

Vol. 2, No. 9 – November 15, 2013

**THE SARASOTA**

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*

**A \$90,000 'IDEOLOGICAL RANT'**

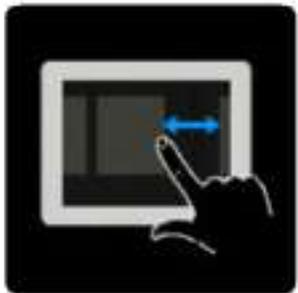
**A RULING IN THE COUNTY'S FAVOR**

**ANOTHER SUNSHINE SUIT BREWING?**

*Inside*

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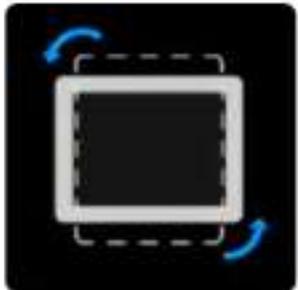
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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# Welcome

This week is another one of those with a wealth of diverse topics — an abundance of riches, if you will.

For several days we have sat on pins and needles, waiting to see whether anyone would beat us to a scoop Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker landed: the release of the draft analysis of the fiscal neutrality facet of the county's 2050 Plan. I have seen the story nowhere else as I type this, which means we owe a big debt of gratitude to the source who provided it to us.

County Editor Roger Drouin has his own scoop about a big court ruling that went in the county's favor — which will save all of us taxpayers money. City Editor Stan Zimmerman has remained vigilant on topics no one else covers — another tremendous boon to our readers.

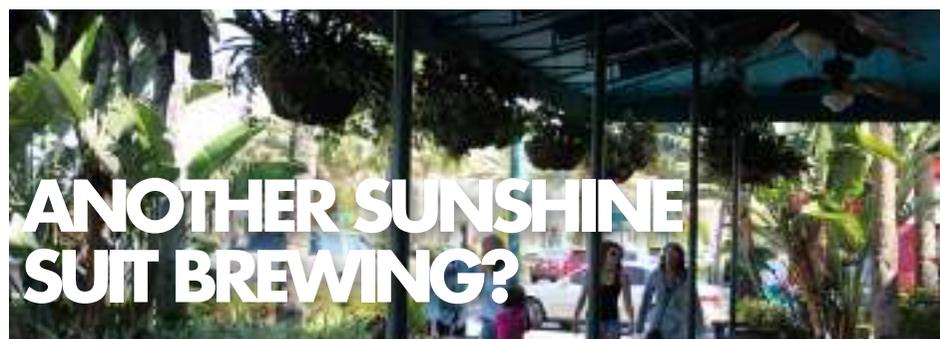
And so much is happening on Siesta Key, I could not begin to include it all in my latest version of *Siesta Seen*.

This also is another unusual week in terms of our *Sarasota Leisure* section's bounty: master sand sculptors on Siesta, a heartwarming story about a prison ministry program, another exquisite essay and series of photos from contributor Fran Palmeri, Rick Wielgorecki's monthly gardening advice and two big photo spreads — the latter thanks to Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel, Stan Zimmerman and Robert Hackney.

One note I must make, though, is that without the extraordinary skills of Copy Editor Vicki Chatley and Production Manager Cleve Posey, this issue could not possibly pack as much impact.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*  
Editor and Publisher





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Front cover: *Rainforest Waterfall* - Robert Hackney  
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**OHHHH, THAT SAND**



**NOVEMBER**

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## A \$90,000 'IDEOLOGICAL RANT'

*Cattle rest under an oak in a field beside Fruitville Road east of Interstate 75. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

### **DRAFT REPORT ON FISCAL NEUTRALITY IN SARASOTA 2050 ELICITS OUTRAGE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

This summer, Sarasota County asked a consulting firm with ties to the Reagan Administration to review the fiscal neutrality requirements in its Sarasota 2050 Plan. It got more than it bargained for. A draft version of the Laffer report is being derided as “awful,” “extreme” and “beyond” what the county wanted — by urban planning experts, longtime commission critics and members of the commission alike.

Sarasota County inked a \$90,000 deal with Tennessee’s Laffer Associates in early September for the firm to analyze Sarasota 2050’s fiscal neutrality regulations. The 2050 Plan, adopted a decade ago, was created to encourage the construction of walkable, mixed-use communities in areas that had previously been closed to development, largely east of Interstate 75. For the past year, the

“ *It’s completely ideologically motivated to discredit the smart growth movement, but it’s a completely inaccurate depiction of how smart growth fits into the history of planning.* ”

David Brain  
Professor of Sociology and  
Environmental Studies  
New College of Florida

County Commission has been pushing staff to loosen 2050's detailed regulations, and fiscal neutrality has been at the top of developers' list of complaints.

Fiscal neutrality is the "requirement that any new growth pay its way," in the words of county Long-Range Planning Manager Allen Parsons. That means builders must demonstrate at multiple stages that a new development will produce enough revenue through impact fees and taxes to make up for the increased burden on county services such as roads, schools, libraries and more.

In July, when the County Commission considered a number of changes to 2050, it explicitly rejected a proposal by former Administrator Randy Reid for what staff termed "an independent, non-biased, academic" review, instead choosing to pursue a contract with a consultant "who has development project experience," in the words of Commissioner Joe Barbetta. Barbetta tossed out the names of three potential candidates — among them, Donna Arduin, who worked with the county to analyze the economic impact of the new Nathan Benderson Park rowing facility. She



*Motorists on the eastern end of Fruitville Road see a lot of pastures, some dotted with cattle and horses.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

was also an advisor to Gov. Rick Scott and is known as the architect of his “7-7-7” 2010 campaign plan.

Arduin co-founded a Tallahassee consulting firm with Arthur Laffer, known as “the father of supply-side economics” during his tenure in the Reagan Administration, according to the company’s website. Sarasota County’s deal was eventually finalized with Laffer Associates, Arthur’s Tennessee-based firm.

Laffer submitted a first draft of its fiscal neutrality analysis to the county last week. It is raising eyebrows among academics and critics of the county’s decision to revise 2050, as well as members of the commission itself.

“I was shocked when I read it,” says New College of Florida Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies David Brain. “It’s completely ideologically motivated to discredit the smart growth movement, but it’s a completely inaccurate depiction of how smart growth fits into the history of planning.”

The first 27 pages of the 48-page report indeed barely mention Sarasota. They instead feature an extended attack on the very notion of smart growth itself, going all the way back to Chaucer to make the case that smart growth is “authoritarian,” “coercive” and “elitist.” The report draws largely from the work of writers such as Randal O’Toole, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank founded in part by Charles Koch, one of the



*Donna Arduin was hired to examine the county’s 2050 Plan. Photo courtesy Virginia Institute for Public Policy*

infamous Koch brothers, and Wendell Cox, affiliated with the Heritage Foundation, also funded in part by the Koch brothers.

Brain says O'Toole has "made a career out of being a critic of smart growth methods," like those employed in Portland, OR, and calls O'Toole's use of data and statistics "insidiously manipulative." Both O'Toole and Cox have "made money out of selling themselves as consultants who are brought in by anti-growth-management, anti-transit lobbies," Brain adds.

Brain calls the entire report an "ideological rant." When he heard Arduin would be reviewing fiscal neutrality, he didn't connect her with Laffer, he says. "I didn't understand the extent to which Laffer is part of the Heritage Foundation cabal that is all about attacking smart growth, focused on this absolute worship of the free market and absolute hatred of any sort of planning."

## **STRONG LANGUAGE ON SMART GROWTH**

"Smart growth is more associated with prescriptive zoning codes, insufficient parking space by design, and other coercive policies to impose elitist views favoring smaller, high density living spaces and highly limited

**“We have no desire to have anything to do with the urban service boundary. It's carved in stone. For that to be even mentioned is not relevant.”**

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



*Arthur Laffer is a nationally known economist.  
Photo courtesy The Laffer Center*

opportunities even to choose traditional American automobile use," the Laffer report states. "But these policies transgress powerful, ingrained American preferences for bigger houses in spacious suburbs, and what has been often described as an outright American love affair with the automobile. Every teenage boy lusts after getting his own car as soon as possible, and when he marries, the couple's American Dream is to move to the suburbs to raise their children sooner than possible."

Laffer's answer? Eliminate smart growth entirely in favor of "actual growth."

"Smart Growth is conceived and designed to pursue what various 'elites,' intellectual, progressive, governmental, bureaucratic, believe is most preferable in urban, and suburban, development, and what those elites think will best serve consumers, workers, families, the

middle class, working people, the poor, and all other interests, regardless of what those interests or populations may think they want or prefer," the report says. "Smart Growth does not actually rely on a traditional, western, market framework."

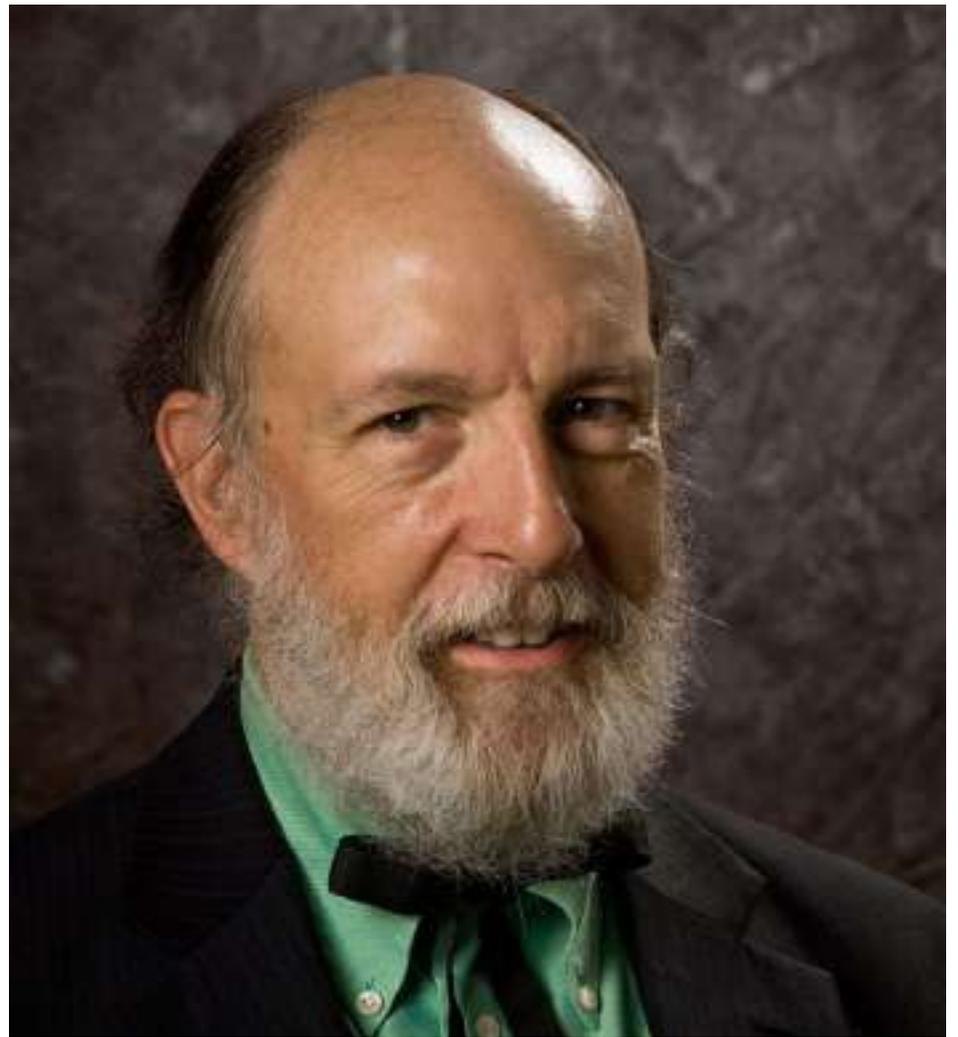
Brain says the section is "shockingly badly done" and that any of his students at New College could produce a better critique of smart growth policies. "The historical and analytical part is just flat shoddy scholarship," he adds, "and I can imagine that same hatchet job being done well."

## BEYOND THE GROWTH ASPECTS

The Laffer analysis does eventually get around to its alleged purpose, analyzing 2050's fiscal neutrality policy. Unsurprisingly, it calls for eliminating that entirely. And, again citing O'Toole, perhaps the county should do away with zoning regulations altogether, just as Houston did, and completely obliterate its urban service boundary. "All density restrictions that are set at the County level should be eliminated," the report states.

Brain says that advice flies in the face of decades-old Sarasota policy: "To do what the report recommends would basically mean throwing out everything that they've been doing for the last 20 or 30 years."

Attorney Dan Lobeck, who has been a persistent critic of the county's decision to rewrite 2050, calls the Laffer report "extreme" and a "radical rejection of any controls on development." It's also no surprise, coming from this commission, he points out. "This report is just one of a long list of things that is providing them the outcome they expect," he adds.



*Randal O'Toole is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. Photo courtesy Cato Institute*

He calls Laffer Associates the commission's "top choice from day one" and says the resulting report is an "unadulterated commentary from the consultants selected by the County Commission."

## COMMISSIONER VIEWS

"The County Commission, Joe Barbetta in particular, owns this outrageous, radical, anti-regulation report," Lobeck adds.

But even Barbetta is not happy with the draft. "Most of us believe in New Urbanism and smart growth," he says of the commission. He intends to bring up his displeasure during the Tuesday, Nov. 19, commission meeting.

"I think it went beyond the scope of what we had charged as a commission back in July," he says. The board wanted an analysis of how

to monitor fiscal neutrality, not an extended history of smart growth, he points out.

“We have no desire to have anything to do with the urban service boundary,” he says. “It’s carved in stone. For that to be even mentioned is not relevant.” He wants to know how the commission’s instructions eventually resulted in the Laffer report.

The final contract between the county and Laffer does include a section calling for Laffer to “review the history of New Urbanism/Smart Growth development” and to “place the Florida state regulations, as well as the Sarasota 2050 Policy, into proper context.” A draft version of the contract given to *The Sarasota News Leader* by Reid a month before the deal was finalized contained no such provision.

Barbetta wants to know how Reid, the county attorney and staff eventually agreed to the scope of work: “I want to discuss where this thing went off-track.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson agrees the report goes “way beyond” what the commission wanted. “My reaction to it is not positive. It would require an entire philosophical change in the county,” she says. “The writer obviously believes in a completely free market, which would be OK if people weren’t affected by the planning for future development.”

Patterson supported Reid’s original proposal to hire an academic team. She says that path

would have generated feedback “independent of a particular ideology.”

Staff is reviewing the report and planning to deliver a response to Laffer by next Friday. When asked his preliminary opinion of the report, all Long-Range Planning Manager Parsons will say is, “It’s an independent analysis of fiscal neutrality. We’re looking to see where some of the conclusions might be able to help us with eventual recommendations to the board.”

The Laffer team will be in Sarasota to present the final draft of its report Dec. 11.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Brain says that as outrageous as the report is, he hopes it doesn’t become just another weapon in the battle between the commission and its critics. Even commissioners are “livid,” he says, and it would be unfortunate if the report eliminates the possibility of consensus over how to revisit 2050.

Laffer Associates did not respond to *News Leader* questions about the research that went into its report. Writing to Parsons — and misspelling his first name as “Alan” — on Nov. 8, Arduin assured him that Laffer “will give you the best guidance to achieve economic growth that will pay for infrastructure and government services.”

“This has been a very interesting project,” she wrote. 

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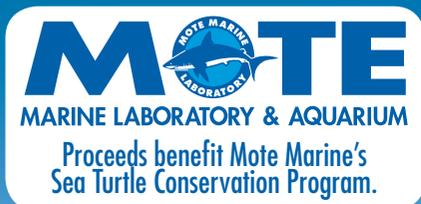


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## A RULING IN THE COUNTY'S FAVOR

*Doctors Hospital of Sarasota is located at the intersection of Bee Ridge Road and Cattlemen Road in Sarasota. Image from [doctorsofsarasota.com](http://doctorsofsarasota.com)*

### **CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE SIDES WITH SARASOTA COUNTY AGAINST A TRIO OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS SEEKING REIMBURSEMENT FOR TREATING INDIGENT PATIENTS**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

A 12th Judicial Circuit Court judge has decided a lawsuit in favor of Sarasota County, potentially saving county taxpayers millions of dollars.

In a Nov. 4 order, Judge Kimberly Bonner ruled against the plaintiffs — a trio of area private hospitals that were seeking reimbursement from the county for treating indigent patients.

The hospitals filed their complaint almost three years ago. Now that Bonner has issued an order in favor of the county, they have 30 days to appeal.

Venice Regional Medical Center, Doctors Hospital of Sarasota and Englewood Community Hospital Inc. were seeking payments from the county under a section of a 54-year old law. On Feb. 25, 2011, the hospitals filed their complaint for declaratory relief, seeking declaratory judgment and injunctive relief, according to the Circuit Court ruling.

“The Plaintiffs request[ed] a determination as to whether the county and the district must reimburse them for care they have provided to medically indigent citizens, in addition to other relief,” the ruling says.

The County Attorney's Office, as directed by the County Commission — along with the Sarasota Hospital District — filed an amended counter-motion with the court. The county's main argument was that a paragraph in the state law called the "Special Act" — which applies specifically to Sarasota County — was unconstitutional because it extended a financial privilege to private corporations.

Bonner agreed with the county.

In her order, she quoted the Florida Constitution: "There shall be no special law ... pertaining to private incorporation or [granting] a privilege to a private incorporation."

The judge concluded: "Therefore, the financial benefit of reimbursement to the private hospitals for indigent care under the Special Act would be an unconstitutional privilege to private corporations."



Englewood Community Hospital is located at 700 Medical Blvd. in Englewood. Image from Google Maps

The judge also ruled that the county does not have to pay the hospitals because of the method of reimbursement they were seeking.

“The Plaintiffs contend that the privilege belongs not to the private hospitals but rather to the patients whose care is reimbursed,” the circuit judge wrote in her Nov. 4 decision. “The Plaintiffs’ request for reimbursement, however, is for direct payment to the hospitals, rather than a relief to patients, and therefore, the Court finds that the privilege would be afforded to the private hospitals.”

## A SIGNIFICANT RULING

The ruling is significant because of the savings the county will realize, said county spokesman Curt Preisser.

County Commissioner Christine Robinson did not want to comment on specifics of the case, because the hospitals can appeal the decision within the 30-day window. But Robinson did note that the ruling, if upheld, would keep a big expense off the county’s balance sheets.

“It will be status quo,” Robinson added.

In a Nov. 8 email to county staffers, Commissioner Nora Patterson congratulated the County Attorney’s Office and also noted the decision was a significant one.

The ruling should not impact other aspects of county healthcare actions or the Sarasota Hospital District because only one paragraph of the Special Act was ruled unconstitutional, Preisser noted.

Last year, in a separate healthcare dispute, the county protested the amount of Medicaid bills it would be required to pay under a law the Legislature passed at the behest of Gov. Rick Scott. That law called for Florida counties to pay Medicaid charges they had rejected from 2001 through April 2012, because the counties had deemed the charges not to have involved their residents.

While early estimates put the expense at approximately \$6.2 million, the County Commission voted in August 2012 to pay about \$3.5 million. It saved some money under a state ruling by not contesting the matter further. However, county staff continued to maintain that some of the bills the state claimed Sarasota County owed were for patients in other counties. 



Venice Regional Medical Center was one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit. Image from [www.veniceregional.com](http://www.veniceregional.com)



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# ANOTHER SUNSHINE SUIT BREWING?



*People stroll by the Crab & Fin restaurant on St. Armands Circle. Members of the Downtown Improvement District and St. Armands Business Improvement District boards have talked of trying to restrict the number of restaurants in certain areas of the city. File photo*

## **ST. ARMANDS BUSINESS DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS MAY BE THE FOCUS OF LEGAL ACTION OVER USE OF PERSONAL EMAIL ON BID BUSINESS**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

In an eerie repeat of the \$8,000 Sunshine lawsuit settlement against two members of the Sarasota Downtown Improvement District board, the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID) board has been asked to furnish “any email containing the words ‘restaurant,’ ‘retail,’ ‘Diana Corrigan,’ ‘Bob Gibbs’ or ‘BID,’” said the organization’s chairman, Marty Rappaport.

The DID was sued last year by Sarasota attorney Andrea Mogensen after *The Sarasota News Leader* reported

two members mentioning at a meeting that they were using their personal computers to send email about city businesses.

Michael Barfield, Mogensen’s paralegal, is the legal consultant for the Sarasota chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union; Mogensen is

a member of the chapter’s board. Mogensen also has represented the nonprofit group Citizens for Sunshine on government-in-the-Sunshine lawsuits.

“*I don’t need this after 22 years of volunteering for the city. You are totally at risk. This is easy money.*”

Marty Rappaport  
Chairman  
Business Improvement District



The City of Sarasota most recently has been in negotiations with Mogensen and Citizens for Sunshine to settle a suit brought after two city commissioners met last month with downtown merchants to hear complaints about homelessness and vagrancy. One of the two commissioners named personally in the suit has refused to settle. Commissioner Susan Chapman says she did not violate the Sunshine Law; her opinion carries some merit with the public as she is a practicing attorney who has served on a variety of city boards and commissions subject to the Sunshine laws. She also has received ample training in Florida's stringent public records and open meeting regulations.

Regarding the BID action: The BID board met in a joint session with the Downtown

Improvement District on Oct. 8. One agenda item was a proposal for the two boards to hire a consultant to analyze the mix of restaurants and retail businesses in downtown Sarasota, on St. Armands Circle and in Southside Village along Hillview Street in Sarasota.

One consultant's name — Bob Gibbs — was repeatedly mentioned until city Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker stepped in to explain state procurement rules.

Diana Corrigan is director of the St. Armands Circle Association, which represents merchants in the shopping district.

The BID's problems surfaced at an early-morning meeting of the group on Tuesday, Nov. 12. Rappaport admitted to using his America On Line (AOL) account to handle city email



*Libby's is one of the popular restaurants in Southside Village. Photo courtesy of Libby's*

because the city email system was impenetrable to him, he said. “It was almost impossible to use,” he pointed out.

“If you’ve used your personal computer even once for city business, they can ask for it,” said Tucker of attorneys in Sunshine cases.

In the DID example, board members Dr. Mark Kauffman and William Pettey admitted to using their personal computers and were forced to turn them over for “forensic analysis.” The DID was billed more than \$8,000 by the city to pay for Mogensen’s legal fees.

Phil Hurwitz, the city’s Information Technology Department director, also attended the Tuesday BID meeting at City Hall. He reported that his staff had made changes to the city email system so it would be easier to use, and he handed out a packet of information to the BID board members on how to use it.

Rappaport said he has turned the matter over to the BID’s attorney, Sam Norton, and the city attorney, Bob Fournier.

“Unless something is done, and the city takes a stand and doesn’t cave in, we will be faced with an unlimited amount of suits,” added Rappaport. “If it goes on this way, we’ll have

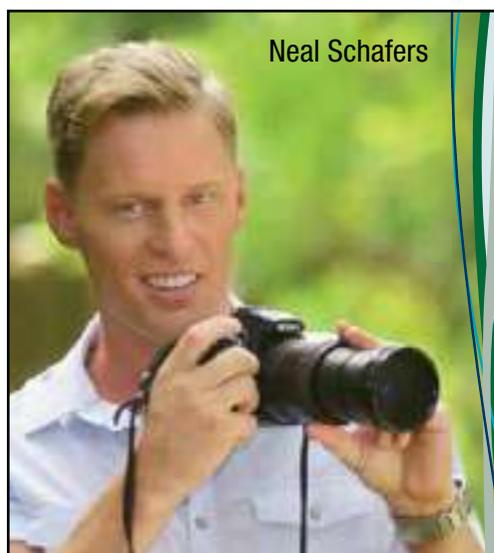


*St. Armands Business Improvement District Chairman Marty Rappaport counts ballots during the latest BID referendum on the future of the district. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

Andrea Mogensen as mayor and Michael Barfield as city manager.”

Tucker pulled out her city-issued cellphone. “I use two phones she told the BID board members. “One is business and one is personal. We take the side of extreme caution,” she said.

“You have to, because you have someone out there as a vigilante, looking for opportunities for extortion,” responded Rappaport. “I don’t need this after 22 years of volunteering for the city. You are totally at risk. This is easy money.” 



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# AT LAST, AN EXPLANATION

*Drivers on U.S. 41 in Sarasota last year could get a view of the stalled first construction attempt involving Lift Station 87 in Luke Wood Park just south of downtown. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **A CONSULTANT DISCUSSES WHY THE MICROTUNNELING MIGHT HAVE FAILED IN THE FIRST EFFORT TO COMPLETE THE LIFT STATION 87 PROJECT**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

While everybody knows it did not work, no real reason had been offered for the failure of the microtunneling effort under Hudson Bayou to connect about one-third of the city to a new sewage lift station under construction in Luke Wood Park.

During a Tuesday, Nov. 12, update meeting with the city and private engineers working on a second attempt, a geotechnical engineer from Washington state with more than 20 years experience in microtunneling used a

series of graphs to explain what could have happened.

Kimberlie Staheli, president of Staheli Trenchless Consultants, is in her appearance the antithesis of a rough-and-ready driller. She may be slender and blonde, but lateral drilling is her engineering expertise. “We now

know quite a bit about what happened,” she said.

A year ago the city fired AECOM Technology Corp., the firm that came up with a plan to install a huge sewer

“*We now know quite a bit about what happened.*”

Kimberlie Staheli  
President  
Staheli Trenchless Consultants



pipe under the bayou. An initial investigation indicated a lack of knowledge of the underground geology was the problem. But Staheli offered a different interpretation Tuesday.

Microtunneling is analogous to using a drill press on its side. Pressure is applied to the bit by a handle, and oil is used to lubricate the bit's cutting end. In a microtunneling rig, the bit is replaced with a cutting head, and the pressure comes from hydraulic jacks, which produce "jacking force." The oil is replaced with a lubricating fluid.

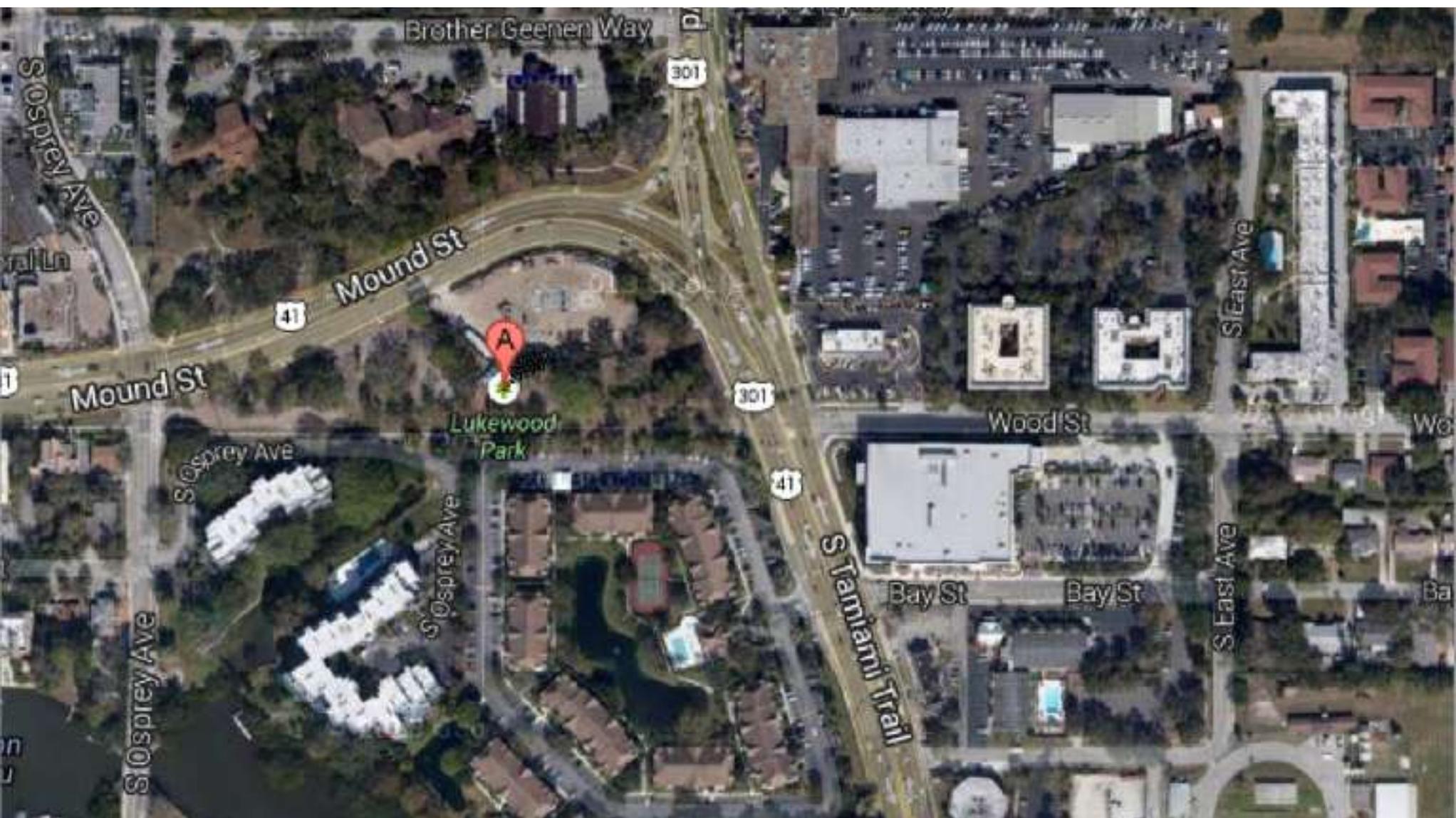
The difference between a drill press and a microtunnel is the hole is a bit wider than the cutter in microtunneling. This difference — called an overcut — allows the lubricating fluid to circulate. This is where Staheli speculates the failure occurred. "The overcut is necessary to limit friction," she explained.

If the overcut was insufficient to allow proper lubrication, more pressure ("jacking force") would be necessary to maintain forward movement of the cutter head. That, in turn, would increase the friction, setting up a positive feedback loop.

Staheli showed those at the meeting a graph of the jacking forces recorded during the initial failed attempt. As the tunnel lengthened, the jacking forces increased to nearly 400 metric tons of pressure.

"The forces on the head were tremendous," she said.

Other projects used vastly less pressure, somewhere in the region of 200 metric tons, she noted. The additional force caused the pipe to break in the tunnel and, eventually, the release of material from the tunnel into the bayou. Staheli speculated the material



An aerial map shows the location of Luke Wood Park in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

was the lubricant under extreme pressure, “fracking” to the surface, similar to the oil shale “fracking” process used in parts of the United States, especially in the West.

Staheli recommended more robust pipe be used for this attempt, either steel or polymer concrete. And she recommended a careful lubrication regimen, along with the use of additives to counteract the impact of salt water. She further recommended a deeper route under the bayou.

After delivering her remarks, Staheli departed to begin laying out geotechnical electrodes to get a better understanding of the strata around and under the bayou. The readings will be compared to various core samples that have already been taken in the area.

“Her job and our job is to reduce the risk to the city,” said Robert Garland, the project



*Kimberlie Staheli is the president of Staheli Trenchless Consultants. Photo courtesy of the North American Society for Trenchless Technology*

manager for the new contractor, McKim & Creed.

A report issued last year by Andrew Robinson of Boregis Ltd. of the United Kingdom provided a top-to-bottom review of the AECOM effort as part of an ongoing lawsuit between the company and the city over the failed \$12.5 million project. The report found AECOM had no experience in microtunneling. Instead, the company relied on the expertise of a Palmetto firm, Huxted Tunneling.

The pipe under the bayou will lead to a new sewage lift station, No. 87, near the intersection of U.S. 41 and U.S. 301, south of downtown. It will replace the old and infamous Lift Station No. Seven. The latter failed twice, spilling hundreds of thousands of gallons of sewage into the bayou, which leads immediately to Sarasota Bay. 



*Robert Garland is the new project manager on the Lift Station 87 initiative. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

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## KEEPING A PROMISE

*Carolyn Mason is chairwoman of the County Commission. File photo*

### COUNTY COMMISSIONER FOLLOWS THROUGH ON PLEDGE TO PURSUE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ORDINANCE

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**  
*Associate Editor*

True to her word, Sarasota County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason last week introduced the possibility of a countywide human rights ordinance that would protect gays and lesbians and many other groups from work-force and housing discrimination.

Mason told *The Sarasota News Leader* two weeks ago she would back such a measure and was willing to bring it to the commission's attention to see if she could find support for it. Englewood Realtor and property manager Julia Nowak has been

hounding the commission for months on the topic, pushing the county to adopt the ordinance as a way to protect individuals who are not covered under the state's limited anti-discrimination statutes.

During the commission meeting last Tuesday, Nov. 5, Mason told the other board members she had met with Nowak. Then she asked

for their thoughts on the human rights issue. Commissioner Christine Robinson was the first to speak, saying she would like to see examples of

“*I'm an annoying, persistent person.*”

Julia Nowak  
Advocate  
Human Rights Ordinance



similar ordinances in local municipalities and an analysis of them by County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh. Both Sarasota and Venice offer anti-discrimination protections for gays and lesbians. Commissioner Joe Barbetta seconded that idea, saying he'd like to read what other Florida counties have done.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said her main concern was the possibility of "getting involved in a lot of lawsuits." She added, "Ideally, you'd put something out there and everyone would obey," she said, implying that wasn't likely.

"Ideally," Mason agreed.

Without making an explicit motion, the commission eventually instructed DeMarsh to research and analyze other ordinances. DeMarsh said the process would take a few months, and to expect the issue to return in early 2014.

Nowak says she feels "optimistic" the commission will OK the ordinance, despite the clear hesitation on some commissioners' part. While the creation of the county's Domestic Partnership Registry has generated a number of local headlines, she believes the human rights issue will affect people more deeply. She once showed an apartment to a young lesbian couple who asked if she had a problem renting to lesbians. A building they had toured before explicitly rejected them because of their sexual orientation — perfectly legal under Florida law.

Mason's advice to Nowak was to "lay off" for a while. Nowak, who has spoken repeatedly at public meetings in recent months, says she will step back from the issue while DeMarsh does his work. If the commission lets the issue drop, though, she'll be back up there, speaking her mind. "I'm an annoying, persistent person," she says. 

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# A DAY FOR DEALS



*The City Commission will consider a new residential overlay district for the Rosemary District. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# THE CITY COMMISSION ON NOV. 18 WILL CONSIDER A NEW DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE ROSEMARY DISTRICT, A PLEA TO KEEP PARKING FREE IN THE PALM GARAGE AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT A COMMISSIONER'S LEGAL FEES

By Stan Zimmerman

*City Editor*

Government primarily is a money-redistribution scheme. But sometimes it can create value where none existed before. The best example, perhaps, is the Tennessee Valley Authority through which the government built dams to provide cheap electricity to a literally powerless part of the nation.

On Monday, Nov. 18, the Sarasota City Commission will be asked to do something similar — creating value where little or none existed before. Attorney Bill Merrill is asking

for a hurry-up change to the city's comprehensive plan in the Rosemary District north of downtown.

Right now, the maximum density is 25 units per acre. He would like to see that jump to 75 or 80 units per acre. A staff report says the increase would “allow for the development of smaller, market rate housing units.”

Merrill is calling for a “Rosemary Residential Overlay District” to make the change. It would operate in similar fashion to the now-defunct



*Site preparation is under way for the new Floridays hotel next to the Palm Avenue parking garage. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*The owners of Louies Modern want the parking to remain free in the Palm Garage — above the restaurant — through the upcoming tourist season. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Downtown Residential Overlay District. This is a first-come, first-served deal.

The underlying zoning density is multiplied by the number of acres in the district. In the case of the Rosemary, it is 25 units per acre times 71 acres, or a total of 1,775 dwelling units. The total number of dwelling units in the overlay district would not change, but their distribution could.

Merrill's client, Rosalyne Holdings, could request triple the regular density for a project (say 75 units per acre). If the project covered 10 acres, then a developer could build 750 units.

However, those units would be subtracted from the overlay's total of 1,775, leaving 1,025 units still available. In other words, an "early bird" could harvest the triple-density bonus, leaving fewer units available for the next triple-density developer.

Merrill is asking for a city incentive to get development started across Fruitville Road from downtown. It would produce the type of units experts say is needed downtown — affordable housing for young workers, either rental or for purchase.

Merrill does not want to wait for the next City of Sarasota Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle to begin next year. His client "has a short timeline for developing this project and would like to have the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Text Amendments in place by next summer," the staff memo says.

## **KEEP MY PARKING FREE**

While Merrill is looking to make some fast changes, a downtown restaurateur is trying

to slow things down. Steven Seidensticker is a co-owner of Louies Modern in the base of the Palm Avenue parking garage. He is asking the city to reconsider a plan to start charging for parking in that facility, hoping the commission will delay it until after the end of the coming tourist season.

The city is running a deficit of half a million dollars per year in its Parking Department — a result of removing brand new parking meters from downtown. While free parking makes the city one of the most car-friendly places in the world, somebody has to pay for all the parking facilities maintenance and enforcement of time limits.

In an effort to keep on-street parking free, the City Commission decided to charge for use of its parking garages. The plan was set to kick off on Jan. 6, 2014.

In a memo, staffers note that if Seidensticker's request is granted, "there is the potential of other construction projects in the vicinity of the garage (the North Palm Avenue drainage, Palm Avenue Hotel offsite improvements, etc.) that could make business activities particularly difficult in this area of downtown."

In other words, the requested delay — if granted — could lead to more requests for holding off on paid parking in the Palm Avenue garage as more construction activity gets under way in its vicinity. Staff makes no recommendation, dropping the decision in the commission's lap.

## **A MOMENT OF TRUTH**

The greatest drama of the evening is expected to come with the last item on the agenda. Will the city continue to pay for the legal defense

of Commissioner Susan Chapman? She is accused of violating the state's Sunshine laws after she and Commissioner Suzanne Atwell met with downtown merchants to hear their views about the vagrancy and homelessness issues around them.

The city and the two commissioners individually were sued by the nonprofit group Citizens for Sunshine. An out-of-court settlement is pending with the city and Atwell. But Chapman maintains her innocence and has not agreed to any settlement.

If the suit continues, who will pay for Chapman's defense? That is the question of the evening.

In a memo, City Attorney Bob Fournier lays out three options available to the city. First, the city could continue to pay Chapman's legal bills. "However this might create a situation in the future where the city commission would want to seek reimbursement for all or a portion of the fees paid, depending on the disposition or the outcome of the suit," Fournier wrote.

Another option is a limited payment plan. The memo says, "the city commission could authorize payment of a specified not to exceed amount of attorney fees at this time."



*City Commissioner Susan Chapman's colleagues on Monday will discuss how to handle her legal fees in a Sunshine suit. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Or the city could just cut Chapman loose. Fournier wrote, "[T]he city commission may discharge its obligation in the form of a reimbursement to Commissioner Chapman at the conclusion of the litigation. This option is possible because the city's obligation to pay legal fees is essentially conditioned upon a successful defense of the suit (or upon settlement with no admission of a violation)."

In other words, only if Chapman wins would the city pay her legal fees. But in the meantime she would be on her own. 

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# A VERY GOOD YEAR



*Crowded tables at The Hub Baja Grill on Siesta Key on Nov. 7 were emblematic of Siesta Village restaurants that evening. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **THANKS TO THE ARTS, SPORTS TOURISM AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, THE COUNTY'S TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUE BREAKS ANOTHER RECORD IN FISCAL YEAR 2013**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

This was one barely missed goal that had Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta smiling: Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue for the county through the end of the 2013 fiscal year was up \$858,897.22 over the FY 2012 total of \$13,345,485.03.

“This is great, great news,” Barbetta said when contacted by *The Sarasota News Leader* on Nov. 12, after the new numbers had been posted on the Sarasota County Tax Collector’s [website](#).

Commissioners had hoped each of the five

TDT pennies would bring in \$3 million, for a grand total of \$15 million for the fiscal year, which ended on Sept. 30, he pointed out. Still, the result did not miss that mark by much. The number was \$14,828,316.70.

And as Deputy Chief Tax Collector Liz Klaber explained recently to the *News Leader*, the tally could go up a bit, as entities that collect the tax make adjustments over the next weeks to their records.

Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County — the county’s tourism office

“*This just shows that Sarasota is strong coming out of the recession.*”

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County





*The Sarasota Chalk Festival is expected to draw crowds to Burns Square again this weekend. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

— said her latest “dashboard” figures show the county saw about 6 percent growth in the number of visitors for the 2013 fiscal year, and their spending was up about 7.3 percent over the previous year.

The last month of the fiscal year “was OK,” Haley said. “It wasn’t fabulous.” Still, the only month when the county realized less TDT revenue than it had in the same month during the 2012 fiscal year was April, she pointed out. That primarily was a result of Easter’s coming in March, Haley added. “We were up insanely in March,” she said of the tourism statistics her office records.

Haley noted “a lot of success in Florida across the board” in regards to FY 2013 tourism. Yet, “our growth is just a little bit ahead of [the state’s], which is what I like to see.”

Haley attributes the continuing climb of the TDT revenue to a combination of her office’s marketing efforts as well as to the gradual rebound in the economy.

Barbetta points to the significance of the arts and sports tourism as other major factors.

“This just shows that Sarasota is strong coming out of the recession,” he noted.

As for the unofficial competition among county locations that collect the TDT, Siesta Key came out on top for FY 2013, with 32.17 percent of the revenue. The city of Sarasota was in second place, with 30.37 percent, followed by Sarasota County at 16.77 percent.

And while September may have been a bit slow, momentum began building in October and will continue this month.



*The US Rowing Masters National Championships at Benderson Park in August brought thousands of people to Sarasota County. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Last weekend, Haley pointed out, Venice hosted its second [Rev3 Triathlon](#); the Ringling College of Art and Design held the second [International Service Design + Tourism Conference](#); and St. Armands Circle bustled with its 25th annual Art Festival.

This weekend will see the fourth annual Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition (see the related story in this issue), the sixth annual Sarasota Chalk

Festival and the inaugural [Sarasota-Bradenton Head Race at Nathan Benderson Park](#).

Haley pointed out that the Crystal Classic and Chalk Festival never had been held the same weekend in years past. “I don’t have a feel for it yet,” she added, regarding whether dual scheduling would bring in more visitors. Tens of thousands of people typically attend each of those events.

### SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

Revenue Comparison of Fiscal Years 2011, 2012 and 2013

\* Collections through 10/31/2013

	FY 2010/2011			FY 2011/2012			FY 2012/2013			FY 2012/2013 Difference
	4.5% Tax	.5% Tax	TOTAL	4.5% Tax	.5% Tax	TOTAL	4.5% Tax	.5% Tax	TOTAL	
October	529,633.06		529,633.06	599,002.90	66,555.86	665,558.76	634,444.76	70,493.86	704,938.62	39,379.84
November	544,353.23		544,353.23	654,819.62	72,757.74	727,577.36	689,841.00	76,649.00	766,490.00	38,912.64
December	678,528.20		678,528.20	771,335.33	85,703.93	857,039.25	908,936.34	100,992.93	1,009,929.27	152,890.02
January	1,164,425.31		1,164,425.31	1,383,368.47	153,707.81	1,537,076.08	1,467,486.11	163,054.01	1,630,540.12	93,464.04
February	1,415,225.33		1,415,225.33	1,693,538.15	188,170.91	1,881,709.05	1,759,246.32	195,471.81	1,954,718.13	73,009.08
March	1,963,138.18		1,963,138.18	2,290,910.14	254,545.57	2,545,455.71	2,439,011.44	271,001.27	2,710,012.71	164,557.00
April	1,257,599.63		1,257,599.63	1,252,939.64	139,215.52	1,392,155.16	1,169,261.57	129,920.17	1,299,201.74	(92,953.42)
	Tax Rate Increased from 4.5% to 5%									
May	746,905.64	82,978.40	829,784.04	812,165.03	90,240.56	902,405.59	885,976.90	98,441.88	984,418.78	82,013.19
June	799,572.92	88,841.44	888,414.36	962,310.35	106,923.37	1,069,233.72	1,047,877.13	116,430.79	1,164,307.92	95,074.20
July	962,269.23	106,918.80	1,069,188.03	977,021.37	108,557.93	1,085,579.30	1,079,803.56	119,976.17	1,199,781.73	114,202.43
August	592,013.72	65,779.30	657,793.02	667,265.54	74,140.62	741,406.16	751,417.16	83,490.80	834,907.96	93,501.80
September	461,084.87	51,231.65	512,316.52	507,800.99	56,422.33	564,223.32	512,162.75	56,906.97	569,069.72	4,846.40
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11,114,649.33</b>	<b>395,749.60</b>	<b>11,510,398.93</b>	<b>12,572,477.53</b>	<b>1,396,941.95</b>	<b>13,969,419.48</b>	<b>13,345,485.03</b>	<b>1,482,831.67</b>	<b>14,828,316.70</b>	<b>858,897.22</b>

Note: The above figures do not include the one-time settlement of \$200,145.63 paid directly to Sarasota County in February 2011 as a result of a class action lawsuit against the online travel companies.

All figures are subject to change following audit and enforcement actions.

Sarasota County Tax Collector  
Barbara Ford-Coates

*Tourist Development Tax revenue for Sarasota County was up almost \$859,000 in the 2013 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office*

Still, she noted that *The New York Times* had recommended the Chalk Festival to readers as a must-see event. “That’s bound to help.”

Additionally, Haley said, research shows tourists like to find “a vibrancy [in the community] and ... lots going on. That’s absolutely what visitors are looking for.”

Barbetta says the county’s next goal will be to hit the \$3.5 million per-penny mark with the TDT revenue. Referring to the extra money, he added, “That’s how we get to keep doing things in the community.”

## OTHER ECONOMIC FACTORS

Although county commissioners have pointed to the TDT revenue growth numerous times over the past months, other fiscal year-end economic statistics underscore a rebound from the recession.

While the number of permit applications for new single-family homes was down 36.8 percent year-over-year in September, the value of the construction was up 3.4 percent, according to figures released by the county’s Office of Financial Planning.

The total value of the development plans was more than \$11 million for September 2013.

In August, the total number of permit applications for single-family homes was up 63.3 percent year-over-year, and the construction value saw a 94.1-percent increase to \$15,576,000.

The total number of homes and condominiums sold in the county in September was 817, up 22.5 percent from the September 2012 figure of 667. Further, the median price was 14.4 percent higher — \$178,943, compared to

### SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

#### COLLECTIONS BY LOCATION

\*Collections through 10/31/2013

	CONSOLIDATED	LONGBOAT KEY	NORTH PORT	SARASOTA	SARASOTA COUNTY	SIESTA KEY	VENICE	TOTAL
October 2012	17,626.07	77,191.25	3,012.57	268,937.71	110,126.79	184,396.49	43,645.74	704,938.62
November 2012	16,439.46	90,295.49	2,602.41	301,590.91	118,710.96	198,156.78	38,891.99	766,490.00
December 2012	40,229.88	125,766.71	4,973.23	326,809.47	170,027.49	281,525.33	60,597.16	1,009,929.27
January 2013	119,172.83	161,722.75	7,100.79	379,705.24	312,940.02	450,710.16	199,188.33	1,630,540.12
February 2013	73,004.96	204,379.75	8,889.39	501,283.01	333,370.45	699,747.28	136,063.30	1,954,718.13
March 2013	62,249.26	314,181.84	15,397.02	709,512.73	486,623.02	946,820.67	173,228.17	2,710,012.71
April 2013	31,092.69	159,858.22	4,851.91	431,676.03	213,783.62	393,256.83	64,682.44	1,299,201.74
May 2013	18,641.49	119,386.46	4,059.56	339,701.82	159,096.04	303,317.05	40,216.36	984,418.76
June 2013	24,290.25	122,247.52	3,997.49	330,160.79	178,833.25	462,867.90	41,910.72	1,164,307.92
July 2013	23,546.71	132,516.75	2,809.12	374,559.90	163,135.10	457,600.60	45,613.55	1,199,781.73
August 2013	18,359.75	84,977.57	2,704.91	315,500.71	130,660.83	249,014.73	33,689.46	834,907.96
September 2013	11,666.13	56,315.04	2,240.04	224,493.36	106,037.86	142,234.58	24,082.71	569,069.72
Grand Totals	456,319.47	1,648,839.35	60,638.44	4,503,911.68	2,487,345.43	4,769,652.40	901,609.93	14,828,316.70
Percentage of Total (%)	3.08%	11.12%	0.41%	30.37%	16.77%	32.17%	6.08%	100.00%

Note: All figures are subject to change following audit and enforcement actions.

Sarasota County Tax Collector  
Barbara Ford-Coates

*Siesta Key took in more Tourist Development Tax revenue for the county in the 2013 fiscal year than any other location. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office*

\$156,454 in September 2012, according to the Sarasota Association of Realtors.

Yet another positive figure in the latest county economic report was a 7.6-percent hike in the total value of gross sales for retail businesses in the county. The September 2013 figure was \$970,280,000, compared to \$901,350,000 in September 2012.

However, as Haley noted earlier, hotel and motel income was down in September 2013 — a 19.9 percent drop compared to the same month a year ago, with a total of \$22,540,000 compared to \$28,140,000 in September 2012.

August, on the other hand, saw a 12.1 percent hike in hotel and motel revenue compared to the 2012 total. The August retail sales number also was up — 8.7 percent, at \$921,660,000 — compared to the figure for August 2012.

On one other positive note: Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport saw a 6.7 percent increase in September in the number of arrivals and an 8.4 percent hike in the number of people departing, compared to the figures from the same month in 2012.

According to the county figures through the end of the 2013 fiscal year, ad valorem tax revenue totaled \$128,441,421, while the budgeted amount was \$126,102,339. Yet an even bigger hike — 72 percent — was realized in the amount of impact fee revenue the county took in for the fiscal year. While the budget counted on \$5,289,598, the county brought in \$9,101,004.

The county did not make its mark on gas tax revenue, though. Instead of the \$15,631,072 budgeted, the county took in \$11,960,320. 



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# HOLIDAY LIGHTS AND FUTURE FUNDS



*The Downtown Improvement District board may try to get funding assistance from the associations of the condominium complexes facing Five Points Park to provide new decorative lighting there. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD PROVIDES MONEY TO A MERCHANTS GROUP FOR SEASONAL DECORATIONS AND PONDERES AN EXPANSION

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The Sarasota Downtown Improvement District (DID) board this week decided to give a loan to a merchants association to speed up the installation of decorative lighting in time for the holidays.

The DID board is reviewing a proposal for \$135,000 to put color-changing lights around 28 trees in Five Points Park. Meanwhile, the Sarasota Downtown Merchants

Association was looking at a \$14,800 project to illuminate 22 trees with white lights along Main Street.

At the DID's Tuesday, Nov. 12, meeting the board voted 4-1 (Dr. Mark Kauffman in the

minority) to loan the merchants' group the money to get its lighting project done as quickly as possible.

**“ We should fund the \$14,800 amount to light up all of Main Street. We can come back for Five Points later. ”**

Tom Mannausa  
Member  
Downtown Improvement District Board

“We just finished a fantastic streetscape and we need to attract

people to enjoy it,” said DID Chairman Ernie Ritz.

Ron Soto, chairman of the merchants group, initially came to the session that day to ask for a \$6,000 loan for the lighting, with his group making up the difference. Instead, he walked away with the full amount and instructions to proceed post haste.

“We should fund the \$14,800 amount to light up all of Main Street,” said DID board member Tom Mannausa. “We can come back for Five Points later.”

The board then voted unanimously to hold off on the \$135,000 contract and instead approved \$1,800 for a demonstration of color-changing lighting in the park.



*The color-changing lights that used to be in Five Points Park suffered from squirrels' nibbling and growth of the oaks' limbs. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*



*With Main Street construction completed, downtown Sarasota merchants are eager to 'dress up' the street for the holidays. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The group has a checkered history of success with Five Points lighting. It previously spent \$80,000 for computer-controlled, color-changing lights in the park, but virtually all of those lights failed as animals nibbled the wires and tree growth broke the circuitry. The money came from a combination of sources.

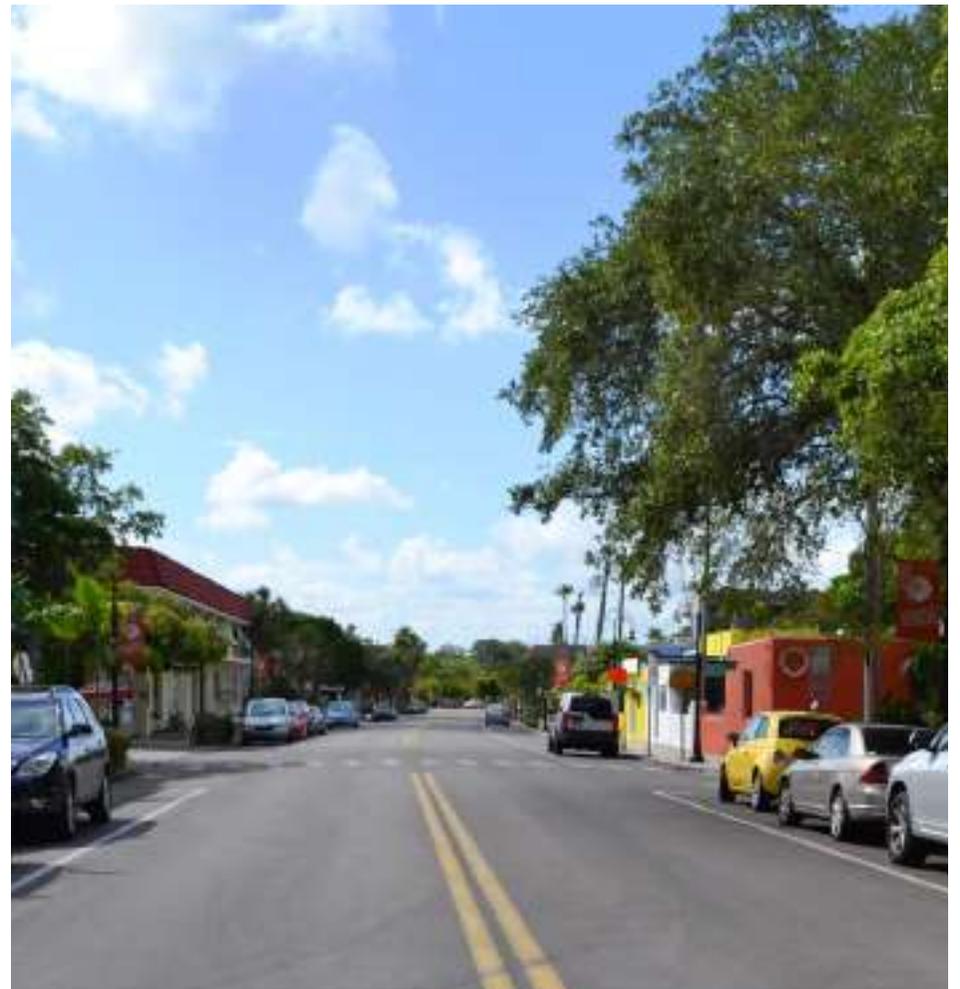
The new Five Points plan also calls for the DID to seek money elsewhere. “We should try to get the two condos [facing the park], [Sarasota] opera and the city to participate,” said Kauffman.

## FACING THE FUTURE

The retired professor who acted as a “mid-wife” for the birth of the DID came before the board Tuesday to ask if the members would like to reconsider their strategic plan. Much of what the DID was empowered to do has been accomplished. With its current state of finances, the board will go forward with very little discretionary money, Roger Barry said. He is professor emeritus of urban planning with the University of Cincinnati and a Sarasota resident.

Barry parsed the DID’s funding. After paying for the bonds used to finance a variety of projects — minus maintenance expenses and the part-time operations manager’s salary — he calculated the group would have about \$80,000 per year for new projects or emergencies.

He noted the Downtown Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is due to expire in 2016. “If there is no CRA, then the DID and the city must pick up the slack for infrastructure improvements,” said Barry. While a committee continues to examine how



*A future discussion is proposed on extending the Downtown Improvement District into Burns Square. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

to extend the CRA’s term, there is no guarantee the political will exists on the Sarasota County Commission to move the sunset date another 10, 20 or 30 years into the future.

The DID board decided to split its crystal ball gazing into two parts. At the next meeting, the group will ponder the near future with \$80,000 in discretionary money. For the larger picture, the group talked about a larger meeting, similar to the past [Semcon](#) gatherings of downtown stakeholders and residents. The last one resulted in the DID’s formation three years ago.

Among the options that could be on the table during the expanded meeting is an expansion of the district east along Main Street to Washington Boulevard, or south into Burns Square. 

## SCAT Standard Shelter (12' Width)

## MCAT Standard Shelter (9' Width)



# MORE SHELTERS — AND FAST!

*Photos compare a Sarasota County Area Transit shelter to one in Manatee County. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION EXTENDS A CONTRACT FOR BUS STOP STRUCTURES AND PARTS WHILE STAFF SEEKS OUT BEST PRACTICES TO PUT TOGETHER A NEW BID PACKAGE FOR FUTURE YEARS

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Of the more than 2,000 Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) stops, only 172 have shelters, and a contract amendment the Sarasota County Commission approved last week will increase that by 47 at the most in the 2014 fiscal year, the County Commission learned last week.

Nonetheless, Glama Carter, the SCAT director, told the board she is working with other county staff on a new procurement process that she hopes will

speed up the installation of shelters and create more cost efficiencies.

Carter added that she planned to be back before the board in February with an analysis of information from six peer counties in regard to their procurement and erection of

shelters, so the commission can have the best possible information as it moves forward on this issue.

Commissioners asked Carter to speed up the pursuit of public

“ Over 90 percent of our stops have nothing other than a sign in the ground. That's bad; that's just really bad.

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



records from those counties at the same time she works with staff to try to get more Sarasota County shelters in place on a faster schedule.

In the end — after more than 30 minutes of discussion — it was Commissioner Joe Barbetta who made the motion to approve the fourth contract amendment with a Detroit firm that has been supplying the county with bus shelter structures and parts since 2010. The board had delayed that vote from Oct. 22, with the understanding Carter would have more data for them to review on Nov. 6. Although he

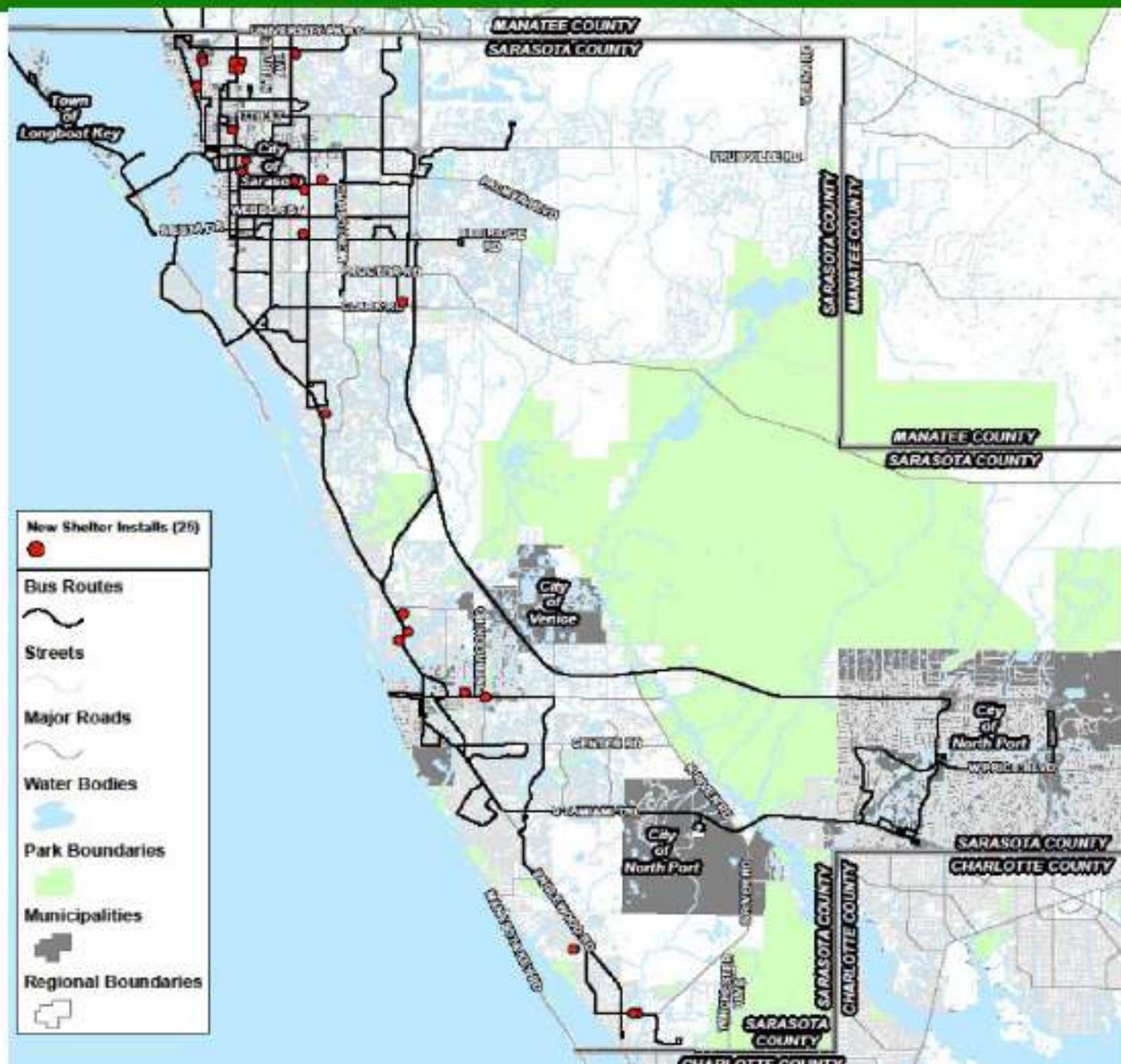
has been the most vocal critic of the county's ongoing delays in putting shelters in place, he said, "I just want to get this thing done and get these [shelters] moving."

In action it approved on May 7, the board set \$250,000 as the upper limit for the contract on an annual basis.

Commissioner Christine Robinson cast the solitary "No" vote on Nov. 6, arguing that while she agreed with the need to get more shelters up as quickly as possible, "I also think that if we delay this [contract approval] and



## Bus Shelter to be installed in FY14 (Minimum of 25 shelters)



*A map shows the locations where new bus shelters are planned for the current fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

discover we can save \$1,000 per bus shelter, that means more bus shelters in the end ...”

She added, “It’s a struggle ... but for me, being able to squeeze out those extra shelters in the end is the way I would like to go.”

Then, she continued, she could look taxpayers in the eye and let them know the board and staff had pursued a comprehensive review of the issue and had determined the most efficient way to proceed.

## THE STATUS QUO

In her presentation to the board on Nov. 6, Carter pointed out that staff installed 51 shelters in the 2013 fiscal year, calling it “a great accomplishment.”

The minimum staff could install in the current fiscal year, she added, would be 25, if the board approved the fourth contract amendment with Brasco International Inc.

That action would allow SCAT to continue with the design of shelters for 16 locations, for which it has received funding from the Florida Department of Transportation, Carter explained, and provide for six new shelters in conjunction with county road projects planned for this fiscal year.

Finally, Carter said, renewing the contract would enable staff to continue with the replacement of parts in older structures as well as maintenance of existing shelters.

Referencing earlier comments Barbetta had made about Manatee County shelters costing less than those in Sarasota County, she

- Six anchored column connections for stability and wind resistance
- 1/8” thick rolled aluminum roof for strength and durability
- Heavy duty header beam supporting shelter roof
- All aluminum, powder-coated, rust-resistant structure

presented the board with charts and graphics to compare the structures in the two counties.

The average SCAT shelter costs \$5,275, Carter pointed out, compared to \$4,385 in Manatee County. However, she explained, the standard SCAT shelter is 12 feet wide, while the Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT)

standard structure is 9 feet wide. The cost breakdown shows the SCAT shelter costs \$4,725; in Manatee, \$3,500. A SCAT bench for three people is \$275, compared to a two-person MCAT bench for \$360. A SCAT trash can is \$275; for the MCAT shelter, a 32-gallon can is \$525.



## Public Records Request

Bus Stop Shelter Information	
<b>1. Bus stop and shelter general info</b>	
Total number of bus stops	
Total number of shelters at bus stops	
Size of most commonly installed (standard) shelter	
Size of standard bench for shelter	
Size of standard trash receptacle	
<b>2. Purchase costs of standard bus shelter and amenities</b>	
Shelter	
Bench	
Map Holder	
Bicycle Rack	
Trash Receptacle	
SCAT's standard shelter is 5'x12'. Do you have a comparably sized shelter? Cost?	
<b>3. Costs associated with construction and install of standard bus shelter and amenities</b>	
ROW/Easement - Purchase of Easement	
ROW/Easement - Administrative costs of obtaining easement	
Design of ADACompliant shelter pad **	
Permit and Construction of ADA shelter pad **	
Sidewalk connection and site improvements for ADA compliance **	
Install Shelter **	
Install Bench **	
Install Map Holder **	
Install Bike Rack **	
Install Trash Can **	
Project support - in house	
Project support - outsourced/contracted	
Additional costs - please list:	
Total construction and install cost	
<b>4. Bus stop shelter maintenance and repair</b>	
Total annual cost to maintain and repair bus stop shelters **	
Average maintenance and repair cost per bus stop shelter	
Are these services in-house and/or contracted? Circle one	
<b>5. Trash pick-up at bus stops and shelters</b>	
Total annual cost for trash pick-up at bus stops and shelters **	
Average trash pick-up cost per bus stop and/or shelter	
Are these services in-house and/or contracted? Circle one	
<b>**Please send scope of work or existing contract for this service - whether contracted out or performed in-house</b>	

*A graphic lists the public information sought from six other counties regarding their bus shelters. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Carter noted other features that make a SCAT shelter more durable and wind-resistant, giving it a 12-year life expectancy.

## RECORDS REQUEST

In preparation for the thorough analysis of best practices in other counties, Carter said she had submitted public records requests to Collier, Lee, Manatee, Pinellas and Hillsborough counties on the west coast of the state as well as Volusia in northeastern Florida. The latter county, she said, has transit agencies “very comparable” to those in Sarasota County.

That information will enable her and her staff, Carter added, to incorporate new design and construction standards, as well as revised permitting procedures, in a new request for bus shelter bids for subsequent fiscal years.

When Carter reiterated that she would appear again before the board in February with all of that information, Commissioner Nora Patterson responded, “February?!”

Carter replied that she anticipated the public records requests would not be handled expeditiously by the other counties, and she wanted to make sure she and her staff had sufficient time to analyze the information.

Patterson told Carter to call the other counties and ask them to expedite their responses.

If the material does come in sooner than expected, Carter said, she would arrange to appear before the board again at an earlier time.

“I appreciate the work you’ve done since you’ve been here,” Barbetta told Carter, “but we’ve been talking about this for the seven years I’ve been here.” (Carter became the new SCAT director in the summer of 2012.)

“We can’t get a grip on bus stops,” Barbetta added. “I mean, it’s really sad. ... Over 90

percent of our stops have nothing other than a sign in the ground. That’s bad; that’s just really bad.”

Moreover, Barbetta pointed out, “We don’t need five, six, seven types of bus shelters; we need two or three types of bus shelters.”

He added, “At this rate, it’s going to take 20 years [to get shelters at every stop], assuming we don’t add any more stops.”

In response to questions from Patterson, Carter explained that if the county did not renew the Brasco contract, staff probably would have to reconfigure the 16 shelters already under design, so they would meet a new contractor’s specifications.

Barbetta again pointed out that the county should have two or three prototype shelters, “so when I hear ‘design,’ I’m worried we’re going through this convoluted process.”

He and Patterson both urged Carter to have her staff determine where shelters could be installed quickly, without stormwater concerns, for example.

However, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh noted that all county bus shelters do have to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Barbetta responded that SCAT should be putting in shelters in locations where sidewalks are not needed for ADA compliance.

Patterson agreed, noting that the county probably could install several shelters where it did not need to add sidewalks for the same expense of constructing the sidewalk and adding one shelter.

“Manatee County seems to be putting these things in like crazy,” Barbetta said. “We’ve got to change our process and just say, ‘These are prototypes. These are locations. Let’s just get ’em installed.’ ... We owe it to our passengers.” 

# FIRST, PLEASE, THE SHORT-TERM BID



*Chairs surround the swimming area of Warm Mineral Springs. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## **THE COUNTY COMMISSION ASKS THE NORTH PORT CITY COMMISSION TO TRY AGAIN TO FIND A SHORT-TERM OPERATOR FOR WARM MINERAL SPRINGS**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

A Nov. 12 letter from the Sarasota County Commission to the North Port City Commission thanks the latter board for its decision to work on a long-range plan for the operation of Warm Mineral Springs.

However, like the previous County Commission letter — dated Oct. 23 — it also encourages the North Port commissioners to try again to get the resort open during season.

Signed by County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason, the letter

specifically says, “I want to convey our continued interest in the offer contained in your October 15 letter to issue another bid for the short-term operations of Warm Mineral Springs while we deal with the long-term bid.”

The County Commission voted 3-2 last week to send its latest missive to the North Port board, with Vice Chairman Charles Hines and

“*I’m asking my board to just try again, just please let’s try again.*”

Christine Robinson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



Commissioner Joe Barbetta in the minority. Commissioner Christine Robinson volunteered to work with staff to draft the letter.

The vote followed Robinson's recounting of the approximately two-and-a-half hour discussion of Warm Mineral Springs that the North Port commissioners held during their regular meeting on Oct. 28.

During that city session, the board members unanimously agreed to hold a special workshop to try to craft their long-term vision for the resort. That meeting will be held on Dec. 2, Assistant City Manager Daniel Schult told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

The North Port Commission already had scheduled a workshop for that date, he pointed out. Staff revised the agenda to permit the Warm Mineral Springs discussion to be included, he added.

The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. on Dec. 2 in Room 244, on the second floor of North Port City Hall, Schult said. It is open to the public.

## AT THE COUNTY COMMISSION DAIS

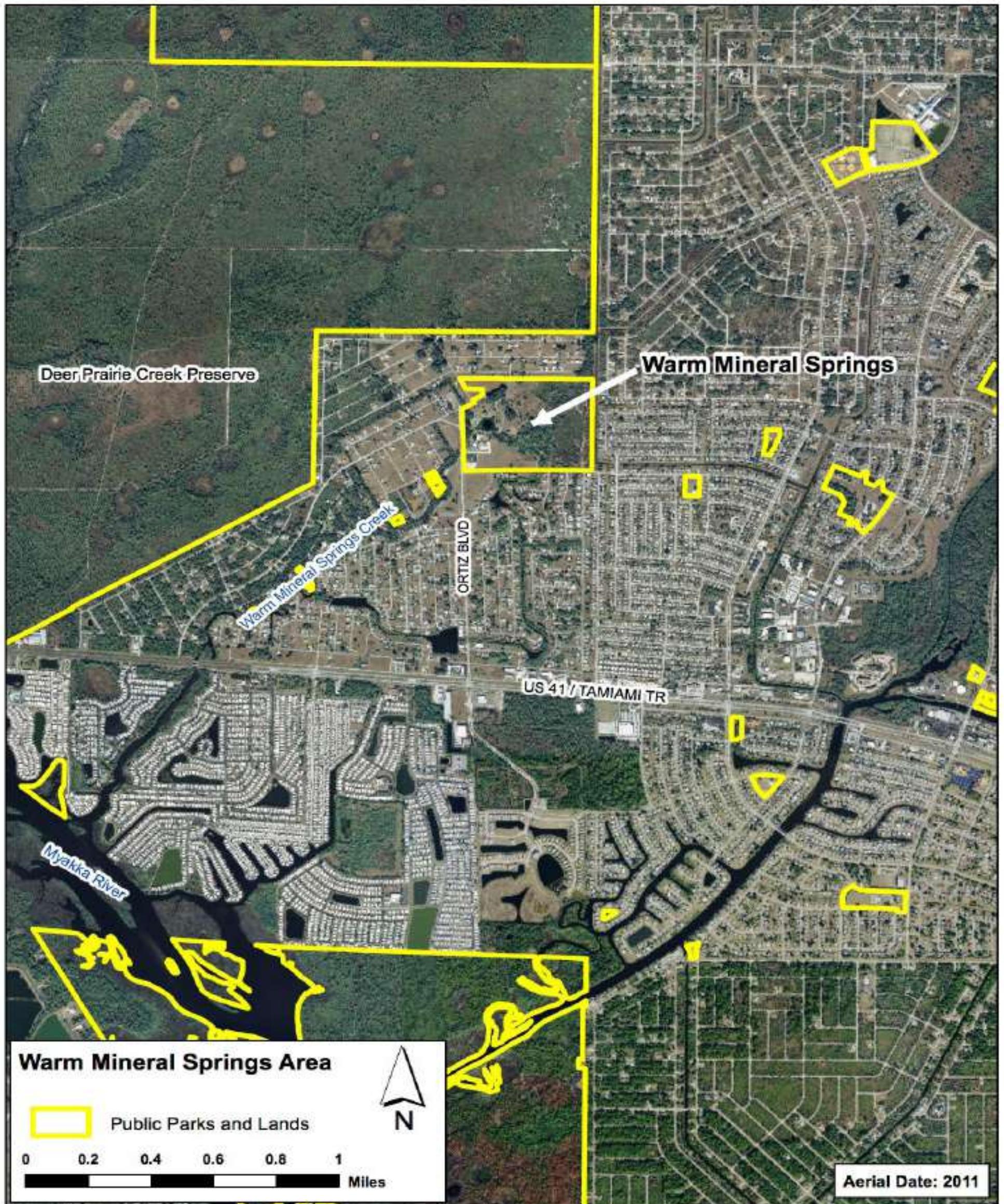
Robinson reported to her board on Nov. 5 that, with an election coming up in the City of North Port in 2014, "I know there will be efforts to rewrite what happened" regarding the two commissions' actions on Warm Mineral Springs. Because of that, she said, she already had asked the county's Communications Department to put together a press packet laying out the timeline and votes.

"The history is what it is," she added. Nonetheless, during the North Port board's Oct. 28 meeting, she continued, several references incorrectly reflected what had transpired between the two local government entities, which are joint owners of Warm Mineral Springs.

Several people remarked to her afterward that they were confused after listening to



*Warm Mineral Springs has an inviting ambiance for visitors. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



An aerial map shows the location of Warm Mineral Springs. Image courtesy Sarasota County

the discussion, Robinson continued. "Quite frankly, I was confused by watching."

Still, she said, she applauded the city commissioners for agreeing to work on the long-term plan for the 81-acre resort the city and county purchased for \$5.5 million in 2010.

On the other hand, she explained, "They apparently have decided that they are not going to [pursue a new short-term solicitation]."

"It remains in their laps to put the short-term bid out, as we had offered," she noted. If a new solicitation process is pursued, she pointed



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November 12, 2013

The Honorable Linda M. Yates  
Mayor  
City of North Port  
4970 City Hall Boulevard  
North Port, FL 34286-4100

Dear Mayor Yates:

On behalf of the Sarasota County Commission, we thank you for moving forward on the scope of services for the long-term lease of Warm Mineral Springs. We look forward to receiving the scope of services in the near future.

I want to convey our continued interest in the offer contained in your October 15 letter to issue another bid for the short-term operations of Warm Mineral Springs while we deal with the long-term bid.

We remain committed to our partnership in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn J. Mason".

CAROLYN J. MASON  
Chair

c: Sarasota County Commission  
Stephen E. DeMarsh, County Attorney  
Thomas A. Harmer, Interim County Administrator  
Jonathan R. Lewis, North Port City Manager

out, it is possible Warm Mineral Springs could open in February or March.

Commissioner Nora Patterson proposed the new letter, thanking the city commissioners for their decision on the long-term operation of the resort but “suggesting to them that we are still open to a short-term solicitation, should they change their minds [about making that move].”

Robinson pointed out that some of the city commissioners “seemed to grammatically dissect” the letter the County Commission sent them on Oct. 25 after agreeing — as the North Port board had earlier — to reject the bid both boards awarded in September to WMS Sarasota Management LLC. That firm — one of only two bidders on the short-term operation of the resort — sought a two-year contract instead of the one-year term offered. One principal of the firm, Dr. Grigory Pogrebinsky, said WMS Sarasota Management would need extra time to recoup its investment because of the need to make further repairs on the property. Attorneys for Pogrebinsky earlier had been turned down when they asked the city to handle those repairs.

The County Commission’s Oct. 23 letter requested the city seek another competitive process, such as an Invitation to Negotiate (ITN), a Request for Bids “or other legal process for the short term operations of Warm

“*We have invested a lot of time and effort in this thing, a lot of staff time ... and every time we near the goal line, [the North Port Commission] kicks it back.*”

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



*County Commissioner Christine Robinson awaits the start of a meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Mineral Springs.” It also asked that the City Commission “approve the proposed scope of services and selection process for the long term operations of Warm Mineral Springs” within 90 days of the date of the letter.

## WORDS AND ACTS

Robinson also pointed out to her colleagues on Nov. 5 that she had told Mayor Linda Yates of North Port she felt the October letter would have some ambiguity regarding the city’s request to have the county administrator work with City Manager Jonathan Lewis on reopening the springs for season. Robinson added that she made it clear to Yates she did not know at the time whether Randall Reid would remain as county administrator after the board conducted his latest evaluation. (The County Commission fired Reid on Oct. 23 and made Deputy County Administrator Tom Harmer the interim county administrator.)

“Mayor Yates knew that letter would be worded that way, and then it was questioned — during the North Port Commission’s Oct. 28 meeting — why the letter was worded that way,” Robinson added.

Further, it appeared city commissioners were upset that the county board did not want to use employees to open the Springs for the upcoming season, Robinson noted.

Only City Commissioner Cheryl Cook voiced adamant opposition to the cost of such a plan, while Yates continued to argue for it on Oct. 28.

“I’m hoping that we can get this back on track,” Robinson told her colleagues. Reliving the history of the boards’ conflict over the Springs “will not serve anybody well going forward.”

Patterson made a motion to send the new letter.

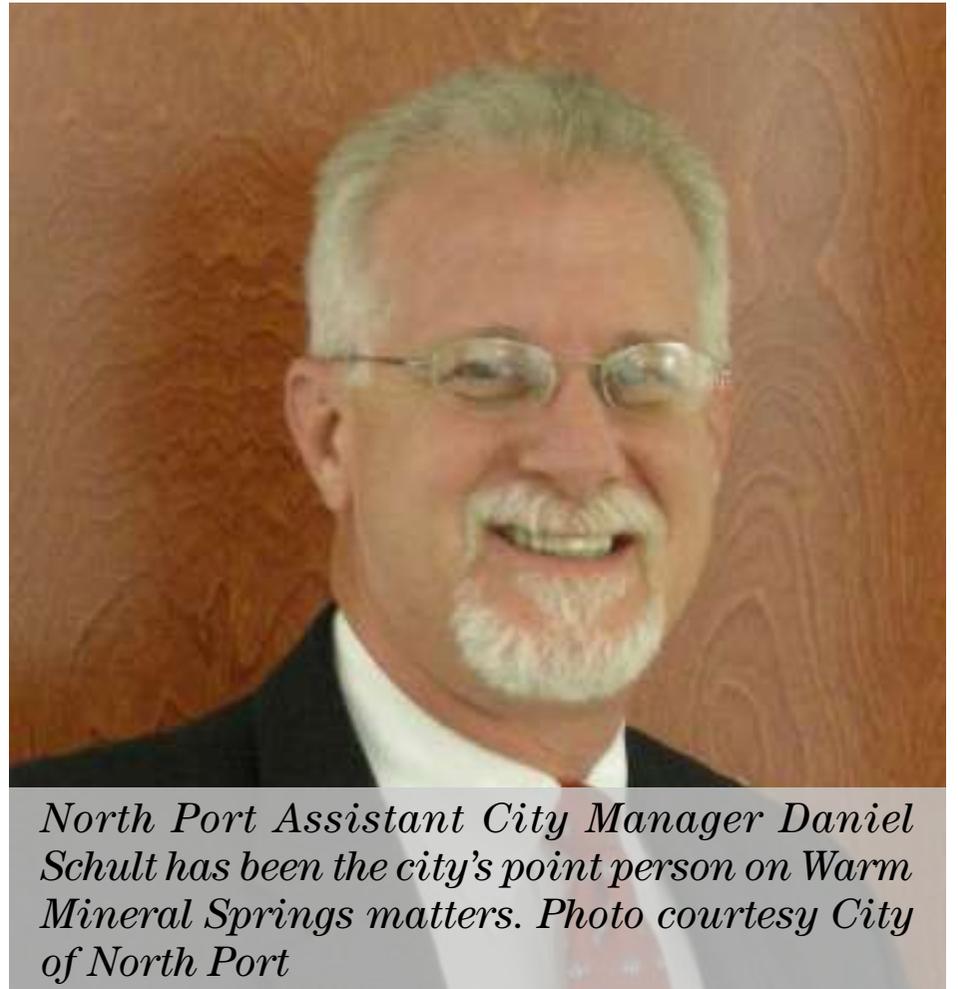
“I’m not going to support it,” Barbetta said. “I’m sick and tired of revisionist history. I’m sick and tired of hearing the comments that are coming from down there, that are mostly not true. The only thing I would be willing to do,” he continued, “is ... go back to the 2012 10-0 vote.”

In July 2012, the boards, meeting together, voted unanimously to pursue an ITN for the long-term operation of the resort. Yates was on the North Port Commission at the time, Barbetta pointed out.

However, after Cook and North Port Commissioner Rhonda DiFranco were elected in November 2012, they joined Yates in a majority to oppose any development of the Springs, saying they preferred to maintain it like a park.

“I think we have to ignore conversations at the [North Port] table,” Patterson told Barbetta. “Everybody’s frustrated.”

She added, “This commission has always been results-driven. I think we should pursue the



*North Port Assistant City Manager Daniel Schult has been the city’s point person on Warm Mineral Springs matters. Photo courtesy City of North Port*

goal of trying to get a good short-term operator, if it’s possible.”

“Nobody’s more goal-oriented than me and the rest of this commission,” Barbetta responded. “We have invested a lot of time and effort in this thing, a lot of staff time ... and every time we near the goal line, [the North Port Commission] kicks it back.”

Robinson pointed again to the North Port commissioners’ decision to work on a long-term plan, “which is a significant move on their part. ... I’m asking my board to just try again, just please let’s try again.”

Hines sought confirmation that both boards would have to agree to the same long-term vision for Warm Mineral Springs before they could move forward on that. Several of his colleagues confirmed that.

Then when Chairwoman Mason called for the vote, she joined Robinson and Patterson in supporting the language proposed for the new letter. 



## IN THE HOMESTRETCH

*The CRA Extension Study Committee members work during their Oct. 8 meeting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### **WITH ITS REPORT DUE TO THE CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS IN JANUARY, THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AREA EXTENSION STUDY COMMITTEE WILL START SETTLING ON THE FINAL DETAILS**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The research has been done. The step-by-step methodology is finished. For the Downtown Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Extension Study Committee, the easy part is complete. Now it is time to start making decisions.

Late Tuesday afternoon, Nov. 12, the committee took stock of its efforts since June. “We’re at a bit of a crossroads here,” said Vice Chairman Chris Gallagher.

The committee adopted a decision-tree technique to frame its research and discussions. Each “limb” led to several “branches,” which led to even smaller “twigs” at times, as the members refined their thinking based upon the experiences of CRAs in other commu-

nities as well as the City of Sarasota’s understanding of its own Community Redevelopment Area.

The CRA is a tax scheme diverting property tax revenue from

“ So the gist of the next meeting is us making a bunch of decisions.

Chris Gallagher  
Member  
CRA Extension Study Committee



the city and county and pooling it for use within a defined area. The tax revenue comes from an “increment” between the tax values on parcels when the CRA was established in 1986 and the current year’s values. This year, the income is about \$8 million.

If the CRA were extended another 30 years, Committee Chairman Andy Dorr estimates the “increment during that time would result in about one-quarter of a billion dollars. All of it could be spent only in the defined area around downtown.

Extension of the CRA will require the agreement of the City and County commissions, and probably the signing of a new memo of understanding or interlocal agreement between them. What those terms might be

has been the topic of the committee’s discussions since June.

## **‘FISH OR CUT BAIT’**

The committee is scheduled to report back to the City and County commissions in January. It is unclear now if it will make a presentation to each board individually, or if it will appear at a joint meeting of the boards. At stake is not just a quarter of a billion dollars, but also the fate and future of the current economic heart of the county — downtown Sarasota.

Thus, the style, tone and substance of the committee’s report are crucial if it expects the findings to influence the two commissions’ decisions. For example, here are a few “limbs” of the decision-tree: Extend or not? For how long? Reset the base tax year? Uses



*Committee Chairman Andy Dorr provides an update to the City and County commissions on Oct. 22.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

of the money? Who manages the money? Who governs the operation? Should the boundaries be changed?

Gallagher suggested that during its next meeting — on Wednesday, Nov. 20 — the committee start going from twig to twig, making decisions. “Yes” here, “No” there, until all the questions are answered.

Other committee members resisted the idea. Bill Russell said, “We may go down the tree, and then I can’t support one decision, so I’m against the whole thing.”

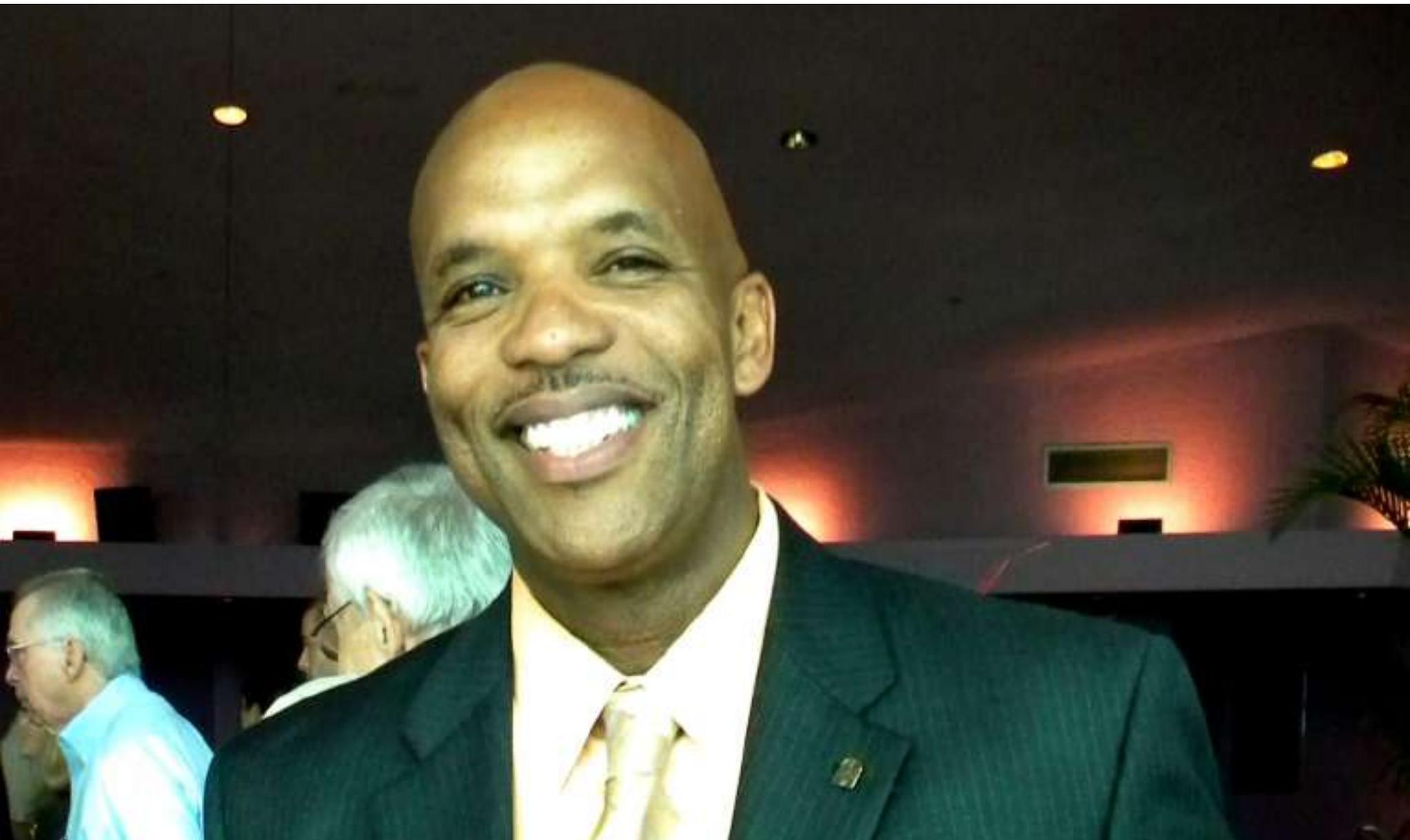
Committee member Michael Beaumier added, “OK, everybody agrees, yes, extend it. But if you asked me to support it just as it is now, I couldn’t support that.”

Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown suggested the committee vote on the outstanding issues at the next meeting. “Based on the votes we record, a draft or several drafts will come to you to review, revise, change. Then you’ll have to vote on the final draft,” he pointed out.

“So the gist of the next meeting is us making a bunch of decisions,” said Gallagher.

While the committee has been disciplined to date, keeping its meetings at two hours or less, the “tree” the members expect to “trim” is large. The next meeting could be a doozy.

*Editor’s note: One of the legal questions before the CRA committee was decided at the last City Commission meeting. The city can unilaterally reset the base year for a CRA, and it will do so for the Newtown CRA.* 



*Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown represents the city at the CRA meetings. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## LET IT BE

*A segment of North Beach Road is blocked off in late October 2012 after wind and wave action from the Superstorm Sandy system caused part of the street to collapse. File photo*

### **GIVEN THE ESTIMATED COSTS OF MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS TO STABILIZE NORTH BEACH ROAD, SIESTA'S COUNTY COMMISSIONER PREFERS THE 'MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE' OPTION**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Almost exactly a year ago, Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson won support from her fellow board members for an independent engineering analysis of North Beach Road on Siesta Key. Late last month, that report was delivered, along with a staff memo pointing out that estimates for most options ranged from more than \$2 million to more than \$3 million to stabilize the structure under assault by wind and waves.

The staff recommendation: “the No-Action alternative, to monitor and maintain North Beach Road as is.”

Patterson told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Nov. 14 that she is fully supportive of that. Her primary reaction to the memo's options

“*I really wasn't expecting something of this magnitude.*”

Nora Patterson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

for making the fragile road segment more durable is “that's an awful lot of money to do something that's actually contrary to our comprehensive plan.”



*The Gulf of Mexico chews the North Beach Road pavement on Oct. 29, 2012. File photo*

The alternatives for long-term stabilization of the road included revetments and a seawall.

A section of the Oct. 23 memo from James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer, and Thai Tran, the county's transportation operational manager, points to county policy that "states that 'Hardening of Gulf [of Mexico] beaches or passes shall be prohibited unless such hardening has been found to be in the public interest' and an additional Management Guideline for Beaches states, 'the use of artificial shoreline stabilization techniques (e.g., seawalls, groins, etc.) that interfere with natural beach processes could contribute to beach erosion, and/or interrupt lateral public pedestrian access along the beach [and] shall be prohibited except in the public interest and in accordance with County codes.'"

Siesta Key architect Mark Smith — chairman of the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp. and a past chairman of both the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce and the Siesta Key Village Association — agrees with Patterson.

"Hardening the shoreline is inconsistent" with county policy, he told the *News Leader*, as evidenced by the number of projects the County Commission has declined to approve over the past years. Among perhaps the most well-known of those was a plea for some means to save the home of artist Syd Solomon, which stood on Blind Pass Road on the southern end of the island. Even Solomon's efforts to close Midnight Pass did not stop the erosion that ultimately necessitated demolition of the structure about 10 years ago



Waves overlap North Beach Road as a result of Tropical Storm Debby's presence off the Florida coast in June 2012. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

“You can’t keep fighting it,” Smith added of the erosion. “We live on a barrier island ...”

## PAST AND PRESENT

The Oct. 23 memo from Tran and Harriott to the County Commission points out that the affected portion of North Beach Road lies between Avenida Messina and Columbus Boulevard, within walking distance of Siesta Village. It provides access to seven residential and vacation-style properties, the memo adds.

“Portions of the road washed out during the 1982 ‘No Name Storm’ and again in 1986,” the memo notes. “This area remains vulnerable to storm surge and wave impact. In the last six years, numerous storm events including Fay in August 2008, Debby in June 2012 and

Isaac in August 2012 had caused severe erosion along North Beach Road.”

What prompted Patterson’s request for action in November 2012 was another dramatic onslaught of wind and wave action produced by the system that went on to be called “Superstorm Sandy.” A 150-foot-long section of the road, 15 to 20 feet wide, collapsed, making it impassable and necessitating emergency repairs.

Most recently, the memo points out that Tropical Storm Andrea in June “caused minor erosion damage, but the repaired roadway was not impacted.”

The memo also notes, “This segment of Beach Road is designated as a critically eroded beach area, as listed in the June 2012 Florida



*A Sarasota County employee shot this photo of water and sand across North Beach Road near Beach Access 3 while Tropical Storm Debby sat offshore in June 2012. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) *Critically Eroded Beaches in Florida* report."

In an interview in late October 2012 — as county staff worked on the temporary fix for the damage inflicted by Hurricane Sandy — Harriott told the *News Leader* he already was figuring the cost of a permanent solution "will

be quite substantial," probably upwards of \$1 million.

The analysis by [Taylor Engineering Inc.](#), based in Jacksonville, shows he was off by more than half, even for the least expensive option.

As Harriott and Tran explained in their Oct. 23 memo, the Taylor firm analyzed four



*An aerial view shows the section of North Beach Road between Avenida Messina and Columbus Boulevard. Image from Google Maps*

alternatives; land acquisition costs were not figured into any of them:

1. No Action and Maintain — \$233,421 every two years, with a 50-year total estimate of more than \$5.8 million.
2. **Rock Revetment** — \$2,460,000.
3. Concrete Seawall — \$2,351,000.
4. Step Revetment — \$2,618,000.
5. Beach Renourishment — \$3,340,000.

Harriott and Tran added that alternatives 2, 3 and 4 have a 50-year life cycle expectancy. “After that the structure would have to be evaluated.”

Alternatives 2, 3, 4 and 5 “would require special survey, design, land easement acquisitions, environmental permitting, monitoring and continued maintenance,” they pointed out. They continued, “The selection of a permanent seawall or revetment will provide a benefit for roadway and shoreline protection, but does not offer assurance of a sandy beach seaward of the roadway. In addition, due to low elevations, a seawall would not prevent the area from flooding and could cause further erosion at the north and south ends of the wall.”

Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 also would require coastal setback variances — exactly the type of action Smith noted the County Commission has been reluctant to approve.

Smith pointed to the potential for further erosion on either side of a seawall, causing “more problems for other people.”

As for Alternative 1: Harriott and Tran wrote that “the County Operation & Maintenance



*James K. Harriott Jr. is chief engineer of Sarasota County. File photo*

(O&M) staff would continue to remove deposited sand from the roadway and repair voids, as needed.

Additionally, they noted that if a future tropical storm caused significant damage, “actual costs for repair would be assessed based on the extent of [it].” The construction cost estimate for the No-Action alternative, they added, was based on the county’s expense for emergency repairs in November 2012.

Since 2001, they wrote, the county has spent about \$378,917 on routine maintenance for street sand cleaning, asphalt repairs and utility services involving the road. That figure includes the cost of the Taylor study, but it does not account for staff time on the project, they added.

They also pointed out that the county requested \$688,781.37 in emergency disaster funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for a partial rebuilding of North Beach Road in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Debby in 2012. The memo says, “The public assistance grant is pending a grant extension acceptance, which is now in progress. No FEMA funds have been received, to date.”

## GOING FORWARD

When she brought up the problems with North Beach Road in the fall of 2012, Patterson told the *News Leader* on Nov. 14, she was focused on the fact that a permanent fix would be “a little more attractive than just this mish-mash

of stuff that’s there now. ... I really wasn’t expecting something of this magnitude.”

Patterson said she planned to talk with Harriott about whether the county staff at least can “clean up what’s there.”

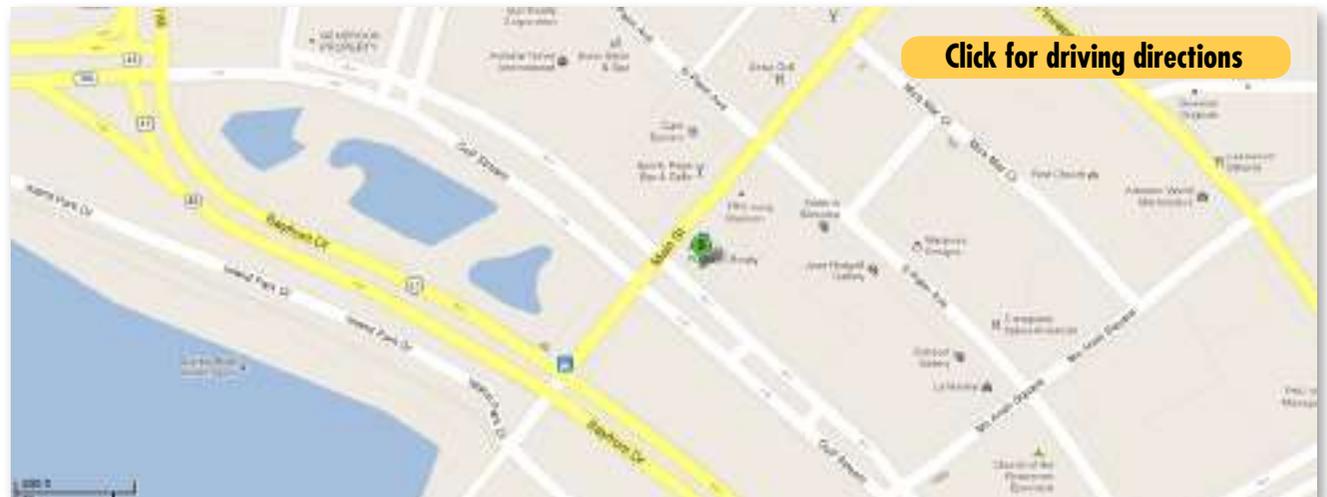
Smith told the *News Leader* he could not help but be amused by the reference to the 50-year cost estimate with the No-Action alternative. If climate change predictions are correct, he pointed out, the road will not be an issue. “We’ll be living on our roofs soon.” He added, “In 50 years — seriously? We could all get wiped out in the next hurricane season.”

“I think we really have no option but a wait-and-see,” Patterson said. “At this point in time, it would be hard to justify that expenditure.” 

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*The 2012 Honor the Badge law enforcement group gathers in front of Target on Fruitville Road. Contributed photo*

## **DONATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR HONOR THE BADGE EVENT**

The Sarasota Housing Authority, Sarasota Police Department and Target are partnering to provide underprivileged youths with a unique holiday experience, the Police Department has announced.

The Sarasota Housing Authority's Honor the Badge shopping event "is an initiative designed to help build mutual trust and respect between law enforcement officials and children of families living in Sarasota Housing Authority communities," a news release explains. Honor the Badge will pair 100 local underprivileged children with Sarasota law enforcement officers to shop for holiday gifts at the Target store on Fruitville Road from 6 to 8 a.m. on Dec. 14, before the store's opening to the public that day, the release notes.

Through donations received from the Sarasota Police Department, local businesses, religious organizations and individuals prior to the event, the Housing Authority will provide the funds for the officers to purchase the gifts, the release explains.

"Our goal is to help underprivileged children from our community come together with local law enforcement [representatives] in an inclusive, non-threatening environment that will encourage open and honest communication with ... [the] officers to remove any fear the youths may have when interacting with [them]," says Capt. Lucius Bonner of the Police Department's Bureau of Professional Standards in the release.

“The event will help educate them regarding the role that the officers play in our community,” he adds in the release.

“Having a safe, strong, vibrant community begins with having mutual respect and trust between community members and the men and women sworn to protect them,” says Sarasota Housing Authority Executive Director William Russell in the release. “Honor the Badge works to build this respect and trust through this fun and positive experience during the holiday season.”

Those wishing to donate to the event may do so through the Housing Authority. Checks may be made out to the Sarasota Housing Funding Corp. with “Honor the Badge” in the memo line. Checks or cash donations can be dropped off at the Sarasota Housing Authority, located at 269 S. Osprey Ave. in Sarasota, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information, contact Russell at the Sarasota Housing Authority at [w Russell@sarasotahousing.org](mailto:w Russell@sarasotahousing.org) or 361-6210.

## TWO ON SHERIFF'S STAFF GRADUATE FROM COMMANDERS ACADEMY

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that two members of his command staff graduated last week from the Florida Sheriffs Institute Commanders Academy.

Capt. Paul Richard, commander of the Criminal Investigations Bureau, and Capt. Jon Goetluck, commander of the Support Services Bureau, have successfully completed the Academy, held at the Florida Public Safety Institute in Havana, FL, a news release says.

Capt. Richard and Goetluck were among 30 graduates from 21 sheriff's offices who made up the Charter Class of the Academy, presented by the Florida Sheriffs Association, the release notes. The Academy was designed by the sheriffs to ensure that members of their command staffs — top-level management within a sheriff's office — “have the background and information they need to carry out their responsibilities,” the release explains. The program was developed in conjunction with the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute.

“Leadership development is a priority for any sheriff engaged in succession planning,” says Knight in the release. “My commanders make



*(From left) Col. Steve Burns, Capt. Jon Goetluck, Capt. Paul Richard and Maj. Jim Lilly. Contributed photo*

complex decisions every day, and additional training at this level will help them supervise personnel and serve our community.”

The intensive training included 40-hour sessions in September and again in November. Among the topics covered were leadership, ethics, legislative affairs, effective discipline, labor and personnel issues, fiscal policies and administration, the civil process, courthouse security and jail management, the release notes.

## LAUREL PARK ASSOCIATION WINS PLANNING ADVOCATE AWARD

The Laurel Park Neighborhood Association has received a Planning Advocate Award for its work on the Laurel Park Overlay, the organization has announced.

The annual award, given by the Florida Sun Coast Section of the American Planners' Association, is presented to a community group in recognition of "significant commitment and support of community planning," a news release says.

The Laurel Park Overlay, approved Aug. 19 by the Sarasota City Commission, enables Laurel Park residents to have a voice in large development projects built across the street from their neighborhood, the release notes. The overlay's approval marked the culmination of three years of work on the part of the neighborhood association, the release points out.

In the future, large developments on the edge of the neighborhood will go through a process requiring two community workshops.

"Although this is not the full Planning Board process which the neighborhood initially requested, the [Laurel Park Neighborhood Association board] is hopeful it will contribute to compatible development around Laurel Park," the release continues.

The overlay zoning, as implemented, was a city-proposed compromise, the release notes. It retains administrative approval (city staff OKs development projects), the release adds, but it includes the two community workshops — the first early on, when a project is in the conceptual stage; the second, after plans have been submitted to the city. It also ensures residents can appeal a decision to the Planning Board and City Commission, if necessary. "Such an appeal would be expensive and difficult, but it provides an important protection to the neighborhood," the release says.

The overlay affects properties next to the neighborhood and has an impact only on large projects — those encompassing more than 5,000 square feet or with more than eight residential units.



*The Laurel Park Neighborhood Association has won an award for its work on an overlay zoning district. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## EMPLOYERS PROMOTING GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT ON NOV. 21

Local business owners are encouraging their staffs to leave their cigarettes and other tobacco products at home during the 2013 Great American Smokeout on Thursday, Nov. 21, the Sarasota County Health Department has announced.

“With support from the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County’s Tobacco Prevention Program, more employers throughout the county are promoting a healthier workforce and environment for their employees by offering cessation services through their health insurance options and creating tobacco-free workplaces,” a county news release points out.

“Most employers are not aware of the additional costs associated with smokers,” says Pascale Edouard, employer cessation specialist with the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, in the release. “A recent report shows that smokers can cost their employers nearly \$6,000 more per year than non-smokers in healthcare costs, absenteeism and through lost productivity.”

He adds in the release, “Employers are looking for creative ways to reduce overhead costs; going tobacco-free and providing smokers with options to help them quit is a great way to accomplish this task. The benefits don’t just stop at the employer. Individuals who



*The 2013 Great American Smokeout will be held nationwide on Nov. 21. Contributed photo*

quit today can start to reverse the damage tobacco use has done to their bodies.”

The Great American Smokeout is a national observance that takes place on the third Thursday of November each year. It urges smokers to quit tobacco use, even if just for one day.

A number of local employers, including Goodwill Manasota and A Banyan Residence in Venice, are using this day to highlight cessation services available to their employees and encouraging them to make a plan to quit, the release continues.

“A tobacco-free environment is a healthier environment,” says Bob Rosinsky, president and CEO of Goodwill Manasota, in the release. “This move will have a positive impact in many ways, including enhanced community

life, improved productivity through better health and potential decreases in healthcare costs. A tobacco-free campus will make the Goodwill Manasota a healthier place to work and learn.”

Employers interested in learning more about how going tobacco-free and providing cessation support to their employees can help reduce costs and increase productivity are encouraged to contact the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota’s Tobacco Prevention Program. The program can provide consultation services, signage and other material resources at no cost to employers, the release notes.

For more information about free tobacco-cessation services available to all Florida residents, including the *3 Ways to Quit*, call toll-free 1-888-U CAN NOW (1-866-822-6669).

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## **RIBBON CUTTING OFFICIALLY OPENS SCTI-VENICE AT VENICE HIGH**

About 40 educators, elected officials, business leaders and interested community members gathered near the entrance to the new Venice High School (VHS) campus on Nov. 8 to officially open the newest addition to the VHS educational complex: SCTI-Venice.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Venice branch of the Sarasota County Technical Institute marked the return of SCTI after it moved from the VHS campus to a location on Indian Hills Boulevard in 1995, a Sarasota County Schools news release points out.

The SCTI branch occupies what used to be VHS Building 30 prior to the school rebuild, as well as two adjacent portable buildings, the release says. “The three facilities provide about 7,000 square feet of instructional space

that was upgraded with new paint and carpeting and the infrastructure needed to support a full complement of instructional computers and other technology in every classroom.”

The facility is providing classes in fire science, an electrician apprenticeship program, General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes, and English for Speakers of Other Languages and Adult and Community Enrichment classes.

Todd Bowden, the Sarasota County School District’s executive director of career technical and adult education programs, encouraged the audience members at the event to offer suggestions for programs and classes they would like to see at the facility, the release notes.

School Board Vice Chairwoman Shirley Brown said the facility represented one of many examples of the collaboration of the School Board and municipal and county governments for the sake of students. Superintendent Lori White added that the new location is more convenient for students and will save the district about \$40,000 a year in maintenance costs compared to the old facility, the release points out.

“Venice Mayor John Holic said he is very pleased to see more services being offered for students who are interested in careers that do not require a college degree,” the release continues. “He noted that his son is an SCTI alumnus whose training led to a very successful career.”

Holic added that providing learning opportunities for students who are coming out of high school and are not college-bound is essential to helping young people find jobs and stay in Venice, according to the release. “He said he hopes to see the VHS branch become the seed for a whole center of SCTI for the Venice area.”

Site Facilitator Kathleen Obendorf noted she is looking forward to helping students who are not likely to go to Harvard, but who need to go to work, have the opportunity to learn job skills, continue their education and be successful. “I love this school,” she said in the release. “The Chamber of Commerce is happy we are here and we are happy to be here.”



*The elected officials, educators and business leaders participating in the Nov. 8 ribbon cutting for SCTI-Venice, included (from left) Venice Mayor John Holic, Sarasota County Schools Executive Director of Career Technical and Adult Education Todd Bowden, School Board member Frank Kovach, SCTI-Venice Site Facilitator Kathleen Obendorf, Venice City Council member Kit McKeon, School Board Vice Chairwoman Shirley Brown, Sarasota County Commissioner Charles Hines, Venice City Council member Jeanette Gates, Venice Chamber of Commerce President John Ryan, Venice Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors member Kathy Leavitt, and Venice City Council member Emilio Carlesimo. Contributed photo*

## REPUBLICAN CLUB TO HOST DETERT, HOLDER AND STEUBE ON NOV. 21

With Florida lawmakers having returned to Tallahassee in late October to begin their first series of committee meetings in anticipation of the 2014 legislative session, the Sarasota Republican Club will host three members of Sarasota's delegation on Thursday, Nov. 21, the club has announced.

State Sen. Nancy Detert and state Reps. Doug Holder and Greg Steube will "recap their initial meetings and explicate their predictions

of what is to come in the spring session," a news release says.

The dinner meeting will be held at Marina Jack, located at 2 Marina Plaza, just off the bayfront in downtown Sarasota. Reservations are required at [www.sarasotarepublicanclub.com](http://www.sarasotarepublicanclub.com); by sending \$30 per member and \$35 per guest to Sarasota Republican Club, PO Box 51953, Sarasota, FL 34232; or by calling 888-325-3212.



*State Sen. Nancy Detert addresses her fellow legislators. Photo courtesy myFloridaHouse.gov*

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION APPROVES \$2.3 MILLION IN GRANTS

At its October meeting, the Board of Directors of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County approved more than \$2.3 million in grants and scholarships, the Foundation announced.

This total included more than \$250,000 for scholarships: \$180,000 for adult learner, theater and performing arts, and certified nursing scholarships; and \$73,000 for multi-year continuing college scholarships, a news release says. Another \$750,000 came from living and legacy donor charitable funds at the foundation.

Also included was \$600,000 for distribution to nonprofit partners in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and DeSoto counties from the

Season of Sharing Fund, which provides targeted financial assistance — primarily for rent, mortgages or utilities — “for individuals and families on the verge of homelessness,” the release adds. “Although the fundraising for Season of Sharing takes place primarily from mid-November through January, nonprofits can apply for funding on behalf of clients throughout the year.”

Further, grants totaling \$168,000 were made for programming at Alta Vista Elementary School, “where children are receiving year-round enrichment and parents have access to specialized career training and scholarships for in-demand careers,” the release notes. “Inspired by the ‘two-generational approach’ championed by Ascend of the Aspen Institute,



*Alta Vista Elementary School is the recipient of significant funds from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and its donors to provide enrichment opportunities for students and parents. Contributed photo*

the Community Foundation has focused attention on providing economic assistance and educational opportunities to move students and their parents forward in this economically-challenged community.”

Also approved were grants in excess of \$145,000 to All Faiths Food Bank, for needs including a new refrigerated truck for food delivery — this vehicle, funded through the Edward H. Lyman Fund, was dedicated on Oct. 24 — and the restocking of high-quality foods in a freezer that malfunctioned, the release continues.

“It was so fitting to provide such a significant level of support in September, as the community recognized ‘Hunger Action Month,’” said Community Foundation President and CEO Roxie Jerde in the release. “Our Community Foundation — thanks to the generous donors to the Season of Sharing campaign — was

privileged to be able to respond so quickly with support that enabled All Faiths to restock the freezer and continue its vital food distribution in Sarasota and DeSoto counties. All Faiths is truly a lifeline for the individuals and families who rely on the organization for food.”

Regarding other grants:

- Selah Freedom, an organization working on behalf of the victims of human sex trafficking, received \$12,000 from the Margaret L. Bates Fund to support the Sexual Exploitation Residential Program within its first safe house in Sarasota. This home — which will be staffed 24 hours a day by trained coaches, clinicians and volunteers — “is a haven to local women desperately needing a safe place to stay,” the release points out.



*All Faiths Food Bank received \$120,000 from the Edward H. Lyman Fund of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County to purchase a new refrigerated truck last month. Contributed photo*

- Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC) received \$10,000 from the Margaret L. Bates Fund to provide funding for renovations to its Main Street Outreach Office to build a sexual assault forensic center within the facility, the release adds.
  - Englewood Elementary School received \$15,000 from the Englewood Fund to support “The Eagle Enrichment Program.” “This after-school program for children in kindergarten through fifth grade promotes academic success by providing homework assistance, technology training, physical fitness, accelerated reader classes, art and Spanish,” the release notes. When the program was supported by state and federal dollars, attendance ranged between 175 and 200 students. “When that funding was cut and a ‘pay to stay’ policy was implemented, the program suffered an attendance decline of over 50 percent: The majority of students who stopped attending could not afford the \$7 daily fee,” the release says. Community Foundation grant dollars will be used to support children receiving free and reduced-price lunches and to help attract matching money.
  - Girls Inc. received nearly \$25,000, including \$22,000 for Project Santa’s Helper. This program, which the Community Foundation has supported for three years, provides gifts and books for every child from approximately 100 families enrolled at Girls Inc., to help them have a happy holiday season, the release adds.
  - Florida Studio Theatre received \$30,000 from the John J. Clopine Fund to support the development of FST’s *For the Ages: A Cultural Gerontology Project*. Through this new initiative, a docudrama comprising interviews with audience members and experts on the issues of aging will be created, the release notes. This collaborative effort includes Embracing Our Differences, Senior Friendship Centers, Institute for the Ages and Savvy Seniors.
  - Sarasota Season of Sculpture received \$10,000, also from the John J. Clopine Fund, to support the 2014 exhibition on the Sarasota Bayfront. These funds will cover operational expenses related to the free public event, the release says.
- For more information about the Community Foundation, visit [www.CFSarasota.org](http://www.CFSarasota.org).

## **ELECTRONIC COPIES OF SITE PLANS REQUIRED FOR CITY APPLICATIONS**

In an ongoing effort to provide greater access to public records, the Office of the City Auditor and Clerk has announced that all site plans and survey materials for development approval applications will be required to be submitted electronically via a PDF file.

“The goal, as always, is to provide greater transparency of the city’s records and to aid citizens in the ability to access these records in the future by providing online access

through the city’s website,” said City Auditor and Clerk Pamela Nadalini in a news release.

The requirement for submission of an electronic copy of the permanent record of all site plans and survey materials submitted with development applications will go into effect Monday, Dec. 2, the release points out. Other submission requirements are not affected.

“An electronic permanent record copy will significantly decrease record storage requirements in the future and, thus, help reduce costs,” the release adds.

## CORRECTION

In the early version of the Nov. 8 *News Leader*, because of an editing error, the article *City Commission wrap-up* mentioned the wrong date for the presentation of homelessness consultant Robert Marbut's report and

recommendations. It will be provided at two times on Nov. 25 — in Venice in the morning and Sarasota in the afternoon. More details will be provided later about the locations and times.

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION TEACHES KIDS ABOUT 'GIVING BACK'

On Saturday, Nov. 9, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County hosted Camp Giving, a program for children ages 8 to 13 and their parents and/or grandparents, at All Faiths Food Bank.

"The goal of this program is to inspire the next generation of philanthropists," a news release says. "The children learned about the value of 'giving back,' discovered how to use the online nonprofit resource [The Giving Partner](#) to find causes and organizations they care about, heard from a high school volunteer — Bailey Peters — and enjoyed a tour

of All Faiths, learning how the organization distributes food through Sarasota and DeSoto counties, the release points out.

For the last hour of the program, the children and their parents helped sort and package food — estimated to provide 1,560 meals for recipients — for delivery. Each of the young participants received a "Moon Jar," which helps children make decisions about saving, spending and sharing, and a \$25 Giving Spirit Card, which the children may donate to any U.S. charity of their choosing, the release notes.



The children of Camp Giving sorted and packaged enough food to provide an estimated 1,560 meals. The participants were (from left) Tyler, Nick, Kaki, RG, Maddie, Ellie and Noah. Contributed photo

Sugar (confectioners)	18 months
Sugar (granulated)	2 years
Syrup (maple & pancake)	12 months
Tea (bags)	18 months
Tea (instant)	3 years
Tomato Products	18 months
Vegetables	3 years
Vinegar	2 years
Water	2 years



Noah was responsible for boxing and weighing food during Camp Giving. Contributed photo



*Ellie (left) and Kaki carefully sorted food during Camp Giving. Contributed photo*

## JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS WITH BOOKER HIGH STACKS CLUB

Junior Achievement of Sarasota-Manatee has announced a working partnership with the Stacks Entrepreneur Club of Booker High School.

“The goal of the collaboration is to help educate students, raise funds for the community and develop a scholarship opportunity in the name of Beverly Porter, a beloved, longtime guidance counselor with the school,” a news release says.

Formed in 2010 by Saul Coplan, a volunteer with Booker High School and mentor with Take Stock In Children of Sarasota, the Stacks Club was established to reach out to students and teach the value of investing, the release explains. After several initial meetings, members expressed a desire to learn more about entrepreneurship, the release adds. This prompted the club to change its name to the Stacks Entrepreneur Club and repurpose itself as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit fundraising business under the umbrella of Booker High School’s 501(c)(3) status, the release notes.

The objective of the Stacks Entrepreneur Club is to raise money for unfunded needs of the school and to donate money to community organizations.

Now with seven active members, the Stacks Entrepreneur Club has formed the agreement with Junior Achievement Sarasota/Manatee for guidance on meeting two additional goals, the release continues. “The first is to raise money and product donations to provide backpacks and school supplies for students of Emma E. Booker Elementary who qualify



*Saul Coplan poses with members of the Stacks Entrepreneur Club. Contributed photo*

for free breakfast and reduced lunch prices,” it says. The second is to raise money for a scholarship to be presented to a deserving graduate in the name of Beverly Porter, a longtime school guidance counselor who is retiring at the end of this year.

“We are proud to provide the guidance and support for the members of the Stacks Entrepreneur Club of Booker High School,” said Maggie Haley, executive director of Junior Achievement Sarasota/Manatee, in the release. “These students are learning the important values and skills that will prepare them for successful futures, all while they contribute financial and material assistance to children who need it most.”

Visit [JASarasota.org](http://JASarasota.org) for more information. 

# CRIME BLOTTER



*North Sarasota County Planning and Development Services offices — including the building permits section — are in the BOB building (partly outlined in yellow), located at 1001 Sarasota Center Blvd. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## **VENICE MAN CHARGED WITH UNLICENSED CONTRACTING WORK**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested James Sohol, owner of Air Today in Venice, in connection with nearly a dozen cases of Unlicensed Contracting, the office has reported.

“Sohol would obtain prospective customers by telemarketing, and when residents were in need of services, Sohol would schedule an inspection, which would lead to the installation of new air conditioning units,” a news release says. “Sohol does not have a state or local license and his company does not have

a state-certified qualifier,” it adds. Therefore, all his work was illegal, the release points out.

In four of the 11 current cases, Sohol listed the license of a New York man who has no affiliation with him or his company, the release notes. Altogether, Sohol collected more than \$55,926 from the current victims for illegal work, it adds.

Deputies arrested Sohol Nov. 13 at his home in Bradenton. He is charged with 11 counts of Unlicensed Contracting and is being held on \$275,000 bond.

“We have two detectives who work on this full-time because unlicensed contractors undercut legitimate professionals and put citizens at risk,” said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. “Installation by unlicensed contractors also voids the warranty, so these victims spent thousands of dollars for a product that may not be covered if it fails.”

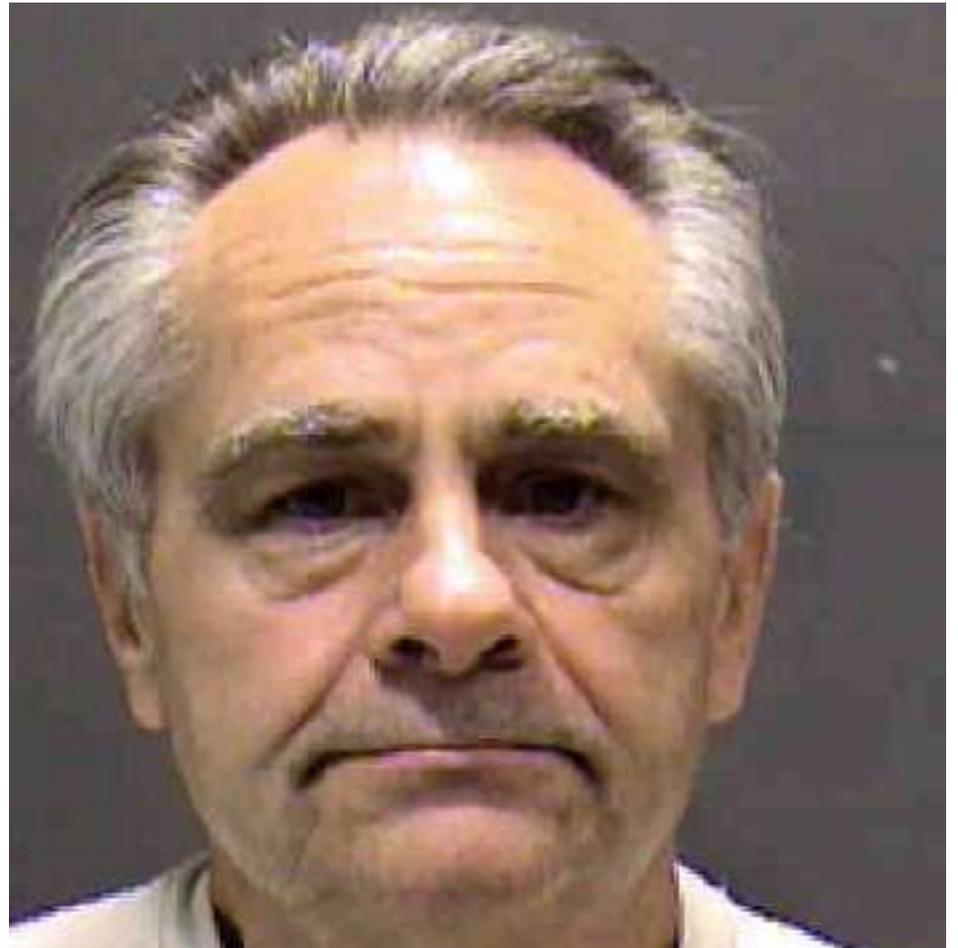
When hiring a contractor, the Sarasota County Building Department recommends people take the following steps:

- Get a signed, detailed contract that spells out the work to be done, when, and for how much.
- Ask for local references and check them.
- Verify the company’s reputation with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- Ask to see the contractor’s license and verify its status. To check a Sarasota County license, call 861-6126.
- Do not make a large down payment, and do not pay in full until the work is complete.

## **SHERIFF’S OFFICE PROVIDES TIPS TO SAFEGUARD AGAINST BURGLARIES**

With the Suncoast enjoying cooler weather overnight, many residents are sleeping with their windows open. An open window can be an open invitation for burglars, so the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office is offering crime prevention tips to help keep residents safe:

- Be sure the windows you choose to open are not next to a door, “to minimize the chance someone could remove the screen to reach inside and open the door,” a news release notes.
- Secondary locking devices allow you to leave windows open enough for ventilation but block them from being opened any wider. These products can be purchased at home improvement stores. “The cost is minimal, but the benefits are tremendous,” the release says.
- While track locks are strongly recommended, inexpensive wooden dowels can block horizontal sliding windows from opening too far. Pins inserted through the frames of vertical sliding windows and doors can also keep them in place.
- Should your home be outfitted with an alarm system, consider the addition of wired screens that enable you to protect those window openings and detect intruders.
- “Finally, whenever you leave the house, close and lock all possible entry points,” the release concludes.



*James Sohol/Contributed photo*

If you think someone is acting as an unlicensed contractor contact the Sarasota County Building Department, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation or visit <https://www.scgov.net/DevelopmentServices/Pages/ContractorLicensing.aspx>.

## 18-YEAR-OLD ARRESTED AFTER HOLDING TWO PEOPLE AT GUNPOINT

Detectives with the Sarasota Police Department have arrested Francisco Ruiz, 18, of 3232 Fruitville Road, Sarasota, after obtaining information that led them to believe he had held two people at gunpoint, stole cash and cell phones from the victims, physically beat one of the victims and stole their truck, the department reported.

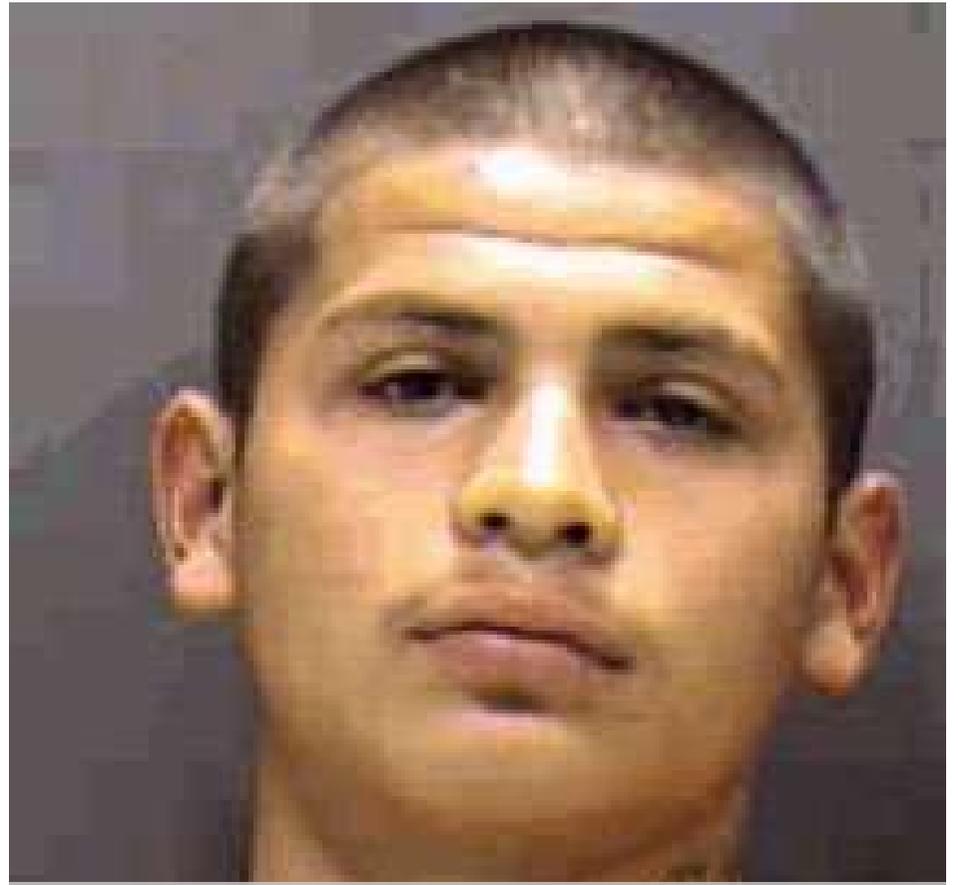
Ruiz has been charged with felony counts of Armed Robbery with a Firearm and Carjacking with a Firearm, according to a news release.

The victims were at the Presidential Apartments when Ruiz asked one of them for a ride, a news release says. After the victim refused, the release continues, Ruiz became angry and started yelling profanities at him. The victim reported to officers that Ruiz told him he was going to call his gang over to kill the victim.

Both victims climbed into their car and drove around the back of the apartment complex to wait for another friend, the report notes. Several minutes later, Ruiz and two other suspects arrived in a gray Volkswagen Jetta, according to the report. The rear passenger — who had not been identified as of Nov. 12 — exited the rear passenger door of the car and pointed a .45-caliber gun at the victims, the report adds.

Ruiz then took the keys out of the ignition of the victims' car, hit one of the victims in the face and ordered both victims out of the car. Ruiz allegedly stole \$140 in cash from one victim's wallet; then he reached into the car and grabbed a cell phone belonging to the same victim, the report says.

The second victim told officers the driver of the Jetta got out of the car next and walked



*Francisco Ruiz/Contributed photo*

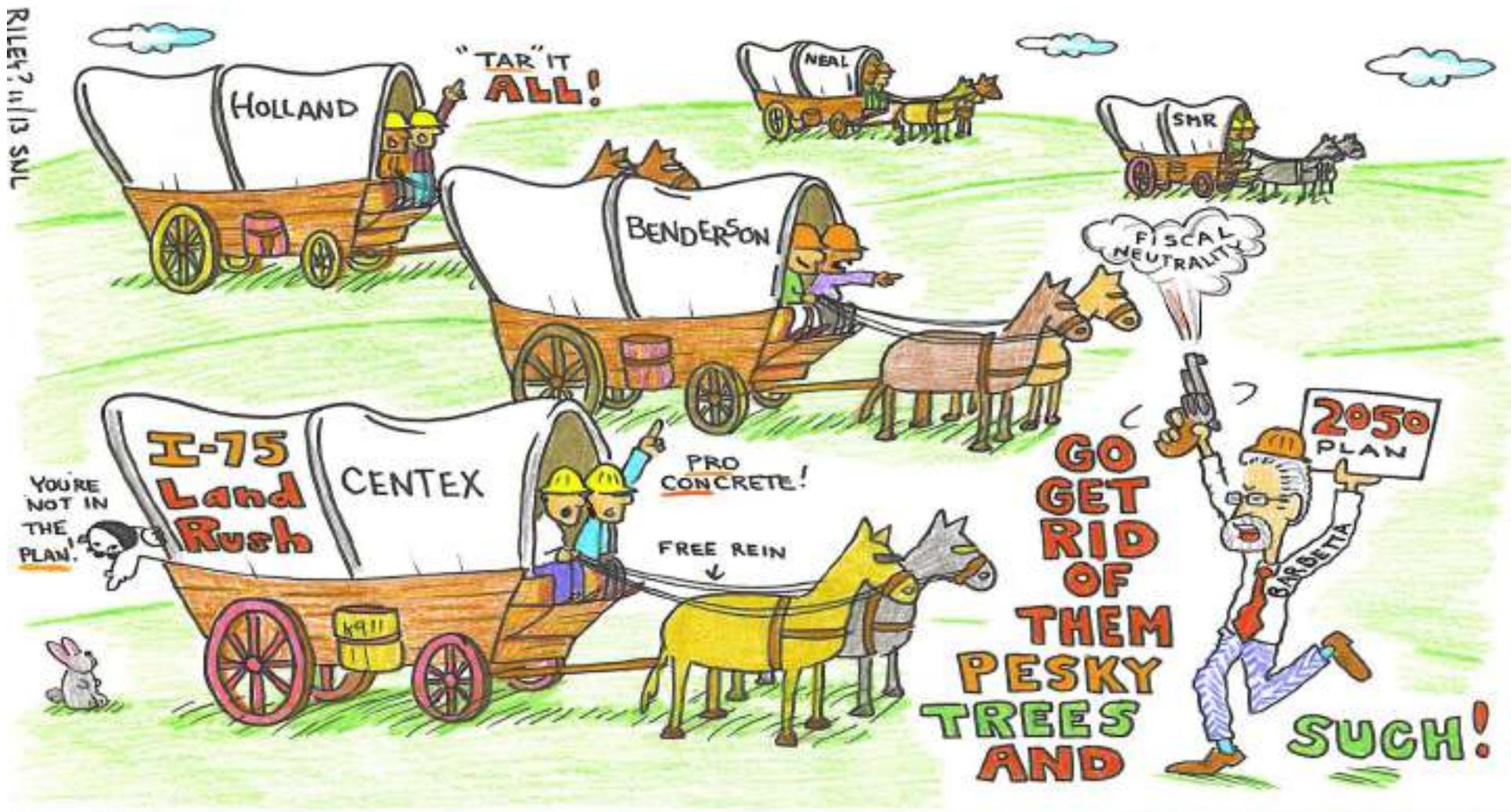
towards him, according to the report. That victim said he saw the handle of a black automatic firearm tucked in the driver's waistband, with the driver's shirt tucked behind the gun. At that point, the report says, the driver ordered the second victim to give him money, and that victim handed over his wallet, which contained \$140.

Afterward, Ruiz and the two unidentified suspects drove off.

Then, about five minutes later, according to the report, the Jetta returned. Ruiz and the rear passenger climbed out of the vehicle, with the passenger brandishing the .45-caliber gun once more. They ordered the victims out of their vehicle and then drove away in it. The Jetta followed them, the report adds.

Anyone with information about the case is encouraged to call Det. Maria Llovio at 364-7336, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at [www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com). 

# OPINION



## BARBETTA'S LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEGACY

### EDITORIAL

One can almost imagine County Commissioner Joe Barbetta's reaction to the draft of the Laffer Associates report on the Sarasota 2050 Plan, delivered in his best Louis Renault voice, "I'm shocked, shocked with this report that wants to destroy our 2050 Plan!"

However, readers of *The Sarasota News Leader* know that his "outrage" rings hollow. It was Barbetta who pooh-poohed then-County Administrator Randall Reid's proposal to hire a qualified academic team to analyze the 2050 Plan, so any proposed changes would stand up to the objections of those against alterations to it.

Barbetta even used Reid's proposal as part of his justification of firing the administrator,

claiming Reid had fashioned himself as "a sixth commissioner."

Instead, Barbetta wanted "a good, quality economist who has development project experience" ... the latter condition really being code for "willing to make life easier for developers." One of the names he tossed out was that of Donna Arduin, who might be considered many things, but to those with academic degrees in economics, perhaps not a "good, quality economist."

Barbetta also objected to the \$85,000 price tag for the academic review, proposed by Reid to be conducted by a team from Florida State University. But the final contract with Donna Arduin's firm, Laffer Associates of Tennessee, was for \$90,000, an amount with which Barbetta found no fault. He believed

# OPINION

it was worth it to get “an economist who can make predictions.”

However, one did not need to be the Amazing Kreskin to predict how Arduin, a hired gun for right-wing politicians, and her associate, Arthur Laffer — famous for being the “father” of what the 41st president of the United States called “voodoo economics” — would view the county’s 2050 Plan.

Their draft report was predominantly an indictment of the entire concept of “smart growth,” citing studies conducted by right-wing organizations, several supported by the infamous Koch brothers. It recommended that smart growth be abandoned in favor of “actual growth,” presumably a euphemism for unchecked plundering of pristine lands by developers.

The reaction to the draft report also has been predictable. It has been roundly criticized by almost all who have read it, *including* Barbetta. Despite his insistence that the county retain these charlatans to evaluate the 2050 Plan, he now expresses consternation at the result.

Perhaps most disappointing is his apparent intention to lay the blame for this misguided waste of taxpayers’ money at the feet of Reid. Barbetta has implied by his communications with staff that Reid somehow subverted the will of the commission in finalizing the contract with Laffer Associates.

Never mind that Reid earlier had been excoriated by Barbetta for having the temerity to propose a serious academic review of the 2050 Plan, to be conducted by people with real qualifications. And never mind that it was Barbetta who proposed Arduin for the job, extolling her “development project experience” and ability to “make predictions.”

To imagine that Reid, who wanted academics to preserve the integrity of the 2050 Plan, would then craft a contract with these

hacks to propose the butchering of that plan — something that Barbetta has publicly pined for on more than one occasion — beggars belief.

It appears to be only the latest example of local public officials, when confronted by the consequences of their wrong-headed actions, casting about for a scapegoat to shoulder the blame for their mistakes.

At this point, the most gratifying action for county taxpayers — and the flora and fauna of eastern Sarasota County — would be for Barbetta to admit he was wrong in denying the need for an impartial academic review and that he was wrong to balk at the cost of such a review. He then should formally repudiate the dangerously flawed Laffer report and ask the rest of the commissioners to join him in inviting an FSU team to conduct a proper, meaningful review of the 2050 Plan.

Better late than never, even if it does cost us an extra \$90,000. 

“Perhaps most disappointing is Barbetta’s apparent intention to lay the blame for this misguided waste of taxpayers’ money at the feet of Randall Reid.”

# OPINION



## SLIGHTLY HACKNEYED

### THE VENERABLE SPORT OF SHOOTING THE MESSENGER

By Robert Hackney

*Opinion Editor*

**COMMENTARY** Citizens for Sunshine sued the City of Sarasota and two commissioners for violating the state's Government in the Sunshine laws. While the city seeks to settle this latest suit, the sixth such occasion in little more than a year, there is no shortage of outrage by some locals.

Unfortunately, the outrage is directed at the organization that keeps calling local governments on their failure to adhere to the law. No one, it seems, wants to admit that violations occur. The first round of negotiations for a settlement always seems to include the request that no admission of a violation is acknowledged by the defendants.

I certainly understand the resentment expressed by many at the frequent lawsuits over Sunshine violations. I just do not understand why the blame is directed at the ones pointing out the violations.

Some claim that attorney Andrea Mogensen is using these violations to fund her practice, "profiting" off the awarding of attorney's fees in the settlements. I do not deny that her firm receives attorney's fees as part of the

settlements, an amount that could approach \$130,000 in only 14 months after this latest suit is finalized. However, a typical law firm of similar size would have to produce annual billings of at least half a million dollars to be considered even marginally successful. So the notion that her firm is "getting rich" off of these lawsuits is laughable.

When one reads the complaints in these lawsuits, and compares them to the Florida attorney general's opinion on how local government officials should apply the law, they do not leave much doubt — assuming the facts in the complaints are correct — that violations have occurred. And, if the facts were different than the allegations in the latest complaint, no rational legal advisor would advocate for an out-of-court settlement. That would mean that Citizens for Sunshine, represented by the Mogensen firm, is accurately calling into question real violations of state law by local officials.

So given this, why does the question continue to be, "Why are these opportunistic lawyers always suing the poor local governments for no good reason?"

# OPINION

Instead, the question should be, “Why, given the clear guidelines for compliance provided by the attorney general, do local officials persist in ignoring the law?”

It is disconcerting that personal responsibility and a willingness to admit one’s shortcomings are never considered. Rather, those accused of wrongdoing blame those pointing out their transgressions, even going so far as to engage in character assassination.

Is this how local officials want to distinguish themselves? Would it not make more sense to distinguish oneself by making a fervent commitment to ensuring compliance with Sunshine laws by all who act in an official capacity?

The people of Florida amended their constitution to provide for transparency in the conducting of the people’s business by governments at the state and local level. And since the people have spoken, it is the duty of all public officials to adhere to that requirement.

Citizens for Sunshine is not the enemy.

## A GUIDE TO POPULAR NEWSPAPERS

Here is a humorous look at some of the country’s most important newspapers and the people who might read them (with special thanks to [About.com](http://About.com)):

1. *The Wall Street Journal* is read by the people who run the country.
2. *The New York Times* is read by people who think they run the country.
3. *The Washington Post* is read by people who think they should run the country.
4. *USA Today* is read by people who think they should run the country, but don’t really understand *The Washington Post*. They do, however, like the statistics shown in pie charts.
5. The *Los Angeles Times* is read by people who wouldn’t mind running the country ... if they could spare the time, and if they didn’t have to leave L.A. to do it.
6. *The Boston Globe* is read by people whose parents used to run the country.
7. The *New York Daily News* is read by people who aren’t too sure who’s running the country, and don’t really care as long as they can get a seat on the train.
8. The *New York Post* is read by people who don’t care who’s running the country, as long as they do something really scandalous, preferably while intoxicated.
9. The *Miami Herald* is read by people who are running another country, but need our baseball scores.
10. *The Sarasota News Leader* is read by people who simply must know what is going on in Sarasota County.

## THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light. — Plato 

# OPINION



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SUNSHINE LAWS' STRICT INTERPRETATION CAN HINDER PUBLIC SERVICE

To the Editor:

As an elected policymaker, I have attempted to understand the homeless issue from all perspectives. In that effort, I have toured The Salvation Army, Harvest House, and Pinellas Safe Harbor. I have interviewed people who helped to create efforts to help the homeless in various cities throughout the United States. I have attended three different presentations by Dr. Robert Marbut. I have spoken with a person with mental illness sitting on the sidewalk and others smoking some substance on the sidewalk of City Hall.

I have considered the “housing first” models, the “shelter plus care” model, the religious conversion model, “tent city” models and Dr. Marbut’s jail diversion “wet shelter” model. I find it dispiriting that when I attended a meeting to hear the perspectives of downtown Sarasota merchants — at which I did not participate in a discussion — I find myself accused of corruption.

The Sunshine Law was created to prevent behind-the-scenes deal making by government officials. It was not intended to hamper or to burden public participation in the policymaking process. Most policymakers know that citizens only rarely attend government meetings or town hall discussions. It is relatively rare for a citizen to take the time to write a letter or an email to a government official. Rather, citizens gather in groups such as business organizations, civic organizations, neighborhood associations and the like, and expect the policymakers to come to them.

To extend the Sunshine Law to prevent more than one policymaker to attend such a meeting is untenable and will only lead to ignorance of public opinion.

How can one represent the public one is elected to serve?

*Susan Chapman  
Sarasota*

*Editor’s note: The writer is a city commissioner.*

# Take Your Time

# You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night

# OPINION

## WRITER TAKES ISSUE WITH STANCE ON SUNSHINE LAWS

To the Editor:

Your recent editorial on Sunshine law issues in the City of Sarasota (Nov. 8) begs a response.

I understand the rationale for unqualified support of “open government” by the news media. Certainly, Florida’s Sunshine laws have done much to overcome some bad practices of bygone years; however, to suggest, as your editorial did, that the law is clear and unchanging is itself deceptive. The law has evolved with interpretive decisions over the years since its enactment and is still evolving today, so much so that the Legislature has found it necessary to enact numerous amendments to remedy absurd interpretations.

Dedicated public officials are frequently caught in the grip of a new interpretation or, in the case of Sarasota County and its cities, by the ambitions of a single law firm that has found it profitable to raise Sunshine issues. That firm has created devices to ensure that it will always have a nominal client, which it controls. The latest challenge to the City of Sarasota is a classic example of such profit-motivated overreach involving an ambiguous situation. Many of these challenges are settled by the defendants simply to avoid the costs of litigation.

Notwithstanding the motivation of those bringing the challenges, it is important to look at the merits of each purported violation to determine if there is evidence of any

nefarious purpose or if any harm resulted. In virtually all of the recent controversies, the “violations” are vague or hair-splitting speculation from which no harm has resulted, and the only benefit of the challenge accrued to the pocketbook of the law firm raising the issue.

You should be more discriminating before launching attacks on people and institutions laboring in good faith to do the public’s business in such an uncertain and hostile environment.

*John Wesley White*  
Sarasota



### 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](mailto: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*.

# Sarasota Leisure

**OHHHH, THAT SAND**  
**STOPPING THE REVOLVING DOOR**  
**NOVEMBER**

*Inside*



**Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast**



# OHHHH, THAT SAND

*The giant sand piles await the master sand sculptors for the 2013 Crystal Classic. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **THE FOURTH ANNUAL SIESTA KEY CRYSTAL CLASSIC MASTER SAND SCULPTING COMPETITION WILL 'TAKE THE STAGE' ON THE BEACH NOV. 15-18**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

As sculptor Matt Long puts it, “The sand goes without saying.”

That fine white quartz sand that dazzles visitors to Siesta Key Beach is the primary element in the Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting competition, which will mark its fourth year starting Friday, Nov. 15.

“It feels like I’m working with the snow,” Sandis Kondrats, one of the winners of the inaugural Crystal Classic in 2010, tells

*The Sarasota News Leader*. He is back on Siesta for his third Crystal Classic. “I have to twist my mind to make it work [that this is sand],” Kondrats adds.

On Nov. 8, exactly a week before the 2013 master sand sculpting event opens, Kondrats and Jan Zelinka of the Czech Republic were drawing long looks from sunbathers as the men spread sand around a sky-high stack of boxes. They were in the very early stages of creating the

“*The Crystal Classic has everything we want. ... They treat the sculptors very, very well. ... We’re made to feel very special.*”

Matt Long  
Master Sand Sculptor  
New York





*Sandis Kondrats (left) and Jan Zelinka work atop the framework for the parrothead logo of Margaritaville Apparel, the sponsor of the 2013 Crystal Classic. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

signature parrothead for the event's big sponsor this year — Margaritaville Apparel — as well as other sponsor logos. Around them, giant-size sand piles awaited the other sculptors who would be competing and “Amazin’ Walter,” as Walter McDonald is known. The South Padre Island, TX, resident is the man who puts on the demonstrations and offers lessons during each Crystal Classic.

Brian Wigelsworth, Siesta's own master sand sculptor — and the creator of the Crystal Classic — soon joined them on top of their pyramid. He had just returned from the airport after picking up another sculptor.

Other than a few technical problems, Wigelsworth says, things were going well.

His only worry: the weather, especially on Saturday, Nov. 16. Still, the event continues through Nov. 18, so the public has plenty of time to take in all the fine details of the sand craftsmanship.

And that engaged public is a major reason Long says he enjoys the Crystal Classic so much.

“People really appreciate [the sculptures] as an art form,” he points out. Sarasotans and the visitors to the Crystal Classic “are very artistically informed,” Long notes. “That’s really what we [sculptors] love the most [about the Crystal Classic].”

Kondrats and Long do not hesitate to point out other factors that make Siesta Key one of



*Willie Turner, a Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department employee, waits in the front-end loader for the signal to add more sand to the ‘parrothead pyramid.’ At right are the stacks of wood that will support the artists’ 8-foot by 10-foot sculptures. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

their favorite spots for pursuing their art: the organizers and the community, as well as the generally good weather.

“Being on a tropical beach is actually kind of rare,” Wigelsworth explains. Siesta is one of only three beaches for such events in the United States where the sculptors generally can count on balmy temperatures.

“It’s fantastic!” Kondrats says.

“The Crystal Classic has everything we want,” Long, a New Yorker, points out. “They treat the sculptors very, very well. ... We’re made to feel very special. It’s hard to come home to be Matt Long again. I’m Bruce Springsteen when I’m down[on Siesta Key].”

He adds, “The accommodations are wonderful; the town is very arts-oriented. ... We get a great turnout.”

Moreover, Long says, “The cleanliness of the sand is the extra special part,” and it holds together so well.

“You don’t get dirty” in Siesta’s sand, Wigelsworth adds.

The only other place he has seen sand almost as white as Siesta’s has been near Mallorca, Spain, notes Zelinka, who is in Sarasota for the first time.

A few more than half of the 20 artists who will compete this year have been former Crystal Classic participants, Wigelsworth points out. Generally, the goal is to invite newcomers to Siesta Key to make up a third to half of the number for the annual event, he says. The three winners from the previous year always are invited back.



*Brian Wigelsworth (left, atop the pyramid) works with Sandis Kondrats to spread sand for the sculpting of the parrothead logo. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*Karen Fralich and Sue McGrew work on their 2012 Crystal Classic sculpture. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

This year, Wigelsworth had to contend with an unexpected problem during his selection process. A major sand sculpting event in Kuwait — an eight-week project — pulled away half of the artists he already had invited to the Crystal Classic, so he had to scramble to replace them.

That Kuwait event has 125 master sand sculptors participating from all over the world, he points out.

That has not hurt the 2013 Crystal Classic, Long maintains, noting the line-up of 10 teams is an excellent one. “It’s going to be a tough neighborhood. It’s going to be really, really good sculptures down there,” he said from his New York home on Nov. 8.

No theme is set, Kondrats explains, but, “At this stage, [the design is] in my mind.”

He and Zelinka await the arrival of their respective partners, they both tell the *News Leader*, to sketch out exactly what they will create out of that beautiful white sand.

“I’m impressed by those [who will be] around me,” Long adds.

“It’s an unusual art form, and it requires a lot of stupidity,” Long says with a laugh.

When a reporter questions what he means by the last part of that statement, Long explains, “It takes a pathological case of OCD” to create the sculptures. “It’s so much work and so short-lived. ... You just have to have a passion for it.”



Delayne Corbett and Craig Mutch won first-place honors in 2012. Contributed photo

## THE ARTISTS AND THE SCHEDULE

The 2013 Crystal Classic will feature the following team members, representing eight countries, as they sculpt for the chance to win prize money totaling \$13,000:

- Craig Mutch, Canada (one of the 2012 winners), and Bill Dow, MT.
- Karen Fralich, Canada, and Dan Belcher, MO (2011 winners).
- Sandis Kondrats, Latvia (one of the 2010 winners) and Bert Adams, WA.
- Michela Ciappini, Italy, and Jan Zelinka, Czech Republic.
- Abe Waterman, Canada (one of the 2012 winners), and Morgan Rudluff, CA.
- Steve Topazio, RI, and Ron MacDonald, FL.
- Matt Long, NY, and Andy Gertler, NY.
- Brett Stocker, Mexico, and Fred Mallet, TX.
- Marek Elsner, Poland, and Ulrich Braentsch, Germany.
- Sean Fitzpatrick, MA, and Andy Hancock, TX.

Master sand sculptor Suzanne Altamare of Florida will be managing the group logo carve.

This year, instead of utilizing Phillippi Estate Park on South Tamiami Trail as a park-and-ride center for visitors to the Crystal Classic, the organizers have arranged for people to take buses from Riverview High School, located at 1 Ram Way off Proctor Road in Sarasota. The service will be offered from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The cost is \$5 per vehicle per day.

As in the past, profits from the event will benefit Mote Marine Laboratory's sea turtle research and conservation programs.

Admission to the Crystal Classic is \$5 per day. The event will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15, through Monday, Nov. 18.

The Crystal Classic Amateur Competition will be held from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 16, with winners announced at 4 p.m.

At 1 p.m. on Saturday, a fashion show will be presented by Margaritaville Apparel. Models will walk along a wooden platform atop the sponsor logos.

The awards ceremony for the master sand sculptors will be held at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 17.

For complete event details, visit [www.SiestaKeyCrystalClassic.com](http://www.SiestaKeyCrystalClassic.com). 



**Siesta Key Beach • November 15-18, 2013 • [SiestaKeyCrystalClassic.com](http://SiestaKeyCrystalClassic.com)**



# STOPPING THE REVOLVING DOOR

*Inmate Ministry Foundation founder Dave Norris says family literacy programs like Read to Me can ease recidivism rates. Photo by mikecogh, via Flickr*

## NEW FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM FOR JAIL INMATES AIMS TO KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

The idea for Read to Me started off pretty simply: Selby Public Library Manager Liz Nolan read an article. The piece, published in *Public Libraries* magazine, detailed a New York Public Library program that promotes literacy in jails and among the children of incarcerated adults. The story “captured my imagination,” Nolan says, so she reached out to the Sarasota County jail about launching something like that

here. Jail staff knew exactly whom to call: Dave Norris.

Norris began volunteering in the county jail four years ago, when the Rev. Fausto Stampiglia

at St. Martha Catholic Church challenged his congregation to take Lent more seriously. “He inspired me to think about what else I could do,” Norris says. He looked in the church bulletin and

“They all realize, all of a sudden, ‘I don’t have access to my children.’ And this is a way to keep the family unit together.”

Dave Norris  
Co-Founder  
Inmate Ministry Foundation



one need jumped out at him: jail ministry. He called the man in charge of the program for the Diocese of Venice and found himself praying alongside prisoners the next day.

But he noticed he kept seeing the same faces again and again. Prisoners would meet with him, be released, then end up right back in jail. Norris realized that many couldn't read, not because they were illiterate, but because they didn't have glasses; they had no way to study or improve themselves while incarcerated.

Norris started buying reading glasses in bulk and now distributes around 300 pairs a month. "That gives you an idea of the volume of inmate turnover there," he points out.

The jail also had just 200 books to loan to prisoners, so Norris reached out to the library

system and Goodwill to expand the number of books available, increasing the total to 6,500 in 2013 alone.

In 2012, Norris and his wife, Bobbi, applied for tax-exempt status with the IRS, which eventually came through this April, and the couple founded the Inmate Ministry Foundation in June. Norris has increasingly become a student of incarceration challenges and statistics. He says one number absolutely floored him. The "children of inmates have a 70% chance of ending up in prison," according to a report Norris came across that cited the Department of Justice.

So when Nolan called him and asked him to work on a family literacy program in Sarasota, he didn't hesitate before saying "Yes."



*Selby Public Library at Five Points in downtown Sarasota will host the first Read to Me event on Saturday. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Here's how Read to Me works: Volunteers go into the jails and record inmates reading stories for their children. The Foundation then burns the audio files to CDs, purchases the books and invites the inmates' kids to an event at Selby Public Library, where they will be presented with the books and recordings. The first Selby gathering will take place this Saturday, Nov. 16, from 1 to 3 p.m.

In addition to working with the jail and the library, Norris reached out to Sarasota County Area Transit to make sure the kids will be able to get to Saturday's event for free. He has also picked up major corporate sponsors such as HealthSouth, which is donating the recording equipment.

The goal of Read to Me is to reduce recidivism rates for the adults, maintain family bonds during trying times and increase literacy among the children, which will make them much less likely to end up incarcerated in the future. Around 25 volunteers made the recordings during the month of November, working with a total of 75 inmates. Nobody knows how many children will show up Saturday, but if one inmate says he or she wants to break the recidivism cycle or one kid says he doesn't want to end up in jail, Norris tells *The Sarasota News Leader* he'll consider the program a success.

Even before the first local event, Norris is planning to make it a quarterly one, and he wants to take the program statewide. The Foundation's budget runs to \$75,000 for 2014, when its goal is to reach five to 10 jails. It wants to be statewide by 2017. That means more than just Read to Me. Norris also wants to implement the glasses program and the book donation program in areas that don't



*The Sarasota County Jail is on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. File photo*

have them. He has meetings lined up with major potential sponsors and says the Florida Sheriffs Association is interested. He'll even be talking with a *Sesame Street* sponsor early next year.

"Where that goes? I don't know," he says. But he's optimistic the Foundation will hit its goals.

Even if it doesn't, it's already had an impact. Norris says the inmates' recordings are unbelievably emotional. "It's incredible stuff; it's just incredible," he says. "They all realize, all of a sudden, 'I don't have access to my children.' And this is a way to keep the family unit together." 



**NOVEMBER**

*No sun — no moon*

*No morn — no noon*

*No dawn — no dusk — no proper time of day*

*No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,*

*No comfortable feel in any member —*

*No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees*

*No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds —*

*November*

*Abridged from November  
by Thomas Hood, London 1844.*

## A COLD DREARY MONTH ELSEWHERE BRINGS A BOUNTY TO SAVOR IN FLORIDA

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri

*Contributing Writer*

Thomas Hood wrote this poem in a city shrouded in fog and smoke. I first read it on a cold November day with winter stretching endlessly before me.

In Florida, summer lingers on. The Gulf is still warm enough for swimming.

Saltbush blooms and climbing aster appears in wet places. In the flatwoods, birds feed on purple beautyberry and the red berries of wild coffee. Grasses give up their seeds. Common buckeye butterflies nectar on goldenrod. The last of the golden aster attracts Gulf fritillaries. Blazing star, which first bloomed last July, can still be found in the pinelands.

Subtle as they may seem, Florida has its seasons. Tree swallows frequent fields while shorebirds crowd rivers and beaches. The sanderlings have returned from long migrations to the Arctic. Little diving ducks are back at the Celery Fields. Eagles nest in the pines.

Sometimes it seems most of “birddom” is crammed into this peninsula.

Other than the calendar, the only guidepost to the month is shorter days. The sun rises later; dark comes on earlier, a small price to pay on a balmy evening with a huge full moon shining through the Spanish moss.

November in Florida would have warmed the heart and soul of Thomas Hood. 



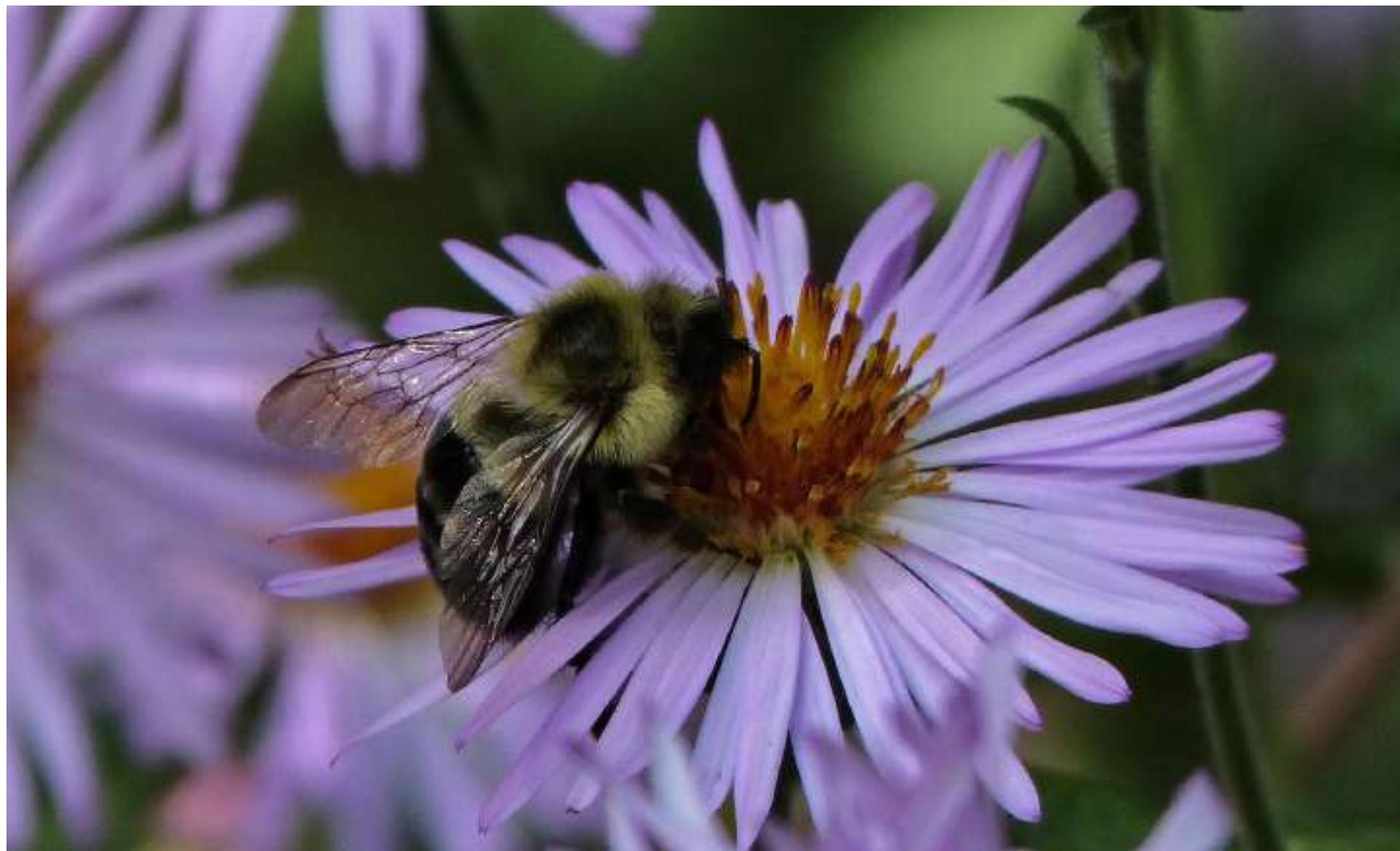
















**I like to take my time.**

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 community calendar, 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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## PREPARE TO BE ENCHANTED

*City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell addresses the crowd at the Nov. 9 dedication.*

### **SELBY GARDENS CELEBRATES THE COMPLETION OF ITS CHILDREN'S RAINFOREST GARDEN**

#### *Staff Reports*

On Nov. 9, Selby Gardens welcomed children — and their parents, of course — to explore a brand new world: the Ann Goldstein Children's Rainforest Garden.

The dedication was held under the banyans in the grove where Marie Selby planted Morton Bay fig trees in the early 1920s. It featured remarks from Selby leaders, elected officials and Alfred Goldstein, who contributed the lead gift in honor of his late wife, Ann, a news release pointed out. The celebration included self-guided tours of the new garden as well as live musical performances, hands-on demonstrations, lawn games and arts and crafts.

The elevated rainforest has been designed to enable children and families to interact with and learn from plants. Among its highlights are huts with thatch roofs, a waterfall cascading down a rock face with lush plants, a suspended rope bridge, caves for exploring, adventure trails and even a research station “to inspire curious minds about what they may find in an actual working research center,” the news release notes. “Features were purposely designed to simulate one of the wildest places on earth — the tropical rainforest, home to half the world's known plant and animal species,” the release adds

“The design team and construction professionals who helped create this magical destination are to be commended for achieving the impossible,” said Cathy Layton, chairwoman of Selby’s board of trustees, in the release. “They worked tirelessly and cooperatively for eight months to deliver this incredible result. Speaking for the board, we could not be more proud.”

The \$5 million campaign, which includes \$1 million for endowment, “was made possible by the generosity of hundreds of individuals, organizations and foundations,” the release points out. In addition to the Goldsteins, Beverly L. Koski, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Pete Russell and Cathy Layton, the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee

and the Dart Foundation were early contributors. “Herb Schaal, a leading expert in children’s garden design, was instrumental in developing the concept for the new garden,” the release adds.

Tandem Construction, with Milton Shenk serving as owner’s agent, was the contractor for the project. Certified Pool Mechanics and Hazeltine Nurseries created the rainforest effect with faux rock, tropical plants and water features, the release notes.

For more information about the internationally renowned Selby Gardens and the new Children’s Rainforest Garden, visit the [website](#).

*All photos are by Robert S. Hackney.* 





*Selby Gardens board Chairwoman Cathy Layton offers remarks.*



*The crowd listens to speakers during the dedication.*



*A 'Hugging Tree' is one of the Rainforest Garden's features.*



*Monkey bridges are just part of the fun.*







**WE SALUTE YOU!**



*Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## HEARTFELT THANKS AND TRIBUTES ARE OFFERED DURING THE ANNUAL SARASOTA VETERANS DAY PARADE AND CEREMONY

*Staff Reports*

Veterans groups, bands, color guards and military equipment marched and rolled through downtown Sarasota on Monday, Nov. 11, for the annual Veterans Day Parade. This year, the theme was *Service and Sacrifice*.

Hundreds of people lined Main Street to show their thanks to the men and women

who have served the nation on battlefields at home and abroad — more than a few of whom were participants in the parade.

Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel and City Editor Stan Zimmerman were there to record the event. 



*Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*The Riverview High School Kiltie Band makes its way down Main Street. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Photo by Norman Schimmel



Photo by Norman Schimmel



*Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino (center) joins a group from her department in the parade. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Members of the Sarasota County Fire Department head down Main Street. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*A variety of American flags from throughout the nation's history wave from a unit in the parade. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



*In period uniforms, a group represents the first veterans in the nation's history. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Sarasota High School's Mighty Sailor Band gathers on Orange Street to take its place in the parade. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



*At the conclusion of the parade, a ceremony was conducted in Chaplain J.D. Hamel Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Sheriff Tom Knight (left) and Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino (right) flank Sheriff's Office members. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Sarasota County and City commissioners greet each other as they prepare for their part in the parade.  
Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

*Photo courtesy of [morguefile.com](http://morguefile.com)*

### **WITH SUMMER FINALLY OVER, IT IS TIME FOR GARDENERS TO TURN THEIR FOCUS TO OFF-SEASON CHORES**

**By Rick Wielgorecki**  
*Contributing Writer*

With cooler temperatures finally arriving and the rainy season over, it is time for us to take a deep breath of drier air and congratulate ourselves for getting through another searing summer. The bounty of four consecutive months averaging 10 or more inches of rain has raised the water table way above normal, and it is nice to have a surplus as we enter the dry season.

This is a good time to sharpen and lubricate the tools that have served us well during the months of heavy pruning and trimming. Amateurs and professionals both need to utilize quality tools that help make clean cuts.

These promote healthy plants, free of ragged edges that injure them and subject them to stress, disease and general poor health.

The tool I pick up first is my precious set of hand pruners. The model I use is the No. 2; it is Swiss-crafted by the company that earned its stellar reputation by producing the famous Swiss Army knives. The pruners are my most used and cherished tool. These sturdy beauties usually will last a decade (even under heavy professional use) because they are incredibly well made. Moreover, when their components wear out (they never really break), replacements are easy to acquire.



*Every good gardener needs to take good care of the tools of his trade. Photo by Rick Wielgorecki*

In addition to being a great pruner the No. 2 is handy for snipping string to bundle brush, slicing open bags of fertilizer and cutting hoses in half to make repairs. The comfortable ergonomic handles are easy on my palm and fingers, and the keen durable blade is surprisingly powerful. It has a bolt-and-retainer system for making minute adjustments to keep the crosscut blade snug against the blunt shear for an extremely clean quick cut.

The No. 2 also has a lively spring that keeps plant material clear after shearing, so you can make cuts in rapid succession. Finally, it has a sturdy adjustable locking mechanism to keep the blade safely closed when out of use.

When the blade gets dull, it can be removed from the handle and ground back into

sharpness with just a single swipe on a small grinder. After a year or two, the blade can be replaced at a reasonable cost — and on and on you go.

As far as lubrication: Just a drop of 30 weight oil on all moving parts will keep the pruners cutting smoothly. The accompanying photo shows the disassembled No. 2 ready for cleaning, sharpening and lubricating.

When I am working in the field or at home, I always keep the No. 2 handy, employing the manufacturer's sheath that slides conveniently onto my belt. I really feel ready for anything with it by my side.

*Rick Wielgorecki may be contacted at 362-0600 or [wielgo@hotmail.com](mailto:wielgo@hotmail.com).* 





# *Siesta Seen*

## **ILLEGAL RENTALS, THE OUTDOOR MERCHANDISE DISPLAY ISSUE, GIDGET'S COASTAL PROVISIONS' LATEST OPENING TIMELINE AND A 'BIRTHDAY PARTY' ARE TOP ISLAND TOPICS**



**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Illegal rentals were back in the spotlight at the Nov. 7 Siesta Key Association meeting, with the key's Code Enforcement (CE) officer, John Lally, pointing out, "This summer was the worst summer we've had" for such incidents on the island.

The case level "continues to grow and grow," he said, "and there's only one of me, so I get to as many [violators] as I can."

He discussed both the 6537 Sabal Drive house — which has been mentioned frequently in



*The sun glitters on the Gulf of Mexico on Nov. 8, as visitors to Siesta Public Beach find the water is still warm enough for swimming and wading. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

this space over the past months — as well as a house on Ocean Boulevard.

“The property down on Sabal Drive was a nightmare,” he told the approximately 30 people present at the SKA meeting. Demolition of the first floor is under way, he noted, to bring the structure into compliance with county and Federal Emergency Management Agency regulations.

Lally pointed out that the owners of the structure added six bedrooms and three bathrooms to the ground level.

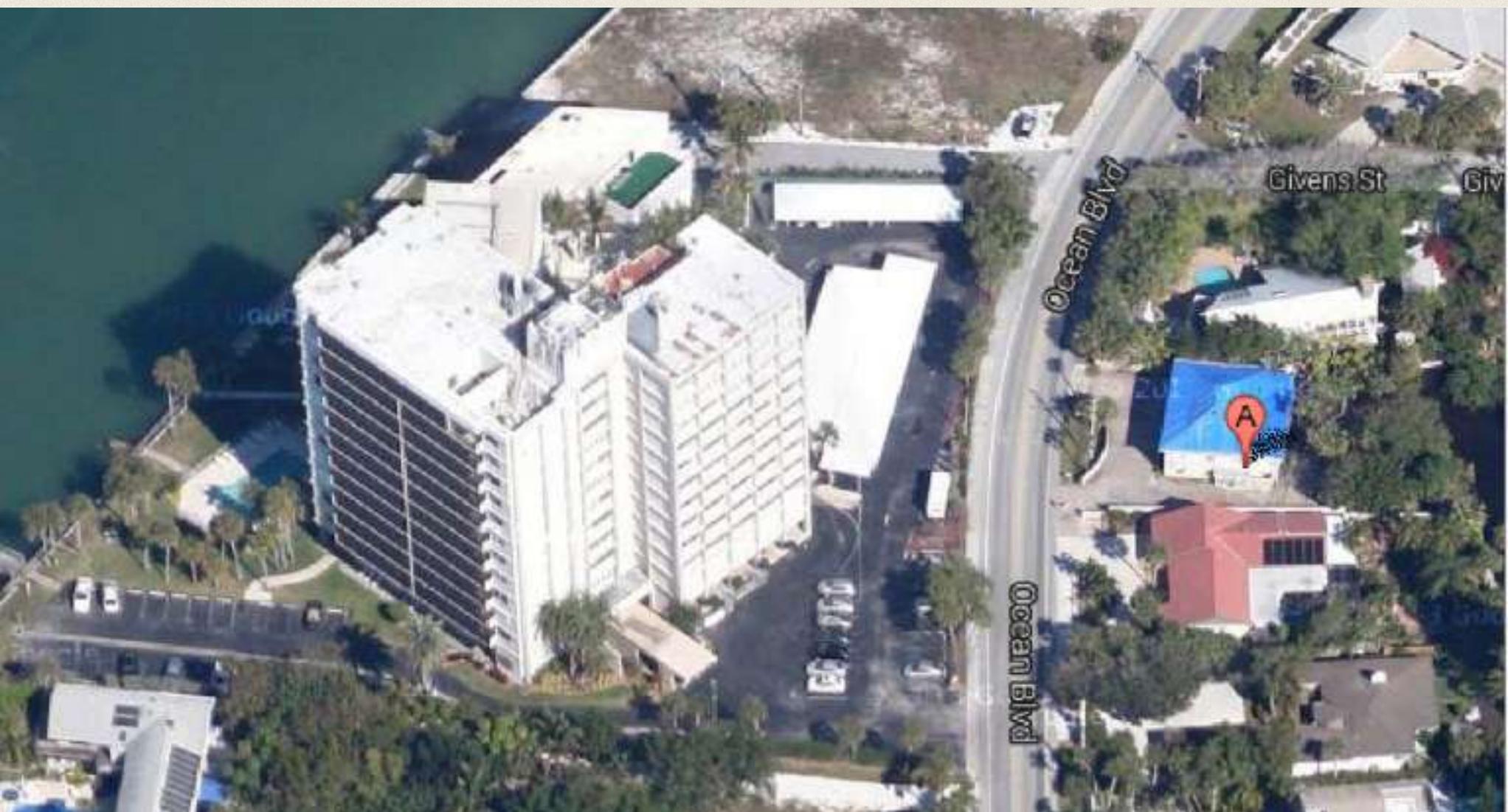
As for the single-family home at 4809 Ocean Blvd.: The previous owner enclosed the ground level of that structure, too, and added

three units to make it a four-plex, Lally explained. The new owner — an artist from Canada — is in the final stages of bringing it fully into compliance with the county code.

When SKA Director Joe Volpe asked whether the work on illegal rental homes has been done by licensed or unlicensed contractors, Lally replied, “Both.”

Lally added, “The state is really coming down on unlicensed contractors.” The fine per disciplinary action has risen from \$500 to \$2,000, he pointed out.

Further, the fine can go up to \$2,000 for a licensed contractor who fails to pull a permit. “We have a stage of fines for licensed



*An aerial view shows the house at 4809 Ocean Blvd., which is being brought back into county code compliance by its new owner. Image from Google Maps*

# *Siesta Seen*

contractors,” Lally said. After the first incident of not pulling a permit, a contractor has to appear before the licensing board, he added. Licensed workers, he said, “know when a permit is needed a lot more than an unlicensed contractor would.”

Lally explained that federal regulations do not allow any construction of living area on the first level of a residence in a flood zone, such as the entire island of Siesta Key. The first floor has to be higher than 15 feet 4 inches, he added. That allows a storm surge to flow through the ground level, theoretically without causing significant damage.

When SKA Vice President Michael Shay asked for more details about the Ocean Boulevard house, Lally replied, “It’s a done case now.”

The new owner, who bought the house in foreclosure, “voluntarily complied” with the county code, Lally added. “He’s really worked with us to bring it back to a single-family residence.”

When Volpe then asked whether Lally had dealt with any rental scams, Lally said he had. In fact, one woman resident on the island, Lally reported, had people show up on two separate occasions, saying they had rented her house. “They had never made contact



*Code Enforcement Officer John Lally had multiple updates for Siesta Key Association members on Nov. 7. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

with her,” Lally added. “The money went to Nigeria or wherever.”

In response to a question about how often people can rent their houses, Lally explained that the county ordinance allows for a maximum of 12 rentals per year. The regulation calls for one rental every 30 days, he pointed out; however, to give owners flexibility, the county will allow a person to rent a house for the last week of a month and then again for the first week of the next month.

He also noted that the owner of rental property has to be registered with the Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office — so the Tourist Development Tax can be collected — and the state’s [Department of Business and](#)

[Professional Regulation](#), which has authority over rental facilities and makes certain they are inspected.

## THE OUTDOOR DISPLAY ISSUE

I was unable to attend the Nov. 12 meeting at St. Boniface Episcopal Church to address the ongoing effort to loosen the outdoor merchandise display regulations in the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD). However, I understand a subcommittee has been appointed to address the matter.

Cheryl Gaddie, president of the Siesta Key Village Association, told members during the SKVA monthly meeting last week that her organization would continue to work



*The owners of Le Grand Bisou Caribbean Boutique and Siesta Key Outfitters in Siesta Village have pressed for a loosening of restrictions on outdoor merchandise displays. File photo*

# *Siesta Seen*

with the SKA and the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce to determine whether the ordinance should be revised.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson told me she was unable to attend the Nov. 12 session because of having to drive to Daytona for a RESTORE meeting — the ongoing state initiative to figure out how best to divvy up whatever money comes to the counties as a result of the BP settlement over the oil rig disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

Patterson said no one had presented any proposal to her since Kevin Cooper, the outgoing executive director of the Siesta Chamber, offered a suggested revision of the SKOD to her during the summer. That one “allowed for an awful lot [of outdoor display area], at least in my opinion,” Patterson noted on Nov. 13.

SKA Vice President Shay shared with me in early October an email exchange he had with Gaddie, saying he was concerned that the SKOD ordinance was not being enforced since some business owners complained about it in early June at an SKVA meeting.

He wrote on Oct. 4, “I have always been a ‘law & order’ type ... guy and if there are rules on the books then they should be followed and enforced, no exceptions. And if there is an issue about them and people want to work to change them, they still have to abide by them UNTIL there is a change. By allowing someone to thumb their nose at the ordinances, you are inviting others, who ‘play by the rules’

to start to flout them, all under the guise of ‘I need to do it so my business survives.’ And by not enforcing the ordinances you take away their incentive to work to change them.”

Gaddie replied, “We are all in agreement that enforcement is fair and necessary. There is a reason for the ‘rules on the books’ and the laws do apply to everyone.”

Although she knows John Lally “has a lot of area to cover,” she added, she planned to talk with Patterson about “what we can do to better enforce the ordinances.”

With Lally present at the Nov. 7 SKA meeting, Shay took the opportunity to ask about the lack of enforcement he has observed in recent months in Siesta Village.

Lally explained that his superiors had told him to hold off on enforcement of the outdoor merchandise provision until some agreement on the matter could be reached among all the affected parties. However, Lally added, “We didn’t realize that this was going to be as slow a process for the Village Association and [the SKA] to get together to decide what you want. If that is ‘no outdoor display,’ all the boss has to do is tell me, and it will go away.”

“I rest my case,” Shay said, then thanked Lally.

Patterson also alluded to that very situation when I spoke with her on Wednesday — that Code Enforcement had been told to hold off on notices or citations until the matter was resolved.

# *Siesta Seen*

## **UPDATE ON GIDGET'S**

Brian and Trudy Wigelsworth really had hoped their new shop, Gidget's Coastal Provisions, would be open before the holiday season commenced. It is going up where Napoli's once stood, next to the Siesta Key Oyster Bar on Ocean Boulevard. Nonetheless, it appears mid-January is the target time, Brian told me last week.

"But it's coming along," he added. In fact, he said, the concrete pour was three days earlier than expected.

In the meantime, Mark Loveridge, project manager in the county's Planning and Development Services office, told me on Nov. 13 that the request for construction of three transient apartments on the upper level of Gidget's may come before the county Planning Commission on Dec. 19.

Loveridge said the agenda has not been finalized, adding he would let me know as soon as it is.

## **THE NOISE**

On Nov. 5, the County Commission voted unanimously to extend the sunset date of the Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance to Nov. 18, 2014, to provide staff extra time to hold public meetings on several matters.

No person asked to speak during the public hearing on the extension.

Donna Thompson, the county's assistant zoning administrator, told the commission the

delay of the ordinance's sunset for another year would enable staff to engage residents in discussions on revisions of the ordinance's noise sections, especially in regard to maximum decibel levels.

She added that staff members already planned a neighborhood meeting in South County on Jan. 20 and were working to find a North County venue for a second session.

On Nov. 13, Donna LaDue, the administrative specialist in the Zoning Office, told me the North County meeting "has not yet been scheduled."

A Nov. 5 memo to the County Commission from the zoning staff points out that representatives from that office, Code Enforcement and the county's Neighborhood Services office already had held initial meetings with various civic associations regarding the Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance. "These meetings have not revealed any substantial concern with the regulations relating to the ... Ordinance with the exception of the Siesta Key Village community," the memo adds.

The ordinance had been scheduled to sunset on Nov. 18 of this year — after the County Commission approved a one-year extension of the sunset originally set for Nov. 18, 2012.

## **SIESTA CLEANUP**

SKA Vice President Michael Shay announced at the organization's Nov. 7 meeting that an Adopt-A-Road pickup will be held on Saturday, Nov. 23, sponsored by the SKA and SKVA.

# *Siesta Seen*

Participants are invited to arrive at the Village Café at 8 a.m. that day for a free breakfast, thanks to co-owners Tom and Kay Kouvatso. The pickup will start promptly at 9 a.m. As usual, he wrote in an email to his regular volunteers, it will cover all of Ocean Boulevard as well as Higel Avenue and Siesta Drive, all the way up to the north bridge. (SKA participants will go as far as the “humpback bridge,” he added, “and our partners,” members of the Bay Island Association, will cover the rest of Siesta Drive to the bridge.)

“Come out and bring your friends!” he added. “As usual, grabbers, gloves and trash bags will be provided.”

## **STORMWATER PROJECT UPDATE**

According to the latest update to the County Commission on the Siesta stormwater project, the contractor began digging the “rim ditch” this week. It is a sump necessary to remove groundwater, Capital Projects Director Isaac Brownman wrote in an email. “Now that the groundwater level is dropping, pond excavation has commenced,” he added, referring to the construction of the new 1-acre retention pond.

Coordination is continuing between the contractor for that project and the Jon F. Swift firm, which is handling the Siesta Beach



*An aerial view shows work under way again at the stormwater project site next to Siesta Public Beach. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

# Siesta Seen

improvements project, Brownman pointed out, “for work to be performed in common areas.”

Brownman added, “Staff expects to receive an updated work schedule from the contractor this week that will take this project through final completion. More information on the time impact will be provided as it becomes available. At this time we do not expect that the delays we have had to date will significantly impact the [Siesta] Beach project.”

## CONDO COUNCIL MEETING

The Siesta Key Condominium Council will hold its first meeting of the season at 3 p.m. Nov. 19 at Siesta Key Chapel, with guest speaker Kevin T. Wells, an attorney, providing an update on new laws affecting Florida condominium associations.

Future meetings are scheduled for Dec. 3 and Jan. 7 — both at 3 p.m. — at the Excelsior condominium complex on Midnight Pass Road.

## WHAT A DELIGHT!

SKA members were treated to a wonderful 65th “birthday party” for the organization on Nov. 7. Jeff LaHurd, a history specialist with the Sarasota County History Center, presented a slide show and discussed Siesta Key’s past.

Among the facts he offered: In 1954, the island had only 500 permanent residents and, according to his research, no structure taller than two stories. In those days, he added, Siesta truly was a tropical paradise.



*Sarasota County History Specialist Jeff LaHurd regales the Siesta Key Association audience with tales from the island’s history. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

The first bridge to the key opened in 1917; it was replaced in 1927, LaHurd said. “You almost swapped paint with the cars that were coming the other way.”

LaHurd also pointed out that Harry Higel — for whom Higel Avenue is named — platted Siesta Key. Higel had the first telephone on the island, LaHurd added. “Who did he talk to?” is the question that always pops in his mind, LaHurd noted, when he considers that.

As part of the celebration, SKA Director Joe Volpe and his wife, Lana, brought cupcakes. The Volpes regularly treat members to chocolate chip cookies, but Lana made it plain this occasion demanded something more festive. 



## A&E BRIEFS

### **PURLIE TO OPEN THE 2013-14 WBTT SEASON**

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe (WBTT) will open its 2013-14 season on Friday, Nov. 15 with *Purlie*, a Tony Award-winning musical version of the play *Purlie Victorious*.

The cast features 16 actors, running the gamut from familiar Troupe members to

many first-timers on the WBTT stage, a news release says.

Earley Dean Wilson, one of the first Troupe members, will enjoy his first WBTT starring role as Purlie, it points out. Wilson has been mentored by WBTT founding Director Nate

*(From left) Earley Dean Wilson, Gia McGlone, Ariel Blue and Emmanuel Cadet will star in Purlie. Contributed photo*

Jacobs since Wilson was 8. Wilson has most recently been working with the Cumberland County Playhouse in Crossville, TN.

The show also features WBTT favorite Ariel Blue as Missy and two new guest artists — Gia McGlone as Lutiebelle (McGlone just finished the national tour of *Dream Girls*) and Emmanuel Cadet, who plays Gitlow, the release continues.

The show will run through Sunday, Dec. 15. Show times are Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Two Saturday matinees have been added to the schedule — on Dec. 7 and 14.

“We are very excited to open the season with this award-winning musical,” said Jacobs in the release. “It is one of my favorite musicals, and it is also a favorite of the director, Jim Weaver.”

He continued, “*Purlie* is also special to me because our Broadway star, Teresa Stanley, debuted in a local production as Lutiebelle at the age of 15. Teresa is presently starring in Broadway’s *Rock of Ages* as Justice. Our *Rhythms of Change* lineup of plays covers 100 years of African American history. We look forward to entertaining our audiences as we recreate meaningful times in our past. We are thrilled to begin with *Purlie*. The play has a lot to say in a very entertaining way.”

*Purlie* is both a Tony and Drama Desk winner. The book is by [Ossie Davis](#), Philip Rose and Peter Udell; lyrics are by Peter Udell; and the music is by Gary Geld.

“The story features Purlie Victorious Judson as a dynamic traveling preacher who returns to his small Georgia town to shake things up and change lives during a time when many Southern sharecroppers still lived under the Jim Crow laws,” the release explains. The story was portrayed first as a straight play, in 1961, followed by a 1963 film, *Gone Are the Days!*, which starred many of the same stage actors, including Ossie Davis as Purlie; Ruby Dee as his wife, Lutiebelle; and Alan Alda as Charley Cotchipee.

The musical opened in 1970 and won two Tonys, including Best Leading Actor in a Musical (Cleavon Little) and Best Featured Actress in a Musical (Melba Moore).

Tickets are \$28.50; they may be purchased online at [www.wbttsrq.org](http://www.wbttsrq.org) or by calling the box office at 366-1505. Subscriptions are still available for the season; they include four shows for \$80.

The WBTT theater is located at 1646 10th Way in Sarasota.

# Take Your Time

# You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night

## ENJOY SOME *PULP CULTURE* AT ART CENTER SARASOTA

As part of Art Center Sarasota's first exhibition in its 2013-14 exhibition season, *Pulp Culture*, a group exhibition devoted to the power of paper, opened Nov. 7 and will run through Jan. 3, the gallery has announced.

*Pulp Culture* showcases works by Matt Cusick, Tasha Lewis, Wilks Mammone, Matthew Shlian and Annie Vought. Three artist's books on loan from Ringling College's Verman Kimbrough Library will also be displayed, a news release explains.

Emma Thurgood, Art Center Sarasota's exhibitions' coordinator and curator of this exhibit, "freely admits to her love affair with

paper," the release continues. "The look, the feel, the smell and, on occasion, the taste all captivate my attention," she says in the release. "Paper's most desirable quality is its versatility. Paper can be so much more than writing or drawing material. Fold paper and it becomes a three-dimensional object with form and weight. Cut paper, and you become aware of the teetering balance between its strength and weakness. Paper as a found object gives a new layer of meaning to the writings and drawings placed upon them. 'Pulp Culture' explores all of these ideas, celebrating paper in an increasingly paperless world."



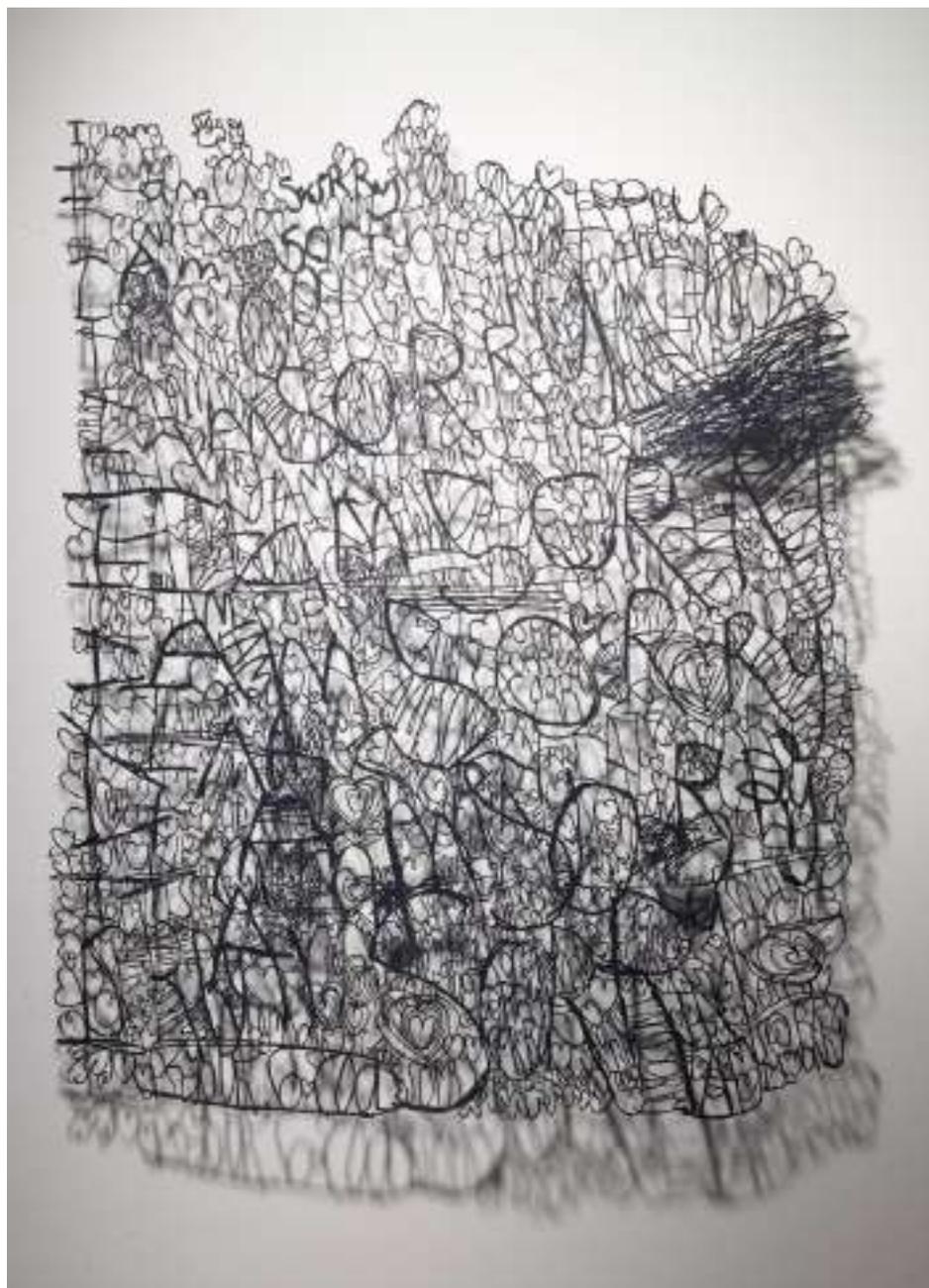
*The Herd by Tasha Lewis. Contributed photo*

New York-based Cusick uses the pages of old history books in his series called *Defacements*, the release adds. “This series is created by selectively and meticulously sanding away text on a page to create an ironic scenario with remaining words and the images left on the page.”

Mammone graduated from Ringling College of Art and Design with a major in fine arts printmaking, the release notes. “She turns her art in on itself, investigating issues of identity and the boundary lines between art and artist with subversively placed images of herself within photographs, prints, paintings and installations.”

Origami artist and self-described “paper engineer” Shlian “investigates the nebulous space between art and engineering,” the release says. His work is rooted in print media, book arts, commercial design and collaborations with researchers and scientists, it notes. Shlian describes himself as “a collaborator, explorer and inventor.”

Los Angeles-based artist Vought works primarily with cut paper, “exploring communication through writing with incredibly detailed letterforms,” the release continues. “I believe handwritten records are fragments of individual histories — expressions of self that bring forth the truth of our inner lives,” Vought explains in the release. “A letter is physical confirmation of who we were at the moment it was written, or all we have left of a person or a period of time.”



*PS You're So Cool by Annie Vought. Contributed photo*

“This exhibit showcases the myriad ways paper can be used to create art — encompassing sculpture, contemporary origami, paper engineering, paper cutting and alternative processes,” says Lisa Berger, the executive director of Art Center Sarasota, in the release. “After seeing this exhibit, you’ll never look at paper the same way again!”

For more information about Art Center Sarasota, call 365-2032 or visit [www.artsarasota.org](http://www.artsarasota.org).

## CIRCUS SARASOTA HAS A NEW BRAND TO BETTER REFLECT ITS PROGRAMS

Almost 17 years ago, Circus Sarasota, made its debut under a canvas tent, and it has just kept growing.

As a result, co-founders Pedro Reis and Dolly Jacobs worked with their team over the past months to create a new brand identity for the organization, which has become host to an array of performance, training and outreach programs: The Circus Arts Conservatory.

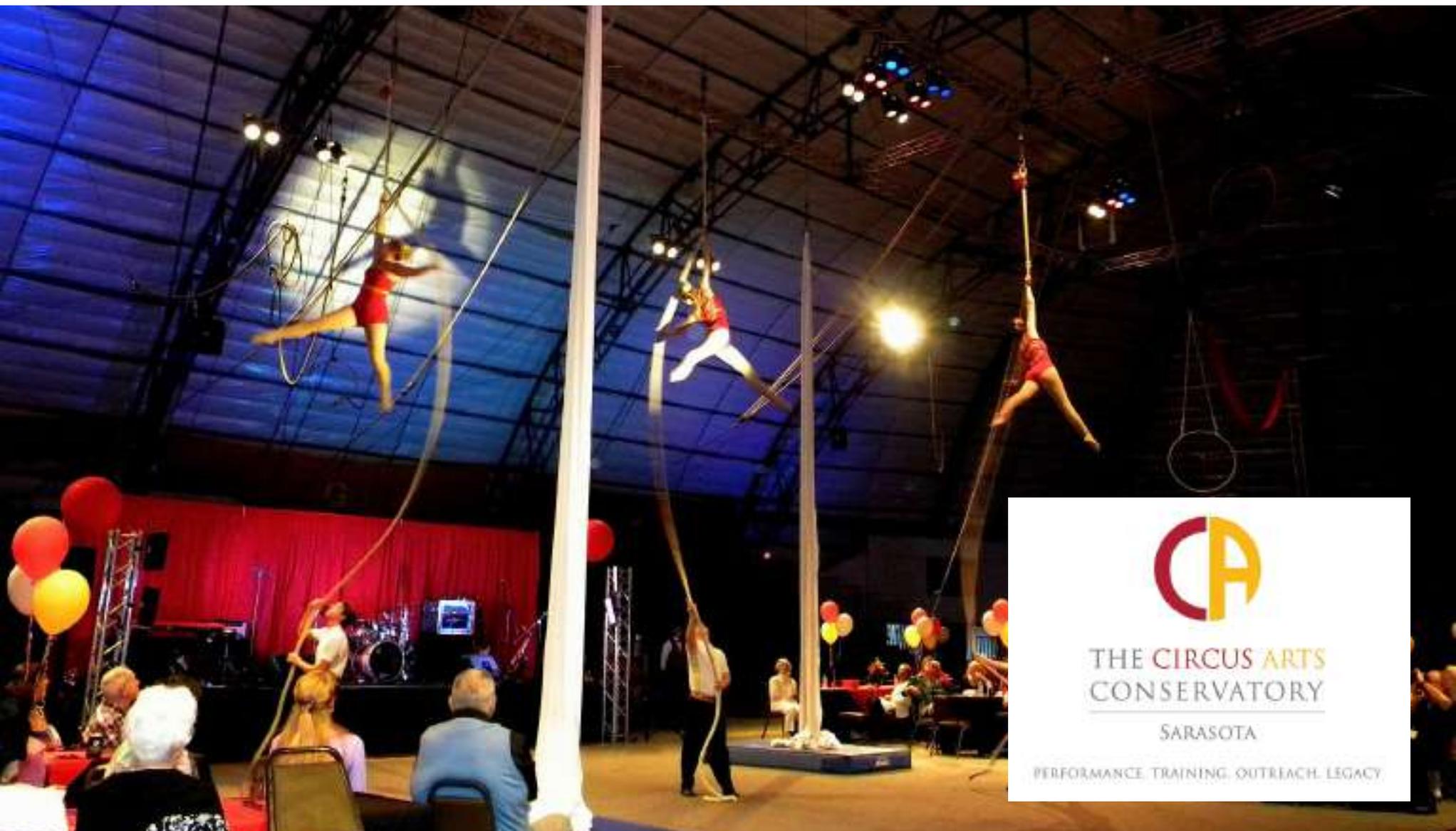
The Circus Arts Conservatory encompasses Circus Sarasota, the newly named Sailor Circus Academy and dedicated education and humor therapy programs, a news release notes.

The process of developing, creating and designing the new identity, carried out by

Sarasota's Be Creative Studios, "involved focus groups with core community members, supporters and centers of influence," the release adds.

The Circus Arts Conservatory was born from decades of circus history and today serves as a legacy to those who "have set the standards for international circus performance," the release adds. In the late 1920s, John Ringling moved his circus winter quarters to Sarasota, and the circus became an integral part of the social and economic life of the community, the release continues.

Jennifer Mitchell, The Circus Arts Conservatory managing director, says in the release, "Our goal was to totally understand



*Sailor Circus performers take to the air during the Nov. 2 event held to announce the rebranding. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

who and what we are to the public and who and what we need to be ... as we leverage the Circus Arts. What became very clear was that we are highly recognized and esteemed for our performances, but there is very little awareness by the public that we are a non-profit organization.”

She continued, “As a nonprofit, we have had a tremendous impact on youth, education and outreach year-round in the community. It was so important that we change [public] opinion as we are charged with a plan to take our programs to the next level, raising capital for facility improvement at our permanent home on Bahia Vista and leveraging our reputation as a nationally recognized center for Circus Arts. We are totally energized and excited by this time of opportunity and change.”



*Pedro Reis, co-founder of Circus Sarasota, marks the rebranding occasion with City Commissioner Susan Chapman (left) and former Mayor Lou Ann Palmer. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Dolly Jacobs and Pedro Reis welcomed supporters to the rebranding celebration. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## ZAMPARAS TO KICK OFF NEW MUNCHTIME MUSICALES SEASON

The Sarasota Concert Association will present pianist Grigorios Zamparas in a Munchtime Musicales performance Wednesday, Nov. 20, at noon in David Cohen Hall at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, located at 709 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the association has announced.

The concert is free and open to the public.

Zamparas has received critical acclaim as a recitalist, orchestra soloist and chamber musician in Greece, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia, Russia, Latin America, South Korea and the United States, a news release points out. He is a frequent guest at festivals worldwide, having performed several times at the prestigious Newport Music Festival

(Newport, RI), the Mainly Mozart Festival (Miami), the Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota and The Salon of the Arts (Sofia, Bulgaria), among others, the release adds. He has been featured as a soloist in more than 20 different piano concerti with orchestras such as the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra (Brazil), Indiana University Symphony Orchestra, Boston Neopolitan Chamber Orchestra, Togliatti Philharmonics Symphony Orchestra (Russia), the Sofia Soloists (Bulgaria) and the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic Orchestra (Czech Republic).

Zamparas is assistant professor of music at The University of Tampa, where he oversees the piano program, the release notes. He is also the pianist with the Trio de Minaret, a



*Grigorios Zamparas will perform on Nov. 20 at Cohen Hall in Sarasota. Photo courtesy of Zamparas*

chamber music ensemble in residence at the university. Zamparas began studying music at the age of 7 in Greece, where he received his first piano degree — from the Lamia Conservatory in 1995.

Zamparas' Munchtime Musicales program will feature the Busoni transcription of J. S. Bach's *Organ Toccata in C Major*, Debussy's *Prélude* from *Pour le piano*; Ravel's *Toccata* from *Le tombeau de Couperin*; and several selections by Franz Liszt, the release adds.

Munchtime Musicales is a series of free concerts featuring performances by high-caliber, area-based artists, the release explains. The series is designed to offer a wide variety of

musical styles, including classical, folk and jazz, featuring both vocal and instrumental performers.

The 2013-14 season will continue with Bill Schustik, known as the "American Troubadour," the release continues. Schustik is a "folk singer with a keen sense of drama who performs on a colorful array of folk instruments and who has a deep interest in traditional American lore," the release says. He will perform on Dec. 11.

Seating is open for Munchtime Musicales; no reservations are accepted. For information, call 351-7467 or visit <http://scasarasota.org/munchtime.htm>.

## DIVERSE ARTS LECTURES TO BE OFFERED ON NOV. 21

On Thursday, Nov. 21, two lectures will be offered — one in Venice and one in Sarasota — about arts topics.

The first, *The Gender of Modernism: The Women Who Opened Modern Art Museums in America*, will focus on the Suffragettes, "women working for a better America," a news release says. "To them, modern artists represented modern ideas — new ways to see the world; new ways to solve and resolve problems," the release notes. They made art; they bought art; and they created public venues to introduce the American public to Modernism, the release adds. "Abstract art to them was a liberation — an ideology that represented freedom of thinking."

The program will be presented from 2 to 3 p.m. at Jacaranda Trace, located at 3600 William Penn Way in Venice. Tickets are \$10 at the door.



*Suffragettes are credited with opening modern art museums in the United States. Contributed photo*

That evening — from 6 to 8 p.m. — Art Center Sarasota will present a program about Christo and Jeanne-Claude: *Wrapping the Pont Neuf Bridge in Paris, 1985*.

Over 20 times in the past 40 years, Christo and his late wife Jeanne-Claude “created world events for spectators, admirers, and skeptics,” the release continues. “They made, and he continues to make, what is now known as Environmental or, Land, Art. The works are visually impressive, unquestionably breathtaking and always controversial because of

their scale and cost,” the release points out. “However, the artists repeatedly insisted that they were merely making ‘art for art’s sake’ and, as such, were working for two reasons — their own pleasure and to enchant the public,” the release adds. “They succeeded in their ventures. They managed to astonish everyone!”

Art Center Sarasota is located at 707 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Tickets are \$10 at the door. Those planning to attend may wish to bring cushions for their chairs, the release notes.



*One of Christo's best-known installations involved the Pont Neuf Bridge in Paris in 1985. Photo by Airair via Wikimedia Commons*

## ACTORS WANTED FOR TROUPE IN A TRUNK OUTREACH PROGRAM

Auditions for Venice Theatre's *Troupe in a Trunk* spring school tour will be held on Monday, Nov. 25, at 1 p.m. at the theatre, located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. in Venice, the theatre has announced.

Venice Theatre Education and Outreach Director Sandy Davisson, who is directing *Troupe in a Trunk*, is looking for four adults to play roles in *FROG!*, a contemporary version of the classic tale *The Princess and the Frog*, a news release explains. The play was written by Venice Theatre's playwright in residence, Ronald K. Myroup.

The zany characters include the Princess, the Frog and Mother Grimm, the release adds. As the story progresses, Mother Grimm reaffirms its theme, the release notes: "Don't judge a book by its cover."

Audition participants are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and footwear. They should also note that rehearsals and performances take place during daytime hours, the release points out. Scripts are available for perusal by contacting Sandy at 486-8679 or [sandydavisson@venicestage.com](mailto:sandydavisson@venicestage.com).

In its 21st year, *Troupe in a Trunk* is an outreach program of Venice Theatre, the release explains. With a minimum of set pieces, costumes and makeup, *Troupe* brings live performances to Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte county elementary schools "to expose young students to theatre, stimulate their imagination and create a bridge to the performing arts," the release notes. The troupe members will take their trunk on tour in March and April.



(From left) Amy Blake, Stacy Pinkerton, Cara Herman, Lynne Doyle and Kathryn Killinger are ready to head out with their trunk for last season's production of *Big Bad!* Contributed photo

## TIM CONWAY ADDED TO VAN WEZEL LINE-UP

High-spirited comedian Tim Conway will take the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall stage on Saturday March 22, at 8 p.m. with humorist friend Louise DuArt, the Van Wezel has announced.

To his peers, Tim Conway is “the comedian’s comedian,” a news release points out. “Audiences, on the other hand, simply consider him one of the funniest men in show business.” Acclaimed for his inventive, often improvised style and razor-sharp timing, Conway is most recognized from his 11 years co-starring on TV’s classic *Carol Burnett Show*, which garnered him five Emmy Awards and a Golden Globe, the release adds. Conway has made frequent primetime

television appearances on sitcoms such as *30 Rock* and *Yes, Dear* and is a regular on *Living The Life* on ABC Family Channel, the release continues.

Conway’s show will be 90 minutes with no intermission, featuring stand-up comedy and sketches, including classics he has made famous throughout his career, the release adds. DuArt, “often called one of the world’s greatest comedic-impressionists, continues to astonish critics and audiences alike with her dead-on impressions of America’s most famous people,” the release notes.

For more information and to buy tickets, contact the Van Wezel Box office at 953-3368 or visit [www.vanwezel.org](http://www.vanwezel.org). 



Tim Conway (left) with Robert Morse in an ABC Television production of *That's Life*. Image from ABC TV via Wikimedia Commons

## RELIGION BRIEFS



*(From left) Joanne Trachtenberg, Paula Spitalny and Patty Schreiber greeted participants at Temple Sinai's recent Mitzvah Day. Contributed photo*

### TEMPLE SINAI MEMBERS SHOW THE MANY WAYS THEY CARE

In May 2012, Temple Sinai members “acknowledged the importance of being a Caring Community” by creating a new position called vice president of caring, the Temple says in a news release.

The first person to fill this position is Elana Margolis, “who had just rolled off two years of being co-president” of the Temple, the release adds. “We realized that to truly do a good job of showing our members and the community at large that we care required more than a small subcommittee,” the release explains. Margolis has a force of more than a dozen Temple volunteers who help with various projects.

Traditionally, caring has been evidenced by clergy visiting the ill and the homebound, the

release notes. “The current efforts go well beyond that.”

Home-baked mini-challah breads and stuffed animals — Care Bears — are given to members when trained volunteers visit them, the release continues. Fresh flower arrangements have also been delivered to members in assisted-living or nursing facilities during the Jewish High Holidays.

“Temple Sinai makes a point of caring for all its members,” the release says. Each family with new babies is given a gift, for example, and college students receive Starbucks gift cards at the holidays. A cadre of volunteers hand-write milestone birthday greetings, condolence notes and congratulatory messages when special recognition is deserved.



*Elana Margolis, vice president of caring, holds a silk floral arrangement, an example of those the Caring Committee of Temple Sinai shared with homebound members during the Jewish holidays. Contributed photo*



*During Temple Sinai's recent Mitzvah Day, Leigh Gordon and Lisa Kleinberg cleaned hundreds of apples that went into bag lunches assembled for the homeless clients of Resurrection House in Sarasota. Contributed photo*

In addition to caring for its members, Temple Sinai has a strong social action component to reflect its philosophy, the release explains. Mitzvah Day is one day a year that brings together members of all ages and guests to work at *Tikkun Olam*, healing the world, the release adds. Projects are done on campus and at numerous locations around the community. Annually, a Food Drive held during the High Holidays brings in thousands of pounds of food and supplies for the Mayors Feed the Hungry program. Additionally, care packages are sent twice a year to Jewish service people

overseas, including items they have requested as well as treats and holiday-related goodies, the release notes.

A new initiative this fall is a partnership between Temple Sinai and the Sarasota YMCA to provide more volunteers to tutor children enrolled in the Sarasota County public schools.

“Whether it is within Temple Sinai, the Sarasota-Manatee area or the world at large, Temple Sinai is walking the talk” when its members say they care, the release adds.

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## **MUSICAL PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION TO FOCUS ON THE BEATLES**

“The Beatles weren’t really so great! Or were they?” will be the question explored through music and discussion at Temple Emanu-El, on Wednesday, Nov. 20, at 7 p.m., the Temple has announced.

The presentation will be led by David Glass, a prominent attorney in New York City who “moonlights” as a Beatles expert and has spoken on this topic in New York and New England, a news release notes. Members of the community are warmly invited.

Temple Emanu-El is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

“From Beatlemania to Sgt. Pepper and beyond, the Beatles were the defining pop culture phenomenon of their era,” Glass notes in the release. “They influenced everything from lifestyles to hairstyles to politics, to an extent that has no parallel before or since.”

“But what about the music itself?” he adds “Does it stand the test of time? Was it as good as we remember, or are our memories clouded by a haze of, ahem, nostalgia?”

In a “magical mystery tour” of recorded and live musical examples, Glass will explore the connections between the compositional techniques intuitively used by Lennon, McCartney and Harrison and those of the great classical composers, the release notes. “Whether you are interested in the Beatles, popular or classical music, or simply a new look at the greatest (?) band of all time, Glass promises a ‘splendid time for all,’” the release adds.

Admission is \$5; reservations are appreciated. To make a reservation, call Barbara Gerber at 927-4683. 

**The Sarasota News Leader**  
**No-Nonsense Reporting**



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**15**  
NOVEMBER

**Planned Parenthood presents High Tide at High Noon**

Nov. 15, noon. Sarasota Yacht Club, 1100 John Ringling Blvd. Tickets: \$65. Information: 365-3913, Ext. 1024, or [MyPlannedParenthood.org](http://MyPlannedParenthood.org).

**15**  
NOVEMBER

**Jazz Club of Sarasota presents Jazz at Two, featuring Tony Castellano Jr.**

Nov. 15, 2 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$7 (\$12 for non-members). Information: 366-1552 or [JazzClubSarasota.org](http://JazzClubSarasota.org).

**15+**  
NOVEMBER

**FSU/Asolo Conservatory presents The School for Lies**

Through Nov. 17; times vary. FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Admission: \$27 to 29. Information: 351-8000 or [AsoloRep.org](http://AsoloRep.org).

**15+**  
NOVEMBER

**Dabbert Gallery presents Season of Color**

Through Nov. 29, 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**15+**  
NOVEMBER

**Florida Studio Theatre presents Monty Python's Spamalot**

Through Jan. 5; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$18 to 49. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**16+**  
NOVEMBER

**Artist Series Concerts presents Crossover with the Rastrelli Cello Quartet**

Nov. 16 & 17, 7:30 p.m., Historic Asolo Theater, 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 to 45. Information: 306-1202 or [ArtistSeriesConcerts.org](http://ArtistSeriesConcerts.org).

**29**  
NOVEMBER

**WSLR presents John McEuen in concert**

Nov. 29, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$20 advance; \$25 at door. Information: 894-6469 or [WSLR.org](http://WSLR.org).

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*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.*