

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 17 — January 10, 2014

News Leader

A LAND DISAGREEMENT

A SURPRISE OFFER

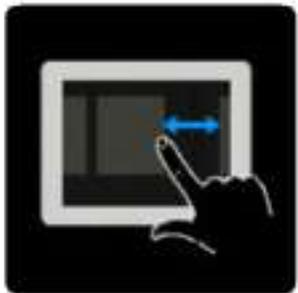
PREDICTIONS COME TRUE

Inside



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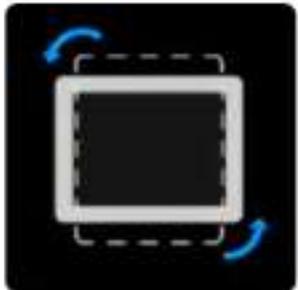
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A.K.A. HELP

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Welcome

I believe most of us on staff would concede we were a little rusty this week after taking off time for the holidays — but rusty only in the sense of minor matters, such as mistyped words. I can assure you we all were happy to be back on the hunt for good stories.

And certainly the good stories were waiting for us.

Two of our top articles this week are updates on issues that have simmered for some time. County Editor Roger Drouin and City Editor Stan Zimmerman collaborated on a look at where things stand between the City and County commissions regarding the vacant site of the former city Police Department headquarters; a 2003 Memorandum of Understanding between the boards over that property remains a point of contention.

This week, I learned that warning flags were waved about the new Bob's Boathouse long before it opened. I had so many documents about this ongoing saga scattered on my computer desktop at one point this week that I could barely see the other items for them.

Siesta Key news flourished this week, too, including a rumor about weddings being prohibited on Siesta Public Beach in 2015. Fortunately, county staff was very helpful to me in sorting fact from fiction.

On the lighter side, correspondent Barbara Dondero has crafted a lovely story about a new Chalk Festival, and Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel — with the help of Production Manager Cleve Posey — has put together a wonderful look at the extraordinarily talented students of the Sailor Circus Academy.

Welcome to a new year of local news!

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





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A LAND DISAGREEMENT



““ *The whole thing is clear as mud.*

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

””

The open lot where the former Sarasota Police Department stood is green space now on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A 2003 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY AND COUNTY HAS BEEN RESURRECTED IN THE FORM OF A POLITICAL DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO BOARDS

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

An agreement reached 10 1/2 years ago between the City and County commissions cleared the way for the swap of key downtown parcels.

But that agreement has resurfaced in the form of a simmering political dispute between the two current boards.

It all goes back to 2003, when the county leveled an ultimatum to the City of Sarasota. Faced with the prospect of losing Sarasota County's central operations in downtown Sarasota, the Sarasota City commissioners capitulated.

In exchange for the county promising to keep its court and administrative facilities on Ringling Boulevard, the city agreed to several concessions, including handing over the downtown parcel where the Sarasota Police Department (SPD) headquarters stood.

On July 15, 2003, a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by then Mayor Lou Ann Palmer and then County Commission Chairwoman Shannon Staub. “The County agrees to satisfy its facilities master plan for Court and Administration needs within the downtown judicial complex area, and the City agrees to provide the County with

CONTRACT NO. 2003-286
BGC APPROVED 6/24/03

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding is entered into this 15TH day of JULY 2003 by and between the **CITY OF SARASOTA**, a municipal corporation existing under the laws of the State of Florida ("City") and the **BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** of Sarasota County Florida, a political subdivision of the State of Florida ("County").

WHEREAS, the City and County have entered into discussions relating to matters of mutual concern to them; and

WHEREAS, the City and County have identified the following eight (8) Principles of Agreement, which each agree to work in good faith to implement through future actions, and agreements.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants and conditions herein contained it is agreed as follows:

County agrees to satisfy its facilities master plan for Court and Administration needs within the downtown judicial complex area and City agrees to provide the County with the police facility site ready to build.

County agrees to assign to the City for fifteen (15) years, or unless otherwise mutually agreed upon, air rights to its three surface lots on Morrill, Main & 301, and Adams & 301 for the purpose of building public parking facilities and providing an option for commercial tenancy provided that such uses replace current County parking on site, or otherwise agreed to, and that commercial uses are mutually agreed upon.

County and City agree to explore other options to maximize the use of City and County public lands for redevelopment and parking purposes so as to avoid removing additional private property from the tax base and so as to add additional private property to the tax roles where possible, including public/private partnerships as well as relocation of public facilities like the 4th Street fire station to free up assets. As well, the County agrees to make its existing downtown parking assets available for public use in a fashion that does not violate its current parking agreements with the City or any related development stipulations.

City agrees to participate in financing shared parking to support the expanded court facilities, the City's Payne Park and vicinity needs, providing up to 300 additional spaces but not to exceed \$4,000,000.

City agrees to participate financially in the development of up to 100 additional parking spaces (to be determined) available in the immediate vicinity of the County Administration building for joint use by County, City and the public.

the police facility site ready to build,” the document says.

But the contract was never finalized; a formal interlocal agreement was never signed, and the deed to the land never was transferred from the city to the county. That lack of resolution is a sore that has festered over time. The old police station site on Ringling Boulevard sits empty.

The future of that former SPD headquarters property is slated for discussion at the Jan. 14 County Commission meeting.

City commissioners do not appear willing to give up the parcel. At their Jan. 6 regular meeting, they made it clear they do not think

of the MOU as a binding contract. “We had no legal obligation to [do] any of it,” Mayor Shannon Snyder said.

Yet, county commissioners say the city is not following through on its share of the accord struck 11 years ago.

In an email he wrote after the City Commission discussion, County Commissioner Joe Barbetta said he wanted to talk about the issue at the Jan. 14 County Commission meeting.

“This matter has been pending for far too long and should have been resolved quite some time ago,” Barbetta wrote to his fellow board members and county administrative staff.



The old Sarasota Police Department building was torn down in May 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

In an earlier email, dated Dec. 30, Barbetta made it clear what action he expects: “We should have had this Deed from the City quite some time ago, so hopefully the City will comply quickly.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson told *The Sarasota News Leader* she did not agree with the manner in which the county leveled the ultimatum at the city leading up to the 2003 agreement. Patterson said her belief is that the county seat should remain downtown — with or without concessions from the city.

“I didn’t think the county should [have been] having that conversation in the first place because the downtown of Sarasota is of great value to everyone,” Patterson pointed out.

“Moving commission meeting and planning staff and administration would have been a huge blow to downtown Sarasota, so I was very focused on making it stay downtown, with an agreement or without an agreement,” Patterson said.

Yet, terms were reached, Patterson noted, adding, “[The city] should keep to that agreement. ... The MOU operates like a contract.”



*The Silvertooth Judicial Center is just west of the parcel where the city police headquarters once stood.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

TUG OF WAR?

“The whole thing is clear as mud,” Patterson said about the question of how to handle the ownership of the old police department site. But one thing is clear: The two sides do not see eye-to-eye on the issue.

At the Jan. 6 meeting, the City Commission, by consensus, agreed with City Attorney Bob Fournier.

“My advice, to put it in a nutshell,” Fournier said, “was that the City Commission is under no legal obligation to convey that site based upon that MOU.”

Mayor Shannon Snyder asked his colleagues, “Does anybody want to sign off on that property? Raise your hand.”

The only response was laughter.

Meanwhile, county commissioners and county staff say they want the land so they can begin planning for expanded judicial and law enforcement facilities on Ringling Boulevard.

In the short term, the property could be used for county parking for the current jail and judicial tower. In the future, it could be the site of a new parking deck, Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer told the *News Leader*.

County Commissioner Christine Robinson has suggested the parcel might be used for an expansion of the Silvertooth Judicial Center just west of it.

County officials believe the property is an important piece of the puzzle as conceptual planning for the entire Ringling Boulevard judicial and law enforcement area begins. The

offices of the Sarasota County Tax Collector and Supervisor of Elections will also be involved in the master planning for the area, Harmer noted.

“It’s planning for the future,” Harmer said.

MORE ON THE ACCORD

Only 11 years have elapsed since then Mayor Lou Ann Palmer reluctantly signed the MOU. But most of the major players are gone from the stage. It resurfaced in March 2013, prompting City Manager Tom Barwin and former County Administrator Randall Reid to take a stroll through downtown together, looking at ways to heal an old wound.

The MOU also assigned air rights to the city until 2018 for a parcel at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Main Street. Additionally, it put the city on the hook for \$4 million “to participate in financing shared parking to support the expanded court facilities, the City’s Payne Park and vicinity needs, providing up to 300 additional spaces but not to exceed \$4,000,000.”

On Oct. 29, when the MOU came up again during a County Commission meeting, Barbetta said of the old SPD site, “Part of the deal was that we took that in trade, so technically, that’s our parcel of land.”

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh replied, “It should be conveyed under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding, in my opinion. I’m not sure the city shares that view.”

As is clear from the Jan. 6 discussion, the City Commission does not; the next move lies with the County Commission. 

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A SURPRISE OFFER

“It's great news.”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

”

Artifacts more than 12,000 years old have been located in Little Salt Spring. Contributed photo by Curt Bowen

THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI HAS SAID IT WILL DONATE LITTLE SALT SPRING TO SARASOTA COUNTY, BUT ONE COMMISSIONER SAYS THE OFFER IS THE FIRST STEP IN A LONGER PROCESS

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The University of Miami (UM) has offered to donate Little Salt Spring — a site where artifacts dating back about 12,500 years have been found — to Sarasota County.

The announcement came in the new year as a bright surprise to supporters who have been hoping the county would take ownership of the 112-acre site.

“I didn't really anticipate UM saying, ‘We will donate it,’” said Lawry Reid, president of the Friends of Little Salt Spring.

But in a letter forwarded to the county commissioners this week, UM General Counsel

Maria Gralia conveyed exactly that message: “I am pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees of the University of Miami has approved the donation of the property known as Little Salt Spring located in the City of North Port, Sarasota County, Florida to Sarasota County for inclusion in the Environmentally Sensitive Land Acquisition Programs.”

The Dec. 20 letter was marked as received by county officials on Dec. 30. The Friends of Little Salt Spring's president learned the news on Jan. 6 when Commissioner Christine Robinson emailed him a copy of the letter.

“I was thrilled,” said Reid.

Other spring supporters, such as North Port resident Jill Luke, voiced their excitement as well. “This year is starting out phenomenal!!” Luke wrote in an email response.

But the deal remains far from official. Reid put it this way: “We’ve had a good blast off, but we haven’t gotten to the moon yet.”

County staff and university officials are negotiating a final agreement, which must be voted on by the County Commission, said Sarasota County spokesman Curt Preisser. In addition to drawing up a contract agreeable to

both parties, they would have to arrange for the property to be transferred to the county through a state agency, such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

The transfer has to be handled that way because of a 1982 requirement stipulating that the property can only be turned over to a state agency, with the premise that the spring would be preserved for educational and research purposes only. The County Commission voted on Oct. 23 to operate the spring as an environmental and educational preserve if the county were to take over ownership.



“ I didn’t really anticipate UM saying, ‘We will donate it.’

Lawry Reid
President
Friends of Little Salt Spring

”

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI



Office of Vice President
and General Counsel

Gables One Tower, Suite 1250
1320 South Dixie Highway
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

Ph: 305-284-2700
Fax: 305-284-5063

December 20, 2013

Carolyn Mason
Chair of the Board of County Commissioners
Sarasota County
1660 Ringling Boulevard
Sarasota, Florida 34236

Re: Little Salt Spring

Dear Commissioner Mason:

I am pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees of the University of Miami has approved the donation of the property known as Little Salt Spring located in the City of North Port, Sarasota County, Florida to Sarasota County for inclusion in the Environmentally Sensitive Land Acquisition Program.

Please direct your staff to contact Gerry Altschul, Assistant Vice President for Real Estate to discuss the agreement conveying the property to Sarasota. Gerry along with Robert Murphy in his department will lead the business discussion. I will be leaving the University at the end of the month, but will continue to provide legal assistance to the University as needed. My colleague Judd Goldberg will be the general counsel assigned to this project. Judd may be reached at 305-284-2700. Our office will begin working on identifying a State agency that will take title to the property for purposes of conveying to Sarasota County.

The University is delighted to donate this unique property to Sarasota County and our commitment to continue to use as a geological, archeological and ecological preserve for future generations of Floridians.

Respectfully yours,

Maria A. Gralia

Assistant General Counsel

cc: Sarasota County Commission
Stephen E. DeMarsh, County Attorney
Thomas A. Harmer, Interim County Administrator
Amy S. Meese, Natural Resources Director
Dr. Thomas J. Leblanc, Provost
Mark Diaz, Vice President & Interim CFO of the Miller School of Medicine
Rudy Fernandez, Vice President for Governmental Affairs
Gerard M. Altschul, Assistant Vice President for Real Estate
Judd Goldberg, Associate General Counsel

2013002525

2013 DEC 30 P 12:59

SARASOTA COUNTY
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

If both sides reach agreement, the spring property would be added to the county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program holdings.

ONE STEP IN A LONGER PROCESS

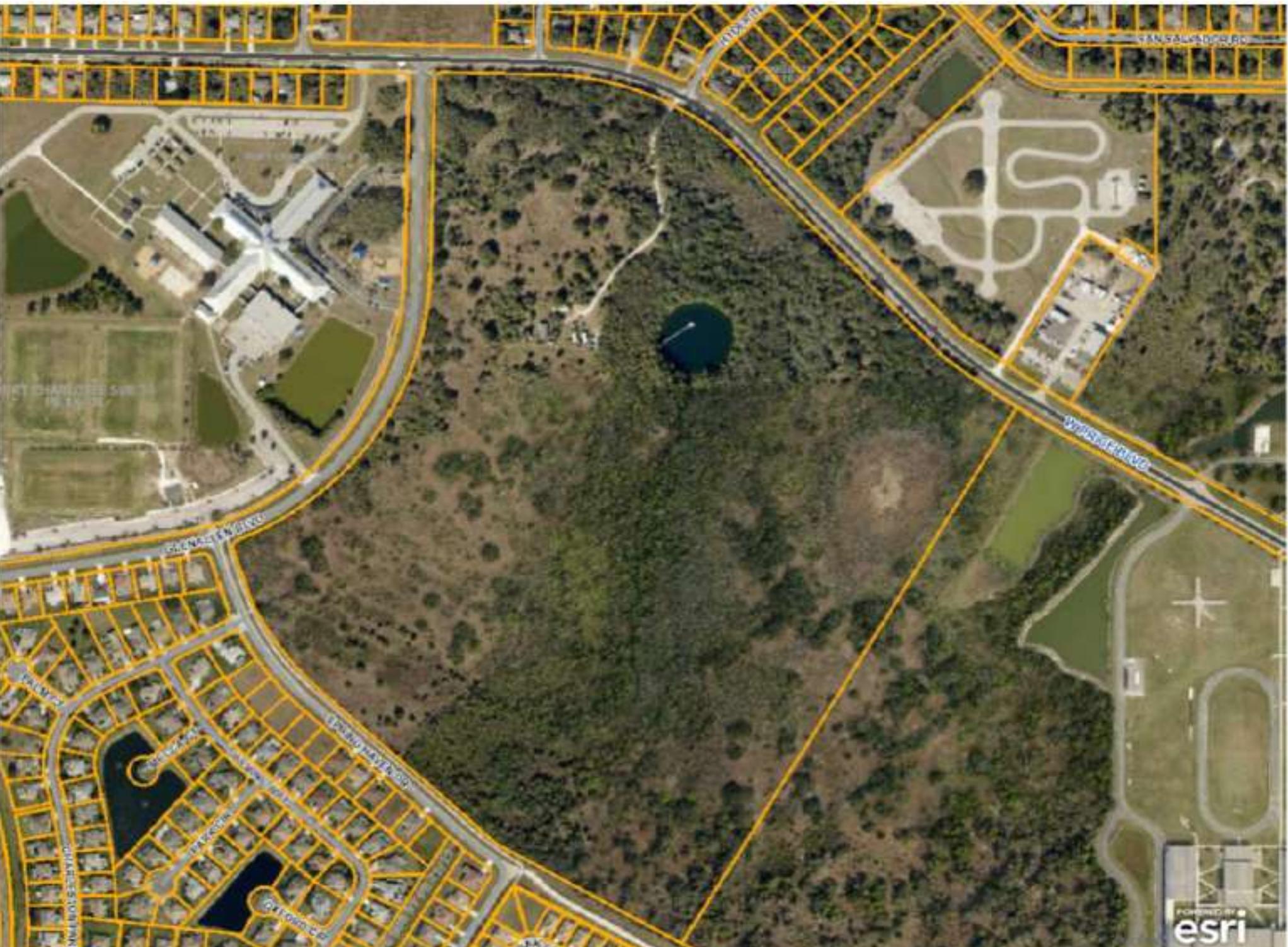
Sarasota County is much closer to becoming the new owner of the spring than circumstances indicated a few months ago.

The University of Miami has owned the land since 1982, thanks to a donation. However, because of cuts in funding to the university's

Rosenstiel School's Division of Marine Affairs Program — which managed research at the spring — the university began looking to sell the property.

Before the county received the university's offer of the donation, Reid and other members of the Friends of Little Salt Spring advocated for the county to purchase the undisturbed site, using funds from the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program.

But at the end of October, the university and the county seemed far apart on terms. The



An aerial map shows the location of Little Salt Spring near North Port. Image courtesy Sarasota County

university had paid for an appraisal that had estimated the value of the land at \$2.11 million. During the Oct. 23 County Commission meeting, three commissioners said they would accept the spring only if it were donated to the county.

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who has voiced concern about taking on the annual maintenance and security costs for the spring, told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week that it would have been a deal killer if university officials had sought a purchase price from the county.

“I would not have supporting paying for it,” Patterson said. “That would have been a dead deal.”

Patterson added that even as a donation, the spring brings a new financial burden to the county, as she had noted at the October meeting. Previously, the University of Miami had a full-time salaried research associate who lived on the property and watched over it.

At the October meeting, Vice Chairman Charles Hines and Robinson also said they would not support paying for the site.

Robinson, who had publicly called on the university to donate the land to the county, is encouraged by the university’s offer.

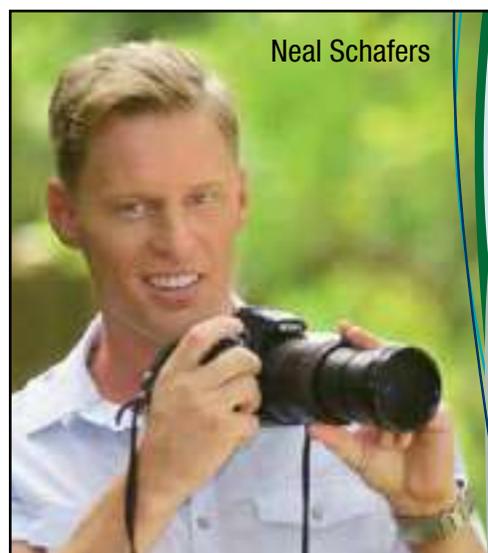
“This is a big hurdle,” Robinson told the *News Leader* on Tuesday, Jan. 7. “It’s one step in a longer process.”

Robinson learned about the offer from the university on Jan. 6, when Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer showed her a copy of the letter. “It’s great news,” said Robinson, who, in turn, sent a copy of the correspondence to the Friends of Little Salt Spring.

If the county takes over the spring, The Florida Aquarium would be an ideal partner to help the county oversee research activities at the spring, Reid indicated. Although Sarasota County does not have the expertise or means to implement an underwater archeological program, the Tampa aquarium does, Reid pointed out.

Patterson also mentioned Mote Marine Laboratory as a potential partner to help manage the spring.

“We will have to see,” Patterson said about the Sarasota-based nonprofit that has seven centers for marine research. “They are such a responsible organization, that would be a positive partnership.” 



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PREDICTIONS COME TRUE

“Before the calls start, we want to make sure we’re all on the same playing field. ... We’re worried about if they’re going to have evening entertainment out there.”

Sheriff Tom Knight
April 28, 2011

”

An aerial photo provided by Sheriff’s Office executive staff to the County Commission in April 2011 shows the proximity of the new Bob’s Boathouse location to residential areas. Image courtesy Sheriff’s Office

CLOSE TO THREE YEARS AFTER THE SHERIFF’S OFFICE WARNED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF BOB’S BOATHOUSE REOPENED, THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ARE MIRED IN COMPLAINTS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

On April 28, 2011, during a County Commission workshop, Sheriff Tom Knight told the board members, “Before the calls start, we want to make sure we’re all on the same playing field. ... We’re worried about if they’re going to have evening entertainment out there.”

He was speaking of plans to reopen Bob’s Boathouse at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

Maj. Kevin Kenney, head of the Law Enforcement Division in the Sheriff’s Office, added, “This is merely a heads up for a potential problem that we see if the same type of

establishment with the same type of business plan goes in at this location.”

When the original restaurant and entertainment venue was open on Siesta Key, Kenney continued, “We endured some 1,800 disturbance calls in those four years. That problem didn’t go away until the establishment went away.”

A PowerPoint presentation prepared for that discussion says, “The Sheriff’s Office spent an inordinate amount of time mitigating disturbance and quality of life issues generated by the establishment and its proximity to residential areas.”

Kenney told the board, “Unless there are some changes to the way they are going to do business — and we’re not even saying it’s the same ownership; we haven’t determined that yet — it’s just a ‘Hey, this may be coming down the road.’”

Flash forward to the present, and Knight’s and Kenney’s statements have proven prescient: The commissioners once again are facing a barrage of complaints about Bob’s Boathouse.

Between April 2011 and November 2013 — when new complaints began rolling in after the business reopened on Nov. 3 at its new location — the county has seen not only changes on the commission but in the county administrator’s office.

The commissioners themselves would have had no say in whether Bob’s Boathouse could reopen its doors, county spokesman

Curt Preisser explained to *The Sarasota News Leader* this week. Unless a petition is filed for a zoning change or a special exception, for example, all applications for new businesses are handled by staff. Further he pointed out, “It’s that fine line that we always need to remember.” The staff works for the administrator, not the commissioners. Only the administrator and the county attorney work for the County Commission. The board just provides direction for operations, Preisser noted. Therefore, it would be up to a county Building Department official to issue a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) or Certificate of Occupancy (CO) to a business.

Almost exactly a month after the 2011 workshop, Administrator Jim Ley was gone — a victim of a Procurement Department scandal. He was followed in the position by Terry



An April 2011 aerial photo shows the site of the new Bob’s Boathouse on property previously occupied by a car dealership. Image courtesy Sheriff’s Office

Lewis on an interim basis. Then Randall Reid came to work in late January 2012. Now, after Reid's firing last fall, Tom Harmer is the interim county administrator.

Maj. Kevin Kenney's April 2011 comment about ownership regarding the new Bob's Boathouse also seems prophetic in the light of recent occurrences.

11.26.13	Notice of Violation	Delivered Notice of Violation to Bob's Boathouse for excessive illumination. They have until 12.4.13 to comply with code.	Kevin Burns
11.27.13	Proactive Inspection	Lights in violation, noise level compliant	Kevin Burns
11.29.13	Noise level Reading	Following two calls at 8:30 PM and the report of an 85 dB noise issue, I responded to property and found noise at closer to 60 dBA , the callers stated the noise had ceased.	Kevin Burns
11.30.13	Noise Level Readings, Two inspections.	Noise levels continue to remain near 60 dBA 67 dBC. No outdoor activity.	Kevin Burns
12.02.13	Noise Level Reading, Light inspection	Noise Levels 62.2dBA and 71 dBC. Light violation continues	Kevin Burns
62.2 dBA - 71 dBC Montclair.			
12.04.13	Light Issue Conversation	In response to call from Mr. Aker, attorney for Bob's Boathouse, went over issue of lighting and county requirements	Kevin Burns
12.04.13	Night time Light Meter Reading	With the company of Mr. Aker, took light	Kevin Burns
5 Maximum illumination permitted measured in footcandles at the property line 0.2 footcandles Maximum Sound Level Limit 7:00AM to 11:00PM 75dBA and 85dBC Maximum Sound Level Limit 11:00PM to 7:00AM 70dBA and 80dBC			

An excerpt from a Sarasota County Code Enforcement log provides details about inspections at Bob's Boathouse. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Because of the filing of applications under different names for the new business, Tom Polk, director of the Planning and Development Services Department, told the commissioners in early December that a county employee had mistakenly issued a TCO to the business before the owners paid the county the \$77,063.44 they owed in water and sewer capacity fees. The action sparked ire from commissioners during that Dec. 10 meeting.

“There are a number of very unhappy emails and I have been getting them for a couple of weeks. Hopefully you are able to inject some belief for the neighbors, as well as the commission that they turn to, that the county will be able to be helpful regarding the noise level or that the owner operator would like to help and be a good neighbor.”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County
Dec. 31, 2013

As a result of the non-payment of fees, Polk pointed out, staff sent letters that week to two entities involved with the business to notify them the fees must be paid by Dec. 30 or the water and sewer service to the restaurant would be terminated.

However, on Dec. 27, an attorney for the business filed suit against the county in 12th Judicial Circuit Court, contending the County Commission had no right to insist the owners pay the capacity fees by Dec. 30.

POINT, COUNTERPOINT

The lawsuit contends that the operations manager for Sarasota County Utilities, Tony Gipe, told the owners of Bob's Boathouse on Oct. 23 that the water and sewer capacity fees would be deferred until after the establishment was awarded its Certificate of Occupancy (CO).

The complaint says that on Oct. 10, The Best Restaurant on 41 LLC, the developer, “entered into a Standard Utility Agreement with Defendant, Sarasota County, regarding water and sewer utilities for the three (3) phases of the property ...” It adds, “The Agreement did not clearly state when water and sewer capacity fees would be due” and that “The County never requested that water and sewer capacity fees be paid at the time permits were

issued in 2010 for the construction of Bob's Boathouse and its utility system.”

A new utility agreement was reached on Oct. 16 to specify that The Best Restaurant on 41 is the long-term tenant of the property, with an option to purchase the site, and is entitled under the terms of the lease to use the property “for a restaurant, hotel and related purposes,” the suit continues, adding that agreement and the original one “are basically the same.”

The lawsuit identifies Skipper Bobs LLC as “the entity which operates the restaurant as Bob's Boathouse.”

The complaint seeks “damages in excess of \$15,000.”

Late in the afternoon of Dec. 30, Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham sent an email to the County Commission with the following update:

“On Thursday, December 26, 2013, staff from County Administration and the County Attorney’s Office met with legal counsel representing Bob’s Boathouse restaurant to discuss the state of the restaurant’s Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO). During the discussions, I indicated that no additional extension to the current TCO would be considered or issued until the outstanding utility capacity fees owed to the County are paid in full. During said meeting, I also communicated that in accordance with recent written correspondences sent to the proprietors germane to the matter, water utility services to the restaurant would be disconnected on or about 5:00 p.m. on 12/31/2013 if the aforementioned utility capacity fees were not paid in full. Subsequent to the 12/26/13 meeting, and as you are aware, a complaint was filed in the Circuit Court of Sarasota against the County [on Dec. 27].”

Cunningham continued, “During follow-up discussions with legal counsel representing Bob’s Boathouse restaurant ... it was indicated that the full amount of the utility capacity fees will be paid to the County on 12/31/13 via a Cashier’s Check contingent upon a 60-day extension of the TCO. Staff has agreed to a 30-day extension, with the possibility of an additional 30-day extension prior to expiration, contingent upon receiving the full payment of the utility capacity fees before 4:00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon. If the fees are not received, water utility services ... will be disconnected.”

The fees were paid as Bob’s Boathouse’s counsel had indicated, but Commissioners Nora Patterson and Joe Barbetta were not happy.

In an email sent at 7:17 p.m. on Dec. 30, Barbetta wrote Cunningham, “Please know that I do NOT agree with this. I thought the



Residents on Montclair Drive, across Phillippi Creek from Bob’s Boathouse, have been the most frequent source of complaints about noise emanating from the restaurant. File photo

Board, at our last meeting, determined that ALL outstanding matters needed to be cleared up by December 30th (today) prior to any further extensions. This is not acceptable to me.”

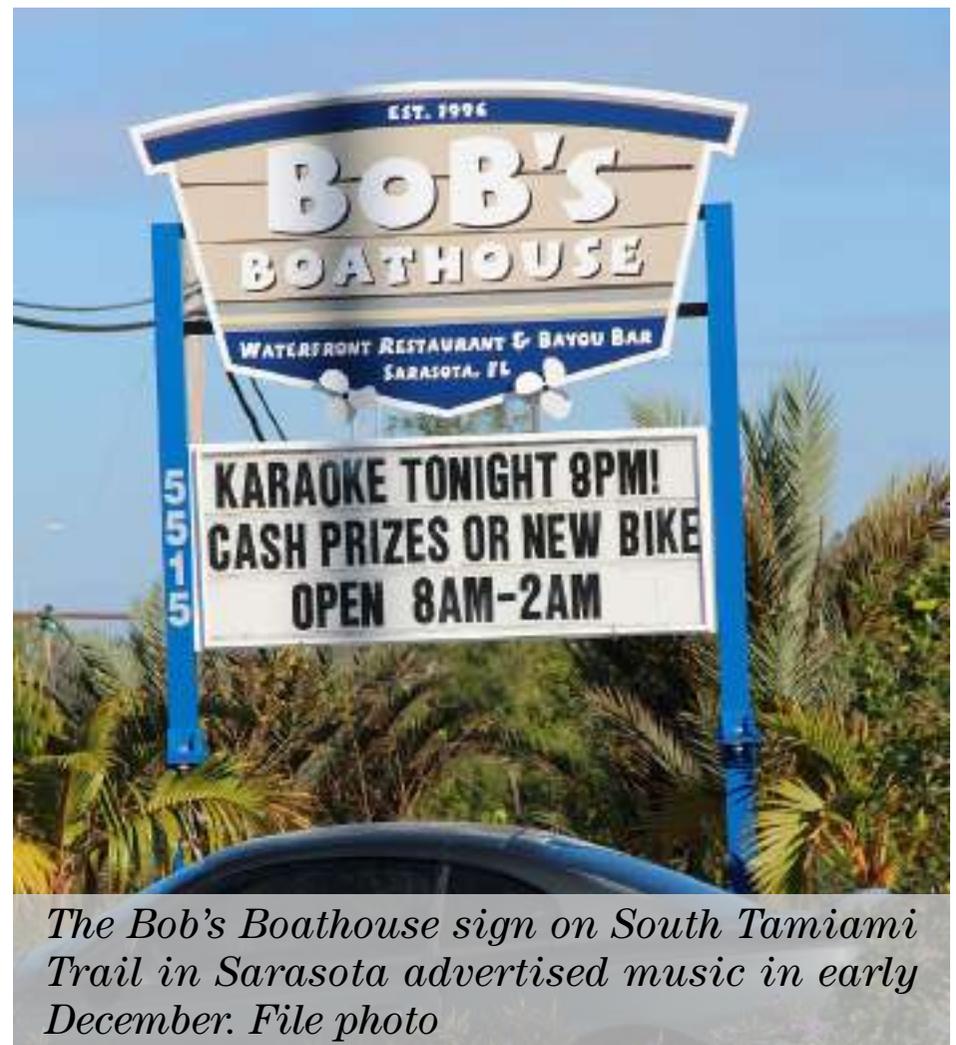
Just after 11 a.m. on Dec. 31, Patterson responded to Cunningham:

“There are a number of very unhappy emails and I have been getting them for a couple of weeks. Hopefully you are able to inject some belief for the neighbors, as well as the commission that they turn to, that the county will be able to be helpful regarding the noise level or that the owner operator would like to help and be a good neighbor [her emphasis]. I do not get from staff that we are devoting the effort needed to see what the noise level is late at night when it is most disturbing and also the continued effort the commission has asked for that would catch noise levels that are loud but discontinuous — say very loud at 1 AM but not so much at 10 PM.”

THE NOISE COMPLAINTS

According to a partial list provided to the *News Leader* by the Sheriff’s Office, the complaints about the new Bob’s Boathouse began as soon as it opened. The first one, identified as a “Disturbance/Nuisance/Noise” call, was logged just before 5 p.m. on Nov. 3. Ten more came in through Nov. 17, with times ranging from 3:22 p.m. on a Sunday to 2:25 a.m. on a Sunday.

In the first complaint, the responding officer wrote that a warning was issued to the manager on duty because a live band was exceeding the allowable decibel level at that time.



The Bob’s Boathouse sign on South Tamiami Trail in Sarasota advertised music in early December. File photo

However, just three days later, a deputy responding to another complaint wrote, “[T]he music was soft ... No noise violation.”

On Nov. 17, after checking on yet another complaint, a deputy reported, “Music can’t be heard from street but there is a creek between establishment and residential neighborhood so noise may carry to residents.”

Bob’s Boathouse employees told that deputy “they would have the band turn it down a bit,” the report added.

Preisser, the county spokesman, told the *News Leader* last week that no citations had been issued for noise by the Sheriff’s Office or county Code Enforcement staff.

On the other hand, a resident across Phillippi Creek from Bob’s Boathouse, Michele Chapman, emailed the county commissioners at 5:30 a.m. on Jan. 6 to complain that not only

had she had another sleepless night because of the music from the restaurant “BLASTING directly into our homes hour after hour after hour after hour after hour!” but also that the Sheriff’s Office had cited her for a noise violation the previous day.

Chapman wrote that she and several of her neighbors were using megaphones to communicate with each other “over the LOUD music” when deputies showed up. She added, “[T]o our dismay, we found out that as private citizens, WE are not allowed to object to this assault at the same decibel levels that Bob’s Boathouse is using. Apparently, it is against a very strict code for any individual to use amplified sound equipment and **I was given a warning** by the Sheriff’s Office to stop making myself heard by the offending business [Chapman’s emphasis].”

The incident report from the Sheriff’s Office says Chapman was cited for “Disturbance/Nuisance/Noise” for an incident called in at 4:27 p.m. on Jan. 5. It adds that deputies responded to the site of Bob’s Boathouse in response to a complaint about live music being too loud. While there, deputies observed a person “yelling through an amplified megaphone.” Then a call came in from the dispatcher saying someone had complained on Montclair Drive “that her neighbor across the street ... was outside with a bull horn yelling, ‘We hate the music; turn it down,’ repeatedly and then got out a flute and began to play it.”

When three deputies and a sergeant spoke with Chapman and a neighbor at Chapman’s house, the report says, Chapman and the neighbor “became extremely belligerent and

stated that we needed to take the measurement from the middle of the waterway.”

The deputies responded that they would not be able to do that. They also advised Chapman that Bob’s Boathouse was not in violation of the noise ordinance. When Chapman and her neighbor continued to insist on a reading from the waterway, the deputy added in the report that he and his fellow officers “tried to explain that was an unreasonable request and further tried to explain that if the reading wasn’t over the limit at approximately 200 feet from the band [at Bob’s] it was not going to be over the limit in the middle of the waterway as that is a greater distance from the band, but none of the subjects were satisfied.”

NEXT STEPS?

Preisser, the county spokesman, told the *News Leader* that Interim County Administrator Harmer plans to initiate another discussion of Bob’s Boathouse during his regular report at a County Commission meeting next week. Additionally, Commissioner Patterson has listed an item regarding the county’s noise ordinance under her part of the commissioners’ reports.

In the meantime, Wendy Rose, the community affairs manager for the Sheriff’s Office, told the *News Leader* on Jan. 9, “Our current position is we would encourage Bob’s Boathouse management to follow the lead of other establishments that were in similar situations to reach out to affected residents and start conversations seeking to become a better neighbor.” 



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MAKING OPPOSING CASES

(From left) Former County Commissioner Jon Thaxton moderates a panel discussion among Sarasota County Schools Superintendent Lori White; Don DeLeo, chairman of Sarasota Citizens for Better Schools; and Rod Thomson, president of The Thomson Group. Photo by Rachel Hackney

A TIGER BAY CLUB PANEL DEBATES THE MERITS OF THE SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD'S LATEST REFERENDUM ON A SPECIAL 1 MIL TAX

If the Sarasota County School District were to lose the approximately \$42 million a special 1 mil tax would add to the budget for the 2014-15 school year, the system would have to reduce salaries, cut its guidance counselor ratio and curtail the offering of small classes such as those for some Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Superintendent Lori White told approximately 200 people at the Sarasota Tiger Bay Club meeting on Jan. 8.

“The quality of the teacher is the single most important factor

affecting student achievement,” White pointed out. Because of the referendum funds, the Sarasota district is “able to attract the best [teachers],” she added.

In a program focusing on the district’s fourth referendum on the tax — scheduled for March 25 — White and Dan DeLeo, an attorney with Shumaker Loop & Kendrick who is chairman of [Sarasota Citizens for Better Schools](#), defended the initiative to seek

“*The quality of the teacher is the single most important factor affecting student achievement.*”

Lori White
Superintendent
Sarasota County Schools



continuation of the special funding. Rod Thomson, the former executive editor of the Gulf Coast Business Review who heads up his own public relations firm, took the opposing view during the 90-minute discussion.

Thomson maintained that no correlation can be found between student achievement and the additional funding made possible by the referendum dollars when demographics are taken into consideration. "We were a Top Three district before the tax," he pointed out. "We are a Top Three district after the tax," according to research by the Tampa Bay Times, he continued.

When children grow up in a strong family, with two parents at home, "they excel," he added, "and you cannot get away from that fact in any of the data."

"Certainly, we know poverty does impact performance," White said. However, she pointed

out that while the perception is that Sarasota is an affluent community, over 50 percent of the students in the school system are receiving free or reduced-price lunches. Moreover, White added, the Sarasota district ranks above other Florida districts with lower percentages of people in poverty.

She further countered Thomson's argument by noting that when people take into consideration the young people who are able to find paths out of poverty as they grow up, the primary reason for their success has been education. "It's the hook that suddenly allows those students to go beyond [a lower-income standard of living]. I will tell you that the arts education is hooking a ton of kids that don't have the advantages that your kids have," she told the audience members. Arts educational offerings are among the "extras" in the district the referendum funds support, she pointed out.



The School Board meets last October with Deputy Chief Financial Officer Al Weidner (far left) and Scott Lempe (to Weidner's right), the district's chief operating officer. File photo

“I will tell you education *can* make a difference,” White added, “and it’s doing it every day.”

Among other aspects of the public educational system the extra funds make possible, White said, are the additional 30 minutes of instruction in each school day, which equals 14 more days a year. “There’s a *huge* amount of research [showing] that instructional time used well does produce better results,” she noted.

The tax money also pays for a technical support person at every school to assist teachers when problems arise with digital textbooks and the “white boards” used to display information, including material on websites.

In the district’s **Title I** schools that do not qualify for federal funds for assistant principals, the referendum dollars make it possible for the district to pay for those extra positions, she continued.

In response to a question from an audience member, DeLeo explained that the owner of a house valued at \$300,000 pays a bill of \$300 per year because of passage of the special tax.

When moderator Jon Thaxton, director of community investment for the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and a former county commissioner, asked Thomson what he would cut in the district’s budget if the March referendum failed, Thomson replied, “Oh, heavens, I can’t [figure out] a school budget.”

“We were a **Top Three** district before the tax. We are a **Top Three** district after the tax.

Rod Thomson
President
The Thomson Group



The School Board meets at the district’s offices at The Landings in Sarasota. File photo

Having covered education for three years at the Florida Legislature, Thomson continued, “I can assure you the [Sarasota County] School Board doesn’t really have a clue how to, either. You have to rely on Lori and her staff to figure it out ...”

Thomson insisted that if the referendum does not win approval for the fourth time on March 25, the district would not lose its high ranking in the state.

A WELL-RUN DISTRICT

DeLeo explained to the audience that when MGT America Inc., an independent consulting firm, [reviewed district programs a couple of years ago](#), its team said the Sarasota district was one of the best-run it had studied in the United States.

He pointed out that local foundations and “very generous” benefactors paid for the undertaking. The firm handles such reviews “in a very rigorous way,” he added.

In its findings, DeLeo continued, MGT America’s team said the Sarasota system’s “morale and performance are unusually high, including innovative practices ...”

Typically, the report noted, a school district of the same size would earn 50 commendations during an MGT review. Sarasota won 73, DeLeo told the audience.

The fact that voters have supported the special tax in referenda held every four years since 2002 reflects their partnership with the district in pursuit of excellence, White added. “This referendum is a way of adding value to the school district ...”



Beverly Girard, director of food and nutrition services for the Sarasota County Schools, says she has seen higher and higher percentages of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals since the recession hit. Photo by Scott Proffitt

Since the Great Recession began in 2007, she pointed out, the district has reduced its budget by 30 percent — about \$124 million — and cut more than 600 positions. “But we are one of those districts that have been able to sustain programs because of referendum dollars.”

When Thaxton asked DeLeo about the makeup of the district Financial Advisory Committee charged with fiscal oversight, DeLeo explained that the members are community business leaders, professional people and representatives of arts groups. Among them is Eric Robinson, a CPA who is the former chairman of the Sarasota County Republican Party, and

John Craner, former chairman of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce.

DeLeo pointed out that the members are not “shrinking violets” and that they challenge the School Board and district staff on spending matters. For example, he said, the committee led an initiative to reduce the school system’s healthcare costs.

DeLeo also praised the district’s chief operating officer, Scott Lempe, who is a retired Air Force officer. “This guy is a phenomenal manager who “runs the district like a business,” DeLeo said.

“I think the district is probably pretty well run for a school district,” Thomson told the audience, adding that no government organization is known for being run well.

While he said he did not believe Sarasota district officials were involved in any financial shenanigans, he maintained that the data he had found through research showed “you do not see an impact on educational achievement from educational spending.”

THE ‘MORAL’ FACTOR

Thomson also explained to the audience his view that the increasing number of single mothers; the rise in the divorce rate; the uptick in the number of single-mother families with multiple children of different fathers, “none of whom are in the picture”; and children living in “higher-crime and drug-ridden neighborhoods” have a much more negative impact on student performance than a lack of funding. If people really want to improve student achievement, he said, “That is what has to be attacked.”

The culture has to be changed, he added, with an emphasis put on “a more moral foundation where we have commitments between men and women in marriage.”

He told the audience, “If we don’t want to do that, then I think we’re just being lazy about voting for a tax increase.”

THE DATES

Thaxton reminded the audience that absentee ballots will go in the mail on Feb. 18 in advance of the March 25 referendum, and early voting will be offered from March 10 to March 22.

When Thaxton asked for an explanation about the School Board’s decision to continue holding the referendum in March — on the same day as the Town of Longboat Key election for its commissioners — White said the School Board in 2002 chose the March time frame for its second attempt to gain the extra tax. (A summer referendum in 2000 failed.) To have changed the timing for this year, she added, would have meant the loss to the district of the \$42 million in referendum money. The district budget has to be ready by June 30, she pointed out, according to state law.

Moreover, White pointed out, “There are actually more citizens here in March [eligible to go to the polls]. They don’t all choose to vote.”

“It was March on purpose,” Thomson said of that 2002 School Board decision, noting that fewer people vote in March elections than in November elections. (Sarasota County Supervisor of Election Office records have confirmed that, *The Sarasota News Leader* has reported in the past.) 

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NO BAN ON BEACH WEDDINGS

Contrary to word spreading on Siesta Key, county staff has not banned weddings at the public beach in 2015 because of planned construction. Image by Beercha via Wikimedia Commons

THE GENERAL LOCATION FOR VOWS ON SIESTA PUBLIC BEACH MAY BE TEMPORARILY INCONVENIENT AS OF JANUARY 2015, BUT COUNTY STAFF WILL ALLOW CEREMONIES IF COUPLES DESIRE THEM

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

When construction begins on the western end of Siesta Public Beach Park in January 2015, that part of the county's prime tourist attraction is not going to be as accommodating a setting for weddings as it is now, Sarasota County's Parks and Recreation Director Carolyn Brown told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

However, contrary to a miscommunication from Parks and Recreation staff to the Siesta Key Chamber

of Commerce, the county is not going to deny permits to people interested in saying their vows in that area while improvements are under way, Carolyn Brown said in an interview on Jan. 7.

“ We would be happy to rent it ... but getting to it is going to be very tricky. ”

Carolyn Brown
Director
Parks and Recreation Department
Sarasota County

“It's certainly not impossible,” Brown said of holding weddings during 2015 on the segment of beach, which faces north. “We are always going to be responsive to the community's needs.”

During the early morning Jan. 7 monthly meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA), Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck and the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar — and the immediate past SKVA president — said he was concerned after hearing that

Parks and Recreation staff had begun telling people the county would issue no permits for weddings on Siesta Public Beach during 2015 because of the phased park improvements.

The work at the beach is just getting started on the eastern end, Brown told the *News Leader*.

Phase III (Nov 01, 2014 – July 01, 2015)

- Having additional parking spaces in phases I and II, there will ample spaces to make up for the ones lost when phase III begins.
- Emphasis will be to regrade and repave the phase III parking lot to maximize parking as soon as possible.
- With the completion of the East Concessions and Restroom Building, we will demo the existing east restrooms and close the West concessions and restroom along with the historic pavilion.
- The work associated with the improvements for the public safety resources, west concessions and restroom along with the historic pavilion will complete with the end of construction activities in phase IV.
- Due to the work associated with the amenities around the historic pavilion, additional temporary facilities will be brought on line for the lifeguard and Sherriff offices along with portable restroom facilities. Our intent is to ensure that siesta beach improvements project minimizes the public impact and maximizes the use of existing amenities.



Phase III of the planned improvements at Siesta Public Beach shows initial impacts on the western end of the property. Image courtesy Sarasota County

All the improvements are scheduled to be completed in four phases over two years.

“If they are turning people away that quickly without an alternative,” Matthes pointed out of Parks and Recreation Department employees, “that really impacts the accommodations, the restaurants and all the retailers on the key.”

Chastanna Neiman, events and office manager for the Siesta Chamber, told the approximately 20 SKVA members present that she

had learned Parks and Recreation staff had begun telling area wedding planners to make it clear to prospective brides that Siesta Public Beach will be off limits for all of 2015. She was trying to learn the exact details about the county’s plans, Neiman added, because the Chamber’s goal was to encourage people to follow proper procedures in planning weddings or other events on the island.

Matthes suggested SKVA board members follow up with county staff to get a better understanding of the situation, so the

Phase IV (July 15, 2015 – Nov 01, 2015)

- It is the intent to construct the main driveway as soon as possible in phase IV so that there will be three drives for the public parking in phase I, II and III. The west drive will be used for construction traffic.
- The work associated with the improvements for the public safety resources building, west concessions and restroom along with the historic pavilion improvements will complete with the end of construction activities in phase IV.
- Final phase of parking improvements for the project.



During Phase IV of the beach park work, the last section of the existing parking area will be renovated. Image courtesy Sarasota County

appropriate information can be conveyed to the public. Otherwise, he said, people will look to venues other than Siesta Key for beach weddings in 2015.

Neiman pointed out that she already had directed Chamber volunteers to begin “calling all the accommodations that are members of the Siesta Key Chamber” in an effort to compile a list of private residences or other locations on the island where weddings could be held.

Brown explained to the *News Leader* that with the western end of the park seeing construction start in early 2015, people would have to walk a much longer distance to reach the area of beach where weddings normally are held. They also would be faced with heavy equipment near the site, she added. Moreover, “There’s going to be mud. There’s going to be dirt.”

She added, “We would be happy to rent it ... but getting to it is going to be very tricky.”

Additionally, Brown said, “We would hate to have someone disappointed with their surroundings.”

She noted that the north end of the beach, where vows typically are said, “is more secluded, more subdued.” But with the construction, she cautioned, “It may not be quite as quiet as one would hope or anticipate a wedding to be. ... One of the things about weddings is that people want to know ... that their special day is going to be really, really special.”

Brown also pointed out that that area of Siesta’s famous sand is not the only one available to the public for weddings. “The beach is huge,” she said — a comment SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos also mentioned during the meeting.

While the eastern end of the park is “typically more active in nature and louder in nature,” Brown noted, weddings could take place in that area. She added that a new public concession probably would be open or nearly ready to open by January 2015, and volleyball tournaments are common on that end of the park. However, Brown said, county staff would be happy to work with wedding planners for events there.

During the SKVA meeting, members also mentioned the fact that weddings take place at some of the beach accesses, especially closer to Siesta Village. However, Brown explained, “We have not done special event permits ... for the beach access points.”

One reason, she continued, is that the paths generally are narrow. If wedding party members took up most of a path, she said, beach-goers would have to maneuver around them, leading to the possibility that people would walk on private property or environmentally sensitive areas of the beach.

Additionally, Brown noted, the access points tend to have limited parking. If the county were to provide permits for weddings at beaches, those events could make it impossible for other members of the public to use the accesses at the same time.

At the conclusion of the SKVA discussion, Matthes and board member Mark Smith of Smith Architects both indicated they planned to contact Brown, so they could assist the Chamber staff with obtaining the most accurate information. A search is still under way for a new executive director of the Chamber, with Kevin Cooper, the most recent person to hold that job, having taken a new position with the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce in early December. 



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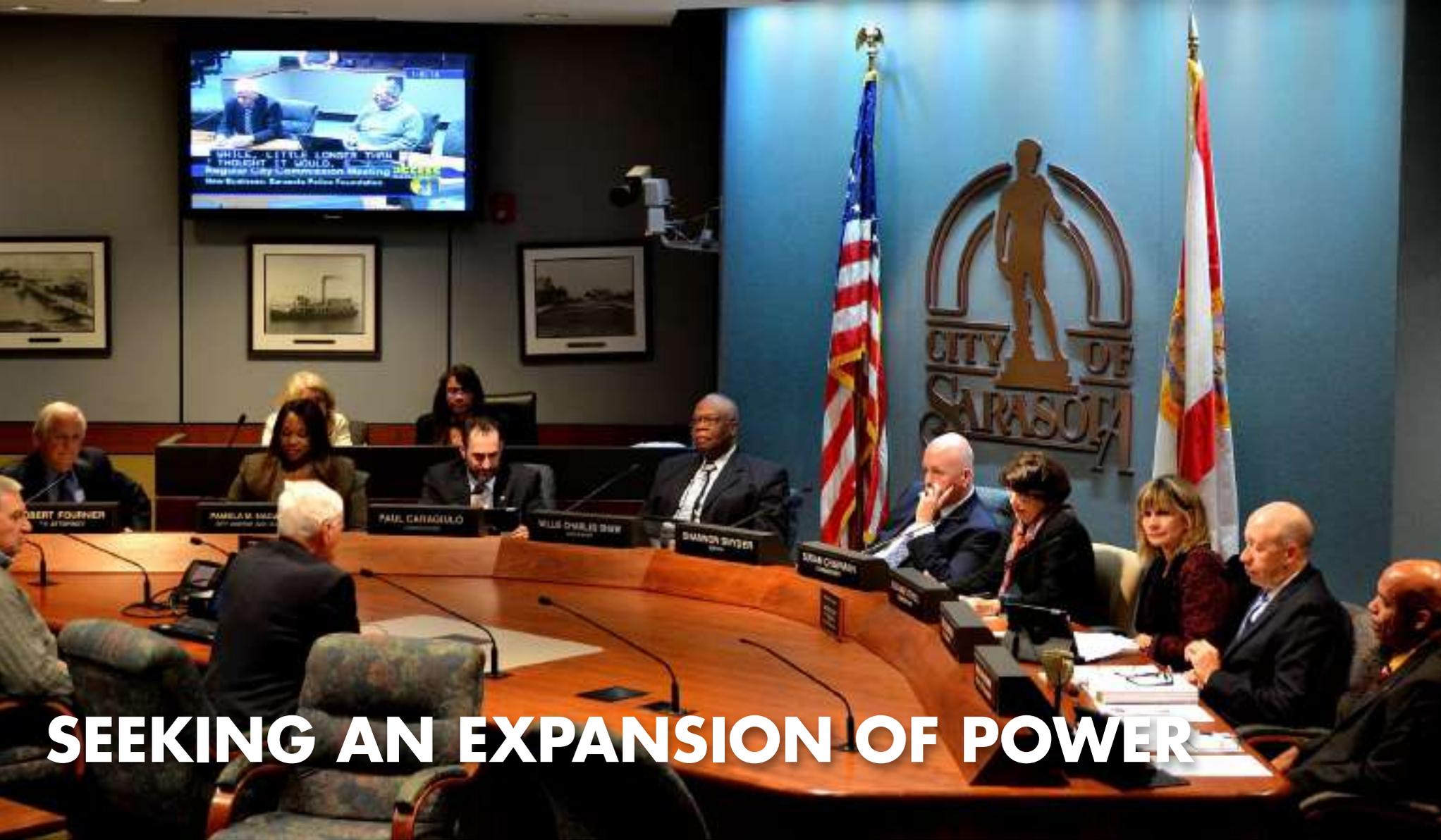
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SEEKING AN EXPANSION OF POWER

The City Commission sits in session on Jan. 6. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE SARASOTA INDEPENDENT POLICE ADVISORY PANEL WANTS MORE SAY OVER POLICE DEPARTMENT MATTERS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Two old adages will collide Friday afternoon, Jan. 10, at the meeting of the Independent Police Advisory Panel in Sarasota City Hall. One is “Advisory boards only advise”; the second is “Power is the ability to influence events.”

Three years ago, the panel was established by ordinance. Now its members want to amend the law to broaden the board’s scope of duties. “We’ve come to the point we need to

expand the ordinance or give more leeway to the board,” Chairman Elmer Berkel told the City Commission last month.

On a 3-2 vote (with Mayor Shannon Snyder and Commissioner Paul Caragiulo in the

minority), the commission agreed to allow the advisory board to suggest amendments to the ordinance.

On Friday, the board will get down to the details of the specific language needed to

“*Early on, I had some issues with this panel. We have a new [Police Department] administration, and this has morphed into something pretty good.*”

Suzanne Atwell
Commissioner
City of Sarasota



change each of the three duties outlined in the original law.

The first change simply clarifies the verbiage, substituting “referred” for “brought” to describe how issues are put before the panel. It also adds the City Commission as a referring agency, to join the chief of police and city manager.

The second change reflects the sex of the current police chief, adding “or her” in addition to “his” in describing the person in the position, as the current police chief is female.

The real and sweeping changes are contained in the third section, which contains topics the group is forbidden to examine. Those taboos now include the Police Department’s operating budget, personnel issues (including hiring and firing), discipline, resource allocation and “other day-to-day operations,” as the proposed change puts it.

The latter amendment that will be under consideration Friday strikes out two words and adds two. For clarity, the proposed changes are capitalized. The current language says, “The panel shall NOT advise OR make recommendations to the city commission regarding matters that are not related to policy making but are more administrative in nature which would be the responsibility of the chief of police or city manager ...”

The proposed language under review by the group reads, “The panel shall FURTHER advise AND make recommendations ...”

The taboo topics in the original ordinance would become part of the panel’s regular agenda. The proposed amendment adds one more topic: “administrative issues referred to



Peter J. Abbott was police chief prior to the establishment of the Independent Police Advisory Panel. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota



The Sarasota Police Department headquarters is on Adams Lane in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the panel by the chief of police, city manager or the city commission.”

The revision also would allow the panel to pursue its own initiatives. It says, “The recommendations authorized by this section include unsolicited recommendations that originate from the panel upon discussion after placement on a published agenda.”

The group meets quarterly. Its subcommittees can meet more frequently.

The police chief is an *ex officio* member of the committee and therefore can participate fully in discussions but cannot vote.

One change to police procedures the panel previously recommended concerned domestic violence. After a 2012 report from the panel, the Sarasota Police Department’s general orders were amended by then Chief Mikel Holloway to reflect that.

Chairman Berkel said of the proposed changes in December, “We’ve come to ask [the City Commission] to open [the ordinance] up, so we can make recommendations to the chief and city manager about police operations. These are just recommendations.”

Vice Mayor Willie Shaw replied, “I found this panel useful to restoring trust in our community.”

But Caragiulo was less enthusiastic. “If you have faith in your police administration, if the chief is doing [his/her] job, I don’t think we need this kind of panel.”

“I won’t support this motion, either,” said Snyder. “If the administration was on the ball, this is stuff that should have been addressed several years ago.”



Police Chief Bernadette DiPino began working in the city a little more than a year ago. Photo by Norman Schimmel

As usual, the swing vote was Commissioner Suzanne Atwell. “Early on, I had some issues with this panel. We have a new [Police Department] administration, and this has morphed into something pretty good,” she said.

With the resulting motion authorizing a rewrite of the enabling ordinance, the Independent Police Advisory Panel can approve the amendments Friday. The board will come back to the City Commission for a public hearing on the changes and a final vote later this year.

OTHER TOPICS

The panel grew out of a scandal during which a Sarasota Police Department (SPD) officer was caught on tape kicking a handcuffed prisoner in the jail sally port. The prisoner was later offered cash by representatives of the department in return for signing a waiver absolving the city of any liability.

The incident eventually resulted in the dismissal of the police chief and the creation of a fact-finding committee. That group recommended the establishment of the Independent Police Advisory Panel (which now meets quarterly on policy issues) and the Police Complaint Committee (which meets monthly to review disciplinary cases).

Several new projects will also come under discussion Friday. One is an “SPD discipline

matrix” to be introduced by Police Chief Bernadette DiPino. Recruitment and testing of entrants to the SPD is also on the agenda.

“Production of an overview of the work of, and report on progress by, the Sarasota City Police Advisory Groups” is on the agenda as well. This may be tied to the item after it, which concerns membership on the advisory panel and the complaint committee. Another item regards the appointment of a “chair pro tem for the April meeting.” That might be an early indication that Berkel will be stepping down.

Berkel was a two-term city commissioner who remains very active in city and county affairs, especially the criminal justice system. He is a retired Sarasota County Schools psychologist. 

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ATWELL MALIGNED

The City Commission listens to a constituent's remarks in June 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA JOURNALISM SCHOOL PUBLICATION MISREPORTS ACTION IN THE LATEST CITY OF SARASOTA SUNSHINE LAWSUIT

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

The premier Sunshine watchdog publication in Florida incorrectly is reporting that the Sarasota City Commission and Commissioner Suzanne Atwell violated the state's Open Meetings Law.

The *Brechner Report* by the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida carries a Page 1 headline in its January issue: *Sarasota, commissioner admit to Sunshine Law violation.*

The story is drawn from the reporting of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*. Ironically, the dean of the journalism department is Diane McFarlin, the former publisher of

the newspaper. The publication is "the joint effort of the Brechner Center for Freedom of Information, the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, the Florida Press Association, the Florida Association of Broadcasters, the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors, and the Joseph L. Brechner Endowment," it notes.

Unfortunately, the headline and the story are wrong. Neither Atwell nor the City Commission admitted any guilt in their settlement of a suit filed last fall by Citizens for Sunshine, a Sarasota organization. The fact has been reiterated several times by City Attorney Bob Fournier and Atwell.

Commissioner Susan Chapman was also named as a defendant in the suit. She has not settled, maintains her innocence and is preparing for depositions later this month in the case.

Citizens for Sunshine filed suit in mid-October, charging that Atwell and Chapman met without public notice with a group of downtown merchants concerned about vagrancy and homelessness.

In another story — this one on Page 4, headlined *Sarasota faced four suits in 2013* — the *Brechner Report* repeated the error. “The city and one of the commissioners admitted violating the Sunshine Law and settled,” it said.

The *Brechner Report* did not respond by deadline this week to *The Sarasota News Leader’s* request for the reason for its errors. 



Commissioner Suzanne Atwell previously was mayor of Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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THE WORK BEGINS

It was standing-room-only in City Hall as residents and property owners listened to a proposal calling for tripled density in part of the Rosemary District. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

A NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING THIS WEEK MARKS THE FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO GAINING CITY APPROVAL FOR INCREASED DENSITY IN PART OF THE ROSEMARY DISTRICT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The circumstances seemed eerily familiar. A developer comes to town, buys a hunk of acreage near downtown and asks for a comprehensive plan change to make his plan economically feasible. The last time it happened, the proposed site was along School Avenue across the street from an undeveloped Payne Park. Old-timers recall well what a *battle royale* that became.

This time it is 6.2 acres in the Rosemary District, with Coconut and 10th

Street as the northwest corner. Property owner Bruce Weiner wants to build 450 market-rate apartments on the site, but he needs to triple the current 25-units-per-acre zoning density to make it economically viable.

The idea to double or triple the density in the area, using an “overlay district,” was

proposed to the City Commission last year. The overlay district is a planning tool used in Laurel Park and along the North Tamiami

“*We’re doing what the market needs.*”

Bruce Weiner
Property Owner
Rosemary District

Trail to alter existing zoning rules in a defined area.

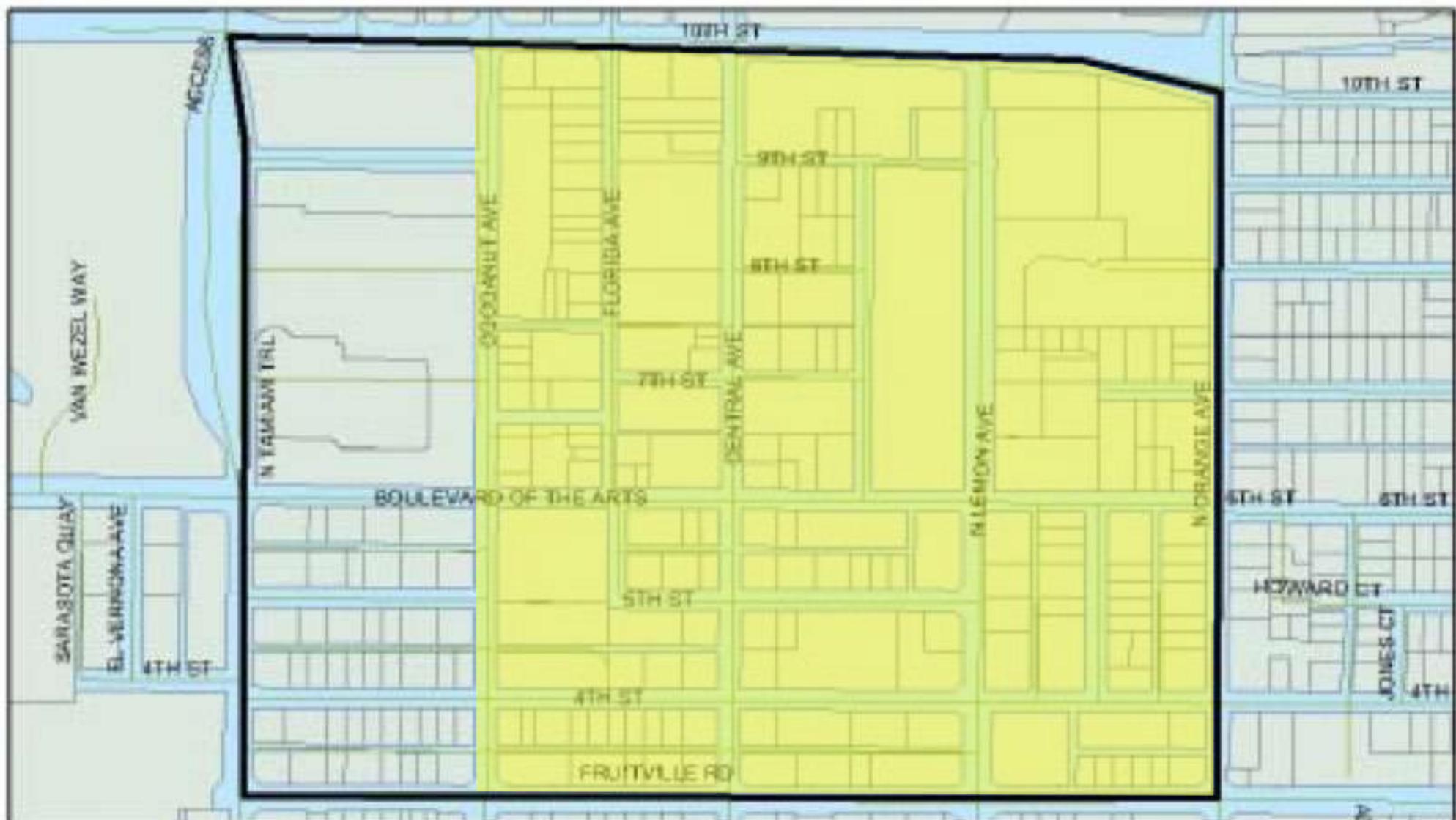
On Tuesday, Jan. 7, a required neighborhood meeting was held in Sarasota City Hall to begin the process to change the city's Future Land Use Map and Comprehensive Plan for the Rosemary District. It was a standing-room-only crowd in the meeting room.

The event was conducted by Weiner's lawyer, Bill Merrill, and planning consultant Joel Freedman. The area they propose for the "Rosemary Residential Overlay District" — inevitable acronym, "ARE-rod" — would be bounded on the north by 10th Street, on the west by Cocoanut Avenue, on the south by Fruitville Road and on the east by Orange

Avenue. The area of the "R-ROD" would be much larger than Weiner's property alone.

The scheme would work in a similar fashion to that of the now defunct "DROD" or Downtown Residential Overlay District, which offered quadruple density to developers in a defined area of downtown. It bumped the density to 200 units per acre from the 50 allowed under the Downtown Core zoning designation, but by the time the DROD was on the books, the economic bloom had faded and there were no takers.

In both cases, the overall number of units in the overlay district remains constant. The roughly 70 acres in the Rosemary area would allow approximately 1,700 units, and that



The area proposed for the 3X density bonus (highlighted above in yellow) is bound by 10th Street on the North, Cocoanut Avenue on the west, Fruitville Road on the south and Orange Avenue on the east. Bruce Weiner is requesting the density change to build a 450-unit, market-rate apartment complex. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

would not change regardless of the density allowed in any single section. A developer availing himself of the triple-density bonus would subtract his numbers from the total.

In Weiner's case — again, the numbers are approximate — his 6.2 acres would normally allow 155 units. But with tripled density, he would get an additional 200 units. Those 355 would be subtracted from the 1,700 total, leaving 1,345 for future development. There are already homes and other development in the overlay district; they would be subtracted as well from the allowable total. In effect, the

extra density is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

PUBLIC WEIGHS IN

The 90-minute meeting this week kept its standing-room-only crowd to the end. Freedman filled in the basics. Two identical buildings would be constructed on either side of May Lane. They would be four stories tall with an integrated parking garage in each structure, creating a rough total of 600 spaces. Access to parking would be off Florida Avenue.



Joel Freedman (in the blue shirt) and Bill Merrill (standing in the center) were the developer's representatives at the neighborhood meeting required at the start of the initiative to change the city's comprehensive plan. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

The units would be “market-rate,” said Freedman, costing about \$1,000 per month for a one-bedroom unit. The project would include two-bedroom and “a few” three-bedroom units. “The average size of the units will be about 900 square feet,” he said.

Each building would have a pool and other “upscale amenities.” The “face” of the development would be along Cocoanut and Boulevard of the Arts (Sixth Street).

A question was raised about traffic generated by approximately 450 new units. Merrill said a traffic study might be required, but he reminded the audience the area is already zoned for 1,700 new units. “The number of trips generated will be the same,” he pointed out.

Questions also were raised about the drop-off and pick-up areas for students at the Sarasota School of Arts and Sciences along Florida Avenue. Freedman said he was aware of such issues (he has a child at Bay Haven School for Basics Plus in Sarasota), and he would work with the school and developer to ease any problems.

Further questions were brought up about noise and light pollution. One neighbor asked where the heating and air conditioning units would be located. “If they’re on the roof, I’m going to hear them,” the neighbor said. Another pointed out, “Five hundred units and 1.5 cars per unit is not going to contribute to the area.”

Noting the meeting was held on the coldest night of the year, one person said, “This is a

great turnout, so you can see there is a lot of passion around this issue.”

In a brief interview after the meeting, Weiner said he closed on the property about nine months ago, and he plans to retain ownership after the building is finished. “I hope my children will continue to receive income from it,” he added.

He and his wife have been visiting and living in Sarasota for the past 25 years, starting with trips to see his parents. He said any number of studies show downtown urban environments are increasingly attractive across a wide range of demographics, and that demand for downtown residences will only increase. “We’re doing what the market needs,” he added.

The next step for the project is a formal application to change the comprehensive plan, followed by a public hearing before the city Planning Board in April. That would be followed by a second public hearing, before the City Commission in May. The package then would go to state government offices in Tallahassee for review, returning for additional public hearings in Sarasota in August or September.

In the meantime, the architect will need to develop both site plans and building plans. Once permits were received, construction would take 14 to 16 months, a contractor estimated.

One resident of the [Renaissance](#) high-rise condominium between U.S. 41 and Cocoanut Avenue said, “I’d rather look at this than what’s there now.” 



An aerial view shows the boundaries of the Downtown Improvement District. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

ANALYSIS: DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT PONDERES EXPANSION TO FILL ITS COFFERS

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

What do you do when the money runs out? It is a question facing a lot of American families today, and it is one facing the Sarasota Downtown Improvement District (DID). In a nutshell, the DID has shot its wad.

“What are we going to do for the next 14 years?” asked Chairman Ernie Ritz. He was reacting to the news that the district has only \$58,000 to spend each of those years.

After paying down the principal and interest that produced a \$1.1

million facelift downtown, covering ongoing maintenance and funding its part-time staffer, the DID has about \$82,000 per year available. Subtract 20 percent for reserves and contingencies, and there is \$58,000 left.

At its Jan. 7 meeting, the five-member governing board of downtown commercial property owners pondered an expansion of the geography the DID represents in the search for more cash.

“What are we going to do for the next 14 years?”

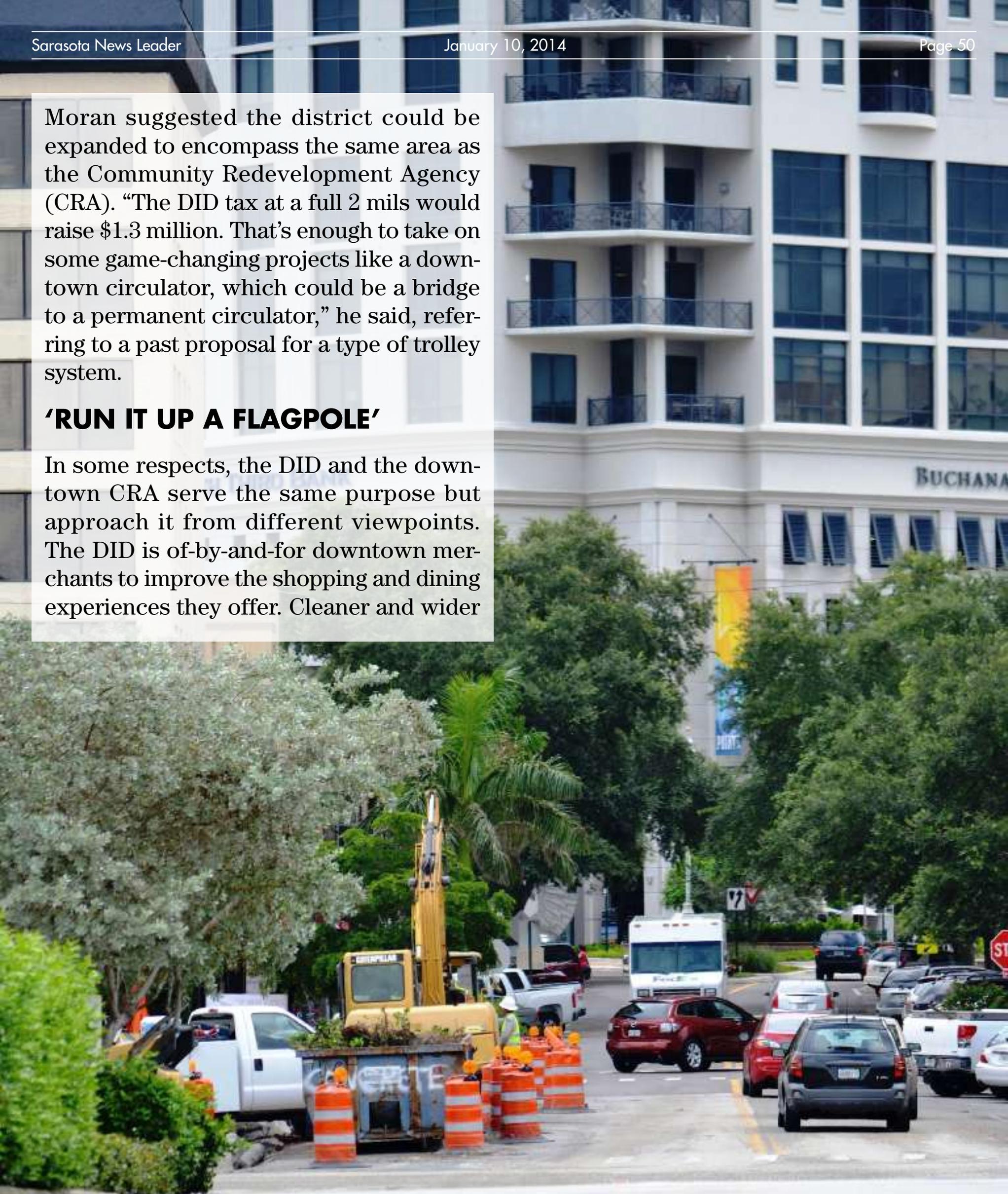
Ernie Ritz
Chairman
Downtown Improvement District

DID Operations
Manager John

Moran suggested the district could be expanded to encompass the same area as the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). “The DID tax at a full 2 mils would raise \$1.3 million. That’s enough to take on some game-changing projects like a downtown circulator, which could be a bridge to a permanent circulator,” he said, referring to a past proposal for a type of trolley system.

‘RUN IT UP A FLAGPOLE’

In some respects, the DID and the downtown CRA serve the same purpose but approach it from different viewpoints. The DID is of-by-and-for downtown merchants to improve the shopping and dining experiences they offer. Cleaner and wider



sidewalks, better lighting, improved landscaping, paver crosswalks and other general improvements have been the DID's focus.

The CRA is ostensibly about encouraging public-private partnerships to spur more development and redevelopment. Whole Foods and the new Sarasota Herald-Tribune building are two examples of successful CRA enticement initiatives. However, "ostensibly" means about half the CRA income now goes to pay for operational expenses that otherwise would come from the regular city budget. The future of the CRA is in limbo, and it is set to expire in 2016. Its \$7 million annual budget would be reabsorbed by the city and county if the CRA expires.

The DID board is not interested in taking over the CRA's role as public-private partnership incubator, in part because it has no public

money to offer enticements. Using one current example, the entire \$58,000 DID budget available for new uses would not even cover putting new lights in Five Points Park.

"If we don't expand and grow, then what we have is \$58,000 per year to spend," said Ritz. "It doesn't even meet our contingency requirements. There's no reason for this board to meet, except on auto pilot."

"We're talking about expansion. Now we're talking about six times what our present [area] is," said member Dr. Mark Kauffman. "If you add [the] Rosemary [District] and other areas, the DID is not a city. Let the city raise taxes and do it. The idea of expanding to the CRA district is overwhelming to me."

Members Ron Soto and Eileen Hampshire seemed to agree. Moran was quick to defuse



Members of the Downtown Improvement District board and area residents gathered for a December demonstration of a proposed new lighting system for Five Points Park. File photo

the growing consensus. “This is not something we have to decide today. If there is no buy-in, we won’t do it,” he said.

Then “Mr. Downtown” rose to speak. Paul Thorpe has served on every downtown organization, often as its leader, for three decades. Every parade and festival during that period has his fingerprints on it. “I agree the DID should expand into the central downtown,” he said, “from School [Avenue to the east] and the bayfront. Continue your work on Main Street. It’s a real Main Street, not a fake like the one at Lakewood Ranch.”

Thorpe then proposed the DID return to its roots with a community-wide meeting to look to the future. “We should discuss this with a group of people, like a [SEMCON](#). Let’s find out from the public what they want, and what we can do,” he added.

“We could have a workshop or a SEMCON,” said Ritz. “A downtown circulator, Fruitville Road [designs], expansion of the DID — let’s do that.”

“I agree with Ernie [about having] a SEMCON. Otherwise, this is just a scheme to raise money,” noted Hampshire.

“It’s not about getting money,” said Moran. “It’s about identifying projects and then deciding how to get the money to achieve them.”

Moran added that he would bring the board a list of names for creation of a steering committee to begin the lengthy process of organizing another SEMCON. The one in 2008 led to the creation of the DID to satisfy a number of unmet needs downtown.



Ernie Ritz is chairman of the Downtown Improvement District. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

PESKY FIVE POINTS LIGHTS

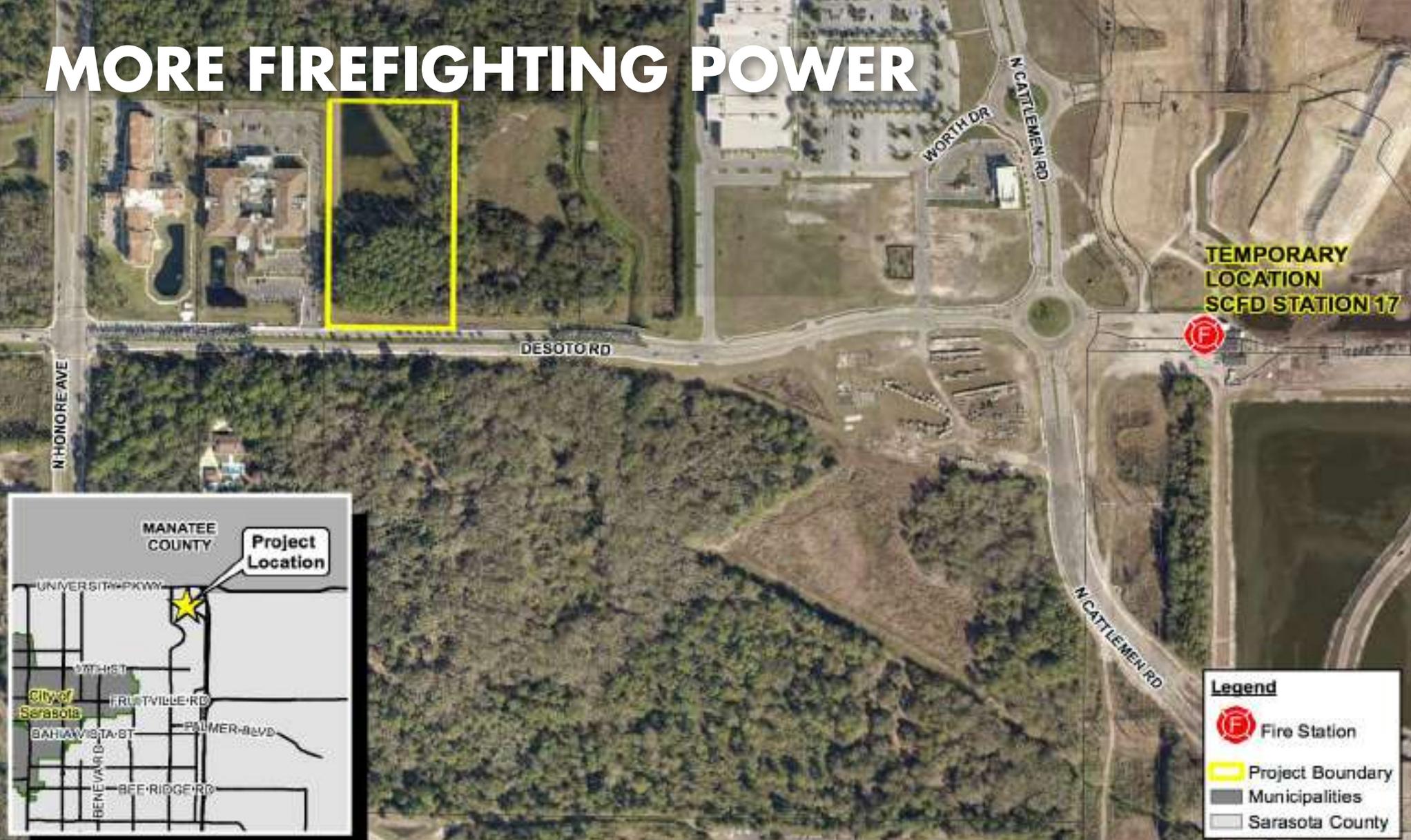
You would think there was a Native American burial ground under Five Points Park. Nothing there ever seems to go right. It is the city’s only park without benches because vagrants used them. City commissioners ordered them removed (the benches, that is; the vagrants remained), so there is no way to linger in the city’s downtown park.

Now plans to install lights in the trees are falling apart. The old system proved a catastrophic failure, leaving a figurative bad taste in the mouths of representatives of organizations and a foundation that initially helped pay for their installation.

At Tuesday’s DID meeting, the conversation turned from who will be installing new lights to who will be removing the old ones.

“I’m not going to spend our reserves on this,” said Ritz. “You guys are asking for the money and we don’t have it.” 

MORE FIREFIGHTING POWER



A map shows the proposed location of Fire Station No. 17 on Desoto Road near University Parkway. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE SARASOTA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT AND SHERIFF'S OFFICE ARE COLLABORATING ON A NEW PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY NEAR UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, WITH INTERIM PLANS IN THE WORKS FOR INCREASED ACTIVITY IN THAT AREA

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

While construction is under way on a new combined fire station/Sarasota County Sheriff's Office facility near University Parkway, county fire officials are prepared to move more units to the area if necessary to handle an increased workload when the [Mall at University Town Center](#) is completed, Assistant Fire Chief Bill Hoag has told the County Commission.

With the mall set to open Oct. 16 and numerous rowing events planned at Benderson Park, Hoag said on Dec. 10, "We will be fluid" in determining how best to address calls in that area.

“We feel very fortunate that we are in a good situation.”

Bill Hoag
Assistant Fire Chief
Sarasota County

Further, Hoag said Sheriff's Office staff is working on ways "to create some temporary ... space" in that area to address its

service level in conjunction with the mall's debut.

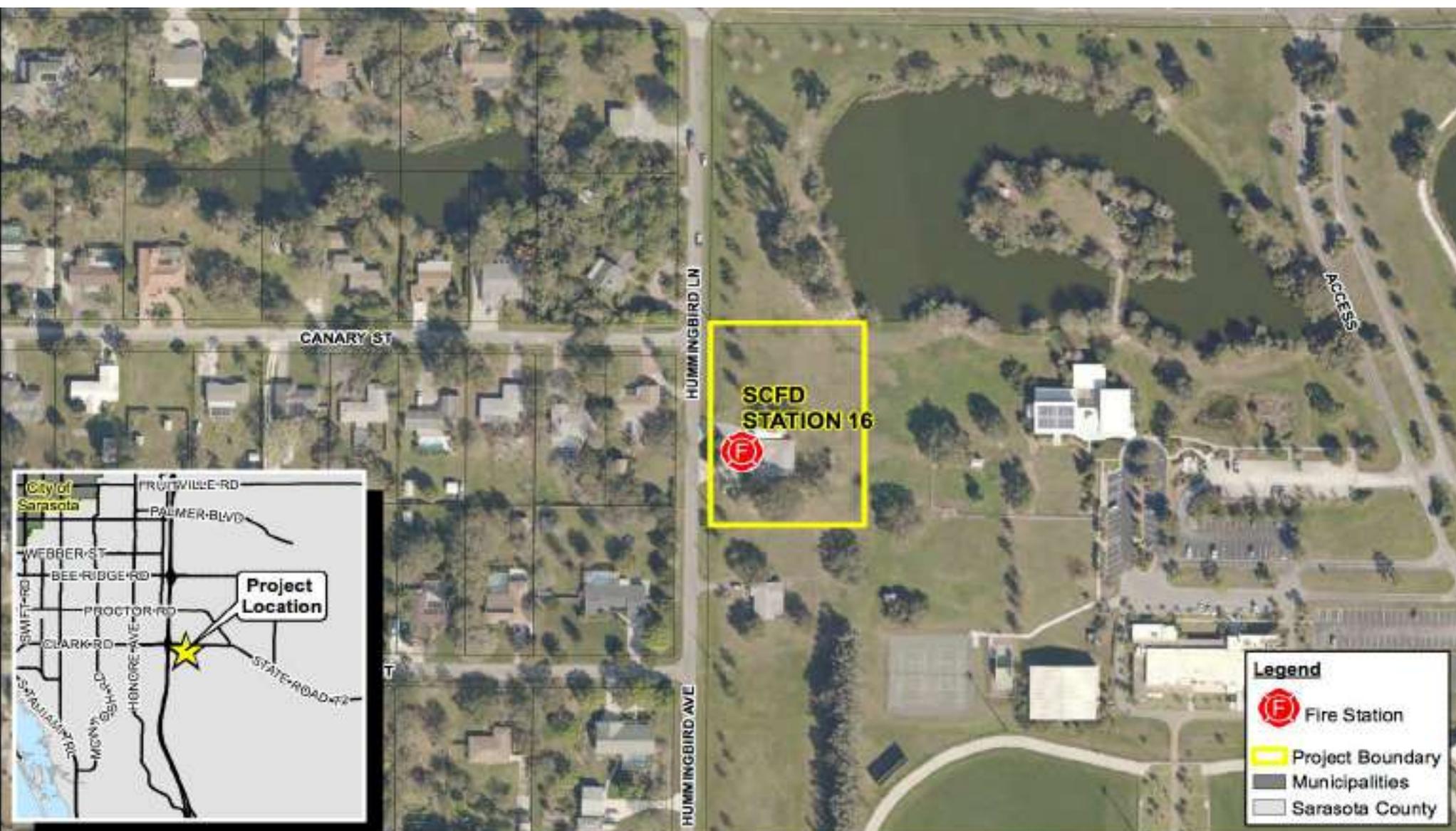
A Dec. 10 memo to the County Commission says the station is expected to be completed about eight months after the opening of the mall. The fire facility will include 2,000 square feet of space for administrative offices and storage area for the Sheriff's Office — including room for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), Hoag added. Staff is working with Benderson Development Co. on a land swap to allow for the construction of a facility for the Sheriff's Office Mounted Patrol to keep horses there as well, Hoag said.

The proposed site of the structure is the north side of Desoto Road, just east of Honore Avenue, on property the county owns.

In an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* last year, Sheriff Tom Knight discussed similarities between staffing near Benderson Park and his use of personnel on Siesta Key. "We're going to need a special group of deputies up there," he told the *News Leader*, especially given the number of international as well as out-of-state and Florida visitors who will be coming to the venue for competitions.

The office utilizes both ATVs and Mounted Patrol officers on a regular basis during season and special events on Siesta Key.

The commissioners voted unanimously during their regular meeting on Dec. 10 to move forward with design and permitting for four new fire stations, with a construction contract expected to come before the board in early spring for the first one. Taking into



A map shows the location of Fire Station No. 16 on Hummingbird Lane near Clark Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

consideration permitting requirements and design work, the order of construction for the stations puts the University Parkway project second in line, according to the Dec. 10 memo.

In response to a question from Commissioner Nora Patterson, Hoag pointed out that while initial cost estimates indicated the county would need to borrow about \$8 million to cover the total cost of the projects, the amount would be closer to \$5 million. "We feel very fortunate that we are in a good situation," he added.

Some of that reduction in expense is related to the use of fire and emergency services impact fees for Fire Station No. 17, Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer explained.

Part of the agenda item the board approved included a budget amendment to transfer \$731,161 in Sheriff's Office impact fees to the project.

THE NAME AND OTHER DETAILS

When Commissioner Joe Barbetta suggested a shorter name might be found for the new University Parkway station, Hoag replied, "I



The design of Fire Station No. 12 on Bee Ridge Road could be similar to that of Fire Station No. 3 on St. Armands Circle. Image courtesy Sarasota County

came up with that name; maybe I was being a little technical.”

The board’s agenda material referenced the facility as “Fire Station No. 17 and Sheriff Administrative Facility University Parkway Area.”

“It’s really a public safety center,” Barbetta pointed out.

Along with the lower anticipated expense, another facet of the four projects that drew commissioners’ praise was the work of the staff to enable them to give concurrent approval to the hiring of both the construction manager and the architect. Harmer called that aspect of the work “really important,” adding that the contractor will be “at the table right upfront with the design. ... We haven’t done that in the past.”

“I think it’s great,” Barbetta said.

Sweet Sparkman Architects of Sarasota is the design firm for the fire stations, while Willis

A. Smith Construction Inc. of Sarasota will be the construction manager.

The first of the four new stations, No. 16, will be constructed at 5875 Hummingbird Lane, in the Twin Lakes area of Sarasota, Hoag pointed out. It will utilize the same floor plan as Fire Station 10 at Fruitville and Vic Edwards roads, he added.

The design originally created for that project was placed on hold in 2010 as a result of budget constraints related to the Great Recession, the Dec. 10 memo indicated. That design will be modified to ensure the structure complies with current Florida Building Code and county standards, the memo pointed out.

Following No. 17 at University Parkway, Fire Station No. 14 will be built on one of two sites under consideration on South Tamiami Trail in Osprey, according to the Dec. 10 memo. Design work is still under way on that project, Hoag pointed out, with the award of the construction bid expected in the fall.



A rendering shows an alternate design for Fire Station No. 12 on Bee Ridge Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Lastly, a new Fire Station No. 12 will be constructed at 3110 Bee Ridge Road. The memo said the Fire Department anticipates a formal award of that bid late this year.

When then Commission Vice Chairman Charles Hines asked why the proposed design for the new Bee Ridge facility was so different from the others Hoag had shown the board, Hoag explained that the site “has a very small footprint ...”

The plan is to put the crew quarters on the second floor, he added. The design also will need to fit in with the community, he noted — a goal for each of the four projects — with neighborhood meetings planned for that purpose. 



Work continued in mid-November on the Mall at University Town Center off University Parkway. Photo by Norman Schimmel



This rendering shows the possible design for Fire Station No. 14 in the Osprey area. Image courtesy Sarasota County



Diane Silverstein and Shirley Rose are making hundreds of cabbage rolls for the Sarasota Jewish Food Festival on Sunday, Jan. 12, at Temple Sinai. Contributed photo

SIXTH ANNUAL SARASOTA JEWISH FOOD FESTIVAL TO BE HELD JAN. 12

The Sixth Annual Sarasota Jewish Food Festival at Temple Sinai will be held on Sunday, Jan. 12, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., the organizers have announced.

Guests are welcome to start with bagels and a *schmear* and then savor all the traditional comfort foods such as brisket, corned beef and cabbage rolls, a news release says. “Or maybe blintzes, knishes or matzoh ball soup would entice you?” the release adds. “Come and experience a blast from your past or some new taste treats.”

Additionally, the release notes, “A large selection of delectable baked goods will be available.”

Admission is free. The event takes place rain or shine, and attendees may eat in or ask for takeaway, the release says.

New this year is a partnership with All Faiths Food Bank, the release continues. Guests are encouraged to bring canned goods or non-perishable donations for the food bank. “The need is great in this community, and All Faiths staff members “work tirelessly to help meet it,” the release points out. Temple Sinai also will be donating a portion of the day’s proceeds to the food bank.

Further, [Be the Match](#), the bone marrow registry organization, will have a booth at the festival, seeking individuals who are willing to

have their cheeks swabbed. This was inspired by members who have a 14-year-old relative with Acute Childhood Leukemia, the release explains. Ninety-five percent of the children diagnosed with this disease respond to chemotherapy, but these members' relative is not one of them, the release points out. "It is critical that a match be found [for him] and he has not matched any of the 10 million people already in the registry," the release says.

The event also will feature a Health Fair with displays presented by numerous companies, as well as a used book sale and many crafts and arts vendors.

Temple Sinai is located at 4631 S. Lockwood Ridge Road in Sarasota. Guests may enter the site from Proctor Road between Swift and Beneva roads.

For more information, call 924-1802 or visit Jewishfoodsarasota.com.

CONA TO HOLD DISCUSSION ABOUT LIDO RENOURISHMENT PROJECT

On Jan. 13 at 7 p.m. at Sarasota Garden Club, the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) will present a program titled, *Big Pass: To dredge, or not to dredge?*

Local environmentalist Jono Miller will address Lido Beach renourishment options, "particularly whether it makes sense to dredge Big Pass to renourish Lido Key, and potential dredging impact on Siesta Key," a news release says.

The Sarasota Garden Club is located at 1131 Boulevard of the Arts off U.S. 41 in downtown Sarasota.

The public is welcome to join this community discussion "to consider alternatives that will serve both local beaches," the release adds. For more information, visit www.conasarasota.org.



In spite of whitecaps in the Gulf of Mexico on Jan. 7, Big Pass appeared calm. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THUNDER BY THE BAY ROARING INTO TOWN THIS WEEK

The 16th Annual Thunder By The Bay Motorcycle Festival will feature a Born To Be Wild Kickoff Party on Friday, Jan. 10, at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota and at events on Main Street in Sarasota Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 11 and 12, with plenty of live music, organizers have announced.

On Jan. 11, nationally known recording artists Foghat will perform, while the Outlaws band will take the stage on Jan. 12, a news release says. Along with the music, more than 80 vendors will offer a variety of specialty items, the release adds.

Light Up The Night LED bike shows have been scheduled for both Saturday and Sunday on South Palm Avenue.

Additionally, on Jan. 12, a Legacy of Valor ride for motorcycles will offer riders \$4,000

in cash prizes, the release notes. Registration will be from 9 to 11 a.m. at O'Leary's Tiki Bar & Grill in Bayfront Park off U.S. 41 in downtown Sarasota.

The 2013 festival drew an estimated crowd of 90,000, the release points out, generating an economic impact of \$6.8 million in the community.

For festival details and more information about Suncoast Charities for Children — for which the event is a fundraiser — visit thunderbythebay.org.

Thunder by the Bay is partnering this year with Legacy of Valor, a campaign honoring veterans and their families throughout Southwest Florida. For more information about that initiative, visit FreedomPassItOn.org.



A multitude of vendors will be offering a variety of wares during Thunder by the Bay this weekend. Photo by Norman Schimmel

FRIENDSHIP FORCE TO BE FOCUS OF JAN. 11 PROGRAM

On Jan. 11 at 10 a.m., the Women's Interfaith Network (WIN) of Sarasota-Bradenton will present a program on the Friendship Force.

The event will be held at the North Sarasota Library, located at 2801 Newtown Blvd. in Sarasota.

Friendship Force (FF) International is a non-profit cultural exchange organization with more than 360 local clubs in 57 countries, a news release notes. Members are people of all ages who want to better understand other cultures and develop friendships around the world, the release explains. The Sarasota club has more than 100 members.

During an exchange, visiting club members stay in the homes of local FF hosts. The host club organizes various large group activities,

including welcome and farewell dinners and visits to various venues, the release adds. Individual local FF members serve as day hosts for individuals or small groups, or they hold small dinner gatherings for visitors and the FF members hosting guests in their homes.

The presentation to WIN, by Peggy Hayden, will summarize a number of inbound and outbound exchange visits over the years, with a special focus on the Sarasota club's September 2012 week-long exchange in Albania, "a country that prides itself on religious tolerance" and is home to Muslims, Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox "and other groups that live in harmony," the release continues.

For more information on the Friendship Force, go to www.womensinterfaithnetwork.org and click on WIN.



Sarasota's Friendship Force shows off the Mote Marine Aquarium to visiting Peruvians. Contributed photo

HISTORY OF SIGNIFICANT SARASOTA NEIGHBORHOODS TO BE DISCUSSED ON JAN. 14

Sarasota officially became a real estate destination in 1885 when 60 people from Scotland, who had purchased land in this area from the Edinburgh-based Florida Mortgage and Investment Co., “arrived on an uncharacteristically chilly December day at what is now lower Main Street, excited to establish neighborhoods and a town,” a Historical Society of Sarasota County (HSOSC) news release says.

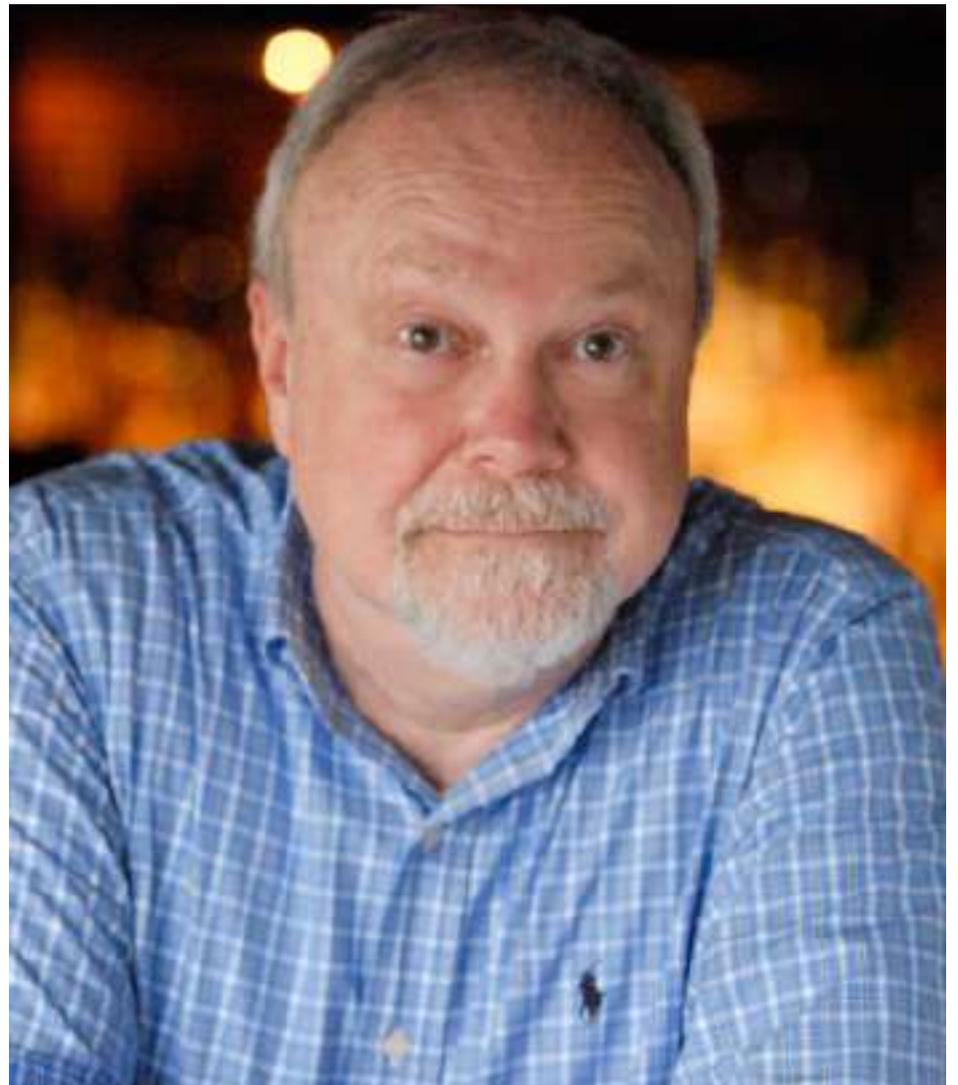
“They were soon disappointed with the mud road and wood huts they saw. Then it snowed,” the release adds.

Want to know what happened next? That will be the topic of the next Conversations at The Crocker program on Tuesday, Jan. 14, at the Crocker Memorial Church (1260 12th St. in Sarasota), “when a small group of gabby researchers talk to one another and to you about the development of significant neighborhoods in Sarasota,” the release explains.

The event is free to Historical Society members and \$10 for the general public. The program starts at 7 p.m.

The leader of this Conversation will be Bob Plunket, who has been writing about Sarasota’s people and places for more than 30 years, the release points out. His articles appear regularly in *Sarasota Magazine*, as well as national publications such as *Barron’s*.

“After owning eight different houses in Sarasota over the years,” he says in the release, “I’m obsessed about all the amazing neighborhoods in Sarasota where you can own, rent and be foreclosed in. And the history of all of these neighborhoods is entirely fascinating,



Bob Plunket/Contributed photo

from the street names to the famous people who lived in them. For instance, do you know why there’s an Ocean Boulevard on Siesta Key when the city isn’t near any ocean? Turns out the street was named after Capt. Louis Roberts’ wife, whose given name was Ocean Hansen.”

Plunket continues in the release, “Roberts was an early developer of Siesta Key and had a hotel on the island that he expanded from his house.”

Joining Bob Plunket will be Clifford Smith, senior planner in historic preservation with the City of Sarasota; and Margi Baskerville Nanny, who, with her former husband, Jerry King, developed Centergate. King was one of Sarasota’s top real estate developers of the

1960s to 1980s, the release notes. With his family, he developed Southgate and several other neighborhoods that will be discussed, the release says.

On The Street Where You Live is the official title of this fourth event of the 2013-14 Conversations at The Crocker season, now in its second year.

Proceeds from the panel discussions help to maintain the Historical Society's two heritage properties at Pioneer Park — the Bidwell-Wood House (1882, Sarasota's oldest private residence) and the Crocker Memorial Church (1901). Docent-led tours of both buildings are available an hour before each of the Conversations at The Crocker events, the release adds.

PREGNANT WOMEN URGED TO RECEIVE FLU VACCINATION

The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) is urging pregnant women to receive the flu vaccination because of "the increased impact that influenza infections are having on pregnant women and their babies in Florida this year," the department has announced.

"The flu vaccine is the single best way to prevent flu," says DOH-Sarasota Medical Director Dr. William Heymann in a news release. "We want to make sure people understand how important it is for pregnant women to receive the influenza vaccination to protect themselves and their babies."

DOH-Sarasota recommends that all individuals six months of age and older receive the flu vaccination each year, the release notes. "It is especially important for pregnant women to be vaccinated due to the increased risk of complications associated with contracting the flu while pregnant," the release adds. The flu vaccination is safe and will protect mothers and their unborn children, and it will also help protect infants during the first months after birth, the release points out.

"Additional flu prevention steps include washing your hands often, keeping your hands away from your face and covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing and coughing," the release continues. "Symptoms of the flu include headache, fever, severe cough, runny nose or body aches. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, see your primary care provider immediately for guidance on treatment," the release says. For more information on pregnant women and influenza, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm.

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, retail stores, pharmacies and health centers, as well as by many employers and schools, the release points out. Check with your physician or the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County or visit www.floridahealth.gov/prevention-safety-and-wellness/flu-prevention/locate-a-flu-shot.html to search for a location to receive flu vaccine.

For more information about the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, visit www.sarasotahealth.org or call 861-2900.

PUTNAM TO BE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT REPUBLICAN CLUB MEETING

Adam Putnam, Florida's commissioner of agriculture, will be the keynote speaker at the Sarasota Republican Club's dinner meeting at 6 p.m. on Jan. 16 at Marina Jack, the club has announced.

Marina Jack is located at 2 Marina Plaza off U.S. 41 in downtown Sarasota.

Reservations are required at 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.



Adam Putnam is the Florida commissioner of agriculture. Image courtesy www.freshfromflorida.com

BIRD KEY PARK GETTING PARKING UPGRADES

Work on upgrades to the drivable grass parking areas in Bird Key Park began this week, the City of Sarasota announced.

Because of the volume of parking and excessive wear, the drivable grass parking areas will be replaced with sustainable pavers, which are expected to be more durable, a news release says. Bird Key Park will be open to the public during the construction period,

with access allowed to parking areas that are not the focus of the work, the release points out.

The replacement process started on the west side of the park, the release continues; work on the east side will begin in approximately two weeks.

The project is expected to be finished within one month at a cost of \$75,467, the release adds.



Bird Key Park is a popular spot for tourists and county residents. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SAF PROGRAM TO PUT THE FOCUS ON A SCHOOL IN THE SUN

On Thursday, Jan. 16, the Sarasota Architectural Foundation (SAF) will present Ringling College of Art and Design professor Christopher Wilson in a lecture titled *A School in the Sun: The Contribution of the Florida Climate to the Sarasota School of Architecture*.

The program will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune building, located at 1741 Main St. in Sarasota, the foundation has announced.

“The Sarasota School of Architecture (SSoA) was southwest Florida’s unique and innovative interpretation of Modern architecture that evolved and thrived in the 1950s and 1960s,” a news release says. “Designed before air conditioning was considered ‘standard equipment’ for homes and businesses, SSoA structures sought to make the best practical use of Sarasota’s sunny, mild and breezy conditions,” the release adds. “Fifty years before the term ‘sustainability’ became fashionable, the SSoA was designing homes, schools and

commercial buildings that incorporated such eco-minded features as the breezeway, internal courtyard, overhead shading, walls of jalousie windows and overhanging roof structures,” the release points out.

Wilson will document “the pioneering design strategies that were most effective in Sarasota’s subtropical coastal location” and contemplate their relevance to today’s environment-friendly designs, the release continues. Among the subjects in his presentation will be architect Paul Rudolph’s Umbrella House, Harkavy House and Walker Guest House (aka the Cannonball House).

Admission is \$10 for SAF members, \$15 for the public and \$5 for students. Click on the following for [advance registration and to pay online](#).

For those paying at the door, cash, checks or credit cards will be accepted, the release says. For more information, email info@saf-srq.org or call 487-8728.



The Walker Guest House was designed by architect Paul Rudolph. Contributed illustration by John Pirman

SARASOTAN ONE OF THREE FINALISTS FOR PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

Gov. Rick Scott announced on Dec. 23 that Alta Vista Elementary School Principal Barbara Shirley is one of three finalists for the Principal Achievement Award for Outstanding Leadership.

One statewide Principal of the Year and one Assistant Principal of the Year will be announced in February at the annual Commissioner's Summit for Principals, a Sarasota County Schools news release notes.

According to a news release from governor's office, the awards recognize "outstanding leaders who have increased student performance, promoted safe learning environments and established successful partnerships with parents and community members."

"It is an incredible honor to receive this recognition when you realize the quality of our principal leadership throughout the state," Shirley said in the Sarasota district news release. "This news is particularly rewarding because it reflects the achievement of our entire Alta Vista team, our district's collaborative educational efforts and the strong citizen support for public education in Sarasota County."

Shirley has been principal of Alta Vista Elementary since July 2007. She has worked for the Sarasota County School District since 1993, serving first at Pine View School as a teacher of gifted students in grades two and four, Exceptional Student Education liaison and admissions coordinator, the release points out. She was assistant principal at Gocio Elementary from 2001-05 and assistant principal at Sarasota High School from 2005-07.



Barbara Shirley/Contributed photo

Alta Vista Elementary has maintained an "A" over the time Shirley has been principal, the release continues. It is designated as a Five-Star School in a statewide program that recognizes schools with high levels of family and community involvement. In 2013, Alta Vista also was designated a Positive Behavior Support Model School; it received two awards from the University of South Florida, the release adds.

In 2012, in partnership with a private donor and with subsequent funding from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County — along with the cooperation of several local organizations and individuals — Shirley started the Eagle Academy, a summer program for entering kindergartners and first-graders. "The seven-week summer academic and enrichment program promotes school readiness and

prepares students for a successful academic career,” the release explains. In 2013, Parent University was added to the program, with sessions centering on parenting and workplace skills. “The Eagle Academy program has been recognized by the Aspen Institute, a national think tank based in Washington, D.C., for its two-generational approach to solving the problem of poverty by addressing its effect on student achievement,” the release says.

Additionally at Alta Vista, “Shirley has emphasized the importance of the arts in a well-rounded education,” the release continues. “She enhanced existing fine arts classes and integrated arts strategies to improve student learning in each classroom.”

Shirley also expanded the volunteer program at Alta Vista, working with school and

district staff, as well as community residents, to create the Eagles’ Nest, “a welcoming yet structured environment for volunteers,” the release notes. “This program has served as a district elementary model for other Sarasota County Schools.”

Further, in October, Alta Vista was recognized by the East Coast Technical Assistance Center, a network of 36 school districts across Florida, “for showing great progress with improving student achievement in a Title I school,” the release adds. Title I schools have a high percentage of students living in poverty; over 90 percent of Alta Vista students receive free or reduced-cost meals. The school was cited for “exceeding expectations on academic indicators when compared to other schools with similar characteristic and populations,” the release points out.

STUDENTS INVITED TO PROGRAM ON HEALTH PROFESSION CAREERS

On Friday, Jan. 17, at 3 p.m., the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) School of Dental Medicine — located at 4800 Lakewood Ranch Blvd. in Bradenton — will host a Health Professions Career Awareness Program.

This event is designed to help answer high school students’ questions regarding medical, dental, pharmacy and veterinary medical schools, as well as other health-related professional schools, LECOM has announced.

From 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., a panel of students representing all of LECOM’s schools will answer questions about “what they did” and “wish they would have done” in high school

to prepare for admission to a variety of medical schools, a news release says.

Additionally, representatives from LECOM’s College of Medicine, School of Pharmacy and School of Dental Medicine will offer presentations and answer any questions students and parents may have, the release continues. The doors will open at 3 p.m., with the program scheduled to start at 3:30 p.m.

To sign up for the program, visit the [LECOM’s Health Professions Career Awareness website](#).

Seating is limited, so those planning to attend are urged to fill out the online form. For more information, email Dr. Kersten Schroeder at kschroeder@lecom.edu.

U.S. 301 LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT COMPLETED

“With the completion of a significant landscape enhancement project to make our community even more beautiful, thousands of new shrubs and hundreds of new trees now line U.S. 301, stretching from Mound Street to Myrtle Street,” the City of Sarasota has announced.

A portion of Mound Street, north of the U.S. 301/U.S. 41 split, also was landscaped, a city news release points out.

“Sarasota is a beautiful city,” says City Manager Tom Barwin in the release. “Now, after this landscaping project, our gateways are even more inviting. If you haven’t driven along U.S. 301 lately, I encourage you to do so. The new landscaping is stunning and long overdue. Congratulations to all involved.”

Among the improvements were the addition of almost 200 new trees — including

147 palms — plus 16,000 shrubs, as well as ground cover, the release notes. Irrigation systems also were installed and brick pavers were placed along select medians.

[Click here to see a short YouTube video of the project.](#)

The contractor will provide one year of maintenance as part of the bid, the release says.

Residents are encouraged to contact Keep Sarasota Beautiful to report litter issues: 861-5000.

The project cost \$851,700, with more than half funded by the Florida Department of Transportation, the release adds. The remainder was funded through the Local Option Sales Tax II, which was approved by voters throughout Sarasota County in 1997.



The ‘facelift’ for U.S. 301 in Sarasota has been completed, adding significant greenery to the landscape. Contribute photo

CORRECTIONS

In the Dec. 27 article *Upgrading a popular place*, dragonflies were misidentified as vertebrates. They are invertebrates.

The Dec. 27 edition of *Siesta Seen* incorrectly identified the president of the Siesta Key Village Association. She is Cheryl Gaddie.

BAY GUARDIAN VOLUNTEERS TO REMOVE AIR POTATO PLANTS

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's Bay Guardians will visit Arlington Park Saturday, Jan. 25, to remove air potato vines and seeds, the organization has announced.

Ridding the park of the invasive plant fosters the vitality of native vegetation, a news release points out. "Prizes will be given for the biggest and smallest air potato seed collected during the morning project," the release adds.

Among other upcoming volunteer outings in 2014 will be a native planting along the Braden River at Jiggs Landing on Feb. 8, a rain garden planting project at New College of Florida on March 15 and a joint planting project with the Tampa Bay Estuary Program at Perico Preserve on April 12, the release continues. All of the projects take place in the morning,

followed by a picnic lunch provided by the [Sarasota Bay Estuary Program](#) (SBEP).

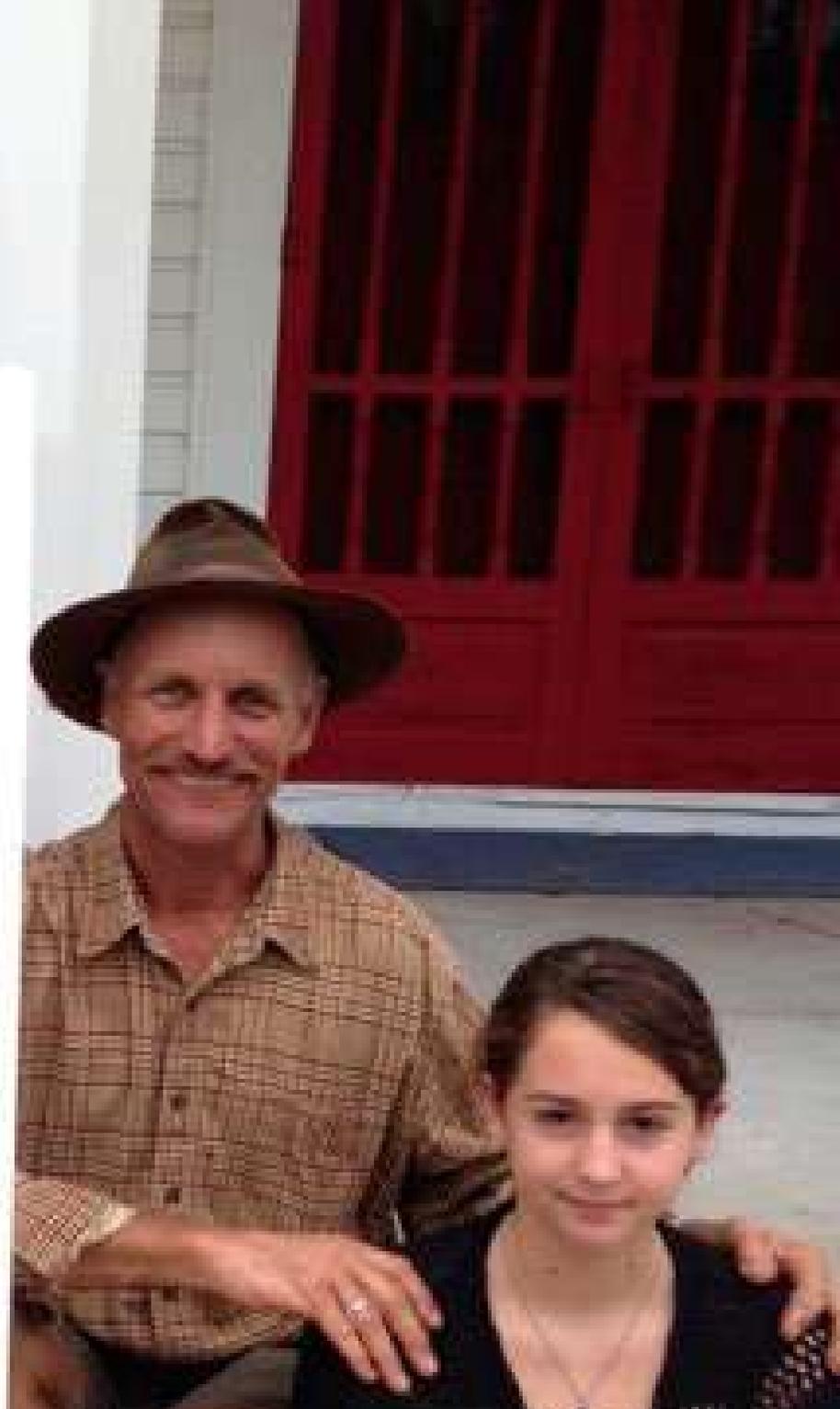
The Bay Guardians are the largest and most active volunteer program in the region focused on Sarasota Bay, the release notes. The award-winning volunteer program is managed by SBEP in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours.

Each new volunteer receives a blue T-shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo, the release adds. Every outing features environmental education and a picnic lunch.

"Join the Bay Guardians for a single project or as an ongoing commitment," the release says. Local school, scout and church groups interested in volunteering should contact Stephanie Hames at info@sarasotabay.org.



Air potato plants are an invasive species found in many parts of Florida. Image by MrX via Wikimedia Commons



MEMORIAL GIFT LAUDED FOR ITS WIDE-RANGING COMMUNITY BENEFIT

The family of Norma Kwenski, a member of the Sarasota Historical Society of Sarasota County (HSOSC), responded to a need at the Crocker Memorial Church (built in 1901) by donating the funds to provide handrails to the porch of the de-sanctified church building in Sarasota's Pioneer Park, the Historical Society has announced.

These new handrails, which were reviewed and approved by the City of Sarasota, provide additional safety for people coming to the Crocker for monthly member programs, weddings and community social and civic

meetings and public events held in the facility year-round, a news release points out.

"I mentioned to my children about the need for handrails on the porch and they suggested we make a family gift of the funding in memory of my husband, Brad, who loved history and loved this community," says Norma Kwenski in the release. "It gives us all such great pleasure now every time we're at the Crocker and we see people using the handrails. It's made a real difference, and my husband would be thrilled to know he is being remembered for a role in historic preservation and in keeping these historic places alive and in use."

The 'Kwenski Krewe' members are (from left) Kendell Kwenski, Kay Kwenski, Norma Kwenski, Brent Kwenski and Montana Kwenski. Contributed photo

ICARD MERRILL EMPLOYEES MAKE DONATION TO ALL FAITHS FOOD BANK

Employees of the law firm of Icard, Merrill, Cullis, Timm, Furen & Ginsburg P.A. joined forces recently to raise \$1,140 for the benefit of All Faiths Food Bank as part of a special holiday outreach project coordinated by firm president Robert G. Lyons, the firm has announced.

Staff from all three office locations — Sarasota, Lakewood Ranch and Port Charlotte — participated in the campaign, a news release notes.

“Icard Merrill supports the community and local nonprofits in various ways all year long, but we wanted to do something extra during the holiday season,” said Lyons in the release. “It is disturbing to realize just how many families in this area may not have enough to eat,

and this small project is a way that we could have a tangible and immediate impact on their lives.”

Because of a matching gifts campaign in effect at All Faiths Food Bank through the month of December, the firm’s donation was automatically doubled to \$2,280, the release points out.

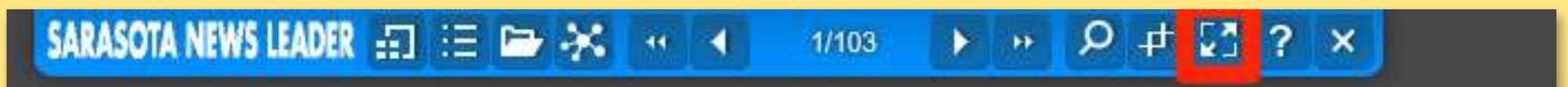
“All Faiths Food Bank is a member of Feeding America and the hub of the hunger relief system in DeSoto and Sarasota counties,” the release adds. Last year, the organization distributed nearly 6.2 million pounds of food — equating to 5.2 million meals — through 195 pantries, soup kitchens, churches, community centers and programs, the release notes. 

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QUICK TIP



For the best viewing experience on a computer click the  icon in the menubar to zoom to fullscreen mode.



North Water Tower Park is located in north Sarasota. Image from Google Maps. (Inset) Deacon Clark/Contributed photo

INVESTIGATION CONTINUING IN OFFICER-RELATED SHOOTING

Two officers with the Sarasota Police Department remained on administrative leave following an officer-involved shooting that occurred on Jan. 5, the department reported on Jan. 7.

Officer Terry Crenshaw and Officer Adam Barlow have both been with the Sarasota Police Department since January 2012 and have not been involved in any other similar incidents, a news release says.

The deceased suspect in the case has been identified as Deacon Clark, 30, with a last known address of 1281 N. Riverside Drive, Sarasota, the release notes.

On Jan. 5, Crenshaw and Barlow were on bicycle patrol just after 10 p.m. in the neighborhood around North Water Tower Park in north Sarasota, the release continues. The Police Department has received complaints

from residents about narcotics and prostitution in that area, the release adds, so officers have increased their presence there.

While on their bicycles, Crenshaw and Barlow encountered Clark in the park, the release says. The officers identified themselves to Clark, the release points out. “Crenshaw and Barlow said Clark had a gun in his hand and as they ordered him to drop [it], Clark pointed [it] in a threatening manner at [them],” the release says. Crenshaw and Barlow fired, wounding Clark, but they continued to order him to drop the gun, the release adds.

EMS workers who arrived on the scene attempted to revive Clark but were unsuccessful, the release continues.

The release notes, “No other information will be released at this time,” as the investigation is proceeding.

THREE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH VENICE BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested three Venice area residents who were in possession of property worth thousands of dollars that allegedly was stolen in six residential burglaries over the past three months, the office has announced.

Deputies first encountered James Moore, Tiffany Meyers and Zachary Johnson during a traffic stop in December, a news release says. At the time, Moore was arrested on drug charges, but deputies also found a number of items in the vehicle that were believed to have been stolen, the release notes. Deputies alerted detectives who were investigating south Venice burglaries on Gentian Road, South Venice Boulevard, Papaya Road, Lemon Bay Drive and Pineapple Place, in which more than \$62,000 worth of property was reported



Tiffany Meyers/Contributed photo



James Moore/Contributed photo



Zachary Johnson/Contributed photo

stolen and one home was ransacked, the release adds.

While Johnson was at the Sheriff's Office for an interview on Dec. 13, a detective noticed "a large black suitcase" in the bed of his pickup truck, according to the report. The nametag on that suitcase was discovered to be that of one of the residential burglary victims, the report continues. After Johnson gave a verbal consent to a search of the truck, detectives found the suitcase to contain "different types of power tools and drill bits," the report says. Additionally, two Invicta watches were discovered behind the driver's seat; they also were identified as property of one of the

robbery victims, the report adds. Johnson denied any knowledge of the property.

Three days later, on Dec. 16, detectives confirmed that Moore had made a phone call from the county jail to Meyers — which was recorded — "instructing Meyers to get rid of the stuff" he had hidden at his residence, the report continues.

Detectives escorted Meyers to the dumpster behind a movie theater in Venice, where they recovered the stolen property, the report says.

Then, on Dec. 20, detectives used a search warrant to enter a storage unit rented by Moore



Tools and other items reported stolen in Venice area burglaries were recovered in a storage unit, Sheriff's Office detectives reported. Contributed photo

TWO SARASOTA MEN ARRESTED ON SEXUAL BATTERY CHARGES

Two men have been arrested in connection with an alleged sexual battery case that necessitated a Jan. 6 deployment of the Sarasota Police Department's SWAT team to a 17th Street residence in Sarasota, the department has announced.

Francisco Serrano, 28, of 2072½ 17th St., Sarasota, has been charged with Sexual Battery and Aggravated Assault with a Firearm, while Pastor Mendiola-Martinez, 26, of 3232 Fruitville Road, Sarasota, has been charged with Sexual Battery, a news release says.

At approximately 3:50 a.m. on Jan. 6, officers responded to a call in reference to an armed sexual battery in the 2000 block of 17th Street, the release continues.

According to the report, the victim said she was at a restaurant with both men on Sunday night; she had gone there to ask Serrano for money to buy gas. She told officers that both men drank numerous beers and she had a couple of tequila shots, the report continues. However, she said the men did not appear intoxicated, the report adds. The victim told the officers that Serrano said she could sleep at his apartment, which was nearby, so she would not have to drive home after consuming the alcoholic beverages, the report says.

While all three of them were in the apartment, the victim told officers, the two men began speaking in Spanish, which she does not understand. They started to remove their clothes and began kissing her, the victim said, according to the report. Then they began to



Pastor Mendiola-Martinez/Contributed photo



Francisco Serrano/Contributed photo

take off her clothes. Both men raped her, she told the officers. After Mendiola-Martinez left, the victim tried to flee, she said, but Serrano came outside — wearing no clothes on the lower half of his body. She jumped in her car and locked the doors, but he began hitting the driver's side window with a gun and pointing the gun at her, according to the report. At that point, friends she had managed to text earlier showed up, the report adds. She told officers that the friends also saw Serrano with a weapon, the report says.

Serrano went back into his home after the other people arrived, the report continues, and the friends drove her to a convenience store, where she called the Police Department.

Officers worked with SWAT members to make contact with Serrano inside his home, the news release adds. "Serrano was arrested without incident," the release notes. During the subsequent investigation, weapons were located inside Serrano's home, the news release says.

Mendiola-Martinez was arrested at his home off Fruitville Road, the release adds.

TEEN CHARGED WITH VEHICLE AND RESIDENTIAL BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested 16-year-old Kyle Cartwright in connection with several residential and vehicle burglaries, most of which occurred earlier this week, the office announced on Jan. 8.

Deputies were looking for Cartwright near Locklear Park in Sarasota on the night of Jan. 7 because he was the subject of an arrest warrant for violating probation and was a suspect in a recent theft," a news release says. "When they approached him Cartwright fled, jumped into a creek and took off his clothes and backpack in an attempt to get away," the release adds.

Deputies took him into custody as he climbed out of the water, the release notes; they found a laptop, jewelry and several watches among his belongings. They linked the items to a crime on Hillview Street, and Cartwright admitted to a number of other burglaries and to selling stolen items, including guns, the release says.



Kyle Cartwright/Contributed photo

Cartwright, who has had four felony burglary arrests since 2011, is charged with three counts of Armed Burglary, two counts of Burglary, one count of Grand Theft and one count of Resisting Arrest without Violence.

FUGITIVE SOUGHT FOR SEX OFFENSE ARRESTED IN ILLINOIS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Apprehension Unit, working in conjunction with the U. S. Marshals Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, has captured a man who has been on the run since September to avoid arrest for a sex offense against a child, the office has announced.

Detectives obtained a warrant for Jose Martinez, 24, after the victim reported that Martinez forced her to perform sex acts on him when she was just 6 years old, a news release says. "Her younger sister, who witnessed this crime, also related the incident to detectives and a threat by Martinez to kill their dog if they told," the release adds.

The Fugitive Apprehension Unit deputy who has been working the case for four months forwarded information to the Great Lakes Regional Fugitive Task Force, the release continues. Members of the task force took Martinez into custody on Jan. 7, the release



Jose Martinez/Contributed photo

notes. He will be held without bond in Champaign, IL, until he can be brought to Sarasota County to face charges of Sexual Battery on a Child and Tampering with a Witness, the release says.

ARREST MADE IN NEW YEAR'S DAY HOMICIDE

A 35-year-old Sarasota man was charged with second-degree murder in connection with a New Year's Day homicide on Fourth Street, the Sarasota Police Department reported.

Less than 48 hours after the incident was reported, officers arrested Jorge A. Macias of 1743 Ninth St., Apartment 2, Sarasota, and booked him into the Sarasota County Jail, a Police Department news release says.

On Jan. 1, Sarasota Police Department officers responded to 2065 Fourth St. in Sarasota in reference to a stabbing at 4:25 a.m., the release says. When they arrived on the scene, they "observed the victim lying on the ground bleeding from multiple stab wounds," the



Jorge A. Macias/Contributed photo

release adds. An EMS unit responded, but paramedics were unable to revive Johnny A. Luna and pronounced him dead, the release continues.

Officers also found at the same location a large kitchen type knife with a black handle; it appeared to have blood on it, according to the report.

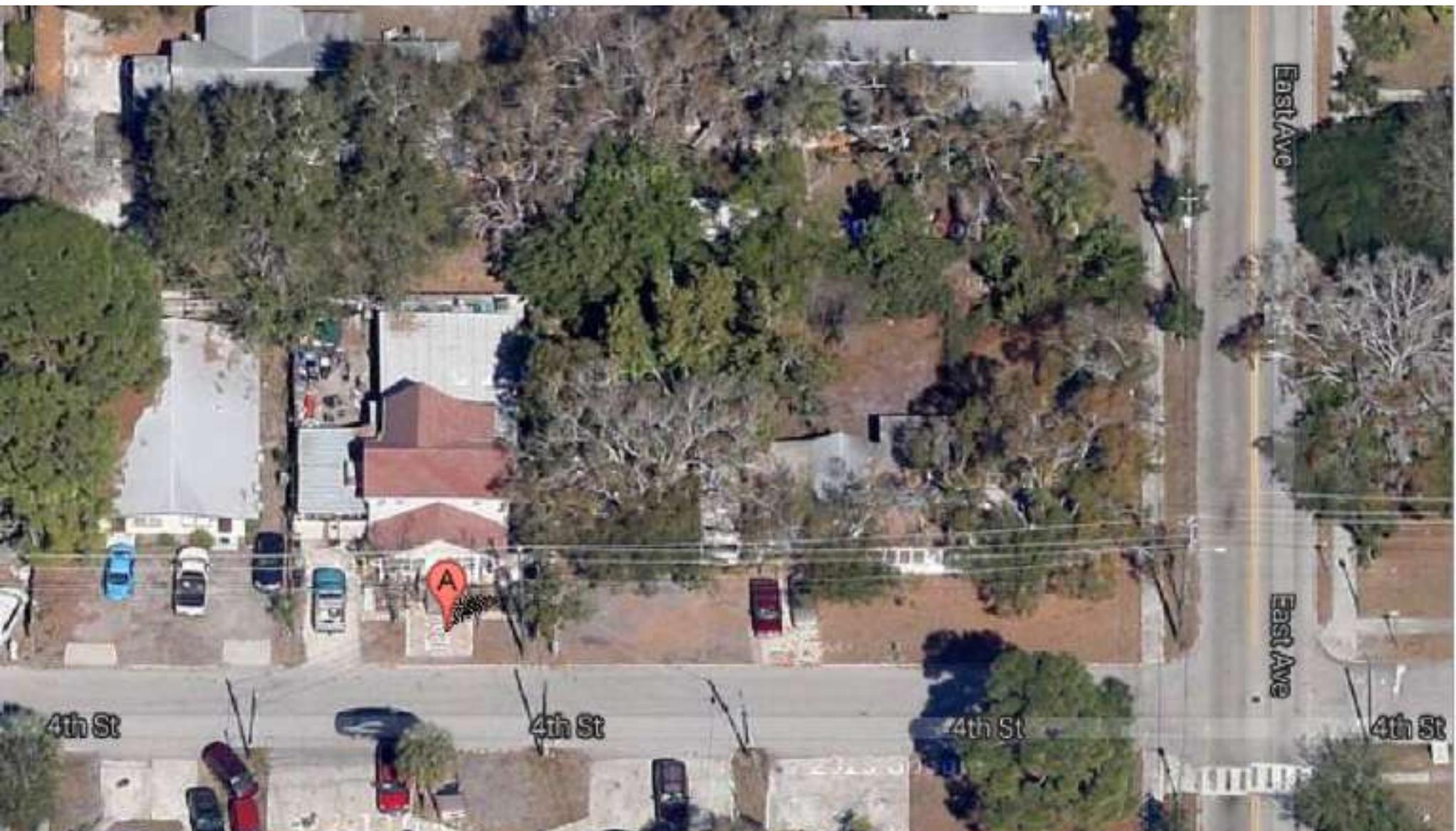
An investigation determined that on Dec. 31, Macias was at 1743 Ninth St. when he reportedly had an argument with family members that turned into a physical altercation, the news release says. Macias fled and later contacted other family members at a party at 2020 Fifth St. “to explain his actions,” the release continues.

While at the Fifth Street address, Macias and two of his friends “became involved in

a heated argument with several people,” including Luna, the release adds. “The people attending the party were laughing at Macias as his friends removed him from the party,” the release says.

On Jan. 2, detectives with the Sarasota Police Department executed a search warrant at the home of Macias, 1743 Ninth St., the release continues. “Detectives located a set of kitchen knives in the kitchen area which matched the murder weapon found at the crime scene,” it adds. Detectives also located clothing they believed Macias was wearing when the homicide occurred, it notes.

On Jan. 2, Macias was interviewed by detectives at the Sarasota Police Department, the release says. During that interview, he confessed to the crime, the release adds.



Officers found a stabbing victim at 2065 Fourth St. in Sarasota just before 4:30 a.m. on Jan. 1. Photo from Google Maps

ONE SUSPECT CHARGED IN JAN. 6 BUSINESS BURGLARY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested one of two suspects who allegedly broke into a business on Lockwood Ridge Road on the night of Jan. 6 but fled without stealing any merchandise, the office has reported.

The owner of SRQ Fishing Oasis/Amendment II Armory called 911 just before 9:30 p.m. Jan. 6, when she reported seeing two men breaking into the store on her remote surveillance system, a news release says. Deputies arrived on the scene, secured the business and reviewed the footage, which showed one of the suspects carrying a small revolver, the release adds. "A man wearing identical clothing and a black brace on his right ankle was located a short distance away," the release notes.

Ryan Pete, 27, of 3209 Joe Louis Drive, Sarasota — who has a history of drug and weapons charges — was charged with Armed Burglary, the release adds.



Ryan Pete/Contributed photo

Anyone with information about the second suspect is asked to call Criminal Investigations at 861-4900, Crime Stoppers at 366-TIPS (8477) or submit a tip online at www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com.

TWO ARRESTED FOR LAWN EQUIPMENT THEFT AT SCTI

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office arrested two people in connection with the theft of lawn equipment from the Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) campus on Beneva Road early on the morning of Jan. 3, the office has reported.

Just before 3 a.m. on Jan. 3, members of the Sheriff's Office Tactical Unit spotted a white Chevrolet Silverado that had been seen on surveillance video from a prior theft, and they attempted to conduct a traffic stop, a news release says.

Unit officers noted in their report that the vehicle was pulling a lawn trailer with three riding lawn mowers on it.

"The truck fled into Manatee County but eventually hit [stop sticks](#) and two suspects bailed out," the release adds. "The driver was taken into custody, a second suspect was captured later and a warrant has been obtained for the third man involved," the release notes.

The men admitted stealing two trailers and four commercial grade lawn mowers from

SCTI on Jan. 3; the equipment was valued at \$45,000, the release says.

Sammy Balsinger, 47, of 4206 78th St. West, Bradenton, was charged with Grand Theft, Aggravated Fleeing to Elude, Driving with a Suspended License and Aggravated Battery on an Officer for intentionally crashing into a deputy's vehicle. The deputy was not seriously injured, the report adds.

Travor Henson, 42, of 5011 31st St. West, Bradenton, was charged with Grand Theft.

The investigation is continuing, with additional charges pending in both Sarasota County and Manatee County, the release says.



The Sarasota County Technical Institute main campus is at the intersection of Beneva and Proctor roads in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County Schools



Sammy Balsinger/Contributed photo



Travor Henson/Contributed photo

PET SITTER CHARGED WITH SELLING PROPERTY STOLEN FROM CLIENT

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested the operator of a Sarasota pet sitting service for allegedly selling thousands of dollars in property that was reported stolen from a client, the office has announced.

The victim reported that jewelry along with cash and electronic items valued at \$12,300 were missing from her home, a news release says. When detectives searched pawn databases, they found two transactions by Jill Huber, 42, of 2363 Doud St., Sarasota, the release adds, which included items matching those reported missing.

The victim explained that Huber, whose business is Pro Pet Services, was allowed to live at the victim's home for a month last fall in exchange for dog-sitting services while the victim was out of town.

Huber is charged with two counts of Providing False Ownership Information to a Pawn Broker and two counts of Dealing in Stolen Property.



Jill Huber/Contributed photo

Huber was also arrested for Grand Theft in December after another client reported \$30,000 worth of jewelry was taken from the client's home and detectives determined the items were pawned by Huber, the release notes.

19 DUI ARRESTS MADE DURING DECEMBER SATURATION PATROLS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office's December saturation patrols resulted in 19 DUI arrests and 216 citations for other traffic offenses, the office has announced.

In addition, the agency participated in the *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* holiday campaign from Dec. 14 to Jan. 1, a news release notes, resulting in 26 more DUI arrests, 39 seatbelt citations, 70 suspended license citations, 193 citations for not having proof of insurance, 109 speeding citations, 30 citations for reckless driving and three child seatbelt citations.

The Sheriff's Office "conducts monthly saturation patrols to remove dangerous, uninsured or impaired drivers from local roadways to keep motorists safe," the release points out.

In January, saturation patrols were conducted on the 4th; they also are scheduled for Jan. 11, 18, 19 and 25, the release says.

This initiative is conducted in partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and supported through a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation.

CONVENIENCE STORE CLERKS CITED FOR SELLING ALCOHOL TO MINORS

Eight local convenience store clerks were cited for selling alcohol to a minor during the most recent undercover operation conducted by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Juvenile Alcohol Task Force (JATF) — on Dec. 30 — the Sheriff's Office has reported.

Seven of the clerks were given a misdemeanor Notice to Appear (NTA), a news release says. In one case, a clerk was arrested for not having legal identification and not fitting the criteria for an NTA to be issued, the release notes.

The following businesses were found to be in violation of selling alcohol to a person under the age of 21:

- Marathon, 6212 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.
- 7-Eleven, 3156 Clark Road, Sarasota.

- Mobil, 3580 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- Palmer Market, 5300 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- 7-Eleven, 5420 Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- BP, 3605 Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- BP, 1660 Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- Mobil, 2745 Beneva Road, Sarasota.

Another 10 businesses were found to be in compliance, the release notes. Each was sent a letter to commend the owners and employees "for helping reduce the sale of alcohol to minors," the release says.

This was the third JATF operation conducted last year, resulting in a combined 29 store clerks being cited for selling alcohol to minors, the release points out.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE ASSUMES PARTIAL DISPATCH SERVICE FOR VENICE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has notified the public that effective as of Jan. 2, its Public Safety Communications Center (PSC) will handle dispatch services for the Venice Police Department (VPD) from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., seven days a week.

"City of Venice residents should continue to dial 911 for all emergency situations," a news release says. "Citizens should not notice a change in service, as 911 calls will be processed through the PSC instead of transferred to VPD," it adds.

During the month of December, Sheriff's Office personnel worked with Venice personnel "to ensure a smooth transition of service," the release notes.

For all other calls, city of Venice residents should continue to call the Venice Police Department's non-emergency number

(486-2444), the release points out. However, between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., calls to the non-emergency number will be redirected to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

"There are a number of advantages to calling 911 in an emergency instead of a non-emergency number," the release explains. "The phone system automatically recognizes the call as an emergency and routes the caller to the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the county, which prevents a delay in service," it says. "In addition, 911 calls come into the PSC as a priority over non-emergency calls, and technology enables the PSC to immediately gather important data from landline and wireless phones."

A complete consolidation of 24-hour dispatch service is expected by the middle of this year, the release adds.

BEACH CLUB ASSAILANT REMAINS IN SARASOTA COUNTY JAIL

A 23-year-old Osprey man arrested in connection with an aggravated battery incident on Dec. 22 in Siesta Key Village remains in Sarasota County Jail under \$500,000 bond, according to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office [website](#).

Hunter Elliott Johnston of 141 Bayview Lane, Osprey, was charged with one count of Aggravated Battery — Serious Bodily Injury after deputies saw him punch the victim in the face at the Beach Club just before 2 a.m. on Dec. 22, according to the incident report.

The victim, Tyler R. Blandford, 25, of Owensboro, KY, sustained minor bleeding in the brain, the report says. He was transported to Blake Medical Center in Bradenton in critical but stable condition, the report continues.

A deputy on routine patrol in Siesta Village already had been advised by another deputy to be on the lookout for Johnston because of a prior altercation at the Beach Club, the report says. A short time later, the deputy heard noise near the establishment and turned in time to see Johnston and Blandford in the alley between the Beach Club and The Lobster Pot, the report notes. Then the deputy saw Johnston use his right fist to punch Blandford, the report says. Blandford fell back and hit his head on the pavement, resulting in bleeding from his ears, the report adds.

Bystanders performed CPR on Blandford while awaiting an EMS unit, the report notes.



Hunter E. Johnston/Contributed photo

Blandford eventually was transported to the Bradenton trauma facility by the Bay Flight medical helicopter service, according to a news release issued later that day.

Johnston is scheduled to be arraigned in 12th Judicial Circuit Court on Jan. 17, according to the Sheriff's Office.

A search of court records shows Johnson has been charged in the past with several traffic infractions and a trespassing incident — the latter dating back to 2009. 



Simply put, Crime Stoppers relies upon the cooperation between the police the media and the community to provide a flow of information about crime and criminals. All submitted tips are secure and anonymous.

(941) 366-TIPS (8477) • SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

OPINION

It is frightening to see someone saunter across seven lanes of traffic on Bee Ridge Road, for example (although, in fairness, this recklessness is engaged in most often by individuals carrying a six-pack of beer or similar libation, apparently not their first of the day).

But another problem is growing that impacts seasonal traffic on the Suncoast, and that is the use of golf carts and similar low-speed vehicles on public streets.

There are three conditions that must be met before a low-speed vehicle, defined by statute as those that travel between 20 and 25 mph, may operate legally on public streets: The posted speed limit must be 35 mph or less; the local government must specifically designate that roadway as eligible for use by low-speed vehicles; and the vehicles must be registered like any other motor vehicle and have a rearview mirror, effective brakes, windshield, headlights and taillights that conform to state standards. Most golf carts, which are designed for use only on golf courses, are unable to meet the standards for on-street use.

Nonetheless, there has been an alarming increase in the number of residents using golf carts and other low-speed vehicles on county roadways, despite the practice being illegal.

Although examples can be found almost everywhere in the county, “Ground Zero”

for the practice appears to be the Amish and Mennonite community of Pinecraft along Bahia Vista Street in Sarasota and its environs.

While the Amish — and, to a lesser degree, the Mennonites — are known for eschewing the trappings of modern society, there have been notable exceptions enjoyed by local members of these communities. Cell phones, for example, are ubiquitous, as are electric-powered bicycles.

Apparently, it was a matter of inevitability that golf carts would be adopted next as a “simple” mode of transportation.

“Combine the slow speeds of golf carts, the minimal visibility, the lack of caution exhibited by the operators and the interaction with heavy traffic traveling at much higher speeds, and one has a perfect recipe for disaster.”

In the Pinecraft community and surrounding area, golf carts have been observed on many public streets, as well on sidewalks and making use of pedestrian crosswalks.

When we asked some Amish golf cart drivers if they were aware the practice was illegal, they voiced essentially the same response: “I don’t care.”

But they should. A nonconforming low-speed vehicle is a greater hazard to traffic safety than errant bicyclists and pedestrians. Perhaps it is for that reason that the County Commission has never designated any roadway in the county for the legal use of low-speed vehicles. There simply are too many motor vehicles on the thoroughfares now, many traveling at speeds much higher than those that could be attained by low-speed vehicles.

OPINION

Combine the slow speeds of golf carts, the minimal visibility, the lack of caution exhibited by the operators and the interaction with heavy traffic traveling at much higher speeds, and one has a perfect recipe for disaster. That no one has been seriously injured or killed in a collision between a golf cart and an automobile is almost miraculous. And if nothing is done to stem the growth of these illegal vehicles operating on county roads, only a true miracle will avoid the carnage that surely will ensue.

Given the illegality of golf cart use, it becomes a conundrum for the Sheriff's Office when some of those users have an utter disregard for obeying the law. Beginning a crackdown on violations with the issuance of warning citations might be helpful, but at some point

persistent violators must face the consequences of their unlawful acts.

Given the decades of deferential treatment of Pinecraft residents by the county, any increased enforcement of existing laws is likely to foment anger and feelings of persecution.

However, the stakes are simply too high for the county and law enforcement to ignore this problem. The Pinecraft community is traversed by Beneva Road and Bahia Vista Street, two of the most heavily traveled thoroughfares in the area. The presence of even a few golf carts constitutes a serious hazard, and the practice must be stamped out, for the safety and welfare of the errant golf cart operators and all those they encounter. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Sarasota News Leader welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and include the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to

Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com, with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

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A NEW CHALK FESTIVAL

IT'S A WONDERFUL SHOW

SIESTA SEEN

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

Inside

A NEW CHALK FESTIVAL



Artist Joel Yau (reproducing a World War I portrait by J.C. Lyendecker) chawks alongside artist Julie Kirk at the Sarasota International Chalk Festival in November. Yau and Kirk are returning to the area for the Anna Maria Island Festival. Photo by Barbara Dondero

SEVEN PEOPLE RESOLVE TO LAUNCH THE FIRST EVENT OF ITS KIND ON ANNA MARIA ISLAND

By Barbara Dondero
Contributing Writer

Is it possible for seven people to have the exact same New Year's resolution — to launch the first annual Anna Maria Island Chalk Festival? *Yes!*

It is true for Denise Kowal, artistic director and founder of the Sarasota International Chalk Festival, who — with Michael Coleman of the Pine Avenue Restoration Project — is helping coordinate the Anna Maria Island event on Jan. 18 and 19.

It is true for California artists Joel Yau and Julie Kirk, who will be returning to the area to be among the more than 20 professional artists who will “chalk” along Pine Avenue.

It is true for Julie Fagen, who, with her husband, manages the Studio at Gulf and Pine (which is owned by Mrs. Lawton Chiles, former First Lady of Florida and also an avid patron of the arts). The studio will be the site of the VIP dinner for the artists and public,

which will be held the night before the festival begins.

It is true for Michelle Clinton, faculty member at Manatee School for the Arts, who will be participating in the event. A longtime volunteer for the Sarasota Chalk Festival, Clinton is “more than ready to make the leap onto the pavement!” according to Kowal.

It is true for the captain of the *Scallywag*, Anna Maria Island’s beloved pirate ship, which “floats” into events such as this one.

It is rumored that the captain will be accompanied by his “Krewe” (sometimes called “scurvy old sea dogs”).

Joel Yau of San Rafael, CA, dazzled viewers last November who viewed his Sarasota street painting, a reproduction of a World War

I portrait by famed illustrator J.C. Lyendecker. “I’m playing with a few ideas before Anna Maria,” he told me. “I want to honor the theme: *From Pirates to the Present*. Maybe I’ll reproduce one of N.C. Wyeth’s pirate illustrations or else one of the lively 19th century posters celebrating Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance*. My favorite part of the festival (Yau chalks at many national and international events) is the camaraderie among the artists and viewers.”

A few years ago in Sarasota, while chalking a Gil Elvgren portrait, Yau heard a man exclaim, “That’s my father’s painting!” Sure enough, it was Elvgren’s grown son, who told Yau that as a youngster in the 1960s, he prepared all of his father’s art materials in his studio on Featherbed Lane on Siesta Key!



Yau’s completed 2013 Chalk Festival work reflected the event’s theme, *Legacy of Valor*. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Joel Yau works on his 2013 Chalk Festival entry. Photo by Barbara Dondero



Denise Kowal, artistic director and founder of the Sarasota International Chalk Festival, with Michael Coleman of the Pine Avenue Restoration Project. Photo by Barbara Dondero

Kowal also enjoys the coincidences. Harriet Stieff, youngest and sole surviving daughter of Sarasota “city father” Owen Burns (1865-1937), “stops by to visit,” Kowal says. Burns’ development firm was responsible for some of Sarasota’s most notable buildings, including John Ringling’s home, Cà d’Zan, and Herald Square — now called Burns Square — at the intersection of Orange and Pineapple avenues. For more than 20 years, the historic Burns building has been owned by Denise Kowal. She already has undertaken two major renovations of it.

“It means so much to me that Harriet encourages my efforts,” Kowal says.

It takes a village to create an event of the Sarasota Chalk Festival caliber. Kowal’s

advice to the volunteer Krewe? “This is your first chalk festival. ENJOY!”

Whether it is a product of hidden treasures (doubloons and pieces of eight) or golden coincidences, do not miss this wonderful street event on the weekend of Jan. 18 and 19. It will be free and open to everybody.

If you yearn to indulge your own creative side by chalking on the pavement, register for a space beforehand by calling Kowal at 954-5800 or email denise@chalkfestival.com. For Friday evening’s VIP dinner tickets, call Julie Fagen at 941-778-8210. For further information, visit www.facebook.com/AnnaMariaChalkFestival. 



Joel Yau’s reproduction of Gil Elvgren’s pin-up illustration was part of the 2010 Chalk Festival. Elvgren, to Yau’s surprise, was part of a notable group of artists and writers who made Sarasota their home in the 1950s and 60s. Image courtesy of ChalkFestival.org.

IT'S A WONDERFUL SHOW



SAILOR CIRCUS PERFORMERS DEMONSTRATE BIG TOP SKILLS

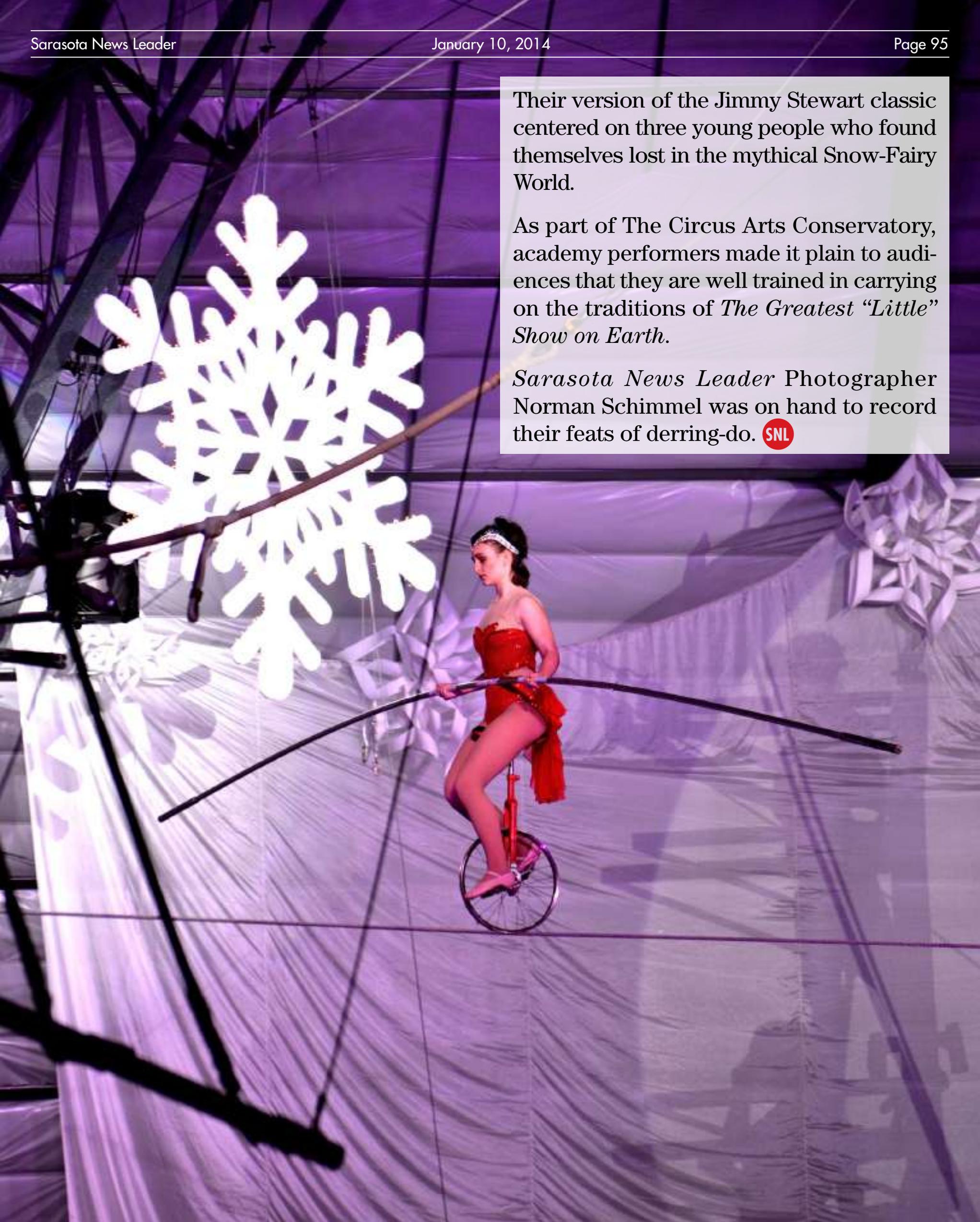
Staff Reports

Offering a new take on the story of *It's a Wonderful Life*, students in the Sailor Circus Academy presented the opening performances of their 65th season in late December, under their Big Top on Bahia Vista Street in Sarasota.

Their version of the Jimmy Stewart classic centered on three young people who found themselves lost in the mythical Snow-Fairy World.

As part of The Circus Arts Conservatory, academy performers made it plain to audiences that they are well trained in carrying on the traditions of *The Greatest "Little" Show on Earth*.

Sarasota News Leader Photographer Norman Schimmel was on hand to record their feats of derring-do. 





Pedro Reis (left), co-founder of The Circus Arts Conservatory, and Circus Sarasota star aerialist Nik Wallenda take on the role of stagehands for the Sailor Circus show.









Siesta Seen

ANOTHER SUSPECTED ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATION HAS BEEN REPORTED ON THE BEACH; THE COUNTY COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING DATE IS SET FOR A NEW PETITION REGARDING CONSTRUCTION AT 162 BEACH ROAD; AND VILLAGE BUSINESS UPDATES AROUND



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A Sarasota Audubon volunteer reported a new potential violation of county and state environmental regulations on the north end of Siesta in late December, I learned this week.

Allan Worms, a wildlife biologist, reported in a Dec. 30 email that he had been seeing

“a great mix of migrant and localized shore-birds on Siesta Key and especially on the wide north end [of the] beach.” However, “a large number of beach visitors” witnessed a man digging an artificial outlet on the west side of a tidal pool in the vicinity of Accesses 4 and 5.



With the wind having blown out of the north Monday and into Tuesday morning — from more than 20 mph to about 10 mph — the fine quartz sand on Siesta Beach appeared to have been sculpted by an artist. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

That pool — consisting “of several acres and at least three feet in depth,” Worms wrote, “developed on the north end last fall and has been providing both a plentiful and diversified array of shorebird feeding opportunities since October — until [Dec. 30].”

After the man completed his project, Worms continued, “The pool drained through a rapidly widening channel. Also, disappointingly, a large number of shorebirds left the pool site and associated feeding area as the pool drained.”

Catherine Luckner, president of the Siesta Key Association (SKA) and herself a Sarasota

Audubon volunteer, notified Sarasota County environmental staff and Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta — as well as officers with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, suggesting the activity might have been “the illegal modification of naturally occurring shoreline regulated by [the Florida Department of Environmental Protection] and the Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan.”

Luckner requested a response from the county and state employees in time for the SKA’s Jan. 9 meeting. (It was held after the *News Leader’s* deadline for this issue.)



Sarasota Audubon volunteers have alerted county and state environmental staff about a potential violation involving a tidal pool on the northern part of Siesta beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

On Jan. 6, I contacted Matt Osterhoudt, manager of conservation and environmental permitting in the Sarasota County Natural Resources Department. He explained that the county already had made plans to send an environmental specialist to the site to investigate the situation. The creation of the channel might not have required county authorization, he pointed out. The specialist would be able to determine whether the work fell within the area governed by the [Coastal Construction Control Line](#) the state established in Sarasota County. He also was making certain the appropriate state authorities had been contacted, he added.

Over the past year, Sarasota Audubon volunteers have dealt with several violations of environmental guidelines as they have tried to aid the island's avian wildlife in co-existing with human inhabitants and visitors.

BEACH ROAD VARIANCE

On Feb. 19, the Sarasota County Commission is scheduled to hear a request for a variance on the property at [162 Beach Road](#), the same location where the board denied a similar request last year.

Commissioner Nora Patterson perhaps was the most persuasive voice during that discussion. She pointed out to her colleagues on the board that she had seen that property underwater in years past.

Howard Berna, the environmental supervisor in the county's Natural Resources Department, said the public hearing probably would be in

the afternoon during the Feb. 19 commission meeting.

The request from owners Ronald and Sania Allen, represented by attorney William W. Merrill III, is for construction of a new single-family residence and paver driveway at 162 Beach Road. "All proposed construction will be a maximum of 176.5 feet seaward of the Sarasota County Gulf Beach Setback Line (GBSL)," according to the public hearing notice published by the county. "Zoning side-yard and street-yard setback variances are also requested in conjunction with this Coastal Setback Variance," the public notice adds.

A nesting area that proved very popular last year with the island's endangered snowy plovers, as well as Least Terns, is on the Gulf of Mexico side of the property.

Peter van Roekens, secretary of the Terrace East Condominium in Siesta Village, tells me Terrace East residents are firmly opposed to the project.

The Siesta Key Association board expressed opposition to the project proposed in 2013. Berna pointed out last summer that this new petition involves a revised construction plan.

THE LATEST ON GIDGET'S

The opening of Gidget's Coastal Provisions in Siesta Village — on the property formerly occupied by Napoli's restaurant — has been delayed again, business co-owner Brian Wigelsworth told me this week.

Siesta Seen

Although he had expected to start work on the interior by the middle of this month, it likely will be the end of January before that happens, he said. Wigelsworth and his wife, Trudy, will be offering customers Margaritaville Apparel and nice gift items in the shop, adjacent to the Siesta Key Oyster Bar, once they get it open.

On a related note, Siesta architect Mark Smith is ready for a Jan. 28 appearance before the County Commission to seek approval for

property and building owners Jim Syrett and Jay Lancer to create three transient rental units on the second floor. Smith won unanimous Planning Commission approval for that plan when he appeared before the advisory board on Dec. 19.

Lancer accompanied Wigelsworth to the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) meeting on Jan. 7.



Southern Cross Contracting Inc. is continuing work on the future home of Gidget's Coastal Provisions in Siesta Village. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Napoli's is open seven days a week in its new location on Ocean Boulevard. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

SPEAKING OF NAPOLI'S ...

Although Napoli's structure was torn down to make way for Gidget's, the restaurant has found a new home in the spot previously occupied by a RE/MAX realty office at the intersection of Ocean Boulevard and Avenida Madera. As a matter of fact, Napoli's is now a neighbor of the Broken Egg.

As for the Broken Egg: Michelle Logan, who represents the firm that recently bought the Siesta restaurant, told me after the Jan. 7 SKVA meeting that renovations are under way, with the establishment — renamed Another Broken Egg Café — scheduled to reopen on Feb. 17.

“We're slowly putting it together,” she added.

STORMWATER SITE UPDATE

Isaac Brownman, the county's capital projects director, notified the County Commission on Jan. 7 about the latest news from the Beach Road Drainage Project (aka the Siesta stormwater project) site, adjacent to the eastern end of the public beach. His report, covering the weeks of Dec. 31 and Jan. 6, included the following notes:

- The 60-inch storm drainpipe is approximately 80 percent complete and should be finished in the next two weeks.
- The intake pipe for the stormwater filter vault has been installed, and the electrical controls and pump equipment structure will be in operation by Jan. 10.



Sections of 60-inch pipe await installation at the site of the Siesta Key stormwater project, just east of Siesta Public Beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

- The new pond is approximately 80 percent complete. Pumping of groundwater offshore continues.
- Forty loads of unexpected buried debris (mostly tree trunks, rebar, asphalt and concrete) have been removed from the site. “Based on test holes dug, an additional 130 loads may still need to be removed,” he wrote.
- Coordination with the Siesta Public Beach improvements project continues, with fill being placed and the footers for the new maintenance facility being installed.

“The Beach Road Drainage Improvement project has a Substantial Completion date of March 14 and a Final Acceptance date of April 13, 2014,” he wrote in conclusion.

ABOUT THE BEACH PROJECT ...

Jon F. Swift Inc. of Sarasota began staging equipment and supplies at Siesta Beach Park on Dec. 28 in anticipation of beginning the long-awaited \$21.5 million improvement project, the county announced last week.

The firm received permission to perform work on Saturdays through March 1 “to make up for work days lost due to heavy rains earlier this year,” a county news release said.

The two-year project still is set to be undertaken in four phases, with Phase 1 contained to the easternmost portion of the park.

Brad Gaubatz, Sarasota County Public Works Department project manager for the beach

park work, added in the release that Swift’s construction manager anticipates “being able to catch up by the end of February, and after that, work will resume on weekdays only.”

THAT BLIP WITH THE BRIDGE

I confess that my curiosity gnawed at me to keep trying to learn why the north Siesta bridge was stuck in the open position on Dec. 19. This week, thanks to JoAnn May, communications specialist with the Florida Department of Transportation, I received an answer.

May wrote in a Jan. 6 email, “I checked with our bridge folks and I’m told the computer at the bridge detected a faulty pump filter ...” Apparently, when the filter was changed the previous day, the replacement was not a good piece of equipment, shall we say. “Consequently, the computer shut it down, and the bridge was closed for 45 minutes while crews mobilized and replaced the faulty filter,” she added.

OH, ME; OH, MY

A stalwart reader alerted me to a big boo-boo in my Dec. 27 *Siesta Seen*: I misidentified Siesta Key Village Association President Cheryl Gaddie as Cheryl Matthes.

In my haste to make early deadlines for two issues, I obviously was thinking both of Gaddie and her predecessor in the post, Russell Matthes. My apologies!

I also absolve Copy Editor Vicki Chatley of any blame. After all, I am the one who is supposed to keep the names straight. 



Riverview High School student Ines Balasch stands with her award-winning drawing Madame Butterfly from the 2013 Evening of Excellence student art exhibit. Contributed photo by Prestige Portraits by Lifetouch

EDUCATION FOUNDATION TO SPOTLIGHT EXCEPTIONAL YOUNG ARTISTS

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County will kick off the 19th Evening of Excellence with its annual Juried Art Show from Saturday through Tuesday, Jan. 11-14, the Foundation has announced.

The exhibit is free and open to the public from noon to 4 p.m. on all four days, a news release notes.

“The premiere arts competition for young artists as well as a favorite on the local social scene, Evening of Excellence showcases outstanding works of fine art created by students from every public high school in Sarasota County,” the release explains.

More than 300 student pieces — paintings, photographs, sculpture and more — will be on display at the Ringling College of Art and Design’s Diane Roskamp Exhibition Hall in the Ulla Searing Student Center, the release

says. Free campus parking is available on either side of the Selby Gallery, one-half block east of 2700 N. Tamiami Trail on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way in Sarasota.

Select works in the exhibit will be available for purchase by sealed bid, the release points out. The minimum bid is \$125, and the first \$100 of each bid will be awarded to the student artist, the release adds.

Each visitor will be invited to vote for his or her favorite piece at the exhibit. The student whose work receives the most votes will receive the Marie B. Ritter People’s Choice Award of \$250, the release continues.

Following the exhibit, the top 25 pieces selected by a panel of arts professionals will be framed by area galleries that donate their services, the release says. “The students contribute their art for a live auction at a gala

dinner held on the last Friday in February,” it notes. This year’s gala theme is *An Evening in Paris*.

“All top 25 artists receive monetary awards, recognition and valuable contacts,” the release adds. “Event proceeds benefit Sarasota County’s 41,200 students through

the work of the Education Foundation. Gala sponsorships are available at \$2,500 and up. Patron seating is \$250; individual tickets are \$200.

For more information, tickets and underwriting opportunities visit www.EdFoundation.net or call 927-0965.

BOOKSTORE1 TO HOST LUNCHEON WITH CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT

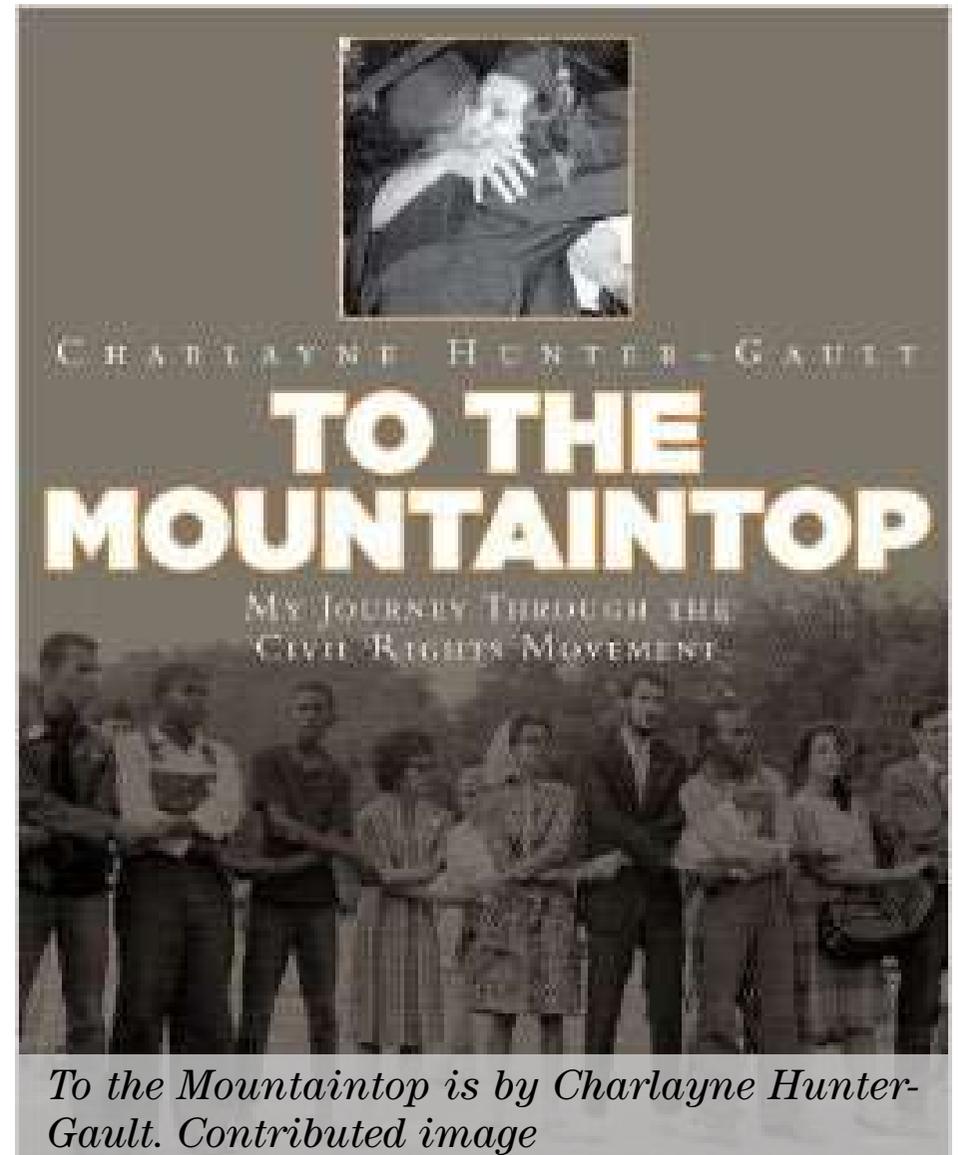
At noon on Jan. 15 at Florida Studio Theatre’s Court Cabaret, located at the corner of Cocoanut Avenue and First Street in downtown Sarasota, Bookstore1Sarasota will host a luncheon featuring Charlayne Hunter-Gault, who will discuss her young adult book, *To the Mountaintop*, the store has announced.

To the Mountaintop chronicles Hunter-Gault’s experiences with the Civil Rights Movement, a news release says.

An award-winning journalist, Hunter-Gault spent 20 years with PBS. During much of that time, she was national correspondent for *NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer, the release notes. She has also worked for National Public Radio as a special correspondent and as CNN’s Johannesburg bureau chief and correspondent.

Her numerous honors include two Emmy awards and four Peabody awards — the first of the latter was for her work on *Apartheid’s People*, a *NewsHour* series about South African life during Apartheid, the release explains. In 2005, she was inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists Hall of Fame. In 2011, she received the [Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award](#).

As part of this Sarasota event, Hunter-Gault is sponsoring — and Bookstore1 is administering — a writing contest for middle and high school students. The first-place winner



will receive \$100 and a signed copy of *To The Mountain*, along with an invitation to sit at the author’s table on Jan. 15. Information about the contest is at www.bookstore1sarasota.com.

The fee for the luncheon is \$25. Reservations may be made through Florida Studio Theatre at www.floridastudiotheatre.org or by calling 552-1521.

More information is available at www.bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900.

ACCLAIMED ARTIST TO TAKE TRASH TO TREASURE AT SMOA

When was the last time you saw a huge work of art made from flattened Cheerios boxes, Harp Lager cartons and Pokemon cards?

The Sarasota Museum of Art's *ARTmuse* program will be bringing just such art to Sarasota "to inspire children and adults," a news release notes.

Wendy G. Surkis, president of the Sarasota Museum of Art (SMOA), a division of Ringling College of Art and Design, has announced that acclaimed artist Lisa Hoke will be in Sarasota from Jan. 15 to Feb. 4. "Celebrated for her innovative use of re-purposed colorful cardboard packaging materials," Hoke has created works designed for specific

spaces and environments at museums all over the country, the news release explains. Hoke "uses massive quantities of everyday consumer materials" — including cardboard boxes and household, office and food product packaging — to create her epic color-saturated assemblages, the release adds. During her Sarasota project, the artist will create a site-specific installation inside the historic Sarasota High School building on U.S. 41 near downtown Sarasota — the future home of SMOA. Surkis says the public will have many opportunities to view the artist at work and watch her creation unfold and evolve, the release continues.



A Lisa Hoke installation combines a multitude of types of 'trash.' Contributed photo

“We’re thrilled to offer our community another artistic transformation using unusual material to stretch their imaginations, thanks to this remarkable artist,” says Surkis, adding that last year’s *ARTmuse* project with Patrick Dougherty was a “triumph.” Surkis adds in the release that Hoke’s work — reusing materials that are transformed into colorful works of beauty — is “symbolic of the work SMOA is doing to repurpose the historic Sarasota High School into a dynamic arts destination for innovative contemporary visual art.”

Hoke, based in New York City, first sorts salvaged packages by color and then forms items into roughly 4-foot collages before integrating them into “huge works that are designed for the particular space and environment,” the release points out. “My room-sized collages are derived from cardboard and paper packaging, reflecting the amazing unappreciated properties of colorful disposable consumer products,” she explains in the release, adding that she enjoys the challenge and stress of working big.

Hoke’s work has been shown internationally as well as in the United States. Hoke has created installations at The North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC; The McNay Museum in San Antonio, TX; New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut; the Brattleboro Museum in Vermont; the D’Amour Museum in Springfield, CT; and the Mass MoCA in North Adams, MA.

Surkis notes in the release that Hoke’s unfolding vision will be realized with help, in part, from corporate partnerships and individual participation. “PNC Wealth Management, again, is this year’s corporate sponsor,” she



Lisa Hoke/Contributed photo

says in the release. “And area companies are already on board to donate the colorful cardboard they would otherwise discard.” These are the Ritz-Carlton Sarasota and the Residences, the Siesta Key branch of Michael Saunders & Co., the PNC Wealth Management staff, New Balance, The Lollicake Queen, Perq Coffee Bar and Sassy Hair on Siesta Key.

As Surkis sees it, community engagement is at the heart of SMOA’s mission, the release explains. “We’re reinventing a historic structure that’s central to the experience Sarasotans have of their community,” she points out. “At the same time, we’re connecting Sarasota with the larger arts community around the nation. The *ARTmuse* program attracts world-renowned artists and is helping

to put us on the art world map while we are a museum in the making. It’s very exciting.”

SMOA will be Sarasota’s first art museum devoted to modern and contemporary art, the release adds. “The museum will interweave exhibitions, educational programs and community outreach initiatives to engage a diverse audience and serve as a stimulating hub for creative discovery and discourse,” the release continues.

The SMOA board has already raised \$16.5 million of the \$22 million needed to bring the museum to a reality, Surkis notes in the release. “We’re in the home stretch.”

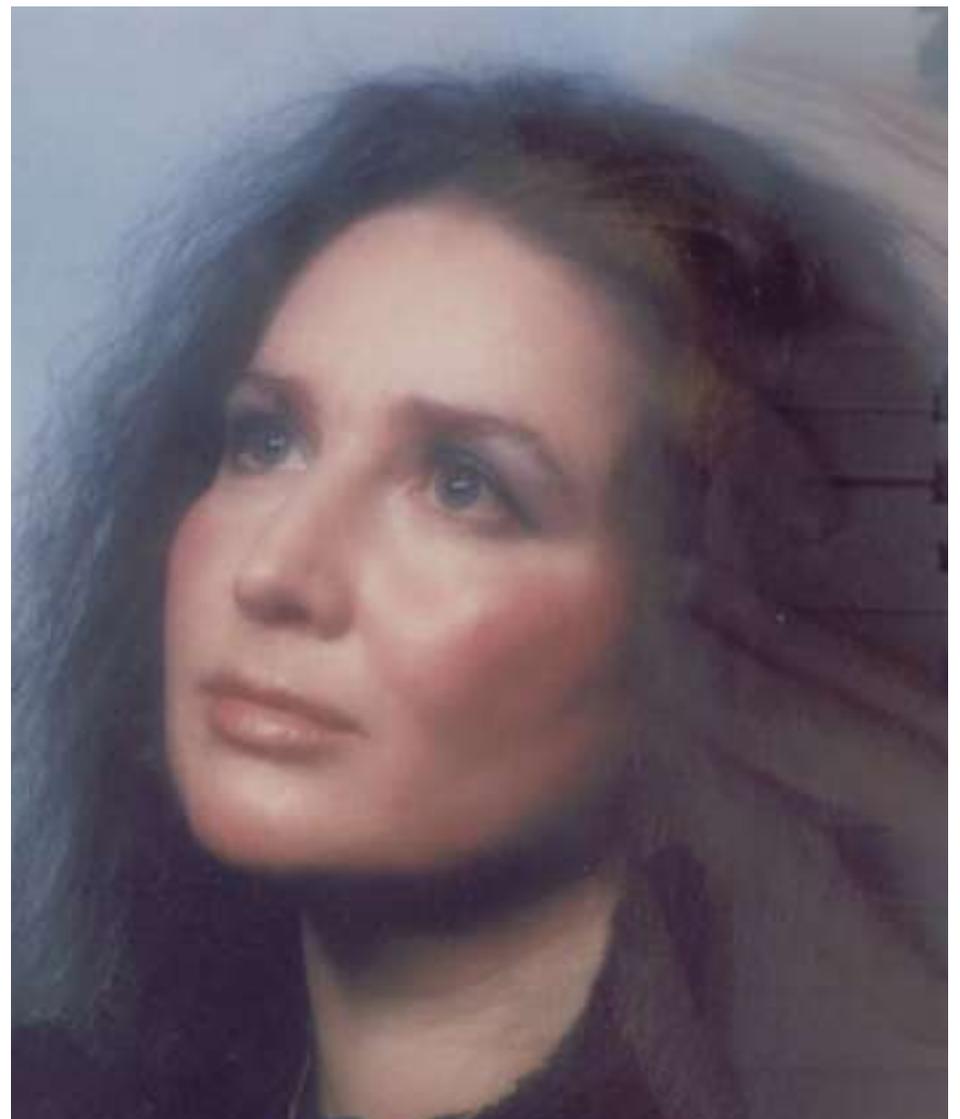
For more information about the Sarasota Museum of Art, visit www.SarasotaMuseumOfArt.org.

INTIMATE FANTASIES TO FEATURE PIANO VIRTUOSO ELEONORA LVOV

Celebrated Russian piano virtuoso Eleonora Lvov will bring “her elegant and passionate brand of performance to the Sanctuary Concerts series” on Jan. 19 at 4 p.m. in a program titled *Intimate Fantasies*. It will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota, series organizers have announced.

Tickets, which are \$15, include a complimentary wine and cheese post reception in the church courtyard with the artist. For more information or to purchase tickets, call 371-4974 or visit www.uusarasota.org/concerts.

Lvov has achieved international acclaim, a news release notes. “She performs as a soloist with major orchestras and in recitals throughout the United States, Europe and Russia, and often punctuates her concerts with personal impressions and historical remarks,” the



Eleonora Lvov/Contributed photo

release adds. Lvov has received the top prize in the Beethoven Competition in Moscow and has been awarded the International Alex de Vries prize in Belgium, among other honors. She has also participated in command performances for the queen of Belgium, the prime minister of Great Britain and the president of Israel, the release points out.

Her program for her Sarasota concert will include works by Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninov, Ravel and Gershwin.

“Music is the language of spirit,” says Lvov in the release. “Whether I am playing about love,

struggle or turbulent dark forces, it is my soul talking to the audience through the language of music. When I perform, my ego dissolves, and what flashes through my mind is a torrent of images — images that come from the subconscious and unconscious mind. I don’t concentrate on the notes — that’s what practice is for — I only feel emotion. What gives me a high is the feeling of joy, from spirit speaking through me.”

For more information visit www.uusarasota.com/concerts/ or email concerts@uusarasota.org.

POPULAR BANJOIST RETURNING TO CITY FOR GLENRIDGE SHOWS

Having performed for sold-out concerts in Sarasota the past several years, banjoist and vocalist Cynthia Sayer will return to town for two shows only this month as part of the South County Jazz Series, the South County Jazz Club has announced.

Cynthia Sayer’s Hot Jazz Trio will perform on Saturday, Jan. 18, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Jan. 19, at 2 p.m. at The Glenridge Performing Arts Center (GPAC) on Palmer Ranch, a news release says.

The Glenridge is located at 7333 Scotland Way in Sarasota. Tickets are \$20 for general admission and \$15 for GPAC and Jazz Club members. Reservations are strongly recommended, the release adds. Call 552-5325 or visit www.GPACTIX.com.

Sayer’s trio will include internationally acclaimed jazz clarinetist Alan Vaché and string bassist Jay Mueller for the Saturday concert and Vaché and string bassist Don Mopsick for the Sunday performance.

“Contemporary, edgy, and soulful, Cynthia Sayer breaks all the banjo player stereotypes

as she single-handedly brings the four-string banjo to the forefront of jazz,” the release continues. “Celebrated as the top four-string banjoist in the world today and praised for her ‘drive and virtuosity’ by the *New York Times*,” Sayer is a founding member of Woody Allen’s New Orleans Jazz Band, with whom she toured for more than 10 years, the release points out. Sayer has played with many leading jazz, popular and roots artists, including Bucky Pizzarelli, Dick Hyman, Wynton Marsalis, Marvin Hamlisch, John McEuen (Nitty Gritty Dirt Band), Charlie Giordano (Bruce Springsteen’s E Street Band), Andy Statman and Tony Trischka, the release notes.

Vaché is a renowned jazz clarinetist who is a former member of the Jim Cullum Jazz Band, having appeared with the group at Carnegie Hall and on PBS’s *Austin City Limits*, the release adds. He also performed on NPR’s *A Prairie Home Companion* with Garrison Keillor, and was a regular performer on PRI’s *Riverwalk — Live from the Landing* from 1987 to 1992.



Mueller, a staff musician at Walt Disney World, is well known for his multi-instrumental talents on brass instruments, the release says. His many credits include touring with the Ringling Bros Circus Band and playing with the Florida Symphony Orchestra, the release continues. He also has played for numerous Broadway shows.

Mopsick was the bassist for the Jim Cullum Jazz Band for about two decades, the release says. He has also played Florida concert dates with many top artists, including Howard Alden, Mousey Alexander, Mose Allison, Bill Allred, Dan Barrett, John Bunch, Pete Christlieb, Al Cohn, Buddy DeFranco, Scott Hamilton, Ken Peplowski, Bob Rosengarden and Ira Sullivan.

TONY-WINNING COMEDY *BOEING BOEING* TO TAKE FLIGHT JAN. 14

Venice Theatre's upcoming MainStage comedy is the 1960s French farce *Boeing Boeing* by Marc Camoletti, the theatre has announced.

The show will open Tuesday, Jan. 14, and run through Sunday, Feb. 2. Performances will be at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. Tickets are \$25 to \$28 for adults and \$10 to \$15 for students. They are on sale at the theatre's box office, online at www.venicestage.com or by phone at 488-1115.

Boeing Boeing features a swinging bachelor named Bernard who has three fiancées: one Italian, one German and one American, a news release explains. "All three are beautiful airline hostesses with frequent layovers," it adds. "He keeps 'one up, one down and one pending' until unexpected schedule changes bring all of the women to Bernard's Paris apartment at the same time," the release continues.

His college friend, Robert — visiting from Wisconsin — and housekeeper Berthe are charged with helping him avoid disaster, the release notes.

According to the Guinness Book of Records, *Boeing Boeing* is "the most performed French play throughout the world," the release points out. "French and British audiences have loved *Boeing Boeing* since it was first produced in 1962," the release adds. The show ran in London for seven years and 2,000

performances. In Paris, it ran for 19 years. "For whatever reason, American theater-goers have taken longer to get the joke," the release continues. "Broadway's first shot at *Boeing Boeing* didn't take off. In 1965 it closed after only 23 performances." The movie, starring Jerry Lewis and Tony Curtis, "was no first-class hit, either," the release says. "Given 30-plus years and an updated translation by Beverley Cross and Francis Evans, American audiences finally decided to jump on board," the release points out.

The recent Broadway production of this classic bedroom farce won the 2008 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. Audiences flocked to see it and the *New York Times* gave it a stellar review. Critic Ben Brantley raved, "[*Boeing Boeing*] levitates low burlesque into high comedy ... It's deliciously, deliriously innocent."

In Venice, Murray Chase will direct an experienced cast featuring Ronald Krine Myroup in the starring role. Kristofer Geddie will play the best friend, and the housekeeper will be portrayed by Candace Artim. Bernard's fiancées will be played by Alison Prouty (the German one), Arianna DeCecco (the American) and Tarah Hart (the Italian).

Venice Theatre is located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. on the island in Venice. Box office hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and one hour before all performances.



facebook.com/SarasotaNewsLeader



The Boeing Boeing cast features (standing, from right) Ronald Krine Myroup as Bernard, Kristofer Geddie as Robert, Candace Artim as Berthe; (seated from left) Tarah Hart as Gabriella, Arianna DeCecco as Gloria and Alison Prouty as Gretchen. Contributed photo by Renee McVety

FOUR EXHIBITS TO OPEN JAN. 16 AT ART CENTER SARASOTA

Art Center Sarasota's 2013-2014 exhibition season, titled *Incredible Journey*, will continue with four shows running from Jan. 16 to Feb 28: *Nature's Voice: Quilts by Regina Benson* in Gallery 1; *Tradition Gone Wild: Venetian Society of Basket Weavers* in Gallery 2; *Black Muse: Works by Members from the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)* in Gallery 3; and *Breaking Tradition*, an open all-media juried exhibition in Gallery 4, the gallery has announced.

An opening reception will be held on January 16 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Art Center Sarasota, located at 707 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. For more information, call 365-2032 or visit artsarasota.org.

Nature's Voice: Quilts by Regina Benson will showcase sculptural quilt forms by the fiber artist Regina Benson, "who is celebrated for her wall hangings, art quilts and dimensional textile sculptures," a news release explains. "Benson pushes the boundaries of textile art,"



Indigo Girls by Eleanor Merritt will be part of the ASALH exhibit at Art Center Sarasota. Contributed image

it adds. “She creates her own fabrics and develops textile constructions that retain the painterly effects of her flat pieces. She imbeds these works with undulating forms, incorporating newspaper clippings, fragments of technology and other physical allusions to her subjects.”

In this exhibit, 12 of her mid- to large-scale wall hangings will be displayed.

Benson’s work has been shown in galleries and museums in The Hague in the Netherlands, San Diego, Los Angeles,



Houston, Chicago and Pittsburgh, the release notes. She was the recipient of the Quilt National 2007 Award of Excellence.

Tradition Gone Wild will be a juried exhibition of contemporary woven art produced by members of the Venetian Society of Basket Weavers, the release continues. Emma Thurgood, Art Center Sarasota's exhibitions coordinator, explains its intent: "This exhibition serves as an exploration beyond the traditional uses of the weaving process, encompassing basket weaving, jewelry, textiles and surface design. These finely crafted, woven artworks will show how functional craft objects can become masterful fine art objects."

ASALH — Black Muse 2014 will be a curated exhibit showcasing artwork by member artists of the Manasota ASALH, the local chapter of the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History, the release explains. This exhibition will include a wide array of media — paintings, drawings and sculptures, the release says.

Regarding *Breaking Tradition*, the release notes, "Take a walk outside the safe zone of tradition, both artistic and personal. Regional artists will rise to the challenge."

For more information about Art Center Sarasota, call 365-2032 or visit www.artsarasota.org.



Core Sample by Regina Benson will be featured in the Nature's Voice exhibit. Contributed image

JIM WELLEN QUARTET TO KICK OFF JOY OF JAZZ CONCERT SERIES

The Jim Wellen Quartet will kick off the Jazz Club of Sarasota's 2014 Joy of Jazz concert series on Jan. 19 at 2 p.m. in Centennial Park in downtown Venice, the club has announced.

The concert is free, but donations will be accepted in support of the Jazz Club's scholarship fund, a news release says. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets. For more information, call 366-1552 or visit www.jazzclubsarasota.org.

Originally from the New York/New Jersey area, tenor saxophonist Wellen has "made his mark on the local jazz scene, where he performs to critical acclaim with the area's top pianists, bassists and drummers," the release continues. Jazz blogger Ken Franckling has called Wellen an "excellent mainstream tenor player" who is "always a treat to hear," the release notes.

Wellen's quartet will include Mac Chrupcala on piano, Al Hixon on drums and Dave Trefethen on bass, along with a surprise special guest, the release adds. In keeping with the open-air venue and the series' joyous theme, Wellen and his ensemble will offer up a program of light-hearted tunes from the Great American Songbook that are "sure to evoke sunny days, good times and lots of smiles," says Wellen in the release.

The Joy of Jazz series will continue in February and March with local favorites The Venturas on Feb. 9 at 2 p.m. "and the buoyant sounds of Tom Ellison and Hip Pocket" on March 9 at 2 p.m., the release points out.

"This Sunday afternoon series is a double treat," says Jazz Club of Sarasota board member and series producer Bill Beckman in the release. "It's a perfect way to come out and enjoy our great climate and swinging jazz!"



Jim Wellen/Contributed photo

THE SHOW KEEPS GOING ON



As a result of continuing popular demand, Florida Studio Theatre has announced an additional extension of the Tony Award-winning musical Monty Python's Spamalot, with book and lyrics by Eric Idle and music by Eric Idle and John Du Prez. The musical will run in FST'S Gompertz Theatre through Jan. 25. Tickets may be purchased online at FloridaStudioTheatre.org, by phone at 366-9000 or by visiting the box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. Contributed photo

NEXT UP FOR ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE: **OTHER DESERT CITIES**

The politically divided and emotionally stunted Wyeth family puts the “fun” in dysfunctional in Jon Robin Baitz’s *Other Desert Cities*, which will open in previews Jan. 15 and 16 before starting its formal run Jan. 17, presented by the Asolo Repertory Theatre, the theatre has announced.

The show will run through Feb. 27.

Greg Leaming, the associate artistic director of the Asolo Rep, will be at the helm of this production, which was nominated for five Tony Awards in 2012, a news release notes.

Other Desert Cities, a 2012 Pulitzer Prize finalist, had its Off Broadway premiere in January 2011 and transferred to Broadway in November 2011.

Former actor-turned-ambassador and Republican Party bigwig Lyman Wyeth and his wife, Polly, “live a picturesque life in their very own affluent exile — the Palm Springs desert,” the release explains. “When their daughter, left-winged Brooke, returns home during Christmas of 2004 for the first time

ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS • MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



Other Desert Cities will open in mid-January and run through Feb. 27 as an FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training production. Contributed image

in six years, she reveals that she has written a tell-all memoir that discloses the family's controversial past, including one very painful incident," the release continues. "This shocking announcement sends the Wyeth family down an emotional spiral," during which they are forced to revisit and ultimately heal their wounds from the past, the release adds.

"Polly's recovering alcoholic sister, Silda, and Brooke's TV producer brother, Trip, complete this holiday family reunion," the release notes.

"Jon Robin Baitz's extraordinary play charts how politics can tear apart a family, and this family is a kind of emblem for America itself. It is painful, hilarious and profound," says Michael Donald Edwards, producing artistic director of the Asolo Rep, in the release.

"Baitz is one of America's most celebrated playwrights," the release points out. The Drama Desk Award winner's other works include *A Fair Country*, *The Substance of Fire*, *Ten Unknowns*, *Three Hotels*, *The Paris Letter* and *Mizlansky/Zilinsky*.

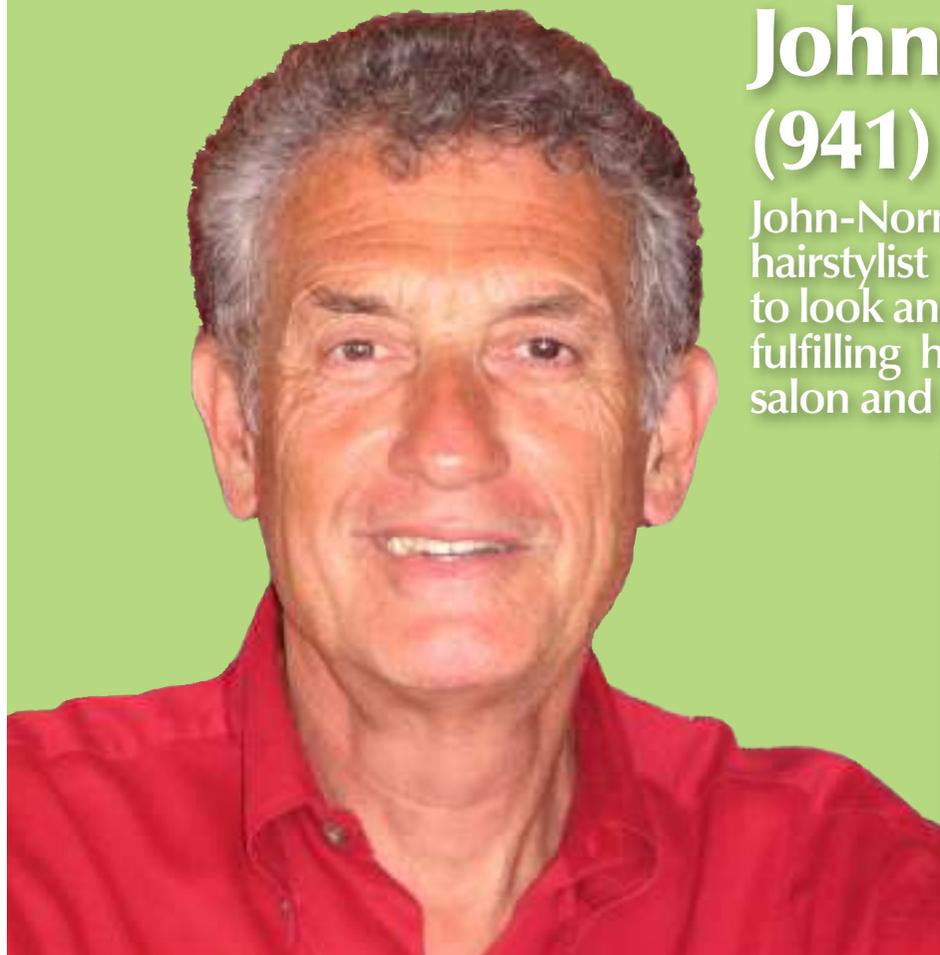
Other Desert Cities is the third show in the second season of Asolo Rep's American Character Project, continuing its concentration on the American family, the release notes.

Tickets for *Other Desert Cities* and the other productions in the 2013-14 Asolo Repertory Theatre season start at \$21. To purchase tickets, call 351-8000, visit www.asolorep.org or visit the Asolo Repertory Theatre box office in the lobby of the theatre, which is part of The Ringling complex in Sarasota. The theatre is located at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. 

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Bernadette Bennett/Contributed photo

EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES TO BE FOCUS OF PROGRAM

Embracing Our Differences, the annual art/quote exhibit that graces the Sarasota bayfront each year, is not something that springs up in a matter of days — nor is it something that disappears when it is gone, a Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) news release points out.

What happens behind the scenes to make the exhibit possible will be the focus of a program hosted by CHJ at 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 11, the Congregation has announced. Special guests will be Carol Poteat Buchanan, who co-chairs *Embracing Our Differences*, now in its 10th year; and Bernadette Bennett, program specialist for social studies in grades K-12 in the Curriculum Department of the Sarasota County Schools, the release adds.

The recipient of numerous local and national awards, Buchanan serves on a variety of boards in Sarasota. She was selected by ABC7 in Sarasota as *One of the Seven Who Care* in 2012, the release notes.

As part of her duties, Bennett creates learning opportunities in character and diversity education for both teachers and students, the release continues. Among those are workshops in creative writing and art teachers' retreats, the release notes.



The Humanaires will be featured in the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism's Jan. 11 service. Contributed photo by Barney Sack

In 2012, student entries for the exhibit grew to more than 23,000 from 186 schools. In 2013, art and quotation submissions came from 52 countries, the release says.

“Come and hear why *Embracing Our Differences* makes an impact — for the people who work on it and the people who see it,” the release adds.

Additionally, The Humanaires, the chorus of the CHJ, will be singing at the Jan. 11 service, the release notes. The Humanaires is now under the direction of conductor Robert Lischetti.

CHJ meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota. The suggested donation for non-members attending the program is \$5.

RABBI ADAM CHALOM TO PRESENT FOUR LECTURES AT CHJ

Rabbi Adam Chalom, dean for North America of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, will present four lectures on *Women in Jewish Life* over the weekend of Jan. 24-26 at the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ), the Congregation has announced.

A national leader of Humanistic Judaism, Chalom has a doctorate in Hebrew and Jewish cultural studies and serves as rabbi of Kol Hadash in suburban Chicago, a news release says. A regular contributor to the *Chicago Times Religion Blog*, he is on the Advisory Council of the Humanist Institute, the release

adds. He also is the editor of *A Provocative People: A Secular History of the Jews* by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, founder of Humanistic Judaism.

“Until modern times, Jewish women, half of the Jewish people, were not full citizens,” the release continues. “What was their experience? What traditional images continue challenging full inclusion? What insights has Jewish feminism offered Jewish women and men? How have we moved forward in the past hundreds of years?”

The programs, which are open to the public, will be held as follows:

- Friday, Jan. 18, 7:30 p.m. Shabbat celebration — *Eve, Lilith and the Jewish Women*.
- Saturday, Jan. 19 — Session I: 10 a.m. to noon: *Wives and Daughters — Jewish Women in Jewish Law and Traditional Life*; Session II: 1:30 to 3 p.m. *Mothers*

and Workers — Jewish Women in Jewish Culture and Literature.

- Sunday, Jan. 20 — Session III: 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.: *Feminist, Prime Minister and Rabbi — Jewish Women in Modern Judaism*.

All events will be held at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota.

Registration is required for the Saturday and/or Sunday sessions, the release notes. The cost is \$20 per session or \$50 for the entire seminar. The reservation deadline is Jan. 18.

Make checks payable to CHJ and please note Scholar in Residence in the memo line. Indicate which sessions you will attend and send your checks to Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, 3023 Proctor Road, Sarasota, FL 34231.

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



Unity of Sarasota is the meeting place for the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. Image courtesy Unity Church

WATERMARKS WORSHIP SERIES TO BE HELD JAN. 12 TO FEB. 23

Members of First United Methodist Church, located at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in downtown Sarasota, invite the public to attend the *Watermarks* Worship Series Jan. 12 through Feb. 23 at all three Sunday worship services (8:30, 9:30 and 11 a.m.).

The Rev. Art McClellan, senior pastor, “will present messages that reference God’s

creating, blessings and saving work throughout the Bible,” a news release explains.

A nursery for babies and toddlers will be available each of the Sundays from 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

For additional information on worship and other church activities, call the office (955-0935) or visit www.firstsrq.com.



First United Methodist Church is located at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

PROGRAM TO FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULT CHILDREN

How to Understand and Form a Positive Relationship with Our Adult Children is the title of a new educational offering at Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

Rita Feder, a registered nurse with a master's degree in counseling psychology, will address this topic on Tuesday, Jan. 14, at 10:30 a.m., the Temple has announced in a news release.

“In addition to helping participants explore generational differences and obstacles, Feder

will provide strategies and basic guidelines for understanding and bonding with adult children,” the release explains. “There will also be an opportunity to share stories and coping strategies for families with tension or animosity between the generations,” it adds.

This program is free and open to the community with advance reservations. To register or obtain more information, email Temple Emanu-El Adult Education Chairwoman Beth Salzman at bethanny2@comcast.net.

'GETTING TO KNOW YOU'



The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) welcomed some of its newest members at a brunch on Dec. 14. The best way to learn what followers of Humanistic Judaism believe and practice is to watch an extended interview (via DVD) with the founder, Rabbi Sherwin Wine, CHJ members in Sarasota point out. Informational coffees featuring the video take place on an occasional basis. Interested persons are asked to email chjsarasota@hotmail.com.

INTERFAITH SHABBAT PROGRAM TO HONOR DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

For the eighth year in a row, Temple Emanu-El will be the site of an interfaith Shabbat service honoring the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Temple has announced.

Joining Temple Emanu-El Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman on the pulpit will be Bishop Henry Porter of the Westcoast School for Human Development. This special service will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 17, a news release says.

The Temple is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

In addition to Glickman's Torah reading recounting the experience of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt and insights from Porter on the legacy of King, attendees will hear firsthand stories of the days of segregation and the struggle for civil rights. Members of the community are warmly invited, the release adds.

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. interfaith Shabbat service is sponsored by the Temple Emanu-El Social Action Committee. For more information, call the Temple office at 371-2788.



(From left) May Fisher Cohen, Rona Shays, Lorraine Glixon, Bishop Henry Porter, Emily Tennenbaum, Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, Dorothy Quint and Helene Rosenberg are regular participants in Temple Emanu-El's annual interfaith Shabbat service to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Contributed photo

WOMEN TO BE ORDAINED AS CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND DEACONS

On Saturday, Jan. 18, at 2 p.m., Maureen McGill of St. Petersburg and Marina Teresa Sanchez Mejia of Cali, Colombia, will be ordained priests in the [Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests](#) during a ceremony in Sarasota.

Mary Bergan Blanchard of Albuquerque, NM, and Rita Lucey of Orlando will be ordained deacons, according to a news release from the association. The presiding bishop will be Bridget Mary Meehan of Sarasota, the release notes. The ceremony will take place at St. Andrew United Church of Christ, located at 6908 Beneva Road in Sarasota.

Because Sanchez Mejia speaks Spanish, part of the ordination rite will be in that language, the release points out.

All are welcome, the release adds.

“The candidates are theologically prepared and have many years of experience in ministry,” the release says.

McGill is a wife, mother, grandmother and retired attorney in St. Petersburg, the release continues. She spent most of her professional career advocating for abused and neglected children as director of the Guardian ad Litem Program in Northwest Florida. “My call to priestly ministry arose from those years,” she says in the release. “Women experience similar abuse and neglect in the church today. My call to priesthood will include advocacy to give women their rightful equality in the church.”

McGill will lead inclusive liturgies at Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community in Sarasota and provide pastoral care for residents of nursing homes in St. Petersburg, the release continues.

Sanchez Mejia “is a dynamic community activist and married woman with two sons and a granddaughter,” the release says. She has pursued the cause of human rights, including justice for women and for Colombians of African descent, her whole life, it adds. In the 1990s, she participated in global women’s conferences in Brazil, Vienna and Beijing. She has worked with local priests in base communities and was a missionary to Ecuador for three years. There, she studied theology and served women, children and outcasts, the release explains. Since 2005, “she has animated, represented and served the large community of Afro-Colombians near Playa Reciente, near the Cauco River in Cali,” the release notes.

Blanchard will continue her work as a counselor, writer and teacher, the release says. “Her mission will be nurturing spiritual life by developing liturgies for inclusive home church celebrations.”

Lucey, a member of [Pax Christi](#), has been married for 61 years, the release continues. She is a human rights activist who spent six months in federal prison because of her activism advocating the closure of the U.S. Army School of the Americas, the release points out. Because of her witness for justice issues and her experience in prison, she has advocated for women in prison and has also served as a Hospice volunteer for 25 years, the release adds. 



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... in a community of equals.

The Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests are ordained women who live and minister in the United States and South America. We prepare and ordain qualified women to serve the people of God as priests. We use equal rites to promote equal rights to achieve justice for women in the church.

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The Association of Catholic Priests (Ireland) is saddened and disappointed by the dismissal of Maryknoll priest Fr. Roy Bourgeois from the priesthood and from his ... [More »](#)

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Swiss Catholic Bishop speaks out for women's ordination. Bishop Markus Buchel, bishop of the diocese of St. Gall in Switzerland, spoke out openly for women's ordination ... [More »](#)

Inclusive Worship Aids



Written by Bridget Mary Meehan, Judy Lee and Dorothy Shugrue, it is a resource created by priests in the ARCWP containing an extensive collection of Eucharistic liturgies ... [More »](#)

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[View the Women Priests' Slideshow](#) (link)

See the women priests' homily-slideshow from their liturgy at the 2012 Call to Action-USA Conference in Louisville, KY. This slideshow is dedicated to Fr. Roy Bourgeois for his prophetic leadership in our church and world. Special thanks to Joyce Rouse (earthmama.org) for her song "Standing on the Shoulders". Two other special people shown in the slideshow are Fr. Bill Brennan and theologian Elizabeth Johnson. For a link to download the slideshow send an email to dlrougeux@insightbb.com.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

10+
JANUARY

FSU/Asolo Conservatory presents *Loot*

Through Jan. 19; times vary; Jane B. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$27 to 29. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org.

10+
JANUARY

FST presents *Monty Python's Spamalot*

Through Jan. 25; times vary; Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$18 to 49. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

10+
JANUARY

Dabbert Gallery presents *10th Anniversary Exhibition*

Through Feb. 1; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com.

10+
JANUARY

Allyn Gallup presents *Nature and Irony*

Through Feb. 1; times vary; Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art Gallery, 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com.

10+
JANUARY

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents *The Whipping Man*

Through Feb. 2; times vary; 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbttstrq.org.

11
JANUARY

WSLR presents *Malcolm Holcombe in concert*

Jan. 11, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

15
JANUARY

Sarasota Concert Association presents the *Jerry Eckert Jazz Trio*

Jan. 15, noon, Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Free Admission. Information: 351-7467 or SCASarasota.org.

YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader

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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



'DUN TAK WIF MA MOUF FULL???'

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.