

THE SARASOTA

October 26, 2012

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*



Inside

**OUR NEAREST COMPETITOR  
FOCUSED ON THE ECONOMY  
NOT HOW THEY RECALL IT**

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



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# A.K.A. HELP



# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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# Welcome

“Diversity” might be the theme of this issue of *The Sarasota News Leader*. With few local government meetings, our staff roamed widely for story ideas and found more than a few we believe you will enjoy this week.

Stan Zimmerman, in fact, ranged as far afield as Bradenton. Lest readers think we are broadening our coverage area, Stan makes it clear in reporting on the new Riverwalk complex that he was taking it all in with an eye on how it compares to Sarasota’s offerings. You don’t have to be a “Stan Fan” to appreciate the thoughtfulness he has put into this article. He’s also proving to be pretty capable with a camera.

In his scouting work, Scott Proffitt searched out some portables on school campuses. Scott not only has an interesting piece this week on the status of those facilities in the school district, but he also delves into new School Board policy on electronic gadgets in the classroom.

Cooper Levey-Baker had some pretty diverse story assignments this week, too — from covering bogus threats about voter registration to the Tourist Development Council meeting with the County Commission.

Beyond our news coverage, our editorial offers a recap this week of our endorsements for the Nov. 6 general election. More details about the candidates — and why they won our support — are provided with [this link](#) in that editorial. Let’s just say our editorial board put a *lot* of effort into compiling the [longer version for that link](#).

Finally, I am very pleased to introduce a new regular contributor to our staff, Tyler Whitson, who will be providing coverage of all sorts of fun things to do around town.

Tyler is a freelance journalist and New College of Florida alum (‘11) with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. In addition to contributing to the *News Leader*, he is a regular contributor to *This Week in Sarasota* and a news production intern at WSLR 96.5 LPFM. He is helping to put together the station’s “Jumping Mullet” local news report and related political coverage, among other responsibilities.

Tyler says he is a proponent of localism and diversity in the media, arts and politics and is passionate about journalism, music, literature and technology. I can affirm for you that his writing reflects an *infectious joie de vivre*. With warmest regards,

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

*Editor and Publisher*





# CONTENTS



## NEWS & COMMENTARY

### OUR NEAREST COMPETITOR

Bradenton experiencing just the beginning of booming times — *Stan Zimmerman*

12

### FOCUSED ON THE ECONOMY

Christine Robinson seeking her first elected term on the Sarasota County Commission — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

22

### NOT HOW THEY RECALL IT

County commissioners surprised to learn that what they thought was written policy regarding land management never was put into the code

26

### MORE GLOOM ON ST. ARMANDS

Parking issue has the 'squeaky wheel' of St. Armands business owners needing a lot of grease from City Hall — *Stan Zimmerman*

30

### A DIFFERENT TAKE

Firefighters' pension board cuts rate of return and mulls a potential snag with the county — *Stan Zimmerman*

32

### TALENT SEARCH EXTENDED

City allowing itself more time to find a new finance director and new utilities director, with yet a third department chief position coming open soon — *Stan Zimmerman*

34

### SOME MORE TWEAKS

Arts Alliance to more closely document its outreach efforts in South County — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

36

### ON THE DECLINE

Once a staple on the campuses of Sarasota County Schools, portables have been disappearing as enrollment has decreased — *Scott Proffitt*

38



# CONTENTS

## WHO'S IMPERSONATING DENT?



KATHY DENT  
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## 'THAT IS NOT A CALCULATOR'

### UNDETERRED

41

Couple who wanted to operate a food truck business in Siesta Village are considering other locations after their request was denied — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

### WHO'S IMPERSONATING DENT?

47

Handful of Sarasota County people reporting they have received a mailing saying they have been flagged as illegal voters — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

### 'THAT IS NOT A CALCULATOR'

49

Sarasota County School Board amends its policy regarding students' use of cellphones and other electronic devices — *Scott Proffitt*

### 'WOODSHED DAY'

52

City boards begin sunshine remedial education — *Stan Zimmerman*

### CHARTER CHANGERS

54

Call this one the 'housekeeping headache' — *Stan Zimmerman*

### BRIDGING THE VOTER GAP

56

Obama-Biden supporters take their message to the bayfront and the Ringling Bridge to boost the Democrats' Florida support — *Sarasota News Leader Staff*

### NEWS BRIEFS

62

## OPINION

### CARTOON BY RILEY

72

### EDITORIALS

72

The Sarasota News Leader Voters' Guide

Guest Columnist - Consider becoming a Friend at a Sarasota County Library — *Mary Byrd*





## SARASOTA LEISURE

### ROCKING OUT

77

Fifth annual WSLR Beach Bash celebrates the role of supporters in community radio — *Tyler Whitson*

### WORLD CHAMPS AGAIN

82

Local father and son take another powerboat title — *Stan Zimmerman*

### ASK OTUS

84

Some subterfuge is in order so Otus can enjoy a Celery Fields visit without becoming more than his hostess' guest

### FOR HIS NEXT ACT ...

88

Aerialist Nik Wallenda returns to Sarasota with promises of future feats of wonder — *Staff Reports*

### SIESTA SEEN

93

Patterson carries on the fight against Amendment 4; county staff talks of future lifeguards and seaweed — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

### RELIGION BRIEF

99

One of New College's first religion majors coming back to Sarasota to preach at Church of Redeemer

### ARTS BRIEFS

101

### COMMUNITY CALENDAR

107

### SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

108





## OUR NEAREST COMPETITOR

*Bradenton experiencing just the beginning of booming times — Stan Zimmerman*

In four days, Bradenton broke a mold. Long derided as a non-destination by Sarasotans, on Oct. 18 it opened what Bradenton leaders hope is a civic attraction that will draw one-quarter of a million visitors per year.

While not a huge figure by Disney World standards, that number of people coming to see the new amenities would provide a significant boost to downtown merchants and restaurateurs — and provide “heads-in-beds” at the 1920s era downtown hotel which is under restoration and appropriately renamed the Riverpark.

A year ago, the 1.5 mile stretch along the Manatee River from the Green Bridge to Manatee Memorial was just piles of sand and building materials. It is a dream 30 years in the making, at a cost of \$6.2 million. Once known as “the sandpile,” it is the site of strolling pedestrians. ([Full story here](#))



## FOCUSED ON THE ECONOMY

*Christine Robinson seeking her first elected term on the Sarasota County Commission — Rachel Brown Hackney*

For Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson of Venice, her campaign focus has been jobs and the economy.

Even the annual citizens survey undertaken by Sarasota County has shown the economy to be the No. 1 issue since 2008, Robinson points out.

“We’ve made a lot of progress,” she says, with the unemployment rate having fallen from an average of 12.2 percent in 2010 to 8.7 percent in September. Still, the commission needs to keep its sights on measures it can continue to take to lower the rate even more, Robinson says.

Although some parties have criticized the commission for using incentives to bring new or relocating businesses to Sarasota County, Robinson defends that action. ([Full story here](#))





## NOT HOW THEY RECALL IT

*County commissioners surprised to learn that what they thought was written policy regarding land management never was put into the code — Rachel Brown Hackney*

A County Commission vote was unanimous this week regarding use of future revenue to manage environmentally sensitive lands, but it followed about 20 minutes of discussion over lack of codified policy relative to past use of funds for the same purpose.

Commissioners were surprised to learn about that lack of written policy.

The Oct. 23 vote was to authorize county staff to proceed with processing a proposed comprehensive plan amendment to allow for a portion of revenue from the sale of transfers of development rights (TDRs) to be used for the management of property in the county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program (ES-LPP). ([Full story here](#))



## MORE GLOOM ON ST. ARMANDS

*Parking issue has the 'squeaky wheel' of St. Armands business owners needing a lot of grease from City Hall — Stan Zimmerman*

If the Sarasota City commissioners were sailors, they would be reefing like mad. A storm is brewing along St. Armands Key over parking, and it is about to blow hard through City Hall.

We reported the first winds after the circle's Business Improvement District meeting on Oct. 9. By the Oct. 24 Parking Advisory Committee meeting, the winds had grown to a squall.

"It's an impossible situation," said Jim Morrison with the Kingston Arms Condominiums on South Washington Drive.

He was joined in his view by a cascade of business operators and property owners along the popular shopping circle.

The problem is a one-size-fits-all parking enforcement policy adopted by the Sarasota City Commission March 5. In the dramatic aftermath of indecision over paid street parking (aka "those damn meters"), the city commissioners decided to allow free on-street parking but coupled it with stringent enforcement. ([Full story here](#))



## A DIFFERENT TAKE

*Firefighters' pension board cuts rate of return and mulls a potential snag with the county*  
— Stan Zimmerman

The City of Sarasota Firefighters Pension Board has complied with a city request to drop its estimated rate of return, but in a way unlike the two other boards overseeing city pensions.

Facing millions in pension shortfalls, the City Commission recently requested all three boards cut their estimated rates of return on investments to 7 percent. Two did so – the Police Pension Board and the General Employees Pension Board.

Each of the three boards is totally independent, a fact that manifests itself in various ways. For example, the Police and General Employees boards exclude management and operational fees from their expected rates of return. The firefighters pension fund includes a fee of one-half percent.

Therefore, the Firefighters pension plan rate of return at 7 percent translates into an actual rate of return of 6.5 percent, once the management and operational fees are subtracted. The board recognized that difference and voted on Wednesday, Oct. 24, to cut its estimated rate of return to 7.5 percent. ([Full story here](#))



## TALENT SEARCH EXTENDED

*City allowing itself more time to find a new finance director and new utilities director, with yet a third department chief position coming open soon* — Stan Zimmerman

It has been a year of changes for the City of Sarasota, changes at the top of the bureaucracy. Two of those transitions already have been completed, with a new city manager and new police chief named.

Three more are coming.

On Wednesday, Oct. 24, Human Resources Director Kurt Hoverter confirmed he is extending the search time for a new finance director and a new utilities director.

Meanwhile, Hoverter is drafting yet another advertisement for the opening of a city department head position — his own. He plans to retire soon as well. ([Full story here](#))





# I like to take my time.

Sure, it's a temptation to rush. Each issue of *The Sarasota News Leader* is brimfull of in-depth coverage of all the news and goings-on in Sarasota County. And it has delightful and informative feature stories. Thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota*, I always know what the most exciting happenings are each week. Plus, it is simply so beautiful, with photography that takes my breath away.

There is so much there, I don't know where to begin. So it is hard to resist the urge to read it all at once. But I know better. Take your time and indulge in all that it has to offer.

*You have a whole week.*

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## OUR NEAREST COMPETITOR

*Riverwalk offers concrete loungers under the shade with a breeze blowing off the water and plenty of people to watch. Bring a cooler! Photos by Stan Zimmerman*

## BRADENTON EXPERIENCING JUST THE BEGINNING OF BOOMING TIMES

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

In four days, Bradenton broke a mold. Long derided as a non-destination by Sarasotans, on Oct. 18 it opened what Bradenton leaders hope is a civic attraction that will draw one-quarter of a million visitors per year.

While not a huge figure by Disney World standards, that number of people coming to see the new amenities would provide a significant boost to downtown merchants and restaurateurs — and provide “heads-in-beds” at the 1920s era downtown hotel which is under restoration and appropriately renamed the Riverpark.

A year ago, the 1.5 mile stretch along the Manatee River from the Green Bridge to Manatee

Memorial was just piles of sand and building materials. It is a dream 30 years in the making, at a cost of \$6.2 million. Once known as “the sandpile,” it is the site of strolling pedestrians.

The linear park is set up like a necklace, with interspaced jewels, including a 24/7 skatepark, a substantial children’s playground and splash park, two outdoor performing arts spaces (one huge, one intimate), a kayak and canoe launch, a new fisherman’s pier and an abundance of shaded places where visitors can stop to look across the water.

As construction began last year, Bradenton Downtown Development Authority Director David Gustafson said, “When this is done, this





*Down one side and up the other, the Riverwalk skateboard park is scheduled to be open 24/7/365. Protective gear optional.*



*Sit on the grass or bring a chair. Watch a play; listen to music; make a speech.*



will be an exciting community to visit. I think that's really what we're doing, we're creating energy."

If Monday, Oct. 22, was any indication, popular interest is profound. There is ample parking, but it was all full. A quick survey of license plates showed not all the cars were local.

The skateboard park held more than 100 bicyclists, skateboarders, scooters, in-line skaters and others on contraptions I had never seen before. Set under the U.S. 41 overpass, the complex even has shade, albeit noisy shade.

The children's playground and nearby water park were jammed, from toddlers through middle-schoolers. Mothers watched from the shade as the children's imaginations ran free.

As the sometimes-brick, sometimes-concrete sidewalk meanders along the river bank, an assortment of benches appear. Some are in the sun; some are under natural or artificial shade.

A student relaxed in something dubbed "the outdoor living room," with homework spread out in front of her. Other teens strolled by or relaxed on concrete loungers (more comfortable than they sound).

The park population on this day did not comprise mostly kids, either. Seniors, some in wheelchairs, easily negotiated the wide path. A good breeze from the east kept everybody cool. Beyond the skateboard park, across the street, is a large veterans memorial arranged to make it easy to hold ceremonies. The names of men and military units are inscribed on granite benches.

Riverwalk is not just something for everybody, it is a lot for everybody. Keeping it neat and tidy will be a real task for nearby residents and the Bradenton Police Department. All the fresh concrete begs for graffiti, but four nights after the opening I saw none. I did see a number of lights and video cameras.



*Drumming along the river is a sound going back before the days of DeSoto, except these are stainless steel drums.*





*Water park to the right and playground front and center are jammed with kids all having fun.*



## BY CONTRAST ...

Sarasota has nothing like Riverwalk. The multi-use recreational trail (MURT) from downtown to Bird Key is a tour of condominiums, commercial and residential areas and a big bridge. Payne Park's promised outdoor performance space was lost to falling sales tax revenues. Sarasota has the famed beaches of Lido Key, but the current pavilion is a far cry from the lost and lamented Lido Casino.

While the benches are gone from Sarasota's downtown Five Points Park, more than 50 grace Bradenton's Riverwalk, which runs in front of tony condos, a hotel, a hospital and the new Manatee Players Theater.

Manatee County just finished a \$2.9 million stem-to-stern rehabilitation of its historic

courthouse, which is open for public inspection and scrutiny after you pass through security. It is only three blocks from the western end of the linear park.

Sarasota County's historic courthouse building was rehabilitated recently, but it is almost impossible to say what it looks like inside. Even if you pass a security screening, you need an escort to go anywhere in the building except to pay a traffic fine or search public records on a computer.

Sarasota scores high in the traditional performing arts – opera, ballet, symphony and theater. But it is not city residents who support these endeavors. Roughly one-quarter of the tickets sold at what one might call the “middle-brow” Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall are purchased by city residents.



*Across the street from the skateboard park are the benches and flagpoles of a new veterans memorial. The wars recognized span a century.*





*Mayor Wayne Poston (right) with Sherod Haliburton – the two men most responsible for the creation of the only grocery store within miles of downtown Bradenton.*





*A downtown campaign banner flies in the race for the strong mayor of Bradenton. Surely it is just a coincidence that the Riverwalk and Sav-A-Lot opened only days before the November election.*



Meanwhile, supporters of the highbrow arts are scrambling to find a younger audience. As the older patrons fade away, there is concern the traditional performing arts may fade away, too. The much-ballyhooed Arts District, which was to replace the acres of asphalt serving as the Van Wezel's parking lot, vanished along with the high-end project planned at the old (and demolished) Sarasota Quay.

Yet, Bradenton's "Village of the Arts" – a live-work enclave – continues to grow and evolve just south of downtown. It is a place to talk with living artists and craftsmen who make and sell their wares downstairs while they live upstairs.

Development and redevelopment are slowly returning to both cities. Tom Mannaussa's 18-story "Jewel" marks the return of downtown condo construction in Sarasota. The \$15 million rehabilitation of Bradenton's 1926 "Pink Palace" into a modern Hampton Inn Suites hotel is a similar revival of downtown construction.

The interior of the Pink Palace was gutted long ago, except for the first floor and a grand staircase, which remain intact under the new plans. Although there will be no public bar, one of the suites will have a sign: Al Capone slept here.

It is the only surviving 1920s-era hotel south of Tampa Bay. Sarasota allowed the demolition of the John Ringling Towers, even though the developer of the Ritz Carlton wanted to save it, as he had saved and restored two other historic hotels in the Midwest.

## ANOTHER KIND OF BRADENTON REVIVAL

At the height of the Great Depression in 1937, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt came to Bradenton to open a community center built with federal funds on land donated by the city. Situated between a busy railroad and a busy highway, the center served Bradenton's African-American community until the tired building was torn down in 2010.

On Monday, Oct. 22, a groundbreaking was held for a new kind of community center, one even more important, you might say, than a structure with classes and recreation. This one will feed the community.

The golden shovels broke ground for a new commercial center, with a Save-A-Lot grocery store as the centerpiece. The complex will be named the Minnie L. Rogers Plaza and Retail Center to honor the woman who created the original community center so long ago.

In the audience were at least 30 of Rogers' descendants, who had come from all over the nation for the ceremony and celebration. And it was indeed a celebration; there is no grocery store within five miles of the site.

"This project is one my mother would be in the middle of," said Mary Brewer, who flew in from San Francisco.

The two men who were the strategic and tactical operators who made it happen were there, too. Bradenton Mayor Wayne Poston spoke, saying the center "is a transformation of this community."



## PAYNE PARK PLAYGROUND WORK CONTINUES

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The City of Sarasota rushed construction of the playground in Payne Park so everything would be ready for a circus-themed festival on June 16. But much was left undone, and it remains undone.

Work has resumed, with security lighting, fencing and the last of the landscaping to be finished by Nov. 2. A security camera should be operational by then as well.

A shade structure for the playground area for 5- to 12-year-olds is being constructed, with installation expected to begin Nov. 26, according to City Commissioner Terry Turner. This design will require fabrication of a superstructure that is expected to be finished by Dec. 17, with the shade cloth installed a week later.

In other words, the children's playground should be finished in time for Christmas. By then, concrete sculptures of circus-themed animals should be in place as well.



*Circus-themed playground equipment awaits installation in Payne Park in late May. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



The tactical operator was the former director of Bradenton's Central Community Redevelopment Agency, Sharad Halliburton.

In addition to the 16,000-square-foot grocery, the center will have about 17,000 square feet available for other retail purposes.

"We're looking at a barbershop and restaurant and deli and others," said Cary Neil, the developer. "We're about 74 percent occupied."

All totaled, there were more than 100 people in the hot October sun for the ceremony, certainly more than those who attended the groundbreaking for the Robert L. Taylor Recreation Complex in Sarasota on June 7, 2010.

## ONE FURTHER OBSERVATION

The reason so many children were at Riverwalk on a Monday was a school holiday called Records Day. One student said it was a day off so teachers could mark up report cards.

In light of multi-million dollar accounting lapses reported at the Manatee County School Board offices, it is hoped Records Day was also celebrated at school headquarters on Manatee Avenue.

One clear distinction remaining between the Sarasota and Manatee counties is the quality of its schools. Sarasota ranks among the highest in Florida, while Manatee lags far behind.

While any turnaround may take time, Manatee is pondering new management in both administration and on the School Board.



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# FOCUSED ON THE ECONOMY



*Christine Robinson is the Republican candidate for the District 3 seat on the Sarasota County Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## CHRISTINE ROBINSON SEEKING HER FIRST ELECTED TERM ON THE SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSION

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

**Editor's note:** *The Sarasota News Leader was unsuccessful in reaching Jennifer Cohen of Nort Port, Democratic candidate for Sarasota County Commission District 3, for an interview. Christine Robinson, the Republican candidate for that seat, talked with the News Leader on Oct. 16.*

For Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson of Venice, her campaign focus has been jobs and the economy.

Even the annual citizens survey undertaken by Sarasota County has shown the economy to be the No. 1 issue since 2008, Robinson points out.

“We’ve made a lot of progress,” she says, with the unemployment rate having fallen from an average of 12.2 percent in 2010 to 8.7 percent in September. Still, the commission needs to keep its sights on measures it can continue to take to lower the rate even more, Robinson says.

Although some parties have criticized the commission for using incentives to bring new or relocating businesses to Sarasota County, Robinson defends that action. “Sarasota had a notoriously well-earned, long-time bad reputation in the business community, both locally and outside the county,” she says. “It was tough for us to get a seat at the table when



companies were looking to expand or relocate. [The use of incentives] gets us that seat at the table.”

She is proud, she adds, of the collaboration between the commission and local business groups to improve the administration of the incentives fund.

Workforce development is another key concern, she says as illustrated by her taking the gavel during a joint meeting with the Sarasota County School Board in late August to request that County Administrator Randall Reid work with school district officials, the Bradenton organization CareerEdge and county economic development staff to determine how best to address the results of a new workforce study.

The report on that study showed Sarasota and Manatee firms felt the local schools needed better programs to prepare workers for careers in high-tech manufacturing.

Having been a member of the Board of Trustees of the State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota, Robinson points to the collaboration between the board and area hospitals to provide new programs to meet the demand for more nurses.

With the workforce issue, she says the manufacturers “are not quite as unified and vocal as the hospitals were,” but she wants to make sure they talk with school officials to resolve the problems they perceive — “so we can all reach towards a common goal with a common path.”

Robinson also takes pride in starting a county newsletter to area businesses, telling them about issues coming up on commission agendas and reporting on board action.

“The feedback from that was incredible,” she says.

County staff took over the project and has continued it, she points out. “Little things like that make a big difference.”

Asked her response to the assertion that the recession kept the county from growing too fast or too recklessly, Robinson says, “I like the sustainable growth [perspective], which I think we’re on the path for right now.”

She adds that the county did its best to manage unprecedented growth during the boom years. “Now we can take a step back and look at some of those things that were good and keep them and get rid of regulations that weren’t so good. There’s a balance, and I think we can strike that balance.”

## **SOUTH COUNTY FACTORS**

Asked her proudest accomplishment since she joined the County Commission in December 2010, Robinson says, “Some of the relationships I’ve built. ... I set my sights on improving the county relationship with south Venice. We’ve done things I never would have imagined in water quality projects in south Venice,” she adds.

The relationship between county officials and the City of North Port also is strong, Robinson says.

“I’ve invested a lot of time in those relationships, just showing up, being engaged.”

Although it’s easy to think of her as running for re-election — after all, she has been chairwoman of the commission since January — Robinson is finishing up the last two years of former Commissioner Shannon Staub’s unex-



pired term. This is Robinson's first run for the seat, and that seat represents South County interests,

It is not uncommon to hear Robinson reference a Venice City Council or North Port City Commission meeting she has attended or watched on the county's cable access net-

work when the County Commission addresses issues in those communities.

"It's a challenge to do that, and I hit as many meetings as I can," she says, "to see where I can help and where we can team up and partner on things that are important to those particular areas."



*Sarasota County Commission Chairwoman Christine Robinson reviews agenda material during the Oct. 23 meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## BOARD PERSPECTIVES

Robinson was appointed to the commission by former Gov. Charlie Crist. A lifelong Republican, she says she disagrees “with some of the things he has done recently,” especially his endorsement of Democratic candidates.

Nonetheless, she says, “Reasonable people can agree to disagree.”

Because no other Republican filed to run against her in the primary, she says she takes that as a sign other members of her party have not held the Crist appointment against her.

Asked about the collegiality among the county commissioners, Robinson says that derives from “mutual respect” and, as she noted with Crist, “an ability to agree to disagree.”

While she confesses she has been a bit impatient to see new County Administrator Randall Reid make staffing and organizational changes, she is pleased with the steps he has been taking.

Referring to the Procurement Department scandal that led to the resignation of former County Administrator Jim Ley in May 2011, Robinson says, “We have a lot of privatization in contracts, which isn’t necessarily a bad thing,” because that can save the county a lot of money.

However, some contracts fail. “As an attorney,” she says with a laugh, “I can tell you it happens in private business, too.”

She adds, “Sometimes you have bad contracts. Sometimes you have an agreement that’s not honored ...”

The latter situation occurred earlier this year with the county’s roadside mowing contract, leading to complaints from constituents about overgrown grass. Reid reported to the commission this week that yet another new vendor had been hired for the north district; that company had been on the job three weeks.

The previous vendor, Reid said, had admitted he could not handle the work.

When something goes wrong, Robinson says, “We have to correct it.”

Still, she says, the county has an \$890 million budget, and it has a vast number of successful contracts. “The ones that get attention are the ones that don’t work out.”

## LOOKING AHEAD

If she wins election, Robinson says, she also wants to focus on maintaining the strong quality of life Sarasota County residents enjoy. The county has had “really incredible achievements” over the past couple of years that reflect on that quality of life, she points out — from Siesta Public Beach’s title as No. 1 in the United States to the recognition of the county’s library system as the best in Florida to the county’s being honored as one of the 100 top communities for youth in the nation.

As the economy continues to improve, she says, “We need to make sure that we don’t expand [county government] too quickly.”

At the same time, though, she says, “We need to try to restore things where we see those needs. ... People look at [it as] a pro or anti-government argument, and it’s not,” she says. “It’s a balance argument.”







# NOT HOW THEY RECALL IT

*Sarasota County voters have been supportive in the past of initiatives to preserve environmentally sensitive lands. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## **COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT WHAT THEY THOUGHT WAS WRITTEN POLICY REGARDING LAND MANAGEMENT NEVER WAS PUT INTO THE CODE**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

A County Commission vote was unanimous this week regarding use of future revenue to manage environmentally sensitive lands, but it followed about 20 minutes of discussion over lack of codified policy relative to past use of funds for the same purpose.

Commissioners were surprised to learn about that lack of written policy.

The Oct. 23 vote was to authorize county staff to proceed with processing a proposed comprehensive plan amendment to allow for a portion of revenue from the sale of transfers of development rights (TDRs) to be used for

the management of property in the county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program (ESLPP).

According to a Sept. 20 memo to the County Commission from County Planner William K. Spaeth, the TDR program would apply to the county's Sarasota 2050 plan for development east of Interstate 75. The memo says, "The basic premise being that for each acre developed within a designated Resource Management Area (RMA), an acre of environmentally sensitive land should be preserved. The TDR program allows for this to be accomplished by removing existing allowed development



rights for a housing unit on environmentally sensitive lands, and transferring those rights to lands more suited for development as identified within the Sarasota 2050 plan provisions ....”

The memo says the goal is to have the comprehensive plan amendment adopted by June 2013.

Before the Oct. 23 vote, discussions between commissioners and the manager of the county’s Natural Resources Department revealed that the original ESLPP ordinance did not specify 10 percent of the voted ad valorem tax revenue in the program would go toward land maintenance, in spite of commissioners’ assertions that that was their intention when the first ESLPP referendum was held in 1999.

“The ordinance [related to the ESLPP] does not specify the distribution of the funds,” Amy Meese, the Natural Resources Department manager, told the commissioners.

Instead, Meese pointed out, the ordinance specified that any debt associated with the program be paid first. Then, the remainder of the ad valorem tax revenue would be split, with 90 percent going toward the purchase of more land and 10 percent going to maintenance.

“There’s something really wrong with that,” Commissioner Nora Patterson told Meese, “because what you’re basically doing is not

honoring the commitment to keep 10 percent of the monies allocated for maintenance.”

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh pointed out that his recollection was that the 90/10 split was not part of the referendum question put before voters, but “was part of the literature delivered to people to explain the [ESLPP] program.”

“But it was a stated policy to everybody when [we] went out and asked them to vote for this,” Patterson said.

Before the referendum, people asked her constantly, “How are you going to maintain the land?” she said, “and the answer was, ‘We’re setting aside 10

percent of the money raised.’”

“Certainly, that’s an area for board direction,” DeMarsh said.

Meese explained that staff had been following the same policy since the ESLPP began in 1999: paying the debt obligation first, then using the remaining revenue according to the 90/10 split.

“It sounds as though we’re violating what we thought was a principle of the program,” Patterson said. “I’m not saying it’s anybody’s fault,” she added, but “it’s a pretty loose principle.”

When Chairwoman Christine Robinson asked whether the situation had been explained to the Planning Commission before its members voted to recommend approval of the process

*“It sounds as though we’re violating what we thought was a principle of the program. I’m not saying it’s anybody’s fault, [but] it’s a pretty loose principle.”*

Nora Patterson  
County Commissioner



to amend the comprehensive plan in regard to TDR revenue, Meese replied, "That question didn't specifically come up, regarding the adequacy of the funding" for land maintenance.

"They made a recommendation for a 90/10 split without knowing whether we're adequately funding maintenance now?" Robinson clarified her question.

One Planning Commission member asked whether she had "specific land management

costs for the precise scope of this amendment, and I didn't at the time," Meese said.

On July 11, the county commissioners had split 3-2 over how much of the TDR proceeds should go toward land management. Thaxton and Commissioner Joe Barbetta were in the minority on a motion that left open what percentage of TDR sales revenue would be used for that purpose.



*Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson listens to discussion during the Oct. 23 meeting.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## RECOLLECTIONS AND PRACTICE

When Commissioner Jon Thaxton insisted on Oct. 23 that the 90/10 split was codified in the ordinance governing the ESLPP program, Meese replied, "The 90/10 is not codified in any adopted work policy. It was only communicated as part of the referendum campaign."

"Well, it continues to be an understanding," Thaxton said. "This is the first time I've heard of this funding shift ..."

Thaxton added that without the split being codified, "We may get down the road and the split is 50/50, which would clearly be in violation of the original commitment that was made to the voters. ... We should be spending the 10 percent for the management and maintenance, because that is what we told the voters we were going to do. ... That came from the building industry groups ... and it was a good [recommendation], one that everyone embraced. So I think it's important that we hold true to it for both sides."

Moreover, Thaxton said, he felt the full 10 percent was going to be necessary for maintenance. "I don't think we're going to get by with 6 or 7 percent. But somewhere it needs to be other than just implied."

County Administrator Randall Reid told the board he would ask staff for a financial report on the amount of ad valorem tax revenue collected and how it had been divided up. "I'd like clarity in this," he added. "We might want to go out for another referendum sometime."

"Thank you," Robinson told him.

The County Commission "in some cases ... ended up paying more than we would have paid today" for some of the environmentally

sensitive lands purchased through the program," Patterson said. "But land was preserved that otherwise would have been built [upon]."

She added, "I don't see the county ... having in the next 10 to 20 years the kind of discretionary income that we had for a few years. I really am worried about today's level of maintenance" for the property in the ESLPP program.

She continued, "I don't want the program to end up a liability to the public as opposed to the huge asset that it's intended to be."

"I'm concerned because I think we have a duty to properly maintain what we have," Robinson said.

Finally, Thaxton pointed out, "We have a much broader discussion ongoing here today than the ... discussion before us" about the amendment to the comprehensive plan."

However, Thaxton said, "The bigger discussion has to be had," referring to the use of the ESLPP ad valorem revenue split for land maintenance.

When Robinson asked for a motion on the matter before the board that day, Patterson offered the motion to recommend the pursuit of the comprehensive plan amendment to allocate a portion of the TDR sales revenue to cover costs associated with preserved land management relative to the ESLPP.

Thaxton seconded the motion, saying, "This policy is not inconsistent with the spirit of what was being considered at the time, that was being offered to the public and voted on by the public."







# MORE GLOOM ON ST. ARMANDS

*City parking enforcement issues are drawing even greater ire of business owners and residents on St. Armands. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## PARKING ISSUE HAS THE 'SQUEAKY WHEEL' OF ST. ARMANDS BUSINESS OWNERS NEEDING A LOT OF GREASE FROM CITY HALL

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

If the Sarasota City commissioners were sailors, they would be reefing like mad. A storm is brewing along St. Armands Key over parking, and it is about to blow hard through City Hall.

We reported the first winds after the circle's Business Improvement District meeting on Oct. 9. By the Oct. 24 Parking Advisory Committee meeting, the winds had grown to a squall.

"It's an impossible situation," said Jim Morrison with the Kingston Arms Condominiums on South Washington Drive.

He was joined in his view by a cascade of business operators and property owners along the popular shopping circle.

"We need to lighten up," said Dianna Corrigan, the director of the St. Armands Circle Association. "Time is of the essence or it will cripple St. Armands Circle, the jewel of Sarasota."

The problem is a one-size-fits-all parking enforcement policy adopted by the Sarasota City Commission March 5. In the dramatic aftermath of indecision over paid street parking (aka "those damn meters"), the city commissioners decided to allow free on-street parking but coupled it with stringent enforcement.



Then they passed the hot potato to Mark Lyons, their newly hired parking manager. Somehow he would have to gather enough money to make parking enforcement revenue-neutral. With tougher enforcement instructions, the “meter maids” were sent forth, and the law of unintended consequences kicked in.



*The city has taken enforcement to an unbelievable, unreal level.*

Andrew Vac  
Membership Director  
St. Armands Circle Association



Matthew Fried is the manager of the Daiquiri Deck on the Circle. “The marking of the parking boxes is a big issue. You could put two Smart cars in one box, but a Hummer doesn’t fit, so it automatically gets a ticket.”

And anybody who lets his car sit for more than three hours is a ticket magnet, too.

“No ticketing after 5 p.m. was the norm for 40 years,” said Bill Carmen, the communications director for the Circle association. “Now I have a \$15 dinner and a \$25 ticket? Am I coming back? The Circle pays over 3 percent of the property taxes in Sarasota. I don’t think you should ticket after 5 p.m.”

Andrew Vac, the membership director for the Circle association, said, “The city has taken enforcement to an unbelievable, unreal level.”

Because the parking is “zoned,” a visitor or resident or employee or customer cannot simply move her car after three hours. The vehicle must be moved out of the “zone” — which

pushes employee parking into the residential areas of the key, upsetting residents such as Morrison. “Our concerns are our family and friends,” he said. “Where can they park to pay us a visit?”

All this vitriol was condensed into the 18 minutes allowed for public comment on the Parking Advisory Committee’s agenda.

The largest audience the committee had ever seen sat (and stood) and seethed.

Lyons’ supervisor, Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown, stepped up to speak. “Mark is willing to work with individuals to tweak what concerns they have. We have to think safety, but adjust accordingly,” Brown said. “Perhaps we can issue a few more warnings. We can work within some parameters to make this work for the area.”

Their 18 minutes expired, concerned citizens, residents, business operators and property owners slowly left the meeting. Little did they know about the purpose of the committee itself – to develop and present a strategic plan for parking in the city. The committee’s job is to fly at 30,000 feet, far above the painful specifics.

But what the committee members heard drove them to earth.



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*The Sarasota City Commission mulls matters during a regular meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION BOARD CUTS RATE OF RETURN AND MULLS A POTENTIAL SNAG WITH THE COUNTY**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The City of Sarasota Firefighters Pension Board has complied with a city request to drop its estimated rate of return, but in a way unlike the two other boards overseeing city pensions.

Facing millions in pension shortfalls, the City Commission recently requested all three boards cut their estimated rates of return on investments to 7 percent. Two did so – the Police Pension Board and the General Employees Pension Board.

Each of the three boards is totally independent, a fact that manifests itself in various ways. For example, the Police and General

Employees boards exclude management and operational fees from their expected rates of return. The firefighters pension fund includes a fee of one-half percent.

Therefore, the Firefighters pension plan rate of return at 7 percent translates into an actual rate of return of 6.5 percent, once the management and operational fees are subtracted. The board recognized that difference and voted on Wednesday, Oct. 24, to cut its estimated rate of return to 7.5 percent.

“If we do 7.5, it is the same as 7.0 with our methodology,” said the pension board’s chair-



man, T.J. Broom. “I support 7.5 at this time, and we can revisit it next year.”

Timing was important, because the change will take effect on Oct. 1, 2013 for the Fiscal Year 2014 books.

## HICCUP WITH THE COUNTY

The firefighters’ pension is an oddity because the city relinquished its fire department to the control of Sarasota County in 1996. Both governments are jointly responsible for keeping the pension plan solvent.

The fund’s actuary – who calculates dollars versus lifespans – put the situation this way in September: “The annual cost of the plan will trend towards cash flows. Sixty-two cents of benefit cash will be paid by investment returns,” said Brad Armstrong. “The remainder will be funded by the city and county.”

Pension Board Trustee Sheila Robertson last Wednesday asked, “Is any city financial staff reaching out to the county financial staff on this recommendation?”

City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini – who is also a trustee of the plan – replied, “Not that I know of. The city Finance Department should reach out to the county.”

In fact, as the pension crisis unfolded, Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid sent a letter in early April to Interim City Manager Terry Lewis suggesting the firefighters’ pension should be an agenda item during the April 17 joint meeting of the two commissions.

“The city never responded,” said Steve Bothello, the county’s chief financial planning officer. “The agenda was not changed.”




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# TALENT SEARCH EXTENDED

*City Hall is seeing an unprecedented number of changes this year among its top managers. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **CITY ALLOWING ITSELF MORE TIME TO FIND A NEW FINANCE DIRECTOR AND NEW UTILITIES DIRECTOR, WITH YET A THIRD DEPARTMENT CHIEF POSITION COMING OPEN SOON**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

It has been a year of changes for the City of Sarasota, changes at the top of the bureaucracy. Two of those transitions already have been completed, with a new city manager and new police chief named.

Three more are coming.

On Wednesday, Oct. 24, Human Resources Director Kurt Hoverter confirmed he is extending the search time for a new finance director and a new utilities director.

While he has received applications for both positions, he recently learned the two state associations representing these types of of-

ficials will be meeting in Sarasota in the very near future. Both men leaving – Finance Director Chris Lyons and Utilities Director Bill Hallisey – were presidents of their respective professional associations in the past.

“We don’t want to miss an opportunity like this,” said Hoverter. “It’s a classic network outreach opportunity. It was fortuitous.”

Both Hallisey and Lyons are veterans of a quarter-century of civic service, and each has agreed to continue to serve until his replacement is secured.



Meanwhile, Hoverter is drafting yet another advertisement for the opening of a city department head position — his own. He plans to retire soon as well.

City Manager Tom Barwin will make the final choice for all three positions.

In a 12-month period, the city will have replaced four of seven department heads and the city manager. In city history, this is an unprecedentedly rapid change of leadership.

So far, none of the replacements reflects an internal promotion.



*Finance Director Chris Lyons is leaving the city because of health reasons. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*





## SOME MORE TWEAKS

*The Sarasota County commissioners meet with members of the Tourist Development Council in the Think Tank at the Administration Center in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### ARTS ALLIANCE TO MORE CLOSELY DOCUMENT ITS OUTREACH EFFORTS IN SOUTH COUNTY

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

The Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County is tweaking its grant process in response to criticism that South County arts organizations have been left out.

Money for the grants comes from the county's Tourist Development Tax — a 5 percent cut of revenue from rentals that last six months or less. The grant funds are used to support arts programs that attract tourists to the area. For the 2013 fiscal year, the Alliance passed out a total of \$1.3 million.

Alliance leaders presented their plan for 2014 to the Sarasota County Commission and the Tourist Development Council Wednesday, Oct.

24, announcing a series of what Alliance Executive Director Jim Shirley calls “adjustments” to the process. Most of those changes involve simplifying the application system and coordinating more with county staff, but Shirley says his group is also working to change the “perception” that South County arts groups have been left behind in the past.

County Commission Chairwoman Christine Robinson has suggested at multiple meetings that South County groups are out of the loop, and she has asked for specific documentation of outreach to those organizations. At a July meeting she said the Alliance should be working harder to help “smaller” South County or-



ganizations like the Venice Art Center, which might not have the “track record” of bigger groups.

“They need help,” she said, “and I think we’re missing the boat by not allowing them to flourish like some of these other organizations.”

Shirley tells *The Sarasota News Leader* it is an issue of “perception.”

“We have always made extensive outreach to South County,” he says. “We’re always trying to reach out to as many groups as we can.”

But those programs must meet the same standards as everyone else.

“We are to administer this grant for organizations that attract tourists to Sarasota County,” he says. “Sometimes you have groups that would love to have the funding, but the reality is the type of program is just not the type of program that attracts tourists.”

With that in mind, the Alliance will be providing the County Commission (and, by extension, the pub-

lic) with detailed records of all its outreach efforts. Shirley tells the *News Leader* the Alliance makes “hundreds” of contacts each week, and that from now on, the group will “be keeping a literal tracking” of all those. “It will be easier for people to see what is taking place,” Shirley says.

“One of the new requirements to show that there’s support for new applicants and support for South County applicants is the recording of some of the contacts,” Robinson said at Wednesday’s meeting. “How will you be doing that?”

“We’ve all received agreed-upon reporting procedures that were instituted this year,” Shirley

told Robinson, adding that the information will be delivered monthly, “on a live time basis.”

Shirley tells the *News Leader* the goal is “making people more aware of the activity,” and that the change is not a significant departure from past practices. “There aren’t many major dramatic changes,” he says.

“They’ve been adjustments.”



*The county’s cable access channel shows Arts and Cultural Alliance Executive Director Jim Shirley addressing the County Commission and the Tourist Development Council as he speaks. Photo by Norman Schimmel*







## ON THE DECLINE

*Portables have been a common sight on Sarasota County school campuses for a number of years.  
Photos by Scott Proffitt*

### **ONCE A STAPLE ON THE CAMPUSES OF SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS, PORTABLES HAVE BEEN DISAPPEARING AS ENROLLMENT HAS DECREASED**

**By Scott Proffitt**

*Staff Writer*

With falling enrollment over the past several years in the Sarasota County Schools, one campus feature that used to seem ubiquitous is becoming less prominent — the portable.

In an April 25 memorandum, Mark Smith of the School Construction Services Department wrote to Scott Lempe, chief operating officer of the Sarasota County Schools, requesting a School Board vote to allow district staff to pursue the demolition of 20 or so “relocatable classrooms” — or as most people know them, portables.

The average age of these portables was more than 20 years, with one surpassing the 40-year mark.

The request won unanimous School Board approval.

A study by MGT of America Inc. titled, “The Efficiency and Effectiveness Review of Sarasota County Schools,” was released in March. While a minor issue, portables still were among the topics of the extensive report, which was privately funded by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

The MGT review of district operations was requested by community individuals in an effort to help improve efficiencies and reduce costs in the school district.



The study recommended the “elimination of the use of portables where possible.”

It added, “The use of portables for short term fluctuations in enrollments is a generally accepted practice. However, if the portables become a permanent part of the school, or if they house more than ten percent of the enrollment, the use of portables is seen to have negative effects on the educational environment. Portables tend to separate teachers from the rest of the school and do not encourage teamwork among teachers or students. The use of portable also overtaxes the support facilities (e.g. the cafeteria, library, gym) since those spaces were not designed to accommo-

date the increased number of students housed in the portables.”

The April demolition approval was just one action the School Board has taken in response to the report. Ken Marsh, the director of long-range planning for the school district, wrote in an update to the MGT study that 25 portables were scheduled to be demolished over the summer, with another 65 expected to be eliminated in the summer of 2013.

While it appears many schools in Sarasota County are seeing a leveling off of student enrollment, another driving force for eliminating portables is cost. The MGT study says, “Based





on the utilization rates ... the district should be able to eliminate 90 percent (approximately 430) of the portables ... The net savings to the district ... could be \$3,964,600 over five years."

The report included a district staff estimate that it costs "\$4,740 in utilities, maintenance and custodial services annually to fully support a portable classroom. The estimated cost to remove a portable is \$5000 each."

Scott Ferguson, communications specialist for the district, told *The Sarasota News Leader*

**“The use of portables for short term fluctuations in enrollments is a generally accepted practice. However, if the portables become a permanent part of the school, or if they house more than ten percent of the enrollment, the use of portables is seen to have negative effects on the educational environment.”**

MGT of America Inc. report  
March 2, 2012

in an email, “Generally use [of portables] in our district is declining ...”

He added that whenever a school undergoes rebuilding, such as Booker High School and the Sarasota County Technical Institute, portables still will be needed.

Ferguson also pointed out, “We’ll have a report on the current status of their use around the district by the end of November.”



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## UNDETERRED

*Siesta Key property owner Randall Arnaud addresses the County Commission on Oct. 23. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **COUPLE WHO WANTED TO OPERATE A FOOD TRUCK BUSINESS IN SIESTA VILLAGE ARE CONSIDERING OTHER LOCATIONS AFTER THEIR REQUEST WAS DENIED**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Tony and Cheri Bonasto said they had “too many [locations in mind] to list them all” on Oct. 23, just moments after the Sarasota County Commission denied their request to operate a food truck business off Canal Road in Siesta Village.

“We’re just going to move on,” Tony Bonasto told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

“This is just the beginning,” Cheri Bonasto added.

They declined to offer any specifics about the other sites. Cheri said they preferred to make

sure they had plans firmed up before seeking board approval again.

The County Commission denial was unanimous, with Commissioner Jon Thaxton making the motion and Commissioner Nora Patterson seconding it.

Calling himself a “big fan of food trucks,” Thaxton added, “I think they’re funky. I think they’re cool.”

However, he said, the Bonastos’ application was for a private business that would be operated on a public right of way. “This board has struggled for as long as I’ve been sitting





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*Tony and Cheri Bonasto arrive at the Sarasota County Administration Center on Oct. 23. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



here, and, frankly, much longer than my tenure here, at trying to maintain a balance in Siesta Key Village that keeps the harmony ... between residents and commercial [operations],” Thaxton said.

“I’m not a big fan of imposing on that very delicate balance something that could disrupt [it],” he added. “I sincerely hope that there is another location that the truck can find.”

“I hate to step on a business enterprise and obviously some nice people with a business plan that probably would work for them,” said Patterson, a resident of the island. However, “Siesta Key is a tight little area,” she added. “To me, this just opens a whole new door that I would have trouble with ...”

Vice Chairwoman Carolyn Mason also weighed in: “I, like Commissioner Thaxton, think food trucks are great, but in the right location, and I don’t think the Village is the right location for this, unlike just down the street from us.”

Mason was referring to the food truck picnic location on Ringling Boulevard that became popular early this year, during season.

Although three major Siesta Key organizations — the Siesta Key Village Association, the Siesta Key Association and the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce — had come out in opposition to his and his wife’s plans, Tony Bonasto told the commission the couple wanted to operate during hours when restaurants in the Village were closed, after 10 p.m.

People who stay later than that in the Village, he added, generally are customers of bars. The truck would offer them an opportunity “so food can be consumed before driving.”

However, in his remarks to the commission, Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck and Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar and president of the SKVA, pointed out, “A lot of restaurants do serve until 2 a.m.; it’s required by law based on their liquor license, and there’s a lot of food business after 10 p.m.”



*Russell Matthes, Daiquiri Deck co-owner and president of the Siesta Key Village Association, asks the commission to deny the request for a food truck business in the Village. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Matthes added, “We’re certainly not afraid of competition.” Nonetheless, he said, the Bonastos’ overhead would be much lower than that of Village restaurants, so they could offer less expensive fare.

“We feel like that’s an uneven playing field,” Matthes said.

A walk-up food service is available in the plaza with Siesta Market and Siesta Key Hardware, catty-corner from the proposed food truck location, Bonasto pointed out. “The only difference is that we are on wheels.”

## THE LOGISTICS

Assistant Zoning Administrator Donna Thompson explained in a brief presentation to the board that the truck would be situated on public right of way near the intersection of Canal Road and Calle Menorca.

Tony Bonasto said they had chosen that location because they realized a lot of people who park in the municipal lot behind the plaza with the market and hardware store walk up Canal Road to Ocean Boulevard.

He also explained that while the truck had been described as being 18 feet wide and 20 feet long, “I don’t believe we’d be able to operate that vehicle on any street here in Florida ...” The actual size, he said, was 8 feet in width and 20 feet in length.

The couple would keep the truck in storage when it was not in operation, he said.

While the vehicle does have a generator on board for emergency use, he said, the operation routinely would be powered by an inverter. “It runs absolutely silent,” he noted.



*A Sarasota County staff photograph shows the general area where the Gumbo Mojo food truck owners planned to operate in Siesta Village. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



In response to concerns about parking, Bonasto said, “We’re not going to be inviting people to park illegally just to come to our business. We’re not Jack in the Box, you know,” referring to the fast-food franchise.

Bonasto added, “I don’t understand how our vehicle being placed where it’s proposed to be placed ... proposes any worse parking situation than already exists.”

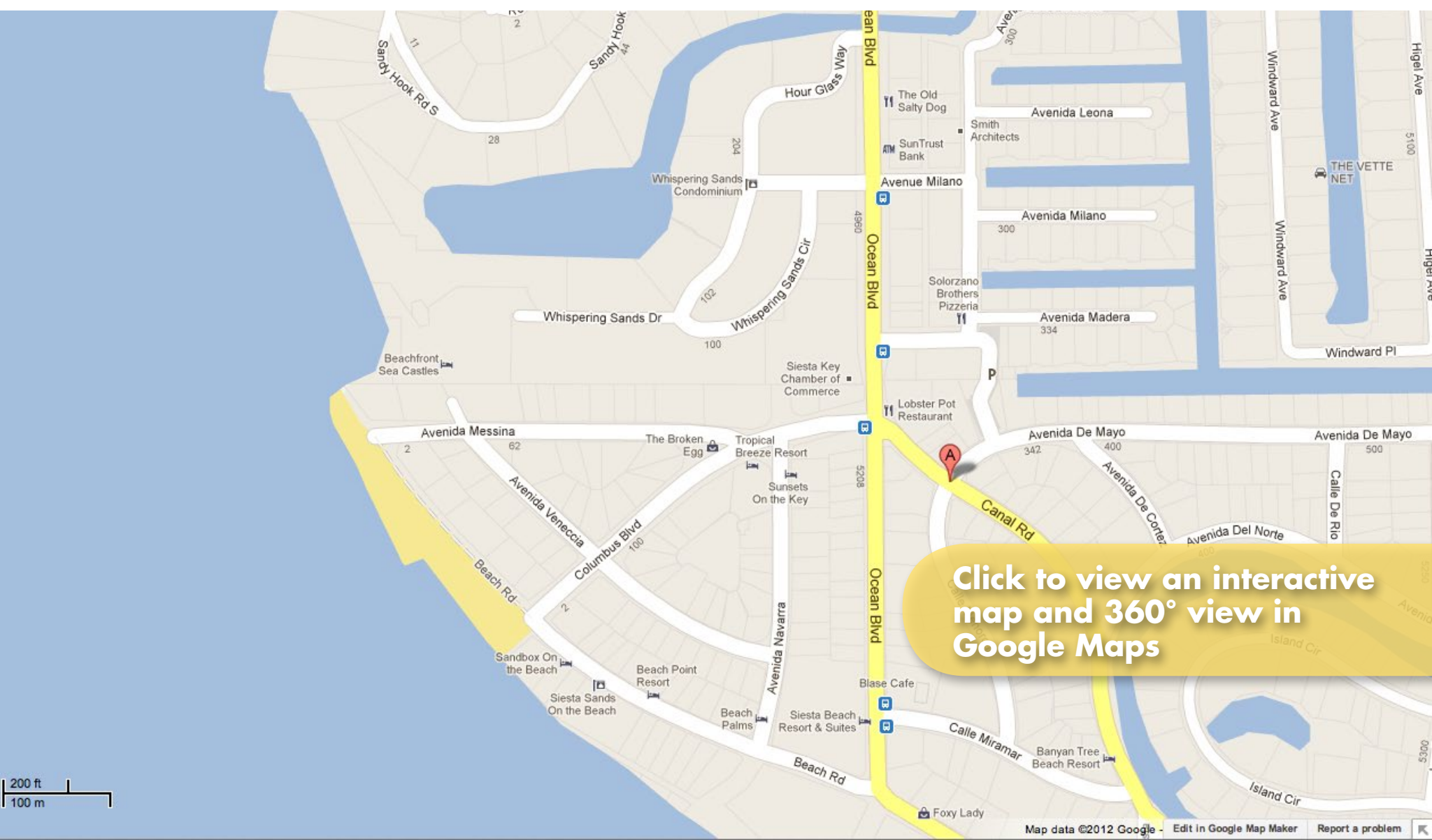
Nonetheless, Village property owner Randall Arnaud, who works in real estate management, told the commission, “That is a very difficult location to maneuver if you live anywhere down Canal Road ...” He added that no crosswalk exists, either, between the plaza with the market and hardware store and the proposed food truck operating area.

“At 2 o’clock in the morning, there’s plenty of parking,” he said, but “there’s no lighting.”

Arnaud also pointed out that the average Village restaurant pays \$20 to \$30 per square foot to lease a space. Altogether, he said, the Village commercial district has a property value assessment of about \$45 million. “That pours a lot of money into the county coffers, as we all know.”

Dave Stewart, the proprietor of Captain Curt’s Crab & Oyster Bar on the south end of the island, also pleaded with the commission to deny the Bonastos’ request.

The Bonastos had one supporter address the commission, Andrew Seeley, owner of Suncoast Food Trucks LLC. In touting the growing popularity of food trucks, he said of the Bonastos’ plans, “As far as I’m concerned, [they] can only enhance the business on Siesta Key ....”





## AFTERTHOUGHTS

Following the meeting, SKA President Catherine Luckner told the *News Leader* she was pleased with the commission's decision.

Just that morning, she said, she had driven by the general area where the Bonastos wanted to operate the truck and had seen a dumpster sitting there, awaiting a Waste Management crew.

"They need to have what I call a 'dynamic site visit,'" she said of county staff, before recommending approval of a request.

Luckner said that while she could not be certain, it appeared the food truck operation would impede the placement of the dumpster at that spot for regular emptying by a garbage crew.

Pointing out that Turtle Beach patrons have been clamoring for a food concession, she added, "It would be great for everybody" if the Bonastos chose to operate there, in cooperation with county Parks and Recreation staff.

"Then they would be in compliance and would be welcome," Luckner said.



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# WHO'S IMPERSONATING DENT?



*Official mail from the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections has the return address as shown.  
File photo*

## A HANDFUL OF SARASOTA COUNTY PEOPLE REPORTING THEY RECEIVED MAILING SAYING THEY HAVE BEEN FLAGGED AS ILLEGAL VOTERS

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

Get something in the mail lately from Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent? Might want to double-check what it is.

The supervisor's office says it has heard complaints from a handful of Sarasota County residents about a new mailing telling them they have been flagged as illegal voters.

"It has been brought to our attention that some Sarasota County voters have received a letter questioning their citizenship status and eligibility to vote from an entity that is not the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections," Dent said in a statement released Monday. "I want to make all Sarasota County voters

aware that this mailing did not come from my office."

The letter appears to be part of an ugly state-wide trend. Florida Division of Elections spokesman Chris Cate told *The Tampa Bay Times* that his office has heard "multiple reports" of a fake letter like the one sent to Sarasota County voters.

The Times reported that the letters targeted Republicans, but Dent's assistant, Joyce Soltis, tells the *News Leader* the Sarasota office has also heard from voters registered with no party. The letters were postmarked in Seattle, WA.



Soltis says staff is asking those who received the letters to bring them to the supervisor's office, which will in turn pass them along to the state. While she says only "a few" voters have called the supervisor's office, it is impossible to say how widespread the mailings are.

"Any correspondence concerning the eligibility of a Sarasota County voter that comes from the Sarasota elections office will include my signature," Dent said, "and will not require a response from the voter within 15 days."

***I want to make all Sarasota County voters aware that this mailing did not come from my office.***

Kathy Dent  
Supervisor of Elections

She urged those who have received the letter to call 861-8600 to report the incident.

"The Sarasota County elections office is committed to protecting the integrity of the

elections process and to protecting the rights of all eligible voters," Dent added. "We will continue to monitor this and will assist the Division of Elections and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in their investigations into cases regarding illegal activities."



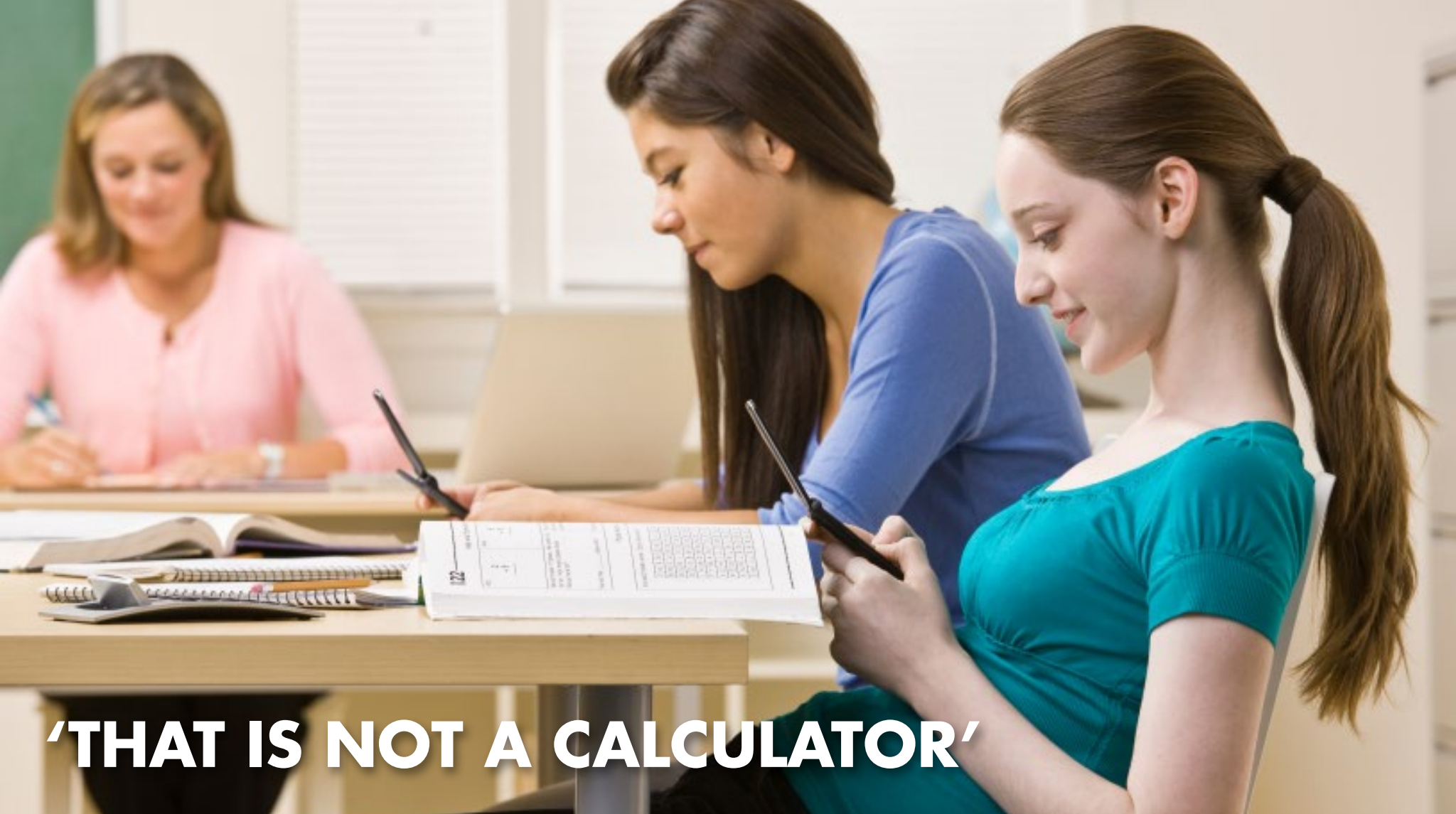
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The contest concludes when The Sarasota News Leader achieves 1,000 "Likes" on Facebook. One winner will be selected at random from among subscribers. Only subscribers are eligible to win the iPad, regardless of having "Liked" our page on Facebook. 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.





## 'THAT IS NOT A CALCULATOR'

*The Sarasota County School Board is trying to achieve a balance between the need for using electronic devices in schools and preventing misuse of such gadgets. iStockphoto*

### **SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD AMENDS ITS POLICY REGARDING STUDENTS' USE OF CELLPHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

**By Scott Proffitt**  
*Staff Writer*

The Sarasota County School Board voted unanimously on Oct. 16 to alter the district's policy regarding students' use of cellphones and other electronic devices in schools.

Technological change has altered the definition, and the very nature, of what is a computer, what is a phone and what is a calculator, making enforce-

ment and decisions regarding permitted uses all the more complex.

**“STUDENTS MAY NOT POSSESS ANY ELECTRONIC OR RECORDING DEVICE(S) AT THEIR DESK, CLIPPED TO THEIR BELT, IN THEIR POCKET, OR ANYWHERE WITHIN REACH DURING TESTING, EVEN IF THE DEVICE IS TURNED OFF OR THE STUDENT IS NOT USING IT.”**

Sarasota County School Board  
District Code of Student Conduct



Pine View School Principal Steve Largo told *The Sarasota News Leader*, “I think the revised policy is a move in the right direction. There is little question that schools will soon be faced with the challenge of integrating our students' electronic devices into our daily instruction.”



Prior to the Oct. 16 School Board meeting, the district policy regarding cellphone use was simple, as follows:

“Personal telephones or other communication devices may not be used during school hours. If personal telephones ring, vibrate, or are used during the school day, telephones will be subject to confiscation ....”

You still cannot have your friends or a parent ring you up in the middle of an algebra lesson to remind you about your violin lesson or your forgotten lunch, but things have changed.

According to the amended District Code of Student Conduct and Individual School Student Handbooks: “A student may possess electronic devices (e.g. cellular telephones, smart phones, personal digital assistant (PDA’s), laptops, and other devices designed to receive and send an electronic signal or store digital data) in school on school property, at after school activities and at school-related functions, provided that during the student day the electronic devices remain powered off and concealed from view.”

Teachers can allow students to use any of those devices within the realm of “education-

al or instructional purpose,” but the teacher must give permission and provide supervision.

Some teachers are uncomfortable with the use of these devices in the class; others welcome the activity, according to School Board discussion. The board is leaving the matter to the individual teacher.

The policy change also makes plain that usage of these gadgets is a privilege, not a right, and it can be rescinded. Additionally, the School Board also has made it clear it is not responsible for a phone that gets stolen or damaged.

With the new provision, though, comes another one in the District Code of Student Conduct:

“STUDENTS MAY NOT POSSESS ANY ELECTRONIC OR RECORDING DEVICE(S) AT THEIR DESK, CLIPPED TO THEIR BELT, IN THEIR POCKET, OR ANYWHERE WITHIN REACH DURING TESTING, EVEN IF THE DEVICE IS TURNED OFF OR THE STUDENT IS NOT USING IT. IF A STUDENT IS FOUND TO BE IN POSSESSION OF ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICE DURING TESTING, HIS OR HER TEST MUST BE INVALIDATED.”



Tonya Herschberger & Linda Keefe

*A smile happens instantly,  
its memory lasts a lifetime.*

“After a terrible accident I required surgery. Tonya shared with me that Dr. Koval was responsible for her beautiful smile. She gave me hope and direction. I’m so grateful to Dr. Koval. Now I have a smile that I love to share with everyone.”

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Tonya Herschberger & Linda Keefe

*A smile happens instantly,  
its memory lasts a lifetime.*



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for Smile Makeovers by  
the Florida Academy of  
Cosmetic Dentistry.**

Tonya was the nurse who prepped Linda for surgery after she was hit by a drunk driver while walking with her husband and their dog. In spite of her pain and the anxiety that precedes any surgical procedure, Linda gazed up at the nurse and immediately felt at ease. "You have a beautiful smile," she said. That's when Tonya shared with Linda the person responsible for her beautiful smile, Dr. Christine Koval.

For over 25 years, Dr. Koval has been one of the area's most trusted experts in creating beautiful, natural smiles using the latest advances in restorative, cosmetic, laser and general dentistry. Most new patients come to her based on referrals from people who just can't stop smiling.

Linda turned to Dr. Koval to repair her smile and jaw which was so misaligned she couldn't chew her food properly. "Tonya's comforting smile and advice gave me hope and direction," she says. "I'm so grateful to her, and of course to Dr. Koval. Now I have a smile that I love to share with everyone I meet."

For a complimentary consultation call **941.923.5406**  
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**ENHANCE YOUR SMILE. ENHANCE YOUR LIFE.**





## CITY BOARDS BEGIN SUNSHINE REMEDIAL EDUCATION

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

Tuesday, Oct. 23, was “to the woodshed day” for the advisory boards of the City of Sarasota. A rash of Sunshine Law problems erupted this year, each costing the city thousands of dollars.

One recent case was settled earlier this month for twice the original estimate. When an ad hoc arts committee – meeting without public notice and keeping few minutes – was challenged by an attorney, the parties agreed to settle for \$5,000 in lawyers’ fees.

However, a city commissioner said the sum should be paid from the public art fund, and he further suggested abolishing the public art

committee (not the offending group, but the whistleblower instead). More turmoil erupted before the case was settled for \$10,000.

The Civil Service Board members talked out of the Sunshine about a controversial case, and that cost \$50,000 in lawyers’ fees, and the Downtown Improvement District is embroiled in an erased email issue.

In an effort to staunch the bleeding, City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini is holding two re-education sessions for all the city’s advisory boards and the staffers who serve as liaisons with them. The second class will be on Oct. 29.



At the Tuesday session, there were 46 attendees' names on the sign-up sheet and 61 people in the room. The session was led by Karen

McGowen, the deputy clerk and auditor, with Nadalini in her usual seat at the dais.



*Members of city advisory boards attend remedial training in Florida's Open Meetings and Public Records laws. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



# CHARTER CHANGERS



*City Hall has plenty of shade on one side of its First Street location. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## CALL THIS ONE THE 'HOUSEKEEPING HEADACHE'

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

State law forbids any constitutional amendment from covering more than one topic. However, changes in city and county charters are exempt from that, which leads to sometimes agonizing choices as multiple issues are crammed into one yes-or-no question.

Do you hold your nose and vote for something that is four-fifths excellent and one-fifth awful? And what if there are 17 different suggestions leading up to your single yes or no?

This type of convoluted situation is one of your choices on Nov. 6, and it is called the "General Recommendations" amendment. Among members of the City of Sarasota's

Charter Review Committee, this was dubbed "the housekeeping amendment."

It was proposed by the committee after a call went out to all city departments. Is there something they needed fixed, clarified or amended in the city's charter? A bunch of ideas came back, and 17 were approved by the committee and eventually by the City Commission for inclusion on the ballot as a single question with one up-or-down decision by voters.

This city charter amendment deals with vacancies, redistricting, how to conduct a special election, residency requirements, how to call an emergency meeting, deletion of a notice concerning the annual financial report,



clarification of when a “supermajority” vote is required, appointments to advisory boards, revision of the city clerk’s duties, review of contracts by the city attorney, deletion of “unnecessary verbiage” in a couple of places, details on campaign treasurer reporting times, and establishment of a municipal canvassing board for city elections. Yes or no? It also deletes the requirement for an annual “State of the City” address by the mayor.

Now you understand why state constitutional amendments are limited to a single topic.

I do not have the patience to go through each of the 17 items, nor, I expect, do you, unless you are a fine details person. The chairman of the charter committee admitted it probably was a mistake to jam all these issues into one ballot question. You may read the [enabling ordinance](#) — 11-4973 — and a copy of the city’s charter with all the proposed changes in underline-and-strikeout format. Comb through it as finely as you like.

At least one of these 17 proposals sneaked under the committee’s radar — and the City Commission’s, too. It would allow insurance to take the place of a bonding requirement for city charter and senior financial officials. Nobody remembers approving this particular item for the amendment.

The charter today requires the city manager, city auditor and clerk, city finance director and the city attorney (if that person is a city employee) all to hold surety bonds for proper performance of duties. Neither the charter board nor the City Commission was told



*City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini listens as City Attorney Robert Fournier speaks to the City Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

that, since her appointment, City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini has been unable to obtain a surety bond. This amendment would relax that requirement and allow her to be covered by insurance.

The measure was approved by the charter board and City Commission before *The Sarasota News Leader* broke the news Nadalini was not bonded, as required by the charter.

Voters who put full faith and credit in the work of the Sarasota City Charter Review Committee will accept the need for these 17 changes in the city charter and vote for the “General Recommendations” amendment.

Voters who would like to know more about the details and implications of these 17 different changes will vote against the amendment, hoping if the changes are important enough, they will return in better form on a subsequent ballot.







## BRIDGING THE VOTER GAP

*Supporters of Sarasota Democratic congressional candidate Keith Fitzgerald make their views known, too.*

## OBAMA-BIDEN SUPPORTERS TAKE THEIR MESSAGE TO THE BAYFRONT AND RINGLING BRIDGE TO BOOST THE DEMOCRATS' FLORIDA SUPPORT

### *Staff Reports*

Their numbers might not quite have matched the 2008 count of almost 8,000, but about 3,500 supporters of President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden gathered at the Sarasota bayfront on Saturday, Oct. 20, for a noon rally followed by a walk over the Ringling Bridge.

The event was sponsored by Grassroots America — Forward Obama/Biden.

Supporters emphasized a positive focus for the rally, encouraging participants to leave anti-Republican signs at home.







*Gathering in the area where the “Unconditional Surrender” statue normally stands, the Obama-Biden supporters prepare to head to the bridge.*





*Holding up their signs in Bayfront Park and along U.S. 41, Obama-Biden backers tout their candidates.*





*Prior to the Bridge Walk, supporters of President Obama gather for a rally on the bayfront.*





*Rally participants take to the Ringling Bridge. Photos by Norman Schimmel*





*Even voters-to-be let their voices be heard.*





*Among the cast members during the 2011 performance of *Thriller* on St. Armands Circle were Sarasota High School students Alyssa Holcomb (left) and Alyssa Fenton. Contributed photo*

## **SARASOTA HIGH STUDENTS PLAN FOURTH ANNUAL *THRILLER* PERFORMANCE**

For the fourth consecutive year, Sarasota High School students will perform the elaborate choreography of *Thriller*, the macabre song and dance created by the late Michael Jackson.

As in previous years, the students will stage the dance live on St. Armands Circle on Halloween night, Oct. 31, a Sarasota County Schools news release says.


On Oct. 18, 200 students tried out for a panel of judges at the high school. Fifty were chosen for the cast, the release adds.

On Wednesday, Oct. 31, the students will spend hours in makeup and costume preparation, with the help of SHS parents and alum-

ni members, the release says. Then they will head to St. Armands Circle. At 6:30 p.m. they will do a “zombie walk,” the release notes, “luring unsuspecting tourists and locals to the park in the center of the circle,” where they will perform Jackson’s *Thriller* dance at 8 p.m.

“This has become such a huge annual event on St. Armands,” said Melissa Dweck, drama teacher at SHS, in the news release. “Last year more than 3,000 spectators followed us to the Circle. The event has become so popular that we have organizations and places calling us from out in the community, asking us if we would be at their Halloween event.”



A close-up photograph of two young women dressed as zombies. The woman on the left has pale, greyish-purple face paint, dark eye makeup, and red paint smeared around her mouth and eyes. She is wearing a brown jacket. The woman on the right has dark green face paint, dark eye makeup, and red paint smeared around her mouth and eyes. She has a large, dark, curly wig and is wearing a purple top. Both women are looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

“The *Thriller* event is not easy,” said SHS senior Brenna Griffith in the news release. “We practice a lot, our makeup takes hours and we can’t be out in the heat before show time. But once the night is here and the crowds are cheering for us, there’s nothing more amazing than being at the center of St. Armands Circle dancing to *Thriller*.”

(From left) Jennifer Carrera and Sophie Antovel of Sarasota High School scare up their best zombie impressions during the 2011 Thriller dance on St. Armands Circle. Contributed photo



## **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP TO BE HELD OCT. 30**

The Sarasota County Sustainable Communities Workshop will be held from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 30, at the Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida Event and Conference Center, 4740 Cattlemen Road, Sarasota, the county has announced.

Because seating is limited, advance registration is required.

This year's theme for the interactive workshop is "Innovation for the Future," a county news release says. The workshop will focus on resources and strategies that can benefit communities through innovative thinking and better products, processes and business models.

"Innovations are not restricted to just technology," said Nina Powers from Sustainable Sarasota in the news release. "By just changing the way we look at products, processes and design, transformation is possible."

Workshop sessions have been scheduled on the following topics: Green Building, Low-Impact Development, Green Infrastructure, Electric Vehicles, Business Sustainability, Local Food Entrepreneurs and Improved Health.

The Lexicon of Sustainability, a traveling exhibit that features the latest examples of sustainability in the world of food and farming, also will be featured, the news release says.

The cost of the workshop is \$30 for professionals and the general public; participants with a student ID will pay a special rate of \$20. The cost includes a continental breakfast, lunch and afternoon refreshments.

In advance of the workshop, the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce will host the second Green Business Roundtable from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 29, at Gold Coast Eagle Distributing, 7051 Wireless Court, Sarasota.

"Local business sustainability heroes will share valuable insights into their sustainability journeys," the news release says.

The chamber is offering a special combo ticket for attending both events. For more information on the Green Business Roundtable, visit [www.sarasotachamber.com/events](http://www.sarasotachamber.com/events).

To register or obtain more information, including sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities, visit [www.scgov.net/SustainableCommunities](http://www.scgov.net/SustainableCommunities) or contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

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## **DRAINAGE WORK TO CLOSE PART OF ORANGE AVENUE**

Orange Avenue between 10th Way and 12th Street will be closed from Monday, Oct. 29, until Friday, Dec. 21, to facilitate a drainage improvement, the City of Sarasota has announced.

As part of the project, a water line will be replaced under the railroad tracks at 11th Street; that work will necessitate the closure.

Motorists should follow the detour signs, a news release says.



## NORTH SARASOTA LIBRARY TO CELEBRATE 8TH ANNIVERSARY

The North Sarasota Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd., Sarasota, will celebrate its eighth anniversary from 4 to 5 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 30, with a performance by the Booker Middle School Visual and Performing Arts students.

In addition to celebrating the anniversary of Sarasota County's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified library, members of the public are invited to share their memories of the former library manager, Yvette Robison, who recently passed away, a county news release says.

"Yvette was a very special person with a vision for enriching the lives of everyone who came through the doors of the library, especially the

children," said Sarasota County Library System General Manager Sarabeth Kalajian in the news release. "Her impact on the library and the community will never be forgotten."

Robison created the "I-Zone," a program based on intelligence, integrity and inspiration, the news release points out.

Light refreshments, including birthday cake, will be served following the performance. Admission to the event is free.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000, or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).

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## VENICE COMMUNITY CLEANUP WILL BE HELD OCT. 27

Sarasota County will hold its annual free community cleanup in the Venice area from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 27, the county has announced.

Dumpsters provided by Waste Management will be available at three locations for residents to use in disposing of refuse:

- South Venice Community Center, 720 Alligator Drive.
- South Venice Ferry Landing, 2000 block of Lemon Bay Drive.
- Seaboard Drive near Orange Street.

Residents may dispose of household items, scrap materials, garbage, unbundled yard waste and tree trimmings during this free

event. 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, a county news release says.

Hazardous waste such as paint and pesticides, as well as auto parts, electronics, televisions and computers, 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 Venice community cleanup.



## CHALK FESTIVAL OPENS OCT. 28 IN BURNS SQUARE

The 2012 Sarasota Chalk Festival will be a 10-day cultural event featuring the art form of street painting, with artists using “the pavement as their canvas and pastel chalk as their medium,” according to the festival website (<https://chalkfestival.org>).

Festivities will run from Oct. 28 through Nov. 6, with the main activities occurring Nov. 1-5.

The festival will feature two stages for musical performances along with a performance stage to showcase not only musical acts but also drama, dance and acrobatic and aerial performances.

“The festival is as raw as it gets to feeling and seeing an Outdoor Museum in Motion as fine artists take to their hands and knees for

days, recreating old master paintings, original works of art and 3D compositions right before our eyes,” says Artistic Director and Event Chairwoman Denise Kowal on the website.

This year’s festival is turning to the circus for inspiration with the theme, *Circus City: USA*.

The website notes the event “aims to bring people back to a time when residents would glow with anticipation as the trains rolled into town carrying circus families from around the world, along with their elaborate costumes, massive tents, and exciting props with which to practice their fearless acts.”

Located in and around Burns Square in downtown Sarasota, the festival is free for all to participate in and attend.



*Yes, international stars are coming to the Chalk Festival, but kids get to participate, too. Here are a few of the hundreds and hundreds of squares children created during the 2011 event. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



## CITY TO HOST MOBILITY WORKSHOP ON NOV. 1

The public is invited to attend a workshop on citywide mobility scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 1, at the SRQ Studio in the Sarasota City Hall Annex, 1565 First St.

Two sessions are planned: 4 to 5:30 p.m. and 6 to 7:30 p.m. Interested persons should plan to attend one session or the other and offer comments, a city news release says.

The workshop will feature discussions regarding the ease of mobility for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit within Sarasota and the surrounding region, the news release notes. "Your input will help guide future transportation policy updates," it adds.

"City planners have recognized the need to tie land use and mobility together as a way to encourage desired redevelopment in targeted areas," the release points out.

Components of a mobility plan would include a downtown circulator assessment, a financing strategy, a strategy to identify specific areas where land use can support multimodal travel and an assessment of complete streets (roadways which can accommodate bicycles, pedestrians and transit).

More information may be found at [www.Lets-GetMovingSarasota.com](http://www.Lets-GetMovingSarasota.com).

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## FLOWER-ARRANGING EXHIBIT/CLASS OFFERED AT REDEEMER

The Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, will offer a special morning of flower arranging on Saturday, Nov. 3, beginning at 9 a.m.

The public is invited to attend "The Ministry of Flowers — A Spiritual Exhibit and Learning Experience" and learn more about the integral role floral arrangements can play in the spiritual experience of attending church, a news release says.

"Redeemer has long been known for the beauty of the floral decorations that grace its altars every week, and is especially known for the stunning arrangements made during Easter and Christmas," the news release says.

The Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson, the church rector, will welcome attendees with a message "on how the reverential arrangement of flowers can inspire worship, serve as remind-

ers of the love and spirit of Jesus Christ, and enhance the experience of the congregation as a whole," the release adds.

The Saturday morning event will take place in Gillespie Hall at the church, featuring demonstrations of flower arranging by members of the Altar Guild Flower Committee. Julie Eisele, committee chairwoman, will discuss each arrangement as it is being made, offering behind-the-scenes secrets to arranging flowers "Redeemer style."

Among the topics to be covered will be seasonal design and "rules"; the relationship between church liturgy and flower arrangements; the mechanics of making arrangements "work"; and tricks of the trade learned through the committee's years of service. [A video \(with no sound\) shows committee members in action arranging flowers in the church.](#) The morning will begin with registration and a continental



breakfast served at 9 a.m. Demonstrations by members of the Flower Guild Altar Committee will begin at 9:45 a.m. and continue through 11:30 a.m.

The finale will be a tour of the church nave, which will still be “dressed” with the floral arrangements installed for the celebration of All Saints’ Day (Nov. 1).

A luncheon in Gillespie Hall will follow.

The cost of this event is \$15, which includes breakfast and lunch. Seating is limited; to reserve a spot, contact the Parish Office at 955-4263.

For more information about the Church of the Redeemer, visit [www.redeemersarasota.org](http://www.redeemersarasota.org).



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## SBEP OFFERS FREE GUIDED KAYAK TRIPS ON SARASOTA BAY

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program has scheduled 10 free guided kayak excursions on Sarasota Bay from December through April.

The first two trips are to Neal Preserve on Saturday, Dec. 1, and Saturday, Dec. 15. Neal Preserve is located in Manatee County. All of the SBEP kayak excursions require online registration at [sarasotabay.org](http://sarasotabay.org).

“The SBEP Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program is a fun learning opportunity to discover the plants, animals, habitats, and restoration projects that distinguish Sarasota Bay,” a program news release says. Brad Tanner, a professional guide and the school programs coordinator for Mote Marine Laboratory, is the kayak tour

leader. He is also a member of the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee.

Additional trips are planned for Leffis and Jewfish Key (Jan. 5 and Jan. 19, 2013), Lido Mangrove Tunnels (Feb. 2 and Feb. 16), Blind Pass (March 2 and March 16) and Lyons Bay and Blackburn Bay (April 6 and April 20). More information and online registration is available at [sarasotabay.org](http://sarasotabay.org).

Participants are required to bring their own kayaks and gear. Outfitters throughout the region rent kayaks and offer demonstrations and beginner classes, the release points out. The Bay Wise Kayak Tour Program is for experienced kayakers.



Area students learning about kayaking at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota. Contributed photo



## COALITION TO HOST 'A TOAST TO DR. WASHINGTON HILL'

When most people retire, they look forward to a break from their exhausting work schedules. Dr. Washington Hill is not “most people.”

After an extensive career in perinatology, Hill plans to retire from his Sarasota high-risk obstetrics practice in January, according to a news release. Afterward, he will join his wife, Pauline, in Rwanda, where they will continue their mission to improve the health and well-being of pregnant women, infants and young children by helping to set up a hospital and by teaching doctors and nurses to provide quality care under the aegis of the Duke University School of Nursing, the news release says.

Hill shares this mission with The Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County, a nonprofit organization with which he has worked closely over the years as an advocate, supporter and executive board member.

On Thursday Nov. 1, the Healthy Start executive board will honor Hill with “A Toast to Dr. Washington Hill” at Michael’s on East in Sarasota. “The event will be a ‘special delivery’ of gratitude for his service to mothers and infants in our community,” the release adds.

Tickets begin at \$85; the cost includes a cash bar cocktail hour and a meal with wine selected by Michael’s on East. Live entertainment will be provided by Nate Jacobs and a guest from the Westcoast Black Theater Troupe.

Proceeds will benefit The Healthy Start Coalition, whose services include childbirth education, breastfeeding support, smoking cessation, psychosocial counseling and more for Sarasota’s at-risk families. Hill “was instrumental last year in advocating for the Coalition’s Save My Life program, a childbirth and parenting education program centered in the Newtown area, the release says.

The Save My Life Program offers small-group and individual classes on the importance of health during childbearing years and pregnancy, stress reduction, childbirth education, breastfeeding education, in-home support for breastfeeding, and safe sleep practices for infants. The only African-American childbirth educator in Sarasota County, Beverly Phelps, offers outreach efforts, education and classes, the release points out.

Tickets, sponsorship and toasting opportunities are available at [healthystartsarasota.org/toastdrhill](http://healthystartsarasota.org/toastdrhill) or by calling 373-7070.

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## CORRECTION AND CLARIFICATION

The article, “Lewis’ legacy,” in the Oct. 19 edition incorrectly said Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin came from a city in Illinois that was one-fifth the size of Sarasota. That city, Oak Park, is about the same size as Sarasota.

The caption with the lead photo for the Oct. 19 story, “Letting it all out,” implied that the

photo was taken in Venice at the joint meeting of the Sarasota County Commission and the Venice City Council on Oct. 16. The photo was taken at an earlier County Commission meeting in Sarasota.



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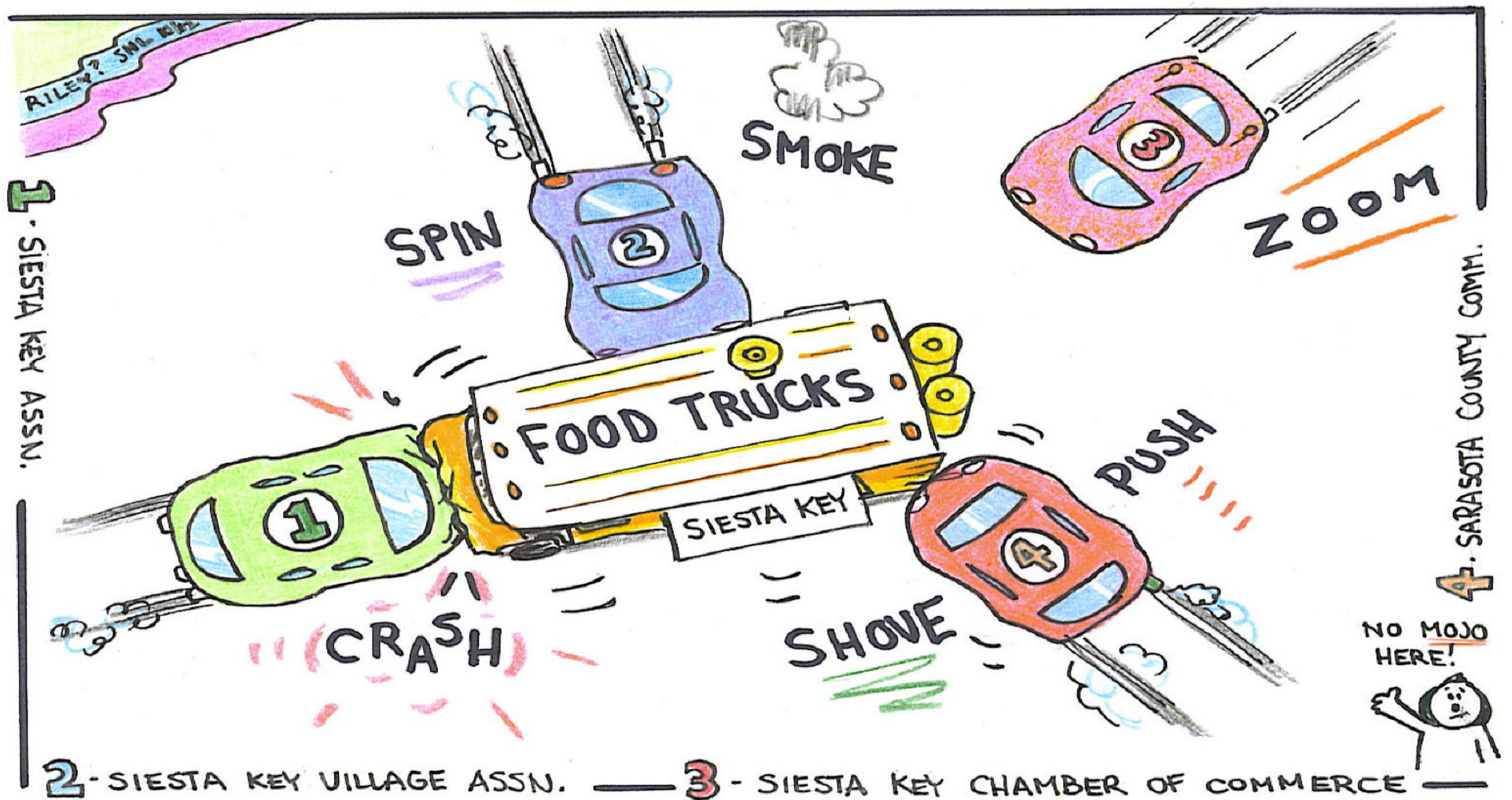
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# OPINION



## THE SARASOTA NEWS LEADER VOTERS' GUIDE

**THE SARASOTA NEWS LEADER ENCOURAGES VOTERS TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IN CASTING THEIR BALLOTS ON TUESDAY, NOV. 6:**

### EDITORIAL

President of the United States - **Barack Obama**

U.S. Senate, Florida - **Bill Nelson**

U.S. House of Representatives, District 16 - **Keith Fitzgerald**

Florida State Representative, District 71 - **Adam Tebrugge**

Florida State Representative, District 72 - **Liz Alpert**

Florida State Attorney, 12th Judicial Circuit - **John Torraco**

Sarasota Charter Review Board, District 2 - **Donna Barcomb**

Hospital Board, Central, Seat 1 - **Teresa Carafelli**



# OPINION

## RETAIN SUPREME COURT JUSTICES AND APPEALS COURT JUDGES:

Retain Justice R. Fred Lewis - **YES**

Retain Justice Barbara J. Pariente - **YES**

Retain Justice Peggy A. Quince - **YES**

Retain Judge Anthony K. Black - **YES**

Retain Judge Darryl C. Casanueva - **YES**

Retain Judge Charles A. David, Jr. - **YES**

Retain Judge Edward C. LaRose - **YES**

## STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS:

Amendment 1 - **NO**

Amendment 2 - **NO**

Amendment 3 - **NO**

Amendment 4 - **NO**

Amendment 5 - **NO**

Amendment 6 - **NO**

Amendment 8 - **NO**

Amendment 9 - **NO**

Amendment 10 - **NO**

Amendment 11 - **NO**

Amendment 12 - **NO**

## SARASOTA COUNTY AMENDMENTS

Sarasota County Charter Amendment - **YES**

## CITY OF SARASOTA CHARTER AMENDMENTS:

Amendment 1, Supermajority vote for certain transactions - **YES**

Amendment 2, Charter Review Committee General Recommendations - **NO**

Amendment 3, Derivatives prohibition - **YES**

Amendment 4, No certificates of participation without referendum - **YES**

Amendment 5, Deletion of alternate minimum wage - **YES**

Amendment 6, Citizen's Initiative Petition, extension of time - **YES**

Amendment 7, Split office of "City Auditor and Clerk" - **NO**

**Note to readers:** For an explanation of these recommendations, please [click here](#).



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



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# OPINION

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## **CONSIDER BECOMING A FRIEND AT A SARASOTA COUNTY LIBRARY**



**By Mary Byrd**  
*Guest Columnist*

The week of Oct. 21 has been cause for a celebration! It has been National Friends of the Library Week, an opportunity to showcase the enormous contributions of our energetic, dedicated Sarasota County Library volunteers.

We applaud the 2,300 Friends' members who donated more than 96,000 hours of their time to our libraries in 2011. Our library system simply could not survive without them!

Each of the nine Sarasota County libraries has established Friends organizations, and each of those is a separate nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, working in concert with our library system and the community.

The Friends organizations are dedicated to raising private money and increasing public awareness to support our libraries. Funds are raised by sales of gently used books in the Friends' bookshops; membership dues and donations; and special events. The Friends use their funds to support programs for children and adults; to purchase books, e-books and new technology; and to provide enhancements for which public funds are not available.

Are there other benefits to the libraries besides money that Friends provide? Absolutely.

Friends are called "Friends" for a very good reason. The best libraries in the country have

tremendous community support. When our libraries work actively with Friends, powerful library advocates are grown. No one knows better than a Friend that strong libraries enhance the quality of life in our community and create a positive legacy for future generations.

We are very lucky to have such an outstanding library system. The Florida Library Association recognized it as 2012 Library of the Year for its innovation and commitment to customer service.

The Friends play a vital role in defining the library excellence that we all can enjoy.

Libraries need Friends now, more than ever. In this challenging economy, county library funding has decreased while usage and demand has increased – including 20,000 new library cardholders last year. The Friends have been critical in helping our libraries weather these tough times. Volunteer hours were valued at almost \$2 million in 2011 for services not funded by our tax dollars. Along with library staff, the Friends are the backbone of our library system.

Whether you are a library user or simply a supporter of public libraries as a part of a strong community, this is a good time to consider joining the Friends group at your local library. Stop by your nearest Friends bookstore or visit [www.sclibs.net](http://www.sclibs.net) and click on "Friends." A fun and interesting Friends world awaits you.



# Sarasota Leisure



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*Inside*

**ROCKING OUT**

**WORLD CHAMPS AGAIN**



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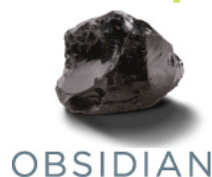
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**THE SARASOTA**  
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**SCENE**







## ROCKING OUT

*(From left) Doug Conroy of Ukemelee, WSLR Station Manager Arlene Sweeting and Isaiah Beaton, among others, greeted attendees at the information booth throughout the afternoon. Photos by Tyler Whitson and Arielle Scherr*

## FIFTH ANNUAL WSLR BEACH BASH CELEBRATES THE ROLE OF SUPPORTERS IN COMMUNITY RADIO

**By Tyler Whitson**  
*Contributing Writer*

On Sunday, Oct. 14, droves of WSLR programmers, volunteers and supporters slipped into flip-flops, donned sunglasses and made their way to the Siesta Key Public Beach with Tupperware containers full of delicious fixings for the community radio station's fifth annual Beach Bash party, potluck and concert.

Those at the event, which started around 3:30 p.m., were treated to live performances by a

number of local musical artists throughout the afternoon, as the smell of burgers, hot dogs and vegetarian grillables wafted through the temperate air. DJ Haile Burke queued up funky, easygoing reggae and dub tracks to get the beach party vibes flowing while equipment was set up for the live performances of the afternoon.

Become a member today - CALL (941) 894-6469

**WSLR 96.5 LPFM**  
**SARASOTA COMMUNITY RADIO**





Ukemelee took to the stage first, playing Hawaiian-style ukulele covers of pop and alternative rock songs, including “Wave of Mutilation” by the Pixies, “Istanbul (Not Constantinople),” most famously recorded by They Might Be Giants and the celebrated “Over the Rainbow” from the soundtrack to the *Wizard of Oz*. After another short set from DJ Haile Burke, Villanova Junction brought the evening to an epic close with the band members’ driving mix of blues and psychedelic rock, inspiring

many audience members to seize the day and groove in the sunset.

Although mostly everyone at the Beach Bash was enjoying a languid, relaxed afternoon surrounded by peers, music and a smorgasbord of diverse dishes, that was not the only reason they were there. Patricia, an attendee of the event who preferred to go simply by her first name, told *The Sarasota News Leader* that leisure was not her primary goal that afternoon.



*WSLR volunteers and supporters see the Beach Bash as an opportunity to bond and discuss important issues.*



“I want to support WSLR. ... I believe in community radio,” she said. “Most of the shows are hosted by volunteers, and that, to me, says a lot about a community, where they give up their own time to do a show. They’re a very open-minded kind of people,” she continued. “I just think it’s really cool for everybody in Sarasota. It’s wonderful and it’s a good thing!”

Enthusiastic attendees such as Patricia had the opportunity at the Beach Bash to show their support for WSLR by donating to the station or signing up to be citizen reporters, music library catalogers, programmers or general volunteers, as many in the crowd had already done.

Eve Prang Plews, veteran volunteer and host of the show, “No Nonsense Nutrition” on WSLR, was enjoying a well-deserved reward for all of the hard work she has been putting into the station over the years.

“I’m part of the WSLR family,” she told the *News Leader* with a wide smile on Sunday, before explaining why she feels so passionately about the station. “We have to have a voice for community radio. There’s no local [radio] news except for WSLR, and there aren’t places to put out independent opinion,” she explained, stressing the fact that the station does not influence what the programmers say, as often occurs in commercial radio.



*Patricia says she appreciates the fact that WSLR programmers and volunteers are so open and welcoming of people with diverse opinions and viewpoints.*



WSLR Station Manager Arlene Sweeting was very happy with the way the event turned out and the fact that so many people had a pleasant time. She told the *News Leader* on Oct. 17 that positive bonding is what the Beach Bash is really all about, explaining that “it’s kind of a point of connection for people, to have a chance to get together live and in person rather than just on the airwaves.”

It can also be a reminder to those living in the community of what Sarasota really has to offer its residents, Sweeting continued. “You know we live in this area and we tend not to take advantage of the resources that are here, so we often only get to the beach that one time a year.”

Aside from bringing together people who share a similar passion, the Beach Bash was a celebration of the fact that WSLR recently



[Click to see more photos of Ukemelee at the Beach Bash](#)

*Ukemelee's Hawaiian-influenced style gives the Beach Bash a luau-like atmosphere.*



succeeded in reaching its 2012 Fall Membership Drive goal of \$30,000. The event was a means of thanking supporters, volunteers and listeners for giving of themselves to the station over the years.

Although WSLR will not be throwing another Beach Bash until next year, it does have a number of events planned in the near future. The Two Man Gentleman Band will be performing on Sunday, Oct. 28; the Bilderberg

Jazz Arkestra will be performing on Tuesday, Oct. 30 and the Dirty Bourbon River Show will be performing on Friday, Nov. 2. All of these events will be taking place in the event space behind the WSLR studio, located at 525 Kumquat Court.

Tickets are available at WSLR's website, [www.wslr.org](http://www.wslr.org) and will also be available at the door at the time of each event.



*Villanova Junction's upbeat, cathartic performance contrasts well with the evening's idyllic sunset.*



# WORLD CHAMPS AGAIN



*Steve and Kim Kildahl are in their Scott Free Racing Team garb as they show off their world championship trophy and checkered flag. Son Steven was attending school. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

## LOCAL FATHER AND SON TAKE ANOTHER POWERBOAT TITLE

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

Offshore powerboat racers Steve and Stephen Kildahl are adding another offshore powerboat racing world championship to their trophy mantel. This one came in Jupiter under the auspices of OPRA, the Offshore Powerboat Association.

Steve and Stephen are father and son. Steve runs a boat maintenance and repair facility on Central Avenue; Stephen is a college student. The younger Kildahl has been racing since he was 16, with his license granted under an exception; under normal circumstances, he would not be able to get it until he turned 18.

Because there are two sanctioning agencies, there are actually two world championships

each year. The second is held by Super Boat International, the group behind Sarasota's annual July Fourth Grand Prix. The Kildahls came in third in that race this year, their second outing in a new boat.

The two organizations run separate slates of races. The final race of the year – independent of how the results were up to then – is considered the world championship. In a field of six on Oct. 21, the Racing Kildahls racked up another world championship. It is the fourth for Steve and the second for 21-year-old Stephen.

Both men have been racing since they were kids.



"I began to crew with my dad when I was 14 and 15, driving the boat during testing," Stephen said.

The older Kildahl said of his early days on the water, "We used to terrorize Sarasota bay when I was a kid."

Their teamwork paid off in Jupiter last weekend when the pair won the Super V Lite class in a 30-foot Phantom. Next up is the final Super Boat International world championship

race in Key West during festivities set for Nov. 4-11.

Throughout all the events, Steve's wife Kim stands by with logistical support.

Offshore powerboat racing is a grueling and dangerous sport. Last year in Key West, Bradenton Racer Joey Gratton was killed, the third fatality in three days of competition.



*Sarasota fans always turn out in large numbers to see powerboats like the ones the Kildahls race. People line Main Street each summer for the boat parade hosted by the Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix before the big race in the bay. Photo by Norman Schimmel*





## ASK OTUS

**SOME SUBTERFUGE IS IN ORDER  
SO OTUS CAN ENJOY A CELERY  
FIELDS VISIT WITHOUT BECOMING  
MORE THAN HIS HOSTESS' GUEST**

Dear Readers,

I have received a Halloween invitation to fly the friendly skies of the Celery Fields. I am torn between elation and trepidation.

My hostess is Belle, the Celery Fields Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). Her name means "beautiful" in French. And she is beautiful, if you go for the zaftig, bleached-blonde type with a raspy

*Come fly the friendly  
Skies of*

*Celery Fields*



voice that makes Tom Waits sound liltingly ariose.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) goes for Belle in a big way. Its staff members wax poetic over her “white heart-shaped face” and “velvety feathers with soft fringes” that allow her to silently approach her prey. In sensuously provocative purple prose they pay tribute to her spectral appearance, particularly the “ghostly look of her whitish under parts.”

In fact, USDA staff members are so smitten by the Barn Owl that they urge farmers everywhere to build owl boxes. [They even provide housing blueprints!](#)

These owl boxes are not limited to placement in the countryside. Using the USDA blueprints, the city of Davis, CA, erected several in-town pieds-à-terre to attract Barn Owls.

Why the rapture? Belle is a natural born killing machine. She and her extended family can control acres upon acres of farmland rodents, as well as those in urban areas. She feasts upon field mice, voles, rats, gophers, ground squirrels, etc., and she does all of this in the dead of night! Yes, Belle is a strictly nocturnal huntress and she is the only owl that can capture prey in total darkness.

No animal can see in pitch black, of course. But Belle’s hearing is so acute that while on her perch and in flight, each of her ears registers a different sound of a mouse rustling

in the grass while her brain simultaneously calculates the exact path to the mouse based on auditory biangulation. She is a deadly accurate huntress.

We all understand loss of habitat. Neighborhoods develop and expand; land is cleared for farming. It’s out with the old growth, in with the new. In Belle’s case, however, a very important natural home for Barn Owls is slowly being eradicated. It is that old dead tree so teeming with wildlife. Those old dead trees that stood in yards, fields and national parks, are quickly disappearing. In parks, they are removed before they fall on visitors. On private property, removal is for aesthetic as well as safety reasons. But Belle requires a high perch from which to survey her vast hunting grounds.

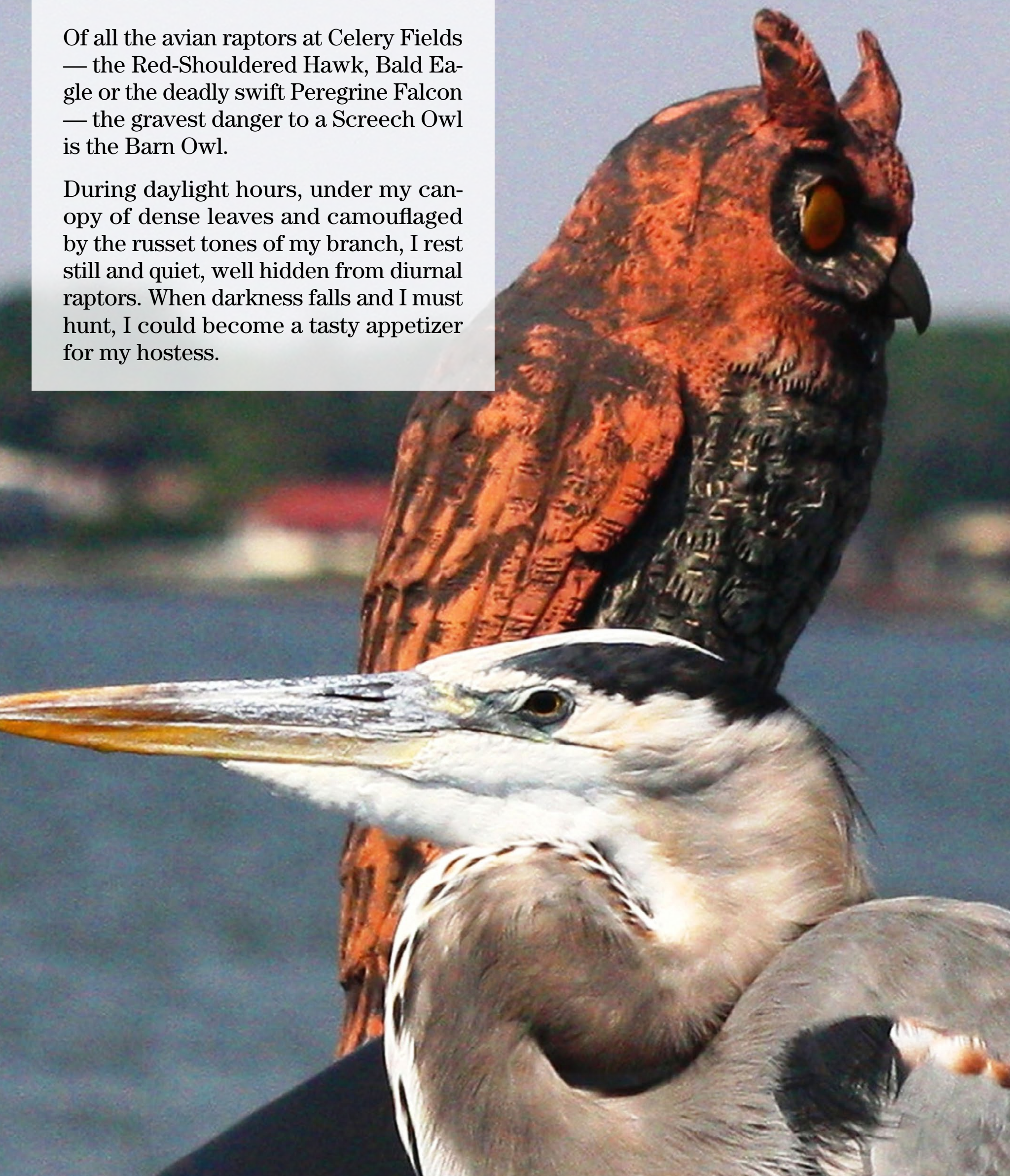
Readers, when you remove that eyesore tree, please consider replacing it with a villa for the beneficial Barn Owl. But NOT on Siesta Key! Why? Did I mention that Barn Owls also eat smaller owls like me? No? Well, neither did USDA. The **friendly** skies of the Celery Fields? My tail feathers!

Before USDA invented the barn, Barn Owls were known by many other names: Ghost-, Hobgoblin-, Death- and my personal favorite ... Monkey-Faced Owl. Every night is Halloween for Belle and family! USDA’s favorite name is “the Cat with Wings.” That makes me shudder.



Of all the avian raptors at Celery Fields — the Red-Shouldered Hawk, Bald Eagle or the deadly swift Peregrine Falcon — the gravest danger to a Screech Owl is the Barn Owl.

During daylight hours, under my canopy of dense leaves and camouflaged by the russet tones of my branch, I rest still and quiet, well hidden from diurnal raptors. When darkness falls and I must hunt, I could become a tasty appetizer for my hostess.



*Otus' Exhibit A is proof that owl statues attract more birds, such as this Blue Heron. File photo*



But I have a plan to circumvent Belle and her kin; a plan so cunning you could put a beak on it and call it an Eastern Screech-Owl.

Please meet my Trojan owl, Nebougepas. That's French for "Don't move!" And she doesn't! I plan to introduce her in the dead of night into the Celery Fields.

You see, for years I have watched humans seemingly willy-nilly placing statues of the Great Horned Owl all over the place: on rooftops, balconies, fence posts, but mostly on docks and piers. There is not a bird on earth who does not fear the Great Horned Owl. Even the American Bald Eagle is hard-pressed to defend its nest from that bully owl's attack. So I concluded that humans were trying to repel birds with these statues: I was wrong and

I'm big enough to admit it. The owl statues actually attract birds. They act like magnets!

Readers, please see exhibit A. It is my only exhibit because it proves my only point: People erect human statues such as "Unconditional Surrender" to attract more people; therefore, people erect owl statues to attract more birds.

Nebougepas will magnetize Belle and family, allowing me ample time to explore and enjoy Celery Fields with elation and without trepidation. What a lovely Halloween trick on Belle and what a treat for me!

Dear Belle,

It is with great pleasure that I accept your kind invitation to come fly the friendly skies of Celery Fields ....

*Otus*



### **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](mailto:askotus@sarasotanewsleader.com). Thank you.*

*'Nebougepas' is part of Otus' plan to keep himself safe from Belle at the Celery Fields. File photo*





## FOR HIS NEXT ACT ...

*Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson addresses Nik Wallenda during the Oct. 19 festivities at Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport as Pedro Reis, Circus Sarasota CEO (right), stands on the sidelines. Photo by Suzanne Willis*

## AERIALIST NIK WALLEDA RETURNS TO SARASOTA WITH PROMISES OF FUTURE FEATS OF WONDER

### *Staff Reports*

After a summer of travel, Circus Sarasota superstar Nik Wallenda returned to Sarasota on Oct. 19.

During a ceremony at Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell and Sarasota County Commission Chairwoman Christine Robinson recognized Wallenda for his latest feat — a cable walk across Niagara Falls in mid-June, the first time that high-wire act ever had been performed.

After some practice with the assistance of Circus Sarasota clowns, Robinson even performed a joint “low high-wire act” to present Wallenda with a county proclamation recognizing Oct. 19 as Nik Wallenda Day.

Pedro Reis, co-founder and CEO of Circus Sarasota, announced that Wallenda once again would be the star of the circus’ winter season performances at the Big Top adjacent to Ed Smith Stadium.

Rounding out the ceremonies, Atwell, on behalf of Circus Sarasota, presented Wallenda with a framed photo taken of him during his February 2010 walk across a high wire between the One Watergate condominium tower and the Sarasota Ritz-Carlton on the bayfront. The photo was shot by *Sarasota News Leader* photographer Norman Schimmel.







*Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson practices walking on a 'low wire' with the assistance of two Circus Sarasota clowns. Photo by Suzanne Willis*





*Fans gather in the baggage claim area of SRQ as they await Nik Wallenda's appearance. Photo by Suzanne Willis*





*Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell (at the podium) addresses Nik Wallenda (right) as Sarasota News Leader photographer Norman Schimmel (second from left); Dolly Jacobs-Reis, co-founder of Circus Sarasota; and Pedro Reis, co-founder and CEO of Circus Sarasota (second from right), join in the ceremony. Photo by Suzanne Willis*



*Norman Schimmel (second from left) waits with the framed photograph of Wallenda taken during the aerialist's One Watergate/Ritz-Carlton high-wire walk in February 2010. Photo by Suzanne Willis*





# This may take a while.

Some things are just hard to resist. Like *The Sarasota News Leader*. It's a feast of in-depth local news, delightful and entertaining features, and — thanks to its partnership with *This Week In Sarasota* — access to the best community calendar available.

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# *Siesta Seen*

## **PATTERSON CARRIES ON THE FIGHT AGAINST AMENDMENT 4; COUNTY STAFF TALKS OF FUTURE LIFEGUARDS AND SEAWEED**



**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Confusion continues to reign in many voters' minds regarding the multitude of proposed amendments on the Nov. 6 ballot. To offer some illumination, Siesta Key Association President Catherine Luckner gave Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson a few minutes on the SKA's Oct. 4 meeting agenda to address two of the proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution.

Earlier that week, Patterson had made her case against Amendment 4 during the Siesta Key Village Association meeting. However, given the complexity of that amendment, I am sure I was not the only attendee at the SKA meeting who was happy to hear a recap.

Amendment 4 has three primary facets. If it wins voter approval on Nov. 6, it will do the following:

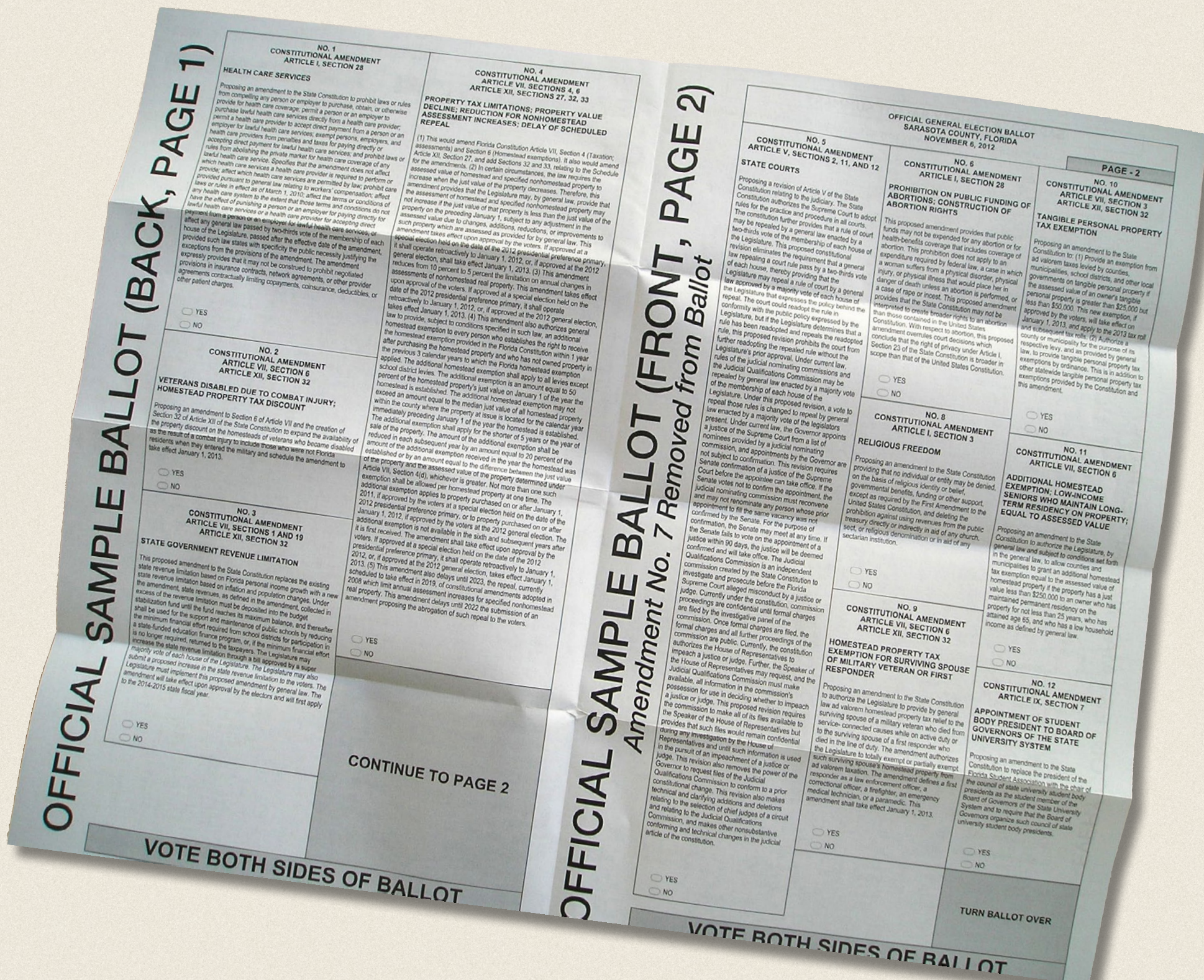


*Sarasota County fielded lots of calls during the summer about the accumulation of seaweed on the beaches, including Crescent Beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# Siesta Seen

- Reduce the current limitation on annual growth in the assessed value of certain non-homestead property from 10 percent to 5 percent. (This does not apply to school districts.)
- Allow the Legislature to prohibit increases in the assessed value of homestead property and certain non-homestead property in any year when the market value of the property decreases. In other words, this would prevent what is referred to as "recapture" of tax revenue.



After opening and spreading out a sample ballot from the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Office, almost any voter can be taken aback by the complexity of all the proposed constitutional amendments. File photo



# ***Siesta Seen***

- Create an additional homestead exemption for first-time buyers equal to 50 percent of the just value of the property (capped at the median home price in the county, which is about \$135,000 for Sarasota County, Patterson says). This is in addition to the current \$50,000 homestead exemption. A first-time homebuyer is defined as one who has not received a homestead exemption in the previous three calendar years — in other words, someone moving to Florida from out-of-state or someone who has not owned a Florida home for several years. Again, this exemption applies to all property taxes except school district taxes. It would expire within five years.

Patterson's big concern, she pointed out, is that Sarasota County would lose an estimated \$2.2 million in tax revenue the first year after this amendment was approved, and that amount would increase to \$9.4 million in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

"If somebody pays less," Patterson said, "somebody's going to have to pay more," if service levels are to remain the same with that much of a drop in revenue.

In other words: What appears to be a good thing on the surface can have harsh consequences.

As Patterson pointed out, Sarasota County already has lost about 40 percent of its property value since the Great Recession began. Closing libraries on Sundays was just one action the County Commission took to deal with the decline in revenue, she noted.

Referring to that estimated loss of \$9.4 million by the 2016-17 fiscal year, she added, "That's a pretty big hole, folks, and it will have to be filled in some way."

The Florida Board of Realtors is supporting Amendment 4, Patterson said, with its members seeing the measure as a way to spur home sales. That group has predicted it could lead to 20,000 new jobs in the state over the next 10 years.

By comparison, Patterson said, Sarasota County has seen 1,200 new jobs created in the past 18 months.

The League of Women Voters, the Florida League of Cities and the Florida Association of Counties all oppose Amendment 4, in no small part because of the potential ramifications on services for the public.

Patterson also took pains to explain the background of Amendment 3. It would cap the revenue collected by the state to the amount collected the previous year, plus an annual adjustment based on a combination of population growth and the rate of inflation. The measure would replace an existing state revenue limitation based on Florida personal income growth.

Revenues collected in excess of the limitation would be deposited into the Budget Stabilization Fund and used for public schools or returned to taxpayers.

"It's an odd thing," Patterson said of Amendment 3. "It's like the state [legislators have] de-



## ***Siesta Seen***

cided they need to put a leash on themselves and future legislators, like they don't trust themselves to make good fiscal decisions."

Ever since she has been in office, Patterson said — this is her fourth County Commission term, and she served on the Sarasota City Commission prior to that — "the state has struggled to put enough dollars on the table for a really fast-growing state to take care of a lot of its infrastructure problems," especially roads and bridges.

For example, she said, "The Venice bypass needs improvements. It took 20 years to amass the dollars" for that work.

For another example, she said, Sarasota County received notification two years ago that it

had won a \$6 million state grant to assist with the extension of Honore Avenue. However, because the state could not come up with the full amount of that grant, Patterson said, it had cut the funding to \$4 million.

As a result, she said, "We don't have enough money to put sidewalks on [the roadside of Honore]."

Amendment 3 also does not take into account how the state would pay for significant damage that could result from a hurricane, she added.

"I just think it's really strange that the Legislature doesn't find itself competent enough to make the decision on an annual basis" about how to handle revenue, she said.

---

## **FUTURE LIFEGUARDS**

Proposed constitutional amendments weren't the only topic of discussion at the Oct. 4 SKA meeting. Carolyn Brown, general manager of parks and recreation for Sarasota County, and George Tatge, a parks and recreation manager, also reported on a number of facets of their work.

Brown noted that Luckner specifically had asked her to address the Junior Lifeguard Program, to which the SKA has contributed.

This past summer, Brown said, the county expanded the program to two, two-week camps. The first had 21 students; the second, 25. What was really notable, Brown said, was

the number of older campers who participated — especially when one normally thinks of campers ranging from little children up to middle-school age.

In the first session, Brown said, 19 of the participants were ages 13 to 17; in the second session, 21.

"They're really, really interested in coming to work for us" as future lifeguards, she pointed out.

During the program, the campers have the opportunity not only to learn lifesaving skills but also to gain their CPR certification.



# ***Siesta Seen***

## **THE NOT-SO-FUN STUFF**

Among topics he addressed, Tatge reported that county crews cleaned up more than 550 tons of seaweed on the beaches during the summer, with 495 of those tons originating on Siesta Key.

The cost of picking up all that seaweed and removing it from the beaches was about \$233,000, he added — and all but about \$46,000 of that was related to the Siesta operations.

The primary reasons Siesta was so high up in those counts, Tatge added, was that Crescent Beach is about 4 miles long, and county staff can reach it easily with equipment to pick up the seaweed.

Tatge explained to me during the summer that the county has to deal with significant limitations in access to beaches to undertake seaweed cleanup, given the size of the equipment it uses. Moreover, he said, the equipment is operated most safely on wide beaches, such as the Siesta Public Beach.

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## **SAFE TREATS AND SANDFEST**

Trick-or-treaters will be welcome as always in Siesta Village on Oct. 31, with businesses offering Halloween candy to youngsters between 3 and 6 p.m.

This will be the 28th year for Safe Treats, which is organized by the Siesta Key Village Association.

Look for the black and orange balloons at participating businesses.

Just two days later, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce will host its biggest annual fundraiser, SandFest, at the Siesta Beach Pavilion.

SandFest proceeds make up a large portion of the fund needed for the annual July Fourth fireworks.

For this 22nd observance of SandFest, the theme is “Fantasy Island.” From 6 to 10 p.m., participants can enjoy a catered meal, live entertainment, dancing, a silent auction and a cash bar. Theme attire is most welcome.

Tickets are \$25 for members; \$30, for non-members.

For more information or for tickets, call the chamber at 394-3800, stop by the office in Davidson Plaza on Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village or visit [www.siestakeychamber.com](http://www.siestakeychamber.com).

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# **SIESTA KEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

## **Sandfest 2012**

**PRESENTS**

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Silent Auction  
Raffles  
Cash Bar*

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**A Tropical Dinner Provided by the Finest**  
**Siesta Key Area Restaurants**

**For Reservations Call 349-3800 or Visit [www.SiestaKeyChamber.com](http://www.SiestaKeyChamber.com)**  
**\$25 Members \$30 Non-Members**

*He may not look much like Ricardo Montalban, but Kevin Cooper, executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce (right), was a good sport to pose for the poster touting SandFest. Image courtesy Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce*



*Dean Leander Harding/Contributed*

## **ONE OF NEW COLLEGE'S FIRST RELIGION MAJORS RETURNING TO SARASOTA TO PREACH AT CHURCH OF REDEEMER**

The Church of the Redeemer in downtown Sarasota has announced that Leander Harding, dean of the Trinity School for Ministry and a noted author, will be the special guest preacher for All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day Masses held Nov 1-4.

The public is welcome to join Redeemer members at the services, church leaders say.

Harding was one of the New College of Florida students to pursue a major in religion, a news release says. At the Sarasota school, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in religion and literary criticism.

Harding serves as the dean of seminary advancement at Trinity School, located in Am-

bridge, PA, and he is an associate professor of pastoral theology.

"I was one of the first religion majors at New College under the controversial 'death of God' theologian, William Hamilton," Harding recalls in a news release. "Nevertheless, in my senior year at New College, I had a profound encounter with Christ which set me on the road to seminary."

After graduating from New College, Harding went on to earn his Master of Divinity degree, *cum laude*, from the Andover Newton Theological School and his doctorate from Boston College's Institute for Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry.

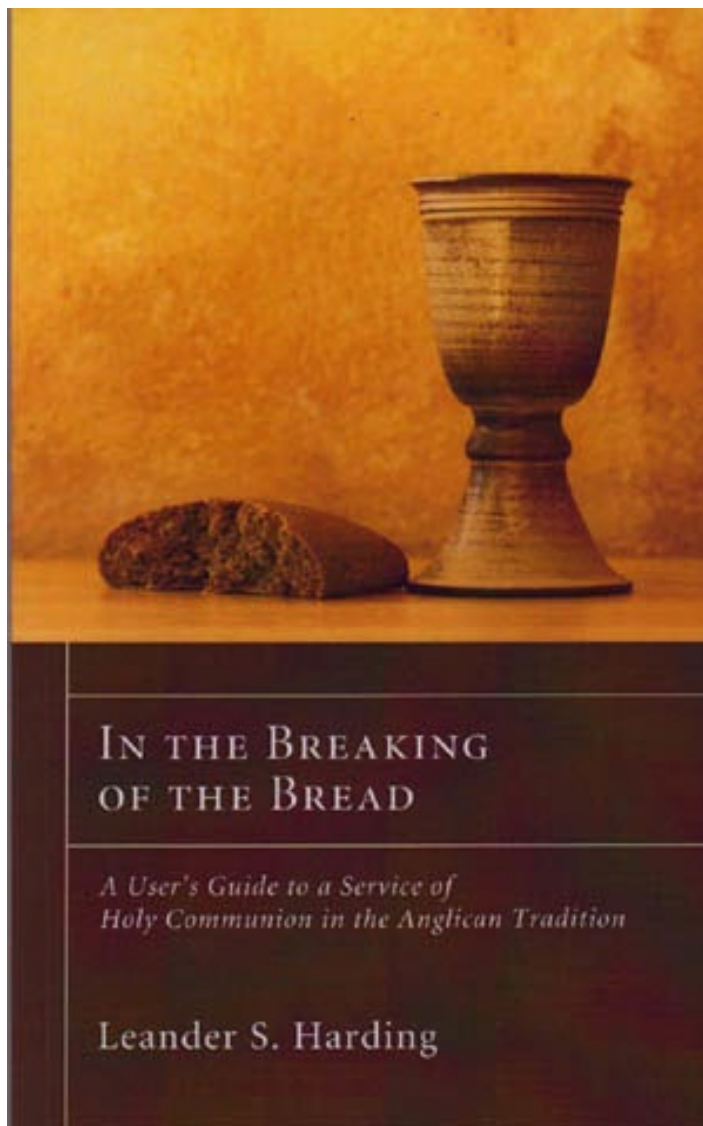


Harding will preach at the 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. All Saints' Day masses on Thursday, Nov. 1. The topic of his sermon will be "When the Saints Go Marching In."

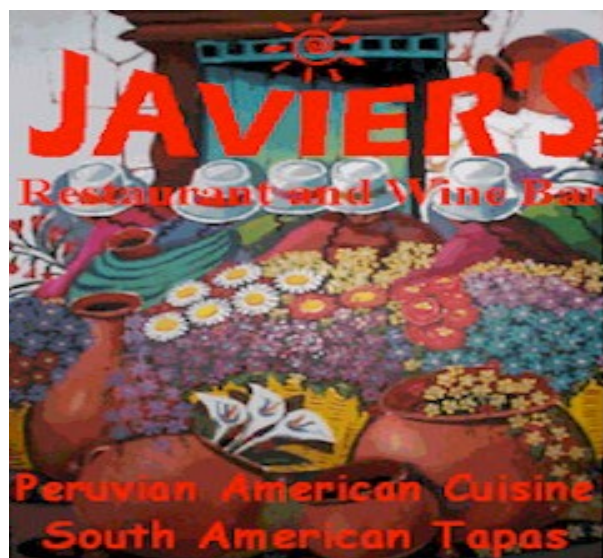
The Church of the Redeemer has arranged for free parking from 5 to 9 p.m., in the M & I Bank building parking garage on McAnsh Court for those attending the evening Mass.

On Friday, Nov. 2, Harding will preach at the 10 a.m. All Souls' Day Mass, which will be held outdoors in the St. Francis Garden adjacent to the church, weather permitting, the news release says. The topic of that day's sermon will be "The Christian View of Death, Grief and Mourning."

On All Saints' Sunday, Nov. 4, Harding will preach at the regular 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses. His sermon will address the question, "Is It Possible for Me to Become a Saint?"



*In the Breaking of the Bread is a guide to the service of Holy Communion, written by Leander Harding. Contributed photo*



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## ARTS BRIEFS

*Work Like a River by Neltje. Contributed photo*

### **GALLUP TO PRESENT ALLURE OF COLLAGE**

Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art gallery will present “The Allure of Collage” from Nov. 14 to Dec. 29, with a reception for the artists on Dec. 14 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The exhibit will feature mixed-media work by Leslie Fry (St. Petersburg), Joan Giordano (New York), Brian Haverlock (Montclair, NJ), Tom Judd (Philadelphia), Mario Naves (New York), Neltje (Banner, WY), Gustavo Ramos Rivera (San Francisco), Erika Lawlor Schmidt (Pawlet, VT) and Josette Urso (New York).

Former Ringling College instructor Haverlock is enrolled at Montclair State University’s MFA program, according to a gallery news release. Haverlock’s works have been featured in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States. His pieces express recalled memories and sensitive reflections of events, situations

he has experienced and individuals he has met or known, the news release says. His “images delight and surprise the viewer with their grandeur and often poignant simplicity and visual complexity,” the release adds.

Fry’s sculptures and works on paper have been shown in solo and group exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout the United States and abroad. Fry says her works on paper begin “by pressing a plant into paper and seeing what grows from that,” according to the release. “These images express moments of wholeness created out of fragmentation.”

Giordano has enjoyed nearly 30 solo shows and has taken part in countless group exhibitions nationally and internationally, the news release says. She was invited to create installations at the First International Women Art-



ists Biennale in Korea; the Sofia Paper Biennial in Bulgaria and the Sosabeol International Art Expo Flame Show, in 2011. Of her work, the esteemed art critic, Joan Altabe, wrote: "In Giordano's hands, paper — the marble of modern sculpture — ranges beyond histo-

ry, past prehistory, back to places of legend where paintings had magical function."

The artist Neltje says she strives "to make the sensed visible, to balance the interior reality of passion with the external condition of form," the news release says. Since 1985, she adds in the release, her life has been her art-



*Lemon Ice by Josette Urso. Contributed photo*



work. “I create because I am driven to define moments, emotional responses to the natural world, and the chaos that seems to be life’s breath. My senses live on red alert. All of them. I am sustained by, obsessed with, my soul filled to brimming virtually daily, by the grand, the infinitesimal, the lightest and the darkest of images and insights.”

Judd first exhibited his work at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where, at the age of 25, he was included in a survey show titled, “Contemporary Drawing: Philadelphia,” the release says. The museum purchased a piece from that exhibit for its permanent collection. Judd went on to exhibit his work in distinguished commercial galleries. Then, in the ’90s, he had a 10-year retrospective at the Philadelphia Art Alliance.

Naves is an artist, critic and teacher. He says in the release that his art “is a form of painting disguised as collage. My criticism abjures the marketplace for what meets the eye. My teaching encourages burgeoning artists to question just what it is exactly they’re getting into and how to do it well.” Naves’ work has been written about in *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *The Village Voice* and *Time Out New York*.

Ramos Rivera is an abstract painter whose work is celebrated nationally for its intense emotional content and its unique, personal symbology, the news release says. “His paintings combine the palette and iconography of the indigenous cultural heritage of his native Mexico with classic techniques of post-war

American abstraction,” the release adds. In his works, Rivera “constructs layers of intense translucent color fields upon which he lays simple hieroglyphic markings of rich impasto, which seem at once archaic and contemporary,” the release notes.

Schmidt has forged a career as a visual and performing artist “whose work is deeply shaped by investigations into Eastern philosophy and Indian mysticism,” the release says. Her work is “shaped by the recognition and inquiry to cyclical tendencies,” the release adds, “including the contemplation of life cycles: birth, death and rebirth or the possibility for reincarnation. I have been interested in this all my life.”

Urso says in the news release that she wants “to push the visual matrix to a crescendo just before breakdown, to find, in T.S. Eliot’s phrase, ‘The still point of the turning world.’ There is a gamble involved in this, and my circular arrangements put me in mind of roulette wheels, just as they provide an insight into the spectral nature of consciousness.” She has received The Basil H. Alkazzi Painting Award (2000), a Mid-Atlantic HEA (1994), grants from Art Matters Inc. (1988) and The Ruth Chenven Foundation (1988) and an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Florida State Arts Council (1986).

For more information about the exhibit, call 366-2454 or visit [www.allyngallup.com](http://www.allyngallup.com). The gallery is located at 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota .

**Press Releases & News Tips**

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## MCARTHUR 'GENIUS' CHASE TO PERFORM AT ARTFUL LOBSTER EVENT

The Hermitage Artist Retreat has announced that 2012 MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Award recipient, flutist Claire Chase, will perform during its annual Artful Lobster event on Saturday, Nov. 17.

Chase not only will perform a short program, but participants also will receive her CD, *Terrestre*, as a gift from Florida Shores Bank and the Hermitage.

The Artful Lobster will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the Hermitage campus, 6660 Manasota Key Road, in Englewood. The day's activities include an elaborate lobster lunch prepared by Michael's on East; a live auction featuring unique trips, dinners and other special items; and Chase's performance. The cost is \$150 for individuals and \$300 for patrons. Funds support the many free community programs presented by world-famous artists who come to the Hermitage to work, a news release notes.

"The Artful Lobster is our signature event," explained Bruce E. Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage Artist Retreat, in the news release.

"This year we invited Flutist Claire Chase, who will be in residence in 2013," he added in the release. "Just our luck," he noted, as on Oct. 2, the MacArthur Foundation named her one of 12 recipients of its \$500,000 "Genius" Award.

Chase is a soloist, collaborative artist and activist for experimental music and performance. Over the past decade she has given the world premieres of more than 100 new works for flute, many tailor-made for her, the news release says. "Chase has given critically acclaimed solo recitals at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall and the Walter Reade Theater

as part of the *Great Performers Series* at Lincoln Center," the release adds. "She has also had solo performances in China, Brazil, Berlin, Vienna and Paris. Her second solo album, *Terrestre ...* was hailed by the *Wall Street Journal* as 'a full-throated affirmation of chamber music as human drama,'" the release says.

To purchase tickets for the Artful Lobster event, view auction items or learn more about the fundraiser, visit [www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org](http://www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org).



Claire Chase/Contributed



## THEATRE ODYSSEY ISSUES 2013 CALL FOR PLAYS

Theatre Odyssey is ready to begin accepting 10-minute plays for its eighth annual festival, scheduled to be held March 29-31, 2013 at the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe's theater, 1664 10th Way, Sarasota, the company has announced.

Theatre Odyssey's 10-Minute Play Festival is presented during a three-day weekend that includes evening performances on Friday and Saturday and one matinee on Sunday. Each play is presented by professional actors who have rehearsed with an experienced director, a news release notes.

Winners of the festival are announced following the Sunday performances.

In addition to seeing their plays presented by professionals, the 2013 finalists will have an opportunity to have their works published in the second volume of *Theatre Odyssey's Ten-Minute Play Festival 2010-2013* anthology, to be released at the end of 2013.

Anyone wishing to submit an original 10-minute play should read the criteria below, the news release says, and send the work before the Dec. 15 deadline to Theatre Odyssey, c/o Melliss Kenworthy, 1430 S. Orange Ave., Sarasota, Florida 34239.

Each play must be presented within 10 minutes (generally between seven and 10 pages in print), the news release says. The cast should not exceed five actors. Theatre Odyssey will make final production decisions based on appropriateness of content and practical ability to produce the play.

Submission requirements follow:

- All playwrights must reside in the central Gulf Coast of Florida (Tampa to Fort Myers).
- The playwright must agree to be present at the award performance March 31, 2013 in Sarasota.
- There is a submission limit of three plays per playwright. The first submission is free. Each subsequent submission carries a \$15 fee. Payment by check to Theatre Odyssey must accompany the play submission.

Each submission or submissions must have a separate cover sheet containing the author's name, contact information and a 150-word bio.

- The cover sheet should contain a statement saying the following:

*"I understand that Theatre Odyssey will only consider original work. Plays submitted which are based on any other published work, including but not limited to novels, short stories, teleplays or other theatrical scripts, unless also written by the submitting author, are ineligible. I hereby state that my submission meets this standard."*

- Three copies of each submission are required, preferably using Microsoft Word with no author identification.
- All submissions must be received by Dec. 15.
- A high resolution headshot should be emailed to [rgp123s@aol.com](mailto:rgp123s@aol.com).



A panel of three judges reviews all plays, the news release notes. The reviewers are independent of Theatre Odyssey, the release adds; and each submission is reviewed without author identification.

Theatre Odyssey was founded in 2006 to encourage and promote the efforts of local play-

wrights and actors, the news release points out. Over the years, the group has premiered more than 60 plays written, directed and performed by Gulf Coast playwrights, actors and directors.

For more information about Theatre Odyssey visit the website [www.Theatreodyssey.org](http://www.Theatreodyssey.org).

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF THE UPCOMING WEEK

**26**  
OCT

### **Halloween Haunted House**

Oct. 26, 6 to 9 p.m., Booker Middle School, 2250 Myrtle St., Sarasota. Theme: *Creepy Carnival*, with decorations by students and parents. Admission: \$5; proceeds go to the school's TV and Film Production Program. Refreshments served. For information: 359-5824.

**26**  
OCT

### **Nunsense**

Oct. 26 to Nov. 4 (no show Oct. 29), 7:30 to 9 p.m., Player's Theatre, 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25. Information: 365-2494 or [www.theplayers.org](http://www.theplayers.org)

**27**  
OCT

### **Planned Parenthood's 15th annual Safe Sex Halloween Bash**

Oct. 27, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., Michael's On East, 1212 East Ave. S., Sarasota. Admission: \$75 in advance; \$100, at door (21 and older only). For information: [SafeSexHalloweenBash.com](http://SafeSexHalloweenBash.com) or 365-3913. Purchase tickets at [Safe Sex Halloween Bash tickets](http://SafeSexHalloweenBash.com)

**27**  
OCT

### **Designed to Give: Designing Women Boutique's Fall Festival**

Oct. 27, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Oct. 28, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 1226 N. Tamiami Trail (at 13th Street), Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 366-5293 or [www.designingwomenboutique@comcast.net](http://www.designingwomenboutique.comcast.net)

**28**  
OCT

### **Sarasota Chalk Festival**

Oct. 28 to Nov. 6, Burn's Square (South Pineapple Avenue and Laurel Street), Sarasota. Free admission. Information: [www.ChalkFestival.org](http://www.ChalkFestival.org)

**29**  
OCT

### **Book signing: *American Ghosts* by Janis Owens**

Oct. 29, 6 to 7 p.m., Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main Street, Sarasota. Free admission; purchase book for signing. For information: 365-7900 or [www.Bookstore1Sarasota.com](http://www.Bookstore1Sarasota.com)

**02**  
NOV

### **Ariel Quartet in concert (Perlman Music Program/Suncoast)**

Nov. 2, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., Tube Dude Gallery, 1001 Central Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$5, in advance @ [www.PMPSuncoast.org](http://www.PMPSuncoast.org); free if space available; 955-4942.

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'S MASTER CALENDAR





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**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

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## ANGLING FOR THE BEST 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.*