

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 47-48 — August 8 & 15, 2014

# News Leader

**SUMMER  
DOUBLE  
ISSUE**

**MAIN PLAZA FOR SALE**

**SIXTH IN 10 YEARS**

**LONGBOAT LEADS**

*Inside*

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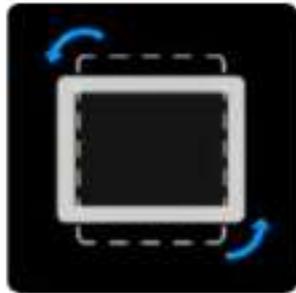
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

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# Welcome

Just as we did during the same time frame last year, we are creating a “double issue” this week so our staff can enjoy a bit of summer vacation.

And even though the City and County commissions also are on a break right now, news has by no means slowed to a crawl. Both County Editor Roger Drouin and City Editor Stan Zimmerman have scored scoops again (as of this writing), while Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker has taken the opportunity to delve into local planning for an issue of particular importance to this region: sea level rise.

Additionally, you will find inside Roger’s excellent assessment of where things stand between the City and County commissions on the homeless shelter and my interview with a family whose members talked poignantly of how Bob’s Boathouse has changed their lives.

And discussion continues on Siesta Key over the proposed county code change to allow outdoor displays, while Village upkeep and the ongoing improvements at the public beach share the spotlight.

We have a much fuller *Opinion* section this week, too, thanks not only to our voting guide for the upcoming primaries but also as a result of three commentaries. The topics are quite diverse among the latter, from somber to idyllic. Do not miss them.

And our *All the rest* section is brimming with gorgeous photos and engaging articles on the recent Women’s Equity Luncheon as well as the natural beauty around us. Contributors Fran Palmeri, Barbara Dondero and Carolann Cahill have offered you lovely gifts to savor over the next couple of weeks.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher





## MAIN PLAZA FOR SALE



## SIXTH IN 10 YEARS

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## MAIN PLAZA FOR SALE

*The Hollywood 20 movie theater complex can be spotted easily, thanks to its sign on Main Street. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **IF THE 8.6-ACRE PROPERTY WITH A PRIME LOCATION ON UPPER MAIN STREET GETS A NEW OWNER, THE POTENTIAL FOR REDEVELOPMENT IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

Sarasota Main Plaza, one of the largest commercial properties on Main Street and home to the highly visible Hollywood 20 marquee, has been listed for sale.

Situated between Fruitville Road and Main Street at the corner of U.S. 301, the property at 1991 Main St. is a key parcel in the vitality of downtown's commercial climate, and it holds promise as a potential redevelopment catalyst on upper Main Street, Sarasota commercial brokers say.

The property for sale includes more than 250,000 square feet of space situated on 8.6 acres with tenants such as the Hollywood 20 Regal Cinemas, Applebee's restaurant and the Sarasota Family YMCA. The complex was developed in 1985 as a retail center. It is owned by Westport, CT-based Sarasota Main Real Estate LLC, according to county property records.

“*Any time 8.6 acres comes available in downtown Sarasota at a significant intersection, that is obviously going to attract interest in the market.*”

Ian Black  
Broker  
Commercial Real Estate

An information sheet posted online July 29 by listing firm Cushman & Wakefield does not disclose an asking price.

While a buyer could choose to renovate the plaza or lease it out as is, significant redevelopment is seen as a strong possibility because of the [County Commission's approval](#) in February of a proposed Kimpton Hotel project on an acre across U.S. 301 from the plaza, said John Harshman, a commercial real estate broker in Sarasota. That former county parcel, located less than a block east of Sarasota Main Plaza, is home to a county parking lot.

The 8.6-acre site on Main is zoned Downtown Core, which allows buildings up to 10 stories as well as mixed uses, from restaurants and a hotel to condos, stores and office space. Up to 50 residential units per acre are permitted. Harshman said those options do not

necessarily mean a potential developer would build towers across the entire footprint. For example, a developer could keep the parking deck and movie theater and concentrate allowable residential density limits in certain areas of the parcel. "Doing something a little taller in some sections might make sense," Harshman pointed out.

Yet, the opportunity also exists to redevelop the land, Harshman noted, so storefronts or restaurants would line Main Street as specified in the city's New Urbanist construction code.

The property for sale does not include the Staples and new Bank of America branch on Fruitville Road just north of the plaza.



*A red dotted line shows the Main Plaza property in downtown Sarasota. The commercial parcel includes more than 250,000 square feet situated on 8.6 acres in downtown Sarasota. Contributed image*

## 'CATALYSTS'

Harshman believes the combination of a Kimpton Hotel at U.S. 301 and Main Street and a redeveloped project at Main Plaza would become “catalysts” for upper Main Street, which does not attract the volume of shoppers, diners and tourists lower Main sees.

But any redevelopment options at the Main Plaza site hinge on the property’s listing price, Harshman said.

As of press time, the listing agent at Cushman & Wakefield had not returned calls from *The Sarasota News Leader*.

If it is priced right, the listing is sure to get the attention of potential investors, noted Sarasota commercial real estate broker Ian

Black. “Any time 8.6 acres comes available in downtown Sarasota at a significant intersection, that is obviously going to attract interest in the market,” Black said. (Black’s real estate office is the leasing agent for some of the commercial space in the complex.)

## A TOUGH RETAIL START

While the plaza has become one of the more visible commercial landmarks downtown — with the bright Hollywood 20 marquee and the Applebee’s sign facing Main Street — it struggled to take off as the Main Street retail oasis it was envisioned to be.

In 1985, the 255,000-square-foot Main Plaza was developed for approximately \$20 million as a shopping center.



An aerial view shows the site in downtown Sarasota where a Kimpton Hotel is planned. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“When it was built in the late 1980s, it was an ill-conceived downtown retail mall,” Harshman said. Part of the problem was that it was built when the local tax structure and financing encouraged development even if demand did not exist for a particular project. “That was a time when they built five or six new office buildings downtown when we needed one,” Harshman noted.

When anchor tenants Hollywood 20 and Applebee’s came in, however, Main Plaza benefited.

Despite these anchors, the plaza has a 60.9-percent occupancy rate, according to Cushman & Wakefield. 



*The site of the planned Kimpton Hotel has a view of the Synovus Bank (left) and part of the Main Plaza complex (right). Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## SARASOTA MAIN PLAZA

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PROPERTY SUMMARY	
ADDRESS	1991 Main Street, Sarasota, FL 34236
SITE AREA	8.6 Acres
YEAR BUILT / RENOVATED	1986 / 1997
GLA (SF)	254,677 SF
MAJOR TENANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regal Cinemas: 76,118 sf</li> <li>• FL Dept. of Revenue: 18,310 sf</li> <li>• Sarasota Family YMCA: 15,556 sf</li> <li>• Sarasota County: 6,619 sf</li> </ul>
OCCUPANCY	60.9%
PARKING	Ample spaces provided in the garage



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Estimated Population	515,253
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Retail Spending	\$4.9 Billion

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- Excellent demographics

For additional information, please contact:

PATRICK BERMAN Senior Director (813) 204-5363 patrick.berman@cushwake.com	JASON DONALD Director (813) 204-5329 jason.donald@cushwake.com
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A photograph of a desk with several laptops and a monitor. The desk is cluttered with various electronic devices, including a large monitor on the left, several laptops in different states (open, closed, and partially open), and various cables. The lighting is warm, and the background is a plain wall.

## SIXTH IN 10 YEARS

*The city's Information Technology Department has had six directors within the past nine years. Photo by ShareAlike via Wikimedia Commons*

### CITY'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTOR RESIGNS

By Stan Zimmerman

*City Editor*

The City of Sarasota's director of Information Technology (IT) has resigned. Phil Hurwitz said his last day will be Aug. 15.

In an Aug. 6 letter to his boss, City Auditor and Clerk Pamela Nadalini, he wrote, "I am proud of the many accomplishments we have had during my two-year tenure at the City of Sarasota including the development of a strategic plan for IT, a strong step forward in making the environment more secure, and above all, the forging of a good team."

The IT Department was the subject of a [critical review](#) in mid-June by a national firm, ReliaQuest, which cited 10 findings, including "a lack of a clear understanding of [IT Department] personnel responsibilities." It also called out "minimal cross training ... limited standardization ... minimal understanding of why things fail ... no current and accurate network diagrams" and other issues.

When questioned by the city commissioners on July 21 about the status of the department, Hurwitz said, "If 10 is perfect, then we're about a six."

Nadalini has run the IT Department since November 2011, when the office was wrenched from then-City Manager Bob Bartolotta following allegations he was deleting emails. Despite investigations by federal and state officials and a local consultant, no evidence of criminal wrongdoing was found. Bartolotta resigned in February 2012. One month later, Nadalini fired then-IT Director Craig Chance.

ReliaQuest's mini-audit noted, "There has [sic] been five (5) different IT Directors within the past nine (9) years."

With the resignation of Hurwitz, the count is now six (6). 

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# LONGBOAT LEADS



*The county has 35 miles of shore on the Gulf of Mexico. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## HOW ONE BARRIER ISLAND IS TRYING TO PREPARE FOR RISING SEAS

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

While the Gulf of Mexico affects nearly every corner of Sarasota County — with its beaches, its bayous, inlets and creeks, its bay — it poses its most dramatic question on the region’s barrier islands, among them, of course, Longboat Key. The average elevation on the 11-mile-long island stands at just 4 feet, and being surrounded on all sides by water leaves Longboat particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change: an increased number of powerful storms and the rising level of the sea.

“There is nowhere to go,” says Alaina Ray, the Town of Longboat Key’s director of planning, zoning and building. “We can’t retreat.”

Town Manager Dave Bullock punctuated the seriousness of the threat in May, at a Sarasota Tiger Bay Club gathering. During an otherwise jovial round of back-slapping by local government administrators and managers, Bullock named sea level rise as the region’s No. 1 menace in coming years.

**“If we can’t come up with methods for maintaining the integrity of the island itself, there is nowhere to go. The island becomes uninhabitable.”**

Alaina Ray  
Director of Planning, Zoning and Building  
Town of Longboat Key



“It’s going to challenge us in ways we have not yet come to grips with,” Bullock said. We spend lots of time and money trying to improve our beaches, he added, and little of the same considering how nature is changing. He called the lack of action by the state and federal governments “unfortunate” and offered a warning: “This will be the most compelling issue we have to deal with in the coming decades.”

And so the island is taking a leading role in developing adaptations that residents hope will safeguard the key’s future. Spurred by an Urban Land Institute study that made several recommendations on how the town should rewrite its comprehensive plan and land development code, Longboat is working with the University of Florida (UF) to apply for a

grant that would provide resources to incorporate sea level rise into those land-use and zoning decisions.

Longboat signed an interlocal agreement with UF in 2013 for the school to help the town with planning issues. The university reached out to Longboat with the idea of applying for funding through Florida Sea Grant, which is a program in partnership with UF, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other agencies.

Sea Grant had issued a call for applications for “coastal resilience research proposals” it will begin funding this December and running through August 2016. It identified developing “innovative approaches that help coastal communities implement policies and plans



*A hole on a Longboat golf course is adjacent to the water. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

that increase resilience to coastal hazards” as a priority topic for the financial support.

“What we saw as an opportunity with Sea Grant was to encompass a look forward at sea level rise and to bring that in as part of [Longboat’s] long-term planning effort,” says Jerry Murphy, an adjunct professor with UF’s Florida Resilient Communities Initiative. He is working with the key on the project. Sea Grant is reviewing proposals; applicants will be notified by early October about whether they will receive the funding.

Longboat Assistant Town Manager Anne Ross says the increased attention being paid to sea level rise hasn’t come from citizen pressure but from staffers who have been watching the problem closely. Already, according to Ray, if heavy rain coincides with high tide, the

island’s streets can quickly flood. Even “minute changes in sea level” will affect the town’s stormwater system, which empties into the bay, Ray says.

“We are very flat,” notes Ross. “There’s nowhere for the water to go but on the streets.”

While the island’s problems are highly specific to its environment and development, Ross and Ray both emphasize the need for a regional approach. “We’re certainly not the experts on sea level rise,” says Ray. “We can’t tackle these issues on our own, and we would be foolish to try. This is a conversation that goes far beyond Longboat Key, and we would not be comfortable without that input.”

Sarasota County as a whole may not be as vulnerable to sea level rise as Longboat, but the



*Beach-goers enjoy a stretch of Longboat Key shore. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

county did host this year's World Environment Day, a United Nations Environment Programme dedicated to the threat sea level rise poses to small island nations, a threat not unlike the one facing Longboat. The county's comprehensive plan includes the prediction that the sea level is expected to rise between 1.3 and 2.1 feet by 2100, and it discusses the effect of such a change on the county's beaches, without mentioning specific remedies.

The county is finalizing a draft of its [Post Disaster Redevelopment Plan](#), with a section on how a rising Gulf will affect different types of shoreline and land. Rethinking redevelopment is a key part of Longboat's approach. Federal Emergency Management Agency rules already dictate that new buildings in flood zones such as Longboat must be built a certain height off the ground. Town rules adopted years ago dictate that new construction must be a foot higher than even that. As new construction takes the place of old buildings or existing structures are updated, how can the town ensure the island is ready for higher water?

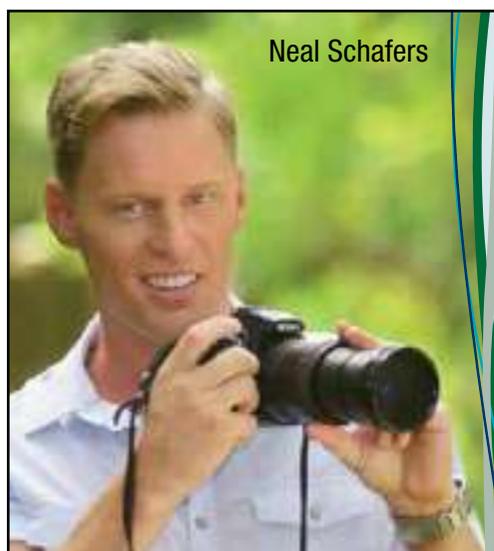
"If we can't come up with methods for maintaining the integrity of the island itself, there is nowhere to go," Ray says. "The island becomes uninhabitable."



*Dave Bullock is the town manager of Longboat Key. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

When put like that, it's no wonder the island is taking sea level rise seriously. Ross says a shift in the media narrative has pushed the issue forward, too. The focus is no longer on the "fight" over the impact humans are having on the climate.

"Whatever the cause is," Ross says, "things are happening. The sea level is rising." 



Neal Schafers

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# My Sunday Paper...

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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.

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# **SMEAR TACTIC**

*Rich Swier Sr. Photo from The United West [website](#)*

## INFLAMMATORY RIGHT-WING BLOGGER GOES AFTER A SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE

By Cooper Levey-Baker

*Associate Editor*

You know a campaign has turned ugly when a blogger is accusing a candidate of speaking to the dead, and that's exactly the bizarre turn the Sarasota County Commission Republican primary between Lourdes Ramirez and Alan Maio has taken. That is all thanks to a new post from right-wing blogger Rich Swier Sr., noted for a long list of what a number of community residents have called ignominious and

hateful comments over the years — a list he added to last week.

Swier's post discusses Isle of Avalon, a shop owned by Ramirez in the Cooper Creek shopping plaza on University Parkway between 2005 and 2010. The store sold what Ramirez calls "inspirational products," such as books by self-help writer Wayne Dyer, as well as soy candles, "peaceful" music and more.



*Lourdes Ramirez is a candidate for the District 4 County Commission seat. Contributed photo*

But Swier's post mocks Ramirez for events the shop hosted, including tarot card readings and spiritual channeling. Ramirez writes in an email to *The Sarasota News Leader* that, yes, Isle of Avalon did host readings, "but that was not the focus of the shop." She says she has no problem talking about it to anyone who asks, and she has done so at previous candidate forums.

More than 1,000 people have read Swier's post, according to his site ticker, and at least one representative of the [Argus Foundation](#) is circulating the link, accusing Ramirez of being a "practicing druid." Ramirez is, in fact, a Roman Catholic.

Swier tells the *News Leader* he received a tip about Ramirez's store from a "reader" of his blogs and then conducted his own research. On Facebook, he posted that he is not supporting Ramirez's GOP primary opponent, Maio, but is instead behind long shot no-party candidate John Minder. Maio did not respond to a *News Leader* voicemail asking for a comment.

In addition to endorsing Minder, Swier last week also voiced his support for Republican Paul Caragiulo in his campaign for a different seat on the County Commission. He called Caragiulo a "victim of government overreach" who "learned from the 2008 housing market

meltdown that government is not the answer because it was government at every level that created the problem."

Swier has developed a reputation for demeaning references to gays and lesbians over the years. A 2011 post he wrote was criticized on national blogs for referring to anti-gay bullying as "healthy" and "peer pressure." Accused by Democratic Sarasota County Charter Review Board candidate Jennifer Cohen of being a "homophobe" in the comments section below his Caragiulo endorsement, Swier responded by calling gays and lesbians "a danger to themselves and the community."

"All bad behaviors are dangerous and must be addressed and condemned, not glossed over or supported," he wrote in another comment. "Please do not compare homosexuality with normal people. Homosexuality is a sexual behavior that goes against nature and nature's laws."

Strangely, perhaps the most relevant comment on the whole issue was made by Maio, Ramirez's opponent, at a recent debate. "As a community," he said to a Sarasota Tiger Bay Club crowd at Michael's on East, "we tend to just pick the extremely titillating, sexy, little sound bites to try to ridicule somebody." 

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# MR. GOVERNMENT, MEET MISS REGULATION

*Lift Station 87 will be built in Luke Wood Park near the intersection of U.S 41 and U.S. 301 in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## CITY CODE STIPULATIONS WILL PUSH BACK THE COMPLETION OF LIFT STATION 87 EVEN FURTHER, IT APPEARS

By Stan Zimmerman

*City Editor*

It is only fair that government has to adhere to the same planning and zoning regulations as private industry. A pair of government projects went before the city Development Review Committee (DRC) on Wednesday, Aug. 6, only to stumble on finely tuned zoning rules.

The Sarasota County Fairgrounds board wants to erect a new sign on Fruitville Road. The old one has seen better days and, after a hurricane or three, is looking a

little lame. So Rory Martin, president of the “fair board,” came to the DRC with the desire for one of the quite fancy LED signs.

The Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall has one on North Tamiami Trail, and it can be eye-popping, with its swirls and rising suns

and video-like explosions to promote its next big act. But if that is what Martin had in mind, tsk-tsk, too bad. His facilities are in a different zone — the Fruitville Road Overlay District — and

“With the restrictions on a [design to withstand a Category 3 hurricane], we’re above the 35-foot height restrictions.”

Tom Cross  
Project Manager  
McKim & Creed



such pop-pop-gee-whiz-wow displays are not permitted. Only messages are allowed, fading in and out.

“Videos and animations are prohibited, of course,” said Courtney Mendez, the senior planner who chairs the DRC. She reminded him the new sign would have to be dimmed at night, as well. And the Sarasota County Fire Department representative said that including the address on the sign would be required, with numbers “a minimum of 6 inches high.”

But with those provisos in mind, Martin received the sign-off for his \$100,000 sign, paid for with a county grant funded by the penny surtax revenue. Next step for him is the Sept. 10 city Planning Board meeting.

## **IS LIFT STATION 87 JINXED?**

The next project on the agenda was not as fortunate. The city’s star-crossed Lift Station

87 design came before the DRC, seeking approval for the new aboveground mechanical complex of pumps and generators.

“We’re coming in with a revised concept,” said Tom Cross, a project manager with the engineering design firm of McKim & Creed. “It is a two-story building with a majority of the equipment on the second floor.”

A previous plan put the sewer pumping facility entirely underground, but for a host of reasons, that plan was abandoned. One of the concerns was vulnerability to storm-surge flooding. Since the installation will handle about one-third of the city’s sewage, plus all of Sarasota Memorial Hospital’s sewage, the city commissioners agreed to put it aboveground and to make certain it is tall enough to survive a Category 3 hurricane storm surge.

Unfortunately, it appears as if the proposed building is too high. “With the restrictions on



*This architectural rendering of Lift Station 87 was presented to the public on July 14. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*



*An aerial view of the Sarasota County Fairgrounds shows the annual county fair under way. The board of directors of the facility plans to erect a new sign on Fruitville Road. Image courtesy of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office via the Fairgrounds' [Facebook page](#)*

a Cat 3, we're above the 35-foot height restrictions," said Cross.

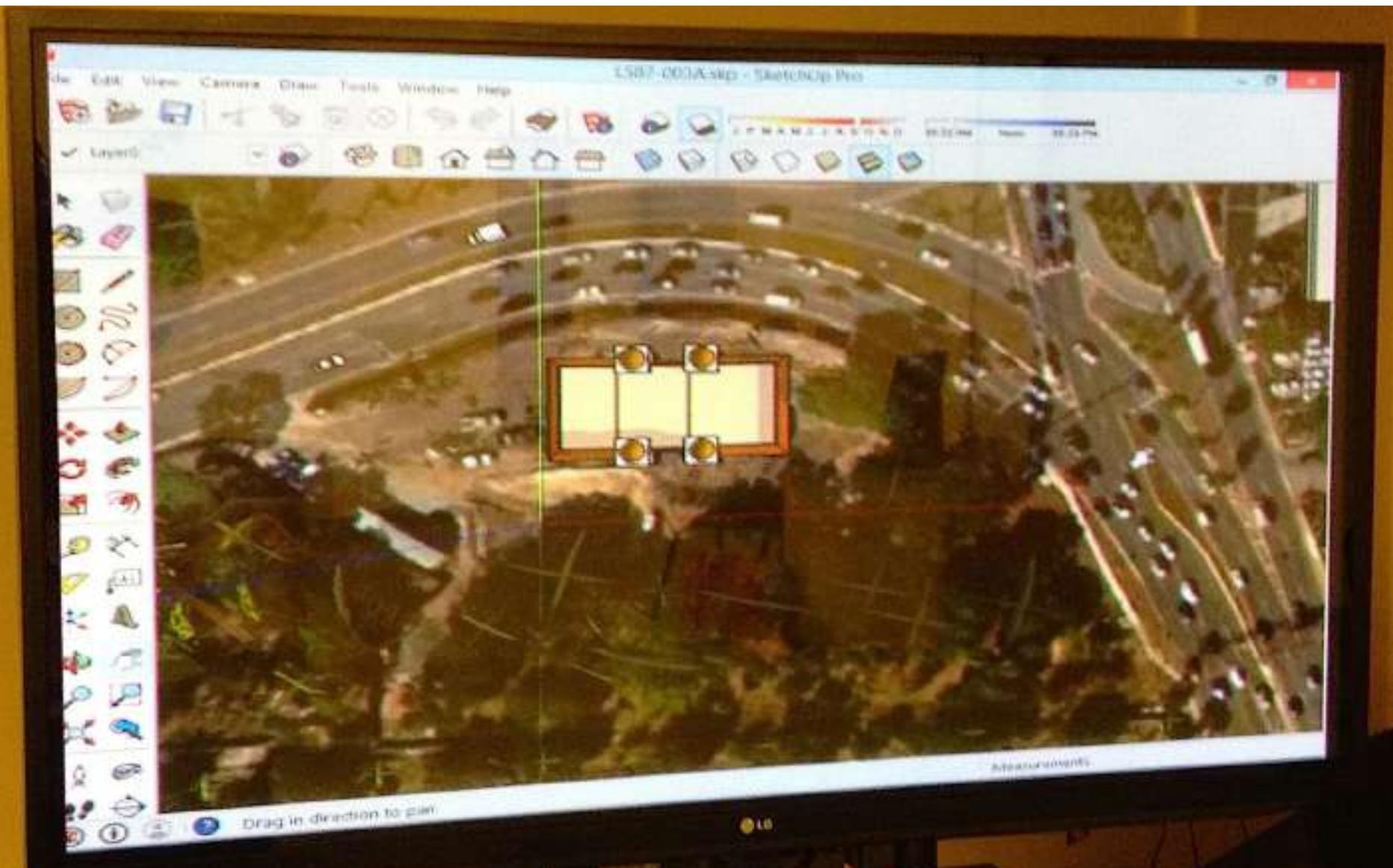
"That will require a G-zone waiver," pointed out the city's senior building and zoning official, Gretchen Schneider. "And that will set the project back quite a bit." The waiver will necessitate a "community workshop" be held for review of the plan, and it will take about three weeks to set up that session. "You can't come back to the DRC before that is done," she told Cross. The delay could mean the next DRC review would be pushed back to October, a 60-day delay.

The project has already been discussed during a substantial number of community and public meetings since the crew with the first engineering design firm walked off the job. The city soon followed that action with a

lawsuit, and then it hired McKim & Creed to replace the original firm.

A new design for the facility was debuted at the DRC meeting. The previous plan was based on the old Hover Arcade, a bayfront building that served as City Hall for decades. Its arched doorways and twin towers provided the motif for the Lift Station 87 architects.

After a public discussion of the design, the decision was reached to make the building features symmetrical as viewed from either the street or the nearby Central Park condominiums. That meant a four tower-design, which was revealed on July 14. However, at the DRC meeting, two of the towers had vanished from the drawings. Cross later told *The Sarasota News Leader* the change was "to better mirror the old Hover Arcade." 



During a July meeting, city staff and a consultant debuted a 'flyover' video showing the Lift Station 87 design with four towers. Photo of illustration by Stan Zimmerman

# SETTING SIGHTS ON THE ISSUE



*The five-member Independent Police Advisory Panel discusses how to conduct its inquiry into accreditation. The fifth member, Curtiss Shantz, is participating by telephone. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

## **MEMBERS OF THE INDEPENDENT POLICE ADVISORY PANEL GET 'MARCHING' ORDERS FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S ACCREDITATION LAPSE**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

The city's Independent Police Advisory Panel on Wednesday, Aug. 6, set an ambitious two-month schedule to look into accreditation of the Sarasota Police Department. The Sarasota City Commission asked the board on July 21 to examine the costs and benefits of police department accreditation and determine "what are the facts regarding the decision to abandon efforts to obtain accreditation in 2015?"

The assignment was given to the panel after it was revealed that Police Chief Bernadette DiPino cancelled the department's accreditation with the Commission for Florida Law

Enforcement Accreditation (known as the CFA) because of lapses in her department. Accreditation is totally voluntary and not required by law, but virtually all law enforcement departments in Florida — even university police forces — have CFA accreditation.

The police advisory panel of five members accepted the assignment and parceled out tasks to be completed before its next meeting later this month. Member Curtis Shantz agreed to make a presentation on the process of accreditation and "exactly how it works within the department."

After that overview, member Randy Coyner will report on the costs of accreditation by the CFA. The \$1,800 annual fee is only part of the true cost, which includes either a part-time or full-time employee of the department to stay on top of the paperwork, even between accreditation cycles.

At the panel's next meeting, member Bill Fuller will report on the benefits of accreditation. The CFA website has a full page of them, one of which applies directly to DiPino's action. The website says, "The agency is compelled to operate within specific guidelines. It is accountable to the Commission. The agency must stay in compliance with the standards set forth by the Commission in order to retain its accreditation."

Member Dedra Anderson pulled a harder assignment. She will sift through records to determine why DiPino pulled the department's accreditation. "I'll be looking for items not meeting accreditation standards at the time the decision was made," she said. Her findings may not be ready in time for the next meeting.

Chairwoman Eileen Normile's assignment is to prepare for the second phase of the panel's inquiry — interviews. The group decided to talk publicly with people involved in the accreditation process and the chief's decision-making regarding the cancelling of the existing accreditation. Because of Florida open meeting requirements, Normile hopes all five members of the panel will be available for the interview phase of the proceedings.



*A powerful combo, former prosecutor Eileen Normile and investigative CPA Randolph Coyner consider who should do what during the Independent Police Advisory Panel's review of the decision to drop accreditation of the Sarasota Police Department. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

Date of the next meeting is uncertain, either on Aug. 20 or 21.

## DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY

The Sarasota City Charter specifically grants the power of investigation to the City Commission, which, in turn, can delegate it to other organizations the commission has created. The power, however, is rarely used.

In some respects, the procedure set up by the Independent Police Advisory Panel on Aug. 6 resembles a congressional hearing. Members and staff will investigate independently, return to share their findings and then call witnesses for questioning. Based upon the testimony and evidence, the group will issue its conclusions in a “finding” or “report.”

The assignment to have the panel investigate the accreditation issue passed by the narrowest of margins, 3-2, with Commissioners Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder in the minority. Before the vote on July 21, the city commissioners appeared eager to grill DiPino.

But they were forestalled by a motion from Vice Mayor Susan Chapman to refer the issue to the independent police panel.

The progress of the citizens panel reviewing DiPino’s decision — and its analysis of the pros and cons of accreditation — could shape future investigations by the City Commission. It certainly will lay some ground rules for the conduct of future inquiries. 



*Bernadette DiPino speaks to an audience gathered for the announcement of her appointment as the new city police chief. Mikel Hollaway (second from right) was preparing to retire from the position. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# CHEWING ON OLD PROBLEMS



*This photo shows Sarasota in the bucolic 1920s, almost a century ago. If you follow Palm Avenue to the intersection with Cocoanut, you will notice some palm trees on the left side of the road. Are these the trees the Downtown Improvement District wants to replant? Photo courtesy Sarasota History Center*

## THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT CRAFTS A PLAN TO SAVE THE PALM AVENUE PALMS AND CONSIDERS DOWNTOWN POLICE AND BEAUTIFICATION INITIATIVES

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

This time last year, the Downtown Improvement District (DID) was wrapping up a multi-million-dollar beautification project, with wider sidewalks and rebuilt streets in downtown Sarasota. On Tuesday, Aug. 4, the group's time was consumed with the fate of issues going back years.

First up, the fate of 25 palm trees, not rarities or exotics, but cabbage palms, Florida's prolific state tree.

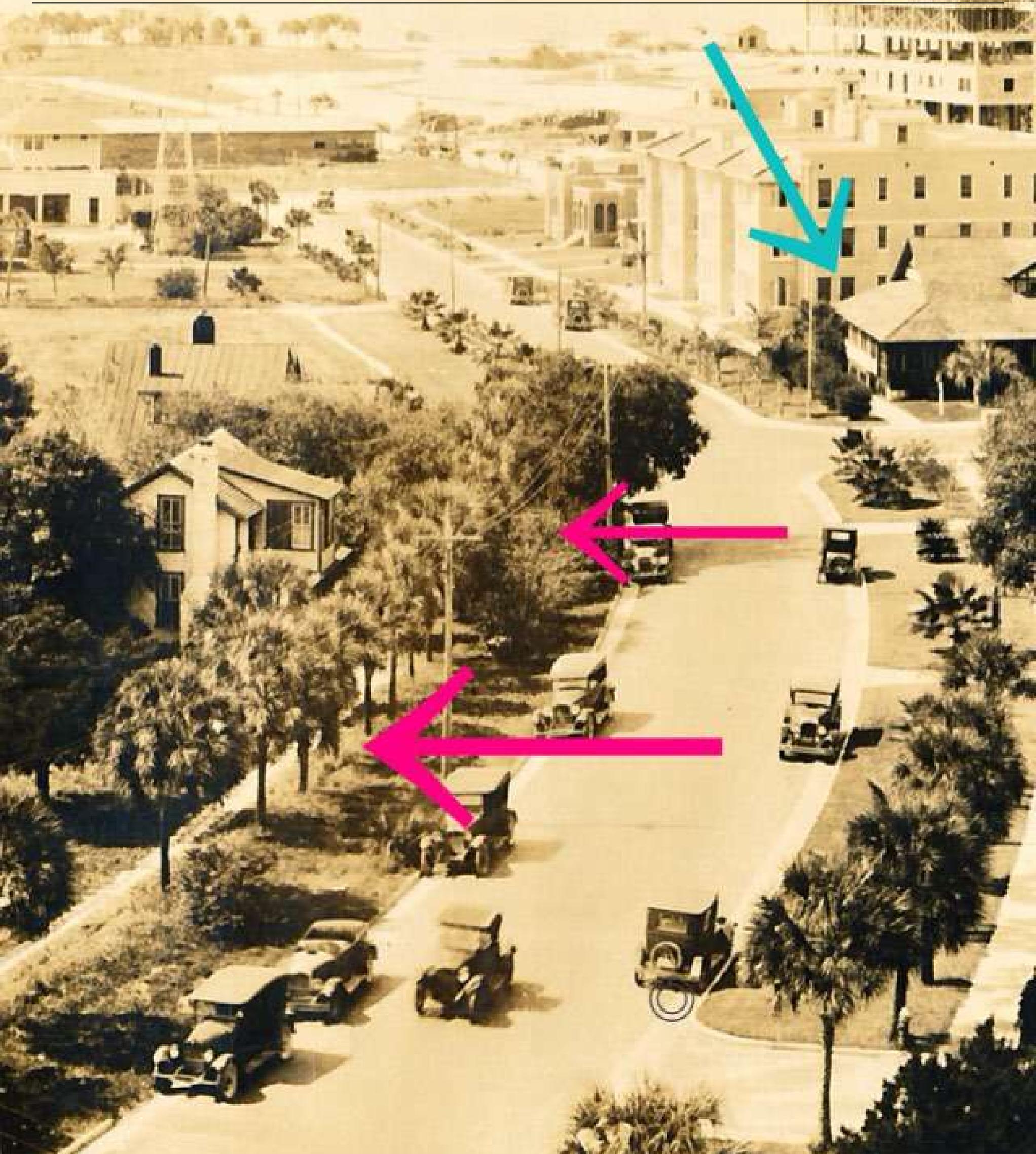
For years, drainage on the west side of

North Palm Avenue has been awful. A simple summer thunderstorm can put people on the sidewalk ankle-deep in water. Over the past three years, a plan was developed — after discussion at more than 20 public meetings — to fix the problem. The area in question is across the street from the Palm Avenue parking structure.

“ *These may be the oldest deliberately planted landscape trees in the city.* ”

Jono Miller  
Environmental Advocate  
Sarasota

The DID project involves pulling out the palms, re-grading the area between the sidewalk and the curb, installing



*The red arrows show the general location of the palms in question. The blue arrow points to today's Florida Studio Theater at the corner of Cocoanut and Palm avenues, for reference. Photo courtesy Sarasota History Center*

underground drainage and replanting the section with shade trees. There is money in the construction account, all the drawings have been done and everything was ready to start.

Enter Jono Miller. He wants to save the palms, some of which he says are 90 years old. Others were relocated to the site when the Bay Plaza condominium was built in the late 1950s. “I agree the flooding problem must be solved,” said Miller. “The whole area needs to be re-graded.”

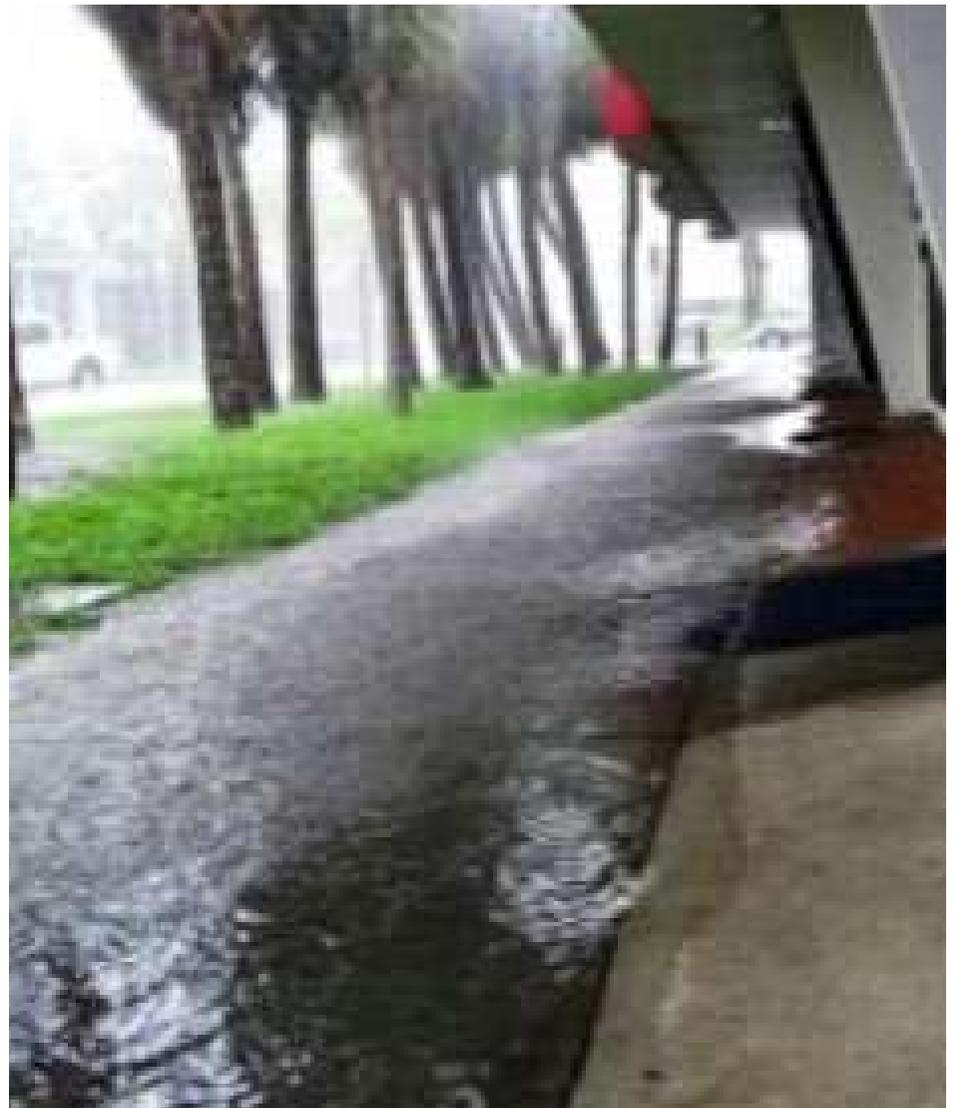
But Miller’s deep environmental sensitivities were rankled by the plan to pull out the trees — old and “new” — to fix an equally old drainage issue. “These may be the oldest deliberately planted landscape trees in the city,” he pointed out.

In the end the project will move forward, but the cabbage palms will be transplanted to “another historic site,” according to DID member Eileen Hampshire’s amendment to the motion to proceed as planned. The likely receiving location would be the area around the newly restored Mabel Ringling Fountain at the junction of U.S. 301 and the Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

## **MERCHANTS LAUD FOOT PATROLS**

As the 2013 streetscape project was winding down, the DID turned its attention to complaints of vagrancy and homelessness downtown. At its August 2013 meeting, the board members considered hiring private security guards to augment Sarasota police patrols.

A year later, a plan to actually hire private security was shelved because city police have increased their presence downtown.



*During a hard rain, North Palm Ave. sidewalks can flood because the ground between the curb and sidewalk is higher than the sidewalk, turning it into a gutter. The cabbage palms can be seen in the upper right corner. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

“We reallocated our forces on July 14,” said Lt. Kevin Stiff. Now two officers are spending their entire 12-hour shifts downtown on foot, from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. (with 30 minutes for daily paperwork). The Street Crimes Unit picks up patrol — in uniform and in mufti — on the weekends from 6 p.m. until midnight.

However, Stiff said the new deployment is scheduled to end on Aug. 14. He added that he will recommend the Police Department continue the daytime foot patrols, in addition to the normal “zone officer” assignment to the area. And he said he has recommended overtime be paid for the Friday and Saturday night patrols.

“I’ve noticed a big difference,” responded DID Chairman Ernie Ritz.

The group was also briefed on the Police Department’s new volunteer “[ambassadors](#)” program. The group’s coordinator, Michelle Rinaca, said the participants would focus initially on the lunch and dinner hours. With distinctive blue polo shirts, the volunteers will be able to answer questions, make referrals and — with police radios on their hips — report suspicious or troublesome behavior.

DID member Dr. Mark Kauffman was so excited, he proposed paying \$2,000 per

month to the Police Department to support the volunteers. “You didn’t come here to ask for money, but we want to give it to you,” he said. A motion was approved unanimously to transfer the sum to the Police Department for a six-month period to support the ambassador volunteers.

## **DOWNTOWN GATEWAY REDUX**

One of the DID’s longstanding desires has been to erect “gateways” to downtown. They would be similar to the arches at Bayfront Park pioneered by Mayor Jack Gurney in the 1990s. In an effort to accelerate the \$100,000



*A recent photo shows the palms the city wishes to replace on Palm Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

project, DID member Tom Mannausa offered to cover 50 percent of the cost of a beautification project at the intersection of Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue, adjacent to his high-rise condominium project, The Jewel.

“It would cost \$306,000 to brick the intersection,” he said. “I could do this in the spring, and I’d pay half.” As discussion ensued, it was suggested the city pay the other half of the expense of the streetscape project, and the DID could erect its first “gateway.”

The plan has been offered to the city, which is lukewarm to the idea. The traffic roundabout

proposed for Main Street and the Tamiami Trail is not yet designed, so engineers are not exactly sure where Main Street would intersect with the Trail. That uncertainty feeds city staff concern about beautifying the intersection with Gulfstream before the roundabout engineering has been completed.

Additionally, the Purchasing Department staff is not sure how to react to a developer’s offer to build an amenity with city participation. DID Chairman Ritz decided more discussion is needed, so he put it on the next agenda. 



*The developer of The Jewel condominium tower at the intersection of Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue has offered to pay half the expense of a beautification project at the intersection. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# SANBORN STUDIOS SUED



*A still image from a Sanborn Studios project. Photo courtesy [sanbornstudiosllc.com](http://sanbornstudiosllc.com)*

## **SARASOTA COUNTY FORMALLY SUES COMPANY IT SAYS HASN'T LIVED UP TO JOB CREATION PROMISES**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

Sarasota County this week formally sued Sanborn Studios, the Lakewood Ranch film and TV production company once heralded by business leaders and county and state officials as a major boost to the region's economy. According to the county, the company hasn't lived up to its pledge to create more than 100 high-paying jobs, and the county would like to get back a major chunk of its \$650,000 total investment in Sanborn.

The county approved the financial incentive agreement with Sanborn in 2010, when the

company promised to create 117 jobs with an "average wage" of \$72,000 by Sept. 2, 2013. Sanborn, in turn, agreed to reimburse the county \$2,992 for each job not created by that deadline.

That Sept. 2, 2013, cutoff came and went, and, according to the county, Sanborn never delivered proof it had made available the positions as promised. As of June 4, according to a memo by County Attorney Steve DeMarsh, "Sanborn Studios has not provided

any evidence or documentation that it has created the jobs required.”

The complaint filed this week by Deputy County Attorney Frederick Elbrecht argues that the company has “breached” its agreement with the county and that the county is “entitled” to \$2,992 for each of the 117 jobs not created. That means Sanborn could be on the hook for up to \$350,000, still just 54 percent of the total amount given to the company.

Scott Sobel, president of the Washington, D.C., public relations firm Media & Communications Strategies — which was hired to represent Sanborn — said in a statement issued Monday, Aug. 3, that the company is “appalled.”

“The county continues to waste more of the taxpayer’s money with a frivolous lawsuit and hurts the county’s reputation, sending a message that Sarasota does not have a business-friendly environment,” he wrote.

In a previous statement, Sobel wrote that in 2013, Sanborn had provided “evidence” to the county that it had created 200 jobs. At an Aug. 9, 2013, meeting, “county representatives heard that the studio had created approximately 200 full time jobs and met all contractual legal obligations,” Sobel wrote in this week’s statement.

Sobel told *The Sarasota News Leader* in June that the county’s contract is not “enforceable” and that Sanborn is not obligated to provide any information beyond what it has already provided. He also pointed the *News Leader* to a 2011 report compiled by the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court and Sarasota County Comptroller Karen Rushing. Analyzing several financial incentive agreements, that report found that 10 out of 15 contracts “did not include a right to examine award recipients’ records relevant to compliance with agreement requirements.” That stipulation “was added to the agreement language in January 2011,” the report states.

A 2012 audit by Rushing’s office, meanwhile, found that “financial incentive contracts lack provisions requiring companies to submit documentation that allows for reconciliation of jobs created during the term of the contract.” That report recommended that “companies should be required to submit documentation to verify the number of jobs created.”

Sobel promised a “more complete” response to the lawsuit once Sanborn has evaluated the lawsuit. The county declined to comment on the action. 

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## A PARTNERSHIP ASUNDER

*The County Commission Chambers was mostly full on Nov. 25, 2013, when homelessness consultant Robert Marbut presented his recommendations to the City and County commissions. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **WHETHER THE CITY AND COUNTY CAN STILL WORK TOGETHER TO BUILD A COME-AS-YOU-ARE HOMELESS SHELTER DEPENDS ON WHOM YOU ASK**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

In therapy, two divergent groups often will be ushered into a room and given a common goal.

“And they work together to solve the problem,” said City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell, a clinical psychologist. That is, if everything goes well.

When it comes to the controversial topic of planning, funding and building a come-as-you-are homeless shelter in or near the city, Atwell predicts that city and county elected officials will come together in the same fashion. But it

will take some time and the outcome might be different from what anyone expects.

Atwell, who voted with her fellow commissioners last month to withdraw from efforts to plan a shelter, acknowledges how tough it was to find a site for the facility. She said the County Commission, which was unanimous in support of a shelter, and the City Commission — with two members adamantly opposed to a city location from the outset — were never truly working in unison.

“*I think the rope has been cut and the ties have been cut.*”

Joe Barbeta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



Atwell told *The Sarasota News Leader* she had concerns about the city-owned site on Osprey Avenue that county officials were pushing as the top site. But she added that the saga is not over. “I call this a relationship break. We arrived at an impasse.”

Atwell continued, “We cut the ties, but we did not cut the rope. The whole process got broken, but I think, ultimately, this will morph into something more appropriate and amenable to everyone.”

Atwell says her eyes are still on “the prize,” which is a come-as-you-are shelter open to all homeless adults in the county. She is an important voice on the City Commission because her term does not expire until 2017. Two people will be appointed temporarily this fall to fill seats left open by the County

Commission candidacies of Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder, and the next city election, in 2015, will fill three district seats.

Asked what she envisions as a compromise between the city and county, Atwell replied that she would like to see a triage center where homeless adults can be assessed and then receive the appropriate services — from counseling to job training to substance abuse rehabilitation. One option for the facility is a site that is not right downtown, a change

## DOWNLOAD THE PDF



*Read the letters exchanged between the city and the county.*



*City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell listens to discussion during a joint city/county meeting on June 23. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

from past proposals that might satisfy those who say a shelter will further tax neighborhoods and businesses already struggling with a growing homeless population and crime.

“I am open to having [the shelter] further out, but I don’t mean out by Interstate 75,” Atwell said.

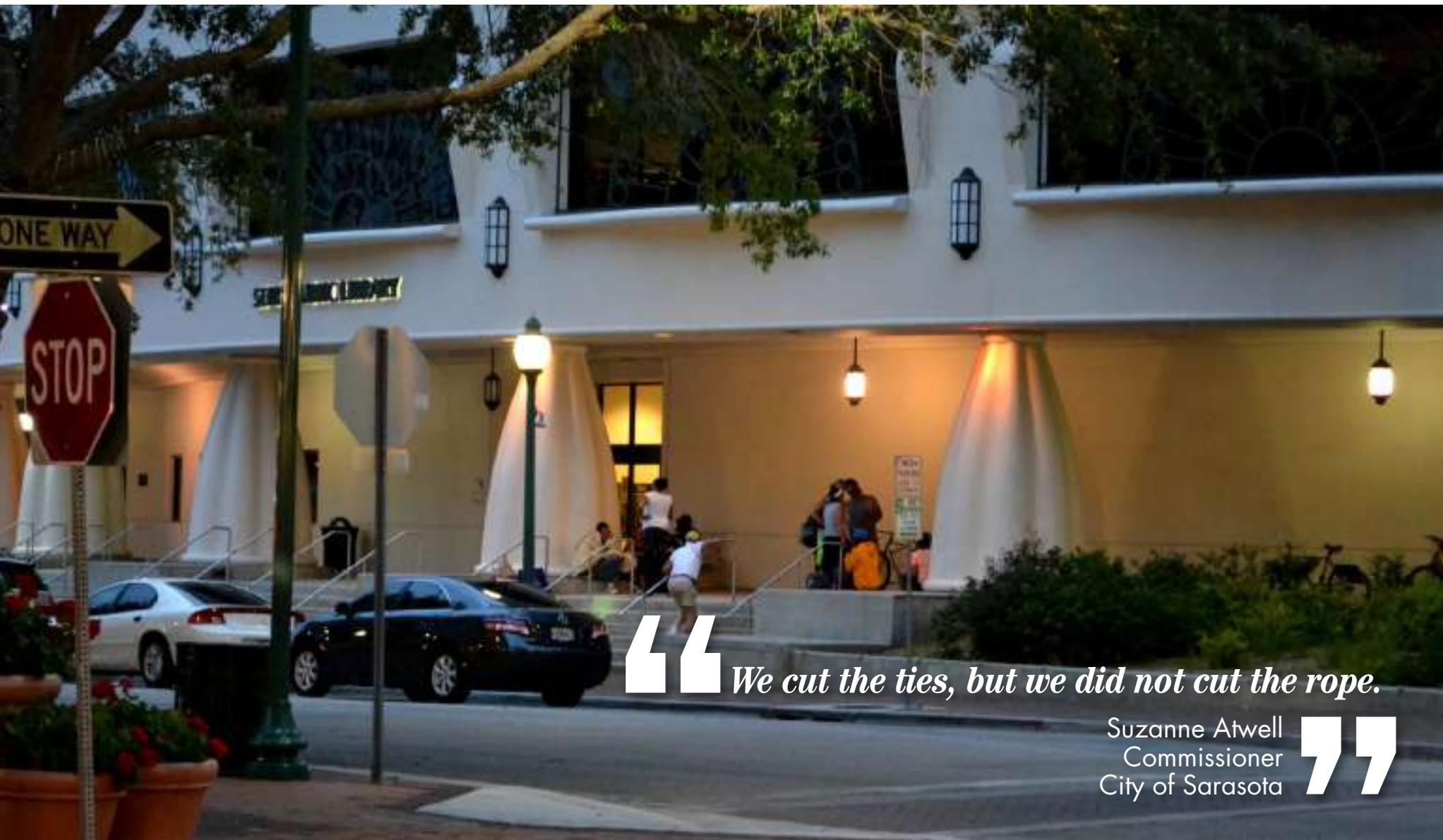
County Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, however, has a less optimistic view on the possibility of a partnership with the city after the city commissioners made it clear they do not want to work with the county.

When asked if there is any hope at this point that the two local governments will be able to work collaboratively in the future on a shelter for homeless adults, Robinson told the *News Leader*, “None whatsoever.”

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta agreed.

“I think the rope has been cut and the ties have been cut,” Barbetta said. “We have gone back and forth over the past few months. We hired a consultant. [The city commissioners] didn’t like what they heard, and we did.”

For Barbetta, the City Commission’s action on July 21 was very clear. At that meeting, the City Commission withdrew from the months-long process of creating a community shelter. After voting unanimously on the decision, the city commissioners directed City Manager Tom Barwin to relay the news in a “breakup letter” to the county commissioners, who earlier had sent the City Commission a letter asking whether it was still interested in working with the county on the project.



“We cut the ties, but we did not cut the rope.”

Suzanne Atwell  
Commissioner  
City of Sarasota



*Homeless people continue to gather at and in the vicinity of Selby Public Library in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

City Commissioner Shannon Snyder, who had been a supporter of the initiative to build a shelter, [reversed his vote](#), becoming a linchpin in the city's withdrawal.

“In response to Chairman [Charles] Hines [sic] letter of July 9, 2014 the Sarasota City Commission voted unanimously at last night's city commission meeting to withdraw from the process to locate a site for a come as you are, jail diversion shelter within the City of Sarasota,” Barwin wrote County Administrator Tom Harmer on July 22. “Therefore the [tentative] joint meeting in September to review possible city and county sites will not be necessary to schedule.”

## IN THE MEANTIME ...

Atwell said she is happy The Salvation Army is stepping up efforts to address homelessness. She also cites city efforts to hire a social

worker and the Police Department's steps to employ a Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) to assist homeless people on the street. “We are doing a lot right now in the meantime,” Atwell pointed out.

Barbetta thinks that without a shelter to serve homeless adults — including resources to help them find jobs — the community's homeless population and problems will only get worse, something homelessness consultant Robert Marbut has told the two local government boards. “I live in the city, and I see it every day,” Barbetta said.

Barbetta believes The Salvation Army is poised to help but that the organization cannot address all the relevant issues on its own.

“The merchants are not happy at all. They come in every morning, constantly every



*On April 1, the City and County commissioners heard from a panel that included Police Chief Bernadette DiPino and Sheriff Tom Knight. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

morning [and] have to deal with the [homeless],” Barbetta pointed out. “... Let the merchants and residents speak up and tell the [city] commissioners what they want.”

Local radio talk show host Phil Grande recounted a scene he had witnessed downtown in a July 26 email to County Commissioner Carolyn Mason.

“A vagrant who was drunk laid down then sprawled out on the concrete and passed out under the library overhang,” he wrote. “Now at 2:36 p.m.,” he continued, “there are 7 new vagrants,” adding, “[S]oon the number will grow ...”

## COUNTY’S NEXT STEPS

Barbetta said he is open to talking with Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight about the type of facility the county could operate to provide shelter and services for some homeless individuals. The size and scope would depend on what Knight says the community needs, Barbetta added.

A shelter, not a “jail-diversion program,” is what Barbetta envisions, he made clear.

The county commissioners will discuss the topic later this month, after they return from their summer recess.



*Sarasota County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson. File photo*

“I will give a standing report Aug. 26,” Wayne Applebee, the county’s homelessness issues coordinator, told the *News Leader*, referring to the responsibility he has had at regular commission meetings over the past months.

However, the topic could come up as soon as the board’s Aug. 20 workshop.

Still, on Aug. 26, Applebee is slated to update the county commissioners on the come-as-you-are-shelter and the City Commission’s vote to opt out of the project.

In the meantime, Applebee and county staffers will continue to search for potential locations for a facility. The City Commission vote, at this point, does not change Applebee’s work in that regard. “We are continuing to

look at sites in unincorporated parts of the county that could be close to the city. The county has been solid all along in embracing Dr. Marbut’s criteria for sites,” Applebee told the *News Leader*, adding that his efforts are encompassing those criteria.

It will be up to the county commissioners to decide whether to pursue planning for any site without the partnership of the city. County Vice Chairwoman Robinson said that if a shelter is to be built, it will be up to County Commissioners to handle the work.

“Now that we know that [the city commissioners have] pulled out of the partnership they invited us into,” Robinson told the *News Leader*, “we are going to have to determine next steps.” 



An apparently homeless man sleeps on a bench in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



## A VOW TO 'NEVER GIVE UP'

*Michele Chapman points across the creek to the site of Bob's Boathouse. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

### **MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY THAT CREATED THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACROSS THE CREEK FROM BOB'S BOATHOUSE TALK OF HOW THEIR LIVES HAVE CHANGED**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

It is just past midday on a Wednesday as Michele Chapman and a reporter enter the lush verdant clearing beside her house. Startled by our voices, a great blue heron lifts itself into the air from the shore of Phillippi Creek and disappears into the azure sky.

Much of the bank is shrouded in mangroves and other native vegetation, but Chapman pauses at a spot where she can peer across the water. She has spent untold hours in that setting over the past nine months, but not to relish the scenic

charm that has been a treasure to her family since her parents and relatives bought the property in 1949.

Instead, Chapman has become practiced in taking noise meter readings. Across the creek, on Oct. 31, 2013, Bob's Boathouse opened for business in its new location at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail.

“*He will never stop hearing from me protesting his invasion of my home.*”

Michele Chapman  
Neighbor  
Of Bob's Boathouse

“Halloween night, our nightmares started coming true, and they came true worse than we ever expected,” she says.



*Joan Rickey (left) and daughter Michele Chapman pose in Rickey's backyard. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

“I vacillate between rage and despair on a daily basis,” she adds. “Those are the two exact emotions that describe it perfectly.”

## **DAYS LONG GONE BY**

Seated at a table Chapman, 62, and her 84-year-old mother, Joan Rickey, reminisce about a time long past. When she was 19, Rickey says, she remembers using a machete to clear out the thick brush as her family prepared to build on the island. “We had to do it by hand,” she explains about the work. “I had to wear a bandana over my head so that the fire ants that rained down from the trees would not get on my scalp and sting me.”

The family members eventually created the Phillippi Fair Trailer Park.

“It was a neat time,” Rickey says. “We even had a little grocery store in there.”

“U.S. 41 was two-lane,” Chapman adds, “and the joke in the family was when we heard a car going by on 41, we’d look up to see who it was.”

She points out, “There was nothing south of Southgate at that time.”

Several years later, the family subdivided the property and created a neighborhood; “sold off various lots,” Chapman says.

At that time, the property had access to U.S. 41, but because of the burgeoning Southgate development and drainage problems, a canal was dug. “So we’re now a little isolated island back here,” Chapman explains.



*Bob's Boathouse is directly across the creek from the Chapman property. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

One building on the island served as the real estate office for her maternal grandmother, Bea Novak, Chapman notes. In fact, she says, Novak, who was one of the first women real estate brokers in Sarasota, and Norma Martin founded the Sarasota chapter of the Women's Council of Realtors.

As Chapman pauses, her sister, Deborah, sums up the family history: "We were here before them," referring to Bob's Boathouse.

"He's turned our property into valueless pieces of dirt, basically," Rickey adds.

Although she has found no way to prove that, Chapman points out that her mother has lost a couple of tenants in cottages she has rented for years. "And I can't get [them] re-rented," Rickey says.

The income was "very minimal," Chapman concedes, but it supplemented her mother's Social Security checks. "Over these last eight months, she's been going through every bit of her savings just to keep afloat."

A neighbor down the road who has her house on the market recently had two sets of prospective buyers look at it, Chapman related. Both times, when they went out on the deck, they asked about the establishment across the creek. As soon as the neighbor responded that it is Bob's Boathouse, Chapman says, the people lost interest in the house.

Yet, Chapman points out, it is impossible to prove that the business' proximity — and stories circulating in the community about its loud music — have led to the loss of rental property tenants and potential home sales.



*Michele Chapman checks the ambient noise on a meter at the rear of her Montclair Drive property. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

“We’ve been to lawyers ... I even called Legal Aid. ... I’ve done every bit of research I can possibly do until I’m exhausted from it, and there just basically is no one willing to help us,” Chapman adds. “So, essentially, it’s lost property value. ... I am now stuck in my house. There’s no way I could ever sell it.”

She has lived there for 30 years, she says. The house was built in 1959 by her parents. “I expected to live the rest of my life there. It’s my home.”

Because she is a caregiver in that home for a relative with significant health concerns, Chapman continues, she also is unable to flee when the music begins, unlike some of her neighbors. “The booming just continues to come through. Even standing in the shower, we hear ‘Boom-bahbah-boom-

bahbah-boom-bahbah-boom’ for four hours” on weekend nights.

“I had a tendency to open my windows in the summer and enjoy the nice fresh air,” Rickey says. “Can’t do that anymore.”

Chapman pulls out a copy of an article that appeared in the daily paper in 2010. It is about the plans for the new Bob’s Boathouse on South Tamiami Trail. “Nowhere was it [described] as a nightclub,” Chapman points out. Instead, the article discusses plans to create an establishment similar to the [Phillippi Creek Village Restaurant and Oyster Bar](#), which is located nearby at 5353 S. Tamiami Trail.

Referring to Bob’s Boathouse, Rickey interjects, “They’re too busy trying to kiss our keel,” referring to signs at Bob’s.



*Danny Chapman, Michele’s father, used to train Sailor Circus students on trapezes in this setting.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*A laurel oak dominates the clearing next to Michele Chapman's house. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

“If he had wanted to set up a nice quiet restaurant,” Chapman says of owner Thomas LeFevre — whose family story is on the restaurant’s [website](#) — “nobody would have said anything, but he came out blasting on Day 1.”

Chapman adds, “There’s just no way to impart the absolute disaster here.”

## THE BANDS PLAY ON

Chapman has become well versed in the procedure for taking noise meter readings, and it is she who ends up calling the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office time and again to report violations of the county’s revised Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance, [which the County Commission approved on a split vote on March 19.](#)

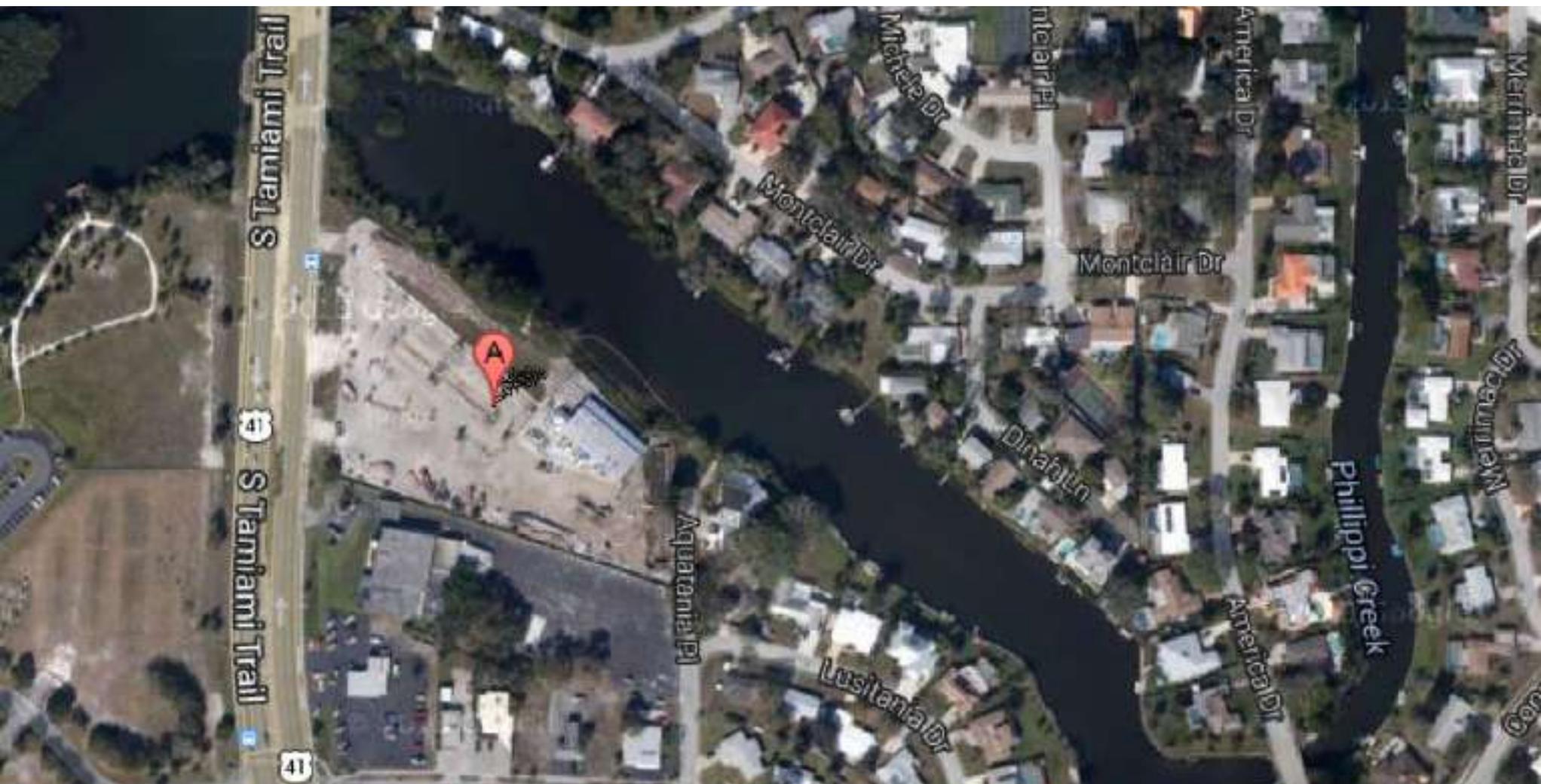
Referring to the deputies who have responded to those calls, Chapman adds, “Really, they’ve

been *very* supportive, *very* supportive. Without them, we would be completely insane.”

It seems to Chapman and neighbors that the staff and the bands that play at the restaurant have made a conscious effort to put figurative roadblocks in the paths of those deputies. Chapman describes the difficulty of getting ambient noise readings, which are necessitated by county code. A deputy has to record levels of sound with which to compare the decibel readings of the music.

On some nights, she points out, the person handling karaoke at Bob’s Boathouse blasts bursts of music for 10 to 15 minutes at intervals. There is no way a deputy could get to her house in time to record what seems to be an intensely high level of sound, Chapman points out.

She keeps going back to a comment Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine



An aerial view shows the proximity of Bob’s Boathouse (marked by the flag) to residences on Montclair Drive and other streets. Image from Google Maps

Robinson made at the March 19 meeting. “I don’t want anyone to think that is going to solve the problem,” Robinson said of the vote. “We have rules that are already being broken by [Bob’s Boathouse].” Referring to the owners of the establishment, Robinson added, “They’re intent on doing what they’re doing.”

“A lot of this is punishment,” Chapman says, referring to incidents at the restaurant in the aftermath of the passage of the revised ordinance.

Yet, no cases have yet reached the trial stage as of this writing, according to court records.

“My biggest issue is that I’m [thinking I am] never going to have a chance to say anything to anybody as the victim,” Chapman adds.

“The only thing I have ever tried to do was seek a little peace and quiet from [LeFevre],” Rickey says, “and the more you try, the louder he plays.”

## BACK IN THE CLEARING

On this quiet morning at Chapman’s house, noise from U.S. 41 is barely noticeable. Across the creek, Bob’s Boathouse stands silent.

Chapman points to the massive laurel oak that dominates the clearing and talks of how her father, Danny Chapman, trained [Sailor Circus](#) students on trapezes there before the big circus tent was erected on Bahia Vista Street in Sarasota.

Danny Chapman even started the Ringling Clown College on the property, Michele says.

“I used to climb the trees,” she adds. “I love this place.”

She does not know whether she ever will be able to enjoy lasting quiet again in that lovely Old Florida setting.

Yet, she says, “I will never give up. He will never stop hearing from me protesting his invasion of my home. I will never give up till the day I die.” 



*In February, a sign at the rear of the Bob’s Boathouse property said, ‘We are here to kiss your keel!’ Residents who live nearby later reported seeing modified versions of the sign that referenced kissing ‘our neighbors’ keels.’ File photo*



## PRIMED FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION

*Siesta Key Village Association President Wendall Jacobsen and Treasurer Roz Hyman listen to a comment during the organization's Aug. 5 meeting. All photos by Rachel Hackney*

### **ENFORCEMENT CALLED THE KEY TO A PROPOSAL REGARDING LIMITED OUTDOOR DISPLAYS ON SIESTA KEY, A MEASURE THAT WAS SET FOR A PUBLIC HEARING ON AUG. 7**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

Both the president of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) and the executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce planned to be present on the evening of Aug. 7 when the Sarasota County Planning Commission considered whether to recommend the County Commission approve outdoor displays on Siesta Key under strict guidelines.

Debra Lynn-Schmitz, executive director of the Chamber, said she was prepared to offer the support of her members.

SKVA President Wendall Jacobsen told about 20 members of his organization at their Aug. 5 meeting that while he probably would voice support for the proposed revision of the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD), he also would stress enforcement if the changes ultimately win approval of the County Commission.

Mark Toomey, owner of [Robin Hood Rentals](#)

and a leader of the business group advocating for the revision, told *The Sarasota News Leader* he had sent an email to all the members of that

“ *Don't pass it if you're not going to enforce it.* ”

Russell Matthes  
Co-Owner  
Daiquiri Deck Raw Bars



committee, reminding them about the session. “Obviously, I’m going to be there,” he said on Aug. 5. “I’d love for [all the others] to go.”

SKVA Vice President Mark Smith ended up drafting the most recent version of the ordinance after the first revision, prepared last summer by then-Siesta Key Chamber Executive Director Kevin Cooper, was rejected as too lenient.

Past SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie pointed out at the Aug. 5 meeting that the process began after retailers complained last year that they saw a significant drop in sales following their receipt of county Code Enforcement staff warnings that they no longer could display merchandise outside their shops. Their

protests and the county action came on the heels of a May 2013 educational session the SKVA hosted about the provisions of the SKOD.

While Toomey and other members of the business committee have worked over the past several months to get the proposal in front of the Planning and County commissions, SKVA members have complained that not all merchants and rental firm operators have been adhering to the new guidelines, as they had vowed to do as a good faith demonstration.

Still, Jacobsen said on Aug. 5, “The majority of the people have been following the rules, according to what Mark and Cheryl put together.”



*Coconuts on south Siesta Key had two racks of clothing displayed outside in early March.*

“I think enforcement is going to be a problem no matter what we put in place,” [Beach Bites](#) owner Jeff Madden noted.

“I agree with you,” Jacobsen replied. “I’ve been dealing with [flouting of the SKOD regulations] since ’08,” as a member of the SKVA. “All we can do is continue to try and push forward.”

“People who are going to obey the rules are going to obey the rules,” Russell Matthes, co-owner of the [Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar restaurants](#), added. “The caveat [for supporting the revision] needs to be ... 100 percent enforcement. Don’t pass it if you’re not going to enforce it,” Matthes said, referring to the county commissioners.

“If our current [county] Code Enforcement [officer] is too busy dealing with illegal rentals and everything else on the key,” Jacobsen continued, “what is the point of going through all of this. ... There were rules in place that weren’t being enforced from the get-go.”

(John Lally, the primary Code Enforcement officer on the key, has told SKVA and Siesta Key Association (SKA) members — as well as this reporter — that violations of the county’s regulation regarding rentals of homes and condos have made up the vast majority of cases he has investigated over the past several months.)

Businesses theoretically self-enforce the SKOD provisions, Kay Kouvatsos, co-owner of



*Debra Lynn-Schmitz is the executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce.*

the [Village Café](#), pointed out, but for the past 25 years, that has not worked. She concurred with the view that the revision should not be approved if county staff will not enforce it.

“I know Michael’s over there biting his tongue,” Jacobsen said, referring to SKA President Michael Shay. “They don’t approve of it,” Jacobsen added of the SKA directors.

Shay repeatedly has underscored the refusal of some island businesses to abide by the measures in the revision.

Matthes reiterated another point made in recent months — that Code Enforcement officers have not been citing anyone over outdoor displays, at the direction of their supervisors, while the revision has worked its way through the county steps to potential approval.

“Years ago, they were kind of strict, actually,” Matthes said of the Code Enforcement staff members. With the proposed changes, he continued, “we are actually making it easier for the retailer. Yet, we’re still looking for enforcement.”

“We think there’s a good plan in place if it’s enforced,” Gaddie said.

If the revisions are approved, Matthes told members, “If we see people in violation, let’s not turn away. Go ahead and call the commissioners and Code Enforcement to get [them] taken care of. ... Those few people who are ruining it for everybody else need to be held accountable.”



*Customers in March browsed items at Comfort Shoes in Davidson Plaza. Comfort Shoes owner Rick Lizotte is one of the leaders of the committee that has advocated for limited outdoor displays on the island.*

## THE PROPOSED CHANGES

According to the draft ordinance prepared for the Planning Commission, a business owner would have to pay a \$25 fee for a Temporary Use Permit before he or she could provide any type of outdoor display on properties zoned Commercial General/Siesta Key Overlay District. The application would include a "Sidewalk Layout Plan." That layout would have to show that all the display area would be on the business' property and not in the public right of way; that it would allow a 5-foot clearance so pedestrians easily could stay on the sidewalks, as well as a 2-foot setback from parking areas and streets; that the linear length of the display would not exceed 33 percent of the linear storefront dimension; and that the maximum height of the display would be 7 feet above the sidewalk. No merchandise could hang from any portion of the building exterior, including windows and doors.

Further, the display area would be limited to two of the following:

- A table with a maximum measurement of 72 inches in length, 36 inches in width and 30 inches in height.
- A mannequin no larger than 24 inches in diameter and 72 inches in height.
- A clothing rack no longer than 72 inches, no wider than 24 inches and no taller than 72 inches.
- A mobile cart no larger than 60 inches in length by 30 inches in width by 36 inches in height.

For firms that rent items such as bicycles and scooters, the display area could not encompass more than 240 square feet of space or be taller than 12 feet.

The Temporary Use Permit would be valid for no longer than a year. Two violations of the conditions set out in the SKOD would necessitate revocation of the permit. If that happened, the business would be unable to apply for another permit for a year.

County staff has found that the proposed revision "does not inhibit or obstruct any goals, objectives, or policies of the Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan," according to a memo prepared for the Planning Commission by the Planning and Development Services staff.

## HELPING NEW BUSINESSES

While the SKVA and the Chamber await the outcome of the SKOD discussion at the county level, Jacobsen and Lynn-Schmitz are putting together a committee whose members will work to educate new business owners about the island's zoning regulations, Jacobsen said on Aug. 5. A packet of the same material will be available to any person considering opening an establishment on the island, he added.

"The important part of that," Lynn-Schmitz pointed out, is learning about "a business that may not be highly visible to us, so we can get to them and give them this educational packet."

She stressed, "If you know of a business ... even before somebody signs on the dotted line ... let us know." 



# Siesta Seen

**THE VILLAGE MAINTENANCE CORP. IS HOPEFUL THE COUNTY COMMISSION WILL APPROVE A NEW UPKEEP CONTRACT ON AUG. 26; THE 162 BEACH ROAD SPECIAL MAGISTRATE HEARING IS DELAYED; CRYSTAL CLASSIC DETAILS ARE PROVIDED; AND ST. BONIFACE WELCOMES ALL TO AN AUG. 17 OPEN HOUSE**



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Aug. 20 will be the final day for Championship Landscape Management Professionals of Fort Myers to deal with the upkeep of Siesta Village, architect and Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) Vice President Mark Smith told about 20 members of the organization during their Aug. 5 meeting.

County Procurement Department staff will be recommending that the County Commission

approve a new contract for Village maintenance during the board's afternoon session on Aug. 26, he added. Although only one bid came in for the work — from Buccaneer Landscape Management of Pinellas County — Smith said he felt the \$129,041.50 figure the company provided was “probably about right, quite honestly.” He pointed out that county staff had expanded the scope of work to



*Customers of [The Local Bean](#) find a shady spot to enjoy morning beverages in Siesta Village. During an anticipated two-week lapse when a maintenance contract will not be in effect, the county is expected to have a firm handle garbage pick-up in the Village. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

include some responsibilities Championship did not have, such as pressure washing.

As he told me last month, Smith pointed out to the SKVA members that he had the opportunity to talk with the owner of Buccaneer during a mandatory pre-bid session in the Village and was impressed with him. The firm has about 65 employees, Smith continued, and he understands it is moving its Punta Gorda operation to Sarasota.

“I’m hopeful,” he said, that all will go smoothly.

When Siesta Key Association (SKA) President Michael Shay asked whether the County Commission would willingly award the

contract to Buccaneer, given the situation of a solitary bidder for the contract, Smith said, “That was my question, also. If [the bid] had come in around \$400,000, I would say, ‘No.’”

However, Smith noted, the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp. (SKVMC) board did review the bid with county staff, “and we have a fiduciary responsibility to the property owners, ’cause it’s our tax money that pays for the maintenance. I believe this ... price is in line ... so we don’t have a problem with it. And I’m hoping that the County [Commission] won’t.”

The alternative to the board’s accepting the Procurement Department’s recommendation



*With school not yet back in session, visiting families were easy to spot as they strolled through Siesta Village this week. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

to award the contract, Smith added, would be to bid out each part of the upkeep work separately, including the landscaping and the hardscape maintenance. “It would be much more difficult and time-consuming to manage it on our end. So I’m hoping that the management company gets the go-ahead.”

He said he planned to be at the County Commission meeting on Aug. 26 to make that point.

When past SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos asked whether recycling will be part of the new contract, Smith responded, “I met with the county [staff] again to discuss this. We

will get all our ducks in a row before March and make it happen. **There was miscommunication.** I can take full blame.”

According to the county code governing the Village upkeep, the SKVMC — which Smith serves as a director and liaison to the county — has to notify county staff no later than March 15 of each year about any changes the organization wishes to see included in the contractual level of services.

“If you all want to fire me, that’s fine,” Smith deadpanned.

“Good luck!” Kouvatsos responded as laughter ensued. (Smith was president of the SKVA for



*An orange cone (far right) marks the location of a bollard that reportedly was knocked over by a taxi picking up a passenger at the Beach Club. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

many years, and he has been a longtime leader of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce.)

Replying to another question, Smith explained that county staff is working on a bid for garbage pick-up in Siesta Village for about two weeks, between the end of the Championship contract and the anticipated approval of the Buccaneer bid.

“The landscaping portion [of the upkeep], trimming, that type thing, won’t happen, most likely, during this time period,” Smith explained.

## 162 BEACH ROAD

Ninety minutes after the 8:30 a.m. start of the SKVA meeting, a mediation session had been planned regarding the [County Commission’s second denial in two years](#) of a couple’s petition to construct a home completely seaward of the county’s Gulf Beach Setback Line (GBSL).

On May 21, Ronald and Sania Allen, owners of the parcel at 162 Beach Road, filed a Request for Relief with the county, acting under a Florida Statute known as the Florida Land



*‘We’re still pretty busy with crowds at the beach,’ Deputy Chris McGregor reported to the Siesta Key Village Association on Aug. 5, as evidenced by beach-goers getting gear together later that morning in the beach parking lot. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

Use Environmental Dispute Resolution Act (FLUEDRA). The Request says the board's denial of the Allens' variance petition in April left them not only unable to construct a house on the site but also unable to "make any other beneficial use of the Property."

In a June 4 memo to the commissioners, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh explained that among the possible outcomes of the action could be the county's purchase of the property, an adjustment of the county's variance standards or suggestions of conditions that would allow development.

On Aug. 4, Howard Berna, the environmental supervisor for the county who handled both the Allens' variance petitions, told me a Special Magistrate hearing on the Request for Relief was postponed until Sept. 16 because of a determination that additional information needed to be obtained beforehand, and that could not be accomplished by Aug. 5.

The decision about the postponement resulted from a mediation session involving the Allens and county staff, Berna added. That session was not open to the public, while the Special Magistrate hearing will be, he said.



*Improvements are under way on part of the old parking lot at Siesta Public Beach. According to the county [website](#), the primary ingress for the beach near the historic pavilion has been changed to allow people to exit at that location as well. Ron Russo, vice president of the construction management firm, Jon F. Swift, told The Sarasota News Leader on Aug. 5, '[W]e have two exit signs that we are installing today and will try to get two more up tomorrow. This should eliminate any future confusion' about the new egress. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

The Sept. 16 hearing has been scheduled before Special Magistrate Carlos Alvarez at 10 a.m. in the Commission Chambers at the County Administration Building located at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota.

## BOLLARD KNOCKED DOWN

In the first incident of its kind, to my knowledge, since the bollards were installed almost exactly a year ago to improve illumination of Village crosswalks, one of them has been damaged.

A taxi knocked over the one near the Beach Club, at the intersection of Canal Road and Ocean Boulevard, Mark Smith reported during the Aug. 5 SKVA meeting. Risk Management

staff for the county is ordering three “in anticipation of losing two more somewhere down the line,” he added, mostly jokingly.

“That particular area has a history of taxicab incidents,” Smith continued. A bike rack and a bench both have been damaged in the vicinity of the Beach Club. “Apparently, the most convenient spot to pick up someone intoxicated is at the door” of the bar, he added.

## CRYSTAL CLASSIC UPDATE

As reported earlier in this space, the 2014 Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition will take place Nov. 14-18. Past SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie



A map shows (in yellow) where construction is under way at Siesta Public Beach. The ‘CM’ stands for construction manager. Image courtesy Sarasota County

# Siesta Seen

provided the dates to the SKVA members on Aug. 5.

The sculptures will remain on display the Monday and Tuesday after they are judged on the Sunday of the event, she pointed out. Previously, they were left up for the public to see just on Monday.

The [Vendor Village](#) will remain up on Monday this year, too, she said.

As in the past, the VIP sponsor party will be held on Thursday night (Nov. 13, this year), before the competition is opened to the public on Friday. And, as it did in 2013, [Margaritaville Apparel](#) will be the presenting sponsor.

“The artists are mostly in place,” Gaddie noted, referring to the 12 two-person teams that will compete against each other.

Speaking of the Crystal Classic, the founder of the event, Siesta’s own master sand sculptor, Brian Wigelsworth, has tendered his resignation from the SKVA board, President Wendall Jacobsen announced at the end of the organization’s meeting. Wigelsworth reported that he was just too busy to keep the position, between his new business — Gidget’s Coastal Provisions in the Village — and handling his normal responsibilities with the Crystal Classic.



*St. Boniface Episcopal Church is located slightly north of the intersection of Beach Road and Midnight Pass Road. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

The remaining board members will make a decision later about his replacement, Jacobsen said.

## SANDFEST

The traditional fall fundraiser for the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, Sandfest, has been scheduled for Friday, Nov. 7, Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck and Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar restaurants, said during the SKVA meeting.

The event's proceeds go into the fund for the July Fourth fireworks.

"We're putting all of the marketing together now," Matthes added.

Asked whether the event will be at the Siesta Public Beach pavilion as usual, he replied, "At this point, yes," noting that the Chamber wants to keep it on Siesta Key.

As for the theme, Matthes said it will be "Country Hoedown."

When that answer brought some laughter, Matthes added, "I am not kidding. ... It'll be a fun and easy one for everybody to dress up."

## FIGHTING THE FLAMES OF INACCURACY

The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce sent an email blast to its members late last week with talking points to assist them if they get questions about a virus in the Gulf of Mexico

that has sickened about a dozen people in Florida and killed three.

In perhaps the most important talking point about *Vibrio vulnificus*, the email says, "**This is not a flesh-eating bacteria. Necrotic fasciitis is not typically associated with this type of bacterial infection.**" (The bold emphasis is the Chamber's.)

The email pointed out what Florida Department of Health representatives have been saying: The virus "is naturally occurring in the warm saltwater of southwest Florida and Gulf of Mexico." The email added, "It is extremely unfortunate that the media has chosen to use the words, 'flesh-eating' and I encourage you to avoid using that term."

## REBOOT YOUR HARD DRIVE

St. Boniface Episcopal Church, located at 5615 Midnight Pass Road, will host an open house at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 17, with the theme, *Reboot Your Hard Drive at St. Boniface*.

A news release asks, "Do the chaos and noise of too full a schedule, too many questions and too many demands, leave you feeling overwhelmed and anxious? Stop by our Open House! You'll discover the many opportunities for you — and your family — to reboot your hard drive this fall at St. Boniface."

The release adds that the church is "an open, inclusive parish" where all are welcome.

To learn more, visit [bonifacechurch.org](http://bonifacechurch.org) or call 349-5616. 



*The Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival includes July Fourth fireworks over the Sarasota bayfront. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **SUNCOAST SUPER BOAT FESTIVAL HAS HIGHER ECONOMIC IMPACT**

[Suncoast Charities for Children](#) has reported to the Sarasota County Commission that the 2014 Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival had a total economic impact on the community of \$17,228,300, a 10.8-percent increase from last year's total of \$15,549,300, according to an email from Lucy V. Nicandri, vice president of Suncoast Charities.

“I am excited to share with each of you this year's Visitor and Economic Impact Study completed by Research Data Services (which is paid for by the charity so that an accurate analysis can be obtained),” she wrote in an Aug. 5 email.

Among the other key findings, she noted, the festival generated an estimated 15,900 room nights, compared to 13,400 last year, and the combined expenditures of out-of-county attendees and participants was \$9,574,300, also higher than the 2013 figure, which was \$8,688,500. Nicandri added that 89.1 percent of the out-of-county attendees surveyed said they visited the area because of the race and festival, not because of July Fourth holiday plans. Additionally, 86.1 percent of them reported they plan to return next year, Nicandri wrote.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

## UNIVERSAL FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM WINS BOARD APPROVAL

With no comments offered during their second public hearing on the plan, the members of the Sarasota County School Board voted unanimously on Aug. 5 to implement a Universal Free Breakfast Program at 10 district schools where the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals is 80 percent of the total enrollment or higher.

Those schools are Alta Vista, Emma E. Booker, Gocio, Tuttle and Wilkinson elementary schools; Booker Middle School; [Triad North](#) and Triad South; and both the elementary and middle levels of the [Suncoast School for Innovative Studies](#).

During their July 22 meeting, Beverly Girard, the district's director of Food and Nutrition Services, [discussed the program with the board](#). Afterward, the board held the first of the two required public hearings on implementing the program at the start of the 2014-15 school year.

Funding is available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Girard said at the time.

None of the board members offered further comments on the program before the Aug. 5 vote.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*



*Sarasota County School Board members meet with Todd Bowden, the district's executive director of career, technical and adult education (second from left), and Deputy Superintendent Scott Lempe (third from left) on June 17. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## CITY'S ANNUAL STREET REPAVING PROGRAM UNDER WAY

The City of Sarasota's annual street paving project started this week and will continue through January, with approximately 9 miles of streets targeted for milling and resurfacing, the city has announced.

Prior to work commencing in a neighborhood, signs will be posted to provide specific dates when crews will be in the area, a news release says. [Click here to see a map for the tentative resurfacing schedule.](#)

Hashay Drive, Hawthorne Street, Hillview Street and Illehaw Drive were scheduled to be paved this week.

Streets are slated for resurfacing based on criteria established by an asset management team within the Public Works Department, the release explains. "Throughout the year, crews use a scale of 1-100 to rate roads as they drive around the city," the release points out. Staff members also take residents' recommendations into consideration.



*The City of Sarasota will be repaving roads through January. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

## PATTERSON FOUNDATION TO KICK OFF NEW INITIATIVE ON AUG. 12

The Patterson Foundation will kick off its Aspirations to Actions initiative, in collaboration with The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, with a speech by national public discourse expert Rich Harwood on Aug. 12 from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at Lakewood Ranch Country Club, the Foundation has announced.

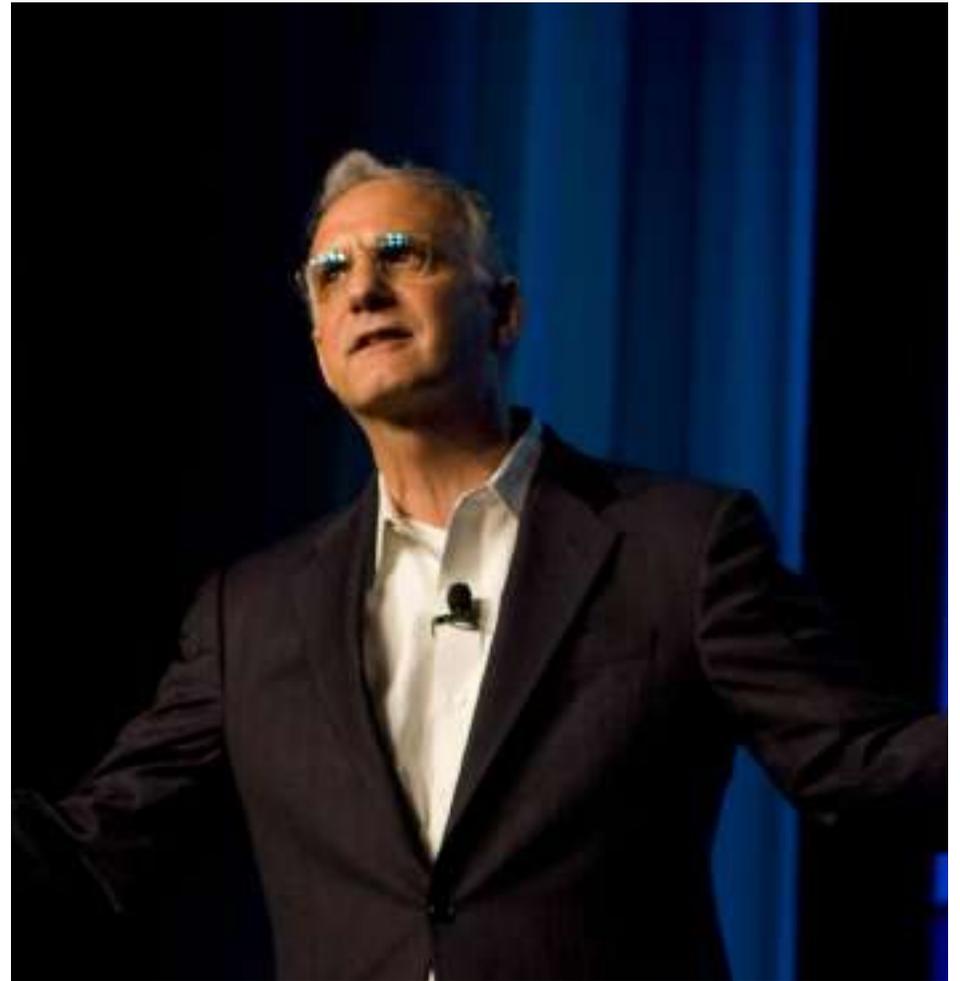
The club is located at 7650 Legacy Blvd. in Lakewood Ranch. The event is open to the public, a news release points out.

During his speech, *Reclaiming Main Street*, Harwood “will share how individuals and organizations can become catalysts for positive change and engage in and strengthen their communities,” the release says. Harwood is “a renowned leader in bringing communities together,” it points out. The address will be part of his [cross-country campaign](#), during which he will talk with people about their [aspirations](#) for their communities, with the goal of training 5,000 public innovators by 2016, the release continues.

Harwood’s address will launch The Patterson Foundation’s Aspirations to Actions initiative, in which individuals selected from the region will participate in three days of training during a Public Innovators Lab presented by Harwood and coaches from The Harwood Institute, the release notes.

“We are always interested in collaboration and innovation while embracing new ideas,” said Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation, in the release.

“The Aspirations to Actions initiative and The Harwood Institute’s techniques have enormous potential to positively impact our



*Rich Harwood will address Sarasota County residents on Aug. 12. Photo courtesy of [The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation](#)*

region and the lives of people who are proud to live here.”

“During the Public Innovators Lab, more than 70 individuals representing diverse geographic and issue areas will learn the Institute’s approaches to ‘turn outward’ by developing a deeper understanding of their communities and using that knowledge to make community the reference point for positive change,” the release says.

The Patterson Foundation, which is providing full scholarships for all of the selected participants, will also provide support for them as they carry out their work throughout the coming year, the release adds.

To learn more about Harwood and The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, visit [theharwoodinstitute.org](http://theharwoodinstitute.org).

## WATER FESTIVAL AFTER PARTY TO FEATURE MUSIC AND FASHION

Following the third Sarasota Bay Water Festival, which will be held on Saturday, Nov. 1, at Ken Thompson Park and City Island, an after party has been scheduled at Circus City Architectural Salvage, featuring live music with Lisa Ridings & Vertigo, local DJ TL Hollefeld, the Aqua-Garde Fashion Show and free beer and wine samples, organizers have announced.

Prizes will be awarded to the most original designs using mostly plastics and other recyclables, a news release says.



*The Aqua-Garde Fashion Show will be held at Circus City Architectural Salvage in Sarasota. Contributed photo*

“The after party is an opportunity to thank the many sponsors, exhibitors and volunteers that support the Sarasota Bay Water Festival,” said Randy Moore with Triple 3 Marketing in the release. “The Aqua-Garde Fashion Show raises awareness about the problem of discarded plastic items harming marine life and birds.”

Proceeds from the fundraiser will benefit Save Our Seabirds and Sea to Shore Alliance, two area nonprofits that protect wildlife, including birds, sea turtles, manatees and whales,



*The Aqua-Garde Fashion Show on Nov. 1 will feature original designs made out of plastics and other recyclables. Contributed photo*

the release points out. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Ticket pick-up locations will be posted online Sept. 1 at [WaterFestivalAfterParty.com](http://WaterFestivalAfterParty.com).

The 2014 Sarasota Bay Water Festival will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Ken Thompson Park, with live music; dragon boat races; speakers, including acclaimed nature photographer Clyde Butcher; water recreation exhibitors; an Art Zone with art and photography for sale; a display of the winning submissions to the *I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest*; children's activities; food trucks; and a beer and wine garden. The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is the founding sponsor of the festival. Learn more at [SarasotaBayWaterFestival.com](http://SarasotaBayWaterFestival.com).



*Proceeds from the Sarasota Bay Water Festival will benefit organizations that protect wildlife and help save those that come to harm. Contributed photo*

## CITY HOSTS SESSION WITH NORTH SARASOTA RESIDENTS

On July 31, Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino, City Manager Tom Barwin and members of the Sarasota Police Department sat down with north Sarasota residents and business owners for nearly two hours to discuss late-night violence, quality-of-life issues and proposed changes to retail business hours along the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Way corridor, the Police Department has announced.

Throughout the meeting, residents and business owners “expressed a desire for strict enforcement of laws” regarding violence, alcohol-related crimes, noise violations and narcotics, a news release says. By the end of the meeting, retail business owners voluntarily vowed to close their doors at 2:30 a.m., the release adds. “This agreement continues

the Community Oriented Policing philosophy of listening to the public and working together in partnership to solve problems,” the release notes.

Since the meeting, all retail businesses have closed their doors at 2:30 a.m. as promised, the release adds. At the same time, the Police Department has begun more traffic enforcement in north Sarasota; officer presence will be increased on strategically chosen days in the coming weeks, the release notes. The “Police Department will be strictly enforcing laws” and asking members of the community and visitors to adhere to all laws or face citations and the possibility of arrest, the release points out.

“Our meeting last week was a chance to continue the conversation about public and officer safety,” said Chief DiPino in the release. “We all want the violence to stop. We all want the shootings to stop. We will continue to work together to keep our community safe. Life is too precious.”

“We hope to continue these meetings in the coming weeks,” added Lt. Pat Ledwith of the Criminal Investigation Division in the release. “This is a chance to continue a two-way dialogue with businesses and residents in our community to continue reducing actual crime and the fear of crime in our neighborhoods.”



*City Manager Tom Barwin (at far right on the front row) and Police Chief Bernadette DiPino (third from right on the front row) were among city representatives who met with Newtown residents and business owners on July 31. Photo courtesy Police Department*

## 174 HOMELESS AND AT-RISK CHILDREN RECEIVE HELP DURING DAY OF HOPE

Nearly 175 homeless and at-risk children living in the community received medical, dental and vision checkups, haircuts, backpacks filled with school supplies and other essentials on Aug. 2 during the Church of the Redeemer's fourth year of hosting a Day of Hope event at its downtown parish campus, the church has announced.

Nearly 290 parishioners and community volunteers and partners pulled together for the day-long event to help youngsters in need prepare for the upcoming school year "and give them the basics to start the first day of school on a level playing field with other schoolmates," a news release says. Day of Hope began locally in 2009; it is organized

annually by the Bradenton nonprofit Hope Kids Community, the release adds.

Day of Hope at Redeemer began with hot breakfasts of bacon, eggs, toast, fruit and juices served to 174 children and their siblings and families, the release continues. As the morning progressed, children, with parents and sometimes grandparents, were escorted through a series of private rooms and spaces that had been transformed into medical facilities with local doctors, physician assistants and medical teams performing needed tests and evaluations.

Children were guided through areas and table setups where they were allowed to select school supplies, personal care items, games



*Fritz Maxwell and brothers George Swain Jr. and Garrison Swain contributed manpower in the kitchen during the Church of the Redeemer's Day of Hope, held on Saturday, Aug. 2. Maxwell is a Redeemer parishioner entering his sophomore year studying accounting at Florida State University. The Swain brothers are 2014 graduates of Booker High School; in mid-August, both will head to Nebraska on football scholarships to study business at Concordia University. Contributed photo*

and toys, and they were given gift certificates for new clothes and shoes, as well as government services information, haircuts, and even family portraits.

“In the afternoon, a full Thanksgiving lunch was served, and everyone was sent home with leftovers and canned goods,” the release notes. “All services and items were free to the children and their families.”

“These beautiful young children from our community deserve every ounce of support we can offer,” said Redeemer Senior Warden Jody Maxwell in the release. “Education is the foundation for everything they will pursue and achieve throughout their lives; it’s

vitaly important that they have the basics to get them off to the best start possible as they head back for another school year. Our parish is deeply honored and grateful to have the opportunity to collaborate with so many medical professionals and caring businesses and organizations who made this year’s Day of Hope possible.”

Food, supplies, gift cards, gift items, on-site information services and medical services and care “were generously donated” by local businesses, medical personnel and organizations, the release continues: Direct Energy Services, Publix, Bealls, Payless, First Federal Sarasota, Oasis Café, Big Apple Market, Hope Kids, Barbara Banks Photography, Maria Lyle



*Young Redeemer parishioners Millie Menke and Annie Pollard helped Day of Hope children and their families stay cool by serving up flavored ice cones. Contributed photo*

Photography, Nuovo Salon, Cutting Loose Salon, James Griffith Salon, All Faiths Food Bank, Northeastern University, Home Depot, Morton's Market, Sarasota Fire Department, Sarasota Memorial Hospital and the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County.

In addition to all the indoor checkups and other activities, children had opportunities for fun and games outside, the release notes. On the parish lawn, activities ranged from bubble blowing to dog petting to corn hole bag tossing to ring tosses and the enjoyment of live music.

Home Depot of Cattlemen Road in Sarasota gave away tomato and herb plants on the lawn, as well as flowers, and flavored snow cones were whipped up by Church of the Redeemer youth, the release says.

The Church of the Redeemer is a traditional Episcopal church located in the heart of downtown Sarasota, at 222 S. Palm Ave. For more information, visit [redeemersarasota.org](http://redeemersarasota.org) or call 955-4263. For more information about Hope Kids Community, visit [hopekc.org](http://hopekc.org) or call 544-4850.

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## DENT REMINDS VOTERS ABOUT ONLINE ABSENTEE BALLOT TRACKING

Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent is reminding voters who have requested an absentee ballot for the Aug. 26 Primary Election that they may track their ballot online from the time they put in the request until the voted ballot has safely reached the Supervisor of Elections Office.

The online tracking system also allows voters to check registration status, party affiliation and local polling place information, as well as to request an absentee ballot, a news release points out. Voters may go to the Supervisor of Elections (SOE) website at [SarasotaVotes.com](http://SarasotaVotes.com) and select the "Vote by Mail" icon at the top of the homepage, the release continues. Then they should choose "Track your Absentee Ballot" from the menu and enter the requested information.

Requests for absentee ballots to be mailed to the voter must be received by the supervisor of elections no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 20, the release adds.

Dent cautions absentee voters that, for the ballot to be counted, the voter certificate on

the return envelope must be signed by the voter and the voted ballot must be received in the Supervisor of Elections Office no later than 7 p.m. on election day. "Marked absentee ballots may *not* be turned in at a polling place on election day," the release stresses.

Effective as of Jan. 1, 2014, a person who has forgotten to sign the voter certificate on the return envelope has until 5 p.m. the day before the election to "cure" the missing signature by completing an absentee ballot affidavit and providing an ID to the supervisor of elections, the release points out. A copy of the affidavit and instructions are available on the SOE website.

Dent also reminds voters whose signatures may have changed since they last voted that signature updates must be made on a Florida Voter Registration Application and presented to the Supervisor of Elections Office prior to the start of the absentee ballot canvass, which is set for 8:30 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 18.

Voters may contact the SOE Office at 861-8600 for assistance or for more information.

## SCOPE TO HONOR CATHY LAYTON AS 2014 BOUNDARY CROSSER

**SCOPE** has announced that its Annual Celebration, which will be held on Thursday, Sept. 25, at Michael's on East, will honor Cathy Layton as the 2014 Boundary Crosser Award recipient. The community event is open to all county residents, a news release points out.

"The Annual Celebration brings the community together each year to honor a Boundary Crosser — that individual who has connected people across lines that traditionally divide community," said John McCarthy, SCOPE executive director, in the release. "This year, the public was invited to participate in the nomination process, along with the committee of citizens and former Boundary Crossers. We're pleased to be honoring Cathy Layton as the 2014 Boundary Crosser."

Layton, who has held numerous leadership roles in the community, is chairwoman of the

Board of Trustees of Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, the release points out. She has been recognized as a leading force in the completion of the Children's Rainforest Garden.

Boundary Crossers are honored not only for creating positive change in the community, but also for inspiring others to do the same, the release continues. SCOPE [website](#) visitors can find out more about the Boundary Crosser Award and previous honorees.

Registrations are being accepted for the Annual Celebration, which will be held from 5 to 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 25. The cost is \$35 for individual seats, \$150 for Circle of Friends support and \$500 for a table of eight. Hors d'oeuvres, wine and beer will be served. The public may register at [scopexcel.org](http://scopexcel.org) or contact Maureen Hadden at 365-8751 or [mhadden@scopexcel.org](mailto:mhadden@scopexcel.org). 



*Selby Gardens board Chairwoman Cathy Layton addresses the audience during the November opening of the Ann Goldstein Children's Rainforest Garden. Photo by Robert Hackney*



*Siesta Dunes has been a perennial winner of the Siesta Key Condominium Council's Christmas Lighting Contest. File photo*

## HALFACRE CONSTRUCTION REVAMPS SIESTA DUNES CONDOS

[Halfacre Construction Co.](#), the area's oldest locally owned and operated private commercial construction firm, is restoring the exterior of the four-story beachfront buildings at the [Siesta Dunes](#) condominiums in Sarasota, Halfacre has announced.

The \$1.3 million renovation project began early this month "and will take an aggressive three months to finish," a news release says. The first phase, which included two buildings, was completed in November 2013, the release adds.

"Halfacre Construction is proud that the Siesta Dunes Condominiums board of directors and staff entrusted us with the second phase of their exterior renovation project," said Andy Stultz, project executive for

Halfacre Construction, in the release. "We look forward to delivering another project on time, within the budget and with the highest level of quality. It's the greatest compliment to build lasting relationships and have repeat clients like Siesta Dunes."

The two remaining buildings, with 32 units each, will undergo a total exterior overhaul, the release continues. The restoration includes replacing all the common area walkways and balconies with new structural steel, concrete, handrails, guardrails and a ceiling system, the release explains. Ground floor pavers and a traffic coating system, which will seal the concrete from moisture intrusion, will allow for positive drainage for stormwater, the release notes.

## THINK DONSON CELEBRATES ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Think Donson, a firm that provides traditional and digital marketing solutions through services including website development and design, search engine optimization, graphic design and branding, is celebrating its one-year anniversary by “giving back,” it has announced.

Think Donson partners Gary Donson and Felicia Rothberg have chosen to support the Payton Wright Foundation by donating a gas card to the organization every time they engage a new client, a news release says.

The Payton Wright Foundation (PWF) was established to help support families who are caring for children with brain cancer, the release points out. Established in 2008 by Patrick and Holly Wright, the foundation honors the memory of the couple’s daughter, Payton, who passed away from brain cancer at the age of 5, the release adds. PWF works with families, physicians and social workers to provide practical relief for needs such as fuel, food and housing expenses so families “can focus their full attention on their child’s care and treatment,” the release points out.

“We have talked to, worked and volunteered with many organizations over the course of our careers,” said Rothberg in the release. “We have been so impressed with the consistently high quality and compassionate work of the Payton Wright Foundation and feel not only that it’s a good fit for us on a personal level, but also that our modest contribution will really help to make a difference in peoples’ lives.”

“Our first year in business together has exceeded our expectations, and we feel so



*Gary Donson and Felicia Rothberg are the partners behind Think Donson. Contributed photo*

fortunate to be able to do what we love — and do it together,” Donson added. “We feel the least we can do to celebrate our good fortune is to give back to families in need.”

Think Donson recently tweaked its branding and redesigned its own website. “We wanted to showcase current trends, which incorporate clean design, full screen visuals, a focus on a ‘message,’ easy navigation and, most importantly, responsive design,” Donson noted in the release. “The site looks great on all devices.”

Think Donson celebrated its anniversary on Aug. 1. Donson and Rothberg have even more to celebrate: The business partners will marry in October.

For more information about Think Donson or its charitable activities, call 487-0036 or visit [ThinkDonson.com](http://ThinkDonson.com).

## ATTORNEY MORGAN BENTLEY RECEIVES BOARD CERTIFICATION

Attorney Morgan R. Bentley, a partner of the Sarasota-based law firm Bentley & Bruning P.A., recently received his board certification in business litigation law from The Florida Bar, the firm has announced.

Board-certified lawyers “have taken extra steps to have their competence and experience evaluated,” a news release explains. “Certification recognizes attorneys’ special knowledge, skills and proficiency in various areas of law, and professionalism and ethics in practice,” it adds. “Certification is The Florida Bar’s highest level of evaluation of attorneys who practice in the 24 areas of law approved for certification by the Supreme Court of Florida.”

Florida Bar President Gregory Coleman said in the release, “Board certification is one of the highest recognitions a lawyer in Florida can receive. The very difficult testing and extensive background peer review to confirm professional conduct is such a high standard that just 7 percent of our eligible membership has achieved this level of recognition.”



*Morgan Bentley/Contributed photo*

Bentley is a past president of the Sarasota County Bar Association, a past chairman of the State Commission on Ethics, a past member of the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Board of Governors and a past winner of the President’s Pro Bono Award from the Florida Supreme Court.

For more information, phone 556-9030 or visit [bentleyandbruning.com](http://bentleyandbruning.com).

## KEVIN BRUNING NAMED TO LEGAL ELITE LIST

Attorney Kevin R. Bruning, a partner of the Sarasota-based law firm Bentley & Bruning P.A., has been named to *Florida Trend* magazine’s prestigious Legal Elite list, the firm has announced. Those recognized on the list have been selected by their peers, who have been invited to name attorneys for whom they have the highest regard or whom they would recommend to others, a news release notes. Only 1,165 lawyers in Florida were named to the 2014 list, which represents just over 1 percent of the nearly 98,600 Florida Bar members, the release points out.

Bruning, previously recognized as a legal “up and comer” by the magazine, is president of the Sarasota County Bar Association and a member and past chairman of the Sarasota County Historic Preservation Board, the release says. He concentrates his practice in the area of complex commercial litigation, involving primarily real estate and business-related disputes, the release adds.

For more information, phone 556-9030 or visit [bentleyandbruning.com](http://bentleyandbruning.com).

## SYPRETT MESHAD ATTORNEYS RECEIVE STATEWIDE RECOGNITION

Syprett Meshad President Michael L. Resnick and Partner Teresa D. Jones have been selected to the Florida Super Lawyers list, and Managing Partner Nancy E. Cason has been named a Rising Star for the second straight year, the Sarasota firm has announced.

Only 5 percent of lawyers in the state are selected for Super Lawyer honor; less than 2.5 percent are selected for the Rising Star distinction, which is reserved for those age 40 or younger, a news release points out. Resnick was selected in the category of family law; Jones, in personal injury-general defense; and Cason, in real estate. They were all listed in the June issue of *Super Lawyers Magazine*.

“Lawyers selected to the independently researched Super Lawyers and Rising Star lists have attained a high degree of peer

recognition and professional achievement,” the release explains. “The selection process includes a statewide survey of lawyers and peer reviews by practice areas,” it adds.

A founding partner of Syprett Meshad, Resnick has been recognized by his peers with selection to the Super Lawyers list every year since 2007, the release continues. His family law practice of more than 40 years involves high-profile marital dissolution and post-dissolution cases involving substantial marital assets, complex property division issues, custody, alimony, child support, visitation and modification of marital settlement agreements, the release says. He is admitted to practice law in the State of Florida, the United States District Court of Florida and the United States Supreme Court; he recently



Michael Resnick. Image from [YouTube](#)



Teresa D. Jones/Contributed photo

completed three years of service on the 12th Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee, the release adds.

Jones has been honored with the Super Lawyer selection every year since the annual listing began in 2006, the release notes. Board-certified in civil trial law, her practice involves cases of personal injury, wrongful death, insurance claims, premises liability, real property disputes, general litigation and appeals, it adds. She is admitted to practice in state courts in Alabama (special membership) and Florida, the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court.

Cason's practice focuses on all aspects of real estate law, both transactional and those involving litigation, the release notes. Her transactional practice ranges from business, commercial and residential contracts, leases and closings to foreclosure prevention (short sales, deeds in lieu of foreclosure and loan modifications), title insurance, commercial and private lending, general business law/corporate formation and land-use law. She is also a member of the firm's litigation department, practicing in the areas of general real estate litigation, foreclosure defense, general commercial litigation, landlord/tenant law, estate/probate/trust litigation and appellate advocacy, the release continues. She is admitted



*Nancy Cason/Contributed photo*

to practice in the State of Florida and before the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida. She serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Sarasota County Bar Association and volunteers with the 12th Judicial Circuit as a pro bono foreclosure defense attorney, the release adds.

For more information about Super Lawyers, visit [superlawyers.com](http://superlawyers.com). To learn more about Sypret Meshad, visit [smrl.com](http://smrl.com) or call 365-7171.

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## **ATTORNEY SCOTT WESTHEIMER NAMED TO FLORIDA'S LEGAL ELITE**

Attorney F. Scott Westheimer, a managing partner of the Sarasota-based law firm Sypret Meshad, has been named to *Florida Trend* magazine's prestigious Legal Elite list for the third consecutive year, the firm has announced.

Those recognized on the list have been selected by their peers, who have been invited to name those attorneys for whom they have the highest regard or whom they would recommend to others, a news release says. Only 1,165 lawyers in Florida were named to the

2014 list, which represents just over 1 percent of the nearly 98,600 Florida Bar members, the release points out.

Westheimer is serving his second year as the 12th Circuit representative for the Florida Bar Board of Governors, representing more than 1,800 attorneys in Sarasota, DeSoto and Manatee counties, the release notes. His law practice is focused primarily on the representation of plaintiffs in personal injury matters, along with various aspects of commercial litigation. He has handled cases involving personal injuries, motorcycle and automobile accidents with severe injuries, premises liability matters, product liability litigation, medical malpractice litigation and commercial litigation, the release continues. He is recognized as an AV® Preeminent Peer Review Rated™ attorney by Martindale-Hubbell.

Westheimer is admitted to practice in the U.S. District Court, Middle District of Florida, and Florida state courts, the release notes. An *ex officio* member of the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division Board of Governors, Westheimer serves his community in a variety of ways, the release says. He is a past



*F. Scott Westheimer/Contributed photo*

president of both the Sarasota County Bar Association and its Young Lawyers Division, and he has served on the board of directors of the Humane Society of Sarasota.

For more information about Syprett Meshad, visit [smrl.com](http://smrl.com) or call 365-7171.

## **SARASOTA DENTIST JOHN PELTON ADDS DENTAL HYGIENIST TO TEAM**

Sarasota dentist John Pelton has added Sabrina R. Taylor, an experienced hygienist, to his full-service dental practice, Pelton has announced.

“Sabrina brings a wealth of knowledge as well as a friendly smile to our professional team,” said Pelton in a news release.

“From regular cleanings to specialized periodontal procedures, Sabrina will deliver the high level of personalized service that our

patients expect at our practice,” Pelton added in the release.

Bilingual in Spanish, Taylor is a registered dental hygienist who is also certified in the delivery of local anesthesia to dental patients, the release points out. She has practiced in the area for five years, since earning her Associate in Science degree in dental hygiene with honors in 2009 at Manatee Community College, the release adds.

“I really enjoy providing dental care and building long-term relationships with patients and their families,” said Taylor in the release. “I also enjoy educating patients about good dental care, while continuing my own professional development.”

In addition to her role with Pelton’s practice, Taylor serves as a part-time instructor in the Dental Hygiene Program at State College of Florida’s campus in Bradenton. She teaches dental students about clinical care, maintaining patient records, taking diagnostic digital radiographs and other professional topics, the release continues.

For more information about Pelton’s practice, located at 3400 S. Tamiami Trail, call 951-7711 or visit [drjohnpelton.com](http://drjohnpelton.com). 



*Sabrina. R. Taylor/Contributed photo*

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*Deputies seized about two pounds of marijuana found in a July 31 traffic stop. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office. (Inset) Carmon P. Merideth/Contributed photo*

## **MAN ARRESTED AFTER DEPUTIES DISCOVER MARIJUANA IN TRAFFIC STOP**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a man on drug charges after finding about two pounds of marijuana during a traffic stop, the office has announced.

On the night of July 31, deputies pulled over a 1999 Ford F-150 driven by Carmon P. Merideth, 20, on Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota, a news release says. During a search of his vehicle, the deputies found three packages of marijuana. All totaled, the drugs weighed 895 grams (just under 2 pounds), and deputies seized approximately \$740 in cash, the

release points out. "Merideth claims to live in Pompano Beach," the release says, but he has an Indiana driver's license and he previously lived in Sarasota.

Merideth was charged with Possession of Cannabis with Intent to Sell and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. He has prior arrests for Cocaine Trafficking, Marijuana Possession and violating probation. In a 2012 case against him, the release notes, law enforcement officers seized nearly 90 grams of cocaine, 246 grams of marijuana and \$18,000 in cash.

## PROACTIVE PATROLLING RESULTS IN ARRESTS OF TWO ON DRUG CHARGES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two brothers on multiple drug-related charges thanks to proactive patrolling efforts near a duplex that has been the subject of neighborhood complaints and the location of six recent drug arrests, the office announced on Aug. 4.

Just before 10 p.m. on Aug. 3, a news release says, deputies on foot patrol in the 2700 block of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way in Sarasota observed several subjects in front of the home. When a marked patrol unit drove down the street, two people immediately fled on foot toward the rear of the building, the release notes. As deputies caught up with one suspect, the other ran north and threw a bag into the yard of a daycare center, the release adds. "Once he was taken into custody, another

deputy located the bag and determined it contained several Hydromorphone pills," the release continues. Both suspects were also allegedly in possession of drugs and cash, the release says.

The suspects, 22-year old Trae Ward and his 20-year-old brother, Ryan — both of 2515 24th St., Sarasota — are charged with Possession of a Controlled Substance with intent to Sell within 1,000 feet of a school and Drug Related Loitering; the latter is a regulation in the Sarasota County code. Ryan is also charged with Obstruction and violating probation on a prior charge of Possession of Cocaine. Additionally, Trae is charged with Possession of Cocaine with Intent to Sell within 1,000 feet of a school.



*Ryan Ward/Contributed photo*



*Trae Ward/Contributed photo*

Trae Ward was also arrested Saturday afternoon, Aug. 2, by a deputy “who tried to stop a vehicle that was speeding and moving erratically,” the news release notes. When the vehicle finally pulled over, Trae was charged with Fleeing to Elude. He

was released on bond four hours later, the release adds.

This is the ninth arrest for each of the Wards, “who have violent criminal histories involving Aggravated Battery as well as multiple weapons and drug charges,” the release points out.

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## **WANTED MEN ARRESTED IN CREDIT CARD FRAUD INVESTIGATION**

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has arrested two men in connection with credit card fraud after a store manager flagged deputies down to report his suspicions, the office has announced.

On the afternoon of Aug. 4, the manager of the Publix located at 3428 Clark Road in Sarasota pointed out the suspects’ vehicle to deputies and said the men had tried to use a Green Dot gift card that appeared to be altered, a news release says. When deputies stopped the

vehicle a few blocks away and then searched, they found wallets with nine Green Dot cards, two American Express cards and an Arizona driver’s license showing one of the suspects with a fake name, the release continues. “Most of the cards contained banking information from Australia,” it adds. Detectives confirmed with Green Dot that the bank numbers did not belong to the corporation, and they learned none of the cards would have a name embossed on it but instead would have



*Carlos Bencomo/Contributed photo*



*Longino Morgan-Terrero/Contributed photo*

“Valued Customer” on the front, the release explains.

Detectives also found multiple gift cards the men allegedly had purchased with the fraudulent cards, the release points out.

Detectives identified the suspects as 54-year-old Carlos Bencomo of Texas and 46-year-old Longino Morgan-Terrero of Largo. They also determined the latter had a warrant for similar crimes in Hillsborough County. The men are charged with one count each of Criminal Possession of Personal Identification. The investigation is ongoing, the release says.



*Sheriff's Office personnel recovered fraudulent credit cards from two men arrested on Aug. 4. Contributed photo*

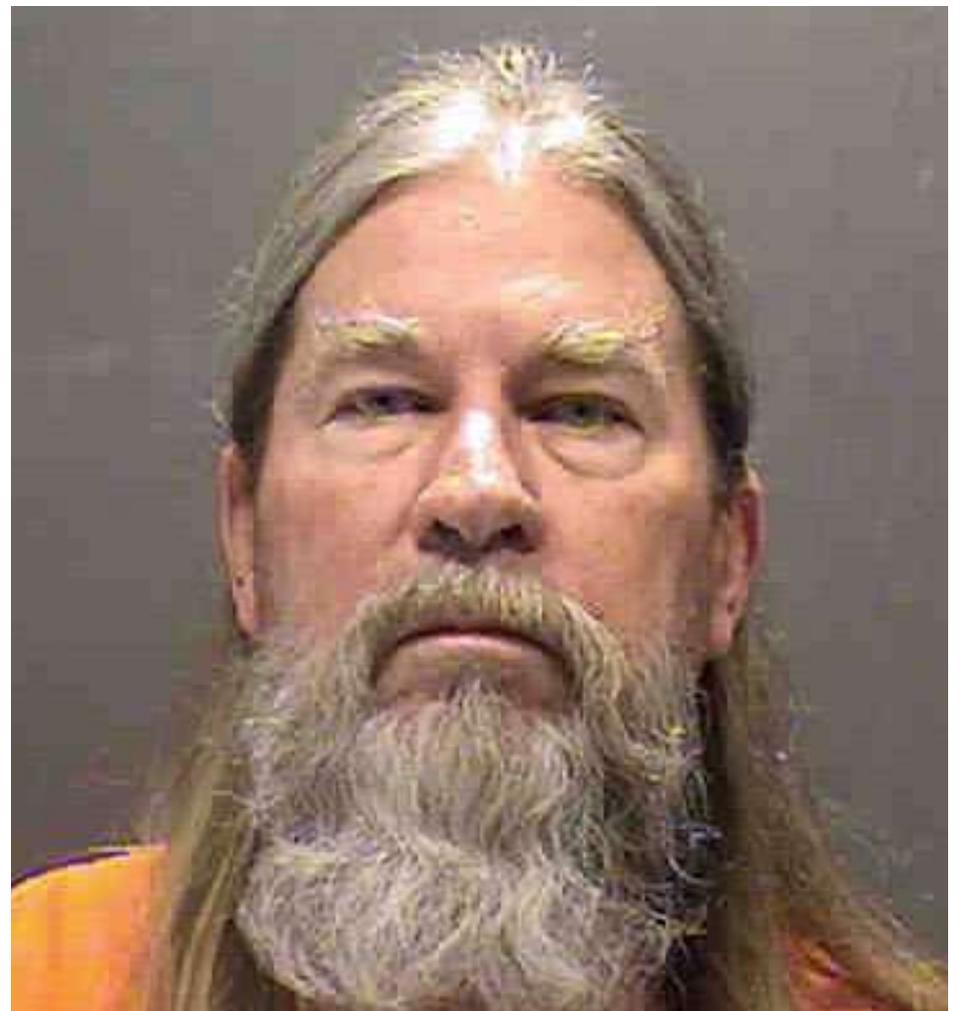
## MAN IN JAIL FOR CHILD SEX CRIMES CHARGED WITH WITNESS TAMPERING

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has charged an inmate at the Sarasota County Jail with two counts of Tampering with a Witness, the office has announced.

“Dennis McGurk is awaiting trial for Capital Sexual Battery stemming from his arrest in [December 2013](#) for crimes against young girls that occurred more than 10 years apart,” a news release says.

At a hearing in January, the judge modified the pre-trial conditions to prohibit direct or indirect contact with alleged victims or witnesses and listed the names of five women, the release continues. “[The judge] stated that there would be ‘zero tolerance’ for any violation,” it points out.

“In May, one of the women received a letter from McGurk begging her not to participate in his prosecution, saying, ‘it will not make you feel better. Spare yourself,’” the release says. In a June phone call to his wife, McGurk said he started an “effective letter writing” campaign, the release adds. In July, McGurk wrote



*Dennis McGurk/Contributed photo*

to his daughter and instructed her to mail something on his behalf to another woman protected by the order and provided the woman's out-of-state address,” the release notes.

McGurk is being held without bond.

## ARRESTS MADE IN VENICE SHOOTING INCIDENTS ON JULY 28

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two men in connection with shooting incidents that took place at Shamrock Park in Venice and on a nearby street, the office has reported.

One of the suspects also was charged with an unrelated crime that occurred on Siesta Key, a news release points out.

According to witnesses, shots were fired from the rear passenger side window of a green Crown Victoria as it drove past the park around 11:30 p.m. on July 28, the release says. Two witnesses followed the suspect's vehicle and called 911 with the tag number. As both vehicles approached the 1300 block of Jamaica Road, the release notes, the Crown Victoria stopped, and the driver allegedly fired

two shots over the witnesses' truck before fleeing the scene.

Detectives found the suspects' vehicle at 1910 Redfern Road and then spoke with the woman listed as the registered owner, the release adds. "She admitted being in the front passenger seat of the car as Andrew Gerace drove to Shamrock Park to watch a fight," the release says. She told the detectives that she did not know anyone had a gun until the man in the rear seat, Reginald Johnson Jr., opened fire, the release adds.

"After being chased by the witnesses, she said Gerace pointed the gun at them but claimed he did not fire it," the release continues. "Two Glock handguns were immediately recovered by detectives," the release notes.



*Andrew Gerace/Contributed photo*



*Reginald Johnson/Contributed photo*

Gerace, 23, of 2609 Heatherwood Circle, Venice, was arrested and charged with two counts of Aggravated Assault with a Deadly Weapon.

Johnson, 17, was located on Aug. 1 at a motel in the 1700 block of Tamiami Trail in Venice and arrested. (His last known address was 504 Collins Road, Unit 2, Apt. 3, in Nokomis, the arrest report states.) He was charged with Discharging a Firearm from a Vehicle in the Shamrock Park case.

Johnson was also charged with Aggravated Battery with Great Bodily Injury in connection with an unrelated altercation at Siesta Key Beach late on the night of July 13, the release points out. The victim, Stephen W. Ultsch, told a detective that a woman with Johnson punched him in the nose when he left

the restroom, the report says. Then Johnson attacked him and threw him to the ground face-first, using a martial arts move. Ultsch suffered multiple fractures to his cheek and orbital socket, according to the report. "The fractures required surgery to install a plate in Ultsch's cheek and resulted in a permanent scar" on the side of his head and his upper lip, the report adds.

Ultsch said he had had "numerous escalating disputes" with Johnson over the past year, the report notes. He told the detective that whenever Johnson sees him, Johnson attempts to fight him, adding that Johnson had made comments indicating he knows where Ultsch lives, the report continued. Therefore, Ultsch has been afraid of retaliating whenever Johnson confronts him, the report pointed out.

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## **TWO MEN ARRESTED FOR PASSING COUNTERFEIT BILLS ON SIESTA**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two men for allegedly passing counterfeit \$100 bills at several Siesta Key convenience stores and bars late last week.

Patrol deputies responded to several calls, reporting that two men bought multiple items with fraudulent bills, a news release notes. Witnesses said the suspects were driving a red Jeep Wrangler, which deputies located on Bee Ridge Road a short time later, the release continues. The driver, Zachery Brewer, 25, of 4130 Central Sarasota Parkway, Sarasota, was taken into custody after the store clerks identified him as one of the suspects, the release says.

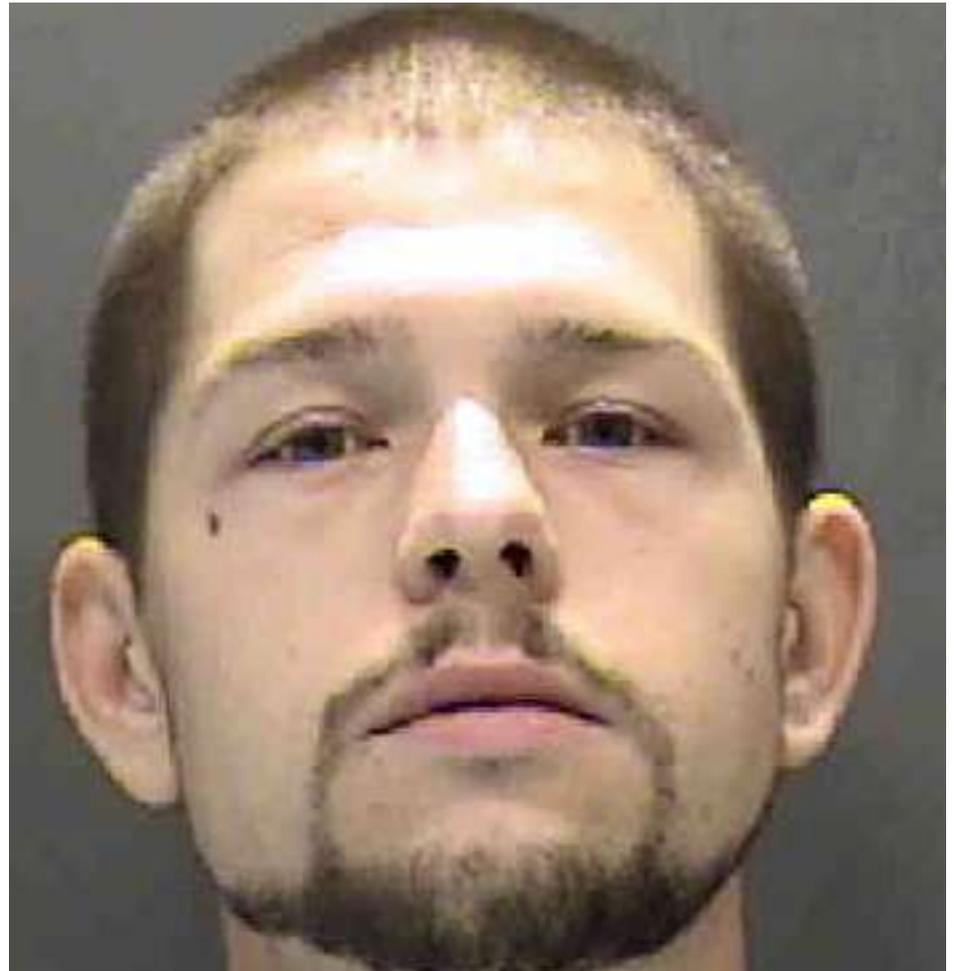
Tactical Unit deputies searching for the second suspect found Erik Brittain, 33, of



*Erik Brittain/Contributed photo*

4134 Central Sarasota Parkway, Sarasota, exiting an apartment near Hillview Street, the release adds. "Brittain was taken into custody and admitted to the crimes," the release notes.

Brittain is a Prolific Offender with more than a dozen arrests for crimes, including cocaine trafficking, child neglect and armed home invasion robbery, the release points out. He and Brewer are charged with three counts each of Uttering a Forged Bill. Both men are on felony probation, the release says, so they are also charged with Violation of Probation. Brewer is also charged with one count of Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. The investigation is ongoing and additional charges are pending.



*Zachery Brewer/Contributed photo*



*A plastic bag holds counterfeit bills allegedly passed by two suspects on Siesta Key last week. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office*

## VANDALISM REPORTED ON PATIO AREA OF BOB'S BOATHOUSE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is investigating a report of vandalism at Bob's Boathouse, located at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, that was called in on the morning of Sunday, Aug. 3, the report shows.

Manager Jeffrey Wade Frye of Sarasota told a deputy that between 2 a.m. and 7 a.m. that day, "someone saturated the outside porch with a very foul smelling oil/grease," according to the report. Employees already had started cleaning up the substance when the deputy arrived, the report continues, "but signs of it were still visible on the umbrellas, tables, and chairs."

Damage was estimated at \$1,900, the report notes.

Employees obtained a sample of the substance and put it in a small plastic container and then in a sealable plastic bag, the report adds.

A surveillance video showed a person walking around the deck, throwing the substance all over that area, the report continues. However, staff members were unable to make a copy of the video while the deputy was present. They said they would call the Sheriff's Office when it was available, the report says.

"At this time there is no suspect information available other than a possible white male [as a suspect]," the report notes, alluding to confidential information provided to the deputy. No witnesses were found, the report adds.



*Bob's Boathouse's outdoor seating is highly visible to drivers pulling into the parking lot of the business. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## WOMAN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH ULTA STORE THEFTS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested the woman allegedly responsible for a retail theft at the Ulta cosmetics store located on Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the office has announced.

On June 26, the manager of Ulta contacted the Sheriff's Office to report a grand theft incident, a news release notes. Surveillance video showed the woman carrying merchandise into the Ulta restroom, where items allegedly were removed from their boxes and the packaging discarded, the release adds. The woman in the video was accompanied by three young girls wearing matching striped dresses.

On July 7, images from the video surveillance were sent out with a news release in an attempt to identify the suspect. Two employees from the Sheriff's Office Offender Work Program identified the woman as 31-year old



*Jessica Barker/Contributed photo*



*Video surveillance showed the suspect and three young girls in the Ulta store on June 26. Image courtesy Sheriff's Office*

Jessica Barker of 2803 31st St. West, Lehigh Acres, the release notes.

On July 31, Barker was arrested on one count of Grand Theft and an additional

count of Contributing To The Delinquency Or Dependency of a Child, a misdemeanor.

Barker was also arrested in 2013 for retail theft at Old Navy on Cattlemen Road in Sarasota.

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## ARREST MADE IN ALLEGED JULY ASSAULT ON SCAT BUS

An arrest has been in the July 19 case of an alleged aggravated assault on a Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) bus, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

Albert Junior Singletary, 31, of 2828 Suncrest Drive, Sarasota, has been charged with a felony count of Aggravated Assault, a news release says. He was arrested on July 29 with the assistance of the U.S. Marshals Service Regional Fugitive Task Force, the release adds.

The victim told detectives she was riding a SCAT bus to work when Singletary sat down near her, the release continues. During the ride, Singletary attempted to engage the victim in conversation, though she tried to ignore him, the release says. When Singletary asked for the victim's name, she gave it, the release notes. The victim told detectives that the suspect began to repeat her name incessantly and then asked for her phone number; she refused to give it. The victim said Singletary got up from his seat at that point and, with his back to the front of the bus, removed his flip phone, wallet and a light blue/silver box cutter from his pocket. He allegedly revealed the blade of the box cutter, the release adds. The victim said Singletary brandished the blade before closing the box cutter and putting it away.

When he sat down again, he asked the victim, "So can I have your number now?" the police



*Albert Singletary/Contributed photo*

report says. "Out of fear, she provided her phone number," the report continues. Then the suspect opened his phone again and called the number, the report says. The victim ignored the call, the report notes, but "Singletary advised her to save it as ... he [planned to] call her at midnight," the report adds.

The victim then pulled the cord for her stop and exited the bus, the release says.

Previous arrest photographs of Singletary were compared to the video surveillance (which may be viewed on [YouTube](#)), the release notes, and detectives used phone records to help identify Singletary as the suspect.

## MAN WHO WORE EINSTEIN MASK IN BANK ROBBERY ARRESTED

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, working in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Marshals Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force and Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, has arrested the suspect wanted for allegedly robbing a Venice bank on Nov. 2, 2013, the Sheriff's Office has reported.

Around noon that day, a man wearing what was described as an Albert Einstein mask entered Wells Fargo, located at 1301 U.S. 41 Bypass South, demanded money and left with an undisclosed amount of cash, a news release explains. "A customer who pursued the suspect was sprayed with mace," it adds.

The suspect initially fled on a bicycle and then left the area in a red sedan driven by an accomplice, the release notes. Detectives obtained the mask as evidence, and witnesses reported the suspect's description.

In July, detectives investigating the case received a tip identifying Matthew Maxwell, 29, of 8413 N. Branch St., Tampa, as the suspect, the release adds. Detectives showed the witnesses a photo lineup, and they identified Maxwell as the bank robber, the release notes. Detectives then obtained a warrant for Maxwell. He was arrested on July 30 in Atlanta by the Atlanta Police Department, using the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office warrant.

Maxwell is charged with one count of felony Bank Robbery and one count of Battery. Elsewhere, Maxwell is a suspect in more than a dozen other crimes, the release says. Additional charges are pending. 



*A surveillance photo shows the suspect in the November bank robbery in Venice. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office*



*Matthew Maxwell/Contributed photo*

# OPINION



## VOTE FOR RAMIREZ AND SNYDER IN REPUBLICAN PRIMARY

### EDITORIAL

Supporters of Alan Maio and Paul Caragiulo have suggested that prospective changes to the county's 2050 Plan should not be the sole criterion for choosing a candidate, given that the county has almost a billion-dollar annual budget. But they are wrong.

Proposed revisions of the 2050 Plan, especially those that would remove or even weaken the so-called "fiscal neutrality" facet, have the potential to cost county taxpayers millions of dollars in extra taxes and infrastructure fees over the next decade or two. Under the current plan, those costs would be born by developers necessitating the additional infrastructure as a result of their new developments. A majority of the current

County Commission — and both Maio and Caragiulo — want to change that.

Such a shift will benefit only the developers' profits, as those costs would be laid in the laps of existing county taxpayers.

The 2050 Plan was one of the most exhaustively vetted changes in public policy in recent memory. It was developed at the request of developers, who wanted to create larger developments than the 5- and 10-acre "ranchettes" that were allowed in the county east of Interstate 75. After several years of study and input from all stakeholders, the 2050 Plan was developed as an overlay zone to grant the developers' request.

It allowed for more housing density, as long as a number of conditions were met, including

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the aggregation of residences in villages — with commercial establishments in the center for greater walkability — significant amounts of open green space and, of course, a requirement that developers pay for any needed infrastructure — roads, water/sewer, schools and the like — that were needed as a result of the new development. This last item is what is known as fiscal neutrality.

Developers participated in the process of creating the 2050

Plan. However, many experienced significant economic losses because of the housing collapse in the Great Recession. To make back all of the money they lost, they decided to claim that the 2050 Plan was why they had not been building any new projects in the eastern part of the county. And county commissioners bought into that fiction, agreeing to change the 2050 Plan to make it more developer-friendly.

Candidates who oppose developers' desires to gut the 2050 Plan are not more honest than those who are sympathetic to the developers' requests. And the candidates who support the developers are not crooks or "on the take."

The only real villains in this situation are the developers themselves. They are far more concerned about making huge profits than they are about the welfare of Sarasota County taxpayers. The owners of these companies

are rich, and can live anywhere in the world they like. If life becomes too expensive for them here because taxes go up too much, they can move someplace else where taxes are lower. The average resident cannot do that,

however. The vast majority of taxpayers will be stuck with the infrastructure costs of development, with little recourse, for years to come.

The 2050 Plan was a sound proposal when it was first developed, and it is no less sound

today. But the reasonableness of the plan gets in the way of developers' greed — and the potential harm that greed poses to the county's fiscal future — so no issue in recent years, or likely in years to come, matters as much to Sarasota County voters as how the current candidates for the County Commission stand on efforts to eviscerate the 2050 Plan.

Paul Caragiulo favors the changes in the 2050 Plan desired by developers. His opponent, Shannon Snyder, opposes those changes.

Alan Maio favors the changes in the 2050 Plan desired by developers. His opponent, Lourdes Ramirez, opposes those changes.

Sadly, there are those who are not content to wage a fair campaign. They attempt to besmirch candidates they do not want to see elected. For example, a whisper campaign has begun, aided significantly by local blogger and

**“ Paul Caragiulo favors the changes in the 2050 Plan desired by developers. His opponent, Shannon Snyder, opposes those changes. Alan Maio favors the changes in the 2050 Plan desired by developers. His opponent, Lourdes Ramirez, opposes those changes. ”**

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right-wing political bomb-thrower Richard Swier Sr., saying that Lourdes Ramirez is somehow less qualified for the seat of a county commissioner because she at one time owned a “new age” boutique. The implication has been that her belief in astrology and psychics makes her undesirable to Republicans. Yet, the great Republican “god” Ronald Reagan had a wife who referred to psychics for advice during his entire term in office, and Nancy Reagan regularly counseled her husband based on the guidance she received. Why is it acceptable for the First Lady of the United States to influence the actions of the President based on the advice of psychics, but it is not acceptable for someone who operated a legitimate small business here that contributed to the health of the county economy? Such hypocrisy indicates the depths to which those in league with developers will go to saddle county taxpayers with a financial burden for decades.

There have also been aspersions cast on Ramirez because she is a volunteer in organizations that seek to protect the quality of life in the county, while her opponent, Maio, has had a career in business. The assertion is that he is more qualified to oversee a billion-dollar county budget. Yet, current Commissioner Carolyn Mason has no extensive business career — in fact, not as extensive as that of Ramirez — and Mason has capably handled the demands of her office and the oversight of that billion-dollar budget, even serving as chairwoman of the County Commission.

Perhaps, then, those who oppose Ramirez might have some misogynistic motives, which should be of concern to all women in the county.

Shannon Snyder is better known to county voters. As a member of the Sheriff’s Office for decades, he has shown his dedication to the welfare of the people of the community. And while we have not always agreed with his positions as a Sarasota city commissioner, we have frequently found common cause with him. We are confident that he will give careful consideration to important issues that come before him on the County Commission and that he will work to protect the interests of county taxpayers.

The most significant issue to come up in an election campaign in more than a decade makes the choices in the race to fill two County Commission seats stark indeed. Maio and Caragiulo, regardless of their motives, have expressed sympathy with rich developers who do not share the same risks and fears of other Sarasota County taxpayers. Ramirez and Snyder have been clear in their support for preserving the 2050 Plan and protecting the environmental and fiscal health of our county. It really is not a difficult choice for any rational person.

**We urge voters in the Republican primary to vote for Lourdes Ramirez for the District 4 County Commission seat and Shannon Snyder for the District 2 County Commission seat.** 

# OPINION

## THE SARASOTA NEWS LEADER ENCOURAGES VOTERS TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IN CASTING THEIR BALLOTS IN THE PARTY PRIMARIES ON TUESDAY, AUG. 26

Governor of Florida (Democrat) — **Charlie Crist**

Governor of Florida (Republican) — **Anyone BUT Rick Scott**

Florida Attorney General (Democrat) — **George Sheldon**

Sarasota County Commission, District 2 (Republican) — **Shannon Snyder**

Sarasota County Commission, District 4 (Republican) — **Lourdes Ramirez**

Sarasota County School Board, District 1 — **Ken Marsh**

Sarasota County School Board, District 4 — **Shirley Brown**

Sarasota County School Board, District 5 — **Jane Goodwin**

Circuit Judge, 12th Judicial Circuit, Group 17 — **Susan Maulucci**

Hospital Board, Central, Seat 2 — **Joseph J. DeVirgilio Jr.**

Hospital Board, Northern, Seat 1 — **Richard Merritt**

Hospital Board, Northern, Seat 2 — **Robert K. Strasser**

Hospital Board, Southern, Seat 1 — **Darryl W. Henry**

Hospital Board, Southern, Seat 2 — **Gregory A. Carter** 

## THE CRUELEST MONTH: THE MANY GUNS OF AUGUST



By **Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

**COMMENTARY** We will see an outpouring of verbiage this month about what you might call “the guns of August,” after Barbara Tuchman’s breakout book of the same name.

A century ago, in 1914, the newly united nation of Germany embarked on “the Schlieffen plan” to conquer France from the north by invading Belgium and Holland. Schlieffen was a Prussian general who thought a fast-paced offensive would be able to outflank French

forces to the west, sweep to the English Channel, prevent British reinforcement and crush the French resistance.

Schlieffen died before the attack was launched, but on his deathbed, he urged his military heirs “to keep the right wing strong.” His fears on the latter point proved well placed. No plan survives intact after contact with the enemy (a fact known to all who have fought). The right wing was weakened, a British expeditionary force landed, and soon the trenched

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stalemate we know as World War I was figuratively dug from the English Channel to Switzerland.

Do not expect re-enactments in which thousands of young men rise from their muddy trenches to charge toward replicas of newly developed machine guns.

And do not plan to see thousands more suffering after breathing chlorine gas or phosgene, victims of the world's first experiments with chemical warfare. The people of World War I are all dead now — the wounded, the missing — the survivors, too. It was a century ago.

We remember them in Sarasota. The dough-boy statue that once graced Five Points — surrounded by plaques bearing the names of local lads who fell to shells, bullets, gas and disease — now stands tall in the Rev. J.D. Hamel Park on Gulfstream Avenue. Over the subsequent century, more names of local lads have been added to the statute, reflecting newer wars America waged in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. We remember all the deceased in May on Memorial Day.

But on the centennial of World War I's beginning, we also need to remember other lethal Augusts, other hot summer days when peace turned to war, driving millions into uniforms and early graves.

The year 1914 is not the only anniversary of bloodshed. It was 75 years ago this month that German Panzers demonstrated a new tactic called *blitzkrieg* — “lightning war” — across

the plains of Poland. It was on the last day of August 1939 that Adolph Hitler ordered the attack, which triggered the start of World War II. Before that conflict ended six years later, an estimated 100 million people had died.

And 50 years ago, in August 1964, the destroyer USS Maddox was engaged by three North Vietnamese Navy torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. On Aug. 7, the U.S. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, giving President Lyndon Johnson broad war powers, a *de facto* declaration of war. Ten days later, there was a coup in Saigon, with a general replacing a civilian as chief of state. Insurgency met technology (Agent Orange, starlight scopes, arc light bomber strikes, helicopter mobility), and insurgency won.

Twenty-four years ago, on Aug. 2, 1990, Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait after two days of combat. The U.S. dispatched the XVIII Airborne Corps (stiffened with the 24th mechanized Infantry Division), the First Marine Expeditionary Force (with two Marine divisions) and the VII Corps (First Armor, Infantry and Cavalry divisions and the Third Armored Division, augmented with the First UK Armoured Division).

They were joined by two Egyptian divisions (armor and mechanized infantry), three Saudi brigades, one brigade each of Kuwaiti and Omani troops and battalions from Senegal, Morocco and Bahrain. All totaled, 32 nations participated in the liberation of Kuwait, probably the largest fighting alliance, based on the number of nations, in which the United States

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has ever participated. Expulsion of the Iraqis took four days.

While the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York City did not occur in August, training was under way before the Sept. 11 strikes. Some of that training occurred here in Sarasota County. Fifteen of the 19 terrorists were Saudi citizens. The attempted conquests of Iraq and Afghanistan ensued after the Twin Towers fell.

This is not an argument for “numerology,” of interpreting history through coincidence. But

throughout the 20th and the start of the 21st centuries, August has been a month of peril, a month when even minor military strikes such as the Gulf of Tonkin could be parlayed into enormous conflicts — just as the assassination of an aristocrat triggered the First World War.

“Beware the ides of March” was the advice given to Caesar, and for good reason. But in modern times, we need to get through the madness of August before we — and our sons and daughters — can breathe a little easier. 

## THE BAYFRONT — SARASOTA’S MAGNIFICENT JEWEL!



**By Vicki Chatley**  
*Contributing Writer*

**COMMENTARY** It is a gem accessible to most of us only at a very few public areas; the vast majority of the waterfront is held as private property. The difficulty finding a parking space at Bayfront Park and Marina Jack is evidence of the water’s popularity. Thus, it becomes vitally important to place public access at the top of any plans for the approximately 40 acres of city-owned property that includes the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall.

Just envision early morning joggers and cyclists getting in some exercise before heading off to work. They are followed by a group of disparate people seeking a bench on which to enjoy a cup of coffee along with the morning paper, while others set up a chess game.

Next come parents with young children eager to romp on the grass. The noon hour finds workers from nearby businesses infiltrating the premises with their brown-bag lunches, or perhaps ordering a meal from a restaurant offering outdoor seating with a view of the bay, but leaving plenty of waterside promenade space. Afternoon is a quiet time for readers who plop under a tree to devour the latest best seller. Evening finds more restaurant goers, as well as those out for a stroll. And, yes, there would be lawn bowling.

There might a handful of well-chosen, small shops. Perhaps one sells ice cream, fudge and saltwater taffy (welcomed by those whose roots lie in the Jersey shore); another has paperbacks, cold drinks, sunblock and sundry

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items; add a couple of clothing stores, one casual and one classy, and maybe a flower/garden shop with an exhibit of native plants.

A hotel with a compact footprint and adjacent garage could replace some of the buildings in the southeast corner of the property along U.S. 41. Some street-level parking might remain in this and a few other well-chosen areas.

What I do not see is a cultural/arts center. Is it logical to place indoor venues alongside majestic water views? Also, there would be a finite number of patrons who could

be accommodated due to limited parking. Additional venues are likely to require staggered events; for example, a concert in one facility could not go on simultaneously with a ballet performance at another.

Of equal importance, there are several city sites where cultural attractions could spur development or redevelopment. The almost vacant strip mall, formerly anchored by Publix, on Ringling Boulevard is one possible location.

This is one vision for the waterfront. What is yours? 

## THE OTHER SIESTA KEY BEACH



By **Harriet Cuthbert**  
*Contributing Writer*

**COMMENTARY** Everybody all over the world seems to know about our magnificent Siesta Beach, the one people remember for its powdery-white silk-like sand that always stays cool to the touch.

After it was named the No. 1 beach in the U.S. by [Dr. Beach](#) in 2011, its popularity quadrupled. And, thanks to its newly expanded parking lot, visiting Siesta Beach has become a little easier.

However, I would like to acknowledge the other large public beach on Siesta Key — Turtle Beach, located on the southern end of

the key. It takes a short simple drive along Midnight Pass Road to reach the large colorful sign welcoming visitors to Turtle Beach. As I drive into the parking area, I pass the only beachfront RV campground on my right and a beautiful, lush and shaded picnic area on my left. The latter is occupied by a large family preparing a feast for the day.

After I park my car, I can easily walk across the lot to see a beautiful lagoon that has a cement boat ramp, offering quick access to the water for those with kayaks and motorboats, plus a few docks built for fishing or just plain meditating. The birds and fish circling the area also seem quite content.

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I arrived at the beach before 8:30 a.m., not too early but early enough to observe a mostly empty beach and perfectly blue, clear water just waiting for me to anoint it with my presence. The few fishermen I saw were about a 10-minute walk further south. I could not help thinking how peaceful the beach was and that I probably had about 30 minutes left to enjoy this tranquility.

When the crowds began to arrive, I was ready to welcome them. I noticed a much larger variety of beach activities were allowed at this public beach area than at Siesta Beach. Just in front of me, kayaks were being hauled to the water. Two minutes later, off they went, holding their happy companions.

Suddenly, a group of 10 people appeared, dressed in heavy vests and carrying spears, life preservers and oxygen tanks. They were in a SCUBA diving class, and they quickly

disappeared into the Gulf, probably in search of pirate booty or sunken ships.

Kids with grandparents set up their fishing poles and began the long wait for a bite. Paddleboarders also set off from the public beach area, looking so serene, skimming the Gulf's surface.

I always enjoy seeing the usual suspects — walkers, floaters, photographers and just all-around beach bums. But spending a morning at Turtle Beach and being up-close and personal with such a great variety of water activities was very pleasant. It reminded me about why I love Siesta Key.

And always remember, when you see a portion of the beach enclosed with sticks and yellow tape, tread very gently around it because you never want to disturb the turtles on Turtle Beach. 



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SKA CONCERN ABOUT BLASÉ PARKING SEEMS OVERKILL

To the Editor:

As we read the update in your recent issue regarding the unauthorized use of parking spots by the owner of Blasé Café (*Siesta Seen*, Aug. 1), I could not help but be concerned that the attention to this issue is the antithesis of the attitude that makes Siesta Key such a wonderful and unique place.

We will admit that we are fans of the Blasé Cafe and the owner. In the years we have been going to this restaurant, we have seen an amazing transition from a small café to a local favorite gathering place, where residents and visiting tourists meet to create a unique community environment.

The driving force behind this has been the owner, Rami Fouad, whose creativity and

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willingness to invest in the facility has made it align perfectly with the Siesta Key lifestyle we so enjoy.

The idea that we need the president of the Siesta Key Association to become so concerned with the loss of two parking spots seems like overkill, to say the least. It seems that the people most likely to be impacted by the loss of the spots are the restaurant and its customers, and I do not believe I read anything about any of these people taking issue with the repurposing of the spots to create a more entertaining venue.

I understand the argument for being fair and equitable with other businesses on the island, but I would suggest that all of them would appreciate a little more flexibility to add value to their businesses and customers as long as that flexibility does not cause any great harm to others, as I believe is the case here.

Let us look to common sense rather than the “rule book” to determine what is best for our wonderful island.

*John and Michelle Garrity  
Siesta Key*

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” — *Pablo Picasso*



## 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*.

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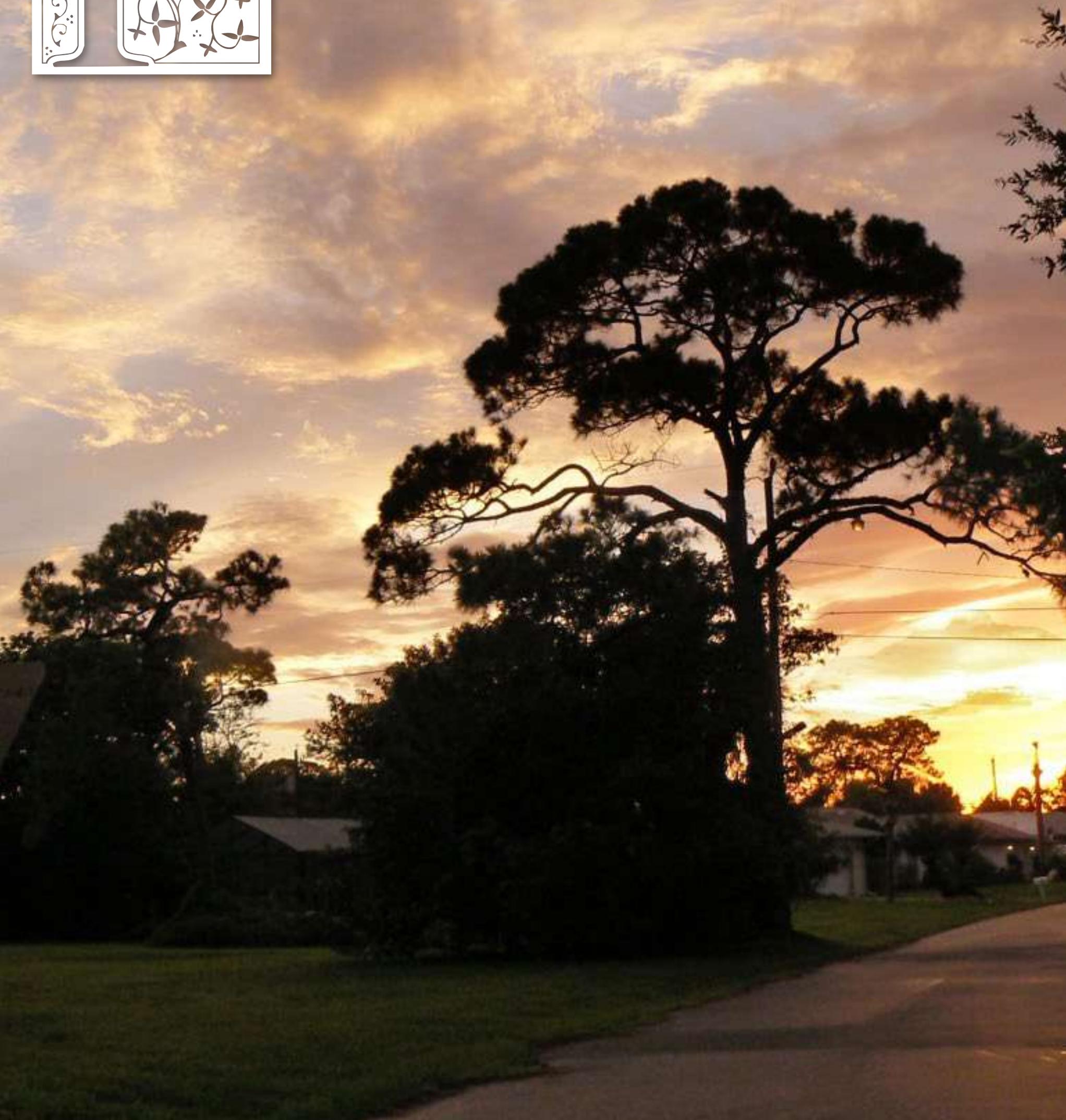
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# IS FOR PINE



## THIS TREE HAS A PLETHORA OF PURPOSES IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri

*Contributing Writer*

Pines are beautiful to behold, with bundles of dark green needles and bark in earth tones. They are the true originals of our landscapes.

Mine have been here many years, home to eastern screech owls and red-shouldered hawks. Pileated woodpeckers probe the chunky bark for insects. In spring and fall, migratory birds rest and feed in the canopy after their long flights. An osprey will sit high atop one to eat his “catch of the day” from the

Gulf, just a quarter-mile distant. Once a black vulture stopped by to groom herself.

Eagles build their nests in pines, and only mature trees can support these huge structures. Great horned owls sometimes lay their eggs in a crotch of a pine.

In the wild, a pine creates a “community” that is practically impossible to replicate and takes years to establish. Grape vines — some as thick as a man’s arm — climb the trunk,





which may be dotted with lichen. Mosses are sprinkled around the base. Saw palmetto, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses grow around the pine. If I took a census, I might note birds, squirrels, lizards, spiders, grasshoppers, bees, ants, beetles, a dragonfly at rest and a sulphur butterfly flitting through the branches — all in one tree.

You will find slash pines scattered here and there in Sarasota's older neighborhoods. Sometimes a pine turns up in unexpected places, such as the one near the county jail, which somehow evaded the chain saw gang.

Considered "commoners," pines are barred from many gated communities.

The authors of *Ecosystems of Florida* call pines the "matrix" which ties together other ecosystems. For me, they are a link to the real Florida. 







# SEEING THINGS



*Jerrine Grim attends the Women's Equity Luncheon, 'accompanied' by her great-grandmother, Clara Pennoyer Roest. Photo by Barbara Dondero*

## WOMEN GATHERED TO MARK THE 94TH ANNIVERSARY OF WINNING THE RIGHT TO VOTE CONSIDER HOW MUCH MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO GIVE THEM EQUAL RIGHTS

By Barbara Dondero

*Contributing Writer*

In front of us stood a woman in a long taffeta dress, her hair pulled back into a neat sensible bun. Was it a ghost? She began to speak slowly, decisively.

“Robbed of the fundamental privilege of citizenship, I am degraded from the status of a citizen ... to that of a subject,” she said, repeating the words a woman told a judge decades ago. The judge dismissed a jury after instructing it to find her guilty of violating the 14th Amendment. (She was a citizen, but she had dared to vote.)

The speaker continued, “It was ‘we the people,’ not ‘we, the white male citizens’ nor yet ‘we, the male citizens,’ but ‘we the whole people’ who formed the union.”

She then recited a remark made at a 1906 gathering in Washington, D.C. “Here is a letter from President Theodore Roosevelt. It reads, ‘Pray let me join you in congratulating Miss Anthony upon her 86th birthday ...’” In a tone of outrage, she added, “I would rather have him say a word to Congress for our cause than to praise me endlessly.”



*Judy Achre, co-president of the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County. Contributed photo by Nancy Hale Goethe*

The speaker offered the final public words of the woman she was portraying. “There have been others just as true and devoted to the cause — I wish I could name every one — but with such women consecrating their lives,” she paused and took a deep breath, “failure is impossible!”

Then the house lights rose in the Sarasota Hyatt ballroom. Sally Matson, portraying the legendary suffragist Susan B. Anthony, received our standing ovation. Five hundred of us had been entranced by her.

## REVERING HER MEMORY

From the era before the Civil War to the turn of the 20th century, Susan B., as she was called, crisscrossed the nation by horse and buggy, railroad and sleigh, braving heat, rain and snow, to speak about women’s rights, “which

are really women’s wrongs, you know,” as Anthony wrote: “the right to vote, to make contracts, to receive equal treatment within the legal system ... [that] ... all civil and political rights that belong to *citizens* of the United States be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever.”

She persevered for six decades through ridicule, defeat and cliffhanger votes.

Her friend and ally was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, speechwriter, newspaper essayist, mother of seven. For an opening salvo, in 1848, Stanton issued her *Declaration of Sentiments* at the Seneca Falls (NY) Convention, listing grievances and resolutions.

Stanton claimed, “I forge the thunderbolts; she fires them!” Stanton’s husband echoed that remark. “She fires up Susan. Susan fires up a nation.”



*Dotti Groover-Skipper, vice chairwoman of the Hillsborough Commission on the Status of Women, was honored for her leadership to help eliminate human trafficking in the Tampa Bay area. Photo by Barbara Dondero*



*Rachelle Hunt Russian represented the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women. Photo by Barbara Dondero*

*In America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*, Gail Collins quoted the ailing Stanton. "Logically, our enfranchisement ought to have occurred ... in Reconstruction days. Yet, the fight to get women the right to vote, like all things too long postponed, now gets on everybody's nerves."

Seventeen years after Stanton's death in 1902, and 13 years after Susan B.'s death in 1906, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was proposed:

THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES TO VOTE SHALL NOT BE DENIED OR ABRIDGED BY THE UNITED STATES OR BY ANY STATE ON ACCOUNT OF SEX.

It was initiated by those who inherited the Stanton-Anthony mantle because a state-by-state initiative to allow women the right to vote had stalled as a result of intense opposition from the South and the East.

The constitutional measure (nicknamed the Anthony Amendment) passed the U.S. House and Senate in 1919, but it still needed to be ratified by 36 of the existing 48 states. Tennessee approved it in 1920, the last state needed for the count. The following year, Florida passed a law giving all residents the right to vote. The Florida Legislature symbolically ratified the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1969, without the signature of then-Gov. Claude Kirk.

## ONGOING VISIONS

Arriving by car, plane and bus on July 26, many groups came to the Sarasota Hyatt for the 94th anniversary celebration of Susan B. Anthony's victory. The Women's Equity Luncheon included delegates from the National Commission on the Status of Women, along with representatives from state and local commissions.



*(From left) Dr. Anila Jain, honorary co-chairwoman; Sally Matson, actress; Maj. Connie Shingledecker; and Betty Schoenbaum, honorary co-chairwoman, pose at the Women's Equity Luncheon. Photo by Fran Palmeri*

What precisely did we *see* on stage? Merely a figure from the past? Did Sally Matson's performance urge us to expand our viewpoints to include the present and the future?

Here is how some of us answered the following question:

If Susan B. Anthony were alive today, what would she say to us?

- **Nancy Hale Goethe**, League of Women Voters, Sarasota County: "Miss Anthony's reaction would probably be a mixed bag. She would be glad that we are doctors, lawyers, soldiers and police officers but sad that some are not paid equally well as their male counterparts. She would be pleased that we can own property and have our own bank accounts but displeased that not all

of our citizens have access to good health-care and education. 'We have more work to do,' she would probably say." (After the 19th Amendment was passed 94 years ago, women's suffrage associations became chapters of the League of Women Voters.)

- **Jerrine Grim** brought along a photo of her great-grandmother, Clara Pennoyer Roest. "Clara will sit with me today at the [Daughters of the American Revolution] table. After she first voted, Clara exclaimed, 'Imagine! Such great progress! Electricity! The automobile! The vote!'"
- **Valerie A. Fisher**, chairwoman of the Manatee Commission on the Status of Women: "Susan B. advocated for the abolition of slavery as well as equality for women. Women are human beings, equal to



*Elizabeth Cuevas Neunder, Republican candidate for Florida governor, is challenging Rick Scott in the Aug. 26 primary. Photo by Barbara Dondero*

men, not merely their chattel. Most noted for her fight for suffrage, she also worked for a woman's right to own her own property, retain her own earnings and attend college. She knew that without the vote, this would be impossible. Today, she would still be advocating for social justice for women and for all oppressed persons. She would likely be appalled at the recent court rulings that have eroded voting rights. She would urge women — and all citizens — to value, become informed [about] and exercise their right to vote.”

- **Betty Schoenbaum**, 96, honorary co-chairwoman of the Equity Luncheon, philanthropist and activist: “We have so much more work to do!”
- **Maj. Connie Shingledecker**, Manatee County Sheriff's Office, Investigative Bureau chief and a graduate of the FBI National Academy, who was honored at the luncheon for making a difference in the lives of women and children at the local, state and national levels: “Support, mentor and volunteer!”
- **Dr. Mona Jain**, a physician and chair emerita of the Manatee Commission on the Status of Women; co-founder (20 years ago) of the Manatee Equity Day of Celebration and member of the Florida Commission on Status of Women: “A small group of women who struggled in the past continues to inspire today's leaders with challenges of healthcare and pay equity. They will pass on the baton to young women who will achieve equity and make us proud!”
- **Barbara Zdravecky**, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Southwest and

Central Florida: “She would be pleased with some of the progress made on behalf of women in our country ... but without the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment], equal pay and the continued struggle for reproductive freedom, including basic contraception, she might get us all out on the streets again, marching for our rights.”

- **Fran Palmeri**, former editor and publisher of *Women's Work* magazine and a Quaker, like Susan B. Anthony and her fellow activists, Alice Paul and Lucretia Mott: “She would include Mother Nature in any advocacy. Caring for the planet, which has nurtured our species for millions of years, would be crucial to our survival. Where would we women — we humans — be without our earthly home?”
- **Dotti Groover-Skipper**, vice chairwoman of the Hillsborough County Commission on the Status of Women: “‘Keep your sleeves rolled up!’ Anthony would say.”
- **Rachelle Hunt Russian**, representing the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women: “She would be proud of our initiative to ‘Write Women Into History.’”
- **Mara Zapata**, chairwoman of the Miami-Dade County Commission for Women: “She would be proud of Miami-Dade's mission in establishing the Young Women's Preparatory Academy ... to inform our next generation of leaders.”

Focusing on the task at hand, Judy Achre, co-president of the League of Women Voters in Sarasota, sent us on our way at the end of the event: “Primary day is Aug. 26. See you at the polls!” 

# ALMOST PARADISE



## SAVOR THE LANDSCAPE'S BEAUTY BEFORE YOU HAVE TO LAMENT ITS LOSS

Story and Photos

By Carolann Cahill

*Contributing Writer*

Every Tuesday, I drive this little two-lane road. On the right side is a gated community. As I pass, I barely glance at the sterile landscape of seasonal annuals planted in rows surrounding shrubs that have been sculpted into box-like structures.

Retention ponds dot the perimeter of the development. They, too, are lifeless. I seldom

see more than a lone anhinga sunning itself by the cement fountain.

The left side of the road, however, is what fascinates me. Each week I anticipate what I might see. As I pass the ancient orange grove, I recall how over the years I have seen many of the trees removed. There are only a few remaining gnarled trunks with their branches





reaching to the sky like arthritic fingers. Old oaks and Sabal palms are silhouetted against the horizon. Cows graze lazily in the pasture. There is the snag where a hawk sits to hunt or just look out over his domain. It is almost paradise, with few reminders that the urban boundary is but a couple of miles west.

One morning, what I see on the left prompts me to pull over. I grab my camera and hop out of the truck. Perfect light from the morning sun is highlighting a menagerie of birds that has gathered at a small pond — roseate spoonbills, great egrets, wood storks, snowy egrets and more. I think about the people in the cars whizzing past on their way to work. They are missing this!

I, too, have to get to work — tending plants in pool cages. Reluctantly, I tear myself away. As I punch in the code at the entry gate and pass the empty retention ponds, a sad thought enters my mind. Some day, the land I just left will probably be sold and it, too, will be molded into what I am now driving through ... another sterile landscape. 





**“** *I think having land and not  
ruining it is the most beautiful art that  
anybody could ever want.*

Andy Warhol

**”**







# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**08**  
AUGUST

### **Open studios and beach reading at the Hermitage**

Aug. 8, 6 p.m. Hermitage Artist Retreat, 6660 Manasota Key Road, Englewood. Free. Event will feature the State Teacher Artist Residency (STAR) public school teachers — all from Florida — at the Hermitage this summer. Beach reading to follow at 7 p.m. Bring chairs and your own refreshments. Information: 475-2098 or [hermitage-fl.org](http://hermitage-fl.org).

**08+**  
AUGUST

### **Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents *Marvin Gaye: Prince of Soul***

Through Aug. 10; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50, adults; \$16.50, students. Information: 366-1505 or [wbttstrq.org](http://wbttstrq.org).

**08+**  
AUGUST

### **Art Center Sarasota presents *Florida Flavor***

Through Aug. 15; times vary. 707 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Free. The all-Florida, all-media juried exhibition showcases two- and three-dimensional works. Information: 365-2032 or [artsarasota.org](http://artsarasota.org).

**08+**  
AUGUST

### **Florida Studio Theatre presents *Taking Shakespeare***

Through Aug. 17; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32 to \$36. This will be the play's U.S. premiere. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**08+**  
AUGUST

### **Players Theatre presents *Talking With***

Through Aug. 17; times vary. 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$18. Jane Martin's series of monologues won an American Theatre Critics Association Award. Information: 365-2494 or [theplayers.org](http://theplayers.org).

**08+**  
AUGUST

### **FST Improv: *Out of Bounds Match Up***

Through Aug. 23, 7:30 p.m. Browne's Lab Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$15. Information: 366-9000 or [www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://www.FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**08+**  
AUGUST

### **Banyan Theater Company presents *Collected Stories by Donald Margulies***

Through Aug. 24; times vary. Jane B. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$28.50. Information: [banyantheatercompany.com](http://banyantheatercompany.com).

**08+**  
AUGUST

### **FST presents *Somewhere Over the Rose: The Songs and Stories of Judy Garland and Bette Midler***

Through Aug. 31; times vary. Court Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$32. Information: [floridastudiotheatre.org](http://floridastudiotheatre.org) or 366-9000.

# THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>08+</b> AUGUST	<b>UUCS Presents Jane Shannon: Works in Fabric</b> Through Sept. 4; times vary. Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, Lexow Wing Gallery. 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Free. Information: 371-4974 or the church <a href="#">website</a> .
<b>08+</b> AUGUST	<b>Dabbert Gallery presents Summer Showcase</b> Through Sept. 29; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Featuring works by three sculptors, one printmaker, 15 painters, one pastel artist and one photographer. Information: 955-1315 or <a href="#">dabbertgallery.com</a> .
<b>08+</b> AUGUST	<b>Allyn Gallup Gallery presents Drawn From Nature</b> Through Oct. 25; times vary. 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free. Show features works by noted landscape artists. Information: 366-2454 or <a href="#">AllynGallup.com</a> .
<b>09+</b> AUGUST	<b>Bookstore 1 Sarasota presents Breakfast Serial Book Club</b> Aug. 9 and Aug. 16. From 10:30-11 a.m., staffers will read to 3- to 6-year-olds; from 11:15-11:45 a.m., they will read to 7- to 9-year-olds. 1359 Main St., Sarasota. Information: <a href="#">bookstore1sarasota.com</a> or 365-7900.
<b>16</b> AUGUST	<b>Venice Theatre presents California Toe Jam</b> Aug. 16, 8 p.m. 140 W. Tampa Ave., Venice. Tickets: \$20. Band plays “good-time oldies” in a family-friendly show. Information: 488-1115 or <a href="#">venicestage.com</a> .
<b>17</b> AUGUST	<b>Open house: Reboot Your Hard Drive at St. Boniface</b> Aug. 17, 9 a.m. St. Francis Room and Youth Studio, St. Boniface Episcopal Church, 5615 Midnight Pass Road, Siesta Key. If the chaos and demands of too full a schedule leave you feeling overwhelmed, stop by the open house and discover opportunities for you and your family to “reboot your hard drive” this fall. Information: <a href="#">bonifacechurch.org</a> or 349-5616.
<b>21</b> AUGUST	<b>Historic Spanish Point presents Trinidades in concert</b> Aug. 21, 7-10 p.m. 337 N. Tamiami Trail, Osprey. Tickets: \$5 at the door. Audience members should bring lawn chairs or blankets. Food and drinks available for purchase. Information: 966-5214 or <a href="#">historicspanishpoint.org</a> .
<b>23</b> AUGUST	<b>Sushi with ALSO, a benefit for ALSO Youth</b> Aug. 23, 6 p.m. Tsunami Sushi and Hibachi Grill, 100 Central Ave., Sarasota. Cost: \$30. Ticket includes complimentary beverage and hors d’oeuvres. Information: Click <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>24</b> AUGUST	<b>Sarasota Architectural Foundation (SAF) presents Seibert on Casey Key</b> Aug. 24, 1-2 p.m. or 3-4 p.m. 3727 Sandspur Lane, Casey Key, Nokomis. Cost: \$15 for SAF members; \$20 for non-members; and \$5 for students with IDs. Tour will feature a classic Sarasota School of Architecture home designed by Edward “Tim” Seibert. RSVP to <a href="#">info@saf-srq.org</a> . Mail checks payable to SAF to SAF, PO Box 2911, Sarasota, FL 34230. Information: 364-2199 or <a href="#">info@saf-srq.org</a> .

Submit Calendar Events To  
[News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

**EVERY VIEW IS  
A WATER VIEW**

**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

6844 04/21/02 Date: 10/15/2008

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