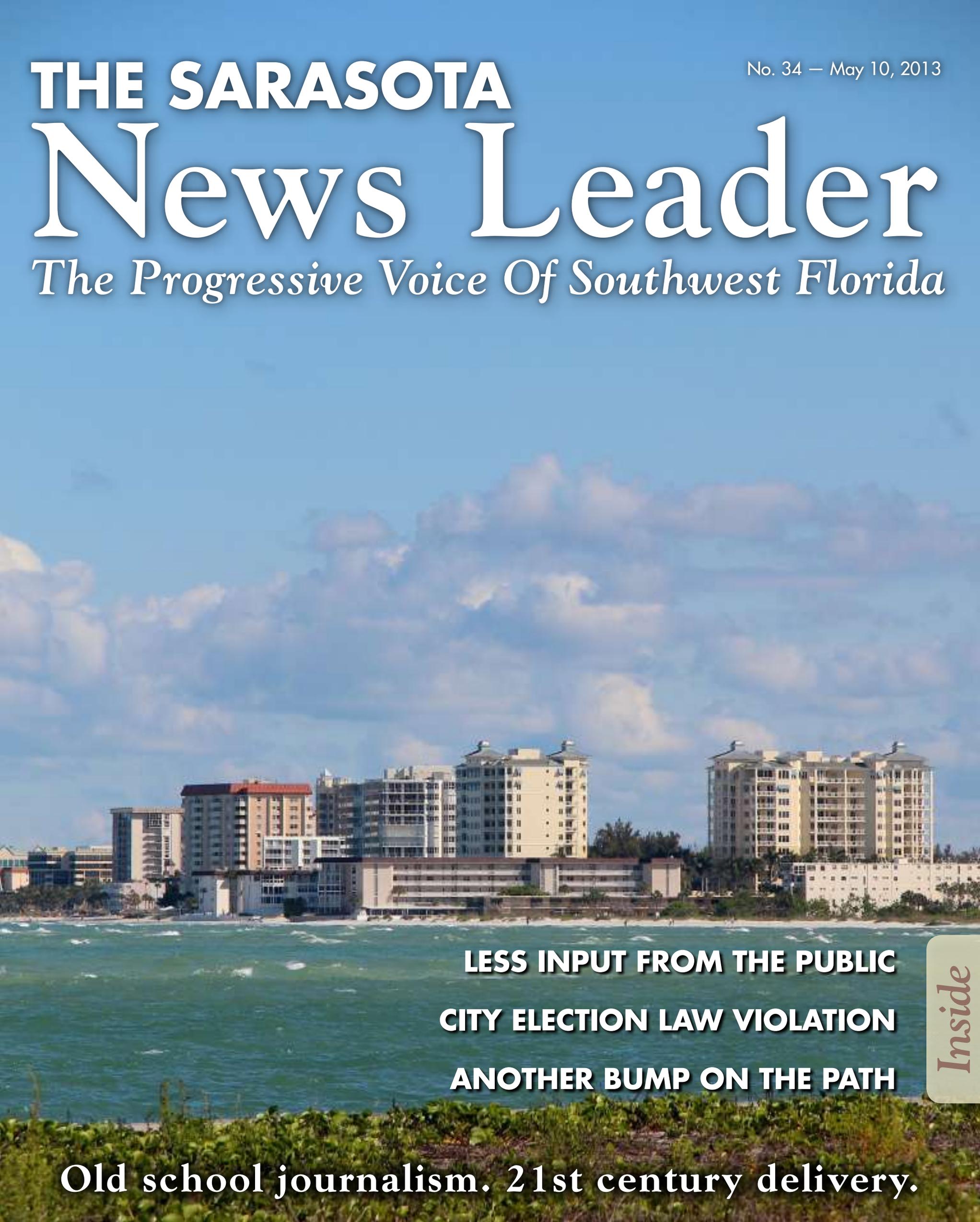


THE SARASOTA

No. 34 — May 10, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

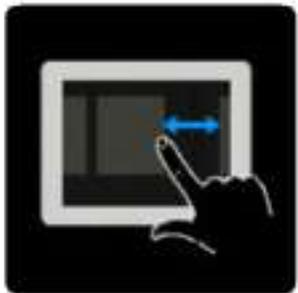


**LESS INPUT FROM THE PUBLIC
CITY ELECTION LAW VIOLATION
ANOTHER BUMP ON THE PATH**

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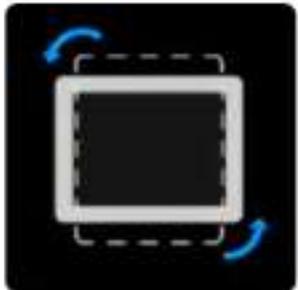
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Welcome

It was another *very* busy week for our local government boards, as evidenced by our news stories in this issue.

Although I have been in this business since I was in college, it still never ceases to amaze me that topics totally unexpected can pop up to create as much if not more interest than those I anticipated during a meeting.

The primary news this week focused on the expected City and County commission discussions — the 2050 Plan, sound enforcement in downtown Sarasota and road impact fees among them. However, outgoing City Commissioner Terry Turner gave City Editor Stan Zimmerman some unplanned good copy, with parting remarks about the state of the city's finances. The county commissioners also had the opportunity to weigh in again on the Warm Mineral Springs debate — with a twist *they* obviously did not expect.

For our readers on Siesta Key, you can call this a “Bonanza Week,” with news varying from the broaching of the idea of building a multi-level parking deck with a restaurant on top overlooking the Gulf of Mexico to the speed reduction petition on part of Midnight Pass Road to the next step in the process of improving the facilities at the public beach.

On the much-needed lighter side, Cooper Levey-Baker offers a preview of the upcoming Community Baby Shower, Tyler Whitson gives us a glimpse into the accomplishments of illustration majors at Ringling College of Art and Design, Scott Proffitt puts students in the spotlight for their achievements and Otus provides us not only an update on Charlie the Great Blue Heron but tells us how we can try to identify the varieties of hawks that make their home in this area.

I think it is safe to say we have something in this issue for almost every reader imaginable.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





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LESS INPUT FROM THE PUBLIC

The Sarasota County 2050 Plan was designed to provide guidelines for managed growth in the rural areas east of Interstate 75. Photo by Rachel Hackney

COUNTY FAST-TRACKS 2050 PLAN OVERHAUL

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Perhaps it wasn't a surprise this week that the Sarasota County Commission voted to start overhauling Sarasota 2050, but the move to fast-track that process caught more than one observer off-guard.

Intended to encourage the construction of walkable, mixed-use communities and to limit urban sprawl, Sarasota 2050 has been a hot topic of discussion since last year, when the commission directed staff to ask developers how

they would like to see the plan changed. On Wednesday, May 8, staff summarized those developer suggestions, as well as feedback from environmental and neighborhood organizations, asking whether the commission wanted to begin the thorny process of altering 2050's

detailed land-use regulations.

The answer: Yes, and let's get on with it, already.

County Long-Range Planning Manager Allen Parsons delivered an informative pre-

“*Just to clarify, because I must not have been clear enough, what I said was that the one-eighth of 1 percent shows that there was not a groundswell of the public coming out.*”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



sentation on the history of 2050, touching on its goals of preserving open space and requiring new neighborhoods to adhere to New Urbanist design principles. According to Parsons' slideshow, 8,020 units have been "entitled" under 2050 guidelines since 2008, but only 103 have gotten all the way to the permitting stage.

A persistent 2050 critic, Commissioner Joe Barbetta seized on those numbers as proof the rules are "unworkable."

"That's the real issue before us today," said Barbetta. "What's preventing column one to getting to column two to getting to column three? That's what we need to talk about today."



Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, has been a critic of the move to revise the 2050 Plan. Photo by Norman Schimmel

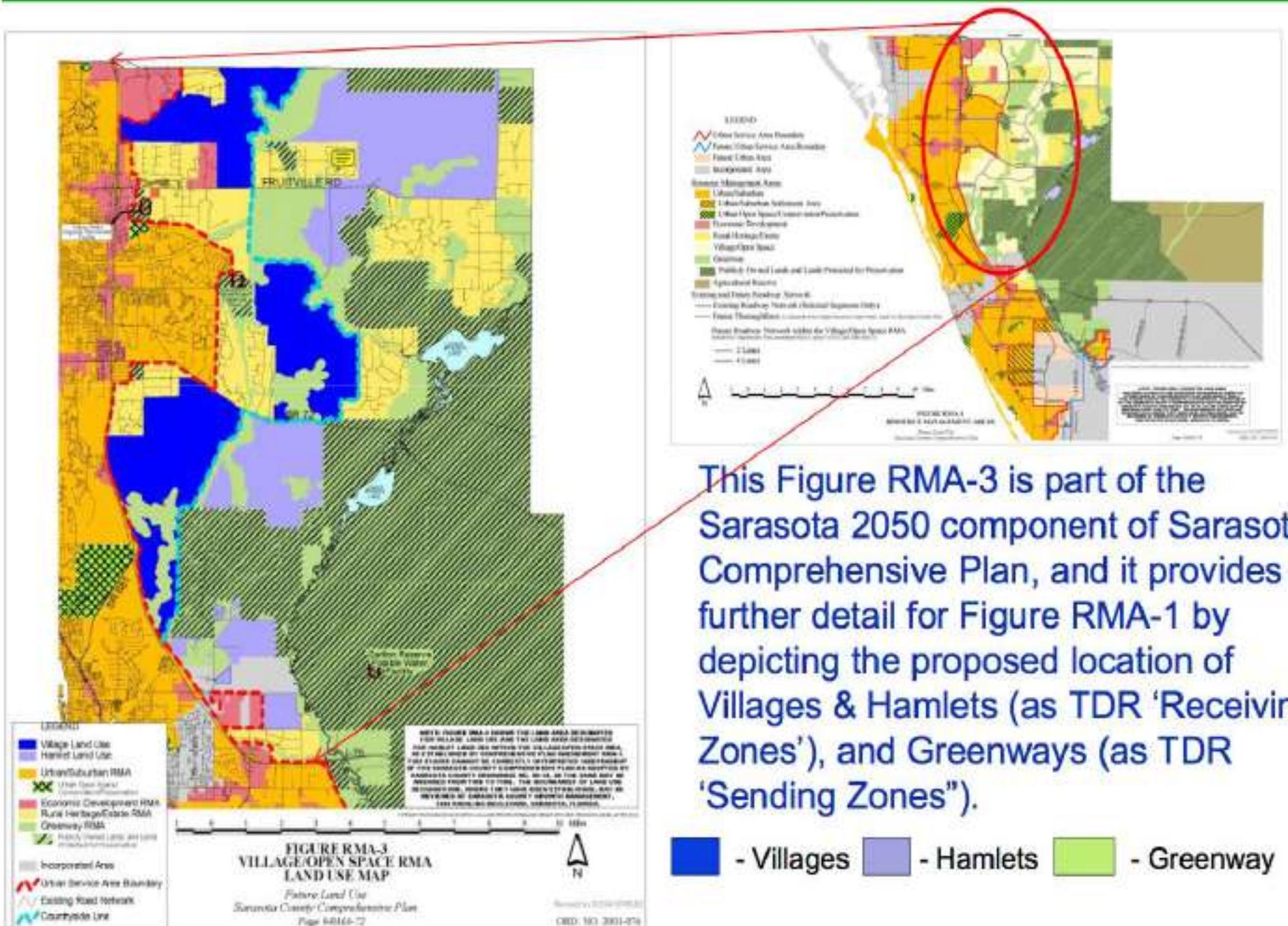
Critics of 2050 say that gap is due to excessive regulations, while defenders blame the global recession and the region’s housing crisis. In their meetings with county staff held last fall, developers suggested changes such as redefining open space and removing fiscal neutrality monitoring. Fiscal neutrality is the principle that any new development should generate enough impact fees, sales taxes and property taxes so it does not cost the county to extend services to the new neighborhood. Builders are now required to submit fiscal neutrality

reports at each phase of construction — a rule developers would like to see axed.

Those opposed to the developer proposals argue it’s too soon to monkey with a plan intended to manage growth for the next four decades, and that the changes would reduce environmental protections. Parsons summarized the objections raised to the process during a pair of public town halls held earlier this year, as well as comments received online and via “snail mail.” Barbetta seemed dismissive.



Comprehensive Plan Amendment 2012-G



This Figure RMA-3 is part of the Sarasota 2050 component of Sarasota’s Comprehensive Plan, and it provides further detail for Figure RMA-1 by depicting the proposed location of Villages & Hamlets (as TDR ‘Receiving Zones’), and Greenways (as TDR ‘Sending Zones’).

A graphic in the county’s Comprehensive Plan shows areas where villages and hamlets could be located under the aegis of the 2050 Plan. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“I calculated 140 — let’s round it up to 150 — people showed up at these meetings,” he said. “And then another 300 written comments we received. So that’s 450 comments. If all 450 were against revisions to 2050, I come up with one-eighth of a percent, based on our population. ... These comments that we’re gutting it and the public’s against all this and everything, I think, are unfounded.”

Barbetta later suggested staff should be “expediting the process as much as possible,” and he moved to eliminate a round of neighborhood workshops and Planning Commission consultation in the review process. Commissioner Charles Hines said citizens could register their thoughts at any public hearings, meaning there was no need for neighborhood input in the short term.

Commissioner Nora Patterson was the only board member to object. The motion passed 4-1. According to Parsons’ presentation, staff will now put together a “Scope of Work” that will “Define issues & how to accomplish,” as well as detail a “public engagement plan” and bring that back to the commission within two months.

No neighborhood workshops will be scheduled till the final phase of the overhaul.

That prompted sharp words from some in the audience.

Former commission candidate Jono Miller took issue with Barbetta’s “one-eighth of a percent” remark, arguing “the commission should clearly communicate with the public about what level of participation meets their threshold for being significant.”

The day after, on his blog, Miller wrote that the commission had chosen to “[abort](#)” its tra-



Commissioner Joe Barbetta. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ditional process for revising the Comprehensive Plan.

Control Growth Now President Dan Lobeck registered “severe disappointment with the process,” saying Barbetta’s “one-eighth” remark demonstrated “contempt” for the public. Lobeck was “appalled,” while Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations President Lourdes Ramirez was “disgusted.”

At the very end of the meeting, Barbetta walked back on his “one-eighth” comment.

“Just to clarify, because I must not have been clear enough, what I *said* was that the one-eighth of 1 percent shows that there was not a groundswell of the public coming out,” he said. “I did not dismiss that. I wish more people came out.”

Barbetta added that he was “always open to public input” and that his words had been “totally misinterpreted; typical, but that’s fine.” 

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CITY ELECTION LAW VIOLATION

Richard Dorfman. Photo by Norman Schimmel

POLICE UNION GIVES COMMISSION CANDIDATE RICHARD DORFMAN A CAMPAIGN DONATION THAT IS TOO HIGH

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

If any organization in a city knows local rules and regulations, it should be the police. So when Sarasota City Commission candidate Richard Dorfman filed his final campaign treasurer's report on Wednesday, May 8, one donation stood out. It was a \$500 contribution from the local Police Benevolent Association.

Voters six years ago approved a change to the city charter that put a \$200 cap on campaign donations. Since then the "amount column" on many treasurers' reports is a string of \$200 donations. But Dorfman's most recent report shows a \$500 figure for the donation on April 30 by the "SW FL PBA Inc." That is the Southwest Florida Police Benevolent Association,

which apparently broke city regulations by donating too much.

Normally a campaign treasurer would flag the large donation and do the paperwork to return it. But Dorfman's treasurer is John Dowd, a Venice accountant who may not be familiar with Sarasota's city-specific election laws.

A call to the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Office directed us to City Attorney Bob Fournier, who said it was the first time he had heard of the situation.

The question put to voters in 2007 was "Amendment to limit campaign contributions to candidates for the City Commission to a

maximum of Two Hundred Dollars (\$200.00) per contributor, per election.”

A second question on the ballot was also approved, and it also applies to the PBA donation: “Amendment to provide that campaign contributions to candidates for the office of City Commissioner shall be limited to contributions from individuals or natural persons only, to the exclusion of corporations and other business entities.”

Since the SW FL PBA is a “corporation or other business entity,” it is not allowed to contribute anything to City Commission candidates under the voter-approved charter change. At least one other candidate — Linda Holland — also received a \$500 donation from the SW FL PBA before her elimination from contention in the March primary.

A call to the SW FL PBA was not returned before deadline.



Susan Chapman. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

STACKING UP THE DOLLARS

The 2013 race for two at-large seats on the Sarasota City Commission may be the most expensive one in city history. Six candidates started on the campaign trail last winter; three failed to make the cut during the March 12 primary. Among them, they raised approximately \$19,500 with one candidate — Kelvin Lumpkin — pulling in just shy of \$12,000 of the total.

After the three “survivors” emerged from the first round of balloting, they were eligible for another round of fundraising. By the time the final treasurers’ reports were filed on May 8, the six candidates had raised a total of \$144,255 (including the \$1,000 in questionable SW FL PBA donations).

Of the \$144,255 total, Dorfman’s war chest of \$62,316 represents almost half the amount



Suzanne Atwell. Photo by Norman Schimmel

raised and sets a new high-water mark for candidate finances.

Forces outside the candidates' campaigns were also at work influencing voters. Sarasota entrepreneur Jessie Biter in mid-April formed a political committee and raised \$35,100. Called Biter ECO, the organization spent \$19,146, including \$14,160 on polling. Biter is backing Dorfman in the race.

Another and more familiar PAC is also helping candidates. "Citizens for a Better Florida Inc.," the electioneering arm of the real estate

industry, sent out multiple mailers supporting Suzanne Atwell and Richard Dorfman.

Dorfman and Atwell have used out-of-town political consultants to help their election chances. Atwell employed Angle Mastagni Matthews Political Strategies of Fort Worth, TX, at a cost of \$1,666. Dorfman used Political Ink of Washington, D.C., paying \$7,500.

Susan Chapman used no out-of-town strategists, nor did she benefit from the efforts of outside political action committees. 



The runoff on May 14 will decide who Sarasota's two at-large commissioners will be for the next four years. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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(From left) North Port City Commissioner Rhonda DiFranco, Vice Mayor Jim Blucher, Mayor Linda Yates, Commissioner Cheryl Cook and Commissioner Tom Jones. Photo courtesy City of North Port

A NORTH PORT CITY COMMISSIONER'S UNEXPECTED REQUEST LEADS TO COUNTY COMMISSION CONFUSION OVER THE NEXT STEPS IN THE BOARDS' EFFORTS TO RESOLVE WARM MINERAL SPRINGS ISSUES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

If they were confused, they had every right to be.

That essentially is what Sarasota County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh told the County Commission on May 7 regarding the latest news about Warm Mineral Springs.

During the Commission Reports part of their regular meeting in Venice, Commissioner Joe Barbetta brought up an email all the board members had received from County Administrator Randall Reid at 8:58 a.m. that day.

Reid notified the board he had received an email from Jonathan Lewis, manager of the

City of North Port, saying one of the North Port commissioners had requested copies of the draft interlocal agreement and short-term lease proposal for Warm Mineral Springs being circulated among Reid, DeMarsh, North Port City Attorney Robert K. Robinson and Lewis. The documents were prepared by DeMarsh and his staff to “memorialize” the action the two commissions took in a facilitated meeting on April 17 about the future of the 81-acre resort the commissions jointly own.

The North Port commissioner who requested the documents, *The Sarasota News Leader* learned in a public records request, was Cheryl Cook.

In a 3-2 vote on Dec. 18, 2012, Cook, North Port Mayor Linda Yates and North Port Commissioner Rhonda DiFranco agreed to sell Warm Mineral Springs, which the city and the county jointly purchased in 2010. In January, a subsequent vote specified they wanted to sell the city's share of the resort instead of pursuing the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) on the future management of the springs that the North Port and County Commissions had settled on in July 2012.

Cook and DiFranco were elected to the North Port Commission in November 2012.

In an email she sent to Lewis at 5:46 a.m. on May 6, Cook wrote, "I would like a copy, please, of the draft Interlocal that you received Friday from the county regarding the

[Warm Mineral Springs] discussed in the conflict resolution meeting. Thank you."

In an email he subsequently sent to all the North Port commissioners on May 6, Lewis reported that he had received a request for the draft "as well as my response. Please find them attached."

He added, "Please remember that the County was doing [a] version [of the agreements] to get the ball rolling between staff so a document could be provided to both Commissions. ... Also please be aware that these documents have been redrafted multiple times since these were created and both the County staff and the City staff are still working to develop documents that reflect the intent of the Commissions at the joint meeting [on April 17]," Lewis added.



A class exercises in the water at Warm Mineral Springs. Image courtesy City of North Port

Moreover, Lewis noted he would be asking the City Commission to allow him to schedule a special meeting on Monday, May 20, so the members could consider the interlocal agreement between the boards “that is still under development.”

The lease for the company operating Warm Mineral Springs ends on June 30.

If the North Port commissioners had access to those draft documents, Reid wrote in his May 7 email to the county commissioners, then they should have equal access to the materials.

THE CHAIN OF EVENTS

Because of the continuing conflict over the future of the Warm Mineral Springs, the eight-hour facilitated meeting on April 17 was held in accordance with the Florida State Statutes, so the boards could iron out their differences.

At the end of that session, the commissions agreed on the idea of a short-term lease followed by a process similar to an ITN for proposals on the long-term management of the resort.

Early on the morning of April 18, North Port Commissioner Rhonda DiFranco sent an email to Lewis saying she had changed her mind and no longer supported the action agreed upon during that facilitated meeting. However, when the North Port Commission discussed the next steps in the process during its regular meeting on April 22, DiFranco made no mention of her email as Lewis and City Attorney



Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid (left) and County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh. File photo

Robinson talked about the need for the interlocal agreement.

Therefore, on April 23, County Commissioner Christine Robinson won support for a motion directing DeMarsh to proceed with drafting that agreement. During that same meeting, DeMarsh told the board he also would draft an agreement regarding a short-term lease; he would provide it to the North Port Commission at the same time he sent the draft interlocal agreement, he added.

As he had explained on April 23, DeMarsh reiterated on May 7 that the North Port Commission still would need to take an initial vote on the documents before the County Commission addresses them formally.

In response to a question from Commissioner Robinson, DeMarsh pointed out that the documents were not ready for either commission to consider.

DRAFTS

The following are examples of the document language proposed by the county and the city in the interlocal agreement:

- The county version: **Equal Partners.** The Parties affirm that they are fully equal partners in the ownership and operation of Warm Mineral Springs and agree that any use or operation of the property shall be made only with the mutual approval of both parties. Furthermore, the Parties agree to share equally in the expenses incurred and revenues generated from the operation of Warm Mineral Springs.
- The North Port version of the same section: **Expenses and Revenues.** The Parties agree to share equally in the expenses incurred and revenues generated from the operation of Warm Mineral Springs. Within thirty days of entering into this Agreement, the parties will reconcile their expenses so that expenses to the date of execution have been shared equally as was required by the Memorandum of Understanding dated December 12, 2010 and subsequently amended on July 23, 2012.
- The county version of another section: **Short Term Operation.** The Parties agree to seek proposals for the operation of Warm Mineral Springs for a 10-month period expected to run from July 1, 2013 until April 30, 2013, in an advertised competitive process in satisfaction of Section 125.35, Florida Statutes, and in a form substantially similar with the operator license attached hereto and incorporated herein as Exhibit A. The Parties agree to use their best efforts



North Port Manager Jonathan Lewis. Photo courtesy City of North Port

to achieve the selection as soon as possible to avoid the closure of the Warm Mineral Springs.

- **The North Port version: Short Term Operation.** The Parties agree to advertise a competitive solicitation in satisfaction of the applicable Florida Statutes including, Section 125.35, Florida Statutes for the operation of Warm Mineral Springs. The terms of the solicitation shall include the items defined in Exhibit A. The Parties agree to use their best efforts to achieve the selection as soon as possible to avoid the closure of the Warm Mineral Springs.

CLARIFICATIONS

“This is ongoing between the attorneys and the manager and the [county] administrator?” Commissioner Robinson asked DeMarsh on May 7, seeking clarification about the status of the documents.

DeMarsh confirmed that.

Then Robinson pointed out that the North Port Commission has a regular meeting scheduled for May 13. DeMarsh told her, “It is likely the city will *not* take action on this next week,” adding that Lewis was attempting to schedule the special meeting.

“Do they want to wait till it’s the day before [the lease ends]?” Commissioner Nora Patterson asked.

“I don’t want our attorney to waste any more time on this,” Barbetta said. “This is outrageous. As far as I’m concerned, we stick with our original agreement.”

“To do what?” Patterson asked.

“So they’re going to wait until the end of the month to hear this?” Robinson asked.

“That’s their prerogative,” Barbetta replied.

While DeMarsh said he could not speak for the North Port Commission, he affirmed Lewis’ efforts to set up the special meeting on May 20.

DeMarsh reiterated that the reason the county commissioners were discussing the matter was because Reid wanted them to have the same drafts the North Port commissioners had.

“So a commissioner in North Port was intervening in the process between the administrators and the attorneys,” Robinson said. “That’s what’s happening?” Then, chuckling, she told DeMarsh, “Don’t answer that!”

“I wasn’t about to,” DeMarsh replied.

“We authorized the attorneys and managers to come up with a memorandum of understanding, and now we have a commissioner who’s getting involved ... to obstruct the process, because they don’t like the end result of what happened at the [facilitated meeting],” Robinson continued.

“I don’t want to wait till really close to the potential closing of [Warm Mineral Springs] for the County Commission to weigh in,” Patterson said. Addressing DeMarsh, she continued, “You said it’s really up to them, but if they wait, I think we’ve got a problem.”

DeMarsh said again that the County Commission had nothing to discuss until the North Port Commission acted on the interlocal agreement and the document regarding advertisement of the proposed short-term lease.

When DeMarsh asked whether they wished to discuss the matter further on May 8, the commissioners decided against that. 



THE HOMELESS

A man seeks handouts from drivers along Bee Ridge Road in late April. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ANALYSIS: HOW CAN SO FEW CAUSE SO MUCH TROUBLE?

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Sarasota's game of homeless "Whac-a-Mole" has taken a couple of twists in the past 10 days. On Wednesday, May 1, the bulk of the grassy area at Five Points Park downtown was draped with orange construction screening to give the grass a respite. The shady park — screening and all — is a popular staging area for Sarasota's homeless.

The following Monday, May 6, a rumor swept the ranks of Sarasota's homeless that a gift of \$2 million and land for a tent city was being offered. Homeless men and women walked to City Hall to

tell the city commissioners not to get in the way of that plan. The commissioners then took counter-fire from downtown merchants with stories of how vagrants are driving away business with vulgarity and filth.

On Tuesday, May 7, the homeless camp on Florida Avenue was demolished, following a warning three days earlier for the people staying there to remove their belongings or lose them.

“*We need your help. We need a safe place to be.*”

Robin Cousino

If history is any guide, the “Florida Avenue Gang” has already found another shady place to squat.

THE MILLION-DOLLAR RUMOR

During the “open to the public” period Monday afternoon, the city commissioners appeared surprised to hear of a \$2 million donation to help the homeless. Vallerie Guillory, executive director of Trinity Without Borders, said the owner of 1003 N. Washington Blvd. was offering the property as the site of a tent city for the homeless.

The parcel is immediately north and east of the railroad tracks north of 10th Street. It was formerly the location of an auto repair shop, with a wide swath of property to the rear looking west. Devoid of trees and covered with a concrete slab, it is about 400 feet due south of the southeast corner of the city’s sewer plant on 12th Street.

In other words, it is a treeless concrete hardstand often bathed in the “perfume” of a sewer treatment plant. And it would necessitate city approval of a “major conditional use” to switch from auto repair shop to tent city. Considering the attendant staff review and public hearings, making a homeless encampment legal there would require months of red-tape satisfaction.

But Guillory was not deterred. “With the generous donation of land and \$2 million, we are ready to assist homeless housing,” she told the commissioners. “We need your help to know whether we have an invitation to assist with the problem.”

“That \$2 million is pledged to us,” said Robin Cousino. “We need your help. We need a safe place to be.”



Homeless people sit on the sidewalk adjacent to Five Points Park in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“This place Vallerie is talking about will offer training,” said Amanda Bartholomew. “I lost my job as a mechanic; I lost my home and everything. I’m homeless, but I want to get back on my feet again.”

The commissioners and staff are now trying to find out more. “We have 400 people on the streets at any one time,” City Manager Tom Barwin said later in the commission meeting. “I will look into the \$2 million pledge to see if it’s real.”

BARWIN’S SCARY BACKGROUND STORY

During the Saturday, May 4, Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations (CCNA) meeting, Barwin relayed what he had found out about Sarasota’s homeless issue. Part of it spilled into Monday’s meeting, including his “400 people on the streets” comment.

Barwin said that based on national averages by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, given the city’s population of 60,000, Sarasota should have 132 street people. “But on any given night, the Salvation Army will host up to 250 people, and there will be 150 more on the streets,” he told the neighborhood representatives.

He called the 400 “street people,” a term the “street people” rejected on Monday evening. Deborah Hines said, “We’re not all street people. ... We’re just homeless.”

Whatever you call them, they are here in a concentration more than twice the national average, Barwin told the CCNA. Exacerbating the problem is their density. Barwin said

they are concentrated in a one-square-mile area, and they are responsible for a number of crimes far out of proportion to their fraction in society.

Assuming a population of 60,000, the 400 street people comprise a mere 0.6 percent of the people in the city, a figure not in Barwin’s presentation.

Barwin asked the Police Department to cross-index robberies, burglaries and aggravated assaults in 2012 and the first quarter of 2013 with transient status. The department staff told him that 13.3 percent of the robberies were cleared with the arrest of a transient. For burglaries, the figure was 23 percent; for aggravated assault/battery, the fraction was 16.7 percent.

For all arrests — felony and misdemeanor — transients accounted for 23.7 percent. In other words, “the 400” have been a source of trouble far beyond their numbers.

Another figure not in Barwin’s presentation, but derived from his numbers: Transients in Sarasota are nearly 40 times more likely to be arrested for a crime than the rest of the population.

MERCHANTS GET MAD

While street people/homeless/vagrants/transients ruled the afternoon City Commission’s open-to-the-public session, downtown merchants stole the show in the evening.

“Since I was here last complaining about the criminal element, I have called the police multiple times, including today,” said Johnna

White. “I have been threatened and cursed. I have drug deals in front of my shop. It’s enough.”

“These are people that have chosen this lifestyle. They’re really begging and making a mess,” said Wendy Getchel. “Customers don’t feel safe.”

“Last Friday, I had to close at 4 [p.m.] instead of 5 because a big fight broke out. They’re almost inside my store, and intimidate my customers,” said Melanie Denicourt. “I feel bad for those people, but we’re at a point we can’t afford it. It needs to stop.”

Ernie Ritz with the Gator Bar and Stacy Holler with Patrick’s restaurant fingered one individual named Ian. “He glares at my customers

and frightens them,” said Hollar. “I call police, but they say he’s not breaking any laws. He’s mentally deranged and very frightening.”

Ritz sees Ian every day. “He’s not a character to us. He’s detrimental to our business. We don’t like him there.”

But the ugliest story came from across the street from City Hall itself. Nancy McElmeil bought a building on Second Street in 2004 and has been working on it ever since. “We realized very quickly the side of our building was a toilet. We’ve been cleaning it up since then,” she said. “It’s been bad, but not as bad as last year.”

Human feces and urine have become a daily part of her life. “We have to clean it up be-



The City of Sarasota has removed a homeless encampment on Florida Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel

cause of the Health Department,” she said. “The Police Department says they are not supposed to be hassling homeless people. One guy urinated in front of us and two officers; then we had a smashed window. The smell of urine and human excrement is gagging in the summer” all across the street from City Hall.

THE BIG STALL

Barwin arrived to take the city manager job as the street people/homeless/vagrant population climbed to its annual peak at the height of the tourist season. His attempt to put together an *ad hoc* committee to tackle the issues was greeted with a carrot and a stick. The Community Foundation of Sarasota County offered \$60,000 to get the initiative started; but a lawyer filed suit because the *ad hoc* committee did not advertise its meetings under the state’s sunshine law.

The committee has not met since the legal challenge arrived. And the grant has been withdrawn because the lawyer dragged the Community Foundation into court, too, demanding its records. While Barwin’s strategy is stuck in neutral, that did not stop him from making observations about the overall situation to the CCNA.

Why are things they way they are? Barwin cited a lack of caseworkers to coordinate the search for diagnosis, treatment, employment and housing. He cited the lack of mental health and substance abuse treatment facilities for indigents. He further noted the reticence of local judges to commit people against their will for treatment beyond three days. And he cited a lack of cheap housing for low-income



City Manager Tom Barwin discusses homelessness issues with the County Commission during a joint city/county meeting in early February. Photo by Norman Schimmel

people. Additionally, he bemoaned the fact the City of Sarasota is carrying the whole burden, that there is no regional approach to low-income housing or mental health needs.

A proposal to look at St. Petersburg’s ordinances regulating panhandling, sleeping in rights of way, trespassing and public urination was deferred on Monday. City Attorney Bob Fournier was not ready for that route.

In other words, for the past six months, as pressures have grown, there has been no action. While there has been no lack of words from the homeless, the bureaucrats, the politicians, the police, the merchants and the public, nothing has been done but the playing of “Whac-a-Mole.”

From Five Points to Gillespie Park to Florida Avenue, the question is, what is next? 

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a black top. She is holding a large, round sandwich with both hands. The sandwich is made with a crusty, golden-brown roll and is filled with layers of green lettuce, a slice of white onion, a slice of red tomato, and a dark, textured filling, possibly meat or a spread. The background is a plain, light color.

This may take a while.

Some things are just hard to resist. Like *The Sarasota News Leader*. It's a feast of in-depth local news, delightful and entertaining features, and — thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota* — access to the best community calendar available.

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THE STATUS QUO

			Full Rate	Adopted Rate	Full Rate	Current Adopted Rate
			2007	2007	2013	2011
Category	Land Use	Development Unit	100%	68% of 2007 Full Rate	100%	50% reduction of adopted 2007 Rate
Residential	Less than 500 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$3,762	\$2,552	\$2,434	\$1,276
Residential	500 – 749 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$5,040	\$3,419	\$3,263	\$1,709
Residential	750 – 999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$5,881	\$3,989	\$3,808	\$1,994
Residential	1,000 – 1,249 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$6,512	\$4,417	\$4,216	\$2,208
Residential	1,250 – 1,499 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$7,016	\$4,759	\$4,541	\$2,379
Residential	1,500 – 1,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$7,623	\$5,171	\$4,935	\$2,585
Residential	2,000 – 2,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$8,512	\$5,774	\$5,512	\$2,887
Residential	3,000 – 3,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$9,365	\$6,352	\$6,061	\$3,176
Residential	4,000 sq. ft. or more Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$9,984	\$6,772	\$6,464	\$3,386
Residential	Mobile Home/RV Park	1 space	\$4,207	\$2,854	\$2,719	\$1,427
Residential	Adult Cong. Living Facility	1 Dwelling Unit	\$1,698	\$1,152	\$1,101	\$576
Industrial	Industrial Park	1,000 sq. ft.	\$5,857	\$3,973	\$3,719	\$1,986
Industrial	Manufacturing	1,000 sq. ft.	\$3,215	\$2,181	\$2,081	\$1,090
Industrial	Light Industrial & Warehousing	1,000 sq. ft.	\$4,175	\$2,832	\$1,940	\$1,416
Industrial	Mini-Warehouse	1,000 sq. ft.	\$1,520	\$1,031	\$946	\$515

A chart compares road impact fees for Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION VOTES 4-1 TO MAINTAIN ITS CURRENT ROAD IMPACT FEES INDEFINITELY AND AGREES TO WORK WITH THE CITY OF SARASOTA ON A MULTIMODALITY AGREEMENT FOR CITY FEES

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

After reviewing updated road impact fee data, the Sarasota County Commission voted 4-1 on May 8 to direct staff to maintain the existing rate schedule indefinitely.

However, the motion called for the implementation of an inflation index as of Jan. 1, 2015, and it also directed staff to begin working immediately with representatives of the City

of Sarasota on utilizing road impact fees collected within that municipality in multimodal projects — the addition of bike lanes and sidewalks not associated with new road projects.

Further, the motion includes a provision calling for the County Commission to revisit the road impact fee schedule six months prior to Feb. 1, 2015.

Jonathan B. Paul, the county's interim transportation planning director, pointed out that the full rates based on the 2013 data would go into effect on Feb. 1, 2015 unless the board took new action.

On Jan. 16, the board voted to retain its adopted 2011 rates through Jan. 31, 2015 while it awaited the latest data. The existing rates, based on 2007 information, were reduced 50 percent on Jan. 26, 2011 to help developers deal with the economic downturn. However, when the board adopted the fee schedule in March 2007, that was 68 percent of the full rate.

As a result of the May 8 vote, staff will prepare an ordinance that will be advertised for a public hearing.

Commissioner Nora Patterson cast the lone "No" vote on the motion by Commissioner Joe Barbetta, saying, "Personally, I think we should hold [the fees] steady for another year and then ... may-be take a couple of adjustments to bring them up to what they should be."

“ It's a little difficult in May of 2013 to be making decisions for May of 2015. ... I'm not sure where the economy will be ... ”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

She pointed out that the 2013 rates are lower than the board had expected.

Barbetta noted he and Patterson would be going off the board after the elections in November 2014, as a result of term limits. A different commission, he said, would be able to consider whether to keep the current fee structure or raise fees.

Per Lane Mile Cost

Proj. #	Road	Segment	Miles	Lanes		New Ln-mi	Cost	Cost Per Lane-Mile
				Ex.	Fut.			
95728	Airport Access Rd	Airport Ave to US 41 Bus.	0.20	0	2	0.40	\$900,000	2,250,000
85832	Jackson Rd	Blackburn Canal to Hughey Kimal Dr	0.10	0	2	0.20	\$730,000	3,650,000
75830	Bee Ridge Rd East	Mauna Loa Blvd to Bent Tree Blvd	1.70	2	4	3.40	\$31,246,938	9,190,276
95804	Cattlemen Rd, Ph 2	Bahia Vista St to Packinghouse Rd	0.40	2	4	0.80	\$10,057,998	12,572,498
95805	Cattlemen Rd, Ph 5	Packinghouse Rd to Fruitville Rd	0.70	2	4	1.40	\$12,158,000	8,684,286
95798	Honore Ave	Laurel Rd to SR 681	3.80	0	4	15.20	\$37,334,602	2,456,224
95771	McIntosh Rd, Ph 1	Sawyer Loop Rd to Proctor Rd	1.80	2	4	3.60	\$29,864,908	8,295,808
85829	North Cattlemen Rd	Richardson Rd to University Pkwy	3.00	0	4	12.00	\$27,024,160	2,252,013
95706	North-South Conn.	Border Rd to Laurel Rd	1.30	0	2	2.60	\$5,920,000	2,276,923
Total			13.00			39.60	\$155,236,606	3,920,116

Source: Projects from Sarasota County, FY 2013 Adopted Capital Improvements Program Budget

A chart shows the cost per lane-mile for Sarasota County road projects in the current fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Commissioner Christine Robinson seconded the motion, noting, “I think that ... we didn’t see the boom before it came and we didn’t see the bust before it came,” adding she was optimistic the action would allow sufficient time for the construction industry to recover. “I’m hoping in the future we won’t have these grim discussions anymore.”

Patterson pointed out that construction industry representatives always are opposed to raising the impact fees, regardless of what the rates are. “That occurred in the middle of the boom,” she added.

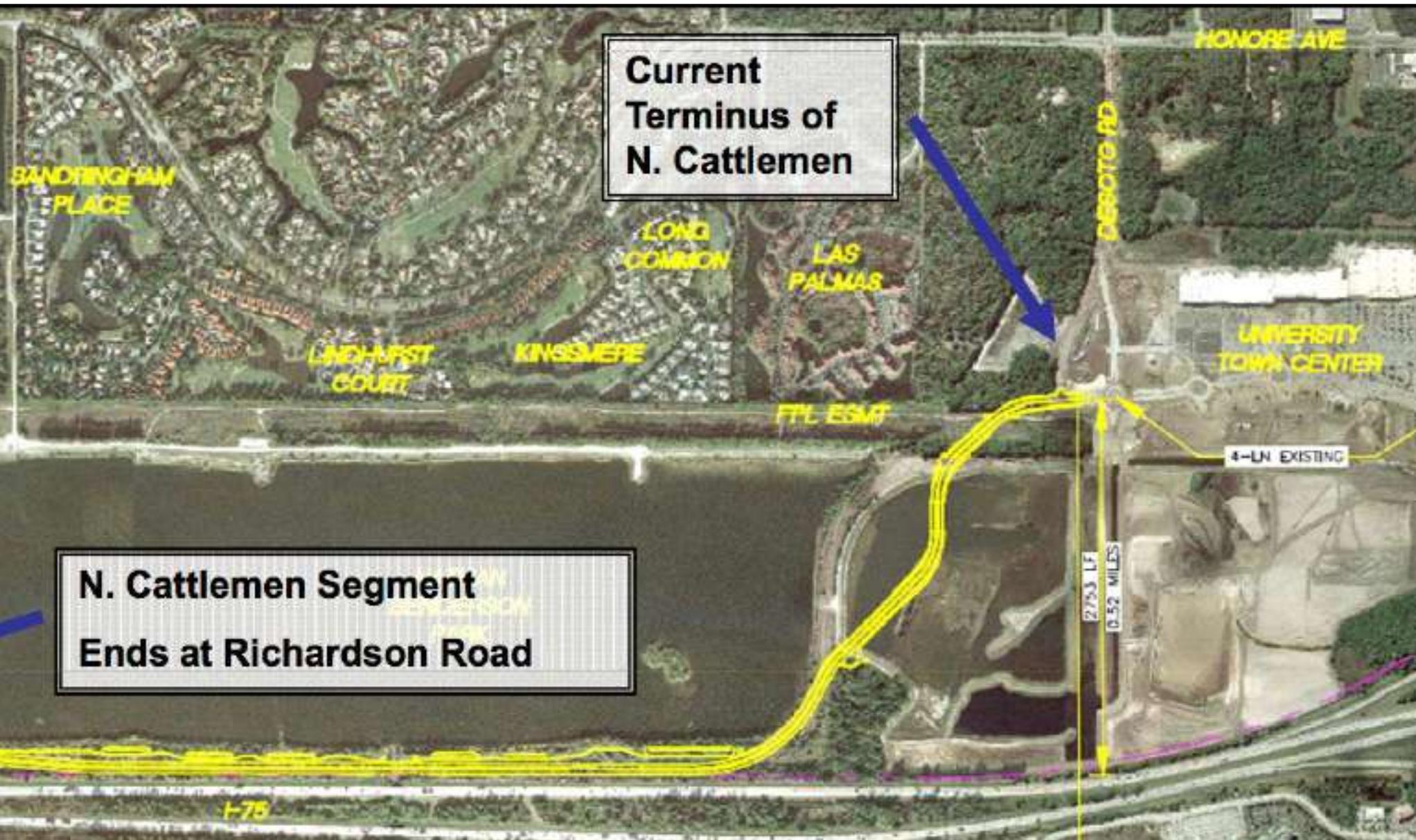
“It’s a little difficult in May of 2013 to be making decisions for May of 2015,” Barbetta said. “I’m not sure where the economy will be, [but] I’m optimistic the economy’s coming back.”

The county is collecting about \$3 million to \$4 million in road fees “that would have been \$8 million, and your road program would have been a lot healthier,” Patterson said, if the board had not reduced the fees by 50 percent in 2011.

Patterson alluded to the budget workshop the board held on April 30, when it heard it would need to spend about \$10 million a year for its road resurfacing program to maintain the status quo.

For the commission not to announce an intent to raise the fees in a couple of years “is a real mistake,” Patterson added.

Robinson responded, “You don’t know one way or the other whether [the road impact fee



A 2011 graphic shows how the extension of North Cattlemen Road will ease access to Nathan Benderson Park. Image courtesy Sarasota County

revenue] would have been doubled ... There's no data either way."

Nonetheless, Robinson said she had concerns about tying the hands of future commissions.

Still, "by the same token," she continued, "I agree with the stability argument" for the construction industry.

THE 2013 RATES

In March, as previously reported in [The Sarasota News Leader](#), Paul provided to the commissioners a report with the full 2013 road impact fees along with comparisons to the full 2007 fees and the rates currently in effect.

For example, the road impact fee for a house with living area between 1,500 square feet and 1,999 square feet would be \$7,623 at the full 2007 rate and \$4,935 at the full 2013 rate. At 68 percent of the full 2007 rate, the fee would be \$5,171 (the rate implemented in 2007). The

current adopted rate for such a house, with the 50 percent reduction implemented in 2011, would be \$2,585.

The full 2013 rates are about 35 percent of the full 2007 rates, Paul pointed out.

In examining county road improvement projects for the current fiscal year, Paul noted, the four most expensive projects have an average cost of \$9.7 million per lane-mile. The four least expensive have an average expense of \$2.3 million per lane-mile.

For example, he explained, the Cattlemen, McIntosh and Bee Ridge road projects "are extremely expensive on a per-lane-mile cost to actually widen." That is because they are in urban areas where the county has to deal with businesses in rights of way, stormwater systems, utilities and curb cuts. Right of way acquisition is much easier in less urban areas of the county, he pointed out.



Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson. File photo

DRIVING TRENDS

During public comments at the opening of the May 8 County Commission meeting, Sarasota attorney Dan Lobeck, who is president of Control Growth Now, criticized the staff for using driving research undertaken during the recession, when people were traveling less. He called the new road impact fee data “fundamentally flawed.”

However, Paul explained that while the U.S. Department of Transportation did undertake the studies in 2008 and 2009 on which the data relied, “It is recognized as the best data available for evaluating travel lengths.”

Paul continued, “It is the primary source of travel length data used in this community [and] used in most communities throughout Florida” and the United States.

He added, “I stand by the data provided ... I don’t believe it needs to be updated locally,” though the County Commission could pursue such an option.

Among newer research, Paul said data collected in 2012 showed the overall number of trips to banks had dropped 60 percent. The move to online banking is a major factor in that change, he added. Moreover, freestanding banks are not as common, Barbetta pointed



Commissioner Nora Patterson/File photo

out; many are in mixed-use developments to which people travel for a multitude of reasons.

Paul said that also was a valid point.

After the board's vote on May 8, Lobeck issued a statement saying, "What all of this is telling us is that Commissioners Barbetta, Robinson, [Charles] Hines and [Chairwoman Carolyn] Mason do not care about protecting us from traffic congestion or about making developers pay for their traffic impacts rather than taxpayers."

Lobeck added, "All they care about is paying back the development interests who bankroll their campaigns and who evidently pull their strings in return."

THE CITY'S REQUEST

Regarding the City of Sarasota's request for the change allowing it to use road impact fees for multimodal projects, Barbetta said, "That makes a lot of sense."

Because the city essentially has no capacity to build new roads, it therefore is constrained from adding sidewalks and bike lanes, Paul pointed out.

The county ordinance could be revised to allow the city to use road impact fees for those features as well as transit lanes and even the purchase of buses, Paul said.

Barbetta noted that the owners of the new Louies Modern restaurant on the lower level of the Palm Avenue parking garage in Sarasota had to pay \$95,000 in impact fees, but no

changes would be forthcoming to the street itself.

The change in the ordinance, Barbetta added, "could really make a super, vibrant multimodal city."

Paul recommended that if the County Commission proceeded with allowing the change, the ordinance could specify the flexibility was accorded only to use of road impact fees the county collects and distributes in the city. Therefore, if a court challenge comes, Paul said, the case would have no impact on the county's impact fee usage.

MAKING IT SIMPLER

After the vote, Hines referenced comments Paul had made in regard to the complexity of the county's impact fee schedule. "Can we simplify it?" Hines asked.

Although the schedule is technically sound, Paul responded, the commission will have an opportunity on July 9 to consider modifying the rate structure. On that date, Paul said, a public hearing will be held on "concurrency" — payments developers make to the county in conjunction with the creation of new projects, so the developers cover the cost of additional services.

The County Commission may want to consider mobility, multimodal and concurrency "all in one simple pay-and-go fee," Paul said, adding that is the direction in which the Florida Legislature is encouraging local governments to go. 



TURNER'S SCARY SWAN SONG

ANALYSIS: WILL THERE STILL BE A SARASOTA IN 20 YEARS?

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Terry Turner declined to run for a second term on the Sarasota City Commission. For the past four years, the former entrepreneur and economics professor consistently has egged his colleagues to look at and learn about the fiscal realities for which they are responsible.

He forced unpopular decisions on the city's pension administrators, endearing himself to not a single current or retired city employee. His eye was not so much on the current budget as the out-year implications of current decisions. He often played Cassandra to the Pollyannas, stripping off their rose-colored glasses to look at the cold, hard numbers.

Monday, May 6, in all likelihood saw Turner's final appearance as a city commissioner, bar-

ring some emergency meeting. His final message — as the clock ticked towards 11 p.m. — was perhaps the most alarming of all.

His solution would require reconsideration of long-held judgments.

THE FISCAL TRAP

The combined city-county tax rate in Sarasota is among the lowest in the State of Florida. While the Legislature puts a 10-mill cap on cities as well as counties, Sarasota city and county are not even close to that level. Both the City and County of Sarasota levy about 3 mills each, giving them enormous headroom to raise rates.

(Above) City Commissioner Terry Turner says the city needs more density. Already, downtown has a number of condominium towers, such as the one at 1350 Main St. Photo by Norman Schimmel

But thanks to the Florida Legislature, the maximum cannot happen. There is a 3 percent cap on increases in the tax rates that provide a large fraction of city and county revenue. “Ad valorem taxes are not going to skyrocket,” said Turner. “They can’t by law.”

In other words, both the city and county are stuck in a legacy property tax trap. Put another way: Although commissioners could legally triple the tax rate — from 3 to 10 mils — it would take almost a century to for them to get there at 3 percent per year. Thus, prior fiscal prudence — keeping property tax millage rates low — now means a major source of government revenue is barely able to keep up with inflation’s influence on expenses.

If all other costs were held in check in a similar fashion, the situation would be financially stable. Unfortunately, nearly everywhere you



City Commissioner Terry Turner. File photo



Outgoing City Commissioner Terry Turner says the costs for the Police Department, whose headquarters (above) is on Adams Lane, are too high. Photo by Norman Schimmel

look in the city and county budget proposals, costs are rising.

“You can do a modest increase in the millage rate,” said Turner. “But too much and it will drive people from Lido to Siesta. Lido is a barrier island inside the city limits; Siesta Key is mostly outside the city limits.

THE CULPRIT IS BUILT IN

From 2007 to 2013, the city and county reeled from collapsing property values, which meant collapsing property tax receipts. Turner noted the city’s ad valorem receipts dropped 26 percent during that period, with total revenue

“One way or another, we need more density. I suggest the Rosemary [District] or around our big parks.

Terry Turner
Commissioner
City of Sarasota

down 6 percent. City staff was cut by almost one-quarter.

In the same period, salaries declined 6 percent (in line with total revenues, but not staff reductions). And the cost of benefits to current and retired employees jumped up 31 percent in the period between 2007 and 2013. As a fraction of the total budget, Turner said personnel costs went from 74 percent in 2007 to 80 percent of the total city budget in 2013.

How could reducing staff by a quarter mean an increase to benefits by almost one-third? And how could a jump from three-quarters to four-fifths of the entire budget be devoted



(From left) City Commissioners Shannon Snyder, Willie Shaw, Terry Turner and Paul Caragiulo listen to a presentation earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

to personnel costs despite a big reduction in personnel?

“We have built into the contracts with our labor step and longevity increases and pension costs, and all of these things are rising,” said Turner. “Salaries and wages will grow 37 percent from 2013 to 2022 with no general pay increases. Only step increases and longevity. The problem comes from the legacy cost structures.”

THE LEGACY PROBLEM

Turner said Sarasota County has adopted a failed strategy to get out of the fiscal trap. “People propose we’ll solve this problem by growing business,” said Turner. “Business now supports about 25 percent of the ad valorem [taxes]. Even if we grew business by 100 percent, that won’t solve the problem. Revenue growth and business growth are not going to solve this problem.”

“Revenue growth might solve a quarter or even half of the problem, but not the whole problem,” he added. “The only way to get there is to solve the legacy problem.”

“The cost of the Police Department is going to ultimately bankrupt our city if we don’t manage it differently,” said Turner.

If he were an optician or a real estate agent or a retired engineer, there might be room to doubt his analysis. Although he does not flaunt them, his doctorate in economics and a professorial chair at the University of California-Berkeley are not trivial accomplishments.

“I think the [police] union contract is a big problem. There’s featherbedding; training, for example, is to be done on overtime,” he said. “There’s union interference in hiring, firing, promotions and training. And it takes three years to change the contract.”

“This will be the single biggest issue for the next four city commissions. We need to manage better. We have 3.3 officers per 1,000 population. Bradenton has 2.2 per thousand. Northport has 1.9, and the [Sarasota County] sheriff runs with 1.3,” said Turner. “Police costs are too much. We need to negotiate back management flexibility. Chief [Bernadette] DiPino may be that person, but until she has flexibility, there’s no way to judge.”

THE TURNER SOLUTION

If more business does not come into the area to provide the revenue, and a higher tax rate takes decades to achieve, what is left? “One way or another, we need more density,” said Turner.

“The way you get more population is to focus on making this a place people want to live,” he said. “There’s no other way to go. All of your policy decisions need to keep that in mind.”

Commissioner Paul Caragiulo gave his support to that proposal. “I agree with your goal of getting a higher population, of increased density at the urban core. Right now, 1350 [a Main Street condominium tower] has more taxable value than all of Laurel Park,” he said. “And the cost to deliver services goes down exponentially.”

“One way or another we need more density,” Turner responded. “I suggest in the Rosemary District or around our big parks.”

Turner had opened his 30-minute tutorial by saying, “This stuff is hard enough to deal with when you’re awake.” Because of the way the agenda was structured and the meeting was conducted, it was nearly 11 p.m. when he finished.

The mayor and vice mayor had nothing to say. 



MEETING MORSELS

The circus playground area at Payne Park is off limits to pets. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY COMMISSIONERS DEAL WITH PETS AT PAYNE PARK, MORE SOUND ENFORCEMENT ISSUES, THE BENDERSON PROPERTY DEAL AND SOME POINTS OF ORDER

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Monday, May 6, meeting of the Sarasota City Commission was lengthy but produced a number of actions that will impact the community. Payne Park uses, North Trail redevelopment, the Benderson Development deal at the Fruit-

ville/Beneva roads intersection and the Chalk Festival were just a few of the topics getting attention.

“ *We need to be in charge of our agenda. We're the ones setting policy. I'm having trouble with this.*

Shannon Snyder
Commissioner
City of Sarasota

”

PETS IN PAYNE

The commissioners acted on two recommendations from their Parks and Recreation

Advisory Board regarding the popular downtown Payne Park. They decided the new circus-themed playground at the northern entrance to the park will be off limits to pets. Dogs are now banned from romping inside the fenced area of the playground.

The commissioners also put Payne Park under the regular leash law ordinance, meaning a dog must remain on a leash while in the park. Under an experiment allowing dogs to be under “voice control” of their masters, owners were not deemed to be sufficiently responsible.

To repeat: Henceforth, people must use leashes on their dogs.

NTOD GETS NOD

At the second reading of the North Trail Overlay District ordinance, the commissioners approved the proposal without any administrative site plan review. They also pulled out the section calling for a mandatory public meeting between neighbors and developers at the start of the planning process. Without administrative review, all plans will undergo the existing public hearing process.

However, the vote did not prohibit an early meeting between a developer and nearby residents. “We don’t have a community workshop requirement for site plans anywhere else in the city,” said Chief Planner Ryan Chapdelain.



The North Trail Overlay District proposal envisions a more bustling area thanks to redevelopment. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

Twenty people came up to address the commission on the NTOD plan, pro and con. Several spoke in favor of the effort but said it was a stopgap measure at best.

“The overlay is a patch,” said Johannes Werner. “I’m in favor of form-based codes — one set of rules for a developer.”

The NTOD provides a small incentive for extra density, but it demands tighter controls on other issues such as setbacks and sidewalks. The city commissioners agreed the NTOD was only one step forward.

“This is just the beginning. I hope we do this pretty quickly and start looking at form-based codes,” said Mayor Suzanne Atwell.

TWEAKING THE RULES

Under New Business as the hour turned late, Commissioner Shannon Snyder complained about how the board was conducting its business.

“The Chalk Festival should never have come before us like this. It should have been a presentation only,” he said. (See the related story in this issue.) “And Mr. [Deputy City Manager Marlon] Brown asked to set up a workshop. But under our rules only the mayor or two commissioners can do that.”

“At some point we need to take control of this,” said Snyder. “We need to be in charge



Issues remain unresolved in regard to the city’s plan to sell property on the northwest corner of Fruitville and Beneva roads to Benderson Development Co. File photo

of our agenda. We're the ones setting policy. I'm having trouble with this."

Vice Mayor Willie Shaw said if Snyder saw a problem, he could call a point of order. "It would have been appropriate once you recognized a problem," Shaw added. "We may get too comfortable, moving from a discussion during Commissioner Comments to address an issue."

Commissioner Terry Turner reminded his colleagues, "Members can kick items off the agenda."

THE BENDERSON AT FRUITVILLE DEAL

The indefatigable Millie Small was the first person to address the city commissioners during the afternoon open-to-the-public part of the session. She stepped up to once again challenge the city's plan to sell slightly more than 10 acres on the northwest corner of Fruitville and Beneva roads to Benderson Development Co. The land is currently a passive and mostly undeveloped park, and it is the site of some local government uses (including a seldom-used helipad).

A recent traffic study found the intersection "failed" normal standards and that at least \$17.6 million would have to be spent to bring it up to a passing grade. Of that sum, Benderson's share would be \$2 million.

"Why waste more time talking about this project?" Small asked. "You don't have the money. Let's keep the open parkland space."

The commission's rules do not allow board members to respond during the open-to-the-public portion of their meeting. But when time came for individual comments later in the ses-

sion, Commissioner Paul Caragiulo asked City Attorney Bob Fournier about Small's claim.

"The purchase and sale agreement is still in effect," Fournier said. "It obligates the city to initiate a comprehensive plan amendment and rezone process. But you are under no obligation to approve those applications."

Under a voter-approved charter change, the comprehensive plan change will require a supermajority of four votes on the commission.

Deputy City Manager Brown said the traffic study was sent to Benderson for review earlier in the day. "We're waiting for their response," he said.

DOWNTOWN SOUND

For more than two months, the city commissioners have asked the Police Department for consistent enforcement of the city's sound ordinance downtown to cut through public opinion and get to the facts about complaints.

Monday afternoon, Chief Bernadette DiPino reported, "We started directed enforcement two weeks ago. And over the next several weekends we'll continue this directed enforcement."

The department has put extra officers on the street under the command of Sgt. Demetrio Konstantopoulos. "It's been a crash course in the measurement of sound," he said. "Last weekend, all the businesses were in compliance."

The heightened enforcement has convinced two bars — Smokin' Joe's and the Tequila Cantina — to close their front doors to prevent the emission of noise into the street. "That's

been problematic in the past,” Konstantopoulos noted.

“Most businesses are cooperating with us,” said DiPino. “And we’re beefing up our Main Street patrols.”

NEW SPD PIO

In addition to the cop assigned as the “sound enforcement officer” and beefed up patrols downtown, another change is coming in regard to the Sarasota Police Department. The new chief is looking for a civilian public information officer.

Twenty years ago, ex-radio reporter Jay Frank was the PIO for the SPD. In recent years Capt. Paul Sutton handled the press and public information duties in addition to his job as the

unofficial deputy chief of police to Chief Mikel Hollaway. Today the duties appear to be split between a former detective and an administrative lieutenant.

Barwin told the commissioners Monday, “The chief and I are moving to civilianize the media relationship position in the SPD in alignment with community policing. We’ll use the saving from other vacant positions, so there will be no addition to the budget.” Nor will the civilian enjoy any police pension benefits, he was quick to point out.

Snyder wanted more information. “I would like to see the budget breakout,” he said. “In the next five years, half the department will retire. We don’t have a cost on that. To hire a media person — a spin doctor — that’s very unfortunate.” 

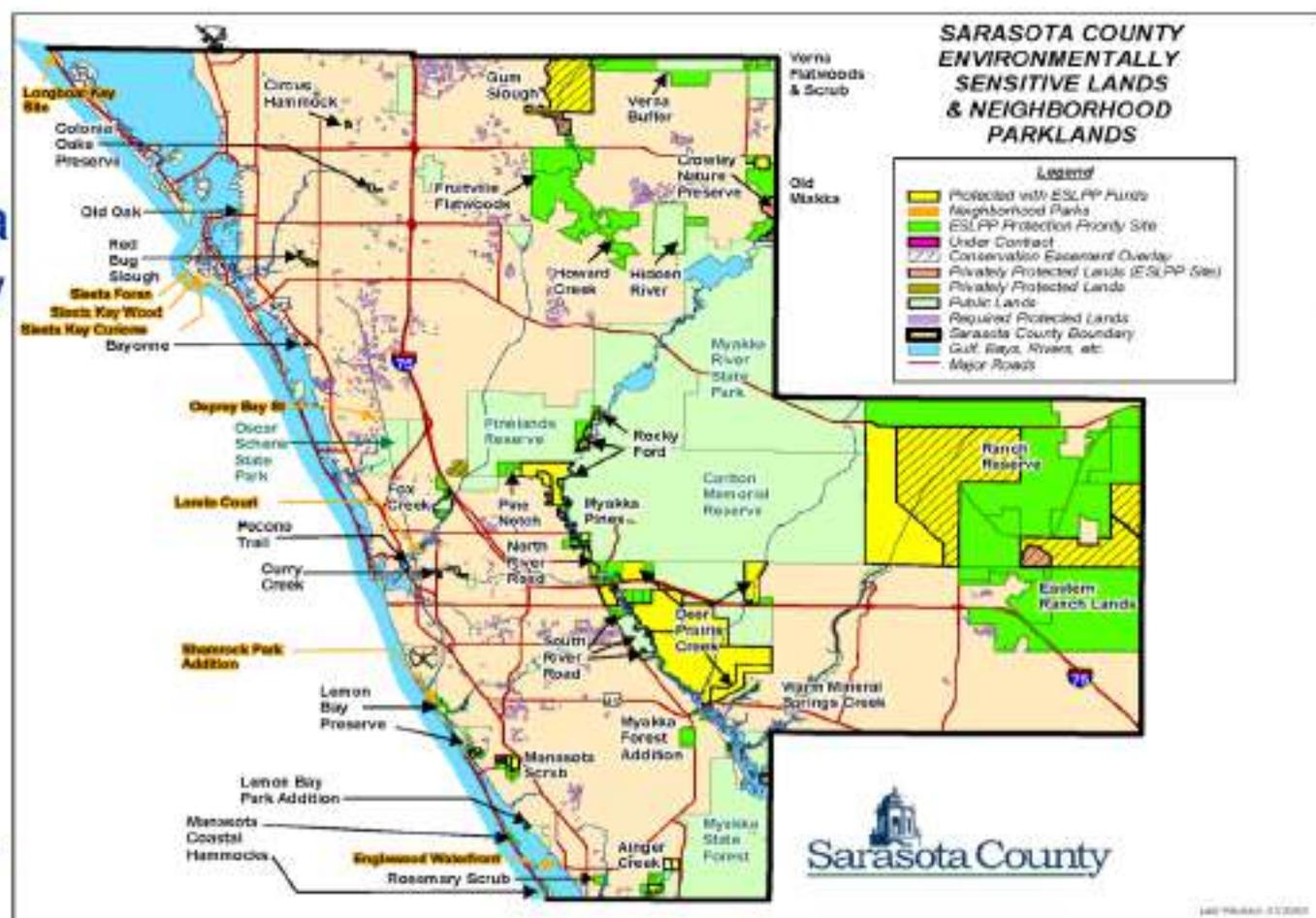


Tequila Cantina plans to keep its doors closed on Main Street to avoid being cited for noise ordinance violations. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A CHANCE TO WEIGH IN

County-owned Sarasota 2050 TDRs

The lands east of I-75 generally shown on this map of Sarasota County in yellow depict many of the locations acquired by the ESLPP that have some potential to be designated as 'sending zones'.



A graphic prepared for the County Commission in October 2012 shows county-owned lands that could be used for Transfer of Development Rights. Image courtesy Sarasota County

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE SUGGESTS UPPING TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS PRICES

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Asked by the Sarasota County Commission to weigh in on a proposed formula for pricing Transfer of Development Rights, the county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee (ESLOC) this week made modest adjustments intended to generate higher revenues.

Transfer of Development Rights — commonly known as TDRs — allow a landowner to sell the right to build new dwellings on his or her

property. The buyer can then apply those development rights to other areas. The goal is to offer incentives to preserve undeveloped land while pushing higher density to areas better suited for it.

The County Commission last year asked staff to figure out a method for pricing the TDRs associated with publicly held lands. After former member Jono Miller complained that the Oversight Committee never got the chance

to review all the data behind the staff proposals, the board sent discussion of the issue back to the group and postponed its debate to June 5.

The Planning and Development Services department originally proposed setting the price at “10 percent of the median sales price of a single-family residential unit or residential condominium unit.” Using sales from June 2012, staff estimated that a single-family TDR would cost \$17,850

“*The apples to apples have to be new houses, new condominiums.*”

Julie Byrne
Member
Sarasota County Environmentally Sensitive
Lands Oversight Committee

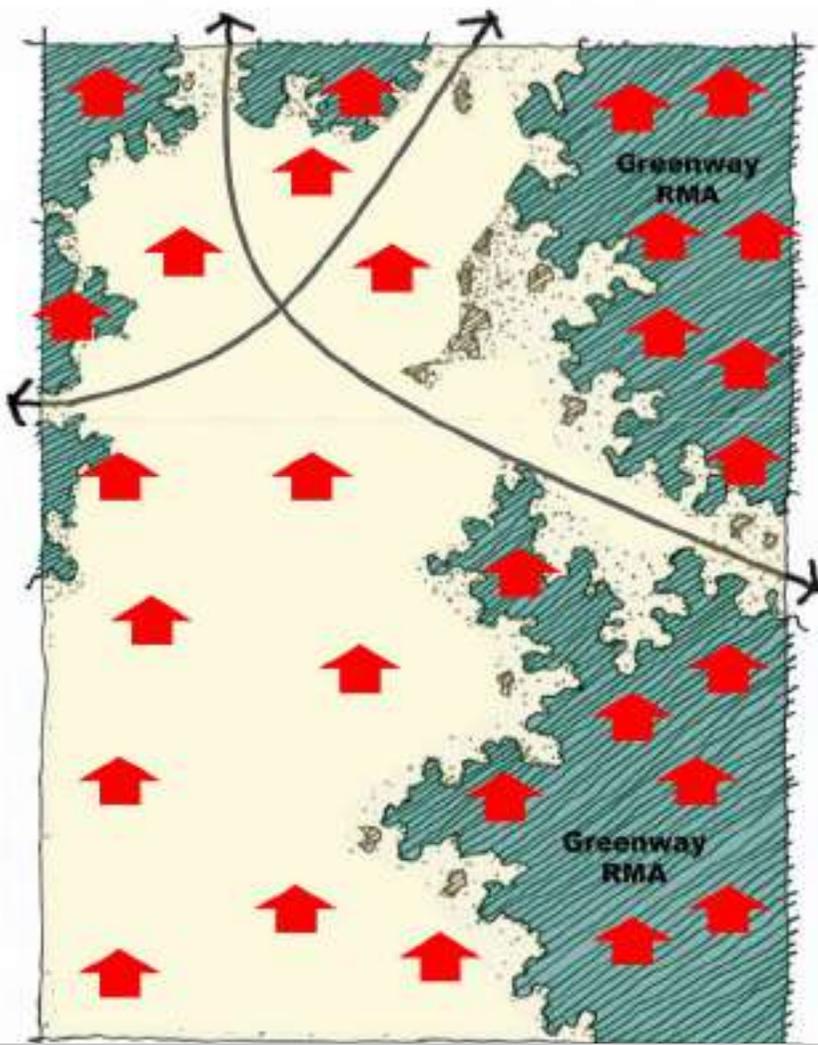
and a multi-family TDR would cost \$19,500. But Oversight Committee members criticized that methodology during a special meeting held Monday, May 6.

Oversight Committee member Julie Byrne said it didn’t make sense to calculate the TDR price using such a wide range of sales, arguing that when you “lump those \$70,000 single-family foreclosures” in with sales of new homes, it drags down the TDR price. “The apples to


Comprehensive Plan Amendment 2012-G

TDR Program Fundamentals

➤ One Transfer of Development Right (TDR) unit represents the property right to build one housing unit.



apples have to be new houses, new condominiums,” she stressed.

Jennifer Shafer, another Oversight Committee member, agreed, saying calculating the TDR based on the price of new home sales would provide a more accurate number. She also recommended using a 12-month rolling average of those home prices, rather than relying on sales from a particular month, which was staff’s original plan.

Both recommendations were unanimously approved; the Oversight Committee declined to comment on other staff proposals, including the location of a TDR test site and the specific wording of the comprehensive plan amendment needed to implement the change.

Byrne was emphatic in her belief that the private market should be the ultimate arbiter of TDR worth. “They want to build; they want to do this — let them come to us,” she said. “We’re not in the real estate business for heaven’s sake. You put them up for sale and you see what they offer.”

County Planner Bill Spaeth said the purpose of the test site program, which includes 635 TDRs in the Deer Prairie Creek area, is to “test the market” before selling the county’s entire stock of around 7,500 TDRs. “Any offer that comes in still must go before the board,” he cautioned, assuring the Oversight Committee there will be no “fire sale.” 

“To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.” — *Sir Winston Churchill*

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Barbara Lee

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AN EVENT REBUFFED

The 2012 Chalk Festival had a circus theme. Photo courtesy of Peter van Roekens

CHALK FESTIVAL GETS ONLY HALF THE AMOUNT OF WAIVED CITY FEES IT SOUGHT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

In a night of hot-button issues, the Sarasota city commissioners on May 6 asked if public money should support downtown festivals.

While the agenda item pertained to the more than 100 festivals held in the city each year, the elephant in the room was the Chalk Festival.

The city has no grant program to help fund special events, but it does waive certain fees normally paid to city departments

for services such as parking, trash pickup, utilities and police. The departments' funds are made whole by special allocations in their regular budgets. City departments, in other words, pad their annual budgets to cover festival costs. In effect, these are indirect subsidies.

Several people testified during the City Commission meeting, and a couple suggested the Chalk Festival relocate to a city park instead of blocking

“ *The question for today is, do we want to provide a subsidy to the Chalk Festival. I think it is warranted.* ”

Terry Turner
Commissioner
City of Sarasota

the streets in the Burns Square area. William Fuller, who has an office in Burns Court, cited the loss of parking, the impact of re-routed traffic and the effects on neighbors.

The Chalk Festival is unique because it lasts more than a weekend. In 2012, it went on for 10 days; this year it is scheduled for six days. Previously, it was held in October, a selling point because it drew people to town during one of the slowest months for tourism. This year it is sliding into mid-November.

City Manager Tom Barwin suggested a change in normal procedure. He said any festival requesting a street closure for three or more days should require the approval of the City Commission after a public hearing. Commissioner Terry Turner recommended pushing back the approval deadline to 180 days

before the event, allowing for time to iron out any kinks.

The overall policy changes were deferred to another time, but the discussion segued immediately into the Chalk Festival's request for more than \$10,000 in fee waivers.

"The question for today is, do we want to provide a subsidy to the Chalk Festival," asked Turner. "I think it is warranted." However, a motion to approve the festival's request died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Shannon Snyder then proposed waiving \$5,000 in fees, but not fees for police protection. His motion was seconded and approved unanimously. 



A sign on Pineapple Avenue advertises Chalk Festival parking spaces in 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel



YOU'RE INVITED!

Family fun is the order of the day at the Community Baby Shower, as evidenced at a previous event. Photos courtesy of Ciera Coleman

THE COMMUNITY BABY SHOWER OFFERS FUN AND SERIOUS SERVICES TO EXPECTANT FAMILIES

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

There will be food, games and tons of pregnant women and babies, but odds are this baby shower won't be like any other you've ever attended.

The Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County and the Sarasota Kiwanis Club are teaming up this Saturday for their 19th [Community Baby Shower](#), a fun, free event with a serious purpose: educating pregnant women and new families. The program is aimed largely at helping Healthy Start moms and babies, "but anyone can go," emphasizes Healthy Start Executive Director Jennifer Highland.

Representatives of several local health organizations will be on hand, promoting support and services in areas such as breastfeeding, positive parenting and nutrition. Participating moms will browse each booth, "receive some piece of information" and then get a punch in a ticket, says Highland. That ticket, once punched all the way around, will be entered in a raffle, with prizes such as Pack 'n' Plays, baby bathtubs and books up for grabs. Former Sarasota Mayor Kelly Kirschner will emcee, presiding over what will surely be a competitive "diaper derby," while Whole Foods will serve up healthy snacks.



About 200 people participated last year, according to Highland, and she expects the numbers to be strong again this Saturday. “It doesn’t seem to be a problem getting people there,” she says.

Highland’s organization, dedicated to supporting new mothers and infants, served approximately 1,500 women last fiscal year — a decline from previous years. But that doesn’t mean need has decreased. According to Highland, the lower number is likely a result of people moving away during the economic implosion, and the women the nonprofit does see have been struggling more than in previous years.

“The women we do see tend to have more problems and more issues, more stress in their lives, and stress is the first domino of a

whole lot of things happening,” says Highland. “We’ve lost a small number of women, but the women we have served have more needs.”

Healthy Start state funding has been tenuous, too. The Legislature last year restored cuts from previous years, and this year it moved Healthy Start money to the state’s recurring fund, an encouraging sign, according to Highland. “We’re happy that we didn’t get a cut,” she says. “We were just so thin already. Another cut would have been devastating.”

The Sarasota Community Baby Shower runs from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 18, at the Boys and Girls Club of Sarasota, 3100 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Call 373-7070 or visit healthystartsarasota.org for more information. 





MULTIPLE HONORS

Members of Brookside Middle School's robotics teams are headed to the national competition. Photo by Scott Proffitt

THE SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNIZES WINNING STUDENTS ON A ROBOTICS TEAM AND THOSE WITH WORKS IN THE EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES EXHIBIT

By Scott Proffitt
Staff Writer

It may be the first year eighth-graders at Brookside Middle School in Sarasota have organized teams for the Technology Student Association (TSA) robotics competition, but that first time has proven charmed: The teams took first-place honors at the state level and are headed to Nationals.

Joel Kaplan, technology education teacher at Brookside, was just hoping his students could manage to build a robot and get it to the state competition, he told the Sarasota County School Board during its May 7 meeting.

"I get to school an hour early," Kaplan said. "If I need to stop for gas or something, I start to worry, because these kids are at my classroom door, waiting to get in."

He added that his students worked on their robots before school, during their lunch period and on weekends.

"For us to have both teams place first, in our opening year, went way beyond my expectations," Kaplan continued. "It is truly unheard of."

The teams are now headed for the National TSA Competition, which will be held June 28 to July 2 in Orlando. Of the three Florida teams, two are from Brookside.

The students on the teams are as follows:

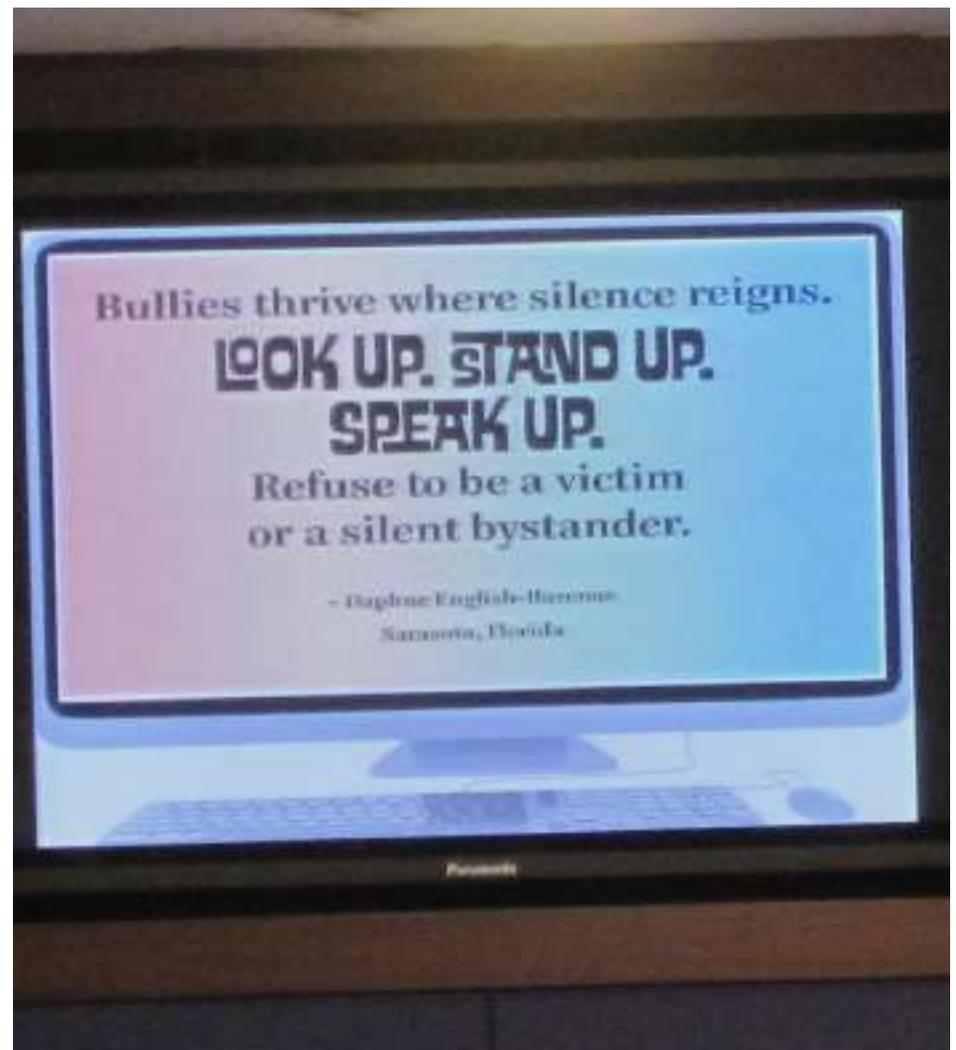
- Team 6105B — Kevin Ewing, Alexander Kane and Ian Lee.
- Team 6105C — Nicholas Greb, Jonathan Fulkert, Cole Foley and Austen Greenwell.

The robotics team members were not the only students earning recognition at the May 7 meeting.

The School Board also praised area residents and youngsters who submitted winning artwork and quotations for Embracing Our Differences, a juried art exhibition in its 10th year. Embracing Our Differences promotes inclusion, tolerance, acceptance and respect. The pieces on exhibit are the size of billboards — 12 feet by 16 feet. They can be seen through June 2 at Island Park in Sarasota and at North Port High School.

The locals were up against stiff worldwide competition. This year, the competition netted more than 4,000 entries from 52 countries and 44 states, said Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences.

“What you have done, to make us think twice, embraces your goal of 10 years ago, of changing the world,” School Board Vice Chairwom-



Daphne English-Bazenas of Sarasota wrote this quote for Embracing Our Differences. Photo by Scott Proffitt



Students who won honors in the 2013 Embracing Our Differences competition are recognized at the School Board meeting this week. Photo by Scott Proffitt

an Shirley Brown told the honorees. “We are so proud of this.”

The Best in Show student winner was *Cyber Bullying* by Steven Staub, Bobby Alvarez and Gennadity Kazimirov, who attend Heron Creek Middle School in North Port.

Twenty-five local residents, including an entire class of kindergartners at Phillippi Shores Elementary School, had their artwork or quotations selected for display in this year’s show. Works by several Ringling College of Art and Design students also were selected.

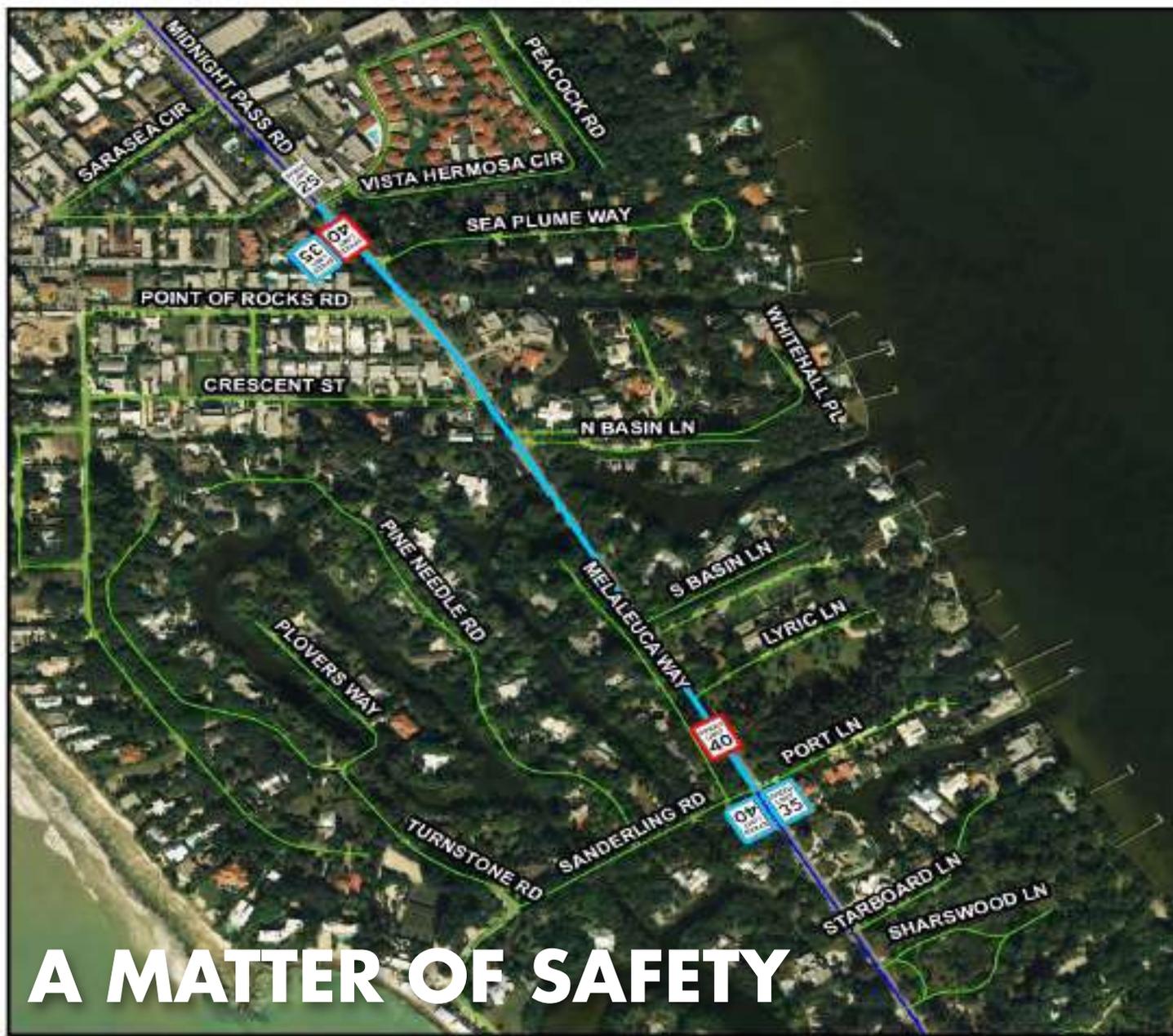
A list of the winners and their artwork may be found at www.embracingourdifferences.org. 



A quote by Joanna Fox of Sarasota also is featured in the Embracing Our Differences exhibit. Photo by Scott Proffitt



Cyber Bullying, by Heron Creek Middle School students in North Port, won Best-in-Show in the 2013 Embracing Our Differences competition. Contributed photo



Feet
400 200 0 400

Legend

Requested

- 35mph
- 40mph

Existing

- 25 mph
- 40 mph (remove)

Item 3 Street

A MATTER OF SAFETY

A graphic shows the area where a lower speed limit has been requested on Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key. Image courtesy of Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION AGAIN DEBATES A LOWER SPEED LIMIT ON PART OF SIESTA KEY BUT FRETS ABOUT THE LOW-SPEED VEHICLE FACTOR

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The Sarasota County Commission this week unanimously indicated a willingness to lower the speed limit on a portion of South Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key to 35 mph but, at the same time, to prohibit low-speed vehicles on that stretch.

(A low-speed vehicle is defined as one that can travel between 20 mph and 25 mph, Pau-

la Wiggins, the county's transportation planning manager, explained.)

However, on a 4-1 vote, the commission also approved the holding of public meetings to gain comments about the use of golf carts and low-speed vehicles on the island and to provide education about state law governing such vehicles.

“There are strong feelings about this issue both ways.”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on the north end of the island, cast the “No” vote on that proposal by Commissioner Christine Robinson.

Patterson said she felt people would find it difficult to keep straight which Siesta roads are under state control and which are under county control. Moreover, she said, she feared that people would be amenable to golf carts and low-speed vehicles traveling in some areas of the key without considering the fact that many residents drive to and from the island to go to work.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason said the public outreach efforts would clarify the issues.

“I’m talking about an overall policy discussion,” Robinson explained.

“I think just giving the public the opportunity to weigh in on the issue is an important one,” Mason added.

THE BACKGROUND

On April 10, the board originally addressed the request to lower the speed limit from 40 mph to 35 mph on Midnight Pass Road from Vista Hermosa Circle to Sanderling Road. The county’s Traffic Advisory Council had recommended the change, but Patterson pointed out that she understood the petition from a resident in The Sanderling Club was designed to enable residents to use golf carts on that segment of the road.

As a result of her comments, the commissioners asked staff to research the Florida State Statutes regarding use of golf carts and low-



With a 20 mph speed limit in Siesta Village, golf carts and low-speed vehicles are being operated along Ocean Boulevard, according to County Commission reports. Photo by Norman Schimmel

speed vehicles on roads and to gain comments about the Siesta proposal from the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

During her presentation to the board on May 8, Wiggins explained that Florida State Statute 320.01(22) defines golf carts as vehicles that cannot exceed a speed of 20 mph; they are designed and manufactured for operation on a golf course.

A golf cart may be operated on a county road if the local government allows such use and the golf cart is equipped with efficient brakes, a rearview mirror, red reflective warning devices on the front and rear and safe tires.

A person has to be 14 years of age or older to operate a golf cart, but no driver's license is

required. Additionally, a golf cart may be operated on a designated road only between sunrise and sunset, unless the local government body authorizes use beyond that time frame.

Wiggins pointed out that low-speed vehicles may operate on any road with a posted speed limit of 35 mph or less, whether the state or a county governs it. However, a low-speed vehicle has to be registered with the state and it must have a windshield, tail and front lights and efficient brakes.

Moreover, Wiggins said, a county commission could prohibit the use of low-speed vehicles on any road "in the interest of safety."

When she spoke with a Sarasota County deputy about the petition for the lower speed lim-



Golf Cart vs. Low-Speed Vehicle

- **Golf cart:** a motor vehicle that is designed and manufactured for operation on a golf course for sporting or recreational purposes and that is not capable of exceeding speeds of 20 mph. §320.01(22)
- **Low-speed vehicle:** any four-wheeled vehicle whose top speed is greater than 20 mph but not greater than 25 mph, including but not limited to, neighborhood electric vehicles. Low-speed vehicles must comply with the safety standards in 49 C.F.R.s.571.500 and §316.2122. §320.1(42)

it on the segment of Midnight Pass Road in question, Wiggins continued, the deputy said the Sheriff's Office had "no issues with low-speed vehicles on this particular roadway if the speed limit is reduced to 35 mph."

The Sheriff's Office would oppose the use of golf carts on that road, she added.

WORRIES ABOUT SAFETY

Patterson referenced data Wiggins presented last month, showing the average speed of vehicles on that part of Midnight Pass Road is 49 mph. "People are just as likely to pass a vehicle that can't go over 25 as they are a vehicle that can't go over 20," Patterson pointed out.

Wiggins agreed: "There are folks that will probably pass."

Commissioner Joe Barbetta brought up the concern about public confusion over where golf carts can travel on the island.

Wiggins responded that golf carts are not allowed on any portion of Midnight Pass Road.

"People think if golf carts are approved [for the segment in question], people are going to go right down Midnight Pass Road and go to Captain Curt's [Crab & Oyster Bar] and any of the condos along there," Barbetta said.

Captain Curt's is located near the intersection of Midnight Pass Road and Stickney Point Road.

The County Commission would have to designate any streets for golf cart use, Wiggins replied.

"We're going to run into a *major* problem on Midnight Pass Road, I think," Barbetta said.



A map shows the location of Capt. Curt's Crab & Oyster Bar on Siesta Key. Map courtesy Google Maps

Appropriate signage would have to be erected, Wiggins told the board, to indicate where golf carts and low-speed vehicles could operate.

Barbetta also pointed out that if such vehicles tended to stay close to the edge of the road, they could interfere with pedestrians and bicyclists.

"That is the possibility, that they can create a safety issue," Wiggins agreed.

"And if somebody passes, you run into an even greater problem," Barbetta added.

When Commissioner Charles Hines asked whether the members of the Traffic Advisory Council had had as in-depth a discussion of the request as the County Commission was having, Wiggins said they did not.

Hines concurred with Barbetta's concerns about the danger of people passing low-speed vehicles.

Patterson noted that, until recently, she had "heavily supported and lobbied [the Florida Department of Transportation] for reducing speed limits to 35 mph on a number of portions of the main arteries [on Siesta Key]." However, she added, that was before she realized that that could pave the way for golf cart usage on those roads.

"I think most people think it's kind of cool in the [Siesta] Village area" and along Beach Road for people to operate low-speed vehicles and golf carts, Patterson said. "I don't think people have a problem [because] the congestion is such there anyway that people aren't going to be wanting to pass."

In the areas of the island with more residences, she pointed out, where people do drive back and forth to work, the use of those vehicles is going to create frustration.

Patterson said she could not support lowering the speed limit if that meant expanding the use of low-speed vehicles on Siesta Key.

Barbetta added that he would support the lower speed limit but he also had concerns about allowing golf carts on the roads.

When Patterson asked County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh for a recommendation on how to proceed, DeMarsh explained that the board could direct staff to come back during a future meeting with a resolution that would allow for the reduced speed but ban low-speed vehicles on that portion of Midnight Pass Road.

Robinson then called for the public meetings, saying the board's action would "literally affect every single person who lives or works on the key. ... There are strong feelings about this issue both ways."

Patterson said that during those meetings, she expected staff would hear from a lot of people who rent low-speed vehicles and want to see them allowed all over the island. "And I think that'd be a *huge* mistake."

DeMarsh clarified the amended motion before the vote, making sure the commissioners understood they were asking staff to come back with a resolution that would lower the speed limit on one section of Midnight Pass Road while banning low-speed vehicles on it, but still calling for public outreach that could indicate a willingness to change their views when the issue comes back to them.

He added that they would have the prerogative of changing their minds about their action when the issue is before them once again. 



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A LONG TIME COMING

Traffic is thick at the four-way stop intersection in Siesta Village on an early March evening this year. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES AN ESTIMATED EXPENSE OF \$72,000 TO GET SEVEN SIESTA VILLAGE CROSSWALKS ILLUMINATED

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Almost 16 months to the day after he spoke of the need to illuminate Siesta Village's crosswalks, Peter van Roekens watched in person as the Sarasota County Commission unanimously directed staff to purchase lighting equipment directly from a manufacturer and use an existing county contract with a firm to handle the installation.

The cost is estimated at \$72,000 — \$46,000 below the only bid the county received for the project earlier this year.

The original county estimate for the work was \$31,500.

“I am relieved. I really am,” van Roekens told *The Sarasota News Leader* following the commission's action during its May 7 meeting in Venice.

In response to a *News Leader* question, Ryan Montague in the county's Mobility/Traffic Office — whose presentation to the commission proceeded the vote — said, “The goal is to have the project completed by season,” adding that he meant November. However, he was hopeful that timeline could be accelerated.

Because the cost of the equipment has been estimated at \$12,000, county regulations re-

quire him to get two more quotes, he pointed out. Those can be obtained over the phone, he added.

“We’re making progress,” Montague said.

Mark Smith, past president of both the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) and the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, told the *News Leader* he also was pleased to hear the news. The lighting “is necessary,” he pointed out. “We’ve had a few people hit in the Village,

and we believe this is the thing to do to help alleviate the chance of someone getting hit.”

Smith attributed the higher-than-expected cost to an improved business climate: “It’s just a sign that the economy is doing just fine.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta Key — made the motion to proceed with the project. Pointing out that she had seen someone struck by a vehicle trying to cross Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village about



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- Made in America and ARRA-Compliant



Performance Chart					
Product Description	Power (W)	Lumen	LPW	CCT**	CRI
STB/XX/20-60/FG/UNV/XXX/XX	20	1300*	65	6000	>70

* Estimated value pending photometric testing ** Note: Specifications subject to change without notice

Specifications:

Housing/Construction:

- Stonelight Bollard are created with durable, maintenance free pre-cast concrete which simulates natural coral rock. Color is integrated with the concrete. It is not a surface application.
- LED Light Kit is one-piece cast, low-copper (0.4% Cu) aluminum alloy housing with integrated lens/gasket system. The LED Engine Assembly mounts directly into standard, cast-in-place architectural junction box.

Mounting:

- Recommended with poured concrete footers approximately 8" to 10" below ground level. Footings are not provided. Install below the frost line in areas where freezing temperatures occur.

LED Modules:

- Aluminum metal-clad board for maximum heat transfer. Consists of High power/high flux white LEDs with average Correlated Color Temperature (CCT) of 6000K and with greater than 70 CRI.

Optical system:

- Optical lens is made of impact-resistant frosted or clear glass.

Electrical system:

- The LED driver is a constant-current device with a high-power factor correction to maximize power utilization. The driver meets UL 1310/UL48 Class 2 with a built-in over temperature protection. The LED driver accepts in put voltage from 120-240 VAC and fits into any standard 2-gang electrical box.

Operating Temperature:

- -40°C to 40°C

Warranty:

- Manufacturer warrants products to be free from defects for a period of five 5 years. For additional information refer to complete warranty and terms and conditions document. For extended warranty consult the factory.

Evolucia, a Sarasota firm, provided these specs for the type of LED bollard Sarasota County will install in Siesta Village. Image courtesy Sarasota County

10 years ago, Patterson added, “It was pretty scary.”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta, who seconded the motion, said he had eaten dinner in Siesta Village on the night of May 3. From a corner restaurant table, he continued, he watched a number of cars run the stop sign or roll through the stop sign as people crossed the street. (Four-way stop signs are at the intersection of Ocean Boulevard, Canal Road and Avenida Messina.)

THE MONTHS-LONG PROCESS

During the Jan. 3, 2012 SKVA meeting, van Roekens talked about the difficulty drivers have spotting pedestrians crossing Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village after dark.

“There’s old people like me driving at night,” he said, “[and] the lighting in the Village isn’t that bright.”

At the time, Van Roekens was vice president of the Siesta Key Association; he also is a Terrace East condominium complex representative at the SKVA sessions.

Then SKVA President Russell Matthes immediately agreed with van Roekens’ proposal for lighting, adding that the two could work together to seek help from the County Commission.

On May 7, Montague explained the process that ensued.

After the County Commission directed staff on Jan. 10, 2012 to evaluate the situation in Sies-



Commissioner Nora Patterson (left) talks with Siesta Key Association Secretary Peter van Roekens (right) as SKA board member Ron Flynn looks on. Photo by Rachel Hackney

ta Village, staff ended up working with SKVA representatives to conduct demonstrations in the Village last summer. The goal was to settle on the best options for illumination. After the island representatives settled on bollards with LED lighting, the County Commission on Sept. 25, 2012 asked staff to obtain quotes for such bollards then report back.

The quote process through the county's Procurement Department netted no results, Montague reminded the commissioners, with vendors saying they could not handle the work for less than the \$50,000 threshold the board had set.

When the Procurement Department subsequently advertised for bids, the only response had the \$118,000 figure.

Afterward, James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer, suggested the county could buy the bollards directly from a manufacturer and use a firm already under contract with the county to install them at seven Village crosswalks.

Montague told the commissioners on May 7 that Doug Clark Electric had provided a verbal estimate of installation costs in the amount of \$40,000, while Windemuller Technical Services had offered a written bid of \$59,410.71. Both are Sarasota firms.

Montague pointed out that the commission could direct staff to rebid the project, proceed with the plan to purchase the equipment and have it installed by a firm already under contract with the county or seek another invitation for quotes.

When Patterson made her motion, she noted, "This is approximately twice ... what we were

hoping to spend, but it sure beats four or five times that quote, with most of the money going to the installation."

She added, "The Village is really a very attractive place. It attracts a lot of folks ... and people cross the street a *lot* at night at those crosswalks."

Everyone with whom she had discussed the matter, she noted, had agreed that better lighting was needed.

Patterson also thanked the staff members who were involved in the undertaking that led to the May 7 vote. "[They] *really* worked this one to bring the costs down," she pointed out, saying she wished staff had done the same to contain the expense of the planned Siesta stormwater project at the public beach. (The commission awarded that project to a firm two weeks ago at a bid that was almost three times the county estimate.)

Additionally, Patterson commended van Roekens, Matthes and Smith for their efforts. "All volunteered their time to quite an extent to come up with the right bollards," she said.

Commissioner Charles Hines praised the staff as well. "This, to me, is the right process," he said of the effort to bring the cost down. He added that he wished staff would challenge estimates on larger projects, using common sense in deciding when figures were unreasonably high, "rather than just getting the information and bringing it to us."

Referring again to the bollards project, Hines noted, "This is good business application by you all."

"Thank you," Montague replied. 



Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, listens as Nik Wallenda addresses the audience after being named the 2013 Voice of Sarasota on May 9. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WALLEND A HONORED FOR PROMOTING SARASOTA

Internationally known aerialist Nik Wallenda was honored on May 9 as the 2013 Voice of Sarasota.

The presentation by Visit Sarasota County, the community's tourism office, came during a celebration of National Tourism Week, held at Westfield Southgate Mall.

More than 50 members of the hospitality industry were nominated for a number of awards.

The Voice of Sarasota honor, which is voted by the Visit Sarasota County Board of Directors, goes to a member of the Sarasota County community who "has succeeded in putting Sarasota County on a national stage," a Visit Sarasota County news release points out.

Wallenda made international headlines in the summer of 2012 for being the first person to successfully cross a high wire over Niagara Falls. ABC telecast the event as he walked from the U.S. to the Canadian side of the tourist attraction. This summer, he will attempt a walk across the Grand Canyon.

In February, Wallenda walked on a cable stretched from a crane on the bayfront in downtown Sarasota to the roof of the Marina One condominium tower in an effort to gain national attention for the community. He designed that event, he told the City Commission, to make certain the photogenic waterfront was the backdrop for photos and TV cameras.

COMMISSION TO DISCUSS DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY

By consensus on May 7, the Sarasota County Commission agreed to place an item on an upcoming agenda to discuss whether it should create a domestic partnership registry for the county.

Leigh Sprimont, operations manager for the commission, told *The Sarasota News Leader* the discussion tentatively has been set for the morning of June 5, when the board will meet in regular session at the Administration Center in downtown Sarasota.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason brought up the topic during the board's May 7 regular meeting in Venice, noting that all the commissioners had received copies of an [April 23 memo](#) from County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh on the issue of domestic partnership registries in the state.

When she first asked, "Can we schedule it for a discussion item," no one responded. Then Commissioner Christine Robinson replied, "I'm fine with that."

"I hear myself and Commissioner Robinson," Mason said after another pause as she looked at the other board members. Then Commissioner Joe Barbetta concurred: "Sure."

County Administrator Randall Reid told Mason staff would schedule the discussion.

Former Sarasota City Commissioner Ken Shelin, who has championed domestic partnership registries in Sarasota, Venice and North Port — with the first two of those having set up registries in the past months — sent an email to the commissioners on May 2, asking them to allow him to address them on the topic of registries, he told the *News Leader*.

"There is a public eagerly awaiting the creation of a county ordinance, just as there were in the Cities of Sarasota, Venice and North Port," he wrote. "I look forward to your favorable action to move this concept forward."

Rachel Brown Hackney



Ken Shelin/Contributed photo



County Commissioner Carolyn Mason. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SWIFT AWARDED CONTRACT FOR SIESTA BEACH PROJECT OVERSIGHT

On May 7, the Sarasota County Commission unanimously approved a contract with Jon F. Swift Inc. of Sarasota to serve as the construction manager at risk for the Siesta Public Beach Park improvements.

The contract amount is not to exceed \$103,899, according to a May 7 memo provided to the commission. The board put a cap of \$16.7 million on the building costs of the project. It will be the Swift firm's responsibility to handle design coordination and constructability reviews, refinement of the schedule and preparation of a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) agreement for all of the work, according to the memo.

The memo notes that the County Commission will be asked to consider the GMP at a later date.

The commission agreed in December 2012 to hire a company to serve as construction

manager at risk with the hope of paring the project's costs. The estimated expense of the improvements has sparked controversy as a result of its escalation over the past couple of years. During the commission's most recent budget workshop, on April 30, three commissioners — Nora Patterson, Charles Hines and Christine Robinson — continued to voice worries about paying for the improvements.

Nine firms put in bids to serve as construction manager at risk, the memo notes. Swift, which is located in Sarasota, won top ranking from the county's Procurement Department, the memo adds.

All four top firms in the scoring process are located in Sarasota. In order after Swift they were Tandem Construction, Gilbane Building Co. and Halfacre Construction Co., the memo notes.

Rachel Brown Hackney



This week the County Commission approved the next step in the plan to improve the facilities at Siesta Public Beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney

ROSE FESTIVAL TO BE HELD SATURDAY AT PHILLIPPI ESTATE PARK

The Bradenton-Sarasota Rose Society and the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department will host the Third Annual Rose Festival from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 11, at Phillippi Estate Park, located at 5500 S. Tamiami Trail.

Among the scheduled events are a tour of the Old Rose Garden on the estate; rose displays

by Society members; classes on rose selection, culture and care at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; and sales of roses — both bushes and cut flowers for Mother's Day.

For more information, call Vincent Celeste, president of the Society, at 358-6991, or visit www.B-SRS.org/2013RoseFestival.

INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE ON UNLICENSED CONTRACTORS

As part of its yearlong outreach campaign to protect the public from unlicensed contractors, Sarasota County has created a website that will identify unlicensed contractors who have been cited for unlicensed activity, the county has announced.

The purpose of the initiative is to provide law enforcement officials with information on repeat offenders, a news release says.

With its centralized database, the website will be open to other government jurisdictions, such as cities, towns and other counties, that want to participate. Each government entity will be provided with a password and instruction on how to use the website, the release notes, and each must assign a staff member to enter and maintain the information on adjudicated cases involving unlicensed contractors.

Sarasota County Planning and Development Services and its proposed Unlicensed Activity Division will be responsible for future maintenance and improvements to the website, the release notes.

The website is for internal use only; it will not be accessible from the county's website,

www.scgov.net, without a password, the release adds.

"This website with the names of unlicensed contractors who have been cited will provide authorities with the necessary information on repeat offenders who often cross jurisdictional lines," said Building Official Greg Yantorno in the release. "This will help in the prosecution of unlicensed contractors who are putting families and businesses at risk," he pointed out.

"We have worked with the Sheriff's Office, the Manatee-Sarasota Home Builders Association and other partners in the community in the development of the website," he added.

Under Florida Statute 489.127, the first offense for unlicensed activity is a first-degree misdemeanor with a civil penalty of \$250; a second offense is a third-degree felony with a civil penalty of \$500, the release points out.

For more information on the dangers of using unlicensed contractors, or to find contractors who are licensed, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 (TTY: 711) or visit www.scgov.net, using the keyword "Building" for your search.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT ASSAULT AT BEACH

The Sarasota Sheriff's Office is seeking assistance in identifying three white males who were involved in an aggravated battery of a teenager at the Siesta Key Beach near the pavilion/picnic area, the office has announced.

The incident, which occurred at approximately 12:45 a.m. on May 6, resulted in the victim, Chance Thomas Prater, 17, of 4975 Reno Drive, Sarasota, sustaining serious injuries, a report says. The victim was transported to Blake Medical Center via Bayflight, the report adds.

Deputy Jason Mruczek told members of the Siesta Key Village Association on May 7 that the victim had a broken jaw and facial swelling.

The three suspects are described as follows, according to the report:

- Suspect No. 1: white male, 15 to 18 years old with short, light-colored hair, approximately 5 feet 9 inches to 6 feet tall with a slender build; he was wearing khaki shorts.
- Suspect No. 2: similar in description to Suspect No. 1 but estimated to be 16 to 20 years old; he was wearing jean shorts.
- Suspect No. 3: described as being in his mid-20s, "big-boned," with ear-length dark curly hair; he was wearing a tank top and shorts.

The three suspects reportedly frequent the Payne Park area, the report notes. Anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Kim McGath at 861-4928 or by email at kmcgath@scgov.net. Persons also may contact Crime Stoppers at 366-TIPS (8477) or online at www.crimestoppers.com.

MAN'S BODY FOUND FLOATING IN POND BEHIND PUBLIX

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is seeking information about the death of a man whose body was found floating in a water retention area at the rear of the Publix complex in the 8400 block of Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, on May 6, the Sheriff's Office has reported.

At approximately 6:36 p.m. on May 6, deputies responded to a report about a body in the water. Upon their arrival, they found an unresponsive male in his 50s, the report adds. Sarasota County Fire Department paramedics treated him after deputies removed him from the water, but they ultimately declared him dead at the scene, the report notes.

"There were no obvious signs of death while deputies were on scene," the report continues. However, Sarasota County Sheriff's detectives have been working with the Medical Examiner's Office to determine the cause, the report says.

The victim was identified, but his name has been withheld pending notification of the next of kin.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call the Criminal Investigations Section at 861-1719 or leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at www.crimestoppers.com.

POT BUST YIELDS FIVE HIGH-GRADE POUNDS

Sarasota Police officers on Monday, May 6, announced the arrests of two mid-level marijuana dealers and the seizure of five pounds of vacuum-packed grow-house pot.

The action capped a six-month investigation by city detectives, who received an anonymous tip in September about deals going down in local nightclubs, according to a report. Detective Greg Grodoski was assigned the case, which quickly ballooned into a serious investigation involving surveillance and a wiretap.

Grodoski determined Anthony Snead was receiving weekly shipments at his rental residence, 635 Audubon Place, in the Park East neighborhood. A department news release said, "Detectives were able to determine that Snead has been receiving five-pound marijuana deliveries approximately once a week for the past couple of years." They said each pound cost Snead \$5,000, equal to \$300 per ounce in bulk.

Using the department's estimates, Snead purchased more than one-quarter of a ton of marijuana over the past 104 weeks, and he paid \$2.6 million for the deliveries.

Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino said the arrests would send a message to local dealers: "Look out; we're coming after you."

Detective Lieutenant Pat Ledwith added that Snead was a "mid-level distributor" who sold to retailers who then repackaged the drug and put it on the street. Snead is 67 years old.

Also arrested was his alleged accomplice, 40-year-old Andy Charlton.



The five pounds of confiscated marijuana sit on a table at the Sarasota Police Department. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

Ledwith and DiPino said the investigation continues to follow up the leads developed over the six months of detective work.

Washington State and Colorado recently legalized recreational use of marijuana.

Stan Zimmerman

GIVING CIRCLES INITIATIVE LAUNCHED WITH FOUNDATION

More than 330 guests attended the Fifth Annual Gems of Philanthropy Luncheon at Michael's On East on April 30, presented by Giving Matters, a committee of the Association of Fundraising Professionals Southwest Florida Chapter (AFP). "Giving Matters is dedicated to inspiring and educating women of all ages about their power to transform communities and the world through volunteerism and philanthropy," a news release notes.

The luncheon launched AFP's [Giving Circles Initiative](#), a community-wide effort to form groups of like-minded women who give to-

gether to support charities of their choice. Encouraging the effort was Anne Mosle, vice president of The Aspen Institute and executive director of Ascend, the keynote speaker. "Mosle created a robust giving circles initiative" while she was president of the Washington, D.C., Area Women's Foundation, the release adds.

Roxie Jerde, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, announced that her organization will provide "back office" support services for giving circles, including handling the set-up, charitable



(From left) Young Woman Philanthropist Award winner Laura Alston, Giving Matters Chairwoman Sue Seiter, guest speaker Anne Mosle, and luncheon Chairwoman Linda de Mello. Contributed photo

tax receipts and management and disbursements of giving circle funds. Jerde also announced \$1,000 in 10 matching grants to the first 10 circles of 10 women or more who attended the luncheon and register their circle with the Community Foundation before June 30.

During the luncheon, Giving Matters honored Laura Alston, a senior at Booker High School, with its 2013 Young Woman Philanthropist Award. Alston will attend Columbia University in the fall to study art and business, the release notes. She received a \$1,000 college scholarship as well as \$1,000 to give to the charity of her choice. She selected the College for Every Student Program at Booker High, the release continues.

For additional information on giving circles, contact Sue Seiter, Giving Matters chairwoman, at sueseiter@verizon.net or 932-3536.



(From left) Community Foundation of Sarasota County President and CEO Roxie Jerde with Dottie Baer Garner and CFSC Board member Audrey Coleman. Contributed photo

CORRECTIONS

The editorial in the May 3 issue incorrectly said that Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson always had opposed proposals for paid beach parking. Patterson was one of three commissioners who voted on May 14, 2008 to advertise for a request for proposal for a parking management firm to implement a proposed Beach Paid Parking Pilot Program at all county beaches. However, one of that majority — Commissioner Shannon Staub —

changed her mind, prompting Patterson to put forward a motion on May 27, 2008, withdrawing the authorization for the request for proposals. That motion passed unanimously.

In a photo in the May 3 *A&E Briefs*, Ricardo Rhodes was misidentified in the early edition of the *News Leader* in a photo from *Symphony of Sorrows*. That ballet was performed by Sarasota Ballet company members in 2012. 

The Sarasota News Leader No-Nonsense Reporting

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WE CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HELPING WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE. NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GET THEM THE CARE THEY NEED. BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRULY CARED FOR, THEY WILL MAKE THEIR LIVES, THEIR FAMILIES – AND EVEN THE WORLD – BETTER AND HEALTHIER.

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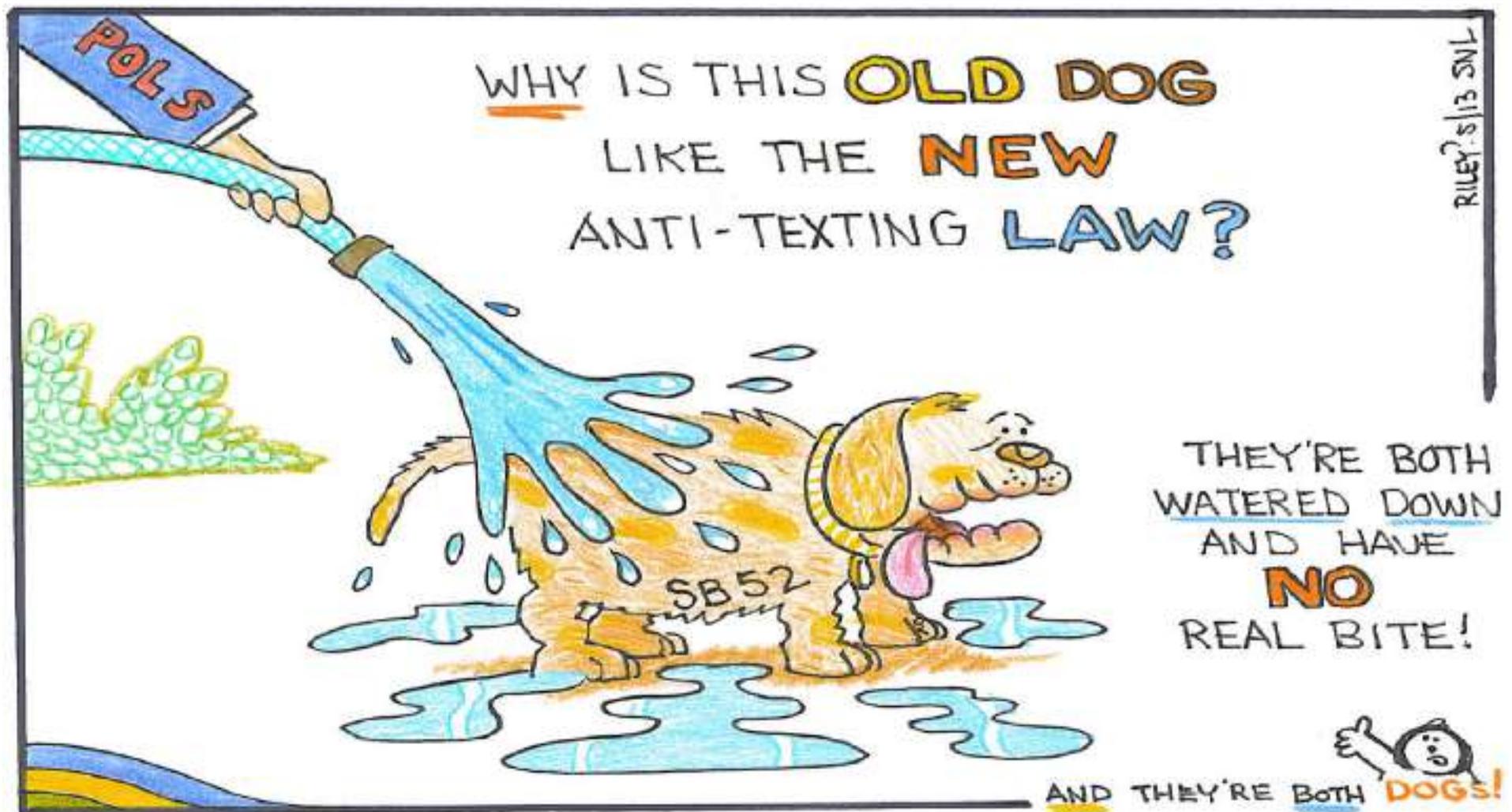
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OPINION



TEXTING-WHILE-DRIVING BAN TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

EDITORIAL

For five long years, proponents of a ban on texting while driving — including Sen. Nancy Detert and Reps. Ray Pilon and Doug Holder of Sarasota County — have endured indifference and outright hostility from their fellow Florida lawmakers, who refused to allow bills that would ban the practice to advance in the Legislature. It was an infringement on the personal liberties of drivers, the opponents would intone gravely.

Never mind that to operate a vehicle in the state of Florida an individual first must complete a course of

“One cannot focus adequate attention on the complex task of navigating a piece of machinery weighing thousands of pounds and propelled by hundreds of horsepower when one is preoccupied with something occurring on a tiny handheld electronic box.”

study that includes classroom instruction and hands-on training, then pass a written exam and a road test. The vehicle in which this newly authorized driver might endeavor to venture forth also must be registered with the state and insured according to minimum state standards. Finally, the driver must fasten himself securely into the driver's seat with

the three-point seat belt, because failure to do so is illegal and subjects the driver to being ticketed. Apparently, none of these impositions is considered an infringement on the personal liberties of drivers.

OPINION

After five years, the guardians of drivers' liberties in the Legislature consented to passing a bill that would slightly curtail the practice of texting while driving, but it was defanged by making texting while driving a *secondary* offense. This means a driver could not be stopped for that violation alone but could be ticketed for texting if pulled over for another offense (perhaps not wearing one's seat belt). However, unless the traffic officer could peer into the driver's window and actually see texting being carried out, the ticket would not stand up in court. Only by obtaining the offender's phone records could it be proven that texting was being committed. The bill was weakened further by prohibiting a search of phone records except in the event of an accident resulting in death or serious injury.

If an officer accuses a driver of texting, all the driver really has to do is say he was playing solitaire or checking the weather on his cell phone. Under Senate Bill 52, both of these activities are legal to engage in while driving. It is communicating by use of written text that is forbidden. And since the officer has no way to obtain the phone records, absent blood on the pavement, there really is nothing that can be done to refute a driver's plea of innocence.

Frankly, however, we are not disappointed in the result, because banning texting while driving is the proverbial band-aid on an arterial wound.

In North Carolina, texting was banned, so drivers no longer balanced their phones on the steering wheel while keying in their mes-

sages. They held the phones in their laps, so an officer passing by could not see they were texting. Guess how much of an impact the ban had on texting-related accidents?

No, the problem is not to identify one aspect of hazardous behavior and believe that outlawing it will eliminate the total hazard. The real problem is the amount of attention demanded by mobile phones, whether someone is talking, texting, Tweeting, gaming or whatever. One cannot focus adequate attention on the complex task of navigating a piece of machinery weighing thousands of pounds and propelled by hundreds of horsepower when one is preoccupied with something occurring on a tiny handheld electronic box.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Board, the National Safety Council, the American Automobile Association and other organizations identify the larger problem as "distracted driving." Texting is only one component of distracted driving, albeit the one that is getting the lion's share of media attention.

Studies have shown that distracted driving is even more incapacitating than being drunk. Put an inebriated driver and a texting driver on a crowded highway, and the texting driver is more likely to cause an accident, too often with tragic results.

It is for this reason that we believe the only practical solution is to ban the use of handheld phones while driving. It really does not matter what the phone is being used for. Its very presence compromises the abilities of the driver and makes accidents more likely.

OPINION

Technology already exists to ameliorate the problem. Wireless phones can link to the car's sound system, and voice-activated dialing allows a person to make calls. Conversations can be heard over the same sound system — unless a wireless headset is employed — allowing the driver to keep both hands on the steering wheel.

Even texting can be done with the aid of voice-to-text software that is showing up in more and more wireless phones. Incoming text messages would be read aloud by the same system, which also would render any dictated message into written form for transmission.

There simply is no reason why banning the use of handheld phones while driving would be the same as a ban on communication. Hands-free technology would allow that communication to be conducted in the safest way possible.

Admittedly, there are those who believe no electronic devices should be operated at all while driving. But for such a proscription to make sense, other dangerous activities that have long been done while driving — eating, drinking, applying makeup, working crossword puzzles — would have to be made illegal as well.

Doing so would not be an infringement on the liberties of drivers, but laws must make sense to the governed or they will be ignored. One needs only to travel on a freeway with a 50 mph speed limit to learn the truth of that ... 85 percent of drivers will be travelling between 60 and 70 mph.

A ban on all electronic devices would not be viewed as reasonable, and, therefore, it almost certainly would be universally ignored by the driving public. But the public already views a ban on handheld phones as reasonable. Polls show that, despite engaging in distracting activities, a majority of drivers admit the danger and realize something must be done.

In Florida, nothing was done this session other than the passage of a memorial to the futile struggle to regulate behavior that is a menace to others. There always is next year, though. Let us hope that, until then, the body count resulting from our Legislature's failure to act appropriately will not prove to be extraordinarily high. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Sarasota News Leader welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and include the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com, with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear SNL Editor,

Your publication is relatively fair-minded, but this nonpartisan claptrap is nothing but Democratic sour grapes (April 26).

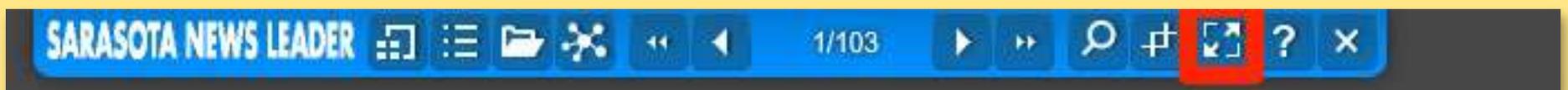
Sarasota Democrats are annoyed that Republicans can hold practically all of the county offices and the Dems only seem to have the city. Didn't Tip O'Neil, a former *Democratic* U.S. House Speaker, once say *all* politics are partisan?

So why does the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations' leadership complain when the Republican Party of Sarasota County is part of the city election? We live here, too, and we want to support our candidate in the open. Deal with it.

All elections must be partisan.

Paul A. Cajka Sr.
RPOS Chairman
Precinct 115

QUICK TIP



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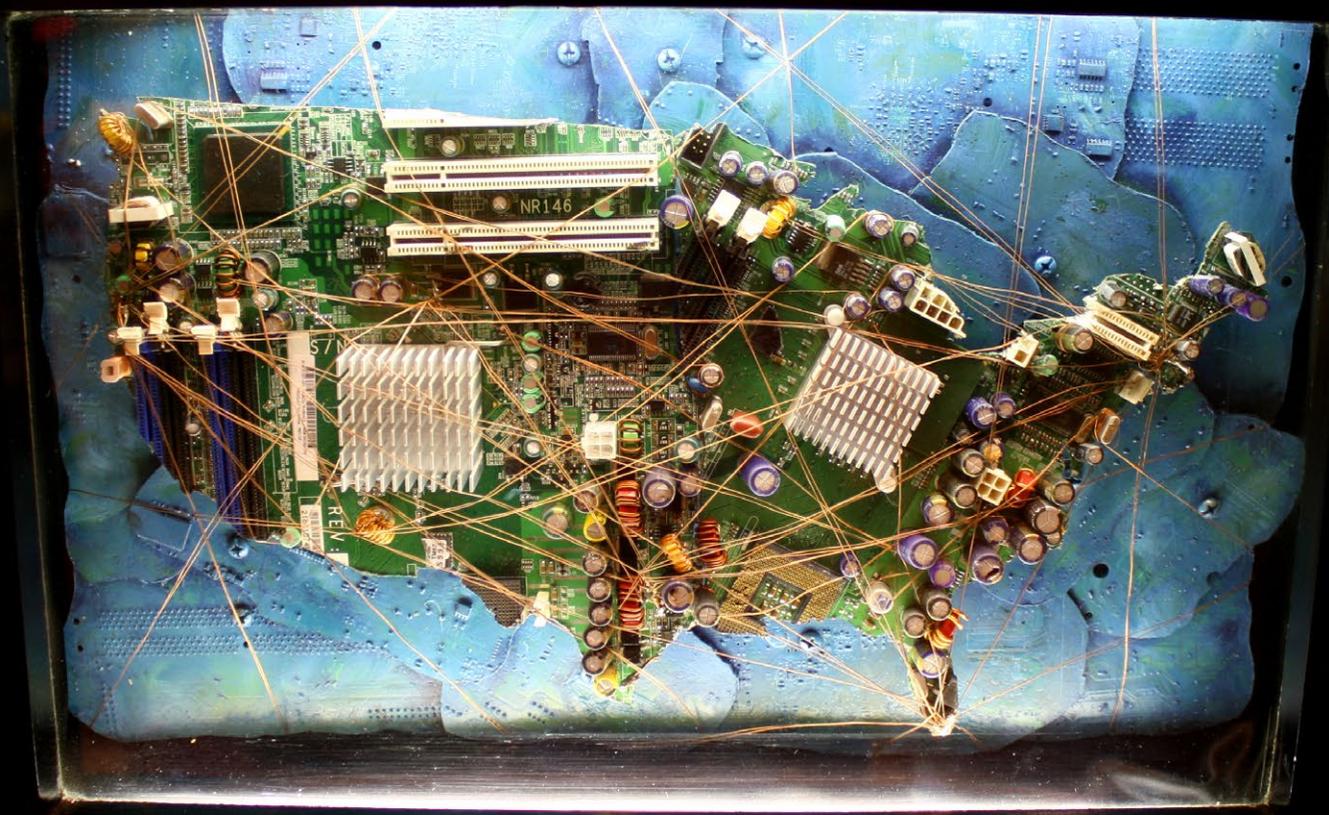
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ARTISTS ON THE MOVE

GRADUATING RINGLING COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN ILLUSTRATION SENIORS DISCUSS POST-GRADUATION PLANS AT 2013 SENIOR SHOWCASE

By Tyler Whitson
Staff Writer

On Saturday, April 27, the Ringling College of Art and Design welcomed members of the public to its Smith, Basch and Christ-Janer galleries for the opening of its 2013 Illustration Senior Showcase.

This exhibition featured works by students who would, within a week, be donning caps and gowns and proudly strutting across the commencement stage.

The week-long show was an opportunity not only for patrons to take in new original pic-

es by developing artists but for 97 graduating illustration seniors to demonstrate they have far more to show for the past few years of effort than the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees they would soon grasp.

Many of the artists exhibiting pieces in the showcase were present on opening night, mingling with patrons, selling items and handing out promotional material. *The Sarasota News Leader* had the opportunity to interview a few of them about their influences and inspirations, their goals as artists and, of course,

(Above) Kieran Collen talked with The Sarasota News Leader about the technological themes in some of his pieces. 'Technology, for me, is kind of a double-edged blade,' he explained. 'There is a benefit in understanding that technology has a certain positivity to bring to the table, but at the same time, I think that if it is placed in the wrong hands or misused, it can be very detrimental to humanity as a whole.' All photos by Arielle Scherr

what they planned to do after the graduation exercises on May 3 at the Bradenton Area Convention Center in Palmetto.

KIERAN COLLEN

Kieran Collen, a political asylee from landlocked Zimbabwe, told the *News Leader* that, after graduation, he plans to attend the San Francisco Institute of Art, where he will be working towards a master's degree. Ultimately, he said, he hopes to work in Portland, OR, at the office of Laika Inc., a stop-motion animation studio specializing in feature films, music videos, short films and other varieties of commercial content.

Collen went on to explain that his work is often informed by his childhood in Zimbabwe, the human rights atrocities that he witnessed there and the decision his family made in 2007 to leave the country and seek asylum in the United States out of fear of persecution by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, his homeland's leading political party.

"A lot of my work has to do with sociopolitical commentary and subject matter," Collen pointed out. "It's obviously a very important topic to me, because human rights where I'm from have been taken away left, right and center," he continued. "I would like to see people have those rights instilled and re-instilled, and



A sculpture by Jimmy Brennick is among the works on display. Although the showcase was for graduates of the illustration program, many of the pieces incorporated sculpture and other mediums.

I'd like to try and enlighten people as to what's going on in the world around them."

Collen added that, in spite of getting his BFA in illustration, his greatest goal as an artist is to eventually produce large-scale public sculptures.

"Obviously, I can't afford it at a student's level right now," he said, "but as soon as the day comes, I would love to be able to make public works so that people can be exposed to them on a larger scale."

VALERIE MOJICA

Valerie Mojica is an illustrator who has focused on producing pieces that depict events from myths, legends and fairy tales passed

on in cultures all over the world. She told the *News Leader*, however, that she wants to devote much of her post-graduation time to writing, illustrating and publishing her own stories.

"I want to pursue my career right now," she said. "I'm planning on trying to finish writing a story that I'm focusing on and I want to color a few pages of my children's book that I'm working on."

Mojica discussed long-term career goals as well. "I want to try to get more into being an author and illustrator for my own works and work on book covers and design," she said. "It's what I like to do," she continued, "so I'm



Valerie Mojica poses with some of her work for sale. In her artist's statement, Mojica wrote: 'What I strive to reach with my illustrations is a visual eloquence, where viewers can surmise their own feelings from the mixed emotions I have illustrated within these tales.'

trying to go for more publishing-based jobs after graduation.”

When asked what inspires her work, Mojica replied that she is influenced by a variety of genres and styles. “I usually take from Art Deco and Art Nouveau as well as fashion, fantasy and whimsical themes and kind of create my own worlds,” she said.

Mojica went on to explain that as an artist, she aspires to produce works that evoke an emotional response in the viewer. “Mostly, when I work on my pieces, I consider what mood I want to convey, how I want my audience to feel,” she said. “So I’m trying to combine the emotional and visual aspects of my art and sort of meld the two together.”

TIM PEACOCK

Peacock is an illustrator who focuses on telling stories with drawings that often incorporate humor. He told the *News Leader* he plans to move to New York City in the fall to pursue a freelance career and to work a day job for primary income, with hopes of eventually supporting himself with his artistic endeavors. New York City, he said, is “kind of where illustration is going on, at least for editorial and institutional-based illustration.”

Peacock added that he has been strongly influenced by comic artists from Europe and Japan, independent contemporary comic artists and sometimes classic superhero comics from past eras. In addition, he said, he ap-



Illustrations by Brandon Bakus are part of the showcase.



MARY ELIZABETH HOLLAND
The artist's work is a blend of traditional and contemporary styles, often focusing on the human form and the interplay of light and shadow. Her paintings are characterized by soft, visible brushstrokes and a rich, warm color palette. Holland's subjects are often women in various poses, exploring themes of femininity, vulnerability, and the human condition. Her work has been exhibited in several galleries and museums, and she has received numerous awards and commissions for her art.



Paintings by Mary Elizabeth Holland are among the works on display.

preciates illustrators who produce editorial commentary.

Asked what he hopes to achieve as an artist, Peacock responded that he wants to be able to publish his own work and have patrons recognize it as unique. “I’d like to consider that my voice is very apparent in my work,” he said. “I guess my aspiration as an artist is to be a part of the [comic artist] community and be able to put out my work independently and have people who are interested in it.”

WREN MCDONALD

Wren McDonald is an illustrator who shares a penchant for comic and editorial art similar to what Peacock described. In an interview with the *News Leader*, McDonald specifically mentioned the names of acclaimed French comic artists Jean Giraud — also known as Moebius — and Christophe Blain.

Also like Peacock, McDonald plans to head to New York City within a year, with the goal of successfully joining the independent artist community up there and sustaining himself with his creative work.

In the meantime, McDonald plans to publicize his pieces as much as possible in Florida while saving up funds for the move. “I’m trying to do freelance, and it’s hard to break right into and have enough clients,” he said. “So the plan is to just promote myself on the Internet, send out postcards — stuff like that.”

Asked what his ultimate goals are as an artist, McDonald responded modestly. “I’m not trying to change the world or anything. Basically, I just want to tell stories the way that I see them and express my voice of interpretation,” he continued, “like I’m interpreting as opposed to creating, if that makes sense.”

THE NEXT STEPS

Regardless of whether they plan to return to school or pursue careers as artists, this year’s Ringling Illustration graduates are taking the next steps on their artistic paths. And though many of them will likely be leaving the area soon — if they have not done so already — the 2013 Illustration Senior Showcase offered them one final opportunity to let Sarasotans see what they have been working on throughout their undergraduate education at Ringling. 

QUICK TIP



Share stories by clicking the  icon in the menubar and choosing to share via e-mail, post to Facebook or Twitter, or many other sharing options.



ASK 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.

CHARLIE CONTINUES A GOOD RECOVERY; IDENTIFYING HAWKS CAN BE A FASCINATING BUT TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS

Dear Readers,

Many of you have requested an update on Charlie, the Great Blue Heron, rescued by Wildlife Center of Venice and released back onto south Siesta Key April 21. The next morning, she was seen fishing with her mate on Turtle Beach. She then flew straight across the island to a bayside pier, where she is known as “Fred,” and resumed a favorite pastime of

hers — chasing Ralphie, an immature Brown Pelican, off “her” dock.

If you look closely at a fleeing Ralphie, you will notice a nice little dent in the back of his head made by her beak thrust. But, please, do not worry about Ralphie! Quite unlike his parents, and sibling, he is an obstinate hardy bully, and if he wants to grow up and breed lots of obstinate bully pelicans just like him, he must first learn



Charlie (in front) and Charley (behind her) in a pond. Photo by Tatiana Staats

the proper dockside pecking-order rules, even if this is part of the “school of hard knocks.”

You may have noted that although the Great Blue Heron does not display sexual dimorphism, I still refer to Charlie as a she. If you look at the photo of Charlie and Charley together, you will clearly see the subtle differences between male and female. In breeding season, the male’s beak is more colorfully marked. The male is also larger than the female. In the case of raptors — osprey, eagles and owls (that’s me!) — the female is larger than the male.

Charlie has also been reported taking her afternoon nap on another bayside dock where she is called “Charlotte.”

In other words, she is back to her old routine, and except for reports that she still favors her left foot, she is doing quite well and thank you all for asking!

And thank you, Tatiana and Rick and John, for keeping an eye on her and reporting in!

Otus

Dear Readers,

A couple of weeks ago, I flew across the road to my favorite frog pond for an early breakfast (actually, a late supper for me). I have been making this trip with impunity on a regular basis ever since our neighborhood Red-shouldered Hawk died in an auto accident. Ironically, that happened this Jan. 5, the same day as



An immature Brown Pelican, Ralphie, who has a hole in his head, escapes off the dock. Photo by Rick Wulterkens



the Audubon 2012 Christmas Bird Count on Siesta Key. And, yes, Wildlife Center of Venice tried to save its life but the head injuries were too traumatic. *Ave atque vale ...*

I was about to fly home and almost ventured out from the protective heavy foliage of the oak when I heard the Fish Crows raucously cawing out the alarm, “Hawk! Hawk! Hawk!” I quickly made myself very small and I froze.

Now, intelligent as all members of the *Corvid* family are, Fish Crows do not speak English. It is merely an uncanny coincidence that their warning cry seemingly mimics the word, “Hawk,” whether there is actually a Hawk, an Eagle or the neighbor’s Abyssinian “pussy tat.”

At the same time the Crows were cawing, the flea-infested tree rats (i.e., Eastern Gray Squir-



rels) started in. In time of danger, they stay in place in a tree-hugging, heads-down mode and loudly chitter-chatter gibberish that could warn one of anything from “Beware the Jubjub Bird” to “Shun the frumious Bandersnatch.” A fat lot of help they are when trouble is nigh.

Finally, the Blue Jays shrieked and began dive-bombing a shadowy presence perched in a palm branch right across the pond from me. I now knew for certain that a Hawk or large Owl was present. I opened one eye and carefully peered across the pond at the object. It was an immature hawk claiming the previous one’s territory. He did this by loudly crying to anyone in or out of earshot, thus proclaiming his rights to his new kingdom.

It was growing quite noisy and rowdy around the placid pond. I, however, remained quiet and still because a deathly fear had gripped me.

I can only describe that fear by borrowing Edgar Allan Poe’s words in *The Pit and the Pendulum*: “I had but escaped death in one form of agony, to be delivered unto worse than death in some other.” You see, once again, I was forced to identify an immature Hawk to satisfy my readers’ insatiable curiosity about our wondrous Florida creatures.

Correctly identifying an immature Hawk is a form of torture invented by the Spanish Inquisition, and the only reason Poe’s unnamed



Otus tries to hide as he peeks at the hawk. File photo

protagonist was spared that torment was because the French army rescued him just in the nick of time.

I anxiously scanned the horizons of both Gulf and Bay and with no French warships anchored anywhere near Siesta Key, I realized there was no rescue of me in sight. I accepted my fate but also decided to share it with my readers.

Today's column will instruct you how to identify a Hawk in your neighborhood so that I do not have to.

1) Begin by narrowing your search to just a few species common to our area, i.e., the Red-shouldered (Florida subspecies, which is paler than the Northern and more likely to be found in coastal areas); the Red-tailed (large, "except when small"; prefers woodlands and meadows); Cooper's; and Sharp-shinned Hawks (they are everywhere!).

2) Go to any birds-of-Florida book and study Hawk photos. I particularly enjoy starting with *Florida's Fabulous Birds — Land Birds: Their Stories*. It is part of a nature series written to inspire readers to learn about our wildlife and then to explore it further. The large photos and text are outstanding. They draw in the amateur's interest and keep it by highlighting the serious, as well as oftentimes charmingly ridiculous nature of the subjects. The series is sold at Davidson's Drugs and at local bookstores. And when you have failed to ID your Hawk, you can turn to the Screech-Owl (that's me!) pages and see how adorable our owlets are!

3) Aha! Now you have decided you saw a Red-tailed Hawk and the reason you could not ID

it right off the bat was because this bird does not have a red tail until it is mature. On the other hand, the immature Cooper's also has the same dark head. So, it is a Cooper's until you read that a Cooper's "is almost identical to the Sharp-shinned Hawk. It is larger and its tail is rounded rather than square, but it may be impossible to tell the difference by casual observation." Now, it is a Sharp-shinned Hawk until you remember we are in the merry month of May and the Sharp-shinned Hawk is a seasonal winter resident.

Nevertheless, by reading Stan Tekiela's *Birds of Florida: Field Guide*, you have learned one vitally important fact about the Sharp-shinned (other than the fact it is an *accipiter*, NOT a *buteo*). Its "Common name comes from the sharp keel on the leading edge of its 'shin,' though it is actually below rather than above the bird's ankle on the tarsus bone of foot. The tarsus in most birds is round." But you already knew that, didn't you?

OK. Despite the fact that the bird does not sport a red shoulder until maturity, your decision is now down to the Red-shouldered Hawk. It is time to confirm your conclusion by visiting a very informative and a more in-depth source.

4) Visit the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#). Oops! This website describes the Eastern Red-shouldered Hawk, not our paler Florida morph. However, if you scroll down to the bottom of the page, you will find beautiful, slide-show photos of the adult and immature Red-shouldered as well as those of "Similar Species." "Similar Species" includes the Broad-shouldered Hawk. Had you forgotten that possibil-

ity? I certainly had. So, let us just ignore that helpful information!

Again, you are back to a choice between the Red-shouldered or Cooper's, and there is only one way to truly find out which it is ...

5) Ask Otus! Otus then asks a Sarasota Audubon Society member and emails that person a photo of "Hawk" sitting on a branch. It is a lovely photo. There is just one problem with

it: The branch cuts off the view of its tail and a photo of an immature hawk's tail is a very important clue to identification. So it is back to the frog pond to get a pic of "Hawk's" tail.

Success at last! The identification was arrived at after the following analyses: "The tail although it appears longish, doesn't seem to be as long as Cooper's. The distance between the end of the wings and the tail is relatively short.





I have to say though that the stripes are quite broad indicating a Cooper's: Looking at Sibley's (Sibley's is a very important bird book, not a hawk!), the breast streaks on a young Cooper's appear more regular — these are all over the place."

And one more confirmation: "As you said, the tail extension is not that of a Cooper's and I

can see the barring of the secondaries, which means it is 100% a Red-shouldered Hawk."

See how easy that was?

So, please welcome *Buteo lineatus* to our key! "Hawk" will establish a territory of some 10 square miles, so I think everyone around here will have a chance to meet and greet "Hawk."



My housewarming gift to “Hawk” is a map of Anna Maria Island with an X marking the location of every single chicken coop, real or imagined, on the island.

As for these last photos, in one it certainly does look as though Hawk has spotted me and is headed straight for the breakfast buffet! Actually, the Blue Jays had chased him off the palm branch and into the pine tree, and he was desperately seeking shelter. Both birds

are excellent dive-bombers with split-nano-second reaction times.

If you check out the photo of “Hawk” diving for cover, in the upper right corner there is a flurry of blue jay wings. The birds barely grazed each other in that encounter. Wow!

I am also including two mystery hawk photos for you to enjoy and identify. Now that you know how!

Otus 





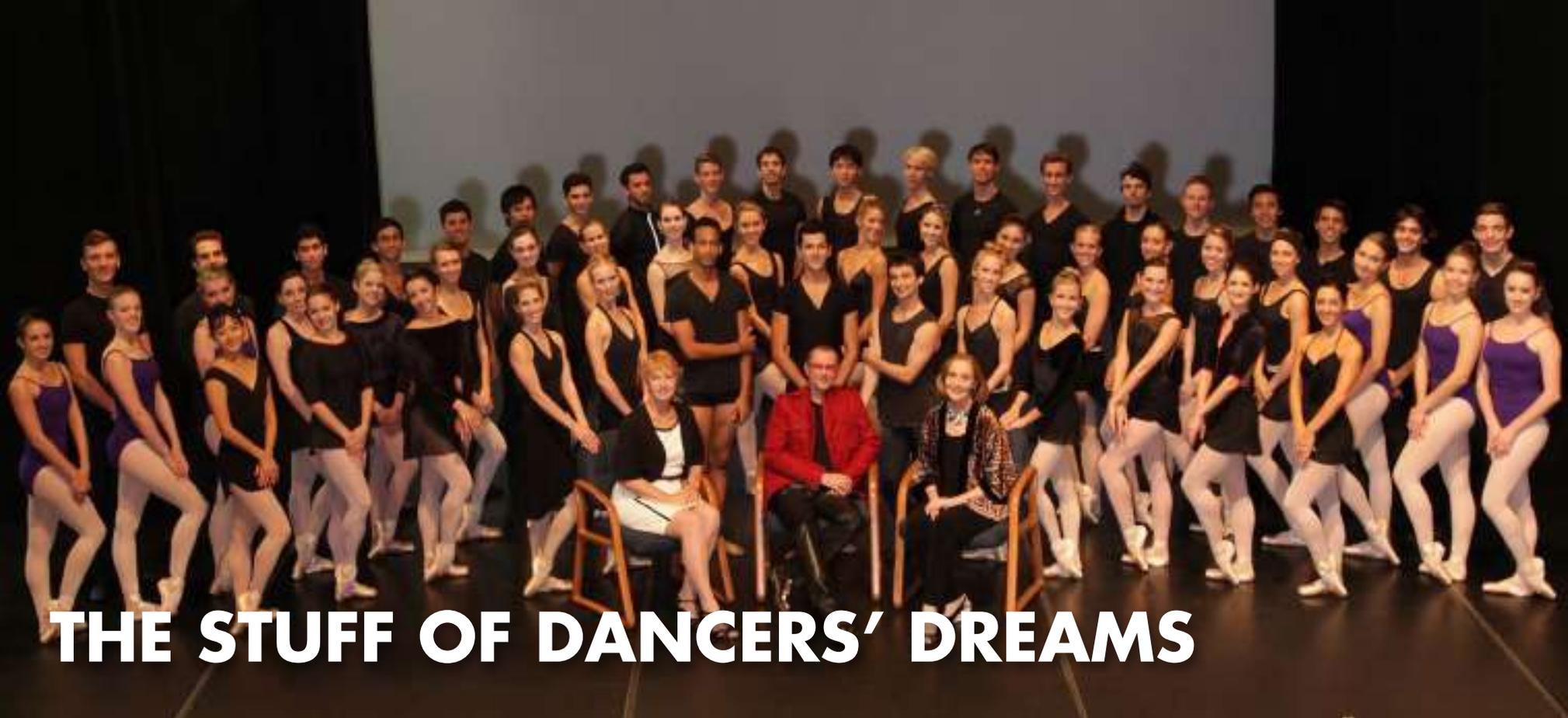
I like to take my time.

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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THE STUFF OF DANCERS' DREAMS

The members of Sarasota Ballet for the 2012-13 season pose with (front row, from left) Managing Director Mary Anne Servian, Director Iain Webb and Assistant Director Margaret Barbieri. Contributed photo

SARASOTA BALLET'S FINALE PRESENTS AN UNEVEN MIX OF COMPANY CHOREOGRAPHY

By Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer

The now seasonal *Theatre of Dreams* program offers the Sarasota Ballet dancers a unique opportunity to flex their choreographic muscles; at the same time, it offers audiences the excitement of discovering new, young choreographers.

However, I am not sure there is enough talent to warrant a yearly program; and I hope that there will be exacting criteria when selecting the choreographers in the future — especially for next season's *Theatre of Dreams*, which will be the company's opening program.

Logan Learned's ballet in the past weekend's *Theatre of Dreams* — *Scene de Ballet*, set to Charles August de Beriot's music (with the accompaniment of Chung-Yon Hong on violin

and Jonathan Spivey on piano) — reflected an amusing, superficial visit to a ballet class. It is a world he knows well, but the characterizations of the dude (Ricki Bertoni), the diva (Rita Duclos), the show-off (Elizabeth Sykes) and the exhibitionist (Kate Honea) were types rather than individuals. On the plus side, it was a sensible choice for a first attempt at choreography, and the underlying humor reflected Learned's own sprightly personality.

Artistic Director Ian Webb wanted live music to accompany each of the ballets, so he set the dancers searching for pieces that could be played by a small group of performers. Ricki Bertoni's ballet, *Ragtop*, set to the foot-tapping music of Scott Joplin's *Ragtop* — with

Kristen Kemp at the piano — was an inspired, entertaining choice.

The opening shoulder rolls, the nonchalant attitude, the black bowler hats and white gloves were obviously Bertoni's nod to Bob Fosse's hip-swirling, fast-moving, detailed choreography — but only a nod. Though there was a cast of 12 dancers, there was not much individuality in the ballet until the five boys competed in a traditional *dance-off* with a series of acrobatic turns, each of them adding another twist and another turn in an attempt to outdo

the others. Overall, kudos to Bertoni, who has a light touch and a sense of humor (playing with the hats, for example) and is interested in exploring the possibility of blending two dance vocabularies: classical ballet and jazz. However, *Ragtop* needed editing and more focus to be entirely successful.

Kate Honea's *Baroque and Blues*, set to Claude Bolling's music of the same name — and played on stage by Betsy Traba on flute, Kirsten Kemp on piano, John Miller on bass and Tihda Vonghoth on drums — flirted with



Kate Honea/Contributed photo

using academic ballet and jazz. More specifically, the same academic variation was danced by different groups then repeated with different music, varying and interchanging dancers and music like a game of checkers.

The duet between Jamie Carter and Rita Duclos was the highlight of the ballet for me. Carter not only was an attentive partner, but he also danced with a rare abandonment in a series of solo leaps that crisscrossed the stage, while Duclos' authority added a dash of sophistication.

Honea used many younger and newer members of the company in the full cast of 14 dancers, and they responded with energy and easy smiles in a ballet that was clearly an exploration of movement that did not rely on a narrative story. This was a new direction for Honea in her development as a choreographer.

The most ambitious ballet, Jamie Carter's *Consortium*, used 24 dancers in four movements; it was an audience favorite, but not mine. Set to a challenging quartet — George Rochbert's *String Quartet No. 5* — and performed by Sean O'Neil on violin, Anne Chadra on violin, Nathan Frantz on viola and Nadine



Jamie Carter/Contributed photo

Trudel on cello — the strong, spare, percussive score overpowered Carter's choreography, which was almost frantic in its busyness. Against a backdrop of changing colors — from purple to deep red to yellow — which indicated the mood of each section, Carter set the four movements, alternating *pas de deux* and *pas de trois* with dancing by a large corps.

In the first section, Ryoko Sadoshima and Ricki Bertoni were the lead dancers, emerging from the group of 16, while in the second, sunny section, Logan Learned led Kate Honea, Sara Scherer and Anais Blake through a series of spoke-wheel variations that brought to mind the muses in Balanchine's *Apollo*. Christine Peixoto, a figurative long drink of water in a black and red unitard — partnered by David Tlaiye in the final duet — merged into the score's dramatic rhythms; instead of fighting the music, she relaxed, letting her extensions melt into the air.

Carter has a painter's eye for moving groups of dancers around the stage and an overall understanding of structure, but I thought there was little or no connection to the music. It was as if the choreography had been set to a different score, and while that sometimes works, as in the ballets of Merce Cunningham, it can be disconcerting.

Carter's second ballet, *Dances for Cello and Piano*, set to Ned Rorem's composition of the same name, was added to the program to present young dancers. The choreography was repetitious and the costumes were fussy, and I felt that it unnecessarily extended the evening to include a school performance. The

students could have been presented in a short variation with the same purpose: introducing a new educational program. As there was a short intermission afterward, some people left, missing Ricardo Graziano's *Valsinhas*, the most intriguing ballet of the evening.

In *Valsinhas*, set to Franz Schubert's *34 Valses Sentimentales* (accompanied by pianist Jonathan Spivey), Graziano interpreted the waltzes with totally unexpected, inventive choreography that had little to do with the traditional idea of a waltz. Instead, the ballet opened with the entrance of a group of five men (Learned, Ricardo Rhodes, Bertoni, Sam O'Brien and Juan Gil) in red velvet shorts, bare legs and gauze tops, their backs to the audience as they scurried like beach birds onto the stage. The dancers then wandered on and off in a series of short solos, duets and group movements. There were hints of acrobatic tumbling in a bodybuilding duet. Then, in each one-minute waltz, there were less specific situations while the dancers simply explored their own flexibility — bending into an odd rolling ball, straightening an arm as if exploring space, flexing a hand as if pushing through a wall and testing the ability of each joint in the human body to see the limits and possibility inherent in their heads, necks, arms, legs, hands and torsos.

There was enough variety of movement to keep the ballet interesting. Perhaps, most importantly, Graziano knew that he did not need to use all 34 waltzes. The ballet ended as it began, with the dancers tiptoeing off the stage like a bevy of sandpipers gently edging through the sand. 



A GULF-SIDE PARKING DECK PROPOSAL SPARKS DISCUSSION; WORRIES AIRED ABOUT THE LATEST COUNTY COMMISSION COMMENTS ON THE SIESTA BEACH PARK IMPROVEMENTS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A four-story parking garage near the Gulf of Mexico with a restaurant on top: That was the recommendation last week from beloved Sarasota County Code Enforcement Officer John Lally, who made his first appearance at a Siesta Key Association meeting since 2012.

(He was out of work for three months because of health problems.)

During the May 2 SKA meeting, Lally said he had had a good conversation recently with John Davidson, owner of Davidson Drugs and a considerable amount of property on Siesta Key. In the past, Lally pointed out, whenever he had broached the idea of an island parking garage with Davidson, the latter had responded with adamant disapproval.



Sandals left alongside a path to Siesta Public Beach suggest an impromptu walk in the sand. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

During this latest discussion, Davidson began to warm to the idea, Lally continued, adding that the idea is to erect the facility near the Sarasota County Fire Station adjacent to Siesta Public Beach.

Lally pointed out that no restaurant on the island overlooks the Gulf.

Because the county has no money to construct such a parking deck, Lally noted, the project could be one for private enterprise. “Bender-

son [Development Co.] has lots of money,” for example, he said. “John Davidson’s got lots of money. Let’s get them to build it.”

The parking deck would alleviate some of the perpetual parking dilemmas on the island, Lally pointed out.

Lally said he had sent SKA President Catherine Luckner photos he had taken of some areas on the key to document parking violations since he had returned to work, along with



Sarasota County Code Enforcement Officer John Lally addresses the Siesta Key Association Board of Directors and audience on May 2. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

some pictures he had taken for “old cases” related to parking complaints.

“The situation out here — it’s not getting any better,” he noted. “And every season, it’s going to get worse. Every holiday, it’s going to get worse.”

The fact of the matter is that more and more people are coming to the island every year, he added. “We either need to quit spending millions of dollars ... getting people to come out here or we need to get some [additional] parking.”

Lally also talked about what he described as “controlled parking,” with residents selling spaces in their driveways and yards; and “uncontrolled parking,” such as the situation that has become the norm on Avenida de Mayo just on the outskirts of Siesta Village.

“Is it right that [homeowners are] charging for parking? No,” Lally said. “It’s not right. It’s against the [county] ordinance.”

However, he pointed out, on a recent day, with people having parked on both sides of Avenida de Mayo, it would have been impossible to navigate a fire truck along that residential street. “It *never* would have happened,” he stressed, reiterating a concern that Avenida de Mayo residents made during an appearance at the April 4 SKA meeting.

That type of parking is uncontrolled, Lally added. “I’d rather have [vehicles] up in the

yards, because ambulances and fire trucks need to be able to get down those streets.”

Island resident Katherine Zimmerman objected to Lally’s parking garage suggestion. “There’s enough problems out here with drinking and driving,” she said. “What we don’t need is a big restaurant with a view” to entice more people onto the island, she added.

Another audience member suggested a shuttle to the key from the mainland would ameliorate the parking situation. “A reliable shuttle,” the woman pointed out.

“The main focus is how to solve the parking problem,” Luckner responded.

“Why don’t people pay to park here?” Zimmerman asked.

Commissioner Nora Patterson — who arrived after the discussion — reminded me the next day that she was one of three county commissioners in May 2008 who voted for a pilot paid parking program at all the county’s beaches.

Then Commissioners Paul Mercier and Shannon Staub joined Patterson in supporting the measure, but Staub ultimately changed her mind. That resulted in a subsequent board vote to withdraw authorization for county staff to seek a request for proposals for the program.

Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Jon Thaxton had voiced adamant opposition to the suggestion that people pay to park at the beaches.

Siesta Seen

Luckner told Zimmerman during the May 2 SKA meeting that the SKA board is collecting information about people's personal perspectives on the parking situation. "Write to us," Luckner added.

"The parking is important," Zimmerman responded. "I know that, and I know people are really frustrated [as to] where to park their cars. But there's limits [to what] you can do on an island," Zimmerman added.

"All your comments are going to be in our minutes for today," Luckner responded.

MORE PARKING WOES

Avenida de Mayo is not the only residential street on Siesta Key where residents are experiencing problems. During his SKA remarks on May 2, John Lally mentioned Avenida del Mare as well.

In early April, I found the following email, which went to Commissioner Patterson. It included a photo to illustrate the situation it discussed. (That is provided with this column.):

"Easter Sunday, after I took this picture the neighbor came over and rudely told my hus-



A resident on Avenida del Mare sent this photo to county officials in April when complaining about a neighbor charging people to park in the yard. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

band that we shouldn't be taking pictures because they are just having an Easter party ...” However, the writer pointed out, when she and her husband left their house the following morning, they saw the same neighbor had a sign posted, offering to sell parking spaces for \$20 each.

“Several other neighbors don't like [this situation] either,” the email correspondent continued. “Traffic on my street is ridiculous. Maybe you can have a police officer monitor the parking lot situation and these neighbors can pay for it. I'm being harassed and infringed upon and I am doing nothing wrong and according to the codes am in the right. Something is wrong with this picture.”

Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham responded to the writer on April 5, at Patterson's request:

“Our Code Enforcement Officers have been monitoring the situation of illegally selling parking on Avenida del Mare, and on the entire Siesta Key. Our officers (John Lally during normal working hours, and Kevin Burns during the evenings and weekends) have achieved good results maintaining a visible presence. They have made contact with property owners, explaining that charging for parking is a violation of our codes. The officers will continue to enforce the ordinance.

“As the tourist season subsides, we expect the problem to lessen in the coming weeks.

Nonetheless, we will continue to monitor for violations during the off-season, and when the season starts again in the Fall we will step up our efforts.”

THE BEACH PROJECT

News that three of the county commissioners last week raised concerns again about the cost of the planned improvements to [Siesta Public Beach](#) raised worries this week among members of the Siesta Key Village Association.

During the SKVA's regular meeting on May 7, board member Mark Smith mentioned the discussion the commissioners had during their April 30 budget workshop.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta had told him about the remarks, Smith continued. “He made it sound like the project could be stalled and in jeopardy again,” Smith added of Barbetta.

Commissioner Christine Robinson's motion after the budget discussion was clear about the board not reversing its Dec. 11, 2012 vote to use bond revenue to pay for the \$16.7 million project. However, she, Patterson and Commissioner Charles Hines all voiced concerns about the price of the improvements.

“Personally, I don't get it,” Smith told his fellow SKVA members.

“They should be excited about any project out here,” outgoing SKVA President Russell Matthes said, adding his suggestion that the mat-

Siesta Seen

ter be addressed during the next meeting of the Presidents Council, which comprises the top officers of the SKVA, the Siesta Key Association, the Siesta Key Condominium Council and the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce.

When SKVA board member Rami Nehme asked what the organization's members could do, Smith replied, "Most likely another letter of support ... to emphasize that any money invested ... on Siesta Key is an investment in Sarasota County."

Smith pointed out that the island contributes about one-third of the annual Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue to the county. (The latest figures, through February, show 26.9 percent of the approximately \$6 million collected in TDT revenue so far this fiscal year came from Siesta Key.)

"The beach facility is an embarrassment," Smith added. "It has been for years. We need to do something about it, and I thought we were. I felt good about it."

Matthes said members of the Presidents Council would talk with Patterson about their concerns and, if necessary afterward, would "create some pressure" on the commission to make sure the project goes forward.

NO BLOCKING

Warning! No more saving of parking spaces will be allowed at Siesta Public Beach.

That was the unanimous decision of the County Commission on April 24, though it came

through the formal adoption of a change to a county ordinance.

In the future, if someone stands in a spot at Siesta Public Beach — where the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office says the greatest number of incidents have occurred — and tries to prevent a vehicle from entering that space while saving it for someone else, the person can expect to be slapped with a \$97 fine.

Kim Lance in the county's Parks and Recreation Department appeared before the County Commission on April 24 to explain that the Sheriff's Office had asked county staff last fall to work on amending the ordinance relating to the use of parks, beaches and public lands.

"What had happened," Lance said, "was some of the incidents of altercations [over spaces] ended up being physical," so the Sheriff's Office wanted a legal means for handling these space-saving incidents.

Sheriff's Office personnel "believe that by [having the ordinance modified]," Lance continued, "they will be able to decrease the [number of] altercations."

The new ordinance language officially says, "The blocking or obstructing access to or from vacant designated parking spots except when moving a motor vehicle into and out of such designated parking space or when conducted by or with the permission of County officials" is a prohibited activity.

Siesta Seen

No one asked to speak during the public hearing, which was advertised following a County Commission vote on March 19.

NEW OFFICERS

During their May 7 meeting, members of the Village Association formally elected their officers and board members for the coming year.

The officers are President Cheryl Gaddie of CG Designs, Vice President Kay Kouvatsos of Village Café, Secretary Helene Hyland of Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate and Treasurer Roz Hyman of Siesta Center.

“You’re all in big trouble,” Hyland told the members with a chuckle: “A slate of four women as the officers.”

The remark drew a good bit of laughter.

The board members are Wendall Jacobs of Beach Bazaar, Smith of Smith Architects, Matthes of the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar, Anne Johnson of fresh. PR and Marketing, Bob Kirscher of The Broken Egg, Keith Cipielewski of Siesta Key Oyster Bar, Dave Magee of The UPS Store, Glenn Cappetta of Sun Ride Pedicabs, Rami Nehme of Blasé Café and Jeff Madden of Beach Bites. 



(From left) The new officers of the Siesta Key Village Association are Helene Hyland, secretary; Roz Hyman, treasurer; Kay Kouvatsos, vice president; and Cheryl Gaddie, president. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Evening Calm Siesta Beach by William Suys. Contributed photo

ECHOES OF SPRING FEATURES DABBERT GALLERY ARTISTS

Echoes of Spring, which will run through May 31, features the works of 10 artists at Dabbert Gallery in downtown Sarasota.

As spring makes the transition to summer, “the featured artists in this month’s exhibit capture this energy [and] the exhilarating drama with canvases of rich color and sculpture in bronze, marble and wood,” a news release notes.

The artists are Candace Knapp, Kathrin Longhurst, Moe Mitchell, Gert Olsen, William Suys, Tom Swimm, Thyra Davidson Wexler, Pamela duLong Williams, Russell Woody and Susan Zukowsky.

Dabbert Gallery is located at 76 S. Palm Ave. in Sarasota. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, visit www.dabbertgallery.com.



Zinnias on Blue by Pamela duLong Williams. Contributed photo



Chubby Cello by Candace Knapp. Contributed photo

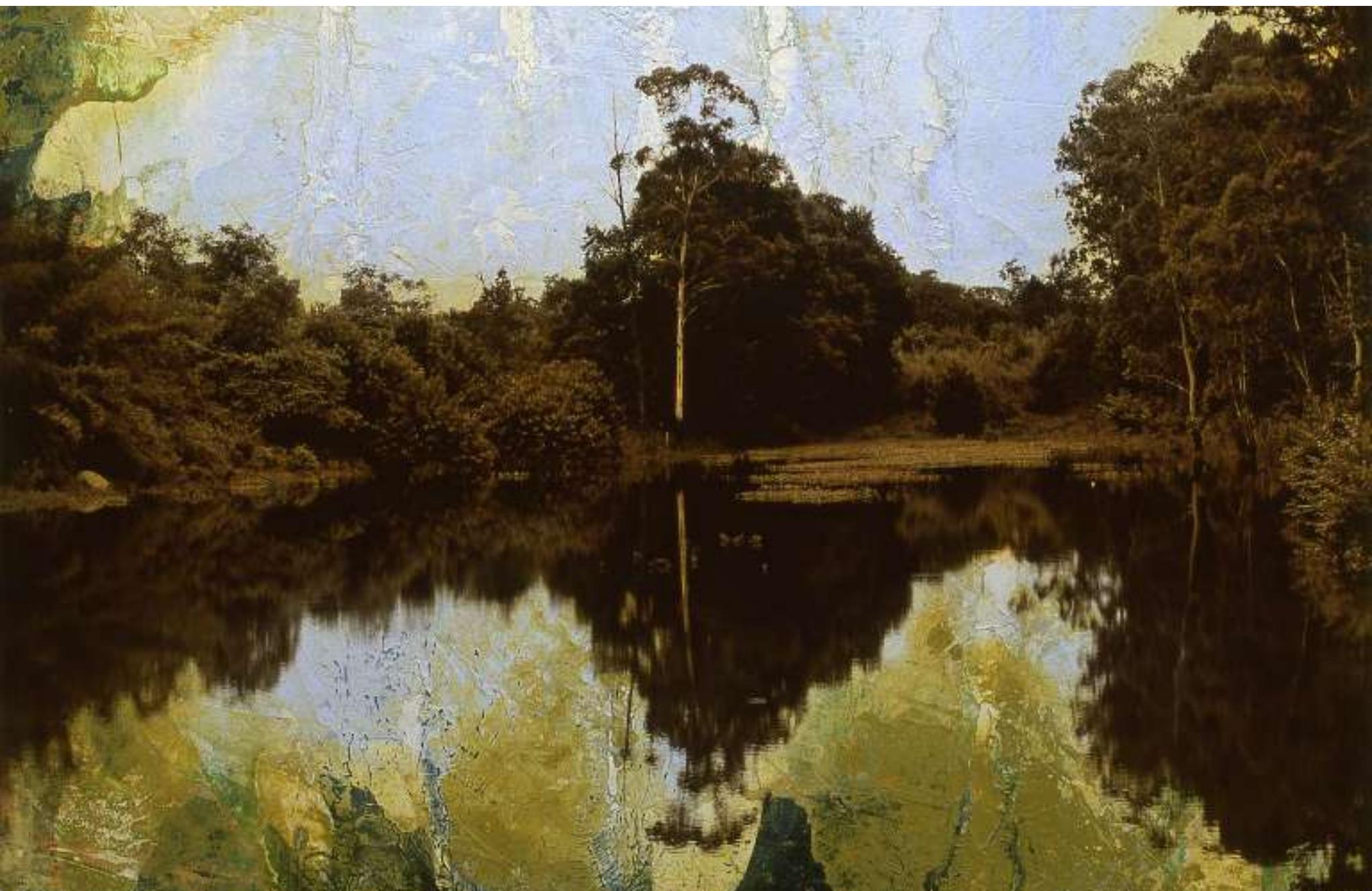
GALLUP PRESENTS LANDSCAPES, MINDSCAPES AND DREAMSCAPES

Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art gallery is presenting *Landscapes, Mindscapes and Dreamscapes* through July 20, featuring paintings by Michele Harvey, Heidi Edwards, Bill Nichols, Bruce Marsh, Jean Blackburn, Deborah Brown and Jackie Battenfield along with photography-based art by Nancy Hellebrand and Pablo Soria.

Harvey has been hailed as one of the great new painters of the American landscape, a news release says. Her work has been featured in *Architectural Digest* and it has been chosen “for some of the most important corporate collections in the nation,” the release says.

The artist, who is from upper New York state, “paints the tree-filled landscapes she has known from childhood, imbuing them with a nostalgic, dreamlike quality that renders them extraordinary,” the release adds.

From his Ruskin studio overlooking Little Manatee River, Marsh creates both large-scale photorealistic oil paintings and more loosely rendered watercolor studies, the release continues. His works hang in museums and corporate collections around the state, including Sarasota’s Ringling Museum; the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Fine Art in St. Petersburg; Tampa Museum of Art; and the Polk Museum of Art in Lakeland.



The Floridita by Pablo Soria. Contributed photo

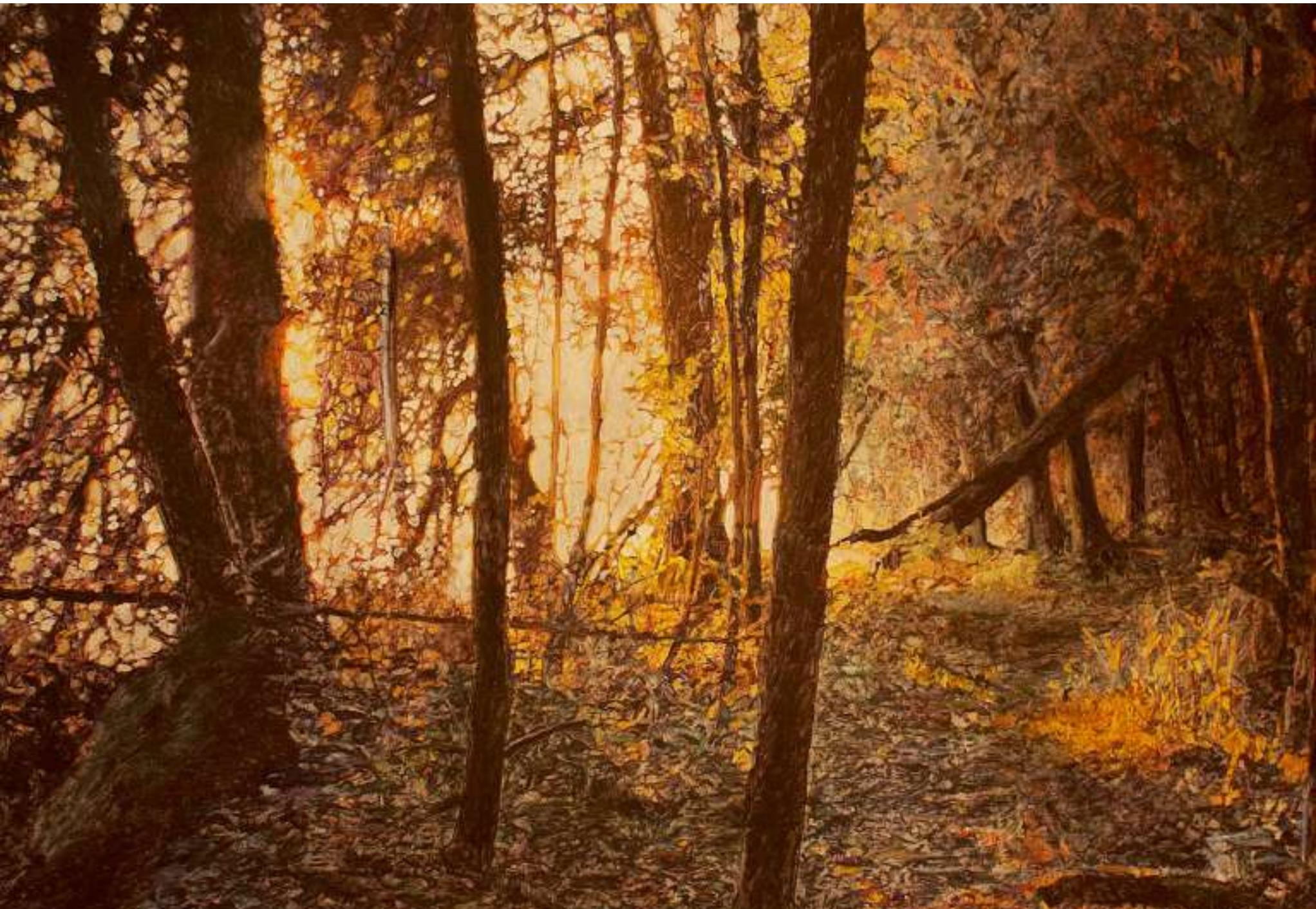
In the release, Marsh says his work is “an extension of my lifelong interest in the processes of perception and representation. The places involve large expanses of space, a clarity of light and a chaos of surface incident that serves to measure the expanse of the places. Color is of critical importance, as I seek to invent means to invoke atmosphere, space, and shifting sources of light.”

Edwards’ works “reveal a preoccupation with the profusion of color and form within the vastness of Florida’s flat topography,” the release notes. She says that in the 40 years she has been painting landscapes, she never tires of the inspiration they provide. “I strive to por-

tray the essence of these places through color and convey a mood that elevates the spirit of my viewers, much the same as these sustain and inspire me,” she notes in the release.

Nichols says in the release that as a young painter, he “saw the landscape for its potential as both a conveyor of visual beauty and a messenger of meaningful experience. The difficulty was defining what was special about it for me and then finding a way of orchestrating the visual vocabulary to meet what I was seeing and feeling.”

He adds that for more than 40 years “I have been working with the landscape as a subject



First Light by Bill Nichols. Contributed photo

capable of acting as a mirror to so many experiential qualities.”

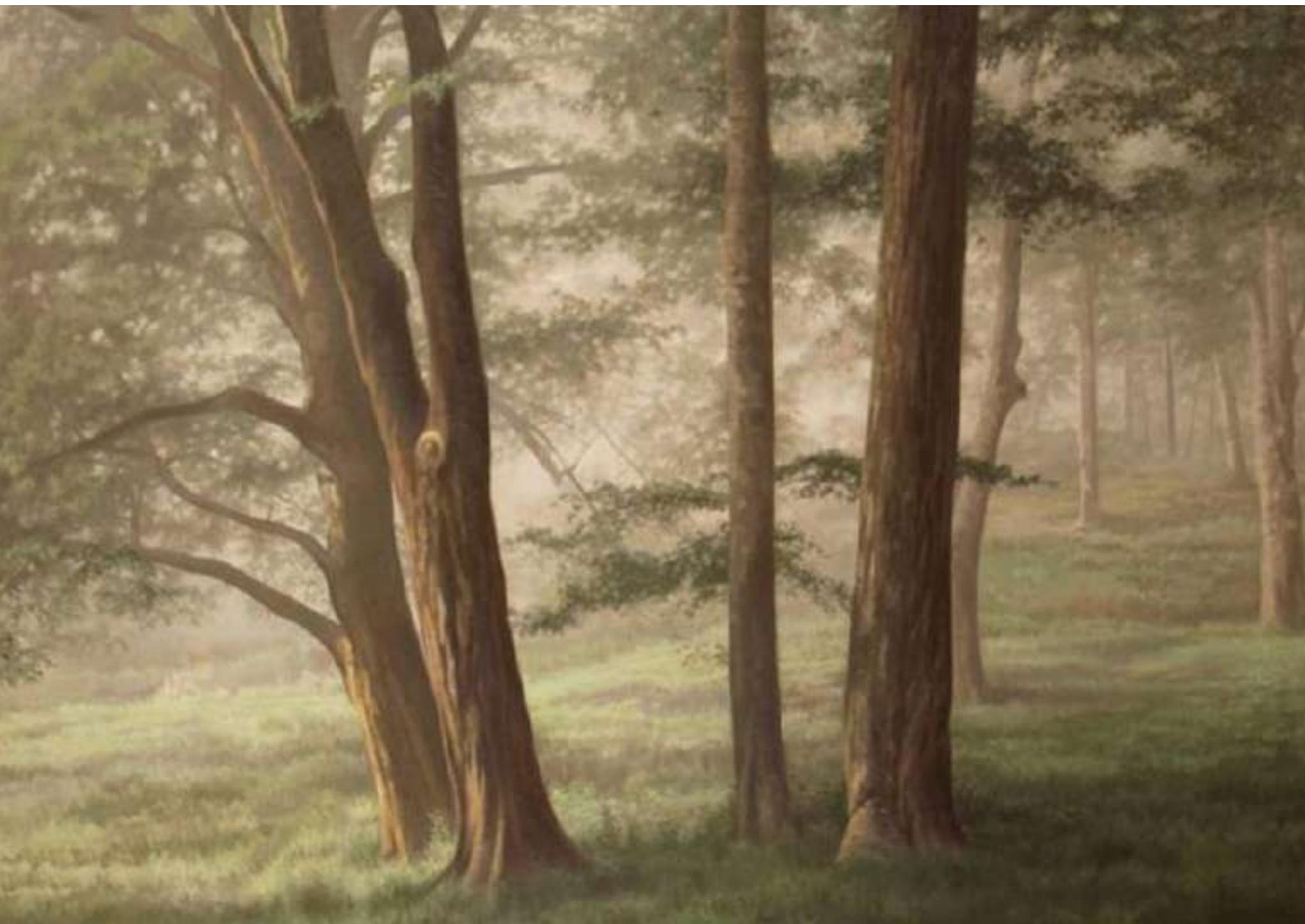
Born in Argentina, the photographer Soria lives in Miami. His works are part of major private and public collections, including those at the Museo de Arte Moderno and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, both in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale; the Museo del Barrio Collection in New York City; and the Museum of Fine Art in Houston, the release notes.

Hellebrand's nature photographs have been exhibited internationally in museums and galleries since 1973. “Nature is full and rich

without my taking pictures of it,” she says in the release. “Yet, I've come to see trees, rocks, clouds and streams as raw material with which to see something new.”

Hellebrand's photographs are in public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Museum of the City of London, Princeton University Art Museum, Yale University Art Gallery and Philadelphia Museum of Art, the release points out.

The gallery is located at 1288 N. Palm Ave. in Sarasota. For more information, call 366-2454 or visit www.allyngallup.com.



FIRST MAJOR MODERN ART EXHIBIT IN THE U.S. TO BE FOCUS OF LECTURE

At 3:30 p.m. on May 15, a lecture at Jacaranda Trace in Venice will focus on *The Armory Show*.

The International Exhibition of Modern Art, which opened in New York City on Feb. 17, 1913 and became known as *The Armory Show*, was the first large exhibition of modern art in the United States, a news release notes. “For the first time, Americans saw examples of avant-garde European art: Fauvism, Cubism, and Futurism. The public sensation and the polemical, critical responses to the show represented a watershed in the history of art,” the release adds.

“The show was an enormous success,” the release notes. “More importantly, it was a catalyst for American artists, who were seeking a way to define their own voice.”

This lecture is being presented in conjunction with The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art exhibit, *100 Years of American Art*, which will open in June.

Jacaranda Trace is located on the second floor of the Cadbury Commons Building, 3600 William Penn Way in Venice. Admission is \$10 at the door. For reservations, call 416-4362.



The 1913 Armory Show will be the subject of a lecture at Jacaranda Trace. Contributed photo

BOOKER MIDDLE TO SHOWCASE STUDENT CREATIVITY

Students in the Visual and Performing Arts Program at Booker Middle School will showcase their talents at events this month to which the public will be welcomed, the Sarasota County Schools has announced.

At 7 p.m., Wednesday, May 15, in the school's cafeteria, students in the VPA TV/Film Program will present the Booker Middle Film Festival. Admission is free.

"The festival is an exciting showing of selected films produced by our students this year," said Booker Middle VPA Coordinator Melanie Heggs in a news release.

At 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 28, in Booker Middle Room 407 (also known as the Black Box Theater), VPA Musical Theatre students will present a Cabaret that will spotlight a variety of performances: singing, acting in small groups and monologues, the release notes.

Admission to the Cabaret is \$3. Teachers and children under age 5 will be admitted free.

"Our students really get a chance to shine in this Cabaret," said Mills in the release.

Booker Middle School is located at 2250 Myrtle St., Sarasota.

FST ANNOUNCES THREE SHOWS FOR ITS SUMMER SEASON

Florida Studio Theatre will present the musical revue *The World Goes 'Round*, the comedy *The Underpants* and a witty new play, *South Beach Babylon*, during its summer season, which will open May 31 and continue through Sept. 1, the theatre has announced.

Artistic Director Richard Hopkins said in a news release, "This summer will be a time of rejoicing at FST. ... From Kander and Ebb's musical revue *The World Goes 'Round* to Steve Martin's fresh adaptation of the wacky comedy *The Underpants*, to life in Miami's fast lane with Michael McKeever's *South Beach Babylon*, the summer promises to be fun, classy, stylish and fun-loving."

The 2013 summer season kicks off in the Gompertz Theatre with *The World Goes 'Round*. "Filled with humor, romance, drama and nonstop melody, this ... is a thrilling cele-

bration of life and the fighting spirit that keeps us all going," the release says. It features such songs as *Mr. Cellophane*, *Maybe This Time*, *Cabaret* and *New York, New York*.

It will run until June 21.

Opening next in the Keating Theatre will be *The Underpants* by Carl Sternheim, adapted by Steve Martin. *Chicago Theatre Beat* has called it "Extraordinarily entertaining," according to the news release.

"Some lives are shaped by tragedy, some by art and others by underpants falling down in public," the release adds. "This play ... spins the farcical tale of five lives reborn from one accidental act of indecency. Its satirical challenge to our obsession with sex and celebrity will be sure to have you howling with Martin's peculiar brand of innuendos and ribaldry," the

release notes. *The Underpants* will play from June 28 to July 28.

Closing out the summer season in the Gompertz Theatre will be *South Beach Babylon*, which *The Miami Herald* called “A crackling comedy,” the release adds. “Commercialism and artistic integrity battle it out as a group of South Beach artists prepares for the celebrated Art Basel event. Is it possible to create art without selling one’s soul?” the release continues. *South Beach Babylon* will

play in the Gompertz Theatre from July 26 to Sept. 1.

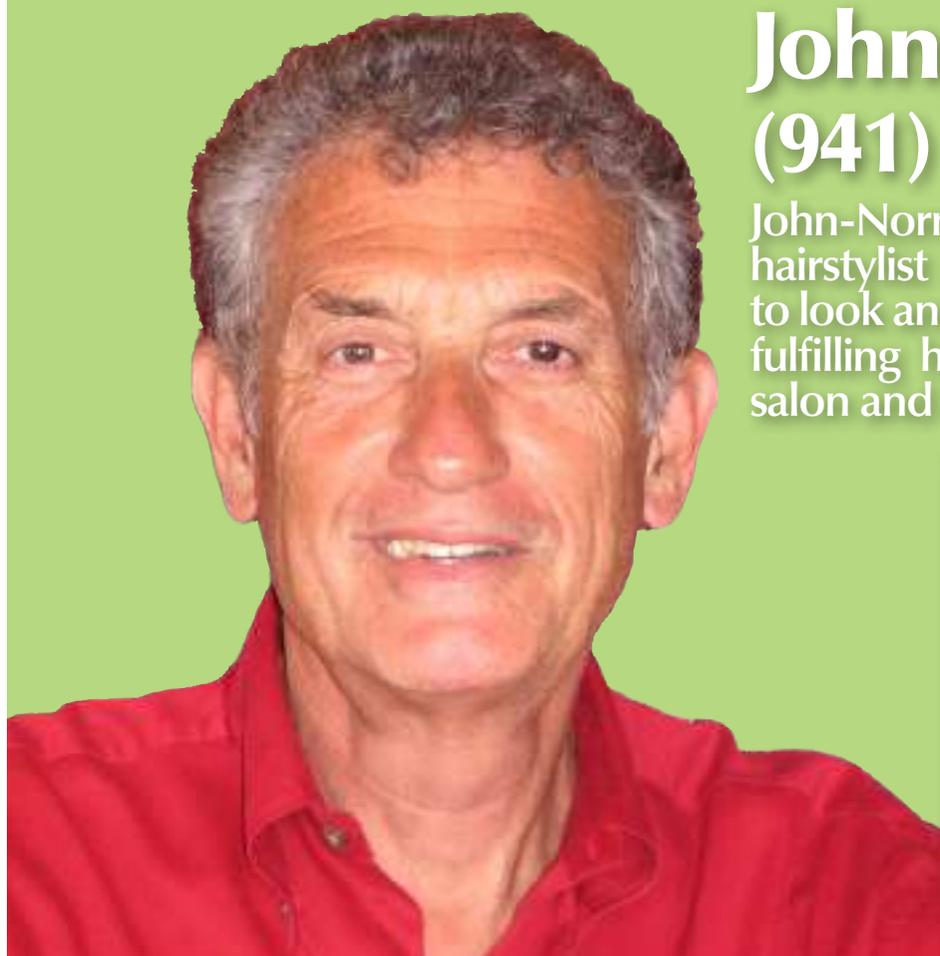
Single tickets range from \$18 to \$36 for previews and \$18 to \$42 for regular performances. A subscription for all three ranges from \$39 to \$49. Both subscription tickets and single tickets may be purchased from the FST box office in person at 1241 N. Palm Ave., by calling 366-9000 or by going online at www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org. 

“How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.” — *George Washington Carver*

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John-Norman Tuck (941) 928-1203

John-Norman Tuck is Sarasota and Bradenton's premier hairstylist and hair color artist. Getting his customer's hair to look and feel it's best is his passion. John-Norman started fulfilling his customers' hair dreams in his Pasadena, CA salon and now has brought his talents to Sarasota.



Located Upstairs In the Green Ginger Salon

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The Church of the Redeemer is located in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

EVENSONG TO HONOR SARASOTA COMPOSER/CONDUCTOR MOE

The late well-known Sarasota-area conductor and composer, Dr. Daniel T. Moe, will be honored on Sunday, May 19, during the Church of the Redeemer's 5:15 p.m. Evensong — the finale of the church's Great Music Series for the 2012-13 season.

The Evensong will mark the anniversary of Moe's passing on May 24, 2012 at the age of 85, a news release notes.

It will feature Moe's composition *Adoramus te Christe, Lux aeterna*, whose translation is "We adore you, O Lord Christ, Light Eternal." *Adoramus* was composed as a Requiem for Moe's mentor, the highly regarded American choral conductor and composer Paul J. Christiansen, who was also the director of the famed Concordia College choir, in Moorhead, MN, the release adds.

Christiansen died in 1997. Moe composed *Adoramus* that same year in collaboration with Drew Collins, the release notes.

Moe was Redeemer's longtime composer-in-residence and the husband of Redeemer's choirmaster/organist, Ann Stephenson-Moe.

Hailed by *New Yorker* music critic Andrew Porter as the "dean of choral conductors," Moe "was a major educational force in conducting and choral literature, having developed distinguished graduate programs in these specialties at the University of Iowa," the release notes. He served as professor of music at Oberlin Conservatory of Music for 20 years, until 1992.

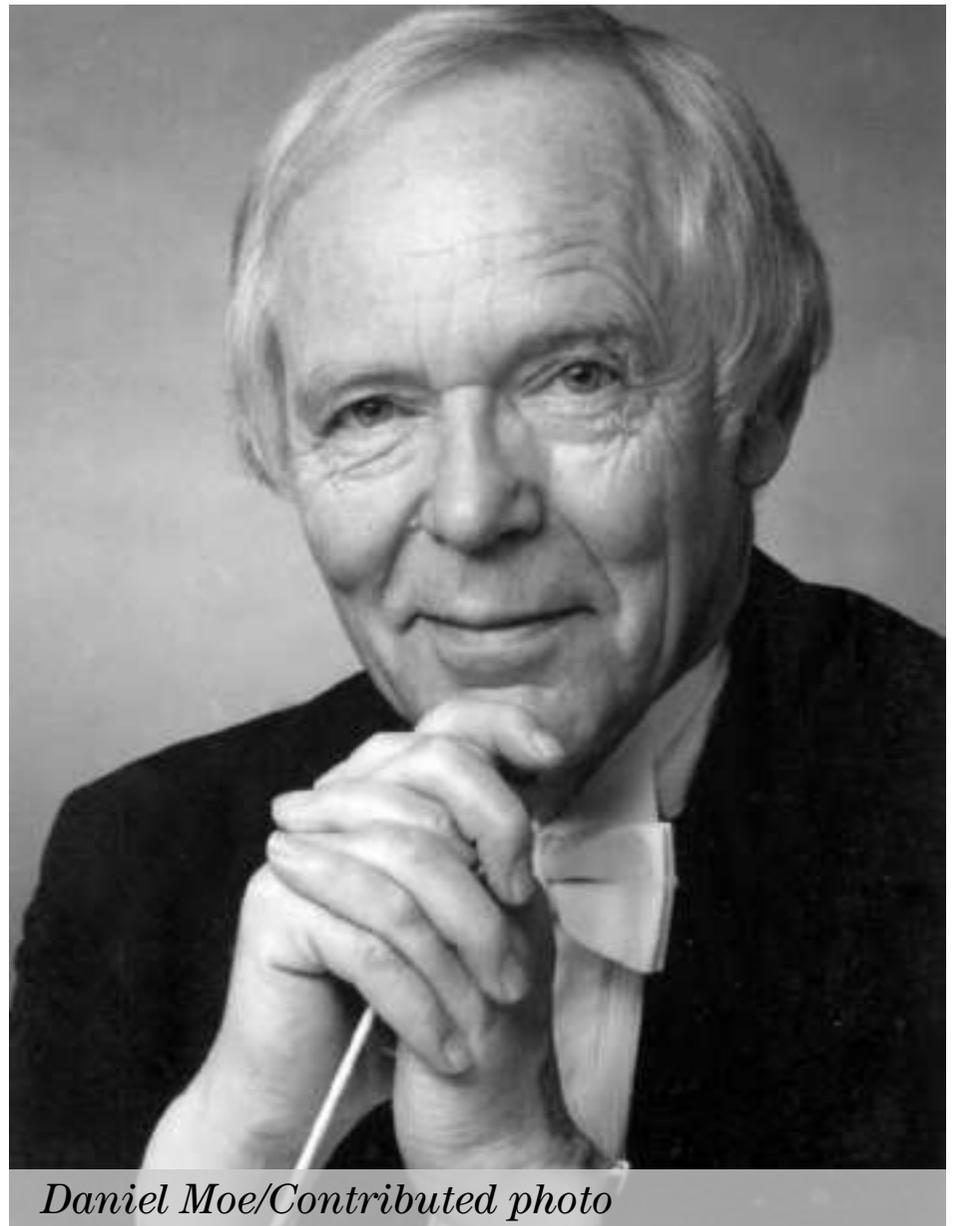
Along with his position at Redeemer, Moe for 21 years was the much-beloved music director (he retired in 2006) of Key Chorale — the offi-

cial chorus of the Florida West Coast Symphony in Sarasota, the release adds. He also was adjunct professor of music at New College in Sarasota, where he conducted the choirs.

In more than 40 years of choral conducting, “Moe brought nearly every landmark choral-orchestral work in the repertoire to performance, ranging from Bach’s *Passion According to St. John* to the Britten *War Requiem*, the release continues. “His work drew him into the nation’s great concert halls, including Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center, where he twice served as consulting conductor for the International University Choral Festival,” it adds.

Evensong is a free offering for the community; all are welcome.

Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave., in downtown Sarasota. For more information, visit redeemersarasota.org or call 955-4263.



Daniel Moe/Contributed photo

TEMPLE EMANU-EL TO HOLD FIFTH ANNUAL BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

The fifth annual Blessing of the Animals will be held on Saturday, May 18, at 10 a.m. at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota. This event is the only pet blessing in Sarasota’s Jewish community, and all are warmly invited, the Temple has announced.

“A celebration of the gift of animal companionship and the special role pets play in our lives, Blessing of the Animals will begin with casual socializing as well as light refreshments for both humans and animals,” a news release says. “Following a brief and inspirational message about the importance of animals in Jewish tradition, each pet will receive



Adam Gersh brought his dog to last year’s Blessing of the Animals at Temple Emanu-El. Contributed photo

an individual blessing from Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman," it adds. "Family pet portraits will also be taken.

Pets of all types are welcome; past attendees include dogs, cats, large lizards, miniature horses, rabbits, chickens and a donkey, the re-

lease notes. "All animals should be leashed or otherwise contained," the release says. "There will be plenty of room for active pets to be walked around and exercised," it continues.

Blessing of the Animals is free. For more information, call 379-1997.

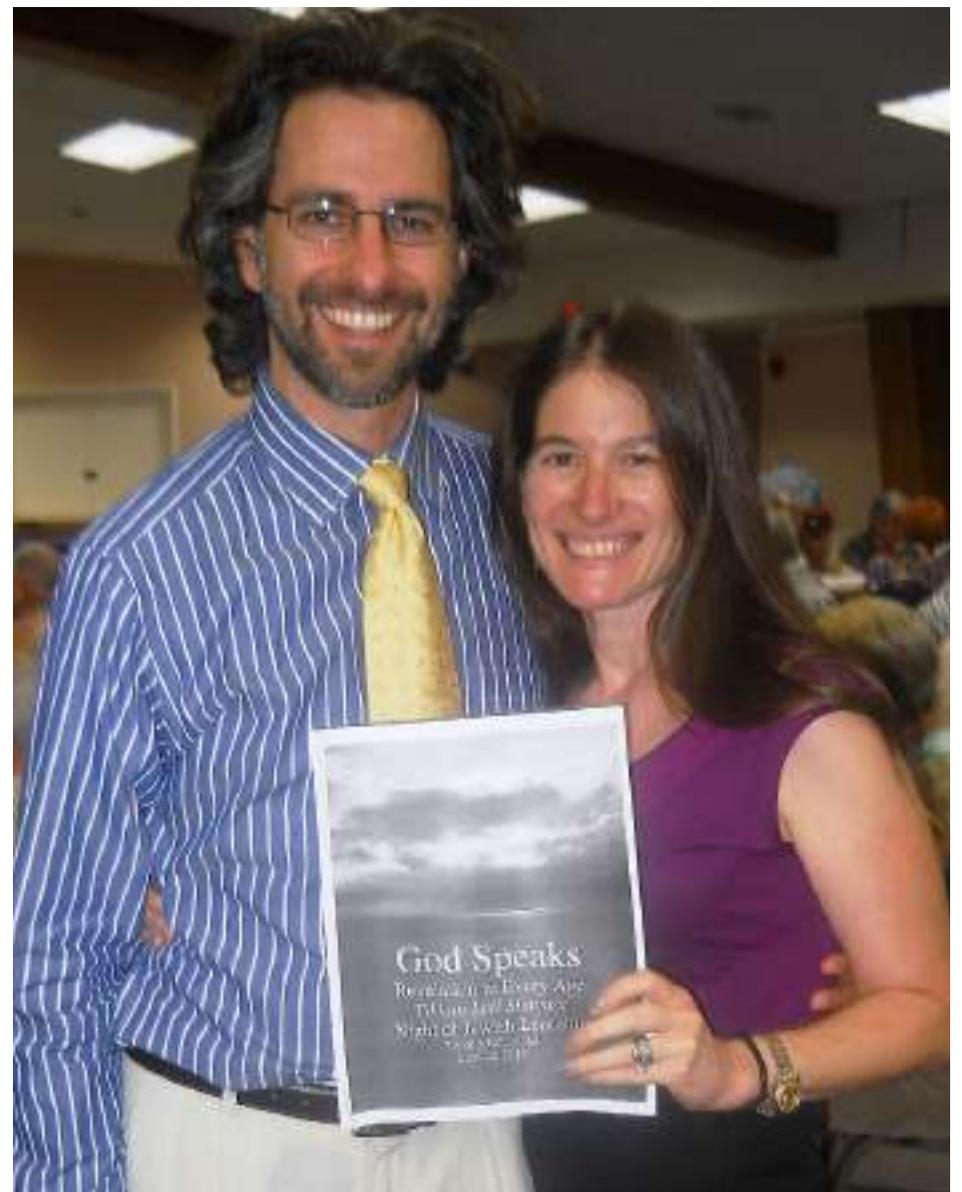
WRESTLING WITH BELIEF TO BE TOPIC OF NIGHT OF JEWISH LEARNING

Essential questions regarding religious belief, doubt and faith will be explored at Temple Emanu-El's *Night of Jewish Learning* — an annual study event held in honor of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot — on Tuesday, May 14, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Temple, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

This year's study topic is *Wrestling with Belief: Faith and the Modern Jew*, a news release says.

Temple Emanu-El's *Night of Jewish Learning* harkens back to a Jewish mystical tradition called the *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, wherein Jews gathered to celebrate the evening of Shavuot — the anniversary of God's revelation of Torah at Mount Sinai — with Bible study, the release points out. Rabbis Brenner and Elaine Glickman will each teach one study session; in between those gatherings, homemade dairy desserts — traditionally eaten on Shavuot — will be served, the release continues. The sessions will explore questions and issues of faith in the Torah, the Bible, rabbinic literature and modern thought. "There will be time for interactive discussions among the participants as well as questions," the release notes.

Members of the community are warmly invited to this event, which is sponsored by Temple Emanu-El's Adult Education Committee.



Rabbis Brenner and Elaine Rose Glickman taught study sessions at Temple Emanu-El's 2012 "Night of Jewish Learning" and will teach at this year's event May 14. Contributed photo

A donation of \$10 with advance reservation is requested, or \$18 at the door.

For more information or to RSVP, contact Margie Rosenthal at hrosent@aol.com or 966-4009.

JEWES' INFLUENCE IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY TO BE DISCUSSED

On Friday, May 17, at 7:30 p.m., the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism will present a program with Roberta MacDonald, whose topic will be *The Astounding Influence of Jews in the Entertainment Industry*.

"The favorite leading lady of the Golden Apple," MacDonald also appeared on Broadway, co-anchored *The Today Show* and was a Drama Award winner at New York City's famed

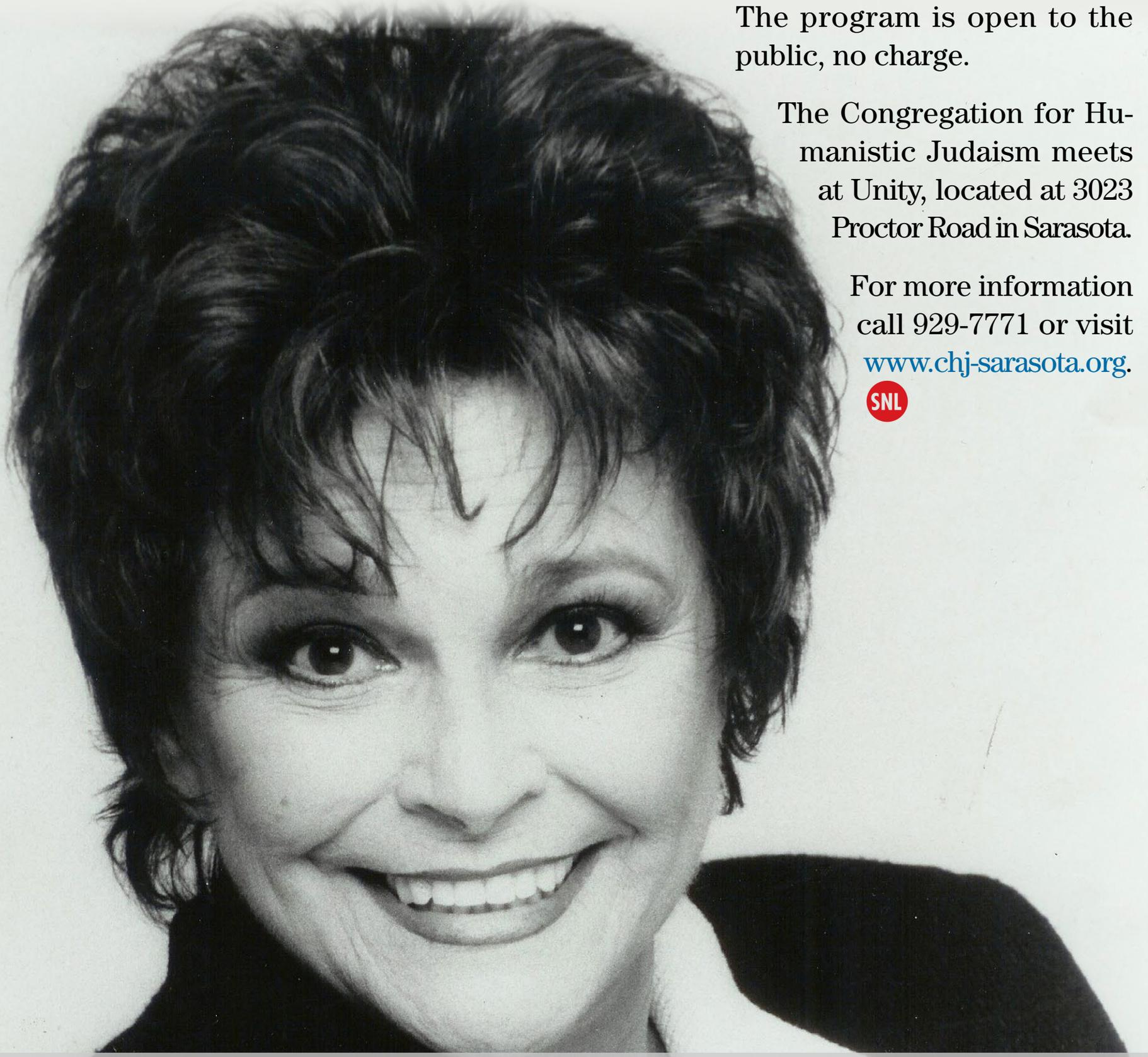
High School of Performing Arts, a news release notes.

Now on the board of the Plato Performing Arts Academy and surrounded by family members involved in presenting as well as performing in the theater, MacDonald continues to provide the community with entertainment opportunities, the release adds.

The program is open to the public, no charge.

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota.

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



Roberta MacDonald/Contributed photo



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

10+
MAY

Landscapes, Mindscapes and Dreamscapes

May 10 through July 20, Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art Gallery, 1288 N. Palm Ave. Free admission. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com.

11
MAY

Third Annual Rose Festival

May 11, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Phillippi Estate Mansion and Rose Gardens, 5500 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, featuring rose displays by the Bradenton-Sarasota Rose Society, classes and sales of roses. For info: 358-6991 or www.b-srs.org.

11
MAY

WSLR presents the Whitney James Jazz Quintet

May 11, 7:30 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$12 in advance; \$15 at the door; 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

12
MAY

Selby Spring Music Series presents Jennifer Leigh and Her New Digs

May 12, 1 to 3 p.m., Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 811 S. Palm Ave. Free with gardens admission. Members & children under 12 admitted free; members' guests: \$5; all others pay \$17. Information at Selby.org.

23+
MAY

Noah Racey's Pulse

May 23, 8 p.m. (and various times through June 16), FSU Performing Arts Center, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$20 to \$72. Information: 351-8000 or Asolo.org.

29+
MAY

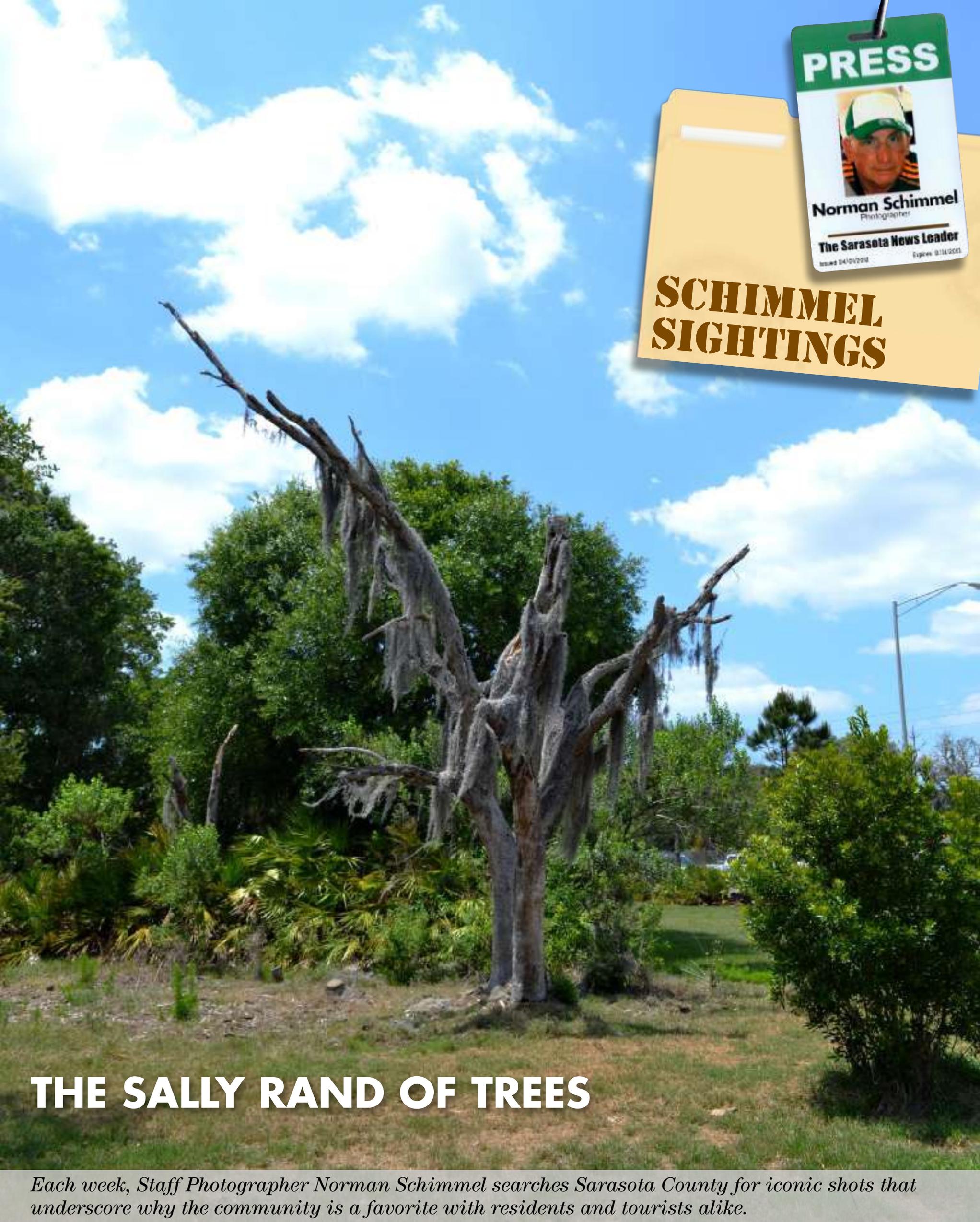
Florida Studio Theatre presents *The World Goes 'Round*

May 29 to June 23 (times vary), Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$18 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

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



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

THE SALLY RAND OF TREES

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.