

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 34 — May 9, 2014

# News Leader

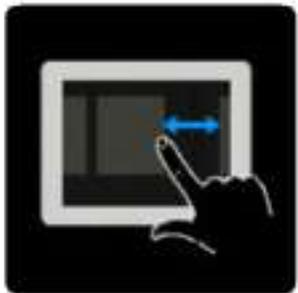
**AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT  
MORE PROJECTS MOVING AHEAD**

**PLUG IN**

*Inside*

**Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.**

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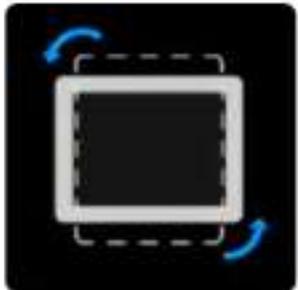
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

**Rachel Brown Hackney**

Editor and Publisher

[Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Cooper Levey-Baker**

Associate Editor

[Cooper@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Cooper@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Stan Zimmerman**

City Editor

[Stan@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Stan@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Roger Drouin**

County Editor

[Roger@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Roger@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Norman Schimmel**

Staff Photographer

[NSchimmel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:NSchimmel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Fran Palmeri**

Contributing Writer

[FPalmeri@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:FPalmeri@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Harriet Cuthbert**

Contributing Writer

[HCuthbert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:HCuthbert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Elinor Rogosin**

A&E Writer

[ERogosin@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:ERogosin@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**John Riley**

Editorial Cartoonist

[Riley@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Riley@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Vicki Chatley**

Copy Editor

[Vicki@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Vicki@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Letters To the Editor**

[Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Cleve Posey**

Production Manager / Graphic Designer

[Cleve@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Cleve@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Robert S. Hackney**

Opinion Editor / General Manager

[Robert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Robert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Advertising Sales**

[Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**Subscription Services**

[Subs@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Subs@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

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# Welcome

Although my Southern upbringing made it clear that bragging is impolite, I think certain liberties can be taken when one is not bragging about oneself.

To that end, I want to say how proud we are that my husband learned this week that he had won a second-place award for editorial writing in the Society for Professional Journalists' 64th Annual Green Eyeshade competition for the region encompassing 11 Southeastern states.

This is his second SPJ award; last year, he took second prize for editorial writing in the organization's contest for all Florida publications.

I do want to emphasize at this point that the most important validation we receive for our work is a reader's compliment.

Still, it is an incredible honor to garner recognition from our peers in journalism. Having spent many an hour as a judge in contests in Florida and in North Carolina, I know how difficult it can be to pick winners from among a wealth of entries showcasing excellent reporting and writing. And that is all the more reason I am very, very proud of Robert.

Many a night I go to bed thinking about what a remarkably talented staff we have. For an editor, no better gift exists than a team of people who work hard and produce top-notch results. Every week you see the bylines of Cooper Levey-Baker, Stan Zimmerman and Roger Drouin, but do not forget our team includes Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel, Production Manager Cleve Posey, Copy Editor Vicki Chatley, Editorial Cartoonist John Riley and contributors Elinor Rogosin, Harriet Cuthbert and Fran Palmeri. I am grateful for each of them — and especially Robert.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*  
Editor and Publisher





## AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT



## MORE PROJECTS MOVING AHEAD

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

# NEWS

## AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT

Harvey Vengroff proposes a new 800-unit rental complex northeast of Fruitville Road and Lime Avenue — *Stan Zimmerman*

9

## MORE PROJECTS MOVING AHEAD

City staff committee signs off on plans by Duval's and Whimsy Museum but seeks more information on Biter proposal — *Stan Zimmerman*

14

## PLUG IN

Sarasota County's electric vehicle infrastructure dubbed 'not adequate' for most drivers — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

20

## THE NEVER-ENDING STORY

Debate over renewal of a county mowing contract finally nets the commissioners solid information about why the issue has remained problematic — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

24

## 'THE LIFT STATION FROM HELL'

Analysis: The City Commission agrees that Lift Station 87 should undergo a total redesign — *Stan Zimmerman*

29

## A DANCE OF THEIR OWN

ALSO Youth's Alternative Prom gives LGBT youth and allies a chance to get down in a 'comfortable' space — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

36

## CROSSING OVER

Plan to improve pedestrian safety along Bee Ridge finds support and criticism from residents and businesses alike — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

39



### COVER PHOTO CREDIT

Front Cover: *Solitude Meets Paradise* - Rachel Brown Hackney



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

## **MORE DETAILS, PLEASE**

**41**

The County Commission takes the next step toward improving the BMX track but seeks more information in the nonprofit operator's business plan — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

## **REAFFIRMING SHELTER SUPPORT**

**48**

The County Commission chairman wants to keep moving forward on the homeless shelter project, but challenges remain as county staffers continue due diligence on two sites — *Roger Drouin*

## **MORE ROOM FOR RESPITE**

**52**

The County Commission approves acquisition plans for Sarasota's North Water Tower Park and Venice's Patriot Park — *Roger Drouin*

## **NO GO ON FIRE PROTECTION**

**56**

Ordinance changes and a new Police Department PR campaign get an airing during the May 5 City Commission meeting — *Stan Zimmerman*

## **ELIMINATING AN EYESORE**

**59**

Work in Bay Island Park is on schedule to be completed within seven months after a new contract is awarded — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

## **CELEBRATING THE CIRCUS**

**64**

New postage stamps unveiled at Cà d'Zan — *Stan Zimmerman*

## **IN OTHER BUSINESS ...**

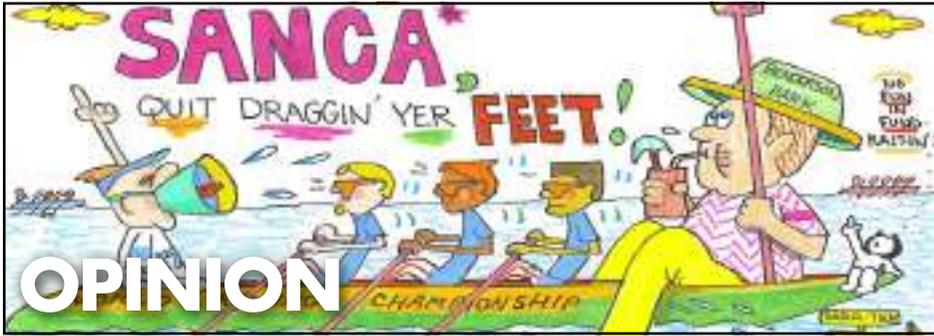
**68**

Suncoast Charities' fee waiver, a grant extension for the Florida House Institute, a Siesta conservation easement and a road repairs project all win County Commission approval — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

## **SIESTA SEEN**

**74**

A proposal for parking permits for Siesta residents gets shot down; 'No Parking' signs will be coming soon to a section of North Shell Road; and the Village Easter Egg Hunt was very popular — *Rachel Brown Hackney*



**OPINION**



**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

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

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**82**

**CRIME BLOTTER**

**93**

# OPINION

**EDITORIAL**

**99**

The nonprofit firm overseeing Benderson Park is in desperate need of more oversight by the counties

# ALL THE REST...

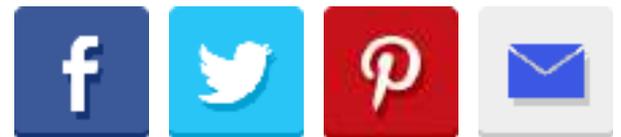
**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

**102**

**SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS**

**104**

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# AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT



*Eight hundred units never looked so good. Of course, this is just a rendering, a 'pie-in-the-sky' design. Image courtesy Fleet Capital Group Inc.*

## **HARVEY VENGROFF PROPOSES A NEW 800-UNIT RENTAL COMPLEX NORTHEAST OF FRUITVILLE ROAD AND LIME AVENUE**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Details of an ambitious affordable housing project were unveiled on May 3 at the monthly meeting of the Coalition of Community Neighborhood Associations, the CCNA. The proponent, Harvey Vengroff, already owns more rental property than anybody else in Sarasota, and he wants to build 800 more units.

Vengroff owns the 8 acres that comprise the former Stottlemeyer & Shoemaker Co. lumberyard northeast of the intersection of Fruitville Road and Lime Avenue. That

site is now home to a boxing club, Bob's Train restaurant and business offices in the old lumber firm structure.

Last year, Vengroff said he was giving up on Sarasota and moving to Belize in Central America. He put his \$75 million real estate portfolio up for sale.

**““** *The obstacles are the city's comprehensive plan and city approval of 100 units per acre.*

Harvey Vengroff  
Entrepreneur  
Sarasota

**””**

Part of the reason for his planned relocation was resistance in City Hall to his 800-unit housing proposal. “For all the reasons that people came to

America, we are leaving,” Vengroff told the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* in November 2013.

Now he is back, saying the move to Belize is off. “I’ve never been good with languages,” he told *The Sarasota News Leader*. And the housing project is back, too. He calls it the Ringling Village.

The property is zoned Downtown Edge, which allows 25 units per acre. That will produce only one-quarter of the units Vengroff wants to build. “The obstacles are the city’s comprehensive plan and city approval of 100 units per acre,” he told the audience at the CCNA meeting. He introduced Eldon Johnson with the Fleet Capital Group as his partner.

Rental housing is very tight in the city. As the economy recovers, so have rents. After being

off the political map for years, “affordable housing” is back.

The people who work Sarasota’s low-pay service jobs can find themselves paying half their monthly incomes for rent and transportation to and from places such as North Port and Palmetto, where rents are cheaper.

Vengroff’s rental “empire” of approximately 1,400 units is centered in the northern half of Sarasota. “Only about 40 percent of my residents have a car,” he told the CCNA.

The Stottlemeyer site is adjacent to the Seminole Gulf Railroad track, and talk continues to percolate about reviving passenger rail service to Bradenton and Tampa. “The train will come,” said Vengroff. “It will link to the Tampa-Orlando-Miami line.” Vengroff



Any similarity of Vengroff’s design to the Doge’s Palace in Venice (pictured) appears purely circumstantial. Photo by gaspa via Flickr and Wikimedia Commons



*Harvey Vengroff (left) and his partner, Eldon Johnson, proposed an 800-unit development near downtown for workforce housing. Vengroff manages 1,400 rentals in the city, and he never stops advertising that. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

could portray his project as “transit-oriented design,” a modern planning term for housing tied to multiple transportation options, none of which is automotive. The property also is located within walking distance of east Main Street in Sarasota.

Johnson said the Ringling Village units will not be expansive; some studio apartments will have less than 1,000 square feet. “We’re talking about much smaller units,” said Johnson. “We’re right next to transportation, so we propose less parking.” Both men are talking about a five-story complex.

“It will rejuvenate the whole neighborhood,” noted Vengroff. “We can have about 200 units for less than \$600 per month.” He estimated the overall cost of Ringling Village would be about \$57 million, or an average price of \$71,250 per unit.

However, the number of units is critical to the overall viability of the plan. Fewer units will necessitate higher rents, and at some point, affordability will fly out the window.

Using an old rental real estate benchmark of 1 percent for rent to unit price, it is likely Vengroff’s project would be profitable. This contrasts with most large condominium projects, in which developers typically want to recover their investments by selling units and moving on.

Vengroff says he can pay for the construction and thus avoid interest and other borrowing fees. This will further add to the bottom line, because the old 1 percent rule includes not only taxes and insurance, but also principal

and interest. Eliminating interest payments will boost profitability.

The regulatory hurdles he faces are significant. He needs a comprehensive plan change to “upgrade” from Downtown Edge to Downtown Core. But even then, the 50 units per acre allowance would get him only half-way to the 100 units per acre scale he needs.

Meanwhile, the city is working on a triple-density multiplier for the Rosemary District in response to another developer’s plan for workforce housing. The Rosemary area is also zoned Downtown Edge; the “Rosemary Residential Overlay District,” or R-ROD, would allow 75 units per acre.

The city’s Development Review Committee in early March approved the R-ROD, and sent it forward to the Planning Board and City Commission for public hearings as part of a comprehensive plan change. If it passes those hurdles, it will go to Tallahassee for approval. The Rosemary plan could come back in October, if all necessary parties sign off on it.

The City Commission has put a priority on redevelopment of the Rosemary District, which is in downtown Sarasota north of Fruitville Road. And it has approved a “fast track” for the R-ROD. Whether Vengroff’s idea gets a similar reception at City Hall remains to be seen.

Vengroff has been in town since 1990, relocating his family and debt-collection business to Sarasota to pursue his passion for sailing. In 2011, he sold part of his business to CapGemini of France and reorganized the remainder into Vengroff Williams Inc. 

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**Justin Bloom Esq.** - Environmental attorney and Director of Suncoast Waterkeeper

**Jono Miller** - Environmental activist who has studied the Myakka River, and shared duties coordinating the Environmental Studies Program at New College

**Rob Patten** – Former Executive Director of the Sarasota County Environmental Services Business Center

**Dr. David Shafer PhD** – Population ecologist and Principal of Shafer Consulting

**Peter van Roekens** – Environmental activist focused on navigation; Founder and Chair of the Boaters' Coalition

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# MORE PROJECTS MOVING AHEAD



Work is continuing at the site of the [Aloft Hotel](#) at Palm Avenue and Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

## CITY STAFF COMMITTEE SIGNS OFF ON PLANS BY DUVAL'S AND WHIMSY MUSEUM BUT SEEKS MORE INFORMATION ON BITER PROPOSAL

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

Three more projects came out of the May 7 meeting of the City of Sarasota's Development Review Committee (DRC) meeting with a clean review.

The DRC screens plans for engineering, zoning and code problems. Once a project gets a "sign off," the developer generally is headed to the Planning Board for the next approval stage; in some cases, though, a project team can go ahead and seek a building permit.

Some plans need only "administrative review" by staff.

The Wednesday meeting saw a sign-off on Mary Lee's plans for a loading dock, conservation facility and employee restroom at her Marietta Museum of Art and Whimsy on the North Tamiami Trail. She ran into snags at the March 19 DRC meeting over a curb cut to the loading dock and the need for the restroom

“You're asking us to sign off on a project we have not seen plans for.”

Gretchen Schneider  
Building and Zoning Official  
City of Sarasota



to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The outdoor restroom is for landscapers. Lee said in March that she did not plan on hiring any disabled landscape personnel. That explanation did not wash, so Lee came back Wednesday with new plans and received staff approval. The next and final step for the museum is a session with the city Planning Board. No City Commission action is required because the total square footage of the project is below a specific threshold.

Coast Cadillac on Bee Ridge Road won a sign-off, too. Its plan is to demolish the existing sales and maintenance facilities and build anew. Representatives of the dealership will also appear with their project at the June Planning Board meeting and then head to

the City Commission for final approval if the Planning Board OKs the project.

## **NIGHTCLUB IN NAME ONLY?**

The DRC also signed off on a petition by Duval's New World Café to serve hard liquor. This proposal may prove more controversial than a bathroom at the Marietta Museum of Art and Whimsy or a new Cadillac showroom. To serve whiskey, Duval's needs a change in its zoning category to "nightclub." The owners have furnished all the necessary paperwork, and staff is sending their case forward.

The owners explained at the April DRC meeting that they do not want to run a nightclub. They want only to expand the drinking options for patrons. They promised — what is called a "proffer" in "zoning-speak" — to



*The Development Review Committee this week approved new ancillary facilities for the Marietta Museum of Art and Whimsy. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

allow music only on three evenings per year (New Year's Eve, Fat Tuesday and their Nov. 14 anniversary).

Staff is aware that a similar petition turned into a late-night club called Ivory Lounge on Central Avenue. That venue has generated multiple complaints from downtown residents. And the staff made sure the owners of Duval's were aware their "proffer" would follow the land, so if they sold the restaurant, a new owner could not open up with a brassy floor show, for example.

Duval's owners will also head to the city Planning Board in June.

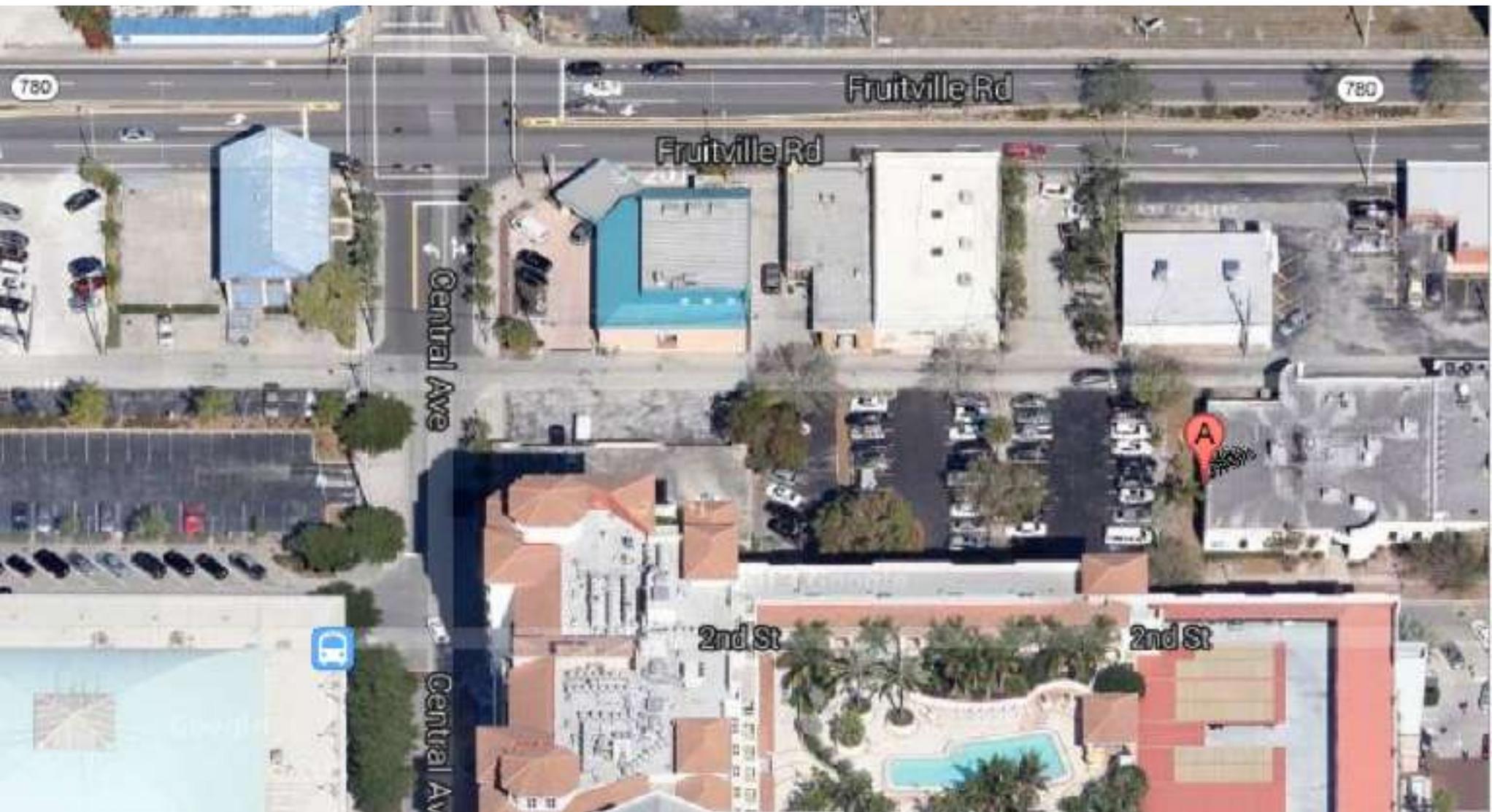
## **BITER'S CONDO DELAYS**

A project in the "administrative approval" phase is finding the going a little harder.

Sarasota entrepreneur Jessie Biter's plans for 10-story residential complex with 168 units on Second Street hit a snag when he purchased an additional quarter of an acre and wanted to expand his plan.

He wants to construct a single building on the two adjacent plots, adding another 12 units and roughly 7,000 additional square feet of commercial space on the first floor. Last month, when Biter's planning consultant, Joel Freedman, apprised the DRC of the new plan with additional land, he was peppered with a range of questions big and small. No formal site plan had been filed, so it was difficult for the committee to provide a solid evaluation.

On Wednesday Freedman and attorney Brenda Patten returned to the DRC to suss out options. "This building isn't designed



*A flag marks the former United Way building at 1445 Second St. in downtown Sarasota, separated by a parking lot from 1401 Second St. Entrepreneur Jesse Biter wants to build one residential complex that encompasses both parcels. Image from Google Maps*

because we don't know if it is one or two buildings," said Freedman. "This may be a completely different building if the two sites are not combined."

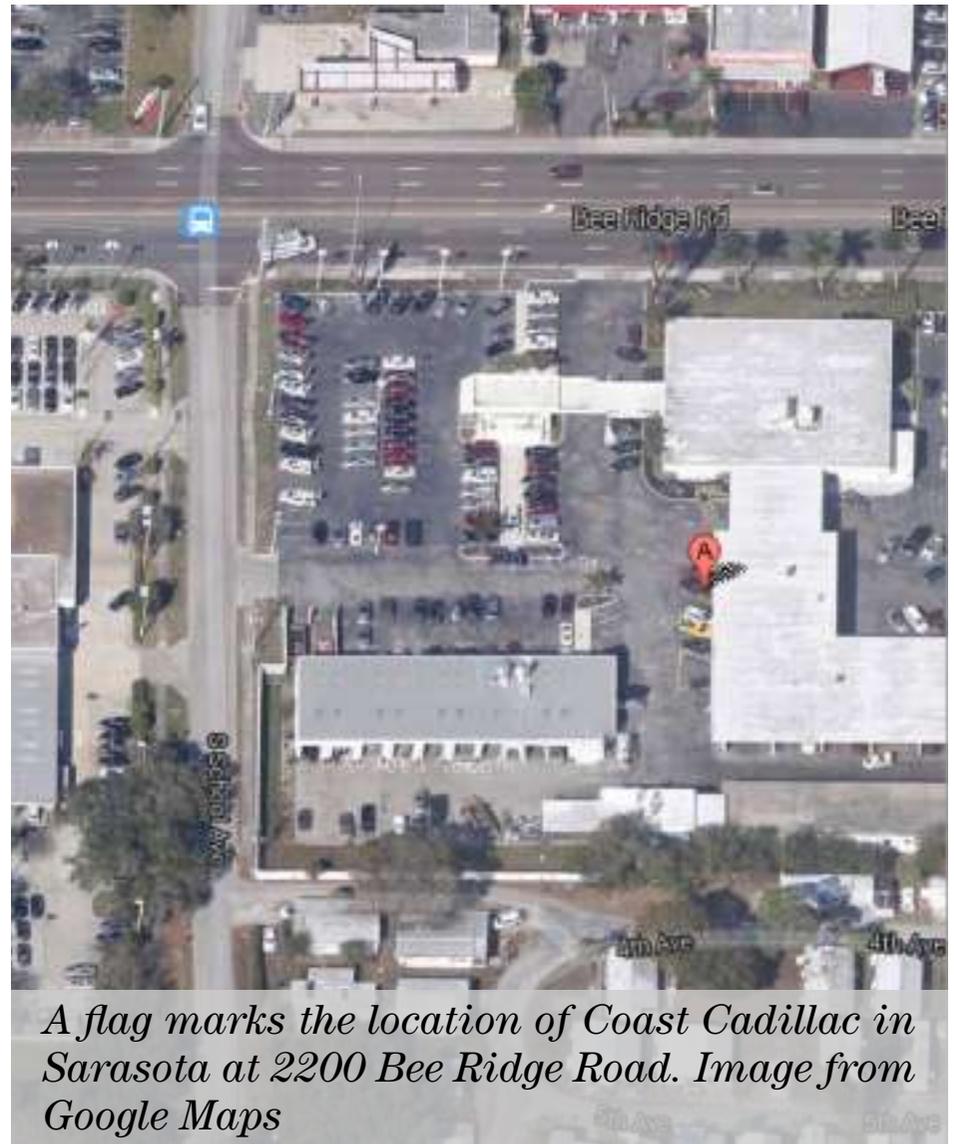
Patten pressed the concept one structure. "Our purpose is to see if we can combine these two buildings," she told the DRC. "The cost to design is pretty significant, designing two connecting buildings. If the Planning Board doesn't want to combine them, my client would be throwing good money away."

While the first Biter proposal required only "administrative approval," the addition of a quarter of an acre has pushed the plan across the aforementioned "boundary" to the place where it needs Planning Board and maybe City Commission approval. "Otherwise, this would be a [Downtown Residential Overlay Project]," said Patten. "We could have gone straight to the building permit stage. You have issues you have to sign off on, I understand."

"You put us in a difficult position," responded Gretchen Schneider, a senior building and zoning official. "You're asking us to sign off on a project we have not seen plans for."

"I understand it's awkward on your side," replied Patten. "It's awkward on our side, too."

A number of issues remain unresolved, including the status of "guest bedrooms," trash pick-up and traffic concurrency. The two sides agreed to continue consideration of the project. "We'll discuss this more," said Courtney Mendez, chairwoman of the DRC. "If we have a higher level of comfort, we'll distribute the sign-off sheet."



*A flag marks the location of Coast Cadillac in Sarasota at 2200 Bee Ridge Road. Image from Google Maps*

## **AND IN THE PUBLIC PIPELINE ...**

On May 3, City Manager Tom Barwin spoke to the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations, giving an overview of public projects in Sarasota.

He noted that rehabilitation of two sewer lift stations recently was completed. Work on Lift Station 16 in J.D. Hamel Park, located on Gulfstream Avenue opposite Marina Jack, and Lift Station 21 in Indian Beach is finished. And three miles of sewer piping has been relined, connecting Lido Key with the mainland, preventing stormwater from infiltrating the sewer system.

Barwin said efforts to fight sign pollution have resulted in the removal of more than 100 signs from public rights of way. "We're taking down more signs than we're putting up,"

he pointed out. And the second phase of the bayfront mooring field is complete, pushing the total number of all-weather moorings to more than 80.

A number of public projects are under way, including the multi-use trail along Brother Geenen Way, across an arm of Hudson Bayou and along Alderman Street. Among the others are the reconstruction of Old Bradenton Road and a new 2-million-gallon drinking water storage tank being built at the 12th Street utilities plant. Construction of the State Street parking garage should begin on May 19. And the million-dollar rehab of the Arlington Park Pool is nearing completion.

The third phase of demolition and reconstruction at Janie's Garden is under way, with 70 new units planned in this mixed-income public housing project. The streetscape project

on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way is in progress, too (see the related item in *News Briefs* this week).

Coming up are new roundabouts along U.S. 41 at 10th and 14th streets and the next evolution of traffic signal synchronization as Sarasota and Manatee counties continue to centralize control of stoplights. Repairs to the Bird Key-Coon Key bridge should provide better pedestrian and bicyclist access, and on the horizon are plans to renourish Lido Beach with sand from Big Pass.

On the public side, Barwin said, "We have more than 1,000 residences and 1,000 hotel rooms planned in and around downtown. We've issued 3,700 building permits in the last six months, and we're on pace for a record year. Right now we're looking at \$260 million in construction. That's a quarter-billion dollars in projects." 



Work is also getting under way on *The Jewel*, an 18-story condominium complex at the intersection of Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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## PLUG IN

*Two Chevy Volts and a Nissan Leaf charging up. Photo by rudisillart via Wikimedia Commons*

# SARASOTA COUNTY'S ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE DUBBED 'NOT ADEQUATE' FOR MOST DRIVERS

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

According to a presentation delivered to the Sarasota County Commission this week by a Sierra Club community organizer, the county could attract greater numbers of electric vehicle (EV) drivers if it invested in its charging infrastructure and offered tax rebates to encourage the technology. Why do that? Cleaner air for one thing, and a chance to bring EV-driving tourists to town.

Britten Cleveland, a conservation organizer with the Sierra Club, delivered that message to the board Tuesday, May 6, as part of the environmental group's Florida Healthy Air Campaign. Sarasota County earned a C from the American Lung Association in its 2013 State of the Air report, meaning the county ranks poorly in regard to the amount of ozone in its atmosphere. Where does that ozone come from? Cars, of course.

With that in mind, Cleveland joined with EV enthusiasts to form the Suncoast Electric Vehicle Collaborative, which aims to promote EV-friendly policies at the state and local levels. Over the course of three workshops held last year, the Collaborative identified major challenges to increasing the number of EVs on the road locally and identified potential policies that could improve the situation.

According to county data, Sarasota County has the highest number of EVs on the road per population, and the number of EVs in the county grew from 99 to 160 (62 percent) in just nine months in 2013. But with only 20 or so charging stations around the county, Cleveland told the commission "the current infrastructure is not adequate for the majority of drivers."

The cities of Sarasota and Venice, as well as the county, have invested in adding free

charging stations to their grids, but only a small number of private enterprises have done so. While 16 charging stations will be added to the new Mall at University Town Center off University Parkway, the region needs to do more to encourage private businesses to install charging stations. When they leave their houses, drivers need to feel confident they can charge up wherever they're headed, said county Sustainability Manager Lee Hayes Byron.

The rewards could be big. EVs pour significantly less smog into the air, Cleveland pointed out, and the money drivers are saving by not buying gas is going to the local

economy rather than to remote oil interests. Byron said Sarasota is well-positioned to become an EV destination; if word gets out that the area is EV-friendly, that could result in an influx of new tourists.

But how can the county get the private sector to invest? Cleveland's Collaborative made a few recommendations, including "loans, grants, and/or rebates to hotels, workplaces, destinations," etc., that would reward them for installing charging stations. Another recommendation: to continue installing public charging stations in strategic spots. According to Byron, the cost to the county for its nine

## Top 5 Worst Florida Counties for Ozone:

	Grade	# Orange Days 2009–2011 [EPA]
1. Hillsborough	F	12
2. Santa Rosa	D	8
3. Orange	D	8
4. Escambia	D	7
5. Sarasota	C	5

<http://www.stateoftheair.org/2013/states/florida/>

*A chart presented to the County Commission this week shows the five worst counties in Florida in 2013 in terms of ozone levels recorded in the atmosphere. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

charging stations —installed with federal grant money — is only \$865 a year.

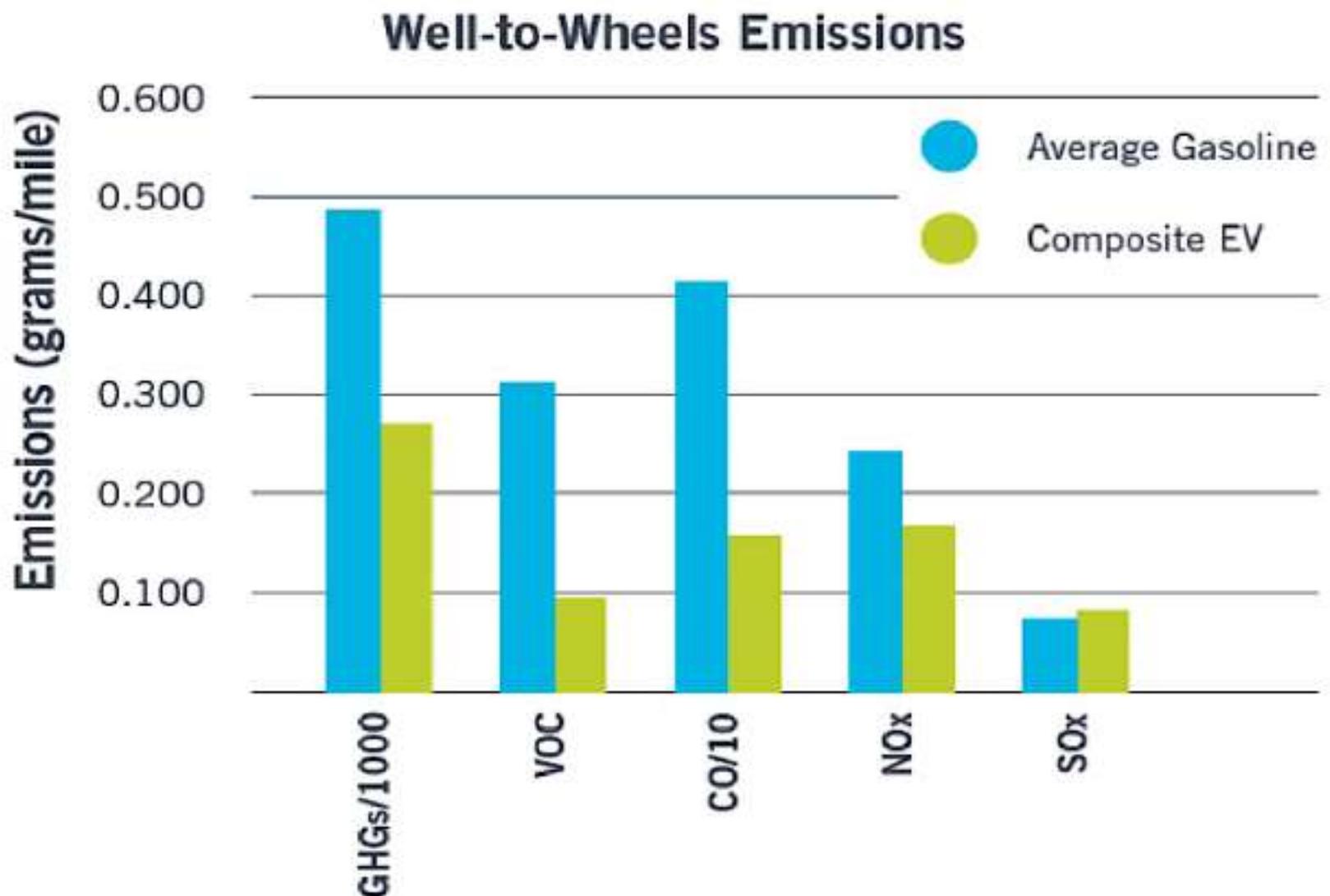
The commission had little criticism for the proposals. Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson pushed for more charging stations in South County, saying the lack of plug-ins there has “left a bad taste in people’s mouth.” But the federal grant that funded the county’s nine stations stipulated specific ZIP codes where the stations could go, none of them south of Bee Ridge Road.

Cleveland tells *The Sarasota News Leader* the county will now take the lead in developing concrete proposals for ways to encourage local EV usage. She calls Sarasota “the ideal

place” for a robust EV program. Next up for her is to make sure the Collaborative’s proposals are emphasized by county staff as the commission finalizes its next budget during upcoming workshops.

The Sierra Club’s EV program wasn’t planned. It came out of the intense enthusiasm local EV drivers feel about promoting their cars, which Cleveland learned about when she began her work as a Sierra Club organizer. She met enthusiasts and began tapping into local networks of Chevy Volt and Tesla fans.

“There were so many people ready and willing to get involved,” she says. “It was just: Let a thousand flowers bloom.” 



*Source:* Guide to the Lessons Learned from the Clean Cities Community Electric Vehicle Readiness Projects

*A chart compares chemical emissions of gasoline-powered vehicles and electric vehicles. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



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# THE NEVER-ENDING STORY

*The median on Webber Street between Beneva Road and Tuttle Avenue appeared neat and trim on May 8. Photo by Robert Hackney*

## **DEBATE OVER RENEWAL OF A COUNTY MOWING CONTRACT FINALLY NETS THE COMMISSIONERS SOLID INFORMATION ABOUT WHY THE ISSUE HAS REMAINED PROBLEMATIC**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

The “m” word was back to haunt the Sarasota County Commission this week. But after close to two hours of discussion over two days — and another 90 minutes County Administrator Tom Harmer said he spent with staff members during the board’s May 7 lunch break — a more thorough explanation emerged about why the county has continued to struggle with its mowing operations.

Blame inaccurate acreage data dating

back to the mid-2000s and contractual clauses designed to ensure vendors are compensated accurately if they find out after the fact that they have taken on bigger jobs than they anticipated.

The commissioners are happy with the way the county looks, but they were unhappy about the information they learned from Harmer and staff this week. The board members reluctantly agreed with Harmer’s

“*The first thing people see once they get off the airplane or get off the interstate is our right of ways.*”

Charles Hines  
Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission



proposal that they approve the latest mowing contract renewal — which prompted the discussions. They also agreed to allow staff to continue a thorough technological review of acreage data so they can ensure future contracts they award will reflect accurately the amount of work a firm is supposed to handle.

At Harmer's recommendation, the commission voted 4-1 — with Commissioner Joe Barbetta in the minority — to: renew a contract with JLC Hauling Inc. for the county's North Urban zone for one year at a cost of \$1,116,514.53; give staff six months to verify the amount of acreage in all eight zones, including the one county staff mows; have staff return to the board with that information for a full discussion; and then consider the resolicitation of all county mowing contracts.

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who made the motion, included in it a request by Barbetta to incorporate in that discussion data comparing the county's mowing costs for each of the past eight years. She further asked that staff research what comparable communities pay for their mowing services and present that information as well.

Commissioners bemoaned the fact they seemed to have no choice but to renew the contract with JLC Hauling. They pointed out that this is the time of year grass has to be mowed regularly, so any gap in service that might result from re-soliciting the bid likely would lead to their reliving the 2012 nightmare of unsightly medians and rights of way.

"The first thing people see once they get off the airplane or get off the interstate is our right of ways," Chairman Charles Hines pointed out.

"We want to have a system that's fair," he said. "It sounds silly to say something that broad,



*The grass was high in the median of Webber Street near Tuttle Avenue in August 2012. File photo*

[but] I want contractors and vendors to want to do business with Sarasota County."

Commissioners also took numerous opportunities to make it clear they were not directing any of their consternation toward JLC Hauling, which uses the working name Mega Mowers. Still, one of the firm's owners, Brigitte Campfield, addressed the board on May 6 after the contract renewal discussion began. During the public comments portion of the afternoon session in Venice, Campfield said, "It's hard not to take this personally." She added, "Are you willing to lose the ground you gained for the future to continue to rehash the past?"

On Aug. 28, 2013 — after yet another dispute over mowing contracts — Campfield told the board, "We just kind of feel like we're always getting shorted on all of these contracts. We

are never the lowest bidder, because we feel we bid appropriately for the work ... We come in and save you guys. This is our second or third time coming in after a failed contract. ... We get everything done on time; our work passes, and we never get a full contract.”

She continued, “We work very hard for you guys, and we do not feel the loyalty in return.”

### THE CONTRACT CHALLENGES

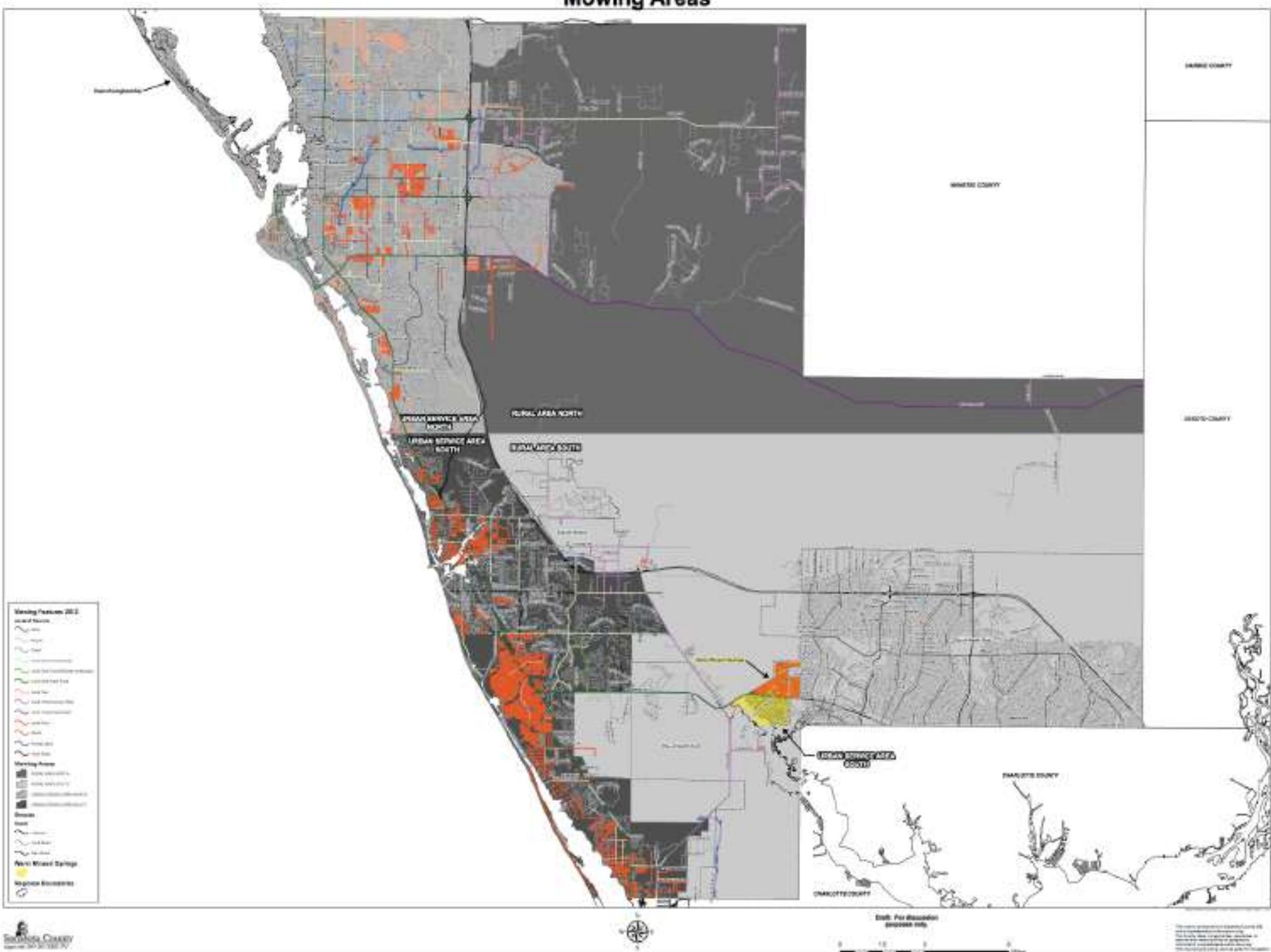
Barbetta and Robinson both pulled the JLC Hauling renewal from the board’s consent

agenda on May 6, citing the fact that it was increasing by \$255,645.

A staff memo said the extra money was necessary because improved calculations of the areas to be mowed in the North Urban Zone had determined the firm was responsible for 115 more acres than the bid originally specified.

However, because of unused contingency funds, the memo noted, the funds were available in the county budget; no extra money was needed from the general fund.

Mowing Areas



A county map shows the areas of the mowing zones. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“I realize there is some extra work involved,” Barbetta said, “but this is less than 11 months [since the contract was awarded in 2013] and now, all of a sudden, this has come forward.”

He added, “I still don’t have total faith in the way our mowing contracts are being handled.”

Robinson reminded staff that past vendors had told commissioners the county’s mowing specs were not accurate, “and it was a point of contention when our mowing contracts were being awarded, and they were correct. So I’m having a difficult time reconciling that.”

Staff members explained that the mowing contracts were structured to allow for firms to receive more compensation if the determination was made after they started working that they were handling more acreage.

That was a fact Patterson continued to argue against just prior to the May 7 vote. “I don’t think your methodology of going back in after a bid [to correct figures] is an appropriate way to continue in the future,” she said. “I really don’t.”

During almost 45 minutes of discussion on the morning of May 7, Spencer Anderson, director of Field Services, which includes

## Asset Area Estimates



*Graphics shown to the County Commission this week compare the proposed type of map showing an area in a mowing zone (left) to the existing map provided to a prospective vendor. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

mowing, explained that Mainscape, which had the North Urban Zone contract prior to Mega Mowers, had informed staff of the extra acreage. Mega Mowers has been receiving the appropriate higher pay from the time it was awarded the bid, Anderson and Harmer indicated.

On June 18, 2013, before the commission approved the North Urban Zone contract with Mega Mowers, Anderson told the board that Mainscape was the third vendor to prove unsuccessful in that zone over the past year. The North Urban zone includes the areas north of Bee Ridge Road and west of Interstate 75.

Pressed to explain those failures, Anderson replied that the three firms were “all unprepared for right of way mowing,” adding that their previous experience was in handling contracts for landscape maintenance in developments.

On the afternoon of May 7 — after the lunch break staff meeting — Harmer told the board that because of the mowing issues in 2012 and 2013, staff members “put an emphasis ... on performance” and vendors “are performing and maintaining the level of service that’s expected of them.”

Then he pointed out that staff members have been working to validate the acreage numbers for all of the zones, with the expectation they would have the results ready before the next countywide round of mowing solicitations in 2016. Some zones may not change at all, while others could prove to have lower acreage, he added.

“Staff was very apologetic to me about not raising this sooner,” he told the commissioners. 

## Contract Language Regarding Payment for Changes

- Technical Specifications Section 15.4:

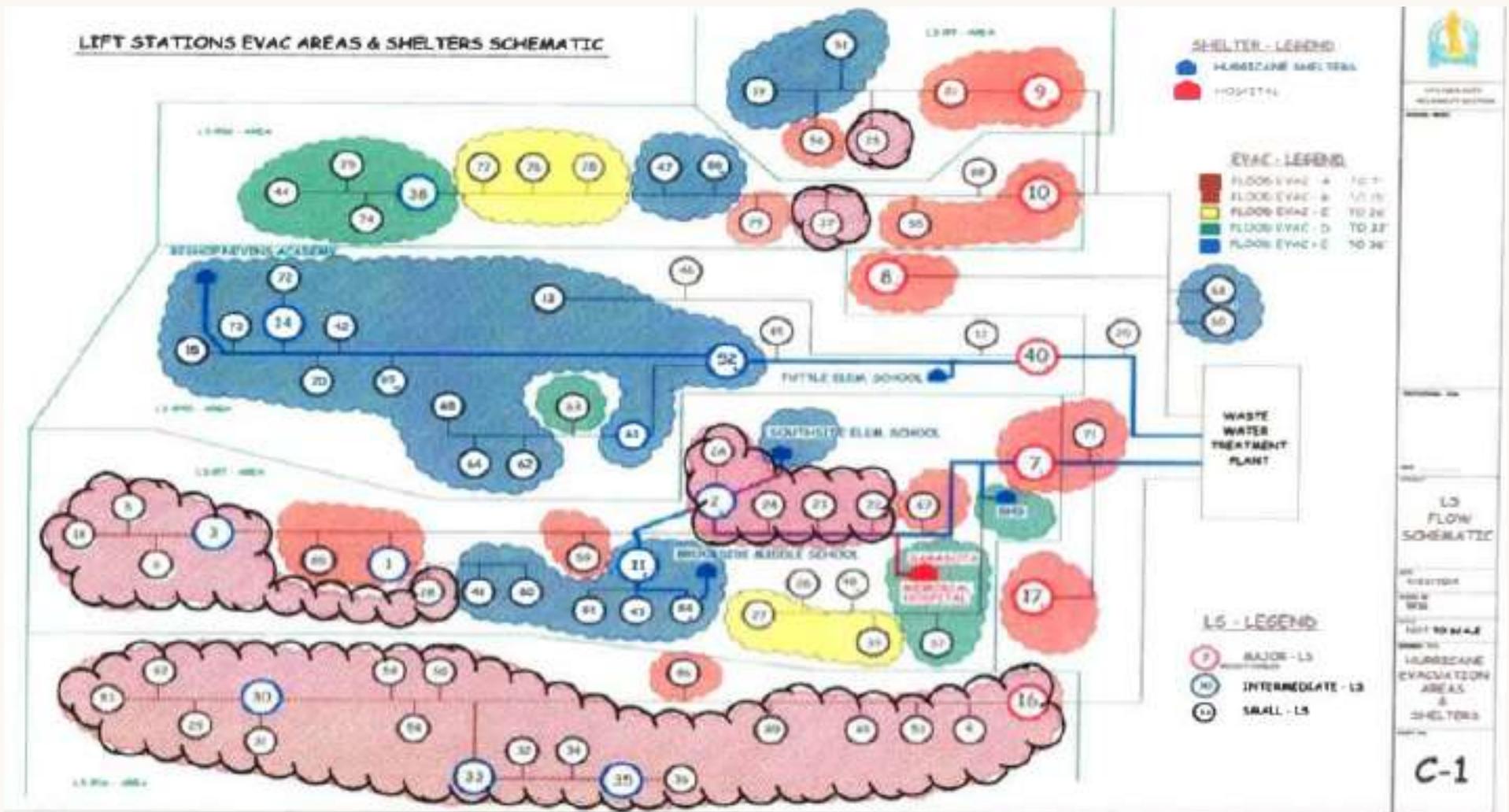
“In the event work zone acreage is added to or reduced from that shown on Exhibit 1, as listed and provided in the IFB documents, contractor compensation will be increased or decreased based on the effective per acre cost computed by dividing the work zone cost per maintenance cycle by the total zone acreage.”

- For the Zone 1 North Urban Contract:

$$\frac{\$30,691.94}{358.97 \text{ acres}} = \frac{\$85.50}{\text{acre}}$$

*A slide shows technical contract specifications county staff has used to increase mowing contractors’ pay if the firms were found to be handling more acreage than outlined in their winning bids. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

# 'THE LIFT STATION FROM HELL'



## Vulnerability Analysis Hurricane Evacuation Areas



Lift Station **87**  
MCKIM & CREED

*When does your toilet stop working after a hurricane? At some point, it will. Suddenly, your house will not be so charming anymore. This indecipherable graphic only hints at your expected sorrows. The city has 60-plus lift stations, and each one has a slightly different vulnerability to flooding. Image courtesy McKim & Creed*

## ANALYSIS: THE CITY COMMISSION AGREES THAT LIFT STATION 87 SHOULD UNDERGO A TOTAL REDESIGN

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

On Monday, May 5, the Sarasota City Commission figuratively threw in its cards on Lift Station 87 and asked for a new deal. It is hard to tell how many millions were in the pot, because some equipment can be salvaged. The ante for the next hand will likewise run into the millions.

The agenda item did not portend the magnitude of the decision: "Status report Re: Lift Station No. 87 Project." Two weeks earlier, the commissioners told their utility staff and consulting engineer to come back on May 5 with designs to "bring some of the facilities aboveground," said Utilities Director Mitt Tidwell as he introduced the topic.

Commissioners were concerned when they heard the Lift Station 87 design could not withstand storm surge flooding from a Category 2 hurricane. The design is unusual

**“ We feel it’s prudent to go with Category 3. ”**

Robert Garland  
Consulting Engineer  
McKim & Creed

because the facility was planned to be totally underground. When asked previously if they ever had seen a sewer lift station completely underground, both Tidwell and consulting engineer Robert Garland of McKim & Creed admitted they never had.

Any flooding or storm surge immediately would begin to exert water pressure on the tops of the eight “silos” that constitute the original design. One of the critical facets of the project was not sufficiently reinforced to withstand the pressure. Failure could mean one-third of the city’s toilets — including all of them at Sarasota Memorial Hospital — would be inoperative.

## Conceptual Renderings Landscape Improvement Plan



**Lift Station 87**  
MCKIM&CREED

An artist’s rendering shows how landscaping could be designed around the new Lift Station 87. Image courtesy McKim & Creed

That news was what prompted the commissioners to tell Tidwell and Garland to look at aboveground facilities. And on May 5, the men brought to the commission table what had been ordered. The results will necessitate a complete redesign of the Sarasota facility.

## TOTAL REPUDIATION

The sense of resignation was almost palpable. No breast-beating; no howls of outrage; no pointed fingers; no scapegoating. The decisions were taken so long ago that all the players involved have disappeared from the stage. The project began two city managers'

and two utilities directors' tenures ago. And the engineering design consultancy that produced the plan that turned out to be so crazily wrong is now defending itself in what promises to be a years-long lawsuit brought by the city.

The entire comedy of errors should be a case study for other cities. When should engineers surrender their good instincts to satisfy neighbors who do not want a lift station nearby? "We'll just put it underground!" Who decides when a novel solution veers into the high-risk category? "You have hurricanes here?"

## Conceptual Renderings Potential Architectural Styles

Mediterranean/Spanish  
Influence  
30 Mira Mar Court



Historic Structure  
City Water Building (1926)  
1015 North Orange Avenue



*Two types of architectural styles were proposed for the building that will house the aboveground Lift Station 87. Image courtesy McKim & Creed*



*City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell listens to a speaker during the May 5 meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The project is located in Luke Wood Park, on the south side of the junction of U.S. 41 and U.S. 301 near downtown Sarasota. It was created after a nearby lift station failed repeatedly, drawing the attention of environmental regulators when hundreds of thousands of gallons of sewage were dumped into Hudson Bayou and then flowed into Sarasota Bay.

Affluent neighbors were outraged and then infuriated when the news broke that the city was minimizing the consequences of those spills. Susan Chapman dug into the records

to uncover the ugliness. A decade later, she sits as a city commissioner, still wrestling to find a fix. Meanwhile, the original offender — Lift Station 7 — continues to handle nearly one-third of the city's sewage under the vigilant eye of the Utilities Department and the crossed fingers of those who live nearby.

## VULNERABILITIES EVERYWHERE

Consultant Garland handled much of the presentation to the commission on May 5. Part of it was aesthetic. For example: If the city wants an aboveground facility, what

## Conceptual Layouts Category 3 Protection



Engineering drawings show how Lift Station 87 could be built to protect it from flooding during a Category 3 hurricane. Image courtesy McKim & Creed

architectural style is preferred? He showed the board a few prospective designs: the typical Sarasota Mediterranean Revival/Spanish Alamo look, an historic look and an Art Deco entry from the city's Urban Design Studio. This at first appeared to be sort of "nothing up my sleeve" sleight of hand to distract the commissioners from a multi-million dollar change in direction.

But to his credit, Garland also introduced the commissioners to the vulnerability from flooding that is a point of fact for all of the city lift stations. He presented a slide titled, *Vulnerability Analysis [by] Hurricane Evacuation Areas*. It is part of the Utilities Department's post-storm "recovery plan," and it shows the projected impact on each of the city's lift stations from flooding produced by hurricanes and other storms.

In light of Pensacola's experience earlier this month with an unprecedented strong rain event (5 inches in one hour), the slide was eye-opening. However, it was a graphic only an engineer could love. Observers had to hope that city staff members in either the Utilities Department or Public Affairs will rework the illustrations so neighborhood residents can have some idea of the vulnerability of the sewer system to storm events.

Fundamentally, the concept of vulnerability was the issue that tipped the commission to abandon the out-of-sight/out-of-mind design in favor of installing equipment in a 40-foot-tall building in the middle of Luke Wood Park.

"We feel it's prudent to go with Category 3," said Garland, referring to the level of structural soundness he recommended for that

facility. "And we need consensus to go in that direction."

It was a watershed moment for the project. Would the commissioners abandon an investment of years and millions of dollars? Would they authorize a total redesign, scrapping the eight already-dug, reinforced holes in the ground, some filled with equipment?

There was no formal vote, and none was needed. Mayor Shannon Snyder asked, "Category 2 or 3?" Commissioner Paul Caragiulo replied, "Three." And so it went.

"I'm excited to be talking about this for a lift station," said Commissioner Suzanne Atwell as the discussion ended. "It's been painful, but look what's happening."

Utilities Director Tidwell figuratively tied it up with a bow. "That's exactly what we needed for today," he told the board.

## CODA

As for all those expensive holes in the ground, what purpose can they serve now? One will be deepened because an operational "wet well" is critical to the idea of a gravity-fed sewer system. The old design called for this hole to be too shallow; the floor needs to be 12 feet deeper, so expect to see it go down another 14 feet or more. A couple of weeks ago, though, Garland suggested digging a new hole.

And what of the other seven "silos?" Engineers are seldom ironic, but Tidwell was on Monday. "We could fill them up with the debris from demolishing the rest of the site. It would save money. We wouldn't have to truck it to the dump," he told *The Sarasota News Leader*. 

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*ALSO Youth volunteers spread the word about Alternative Prom. Photo courtesy of Molly Swift*

## **ALSO YOUTH'S ALTERNATIVE PROM GIVES LGBT YOUTH AND ALLIES A CHANCE TO GET DOWN IN A 'COMFORTABLE' SPACE**

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

“We don’t want there to be a need for an alternative prom,” says ALSO Youth Program Coordinator Molly Swift. But after hearing from students active in the nonprofit, which supports LGBT youth and their straight allies, it was pretty clear one was needed.

ALSO Youth students don’t all go to the same high school, for one thing, and some feel they can’t take the date they’d like to their regular proms. Some just flat-out can’t afford to attend a prom. And

some with disabilities simply don’t feel comfortable at the dance.

So if the students don’t want to go to their school prom, why not just throw their own? Alternative Prom — which will take place at The Out-of-Door Academy’s Lakewood Ranch campus this Saturday — was born.

“*If the youth have a good time, we’d like to do this every year.*”

Molly Swift  
Program Coordinator  
ALSO Youth

ALSO Youth didn’t invent the concept. So-called “anti-proms” have been around for a while; the long-gone sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle* once featured

a plotline about the protagonist's attempt to throw a "morp," i.e., "prom" spelled backward.

One thing the ALSO Youth party is not is a "gay prom," Swift emphasizes. The party's not just for gay and lesbian teens, but also for anyone between the ages of 14 and 20 who doesn't feel "comfortable" at a typical prom, anyone who's looking for an "alternative space." The soiree will come complete with a prom-like theme, *A Summer Night*, and will feature food and refreshments, raffle prizes, a photo booth and, of course, music and dancing.

The party is also not a fundraiser. ALSO Youth survives on donations, and it often throws galas and brunches for donors, but Alt Prom is different. "This is the first big youth event," Swift says. The organization leaders

think 200 teens will attend, although plenty of tickets remain. "Not many kids have PayPal accounts," Swift notes.

ALSO Youth was formed in 1992 by locals concerned about shockingly high suicide rates among gay and lesbian teens. Its main mode of outreach remains its popular Drop-In Center, a safe spot for kids to hang out. Peer support groups meet there, as well.

A safe spot — just like ODA will become Saturday night. "If the youth have a good time," Swift says, "we'd like to do this every year."

*Alternative Prom will run 6-10 p.m. Saturday, May 10, at The Out-of-Door Academy's Lakewood Ranch campus, 5950 Deer Drive, Sarasota. Tickets are \$20. For more info, visit [alsoyouth.org](http://alsoyouth.org).* 



*ALSO Youth's Drop-In Center. Photo courtesy of Molly Swift*



# My Sunday Paper...

## ...two days early!

One of my favorite things to do is spend all day Sunday relaxing with the Sunday newspaper, reading it from cover to cover. Unfortunately, my old Sunday paper is mostly classified ads, real estate ads, ad inserts and very little in the way of real, informative news.

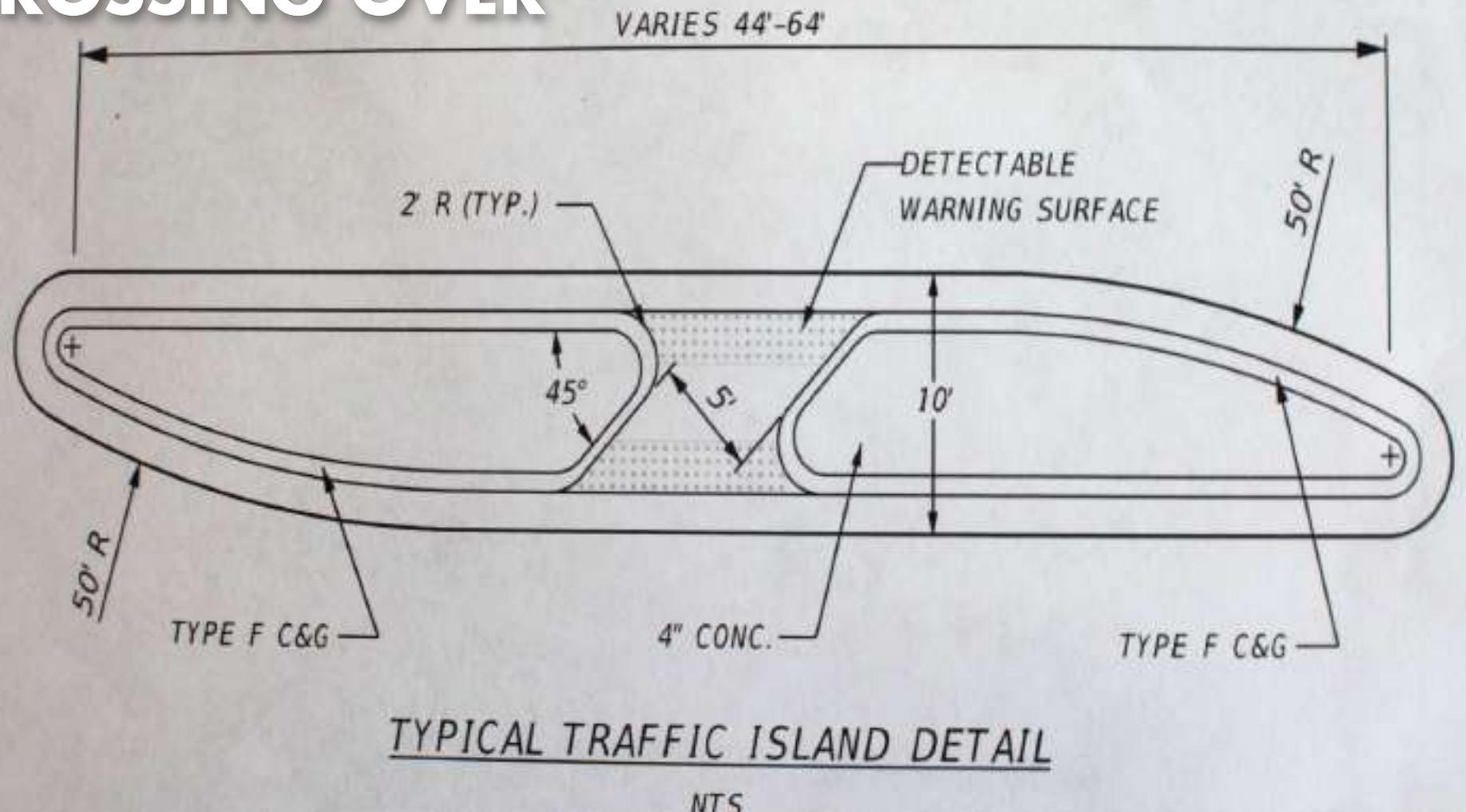
That's why I love the award-winning *Sarasota News Leader*. It is so full of news and features that relate to Sarasota County that I need a whole day to read it all ... perfect for a lazy Sunday afternoon. And reading it on my iPad means no trip to the recycling bin.

*The Sarasota News Leader* access e-mail is delivered to my inbox every Friday morning. Of course, I'm tempted to read some of it right away. Who could resist? But I know I have all day Sunday - in fact, all week - to read the No. 1 digital news weekly in Sarasota County.

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# CROSSING OVER



An engineer's drawing shows the design of a pedestrian refuge island for Bee Ridge Road. Image courtesy Florida Department of Transportation

## PLAN TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ALONG BEE RIDGE FINDS SUPPORT AND CRITICISM FROM RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES ALIKE

By Cooper Levey-Baker  
*Associate Editor*

A proposal to improve pedestrian safety along a hazardous stretch of Bee Ridge Road is receiving positive feedback from neighbors, but some local business owners say the pedestrian refuge islands could block access to their properties.

The project was hatched by the Florida Department of Transportation, which is planning to install 12 pedestrian refuge islands in a 3.6-mile stretch of Bee Ridge between U.S. 41 and Dunn Road, just east of McIntosh Road. Between 2008 and 2012, that section of road saw 61 accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists, two of which led to fatalities. Work is set to begin in the summer of 2015 and will

cost \$708,000, according to Department of Transportation projections.

The department held a public hearing on the matter last week and has been collecting comments from residents and business owners. Those comments, provided to *The Sarasota News Leader*, show the plan has generated a wide range of reactions. One resident called it a "good project" justified by the "crash data," while another called it "long overdue." A third resident said "anything" the department does would represent an improvement — even new traffic lights that might slow down traffic.

Few have objected to the concept behind the pedestrian refuge islands, but some business

owners do worry that the specific placements might disrupt their operations. Dave Pritchard of Pritchard's Pianos and Organs, located on Bee Ridge just east of 41, wrote that the proposed island outside his store would make it "impossible" for eastbound drivers to safely enter his parking lot.

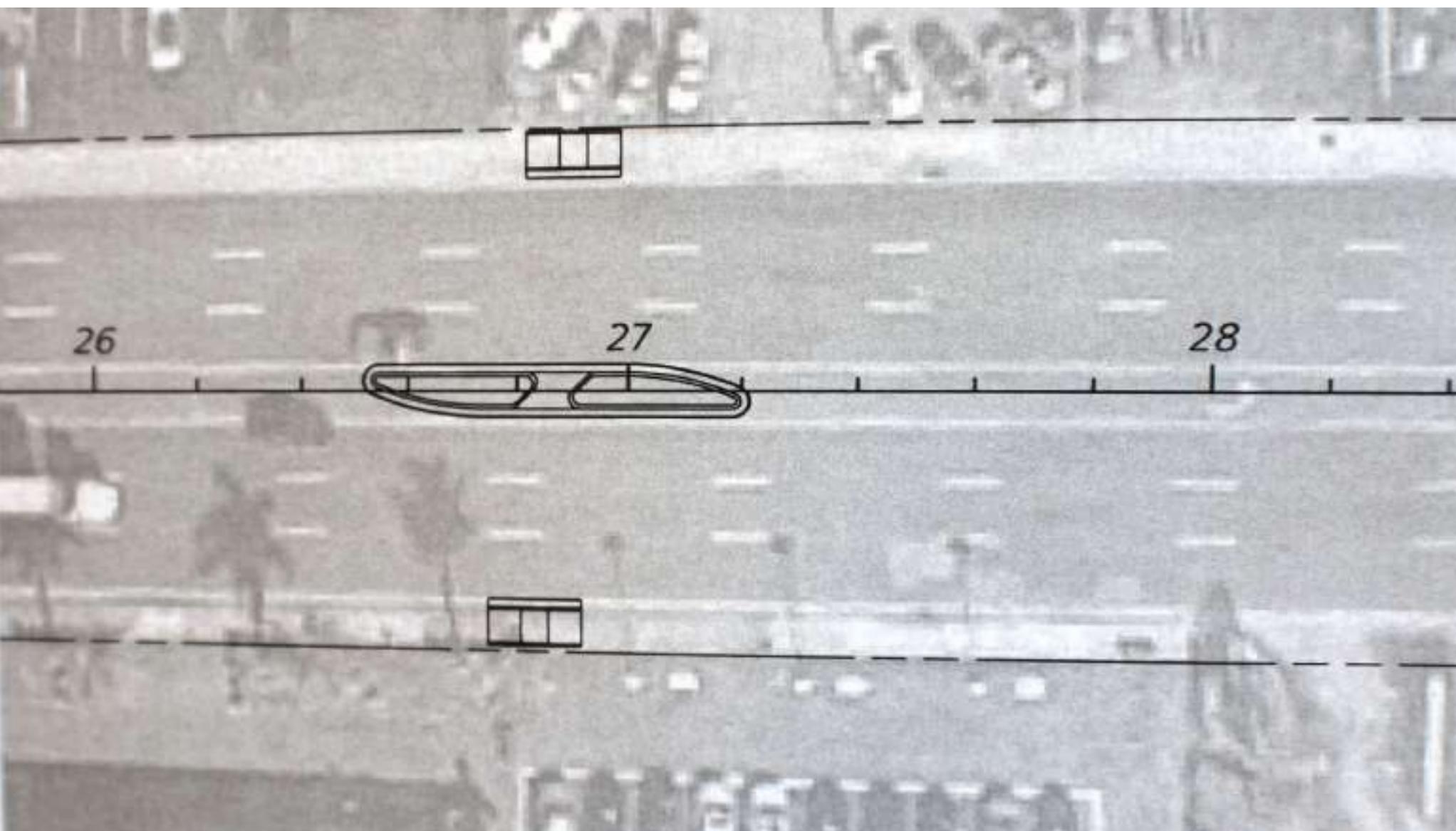
"The eastbound driver will be deprived of a turning lane into my parking lot," Pritchard wrote. "Many of my customers are retired and over the age of 70 and I know that their cars would be exposed to being rear ended."

Mark Cooper of Cooper Enterprises, meanwhile, wrote that one of the islands would impede access to his two parking spots, located just east of Pritchard's.

Resident Richard Walmsley wrote that the placement of one island would force him to perform a U-turn to pull into his home.

Architect John Bryant, who lives in the area, called the project "worthwhile" because "Bee Ridge is a difficult and at times dangerous road to cross." But he suggested that planners need also to improve the crossing at Shade Avenue and Bee Ridge, which has a high amount of pedestrian traffic coming from nearby Brookside Middle School and the newish burger place S'macks.

Department of Transportation Communications Specialist Robin Stublen tells the *News Leader* the department is still sorting through all the feedback it has received. Its open comment period concludes on Saturday, and plans for the pedestrian refuge islands will remain on display at the [Fruitville Public Library](#) through May 15. 



An illustration shows how one island would be situated in the median of a section of Bee Ridge Road. Image courtesy Florida Department of Transportation

# MORE DETAILS, PLEASE



Children compete in a *Strider* competition at the Sarasota BMX track. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION TAKES THE NEXT STEP TOWARD IMPROVING THE BMX TRACK BUT SEEKS MORE INFORMATION IN THE NONPROFIT OPERATOR'S BUSINESS PLAN

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

On a unanimous vote May 7, the Sarasota County Commission moved forward with plans for improvements at its BMX complex with the goal of drawing major national and international events.

However, at the recommendation of Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, the board declined to acknowledge receipt of the 2014-2017 business plan from the Southwest District

Parents' Council Inc. — known as Sarasota BMX — which has been operating the track at 17th Street and Tuttle Avenue in Sarasota.

The commissioners approved a \$31,593 contract with Tandem Construction to handle construction management services at risk. The firm will work with staff to ensure the project design stays within budget. As of May 7, Project Manager Brad

“What [BMX Sarasota members have] in their favor is their vast amount of history and their connections to the BMX community.”

Carolyn Brown  
Director  
Parks and Recreation  
Sarasota County



Gaubatz conceded, it is slightly over budget — around \$2.1 million — at the 60-percent design mark.

In September 2013, Carolyn Brown, director of the county's Parks and Recreation Department, estimated the total cost of improvements at \$1,744,160. Approximately \$1 million will be coming out of Tourist Development Tax revenue to supplement funds already available for the project, she said at the time.

As for the business plan: Robinson pointed to the need for far more detail and explanations. "I don't know that we gain anything by just accepting it today."

Among problems she cited with the document were revenue and hiring projections without details showing how the club expected to reach those marks.

Brown said the new agreement will not have to be approved by the board until prior to the opening of the improved track.

"I think it would be better for it to come back to us earlier than later," Commissioner Nora Patterson told Brown, adding that the business plan "is intended to reassure us of what's going to happen once we make the capital investment. ... At that point, you absolutely need to know whether this thing's realistic ... In the next few months, it should come back to this board."



*An aerial view shows the site of the county's BMX track at 17th Street and Tuttle Avenue in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

County Administrator Tom Harmer concurred with Patterson, saying he would make sure the business plan comes back to the commissioners before they approve the construction contract.

According to the timeline presented by staff on May 7, the county will vote in October on a construction contract with a Guaranteed Maximum Price. The project is expected to be completed in July 2015.

Plans call for the construction of a new 8-meter ramp for **Supercross** events and probably a 5-meter ramp, installation of electronic starting gates and new lighting, a redesign of the track,

better site drainage and creation of a better location for bleachers in the future, according to the staff presentation.

## THE BUSINESS PLAN

Robinson praised the [Sarasota BMX](#) business plan for providing “a great historical and current review.” However, she pointed out, “the actual narrative of the financial plan is less than a page [showing] projected numbers without a whole lot of explanation as to how you get there ... and assumptions.”

For example, she said, the plan predicts local membership at the track to jump 25 percent

“Increasing membership for any organization by 25 percent is quite an amazing goal.”

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission



## New Project Features:

- New 8-Meter Ramp (Supercross).
- New 5-Meter ramp.
- Electronic starting gates.
- Redesigned track.
- Improved Site Drainage.
- New Site Lighting.
- Improved location for future bleachers.

## Event Master Plan

*A county staff presentation on May 7 listed planned improvements at the Sarasota BMX track. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

### Funding Forecast

<b>Funding</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>
Track Rental	\$0.00	\$20,000	\$45,000
Weekly Practices/Race	\$7,920	\$23,760	\$24,472
Major Non UCI Event	\$19,750	\$73,050	\$75,241
Major UCI Supercross Events	\$0.00	\$141,200	\$145,436
Sponsorships	\$0.00	\$25,000	\$25,750
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$27,670</b>	<b>\$283,010</b>	<b>\$315,899</b>

### Direct Cost of Funding

Track Rental	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Weekly Practices/Races	\$2,022	\$6,265	\$6,453
Major Non UCE Events	\$1,850	\$11,840	\$12,196
Major UCI Supercross Event	\$0.00	\$126,600	\$130,398
Sponsorships	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Cost of Funding</b>	<b>\$3,872</b>	<b>\$144,705</b>	<b>\$149,047</b>

## 5.3 Projected Surplus or Deficit

Our projected surplus and deficit is shown in the following table:

### Surplus and Deficit

	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>
<b>Funding</b>	\$27,670	\$283,010	\$315,900
<b>Total Direct Cost</b>	\$3,872	\$144,704	\$149,045
<b>Gross Surplus</b>	\$23,798	\$138,306	\$166,855
<b>Gross Surplus %</b>	86%	49%	53%

within the first year after the improvements are completed. “Increasing membership for any organization by 25 percent is quite an amazing goal,” she added. “The local BMX-ers, I betcha, are already members.”

For another example, she pointed out that the forecast calls for track rental income to increase from \$20,000 in the 2015 fiscal year to \$45,000 in FY 2016. “What is triggering that?”

Chairman Charles Hines agreed with her concerns. “This commission, I believe, has clearly said sports tourism is something that we want to invest in,” he noted, but in exchange for the investments it is making, the groups that will be operating facilities should provide detailed business plans.

Moreover, Hines noted, about a year ago, BMX competitors and other supporters of

improving the county’s track indicated the facility would be the only one of its kind on the East Coast of the United States and, therefore, a focal point for national and international training and competitions.

During the board’s Aug. 20, 2013 budget workshop, Percy Owens of Sarasota, a world BMX champion, said the “local impact of Supercross [at the county’s BMX facility] will be awesome.”

Owens added that if the county had an upgraded facility, “It will bring all kinds of attention from a national standpoint.”

Amanda Carr, a Punta Gorda native and the world amateur BMX champion in 2005 and 2006, told the commissioners that because the only Supercross track in the United States is in California — and it is very difficult for athletes



## Proposed Schedule

<u>Item</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
• Notice-To-Proceed with Preconstruction Services issued to Construction Manager	May 13, 2014
• Confirmation of Construction Cost	June, 2014
• Complete Design Documents	August 2014
• Complete Permitting (City)	September 2014
• Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) received from Construction Manager	September 2014

*A schedule presented to the County Commission on May 7 shows most of the planned benchmarks for the BMX project. The improvements are expected to be completed in July 2015.*

from overseas to get training slots there — Sarasota would become a Mecca for those athletes if it invested in the improvements.

During the May 7 meeting, Hines reminded his colleagues that they subsequently learned BMX track projects are under way in South Carolina and in Oldsmar.

“If it’s sports tourism versus a local nonprofit for our kids, it’s a totally different game,” he added, “and we do expect something in return” in the form of sales tax and Tourist Development Tax revenue.

Patterson asked Brown whether she felt the other BMX facilities would be complementary to the Sarasota track — perhaps in making a circuit of events possible — or whether they would take away competitors and races. Brown replied, “It could go either way, and it’s hard to know exactly what the impact will be of these additional tracks coming on.” Nonetheless, Brown continued, “What [BMX Sarasota members have] in their favor is their vast amount of history and their connections to the BMX community.”

The staff presentation noted that the Sarasota track, which opened in 1974, is the oldest continuously running facility of its kind in the United States.

Additionally, Brown said, Visit Sarasota County, the county’s tourism office, is very helpful in putting together bid packages for major events.

“You feel optimistic about the vision being realized?” Patterson asked.

“I do,” Brown responded.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta told his colleagues he believes Nicole Rissler, sports director for Visit Sarasota County, has most of the information necessary to explain the figures in the Sarasota BMX business plan. “I think the people who have run this operation to date have been great stewards of this park,” he said of the nonprofit. “If there’s any fault, it’s probably in how to write a business plan. It’s difficult for volunteers. ... I think we do need to work with them on that, and Nicole can work with them, also.”

Robinson further recommended that such business plans be vetted by the county’s Office of Business and Economic Development before they are presented to the commissioners. She asked Harmer to discuss the matter with Jeff Maulsby, director of that office.

Brown assured the commissioners she would provide their feedback to Sarasota BMX. 

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# REAFFIRMING SHELTER SUPPORT



*Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut has said the city-owned site at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. is the best of those he reviewed as potential shelter locations. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION CHAIRMAN WANTS TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD ON THE HOMELESS SHELTER PROJECT, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN AS COUNTY STAFFERS CONTINUE DUE DILIGENCE ON TWO SITES

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

Sarasota County Commission Chairman Charles Hines has been hearing quite a bit from some downtown business owners in regard to one topic — homelessness.

For example, one business owner told Hines about a homeless person who had been sleeping behind the person's shop. Several days after the owner informed the homeless person he could not do that on the property, the owner discovered the business had been

vandalized — an apparent act of retaliation, Hines related to *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

That situation reflects the scope of the problems associated with the homeless population in downtown Sarasota and throughout the county. For Hines, it underscores the need for a shelter in the city, he told the *News Leader* on Tuesday, May 6. “We need to move forward,” he said, referring to the

“*We're not just making this decision willy-nilly.*”

Charles Hines  
Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission



come-as-you-are shelter plan that is a cornerstone of consultant Robert Marbut's recommendations for addressing homelessness in the area.

Hines points out that Marbut was asked by the city and the county to study the local situation and come up with solutions. "We're not just making this decision willy-nilly," Hines told the *News Leader*.

Doing nothing is not an option, he added.

This week he publicly affirmed his support for Marbut's proposal for a city shelter. "Without a come-as-you-are shelter, we are going to be stuck with what we have now," Hines said during the regular County Commission meeting on Tuesday. He wants to see alternatives — and not just opposition — from those protesting the concept of a facility in the City of Sarasota.

During that May 6 session, Hines' fellow commissioners also reiterated the county's commitment to a project that could cost millions in construction and operating expenses.

"If nothing is done, the street homelessness is going to increase. It's pretty obvious," said Commissioner Joe Barbetta. "We either go forward with this, or we give up."

The comments came after county Homelessness Coordinator Wayne Applebee updated the commissioners on the project. County staff is continuing studies of two potential shelter sites, with an eye toward the next joint session of the County and City commissions, which is set for June 23.

"Both sites remain viable and are going through the massive due diligence," Applebee said.

**“** *I don't think giving up is an option, and the city has to step up on this.*

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

**”**



*The parcel at 1800 N. East Ave. in Sarasota also is the focus of due diligence as a potential shelter location. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The county commissioners voted to move forward with work on both parcels.

Challenges remain, though. A report released last month detailed contamination issues and other logistical challenges at the two sites — the lot at 1800 N. East Ave. and the city-owned property at 1330 N. Osprey Ave.

## CHARGES OF MISINTERPRETATION

Barbetta also had a message Tuesday for some elected city officials and city administrators, whom county commissioners recently accused of hindering the shelter site selection process.

“I don’t think giving up is an option, and the city has to step up on this,” he said.

In the latest wrinkle, at the beginning of this month, City Manager Tom Barwin and the city’s Independent Police Advisory Panel, distributed [a report from Pinellas Safe Harbor](#), a homeless shelter in Clearwater seen as a model for a Sarasota facility. The report contained statistics that opponents of a downtown Sarasota facility have pointed to, saying they show the Pinellas shelter does not help homeless people get off the streets.



Consulting firm Cardno created a graphic to show how a homeless shelter could be placed on the North Osprey Avenue site. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Marbut responded in a memo this week, calling the portrayal of the report, a “significant misuse of report data.”

The information, he said, was used internally to track use of Pinellas Safe Harbor.

Barbetta pointed out that the distributed report was a “misinterpretation of statistics.”

“What should be printed is the drop in street homelessness from 2010 to 2013 [in Pinellas County] ... in excess of 90 percent,” Barbetta said.

## WHERE TO PARK THE TRUCKS?

On April 22, during the last joint session of the City and County commissions, the boards voted 8-2 — with City Commissioner Susan Chapman and Vice Mayor Willie Shaw dissenting — to further evaluate and compare the two potential shelter sites. But those parcels have environmental contamination and other logistical problems, as revealed in a report conducted by consulting firm Cardno ENTRIX Inc. Those issues nonetheless were more fuel for Chapman, Shaw and other Sarasota residents who have voiced opposition to a homeless facility in the city.

On Tuesday, Barbetta called on city officials to try to find alternative sites where staff could park utility trucks and house storage bins that could be displaced if a shelter is built on the Osprey Avenue property the city owns.

Hines and Barbetta both criticized the city’s recent discussions to consider paying Florida Power & Light \$1.6 million for a parcel to accommodate the displaced vehicles and structures.

Barbetta said the city should consider parking those trucks on a nearby city-owned lot on Goodrich Avenue. “One point six million for a lot is a little ludicrous and disingenuous,” Barbetta added.

However, city leaders already had decided against buying the site because it is in the city’s planned economic redevelopment area, Applebee told the County Commission.

Commissioner Carolyn Mason seemed to sum up her board’s position about building a homeless shelter when she said it should be a community effort. “It’s not just our problem ... We are trying to be a good partner in this whole effort.” 



*(From left) County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, County Commissioner Nora Patterson, Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, County Commission Chairman Charles Hines and Mayor Shannon Snyder listen to a speaker during the boards’ joint meeting on April 1. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## MORE ROOM FOR RESPITE

*A graphic shows the Sarasota County neighborhood parkland acquisitions made thus far. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

### THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES ACQUISITION PLANS FOR SARASOTA'S NORTH WATER TOWER PARK AND VENICE'S PATRIOT PARK

By Roger Drouin  
*County Editor*

On Wednesday, May 7, the Sarasota County Commissioners unanimously approved plans for two neighborhood park expansions — North Water Tower Park in the City of Sarasota and Patriots Park in Venice. The vote clears the way for the purchase of land bordering both parks.

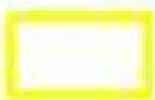
The pair of expansions would become the 17th and 18th made under the county's Neighborhood Parkland Acquisition Program, which is funded by a voter-approved tax. It involves the purchase of both environmentally sensitive areas and neighborhood park space. Approximately \$7.5 million is available for the acquisition of neighborhood parks,



**Patriots Park Addition - Venice**



Subject Site



Public Parks and Lands

*A map shows the area of the Patriots Park addition. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



Sapphire Shores Park

North Water Tower Park

OLD BRADENTON RD

Firehouse Park

SARASOTA BAY

Indian Beach Drive Park

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park

### North Water Tower Park Addition Work Plan



Subject Site



Public Parks and Lands

A map shows the location of the North Water Tower park addition. Image courtesy Sarasota County

while another \$8.7 million is in the account for environmentally sensitive lands.

The latest purchases are not a done deal; the vote on Wednesday authorizes staff to “move forward with additional investigation and negotiations,” according to a county staff memo.

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson said she was pleased to see the county moving forward with the expansions in the two cities.

## **MORE VISIBLE**

The plan for North Water Tower Park would add three adjacent bits of property for a total of 11 more acres for the existing park. The City of Sarasota nominated the park for expansion consideration through the county program; the city has identified that as a priority in its park plans.

Located one block east of U.S. 41, North Water Tower Park functions as a large neighborhood recreational area and is best known for its popularity among enthusiasts of [Frisbee golf](#). Acquisition of the extra 11 acres would allow for an expansion of the disc golf course and would add “visibility of the park” from both U.S. 41 and Old Bradenton Road, creating an opportunity to add a second entrance, said Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Director Carolyn Brown. Among the other potential improvements are play areas, additional trails, and picnic areas, Brown told the board.

“One of the concerns is it is tucked back here in a neighborhood and doesn’t get utilized as much as it could,” she pointed out.

The connection to U.S. 41 and Old Bradenton Road would improve the park, Robinson agreed.

Although it is located in a quiet north Sarasota neighborhood, the park has seen its share of crime in recent years. That factor has made it an area of concern for residents and the Police Department, prompting even more desire on the part of the city to see it cleaned up and improved.

## **SMALL EXPANSION, BIG IMPACT**

The plan for Patriots Park calls for the addition of eight-tenths of an acre. The property would create additional space for ceremonies and other events held at the 4-acre site, enable the park to have direct access to the Legacy Trail and provide sufficient area for restrooms for users of the trail and the park.

There would also be space for benches and picnic tables.

Robinson was pleased with the potential for greater access to restroom facilities at the park for people using the [Legacy Trail](#). Some folks on the trail seem to be utilizing “private property” for bathroom purposes right now, she pointed out.

The expansion would also alleviate the need for people to cut through private property to reach the park.

Chairman Charles Hines agreed that the Patriots Park expansion makes sense because it would tie the facility into the Legacy Trail.

The Parks Advisory and Recreation Council (PARC) has already approved both expansion plans.

According to a county memo, “There are additional highly-ranked sites that may be revisited at a later date” for parkland funding. 

# NO GO ON FIRE PROTECTION



*The City Commission listens to remarks on May 5. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **ORDINANCE CHANGES AND A NEW POLICE DEPARTMENT PR CAMPAIGN GET AN AIRING DURING THE MAY 5 CITY COMMISSION MEETING**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

On Monday, May 5, the Sarasota City Commission put two new ordinances in place, learned of a new logo and PR campaign involving the city police and wondered if the city needs an ordinance to prevent it from burning down.

After complaints about fires started by the homeless and vagrants near a gasoline and propane storage facility in the center of town, City Attorney Bob Fournier found the city did not have any way to regulate open fires within the city limits. A county ordinance regulates Boy Scout cookouts and burning off brush. “The city code bans open fires at parks and beaches,” said Fournier.

However, he ran into resistance Monday when he suggested maybe the city should implement some regulation of open fires. “Can we handle this without writing an ordinance?” asked Mayor Shannon Snyder. “The county ordinance will not apply to our urban setting. We’re getting ready to regulate far more than this individual problem.”

“There should be a differentiation between public and private property,” Fournier replied.

“We do have a problem out there; that’s a substantial danger there,” said Snyder. “But limiting neighbors from having smokers or a



**SHANNON SNYDER**  
**MAYOR**

*Mayor Shannon Snyder. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

fire pit? Or some larger lots that might want to cook overnight?”

“I want no open burning within a fixed distance of petroleum sources,” added City Commissioner Susan Chapman.

That was it; no action followed.

## NEW ORDINANCES

The commissioners did approve a “no-hanging-out-in-roundabouts” ordinance by a 4-1 vote (Snyder in the minority). The roundabout in question is at Pineapple Avenue and Ringling Boulevard, where a vagrant has taken up semi-permanent daytime residence. If he continues staying there, he will violate the new ordinance.

The commissioners also approved a language change in an ordinance after a Public Meetings Law challenge. The staff of the Independent Police Advisory Panel and the Police Complaint Committee — civilian advisory boards focused on city police operations — will no longer be called “*ex officio* members.”

A threatened court challenge said “*ex officio* members” could not communicate with committee members without official notice. The ordinance clarifies the *ex officio* members’ status as city employees, not “members.”

That change passed 3-2, with Commissioner Paul Caragiulo and Snyder in the minority. They have consistently voted against measures regarding the two advisory boards.

## NEW LOGO, NEW OUTREACH

The city commissioners Monday were apprised of a new logo developed for the Police Department in cooperation with the Ringling College of Art and Design. *Blue + You* is the theme.

*Ringling College students created this poster for the first Blue + You movie night, held April 26. Image courtesy Sarasota Police Department*

“We came together; we worked and collaborated together and made a partnership,” said Police Chief Bernadette DiPino.

This initiative continues the theme of community outreach that DiPino has championed since her arrival from Maryland in 2012. From entertaining children with a movie projected on the site of police headquarters to a BBQ in the center of a city neighborhood plagued by drug dealers, DiPino has attempted to forge a partnership between residents and cops.

Thus, *Blue + You* is a natural outreach with many applications for growth.

“This is simple,” said City Manager Tom Barwin, himself a former cop. “It’s a breakthrough.” 

# ELIMINATING AN EYESORE



A graphic shows the county portion of Bay Island Park outlined in red, while the City of Sarasota's portion is outlined in yellow. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## WORK IN BAY ISLAND PARK IS ON SCHEDULE TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN SEVEN MONTHS AFTER A NEW CONTRACT IS AWARDED

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Commissioner Nora Patterson has heard so many complaints about the orange construction fencing and idle equipment in Bay Island Park over the past months, she confessed amazement Wednesday, May 7, when the county's director of public works told the Sarasota County Commission that the original contract to repair the seawall was approved just a year ago in March.

After a staff presentation about the project whose remains Patterson termed “a

wreck,” she made a motion to encompass the necessary steps to get the work under way again. It passed unanimously. She also pressed the public works director, Isaac Brownman, about the timeline for completion.

“Seven months total,” was his response.

“*We do intend to communicate with the residents during construction.*”

Isaac Brownman  
Director  
Public Works  
Sarasota County

Formally, the May 7 action allowed emergency procurement of a contractor to “reconstruct and restore all project improvements on the County-owned portion

of the Bay Island Seawall Replacement Project,” approved a budget amendment for the work, awarded the contract to Duncan Seawall, Dock & Boat Lift LLC of Sarasota in an amount not to exceed \$950,551 and hired Erickson Consulting Engineers Inc. of Sarasota for \$90,000 to keep a keen eye on the work.

In response to a question from Commissioner Joe Barbetta, Brownman said Erickson representatives “are going to be required to be out there pretty heavily ... to make sure this project does not go off-track as the last one did.”

## WAY OFF-TRACK

On March 5, 2013, the County Commission awarded a [\\$997,379 construction contract to CB Construction Services](#) for repairs to the

40-year-old Bay Island Park seawall after staff advised the board the structure was in bad shape. A May 7, 2014 staff memo points out that the park “is heavily used for recreational fishing and is an easily accessible [facility] that is used by the public.” The City of Sarasota, which owns the western portion of the park, was a participant in the original project.

Bay Island Park is highly visible to drivers heading onto Siesta Key via the north bridge on Siesta Drive. That fact has fostered the barrage of public complaints Patterson and Barbetta said they have been fielding about the construction materials and fencing.

CB Construction Services began work on the county side of the park on April 25, 2013, according to a county staff memo. Less than two months later, however — on June 10, 2013



*Construction materials have been piled up for almost a year in the county portion of Bay Island Park. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

— the project engineer of record rejected 16 concrete seawall panels CB Construction had cast because the appropriate specifications had not been followed.

On July 3, 2013, the memo continues, the county denied a claim by CB Construction requesting payment for the 16 rejected panels. Then, on July 31, 2013, the engineer of record sent a letter to CB Construction “advising project is significantly behind schedule and work completed does not meet requirements of Contract Documents.”

On Aug. 20, 2013, the memo says, the engineer of record emailed a “stop work” notice

to the contractor, telling the firm to “cease installation of new seawall panels due to quality issues.”

On Aug. 27, 2013, the president of the firm died, apparently on the work site; his body was found in Big Pass, according to law enforcement reports.

Afterward, CB Construction notified Capitol Indemnity Corp., which provided a performance bond for the project, that it would be unable to finish the work, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh explained in an April 2, 2014, memo to the commissioners.

### Erosion at new wall



### Erosion and Gaps





*The seawall in Bay Island Park extends under the north Siesta Drive bridge, with the city part of the park on the Sarasota Bay side of the bridge. File photo*

Capitol Indemnity put the project out for bid again, but the responses it received ranged from \$1,465,870 to \$1,555,000, DeMarsh pointed out in his memo, considerably more than the bond amount.

The matter ended up in federal court in Tampa.

After the County Commission agreed to a stipulated settlement in early April that would give the county \$802,148, staff began working on a means to get the project under way once more, Brownman explained this week.

“Duncan is a local contractor,” he stressed. “They are confident they can accomplish the work” within the time frame set out by staff and for the amount of money the commission ended up approving on Wednesday.

Brownman also pointed out that the City of Sarasota “has actually opted out of doing [its] piece” at this point. Duncan will restore that section of the seawall, however, Brownman noted, so people safely will be able to use the city’s part of the park.

In response to another question from Barbetta, Brownman said he did not feel the city’s

decision would pose a problem. “I believe the county side was worse.”

Referring to city staff members, Brownman added, “They plan to do remediation and they are comfortable with that, based on our conversations.”

Barbetta also sought assurances from Brownman that county staff would inform residents of Bay Island and Siesta Key about what will be transpiring in the park.

“We do intend to communicate with the residents during construction,” Brownman replied.

Patterson was concerned about how much money the county was going to lose, after all the ordeal involving the bond and court proceedings. “How much are we going to end up in the hole on this?”

“I don’t believe we’re going to end up in the hole,” Brownman told her. Because not all the funds allocated for the original project were paid to CB Construction, he said, sufficient money is available to cover the expense.

“I appreciate that,” she said, “and thank you for moving fast on it once we started to move.” 

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# CELEBRATING THE CIRCUS



*The famous Bell Wagon has returned from a three-decade loan to Baraboo, WI, and is now at the Feld headquarters in Palmetto. It has nine brass bells, and it was featured in Sarasota during the filming of The Greatest Show on Earth. At the handles is Bellmeister Shawn Marren. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

## NEW POSTAGE STAMPS UNVEILED AT CÀ D'ZAN

By Stan Zimmerman

*City Editor*

Perhaps 300 people showed up on May 5, a prematurely summery day, to participate in the U.S. Postal Service's launch of eight new stamps based on classic circus posters. Hand fans were waving full blast as folks sought to beat not only the heat but also an early invasion of love bugs outside the entrance to Cà d'Zan, the residence of John and Mable Ringling.

In keeping with the postal creed, neither heat nor love bugs could keep Ellen Williams

from her appointed rounds as a member of the United States Postal Service Board of Governors. She wobbled across the plush lawn in heels to mount the stage and start the festivities. She was joined by Steven High, the Ringling Museum's executive director, and Mark Riddell, the public relations director of the combined Ringling Shows.

The clowns, of course, made the show, assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle representing the

# CIRCUS

MAIN ENTRANCE



## VINTAGE CIRCUS POSTERS

A poster shows all the new circus stamps available from the U.S. Postal Service. Image courtesy U.S. Postal Service

sheet of new stamps. The real ones — stamps, that is — were on sale in the shade nearby for collectors of first-day-of-issue postmarks.

For those with a taste for authenticity, all eight of the circus posters featured on the stamp sheet are in the collection at the Circus Museum in The Ringling complex on North Tamiami Trail.

The real treat for circus fans was the reappearance of the Bell Wagon, the five-ton star of many circus parades, which has returned to Florida after a three-decade loan to the circus museum in Baraboo, WI. Sean Marren pulled the levers to ring the nine brass bells and peel out any number of songs before the suits and heels took the stage.



The wagon then disappeared from local view, back to Palmetto, where Feld Entertainment has its world headquarters. Joining the Bell Wagon on display Monday was another item from Feld's Palmetto collection. The bandwagon dubbed the "Lion and Gladiator" was also parked in front of Cà d'Zan. Although Mable would have been horrified to wake and find two circus wagons at the entrance to her home, the sights were a delight for children of all ages at the event.

While most of the audience came for the stamps, two century-old wagons were the real stars, painted scarlet and trimmed in gold, gleaming in the Florida sunshine. 



*Outside the museum grounds, three people representing People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals offered a quiet protest. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



*The backdrop to the speakers was a giant jigsaw puzzle of the eight-stamp sheet. After the mercifully short speeches were done, the real clowns came forward to fill in the blanks. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



## IN OTHER BUSINESS ...

*The Florida House has a cistern for water conservation. Image courtesy of the [Florida House Institute](#)*

### **SUNCOAST CHARITIES' FEE WAIVER, A GRANT EXTENSION FOR THE FLORIDA HOUSE INSTITUTE, A SIESTA CONSERVATION EASEMENT AND A ROAD REPAIR PROJECT ALL WIN COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVAL**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Waiving fees for the Suncoast Offshore Super Boat Grand Prix Festival this summer, extending a grant agreement with the Florida House Institute, accepting a new conservation easement on Siesta Key and formally approving more money for an east county paving contract. They were all part of the action the Sarasota County Commission took when it unanimously approved most of its May 6 consent agenda items.

No comments were offered on any of the items.

### **SUPER BOAT GRAND PRIX**

At the request of [Suncoast Charities for Children Inc.](#), a nonprofit corporation that serves children with special needs and their families, the County Commission waived \$3,500 in fees for the 2014 Super Boat Grand Prix Festival.

Events are scheduled from June 28 to July 6.

The organization uses net proceeds from the festival to construct and maintain facilities

and to support special projects, a county staff memo notes.

On June 4, 2013, the commission approved a grant of Tourist Development Tax revenue “to assist in the payment of sanction fees for the 2013 and 2014 Suncoast Offshore Super Boat Grand Prix Festivals,” the memo explains. That action did not preclude Suncoast Charities from seeking a waiver of direct fees for county services for all future festivals, the memo adds.

Those fees would cover assistance of the Sarasota County Fire Department and the Emergency Management Services (EMS) and Parks and Recreation departments, including EMS support in the boat pits.

Last year, according to a study Suncoast Charities commissioned, the festival generated an estimated economic impact of \$17

million, the memo says. A separate study commissioned by Visit Sarasota County — the county’s tourism office — found that the events produced 13,400 room nights totaling \$1.6 million in hotel revenue. Further, the study showed that festival attendees spent \$8.6 million, resulting in \$254,628.27 in resort and state sales tax revenue collected by the county.

After expenses, the memo continues, Suncoast Charities received a net of \$70,690 from the 2013 festival.

## FLORIDA HOUSE

A little more than a year ago — on April 10, 2013 — the commission approved a \$100,000 grant for the [Florida House](#), the educational project designed originally to promote energy and water conservation. The Executive Board of the Florida House Institute requested the



*The Miss Geico team rides on its boat during the Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival Parade of Boats in downtown Sarasota in 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

funds to enable it to renovate the facility as an energy-efficient, state-of-the-art meeting place.

The house is located at 4454 Beneva Road in Sarasota.

Those renovations were supposed to have been completed by May 13.

A staff memo says, “Substantial work has taken place pursuant to this grant,” and the institute “has been soliciting other like-kind donations and grants, and has exceeded [its] goals. Permitting of the project with assistance from a volunteer labor force, however, has taken longer than anticipated ...”

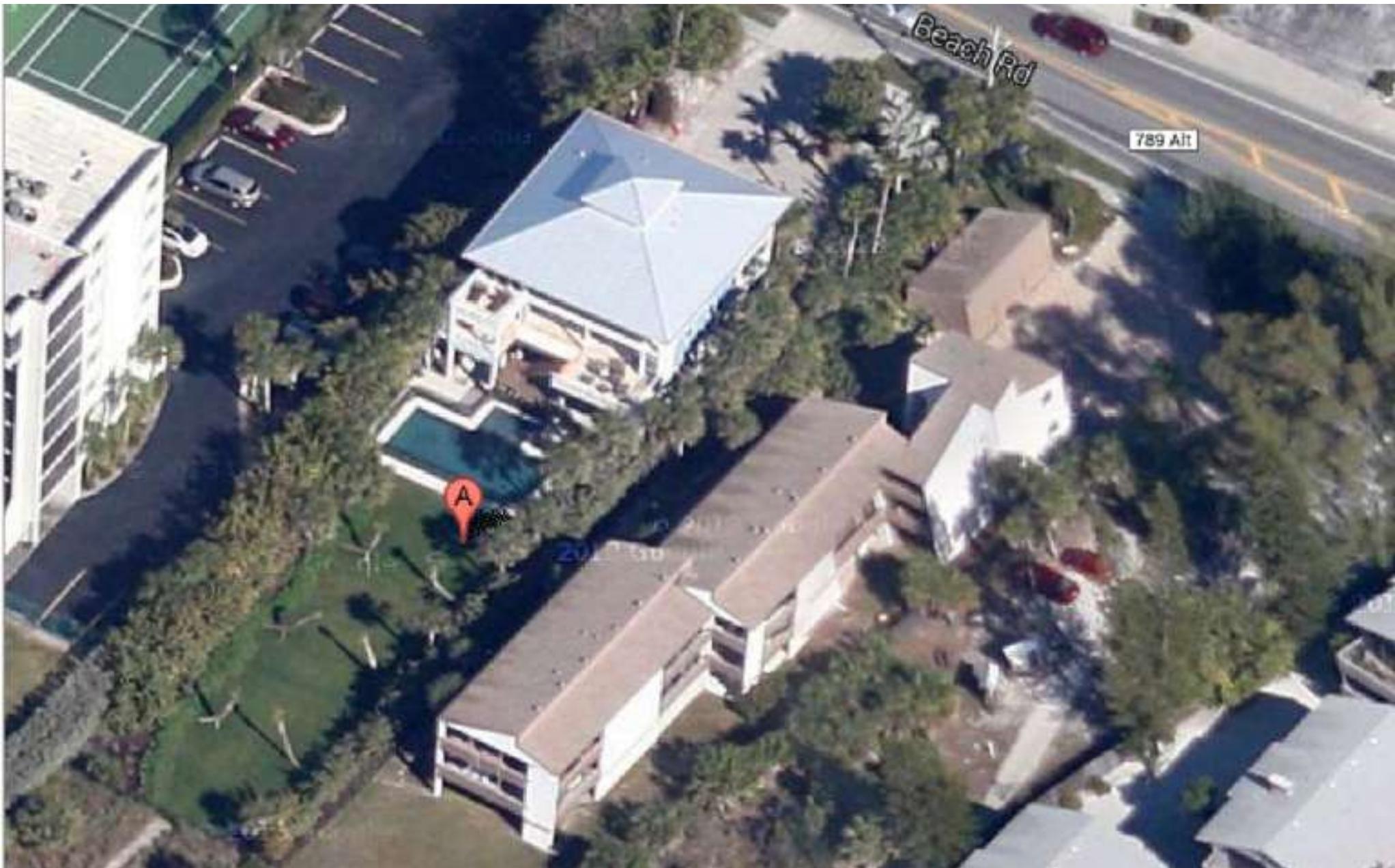
The grant was extended to Sept. 30.

## CONSERVATION EASEMENT

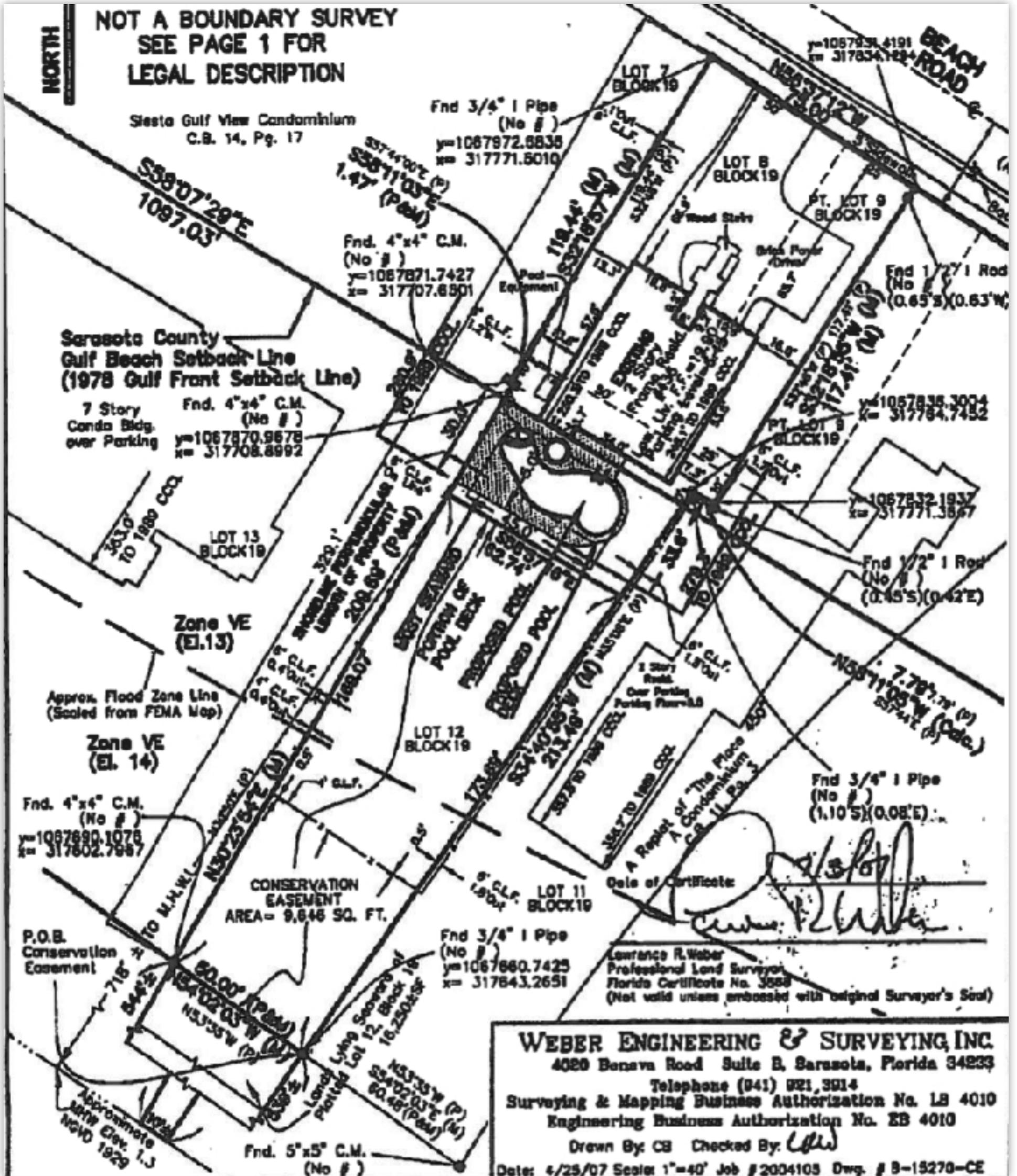
On Sept. 28, 2011, the County Commission approved a Coastal Setback Variance petition for the construction of an elevated pool and deck for the house at 436 Beach Road on Siesta Key, a staff memo explains. However, on May 23, 2012, the 12th Judicial Circuit Court overturned that action.

However, several years earlier — on May 9, 2007 — the County Commission approved a pool at grade level. All construction was to be a maximum of 30 feet seaward of the Gulf Beach Setback Line, according to the memo.

Because that variance remained valid, the owner of the house went ahead and



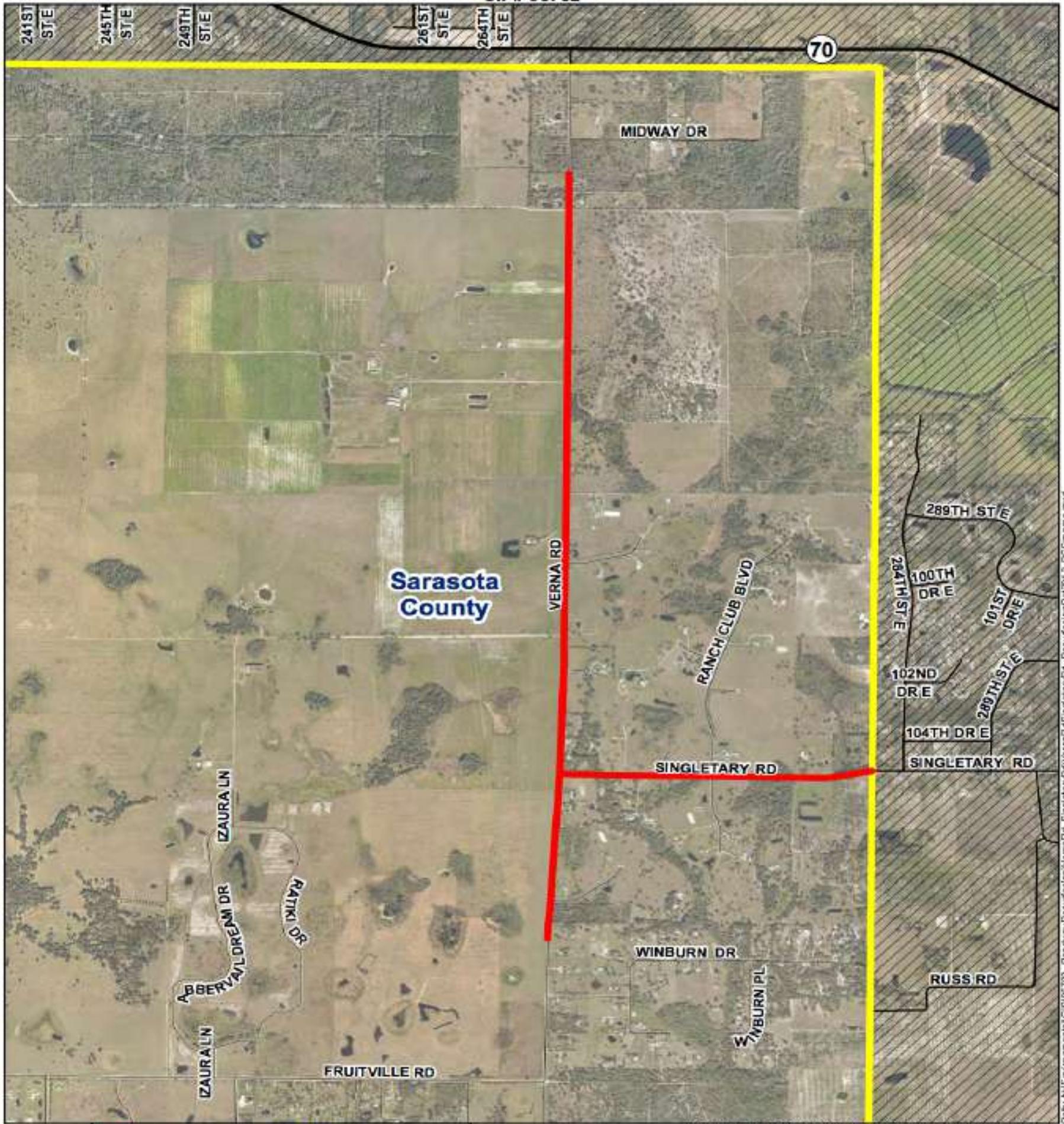
*A flag marks the house at 436 Beach Road on Siesta Key. The conservation easement is seaward of the pool. Image from Google Maps*



An engineer's drawing shows the area of the conservation easement at 436 Beach Road on Siesta Key. Image courtesy Sarasota County

### Roadway Resurfacing - Verna Rd and Singletary Rd

CIP# 95702



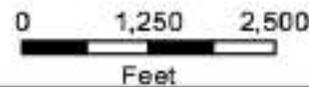
Resurfacing Area	Sarasota County
Streets	Manatee County

**Sarasota County**  
 sccgov.net | 941.861.5000 | TV

Aerial Imagery Provided by Pictometry International:  
 Sarasota County, FL  
 February 2013  
 4" Resolution  
 N.A.D. 1983 HARN State Plane Florida West FIPS 3202 61 S. Survey Feet



**Draft: For discussion purposes only.**



This map is produced from Sarasota County GIS, and is representative information only. The County does not warrant, guarantee, or assume any responsibility for geographic information completeness and/or accuracy. This map should not be used as guide for navigation. Copyright © RCGIS 2013.

Path: N:\Environment\GIS\CIP\95702\_RoadwayResurfacing\WernaRd\_SingletaryRd\WernaRdSingletaryRd\_Resurfacing\Oct28\_13\_BCCamera.mxd

Map published using ArcGIS 10.x by jgrimes on Monday, October 28, 2013

*A map shows the area of the resurfacing project on Verna and Singletary roads in east Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

constructed the pool at grade level after the court action ruled out the elevated structures.

Nonetheless, as a condition of the 2011 variance, the memo points out, the owner agreed to execute a conservation easement on the property and record it prior to commencing construction of the pool. “The petitioner’s attorney held the document after having the petitioner sign it on August 30, 2013,” the memo adds.

“Seeking compliance with the variance conditions,” the memo continues, “staff prompted the petitioner’s attorney to provide the required Conservation Easement and the document was received on April 2, 2014.”

The easement lists Lynne E. Gayler as the trustee of the Lynne E. Gayler Self Trusteed Revocable Trust Agreement and lists the trust’s address in Centerville, OH.

The 9,646-square-foot easement is seaward of the pool.

The memo notes that the purpose of the agreement “is to assure that the conserved area will be retained in its existing or restored natural condition.”

## **VERNA AND SINGLETARY**

On Dec. 10, 2013, the County Commission approved a \$188,625.96 contract with Ajax Paving Industries of Florida LLC for the resurfacing of Verna and Singletary roads in the area east of Fruitville Road. During the project, which began in late January, the contractor discovered “a large void ... within the storm drainage pipe crossing on Singletary



*Lucy Nicandri, vice president of marketing and special events for Suncoast Charities for Children, addresses the County Commission in March 2013. File photo*

Road,” about 600 feet east of Verna Road, a staff memo points out. Stormwater flow was not going through the pipes, the memo says.

Additionally, a cross drain on Verna Road was found to have a defect; it needs to be relined, the memo points out.

Repairs are expected to start on May 19, with substantial completion of the resurfacing project expected in June, the memo adds.

Isaac Brownman, the county’s director of public works, explained the structural problems to the commissioners during their March 25 budget workshop. At that time, they approved county surtax funding in the amount of \$250,000 to make the repairs possible. A formal contract change order was necessary, however, before the work could proceed. 



# *Siesta Seen*

## **A PROPOSAL FOR PARKING PERMITS FOR SIESTA RESIDENTS GETS SHOT DOWN; 'NO PARKING' SIGNS WILL BE COMING SOON TO A SECTION OF NORTH SHELL ROAD; AND THE VILLAGE EASTER EGG HUNT WAS VERY POPULAR**



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Siesta Key Association (SKA) President Michael Shay summed up a major topic of discussion during his organization's May 1 meeting: "The season's over, so, hopefully, it will quiet down."

He was referring to the never-ending parking ordeal on the island, for which [Avenida de Mayo](#) has been the "poster child" over the past year.

Sgt. Scott Osborne of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office mentioned Avenida de Mayo during his report at the outset of the meeting. County staff had replaced signs marking the no-parking zones on the street, Osborne pointed out, and he understood more signs would be erected to try to improve compliance.

During his remarks later in the meeting, Shay mentioned that no-parking zones would be



*Like father, like son: Visitors strolling through Siesta Village on the morning of May 6 find both their attentions directed toward Davidson Plaza. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

marked soon on North Shell Road, at the request of residents.

A few weeks ago, Osborne reported to me through Wendy Rose, the community affairs manager in the Sheriff's Office, that the new signage on North Shell Road should eliminate the problems on that street that seemed to multiply faster than spring breakers this season.

During the SKA meeting, Osborne said of North Shell Road, "We have towed a lot of cars from there. We have taken a lot of complaints from residents in that area."

When Shay asked him to elaborate on those comments, Osborne said the main reason

deputies call tow trucks to that street is continued vehicle parking in front of the fire hydrant. Additionally, Osborne noted, it is illegal to park within 30 feet of a stop sign; motorists who violate that traffic regulation make it dangerous for people trying to pull out onto Higel Avenue from North Shell Road.

As the parking discussion proceeded late in the SKA meeting, one woman — who politely declined to give me her name — complained that it was almost impossible for island residents to enjoy dining at Village restaurants during season because it is too difficult to find a parking place. "Is there anything that can be done for residents of Siesta Key who



*Sheriff's Office personnel and county staff say people have continued to park illegally in front of the fire hydrant on North Shell Road and too close to the stop sign. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

have to put up with everything but get none of the benefits?" she asked. Perhaps the County Commission could approve the issuance of special stickers to full-time islanders to give them parking priority in the Village, she suggested, adding that Avenida de Mayo "used to be one of my secret places [to park]. Now it's been taken away."

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who was a guest at the meeting, responded, "So what we would have to do is take this parking that's scarce for tourists, for part-time residents, and block it off so that other people couldn't park there but the residents could. And what

do you suppose the businesses would say to that?!"

The woman told Patterson the merchants and restaurateurs would be getting the business of residents using those designated parking spaces.

That would be true, if residents kept those spaces filled, Patterson said, "but I suspect that wouldn't be the case."

Then resident Katherine Zimmerman pointed out that people usually can find places to park in Davidson Plaza. She often parks there or in front of Siesta Market, Zimmerman added.



The Sarasota County Commission approved Option 3 for a parking plan on North Shell Road, with the elimination of the solitary space to the east of Solymar Drive. Image courtesy Sarasota County

# *Siesta Seen*

Signs in the plaza clearly state that parking is for customers only, the woman noted. (Similar signage is posted at the market.) Zimmerman suggested one could go into a Davidson Plaza shop long enough to satisfy the spirit of the signs.

Another option, Zimmerman pointed out, is the valet parking offered by restaurants such as The Hub Baja Grill and The Lobster Pot.

“Or walk or bike,” SKA Director Joyce Kouba added.

The woman responded that when she lived in Annapolis, MD, people who could prove they were residents were provided permits that enabled them to find parking spaces.

“That’s to park in the residential areas,” Patterson explained.



*Sgt. Scott Osborne of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office makes a point to Siesta Key Association members on May 1. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

“OK, OK. I was just bringing it up,” the woman conceded.

“I hear your frustration, believe me,” Shay told the woman, “and we completely understand it.”

The reason parking restrictions were approved for Avenida de Mayo and North Shell Road was to enhance safety for residents, he said. (Illegal parking on both roads was called an impediment to emergency vehicle traffic.)

Shay agreed with Patterson that “it would never pass muster” with businesses on the island to designate certain spaces for residents, especially with no certainty residents

would use those spaces regularly. Therefore, residents were left with the options during season of riding bicycles, walking to shops and restaurants or heading off the island.

Then Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, reminded the audience members that the island has free transportation services such as [Sun Ride Pedicab](#).

Shay thanked Ramirez for that comment.

Patterson told the woman, “I don’t mean to be unsympathetic to your point.” Residents of downtown Sarasota face the same type of situation during season, Patterson added. “The



*The new parking area at Siesta Public Beach is easily spotted by passersby, thanks to the palm trees added to the landscaping. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*Wendall Jacobsen, the new president of the Siesta Key Village Association, makes his first report to the Siesta Key Association during the latter group's May 1 meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

price of success sometimes also is inconvenience. I'm sorry that that is what it is. But these little businesses [in the Village] are struggling. It's not that they're rolling in dough."

Patterson continued, "They do need the customers, and our economy needs the customers."

Patterson then raised a point she made to me last week: The Village needs more parking. However, she said, she has been unsuccessful in gaining the support of businesses for a new public/private venture with the county to create another municipal parking lot.

When a man in the audience asked whether the county could implement some sort of shuttle service, Patterson reminded the audience that the Siesta Trolley will start running on July 12, with stops every 20 to 30 minutes, including those at Siesta Public Beach and in Siesta Village.

The trolley, which will be operated by Sarasota County Area Transit, will circulate from Westfield Southgate Mall, located at the intersection of Siesta Drive and U.S. 41, to Gulf Gate.

As she has during past discussions of the service, Patterson also admonished people to use it. State grant funding will help cover the expense of it for three years, she said; then, the County Commission will have to decide whether to maintain it. If ridership numbers are low, the board's decision will be an easy one, she has indicated: Discontinue it.

Finally, Patterson said with a chuckle to the SKA audience, "Bicycling is really good for you."

## **SPEAKING OF NORTH SHELL ROAD ...**

During the May 6 County Commission meeting, Commissioner Patterson brought up the North Shell Road parking problems Sgt. Osborne alluded to during the SKA meeting. Her frame of reference, however, was an email she had received from the president of the Solymar Owners Association, which comprises residents of the development on the south side of North Shell Road.

According to that email, Patterson told her colleagues, "All day long on weekends, the fire hydrant's completely blocked" on the south side of the road. The Solymar Association president had asked if the county would go ahead and put up signage indicating parking is not allowed near the hydrant or close to Higel Avenue.

That was what the board had [approved in its vote](#) last month regarding a parking plan for North Shell Road, Patterson pointed out.

When she discussed the request with James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer, Patterson continued, Harriott told her he believed the commission would have to approve a resolution allowing staff to go ahead and put up such signage. However, he indicated he would check with County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh to seek his opinion.

# Siesta Seen

When Patterson asked DeMarsh whether that conversation had taken place, DeMarsh replied that it had. “I think [staff members] could simply begin to implement [the no-parking rules on North Shell Road] under the current resolution,” which was approved April 9, he added.

Patterson then made a motion for staff members to get those signs up “at their earliest convenience.” Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## A VERY HAPPY EASTER

New Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) President Wendall Jacobsen, general manager of Beach Bazaar, has reported to the SKA and his own organization’s members in recent days that the Village’s annual Easter Egg Hunt, held April 19, was a huge success.

SKVA Treasurer Roz Hyman said the event had 145 paid participants. “There were very, very few no-shows this year,” she added. The only complaints she heard, Hyman continued during the May 6 SKVA meeting, was that not all of the children who wanted to participate were able to do so. “But everybody had a good time.”

SKVA officers pointed out that participation by representatives of the county Fire Department — with equipment on display — and members of the Sheriff’s Office’s Mounted Patrol always proves incredibly popular with the children who attend the pre-Easter festivities in the Village.

**DAIQUIRI DECK DASH**

**6:15p - Siesta Key**  
5250 Ocean Boulevard  
Sarasota, FL 34242  
(941) 349-8697

**6:15p - St Armands**  
325 John Ringling Boulevard  
Sarasota, FL 34236  
(941) 388-3325

**6:15p - Island of Venice**  
300 West Venice Avenue  
Venice, FL 34285  
(941) 488-0649

**Every Monday  
Every Week  
Every Deck!**

**Complete the 5k Run  
& get a free small daiquiri,  
10oz. domestic draft or  
10oz. smoothie**

[www.DaiquiriDeck.com](http://www.DaiquiriDeck.com)

## DECK DASH

The Daiquiri Deck has announced a new 5K event, which is being held every Monday, every week, at each of the restaurant’s locations — in Siesta Village (5250 Ocean Blvd.), on St. Armands (325 John Ringling Blvd.) and on Venice Island (300 W. Venice Ave.). Complete the run and get a small free daiquiri, a 10-oz. domestic draft or a 10-oz. smoothie.

For more details, visit the restaurant’s [website](http://www.DaiquiriDeck.com). 



## 'DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE'

**EDITORIAL** Europeans understandably are somewhat disdainful of American get-out-the-vote efforts, which normally employ a slogan along the lines of, "It doesn't matter who you vote for. Just vote."

ing anarchy or the destruction of our capitalist system, we do have candidates who for various reasons — an ax to grind, slavish devotion to incompatible ideologies, intellectual deficiency or a struggle to maintain a firm grasp of reality — simply do not present good alter-

*'Double, double toil and trouble,' the editorial in the News Leader's June 7, 2013 edition, was one of a winning series written by Robert S. Hackney.*

## NEWS LEADER HONORED BY SPJ FOR EDITORIAL WRITING

The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) has announced that Robert S. Hackney, opinion editor of the *News Leader*, has won second place in the *Editorial Writing — Non-Dailies* category of its 64th Annual Green Eyeshade competition.

The results represent 2013's best work by journalists in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia, the organization pointed out in a news release.

Hackney was honored for his entry of five editorials, with topics ranging from the County Commission's decision to vacate a Siesta Key

right of way to North Port city commissioners' refusal over a period of time to collaborate with the County Commission over the future of Warm Mineral Springs. The selection also included his editorial in observance of July 4: [No independence without equality.](#)

First place in that category went to *The Memphis News*, a weekly publication of *The Memphis Daily News* that contains curated content from the previous week's daily issues, plus additional unique content. The free publication goes out each weekend.

Third place went to *The Memphis Flyer*, a free lifestyle weekly founded in 1989 that combines news and information about leisure activities.

## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. WAY STREETScape WORK UNDER WAY

Improvements in north Sarasota will continue with a streetscape project along the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way corridor that began this week, the City of Sarasota has announced.

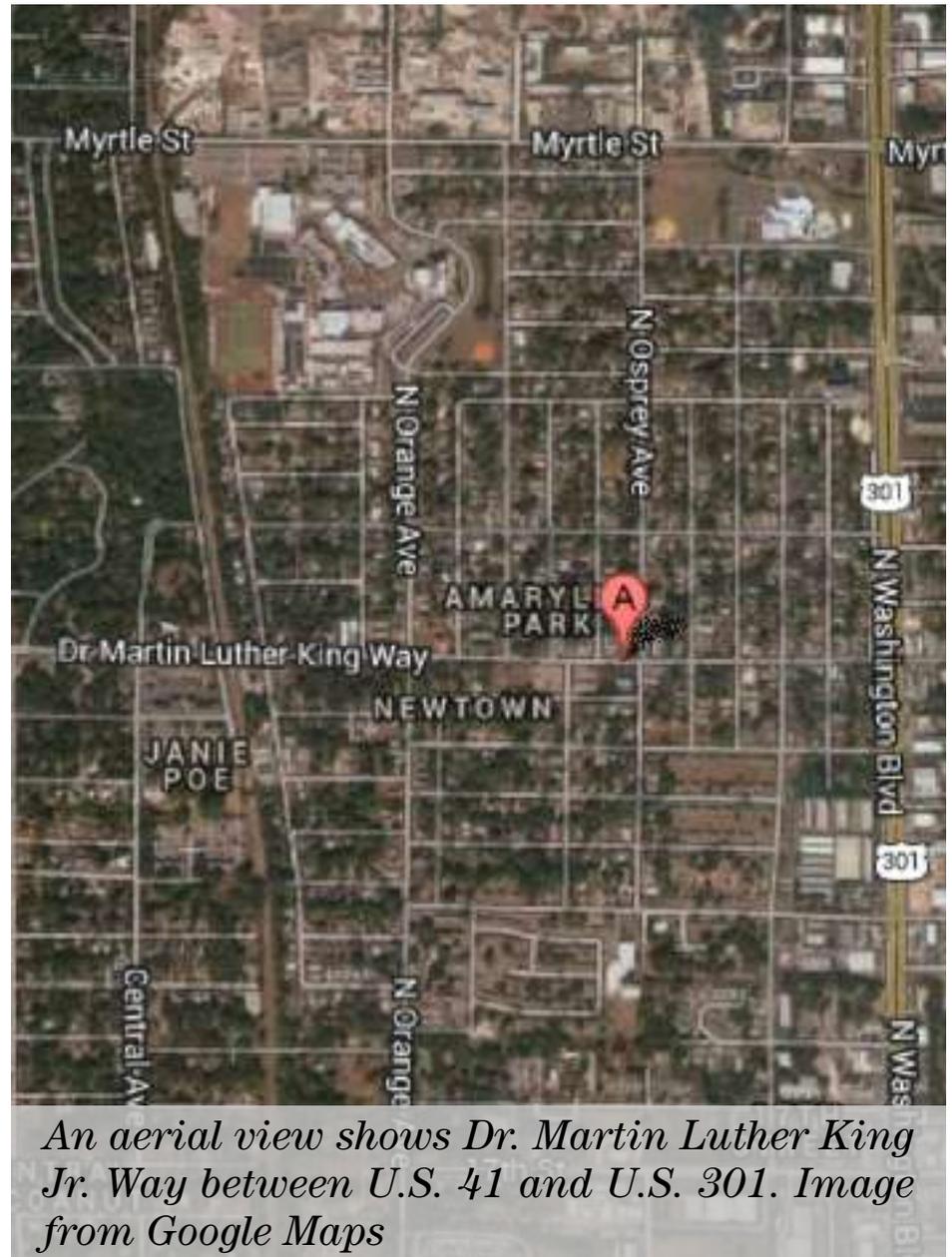
The entire length of the corridor stretching from U.S. 41 to U.S. 301 will be repaved, a news release says. Additionally, brick crosswalks will be installed, bulbouts will be removed, trees will be replaced and a bicycle lane will be added, the release notes.

The project is scheduled to be finished by mid-July.

While no street closures are expected during the project, motorists and pedestrians should plan for periodic lane closures, the release points out. At the same time, the release notes, crews occasionally may need to temporarily close driveways. "In those cases, the contractor will work closely with residents and merchants to minimize the impact and allow driveway access throughout the project," the release says.

The following project details were provided:

- Central Avenue to Osprey Avenue: Existing bulbouts will be removed and replaced with level pavement and a striped bicycle lane will be added between the road and curb.
- Osprey Avenue to U.S. 301: Existing oak trees will be replaced with palm trees.
- U.S. 41 to U.S. 301: The entire length of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way will be repaved.
- Orange Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way intersection: Brick crosswalks will be installed, which could take up to three weeks; new pedestrian safety features will



*An aerial view shows Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way between U.S. 41 and U.S. 301. Image from Google Maps*

be installed, including pedestrian crosswalk indicators and push buttons; during the crosswalk construction, a metal grate will be placed on the road atop the work area to allow vehicles to travel over the concrete.

The Orange Avenue intersection improvements will be the final segment of the work, the release points out.

The \$200,000 project is being funded through a Community Development Block Grant as well as the penny surtax and gas tax, the release says. It is planned that both tax funds will be reimbursed with Newtown Community Redevelopment Agency money, the release adds.

## RIVERVIEW HIGH TO DEDICATE EAGLE NATIVE PLANT NATURE TRAIL

Riverview High School will unveil the Eagle Native Plant Nature Trail on its campus at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 10, the school has announced.

The new feature is an extension of Riverview's Stars to Starfish program, which focuses on the sky, thanks to the school's planetarium; the sea, in the school's AquaDome; and now the Earth, with the new nature trail, a news release explains. The event, which is free to the public, will include tours of the nature trail and AquaDome from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and planetarium shows from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. For those interested in stargazing, the Observers Club will be on site with telescopes, the release points out.

Developed by students, the Eagle Native Plant Nature Trail includes 600 linear feet of trail with 7,600 plants (representing 53 species that are native to Florida), along with a pond and surrounding garden, all housed within five ecosystems, the release notes. Students planted much of the foliage during the late April week that included Earth Day.

"We are excited about this expansion of the Stars to Starfish program," said Katrin Rudge, director of the Riverview Aquascience Department and co-director of the Stars to Starfish Program, in the release. "We want students, staff, parents and other visitors to appreciate the beauty of Florida's trees, shrubs, grasses, wildflowers, air plants and



*(Foreground from left) Riverview High School students Alexander Katsarelas, Jack Ostrowski and Elliott Tuchfeld work on the school's Eagle Native Plants Nature Trail in April. They were among the more than 100 students who planted foliage. Contributed photo*

vines, and how ecosystems impact all life on land, in the sea and in the sky — from the Florida panther to the manatee to the osprey.”

Principal Linda Nook added in the release, “The Eagle Native Plant Nature Trail illustrates the power of community partnerships that enhance our instructional programs.”

The Eagle Native Plant Nature Trail was made possible by grants from the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County.

Riverview High School is located at 1 Ram Way in Sarasota.

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## **INTEGRITY FLORIDA CO-FOUNDER TO ADDRESS CONA MEMBERS**

Dan Krassner, co-founder and executive director of [Integrity Florida](#), will be the featured speaker for the May 12 meeting of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA).

The recent firing of the Sarasota County ethics officer and the earlier dismissal of County Administrator Randall Reid have “heightened community concern about ethics in local government,” a news release says. “How do other communities create and enforce ethical standards?” it adds. “How can Sarasota County

residents ensure government implements and enforces the highest ethical standards?”

Krassner will make his remarks via Skype, the release notes.

The organization meets at the Sarasota Garden Club, located at 1131 Boulevard of the Arts in downtown Sarasota. For directions, visit the club’s [website](#).

The doors will open 6:30 p.m., the release says, and the program will begin at 7 p.m.

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## **STATE STREET PARKING LOT TO CLOSE ON MAY 19**

Effective Monday, May 19, the State Street parking lot, located at the southeast corner of State Street and Lemon Avenue in Sarasota, will be closed for construction staging for the new State Street garage, the city has announced.

The Parking Operations Division (POD) has been working with State Street parking lot permit holders, “helping to make other parking arrangements during the construction period,” a news release explains. “Drivers are encouraged to use alternate free public parking areas,” including the Burns Square lot, those on First and Orange streets and the Whole Foods garage on Second Street, all of

which are less than a five-minute walk from the State Street area, the release adds.

“We’ve been quite proactive with this project,” said Mark Lyons, parking manager, in the release. “We also have been assessing how the closure will impact our parking needs and making arrangements to add parking spaces in the area near State Street.”

The State Street lot contains 139 public parking spaces, the release notes. During the week, the majority of those are reserved for permit holders, it adds.

To help mitigate parking needs during construction, portions of Ringling Boulevard,

Pineapple Boulevard, Morrill Street, Rawls Avenue and Adelia Avenue soon will be restriped to create an additional 35 on-street parking spaces, the release points out. In addition, a new temporary agreement was reached with BMO Harris Bank to allow the public to use 12 parking spaces free of charge within the BMO garage, located at Pineapple Avenue and McAnsh Square, on weekdays from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., the release says.

“Since the State Street Lot is very popular on Saturday mornings” when the Sarasota Farmers Market is under way, the POD has been collaborating with Phil Pagano, executive director of the market, “to educate the

public about the upcoming closure and alternative parking areas,” the release notes.

Construction of the State Street garage is expected to take approximately 10 months, with the facility scheduled to open in March 2015. Slightly fewer than 400 parking spaces will be available to the public when the garage is finished, the release adds, with retail on the ground floor.

Anyone with public parking questions is encouraged to contact the city’s Parking Operations Division at 954-7057. Updates also will be available at [SarasotaGov.com/Parking](http://SarasotaGov.com/Parking) and by following the POD on Twitter [@SRQParking](https://twitter.com/SRQParking).



*The surface lot on State Street will close on May 19 so work can begin on the new parking garage. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## BLOCK PARTY PLANNED TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

North Sarasota and Newtown-area churches are joining together with the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, and in partnership with the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida (HANS), to promote community health and wellness services, the groups have announced.

The Gospel Explosion Block Party will be held on Saturday, May 17, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Sarasota County Housing Authority's The Courts Apartment complex on the corner of Orange Avenue and 21st Street in Orange Avenue Park, a news release explains.

"This is going to be an exciting community affair," said Bill Carter, who works for Genesis Health Services and First Step of Sarasota as a case manager, in the release. "I've wanted to see our community embrace this type of event and now we are seeing this dream come together with these churches."

He added in the release, "All of the churches will have choirs performing inspiring and uplifting songs of joy and hope that carry a positive message."

Representatives of local healthcare agencies will be present to distribute information, including material about HIV and STD testing, the release notes.

The event will feature live musical performances from the choirs of the following local churches: Bethlehem Baptist, Hurst Chapel AME, New Bethel Missionary Baptist and Truvine Missionary Baptist, the release continues. "Attendees also will be able to enjoy fun activities with their children," it notes. Free refreshments will be provided.

For more information, call 256-6620 or visit the HANS [website](#). For information about health initiatives in the Newtown community, visit the Community Health Improvement Partnership [website](#).



*Orange Avenue Park will be the site of the Gospel Explosion Block Party on May 17. Image courtesy Sarasota Housing Authority*

## **JOLLY TO SPEAK AT SARASOTA REPUBLICAN CLUB DINNER ON MAY 12**

David Jolly, who recently was elected to Congress from Florida's 13th District, will be the final speaker of the Sarasota Republican Club's 2014 Congressional Series, the club has announced.

Jolly's "success provided a major boost to Republican expectations for victory this November," a news release says. During the dinner, he "will provide his insights and perspective on recent activities in Washington, as well as GOP election prospects," it notes.

The dinner will be held at 6 p.m. on Monday, May 12, at The Francis, located at 1262 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, a news release notes.

To reserve space for the dinner, click [here](#). Reservations are required, the release points out. Those who prefer sending a check are asked to pay \$30 per member and \$35 per guest to Sarasota Republican Club, PO Box 51953, Sarasota, FL 34232. Reservations also may be made by phone at 888-325-3212.



*U.S. Rep. David Jolly of St. Petersburg. Image courtesy U.S. Congress*

## SARASOTA MEMORIAL NAMED AMONG 150 GREAT PLACES TO WORK

Becker's Healthcare has named Sarasota Memorial Health Care System one of the 150 Great Places to Work in Healthcare for 2014, Sarasota Memorial has announced.

Each year, [Becker's Healthcare](#) publishes its "compilation of hospitals, health systems, ambulatory surgery centers, physician groups and other healthcare organizations that provide excellent work environments and outstanding benefits to their employees," a news release explains.

To develop the list, the Becker's Healthcare editorial team conducts research, considers nominations and evaluates organizations based on their benefits, workplace culture, professional development opportunities and

previous recognition for workplace excellence, the release continues. "The resulting list is a compilation of 150 healthcare organizations that go above and beyond for their employees and are great places to work," the release adds.

"We are honored to be included on this list," said Sarasota Memorial CEO Gwen MacKenzie in the release. "It's a real tribute to our excellent managers and leaders who strive to provide a great work environment — one that promotes excellence and compassion."

The announcement was made just as Sarasota Memorial and other healthcare organizations across the nation kick off Nurses' Week, a celebration that spotlights excellence in nursing



*Sarasota Memorial towers above other buildings in the Sarasota landscape. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

every May 6-12 (culminating on Florence Nightingale's birthday), the release points out. Sarasota Memorial hosted numerous activities this week, which will be capped off by a ceremony honoring its Nurses and Patient Care Techs of Excellence on Monday, May 12, at 3:30 p.m. in the hospital auditorium.

In naming Sarasota Memorial one of the nation's great places to work, "Becker's noted that Sarasota Memorial is one of Sarasota County's largest employers, with about 4,000 staff members and 800 affiliated physicians,"

the release continues. Sarasota Memorial was named to *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Hospitals list in 2013 and was also ranked No. 1 that year for overall care in the Bradenton-Sarasota-North Port region, the release adds. Additionally, it has been listed among the top 1 percent of hospitals in the nation to receive the "Magnet" nursing designation for the third time — the nation's highest honor in nursing, the release points out.

Sarasota Memorial's Becker profile page may be found [here](#).

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## COUNTY OFFERING DO-IT-YOURSELF ENERGY AND WATER USE AUDIT KITS

Sarasota County is offering do-it-yourself (DIY) energy and water usage audit kits for checkout at Sarasota County libraries, the county has announced.

"The kits and the accompanying *Home Energy and Water Evaluation Guide* have been created to provide area residents with a simple and economical way to evaluate their home energy and water use," said Lee Hayes Byron of Sarasota County Sustainability in a news release. "Plus, users can learn about more ways they can save resources and money."

"The kits are a part of the Sarasota County Energy Upgrade program, which provides residents with various levels of information on residential resource-saving opportunities," the release explains.

The program's website, [EnergyUpgradeToday.com](http://EnergyUpgradeToday.com), offers in-depth room-by-room energy-saving tips, information about workshops and Family Sustainability Kits and other resources.

"The DIY audit kit available at county libraries is intended to serve those residents who

have already gone beyond those first-level actions and are ready for the next step," the release points out.

The kit provides a step-by-step guide as well as the technical equipment necessary to determine specific energy and water use profiles and solutions for the home, the release says. The guide is broken into two sections: the Energy Audit and the Water Audit.

"Residents may choose to focus on only one or the other for now or to address both at the same time," said Byron in the release. "The two sections are designed to function independently to allow you that flexibility," she added. "The kit and guide, however, are not intended to be a replacement for professional services. Our residents' safety is a top priority; so if they don't feel comfortable performing a guided task during the evaluation, then they should stop the process."

For more information about the kits and accompanying guide, visit [scgov.net/EnergyUpgrade/Pages/DIYAuditKits.aspx](http://scgov.net/EnergyUpgrade/Pages/DIYAuditKits.aspx) or call the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.



Sarasota County is offering do-it-yourself kits for energy and water usage audits. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## SARASOTA COUNTY JUDICIAL CANDIDATES ELECTED UNOPPOSED

Incumbent Sarasota County Judge David Denkin has been reelected unopposed, Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent announced this week.

Denkin was the only candidate who qualified for the nonpartisan judicial seat by the noon qualifying deadline on May 2, a news release says.

Pursuant to state statutes, Dent said in the release, “the name of an unopposed candidate for the office of circuit judge, county court judge or member of a school board shall not appear on any ballot and such candidate shall be deemed to have voted for himself or herself at the general election.”

Twelfth Circuit judicial incumbent Judges Kimberly Bonner, Peter Dubensky, Deno Economou, Edward Nicholas, Andrew Owens Jr., Charles Roberts and Gilbert Smith Jr., have also been elected unopposed, the release reports. “Twelfth Circuit judicial candidate Stephen Walker, who qualified for the seat being vacated by Robert McDonald Jr., is also deemed to have been elected unopposed,” the release adds.

For a complete listing of 2014 offices up for election or retention, go to the Supervisor of Elections [website](#), select “Election Information” from the main menu and click on the link to “2014 Offices.” 

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# CRIME BLOTTER



*The female suspect in the case of a wallet theft is shown in a video from a Publix store on Clark Road. Contributed image*

## **PUBLIC'S HELP SOUGHT IN IDENTIFYING TWO SUSPECTS**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is asking the public for assistance in identifying a young couple suspected of stealing a wallet and buying gift cards at a nearby store, the office has announced.

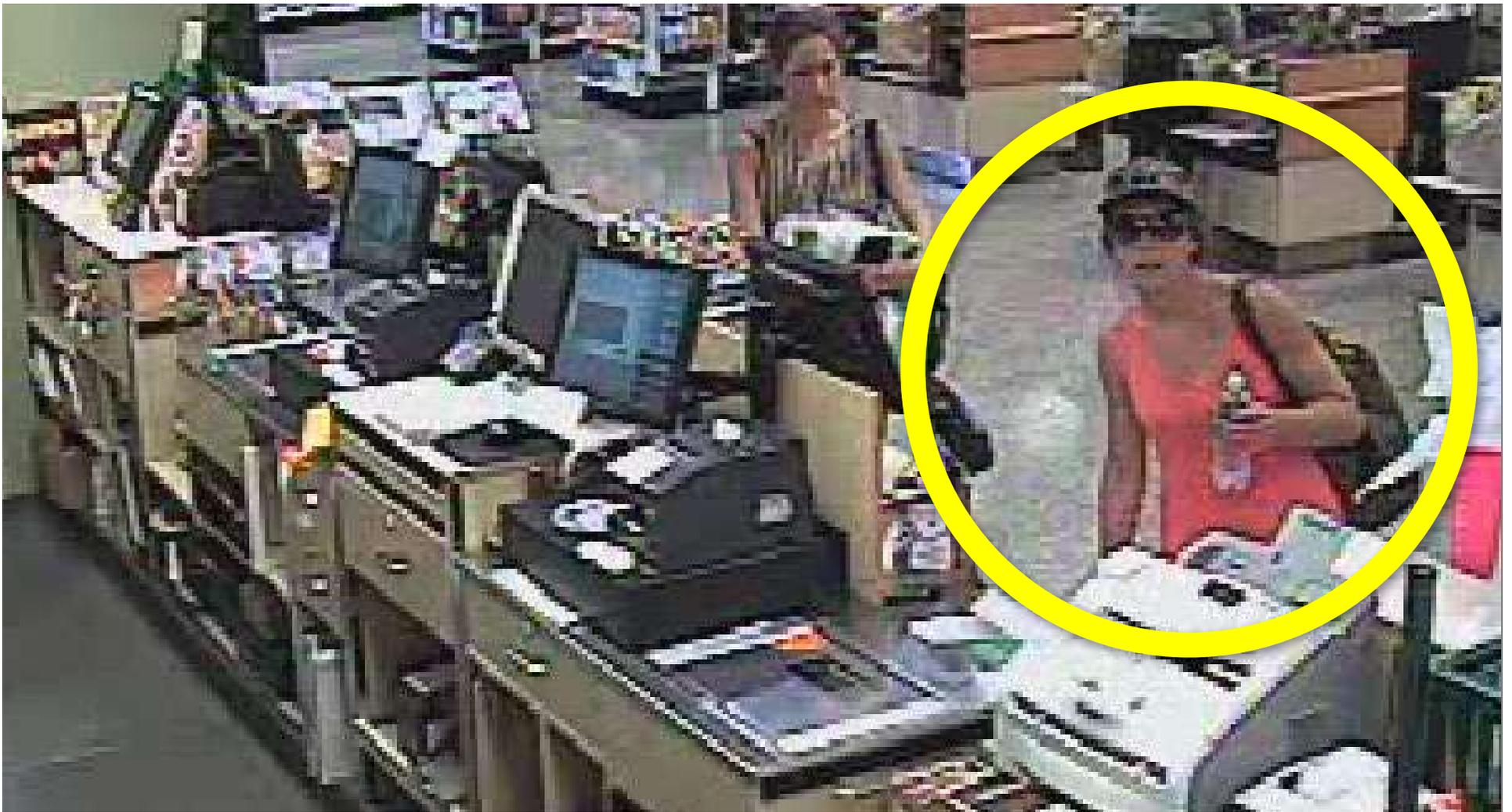
The victim's wallet was reportedly taken from her purse on April 23 while she worked at a Gulf Gate area consignment store, a news release says. She recalled that a white male and female were in the store around noon, trying to sell her a Coach purse, the release adds.

While the deputy was taking the crime report, Publix managers reported the fraudulent use of the victim's credit cards at the store in the 3400 block of Clark Road, the release notes. The male suspect allegedly used the stolen American Express and Visa cards to buy two

\$100 gift cards and a pack of gum, the release continues. The female suspect tried to buy two gift cards with the stolen Discover card but was asked for her ID, it adds. She said she was going to her car to get it but never returned, the release says.

The suspects are described as a female in her 20s with long brown hair and a male in his 20s with brown hair and tattoos on both of his legs. "They were trying to disguise themselves by wearing hats and sunglasses," the release notes.

Anyone with information on the suspects in the accompanying photos is asked to call Criminal Investigations at 861-4952 or Crime Stoppers at 366-TIPS (8477) or to go online at [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com).



*A second photo from video surveillance shows the female suspect looking toward the camera. Contributed image*



*Video surveillance shows the male suspect in the Publix store. Contributed image*

## FIVE LOCAL TEENS CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested five local teens in connection with a string of residential and vehicle burglaries as well as three stolen vehicles, the office has announced.

"Their recent crime spree was unraveled in just a matter of hours," a news release says. Around 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 1, the office's Crime Analysis Unit issued a bulletin showing someone using a credit card stolen in a vehicle burglary on April 28, the release continues. Soon after, deputies identified the suspect and his associates, it adds. By the end of the day, officers had taken them into custody, located stolen vehicles from Sarasota and Orange counties, and connected the suspects to 10 burglaries in Misty Creek and Heritage Oaks in Sarasota, the release points out.

Detectives arrested Jesse Jendrick, 18; Stephen DeLoach, 18; and Francis Jerauld, 17, all of 3977 Vana Drive, Sarasota; Dinko Karajic, 18, of 5531 Briarcliff Drive, Sarasota; and David Perez-Ibarra, 19, of 4255 Webber Street, Sarasota. Jendrick, Jerauld, Karajic and Perez-Ibarra are facing 48 total charges, the release says. DeLoach was charged with one count of Grand Theft for the vehicle stolen in Orange County. "The investigation is continuing and will result in additional charges," the release notes.

"These arrests would not have happened without well-trained, dedicated law enforcement professionals who have a substantial

knowledge of the local criminal element," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "It is another example of our intelligence-led policing model at its finest, with multiple areas of the agency working together to quickly resolve an emerging crime trend."

Jendrick, Jerauld, DeLoach and Perez-Ibarra were charged with seven vehicle burglaries, three counts of Grand Theft Auto, one count of Burglary of an Occupied Dwelling and one count of Armed Vehicle Burglary.

Karajic was charged with seven vehicle burglaries, three counts of Grand Theft Auto, one count of Burglary of an Occupied Dwelling and one count of Criminal Use of Personal Identification Information.



*Jesse Jendrick/Contributed photo*



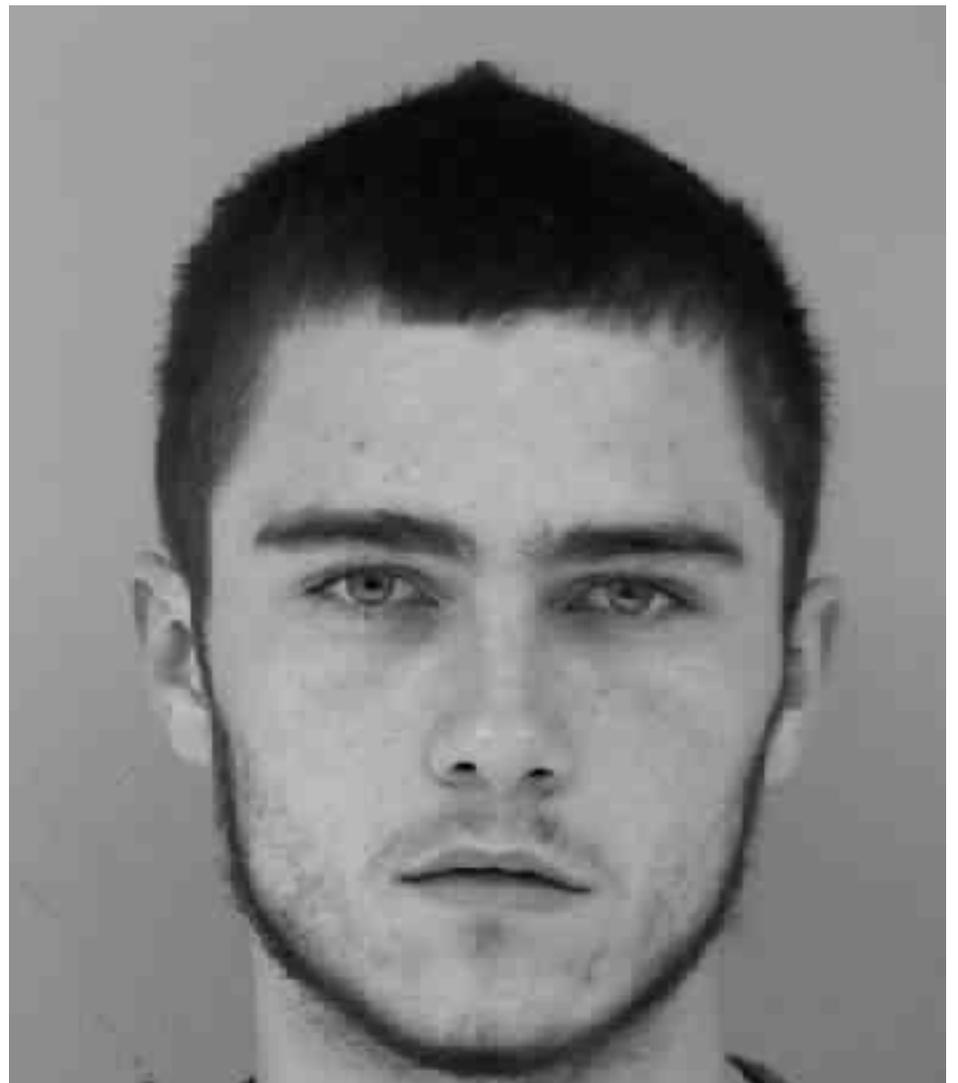
*David Perez-Ibarra/Contributed photo*



*Stephen DeLoach/Contributed photo*



*Dinko Karajic/Contributed photo*



*Francis Jerauld/Contributed photo*

## TWO ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH VENICE HOME BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two men in connection with residential burglaries in Plantation Golf and Country Club in Venice on the night of May 6, the office has reported.

Manatee County detectives asked Sarasota deputies to conduct surveillance on Stephen Pitts and an accomplice as the suspects' gold Chevrolet Malibu headed south into Sarasota County on Interstate 75, a news release says. Sarasota County personnel in the TAC unit followed the men to Jacaranda Boulevard and into Plantation, the release continues. The car stopped briefly within the subdivision and then left with only one occupant, it adds. Deputies maintained surveillance on the vehicle for more than an hour, followed it back to Plantation and stayed close to it as it headed north on I-75, the release notes.

At the same time, members of the K-9 Unit conducted a reverse track from where the

vehicle was last stopped in Plantation and located three homes with damage — two with smashed rear sliding doors and the third with a slashed lanai screen, the release says. The deputies in the TAC unit were notified to stop the vehicle on I-75; when they did, they recovered three flat screen televisions and a bag of collectible coins that have since been identified by the victims, the release points out.

Stephen Pitts, 28, of 3076 Wood Street, Sarasota, and Raymond Corso, 27, of 2417 Buckeye Street, Sarasota, were both charged with two counts of Burglary, one count of Attempted Burglary and three counts of Unlawful Use of a Communications Device for using cellphones "to coordinate their getaway," the release notes. "Detectives are working closely with the Manatee County Sheriff's Office as the investigations continue. Additional charges are pending," the release says.



*Raymond Corso/Contributed photo*



*Stephen Pitts/Contributed photo*

Pitts was operating the vehicle at the time deputies stopped it, the report notes. Corso was in the passenger seat.

“Pitts has a criminal history of residential burglary,” the release continues. “He was the same man arrested in November 2013 after fleeing from a traffic stop at a high rate of speed with two young children in the car. He then abandoned the children and the vehicle

while he ran into the woods in an attempt to elude arrest for burglaries at that time,” it points out.

Corso is on probation in a case that involved charges of dealing in stolen property, the release adds. He was arrested earlier this week for a probation violation and was released from jail on bond, it says. 



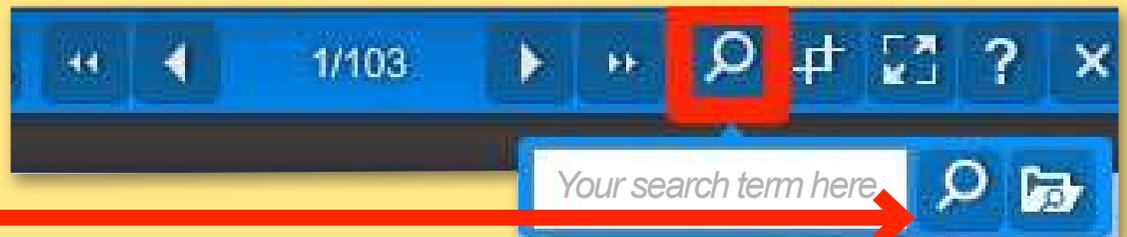
Simply put, Crime Stoppers relies upon the cooperation between the police the media and the community to provide a flow of information about crime and criminals.

**Call:** (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

**Click:** [SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com](http://SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com)

**Text:** Text “TIP109” plus your message to CRIMES (274637)

# QUICK TIP



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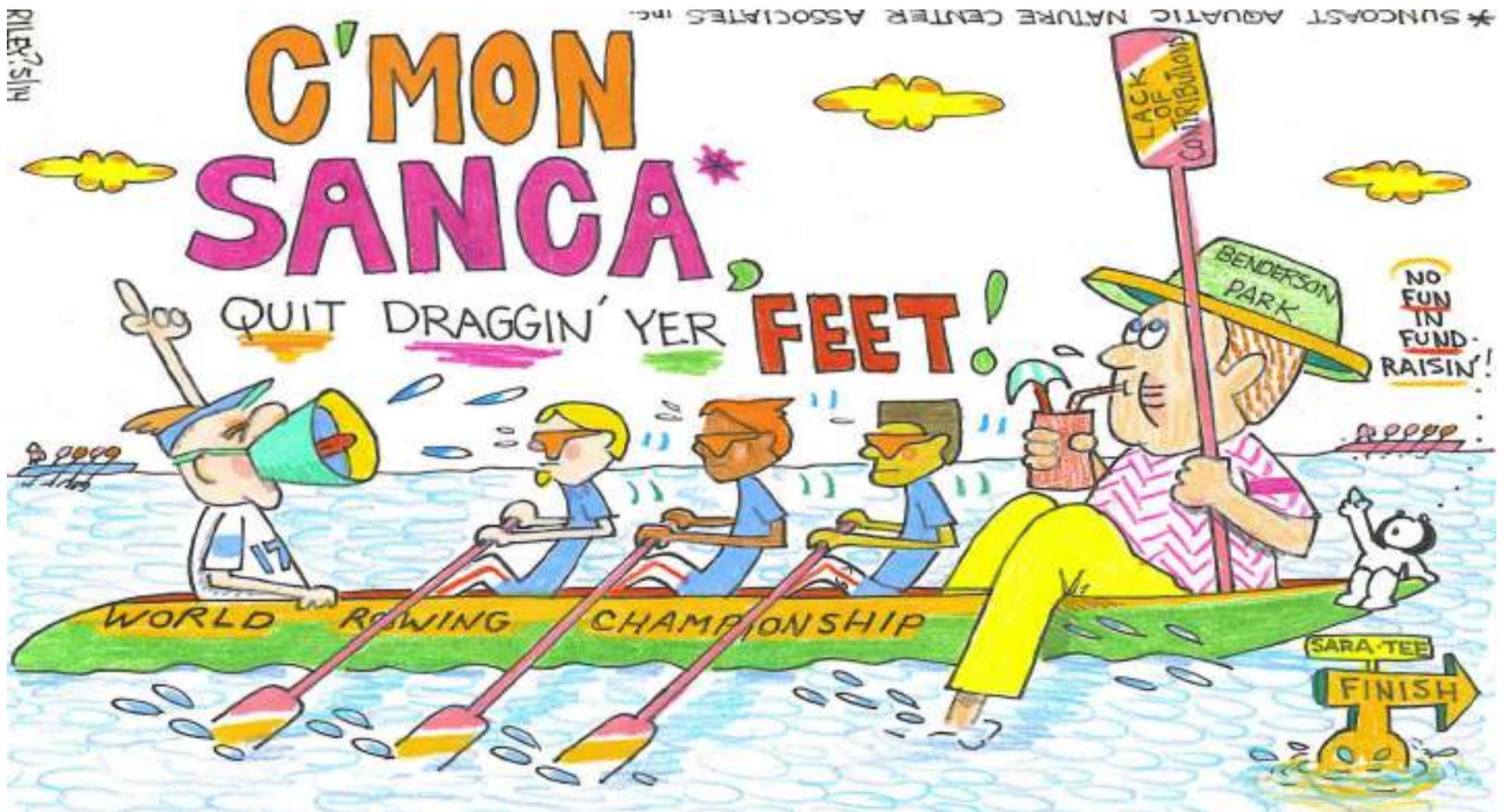
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# OPINION



## THE NONPROFIT FIRM OVERSEEING BENDERSON PARK IS IN DESPERATE NEED OF MORE OVERSIGHT BY THE COUNTIES

### EDITORIAL

Because we want Sarasota and Manatee counties to shine brilliantly when Benderson Park hosts the 2017 World Rowing Championships, we believe the nonprofit managing the rowing venue must start showing its muscle in pulling us toward the fundraising finish line.

Frankly, we were gratified to learn last week that the Florida Legislature had turned down another request by the Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates Inc. (SANCA) for more money on top of the \$10 million it already has received from the Legislature. It was clear that SANCA's continued reliance on taxpayer money to make the park's infrastructure a reality has not won it supporters in Tallahassee.

The fatuousness of the fundraising plans the nonprofit has touted was illuminated for all to see when the news broke in early April that SANCA had failed to file the necessary paperwork with the state to maintain its registration as a charitable organization that could accept contributions.

As Erin Gillespie, a spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences, put it to the *Bradenton Herald*, "The only organizations that need to register with the state are those actively soliciting donations from the public."

If SANCA had been working as hard to snare private donations as its president, Paul Blacketter, has been saying it would for more than a year, the last thing we would

# OPINION

have seen happen was inattention to that filing deadline. Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason was justified in telling her colleagues during their April 23 regular meeting that they were left with “egg on the face.”

Anyone who had felt the smallest nagging worry up until that point about SANCA being able to fulfill its end of the funding bargain should have experienced a jolt of alarm.

Of course, SANCA acted hurriedly to rectify the filing mistake. But why has it dragged its feet on finding the contributions it needs to put in place the park’s final pieces of infrastructure? That is the question the Sarasota and Manatee county commissioners — and all of the rest of us taxpayers — need to have answered.

In recent months, every time a commissioner has tried to pin down Blackketter on such details, he has squirmed. He has spun a gospel of good vibrations instead of providing solid satisfactory answers. Yet, in spite of the missing information, the Sarasota board approved an agreement in March that calls for the county to reimburse SANCA up to \$788,999 each fiscal year for maintenance, personnel costs and other expenses in return for managing all the events at the park. That contract also permits the county administrator to direct up to \$100,000 more to SANCA for nonrecurring costs without having to consult the commissioners.

At the same time, SANCA is “entitled to retain all revenue, proceeds and fees generated by events and activities.”

On Jan. 17, 2013, Blackketter spoke to the county’s Tourist Development Council in glowing terms about how the 2017 World Rowing Championships practically was Benderson Park’s event to lose. From international supporters to the leaders of USRowing — the national governing body for the sport — everyone apparently was cheering the venue on to victory in September of that year, when the winner of the bid would be announced.

However, one statement Blackketter made at that meeting has reverberated in our mind over all these months: that it would cost only about \$5 million more, from that point, for the remaining critical infrastructure Benderson Park had to have to host world-class competitions — among them, a starting tower, timing huts, audio/visual systems and a “regatta navy” to transport referees and provide safety support to the rowers.

The Legislature gave SANCA another \$5 million last year. Yet, it seems SANCA’s staff is as bad at math as it is at filing state paperwork.

Last week, when Blackketter spoke with Roger Drouin, the *News Leader’s* county editor, about losing out on more state funding, he referred to a \$52-million rowing venue. In other words,

**“ Why has SANCA dragged its feet on finding the contributions it needs to put in place Benderson Park’s final pieces of infrastructure? That is the question the Sarasota and Manatee county commissioners need to have answered. ”**

# OPINION

SANCA needs another \$22 million to be ready for its international debut — on top of the \$19.5 million it already has from Sarasota County and the \$10 million previously allocated by the Legislature. And Blackketter talked of half that \$22 million coming from the 2015 Legislature, though he conceded SANCA needed to score the same amount through private fundraising in the interim.

We are willing to concede that Blackketter's \$5 million figure in January 2013 did not encompass all of the infrastructure envisioned for the park. Still, why does the price tag keep going up, up, up?

For some time, local watchdogs have bemoaned the Sarasota County Commission's continuing contributions to the park, giving the rowing venue a far higher priority than other projects sought by community residents. When Commissioner Mason raised her concerns on April 23, no one else lent

a squeak of support. The fact that County Administrator Tom Harmer and Manatee County Administrator Ed Hunzeker attend SANCA's meetings seemed sufficient in terms of oversight, Chairman Charles Hines indicated. It is not.

SANCA has done nothing to demonstrate it can find the private money to help pay for all the rest of the facilities necessary to show the world that Benderson Park deserves the 2017 World Championships. What will the counties do, though, if they are faced with a choice of a debacle of gigantic proportions on an international stage or ponying up the extra money?

We know the answer, and it has an odor far more foul than that of rotten eggs.

Sarasota and Manatee counties must act now to ensure that we, the taxpayers, will not end up with a \$20 million-plus bill that we were assured a long time ago we would not have to pay. 



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

**The Sarasota News Leader  
No-Nonsense Reporting**



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**09**  
MAY

**UUCS Freethinkers' Briefing featuring the Rev. Frank Schaefer**  
May 9, 10 a.m. Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road. Free. Information: David Ryan at 365-4027 or [d2mryan@verizon.net](mailto:d2mryan@verizon.net).

**09**  
MAY

**WSLR presents Kim Lenz and the Jaguars**  
May 9, 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](http://WSLR.org).

**09+**  
MAY

**Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents Bubbling Brown Sugar**  
Through May 11; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or [wbtsrq.org](http://wbtsrq.org).

**09+**  
MAY

**Dabbert Gallery presents Expressions of Spring**  
Through May 31; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free Admission. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**09+**  
MAY

**Florida Studio Theatre presents Tom Jones**  
Through June 1; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$19 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**09+**  
MAY

**Asolo Repertory Theatre presents Hero: The Musical**  
Through June 1; times vary. Mertz Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$21 and up. Information: 351-8000 or [AsoloRep.org](http://AsoloRep.org).

**09+**  
JUNE

**Florida Studio Theatre presents Too Darn Hot**  
Through June 1; times vary. J.C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$18 to \$36. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>10</b> MAY	<p><b>The Baltimore Orioles present <i>Spirit of America</i>, featuring the Sarasota Orchestra</b>          May 10, 7 p.m. Ed Smith Stadium, 2700 12th St., Sarasota. Tickets: \$15 and up for adults; \$5 and up for youths. Tickets: 893-6300 or the <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
<b>11</b> MAY	<p><b>Selby Spring Music Series presents <i>Yesterdayze</i></b>          May 11, 1 p.m. Selby Botanical Gardens, 811 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Admission: \$19 for adult non-members; \$5 for members' guests; members and children 11 and under admitted free. Information: 366-5731 or <a href="#">Selby.org</a>.</p>
<b>18</b> MAY	<p><b>Redeemer presents <i>Solemn Evensong with Five Mystical Songs</i></b>          May 18, 5:15 p.m. Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Information: 955-4263 or <a href="#">RedeemerSarasota.org</a>.</p>
<b>21+</b> MAY	<p><b>Asolo Repertory Theatre presents <i>I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti</i></b>          May 21 through June 15, times vary. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 and up. Information: 351-8000 or <a href="#">AsoloRep.org</a>.</p>
<b>04+</b> JUNE	<p><b>Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Pump Boys and Dinettes</i></b>          June 4-29; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$34 to \$44. Information: 366-9000 or <a href="#">FloridaStudioTheatre.org</a>.</p>
<b>12+</b> JUNE	<p><b>Players Theatre presents <i>The Dixie Swim Club</i></b>          June 12-22, times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Information: 365-2494 or <a href="#">ThePlayers.org</a>.</p>

**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

Phone: 941.551.1104

Camera: 1D5S/2000

# **SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS**

**I WON'T SIT ON  
THAT AGAIN!**

*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.*