

THE SARASOTA

October 5, 2012

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



Inside

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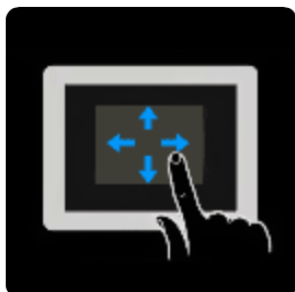
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A.K.A. HELP



Welcome

With two issues “under our belts,” so to speak, we want to thank all of you who have provided us with comments.

One major concern we addressed last week was the design of our table of contents. I expect you will see future tweaks as we continue to help you zero in on the stories that interest you the most.

One comment we have heard, admittedly tongue-in-cheek, has intrigued us a bit: too much content.

Our goal at the outset has been to provide comprehensive news coverage, which is why many of our stories are longer. However, we also want readers to be able to take their time going through the issue every week. There’s no need to rush!

Just a couple of years ago, a close relative mentioned to me how disappointed she was at the pitifully thin issues of the Sunday newspaper I had grown up with in North Carolina — the one she had been reading ever since she married my cousin and moved to my hometown.

We want you to take your time and enjoy perusing *The Sarasota News Leader*. It is a weekly publication, after all, meaning you have seven days to read everything.

And even when the next issue appears, you can find the previous editions in our archives.

Therefore, just take your time!

One other point I want to mention this week is that the *News Leader*, like all reputable publications, wants to acknowledge any mistakes our staff makes. As much as we strive for perfection in our work, we acknowledge that is an extraordinarily high bar to reach.

That leads me to tell you we goofed last week by failing to include two photo credits in Otus Rufous’ column.

Laura Dean, the marketing and public relations coordinator at Historic Spanish Point, had been incredibly helpful to Otus over the previous couple of weeks. Yet, we failed to give Dean and her staff credit for the two adorable photos of Lizzie in the Sept. 28 *Ask Otus* column.

Thank you to everyone at Historic Spanish Point for your generous assistance to our resident wildlife expert.

With warmest regards,

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



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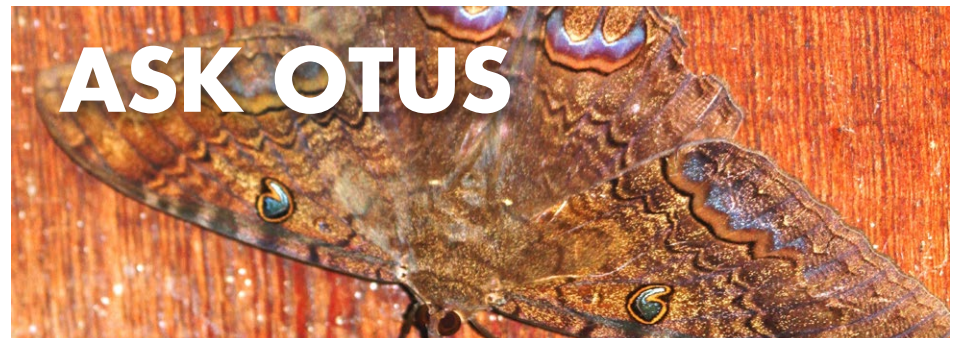
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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher
Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor
Cooper@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Stan Zimmerman

City Editor
Stan@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Norman Schimmel

Contributing Photographer
NSchimmel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

David Staats

Contributing Writer
DStaats@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer
FPalmeri@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Harriet Cuthbert

Contributing Writer
HCuthbert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer
ERogosin@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer
SProffitt@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Vicki Chatley

Copy Editor
Vicki@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cleve Posey

Production Manager / Graphic Designer
Cleve@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Robert S. Hackney

General Manager
Robert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Advertising Sales

Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Subscription Services

Subs@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Press Releases & News Tips

News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com



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CLUCK COMMITMENT

Families who have kept chickens say they keep yards free of insects at the same time they provide high-quality eggs for consumption. Bogdan Carstina | Dreamstime.com

MEMBERS OF A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION WANT TO WORK WITH SARASOTA COUNTY TO MAKE CHICKEN-KEEPING LEGAL

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Members of CLUCK (Citizens Lobbying for Chicken Keeping) are not giving up on persuading the Sarasota County Commission to make chicken-keeping legal in the unincorporated parts of the county, Jono Miller, one of CLUCK's founders, told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

However, Miller said he and other members of the organization are frustrated that the commission on Sept. 25 did not provide direction to staff to assist CLUCK in preparing something to take to neighborhoods and homeowners associations.

During their Sept. 25 regular meeting, the County Commission heard six members of the public — two of whom had brought children with them — request the board to change the county's zoning code to make it legal for families to own chickens.

In discussion later that day, the commissioners agreed by consensus to ask CLUCK to undertake community outreach before they decided their next step.

"I just don't know how we would get that public input [otherwise]," Chairwoman Christine Robinson said.

Commissioner Nora Patterson added, “I guess I feel like our Code Enforcement plate is really full,” as she voiced opposition to the speakers’ request.

Interviewed by the *News Leader* on Oct. 3, Miller said CLUCK representatives would try again to seek commission support for some direction to staff before beginning the community outreach. However, he was not certain when that next contact with the commissioners would come.

CLUCK members could go out with a petition asking people whether they support a move to make chicken-keeping legal, Miller pointed out, but people can be expected to ask questions CLUCK members lack the expertise to answer.

“They’re going to say, ‘I can’t write you a blank check,’” Miller added.

CLUCK members need a draft ordinance that has been vetted by the appropriate county staff — from the County Attorney’s Office to the Extension Office to Code Enforcement to Planning and Development Services — he said, before going out into the community.

Lack of such a formal proposal, he said, is “one of the things we’re really struggling with.”

THE PUBLIC PLEAS

During the public comments portion of the Sept. 25 County Commission meeting, LaVon Kennell said he accepted about two dozen chicken eggs three years ago from the parents

of an Army buddy in Oklahoma. He talked of how excited his 1-year-old daughter was when the chicks were hatched.

About seven months ago, Kennell said, a Code Enforcement officer showed up at his home and explained the family was in violation of county ordinance by keeping the chickens.

“I didn’t realize ... you couldn’t have backyard chickens in a non-deed-restricted part of the county,” he added.

Since he has given up the birds, Kennell said, his daughter has been asking, “Where are my chick-chicks?”

Gabriel Cortez talked of how his children played less with video games and spent less

time watching TV when they had chickens for which to care.

Cortez and others also pointed to the quality of fresh eggs for meals and the fact that the chickens eat insects, reducing the need for pesticide use in their yards and gardens.

Ira Kleinschmidt told the commissioners he had created a business by building and selling chicken coops “from Dade City to Naples.”

Kleinschmidt added, “I just see that people just want to have one thing in their life to help sustain themselves. I think having chickens in the county would be a really good step”

Meleney Yoder’s autistic son spoke of how much he had enjoyed the eggs from his family’s chickens until neighbors complained to Code Enforcement.

I just see that people just want to have one thing in their life to help sustain themselves. I think having chickens in the county would be a really good step

Ira Kleinschmidt
CLUCK member

Neighbors complaining to Code Enforcement also had resulted in Jenny Brannon and her family giving up their chickens, Brannon said.

"I just don't know how to explain to my 3-year-old that we have to get rid of our Dr. Boost and Cinnamon and all our little chickies," Brannon said. "She doesn't really understand, and I don't understand, either, why we shouldn't be allowed to have them. Sometimes kids have the most sense."

COMMISSIONERS' RESPONSE

During their Commission Reports discussions, Commissioner Jon Thaxton said, "I know it's going to take a great deal of community outreach in terms of the neighborhood associations, but [legal chicken-keeping has] been a long time coming. ... It's something that initially I would support, at least to the point of getting some public feedback."

"I would do the same," Commissioner Carolyn Mason said. "The sooner we can get the dialogue started, the better."

However, Patterson said she did not support the initiative, though she might at some point if the majority of the commissioners did.

"While I really do feel for the kids ... they certainly pull at your heartstrings — if the neighbors hadn't complained, they would still have the ability to have the chickens," Patterson said. "The truth is [chicken-keeping] does bother some folks."

Commissioner Joe Barbetta agreed. "It was a great display this morning [but] the people [who wouldn't support it] ... would probably fill this room."

When Barbetta added that he felt CLUCK needed to demonstrate sufficient community support for the county initiative, Mason replied, "I think that's fair."

"That would help," Patterson said.

"If we hear from folks and it just proves to be too controversial," Thaxton said, "so be it."

Still, Thaxton said, "It does seem kind of odd that we have had something similar in a municipality and not in the county, when the definition of a county would be more permissive than that of a municipality."

The City of Sarasota approved the keeping of chickens about two years ago.

"I'd really like to watch that for a couple of years and make sure it isn't a problem," Patterson said of the city's situation, adding that she was familiar with Key West, which has been so overrun with chickens, the city even hired a "bounty hunter" to try to contain the problem.

"I like the idea of sending it back to CLUCK [to gather] the support, rather than put the onus on us," Robinson said.

Mason pointed out that she had seen city residents with chickens that were "nice and orderly and didn't seem to be causing a problem. But I would like to see it vetted" for the county.

CLUCK'S PERSPECTIVE

CLUCK has about 600 Facebook fans from all over the country, Miller said, and it has had more than 60,000 hits on its blog, "which is supposed to be about chickens in Sarasota."

He added, "I've been doing community service ... for 35 years in Sarasota County ... and when I talk to people, I just get a lot of resonance" on the topic of families keeping chickens.

During a regular meeting of CLUCK this week, Miller said, members reviewed the video of the speakers' comments on Sept. 25 and the commissioners' remarks.

"The children are asking [the commissioners], 'Why can't we have chickens?' ... Parents have come to the commissioners in good faith and said, 'What do we tell our kids?'" Miller pointed out.

"I wish that things had gone differently," he added.

Regarding chickens in the city of Sarasota, Miller said he visits with families who have had Code Enforcement complaints to try to remedy the situations. "And so far all of that has worked out," he said. "We'd be willing to do the same thing for the county."

Jan Thornburg, the public information officer for the City of Sarasota, told the *News Leader*, "From what I understand, there have only been a couple of minor issues that have popped up" with chickens in the city.

Miller pointed out that more than three-quarters of the largest cities in the United States allow residents to keep chickens.

"We're going to get there," he said of CLUCK's county initiative.



The Sarasota County commissioners are split over whether to allow families to keep chickens in unincorporated areas of the county. Photo by Norman Schimmel

IN OPPOSITION



Many public school officials and school board members say taxpayer dollars should stay with public schools, such as Bay Haven School for Basics Plus in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SCHOOL BOARD VOTES AGAINST AMENDMENT 8'S PROPOSAL TO FUNNEL PUBLIC MONEY TO RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

The Sarasota County School Board voted 5-0 during its regular meeting Oct. 2 to join the majority of Florida school boards in opposing Amendment 8, which is coming up for public vote next month.

The Nov. 6 general election ballot is chock-full of potential amendments to the state constitution. Amendment 8 is one that involves politics, money and religion — almost all the things people are not supposed to discuss in polite dinner table conversation. And yet this amendment is likely to get a good bit of debate — maybe before dinner.

Amendment 8, also called the Florida Religious Freedom Amendment, reads as follows:

Proposing an amendment to the State Constitution providing that no individual or entity may be denied, on the basis of religious identity or belief, governmental benefits, funding, or other support, except as required by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, and deleting the prohibition against using revenues from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid of any church, sect, or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution.

School boards are already suffering financial stress as a result of a number of factors, not the least being decisions of the Florida Legislature that have decreased funding by more

than \$1,000 per student over the last five years. Thus, school boards are wary of the financial impacts of losing more students as well as the diversion of funding from public schools to religious schools.

Proponents of the amendment argue that religious institutions should not be treated differently than non-religious institutions, while opponents of the Florida Religious Freedoms Act claim that a large portion of the public school funding comes from property taxes, and religious institutions do not pay those taxes.

The majority of school boards in the state see the proposed Amendment 8 as an end-run around the legal constraints regarding use of public funding for religious schools.

Although the State of Florida routinely funnels money to projects run by religious institutions, it avoids conflict with state and federal laws by requiring that no effort be made to involve the recipients in religious activities.

The Florida School Boards Association is “opposed to Amendment 8 for numerous reasons including the fact that it would divert financial resources from the vast majority of Florida’s PreK-12 students, and would encourage the proliferation of voucher programs that are not subject to stringent accountability standards and have not been shown to be academically

beneficial to students,” the association’s formal position says.

Public school districts already have been grappling with the decrease in state funding as a result of a decline in enrollment — not only because of the recession’s impact on the state but also because of the increase in the number of charter schools. Not too many years ago, Sarasota County was having trouble coping with the volume of new students and the need to build more schools and hire more teachers to meet demand. That is no longer the case. Therefore, charter schools are seen by some as competition for a limited supply of students.

“As charter schools increase, our enrollment does not,” Sarasota County Schools Superintendent Lori White said during the Sept. 18 School Board workshop. “You have ineffective use of facility space. That may not be the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars.”

“If this [Amendment 8] passes, and religious schools use state funds, they would be held accountable to the rules, standards and evaluations that all schools are,” Sarasota School Board Chairwoman Caroline Zucker told *The Sarasota News Leader*. “I hope they understand that.”



BASIC COMPUTER CLASSES OFFERED AT CHURCH



The Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave., in downtown Sarasota, is offering a free education course for adults covering the basics of using a computer for online personal transactions.

Starting Oct. 12, classes will meet on Friday afternoons from 3:45 to 4:45 p.m. Among the topics covered will be Internet surfing, finding and making “favorites” of often-used websites, and library system use. For location, details and online registration, visit www.redeemersarasota.org or call 955-4263.

CONTRACTOR CONTROVERSY



In mid-May, work was well under way at the site of the Walmart on North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

FIRM SAYS IT IS WAITING TO BE PAID BEFORE IT CAN SETTLE WITH SUBCONTRACTORS IN 'ATYPICAL' WORK ARRANGEMENT

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Two subcontractors tell *The Sarasota News Leader* they have not been paid for work completed at the new North Tamiami Trail Walmart back in August, an allegation the builder denies.

According to Rob Urbanek, his Fernandina Beach company Xtreme SPD originally was hired by the Sarasota construction firm Kellogg & Kimsey to do light interior work on the new Walmart, what he calls in an email “‘non-critical path’ items.” Urbanek says a new venture building NASCAR-branded tables was eating up his time, and complications made the Walmart project lengthier and more ex-

pensive than he originally had anticipated. So he contacted Naples’ Richard E. Stephenson II Construction Management to finish the job.

Urbanek writes that a friend recommended Stephenson highly, calling him “a true craftsman, and a very honest and ethical guy.”

“I went up there initially to do two or three days of work, which turned into 10 days in order to get them bailed out,” says Richard Stephenson.

He says Urbanek told him he had “enough of a relationship” with the Kellogg & Kimsey project manager to make sure Stephenson was

paid. “That turned out to be not the case,” Stephenson says. According to Stephenson, his crew finished its work in late August and received “a blank refusal” when asking for payment.

Both Urbanek and Stephenson say they met with a Kellogg project manager around the time the Walmart finally opened, and the three came to a “theoretical agreement” (Stephenson’s phrase) for Urbanek and Stephenson to at least break even on the project. “We said, ‘Just pay us our costs. I don’t need to make anything on this. Just let us walk away whole,’” Stephenson says.

Urbanek writes that he and Stephenson “parted ways satisfied” that they would be paid, but so far, no dice. Stephenson says he received \$12,000, but the total for the project should have been around \$45,000.

Kellogg CFO Ed Doughty says Walmart may not pay his company for another three or four months, after inspections and verifications, and that any allegations that Kellogg has not paid out money it owes are simply not true.

“Subs may not be paid for several months from this point out, not because we’re withholding anything from them, but because that’s how contracts work,” Doughty says.

“We’ll get to the bottom of it with our subs,” Doughty says.

Stephenson says he’s exploring legal options, such as a lien, which would halt financial transactions associated with the project. While he is angry with Kellogg, he says Urbanek does bear some of the blame for the situation. “In a perfect world,” Stephenson says, “he never would have signed the contract that he signed.”

“They should have ended my contract, paid me for what I had done and written a new contract for Stephenson,” Urbanek admits.

I went up there initially to do two or three days of work, which turned into 10 days in order to get them bailed out.

Richard Stephenson
Contractor

Stephenson says he has found himself in situations like this much more frequently in recent years.

“Since 2008, it is much more prevalent in the industry,” he says. “Since everything took

a turn south, people are doing work for cost or less, just to get work, to get cash flow.”

Gulf Coast Builders Exchange Executive Director Mary Dougherty-Slapp says her organization, a trade association for the commercial contracting industry, has not seen any spike in complaints like Urbanek’s and Stephenson’s, but they do come in “sporadically.” She calls the two men’s case “atypical.”

“When you have a reputable general contractor and reputable customer,” she says, “folks are going to get paid in a timely manner” — at least they should. “The bottom line,” she says, “is there’s just a certain amount of ethics involved.”





SAILING THROUGH

Walmart plans to open its newest Sarasota store in the downtown shopping center where a Publix once stood. Photo courtesy Walmart

RINGLING WALMART PLAN CLEARS DRC; NEXT UP — THE PLANNING BOARD

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Plans for a Walmart supercenter on Charles Ringling Boulevard passed their last bureaucratic hurdle on Wednesday, Oct. 3.

The City of Sarasota's Development Review Committee cleared the project for Nov. 14 review by the city's Planning Board.

The DRC is composed of senior officials from several city departments and the county fire marshal. These people ensure all of the many regulations and restrictions have been complied with before they give their approval for a development to enter the policy process.

In the case of Walmart, the property proposed for the store is already the site of a shopping

center – the city's first – so no rezoning is required. No special exception or variance has been requested, so there is no required neighborhood meeting. However, Walmart representatives held a voluntary public meeting Aug. 15. "We want to be good neighbors and that's why we're here," said Michelle Belaire, a Walmart PR veteran from Miami, during that neighborhood meeting.

The company plans to demolish the existing strip mall and parking lot at the intersection of Ringling and Lime and build a 98,000-square-foot general retail center with a grocery store. Doors should open in 2014 and then stay open 24/7/365.

Neighbors to the east and south of the store asked for some provision to allow pedestrian access to Payne Park. Although the architect inked in plans for a north-south walkway from the neighborhood to Ringling Boulevard, he made no allowance for people walking directly behind the store to the park.

During the neighborhood meeting, Belaire said, "Under our site plan, you'd cut through the back of the house [e.g. the loading and garbage area south of the building]. But a cut-through may not be appropriate. We're working on this, internally and with city staff."

Those efforts came to naught. Courtney Mendez, the city's planner for the project, said this week that neighbors will have to walk around three sides of the block to get to Payne Park, to avoid "trespassing" behind the supercenter.

It is unclear whether Walmart will erect any barriers to prevent people from walking behind the store as a cut-through to Payne Park.

During the neighborhood meeting, Walmart architect Michael Blinn also noted the store would be different from those of his normal big-box design.



City officials on the Development Review Committee have cleared plans for the proposed Walmart on Ringling Boulevard. Photo by Norman Schimmel

"This store is smaller and shortened," he said. "There is an all-glass entry with a canopy at a pedestrian scale."

While the Planning Board will hear Walmart's petition and review its site plan, there is very little it can do to amend them. Wednesday's "sign-off" by the Development Review Committee means all technical issues have been resolved. And the project meets all zoning requirements.



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NEW RULES

*Management of behavioral health programs in Sarasota County could go to firms outside the area.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

LOCAL NONPROFITS COULD LOSE OUT ON DCF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONTRACTS

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

The Florida Department of Children & Families has launched a new competitive procurement process to decide who will manage its behavioral health programs in Sarasota and DeSoto counties, a “completely new” process that has some folks concerned the programs could be managed by non-local entities.

The Network has pulled its contract with Coastal Behavioral Healthcare, which receives 80% of the current DCF funds in Sarasota County, as a result of “performance issues and concerns with responsiveness,” according to minutes of a Sept. 28 meeting on the topic provided to *The Sarasota News Leader*.

At that meeting, a DCF representative “made it clear that although other behavioral health providers, who receive twenty percent of the DCF funding, are in good standing (First Step, Mental Health Community Centers, Renaissance Manor, and Bayside), they will still be part of the procurement process in order to address the entire system of care,” according to the minutes.

On Monday, Oct. 1, the Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, which manages the DCF program, issued an Intent to Negotiate worth up to \$12 million annually, asking applicants to focus on “Innovation,” “Agility,” “Inspira-

tion,” “Accountability” and making their services “consumer driven.” Only three entities were deemed “qualified” to receive the Intent to Negotiate: Clearwater’s Baycare Behavioral Health, Lakeland’s Tri-County Human Services and First Step of Sarasota.

Responding to concerns about having out-of-county entities handling behavioral care here, the DCF representative at the Sept. 28 meeting told stakeholders that if the “community response” is “collaborative with enhanced integration of services, it will be considered competitive” with the Clearwater and Lakeland organizations.

“This is something completely new. They’ve never done anything like this before,” says Sarasota County Behavioral Health Policy Coordinator Pamela Meunier.

But Floridians should get used to it. According to Meunier, competitive procurement is going to be DCF *modus operandi* statewide for at least “the next few years.” Indeed, according

to the meeting minutes, “all behavioral health services in the state will be competitively procured” at some point.

A 2011 year-end report from DCF claimed that through the competitive process, the department has “increased services and improved outcomes as well as reduced administrative costs.” According to that report, “the majority of new contracts were awarded to a successful incumbent,” a sign that First Step (whose president and CEO, David Beesley, did not respond to calls) has a good shot at landing the new contract.

“They’re looking for effectiveness,” says Meunier. “They’re looking for more bang for the buck — just like when they procure for road-building and bridge-building.”

The three organizations’ applications are due Dec. 31; a final agreement should be hammered out by next April. The new contract will kick in July 1, 2013, and will last one year.



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The contest concludes when The Sarasota News Leader achieves 1,000 “Likes” on Facebook. One winner will be selected at random from among subscribers. Only subscribers are eligible to win the iPad, regardless of having “Liked” our page on Facebook. Contest is open only to residents of Sarasota County. Selected winners must provide a valid Sarasota County street address to receive the iPad. Contest is void where prohibited by law.



CHARTER CHANGERS

One of the seven proposed charter amendments for the City of Sarasota would remove a measure aimed at stopping construction of a Walmart in 2007. Today, a new Walmart is open and busy on the North Tamiami Trail. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ERASING THE ANTI-WALMART LANGUAGE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

What a difference five years makes. Today the city is about to authorize a new Walmart only a few blocks east of downtown. Five years ago, the city put into the charter a provision aimed directly at stopping a Walmart from coming to the north end of town.

The charter is a relatively slim document, but more than six of its pages today are devoted to the 2007 anti-Walmart provision. On Nov. 6, voters will be asked to repeal that language — stripping it from the charter.

The old language was a product of time and place. The year 2007 was just past the peak of property values, and few people in town were hurting. Walmart proposed building a store at

the southeast corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Washington Boulevard on a contaminated site. The company offered to clean up the site and employ more than 50 people.

While a majority of north Sarasota civic leaders embraced the project, others began a petition drive to throw up roadblocks. The petitioners said any company receiving more than \$100,000 in government subsidies and employing more than 50 people would have to pay workers \$10.70 per hour or more. At the time, Florida's minimum wage was \$7.25.

Walmart met those criteria, taking a government subsidy to help clean up the old dump site before it would begin erecting its building. When the charter amendment passed,

Walmart killed its plans and pulled out. The site remains undeveloped – and polluted – to this day.

The Sarasota City Charter Review Board voted to remove the six-plus pages of anti-Walmart language from the charter, in part, because it believed the charter had no business getting involved in day-to-day decision-making. Several members of the board said that if the city wanted that kind of protection, it could pursue such an avenue with a simple ordinance.

Voters who believe the city charter should not contain language concerning specific recommendations on economic development will vote in favor of the amendment.

Voters who believe the city charter should contain a provision that companies taking government subsidies should pay higher-than-minimum wages will vote against the amendment.



FIRE PREVENTION OPEN HOUSE TO BE HELD OCT. 6



Families are invited to enjoy a fun-filled day at the annual Fire Prevention Open House sponsored by Sarasota County Emergency Services.

The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 6, at Fire Station 5, 400 N. Beneva Road, Sarasota.

This year's theme is "Have 2 Ways Out," which focuses on the importance of escape planning and practice, a county news release says.

During the event, a World Trade Center artifact will be unveiled and kept on display throughout the day, the news release says.

Numerous live fire and safety demonstrations are planned throughout the day, the news release says.

The event is free and part of the National Fire Prevention Association's campaign to raise awareness about fire safety during Fire Prevention Week, which is Oct. 7-13.

Sarasota County Emergency Services Director and Fire Chief Mike Tobias offers the following safety tips:

- Check your smoke alarms every month to make sure they are working.

- Replace your smoke alarm batteries when you change your clocks -- twice a year.
- If your smoke alarm is "chirping," it is time for a new battery.
- Smoke alarms should be on every level of your home. Make sure there is an alarm in or near every sleeping area.
- Plan regular fire drills setting off the smoke alarm so everyone knows exactly what to do when they hear the smoke alarm.
- Have a home escape plan. Draw a floor plan or map of your home and make sure everyone knows how to get out of the home in case of fire and knows a safe place to meet outside the home.
- Make sure your home escape plan shows two ways out of your home in case your primary way out is blocked.
- • If there is someone in the home with special needs, make sure you have considered the person's needs when creating your home escape plan.

For additional information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000, or visit www.scgov.net.

THINK BEFORE YOU VOTE



Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson and County Administrator Randall Reid prepare for a recent commission discussion. During the Oct. 2 meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association, Patterson weighed in on the proposed Amendment 4 to the state constitution; Reid was a guest at the meeting. File photo

VILLAGE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS ASKED TO WEIGH IN ON PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Siesta Key Village Association President Russell Matthes is asking members to weigh in on the 11 proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution that will be on the Nov. 6 ballot, following negative comments about one that aired at the SKVA's regular meeting on Oct. 2.

Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, told the approximately 25 SKVA members present that CONA's next meeting, on Oct. 8, will feature a discussion of the amendments. That meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts.

New College political science professor Frank Alcock, considered an expert on the amendments, and Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid will be the guest speakers, Ramirez added.

Because the SKVA board of directors will not meet until Oct. 16, Matthes said, the organization's members will have time after the CONA discussion to let Matthes know their thoughts on all 11 amendments.

Matthes pointed out during the SKVA meeting that members of this organization had been working with members of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce to address the amend-

ments. The chamber is encouraging its members to vote in favor of Amendments 2, 4, 9, 10 and 11, Matthes said.

“We, as an association, should probably take a position as well,” he added.

Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who was a guest at the meeting, asked to weigh in on Amendment 4.

According to the Florida Division of Elections, that amendment would “provide that the assessment of homestead and specified nonhomestead property may not increase if the just value of that property is less than the just value of the property on the preceding January 1, subject to any adjustment in the assessed value due to changes, additions, reductions, or improvements to such property which are assessed as provided for by general law.”

In other words, Patterson said, if the value of homestead property goes down, the property owner will see “some erasure of the gap” between assessed value and the real market value.

The amendment also would reduce from 10% to 5% the limitation on annual changes in assessments of nonhomestead real property.

Referring to those provisions, Patterson said, “That’s, frankly, bait for the homeowners who are, by and large, the [people who will] vote on this. ... I would urge you to look at the long-term effects of something like that.”

The Florida Association of Counties has estimated that if Amendment 4 is approved, within four years, Sarasota County will have collected about \$9.4 million less in property tax revenue. Municipalities also would see less revenue, she added. “That’s a lot of money ... about an 8% or so reduction in our property tax collections” in the county.

Patterson pointed out that since the Great Recession began, the county’s property tax base had lost 40% of its value.

People who want good libraries and parks, good law enforcement and other amenities, she said, should be cautious about voting for the amendment.

“You’re putting something in the constitution that’s really rough to take out, with long-term, serious consequences, I believe, to the quality of life in the community,” she said.

The League of Women Voters and the executive committees of both the state’s Democratic and Republican parties all were advocating against passage of Amendment 4, Patterson said.

AMENDMENT 10

Kevin Cooper, executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, spoke in support of Amendment 10. The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce “was instrumental in getting this on the ballot,” he added.

“You’re putting something in the constitution that’s really rough to take out, with long-term, serious consequences, I believe, to the quality of life in the community.”

Nora Patterson
County Commissioner

Amendment 10 would provide “an exemption from ad valorem taxes levied by counties, municipalities, school districts, and other local governments on tangible personal property if the assessed value of an owner’s tangible personal property is greater than \$25,000 but less than \$50,000,” according to the Division of Elections.

The amendment would take effect on Jan. 1, 2013.

Additionally, it would authorize “a county or municipality for the purpose of its respective levy ... to provide tangible personal property tax exemptions by ordinance. This is in addition to other statewide tangible personal property tax exemptions provided by the Constitution and this amendment,” the Division of Elections website says.

“This is the one that really affects business,” Cooper pointed out.

THE AMENDMENTS AS A GROUP

SKVA member Anne Johnson recommended everyone read the voters guide published by the League of Women Voters, as the organization is nonpartisan. The guide, she said, “explains really well what all these gazillion amendments mean.”

The guide reportedly is available at all Sarasota County libraries.

Ramirez pointed out that, along with the 12 proposed state amendments, Sarasota County has one proposed charter amendment that will be on the Nov. 6 ballot.

The City of Sarasota has seven proposed amendments.

“There shouldn’t be four pages of amendments,” Ramirez added.

The other amendments Matthes addressed are as follows:

- Amendment 2 “would expand the availability of the property discount on the homesteads of veterans who became disabled as the result of a combat injury to include those who were not Florida residents when they entered the military,” according to the Florida Division of Elections. It would take effect Jan. 1, 2013.

- Amendment 9 would “provide by general law ad valorem homestead property tax relief to the surviving spouse of a military veteran who died from service-connected causes while on active duty or to the surviving spouse of a first responder who died in the line of duty. The amendment authorizes the Legislature to totally exempt or partially exempt such surviving spouse’s homestead property from ad valorem taxation. The amendment defines a first responder as a law enforcement officer, a correctional officer, a firefighter, an emergency medical technician, or a paramedic,” according to the Division of Elections. It also would take effect on Jan. 1, 2013.

- Amendment 11 would “authorize the Legislature ... to allow counties and municipalities to grant an additional homestead tax exemption equal to the assessed value of homestead property if the property has a just value less than \$250,000 to an owner who has maintained permanent residency on the property for not less than 25 years, who has attained age 65, and who has a low household income as defined by general law,” according to the Division of Elections.



PRESERVING A WAY OF LIFE

Amish and Mennonite residents enjoy sports in Pinecraft Park, one of Sarasota County's most heavily used parks, according to county staff. Photo by John McCarthy/Sarasota County

PINECRAFT COMMUNITY WORKING WITH SARASOTA COUNTY STAFF ON A LONG-RANGE PLAN

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sarasota County staff has been working with the residents of the Pinecraft community on a long-range plan that will have national significance, the County Commission heard during its regular meeting on Sept. 26.

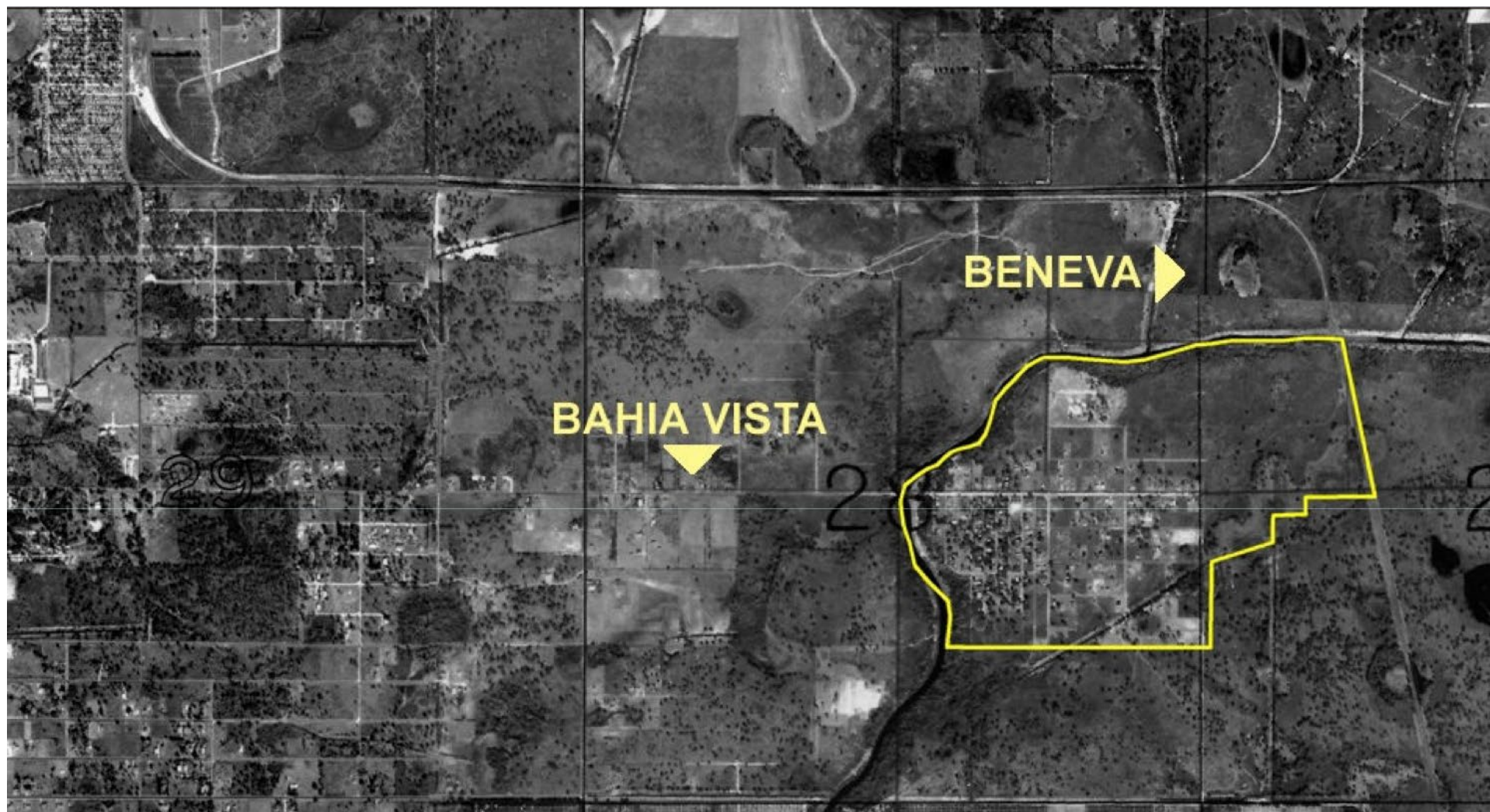
The goal of the plan is to preserve the culture and quality of life of the Amish and Mennonite members of that community, explained Teresa Mast, the business relations coordinator in the county's Economic Development Office.

Community residents have committed themselves to paying for a consultant who can develop the plan, Mast said, but county staff will

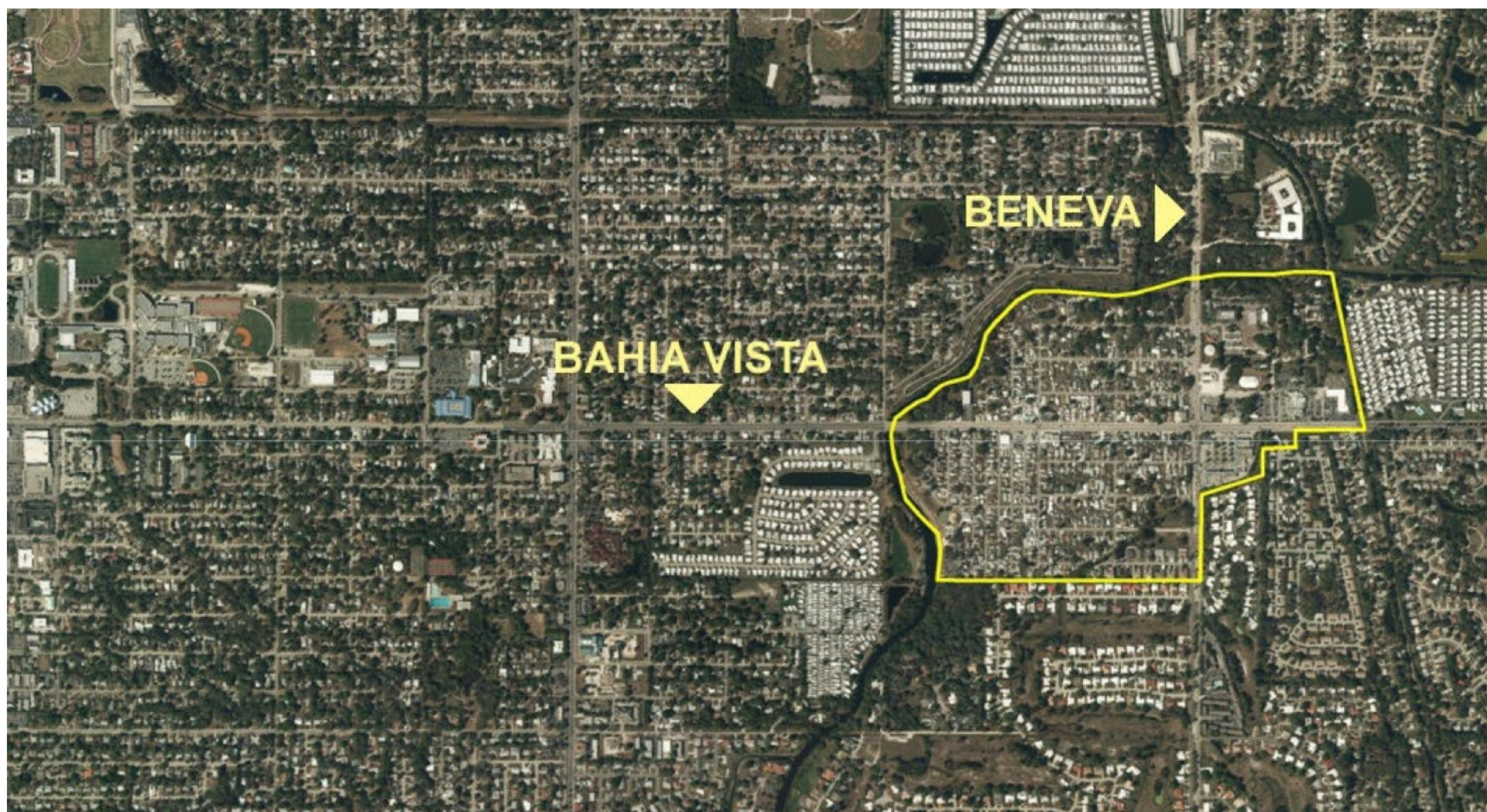
be providing planning and technical resources.

Community residents will be holding a variety of events, including barbecues, she said, to raise funds with the hope of having the consultant on board by January. The core of the planning work would take place in the winter of 2013 and the spring of 2014, she said.

Pinecraft residents are hoping to hire Norm Kauffman, the former dean of students at Goshen College in Indiana, Tom Polk, the county's general manager for planning services, told the commission.



A Sarasota County map shows how little development exists around Pineland in 1948. Map courtesy Sarasota County



A 2012 county map shows how development has encompassed Pineland. Map courtesy Sarasota County

Kauffman “understands the balances” of a community like Pinecraft, Polk said, as Kauffman is very familiar with Shipshewana, an Amish community about 15 miles away from Goshen College.

If Kauffman is hired, Polk continued, Kauffman wants to create an internship program involving students from Goshen College, Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, VA; Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, PA; and the University of Florida. Those students would spend their spring semester in Sarasota in 2014 to work on the long-range plan, Polk added.

While Goshen, Eastern Mennonite and Messiah have strong liberal arts programs, students with architectural and transportation planning skills could be found at the University of Florida.

County staff has held five meetings with Pinecraft residents over the past couple of years, Mast said. Another is scheduled for Oct. 16. The meetings have drawn from 50 to 250 participants, she said.

Residents have pointed out their primary concern is their quality of life, she added.

Pinecraft was established about 50 years ago, Mast said. “The majority of the Amish and Mennonite communities throughout the country” are in rural areas, she noted. “Pinecraft is established in the heart of urban Sarasota,” along a portion of Bahia Vista Street.

It is bisected by Beneva Road.

The population increases about 60% during season, Mast pointed out, as Amish and Men-

nonite visitors make Pinecraft their winter home.

Because of that population’s culture and its choices, “Pinecraft is a walking and biking community,” she added.

CHANGES AHEAD

Part of the long-range plan will be focused on making the streets more pedestrian-friendly. Mast called that effort not only a “desirable objective for Pinecraft but a life-safety issue.”

County staff hopes to install pedestrian-activated blinking lights at the three crosswalks in the community before the end of the year, Mast said. Two of those crosswalks are located at the well-known restaurants on Bahia Vista — Yoder’s and Der Dutchman. The third is on Beneva, just south of the Bahia Vista intersection.

Additionally, she said, radar speed signs, which alert drivers to conform to the speed limit, will be installed on the main approaches to the community.

“I am really glad to hear that the speed issue is going to be addressed,” Commissioner Carolyn Mason said, “because it’s really troubling when I drive through Pinecraft, how some drivers just disregard the speed limit signs, because this is such a pedestrian- and bike-oriented community.”

The speed limit in Pinecraft is 30 mph.

Mast noted the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office already has been working closely with county staff on the safety issues. “They said that they will be happy to come out and encourage our residents to abide by those [speed] laws,” Mast said.

“That was gentle!” Chairwoman Christine Robinson responded with a laugh.

Staff also will be working with community residents to make certain they understand the improvements as they are implemented, Mast said. “The internal communication, we feel, is just as important as the external communication.”

Moreover, Mast said, the Sheriff’s Office is planning a Safety Fair in Pinecraft on Jan. 26. It will be targeted to seasonal residents.

“A lot of folks come from different parts of the country and don’t necessarily understand all the rules and regulations of the road and the bicycle use and all that,” Mast pointed out.

Because Pinecraft experiences a lot of bicycle theft, she added, Sheriff’s Office personnel also will engrave ID information on bicycles during the fair.

County staff has been working to try to improve bus service in Pinecraft, too, Mast said.

“The community uses [Sarasota County Area Transit] services extensively,” she pointed out. Factors to consider in the plan are whether the bus stops are in the best locations, whether enough of those stops have shelters and whether a sufficient number of bike racks are available for people who use that means of transportation to reach the bus stops.

Additionally, Mast said, community residents have asked for “a direct route from Pinecraft to Siesta Key,” routes with fewer stops to some of their primary shopping destinations, such as Walmart and Home Depot, and perhaps “customized, seasonal routes.”

SCAT staff also is reviewing the possibility of relocating some of the stops to make them more accessible to community users, Mast said.



A recreational vehicle parked at a house in Pinecraft is a common sight. Photo by John McCarthy/Sarasota County

Pinecraft residents even have said they would be willing to pay an additional bus fee, she added, “knowing there is a budget impact for some of those [requests].”

Yet another focus of the plan will be zoning issues, Mast said. For example: “Because of roadway expansions and substandard lots, there are structures that can’t be expanded out or replaced” to meet code, she said.

As she made that point, Mast showed the commission a PowerPoint slide with a recreational vehicle parked in front of a house.

“I assume you’re going to take the temperature of not just those people who have motor homes in their yards but the people who don’t, whose neighbors have them, to see what the consensus is,” Commissioner Nora Patterson said.

County staff has learned that it is important to work with the community churches as well as talking to people in the neighborhoods about these issues, Polk said, as “[the churches] really provide a face to the community.”

While county staff members are “not trying to bypass [regulations] in any capacity,” Polk said, they are trying to keep in mind Pinecraft residents’ way of life as they address the various issues.

“I’m very optimistic, with the trust and respect that we’re getting in the community, [residents] can be their own best watchdogs at some point,” Polk said.

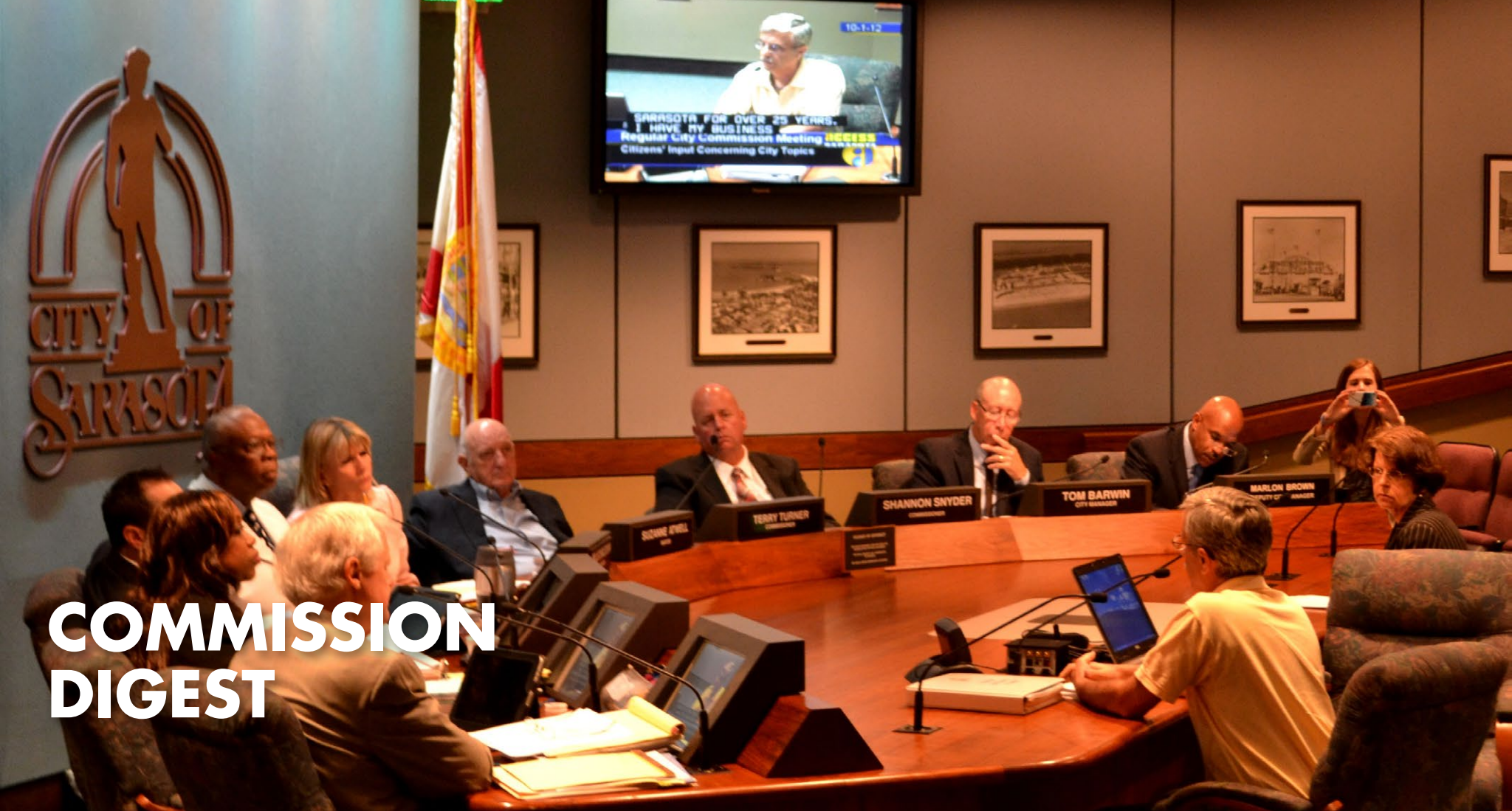


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COMMISSION DIGEST

Manuel Chepote addresses the Sarasota City Commission on Oct. 1, decrying the reinstatement of a police officer accused of mistreating an Hispanic arrestee almost three years ago. Photo by Norman Schimmel

MISSING EMAILS, PAINT AT THE CHALK FESTIVAL AND FEAR IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY AMONG TOPICS AIRED

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

A score of issues were taken up Monday, Oct. 1, by the Sarasota City Commission or presented by residents. A downtown hotel, fear in the Hispanic community, paint at the Chalk Festival and more were aired and acted upon.

SYLINT AND THE MISSING EMAILS

One hot topic was a verbal report by John Jorgenson full of mystery and intrigue, ghost users, infiltration and incompetence. His company, Sylint Cyber Security, Forensics and eDiscovery, was hired to investigate allegations that former City Manager Bob Bartolotta erased emails in violation of the Florida Public Records Law.

Jorgensen promised a full written report by the end of October, but he verbally informed the City Commission he could not interest the state attorney or the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in pursuing any criminal charges.

“Unfortunately, because of the problems with the backups and log-in problems, it is very difficult to trace back everything that has happened on that system. Some emails were lost and probably will never be recovered,” he said.

A number of anonymous users with the highest access were able to cruise the city’s email

system, he said, looking into the correspondence of City Attorney Bob Fournier, city Commissioners Paul Caragiulo and Shannon Snyder, City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini and others.

Identifying the anonymous users – “ghost accounts” as Snyder called them – was impossible because of shared passwords and other intentional scrambles. The users were able to penetrate the Sarasota Police email system, but not law enforcement’s working files.

While initially it was thought thousands of emails had disappeared, after Jorgenson finished his forensic evaluation, he said 104 remained unaccounted for.

“The FDLE is taking no action. There is no formal prosecution. I met with the State Attorney’s Office, with law enforcement present. Law enforcement has to pick and choose the cases they’ll go after,” Jorgensen said. “They are having a difficult time assigning criminal intent.

Sylint so far has been paid \$141,786.50 for its services, with the contract set at \$149,765.

PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY EDGES CLOSER TO REALITY

If anybody knows how to make use of the levers of power in the City of Sarasota, it is former commissioner Ken Shelin. On May 21, he proposed the city begin a “Domestic Partnership Registration” system.

On Oct. 1, the enabling ordinance was approved unanimously. With a second reading scheduled in two weeks, it appears destined to become local law. For municipal legislation, that is warp speed.

While Florida law forbids same-sex marriages, several cities in the state have established partner registration systems that skirt the prohibition. The establishment of registries has come in response to circumstances in which long-time partners have not been allowed visitation in hospitals, for example, as well as other, similar quasi-legal bans.

“This is a simple device to recognize the changing nature of domestic relationships,” said Shelin.

“If you are going to have a progressive city, you need to have progressive policies,” added City Commissioner Willie Shaw.

The measure passed unanimously, to applause.

LIDO POOL SURVIVES AGAIN

“It’s a \$2.9 million project,” said Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown. “I would be very cautious with how you proceed with this.”

The city commissioners looked at a proposed four-phase plan for the pool and its grounds – playground, meeting room, restroom renovations, reconfigured parking – with its price tag, and they balked. But they did not walk away.

“It is one of the most desirable locations in the city” for a restaurant, said City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo. “It’s a great opportunity.”

“We’ve done great things at the Robert Taylor [Community Complex in north Sarasota] and Payne Park and downtown,” said Commissioner Terry Turner. “This is a part of the city you might say we’re neglecting.”

The pool became a city responsibility when Sarasota County 18 months ago shifted millions in parks maintenance to the city in a new interlocal agreement. The county claimed Lido Pool was costing \$180,000 to operate, and generating very little income.

Carl Shoffstall, a Lido Beach neighborhood leader who has been trying to save the pool, said annual expenses are down to about \$128,000 while revenue is up to about \$100,000.

“We’re looking at grants, matching grants. There are tourist tax dollars out there,” said Shoffstall.

The commissioners instructed staff to create a business plan with anticipated revenues and expenses for the pool.

“In order to get a space that’s earning money, you don’t have to go anywhere near the \$2.9 million,” said Caragiulo.

GREEN LIGHT FOR FLORIDAYS HOTEL

Borrowing a bit of Shelin’s “warp speed,” a hotel project proposed for the northern corner of Palm and Cocoanut Avenues won the go-ahead Monday. Developer Angus Rogers said he wants to build “a four-star experience.”

“We are eager to get to work,” he told the commissioners.

The project marched quickstep through the Downtown Improvement District, the Development Review Committee and the Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board, possibly in record time.



City staff will take another look at how best to make use of the Lido Pool as a community asset. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The Floridays company will buy the land from the city for \$2.5 million, but the city will put \$1.2 million back into the project in infrastructure (mostly utilities work), which will benefit not only the hotel but the surrounding area.

Monday was the day the commission agreed to sell the land, the first of two key agreements. The second involves a parking and redevelopment pact to be signed in early January.

Commissioners enthused about the project.

“Mr. Rogers, I can’t say thank you enough,” said Shannon Snyder. Mayor Suzanne Atwell even “punned” him: “Not to be funny, but this is a wonderful day in the neighborhood. It’s the right time, the right fit and the right style for the City of Sarasota,” she said.

The vote was unanimous, also to applause.

CHALK FESTIVAL SWEEPS UP

While at least two commissioners did not realize it, Chalk Festival Organizer Denise Kowal already had what she needed when she came forward, seemingly to ask for help.

Because staff decides virtually all issues about festivals, she needed commission approval only to waive about \$3,500 in city fees.

At least two commissioners thought they would be able to decide how long the festival would last, if paint could be applied to the asphalt and whether the art could be left on the streets after the festival ended.

A number of residents came to protest the 10-day duration of the festival.

“Ten days is a ridiculous amount of time to shut down a retail district,” said Lee Anne Swor. “I need to work to make a living.”

Heidi McCullough said, “I believe a two-day closure is sufficient. And it’s a chalk festival. No paint.”

Commissioners were surprised to find out all the decisions had been made at the staff level, except for the fee waiver.

“You have given us administrative authority to approve that part of the event permit,” said Deputy City Manager Brown.

“These folks have been marketing since January,” said Commissioner Snyder. “Either they are marching on their own or had tacit approval from staff since January. Either there are memos, or we are being cornered in a box.”

“These folks have been led to believe a 10-day festival has been permitted,” said Commissioner Turner. “We could overrule staff, but it would be totally inappropriate to do that. We should stand behind our staff.”

“This is now the biggest collection of 3D artists in the world,” said Kowal. “We are flying in 20 artists from around the world to participate. But only one will be using paint.”

In the end, commissioners succumbed to the lure of the chalk. Turner made a motion to delegate to the city manager how long the chalk stays on the street, approve the festival’s safety plan for post-event viewing of the art and “approve the small waiver of fees.”

The motion was approved 4-1, with Shaw in the minority.

FEAR AND ANGER AFTER OFFICER’S REINSTATEMENT

The decision putting Police Officer Christopher Childers back on duty at the Sarasota

Police Department propelled several speakers to tell city commissioners they felt afraid to call city police.

Last month, Childers was reinstated nearly three years after he was fired for excessive use of force, caught on camera kicking a handcuffed Hispanic man in his custody.

“Recently we were shocked that a civic board of this city is reinstating into our fine police department a person who had a serious problem with a member of the Hispanic community,” said neighborhood leader Manuel Chepote. “I don’t think it was right, and I don’t think it was right the civic board reinstated him with three years of back salary.”

“Where is this going to lead us,” asked Francisco Suriano. “The fear is very real and very pervasive, when 20% of our population is afraid to call the police if they are robbed, if they are raped, because they fear the police.”

The city’s Civil Service Board voted unanimously to dismiss charges of excessive use of force and three other violations against Childers.

Video of the incident went viral on the Internet, showing Childers handling a drunken Juan Perez in the Sarasota County Jail sally port. Perez later sued the city and received a \$40,000 settlement.

Three city commissioners expressed disappointment in the Civil Service Board’s decision. Turner asked City Attorney Bob Fournier, “What authority do we have to right an injustice. What can we do or can’t do?”

The attorney said he would report back later in the month with some guidance.

Commissioner Snyder, a retired Sarasota County deputy, said, “That’s not how a professional acts or how an organization should respond to it.”

■ ■ ■



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Former Sarasota Mayor Kelly Kirschner will moderate a program on Oct. 9 to raise funds for maintaining historic city structures. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SPOTLIGHT ON 'OLD GRAY MAYORS,' RESTAURANTS COMING AND GOING AND COMMEMORATING BEACH DESEGREGATION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

'OLD GRAY MAYORS' CHATTER AT CROCKER

Sarasota city government is nonpartisan, a fact that is reflected in unusual ways. For example, past mayors can talk with each other without scratching out each other's eyes. Sometimes they even back worthwhile causes together.

On Tuesday Oct. 9, five of them are expected to assemble for a panel discussion about the city's past, present and future. If he shows up, it will be a rare public appearance for three-time Mayor Fredd Atkins. The other "grays" present will be Elmer Berkel, Kerry Kirschner and Mollie Cardamone.

The fifth former mayor is not gray at all: Kelly Kirschner will moderate the discussion and perhaps egg on his elders.

The session will benefit the Historical Society of Sarasota County. It will be held inside the 1901 Crocker Church in Pioneer Park.

A \$10 donation is asked of each attendee to help maintain the church and the adjoining Bidwell-Wood House. Built in 1882, that house is Sarasota's oldest surviving residence.

FOR RESTAURANTS: HELLO AND GOODBYE

There are more Michelin-starred restaurants in tiny Belgium than all of France. The cook-

ing is that good, food snobs say. But there must not be enough of those snobs to keep a local Belgian restaurant cooking.

The Brasserie Belge across the street from the Hollywood 20 theaters has closed its doors, lasting only through one tourist season. The continental cuisine was highly ranked by local reviews and word of mouth, but the business succumbed to the economic doldrums.

Meanwhile, an old downtown favorite is moving to upscale quarters. The Peruvian-themed Ceviche will be moving off Main Street to the classy Mira Mar on Palm Avenue.

Property owner Dr. Mark Kaufman announced the move of the popular restaurant on Tuesday, Oct. 2. Its service will operate in and around the courtyard of the historic apartment building.

LIDO BEACH DESEGREGATION MARKER DEDICATED

The Sarasota County Historical Commission is hosting a ceremony on Saturday, Oct. 6, to dedicate a historical marker commemorating the desegregation of area beaches. The ceremony will be held in the landscaped area north of the Lido Beach Pavilion at 4 p.m.

In 1951, Mary Emma Jones asked the county commissioners for a beach that could be used by African-Americans. The following year, county voters approved a bond issue to pay for beach acquisition.

In 1955, Neil Humphrey led members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People on several visits to Lido Beach. The city temporarily closed the beach, citing dangerous currents.

In 1964, the Civil Rights Act made racial discrimination in public places illegal. The his-



Parking fines may be paid at the Sarasota Police Department. Photo by Norman Schimmel

torical marker notes it was several years after that before the beaches were integrated.

PARKING AMNESTY EXTENDED

The city's September parking ticket amnesty program resulted in 200 past-due tickets being paid, without the levy of a late fee. Now the city is extending the program through October.

Tickets must be more than 90 days old to qualify for amnesty. City officials say there are unpaid tickets adding up to approximately \$700,000 and going back to 2002. If one of them is yours, you could benefit from the amnesty program and avoid having your car immobilized, or finding you have problems renewing your tag.

"As the initial program wrapped up at the end of September, we noticed some good momentum with people paying their old citations," said Parking Manager Mark Lyons in a press release. "Also our seasonal residents are beginning to return, so this will give them an opportunity to learn about the program and participate."

Since the city did away with the downtown parking meters, the only way it can pay for parking enforcement is through ticket payments and late fees.



PRAISE FOR A PROJECT



Venice Middle School students enjoy the hands-on approach of the new TechActiv Classrooms of Tomorrow. Photos courtesy Sarasota County Public Schools

TEACHERS, STUDENTS THANK SPONSORS OF NEW MATH/SCIENCE INITIATIVE IN THE SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

The meeting room was as full as some regular attendees had ever seen it, for the Oct. 2 meeting of the Sarasota County School Board.

Had some controversial issue drawn angry residents out on a weeknight? Was the board going to address a hot agenda item?

No, the audience comprised mostly teachers, students and their parents, coming to say, “Thank you” and sing the praises of a project that is changing the way students are being taught in the Sarasota County Public Schools — the TechActiv Classrooms of Tomorrow.

These TechActiv Classrooms have been in use in all the district’s middle schools since the

beginning of this school year, but the School Board meeting provided an opportunity for a celebration of several years of in-house planning and design.

It is the opinion of many educators, scientists and world leaders that the sort of innovative teaching demonstrated in these Classrooms of Tomorrow is vital in helping prepare students for careers in a modern world focused more and more on technology.

The 50 Sarasota County Classrooms of Tomorrow were funded primarily by such local organizations as the Gulf Coast Community Foundation in Venice, though support also

came from the Faulhaber Foundation, Hewlett-Packard and other national organizations.

They represent part of a \$2.5 million plan by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation to support science and technology in schools in both Sarasota and Charlotte counties.

The principal feature of these new classrooms is simple: a series of workstations with space for four students each at a semicircular table. The table has an interactive 24-inch, touch-screen computer. It is connected to Hewlett-Packard wireless graphing calculators, for example, as well as digital probes and microscopes. The curriculum calls for using these devices in experiments and projects — in essence transforming otherwise potentially dull lectures into pretty exciting hands-on work.

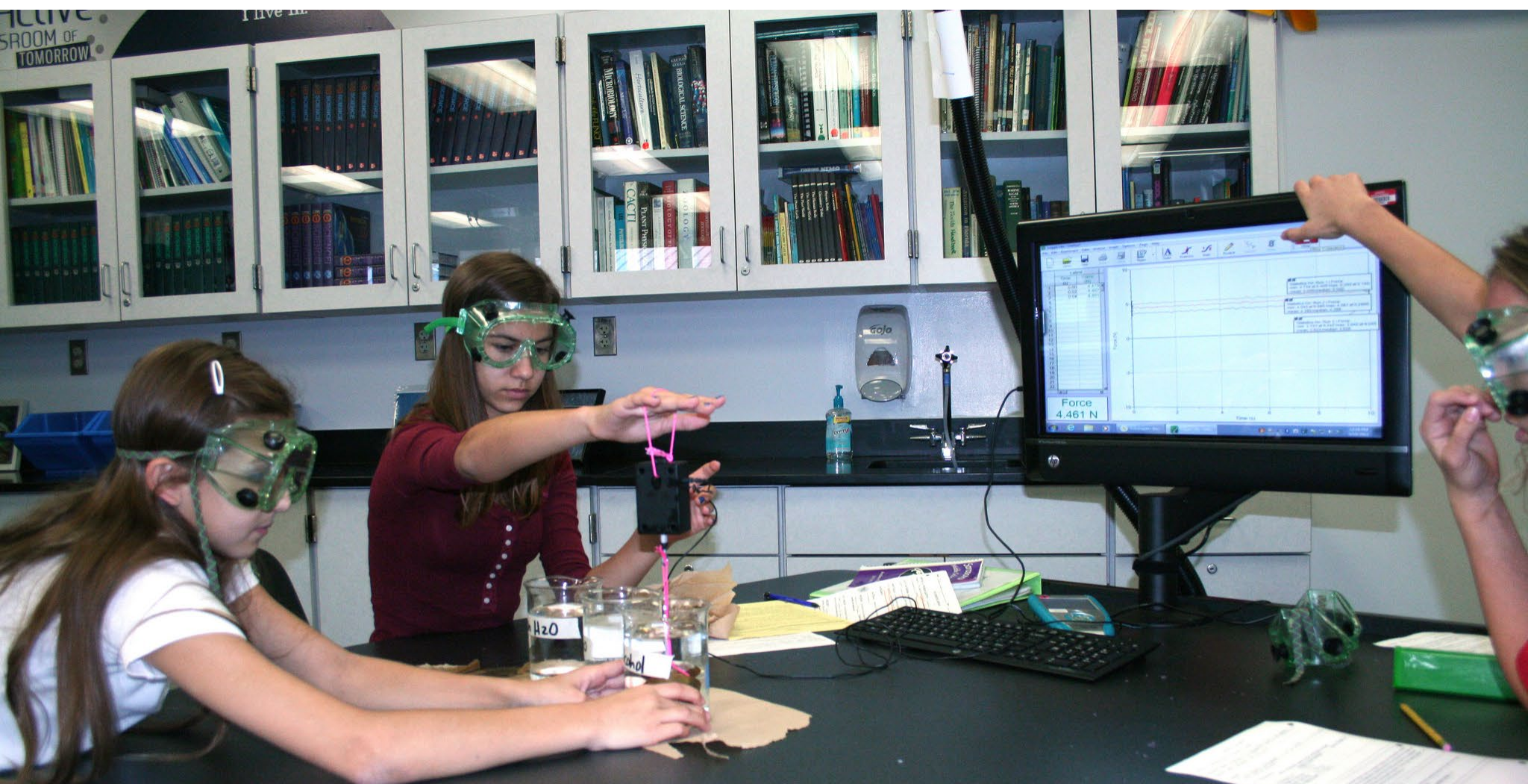
“I really think it’s cool,” said student Christina Strates on the School Board website. “We get

to learn in a different way. We get to interact with one another. Learning this way is more fun than reading a textbook. We learn to use the technology at the same time we learn the schoolwork.”

The teacher, no longer sitting at the front of a room facing the students at their desks, interacts with them in groups or monitors their computers with her own wireless pad.

“The Classrooms of Tomorrow are set up to be student-centered,” said Venice Middle School math teacher Katelynn Albert-Hefner on the School Board website “[They encourage] teachers to promote higher-level thinking skills. We are providing students the strategies they need to be successful. The kids love it.”

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this “Classrooms of Tomorrow” project was the



Experiments become a lot more interactive with the new equipment. Photos courtesy Sarasota County Public Schools

local nature of the design, planning and construction.

“We literally started out putting the workstations together from cardboard,” said Page Dettmann, executive director for middle school education in the school district, during Tuesday night’s presentation.

“As student input, or teacher’s opinions, were brought in, we ... changed the cardboard mockups,” she added.

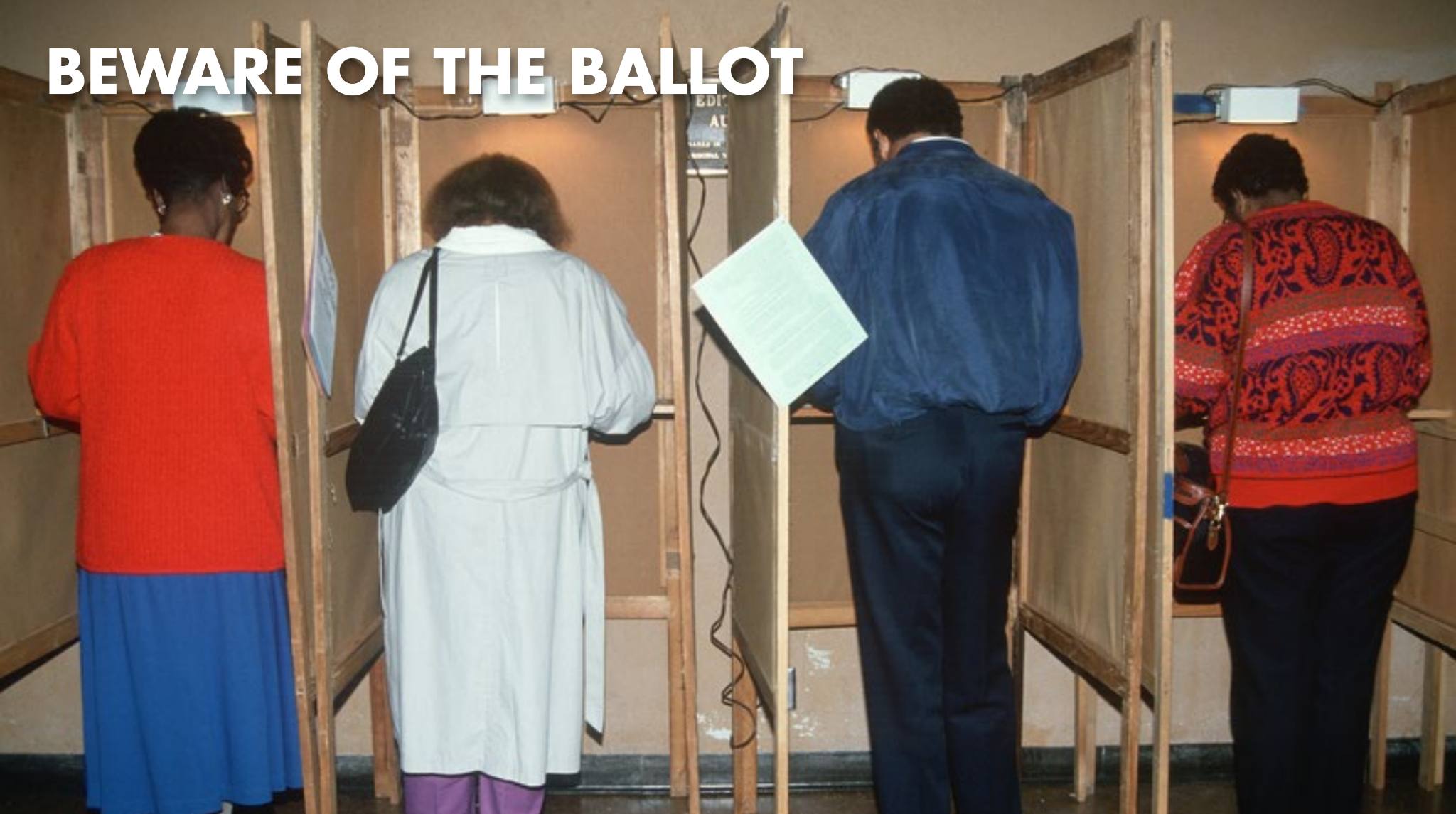
Everything from cardboard construction to actual construction was handled locally, though not all by the school district. Ideas for various technological aspects of the project came from district staff and the sponsors.

“This project initiates a new way in which we support the instruction of our students in the digital environment and [teach] the new skills for these digital learners,” said schools Superintendent Lori White.



High-tech microscopes are linked into the computer equipment. Photos courtesy Sarasota County Public Schools

BEWARE OF THE BALLOT



Long lines of voters are expected for the Nov. 6 general election, with Sarasota County and City of Sarasota voters facing a multitude of proposed amendments as well as the list of candidates. Americanspirit | Dreamstime.com

CHARTER AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ON NEIGHBORS' MINDS AS NOV. 6 APPROACHES

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

With the November general election only four weeks away, two prominent neighborhood umbrella organizations will be taking a look at voters' choices on proposed city and county charter changes and state constitutional amendments.

The Nov. 6 ballot will be the longest in Sarasota's history. There are seven Sarasota City Charter changes proposed, one Sarasota County Charter amendment and 11 amendments proposed to the Florida Constitution, plus voting for the president of the United States of America and lesser offices.

On Saturday, Oct. 6, the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations (CCNA) will meet at 9 a.m. It will hear a presentation on six of the seven city charter amendments as proposed by the city's Charter Review Committee. Chairwoman Gretchen Serrie and then-committee member and current City Commissioner Shannon Snyder will provide details and take questions.

City Commissioner Terry Turner will be there to give a rundown on the seventh proposed charter change, which was put on the ballot by a petition drive.

The meeting will be held on the second floor of the Waldemere Fire Station on Waldemere Street, across U.S. 41 from Sarasota Memorial Hospital.

COUNTY AND STATE CHANGES, TOO

On Monday, Oct. 8, the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) will hold a meeting to evaluate the 11 state constitutional amendment proposals and one county charter amendment.

The meeting will start at 7 p.m. at the Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Boulevard of the Arts. The building is nestled between the Hyatt Hotel to the south and the Sarasota Arts Center to the north.

CONA's meeting notice says, "A panel of citizens and public officials will explain the various ballot amendments and illustrate [their] impact to our local community."

Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid has agreed to participate, along with New College political science professor Frank Alcock.

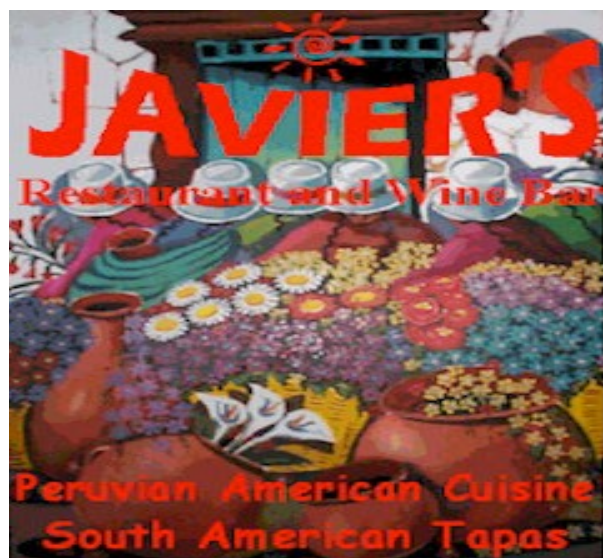
The Sarasota County Elections office website (www.SarasotaVotes.com) is displaying

a sample of the ballot you will see at the polls. Go to the site and select "precinct finder" to see the sample.

This year the Sarasota Herald-Tribune newspaper will not be making endorsements as it has for the past 76 years. The paper is under new ownership. Voters who in the past used the newspaper's guidance will not have the ability to "clip and save" its choices for later use. However, *The Sarasota News Leader* will publish a summary of its endorsements for all races in its Nov. 2 edition.

Lines at the polls on Election Day are anticipated to be long because heavy turnout always is expected during presidential elections. Additionally, many voters will be unprepared to face 19 city, county and state amendments.

You can skip the Nov. 6 balloting by voting early or by mail. You can request an absentee ballot by calling 861-8618 by Oct. 31, or you can vote early from Oct. 27 through Nov. 3 at six locations in the county. The Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections website has details.



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EASING IN THE CHANGES

Foliage along one side of Access 7 helps screen the parking area from the neighboring condominium complex. Photos by Rachel Hackney

SARASOTA COUNTY STAFF IS MOVING SLOWLY ON PLANS TO EXPAND PARKING AT SIESTA BEACH ACCESS 7

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Almost three-and-a-half years ago, the Sarasota County Commission asked staff to provide information “about plans for improvements at the two properties purchased adjacent to Siesta Beach Access No. 7,” according to a June 16, 2009 memo from then-County Manager Jim Ley.

The primary goal was to create more parking at that access. A secondary goal — a dream of then-Parks and Recreation General Manager John McCarthy — was to transform an historic cottage on the property into an educational center.

The property “really was bought to provide parking,” Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, told *The Sarasota News Leader* in a recent interview.

However, the plan was to add the parking slowly, current Parks and Recreation General Manager Carolyn N. Brown explained to the *News Leader*.

In just a few weeks, George Tatge, a Parks and Recreation manager, will join other staff members at the site to assess the next steps, he said in a Sept. 28 interview.

“We’re not developing a full-blown parking lot there,” he said. The idea was to protect the

neighborhood, he pointed out — and pointed to the vegetative buffer along the southern perimeter of the property. The vegetation was planted about two years ago, he said.

“As we move forward,” Tatge said, “that buffer’s getting established ... [becoming] a better buffer all the time.”

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

On Oct. 17, 2007, Sarasota County purchased the 3.2-acre vacant Siesta-Wood site next to Access 7, according to that June 16, 2009 memo. On Jan. 22, 2009, the county acquired the 0.5-acre Siesta-Curione Site. The latter property is home to that original beach cottage, the 2009 memo adds.

Not only has county staff been careful to “ease” the neighbors into changes at Access 7, it also has had to be careful of the endan-

gered snowy plovers that nest generally between Beach Accesses 5 and 10 from Feb. 1 through Aug. 31 each year.

Patterson likened the situation to a “push and pull” between watching out for the plovers and adding the extra parking spaces.

In fact, Tatge said, the possibility remains that county staff could work with the Sarasota Audubon chapter to transform the beach cottage into an educational center about not just the snowy plovers but also about the other wildlife at the beach, including the endangered sea turtles that nest on Siesta Key.

“We can maybe work a partnership with somebody” — an organization that would be interested in assisting the county with funding for planning purposes, at least, he said. “We don’t



An original beach cottage at Access 7 might at some point become an educational facility to teach visitors about the shore and the creatures that call it home.

have the money to do [such a project] at present anyway.”

However, Tatge pointed out that the necessary modifications to make the cottage a public facility would result in significant structural changes.

“Sometimes,” he said, “it just doesn’t make any financial sense to do that.”

He added, “That’s one of the things we’re going slow on as well,” determining “the highest and best use” of the cottage.

In the meantime, staff at that coming site meeting will take a look at whether the current number of parking spaces — eight — can be doubled or tripled, Tatge said. “We haven’t done the math yet.”

The plan is to move or remove the fence along one side of the access to provide an extra 40 feet or so of space to accommodate additional vehicles. One thought, he said, is that staff might leave sections of

the fence there, instead of installing more parking bumpers.

In other park districts around the United States, Tatge noted, native and natural materials are being utilized instead of manmade structures wherever possible. For example, he said, “They’ll cut a tree down in the parking lot” and leave the trunk on the ground as one long parking bumper.

The goal with parks, he said, “is to minimize your impact ... so that’s exactly what we’re doing.”

At some time in the future, Tatge said, the Access 7 parking area might have to be paved, but that action would necessitate going through a permitting process. “Those are issues we’re tip-toeing around,” he said.

Ultimately, Tatge said, “It’s trying to walk that fine line between what the neighborhood can tolerate and the County Commission can tolerate.”



A Sarasota County sign at Access 7 tells visitors about the endangered beach-nesting birds that migrate to Siesta Key each year.



NEW DIGS

Members of the Downtown Improvement District hold their first meeting in a new facility at the City Hall annex. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

DID AND OTHER GROUPS TO USE SRQ/TV STUDIO FOR MEETINGS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The City of Sarasota unveiled a new meeting space Wednesday, Oct. 3. It is called the SRQ/TV Studio. The first organization to use it was – appropriately – the Downtown Improvement District (DID).

The facility is located on the first floor of the three-story annex east of City Hall on First Street. Historically, the floor was used by the Engineering Department. It became a warren of cubicles, map storage compartments and cramped conference areas over time.

As the number of city employees has declined over the past five years, the surviving workers and leaders have migrated to different areas.

With the first floor of the annex unpopulated, the City Auditor and Clerk's Office asked to use the space as a television studio.

Previously, the only city meeting venue “wired for light and sound” was the City Commission chambers. Smaller groups would meet in other areas with audio recording capability, but not video, for the sessions.

The new space is much larger than those other areas; it will accommodate many more people as well as meet the space requirement for cables, lights and cameras. It also will free up the City Commission chambers for use by pension advisory boards and other such groups.

While the move was news on Wednesday, the meeting in the new, airy and bright quarters was anticlimactic. Should pots of flowers get micro-irrigation along South Palm Avenue? Would the merchants contribute to the cost?

The City Commission already had made one big decision for the DID, banning downtown street and sidewalk disruptions except between July 4 and Nov. 11. This kicks at least one beautification program into next summer.

Among other news: The lights in Five Points Park are on the fritz. Between growing trees and gnawing squirrels, the wires are breaking, said DID Manager John Moran. "I think we're going to have to dig into our pockets," he said. "These strands cost \$500 apiece."

Commenting on the new hotel planned on South Palm Avenue by Floridays Development Co., DID Member Dr. Mark Kaufman suggested any public art money paid to the city in connection with the project stay in the same general neighborhood.

Builders are required either to commission a new work of art to complement a project or contribute a set percentage of funds to the city's Public Art Fund.

"[New artwork] could be on the site, or the money goes to the art fund and the Public Art Committee decides," Kaufman said. "I'd like to see [funds] stay downtown."



OSPREY-VAMO COMMUNITY CLEANUP WILL BE HELD OCT. 6



It's time to clean out the garage and gather up discarded household items, junk and yard waste in the Osprey and Vamo area.

Sarasota County will hold its annual free community cleanup in those neighborhoods from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 6. Dumpsters provided by Waste Management will be available at three locations:

- U.S. 41 and Church Street (east of Tamiami Trail)
- U.S. 41 and West Oak Street (west of Tamiami Trail)
- U.S. 41 and Livingstone Street (west of Tamiami Trail)

Residents can dispose of household items, scrap materials, garbage, unbundled yard waste and tree trimmings during this free event, a county news release says. Sarasota County employees will be available at each site to offer assistance. Hazardous materials will not be accepted at any of the three community cleanup locations, the news release notes.

Hazardous waste such as paint and pesticides may be taken to the Sarasota County Chemical Collection Center, 8750 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 and ask about the Osprey-Vamo community cleanup.

Press Releases & News Tips

News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com



QUADRUPLE THE FUN

Quiet now, Siesta Village will be brimming with people during a variety of events this fall. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SIESTA VILLAGE BUSINESSES DELVING INTO DETAILS FOR FALL EVENTS, INCLUDING THE CRYSTAL CLASSIC

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

In 26 days, Siesta Village will mark the official start of the island's "Big Four" for fall: Safe Treats on Oct. 31, Sandfest on Nov. 2, the Crystal Classic Master Sandsculpting Competition on Nov. 8-12 and Light Up the Village on Nov. 24.

With the season almost upon them, about 25 members of the Siesta Key Village Association addressed planning for these events as they gathered for their monthly meeting on Oct. 2.

First up: Safe Treats. President Russell Matthes distributed copies of a marketing card that had been prepared for distribution in the Sarasota County Public Schools, noting the event's hours will be 3 to 6 p.m.

About 5,000 of the cards will go to schools, he said; they feature a jack-o-lantern and the SKVA logo.

On Halloween, Matthes added, the Village "is a great safe place to take your children. A lot of young kids come to [Safe Treats]. So have a lot of candy [available] if you are a business owner."

When someone asked how many bags of candy he recommended, Matthes replied, "A lot."

Wendall Jacobson of Beach Bazaar pointed out that he and his staff went through about eight bags of candy in 2011, plus other fun items to give the children, such as spider rings.

Next up: the Crystal Classic. Co-chairwoman Maria Bankemper reported that the event's new website had been launched the previous day. It is TheCrystalClassic.org. However, Co-chairwoman Cheryl Gaddie added that the former domain name, crystalsand.org, would still work.

Bankemper pointed out that since the storm-water project at Siesta Key Public Beach would not get under way until April 2013, according to the latest county projections, the Crystal Classic organizers planned to sell VIP parking packages, so visitors could park on the former ball field near the picnic area at the beach. The VIP pass is \$49, she said, with an extra \$10 for two tickets to the Crystal Classic.

Turning to transportation, Bankemper said organizers had met with representatives of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office after Deputy Chris McGregor had raised some concerns about details she had discussed during the September SKVA meeting.

Plans call for flexibility in buses dropping off people within the parking lot at the public beach or at the Sarasota County Area Transit stop on Beach Road by the beach park, depending on how heavy traffic is in the parking lot at any given time, she said.

Bus capacity has been tripled for Saturday during the event and doubled for Sunday compared to the 2011 shuttle-bus capacity, she

said, adding that travel arrangements from Phillippi Estate Park at 5500 S. Tamiami Trail would be much better "than they've been in the past."

Additionally, Gaddie reported, "Support [from the community] has been overwhelming."

Still, more sponsors are welcome, Gaddie said. Rack cards and posters were available at the meeting for business owners to display, she pointed out.

"We feel that this is going to be the best [Crystal Classic]," Gaddie said. This will be the third consecutive event to draw sandsculptors of international reputation to Siesta Key.

"We're five weeks away," Bankemper added.

Third on the list: Light Up the Village — the SKVA's biggest annual event. Matthes noted that another committee planning meeting had been set for Oct. 4.

"This [year's] parade is going to be bigger than ever," he said, with "a lot of quality participants. ... This has really exploded."

"We already have several floats scheduled for this year's parade," SKVA Secretary Helene Hyland said after distributing a flyer seeking more sponsors for Light Up the Village, scheduled for Nov. 24, the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

**Siesta Key Village Association's
28th Annual**

Safe Treats

**Siesta Village
Wednesday, Oct. 31, 3-6 pm**



SIESTA KEY VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Public schools are permitted to make information available to parents regarding student activities offered by not-for-profit organizations. The School Board of Sarasota County provides this information as a service to students and their families. Distribution of this information does not constitute an endorsement of these activities.

Cards like this will be distributed to the Sarasota County Public Schools to let children and parents know about the annual Safe Treats event in Siesta Village.

She encouraged business owners to plan to keep their stores open that evening and to have shops and restaurants decorated not just for that night but also for the entire holiday season.

Hyland also pointed out that more musical groups are being sought.

“We’d love music in the parade, too,” Matthes said.

If the bars and restaurants that regularly feature musical acts could ask those the performers to start playing sooner that evening — and blend in some carols, she said — “that would help liven up all different parts of the Village.”

The Pine View Jazz Band will be performing at Village Café, she said, and a choir will be singing in Davidson Plaza on Ocean Boulevard.

Jacobson pointed out that Light Up the Village used to draw about 200 people. “Now it’s turned into thousands of kids,” he said. “The place is packed.”

“And we have a very special Santa Claus this year,” Matthes said.

Following up on that statement, the only admonishment about the event came from SKVA Treasurer Roz Hyman, who represents Siesta Center on the organization’s board of directors: “There can only be one Santa Claus in the Village that night.”

After the ensuing laughter subsided, Hyman added that business owners should not ask any musicians to perform in Santa costumes, for example.

“It gets very confusing,” said Rahmi Nehme, co-owner of Village Café.

“You can have all the elves you want,” said Kay Kouvatsos, co-owner of Village Café.

When Syd Krawczyk of Concept Digital Media asked, “What about Elvis?” more laughter ensued.

Finally, Matthes asked Kevin Cooper, executive director of the Siesta Chamber, to discuss Sandfest.

The event, which raises a significant portion of the funds needed each year to pay for the July Fourth fireworks show, takes place at the Siesta Public Beach pavilion, Cooper pointed out.

Sandfest is a unique opportunity “to get out and actually have an event at the public pavilion,” Cooper added.

The theme this year is “Fantasy Island.”

Tickets, which are \$25 each, include a full, catered meal and entertainment by a DJ. The event also features a cash bar and a silent auction.

“Every year this is one of the funnest things we get to do out here,” Cooper said.

Posters for Sandfest would be distributed soon in the Village, he added. For more information, visit the [chamber website](#).

Matthes acknowledged that all these events require a lot of volunteer work. Nevertheless, he said, “This is what makes the community work.”





FULL-CIRCLE KARMA

The prior incarnation of the Adams Lane Law Library had 5,000 linear feet of books.

SARASOTA COUNTY LAW LIBRARY RETURNS TO OLD DIGS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

It's been a crazy two years for Roger Fischel, the county's law librarian.

In October 2010, he was given only a few days to prepare for the Law Library's move from its location on Adams Lane, south of the Terrace Building in downtown Sarasota. Today he is back in the same place.

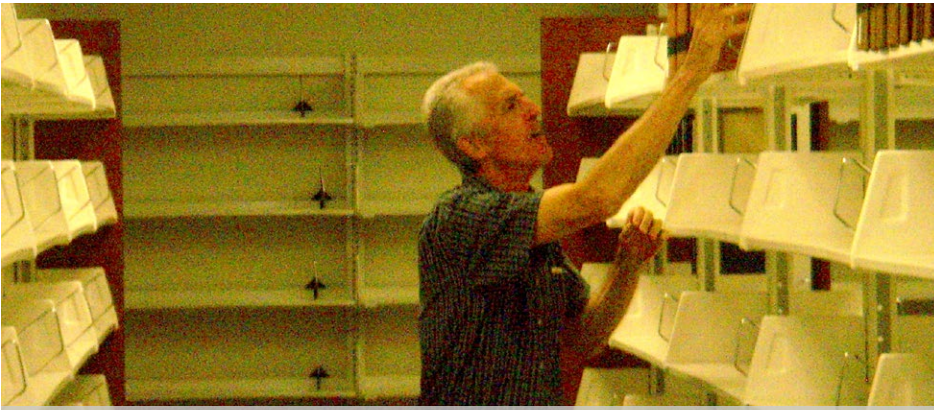
Two years ago, the City of Sarasota, which owns the building where the library was located, wanted to create a wellness clinic for its employees. Because of a paperwork snafu, Fischel received scant warning. He was given a two-week notice to leave that location. His dumpster overflowed as he sorted the essen-

tial from the less so. The majority of 5,000 linear feet of books was put in storage.

A mere 400 linear feet of shelf space was made available for the Law Library at the Selby Library downtown by shoehorning in on the Genealogy Department. And later, Fischel was moved to the loneliest spot in the library, the second-floor periodical section behind a glass-block wall — where he had his back to a monolithic block of shelving machines.

"They treated me very well," he said of the library staff. "They were very businesslike and professional."

But law libraries are not like public libraries. In a public library, a librarian points you at the



Law Librarian Roger Fischel re-stacks legal volumes in the Law Library, back on Adams Lane.

right book and you are on your own. In a law library, you may not understand the language in the right book, because law has a lingo all its own. This is where public law librarians earn their keep.

The public law library also serves some newly minted attorneys, fresh from law school and starting out on their own. And it served – before moving to Selby Library – as a place for attorneys to make last-minute checks before going into the Judge Lynn Silvertooth Judicial Center across Adams Lane.

Now the Sarasota County Law Library is back on Adams Lane, in a space less than half the size of its former site.

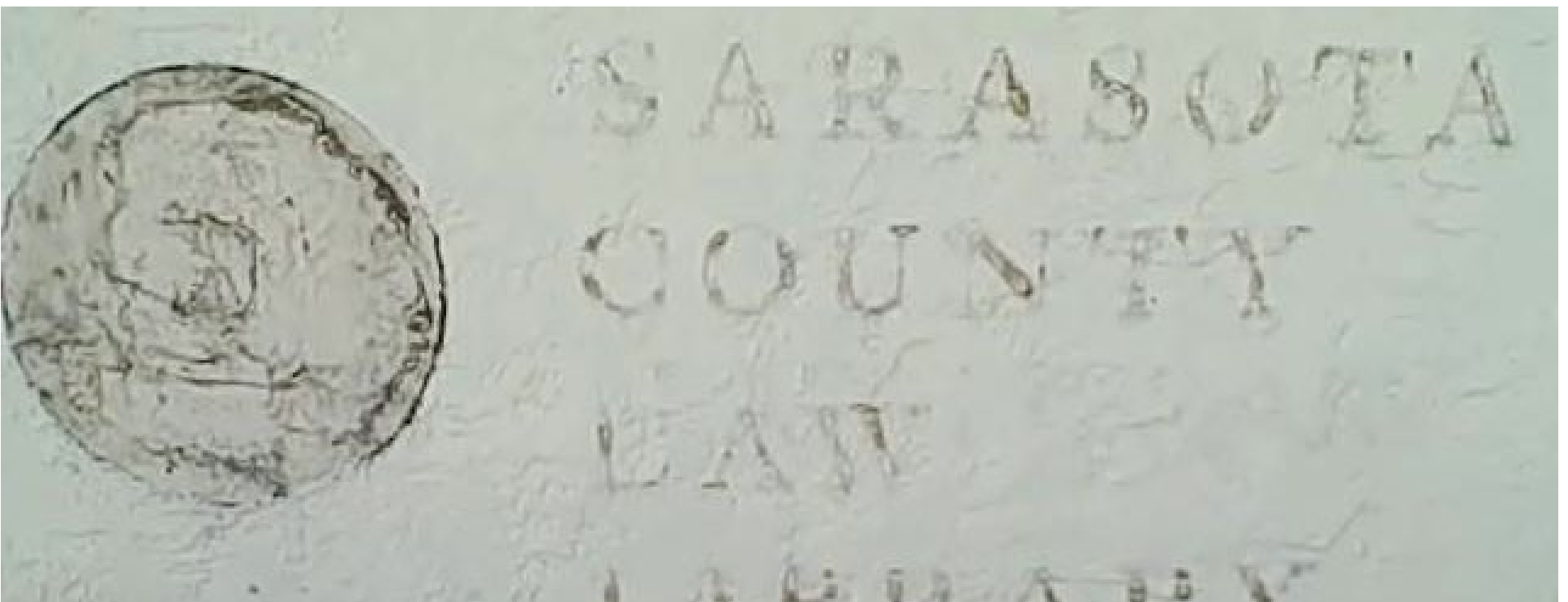
“Everything we have left is here in one spot, and I can get to it,” said Fischel.

County technicians are hooking up terminals to provide patrons access to cybernetic reference services. However, the county subscribes to only one – West Law. Additionally, there is room for just two tables for the public to spread out their research materials, but this is better than the cramped conditions at Selby.

Throughout these transitions, the telephone number remains the same: 861-8191. This time the lease runs out in 2017.

While the law librarian cannot offer legal advice, he can point out relevant materials to help people follow proper procedures, use appropriate statutes and find pertinent self-help volumes.

The service is free; the library is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



City workers quickly chiseled off the old sign after the Law Library had to move in 2010. Will the sign return? Photos by Stan Zimmerman



NEWS BRIEFS

Although red tide has been associated in years past with copious seaweed, no red tide was detected in August when seaweed was abundant on numerous beaches, including Lido. Photo by Norman Schimmel

RED TIDE BLOOM AFFECTS SOUTHERN SARASOTA COUNTY



State and local officials from Mote Marine Laboratory and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) this week identified a bloom of red tide algae in southern Sarasota County, the county has announced.

The bloom appeared to stretch to offshore Collier County as of mid-week, a Sarasota County news release says.

The bloom was centered off Charlotte Harbor, stretching southeast toward Collier, according to satellite images provided by the University of South Florida.

"We saw an obvious patch of the *Karenia brevis* bloom near Charlotte Harbor on Sept. 30 during a flight with the volunteer-led organi-

zation LightHawk," said Alina Corcoran of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), in the news release.

The Mote Beach Conditions Report System, which covers 26 beaches along the Gulf Coast, including Sarasota County, has received reports of respiratory irritation and dead fish from beaches in southern Sarasota County, the news release notes.

FWRI confirmed low to medium concentrations of the red tide algae in samples collected alongshore of Charlotte County, the release adds.

Mote planned to collect additional water samples from the bloom over the next couple of days as part of the joint Mote-FWRI red tide response strategy, the release says.

Local officials say people can still enjoy the beaches but should be aware that red tide is present in coastal waters.

“We are reminding people that respiratory irritation is possible, similar to a cold or hay fever,” said Sarasota County Health Department Environmental Health Administrator Tom Higginbotham in the news release. “People with asthma or chronic respiratory impairments need to be especially mindful of beach conditions where red tide impacts are being reported. For those who are susceptible, symptoms associated with red tide tend to become more noticeable when the winds are blowing onshore, which is forecast for the next few days.”

“It’s important to note that winds can change quickly,” said Kate Nierenberg, Mote senior biologist, who coordinates the beach conditions report. “The Mote Marine Laboratory’s Beach Conditions Report, which is updated at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., allows the public to be equipped with current information when planning their visits to the beach.”

Sarasota County maintenance crews were scheduled to remove dead fish from Blind Pass Beach, 6725 Manasota Key Road, on Oct. 4 and from Manasota Key and Manasota Beach, 8570 Manasota Key Road, Manasota Key, on Friday, Oct. 5.

Sarasota County lifeguards and other staff will continue to monitor beach conditions and respond appropriately, the news release says.

Reports are displayed online at www.mote.org/beaches, where residents and visitors can register to receive reports about specific beaches by email. For telephone updates, call 941-BEACHES and press 1 for Sarasota County beaches.

To report fish kills, people can call FWRI’s Fish Kill Hotline at 800-636-0511 (toll-free).

Residents and visitors can stay apprised about the red tide organism in area recreational waters by using the resources listed below:

<http://myfwc.com/research/redtide/events/status/>.

EXTENDED HOURS OFFERED FOR VOTER REGISTRATION



Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections (SOE) offices will remain open until 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 9, which is the deadline to register to vote in the Nov. 6 general election, the office has announced.

Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent says staff will be accepting new voter registrations, as well as address and name changes and signature updates, at SOE offices in the Terrace Building, 101 South Washington Blvd., Sara-

sota; the Robert L. Anderson Administration Center, 4000 Tamiami Trail South, Room 114, Venice; and Biscayne Plaza, 13640 Tamiami Trail, North Port, during the extended hours.

The Supervisor of Elections Office also provided the following information to assist voters:

- New registrations and signature updates must be submitted on a Florida Voter Registration Application (FVRA).

- Name and party changes may be made by signed written notice, including on an FVRA, but they must include the voter's date of birth or Florida Voter Registration System ID number.

- Address changes within the state of Florida may be made by phone, fax or email but must include the voter's date of birth.

A voter may check his or her voter registration status by going to the SOE website (www.SarasotaVotes.com). Select "Voter Informa-

tion" from the menu, then select "Voter Look-up" and follow the instructions.

Florida Voter Registration Application forms are available at all supervisor of elections' offices, city halls, county libraries and offices, and social service agencies. They may be downloaded from the SOE website.

For more information, call the supervisor of elections at 861-8600 or write to Supervisor of Elections, PO Box 4194, Sarasota, FL 34230-4194.

SAMPLE BALLOTS AVAILABLE ON ELECTIONS SUPERVISOR WEBSITE



Sample ballots for the Nov. 6 general election are available on the supervisor of elections (SOE) website at www.SarasotaVotes.com, Supervisor Kathy Dent has announced.

Voters may go to the website and select the "Precinct Finder" icon at the top of the home page or click on the "personalized sample ballot" link in the "News Briefs" section and follow the instructions to view a personalized sample ballot.

Dent is urging voters to take time to study the ballot carefully, because it is packed with candidate races, constitutional amendments and local referenda, a news release says.

She said the ballot "will be extremely long" — two 17-inch pages, front and back — and will contain 11 proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution "dealing with everything from health care services, to homestead exemptions, to religious freedom."

In addition, there will be local ballot questions concerning a Sarasota County charter amendment and municipal charter amendments, judicial retention questions, races for president, U.S. Senate, the 16th Congressional District, a constitutional office, County Commission, Charter Review Board and a host of other local offices.

Dent said the constitutional amendment questions will be particularly time-consuming to consider, so she is reminding voters their ballots will count even if they choose not to vote on every race or every issue.

Information on the proposed amendments also may be accessed from the SOE website and at the Division of Elections website at www.elections.myflorida.com.

Dent also noted that her office will be sending a personalized sample ballot to all registered voters who have not requested to vote by mail (absentee) in the November election.

Voters may request an absentee ballot online at www.SarasotaVotes.com, by phone at 861-8618 or by email at absentee@sarasotavotes.com.

The deadline to request that a ballot be mailed to a voter is Wednesday, Oct. 31.

Voted mail ballots may be returned in person or by mail to any supervisor of elections office but must be received in the elections office not later than 7 p.m. on Election Day. The cost of postage to return a vote by mail ballot will be 65 cents.

SARASOTA COUNTY LIBRARIES CLOSED ON OCT. 8



All Sarasota County libraries will be closed on Monday, Oct. 8, while employees participate in training, the county has announced.

Access to outside book returns will not be affected by the Oct. 8 closure; borrowed items may be returned, a county news release says.

Additionally, the Sarasota County library website, www.sclibs.net, is available 24 hours a day.

“Bringing employees from all of the libraries together for a staff development day provides an opportunity for concentrated training in areas such as the latest technology applications, new ideas for programs and policy updates,” said Public Services Manager Andrea Ginsky in the news release.

With the theme of “Learning Together,” the training agenda features guest speakers such as Dr. Jeannette Vos, internationally recognized researcher and co-author of *Unlimited: Your New Learning Revolution* and the *Seven Keys to Unlock It*. Throughout the day, employees will participate in breakout and post-

er sessions designed to enhance their ability to serve the changing needs of library users, the news release says.

“The nine Sarasota County public libraries share the goal of connecting the community through knowledge, conversation and ideas,” the release adds.

In April, the Florida Library Association named the Sarasota County Library System 2012 Library of the Year, recognizing the staff for contributing to “community building through partnerships and collaboration, implementation of technologies that improve efficiency and for developing a wide variety of programs and services to enrich the lives of citizens,” the release points out.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000, or visit www.sclibs.net.

Photo: Sheriffs Office donation to All Faiths

Cutline: Sheriff Tom Knight presents a check to All Faiths Food Bank Executive Director Sandra Frank and Director of Development Aundria Castleberry

SHERIFF'S OFFICE DONATES TO ALL FAITHS FOOD BANK



Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight recently presented a check for \$15,000 to All Faiths Food Bank.

Sheriff's Office employees donate money to local charities toward the end of each year, but after seeing news reports about the current need, chose to make this presentation of unclaimed cash earlier, a news release says.

"Our employees continually demonstrate their commitment to this community," said Knight, "and it is gratifying to help our neighbors in such a meaningful way."

After learning about the donation, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation decided to match a portion of it through its Gulf Coast Gives campaign.

"Gulf Coast Community Foundation is pleased to help leverage this donation from Sheriff Knight to All Faiths Food Bank," said President & CEO Teri Hansen in the news release. "We encourage families in our community to go to gulfcoastgives.org and continue supporting the great work All Faiths does to feed the hungry throughout our region."



Sheriff Tom Knight presents a check to All Faiths Food Bank Executive Director Sandra Frank and Director of Development Aundria Castleberry

EXPANDED SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES



The Sarasota County Health Department, under a partnership with the Community Health Center of North Port Inc., a not-for profit 501(c)(3) organization, will offer additional services and expanded hours at the Health Department's Ringling location, 2200 Ringling Blvd., beginning Friday, Oct. 12.

This expansion is the result of New Access Point satellite funding — \$650,000 per year through 2016 — granted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through its Health Services and Resource Administration Bureau of Primary Care to the Sarasota County Health Department on behalf of the co-entities, a news release says.

In addition to the funding, this grant placed the Ringling site under the North Port Health Center's Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) umbrella. In June, the Health Department's Children's Health Center also was granted FQHC status by HRSA.

"Having all of our Health Department sites designated as FQHCs is positive for the community because FQHCs and local health departments share a common mission to improve community health," said Sarasota County Health and Human Services Director Chuck Henry in the news release. "It also enhances our ability to provide improved access for low-income and uninsured clients while allowing access to lower-cost medications, different reimbursement options and potential access to capital development funds."

The weekday hours for adult and children's primary care, behavioral health, dental and immunization services at the Ringling site are from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Primary care and dental services are provided by appointment during the week. Saturday hours, for child and adult primary care only, will be from 8 a.m. to noon.

Immunization services at the Ringling site are available on a walk-in basis, although appointments are encouraged for adult and travel vaccinations, the news release notes. Health officials say that the services at the Children's Health Center at 17th Street, as well as the following services at the Ringling site, will remain unchanged: WIC, Healthy Start and Women's Health.

The Ringling Health Center recently underwent renovations to accommodate the expansion of services for families across all age groups, the news release adds. A full-time family practice physician and pediatrician are being added to the current mix of medical staff, bringing the number from three to five.

Health officials say existing and new clients who work will have more opportunities for appointments through the expanded hours.

Under the new structure, no one is refused health care. However, anyone seeking these services must participate in an eligibility screening process and pay his fair share on a sliding fee scale based on income and family size, the news release points out. Families are advised that proof of Sarasota County residen-

cy is required by certain facilities that handle referrals from primary care providers.

“Overall, we expect to provide medical, mental health and dental care for approximately 23,000 patients when we reach full capacity at the Ringling site in two years,” said Hen-

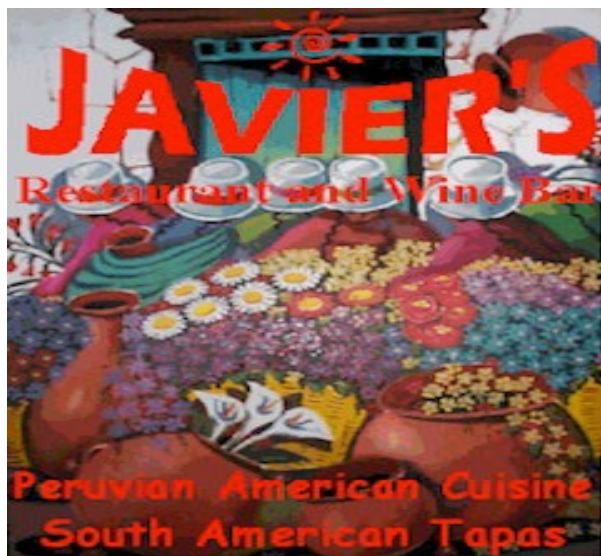
ry. “This is up from the current number of 19,445.”

For more information or to make an appointment for services at the Ringling site, call 941-861-2859 or visit www.sarasotahealth.org.

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OPINION



BARACK OBAMA FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

EDITORIAL

Every presidential election, it seems, is framed as a stark choice for the voters, with the two major candidates offering widely divergent paths for the nation to follow, should they gain election.

In many of those elections — for example, the 1992 contest between Republican President George H.W. Bush and Democratic challenger Bill Clinton — the touted differences were not that great in retrospect. But as Barack Obama seeks re-election to a second term, and is opposed by Republican Mitt Romney, the proverbial divergent paths could not be more starkly defined.

Mitt Romney was born into an affluent family, educated at the most elite schools and used his family's fortune and connections to launch a career as a venture capitalist. He bought and sold companies — harvesting them for profits, to use his words — and built a fortune that, according to investment banking terminology, qualifies him as an “ultra-high net worth individual.”

His lifelong insulation from economic privation and want, and his greater association with ultra-rich individuals such as himself, makes it virtually impossible for him to relate to or empathize with the plight of the poor, or even the struggling middle class. Indeed, by his own statements, he has posited a belief that

OPINION

Americans of modest means are somehow less “American” than the wealthy because of their dependence on government programs — and that he has no need to be concerned for them.

The ruinous economic policies of the George W. Bush administration, which resulted in the Great Recession and the near collapse of our economy, have had an especially harsh impact on the American middle class. Income disparity — the division in both income and wealth between the richest Americans and the poorest — is the greatest it has been since just before our earlier economic collapse and the Great Depression.

Romney’s proposed economic policies would add injury to insult for the poor and struggling middle class in this country. He would decrease taxes on the richest Americans by 20% saving them trillions of dollars. He would pay for that decrease in tax revenues in part by eliminating tax deductions, such as the mortgage interest deduction, that disproportionately benefit the lower tiers of taxpayers. Moreover, the elimination of the mortgage interest deduction would further depress home values in the United States, inflicting even more pain and suffering on the dwindling wealth of the middle class.

Obama, on the other hand, would actually increase taxes on the richest Americans, while using infrastructure improvements and retraining programs to help unemployed citizens find jobs. He would return the country to policies in place during the Clinton administration, when the wealthiest paid a larger (though by no means inordinate) share of income taxes ... and the economy had low unemployment and a budget surplus.

“He has consistently put the interests of the nation — of all Americans — ahead of the selfish desires of a wealthy few.”

Romney has embraced plans to restructure Social Security and Medicare, sharply limiting the value of these vital social safety nets for citizens, especially those now in their mid-50s or younger.

Obama has pledged to strengthen these programs so future Americans will be able to depend on them as their parents and grandparents did. Eliminating the salary ceiling for Social Security and Medicare taxes would go a long way toward accomplishing this goal.

Romney has repudiated his earlier support for a woman’s right to choose, instead now calling for outlawing abortion. His party’s platform, which he has accepted as the standard on which he is campaigning for president, seeks to remove the right to an abortion even in the case of rape or incest, would redefine rape in ways that are abhorrently degrading to women, and would dramatically limit access

OPINION

by women to health care services, especially contraception.

President Obama remains steadfast in his support of reproductive choices for women and ensuring that all women have access to affordable health care services.

As for foreign affairs: Four years ago Obama was criticized by Republican John McCain as being “not ready” for that proverbial phone call at 3 a.m. Obama, in one of the debates that took place between the two, stared into the camera and assured the American people that he would be ready, that he would make the difficult decisions. He went on to say he would pursue Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden and, should he learn that bin Laden was hiding in Pakistan and the government of that country refused to act, he would do whatever was necessary to see justice done.

After a little more than three years as president, he did exactly that.

Mitt Romney would return our country to the laissez-faire policies of George W. Bush and Herbert Hoover, further aggregating wealth among the richest 1% of Americans. He not only would diminish women’s rights by returning us to the dark days of illegal back-alley abortions before Roe v. Wade, he would return us to the repressive Comstock era of the late-

19th century. And he would remove the peace of mind that millions of Americans have as a result of Social Security and Medicare.

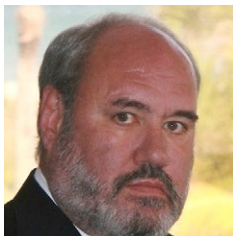
President Obama would restore the nation to fiscal prudence, using its might to increase employment, thereby helping the economy to rebound and grow. And he would expect fairness in the shouldering of the burden of financing that government, so deficits could be reduced while essential services were preserved. He also would preserve and enhance the dignity of women in our society by continuing programs and services vital to their interests. And he would protect the safety net that has helped millions of American face their golden years with confidence and dignity.

President Obama has done everything he could to protect us and resolve the serious issues that confront the nation. He has been resisted at every turn by a recalcitrant Congress bent more on hindering his administration than governing the nation. He has consistently put the interests of the nation — of all Americans — ahead of the selfish desires of a wealthy few. And he has earned our faith in his ability to do so for another four years. **We urge voters to cast their ballots for Barack Obama for president of the United States.**



OPINION

MODERN EXAMPLES MAY BE STARK, BUT RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE HAS LONG HISTORY



By David Staats
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY September 2012 was a busy month for the forces of religious intolerance. While on parole from a federal prison, convicted felon Nakoula Basseley Nakoula (aka Sam Bacile, et al.) produced *The Innocence of Muslims*, a hate film about the Prophet Muhammad. Terry Jones, the Gainesville, FL-based Qur'an-burner and self-styled "pastor," is said to have helped Nakoula with the film's promotion. Outraged Muslims around the world attacked American embassies. Numerous people died in the violence. An expensive price to pay for such a cheap shot.

Religious intolerance provokes different responses in different people. In 1987, artist/photographer Andres Serrano submitted his work, *Piss Christ*, to a competition organized by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, NC. This "artwork" was a photograph of a crucifix floating in a glass of Serrano's own urine. *Piss Christ* won a \$15,000 prize that was partially funded by U.S. taxpayer money administered by the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts.

Serrano kept his prize money despite congressional protests. Christie's sold the origi-

nal photo in 1999 for \$277,000. In the interim, copies of *Piss Christ* were mutilated at other gallery showings. Serrano himself, however, was not personally threatened and today at 62, he continues to breathe God's good air. *Piss Christ* is currently on exhibit in New York ("Body and Spirit: Andres Serrano 1987 – 2012," Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art LLC, 37 W. 57 St., Second Floor, N.Y., N.Y. 20019).

One year after Serrano first exhibited *Piss Christ*, British-Indian writer Salman Rushdie published *The Satanic Verses*, a novel. It is based, in part, on the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Western critics praised the book. It won the 1988 Whitbread Award for novel of the year and was a finalist for that year's Booker Prize.

In the Muslim world, however, reaction to the book was different. Clerics denounced the novel as blasphemy. On Valentine's Day 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran, issued a fatwa (a decree by an acknowledged, senior Islamic jurist) pronouncing Rushdie a blasphemer. It called for his death, as well as for the deaths of all those who assisted Rushdie in the book's publication.

Rushdie lived the next several years in hiding under the protection of British law enforcement. His Japanese translator, however, was murdered. Rushdie's Italian and Norwegian translators were stabbed and shot, respectively, but they survived.

OPINION

Why is it that one artist who “blasphemes” Christianity gets a spectacular payday while another who “blasphemes” Islam is issued a very credible death threat?

In his seminal treatise “The Government of the Islamic Jurist (velayat-e faqih),” Ayatollah Khomeini makes the following points: (1) All laws of Islam were revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad, God’s Messenger; (2) the Prophet Muhammad named a successor only in order to see those laws enforced, not to create any new one; (3) Islamic law is the only form of legitimate government; and (4) because it is, blasphemy requires harsh and immediate punishment.

Khomeini explained that “these penal provisions are intended to prevent great nations from being destroyed by corruption.” Thus, imposing the sentence of death on Rushdie-the-Blasphemer was necessary and unavoidable in order to save Islam and protect its community of believers from the corruption that inevitably would have infected and ruined both.

The early and medieval Christian Church was no less harsh in eradicating heresy and heretics. During the 12th and 13th centuries, while crusading against Muslim “infidels” in the Holy Land, the Church also was engaged politically and militarily in southern France against the Cathars, or Albigensians, a heterodox sect influenced by Manichaeism.

It is reported that at the capture in 1209 of Béziers, an Albigensian stronghold, Arnaud

Amalric, bishop of Cîteaux and co-papal legate, ordered that all surviving inhabitants of Béziers, whether Catholic or Cathar, be killed. “Kill all,” he said. “God will know His own.” In his letter to Innocent III, the bishop claimed that the ensuing carnage claimed nearly 20,000 lives. Afterwards the city was burned to the ground.

Over the following centuries, Christendom experienced other, moderating influences. These included those of the Renaissance, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Enlightenment, Romanticism, etc. Collectively, these experiences profoundly altered the relationship between church and state. As a result, church and state developed as independent institutions, increasingly disengaged from one another.

The Islamic world during this same period proved relatively immune to reforming influences. The relationship between ruler and ruled was little changed until the mid-20th century when revolutions in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Libya ushered in new dictatorships under the guise of “Arab Socialism.” Iran’s 1979 revolution, however, restored Islamic law to prominence. In the wake of the “Arab Spring,” Egypt, Iraq and Syria may soon follow suit.

Does the shari’a (Islamic law) have a future when not coercively imposed? It does indeed. The Washington Post wrote on April 21, 2011 that despite the infusion of \$429 million spent in 2010 by the U.S. Agency for International Development on justice projects in Afghanistan, 95% of all disputes are still arbitrated by

OPINION

tribal elders and mullahs in what is described by Westerners as “informal justice.”

In sum, in many countries of the Muslim world Islamic law is inseparable from the state and “justice” is meted out accordingly. This contrasts starkly with the principles of Western jurisprudence in which religion plays no conspicuous role.

On the one hand, the likelihood of being able to reconcile these two very different systems is slim. On the other, managing the differences between them constructively is not impossible.



GREAT ELECTRONIC RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR LIBRARY PATRONS



By Linda Getzen
Guest Columnist

GUEST COLUMNIST

What makes a great public library? It's really hard to decide between the helpful staff and the thousands of books on the shelves. Then again, maybe it's the free Internet access or the extensive selection of free databases.



Selby Public Library in downtown Sarasota draws many patrons interested in its electronic resources. Photo by Norman Schimmel

OPINION

Today, libraries have to be about so much more than friendly librarians and a great selection of books if they are to thrive. Luckily for us, our Sarasota County Library System knows what it takes! Our system was just named the 2012 Florida Library of the Year by the Florida Library Association.

With information and pleasure-reading material now available in so many formats, our Sarasota County libraries have found just the right mix of books, DVDs and magazines, engaging programs and outstanding electronic resources to serve community residents and seasonal visitors.

There are dozens of databases, most directly accessible and free on the library website at www.sclibs.net/resources — all you need is a Library Card. Just imagine, there you are sitting at home in your pajamas, learning a foreign language using Mango software, getting information on your investments from Morningstar Online, reading a new play from the Alexander Street Press, learning how to fix your car through the Chilton manual or finding data on Gale Virtual Reference for your term paper. Maybe you are out of work and you are using the Small Business Resource Center online to create your own business.

Do you have one of the new e-readers or tablets? Do you think you don't need the library anymore? Think again. Right now, from the Sarasota County's library website, you can download e-books for free to your device through OverDrive. Do you need help with that? Many of the nine Sarasota County librar-

ies are offering classes for people learning to use e-readers.

Our libraries continue to adapt to new technologies and to meet the information and inspiration needs of their users, no matter where they are and no matter what reading format works best for them. More than 10,000 people walk into Sarasota County libraries each day; another 30,000 visit online.

But, you may ask, doesn't everyone have access to these resources through the Internet at home? Actually, many people don't; library usage increases as the economy falters.

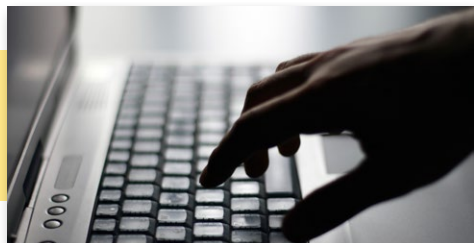
Paula in Venice recently wrote, "I have been out of work for 3 years and can't afford cable or Internet hookup. The library has been a real lifesaver for its free computers and DVD rentals."

Electronic resources are expensive and quickly become obsolete. Demand and costs for e-books and databases are rising even as state and county funds for collections decrease. The new Library Foundation for Sarasota County is committed to securing the future of our libraries by raising private dollars to complement tax dollars. You can help, too. Just visit www.sarasotalibraryfoundation.org or call 497-6643.

Linda Getzen is a member of the board of directors of the Library Foundation for Sarasota County.



OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REPUBLICAN PARTY HAS TAKEN A VERY BAD TURN

To the editor:

What has happened to the Republican Party? Four years ago, its candidate for president, John McCain, responded to a woman who called Obama an Arab by taking her microphone and saying, “No madam. We disagree on policy, but he is a good American and a good family man.”

Now Mitt Romney not only doesn’t make an attempt at decency, he and other members of the Republican Party say or insinuate the president is a Muslim and is not an American. When asked for proof, they have none.

Now joined by the Sarasota Republican Party’s “Statesman of the Year,” Donald Trump, this Republican Party wrongly believes we will buy anything its leaders say. We’re not that gullible. Some of us can actually read and don’t restrict our investigation to the GOP’s Fox News reports.

Romney’s campaign has been called a disaster and a rolling calamity, and those evaluations are from staunch Republicans. Their convention left us with their question, “Are you better off now than you were four years ago?” YES! The Dow Jones value has doubled, housing

values are rising, we are out of Iraq and we have killed Osama bin Laden.

I canvassed for Obama four years ago and walked on streets where kids I coached in midget football used to live. Furniture filled the yards of Southgate neighborhoods, and tears filled my eyes. Not so now. We are working our way out of the recession caused by the GOP’s thoroughly debunked trickle-down economic theory.

There may have been some question about the purpose of the Republican Party, but Mitt did us a favor and spelled it out. It is a party of the rich, by the rich and for the rich, and some of its leaders’ financial good fortune ain’t trickling down to us.

*Art Ginsburg
Sarasota*

VOTERS GET TO CHOOSE SCENARIO THEY WANT FOR THE U.S.

To the editor:

If the polls are somewhat correct, people believe that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney would do a better job than President Obama on reducing the deficit. Obama wins over Romney on just about everything else.

Therefore, three scenarios come to mind:

1. Romney wins the election: He drastically cuts all government agencies and services; makes large cuts to federal support for education and student loans; abolishes the Affordable Health Care Act and replaces that with a limited-value voucher program; privatizes Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid; and takes other actions in accordance with fundamentalist religious beliefs.

Yes, the deficit gets eliminated quickly. Some other changes take place in America that one can just imagine.

2. Second scenario: Obama wins and maintains enough Democrats in the Senate for a majority, but Republicans continue to control the House of Representatives. Republicans continue to vote down everything that Obama proposes, even programs that they once initiated. The economy continues to grow slowly and the deficit is also reduced slowly.

3. Obama wins: Pressure from large numbers of fed-up American voters brings about changes in the attitudes of significant numbers of Republicans, resulting in a greater

level of cooperation in Congress. Obama's American Jobs Act is approved after some revisions, along with other constructive bipartisan legislation. The economy improves more rapidly than in scenarios 1 or 2. The deficit is also eliminated over a period of a few years, just as most economists say it would be.

Next month we get to vote for the kind of country that we want.

*Brad Hardin
Venice*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



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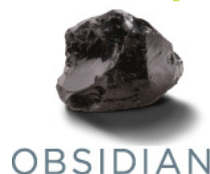
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A DASH OF MAGIC

ASK OTUS

Inside





A DASH OF MAGIC

(From left) Daria Ilunga, Kathleen McKenna and Melon Dash wade into the Gulf of Mexico on an August morning at Crescent Beach on Siesta Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney

SARASOTA WOMAN TO MAKE PITCH FOR NATIONAL FUNDING TO TEACH ALL AGES TO BE COMFORTABLE IN THE WATER

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

On Oct. 10, Sarasota resident Melon Dash will step up to a podium in Norfolk, VA, and make a 40-minute pitch for funding to teach millions of people how to conquer their fear of the water.

She expects to be speaking to about 500 people at the first Step into Swim Congress/World Aquatic Health Congress about “changing the [teaching] paradigm from strokes to comfort.”

She will be one of only four people or groups having the opportunity to make a case for grant money from a \$78,000 fund the congress has to award.

“My job is to show them we are the best bet ... because we teach adults — afraid adults.”

Dash founded her Miracle Swimming Institute in 1983. Since then, she has used what observers and students describe as a revolutionary system of teaching people to feel at ease in the water — and then to swim, snorkel, SCUBA dive — the possibilities seem limitless once they get past their fears.

As her institute marks its 30th year, Dash estimates she and the instructors she has taught have created more than 4,000 comfortable, happy swimmers.

The underlying focus of the conference next week will be a “Step into Swim” white paper commissioned in May by the National Swimming Pool Foundation. Its executive summary points to the need for people such as Dash:

- Aversion to water “places large populations at risk of drowning.”
- “Physical inactivity, obesity, and an aging society are driving up healthcare and insurance costs. These epidemics continue to grow at an alarming rate.”
- “About 3,800 drowning deaths (almost 700 in pools), 5,700 emergency department-treated injuries [more than 3,300 in pools], and hundreds of civil suits occur every year.”
- About half of Americans have a fear of swimming pools.”

The paper says a study undertaken by the Gallup organization, which evaluated 815 subjects, “indicated that even more people are not confident swimmers since about two-thirds of Americans are afraid of deep, open bodies of water,” including lakes, rivers and the ocean. The study found 46% of the subjects were afraid of the deep end of a pool.

The paper also notes that physical inactivity and obesity will continue to drive up health care costs as baby boomers pass the age of 65 and the incidence of childhood obesity increases.

“To stabilize and reverse these crippling trends,” it continues, “government and the private sector will have to invest in physical activity. Aquatic activity is ideal for sedentary, obese, and older populations.”



A group of young people enjoys the warm gulf waters in early August. Almost half of the American population has a fear of being in deep water. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Kathleen McKenna enjoys mastering the standup paddleboard technique. Photo by Melon Dash

The paper adds, “Fortunately, many extraordinary, financially-sustainable organizations have exceptional programs to attract and teach millions of people to learn to swim. ... It is tragic that so many people who aspire to be swimmers — are not swimmers — yet.”

Thomas M. Lachocki, the CEO of the National Swimming Pool Foundation, called Dash in February to ask her about making the presentation next week. She’s known him for about six years, she adds. “He’s trusted ... and he’s coming from a good place” in this effort to fund swimming programs that work.

Dash probably won’t know until mid-December whether she will receive any of the grant funding, she says.

Ideally, she’d like to see “an in-depth study comparing our system to others” conducted with a portion of the funds. The results of such a comparison, she points out, should make it easy to decide how to allocate the money.

“Once people see it,” she says of her system, “they believe it.”

TRUE BELIEVERS

Flash back to early August: Dash and two women are sitting at Siesta Key Public Beach,



Daria Ilunga (top) and Kathleen McKenna enjoy boogie boarding after working with Melon Dash this summer in Dash’s Ocean 202 class. Photo by Melon Dash

going over the basics that every student of Dash's learns — either through one of her books or in one of her classes.

Kathleen McKenna, a Sarasota resident, just started working with Dash in July. Daria Ilunga of New York also had taken several classes with Dash, starting at the beginner level. Both were ready to begin the Ocean 202 class that morning at the beach, knowing it would enable them to build on the comfort levels they already had attained.

"I feel very confident in shallow water in the ocean," Ilunga says, "and snorkeling, I feel fairly comfortable." She wanted to find that same feeling in deep water, because she and her family had planned a vacation in Hawaii in December. Her youngest child is 6, Ilunga pointed out. "It's a different ballgame, and it always has been, I think, with my children."

Dash has a lot of familiarity with parents who want to be able to swim well so they can provide an extra measure of security for their children in the water.

The previous week, McKenna says, "I was able to get comfortable being in the ocean," including handling waves breaking over her head.

Until she worked with Dash, she said, she "never experienced that before."

McKenna adds, "I feel like I'm getting to do stuff I never got to do as a kid" without panicking.

Like Ilunga, though, she wanted to be comfortable in deep water — "the next little piece."

"The way to do that is to go out with the intention of coming right back; you suddenly feel safer," Dash tells her. "Just go a step at a time.

... If we stay in our bodies ... the amount of time you stay in deep water grows and grows."

'IN YOUR BODY'

In working with all her students over the past decades, Dash has helped them focus on a simple mantra: "Stay in your body."

She uses a simple system, too, to make that possible. It's called "the five circles."

In the first circle, a person is completely comfortable. As McKenna puts it, "I really can do anything I want to do."

Dash has her students focus on a stick figure encompassed by a circle.

The second circle moves up a bit on that stick figure's "body," so the feet are out of the circle. "Cold feet" or "weak in the knees" are two ways to describe the feeling. "You still have presence of mind ... and it's still possible to move back quickly" into the first circle, as McKenna puts it.

The third circle moves even higher on the stick figure. Think of it as "butterflies in the stomach," or, as Ilunga describes it, "This isn't comfortable."

Ilunga had experienced that third circle in the Caribbean, she says, when the water "was extremely choppy."

By the fourth circle, panic has begun to set in. That circle has moved up to the place where it barely encompasses the stick figure's head. "You're scared stiff; paralyzed by fear," Dash says.

The fifth circle has moved above the stick figure. "You're completely out of your body," Ilunga says.

“You say, ‘We lost it,’” Dash adds.

In Dash’s system, there is only one place to be: in the first circle. “This is what we’re going to be working on — whatever it takes to stay here,” she tells the two women. “The first circle is the key to everything.”

CONVINCING THE CONGRESS

Having successfully taught swimming and water-related activities all over the world, Dash is hopeful she can convince the attendees at the congress in Norfolk that her system works.

Other people, she points out, “teach with the premise that learning how to survive is learning strokes. ... We teach the opposite of that.”

She frets, too, that so little emphasis nationally is placed on teaching adults.

So many parents can’t swim or don’t like being in the water, but “[they] don’t let their kids know they’re afraid.”

They need to know how to swim as much as their children do, she points out, “for their whole family’s safety.”



A mother stands at the water's edge while her son plays in the surf on Siesta Public Beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney



THE MIRACLE WORKER

Rachel Hackney prepares to jump into the sea offshore of Cozumel, with Melon Dash waiting in the water. Contributed photo

A PERSONAL SWIMMING EXPERIENCE TEACHES WRITER ABOUT MELON DASH'S GIFTS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

When I was 9 years old, I lost my younger sister to cancer.

Months later, when my family went to the Outer Banks of North Carolina for a few days so my dad could attend a veterinary medical conference, my mother took the opportunity to sign me up for private swimming lessons in the hotel pool.

The instructor was patient, kind and quite handsome, I thought, so I was having a blast — until he started encouraging me to swim in the deep end. My mother panicked. She couldn't swim, and she couldn't bear the idea

of losing another child. Her fear became my fear.

I managed to pass the swim test in college, thanks to another very patient instructor, but I was uncomfortable in deep water. It didn't matter that I could swim well enough to get from one end of the pool to the other.

Fortunately, I married someone who grew up on the banks of a river in North Carolina, a man who claims his “webbed feet will dry out” if he strays too far from the water. With his patience and love, I finally overcame most of the vestiges of that fear in deep water.



Melon Dash (left) and Rachel Hackney explore one of Cozumel's renowned reefs

That is why, when I answered the phone at the Pelican Press in early 2010 and heard Melon Dash ask if someone would be interested in doing a story about her Miracle Swimming System, my ears “pricked up.” I was very interested.

After writing two stories about Dash and her truly, miraculous system — the second feature about a Sarasota resident who won a contest to take Dash’s beginning class — I had the opportunity to take my own class with Dash.

My husband and I joined a group of beginning and veteran scuba divers and partly experienced snorkelers who gathered with Dash in Cozumel, Mexico, in April 2011.

I had done some snorkeling just once before — in the Virgin Islands in 1984.

Cozumel is renowned for its underwater scenery, but as much as I wanted to see it, I realized the first day on the beach with Dash and one other student that I wasn’t as comfortable doing something that had seemed so enjoyable with a big group in St. Croix all those years earlier.

Thanks to her wealth of patience and support, I began venturing farther and farther from shore, all the while knowing she was keeping an eye on me and ready to offer help at a moment’s notice.

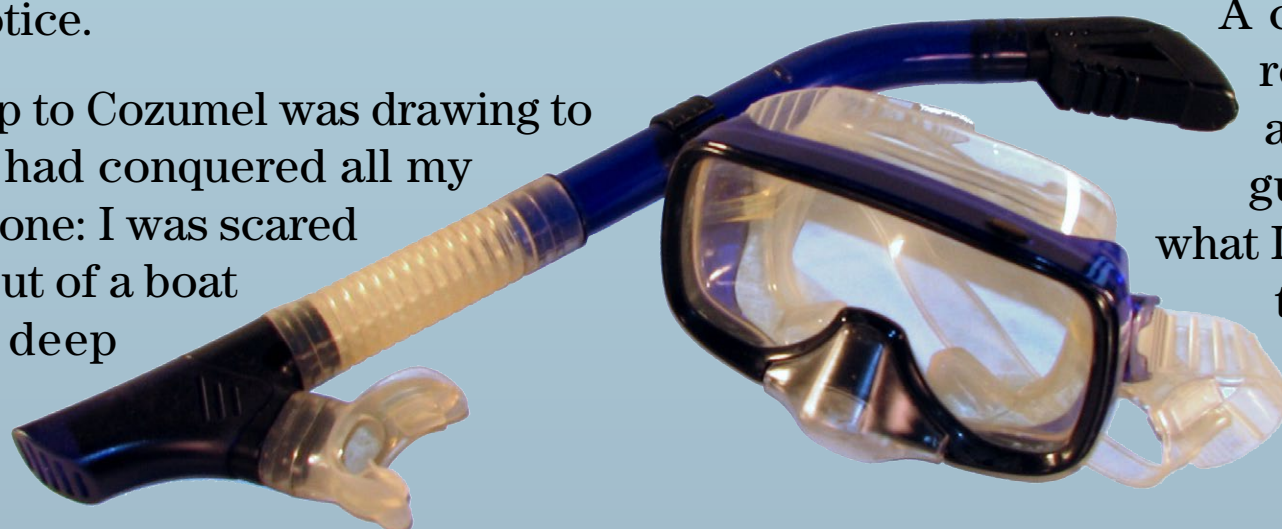
As our trip to Cozumel was drawing to an end, I had conquered all my fears but one: I was scared to jump out of a boat into the deep blue sea.

As we neared the first of the gorgeous reefs all of us were eager to explore on that last full day of the trip, I talked with Dash again — as I had earlier in the week — about taking, literally, that last big leap. She calmly and gently repeated the advice she had told me before and promised to stay with me. I know I was in that second circle as she treaded water, waiting for me, but I finally put my faith in her more than in myself and made the jump. When I came to the surface, it was with a big grin on my face.

By the time the boat made its way to the second reef with all of us back on board, I was feeling a lot more comfortable, but I still had some twinges of anxiety. After the boat stopped and people starting jumping in again, I suddenly realized I was the only one left on the boat who planned to snorkel. (My husband had stayed on shore, by the way; he didn’t abandon me.) Not having voiced any fears to Dash again, I was on my own.

I repeated to myself what she had told me at the first reef, and I knew she was right there in the water if I needed her. In a couple of minutes, I was closer to that first circle again and ready to jump. I cannot begin to describe the feeling of confidence and accomplishment that washed over me as I began following other members of the group in the water.

A close friend of mine refers to Melon Dash as my “swimming guru.” What she is — what I know for a fact — is that she is a miracle worker.





ASK OTUS

MOTHS CHALLENGE EVEN THE FBI

Dear Otus,

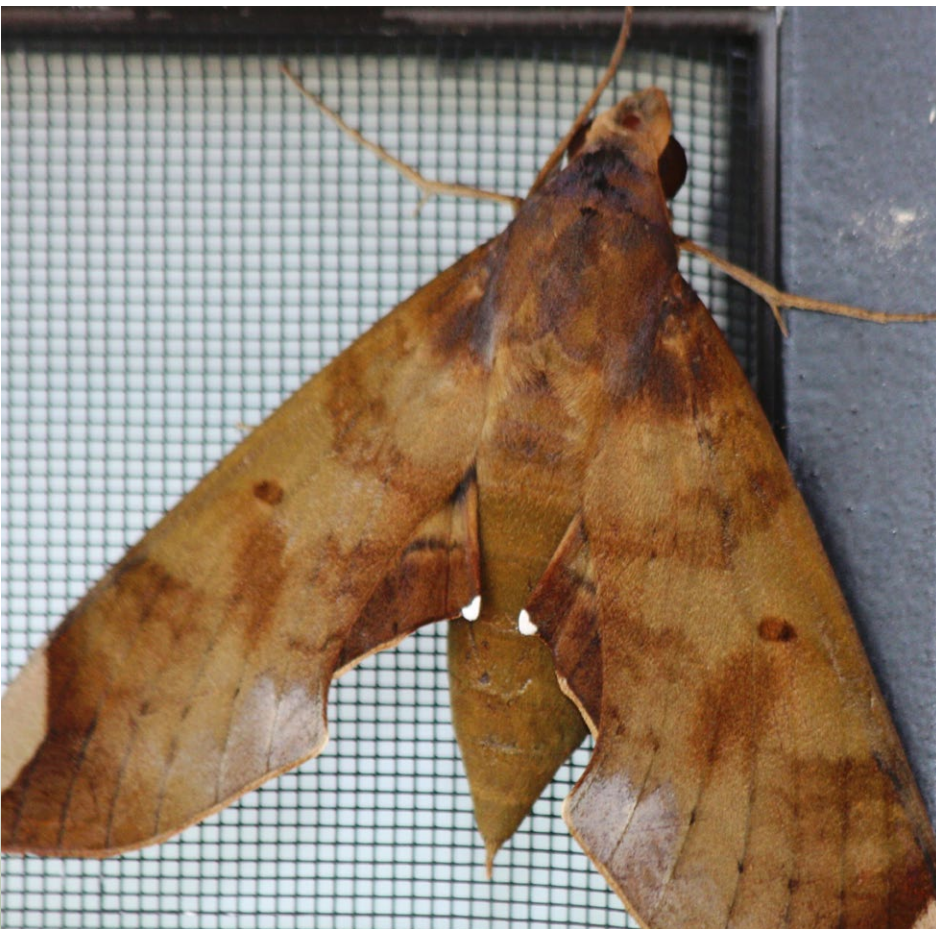
Find attached a few shots Diane took of a moth on one of the neighbor's screen windows this a.m. ID? Wingspan is about 4 inches across.

Thanks!
Rick Wulterkens

Dear Rick and Diane,

It's a delight to meet a couple so interested in nature, and so good at photography!

Your photo is a fine one of a Fig Sphinx moth (*Pachylia ficus*), a Florida native.



A Fig Sphinx moth has attached itself to a screen window. Photo courtesy Diane Wulterkens



The Black Witch moth has a sinister reputation. File photo

A wingspan of some 4 inches! That is quite a satisfying mouthful! You see, I'm far better at eating insects than at identifying them. According to the Entomological Society of America, there are more than 1 million identified species with possibly up to 30 million species yet to be discovered and identified. That's a lot of Latin names to keep in one's head — enough to drive one buggy!

Entomology is an arduous discipline. Even the FBI Academy in Quantico, VA, does not offer instruction in it. This explains why Clarice Starling took the Death's Head Sphinx moth's pupa, which Buffalo Bill inserted in his victim's throat, to the National Museum of Natural History for identification. Had *Silence of the Lambs* been made today, Clarice could just "Ask Otus."

The Death's Head moth was in the film version of *Silence of the Lambs*. In the Thomas Harris novel on which the film was based, the moth

ABOUT OTUS

Otus Rufous, an Eastern Screech-Owl, was born on Siesta Key and is a full-time resident there. An avid hunter, accomplished vocalist and genuine night owl, Otus is a keen observer of our local wildlife and knows many of nature's secrets. Otus will answer your questions about our amazing wildlife, but only if you Ask Otus. So please send your questions and photos to askotus@sarasotanewsleader.com. Thank you.

was actually a Black Witch moth, a beautiful creature, but one with an equally sinister reputation.

I loved the film but was quite disappointed that they cut out the scary part ... the Death's Head Sphinx moth talks. Yes! It squeaks loudly when annoyed. If you don't believe me, go to YouTube and enter "Death's head moth squeak" and you'll find a chorus of squeaking moths telling you to back off.

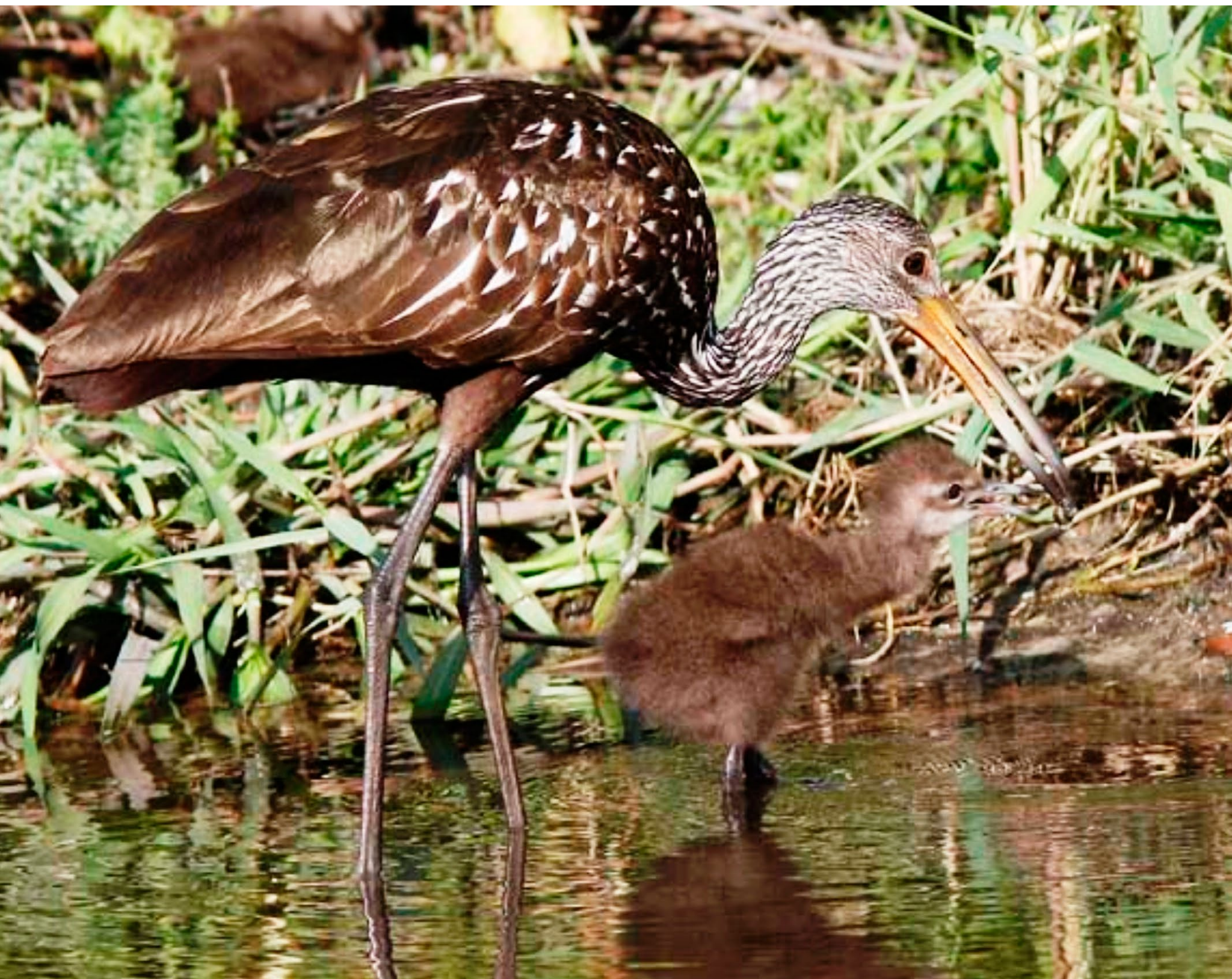
A moth with attitude. That's really scary!

Otus

Dear Otus,

I'm fairly new to Sarasota, and I understand it's a great place to do bird watching. As a bird yourself, perhaps you can help me find the places where I can see many different kinds of your fellow avians. I've heard the Celery Fields mentioned, but I'm not sure how to go about seeing birds there. Thanks for your help.

BIT (Birder-in-training)



A limpkin feeds its chick at the Celery Fields in Sarasota. Photo courtesy Rick Greenspun

Dear Birder-in-training,

A heartfelt welcome to Sarasota and OMG, did you ever come to the right place for bird watching! Celery Fields is THE place for birding. People from all around the country come to Sarasota just to visit Celery Fields and see some of the 216 species of birds it hosts. Yes, 216 bird species, and another 216 Latin species names to keep in my head — it's enough to drive me loony.

As you are a beginner-level birder, I suggest that when you visit Celery Fields you seek out the Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*). Why? Well, because birds can be awfully flighty creatures and not always that easy to spot, especially when you are new to birding. At Celery Fields, where the limpkins have established breeding colonies, you are pretty much guaranteed a limpkin sighting, and, in season, you will even see their adorable (i.e., almost as cute as an owlet) chicks.

To think that thousands of people spend so much time and money to travel thousands of miles just to see the limpkins that are in your very own backyard at Celery Fields. Lucky you! Lucky Sarasota!

Two interesting facts about the Limpkin: Its name derives from its seemingly impeded gait when walking and stalking; and it is also fa-

mous, or should I say “infamous,” for its terrifying screams at night.

Dear readers, thanks to your questions this week, I've listened to the outraged squeaks of a Death's Head Sphinx moth, the piercing nocturnal cries of a limpkin, and that famous Beetles' song “Celery Fields Forever.” Please send in your accounts, with photos, of our noiseless Siesta Key bobcats, known by Native Americans as “The Fog.” I want to hear the sounds of silence!

Otus



Otus still is asking readers to be on the lookout for bobcats and their kittens. File photo

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IN RECOVERY



Even with a gazillion channels, TV can prove awfully boring after awhile. iStock photo

HAVING TO DO NOTHING CAN BE HARD WORK

By Harriet Cuthbert

Contributing Writer

I recently had minor surgery on the area below my right knee. The reason for the procedure was major, but the result looks fairly innocuous, almost like a large sore I could have gotten by falling from my bicycle (at the age of 8 or so).

One large bandage covers everything.

Upon reading the doctor's take-home patient sheet, I noticed that the first and most important instruction on the wound care list was, "Limit activities for at least 24 hours."

I was immediately thrilled to read those "orders," which I interpreted as no vacuuming, no cleaning, no gardening, no shopping and

no cooking — but drinking red wine was still permitted.

The second instruction on the list was to keep the wound area elevated. This was getting better all the time. The doctor was actually demanding that I go right to bed, put my sore leg up on a pillow and enjoy my day off. I had a ticket to read and watch TV — in the daytime — and I didn't have to feel guilty about it.

I kept thinking that once the drugs from the surgery wore off, I would be screaming in agony and want more drugs; but I felt no pain at all.

I started by piling up the books and magazines that I already had begun reading, and then I

wondered: What could I watch on TV? I've never thought about daytime TV at all, unless it was about tennis. I had heard a lot of people talking about "The View," though. When I turned on the program, I was dumbfounded to see President and Mrs. Obama sitting casually on a long sofa, chatting up all the ladies on the show. Wow. Life is good in recovery.

About eight hours later, I was getting really, really bored. (Was it only eight hours?) I'm not used to being forced to be inactive, not being able to just "pick up and go."

I like sweating in the hot sun; digging weeds to beautify my garden. I like food shopping

and preparing home-made meals. And, as a great fan of instant gratification, I even occasionally enjoy polishing a window or two and admiring my work.

But I also like being healthy — my first priority, a state that enables me to continue to pursue all the various physical activities that I look forward to doing every day.

Those 24 long hours of rest might not have included much physical work, but the mental lesson I worked through was very meaningful: Life is an adventure; enjoy the ride.



Gardening — and the resulting flowers — can look more and more attractive to someone told not to do it. Photos by Harriet Cuthbert



SCULLS OUT

Fisherman's Island is quiet after the teams and spectators have headed home. Photos by Scott Proffitt

SARASOTA 5000 REGATTA SERVES AS WARM-UP TO A SEASON OF ROWING FOR AREA TEAMS

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

Rowing was the order of the day on Sunday, Sept. 30, and the weather was perfect for the thousands of people competing in or attending the Sarasota 5000 Regatta.

Held just off Blackburn Point Road, the event is pleasantly viewed from Fisherman's Island in Sarasota County's Blackburn Point Park, near Casey Key. It is not unusual to see dolphins and manatees from the vantage point of this jewel of a park. The occasion of this race was no exception, as people called out in excitement whenever one of those aquatic mammals was spotted nearby.

In its fourth year, the regatta was hosted by the Sarasota Scullers. It was sponsored by Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, Allen Family Dentistry, Jersey Mike's subs, Bentley's Resort, the Diamond Vault and Bee Ridge Vet Clinic. It was deemed a success, with county estimates of around \$4 million brought into the community as a result of participants and spectators involvement.

"The race gets bigger and better every year," said Jeff Koehler, one of the event organizers. "While the kids have fun, it provides an important opening race to work out the kinks for the upcoming rowing competitions."



The coxswain (at the rear of the scull) plays a key role on the team.

He added, "The response and community support have been fantastic."

Rowing is big in this area. When the Benderson Lake rowing complex is completed in the near future, Sarasota is expected to be the venue for national and international rowing events that will fill hotels, restaurants and stores.

The Sarasota 5000 is a small race, for now, with 17 clubs competing from 13 cities. It

is considered a good opening race, so local teams can warm up for larger and more heated competitions to come.

Along with its setting at a beautiful park on the water, another praise-worthy aspect of the 5000 is the availability of free spectator boats from the Sarasota Scullers. Anybody wanting an up-close look at the sport can achieve that easily.



A team makes its way across the water off Blackburn Point Park in south Sarasota County.



FIRST TEST FOR CHAMPIONSHIP; NEW EAT HERE PLANS GO PUBLIC

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor



Editor's note: Former readers of the Pelican Press who enjoyed Rachel Brown Hackney's "Island Beat" column, which kept all apprised of goings-on on Siesta Key, will be pleased to know that her new column — "Siesta Seen" — will be a regular feature in The Sarasota News Leader.

It didn't take long for the new Siesta Village maintenance contractor to find out that it will have some, shall we say, unusual tests.

Just eight days after Championship Landscape Maintenance Professionals of Fort Myers officially took over the Village upkeep, Mark Smith, chairman of the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp., took a call about 7 p.m. on Sept. 18 regarding a light pole having been knocked down in the public improvement district.



Workers at the location of the Peppertree condominium complex on the bay side of Midnight Pass Road began work last week for the construction of a pedestrian crosswalk at that site. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

Given that that was a Tuesday night — the eve of the key's weekly garbage collection — Smith told me he wasted no time calling Championship's office to report the need for workers to collect the pole quickly, before it ended up being sold at a scrap metal yard.

Although I was speaking with him on the phone, I could envision Smith shaking his head as he tried to figure out how in the world someone hit the pole in the first place.

The incident occurred near the Siesta Beach Resort & Suites, located at 5311 Ocean Blvd.

Smith pointed out that the speed limit along Ocean Boulevard is 20 mph. The driver apparently hit the gas coming off Calle Miramar — or was distracted, or perhaps both — as he or she turned north onto Ocean, jumped the curb and knocked over the pole. "I don't know how on earth they hit it," he said. "Texting or what?"

A DUI case, Blase Cafe co-owner Rahmi Nehme reported during the Siesta Key Village Association meeting on Oct. 2.

Nehme said he saw the incident, which the Florida Highway Patrol handled. The driver was a woman, Nehme added.

Smith told me it had reminded him of the time someone hit the light pole in front of SunTrust bank, which, he pointed out, is on a straight-away section of Ocean Boulevard.

At least, Smith said, when he drove over to check out the situation, he saw the pole "was

neatly placed on the side of the road and out of the way."

The following morning, Smith said, he left a board of directors meeting at the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce and drove down to take another look. The pole was gone, so he was hoping Championship workers, not someone cruising for scrap metal, had collected it.

Sure enough, as he turned the corner of Calle Minorga to head to his office, he saw the pole was resting neatly in the side yard.

"They are on the ball," he said of Championship's staff. "I was just surprised to pull up in my driveway and see a light pole."

At least, he added, "We have the room." Smith shares the office with Cheryl Gaddie of CG Designs.

Tom Maroney, general manager of business operations in the county's Public Works Department, first told me about the incident. One of his staffers had received a phone call about it from a county traffic employee, Maroney said.

Maroney seemed happily relieved not to have to worry about this situation. While the county was handling the Village maintenance, he had his share of headaches, including, for a period of time, almost constant vandalism of the fence alongside Ocean Boulevard near the Treasure Boat Way intersection. The county finally replaced that fence with something much sturdier.

Siesta Seen

COMING SOON

After months of rumors circulating around the key, it appears work is under way on a new Eat Here location in Siesta Village on Avenida Madera, in space owned by John Davidson and previously rented to Total Tennis, and — many years ago, the Pelican Press.

According to the Sarasota County Planning and Development Services section of the county government website, a review is under way of plans for alterations of the property to create a three-story facility, with the total construction value estimated at \$307,476.44.

The initial work approved has a value of \$13,820, according to the permitting website. County staff already has signed off on reviews of the electrical, plumbing and mechanical plans.

The application was submitted on Sept. 24. The building contractor listed is Donald J. Sutherland of Beyond Design Contracting Inc. in Sarasota, while Smith Architects is the architect of record.

One key concern when the rumors began about the restaurant was whether plans could pass muster with the Village parking ordi-



Sarasota County staff has signed off on preliminary contracting work to transform the former Total Tennis store on Avenida Madera into the third Eat Here restaurant location in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

nance. A note on the permitting website says Eat Here proposes to use 52 existing parking spaces in Davidson Plaza on Ocean Boulevard. The comment adds that the restaurant would open at 5 p.m., after other businesses have closed.

A couple of years ago, when Village business owners worked closely with county staff to craft that revised parking ordinance, the resulting document was very specific about the number of parking spaces that had to be available, based on the number of seats a new restaurant would have.

All existing restaurants were grandfathered in under the ordinance.

OFFICIAL OPENING

Best Western International formally has announced the opening of the Best Western Plus Siesta Key Hotel at 6600 S. Tamiami Trail.

“This property gives guests a quality lodging option when traveling to the southwestern coast of Florida,” Mark Williams, vice president of North American development for Best Western International, announced in a news release.

Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce members are well-acquainted with the property’s general manager, Maria Bankemper, a principle of MPL Lodgings, which owns as well as operates the hotel.

Bankemper long has been involved with chamber activities on Siesta. This year, she is co-chairing the Siesta Key Crystal Classic

Master Sandsculpting Competition Nov. 8-12. (Cheryl Gaddie is the other co-chair.)

“We believe we have done an excellent job re-positioning this hotel property,” Bankemper wrote in the news release, with MPL Lodgings having invested more than \$1 million in renovations and upgrades.

Of course, as she adds, the location is unbeatable — just off the Stickney Point Road access to Siesta Key.

For more information and grand opening rates, call 924-4900.

ONLY THE BEGINNING

“All’s well and going according to plan/schedule.”

That was the Sept. 28 report from Brian Bolas, planning and environmental manager with Parsons Brinckerhoff, the consultant working with the Florida Department of Transportation on the installation of six crosswalks along Midnight Pass Road between the Beach Road and Stickney Point Road intersections. The crosswalks are designed to improve pedestrian safety.

The project officially began Sept. 24, a week after FDOT hosted an open house at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church to provide island residents one more opportunity to get a look at the plans.

This week, Bolas said, workers are expected to complete the installation of the sign pads and the signs themselves. Next week, he said,

Siesta Seen

passersby should see the milling and resurfacing of the road at the six locations, in preparation for the thermoplastic striping to be laid.

After the road prep is completed, he said, a 30-day curing period will follow. Then, the contractor will have a crew back on site to lay the permanent stripes.

Of course, Bollas noted, "This is all weather permitting."

Still, the project has begun sooner than originally planned. Bollas and FDOT officials are hopeful it will be completed well in advance of Thanksgiving.



A close-up shows markings on Midnight Pass Road for the crosswalk between the bay and beach condominiums of Peppertree. Photo by Norman Schimmel



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF THE UPCOMING WEEK

05
OCT

***BIRTH: The Play* (based on playwright Karen Brody's interviews with more than 100 mothers)**

Oct. 5- 6, 7 to 10 p.m., Black Box Theater, 5845 Gen. Dougher Place, Sarasota; 894-6469 or email info@wslr.org

07
OCT

Young Adult Novel Debut

Chalise Bourque will sign her new novel, *One Right Thing*, at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 7, at Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St.; 365-7900; www.bookstore1sarasota.com

07
OCT

GartenFest Fall Music Series

Oct. 7, 14, 21 & 28, 1 to 3 p.m., Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 811 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Admission: free for members; non-members: \$17, adults; \$6, children 6-11; 366-5731

07
OCT

2012 Equality Florida Suncoast Gala (benefitting the Equality Florida Institute)

Oct. 7, 5 to 7 p.m., Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Great Room by the Bay, 811 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota; tickets: \$100; www.eqfl.org/suncoastgala

10
OCT

Ringling International Arts Festival

Oct. 10-13, Ringling Center for the Arts, 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota. Tickets: Historic Asolo Theatre Box Office, 360-7399; www.RinglingArtsFestival.org

14
OCT

Sunday After Brunch Soiree

Sheryl Needle Cohn will present her novel, *The Boy in The Suitcase*, at a Sunday After Brunch Soiree at 1 p.m. Oct. 14 at Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St. The novel offers a unique approach to a Holocaust story. For more information, visit www.bookstore1sarasota.com or call 365-7900

To get all the details on these and other great activities — food, nightlife, music, art, theater, children's events, learning opportunities and more — go to Sarasota's No. 1 source for local events, hot spots, fun activities and hidden gems:



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SARASOTA.com
SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR



PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader

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**SCHIMMEL
SIGHTINGS**

**FEATHERED ANGLER'S
FAVORITE FISHIN' SPOT**

Each week, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel searches Sarasota County for iconic shots that underscore why the community is a favorite with residents and tourists alike.