Road

Yawkey Avenue



FY 2012, he noted, the percentage of county roads with an OCI of 60 or below would drop to 30.2 percent.

In an earlier email on Dec. 21, Harriott pointed out to Robinson that the county maintains 2,328 miles of roadways. Of those, he continued, 449 lane miles are arterial roads, 208 are collectors and 1,671 are local lane miles.

FUTURE FUNDING WORRIES

When the County Commission voted on Dec. 11 to authorize a bond issue to pay for renovations to Siesta Key Public Beach over a period of about two years, Robinson cast the lone “No” vote.

“We have dire needs for our roads in our community,” she said then, pointing to information Harriott had provided during the meeting about the loss of surtax revenue for resurfacing.

Commissioners often have noted the impact of the Great Recession on the surtax funds, leaving the county with far less money than it had budgeted for projects.

During the months Robinson traveled the county while campaigning for election to the board (she had been appointed in late 2010 to fill out an unexpired term), she told the *News Leader*, she

heard from many residents that good road conditions needed to be a top priority for the County Commission.

During the Siesta Beach discussion last month, she also pointed to a statement by Steve Botelho, the county’s chief financial planning officer, that the combination of bond sales for the Siesta Beach plans and the replacement of the county’s emergency communications infrastructure and radios would leave the county in a “lean situation” until probably Fiscal Year 2017 or 2018, meaning the board would not have sufficient funds to cover any other, major expenses that might arise.

However, Barbeta told the *News Leader* he was not convinced the replacement of the emergency communications system would cost as much as the \$30 million staff has estimated.

“We need a little more backup data and research,” he added.

Likewise, he has said he thinks the Siesta Beach project will come in under the \$16.7

million limit the commission has imposed.

Regardless of those projects, Barbeta agrees with Robinson about the importance of the road resurfacing issue, he said. “I think in the end we can’t ignore this anymore. We need to address it.” 

2,328 County Maintained Lane Miles

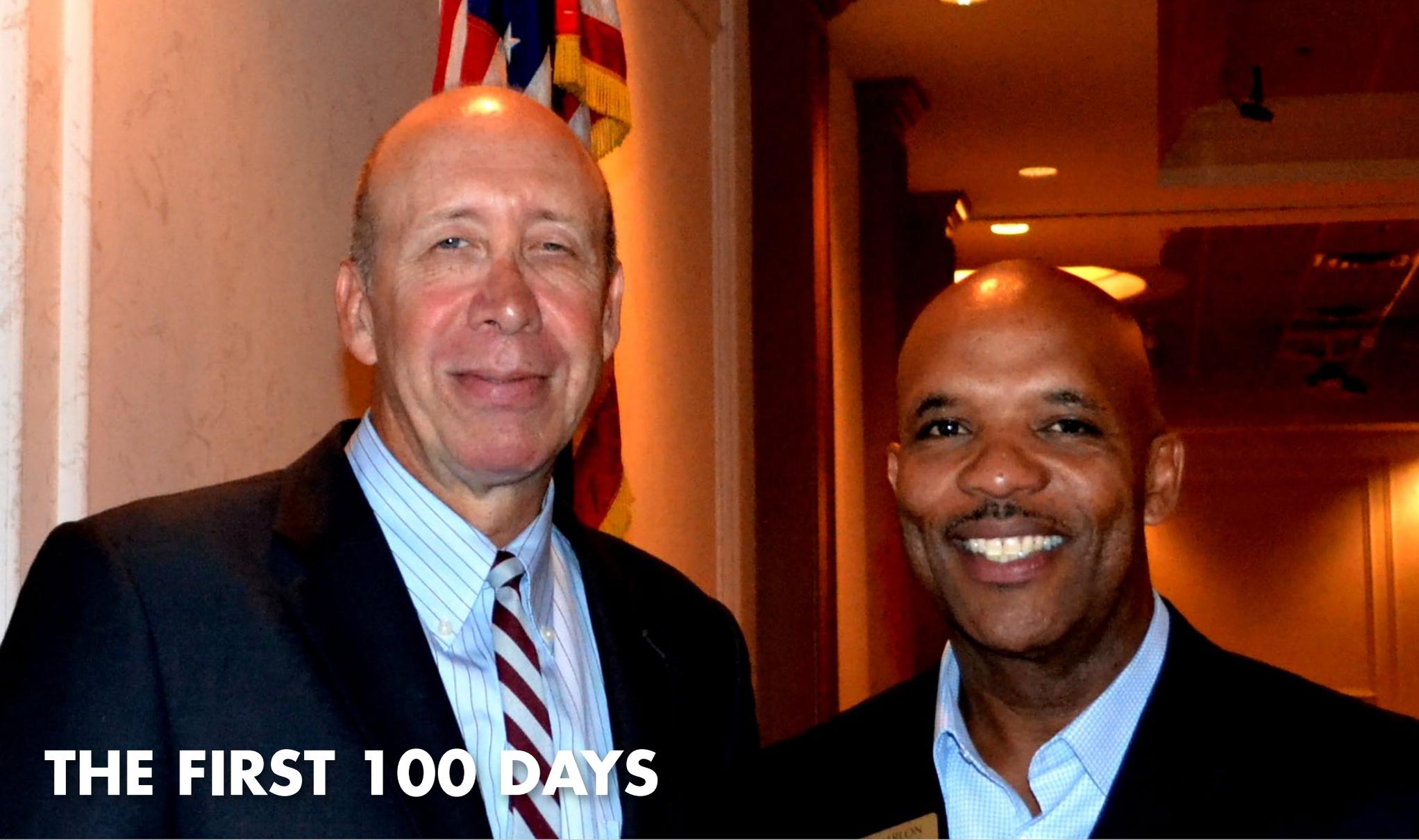
*(Estimated Total Asset Value = \$2.3 Billion)

- **Arterials**
 - 449 Lane Miles
 - Asset Value = \$674 Million
- **Collectors**
 - 208 Lane Miles
 - Asset Value = \$312 Million
- **Local**
 - 1,671 Lane Miles
 - Asset Value = \$1.3 Billion

On average, the County has added 14.6 lane miles/year

* Based upon FDOT 2010 construction data, including sidewalks, drainage, etc.

A May 2012 presentation to the County Commission shows the value of various types of roads in Sarasota County. Chart courtesy Sarasota County



THE FIRST 100 DAYS

*Tom Barwin joins Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown at a Tiger Bay Club meeting in November.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

SARASOTA CITY MANAGER TOM BARWIN REFLECTS ON HIS FIRST MONTHS ON THE JOB

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Editor's note: Last month as Sarasota's new city manager, Tom Barwin, neared the 100-day mark on the job, he sat down with Sarasota News Leader City Editor Stan Zimmerman for a wide-ranging interview. The transcription is long, but it provides two sets of broad insights.

First, Barwin views the city with a pair of new but professional eyes. He has been in public service for more than three decades, starting as a Detroit cop and concluding as the city manager of Ferndale, MI, (a Detroit suburb) then Oak Park, IL, (a Chicago suburb).

The second group of insights concerns Barwin's goals and management style. While the past two city managers were short-timers, their predecessors served long tours and had wide-ranging powers. Thus, Barwin could serve a long career in the top administrative position at City Hall. His goals and styles could be with us for many years.

SNL: In the Oak Park newspaper story *Barwin Quits*, you are quoted as saying you would prefer private or non-profit sector work: "Maybe government again, but that would be my third choice." Was Sarasota your third choice?

Barwin: No, not at all. I feel very fortunate to be here in Sarasota, It is a marvelous and magnificent community. I was quite fortunate to have a mini-sabbatical between [city manager] jobs. For the first time in more than 10 years, I had more than two weeks off. Arriving here in what is a stimulating community and environment, I feel I'm at the peak of my ability to contribute to community building.

It's not my third choice at all. I had four communities recruiting me when Sarasota offered me the job. They were all really nice communities. Sarasota was my first choice and my family's first choice. The statement you referred to was at the end of a long night following a commission meeting, at the end of nearly six years of effort throughout the Great Recession that required a lot of heavy lifting and tough decisions. I was a little burnt out there and had a lot of success in the environmental world and the energy world, and there were some opportunities to go into the private sector at that time. For a couple of minutes I was entertaining those options.

SNL: You led Oak Park to become the first municipality in the Midwest, and maybe the nation, to have 100 percent renewable energy sources. Do you have a green initiative in mind for Sarasota?

Barwin: I am aware of the negotiations with [Florida Power and Light] over the fran-

chise fee. Personally to me — and I work for the City Commission and the people of Sarasota, and we do have a strategic plan — I am hopeful environmental/sustainability/energy issues will work their way into the commission's strategic plan in a little stronger fashion.

Me personally, I think the threat of climate change is the issue of this generation — not that other important challenges aren't still out there to work on, including civil rights and economic justice. I believe climate change is happening, and I believe it is vital we work as diligently at all levels of the public and private sector as possible to address it.

In my realm, we will be moving the environmental advisor from the [Department of Public Works] to an office here at City Hall, so I can have daily or weekly contact with her [Allison Albee]. We are collaborating with Sarasota County to ... try to land our fair share of the restore-the-Gulf dollars that will be covered through [BP] fines.

I've been out at Mote [Marine Laboratory] and talked to some of their people and with some of our utilities people about what we can rea-

sonably do further to prevent or clean or deal with stormwater that runs into the Gulf. The mayor and I are trying to expand [those efforts] to a regional effort. Make buildings more energy efficient, and the savings help cover the capital costs.

“What I've tried to do and practice throughout my 30-year city management career begins with personnel. On day one since I began this career — and I'm biased because I've had pretty good success wherever I've been — it all begins with who you hire.”

Tom Barwin
Manager
City of Sarasota

Oak Park has 100 percent renewable energy, but we don't have energy aggregation here in Florida yet. I've been surprised there aren't more solar installations around the town and the community. That would seem to be a logical enhancement. I know the Chamber [of Commerce] has put up some panels as a demonstration project.

SNL: How often do you talk with [new Sarasota Police Chief] Bernadette DiPino?

Barwin: Three or four times since she was appointed [Oct. 16]. Two or three times in the last week. She's ready to go. She [started] on Jan. 1.

SNL: You were a member of the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board. Have you read the standing orders of the Sarasota Police Department?

Barwin: I have not. I was appointed by the [Illinois] governor to that commission, and it was a very educational experience.

It's one of those things I'd like to peruse. My plan coming in was to immerse myself as much as I could in this community. I've been on a furious tear to do that. I am surprised and impressed on a daily and certainly a weekly basis with new assets that are under the radar.

SNL: Can you give examples?

Barwin: I know Mote is known locally. But when you go out there and talk to the folks and understand the breadth of what they do, it's a phenomenal operation.

I toured Booker, the [rebuilt] high school yesterday. It's going to be an incredible asset to the community. The labs — the science and math labs — the performing arts facilities are incredible. Once a student is inside, it's an open-air university-campus-like setting. All



Tom Barwin attends his first City Commission meeting on Sept. 4. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the new housing in north Sarasota and the Newtown neighborhood is impressive.

I went to [Sarasota Military Academy] last week, an amazing place with almost a thousand students. A gentleman donated \$4 million to build new classrooms. Ninety-two percent of the kids who start there graduate. Ninety-seven percent go on to further education at the university [level].

What strikes me is the human capital involved, the folks in Newtown pushing for a first-class facility. It's impressive what the African-American community has had to do, and some of the rules students had to adhere to back in the so-called day.

The [Sarasota] Sailing Squadron is off the radar screen with a magnificent setting, teaching kids how to sail and providing a lifelong opportunity [to sail]. All the way to the theaters, the plays and things. There's something to do here all the time.

What's really impressive, I think, instead of my city manager nameplate on the door, I should put up "Complaint Department," because we hear those things. But when I travel throughout the community, as I have in my first almost 100 days, the folks who chose to live here really love the place.

One of the other assets is the universities here. I've had the chance to tour Ringling [College of Art and Design], New College and meet the new president, and spent a couple of hours with the chancellor of the University of South Florida: all impressive institutions with some growth plans. We're a college town, and that seems to be an afterthought. You'd never know it; it's a little asterisk. These are high-caliber, high-quality places. There's some nice growth potential there.

And then you have some of the younger entrepreneurs gathering at The HuB, a private-sector business incubator. That is really cool and very promising, in terms of having some of these college and university minds to have a chance to stay around and grow and flourish here and create some partnerships and maybe transplant some business from the idea phase to the implementation phase.

There is a lot of volunteerism in this community. I was in northern Sarasota yesterday and dropped in on some of the high school training programs in Newtown. I met an attorney who was just retired and mentoring kids. I met a successful businessman who had retired. He was mentoring one-on-one, teaching math. There's a lot of that.

I toured [Resurrection House](#); there's 200 volunteers there dealing with the homeless. You go to the Van Wezel [Performing Arts Hall], and all the folks supporting that facility.

SNL: In next few months, Sarasota will be under new management, with a new police chief, a new human resources director, a new finance director and possibly a new utilities director. Any thoughts about how you want to run this new team?

Barwin: What I've tried to do and practice throughout my 30-year city management career begins with personnel. On day one since I began this career — and I'm biased because I've had pretty good success wherever I've been — it all begins with who you hire. We're putting a lot of effort into hiring positive, productive, talented people with a life vocation to be a part of an effective community-building team.

That's not to say we wouldn't recruit somebody from the private sector if they were

interested. Even private-sector folks can be heavily involved in community building. You can see the effort we put into the selection of a police chief, and I'm confident we had a very good outcome.

We're putting comparable efforts in picking our new finance director, our new utilities director, and we have a good in-house candidate to step in at the HR position. We'll see how she does, but it's not a done deal yet.

The challenging part is we have really terrific people in those positions now. [Finance Director] Chris Lyons is awesome. He knows every aspect of Florida finance and this city's \$175 million-a-year budgets. Chris is helping with the transition; he's going to be around and be a mentor. It's the same with utilities. [Director] Bill Hallisey is really experienced, really talented, really conscientious. He's been touring me around our assets, where our water comes from and how we treat it, where it goes.

It's a good opportunity to replace really good people with really good people. I'm emphasizing teamwork and partnership and good communications. It's one of the things as an incoming manager; the times dic-

tated where some of my time needed to be spent.

SNL: It is an unusual transition. Normally you would come in and face an existing management structure in place for who knows how long. Here, fully 90 percent of your budget will be under new managers — for utilities and police.

Barwin: I think most incoming managers would generally think that's a good thing. In this case, I wish Bill and Chris and Kurt [Hoverter, human resources director] were staying around a little longer, because they're excellent. But this is one of the strengths of the council-manager form of government. You strive to recruit and keep talented people, and the changing politics really are minimized. Good managers value and deeply appreciate

other good managers, and I think we've got some great ones here. It's a big challenge, replacing really good people with really good people. They need to be committed to this community, and not necessarily who sits in this seat or at the commission table — although it's important that all understand you are a team. This is a democracy, and you have to respond



Tom Barwin addresses the City Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel

to people chosen to lead and set policy in our democracy.

I don't know if it's my personality or their personality, but we've had a terrifically productive relationship in my first 100 days. Maybe it's because there has been such turmoil and uncertainty in a tough year that the folks here were really ready for some calm and stability and direction and, on occasion, a little bit of leadership.

SNL: How many people report to you?

Barwin: I'm accountable for most of the whole organization. We peaked at 770 [city employees] in 2006, 2007. We're down to 555 now. But as I sit at our staff meetings, it's about 10 or 12 [who report directly to me].

I've met with my fellow managers in the county and with Randy Reid, the county administrator, and all those folks are fairly new. I don't know what that tells us. The recession has been tough on these public-sector positions across the country. Florida seems to be a little more volatile than other states.

But I'm happy to report that we all have seemed to hit it off. I'm very optimistic and very hopeful that we in Sarasota County and the city are in a period of good, and perhaps even magical, achievement and progress.

SNL: Have you landed where you want to be?

Barwin: We were in a temporary [home] for 90 days in Laurel Park. It was supposed to be 60 days. Then we found a place to lease for a year. Our moving van delivered our furniture two days ago. We're here in downtown [in a condominium]. I have my [Florida] driver's li-

cense, and my library card. License plates are next.

SNL: After your first 100 days, what is your ambition here?

Barwin: My impression is that there are a lot of comparables between here and Oak Park with citizen participation and appreciation of architecture, concern for the environment. Similarly, this community doesn't want to rest on its laurels.

Two things strike me. I hear the term "world class" a lot — that whatever people are associated with by their choice, by their inclination, whatever their passion is, they generally want to push the envelope. They want to take it to the next level of improvement. The interesting part about it ... is for the people who are living here to continue with a high-quality-of-life, interesting, plenty-of-things-to-do place that is safe and rewarding to be in.

When you look at the art that continues to grow, the landscaping investments and beautification initiatives under way, folks like me who come into these jobs have to maintain a pretty good sense of energy and be able to synthesize a lot of what we see and hear and make the connections and try to keep things moving in the right direction.

SNL: And things are headed in the right direction?

Barwin: In lots of way, yes. Big time. The economy's beginning to perk up, which is good, very good. Overall, a whole lot is moving in the right direction.

I've established a terrific relationship with the city commissioners. I value everything they

bring to the table and share with me. I hope I've been here long enough that they can see I'm committed and working hard to bring some [sense of] achievement to the conversation.

Besides economic development, there are a lot of planning initiatives under way. We're looking at a catalyst project in the Rosemary District. I'm going to be proposing we look at a second catalyst project in north Sarasota, in Newtown, in terms of the Marian Anderson [brownfield] site. I'm still new, but we don't have to sit on our hands over that site.

We're working with folks on Lido Beach, looking at the pool and park area and its future. It's been in front of the commission a couple of times. We're fine-tuning our parking, the right way this time. That will evolve over the years. We're starting to address employee parking needs and trying to get that organized. It's subtle, but it's important. I was surprised it hadn't risen [to a higher level of awareness]. Having been through this before, I understand that. These are all good things.

Times dictate your priorities. On the less positive side, I've had to [suspend] two police officers for 90 days for incidents that were — I think — unfortunate. And I've had to suspend an officer for unnecessary force. But I think there's a silver lining to that, in that it accelerated my need to understand our Police Department in more depth than an incoming manager would expect in their first 90 days. Usually, that's the chief's job.

What I've discovered is — for lack of a better word — “victims” of the Great Recession were training programs. We are going to re-boot that. [I] don't know if you saw the press

release, but I brought [former Sarasota Police Chief] John Lewis in for 30 days to speak to as many officers as possible and develop a road map Chief [Bernadette] DiPino can begin working on to have the Sarasota Police Department become the best trained police department in the state of Florida. And I'd like to take it a step further, to the Southern United States. I hope to begin that initiative in 2013.

Once we get rolling on that, some of these incidents we've had to deal with over the past three years will be fewer and farther between. It's a tough job; it can be very frustrating. We do have human beings in these jobs. But they have to be well trained and deal appropriately — or perfectly, really — with every situation they face. They need to work like a team out there.

In this last incident [at the downtown Sarasota County Area Transit transfer station], we had two officers. There was no sense of urgency about it. The guy was belligerent; he spit in the security guard's face. He wasn't on his best behavior, either. It was hard to decipher on the video to what degree the individual was actually resisting arrest. But I felt, from having had that experience for four years, they could have used more discretion and coordination in effecting that arrest.

It's accelerated my need to understand what's happening throughout that department, and discovering that training needs to be re-booted and emphasized — maybe even more so during tough economic times, because you are asking fewer people to do more.

The other thing: This situation has given me an opportunity to become more familiar with the whole homeless community, or sub-communi-

ty, and how we can bring resources to bear on the revolving door of the most prolific persons who get involved with disturbing the peace. Some of these people have been through the revolving door 50, 60, 70, 100 times. They have substance abuse issues, maybe mental health issues. That's going to be the priority of the task force, how to address that.

SNL: Ferndale was a suburb of Detroit. Oak Park was a suburb of Chicago. In both cases, you managed a satellite community adjacent to a large metropolis. What is the difference between that type of management and the management of a freestanding city like Sarasota?

Barwin: That is a great observation, a great question. Ferndale and Oak Park were like a precinct in the big urban city. I worked a lot in Detroit. I knew Mayor Daley in Chicago.

The difference is Sarasota City is kind of [like] the Chicago of the region. It's the county seat; it's the central community. When I'm out and about within the county and have these regional conversations, they talk about "the city." They mean Sarasota, the city.

And the media is centered here, too. It's a little unusual to have this degree of media in a city this size. The difference is Sarasota is the central city and it's kind of like Chicago sets the image for the region, like Detroit sets the image for the region; Sarasota City has a special relationship and responsibility to the region to set the tone.

And it does, in many, many ways. With that comes some of this passion we've been talking about, to keep polishing it and improving it, making it as attractive and special a place as possible. I think it bodes well for everybody.

I've met a lot of folks since coming here, and before coming here, and I feel a lot of people think this is kind of the gemstone of the cultural life of the west side of Florida.

SNL: What would you consider your greatest achievement in these first 100 days?

Barwin: Early on I sensed morale was pretty low in the city organization, so I made it a point to reach out, try to meet as many people working for the city as possible. I spent a lot of time in the Police Department. I spent time at Public Works, time at Utilities — been to each and every division here at City Hall. I think I've met 75 to 80 percent of our employees.

It's going to take them awhile to know me, trust me. But we started a dialogue and try



Tom Barwin and his wife, Margaret Bailey-Barwin, attend the Oct. 5 reception for finalists for the job of Sarasota police chief. Photo by Norman Schimmel

to convey this message: We're all part of the same team, and we all have our roles to play, and so I feel pretty good about that, and I sense we're all working like a team now.

I've had a number of sit-downs with [City Auditor and Clerk] Pam Nadalini, and I think we have a good working relationship. I get along great with Bob [Fournier, city attorney] so all of that is good.

I think we've hit a home run on the selection of the police chief. We've got some good talent we're looking at for the finance director and the utilities director. We hope we'll get a good match.

There's a lot that's happened in 90 days. And the [City] Commission has advanced a lot of projects we're looking at — finalizing this Palm [Avenue] hotel project [for example]. I don't know if we'll have a compromise with the Laurel Park neighborhood on the overlay [district], but I think whatever comes out of that is going to be a nice improvement in facilitating the communication between the neighborhood and potential developers.

Trying to deal with the aftermath of the Chalk Festival, we've had plenty of people in here to talk about that. And there's the micro-tunneling under Hudson Bayou for the lift station replacement; that's been a challenge.

SNL: What was the worst mistake in your first 100 days?

Barwin: I don't know if it was a mistake or not, but you didn't like it and [*Sarasota Herald-Tribune* columnist] Tom Lyons didn't like it. But I just felt compelled to respond to Mr. [Michael] Barfield when he accused the city by inference of having a war on the homeless.

[*Editor's note: Barfield is the legal chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union's Sarasota chapter.*] I just thought it was inaccurate and unfair, and as a new manager, I felt blindsided by it.

To have good working relationships, you need to establish trust. I don't want to change him. He can do his thing. He's got his First Amendment rights and his perspective and that's what makes this country great. That's what veterans fought for. I would not deny anybody that.

But on the first go-round, I would only ask [that] responsible people pick up the phone and give me a call, saying, "I discovered something you should be aware of" before you call a press conference and hypercharge it with rhetoric. That has some implications to a lot of people. The people don't see our officers arrange for a hotel for a night or two for somebody on the toughest of times. That happens. They don't see our officers referring a new homeless person to the Salvation Army. They don't see our officer telling a guy, "Go to the Resurrection House to do your laundry."

Maybe I felt too much of a propensity to defend [officers'] good work, but I was listening to the unflattering stuff and did follow up on all of it. I might have got a bit defensive. But I think the public also needs to understand what's happening in that arena.

SNL: Most enduring moment so far?

Barwin: I have had a special moment almost every day. I tell people I get goose bumps at least daily from what people do and their commitment to doing them. There's bunches of 'em.

Yesterday, I was touring Booker High School with Vice Mayor [Willie] Shaw and Barbara Langston. He was telling me what he had to do when he was in school, and she told me how they had to fight to get the assets that are at Booker.

This is a great story, and this is why I stayed at the grassroots, because you get a feeling; you can see the victories. That new facility is going to help a bunch of people. There's going to be untold mentorings nobody's ever going to know about. That was special.

Then seeing this older guy come out and write a \$4 million check for the military academy. Obviously, [that charter school is] working for a thousand kids. This guy was so humble and nonchalant, saying, "I want to see you guys do well." Things like that happen all the time.

SNL: Do you have a favorite find: a restaurant, a book, a painting, a vista?

My wife and I have been going to watch sunsets as often as possible, Saturday and Sunday walks and jogs on the beach at Lido. We drive down to the park and go clear to the north end. It's a delightful walk. But the other morning, we went the other way. We walked back toward the bay, toward town.

It was a nice visual, and we both took pictures. There were two guys fishing, and there were four herons surrounding them — like, who's gonna get to eat this fish? — with the city as the backdrop. The whole scene was just gorgeous: the herons, the fishermen, the blue sparkling water, the nature and then the backdrop of that just gorgeous skyline of downtown Sarasota. We are so happy to be here. 

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WHAT KIND OF PRECEDENT?

PROTESTS ARE MOUNTING AS THE COUNTY COMMISSION PREPARES TO VOTE NEXT WEEK ON WHETHER TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION ON SIESTA KEY BEYOND THE GULF BEACH SETBACK LINE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

With more than 20 email protests having shown up in the Sarasota County commissioners' inbox before noon on Jan. 3, opposition is mounting to requests for county variances to allow two homes to be constructed on Siesta Key about 200 feet beyond the county's Gulf Beach Setback Line.

As those protests mount, Siesta Key Association President Catherine Luckner says the County Commission will be facing a potentially precedent-making decision during its regular meeting in Sarasota on Jan. 9: If the commissioners approve the variances for 162 Beach Road and 168 Beach Road, will they es-



An Oct. 29 photo of the north section of Beach Road shows it crumbling as a result of wind and wave action associated with then-Tropical Storm Sandy. The two lots where construction is proposed are near that part of the road. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

essentially be nullifying their own construction setback ordinance?

“They are sitting right now in a very, very precarious place,” she added during a Jan. 3 interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*.

“This is completely undeveloped land,” Luckner pointed out. Would approval of the variances open the door to the board’s having to allow every other such parcel to be developed on a barrier island in the county, if the owners sought permission to do so, she asked.

“We’re not sitting in a place of passing judgment,” she said of the SKA. All she and her board members want to do, she added, is pose

the questions for the County Commission’s consideration.

The matter of the variance requests was brought up during the Dec. 6 SKA meeting, when Vice President Peter van Roekens pointed out that he and other residents of the Terrace East condominium complex in Siesta Village had not received legal notices from the county thus far about the upcoming public hearings before the County Commission.

Van Roekens said the Terrace East board would be meeting to discuss the matter. He also pointed out that he had photos showing the two parcels in question had been underwater at one time.



A Sarasota County Geographic Information Systems map shows the two lots that are the focus of the variance requests on Beach Road: 0080-24-0027 and 0080-24-0028, to the left of the Terrace building. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Van Roekens is one of the people who have emailed concerns to the County Commission over the past several weeks.

In his Dec. 31 email, van Roekens wrote, “No previously undeveloped lot on Siesta has ever been granted a variance to the GBSL [Gulf Beach Setback Line],” according to a record search that went back to 2007.

He added that the County Commission in 1993 turned down a variance to build on one of the lots under consideration this time.

Moreover, he wrote, “We know the water has undermined Beach Road north of these lots and that the storms have recently flooded these lots. And this is nothing new as there is evidence of major flooding of these lots as far back as 1978, 1979, 1981 and 1992. Further, according to coastal geologists we can expect to see a continuing and significant rise in the sea level over the next 50 years.”

Finally, van Roekens wrote, “There are also other considerations such as protecting the dunes and wildlife in this area”

Luckner pointed out that sand had been accreting on that area of the beach over the past several years, with dunes clearly visible. She noted that one of the endangered snowy plover pairs on the island built a nest on one of the lots during the past summer.

THE REQUESTS

Both variance requests involve construction of new homes with swimming pools and decks, paver driveways and landscape retaining walls.

Construction at 168 Beach Road is proposed to be a maximum of 182.1 feet seaward of the GBSL, while development of the lot at 162 Beach Road a maximum of 200.16 feet seaward of the GBSL, according to the petitions presented to Sarasota County staff.

A *Sarasota News Leader* search of county property records last month shows the 7,429-square-foot parcel at 162 Beach Road is owned by Ronald and Sania Allen of Osprey.

The parcel at 168 Beach Road, which has 7,679 square feet, was sold to Ronald G. Allen in May 2009, who transferred it about two-and-a-half years later to Siesta Miramar LLC of 2033 Main St., Sarasota. According to corporate documents, the officers of that company are Ronald and Sania Allen.

The Allens are being represented in both variance requests by attorney William W. Merrill III of Sarasota. According to the [website](#) for the Icard Merrill law firm in Sarasota, Merrill has a “nationally recognized practice in land use, planning, transportation and environmental law”

“We know the water has undermined Beach Road north of these lots and that the storms have recently flooded these lots. And this is nothing new as there is evidence of major flooding of these lots as far back as 1978, 1979, 1981 and 1992.”

Peter van Roekens
Vice President
Siesta Key Association

Sarasota County Gulf Beach Setback Line



BEACH RD
EDGE OF PAVEMENT

PROPERTY LINE

LOT 12

PROPOSED 11' WIDE DRIVE
2000 sq. ft.

LOT 11

20' FRONT YARD SET BACK



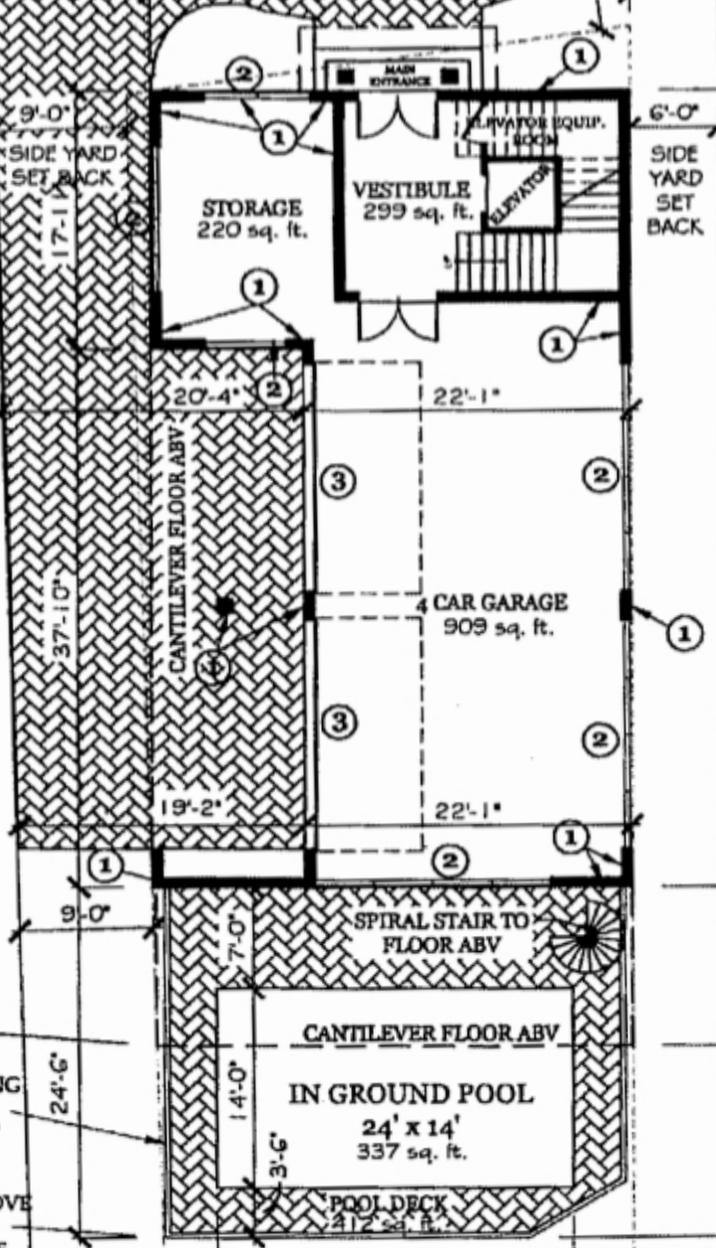
KEY NOTES

- ① SHEAR WALL
 - ② BREAKAWAY LOUVERED FIBERGLASS PARTITION W/ BUG SCREEN ON INTERIOR SIDE
 - ③ BREAKAWAY WOOD GARAGE DOORS WITH LOUVERED PANELS
- INDICATES AREAS OF SAND SET BRICK PAVER

200'-2" ± MOST SEAWARD EXTENT FROM POOL / POOL DECK TO GBSL
186'-8" ± MOST SEAWARD EXTENT OF PROPOSED BUILDING STRUCTURE (EDGE OF CANTILEVER BALCONY) TO GBSL

EXISTING NEIGHBORING RESIDENCE

PROPERTY LINE



PROPERTY LINE

55'-9"

CANTILEVER FLOOR ABV

11'-0"

13'-6"

BREAKAWAY, LANDSCAPE RETAINING WALL (LOOSE LAID 4" THICK x 8" DEEP x 16" LONG CONCRETE LANDSCAPE BLOCKS). 1'-2" MAX. HEIGHT ABOVE ADJACENT GRADE, TOTAL LENGTH = 79 LF.

416'-2" ± MOST SEAWARD EXTENT OF POOL DECK TO MHWL
429'-8" ± MOST SEAWARD EXTENT OF PROPOSED BUILDING STRUCTURE (EDGE OF CANTILEVER BALCONY) TO MHWL

ESTABLISHED LINE OF CONSTRUCTION, AS MEASURED FROM NEIGHBORING BUILDINGS, SEE SHEET 7 OF 8 FOR ADDITIONAL INFO

ESTABLISHED LINE OF CONSTRUCTION

ENLARGED DIMENSIONED SITE PLAN

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



PROPERTY ADDRESS:
PID: 0080-24-0028
BEACH RD, LOT 12
SIESTA KEY, FL 34242

GEORGE MERLIN ASSOCIATES INC. ARCHITECTURE INTERIOR DESIGN	
7729 HOLIDAY DRIVE SNEAD HARBOR VILLAGE SARASOTA FLORIDA 34231 PHONE: 941-923-8668 FAX: 941-923-9149 LIC. AAD03459 ARC010523	
PROJECT	LOT 12
NUMBER	1208
DATE	2/29/12
REVISED	6/29/12
SHEET	2 OF 8

OTHER PROTESTS

Among the other emails sent to the county commissioners are the following comments:

- “The properties in question are often flooded, and the roads in front of these properties frequently then become impassible. ... If [these homes are] constructed on this beach some of the grass on the gulf side would have to be destroyed. The ecological balance of this area would forever be adversely affected.”
- “The variances should NOT be granted. That will violate the ordinances that [have] been established to prevent or retard erosion of our coastline ... [I]t would set a precedent that will nullify the current protections of the [GBSL] for everyone.”
- “This proposal would build two large structures entirely seaward of the setback line, would remove protective grasses and vegetation, disturb an area of dune formation, and would be seaward of Beach Road which already has been washed away at its northern end.”
- “Siesta Beach is an acclaimed treasure. Water has already flooded this area and covered parts of Beach Road and we have been told that with climate change and the rising level of the oceanic waters, our coastline will become increasingly vulnerable. In addition, the entire beach ecosystem will begin to fall apart. Nesting areas for sea turtles and ground nesting birds will disappear. Sea grass, so vital to keep the sand from being washed away will become sparse and disappear.”
- “Siesta Key has built a reputation for [its] white-quartz beaches that offer luxurious amenities with a relaxed vibe. Clearly, by

allowing new property to be built so close to the water, you are taking away the very thing that has put Siesta on the map — the beautiful, sandy beaches!”

- New Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason has responded to the emails with the following comments: “On behalf of the County Commission, I want to thank you for taking the time to write to us sharing your comments and concerns relative to Variance Petitions 79-03-12-419 and 79-03-12-425. These matters are quasi judicial and as such we are discouraged from commenting outside the public hearing. Your comments are important to us so I have copied our staff to make sure those comments become part of the public record on this issue.”

A BALANCE

Luckner told the *News Leader* in a follow-up email that the SKA also is concerned about people purchasing land in the county “that may not be truly ‘buildable.’”

The county Tax Appraiser’s Office “lists many risky parcels as [Residential Single Family and Residential Multi Family] despite their location being 100% seaward of the GBSL and the [Coastal Construction Control Line],” she wrote.

Additionally, Luckner pointed out, “As advocates for property owners, we want to protect the barrier island coastal environment. It ensures safety as well as value for existing homes.”

The County Commission Jan. 9 agenda was not available before the *News Leader*’s deadline this week. It should be available by Jan. 4 on the [county website](#). 



HOW TO PROCEED

*Bob Waechter (left) watches the newly elected Sarasota County commissioners sworn in on Nov. 20.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

COMMISSIONER GRAPPLES WITH WAECHTER'S ROLE ON COUNTY BOARDS

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

What to do about Bob Waechter? That is one question some county commissioners are grappling with in the wake of the former Republican Party of Sarasota County chairman's arrest.

Waechter, charged with impersonating Republican activist Lourdes Ramirez and donating in her name to the congressional campaign of Democrat Keith Fitzgerald, withdrew from his post on the Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority board shortly after his arrest. But he also serves on two county advisory boards, the Board of Zoning Appeals, which he chairs, and the Tourist Development Council.

Newly elected County Commissioner Charles Hines tells *The Sarasota News Leader* he has heard from constituents who want to know how the county plans to deal with Waechter's presence on those bodies.

"Does the [Board of County Commissioners] intend to act (or has it acted) on his continuing service as a TDC member pending resolution of the criminal matter?" wrote county resident Richard Alpher on Dec. 18. "I think at least some temporary action ... such as a suspension from serving on the committee, would seem in the public interest as well as the BCC interest."

Responding to the public comments, Hines asked county staff via email if “there are any conduct standards for our boards.” As of Wednesday, he had not received an answer to that query. He hopes to hear an update on that point during a public meeting next week, or, barring that, to press for more information on the matter.

County Attorney Steve DeMarsh did not respond, as of press time, to questions about whether such a policy exists.

While Hines, for whose candidacy Waechter raised money this year, is reluctant to comment on what

he wants to see happen in this specific situation, he says he thinks the commission should discuss creating a set of conduct rules if none exist.



Sarasota County Commissioner Charles Hines/Photo by Norman Schimmel

“Is it automatic removal? Is it up to us to decide? Do you wait to see if all the facts are in? Is it a conviction? Is it an arrest?” Hines lays out the thorny hypotheticals.

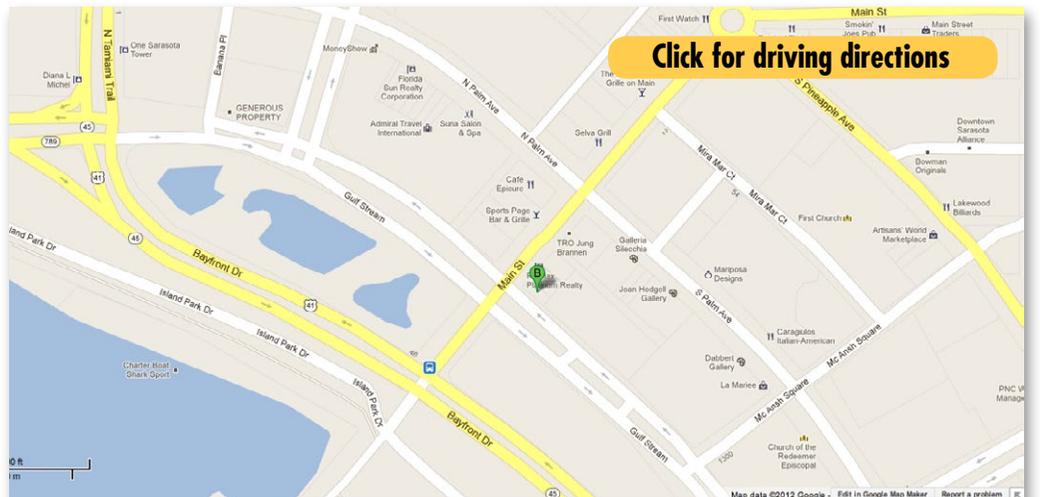
“You want to handle it appropriately. It’s a very difficult situation, and people have asked us in emails; they’ve asked the right questions, and we’re trying to get answers.” 



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FALLING FURTHER BEHIND

Commissioner Joe Barbetta/File photo

COUNTY IMPACT FEE TABULATION MISTAKE LEADS TO STAFF MEMBER'S RESIGNATION, CONCERNS ABOUT FLORIDA STATUTE VIOLATION

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

A spreadsheet error cost one Sarasota County employee his job shortly before Christmas, and, according to at least one commissioner, it leaves the county even further behind in complying with state law.

The County Commission was all set to consider new road impact fees — the charges billed to developers for projects that increase demand on county infrastructure — at its Jan. 16 meeting, but a late December announcement from County Administrator Randy Reid put the kibosh on that. Reid's message revealed that Transportation Director Clarke Davis had discovered an error in the spreadsheet tables used to calculate the new impact fees and that the numbers could not be corrected in time for that Jan. 16 session.

In 2011, the commission voted to temporarily slash its fees in half to spur development, but that short-term reduction expires in February. The commission has pushed to have permanent rates, reflecting current construction prices, in place before that deadline.

“*It just seemed like there was no sense of urgency.*”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

“On December 16, when I was transferring tabular data from the analysis spreadsheets to the technical report, I found an error in one of the ta-

bles,” Davis wrote to Reid on Dec. 19. “The road impact fee methodology is implemented as a series of interconnected tables in a spreadsheet. When an error is made at an early step, it propagates through the tables and affects the final results.”

Two days after sending that email, Davis resigned.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta wrote to Reid that he felt “great concern” over the mistake. “It seems that excuses keep being made when in fact this should have all been resolved correctly quite some time ago,” he wrote, “not only because of the Florida Statutory requirements, but also Board direction back in January 26th of 2011, nearly 23 months ago, and also follow up direction again by the Board back during this past summer.”

Those state rules Barbetta’s fretting about? They can be found in Florida Statute 163.31801, which stipulates that the “calculation” of any impact fee “be based on the most recent and localized data.”

The county’s current rates are based on data collected in 2007, reflecting numbers from the height of the housing boom, hardly “recent” figures. Barbetta says the county’s numbers are way out of date.

“We all know that costs have gone down,” he tells *The Sarasota News Leader*.

Calls to County Attorney Steve DeMarsh to ask about the county’s potential non-compliance were not returned as of press time.

Barbetta says the commission’s decision to temporarily cut the rates could discourage anyone from challenging the county over that statute. Even with the out-of-date numbers, “we’ve remained safely below an overcharge situation for the road impact fees,” Davis told the commission last September.

“If we were charging the full rate ... then maybe somebody would have a gripe,” says Barbetta, adding that the issue goes deeper than the potential legal violation. “It just seemed like there was no sense of urgency.”

Barbetta says he has heard complaints from developers and trade associations about the delay. He argues that the county has failed to “give certainty to our industry.”

Before resigning, Davis laid out one potential timeline for how to proceed, suggesting that the commission extend the temporary reduction till July 1, at which point the corrected tables would be ready to go into effect.

Barbetta says he does not want to “get ahead” of the commission, which will surely discuss the issue at its next public meeting, Tuesday, Jan. 8. “But we need to do something,” he says. 



The Sarasota County Commission will have to grapple this year with another setback in setting new road impact fees. Photo by Norman Schimmel



A NEW FINANCE DIRECTOR

The City of Sarasota is expected to see the replacement of several department chiefs this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

JOHN LEGE COMING TO SARASOTA FROM CITY OF OCALA

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The City of Ocala's loss is Sarasota's gain, as John Lege (pronounced "leggy") has been selected as Sarasota's new finance director, replacing Chris Lyons.

Lege holds a master's degree in business administration from Webster University in St. Louis and a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Florida. He retired as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy in 2001 after 21 years of service as a division officer and department head.

During his two-and-a-half years in Ocala, Lege centralized the Purchasing Department. "Each

city manager had a purchasing agent in their individual departments," he wrote on his application. "Because there was no standardized process, there were inefficiencies, purchasing irregularities and discrepancies, bid protests and vendors challenging the process."

The consolidated purchasing work was put under the purview of his department (Budget and Finance). The move "has created standardization, improved internal controls, reduced costs and provided purchasing agents the ability to cross-train and support one another," he wrote.

That undertaking was similar to one of his jobs in the Navy; he was a department chief for aviation support for 12 squadrons. "I maintained 100 percent inventory accuracy while increasing aircraft operational readiness by 20 percent," his application says.

For three years prior to his Ocala experiences, Lege was the finance director of Sumter County, Florida, working under the county clerk of the court. He was responsible for the general ledger, payroll processing, banking, cash management, bond disclosure and financial reporting. He also prepared the county's annual audit. Additionally during his tenure there, he developed new accounting procedures as well as the county's investment policy.

For the six years prior to that stint, he was a senior auditor with Carr, Riggs and Ingram in Gainesville. The accounting firm specialized in audits of local governments and not-for-profit organizations.

Lege is an advocate of TQL – total quality leadership, a program that swept through the military services in the late 1980s and 1990s.

"I taught the fundamentals of TQL to more than 2,500 military and civilian personnel and was considered an expert in TQL," he wrote in his application. "I have carried these princi-



Chris Lyons works at his desk before his retirement from the City of Sarasota. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

ples with me and have used them successfully in all types of military and civilian organizations," he added. "It teaches how to analyze, adapt and respond to situations that are outside of the normal process."

Lege will take the position held by Chris Lyons, the city's highly respected finance director who is retiring for medical reasons unrelated to the job. **SNL**

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UPWARD TRENDS

Sarasota County home sales stayed stronger in the 2012 fiscal year, county data shows. File photo

SARASOTA COUNTY'S HOUSING MARKET CONTINUES TO IMPROVE AND THE COUNTY EXCEEDED ITS REVENUE PROJECTIONS FOR THE 2012 FISCAL YEAR

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Sarasota County has continued to see an improving housing market since its new fiscal year began Oct. 1, county financial data shows, with almost 27 percent more housing units sold in November 2012 compared to November 2011 — the latest month for which figures are available.

The year-to-year comparisons show 764 units sold in November 2012, while 602 were sold in November 2011. In October 2012, the number of units sold was 709, the data shows, a 22.9 percent increase over the 577 figure for October 2011.

The median sales price also has continued a positive trend, according to the data.

In November 2012, the median sales price for residential and condominium units was \$170,516, a 12 percent increase from the \$152,291 figure for November 2011.

The November 2012 figure was down slightly — 0.6 percent — from the October 2012 number of \$171,645. The median price in September 2012 was \$171,195.

The average number of days on the market for November 2012 was 173, down 6.7 percent from the 186-day level of November 2011. In October 2012, the average number of days on the market was 175, the county data shows.

The number of building permits issued for single-family home construction also has con-

tinued to climb, according to the report. In November 2012, the county issued 48 permits with a total value of \$9,243,000, compared to 25 permits in November 2011 with a total value of \$5,622,000.

In October 2012, the county issued 50 permits with a total value of \$7,873,000, compared to 30 in October 2011 with a value of \$4,819,000.

Sarasota County also had positive news in terms of its tax collections for the end of the 2012 fiscal year. It brought in a total of \$127,803,058 for all its ad valorem tax revenue, although it had budgeted \$125,515,648.

Its tourist development tax revenue collections totaled \$7,014,813 for FY 2012, compared to the \$4,145,880 budgeted — an increase of almost 41 percent.

Only the county's gas tax revenue total came in lower than budgeted for FY 2012. The county had planned on collecting \$16,302,414, but it brought in a total of \$15,623,475, or about 4 percent less than budgeted.

Regarding the county's labor force: November's data showed a 19.5 percent drop in the number of unemployed people seeking jobs, compared to the figure for November 2011. The November labor force numbered 162,108,

down 0.2 percent from the figure of 162,404 reported in November 2011.

Unemployment claims were down 11.9 percent in November 2012 compared to the same month the previous year, 739 for November 2012 versus 839 for the same month in 2011.

In October, the labor force numbered 163,067, up 0.6 percent from the figure of 162,138 in October 2011.

Unemployment claims were down 18 percent year-over-year for October.

Among other data that was down year-over-year, the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport saw 14.4 percent fewer passengers arrive in November 2012 compared to November 2011 — 47,174 versus 55,087.

AirTran, which was purchased by Southwest Airlines, ceased operations at SRQ in August.

The number of passengers boarding planes at the airport also was down in November 2012 compared to November a year ago — 46,961 compared to 56,611, a drop of 17 percent.

In October, the airport saw a 10.6 percent drop in the number of passengers arriving compared to the October 2011 figure. The number of people boarding planes was down 13 percent year-over-year for October. 

REVENUE SOURCES Source: CAFR-GovMax-IFAS

	<u>2010 Actuals</u>	<u>2011 Actuals</u>	←	<u>2011 YTD *</u>	<u>2012 YTD **</u>	→	<u>2012 Adopted</u>
Ad Valorem (GO-Debt Service-Mosquito)	\$150,242,414	\$136,123,200	100%	\$136,123,200	\$127,803,058	102%	125,514,648
Half Cent Tax	\$21,258,282	\$22,702,622	100%	\$22,702,622	\$22,765,266	107%	21,343,830
State Revenue Sharing	\$7,425,253	\$7,581,187	100%	\$7,581,187	\$7,772,347	105%	7,382,076
Electric Franchise	\$16,941,643	\$16,576,491	100%	\$16,576,491	\$15,665,884	97%	16,109,505
Gas Taxes (All Five)	\$16,196,653	\$16,133,202	100%	\$16,133,202	\$15,623,475	96%	16,302,414
Infrastructure Surtax	\$25,006,507	\$27,069,391	100%	\$27,069,391	\$27,440,370	105%	26,223,926
Tourist Development Tax	\$9,777,447	\$11,469,148	100%	\$11,469,148	\$14,076,593	121%	11,642,760
Impact Fees	\$6,529,905	\$6,486,626	100%	\$6,486,626	\$7,014,813	169%	4,145,880

* As of 09/30/2011
** As of 9/30/2012 - YTD actuals provide a snapshot of the balance on that day and are subject to revisions.

COUNTY TAXES

A chart shows Sarasota County revenue sources and collections for the past two fiscal years. Chart courtesy Sarasota County



Vigil participants gather at the Federal Building on Orange Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SARASOTA VIGIL PARTICIPANTS SEEK STRICTER GUN CONTROLS

Staff Reports

About 70 people gathered in front of the Federal Building on the evening of Dec. 27 for a vigil in memory of the 26 victims of the Newtown, CT, shootings and to call for new federal laws restricting the sale of assault weapons.

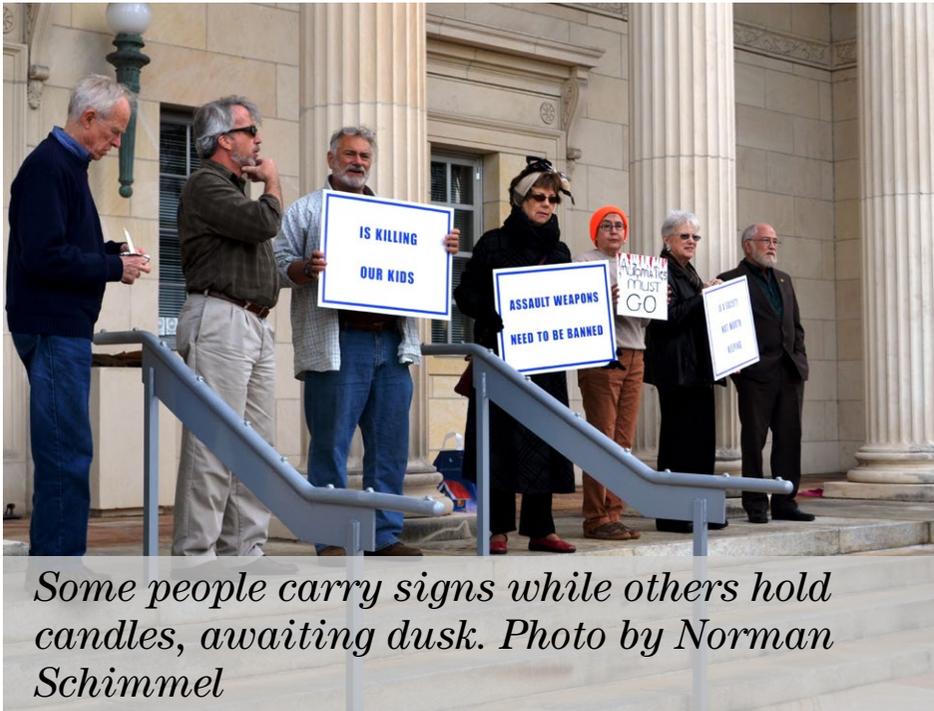
Sponsored by the Alliance Against Gun Violence in Our Communities, the event included the release of a letter to U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Longboat Key, urging him to support action in Congress in the wake of multiple mass murders in recent years in which assault rifles have been used.

Interim Minister Mike Young of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice was the speaker for the rally.

The letter to Buchanan, also dated Dec. 27 and signed by Young, says, “In the wake of so many tragic deaths of the innocent due to gun violence, we ... urge you to affirmatively vote for pending gun control legislation that will be introduced ... during the next session of Congress.”

The letter adds, “For too long the nation has protected the right of civilians to possess weapons and ammunition which have a high capacity for the rapid and random mass killing of men, women and children.”

It points to the use of such weapons in the murders at Columbine High School in Colorado in April 1999; Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, VA, in 2007, where 32 people were



Some people carry signs while others hold candles, awaiting dusk. Photo by Norman Schimmel

killed; Tucson, AZ, in January 2012, where U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was gravely wounded and six people were killed; and the Aurora, CO, shootings — including 12 deaths — in July 2012 in a theater where *The Dark Knight Rises* was showing.

The letter continues, “We would also dispel the notion that the use of [assault-type] weapons to commit mass murders can be prevented by identifying the mentally ill early on before they have access to guns. Yes, recent mass killings with assault weapons were committed by individuals with mental afflictions and with suicidal/homicidal aims. However, people are the victims of gun violence every day and the perpetrators are not always the mentally ill. The behavior and psyches of human beings whose emotional states of anger, fear, jealousy, revenge, depression or any other dark mood that strikes them at the moment become highly lethal if combined with the possession and use of these killing weapons.”

The Alliance says in the letter that it also believes the Florida Legislature should change the state’s Stand Your Ground gun law. The letter adds, “Conceal Carry laws assume that

it is appropriate to carry guns anywhere and everywhere and [ignore] the public’s right to know that they may be among people with legally sanctioned lethal weapons. Those who believe they have [a] right to live in a gun free environment where lethal weapons are restricted to law enforcement officers are treated as second class citizens and viewed as un-American.”

The letter to Buchanan notes its endorsers “include hundreds of people of all faiths and political persuasions. We are citizens of Sarasota and Venice and we are your constituents. Most importantly we are Americans concerned about our country and the welfare of its citizens and communities.”

The Sarasota News Leader was unsuccessful in its attempts to obtain a response from Buchanan’s office. 



Signs call for a renewal of the federal ban on sales of assault weapons. Photo by Norman Schimmel



A wide ditch is part of city-owned property Benderson Development wants to purchase. Photo by Robert Hackney

CITY'S DRC CLEARS BENEVA PLAN FOR BENDERSON

The city's controversial plan to sell 11 acres at the northeast corner of Beneva and Fruitville Roads achieved an important milestone Wednesday, Jan 2.

The Development Review Committee, composed of senior city staffers, "signed off" on a plan to amend the city's future land use map to designate the site "Commercial General" instead "Government," as it is labeled now.

The city is deep in negotiations to sell the property to Benderson Development, which has announced a desire to build a shopping center on the property. Neighbors say the land-use change is inappropriate; they would prefer the area remain a park and training area for firefighters.

The sale was never advertised in a conventional fashion. Only after the Benderson deal was revealed did another firm step forward

and bid \$2 million for the land, about twice what Benderson has agreed to pay.

The “sign off” means staffers see no legal impediment or zoning text problems with the change to “Commercial General.”

The land-use map change and subsequent zoning changes will go before the Sarasota City Planning Board on March 12.

Stan Zimmerman



A pond is one feature Benderson Development would have to deal with on a city-owned parcel it wants to buy at the intersection of Beneva and Fruitville Roads. A helipad used by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office (at the rear of the photo) is adjacent to the Beneva Road side of the parcel. Photo by Robert Hackney

SARASOTA DISTRICT 1 FORUM TO BE HELD JAN. 8

District 1 City Commissioner Willie Shaw will host a [community forum](#) Tuesday, Jan. 8, at the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex, 1845 34th St., the city has announced.

Updates will be provided on initiatives occurring within District 1 with an opportunity for questions, the release says. Residents, business owners and District 1 stakeholders are encouraged to attend.

Additionally, Shaw and City Manager Tom Barwin will introduce new Chief of Police Bernadette DiPino. Shaw also will discuss the top two priorities for District 1 in 2013: the cleanup and development of the Marian Anderson Place brownfield site and the creation of a small business incubator, the release says.

Additionally, updates will be provided on the following projects: Old Bradenton Road, Myrtle Street improvements, Newtown gateway/landscaping, Newtown CRA goals and a North Sarasota Communication Plan, the release points out.

Upcoming District 1 forums will be held on Thursday, March 14; Thursday, June 13; and Thursday, Sept. 12, the release says. Times and locations will be announced closer to the forum dates.

The boundaries of District 1 roughly are University Parkway to the north, Fruitville Road to the south, North Tamiami Trail to the west and Tuttle Avenue to the east.

DIPINO TO MEET MEMBERS OF THE 'HOODS

Spanking new Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino will meet leaders of the local 'hoods Saturday, Jan. 5 — the neighborhoods, that is, at the monthly conclave of the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations.

While her first “official” day at the office was Jan. 1, she was present for the command meeting Dec. 31, surrounded by senior police staff.

After the expected “so-glad-to-be-here” remarks on Jan. 5, she will face questions from representatives of the 28 registered city neighborhoods. Also at the dais will be Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight.

One question sure to come up— with Knight and DiPino in the room — regards the likelihood of consolidating some specialty teams fielded by both departments, such as K-9, SWAT, bomb squad and marine patrol. City Commissioner Shannon Snyder, a former deputy, has harped for a year on the need to consider a total consolidation of city and county law enforcement programs.

The city Police Department is the largest component of the city’s budget, costing more than all the collected property taxes.



New Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino addresses an audience in the City Commission Chambers on Oct. 16 as City Manager Tom Barwin looks on. Photo by Norman Schimmel

It is likely some or all of the six formal candidates for two open City Commission seats will be in attendance as well. The election will be in March.

The coalition will meet upstairs at the Waldemere Fire Station on East Waldemere Street starting at 9 a.m.

Stan Zimmerman

'WHAT HAPPENED??!!' TO BE TOPIC OF PANEL DISCUSSION

The Sarasota Republican Club will hold a panel discussion during its meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 9, focusing on the topic,

“What Happened??!!”

The panelists will be political consultant Jamie Miller; Andres Malave, field coordinator for Hispanic Outreach (Americans for Prosperity); and radio talk show personality Johnny Jackson, a club release says.

The social hour will begin at 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$30 for members and \$35 for guests and non-members.

For additional information and reservations, click on “Upcoming Events” at www.SarasotaRepublicanClub.com or contact Donna Arenschield at 312-5279.

MARKER TO COMMEMORATE DEVELOPMENT OF BIRD KEY

The development of Bird Key, starting with the purchase of property in 1906 for construction of the key's first mansion, will be commemorated at a ceremony hosted by the Sarasota County Historical Commission on Saturday, Jan. 5, Sarasota County has announced.

The 9:30 a.m. event will be held at the entrance to Bird Key, on John Ringling Boulevard, Sarasota, a county news release says.

According to information contained on the marker, the first mansion built on Bird Key was New Edzell Castle, named for Davidella "Davie" Lindsay Worcester's ancestral home in Scotland, the release notes. After Worcester came to Sarasota County for health reasons in 1905, she discovered Bird Key's natural beauty and serenity while boating with friends, the release says.



*The design of Bird Key Park, adjacent to Sarasota Bay, makes it a memorable gateway to the island.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

A deed for 12.8 acres on the key was recorded in her name the following year.

Featuring modern amenities such as gas, electric lights and hot and cold water, the property had its own dock, since access to the island was by boat only, the release points out. Although she planned much of the Georgian-style home, Davie Worcester died before its completion in 1914, the release notes, but her husband, Thomas, lived there until his death in 1918.

Family members continued to reside there until John Ringling, the circus magnate and entrepreneur, purchased Bird Key in 1922. Ringling then constructed a bridge and causeway in 1925 to connect Bird Key and the outer keys of St. Armands, Lido and Longboat to the mainland, the release says.

According to the marker, John Ringling's only sister — Ida Ringling North — lived in the mansion from 1934 until 1959, when it was demolished by Arvida Corp. John Ringling had died in 1936, and his sister and his nephew, John Ringling North, were administrators of his estate, which included Bird Key.

John Ringling North formed the Bird Key Corp. and acquired about 280 acres of sub-

merged land from the state, but his vision of developing the property did not materialize, the marker notes.

In 1959, the Arvida Corp. bought 2,000 acres of Ringling property, including Bird Key. The city approved Arvida's plan for a "luxurious island residential haven," the release says, and dredging and filling to enlarge the island to about 300 acres began, along with construction of the island's infrastructure.

Enticed by sales incentives such as a Chris Craft cabin cruiser and a Lincoln Continental car, real estate agents quickly sold the first lots, according to the marker.

Bird Key was connected to the city of Sarasota water system in 1964, and in 1960, Arvida built the Bird Key Yacht Club, which was transferred to residents in 1967.

Members of the Bird Key Improvement Association applied for the historical marker. A brief reception sponsored by the Bird Key Yacht Club will be conducted immediately after the ceremony, the release says.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

NEW COLLEGE RANKED 7 ON KIPLINGER'S TOP 100 LIST

New College of Florida once again has been recognized as a top value in America by *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* magazine, placing seventh on the list of 100 best values in public colleges for 2012-13, the college has announced.

This marks the 10th consecutive year New College has placed among the nation's top 20 public colleges overall on Kiplinger's list of

schools "delivering a stellar education at an affordable price," a news release points out. Kiplinger's ranked New College No. 5 in 2012 and No. 11 in 2011.

To determine the ranking each year, the editors at *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* narrow down a list of nearly 600 public four-year schools to about 130 schools based on SAT or ACT scores, admission and retention rates,

student-faculty ratios and four- and six-year graduation rates, the release adds. The editors then rank each school based on cost and financial aid, “though academic quality carries more weight than costs,” the release points out.

With a 10-to-1 student/faculty ratio, the 832 students enrolled at New College “chart their own learning in close consultation with faculty mentors through independent study and thesis work in addition to courses,” the release adds. The 2012-13 incoming class entered New College with average SAT scores

between 1783 and 2100 (out of 2400), and more than half of New College’s 2012 graduates (52 percent) completed their degrees with no debt, the release says.

“We applaud this year’s top 100 schools for their efforts to maintain academic standards while meeting the financial needs of their students,” said Janet Bodnar, editor of *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance*, in the news release.

The annual public school rankings appear in Kiplinger’s February 2013 issue and online at kiplinger.com/links/college.

ADULT LEARNERS SCHOLARSHIPS PRESENTED

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County recently awarded \$237,750 in Adult Learners Scholarships, including 93 to new students (totaling \$159,250) and 34 renewed scholarships (totaling \$78,500).

Amounts per student range from \$500 to \$3,000, a news release notes. The funds were granted from 15 donor funds held at the Community Foundation.

The scholarships will help students attend the following schools: AHIAM (American Health Information Management Association), Argosy University, Center for Advanced Legal Studies, DePaul University, East West College of Natural Medicine, Eckerd College, ITT Technical Institute, Keiser College, LECOM School of Pharmacy, Liberty University, Manatee Technical Institute, Sarasota County Technical Institute, Southwest Florida Technical Institute, St. Petersburg College, State College of Florida and the University of South Florida.

The financial assistance is offered to adults entering institutions of higher education after

having been out of high school for a number of years, the news release notes. The scholarships are not restricted to four-year universities; “higher education” includes college, vocational or technical school, as well as accredited courses of study for cosmetology, health care and other specialized fields.

Adults who are residents of Sarasota, Manatee or Charlotte counties, including those already enrolled in a course of study, are eligible to apply for assistance from the Adult Learners Scholarship program, the news release points out.

Annually, scholarships are awarded from more than 60 funds managed by the Community Foundation. “These funds are diverse, fulfilling the wishes of donors — both living and deceased — who want to provide needed financial support to promising scholars,” the release adds.

More information is available by clicking [here](#) or by calling 556-7114.

CRUISING (WITH) CLASS BEGINS JAN. 10

Rare is the time when sailors share their secrets. But for eight weeks, starting Jan. 10, a vast body of knowledge will be laid bare on how to cruise the Southwest Florida coast under sail.

Hard-won secrets will be the free for the taking.

Instruction will begin at 7 p.m. Jan. 10 at the Sarasota Sailing Squadron clubhouse in Ken Thompson Park, just down the road from Mote Marine Laboratory. The course is free and open to any interested person. It is geared for sailors new to the area and people who wonder if they, too, could go cruising on a sailboat.

The instructor will be Stan Zimmerman, a sailor with more than 30 years of experience cruising under sail in small sloops. "It's not the size of the boat, it's the courage and skill of the skipper and crew that determines how far you can go," he says.

The eight two-hour lectures (with a break each evening) will include briefings on local weather and currents, anchoring, provisions, beating the bugs, avoiding sunstroke, coastal piloting without electronics, sail handling and trim (from dead air to full gale), non-electrical self-steering, emergencies and much more. Successful sailboat cruising requires a vast body of knowledge, Zimmerman points out.

Students are expected to bring paper, pencils and a hank of line. Each class will start at 7 p.m. sharp and end at 9 p.m. for eight consecutive Thursday evenings through Feb. 28.

The Sarasota Sailing Squadron, which leases land from the City of Sarasota, offers educational opportunities to the public.

The squadron has no heat, so dress appropriately for a porch classroom in winter. Sailors are tough, Zimmerman adds.

For information, contact Zimmerman at 955-0790 or the Sailing Squadron at 388-2355.

ORIOLES TO HOST THIRD ANNUAL BIRDLAND GOLF CLASSIC BENEFIT

On Wednesday, Feb. 20, the Baltimore Orioles will hold the third annual OriolesREACH Birdland Golf Classic at Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club to benefit the Miracle League of Manasota, an organization dedicated to providing an opportunity for every person to play baseball, regardless of their ability, an Orioles news release says.

The event will begin with registration and lunch at 11 a.m.; a shotgun start is set for 12:30 p.m.

Since its inception, the Birdland Golf Classic has raised more than \$56,000 for the Miracle League of Manasota, the release adds.

The classic will feature a silent auction and the chance to play a round with current and former Orioles players and coaches, the release notes. Manager Buck Showalter and current Orioles Jim Johnson, J.J. Hardy, Adam Jones and Matt Wieters are among the team members scheduled to attend the event.

Registration is open for golfers and corporate partners, the release says. Multiple levels of participation are available, including MVP Sponsor packages which consist of recognition as a presenting sponsor, a foursome with the opportunity to select your Orioles playing partner, four infield box seats to a 2013

Orioles Spring Training game and more, the release points out.

For the 14,000 school-age children with disabilities and their adult counterparts in Sarasota and Manatee counties, a synthetically surfaced baseball field with all the requisite amenities was built last year in Longwood Park, just off University Parkway in Sarasota, the release notes. Sarasota County committed \$500,000 to the capital improvement of Longwood Park, while the Baltimore Orioles

and Pittsburgh Pirates contributed \$150,000 for the field. The opening game of the Miracle League of Manasota was held on March 17.

For more information, visit www.miracleleaguemanasota.org.

For more information or to register for the golf event, contact the Miracle League of Manasota at 225-2966 or info@miracleleaguemanasota.org. The entry deadline is Wednesday, Feb. 6.

CITY'S HOUSING OFFICE WINS NATIONAL HONOR

The Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development has been honored by the National Community Development Association (NCDA) as a recipient of the Audrey Nelson Community Development Achievement Award for exemplary use of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

Sarasota was recognized for its use of CDBG funds and Neighborhood Stabilization Funds in the Newtown neighborhood, a city news release notes. The funds have been utilized to improve neighborhoods, homes and family lives, the release adds.

Since 2008, \$60.6 million in public dollars have been invested in the Newtown community on 12 projects, the release points out:

- Janie's Garden Phases I & II
- Kingstone Apartments (formerly The Mediterranean)
- Elms Apartments
- Fredd "Glossie" Atkins Park
- Storefront Renovation Program
- Robert L. Taylor Community Center
- Newtown Training Center
- Orange Avenue Playground Improvements

- Newtown Estates Playground Improvements
- Orange Avenue Drainage Improvements
- Bertha Mitchell Development Improvements

Just 4.2 percent of the total amount invested in Newtown came from CDBG funds, the release says. The remainder was from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, economic development initiative funds and disaster recovery funds, but the money was awarded through the CDBG program, the release notes.

"This award demonstrates the commitment that both the city and the county have shown to rehabilitate this area," Don Hadsell, general manager of the Office of Housing and Community Development, says in the release.

"The city and county have not only dedicated federal and state grant funds to this effort, but their own general fund dollars," he adds.

The award will be presented Feb. 1, during the NCDA annual conference in Washington D.C.

Audrey Nelson, for whom the honor is named, was the first deputy executive secretary of the NCDA. She was committed to neighborhood improvements in Chicago before she died with cancer at the age of 29, the release says.

COUNTY REMOVES THOUSANDS OF DEAD FISH FROM BEACHES

Sarasota County staff worked with non-violent offenders from the Sarasota County Sheriff's Offender Work Program to remove more than 9,000 pounds (4.5 tons) of dead fish from Blind Pass Beach and Manasota Beach on Manasota Key Dec. 27-28, the county announced in a news release.

The suspected cause of the fish kill was a red tide bloom located offshore in the Gulf of Mexico, the release notes.

The dead fish started washing ashore earlier in the week, the release adds.

County staff, including lifeguards and employees of Parks and Recreation, are continuing to monitor all public beaches for impacts of red tide and will respond as the need arises, the release says.

Subsequent weather systems reportedly diminished the impact of red tide in the Gulf.

Residents and visitors with asthma or chronic respiratory impairments who are planning to visit a local beach are encouraged to be aware of beach conditions where red tide impacts are being reported, the release points out. For those who are susceptible, the symptoms associated with red tide tend to become more noticeable when the winds are blowing onshore, it adds.

Current beach conditions may be found online at Mote Marine Laboratory's website, www.mote.org/beaches. Residents and visitors also can register to receive email reports about specific beaches. For telephone updates, call 941-BEACHES (232-2437) and press "1" for Sarasota County beaches, the release notes.



On Dec. 28, Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason took this photo of dead fish on Blind Pass Beach in the southern part of the county. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

SARASOTA POLICE RECOGNIZE AND THANK VOLUNTEERS

During a recent Awards Dinner, the Sarasota Police Department and the City of Sarasota expressed gratitude for the contributions made by 73 citizen volunteers, the city has announced.

Among those honored were Volunteer of the Year Tom Solomon; Outstanding Volunteers Ron Bledsoe, Charlie Mericle, Sandy Savage and Leon Warshaw; and the winner of the Brachle Award, A.P. Raghavendra, a news release says.

The Brachle Award recognizes dedicated service under difficult circumstances, the release notes.

The award is named for its first recipient, in 2001 — Bob Brachle — who continued to serve after a double amputation necessitated his use of a wheelchair, the release points out.

In the past 12 months, citizen volunteers have donated 13,638 hours of unpaid service to the City of Sarasota, the release says.

Officer Danny Robbins, who is the volunteer coordinator, “receives valuable assistance” from volunteer Carolyn Fishel, who is the citizen volunteer coordinator, the release adds. Fishel, Bledsoe, Martha Bohn and Don Herklotz each volunteered more than 1,000 hours during 2012, the release adds.

Among officials attending the dinner were City Manager Thomas Barwin, Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown, Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, then-Acting Police Chief Paul Sutton, incoming Police Chief Bernadette DiPino and Capt. Lucius Bonner.

Volunteer Julie Clarke coordinated the dinner, the release notes. The volunteers donated the food.



City of Sarasota volunteers are honored for their hours of work in 2012. Contributed photo

STORES CITED FOR UNDERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Twelve local convenience store clerks were cited for selling alcohol to a minor during an undercover operation conducted by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Juvenile Alcohol Task Force Dec. 27-28, the office has announced.

The following businesses were found to be in violation of selling alcohol to a person under age 21, a news release says, and each of the clerks was given a misdemeanor Notice to Appear:

- 7-11, 4400 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- BP, 5300 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- 7-11, 5754 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- Maxx's Mart, 2616 Stickney Point Road, Sarasota.

- Discount Beverage, 2316 Gulf Gate Drive, Sarasota.
- Lee's Food Store, 5604 Swift Road, Sarasota.
- 7-11, 4350 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- BP, 3605 Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- BP, 1660 Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- 7-11, 1721 Honore Ave., Sarasota.
- Low Price Tobacco and Beer, 700 S. Tami-ami Trail, Nokomis.
- Hess Express, 350 Commercial Court, Venice.

Another 43 businesses were found to be in compliance and were sent a letter to commend owners and employees for helping reduce the sale of alcohol to minors, the release notes.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE SELECTS WINNER IN PSA COMPETITION

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has selected the winner in a student competition to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) warning teens about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and misuse, the office has announced.

The PSA competition was held among Television Production students at Pine View School in Osprey. There were 10 entries overall, with the winning 30-second spot created by 11th graders Wesley Backer and Max Klauber, a news release says.

"Prescription and over-the-counter drugs are among the most commonly abused drugs by teens, so we wanted to see how students

would reach out to peers with this lifesaving message," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "As the entries showed, we have some real talent in this community, so we hope to expand the competition next year."

The winning PSA has been airing on ABC7. It will also be posted on the station's website www.mysuncoast.com. Airtime was paid for by Regional Strike Force funding from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the release notes.

The PSA will also air on The Education Channel, and it is posted on the Sheriff's Office YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/SarasotaSheriff. 

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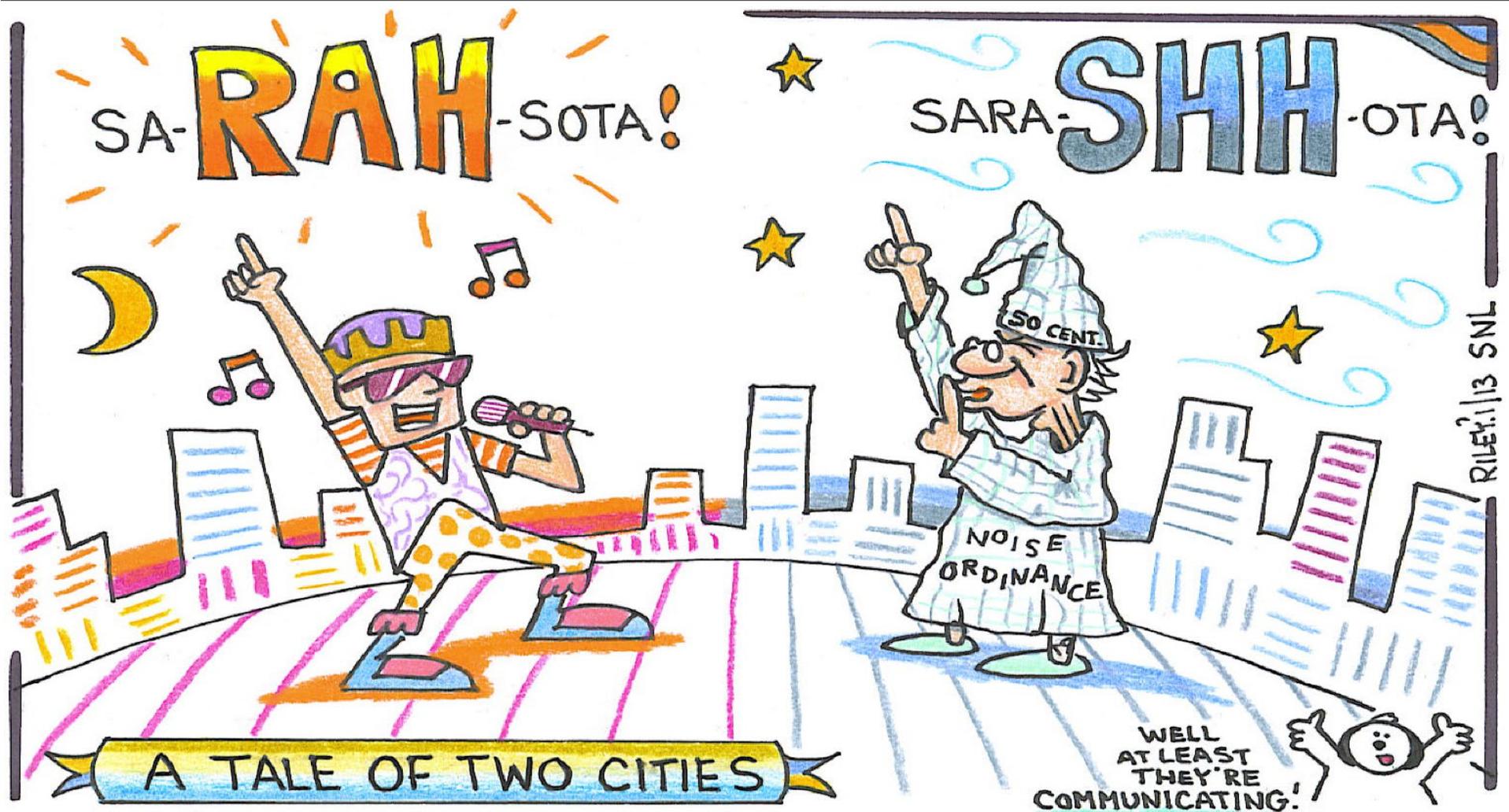
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OPINION



DON'T DOOM SARASOTA TO THE 'SOUNDS OF SILENCE'

EDITORIAL

In the last decade of the Cold War, a motion picture titled *The Day After* was released. Directed by Nicholas Meyer and starring Jason Robards, John Lithgow and Bibi Besch, it was a graphic and disturbing depiction of the aftermath of nuclear war as it affected those living near Kansas City, KS. In addition to massive casualties, radioactive fallout and the loss of every single modern convenience, their world was eerily silent.

With the recent escalation of the debate over "noise" in downtown Sarasota, we were reminded of this film. We also recalled such common sayings as "silent as the grave" and "quiet as a tomb." It seems that complete silence often is equated with death. It is in that context we remain perplexed about those who, having sought a residence in the heart

of an urban downtown, want to project on that environment a deathlike silence ... what is euphemistically referred to by them as the "quiet enjoyment" of their property.

Whenever we contemplate a silent urban center, it is in the tragically unnatural circumstances of a post-nuclear disaster. Perhaps that is because, after having been in urban centers around the world, we never have encountered one that truly is "silent," or which would afford its denizens any sort of "quiet enjoyment." Enjoyment, yes. But silence? In an urban setting, "quiet enjoyment" seems like an oxymoron.

Downtown Sarasota is not the heart of Manhattan, but it is an urban metropolis. And that means urban noise is an inescapable accompaniment. Traffic, sirens, construction — yes,

OPINION

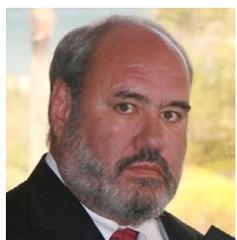
even the booming sounds of live music — are integral elements of that environment. The hustle and bustle of a city's core create the very vitality and vivacity that attract many to live there. To desire otherwise says more about the unrealistic expectations of those who eschew noise than it does about the appropriateness of noise — both good and bad — in an urban center.

Traditionally, people prefer to live in an urban setting because of the fast-paced lifestyle, the diversity, the culture ... in short, everything that makes a city the last logical place to seek out quiet. Yet, apparently, some arrived in Sarasota's downtown hoping for exactly that. If only they, upon learning the extent of their folly, had moved to the country for their sepulchral silence, all would be fine. Instead,

they have exerted an outsized influence on the city's government, with the result that our downtown is nearly reduced to all the tumult one might find in ... well, a tomb.

We have tried to see the proverbial middle ground in this controversy, some basis for a reasonable compromise. Unfortunately, expecting the center of a city to be as quiet as a rural countryside is neither reasonable nor fair. Realtors and condo salespeople might have promised a quiet downtown, but they could just as well have been hawking the Brooklyn Bridge. It was not theirs to promise. And the sooner downtown residents embrace the sounds of the city — or head east of Interstate 75 — and the city backs off of its draconian restrictions on downtown nightlife, the better off Sarasota will be. 

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PORTRAIT OF A KILLER



By David Staats
Columnist

COMMENTARY News media coverage of the Dec. 14 Newtown, CT, school massacre has been extensive. Still, many of the basic facts in the case of Adam Lanza, who is suspected of the murder of his mother and 26 innocents, remain unknown or are in doubt.

Some reports depict him as a deeply troubled young man suffering from Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism spectrum disorder. Other reporting paints a different picture.

Theories as to Adam's motive continue to be put forward.

Three psychiatrists were interviewed for this article. Each knew Adam only from what he had read in the newspapers or had seen on television. Since they could only speculate in general terms about an individual whom they had never met or treated, the three asked to remain anonymous.

One of the psychiatrists believes it is impossible to separate Adam's neuroses from those

OPINION

of his mother. The “high strung” mother who believed in an impending and violent end to the nation’s social and economic order passed her apocalyptic vision to her son, who absorbed and cultivated it. She taught him marksmanship with rifle and pistol — skills he would need to protect himself when civilization collapsed.

Adam’s already fragile psyche was a fertile field in which his mother planted her obsessive-compulsive fantasies. In order to condition himself for the end of civilization that she had foretold, he played violent video games in the seclusion of his windowless basement refuge, where he also likely thought about matricide.

Another psychiatrist agreed that Adam’s disorder is likely rooted in his family’s history. This psychiatrist was skeptical, however, that Adam had ever been professionally diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome because there is no evidence he was ever treated for it. Even when Adam was in high school and had been assigned a psychologist, there is no record that the psychologist had been aware of a past diagnosis of Asperger’s syndrome. The psychologist’s chief concern, as was that of the school administration, was that the socially maladroit Adam, who had no criminal record, might do harm to himself, not to others.

Adam’s parents separated in 2001 and divorced in 2007, when he was 17 years old. Over the next three years, his father regularly visited Adam and Adam’s elder brother on weekends. In 2010, Adam’s father remarried, and Adam’s brother went to work in New York City. It was then that Adam refused further vis-

its from his father. His brother busied himself with his new life and dropped contact with Adam. The closest male role models in Adam’s life had simultaneously vanished from his life and did not return. Only his mother remained.

The divorce decree gave Adam’s mother complete authority over his upbringing. After the divorce, she began buying guns. Adam’s life then more than ever centered on and depended upon his mother. She home-schooled him, further restricting his socialization possibilities. Each one’s neuroses fed off of and reinforced the other’s.

A third psychiatrist consulted for this article doubted that Adam would have responded to treatment even if it had been sought for him. Only someone like the late Bruno Bettelheim, an expert in treating troubled young people, might have been able to reach Adam, but even that is doubtful.

CHILDHOOD TRAUMA?

Described by one contemporary as a “weird kid” since the age of 5, Adam, this third doctor said, may have suffered a violent episode in early childhood that left him brain-injured as well as psychologically impaired. The brain’s ability to repress the recall of dreadful events is strong, this doctor added, and the brain would have suppressed the conscious memory of such a traumatic episode, holding it in check until a stressor event released it.

The psychiatrist commented that a post mortem examination of Adam’s brain might not discover the physical injury, if in fact there were one — unless it was a gross anatomical lesion, a tumor, etc. Chemical lesions in the

OPINION

brain, which are a more common cause of behavior such as Adam's, are undetectable. For this reason, Connecticut's chief medical examiner's autopsy may not produce a convincing explanation of Adam's behavior.

What was the stressor event that triggered the shootings? It has been suggested that Adam discovered his mother was planning to commit him to a mental institution. Another theory is that she was going to enroll him in a school in Washington State. Our doctors discount these theories.

A more likely explanation, they say, is that Adam began questioning himself about his mother's belief in an impending apocalypse and that he could not answer those questions satisfactorily. Her paranoid fantasies continued to nourish his, and he acted on them. Adam's first victim was his mother, whom he is said to have shot four times in the head and face.

Why did he kill very young children? One psychiatrist said that within the context of the "End of Days" fantasy that Adam and his mother shared and nurtured, and which, in Adam, may have been informed by his alleged flirtation with Satanism, Adam could have come to see the children as agents of the "Lord of Misrule," who had to be destroyed, as in the video games he played. One child was shot 11 times.

COMMITMENT PROCESSES

A word about the process in Connecticut by which mentally ill persons are involuntarily committed is perhaps overdue. Involuntary commitment is governed by CGS §17a-503.

This statute provides that persons who are mentally ill may be committed involuntarily if they are judged to be a danger to others or themselves, or if they are severely disabled to the point where they may suffer serious harm because they cannot provide for their own basic human needs and refuse to accept necessary hospitalization. Involuntary commitment requires that papers be filed with the probate court and competent medical professionals examine the individual in question. This process is neither swift nor easy.

There is also an expedited process for involuntary commitment. Known as "emergency certification," this venue requires a competent medical practitioner to certify that an individual is mentally ill, is a danger to himself or others and/or cannot care for himself without specialized assistance. In such instances, an individual may be held for 15 days for observation and evaluation. If at the end of this period the test results are negative or inconclusive, and no civil commitment petition has been filed with the probate court, then the individual is released back into his community.

Based on available reporting, it appears as though Adam was never the subject of civil commitment proceedings or an emergency commitment. Adam's mother, his sole caregiver, took no step to secure professional help to treat his mental illness, which was obvious to many, and which she may have tacitly encouraged.

The responsibility for the tragedy of Newtown is shared equally by mother and son, as well as by the dozens of individuals who turned a blind eye to the pair's bizarre, symbiotic behavior. 

OPINION

I CALL IT 'THE CLUB'



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY Is it the easy camaraderie among fitness folks — people somewhere between the ages of 18 and 90 who love the feeling of a good workout? Is it the studio regulars, dancing or stepping to the beat, knowing that after their own grueling one-hour workout they will have earned a nice cool shower and their day will be better than ever? (I don't understand yoga, but I do recognize a look of satisfaction and accomplishment on the faces of the group members after their class ends.)

Is it the gang of older guys who meet every week to wring out every ounce of sweat on the racquetball courts? They are definitely in their own zone, loving every second of their competitive matches. One could call it a fraternity of ageless men who just cannot, and will not, quit. I heard one red-faced player tell his buddy, "I'm 65"; the other guy responded, "So what! I'm 77." But he was outdone by the third player in the group, who wore a large elastic brace on his leg and walked away from his game with an enormous smile and a look of great pride.

Is it the large, round open area in the center that serves to welcome members, inviting them to have a cup of coffee and a chat? The people in this spot always seem so comfortable and relaxed, enjoying this home-away-from home ambience.

What about the marvelous day-care services and teen programs?

The Sarasota Y on Bahia Vista Street, officially known as the Frank A. Berlin YMCA, seems unique to me. Nobody ever judges anybody there, but maybe a few of us really like to admire some of the great bodies.

Sometimes I am not in the mood to make the drive over to "The Club," but once I arrive — and it never seems to fail — I am greeted by the friendly volunteers and am motivated, once again, to do my workout.

If my friend, Ken, who just turned 90, can show up — along with his wife — and strain on all those machines, then I guess I have no choice.

Happy New Year, and stay fit (keep lifting). 

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BEER PIONEERS

ASK OTUS

SIESTA SEEN

Inside



BEER PIONEERS

Cigar City Brewing Tour Guide Bob Lorber animatedly describes the brewing process to tour groups on Saturdays and shares samples of some of the brews before they make it into the tasting room. All photos by Arielle Scherr

CIGAR CITY BREWING EXPANDS AS IT GARNERS NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR FLORIDA-INSPIRED AND INNOVATIVE CRAFT BREWS

By Tyler Whitson

Staff Writer

Cigar City Brewing in Tampa appears to have a serious, though exhilarating, situation on its hands.

As if an unsuspecting bartender has pulled the lever on a tap that cannot be switched off, the budding business has been overflowing with demand beginning a short time after it was founded by CEO Joey Redner and Head Brewer Wayne Wambles in March 2009. It has recently been scrambling to expand quickly enough to satisfy the desires of its customers in Florida and across the United States.

“Most breweries don’t do as well as we did as fast as we did,” said Cigar City Brewing Tour

Guide Bob Lorber during an early afternoon look at the brewery’s facilities on Dec. 22, for which he had donned a Santa Claus hat and a beaming smile. “We brew around the clock — six days a week, 24 hours a day — and we still can’t supply Florida.”

CIGAR CITY CONTINUES TO EXPAND

The brewery is so popular locally, in fact, that even though it expanded its tasting room to three times the original size last November, extended its hours and added an additional, larger bar, many patrons still struggle to find seating during weekend visits, whether in the evening or early afternoon. Even those who

want to purchase bottles or fill up takeaway containers called “growlers” often have to wait in line to get their brews and drink them at home.

Expanding the tasting room, however, is only one step Cigar City is taking to satisfy its customers. To increase its overall production — in addition to Florida, its beers are distributed to Alabama, Philadelphia and New York City — the brewery in May 2012 purchased and developed a new, additional brew house on its original property with twice the capacity of the first one.

Lorber estimated that, once the production numbers are in for 2012, they would be at least double, possibly triple those of 2011, when the total was about 8,000 barrels.

Another important part of Cigar City’s expansion is its recent purchase of a canning line

that allows the brewery to package beer more quickly and efficiently than with its original bottling line, a difference between 62 cans per minute and 24 bottles per minute. The brewery began selling and distributing its canned beers in November last year. At present, only the best-selling Cigar City beers are available in cans.

“Cans are awesome in Florida, specifically, because you can take them to the boat, the beach, the pool, the golf course, tailgating, work, whatever you feel like,” Lorber said jokingly. “We love cans,” he continued. “There’s no white stripe; there’s no oxidation; there’s no seepage. They’re easy to pack in, pack out — or shotgun,” he added, evoking some hearty laughter from the tour group.

The most obvious choice for canning is the Jai Alai India Pale Ale (IPA) because it makes up



Dario Diaz (right) tells The Sarasota News Leader he admires Cigar City Brewing CEO and Founder Joey Redner’s decision not to include television programming in the tasting room, so it does not distract from the experiences of patrons bonding over beers.



This display, frequently referred to in the Cigar City Brewing tour, shows the ingredients used to make some of the brewery's more famous and popular beers.

70 percent of Cigar City's output and can be considered its flagship beer. The ale — which has a hoppy, crisp taste with light bitterness that is balanced with citrus and tropical fruit flavors — is rated “exceptional,” scoring 91 out of 100 points, by *Beeradvocate*, an international authority and online social rating system of beer quality and taste.

In second place is the Maduro Brown Ale, a more affordable choice that helped put Cigar City on the map, thanks to its nod to Tampa's Cuban cultural heritage; its smooth mix of complex chocolate, espresso, caramel and toffee flavors; and its excellent pairing capabilities with heavy Cuban dishes such as ropa vieja.

Finishing out the canned selections are two beers that fall within the same price range as Maduro: the Florida Cracker White Ale, named after the Colonial-era cattle ranchers of Florida who used to herd or hunt cattle using whips instead of lassos; and the Hotter than Helles Lager, named after the Munich Helles style of German beer to which it adheres.

Those who are already familiar with the brewery's more exclusive selections will likely be excited to hear, according to Lorber, that the company has tentative plans to can the Tocobaga Red Ale, which is rated even more highly than the Jai Alai on *Beeradvocate*; the White Oak Aged Jai Alai IPA, which, as its name suggests, is brewed with spirals of white oak that impart a unique flavor to the ale; the Minaret Extra Special Bitter (ESB) ale; and Cubano-Style Espresso Brown Ale, which is one of Cigar City's more distinctly Cuban-influenced beers. Lorber made sure to emphasize that these plans are still tentative, however, and people should not get too excited just yet.

In addition to expanding statewide and nationally, Cigar City is giving fans who happen to live in or near Tampa the gift of an official brewpub: Opened recently in the Carrollwood neighborhood, it will be producing its own new beers and specializing in pairing them with particular dishes. Further into the future, locals and visitors will also have the opportunity to relax in the Florida sun at the Biergarten that will be developed outside the newly expanded brew house.

THE ROOTS OF THE SUCCESS

Those who have tried Cigar City's beers know it is no secret why the brewery has gained such an ardent following so quickly.

“It's their creativity,” said Jacob Gibson — a Tampa resident of nine years who brews his own beer at home with his father and takes the Cigar City tour as often as he can. He spoke with *The Sarasota News Leader* on Dec. 22.

“You can come in here once a week and they're opening weird kegs of random stuff, like they're saying, ‘Hey look what we've done! We put Jai Alai in a chardonnay barrel, inside of another barrel!’”

It is this determination to constantly produce something new and unique without fear of failure that has helped make Cigar City famous.

The brewery began developing this reputation less than six months after its opening by submitting its Humidor Series IPA — a Jai Alai aged with spirals of Spanish cedar commonly used to make cigar boxes — to the prestigious Great American Beer Festival in Colorado and walking away with a gold medal. Since then, the brewery has entered the competition every year and has consistently won medals: In

2010 it won a silver medal for the same beer; in 2011, it won another gold medal for the Minaret ESB; and in 2012, it won a bronze medal for the Cucumber Saison, which is a light, refreshing, Belgian-style summer beer infused with cucumber and dill.

These and various other awards won at craft beer competitions across the United States, along with frequent high ratings from *Beeradvocate* and the similar *RateBeer* site, have combined with lore about special release beers and aged beers to create a culture of Cigar City obsession among craft beer fans across the country. Probably the best illustration of this is Cigar City's elusive Hunah-

pu's Imperial Stout, which has an almost unheard-of rating of 99 points on *Beeradvocate*. The brewery releases it only one day per year — on its March 9 birthday — which has been dubbed “Hunahpu's Day.”

The extremely limited-release Hunahpu's, which is a variant of Cigar City's popular Marshal Zhukov's Imperial Stout, is brewed with three different kinds of chiles, cocoa nibs, Madagascar vanilla and Ceylon cinnamon. On its release date last year, it attracted more than 5,000 customers to the brewery, some of whom arrived hours before the doors even opened. It sold out in a matter of hours, de-



The tasting room at Cigar City Brewing offers flights for patrons who want to try various beers at once, which is often helpful for first-time visitors navigating the extensive draft menu.

spite the brewery's limiting the sales to two bottles per customer.

Lorber said he still has a couple of bottles of it at home and that he has received offers to purchase them for \$300 each, though he has not yet been able convince himself to let them go.

Those who do not necessarily have "Hunahpu's fever" can still visit Cigar City's tasting room most other days of the year and enjoy themselves. This is not only an essential part of the true Cigar City experience, but also an integral part of the brewery's business model. After all, the tasting room is the place where beers go from a small test batch to the tap and then, depending on customer response, to oblivion or back to the tap for another run, with the hope of possibly making it into 12- or 22-ounce bottles.

This type of customer feedback, Lorber explained in an interview between tours, is one of the primary ways Cigar City makes its decisions about how often and in what quantities to produce certain beers.

"It's a test market," he explained. "We test it in the tasting room; we listen to the feedback. If it sells out quickly, we know it's done well," he continued. "If the public tells you to do something — well, you'd be stupid not to do it!"

While this testing process may not seem unusual for any business, Lorber explained that what makes it different at Cigar City is the company's refusal to rest on the laurels of its favorites. Cigar City, he added, has an insatiable desire to experiment, and it continues to produce and offer a wide variety of new beers in its tasting room, which is what keeps people coming back so often.

"Beer drinkers love us because we don't just stay with the regular rotation, we change it up. Every time you go into the tasting room ... there will be a different beer in there," he explained. "That's what sets us apart from other breweries. I've been all over the country, to 250 different breweries, and nobody really does this."

Another aspect of Cigar City that makes it unique and appealing is the way it incorporates the Cuban influence of Tampa's culture into its beers, particularly in using ingredients and processes that have not been tried before or may seem unusual to many beer drinkers. Dario Diaz, a Tampa native, a friend of Redner and a fan of the brewery, explained to the *News Leader* as he sat at the tasting room bar on Dec. 22 that he appreciates this originality. "They're being innovative with beer, they're having fun with it and it shows," he said.

"I'm proud of Cigar City," Diaz continued. "Get on any forum about beer and you'll see somehow, somebody from another place talking about Cigar City, saying things like, 'We don't have it in New England yet, but we're really looking forward to it!'"

Jerry Troya, another Tampa native who was sitting and chatting with Diaz, expressed a similar sentiment. "It shows that they're creating a product that they enjoy and they enjoy doing it, too. They use different flavors that do create the Latin-type feel of being here in West Tampa," he said, adding that Cigar City is expanding the recognition of Tampa and its culture all across the United States.

"I tell people I live in Tampa," he pointed out, "and they say, 'Oh, that's where Cigar City is, right?'"

A GROWING AUDIENCE

Cigar City's current rate of success and expansion may be just the beginning for the young brewery. National demand for the company's beer remains on the rise, and once the company is able to fulfill the demand in Florida, it may move on to national distribution — for good reason. The brewery's Facebook page, for example, is constantly peppered with posts from people in other states asking when they will be able to buy Cigar City beers locally.

Gibson, who is lucky enough to be able to visit the brewery whenever he wants to satisfy

his own Cigar City desires, said he has friends who fall into this demographic. "I know people in Georgia who drive to Tallahassee just to get Cigar City beers," he said. "It's ridiculous."

Of course, with growth often comes change. However, from what Lorber has said about the core values of Cigar City's employees, its owner and its head brewer, fans need not worry about how future commercial success will affect the brewery's prestige and adventurousness.

"It's true heart craft beer," he said. "For these guys, it's not a job, it's a passion." 



At the front of its expanded tasting room, Cigar City Brewing proudly displays the awards it has garnered over the years.



I like to take my time.

Sure, it's a temptation to rush. Each issue of *The Sarasota News Leader* is brimfull of in-depth coverage of all the news and goings-on in Sarasota County. And it has delightful and informative feature stories. Thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota*, I always know what the most exciting happenings are each week. Plus, it is simply so beautiful, with photography that takes my breath away.

There is so much there, I don't know where to begin. So it is hard to resist the urge to read it all at once. But I know better. Take your time and indulge in all that it has to offer.

You have a whole week.

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ASK OTUS

SO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW BIRDS DO IT

Dear Readers,

It is the New Year, and in our avian world, it is “in with the old!”

The mating season for most birds is just beginning, celebrating the eons-old cycle of courtship and love while trying one’s absolute best to get someone to “do it” with you! The haecceity of a bird is simple to explain: We exist to

breed and insure the survival of our species. The fact that we do it with panache and pursue it with an intensity that oftentimes borders on the ridiculous is just another part of our inherent charm — something that makes people smile understandingly or scratch their heads perplexedly as they watch our antics.

As usual, I have a wonderful old song running through my head. It is called *Let’s Fall in Love*, and it was written by Cole Porter, the famed Hoosier composer (as well as naturalist and ornithologist). It is more commonly known as “Birds do it, bees do it.” And here is a [video](#) I really enjoyed. The film’s quality may be pathetic, but it features lots of glorious love-struck birds as well as one rutting,



Oscar and Olivia mate in their nest. File photo

flea-infested squirrel pair. It also has the original, and even back then, politically incorrect lyrics.

Cole Porter did elucidate how “it” is done by some. For example, “Roosters with a doodle and a cock do it,” which explains our barnyard friends; but, when it came to “Bees do it,” he was purposely vague. I actually had to do my own research.

According to *eHow*, “The mating process usually occurs above ground in mid-flight, and results in the death of the drone as he expends semen.” There is not enough in that moment of passion to keep the imagination alive, never mind inspire romance novels, *chansons de gestes* or hauntingly sad ballads, is there?

I have been watching Oscar Osprey for the past couple of weeks. He has been flying back forth to his nest on Little Sarasota Bay. Sometimes a long train of Spanish moss trails behind him; at other times, he carries the tiniest and most inconsequential-looking twig.

How many of you knew that male birds take as serious an interest in architecture as Mies van der Rohe or I.M. Pei? And who would guess that birds could construct architectural marvels that include

solar heating and heat-generating biodegradable materials? Anyway, Oscar is rebuilding the nest he established three years ago in the hope that Olivia Osprey will again fall in love with him and they can “do it.”

He is starting to do everything a male bird can possibly do to attract a mate. Even if it is the same mate as the one he had last year — and many birds do so hope it will be the same one — he still has to show her he has what it takes.

I am always touched by the affection and interest people have in birds on their property or in their neighborhood. They name the birds as though they were a part of their family or close circle of friends.

On south Siesta Key, the Great Blue Heron is called Fred, Charley or Sam. The Osprey offspring, who fledged in glorious flight, were appropriately named Orville and Wilbur (after the Wright brothers, but Wilbur turned out to be Amelia, as in Earhart!).

Birds seem to evoke in humans a passel of interests — from aviculture to zoolatry — as well as emotions ranging from the proprietary, with all the good feelings of love and concern for “their birds,” to just downright curiosity.



*Oscar brings a stick to the nest he is building.
File photo*

That is why we should always throw out the cardinal rule of correct and proper scientific analysis in ornithological behavioral studies; i.e., “Never anthropomorphize your subject!” If people did not enjoy watching birds and interpreting their behavior in a manner that directly relates to them personally, well, our courtship, love games and our ludicrously adorable chicks would be as much fun and interesting to people as a pile of dead male bee drones. And no one would ever have asked me, “**HOW DO BIRDS DO IT?**”

I hope to satisfy people’s prurient curiosity as to how we birds do it. It will take a bit of time and more than one column, because I believe that following the life of a bird *ab ovo* will answer everyone’s questions.

Next week I shall introduce you to a particular Great White Egret (*Ardea Alba*), a bird that

exemplifies what people recognize as a beautiful and integral part of Florida’s wildlife, but one whose breeding and nesting habits are rarely seen by most. You will enjoy learning Ardea’s secrets. I sure did!

Until then, I leave you with a few candid shots of our beloved south Siesta Key Osprey family. Oscar Osprey constructed a nest. He again attracted Olivia to it. He assumed the missionary (i.e., angelic) position and they mated. She laid eggs, and those eggs hatched into ludicrously adorable chicks. The chicks fledged. Now all members of the Osprey family will be looking toward a nest and a mate and eggs and chicks.

Ah, the New Year with all its *auld lang syne*

Otus



ABOUT OTUS

Otus Rufous, an Eastern Screech-Owl, was born on Siesta Key and is a full-time resident there. An avid hunter, accomplished vocalist and genuine night owl, Otus is a keen observer of our local wildlife and knows many of nature’s secrets. Otus will answer your questions about our amazing wildlife, but only if you Ask Otus. So please send your questions and photos to askotus@sarasotanewsleader.com. Thank you.

Oscar is in the nest with the chicks, Orville and Amelia. File photo



Siesta Seen

COUNTY NOT EXPECTED TO TAKE OVER KEY ROADS FROM FDOT; USA TODAY ASKING FOR VOTES ON BEST FLORIDA BEACH; EAT HERE OPENS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Although talk has resurfaced recently about Sarasota County possibly taking over the maintenance of a state road segment on Siesta Key, Commissioner Nora Patterson discounted any such move in the immediate future.

“Bottom line really for me,” she said in late December, “it doesn’t make sense for us to

take over maintenance of state roads [just] for us to lower a speed limit.”

For some time now, Walt Olson, representing the Siesta Key Condominium Council, has lobbied for a lower speed limit on Midnight Pass Road between the Beach Road and Stickney Point Road intersections.



Six new pedestrian crosswalks — complete with flashing lights that can be activated as people prepare to cross — were completed on Midnight Pass Road last fall. File photo

Siesta Seen

A little more than a year ago, when she was chairwoman of the County Commission, Patterson sent a letter to Billy Hattaway, then the new Florida Department of Transportation secretary for District One — which includes Sarasota County — asking on behalf of the commission that FDOT consider Olson's request.

Although the Florida Department of Transportation this fall installed six new crosswalks along an approximately 1.2 mile stretch of the road, FDOT officials have said traffic data does not support reducing the speed limit from 35 mph to 30 mph.

Olson was successful in getting the speed limit lowered on Beach Road between Ocean Boulevard and the Midnight Pass Road intersection near St. Boniface Episcopal Church, but that is a county-maintained segment.

During an FDOT open house about the crosswalk construction, held on Sept. 17, Cindy Clemmons, public information director for FDOT, explained to me that the department's engineers in Sarasota County had reviewed the data about traffic patterns on the affected portion of Midnight Pass Road at the request of residents.

That data had not proven compelling enough, she said, to warrant the lowering of the speed limit on that section of Midnight Pass Road where the crosswalks were going to be installed.

However, Clemmons said, after the crosswalks were completed, FDOT would under-

take another traffic analysis of the speed limit situation.

An Excelsior resident, Olson has been a strong advocate for helping people walk safely from the bay side of the island to the Gulf of Mexico side — and back, of course — especially during high season.

Before I could reach Patterson for comments, JoAnn May, the new communications officer for District One, told me there had been “no formal discussion or correspondence about transferring roadways from the state to the county.”

May added in her Dec. 18 email, “Department and county staff have spoken informally about things the county would like to do — reduce the speed limit and add crosswalks — and that the county could make those decisions and take those actions, for example, if it owned the road.”

More recently, Patterson told me, people have approached her about lowering the speed limit on the portion of the road with the new crosswalks because that would enable them to operate golf carts legally on that segment.

Patterson has worries about the safety of such transportation, she said, not to mention the fact that Siesta has quite a few residents who are not retirees and/or seasonal inhabitants.

“It's not just a resort community,” she pointed out. A lot of people have regular jobs off the island, she added, and they would become frustrated with much slower-moving traffic. “So I'm not enthusiastic about these requests.”

Siesta Seen

ALCOHOL ON THE BEACH

Lourdes Ramirez, the Siesta resident who has her own [Siesta Key Community website](#) —and also is president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations — recently asked a good question about some signage at the public beach concession.

In late December, she emailed Patterson with a photo showing an advertisement for margaritas and pina colodas at the beach. She wanted

to be certain that only beer and wine legally could be sold at the concession.

Patterson passed along that question to Carolyn Brown, general manager of the county's Parks and Recreation Department. Sure enough, Brown responded, "Only beer and wine are sold at the Siesta Beach concession. Anyone may bring any beverage to Siesta Beach as long as it is not in a glass container."

My curiosity was still aroused at that point. What was in those "margaritas" and "pina colodas"? Although Brown was on vacation for the holidays, she responded quickly to my query: "We checked and it is more akin to a wine cooler. We asked the concessionaire to remove the signs as they are misleading."

THE BEST BEACH

Speaking of county email exchanges: County Administrator Randall Reid sent a note on Dec. 28 to Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, about an article he had seen in *USA Today*.

Reid directed her to a [website](#) for the paper, where people could vote on the best beach town in Florida.

In a blog posted the same day, Laura Bly had written that in light of the "thousands of snowbirds pointing their convertibles south to the Sunshine State for a dose of winter warmth," the paper's staff had asked Dr. Beach — Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman of Florida International University — to name "10 Florida destinations that combine sand, surf and a welcoming sense of community."



Lourdes Ramirez took this photo last month of an advertisement for alcoholic beverages at Siesta Key Public Beach. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

His answers, in alphabetical order, included Siesta — no surprise, since he named it the No. 1 beach just before Memorial Day in 2011.

Regarding Siesta, the *USA Today* staff not only noted the honor but added, “... this Gulf Coast barrier island southwest of Sarasota has ‘the finest white sand in the world.’”

Among his other Top 10 destinations are Key West, Sanibel Island and South Beach in Miami.

I am sure Haley and her staff are thrilled, coming as this does on the heels of big publicity

for Sarasota County in the form of a *New York Times* travel article.

SPEAKING OF TOURISTS

Although Tom Maroney, general manager of business operations in the county’s Public Works Department, had told me this information in time for publication just before the holidays, I wanted to note this week that Maroney’s boss recently had affirmed it.

The date I am referencing regards the meeting when the County Commission is expected



Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman of Miami, aka Dr. Beach, put Siesta Key on his list of Top 10 Florida beaches for a recent USA Today article. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

to approve a bid for installation of lighting at crosswalks in Siesta Village. That date is Jan. 29.

In a Dec. 20 email to the commissioners, James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer (and head, therefore, of Public Works), wrote that the Invitation for Quotes for the procurement and installation of 14 decorative LED bollards at seven Village crosswalks was advertised on Dec. 7.

A mandatory pre-quote meeting was held on Dec. 20, he added, with representatives from two firms present, along with "Mr. Peter van Roekens, representing the Siesta Key Village Association."

Van Roekens was the person who proposed the bollards during the January 2011 SKVA meeting. He represents both the Siesta Key Association — which he serves as vice president — and the Terrace East board at the SKVA's monthly sessions.

Harriott added in his email that, per the commissioners' direction, staff would bring the quotes to them on Jan. 29, along with "a proposed funding solution before any notice to proceed is issued."

SKVA President Russell Matthes voiced his view during both the November and December meetings of his group that the bollards should be in place by mid-February, when Village businesses consider the tourist season officially under way.

EAT HERE SIESTA KEY OPENS

Sean Murphy, owner of the award-winning Beach Bistro and Eat Here restaurants on Anna Maria Island and in Sarasota, respectively, has announced that his Eat Here in Siesta Village has opened.

Siesta architect Mark Smith had told SKA members it would be completed in December in the space once occupied by Total Tennis.

A press release from Murphy notes, "Eat Here [in downtown Sarasota] was named 'Best New Restaurant' by Florida Trend Magazine, SRQ Magazine, Sarasota Herald Tribune and Sarasota Magazine. It celebrates chef-crafted cookery with presentations of local farm products; fresh, locally-caught seafood; inspired pizza and taco cuisine; refreshing, fruit-infused cocktails and craft beer and wine. The newest chef-driven, Gulf Coast cookery on Siesta Key offers the same winning formula as its predecessors."

Among the menu selections, the release notes, are "the *Killer Grilled Cheese* with muenster and gruyere cheeses and caramelized onions; free-range, buttermilk *Fried Chicken and Waffles*; *Lobster Tacos*; *Lobstercargot*; *Island Ribs*; *Gulf Coast Oyster Fry* and *New Orleans-style Seafood Stew*."

The newest Eat Here is located at 240 Avenida Madera. It serves dinner from 5 to 10 p.m. weekdays and is open until 11 p.m. on weekends. Call 346-7800 for more information or visit www.EatHereSiestaKey.com. 



ADAM TRENT



Adam Trent will bring his unique blend of comedy, song and dance to the Van Wezel stage on Jan. 5. Contributed photo

ADAM TRENT BRINGING HIS MAGIC SHOW TO TOWN

Magician Adam Trent will be bringing his unique style of pop music and modern dance to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota on Saturday, Jan. 5, the Van Wezel has announced.

“The young performer has been making waves in the magic community with his signature combination of ... comedy, urban dance, catchy pop music and masterful illusion, inspiring some to describe his show as resembling ‘Justin Timberlake meets David Copperfield,’” a news release says.

Trent was the youngest, and only, magician ever to win back-to-back medals in the Pacific Coast Association of Magicians Pro Magic Challenge, the release adds.

His appearance is a Van Wezel Family Night show: Buy one adult ticket and get a second ticket for free for someone between the ages of 6 and 18, the release notes.

Tickets are \$10 to \$35. For more information, call the box Office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org.

FLORIDA FANTASTICA TO DEBUT AT SELBY GARDENS

Science inspires art in colorful mixed media show, *Florida Fantastica*, which will be on display at Selby Gardens Jan. 9 through March 3.

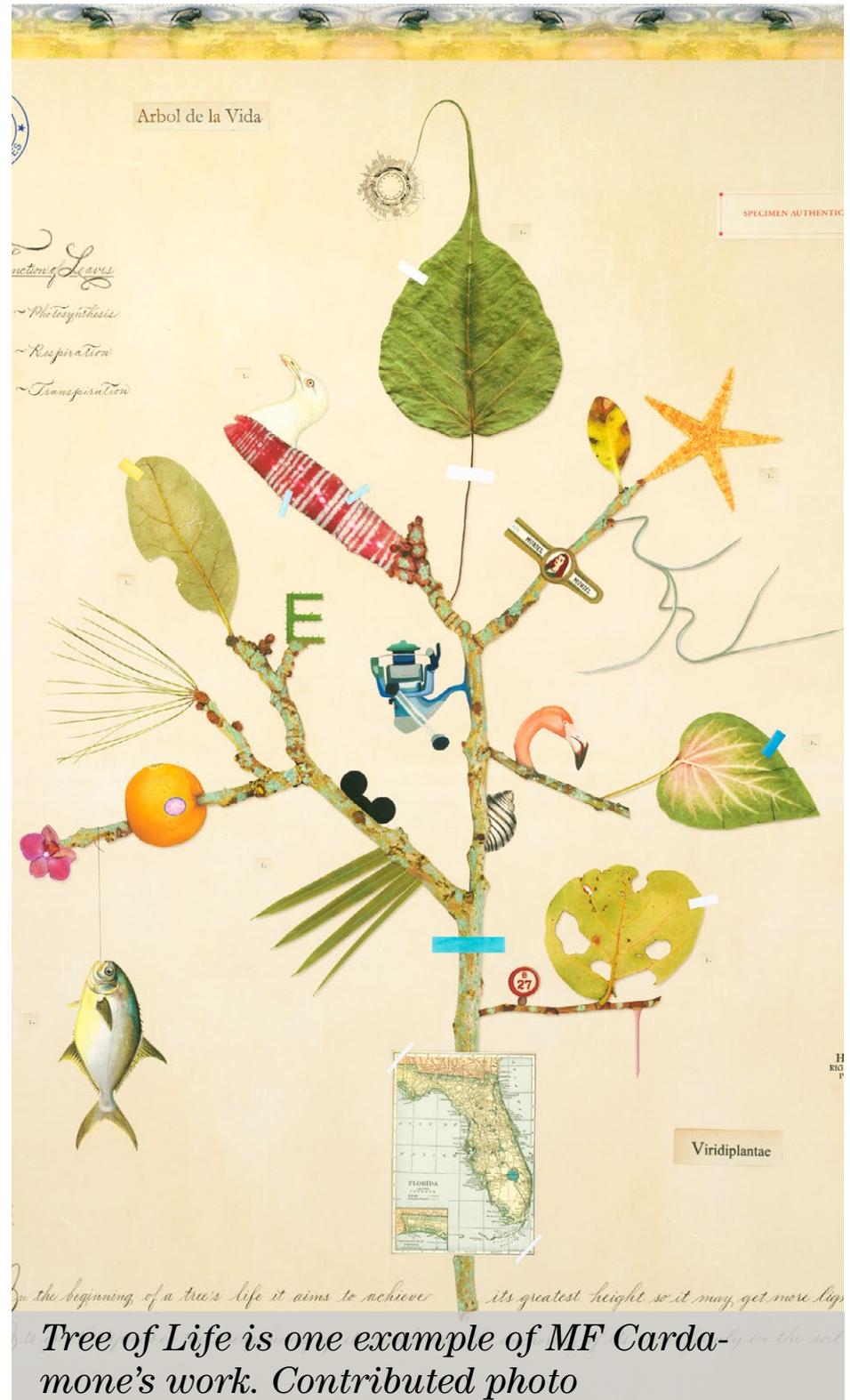
The show is by Philadelphia native MF Cardamone, whose “clear and insightful artwork illuminates people’s relationship with plants,” a news release says.

The exhibition is included in the regular admission fee to Selby Gardens, which is located at 811 S. Palm Ave. in Sarasota. The show will be in The Museum of Botany and the Arts.

Guests will have the opportunity to meet Cardamone at a free public reception on Jan. 10 at 5:30 p.m., the release adds.

In her unique form of art, Cardamone records a plant’s life history, ecology, folklore, wildlife value and medicinal uses by combining specimens with digital imagery, inks and hand-drawn touches “that playfully modernize the traditions of plant specimen mounting and botanical illustration,” the release notes. “Like Selby Gardens, Cardamone has a passion for the education and preservation of plants, but above all, her artwork strives to express the connections between plants and people,” the release adds.

“I like to create visual puzzles with my work and try to evoke a sense of mystery and wonder in the viewer because that’s the way I feel about the natural world,” Cardamone says in the release.



Together with Selby Gardens’ botany director, Bruce Holst, Education Director Jeannie Perales and Horticulture Director Mike McLaughlin, Cardamone developed a list of plants representing both the Gardens and Florida, the release points out. Many of these selections will be featured in the *Florida Fantastica* exhibition, which coincides by design with statewide celebrations of Florida’s 500th anniversary.

JOY OF JAZZ CONCERT SERIES TO KICK OFF JAN. 13 IN VENICE

The Jazz Club of Sarasota's *Joy of Jazz* concert series will kick off with David Pruyn and The Paramount Swing 6 on Sunday, Jan. 13, from 2 to 4 p.m. in Centennial Park in downtown Venice.

The concert will be free, a news release notes, but donations will be accepted in support of the Jazz Club's scholarship fund. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets.

Trumpeter and vocalist Pruyn will appear with his band, The Paramount Swing 6, consisting of Tom Ellison playing sax and flute, Greg Nielsen on trombone, Dick Reynolds on piano, Bruce Wallace on bass and Rich MacDonald on drums, the release adds.

A New Orleans native, Pruyn is a multi-talented musician and conductor who has performed with many jazz greats, including Dick Hyman, Chick Corea, Mel Torme, Steve Lawrence, Frank Sinatra Jr., Al Jarreau, Rosemary Clooney, Edie Gorme, the Manhattan Transfer and his hometown buddy, Harry Connick, Jr., the release points out.

"We'll be playing music from *The Great American Songbook*," says Pruyn in the release, "and we'll throw in some Big Band-era favorites and other tunes associated with notable instrumentalists and vocalists from the true glory days of popular music."

The 2012-2013 *Joy of Jazz* series will include two more concerts — on Feb. 3, featuring the Venice High School Jazz Lab, and on March 17 with Ron Kraemer and the Hurricanes. "It's a perfect way to spend a weekend afternoon: enjoying the great melodies, rich harmonies and soulful rhythms of jazz," says Bill Beck-

man, a Jazz Club of Sarasota board member and producer of this series, in the release.

For more information, call 366-1552, or visit www.jazzclubsarasota.org.



David Pruyn/Contributed photo

MASTER CHEF AND AUTHOR HAZAN TO APPEAR AT FESTIVAL

The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee will continue its 2012-2013 Jewish Book Festival with master chef and author Giuliano Hazan appearing on Jan. 13 at 7 p.m. at the Lakewood Ranch Town Hall, 8175 Lakewood Ranch Boulevard.

Hazan “is one of the foremost authorities on Italian cooking,” a news release notes. “His style is accessible and authentic, without pretense or fanfare,” the release adds. “Hazan shares his lifelong love of food — food that is simple, honest and incredibly flavorful — empowering his students to create impressive meals that are consistently and reliably delicious,” the release notes.

His cookbooks have earned him a James Beard Award nomination and the World Cookbook Award for Best Italian Cookbook in the English Language, the release points out. In 2007, the International Association of Culinary Professionals named Hazan the Cooking Teacher of the Year. Together with his wife, Lael, he runs an acclaimed cooking school in northern Italy, Cooking with Giuliano Hazan at Villa Giona, the release adds.

The Jewish Book Festival will continue with New York Times best-selling author Rich Cohen on Feb. 13.

“This year’s festival features a stellar lineup,” says event Co-Chairman Marvin Waldman in



Giuliano Hazan/Contributed photo

the release. “These are lively, brilliant individuals, and we’re honored to introduce them to our community.”

Tickets, which are \$10, may be purchased via the Federation’s website, www.jfedsrq.org, or by calling 371-4546, ext. 119.

For more information about The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, call 371-4546 or visit www.jfedsrq.org.

Take Your Time You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night

PARROTT TO PERFORM WITH SPORTIELLO AND METZ

The Jazz Club of Sarasota will present jazz vocalist and bassist Nicki Parrott, pianist Rossano Sportiello and drummer Eddie Metz Jr. in concert on Friday, Jan. 18, at 7:30 p.m. at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

The award-winning Sportiello was born in Vigevano, Italy, a news release says. He began studying the piano at the age of 9. By 16, Sportiello was performing professionally at jazz venues in the Milan area, the release notes. In 1992, he joined one of Europe's historic jazz bands, the Milano Jazz Gang, and toured with the group throughout Europe until the end of 2000. Since then, Sportiello has performed with the world's finest jazz luminaries, including Slide Hampton, Dan Barrett, Bucky Pizzarelli, Warren Vache, Bob Cranshaw, Howard Alden, Joe La Barbera, Scott Hamilton, Jake Hanna and Dick Hyman, the release points out.

Nicki Parrott, vocalist, bassist and songwriter, came to the United States from Australia in 1994 to study with the acclaimed bassist, Rufus Reid, at William Patterson College, the

release adds. Since 2000, she has performed with such notable musicians as Les Paul, Billy Taylor, Dick Hyman, Terri Thornton, Holly Hoffman, Bucky Pizzarelli, John Pizzarelli, Warren Vache Jr. and Jose Feliciano, the release notes. Parrott has also performed in such Broadway shows as *Avenue Q*; *Imaginary Friends*; *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*; *Summer of '42*; and *Jekyll and Hyde*.

With more than 30 years of experience as a professional musician, Metz continues to record with jazz greats and play at jazz festivals and events around the country, the release says. He has performed with Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Sammy Davis Jr., Rosemary Clooney, Woody Allen and Patti Page.

If purchased before Jan. 15, tickets are \$25 for Jazz Club members and \$30 for non-members, the release notes. Tickets are \$35 at the door and \$10 for students.

For information and tickets, call 366-1552.

For more information about the Jazz Club of Sarasota, visit www.jazzclubsarasota.org.



(From left) Eddie Metz Jr., Rossano Sportiello and Nicki Parrott will perform together in Sarasota on Jan. 18. Contributed photo by Brian Wittman.



Nicki Parrott/Contributed photo

LERNER TO PRESENT CONCERT AT NEW COLLEGE

New College New Music will present *Dreamwork*, featuring pianist Marilyn Lerner, at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 19, in the Mildred Sainer Music and Arts Pavilion, 5313 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota.

Widely recorded and internationally renowned, “Lerner’s work speaks to improvisation, not just as an approach to music making, but as a way of life, a mode of being that is accessible to all of us in our daily lives,” a news release says.

Among her best-known recordings are *Luminance*, *Romanian Fantasy* and *Special Angel*, the release adds. “Her intimate knowledge of the piano, combined with a fearless experimental and passionate spirit, render her a true original,” the release points out.

Lerner’s work spans the worlds of jazz, creative improvisation, klezmer and 20th century classical music, the release says. She composes for film, theatre, radio and television. Additionally, she is an audio artist, and she “has created a series of soundscapes using samples of sounds she collects in the natural environment,” the release points out.

Lerner is also a practicing psychotherapist and an analyst in training at the Toronto Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis. While at New College, she will discuss how her artistic work and her therapeutic work inform each other and how her practice in both arenas is informed by and informs her feminism, the release adds. That discussion will be part of a session co-sponsored by the college’s Gender Studies Program, the release says.



Marilyn Lerner/Contributed photo by Karen Tweedy Holmes

Tickets for the *Dreamwork* performance are \$15 for the general public and \$5 for non-New College students. They are free for all members of the New College community.

Online reservations may be made at donate.ncf.edu/events. For more information, visit newmusicnewcollege.org or call 487-4888.

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA TO TAKE THE VAN WEZEL STAGE

The Sarasota Concert Association's 2013 *Great Performers Series* will continue with the acclaimed Cleveland Orchestra and violin soloist Joshua Bell on Jan. 28 at 8 p.m. at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tami-ami Trail, Sarasota.

Under the leadership of Franz Welser-Möst, the Cleveland Orchestra "remains one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world, setting standards of artistic excellence, concert programming and community engagement," a news release says. In this Van Wezel appearance, the orchestra will perform the *Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 61* by

Beethoven and *Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14* by Hector Berlioz.

Often referred to as the "poet of the violin," Bell is one of the world's most celebrated violinists, the release adds. Born in Bloomington, IN, he received his first violin at age 4; at 12, he began studying with revered violinist Josef Gingold at Indiana University, the release points out. Two years later, Bell came to national attention in his debut with Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra. At the age of 17, he made his Carnegie Hall debut, the release adds.



Franz Welser-Möst conducts the Cleveland Orchestra. Contributed photo by Roger Mastroianni

Among his numerous awards and honors, Bell has been an Avery Fisher Prize recipient, and he was named Musical America's 2010 Instrumentalist of the Year, the release notes.

Recently appointed music director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, he is the first person to hold the title since Sir Neville Marriner formed the orchestra in 1958, the release points out.

Bell performs on the 1713 Huberman Stradivarius.

Tickets are \$40, \$50, \$60 and \$70. Tickets and information for the *Great Performers Series* are available by calling 955-0040 or visiting www.scasarasota.org.



Joshua Bell/Contributed photo

The Sarasota Concert Association also presents Munchtime Musicales, a series of free concerts featuring performances by high-caliber artists based in Sarasota. The series is designed to offer a wide variety of musical genres — including classical, folk and jazz — and feature both vocal and instrumental

performers, the release continues.

The 2012-2013 concert season will continue with the Sarasota String Quartet on Jan. 16 at noon at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Seating is open; no reservations are taken. For more information about Munchtime Musicales, call 351-7467 or visit www.scasarasota.org.

BRASSY BROADS RETURNING FOR ONE WEEK ONLY

She's coming back! *Brassy Broads of Broadway*, featuring Kathy Halenda, will return to Sarasota for a limited engagement beginning Feb. 19 in the Goldstein Cabaret at Florida Studio Theatre, the theater has announced.

"From wistful ballads to show-stopping Broadway classics, Ms. Halenda combines her powerful vocal style and energetic personality to create a performance that will touch as well as tickle her audience," a news release says.

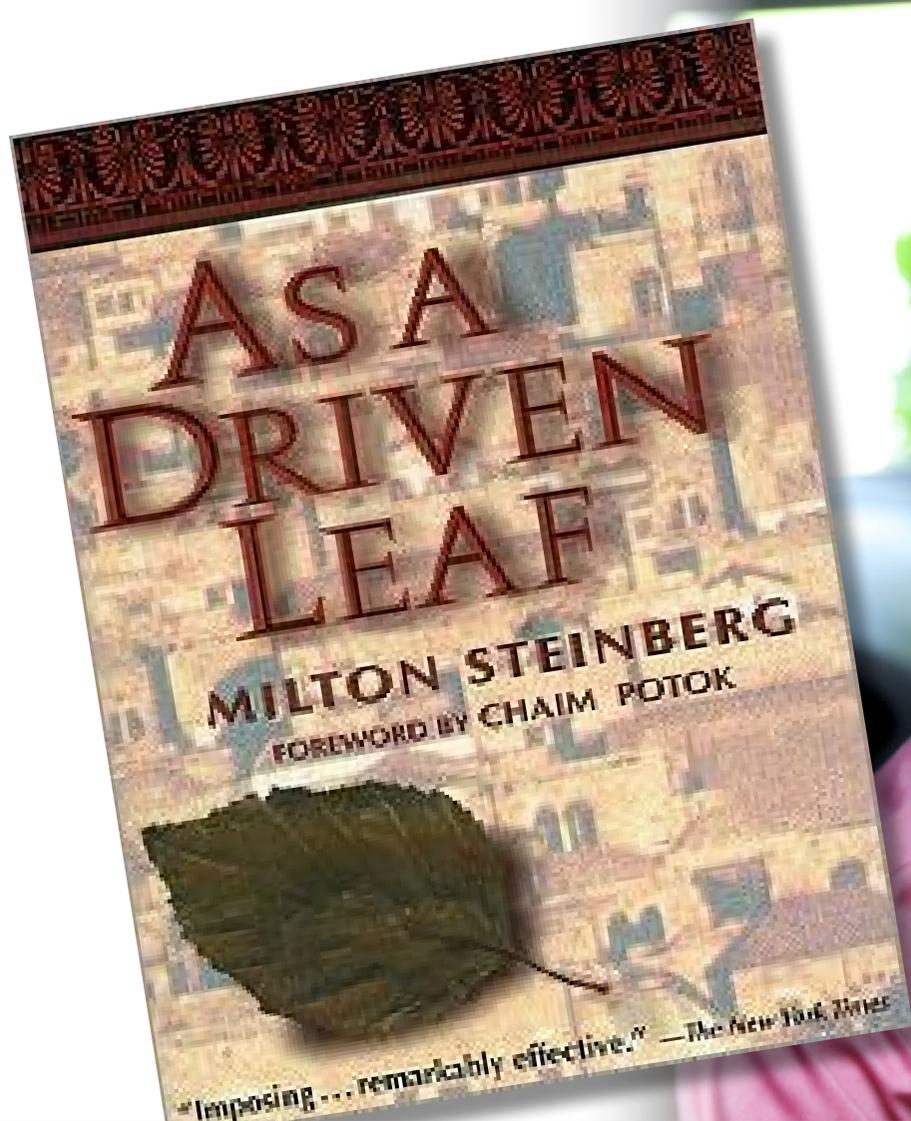
"*Brassy Broads of Broadway* is a musical tribute to the larger-than-life characters of American musical theatre — the women who put the 'broad' in Broadway," the release adds. Halenda's "ladies" include Mame Dennis from *Mame*, Mama Rose from *Gypsy*, Fanny Brice from *Funny Girl*, Dolly Levi from *Hello Dolly*,

Reno Sweeney from *Anything Goes*, Miss Mona from *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, Annie Oakley from *Annie Get Your Gun* and Sally Bowles from *Cabaret* — "with the zany playfulness of Ms. Halenda herself thrown in," the release points out.

Halenda previously appeared in all three of FST's productions of *Sophie Tucker* as well as *No Way to Treat a Lady*, *Shakespeare's Greatest Hits*, *Inspired Lunacy* and *The Robber Bridegroom*, the release adds.

Brassy Broads of Broadway will run through Feb. 24. Single tickets range from \$29 to \$32; they may be purchased from the FST box office in person, by calling 366-9000 or by going online at www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

FST is located at 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. 



RELIGION BRIEFS

As a Driven Leaf will be the focus of upcoming discussions. Rabbi Brenner Glickman of Temple Emanu-El. Contributed photo

PUBLIC INVITED TO AS A DRIVEN LEAF BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Members of the public are invited to join Temple Emanu-El Rabbi Brenner Glickman for a unique adult education series based on *As a Driven Leaf* — his favorite book and one of the most important Jewish works of the 20th century, the Temple has announced.

This learning opportunity will be offered on three Tuesdays this month — Jan. 8, 15 and 22 — at 10:30 a.m. at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

The year 2013 marks the 75th anniversary of the publication of Milton Steinberg's *As a Driven Leaf*. "This extraordinary work tells the story of Judaism's most famous apostate, Elisha ben Abuyah, and his search for wisdom," a Temple news release says. "It brings to life the Holy Land in the first and second century of the Common Era and uses as settings and characters some of the most famous institutions and sages of the period," the release adds.

"The book is compelling, engaging and extremely provocative," the release points out.

Glickman's learning series will combine the book discussion with historical perspective, an examination of the theological questions the book raises and an exploration of the book's enduring significance, the release says.

As a Driven Leaf is available for purchase in Temple Emanu-El's gift shop and through www.amazon.com. Advance reading is strongly recommended.

This book discussion series is sponsored by Temple Emanu-El's Adult Education Committee. The class is free to Temple Emanu-El members; an \$18 donation is asked of guests. Advance registration is required. For more information or to register, contact Judilee Sterne at 349-9287.

PUBLISHER OF THE FORWARD TO SPEAK ON JAN. 5

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism invites members of the public to a Jan. 5 discussion titled, *The Forward in the Age of Facebook: The Story of a 115 Year Old Start-Up*, by publisher Samuel Norich.

Born in Germany in 1947, Norich immigrated to the United States in 1957, a news release says. He served as the executive director of YIVO, the Institute for Jewish Research, from 1980-1992, the release adds. Additionally, he has served as executive director as well as

publisher of *The Forward* and *The Forverts* since 1997.

Norich also is the author of *What Will Bind Us Now: A Report on the Institutional Ties Between Israel and American Jewry*.

The program will begin at 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 5. It is open to the public at no charge.

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism meets at Unity, 3023 Proctor Road, Sarasota. For more information, call 929-7771 or visit www.chj-Sarasota.org.

DEMYSTIFY THE UNIVERSE TO BE THEME OF CLASSES

Jeff Rodgers, director of Bishop Planetarium and director of education at the South Florida Museum in Bradenton, will present adult education classes at the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) this month on the theme, *Demystify the Universe*.

“He is an extraordinary communicator who makes the newest scientific discoveries understandable to everyone,” a news release says.

The class schedule and topics will be as follows:

- Jan. 8, 2 p.m.: “The ‘Big Picture’ through the creation of stars, planets and life.”

- Jan. 15, 2 p.m.: “The nature of space, time, matter and the evolving nature of our universe.”
- Jan. 22, 2 p.m.: “Our solar system and Earth as a habitable planet.”
- Jan. 29, 2 p.m.: “Life — what is it? How did it start? How does it evolve? Is evolution really just a theory?”

The classes are free for CHJ members; for non-members, the fee is \$10 per class or \$30 for all four sessions.

Classes will meet at Unity, 3023 Proctor Road, Sarasota.

For more information, call 929-7771 or visit www.chj-Sarasota.org.



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COURSE TO FOCUS ON KABBALAH AND THE ZOHAR

Congregation Kol Ha Neshama will offer the course *Kabbalah and an Introduction to Reading Zohar* starting on Saturday, Jan. 5, from 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Dr. Arnie Binderman, a doctoral student at Spertus College of Judaic Studies who has a master's degree in Judaic studies, will lead the class, a news release says.

The course will focus on understanding mystical thinking and its development and meaning to Judaism, along with understanding its codes. The group will read portions of the Zohar together, the release says.

This will be the first session in an ongoing series, the release notes, with further dates to be announced. All members of the public are welcome, and all are invited to join members of the congregation after the class for their Reconstructionist Sabbath service and luncheon.

All the events will be held at South Gate Community Center, 3145 South Gate Circle (sometimes known as South Tuttle Circle or Siesta Circle). 

“There are only three sins: causing pain, causing fear, and causing anguish. The rest is window dressing.” — *Roger Caras*

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF THE UPCOMING WEEK

04
JAN

Dabbert Gallery presents *A Legacy of Sarasota Masters*

Jan. 4, 6 to 9 p.m., 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission; 955-1315 or dabbertgallery.com.

04
JAN

The Perlman Music Program Recitals

Through Jan. 5; times vary; USF-Sarasota/Manatee, 8350 N. Tamiami Trail. Free admission (first-come basis). Information: 955-4942 or PMPSuncoast.org

04
JAN

Thunder by the Bay

Through Jan. 6, with events at the Hyatt Regency and on Main Street and Palm Avenue, Sarasota. Festival to be held Jan. 5-6 on Main Street with bands and about 80 vendors, concluding with the Marshall Tucker Band performing at 4:30 p.m. Jan. 6. For details, visit www.thunderbythebay.org.

04
JAN

Smokey Joe's Cafe

Through Jan. 12; times vary; Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Admission: \$19 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or floridastudiotheatre.org.

06
JAN

Book reading and signing

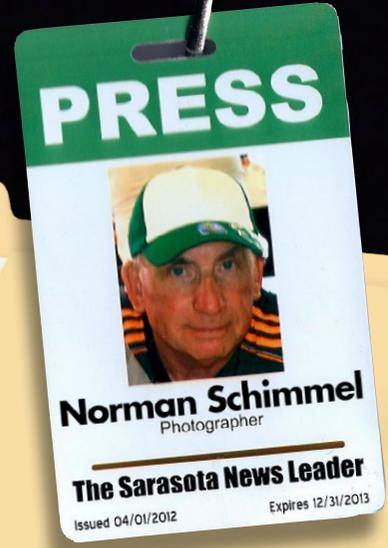
Jan. 6, 1 p.m., Helga Harris will read from and sign her collection of nonfiction short works titled, *Nothing Is Forever*, at Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St., Sarasota. More information at www.bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900.

To get all the details on these and other great activities — food, nightlife, music, art, theater, children's events, learning opportunities and more — go to Sarasota's No. 1 source for local events, hot spots, fun activities and hidden gems:



thisweekin
SARASOTA.com
SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR

WHO NEEDS A CRYSTAL BALL



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



Each week, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel searches Sarasota County for iconic shots that underscore why the community is a favorite with residents and tourists alike.