

THE SARASOTA

December 14, 2012

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

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VOICING OPPOSITION

CHANGES IN STORE FOR 2050?

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

In our never-ending quest to help you navigate more easily through our publication, we have taken some new steps this week to facilitate the process.

First, we realized that we have never pointed out that all of the headlines in our table of contents are *interactive*. If something catches your eye immediately, just click on that headline if you are using a computer or tap on it if you are using a tablet or smartphone, and you will go directly to that story. If you wish to go back to the very beginning of the issue, all you need to do is click on the double arrow symbol on the left side of the page when you finish reading the article.

In addition, our production manager, Cleve Posey, has “sprinkled” a number of tips throughout our pages. We hope they will help you understand more clearly the options available to you for emailing articles, for example, or posting links to them on Facebook.

We certainly want to make it as simple as possible for you to share what we publish each week. As much as we may enjoy writing the stories (some more than others, admittedly, with the enthusiasm level sometimes linked to how long we have sat through a meeting), our efforts are for naught if you cannot quickly find a particular article or cannot figure out how to send it to someone you know would enjoy it as much as you did.

I also want to encourage those of you who read the *News Leader* on a computer to use the full-screen toggle to expand each page to a wide-screen perspective. That will make it much easier on your eyes.

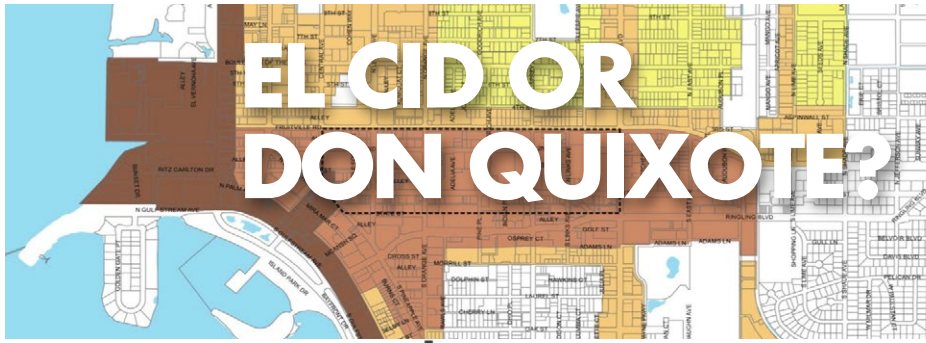
With all the diverse issues going on right now in the city and the county, we feel you have plenty of topics to choose from in this week’s issue as you put our reader tips to use.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



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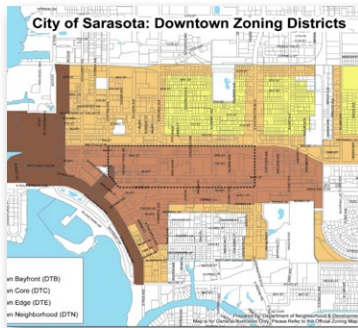
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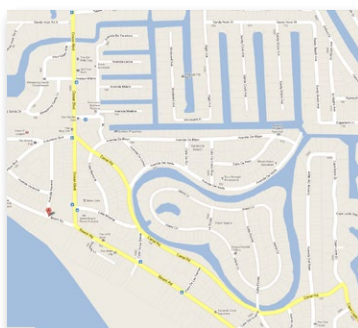
EL CID OR DON QUIXOTE?

Analysis: Caragiulo tilts at the noise ordinance — Stan Zimmerman

Live and amplified music downtown is a third rail of Sarasota city politics. So it is a great surprise that first-term City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo is getting ready to joust with the thousands of voters who live downtown and go

to bed early.

On Oct. 27, he took testimony in a town hall-style meeting packed with musicians and people who like music, people who have not heard much music downtown for the past decade —since the city imposed a draconian noise ordinance. It is draconian because a complainer may remain anonymous and because the sound level is measured at the source and not at the point of complaint. ([Full story here](#))



VOICING OPPOSITION

The Siesta Key Association and property owners indicate opposition to efforts to build on two Beach Road parcels that have been under the Gulf of Mexico in years past — Rachel Brown Hackney

Residents of Terrace East and directors of the Siesta Key Association have indicated they will oppose requests for two variances that will be addressed by the Sarasota County Commission on Jan. 9.

Both petitions involve construction of new Beach Road homes with swimming pools and decks, paver driveways and landscape retaining walls about 200 feet seaward of the county's Gulf Beach Setback Line.

Peter van Roekens, vice president of the SKA, brought up the matter during the organization's regular meeting on Dec. 6, noting the two lots had been beneath the Gulf of Mexico in the past. He had photos as proof for the County Commission, he pointed out. ([Full story here](#))



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CHANGES IN STORE FOR 2050?

With some builders calling the plan too strict, the County Commission may take a hard look at revamping it in 2013 — Cooper Levey-Baker

Sarasota County's 2050 plan may not make it past 2013 intact.

On Sept. 18, the Sarasota County Commission instructed staff to meet with developers who have had firsthand experience dealing with Sarasota 2050, the ambitious and detailed document created to guide development in the county's eastern portions. The idea: to generate ideas for how to update the 2050 plan, a move which has environmental and managed growth advocates concerned.

Originally approved a decade ago, the 2050 plan was intended to encourage developers working outside the county's Urban Service Area Boundary to incorporate green space into their designs and to fight urban sprawl and reduce automobile traffic as the county's population increases. ([Full story here](#))



PONDERING THE FUTURE

City staff asks residents and business owners how they would like to see the Rosemary District transformed — Stan Zimmerman

A one-acre parcel sparked a broad community discussion about the future of the Rosemary District on Monday, Dec. 10. City Manager Tom Barwin opened the meeting by saying the city-owned land could be a catalyst for redevelopment of the historically depressed area adjacent to downtown, north of Fruitville Road.

A "varsity team" for the city attended the meeting, including a host of planners. Chief Planner Ryan Chapdelain was the moderator.

The "catalyst" to which Barwin referred is the old Community Garden parcel on Sixth Street (aka Boulevard of the Arts). It lies adjacent to a city-owned parking lot on Fifth Street; together, they comprise just a tad more than one acre. ([Full story here](#))



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MOVING FORWARD WITH BONDS

The County Commission authorizes final design and bidding out of the Siesta Public Beach project, with funding from bond revenue but with a change in how construction management will be handled — Rachel Brown Hackney

After close to two hours of discussion and public comments combined, the Sarasota County Commission voted unanimously on Tuesday, Dec. 11, to authorize staff to complete the design of the Siesta Public Beach project and put it out for bid, with the cost not to exceed \$21.5 million.

The amount includes \$16.7 million estimated for the actual construction, with the rest allocated to engineering and architectural consulting fees.

The motion also permitted staff to seek supplemental bids for 10 “extras” for the project that the design team had suggested. ([Full story here](#))



UNDER SCRUTINY

Business organizations want to see café owners keeping umbrellas over outdoor tables out of the way of pedestrians — Stan Zimmerman

Sidewalk cafés lend an air of insouciance to Sarasota — until the umbrella pokes you in the eye. Then life is not so carefree. Cafés are encroaching on pedestrian space, say the chairmen of both the St. Armands and Downtown improvement districts. And that is going to change.

St. Armands’ Business Improvement District Chairman Marty Rappaport and the Downtown Improvement District Chairman Ernie Ritz took a sidewalk stroll through both areas, and they separately told the same tale afterward: “Tables and chairs are encroaching on sidewalks.”

The cafés lease the sidewalk area from the City of Sarasota on an annual basis. The city, in return, requires at least a six-foot-wide walkway to remain, to handle foot traffic and wheelchairs. ([Full story here](#))



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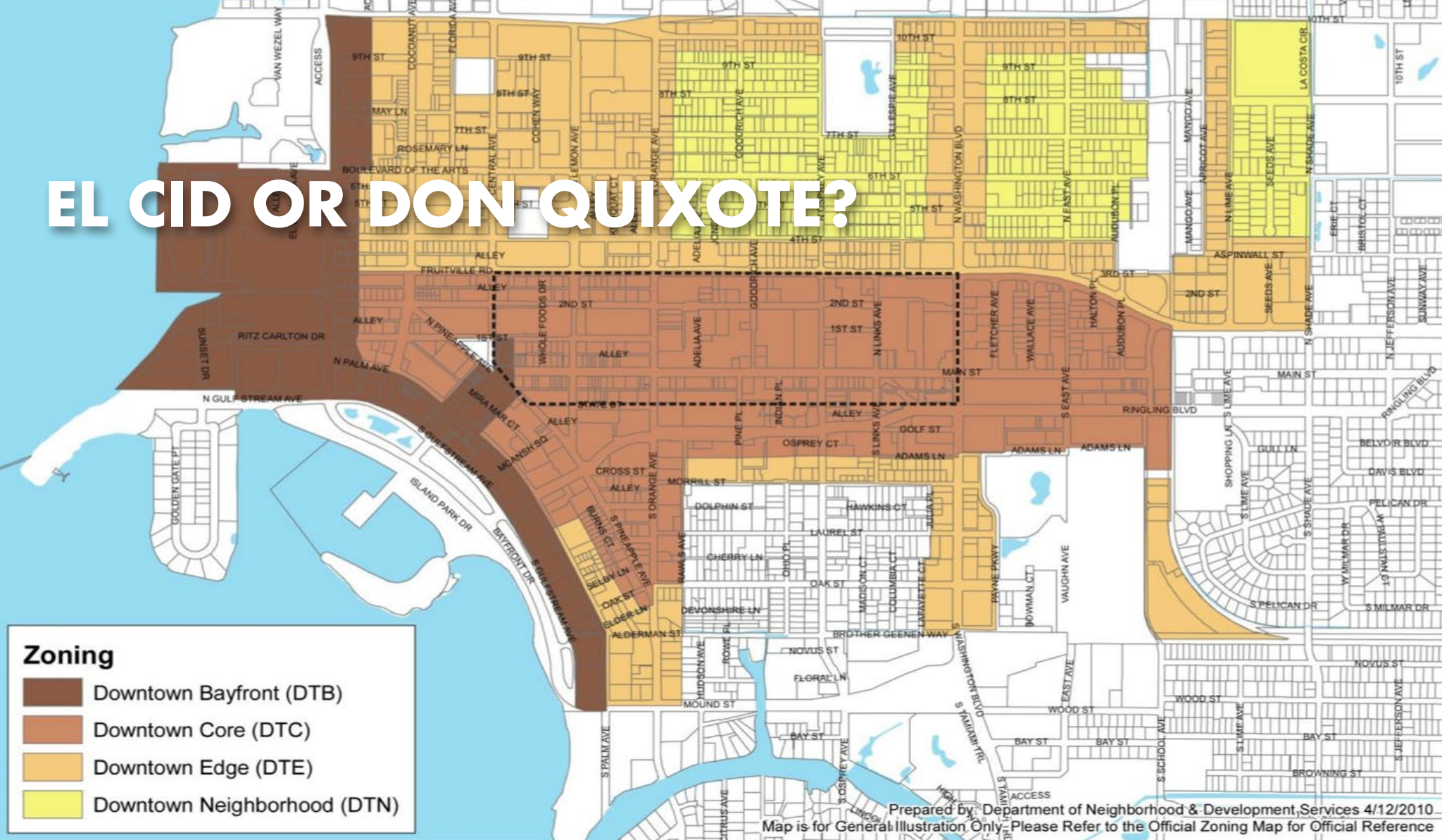
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EL CID OR DON QUIXOTE?



A city map shows the downtown Sarasota zoning districts. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

ANALYSIS: CARAGIULO TILTS AT THE NOISE ORDINANCE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Live and amplified music downtown is a third rail of Sarasota city politics. So it is a great surprise that first-term City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo is getting ready to joust with the thousands of voters who live downtown and go to bed early.

On Oct. 27, he took testimony in a town hall-style meeting packed with musicians and people who like music, people who have not heard much music downtown for the past decade —since the city imposed a draconian noise ordinance.

It is draconian because a complainer may remain anonymous and because the sound level is measured at the source and not at the point of complaint.

The draconian nature of it is typified by the Starkeeper Café, a bungalow sandwiched between the GTE monolith and the Rivo on Ringling condominiums on the north side of

Charles Ringling Boulevard. Café operator John Snyder has small speakers for background music outside, and that makes him an outlaw.

I keep getting busted for the noise ordinance because one person complains.

John Snyder
Starkeeper Café

“I keep getting busted for the noise ordinance because one person complains,” he said.

Who is that person? Nobody knows. And where do the police measure the noise? At the speaker, of course.

If Snyder does not stand a chance, the odds are members of a blues band would literally sing their own blues if they performed outside in downtown Sarasota. The banned and busted musicians congregate once a year to produce a recording of their new music named — what else? — The Noise Ordinance.

You can have a Harley with straight pipes or a million-watt boombox-mobile and the cops do not care. Pipe in a little easy listening for the customers? You’re busted, sucker.

UNREASONABLE SOUND?

During the October meeting, City Planning Board Member Mort Siegel suggested “entertainment-specific areas.” He then cautioned, “If you are advocating downtown be turned into an overall large entertainment center, you will fail.”

Caragiulo took the idea of an “entertainment center,” massaged it with limits on time and volume and shared the idea with Peter Fanning, president of the Downtown Sarasota Condominium Association. Fanning is quick to note, “We do not represent 3,000 residents. We represent the boards who represent the residents.”

On Oct. 31, DSCA endorsed the idea of an “entertainment district.” It delivered that finding



Many of the thousands of residents of downtown Sarasota condominiums say they do not like loud music late at night. Photo by Norman Schimmel

on Dec. 11 to the Downtown Improvement District. “We are promoting the discussion: What constitutes unreasonable sound?” Fanning said. “Should we create different districts? Should we set standards for enforcement? These are all important issues.”

“The residents’ main concern is we avoid a discussion that leads to a we-versus-they proposition,” added Fanning. “We have other important issues downtown.”

A contingent of residents from the Plaza at Five Points Condominium (aka 50 Central) also showed up at the DID meeting to share their thoughts on an entertainment district downtown.

Faye Beloff noted things are already a bit loud. “There was dancing in the street at 2 a.m. outside Smokey Joe’s [on Main Street],” she said.

“What is a special entertainment zone?” asked David Eckel, who then said, “I don’t want to live in a special entertainment zone. Don’t spoil it at this particular point.”

Ironically, he and the others live above a boisterous nightclub called the Ivory Lounge at 50 Central. But because all the noise is inside a building, the noise ordinance does not apply.

The proposed entertainment district would be bordered by Fruitville Road to the north, Washington Blvd. to the east, State Street to the south and Central Avenue to the west. The Plaza at Five Points would be at the western edge of the zone.

WILL ANY FOLLOW?

It has been a decade since the Lemon Coast (aka “the downtown beach bar”) forced the


city to take action on noise. The rock and roll concerts on Fridays and Saturdays were memorable, but the sound bounced off an office building wall and went straight into Sarasota’s new downtown condos full of new downtown condo owners.

John Vetri is the property manager at 50 Central. “The people who live here, the residents, deserve the right to use their property,” he said.

Vetri suggested moving the boundaries of the entertainment district away from his building.

Caragiulo is planning a second town hall meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 19, in the City Hall Annex. “We need to modernize the noise policy,” he said. “We need effective enforcement and realistic appeals. This is going to be a long process; there’s a lot to change. We’re juggling science, the First Amendment, how to enforce.”

In politics, timing is everything. Next March, city voters will elect two at-large commissioners. Caragiulo is not running this time, but candidates could take up the noise issue — pro or con — and keep it open for discussion. Caragiulo could be betting full-time residents are tired of a sleepy downtown and ready to amp it up. That might give him support on the commission to make a change — or vice versa.

One thing is certain. Not all of the 3,000 anonymous potential complainers who live in downtown condominiums are registered to vote in Sarasota. Just look up any summer evening and see who is home. While the rooms are empty, the noise ordinance lives on. 



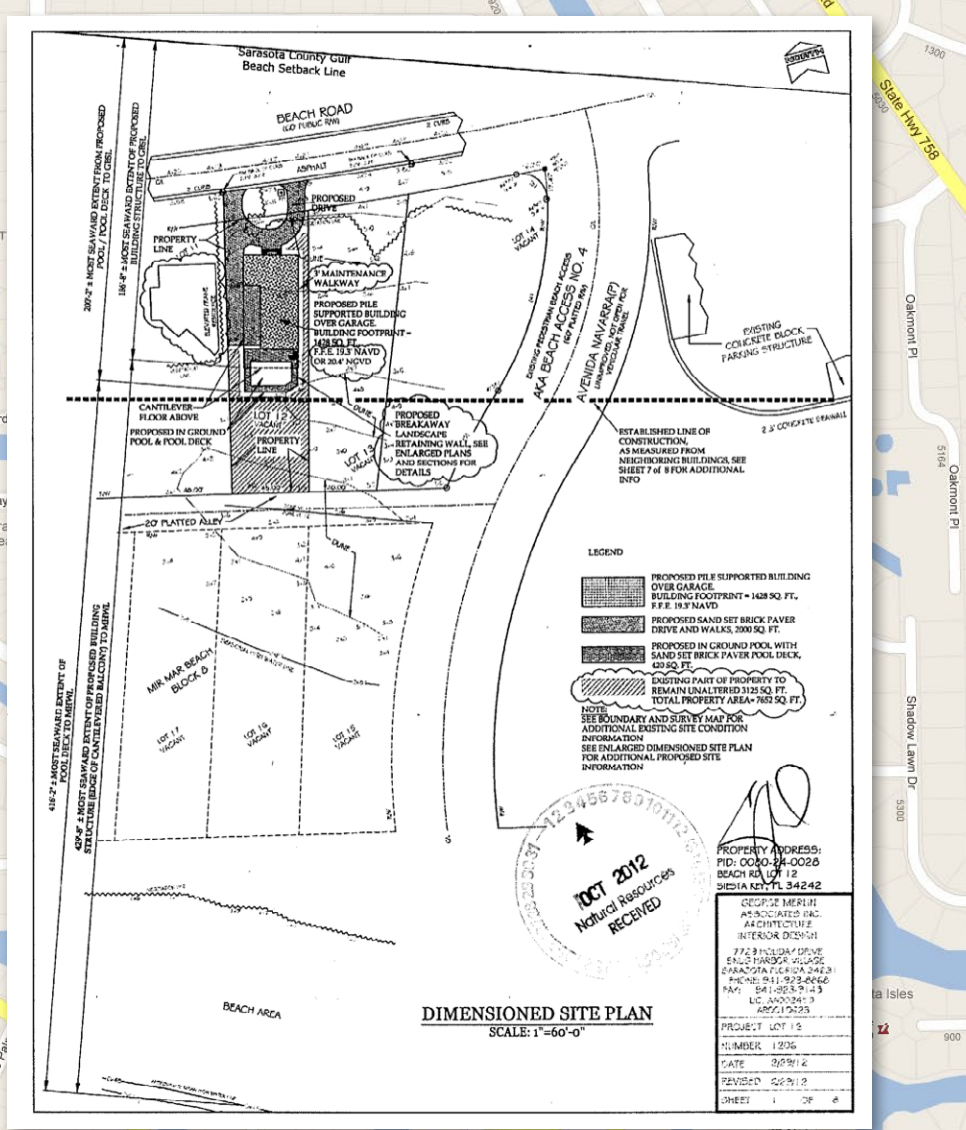
I like to take my time.

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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VOICING OPPOSITION

A Sarasota County diagram shows the overall site plan for the parcel at 162 Beach Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION, TERRACE EAST RESIDENTS INDICATE PLANS TO FIGHT REQUESTS FOR NEW HOMES ON TWO BEACH ROAD LOTS THAT HAVE BEEN UNDERWATER IN THE PAST

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Residents of Terrace East and directors of the Siesta Key Association have indicated they will oppose requests for two variances that will be addressed by the Sarasota County Commission on Jan. 9.

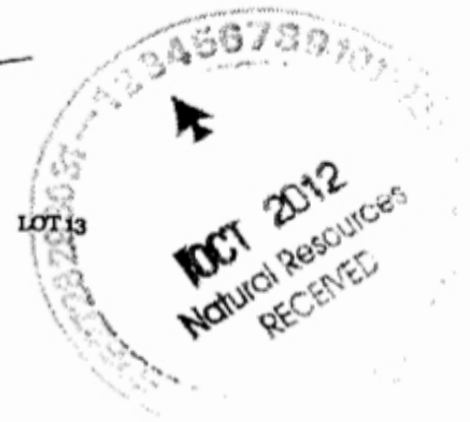
Both petitions involve construction of new Beach Road homes with swimming pools and decks, paver drive-ways and landscape retaining walls about 200 feet seaward of the county's Gulf Beach Setback Line.

Peter van Roekens, vice president of the SKA, brought up the matter during the organization's regular meeting on Dec. 6, noting the two lots had been beneath the Gulf of Mexico in the past. He had photos as proof for the County Commission, he pointed out.


He had just learned notices about the requests had come to adjacent property owners in the mail the previous day, he said. "However, I didn't get one," van Roekens said. Neither did the president of Terrace East, he added.

“We’re going to meet about it. It’s not a good thing.”

Peter van Roekens
Board member
Terrace East



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SHEET 2 OF 8

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

An enlarged view of the site plan for 162 Beach Road shows details of the proposed construction. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“We’re going to meet about it,” van Roekens said of the Terrace East board. “It’s not a good thing.”

When SKA Director Bob Waechter asked whether the requests involved parcels north of the Terrace building, van Roekens replied, “Yes,” adding, “There are dunes on them.”

The lots are vacant, van Roekens said in response to another question from Waechter, though houses stand on lots adjacent to them.

Whenever someone wants to build a structure outside the boundary of the county’s coastal setback line, SKA President Catherine Luckner noted, the law requires adjacent property owners to be notified of the fact.

Luckner pointed out that the Gulf Beach Setback Line was established to prevent property damage as a result of storms. “We take it pretty seriously,” she added.

“Frequently, we get [notices] because we represent the residential community,” she said. “In this case, we did not get one.”

Noting that the requests for the variances were filed with the county in October, Luckner said, “We found [it] ... unusual” that notices had not gone out sooner.

In response to *Sarasota News Leader* questions about the situation, Howard Berna, environmental supervisor in the county’s Natural Resources Department, said in an email, “The first [county] code-required mailing was posted on December 3 by the applicant’s agent. A second required mailing will also be posted by the applicant’s agent on or about December 21.”

Each current notice says, “A second mailing will be sent to the appropriate neighborhood associations and all property owners within 500 feet of the property boundaries at a minimum of fifteen days prior to the public hearing.”

Berna continued in his email, “The mailing addresses are based on available property appraiser records linked to our [Geographical Information System (GIS)] and it is quite pos-



A Sarasota County GIS map shows the two lots that are the focus of the variance requests on Beach Road: 0080-24-0027 and 0080-24-0028, to the left of the Terrace building. Image courtesy Sarasota County

sible that those who have not received [notices] yet may have a northern address on record [at the Sarasota County] Property Appraiser' Office and the item is making its way back to Florida if they have forwarded their mail."

He added that an applicant for a variance also is required to post the property in question a minimum of 15 days before the public hearing date on the matter.

The mailed notices say the County Commission will hold the public hearings on those variance requests during the afternoon portion of its regular meeting on Jan. 9 in Sarasota, which will start at 1:30 p.m.

Berna told the *News Leader* on Dec. 11 that he had received no formal comments so far about the petitions.

THE PROPERTY ITSELF


A *Sarasota News Leader* search of county property records shows the 7,429-square-foot parcel at 162 Beach Road is owned by Ronald

and Sania Allen of Osprey, who purchased it on May 29, 2009 for \$5.4 million. The seller was Brent R. Cooper, trustee.

The lot sold in September 2007 for \$500,000.

The second parcel where a variance has been requested is located at 168 Beach Road. With a total of 7,679 square feet, it was sold by Cooper to Ronald Allen together with the 162 Beach Road lot on May 29, 2009. On Feb. 21, 2012, Allen transferred it for \$100 to Siesta Miramar LLC of 2033 Main St., Sarasota. According to corporate documents, the officers of that company are Ronald and Sania Allen.

That parcel also was sold in September 2007 for \$500,000.

The Allens are being represented in both variance requests by attorney William W. Merrill III of Sarasota. According to the website for the Icard Merrill law firm in Sarasota, Merrill has a "nationally recognized practice in land use, planning, transportation and environmental law" 



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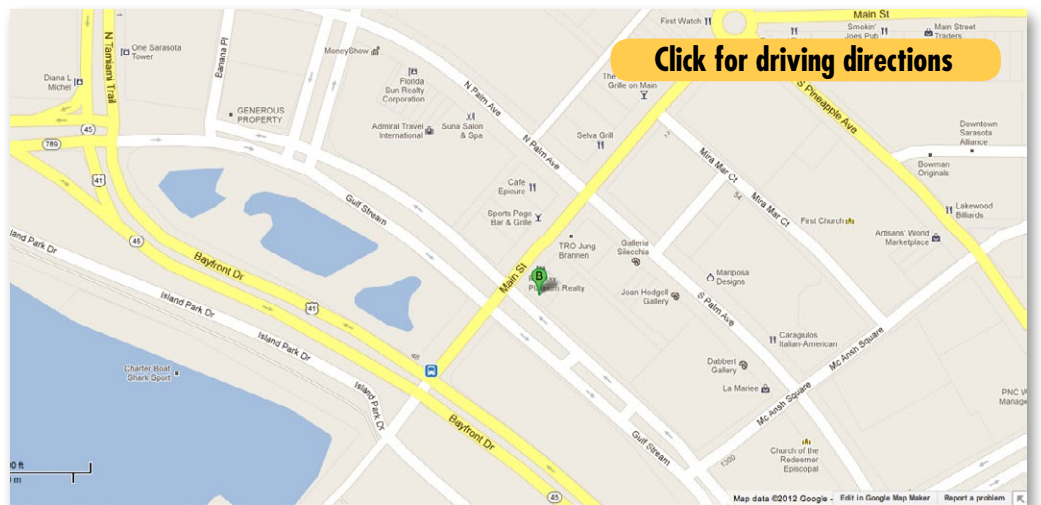
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CHANGES IN STORE FOR 2050?



(From left) Sarasota County Commissioners Joe Barbetta, Charles Hines and Christine Robinson have been most vocal about taking another look at the 2050 Plan. Photo by Rachel Hackney

WITH SOME BUILDERS CALLING THE PLAN TOO STRICT, THE COUNTY COMMISSION MAY TAKE A HARD LOOK AT REVAMPING IT IN 2013

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Sarasota County's 2050 plan may not make it past 2013 intact.

On Sept. 18, the Sarasota County Commission instructed staff to meet with developers who have had firsthand experience dealing with Sarasota 2050, the ambitious and detailed document created to guide development in the county's eastern portions. The idea: to generate ideas for how to update the 2050 plan, a move which has environmental and managed growth advocates concerned.

Originally approved a decade ago, the 2050 plan was intended to encourage developers working outside the county's Urban Service Area Boundary to incorporate green space into their designs and to fight urban sprawl and reduce automobile traffic as the county's population increases. Dan Lobeck, an attorney

and the president of Control Growth Now, calls the 2050 plan a "grand bargain" that allowed developers access to areas east of I-75 in exchange for strict regulation of what could be built.

I would think it would raise alarm bells if someone asked the fox how to redesign the henhouse. That's effectively what the County Commission is doing.

Dan Lobeck
President
Control Growth Now

But today, critics say the plan has stifled the private sector, pointing to the fact that only one new project — Neal Communities’ Grand Palm in Venice — has gotten off the ground under the new rules. And that criticism has been well received on the County Commission, where at least three commissioners have publicly indicated a desire to overhaul the 2050 rules.

Weeks after the County Commission’s vote for more information, employees from the county’s planning, environmental and zoning teams met with Neal Communities and Schroeder-Manatee (the company behind the Villages of Lakewood Ranch South), and jotted down many of their concerns and complaints, later summarized in a memo from Planning Services Director Tom Polk to County Administrator Randy Reid.

According to notes from those meetings, concerns centered around how to define 2050 concepts such as “Open Space,” what to do about pine flatwoods (which are “conserved” but not “preserved”) and the question of fiscal neutrality, which requires that developers produce documentation showing new projects

will not cost the county money in the way of new services. “Fiscal neutrality causes uncertainty for the financing of a project,” reads one note from Schroeder-Manatee.

According to Polk, the county has at least two more “stakeholder” meetings before it will summarize the feedback for the commission on Jan. 30. Polk says the recommendations are mere “refinements” to the plan, and he calls, for example, Neal Communities President Pat Neal a “very big supporter of 2050.”

A Neal Communities press release, in fact, touts the fact that its Grand Palm development is the first project to meet the “carefully-crafted, low-impact standards of Sarasota County’s ‘Sarasota 2050 Initiative.’” Nevertheless, “through the processing there were some issues we had to work through,” Polk says. (Neal Communities did not respond to a request for comment as of press time.)

In addition to Grand Palm, Schroeder-Manatee has earned approval for Villages of Lakewood Ranch South, a 5,500-acre, 5,144-unit development, according to Planning Services Customer Service Manager Mary Beth

DENSITY ASSIGNMENT RANKINGS		
	Greenway RMA	Village/ Open Space RMA
Native Habitat		
High Dry Scrub	1	1
Xeric Hammock	2	2
Dry Prairie	3	3
Pine Flatwood	3	3
Mesic Hammock	3	3
Streams, Estuaries	4	4
Freshwater Wetlands	4	4
Potable Water Storage Facilities	4	4
Existing and New Passive Public Parks	N/A	5
Existing Low-Intensity Agriculture	5	5
New Agriculture that Uses Best Management Practices	N/A	6
New Hiking/Natural Resource Recreation/Boardwalks	5	5
Existing High-Intensity Agriculture	6	6
Lakes and Regional Stormwater Facilities	6	6
New Active Public Parks	N/A	6
Developed Land in Village	N/A	7
Golf Courses	N/A	N/E
Note: This table represents a ranking, with 1 signifying highest priority, and 7 as lowest priority. N/A designates land uses that are not applicable, and N/E designates land uses that are not eligible for density transfer credits.		

A chart in the county’s 2050 Plan ranks the priority of resource management areas (RMAs) for consideration in transfer of development rights transactions, another controversial issue related to the 2050 Plan. Chart courtesy of Sarasota County

Humphries. All told, that means more than 7,000 units have been approved under 2050 guidelines.

Such successes suggest that 2050 has not been the economic death knell some have claimed, but that has not stopped county commissioners from calling for fundamental changes. During a Tiger Bay forum, newly elected Commissioner Charles Hines said he supported loosening up the 2050 rules, and Commissioner Christine Robinson wrote in a *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* candidate questionnaire that 2050 does not promote “smart, well thought out planned growth” but is instead “a barrier to any growth at all.”

“The development community has told us it’s not workable,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta told a man giving a public comment at a September meeting. Barbetta called 2050 a “great plan” but said it was not right for the inland area. “You can’t airlift an urban community and put it eight or nine miles out east,” he said. “It’ll never work.”

Lobeck says he’s “alarmed” about the potential changes. He is particularly worried about the possibility of weakening the county’s process for monitoring fiscal neutrality. Developers may argue they simply want to cut red tape, Lobeck says, but the end result is new communities that could become a financial burden on the county’s taxpayers.

And while critics may blame 2050 for a paucity of new projects, the real estate collapse has been a far bigger factor, Lobeck says. The most recent tweaks to the 2050 plan came in November 2006 — just before the housing implosion. “Nobody’s building these huge mixed use developments and you’re going to blame 2050?” he says. “It’s the economy.”


That is a point echoed by Jono Miller, the former chairman of the county’s Environmental Policy Task Force. Is the lack of new construction a reflection of a “depressed economy or is there some flaw in the 2050 implementation that’s keeping people from choosing it?” he asks.

Miller is not opposed to 2050 tweaks, but he says the overall concept remains sound. “I think the goals are appropriate or relevant,” he says, arguing that without 2050, “we could just see the eastern county carved up in lots, with no real guarantee that the habitats are going to be protected and with everything kind of spread out.” He calls such development “rural sprawl.”

“This question comes up: Well, it’s only 2012 and we’ve got a 2050 plan. Do we need to be nervous that it’s not working or is everything on track?” he asks.

While he is not directly involved enough to have a “strong opinion,” and he would like to see statistics on all the different types of new developments being built, Miller says his inclination would be to “let it ride” for now.

Lobeck calls the situation a “payoff” to the commissioners’ “patrons.” Neal served as an “honorary host” at a September fundraiser for Robinson; Schroeder-Manatee President and CEO Rex Jensen was on the “host committee.” Neal also backed Hines, and several companies associated with Lakewood Ranch donated to his campaign.

“I would think it would raise alarm bells if someone asked the fox how to redesign the henhouse,” Lobeck says. “That’s effectively what the County Commission is doing.” 



PONDERING THE FUTURE

Chain-link fencing surrounds the former Community Garden parcel on Boulevard of the Arts in the Rosemary District. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY STAFF ASKS RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS HOW THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE ROSEMARY DISTRICT TRANSFORMED

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

A one-acre parcel sparked a broad community discussion about the future of the Rosemary District on Monday, Dec. 10. City Manager Tom Barwin opened the meeting by saying the city-owned land could be a catalyst for redevelopment of the historically depressed area adjacent to downtown, north of Fruitville Road.

A “varsity team” for the city attended the meeting, including a host of planners. Chief Planner Ryan Chapdelain was the moderator.

The “catalyst” to which Barwin referred is the old Community Garden parcel on Sixth Street (aka Boulevard of the Arts). It lies adjacent to a city-owned parking lot on Fifth Street; together, they comprise just a tad more than one acre.

“You have a moment in time where the development world is going to get active again. Interest rates are at an all-time low. It’s a heaven-sent opportunity to do an increase in density.”

Ian Black
Realtor

Current zoning of the two properties is Downtown Edge, which allows 25 dwelling units per acre and a five-story maximum height. But Chapdelain said, “Anything is possible. There are incen-

tives the city can offer to develop this site. We've heard in the past mixed-use might fit."

OPEN MIC

Virtually none of the audience members identified themselves as the microphone was passed from speaker to speaker. One question that struck to the heart of the discussion came up early: "What does the Rosemary District want to be? Right now, it's half blight."

Chapdelain's answer was surprising to some. "It is not the city's role to provide that answer," he said. "It should come from the stakeholders who live and work in the district."

Devin Rutkowski suggested the current code allows "accessory dwelling units," such as a cottage behind a main house. "That could double the density with small apartments," he suggested. But under current rules, the idea does not work, said Tim Litchet, the city's director of building, zoning and neighborhoods.

Chapdelain emphasized the appeal of the Rosemary District. "As the economy begins to bounce back, we want to make the area as attractive as we can," he said. "There is proximity to downtown; the zoning is in place; there are a lot of opportunities."

"The Rosemary District is almost like a blank palette," said one stakeholder. "A lot of good things are happening there. It seems to me it offers the opportunity to be a bit more edgy than downtown or Towles Court," said one person, referring to the art district near Laurel Park, on the other side of downtown.

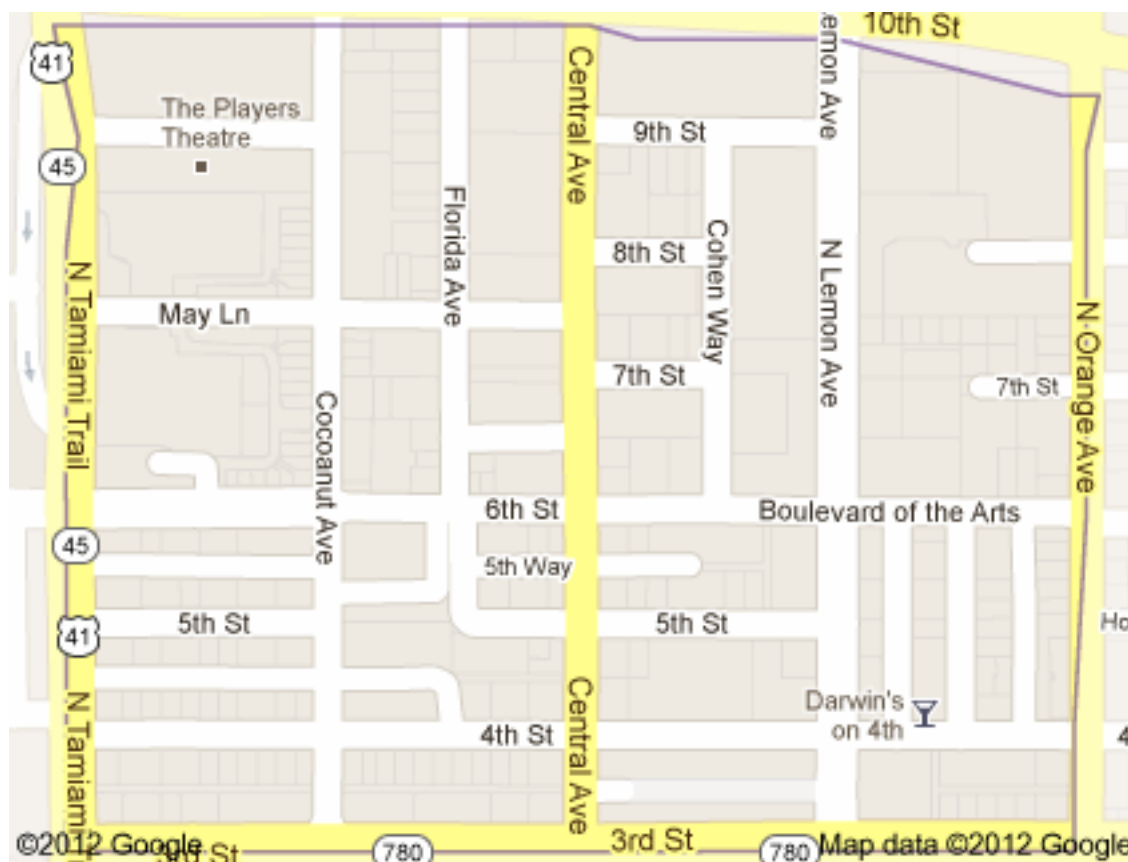
Downtown Edge zoning allows and encourages multi-use buildings. Citrus Square on North Orange Avenue is an example, with townhomes above retail space, allowing a live-work experience.

'ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE'

Chapdelain asked, "Is anybody interested in going to Downtown Core [zoning] from Downtown Edge?" The change would allow significantly greater development, with 50 dwelling units per acre possible and a height of up to 10 stories. Yet, the idea drew few takers.

"We're asking for increased density, but not towers," said property owner Jim Lampl.

Realtor Ian Black, who has a vested interest in the area, said, "You have a moment in time where the development world is going to get active again. Interest rates are at an all-time low.



A map shows the boundaries of the Rosemary District. Image from Google Maps

It's a heaven-sent opportunity to do an increase in density."


Another property owner stressed the need for more than just residential or office space. "I own a large property on Central Avenue. We need people, but we also need retail, art galleries, coffee shops. If it's development just for people to live in, it will kill the Rosemary District," the person said.

Virginia Hoffman, a city advisory committee member, noted that north of the district, the land is zoned Light Industrial. "That is prime for an overlay district for live-work. This [plan] must remain affordable," she said. "This

one-acre lot is not a magic bullet for the Rosemary [District]. What's around this makes it good, too."

A variety of ideas were batted about in the 70-minute session. Condominiums, townhouses, live-work space, overlay district(s), parking alternatives, tax incentives and more were mentioned.

But it all comes back to the two city-owned lots comprising one acre. In the near future, the city will release an "intention to negotiate" request for proposals for that one acre.

"It won't say what we want," said one senior city official. "You tell us." 

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MOVING FORWARD WITH BONDS

PARKING STATISTICS	
EXISTING PARKING	
814 PAVED PARKING (INCLUDES 12 HANDICAP)	
6 PAVED RV PARKING	
6 PAVED CONCESSION PARKING	
6 UNPAVED LIFE GUARD / SHERIFF PARKING	
3 UNPAVED MAINTENANCE PARKING	
837 TOTAL	
PROPOSED PARKING	
631 PAVED PARKING (INCLUDES 18 HANDICAP)	
317 PAVED RV PARKING	
10 PAVED RV PARKING	
9 PAVED MAINTENANCE PARKING	
967 TOTAL	

LEGEND	
1 MULTI-PURPOSE OVERLOOK / SHELTER	21 OPEN SPACE (4,700' x 3,000')
2 EXISTING OVERLOOK	22 EXISTING PICNIC SHELTER (25' x 40')
3 15' PEDESTRIAN ESPLANADE	23 2-POLE SHELTERS WITH GRILLS
4 VEHICULAR DROP-OFF	24 LARGE MULTI-PURPOSE SHELTER (40' x 70')
5 SCAT BUS STOP	25 TRANSIT STOP
6 RENOVATED REST ROOMS	26 TENNIS COURTS
7 HISTORIC PAVILION	27 DRIVE-THRU COVERED STORAGE
8 NEW CONCESSION / RETAIL FACILITY	28 MAINTENANCE FACILITY (26' x 46')
9 CONCESSION COMMISSARY / FIRST AID	29 TRASH COMPACTOR (8' x 24')
10 PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING	30 LANDSCAPE BUFFER
11 SERVICE AREA	31 EXISTING FIRE STATION
12 ENTRY COURT	32 SHADED ESPLANADE SEATING
13 RENOVATED PAVILION (25' x 25')	33 ICONIC GATEWAY FEATURE
14 NEW BEACH CONCESSION FACILITY	34 PAVEMENT TREATMENT
15 NEW REST ROOMS	35 HANDICAP ACCESS MAT
16 OBSERVATION DECK	
17 ADA ACCESS RAMP / NATURE TRAIL	
18 PICNIC AREA	
19 PLAYGROUND	
20 PICNIC SHELTER	

Siesta Beach

Adjusted Preliminary Design Plan - Base Project

SARASOTA COUNTY
SARASOTA, FLORIDA



Suggested

Base Project: \$21,500,000

(Includes \$16,700,000 for construction)

ITEMS NOT IN SUGGESTED BASE PROJECT:

- BEACH ROAD PAVERS
- MAINTENANCE AREA COVERED STRUCTURE
- MULTI-PURPOSE STRUCTURE / EVENT AREA

A graphic illustration shows the proposed basic Siesta Beach park planned improvements, at a total cost of \$21.5 million. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION AUTHORIZES FINAL DESIGN AND BIDDING OUT OF THE SIESTA PUBLIC BEACH PROJECT, WITH FUNDING FROM BOND REVENUE BUT WITH A CHANGE IN HOW CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT WILL BE HANDLED

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

After close to two hours of discussion and public comments combined, the Sarasota County Commission voted unanimously on Tuesday, Dec. 11, to authorize staff to complete the design of the Siesta Public Beach project and put it out for bid, with the cost not to exceed \$21.5 million.

The amount includes \$16.7 million estimated for the actual construction, with the rest allocated to engineering and architectural consulting fees.

The motion also permitted staff to seek supplemental bids for 10 “extras” for the project that the design team had suggested.

In making the motion, however, Commissioner Joe Barbetta went against staff recommendations for oversight of the actual work. He included in his motion direction for the county to hire a construction manager instead of an outside company to handle construction engineering inspection (CEI).

Mark Smith, a Siesta architect and the chairman of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce — who reviewed the design plans at the behest of commissioners — had proposed the board pursue the employment of a construction manager to save money.



Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce Chairman Mark Smith discusses the Siesta Beach improvements during the Dec. 6 Siesta Key Association meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Staff and commissioner comments suggested the county would net more than \$1 million in savings by taking that step.

The commissioners also approved the use of bond funds to pay for the project to be undertaken at one time, instead of doing it piecemeal as funds were made available through Fiscal Year 2024.

Chairwoman Christine Robinson was the only board member to vote “No” on the bond motion.

“We have dire needs for our roads in our community,” she said, referencing information provided during the meeting by county Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr.: Approximately \$14 million had been lost in revenue for paving projects. “This is a quality of life issue for our community,” she said, noting the commissioners receive complaints every day about the county’s dilapidated road surfaces.

Robinson also pointed to a statement by Steve Botelho, the county’s chief financial planning officer. While the county could afford to sell bonds to pay for both the Siesta Beach project and new infrastructure and radios for the county’s emergency services responders, Botelho said the combination would create a “lean situation” until probably Fiscal Year 2017 or 2018, meaning the board would not have sufficient funds to cover any other major expenses that might arise.

“This is a very worthy project,” Robinson said of the beach improvements. Her vote, she added, “is not a reflection on the project itself. ... I really have an issue with tying up our future commissioners’ hands.”

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Although commissioners since early November had voiced dismay and criticized staff over the delay in completing the design of the beach park improvements, none of them raised questions during their Dec. 11 regular meeting about why the project had been delayed.

Representatives of the consulting firm on the project — Kimley-Horn and Associates — along with Carolyn Brown, general manager of the county’s Parks and Recreation Department; Botelho; and Hank Schneider, operations manager of the Mobility/Facilities Office, addressed the board following the public comments portion of the meeting. Smith and Siesta Key Association President Catherine Luckner were among the four members of the public who took the opportunity to speak to the board at the outset of the afternoon session of the meeting.

Brown offered a quick overview of the project, followed by Michael L. Sturm of Kimley-Horn, who reviewed the basic proposed improvements.

Then William D. Waddill of Kimley-Horn ran down a list of 10 optional amenities that could be included in the project at a total cost of \$4,125,000. Among them were a covered storage and work area structure in the maintenance section of the park (\$90,000), replacement of the existing dune walkovers (\$300,000) and adding more light poles and fixtures as well as upgrading the lighting to state-of-the-art, turtle-friendly amber LED lights (\$990,000).

(A note regarding the walkovers pointed out, “This will upgrade one of the walkovers to allow vehicle loads for maintenance equipment”)

Botelho told the board that a \$14 million bond issue would provide the funds needed to complete the project at \$21.5 million, as the county already had \$7.5 million in hand from surtax revenue. “We wouldn’t even be coming back with the borrow until late next summer,” Botelho added.

However, if the county issued those bonds and \$26 million in bonds to pay for the replace-

ment of the 800 MHz emergency radio system, he noted, 70 percent of the county’s revenue would be going toward debt service.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The first commissioner comment to be parried by staff focused on the amount of time anticipated to complete the project. After Barbetta mentioned the county could take advantage of lower construction costs by issuing bonds for the funding and getting the work finished in 18 months, Schneider told him, “We’re proposing 27 months [of] construction time.”

“At once? All at once?” Barbetta replied. “I’d be a little shocked at that.”

Schneider referred Barbetta to a staff memo about the project dated Nov. 9, which included the 27-month timetable.

Then Waddill jumped in: “My opinion is that the project could be constructed in a shorter period of time.”

Commissioner Charles Hines agreed with Barbetta about the need to have the work done all



(From left) Sarasota County staff members Rob LaDue, Carolyn Eastwood and Curtis Smith — all of whom have been involved with the Siesta Beach project — listen to public comments during the Dec. 11 County Commission meeting. At right is Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, who is a Siesta resident. Photo by Rachel Hackney

at one time, but he also speculated the project could be completed in less time than 27 months.

“I support what Commissioners Barbetta and Hines have said about completing the project all at once as a borrow,” Vice Chairwoman Carolyn Mason said.

“I want it bonded, too,” said Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, “but I don’t want it bonded necessarily at the price that is on the table.”

When Patterson further questioned the additional amenities at the \$4,125,000 estimate, Waddill reminded her those items could be bid out separately as alternates to the base project.

Robinson asked Botelho whether the county would have to delay or cut back any other initiatives linked to its surtax revenue if it pursued bond issues for both the beach and the 800 MHz projects. Botelho responded that he foresaw no problems.

County Administrator Randall Reid emphasized, “The program is lean, but you can do it all.”

Robinson later pointed out that the cost of asphalt was rising. “That’s where the lean program in the future would have to be looked at,” she said.

At Robinson’s request, Harriott stepped to the podium to point out that the board originally approved \$122.5 million in surtax funding for road resurfacing. The downturn in the economy had resulted in that amount being reduced to \$108 million, he said.

When Patterson turned the discussion again to the 10 supplemental features for the park plan, Barbetta referenced Smith’s estimate that the base project could be completed for \$13 million. Barbetta said, “I personally think somewhere between Mark Smith’s numbers and [the \$21.5 million estimate] is the right number.”

Even with the 10 upgraded features included, Barbetta added, he expected the total cost would end up being between \$16 million and \$17 million.

“The longer we wait, the more costly it’s going to be. There might be another 12 to 18 months of decent pricing” in the construction industry, he added.

“We’ve been frozen [on the beach plan] for five months at 60 percent design. We can’t wait another eight months.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



THE CONSTRUCTION MANAGER FACTOR

When Barbetta initiated dialogue about whether the county could hire a construction management firm instead of a CEI for the project, Schneider said it could take up to eight months to get a construction management company on board.

“Why can’t it be done in 30 to 60 days?” Barbetta asked. “We’ve been frozen [on the beach plan] for five months at 60 percent design. We can’t wait another eight months.”

Schneider replied that it would take six weeks just to schedule a board vote on a construction management firm after the Procurement Department put the job out for bids and assessed the responses.

The county’s procurement official, Ted Coyman, told the commissioners it would take 90

to 120 days for his office to take care of its part of hiring a construction manager.

Sturm and Waddill agreed the county could end up paying much less by using a construction manager. Waddill explained how the firm utilized that process to build the new Riverwalk complex in Bradenton. A construction manager would hire the contractors to handle the work and keep the project on schedule, he said. “[It] is perhaps a good way to go,” he said. “You’ve selected them as basically your construction partner.”

“We’re already on the team as the engineer of record and the architect of record,” Sturm said. “[You would be] paying [a CEI] to do what we’ve already done.”

Schneider then took close to four minutes to read from material explaining how the county

uses CEIs, noting they are “an impartial third party” ensuring adherence to the design as well as quality control.

Barbetta said he expected the county could hire a construction manager for \$250,000. Schneider noted county staff normally estimates 10 percent of a project for the cost of CEI; in this case, that would be \$1.67 million.

Hines concurred with Barbetta that the CEI cost was too high.

“We could have a couple of engineers for a couple of hundred thousand dollars,” Patterson said, “and we would come out way ahead.”

Schneider then said the cost probably would be closer to \$300,000 for a construction manager.



Commissioners Charles Hines and Christine Robinson listen to remarks by staff and consultants during the Dec. 11 board meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

"That's still ahead," Patterson pointed out.

"We hear your complaints about the CEI element," Schneider said. "We'll try and turn [this] around in the next few weeks and get that thing advertised about as quick as possible."

After Barbetta made his motion to proceed with the completion of the design work, the hiring of a construction manager and bidding out the project without exceeding the \$21.5 million budget, Patterson said, "I think it's too much. I think we should try to make it less."

"That's why I said 'not to exceed,'" Barbetta replied.

"I guess I just want it clearly understood that I think that cost is too high," Patterson said.

"I think we all agree it's too high," Hines said, "and that's why we want to get the bids out there ... and then we can decide whether to approve [the contract]."

THE AFTERMATH

Following the vote, SKA President Catherine Luckner told *The Sarasota News Leader* she felt the commissioners should have subtract-


ed the CEI cost from the \$21.5 million. She was concerned the project still was too expensive, she added.

She and representatives of other Siesta organizations had agreed with Smith's assessment that a number of items could have been omitted from the base project, she added.

The primary concern of the island groups, Luckner has pointed out, is that they want to see the project completed in a timely fashion; they have said it does not need as many "bells and whistles" as the design team has proposed.

In an interview, Smith told the *News Leader*, "I think there is a certain fatigue with the project, but [the commissioners] made the right decision in moving forward."

He was pleased the vote included the hiring of a construction manager, he added, "to bring this project in on budget."

Parks and Recreation General Manager Brown told the *News Leader*, "I'm happy that we got some direction and can move the project forward." 

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UNDER SCRUTINY

Outdoor tables are common at restaurants on Main Street and on St. Armands. Photo by Norman Schimmel

BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS WANT TO SEE CAFÉ OWNERS KEEPING UMBRELLAS OVER OUTDOOR TABLES OUT OF THE WAY OF PEDESTRIANS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Sidewalk cafés lend an air of insouciance to Sarasota — until the umbrella pokes you in the eye. Then life is not so carefree. Cafés are encroaching on pedestrian space, say the chairmen of both the St. Armands and Downtown improvement districts. And that is going to change.

St. Armands' Business Improvement District Chairman Marty Rapaport and the Downtown Improvement District Chairman Ernie Ritz took a sidewalk stroll through

both areas, and they separately told the same tale afterward: "Tables and chairs are encroaching on sidewalks."

The cafés lease the sidewalk area from the City of Sarasota on an annual basis. The city, in return, requires at least a six-foot-wide walkway to remain, to handle foot traffic and wheelchairs.

For no more than two outdoor tables, the cost is \$274; a café owner or operator pays \$50 for each additional table. Renewals

If you are walking and talking to a friend, it would be easy to get jabbed in the eye.

Ernie Ritz
Chairman
Downtown Improvement District

are \$274 for up to two tables and \$25 for each additional table on the city-owned sidewalk.


Ritz and Rappaport's tour turned up problems, especially with overhanging umbrellas.

"They're at eye level," said Ritz. "If you are walking and talking to a friend, it would be easy to get jabbed in the eye."

In addition to the umbrellas, the tables and chairs are slowly inching into the walkway, the men indicated.

"I had trouble with seating in the walking area," said Rappaport. "We need regulations to make it safer and easier to implement."

Both organizations tax businesses in their areas, then provide improvements. One of those services is regular sidewalk cleaning. Over time, representatives of the two organizations report, they have found that the sidewalks by cafés require the most cleaning of any areas.

Ritz and Rappaport say they would like to convince café operators to comply with existing regulations instead of opting to receive citations from the city's code enforcement officers for impeding traffic and blocking sidewalks. 



Business organization representatives on St. Armands and in downtown Sarasota do not want pedestrian traffic to be impeded by umbrellas over café tables. Photo by Norman Schimmel

struck the garage two days before the collapse, but he emphasized it was too soon to say whether that incident had contributed to the situation.

The collapse still was under investigation, Stuckey told the commissioners. It could take months or a year or so before the cause is determined, he added.

“In our research,” Stuckey continued, “we basically have found ... that Ajax has been very compliant and very performance-driven in dealing with the construction of EOCs and 911 centers across the state of Florida.”

Moreover, Stuckey said, it did not appear that any of the construction team involved in the Miami-Dade project would be working on the Sarasota County EOC.

“We’ve been getting nothing but glowing reports back as far as the professionalism and their performance,” he added of comments the Sarasota County Emergency Services staff had been receiving about Ajax.

A group from the Sarasota County Public Safety Office recently traveled to Volusia County, where Ajax is working on a new EOC/911 center, and spent about three or four hours looking at that project, Stuckey said.

The same Ajax team working on that project is expected to handle the Sarasota County EOC work, he added.

Sarasota County officials also had talked with people in Baker County, where Ajax was the contractor for the Sheriff’s public safety complex, Stuckey said. That project was completed about three years ago.

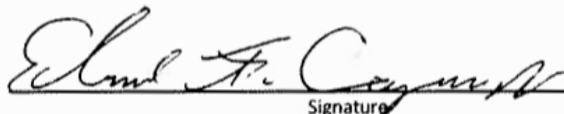
REQUEST FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES EVALUATION SUMMARY - SHORTLIST
RPS 111404PB CONSTRUCTION MANAGER FOR THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER
SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

PROPOSERS (listed alphabetically)	EVALUATOR #1	EVALUATOR #2	EVALUATOR #3	EVALUATOR #4	EVALUATOR #5	TOTAL COMMITTEE POINTS	AVERAGE COMMITTEE POINTS	CALCULATED BY		
								MBE POINTS (CALCULATED BY PROCUREMENT)	SUM OF CALCULATED + AVG COMMITTEE POINTS	PROPOSER SHORTLIST RANKING
Ajax/Tandem Construction	19	19	18	19	14	89	17.8	0.0	17.8	1
Biltmore Construction Company, Inc.	17	17	18	19	15	86	17.2	0.5	17.7	2
Brooks & Freund, LLC	9	8	12	8	9	46	9.2	0.0	9.2	11
GATES Butz Institutional Construction, LLC	15	17	16	16	13	77	15.4	0.5	15.9	5
Jon F. Swift, Inc	11	12	17	13	8	61	12.2	0.0	12.2	10
Lend Lease (US) Construction, Inc	13	15	18	15	11	72	14.4	0.0	14.4	8
Manhattan Construction (Florida), Inc	13	17	17	16	18	81	16.2	0.0	16.2	4
McIntyre Elwell & Strammer	11	10	15	16	11	63	12.6	0.0	12.6	9
Mills Gilbane/Halfacre	13	15	18	16	14	76	15.2	0.5	15.7	6
Owen-Ames-Kimball Company	15	14	17	16	11	73	14.6	0.5	15.1	7
Willis A. Smith Construction, Inc	17	14	18	18	16	83	16.6	0.0	16.6	3

Chair's Approval

Edward F. Coyman Jr.

Name



Signature

9-25-2012

Date

A document shows the ranking of companies that bid to handle the construction management work for the new Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center. Chart courtesy Sarasota County

“They’re using it without any problems,” he noted.

Ajax was ranked the top choice out of 11 respondents to the Sarasota County EOC project through two different assessments, Stuckey added.

After Robinson clarified that Tandem Construction of Sarasota would be working with Ajax on the county’s new EOC/911 center, Stuckey responded that both Ajax and Tandem had more than 40 years of experience with projects such as the EOC.

“Tandem has an amazing reputation here,” Robinson said.

When Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out that “this is only the first section of this job,” Stuckey concurred: “No dirt [will be] turned on this particular process.”


The Emergency Management Services team planned to be back before the board in late summer or the fall of 2013 to give the commissioners an opportunity to vote on the next phase of the EOC construction, Stuckey added.

“Tandem gives me a high level of confidence in this one,” Robinson said.

Commissioner Nora Patterson made the motion to proceed with the contract. Vice Chairwoman Carolyn Mason seconded the motion.

Tobias’ Dec. 11 memo notes that the pre-construction services Ajax and Tandem will be undertaking include “design coordination and constructability reviews, value engineering, preparation of project estimates, schedule refinement, bidding phase services and preparation of a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) for all Construction Phase Services.”


Stuckey also took the opportunity during his remarks to point out that the county’s public safety team had been able to talk with other emergency management and 911 center directors about plans for Sarasota County’s new EOC. “What we learned from all of them was that we are on the right track ... as far as size, functionality and adjacency,” he added.

The EOC will be constructed on a parcel the county owns on Cattlemen Road at the Porter Way intersection. The cost of the project has been estimated at \$14,269,279. The County Commission voted May 22 to proceed with the construction. It is to be completed before the start of the 2014 hurricane season, which officially begins June 1 each year. 

QUICK TIP

SARASOTA NEWS LEADER



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



SHELTER STANDARDS

Work continues on the rebuilding of Booker High School on North Orange Avenue in Sarasota. The school had some of the oldest structures in the district. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES FUNDING TO MAKE MOST OF THE REBUILT BOOKER HIGH SCHOOL SUITABLE AS A HURRICANE SHELTER

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

After being reassured by staff that state law does not require the Sarasota County Schools to make as much of the rebuilt Booker High School suitable for a hurricane shelter as the county needs, the Sarasota County Commission voted unanimously on Dec. 11 to fund the completion of the project.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta had objected to the \$1,004,822 funding request during the board's Dec. 4 regular meeting. The commission then postponed the vote one week while staff researched the matter further.

A Dec. 11 memo to the commission from Mike Tobias, the county's emergency services executive director, says, "Local Emergency Management agencies are required by the State Division of Emergency Management to address shelter deficit reduction strategies, which include retrofits and rebuilds. The State Board of Education requires local School Boards

to ensure that new educational facilities can serve as public shelters for emergency management purposes."

It adds, "Within the scope of the upgrades are an increased design wind load from 130 mph to 170 mph and increasing the [Enhanced Hurricane Protection Area] from the required 50 percent to 100 percent less the Media Center, and any Labs and Administration."

The memo notes that once the Booker project is completed — in 2013 — the county will have a 24-hour shelter with space for about 2,400 people.

The district's total cost of the Booker construction is about \$58 million, Scott Ferguson, spokesman for the school district, told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

On Sept. 4, the School Board signed the agreement to work with the county for the Booker High hurricane shelter project, Tobias' memo points out.

"What we do is work with [the school district] cooperatively to get additional [shelter] space," Sarasota County Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane told Barbetta on Dec. 11 during the commission's regular meeting in Sarasota.

“What we do is work with [the school district] cooperatively to get additional [shelter] space.”

Ed McCrane
Chief
Emergency Management

The Booker High agreement would make an extra 36,000 square feet of space available "in a very critical area of the community," McCrane added.

Anne M. Miller, the logistics chief in the county's Emergency Management Office, pointed out the School Board constructs its facilities to the specifications of the Florida Building Code. "What we ask them to do is to go beyond that 50 percent [mark] to near 100 percent," Miller added.

Repeating a comment he made Dec. 4, Barbetta said he wanted to be sure the county did not shoulder an expense that should be the responsibility of the School Board.

A Florida statute that went into effect in January says funds should be available from the Public Education Capital Outlay Fund to help districts meet hurricane-resistance standards in school construction, he noted.

The Legislature had not provided money for the PECO fund in the past two years, Miller responded. Moreover, she said, she had checked with the Florida Division of Emergency Management about other funding options for Booker High, and none was available.

"I know we have an interlocal or some kind of agreement with the schools for upgrades," Barbetta said. "I think what troubled me the most is the perception that there are no funds available" for the school district to seek.

He added that the state collects taxes on gas sales and communication services, and it receives fees from power companies to contribute to the PECO fund. [Florida Tax Watch](#) anticipates

money being in that fund in 2013, he added.

Yet, Scott Lempe, the district's chief operating officer, had said the district had not applied for PECO money the past two years, Barbetta continued.

"I would think they would at least apply before we gave them money," Barbetta said. "If they get rejected, fine. Then, we work with our legislative delegation, because the statute clearly says that PECO funds are available ..."

Miller reiterated that the district was not required to provide hurricane enhancements beyond the 50 percent mark.

"If you're going to assure me that our million dollars are for things that aren't required by anybody but us —" Barbetta said.

"I can assure you of that, sir," Miller replied.

In the future, the district should apply for any available funding for shelters before coming to the county for money, Barbetta said.

"For future programs, we can work with them on that," Miller replied.

Barbetta then made the motion to approve the funding. Vice Chairwoman Carolyn Mason seconded the motion. 



PAYNE PARK SPOTLIGHT

A child demonstrates disc golf. Contributed/City of Sarasota

FOCUS ON CITY FACILITY COMES AS A RESULT OF A POSSIBLE NEW LEASH LAW, UPGRADED AMENITIES AND A SKATEBOARD PARK PACKAGE SNAFU

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Sarasota County has rules requiring all dogs to be on leashes in parks, except where cities allow them to run free. The City of Sarasota has ruled all city parks are leash-free except Gillespie Park, Arlington Park and Bayfront (Island) Park, where leashes are required.

However, after complaints at Payne Park, city staffers are looking to add it to the areas requiring leashes. Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown says if staff members believe the leash law should be required for health and safety reasons, they will appear before the City Commission with that recommendation.

The commission could ask an ordinance be drafted and set for public hearing before mak-

ing a final decision. Staff alone cannot amend the existing ordinance, said Brown.

Current regulations allow leashes no longer than 26 feet in the three parks requiring them. One small wrinkle on leashes applies to dogs in Bayfront Park: A dog can go for a swim but must be leashed upon its return from the water. No dog swimming is allowed in the ponds of Gillespie and Arlington parks.

In the three parks allowing unleashed dogs, the animals must stay within 100 feet of their owners and respond to voice control. Sarasota Police Department officers enforce these city regulations.

SHADE AND DISC GOLF COMING

City workers finished creating the support structure last week to provide shade for children at the Payne Park playground. Project Manager Neil Gaines said workers installed the footers and cap for the supports.

The shade cloth and support cables should arrive in mid-January and be installed over the playground and music area. Shade for the playground for small children has already been installed. The park was closed for the support structure installation, and it will be closed again in mid-January to allow the shade cloth to be put up.

Other workers were in the park last week installing “holes” for a disc golf course. Those “holes” are actually metal baskets with chains; players toss flying discs (aka Frisbees) into the baskets.

The Payne Park course will feature nine “holes,” and it is being designed for beginners. North Watertower Park has a more challenging and larger course that has been used in the past for state championship competition.

An introductory course at Payne Park was suggested by

a local disc golfer who competes at the professional level.

MISSING BOX CAUSES SKATE PARK SHUTDOWN


This is another Sarasota “ready-fire-aim” story. When a delivery of \$560 worth of gear went missing last week, Sk8Skool Director Dan Giguere shut down the skateboarding section of Payne Park until the stuff was returned. A thief took it, staff figured.

Sk8Skool is a nonprofit with a three-year contract to run the city-built facility; it charges membership fees.

The shutdown caused howls of outrage from skaters.

Lo and behold, the package had been delivered across the street to the Sarasota Police Department. Acting Chief Paul Sutton said a police volunteer signed for the package and added it to the pile of stuff in a storage room.

A quick detective job by the United Parcel Service turned up the box’s location, and it was returned to the Sk8Skool.

After the snafu was cleared up, the park reopened on Dec. 12. 



Work was being completed this week on shade structures in the Payne Park playground area. Contributed/City of Sarasota



HURRICANE SEASON 2012

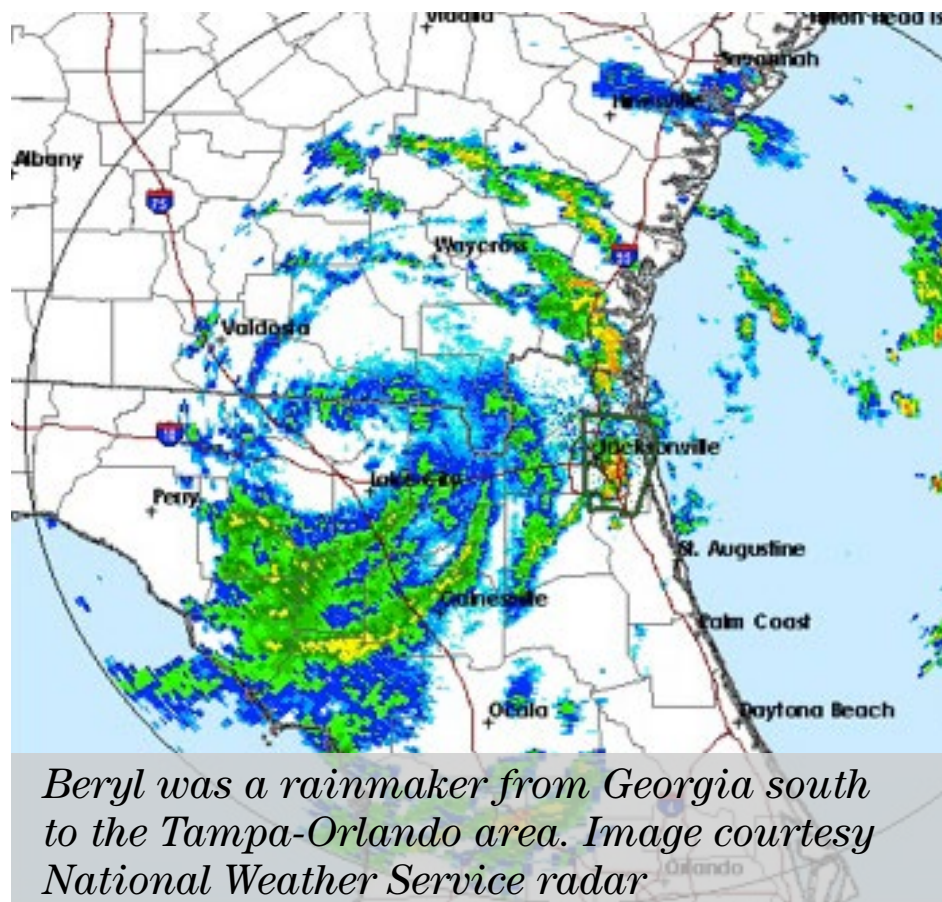
Sarasota County staff member Weiqi Lin took this photo of waves breaking over North Beach Road on Siesta Key when Tropical Storm Debby was lashing the coastline in June. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

STORMS CAME AND MOSTLY WENT, UNTIL SANDY PUT ITS NAME IN THE RECORD BOOKS WITH ITS PRE-ELECTION DEVASTATION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The 2012 hurricane season ended Nov. 30, but considering how it started, we waited to see whether any late-season storms would blow up before putting a cap on this story. Nearly two weeks before the season began, Tropical Storm Alberto was up and running off the coast of South Carolina. It headed off into the mid-Atlantic and threatened nobody. The entire year was a bit like that — with the exception of Hurricane Sandy, which we have already reviewed (*SNL* Nov. 8).

The second storm was also a preemie. Beryl came ashore in St. Mary's (north of Jacksonville) on May 28 as a 40 mph tropical storm



Beryl was a rainmaker from Georgia south to the Tampa-Orlando area. Image courtesy National Weather Service radar

with an unusually low central pressure — 29.53 inches of mercury.

Beryl's Florida landfall made it the first tropical system to hit the state in 18 months. A far more historic figure is 1908 — the last time two tropical systems formed before the 1 June official start of hurricane season.

The early pair this year made hash of the predictions of storm gurus William Gray and Phil Klotzbach at Colorado State University, who said this spring the season would see a lower-than-usual number of storms, with only 10 of them named. In fact, they and AccuWeather marked June 1 by increasing their forecasts. Gray and Klotzbach hiked theirs to 13 storms, and Accuweather bumped its prediction to 12.

Meanwhile, on June 1 Sarasota set an absolute record for rainfall at 2.56 inches. The deluge was unrelated to any tropical system, but it reminded one and all to keep their eyes on the weather.

On June 21, Chris became the first hurricane of the season. It was in the mid-Atlantic and predicted to start doing "donuts." Other storms would follow the lead of Chris.

In the meantime, an area of low pressure was creating clouds and rain in the western Gulf of Mexico; models suggested the system could go anywhere from South Florida to Texas. The system meandered north to near Apalachicola, gained cyclonic characteristics and become Tropical Storm Debby. It drenched Sarasota with up to 13 inches of rain while crossing the peninsula west-to-east to die in the Atlantic.

Debby would be Sarasota's only tangible brush with tropical weather in 2012. Because the storm was north of town, the winds were

west-to-southwest, and they pushed water over Siesta Key Public Beach as well as the seawalls at the downtown Sarasota bayfront. Local flooding was reported inland in the Myakka River Valley.

The winds, while persistent, never topped 40 mph. By June 28, Debby was gone. Isaac would come much, much closer to us but leave hardly a trace.

July passed without a single named storm. A couple of weak low-pressure systems formed up over the Florida peninsula, but nothing came of them. In early August, all the major predictors upgraded their forecasts to "average storm season" from "below average."

The season's first African "pipeline" storm — brewing off the Sahara then crossing the Atlantic and heading into the Caribbean — showed up in early August: Ernesto. It would become a full hurricane just before tearing into Belize on Aug. 10.

As Ernesto crossed Mexico and exited into the Pacific Ocean, three other systems were on the map. One of them would become Tropical Storm Helene, destined to cross central Mexico and join Ernesto to die in the Pacific.

Florence was the next named storm, a mid-Atlantic non-hurricane nobody. It was followed by Gordon, which attained hurricane status but followed Florence's "loop-de-loop" in mid-ocean.

By Aug. 20, the African pipeline was in full force. The National Hurricane Center identified a mid-Atlantic patch of clouds as having a strong potential to develop, and, indeed, two days later, Tropical Storm Isaac approached the Caribbean out-islands. By Aug. 24, its cen-

tral pressure was down to 29.27, but it was not expected to reach hurricane force until after it passed south of Puerto Rico and Hispanola, then went across Cuba and on into the Florida Straits.

While the winds did not reach hurricane force, the “wind field” expanded and grew. On Aug. 25, hurricane warnings were posted from Bonita Beach south to Key West and east to Key Largo. We were in a tropical storm watch situation.

Isaac did not cooperate, pushing ever further west and refusing to strengthen beyond tropical storm force. Its landfall was predicted near the Mississippi/Louisiana border as a Category 1 storm. Only the day before, the target had been St. Marks in the Florida Panhandle.

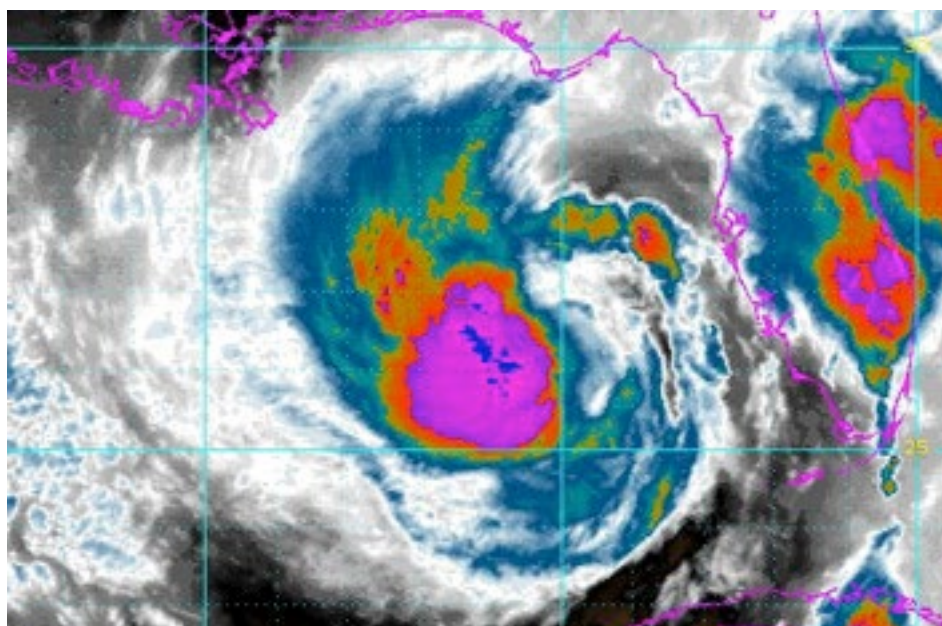
On Aug. 27, Isaac was about 200 miles directly west of Sarasota with a central pressure of 29.18 inches. And like Beryl earlier, the low

central pressure did not translate into higher winds; this meant a broader coverage of “slower” winds. Although the storm was close, all watches and warnings were discontinued for the Florida Peninsula.

On Aug. 28 in the early evening, Isaac closed its eye to achieve the classic hurricane swirl just as it came ashore at the Mississippi delta of Louisiana; it was a slow mover. Up to 20 inches of rain were predicted, along with a 12-foot storm surge.

The storm would eventually break a drought as it tracked through Arkansas, Missouri and Illinois and on into the Ohio River Valley. It eventually flooded Washington, D.C., with 1.64 inches of rain — “the wettest day of the year,” said the *Washington Post*.

In a foreshadowing of Sandy, sections of the D.C. Metro were shut down because of flooding in the tunnels.



Sarasota received very little wind or rain from Isaac, and in this water vapor image, you can see why. Isaac's rain band contained a powerful cell to the east that ended up drenching southeastern Florida. For us, the conditions were just cloudy and breezy. Image courtesy National Hurricane Center



Isaac's 'wind swath' is epic but not strong. All of Cuba and Hispaniola, half of Puerto Rico and half of the Florida peninsula fell under its skirts. Image courtesy National Hurricane Center

LABOR DAY DEMARCATION

It is a tradition that somewhere on Labor Day weekend, a hurricane is blowing. For 2012, the tradition was maintained by Leslie in the mid-Atlantic. But it did not last long. By Saturday evening, it was downgraded to a tropical storm. Leslie maintained that status for more than a week before passing north of Newfoundland.

Both Leslie and Michael formed in the mid-Atlantic and veered northeast. Michael eventually became a Category 3 storm (the only “major hurricane” of the season). Neither was a threat to land, except for Leslie’s flirt with Newfoundland.

Tropical Storm Nadine formed Sept. 13 in the same area of the mid-Atlantic and suffered the same influence, pushed away from North America. Nadine, however, proved a boomerang storm, turning east then south and heading back to the Cape Verde Islands, which are the birthplace of tropical waves that become storms and hurricanes.

Nadine endured until Oct. 4, falling a week short of setting an all-time record for cyclone longevity. It did tie for second place, however, with 1971’s Ginger at 21 days. The record-holder is an impressive 28 days — a month-long

cyclone. That record belongs to an unnamed storm in 1899.

Tropical storms Oscar and Patty rose up in mid-October, but both were pushed away from the U.S. mainland into the Atlantic by high pressure. Ditto for Hurricane Rafael, which thrashed Bermuda but stayed away from the United States.

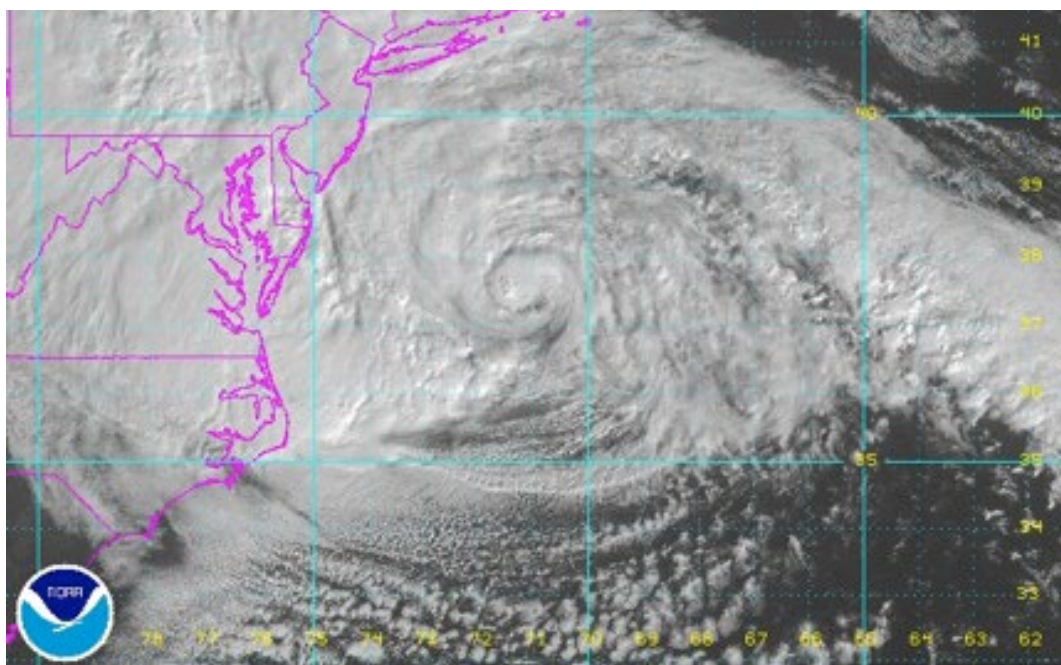
THE BIG ONE OF THE SEASON

With five weeks to go in the 2012 hurricane season, “Invest 99L” formed south of Jamaica. The models seemed to push it in the same direction as Rafael, trending east toward the Bahamas. On Oct. 22 it received its name — Sandy. The storm was expected to cross Jamaica and Cuba, with the mountainous territory predicted to steal its strength.

A tropical storm watch was posted for the Florida Keys at noon Oct. 24. *The Washington Post* scored the weather scoop of the year about 10 p.m. that day when it posted mod-

els and maps galore indicating the storm was headed for landfall north of Chesapeake Bay and expected to raise huge mischief. The newspaper noted landfall could be at high tide, exacerbating the storm surge.

And the *Post* said that as the storm moved inland, a tremendous Octo-



By Oct. 29, Sandy was fully formed and already merging with a strong, early-season cold front. The combined weather systems are immense in size. Image courtesy National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

ber snowfall could be in the offing for higher altitudes. (hurricane snow??!!)

“Some models suggest over a foot of heavy, wet snow could fall in places like western Maryland and central and western Pennsylvania. This amount of snow on top of existing foliage could result in tremendous damage and power outages,” the newspaper reported.

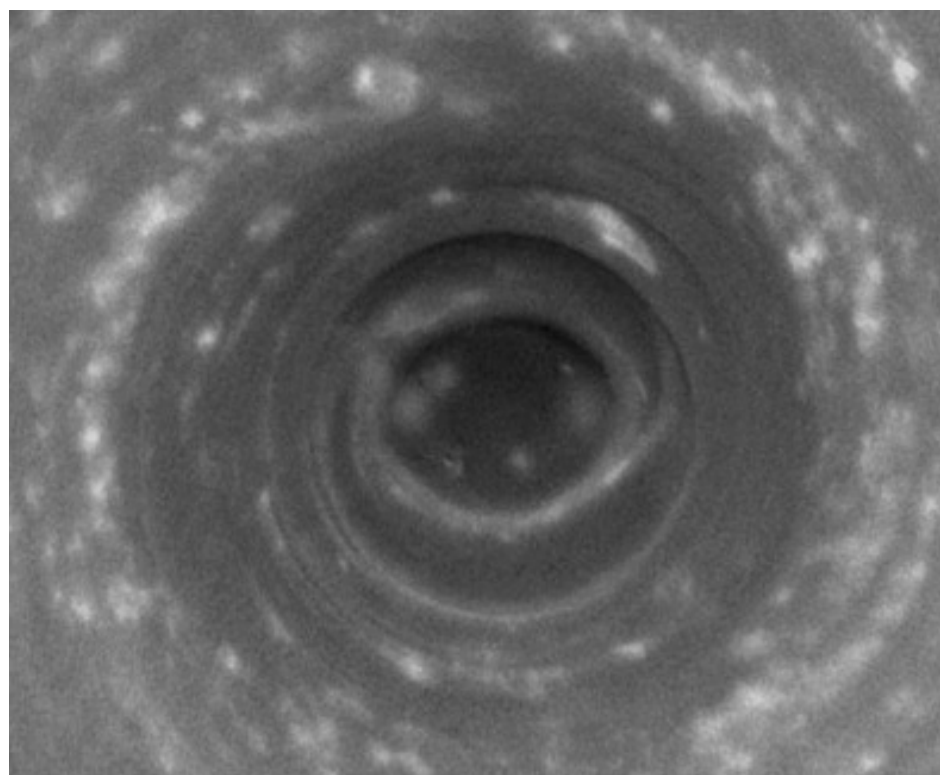
Sandy survived Jamaica and Cuba then bore down on the Bahamas. The Palm Beach offshore forecast advised seas would be running 22 to 32 feet, with winds to 70 knots. Sandy was at that point a Category 2 storm.

The cyclone emerged from the Bahamas as a Category 1 storm, but with a vastly expanded wind field. By midnight Oct. 27, tropical storm force winds extended out 520 miles from the center, meaning the diameter of tropical storm force winds was 1,000-plus miles. Central pressure in the storm was 28.35 inches.

Hurricane Sandy — like Isaac — had a very difficult time “closing the loop” to create an eye and all-round circulation. But once it did form an eye — again like Isaac, only hours before landfall — it strengthened mightily.

At 2 p.m. Oct. 29, the central pressure was 27.76 (a one-quarter-inch drop in three hours!) and sustained winds were up to 90 mph. The storm had a forward speed of 28 mph. Thus, on the “wrong side” — e.g., the northeastern side of the storm — sustained winds were 118 mph when storm speed was added to wind speed.

Tropical storm force winds were felt between South Carolina and Maine. Six million people lost power, some for weeks. Storm surges




Spotted by the space probe Cassini earlier this year, this cyclone on Saturn is about the diameter of the planet Earth, and it could be more than a billion years old. Image courtesy NASA and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory

smashed homes along New Jersey and Long Island.

Sandy could be the largest hurricane disaster in United States history, at least in monetary terms. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 toppled New Orleans levees, resulting in massive flooding. The federal government spent \$19.6 billion in hurricane aid after Katrina.

On Dec. 9 President Barak Obama asked Congress for a \$60.4 billion “emergency aid package to assist recovery efforts from Hurricane Sandy.” New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the storm damaged or destroyed 305,000 homes and 265,000 businesses. Katrina (and Rita a month later) damaged or destroyed 215,000 homes and 18,500 businesses.

It could be worse. If you lived at the south pole of the planet Saturn, you would endure a perpetual hurricane with winds of more than 300 miles per hour. 



NEWS BRIEFS

Members of the Gulf Gate Elementary School Student Council prepare Shoe Boxes for Seniors: (Front row, from left) Anna Edelstein, Lily Houser, Hannah Yost, Joseph Callaway and Matthew Fett; (back row, from left) Student Council Advisor Debbie Lacy, Trent Schnathmann, Raina Meyers, Isabella Garland, Aundrianna Twigg, Kaia Clark-Toth and Hunter Harting.

GULF GATE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS DONATE SHOE BOXES FOR SENIORS

The Gulf Gate Elementary School Student Council recently contributed 79 shoeboxes filled with gifts to the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune's* Shoe Boxes for Seniors project.

The boxes, which will be distributed to needy seniors in nursing homes, are filled with soap, combs, brushes, nail clippers and other health and beauty items, bedroom slippers, magazines and more, a school district news release says.

“As they’ve done in the past, our students were happy to help with this worthwhile project,” said Gulf Gate Elementary Principal Robin Magac. “Many of our students, parents and

staff members contributed items for the boxes and the Student Council members boxed them up for the project. I’m so glad our students realize the importance of giving back to their community.”

The Gulf Gate school family joined other donors in the area who prepared Shoe Boxes for Seniors and Santa’s Shoe Boxes filled with items for disadvantaged children, the release points out. Last year more than 8,000 shoe boxes with gifts from people throughout Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte counties were delivered to seniors and children, the release notes.

CHURCH TO ACCEPT BIKES FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota is sponsoring a bike and bike parts collection on December 15 from noon to 3:00 pm. The event will take place in the UUCS parking lot and is co-sponsored by Suncoast Community Bikes, a start-up nonprofit for bikes for the poor. The organization collects, repairs, and

distributes bicycles and bicycle parts, but steady donations are needed to keep the program going. If you cannot stop by on December 15, you can call Ryan Feller at 894-4333 to arrange a bike pick-up. For more information, contact El Parent at 206-6201.

HOUSING AUTHORITY, POLICE HELPING UNDERPRIVILEGED YOUTHS

The Sarasota Housing Authority, City of Sarasota Police Department and Target are partnering to provide underprivileged youths with a unique holiday experience, the City of Sarasota has announced.

The Sarasota Housing Authority's Honor the Badge shopping event is a new initiative designed to help build a good relationship between law enforcement officials and children of families living in Sarasota Housing Authority communities, a city news release says. Honor the Badge is pairing 75 local underprivileged children with local law enforcement officers, including incoming Sarasota Chief of Police Bernadette DiPino and Acting Chief Paul Sutton, to shop for holiday gifts at a local Target, the release adds.

Thanks to donations from local businesses, religious organizations and individuals prior to the event, the Sarasota Housing Authority provided the funds for the gifts to be purchased by the police officers, the release points out.

"Having a safe, strong, vibrant community begins with having mutual respect and trust between community members and the men

and women sworn to protect them," said Sarasota Housing Authority's Executive Director William Russell in the news release. "Honor the Badge works to build this respect and trust through this fun and positive experience during the holiday season."

DiPino added in the release, "The holiday season is the perfect time of year for people to see that law enforcement officers have a heart for their community, and what better way for police to show their commitment to the community than by taking a child shopping for holiday presents!"

DiPino pointed out, "My family has a long history of helping people in need during the holiday season which I have continued throughout my career. I am proud to see the Sarasota police involved in this event, which is what the holidays are all about — happy, smiling children being helped by America's hometown heroes."

The holiday shopping experience will be held from 6 to 8 a.m. on Dec. 15 at Target on Fruitville Road, before the store opens for regular customers, the release adds.

PUBLIX OPENS NEW STORE ON LONGBOAT KEY

About eight months after it closed its store in the Shoppes of Bay Isles on Longboat Key, Publix welcomed people to a brand new store during a grand opening on Dec. 13.

The 49,000-square-foot facility will employ about 200 people, according to a Publix news release.

Along with full-service departments such as a bakery, deli, floral planning and event planning, the store even offers wi-fi to customers.

The store will be open seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., the news release notes.



Assistant Store Manager Chad Falde and Manager Andy Lappin greet customers shortly after the new Publix store opened at 8 a.m. Dec. 13 on Longboat Key.



The new Publix on Longboat Key is located at 525 Bay Isles Parkway. Photos by Norman Schimmel

'DRIVE SOBER OR GET PULLED OVER' INITIATIVE UNDER WAY

Law enforcement agencies across the state are launching "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" crackdowns to stop impaired drivers and to save lives on Florida's roadways, the Florida Department of Transportation has announced.

"Officers will be aggressively looking for impaired drivers and will arrest anyone caught driving impaired," an FDOT news release points out. Enforcement efforts will include sobriety checkpoints and heavy enforcement through Jan. 1, the release adds. The crackdown began Dec. 12.

"Lots of folks will be out during this busy holiday season, enjoying themselves and the holiday festivities, and we want everyone to be safe on our roadways" said Lora Hollingsworth, FDOT chief safety officer, in the release. "That's why our law enforcement partners will be stepping up efforts to catch and

arrest impaired drivers. If you are caught drinking and driving impaired, you will be arrested. No warnings. No excuses."

During 2011 there were 920 fatalities suspected to be alcohol-related in Florida resulting from motor vehicle traffic crashes, the release points out. "The holiday season is a particularly dangerous time," the release notes. "Nationally, in December, approximately 30 percent of all fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes involve alcohol-impaired drivers," the release adds.

It is illegal in Florida to drive with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08 or higher, the release points out. Violators face jail time, loss of driver's license "and steep financial consequences such as higher insurance rates, attorney fees, court costs, lost time at work, and the potential loss of job," the release adds.

MASON, HINES ELECTED TO TOP COMMISSION POSTS

Commissioner Carolyn J. Mason was elected chairwoman of the Sarasota County Commission for 2013 during a meeting on Dec. 7.

Commissioner Charles D. Hines was elected vice chairman, and Commissioner Joseph A.

Barbetta was chosen to serve as pro tem, a county news release reported.

The commissioners vote to select the positions, which become effective Jan. 1.



VIOLENT FELON CAPTURED BY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, working in conjunction with the U.S. Marshals Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, this week arrested a wanted felon known for gun violence.

Deputies found Jadavian Shird, 20, of 3217 Newtown Blvd., at the Budget Inn Motel, 8100 North Tamiami Trail, and arrested him without incident at 1:40 p.m., Dec. 11, the Sheriff's Office reported.

Shird was wanted for armed robbery with a firearm and domestic battery by strangulation, but he is facing new charges for attacking a former girlfriend and threatening her and three other women with a gun Sunday night, a news release points out.

The report says the former girlfriend told deputies she was with her sister and two friends at Newtown Rec when Shird approached them, pulled out a black handgun and pointed it at them. The former girlfriend added that Shird left but returned about 45 minutes later, then approached her and began to choke her. The other three women pulled him away from her, the report says.



Jadavian Shird/Contributed

Shird was booked on the outstanding warrants and charged with one additional count of Domestic Battery by Strangulation and four counts of Aggravated Assault with a Firearm, the release says.

He has been arrested four times for similar violent crimes in the past three years, the release adds.



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COUNTY LIBRARIES OFFER NEW ONLINE VIDEOS AND EBOOKS

Sarasota County library cardholders now have free access to a wide variety of videos from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and the Arts & Entertainment Network (A&E), as well as thousands of Disney Digital Books and Duke Classics eBooks, the county has announced.

“The new formats will give patrons more choices in addition to eBooks and downloadable audio, plus we have an unlimited supply so patrons will never have to wait for something to be checked back in,” said Collection Development Librarian Susan Cortright in a county news release. “We are always looking for ways to expand the selection of items and formats we can offer to the public.”

The new service is part of the Sarasota County library system’s collaboration with OverDrive, a leading distributor of digital media, the news release says. PBS provides a diverse array of topical programs and popular titles, including *Downton Abbey*, *Frontline* and *Ken Burns’ National Parks*, the release notes. Programs

also are available from The History Channel and the Biography channel.

Classic Disney adventures can be explored on a computer with Disney Digital Books, the release points out. “These colorful, interactive eBooks offer opportunities for learning and fun with a ‘magic pen’ feature that allows children to move a mouse over a specific word and then hear the correct pronunciation with just one click,” the release says.

Children also can enjoy trivia questions and reference a dictionary that displays definitions without losing their place in the book, the release notes.

To browse the newly added videos and the Disney online books, library cardholders may go to the library’s [download center](#). The system is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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

Enter To Win A New iPad

When our “Likes” on Facebook reach 1,000, we will randomly select one of our subscribers to receive a new iPad.

1 Click to Subscribe **2** Then Like Us On Facebook

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.

CITY OF SARASOTA WELCOMES TEL MOND STUDENTS

Last week, Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell welcomed 20 student dancers who were visiting from Tel Mond, Israel, as part of a cultural exchange with the Sarasota Sister Cities Association.

The young women, ages 16 and 17, were from a dance school at the Tel Mond Cultural Center, a city news release says.

Prior to meeting Mayor Atwell in the Commission Chambers, the dancers toured City Hall.

During their visit, which lasted through Dec. 10, the members of the group were scheduled to perform at Temple Emanu-El and the Jewish Federation. They also planned to explore many of Sarasota's popular attractions, including John and Mable Ringling Art Museum, Sailor Circus, Mote Marine, and the Sarasota Ballet, the city news release says.

Tel Mond officially became Sarasota's Sister City in 1999 with the signing of a mutual agreement, the release notes. Over the years, many delegations have visited from Tel Mond.

Sarasota has a total of eight Sister Cities. Along with Tel Mond, they are Dunfermline, Scotland; Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; Merida, Mexico; Perpignan, France; Treviso, Italy; Vladimir, Russia; Xiamen, China.

"The goal of Sister Cities is to strengthen shared interests around the globe and lessen the possibility of world conflicts," the release notes.

For more information on the Sarasota Sister Cities Association visit www.SarasotaSisterCities.org.



Sarasota Mayor Suzanne Atwell greets a student group from Tel Mond, Israel. Contributed photo

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WE CARE.

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WE ARE UNWAVERING IN OUR BELIEF THAT ALL PEOPLE DESERVE HIGH QUALITY, AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE. WE ARE TIRELESS IN OUR EFFORTS TO PROVIDE EDUCATION AND INFORMATION SO PEOPLE CAN MAKE THEIR OWN HEALTH DECISIONS. WE PROUDLY FIGHT FOR WOMEN TO BE ABLE TO GET THE REPRODUCTIVE SERVICES THEY NEED. WE DO ALL OF THIS BECAUSE

WE CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HELPING WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE
LEAD HEALTHY LIVES.

NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE. NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GET THEM THE CARE THEY NEED. BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRULY CARED FOR, THEY WILL MAKE THEIR LIVES, THEIR FAMILIES – AND EVEN THE WORLD – BETTER AND HEALTHIER.
PLANNED PARENTHOOD. CARE. NO MATTER WHAT.

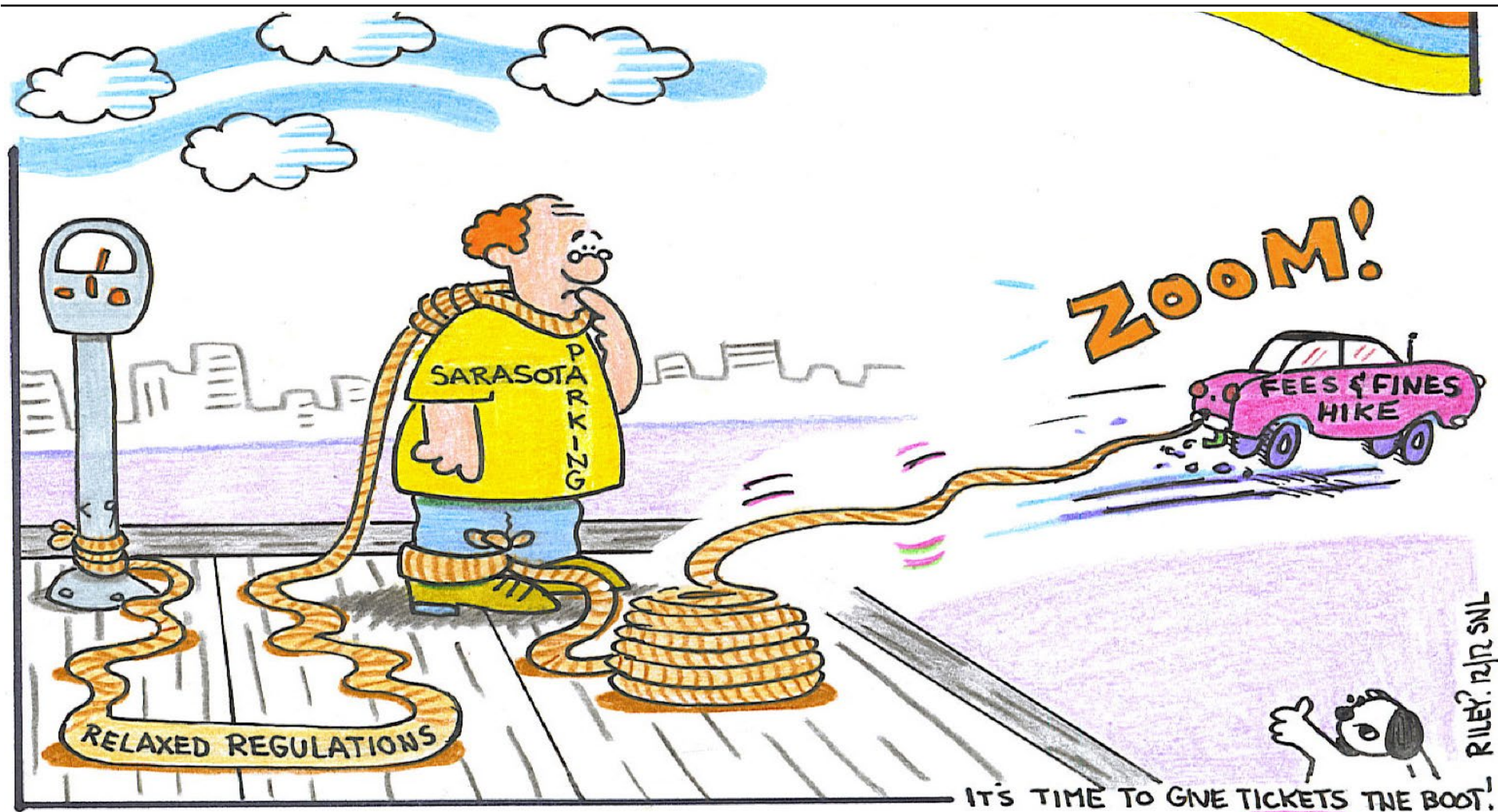


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OPINION



CITY NEEDS LEADERS WITH VISION AND UNITY

EDITORIAL

With the election of two at-large City of Sarasota commissioners only three months away, six candidates already are vying for the two available seats, including incumbent Mayor Suzanne Atwell. Commissioner Terry Turner recently announced he was declining to seek re-election.

The other candidates are Richard Dorfman, Susan Chapman, Linda Holland, Kelvin Lumpkin and Pete Theisen. Of course, filing for the two seats does not open officially until Jan. 7. By the time the statutory filing period has closed five days later, more candidates might have come forward to offer themselves to the city's electorate.

While we are not yet prepared to offer an opinion as to which announced contenders

might be best qualified to fill the two at-large vacancies, we are prepared to say that nothing proffered to date by them or their surrogates gives us any hope that the maladroit disunity that has characterized the City Commission's struggles in recent years is likely to end anytime soon.

There are two types of candidates for municipal public office. The first is one who has a preset agenda — what might be indelicately described as “an ax to grind.” Such an individual typically has strongly held beliefs about what changes in governance might produce the results most likely to conform to those beliefs. Occasionally, a candidate might be so convinced of his own unique talents and abilities that his only real strongly held belief is in his own greatness, or potential. Regardless, such a candidate is less interested in a syner-

OPINION

gistic integration into the larger organization — in this case, the City Commission — and more concerned about reshaping it to comply with his preconceptions, which may or may not be in the best interests of the citizenry.

The other type of candidate is one who, while perhaps not entirely self-effacing, has a healthy respect for the significant task of participating in the governance of large municipalities. Such a candidate would have sought out the advice of opinion-makers in the community, focusing especially on those whose beliefs might be in direct conflict with the candidate's own views. It is precisely in challenging one's beliefs and preconceptions that one gains a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing the city — and the opportunities that might exist for meeting those challenges.

The former candidate is an individualist, uninterested in building consensus. The latter seeks like minds among other candidates and sitting commissioners in an effort to realize a common vision for the city's future that can be reasonably and realistically achieved.

The City of Sarasota has struggled mightily for several years, caroming from one unlikely debacle to another. While blame has been placed on city management and senior staff, the real blame ultimately rests with the City Commission, which shoulders the burden of articulating a vision for the city and promulgating policies and strategies which will bring the city closer to a realization of that vision. Blame also rests with the voters, of course, but they cannot be blamed when confronted with a Hobson's choice on Election Day.

Qualified and motivated citizens, guided by their desire for a better Sarasota, must offer themselves for office if the voters are to have a meaningful alternative.

While some or all of the announced candidates might be just that sort of public servant, it remains for each of them to convince us — and the citizens of Sarasota — of that fact. And it remains for the populace to do some collective soul-searching in the four weeks remaining before filing for the City Commission closes.

The City of Sarasota needs two qualified, committed candidates who agree on a mutual plan of action for remedying the city's woes. And those two candidates must identify a sitting commissioner with whom they can make common cause, giving the city — assuming their election — what it has lacked for too long: an actual majority striving in the same direction.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

OPINION

JUST CALL ME 'DIGITALLY DENIED'



By Harriet Cuthbert

Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

There are so many “d” words I could use to describe how digitally impaired I am: deprived; demented; desperate; dumb.

Well, you get the picture.

I am totally lacking in today’s digital technology, and I am not ashamed to admit it.

I thought I was so cool when I learned how to be an expert at using my digital camera. And then I impressed myself when I “uploaded” all my photos to Picasa and tormented friends and family with a constant barrage of emailed photos with stupid comments.

Now, when I wander around the world, I notice that I am practically a minority of one, still taking pictures with an actual camera. **Everyone** else is clicking away on their slick, shiny, smooth phones, saving their pics and emailing them to their own BFFs.

Only a couple of short years ago, I thought I was rather up-to-date with my well-designed, multi-use clamshell cellphone. It was relatively easy to make calls, send texts and use voicemail. And it even told the time. Suddenly, out of nowhere, appeared a new species called an iPhone/Droid/smartphone. Punching in phone numbers was gone.

Where did I go wrong?

Now we magically slide our sweaty fingers across a panel and “touch” the screen to make a phone call. Texting seems to be addictive (I would not know), because anyone I see with a smartphone has his/her fingers in constant motion.

And what is an app? What does it do and why is it on a phone? I do not know the answer to that, either. All of this talk of sliding and tapping sounds more like references to dance steps to me, not words I would use about a phone.

Shall we now move on to Tweeting? Is this today’s idea of blogging, only with much shorter messages (less chance to bore people)?

Here I go again, being denied, not having a clue about setting up a Twitter account.

How do dogs and cats and turtles get Twitterized and why does anyone care? Who reads all this stuff? Who has all this free time? And, what is a hashtag? I think I used to call it the “pound sign.” That was in the days when landlines ruled and handheld phones were connected by jacks in the wall.

I am thinking of putting my well-used and user-friendly handheld phone up for sale on eBay, filed under “Antiques.”

(And, in our next class, we will discuss Facebook and iPads.). 

Sarasota Leisure

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BAUHAUS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A 'HUB' OF CREATIVITY

ASK OTUS

Inside

BAUHAUS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



New College of Florida's recently constructed Academic Center features a number of forward-thinking techniques and strategies to reduce the building's environmental impact, such as carbon dioxide room sensors that measure air quality, toilets that flush using rainwater collected from underground tanks and cisterns and highly-reflective roofing and paving materials that reduce heat absorption. At night, the building exterior is lit partially by energy-efficient LED lights. Photos by Arielle Scherr

ART LECTURER JEAN RENOUX DISCUSSES THE HISTORY OF THE DESIGN SCHOOL AND ITS RELEVANCE IN A GREEN ERA

By Tyler Whitson

Contributing Writer

For almost two hours on a recent evening, a group of people in Sarasota immersed themselves in a “Bauhaus experience.”

On Tuesday, Nov. 20, Sarasota interior designer, academic lecturer and professional architectural instructor Jean Renoux delivered a talk on the history and design concepts of Bauhaus — meaning “School of Building” — a German philosophy of design that existed during the first half of the 20th century.

Accompanied by vibrant slides and photographs, Renoux went into great detail about the institution, explaining its conceptual roots as a synthesis of forward-thinking craftsmanship and fine art; its inception in 1919; its growth; its heyday; its struggles; its dissolu-

tion in 1933 because of outside pressure from the Nazi regime; and finally the indelible impression the short-lived school has made on contemporary architecture and design all over the world.

During the lecture and subsequent question-and-answer session, Renoux touched on a number of different themes and concepts that were cornerstones of the Bauhaus movement, focusing particularly on the school’s use of progressive technology to design the most efficient and ergonomic living and work spaces, machines, vehicles, furniture, decorations, toys and other products that would not only be affordable for the working class, but would also be comfortable and durable.



The study lounge inside New College of Florida’s Academic Center utilizes decor for aesthetic as well as functional purposes. The high backs of the sofas, for example, though not necessarily practical, may provide users with a sense of privacy that could enhance their concentration on tasks without making them feel isolated from the rest of the room. Photo by Arielle Scherr

APPLYING THE CONCEPTS

The following day, *The Sarasota News Leader* spoke by phone with Renoux, who is a member of the Society of Architectural Historians. The interview focused on the lasting influence of Bauhaus and the ways its concepts can be applied in a time when efficient, low-impact and progressive designs are becoming increasingly essential because of concerns about resource scarcity and climate change, especially in a place like Florida, with its substantial carbon footprint.

Asked how he would construct the ideal environmentally friendly building in Sarasota — using progressive techniques — Renoux responded with a number of specific suggestions.

“First of all, it would be made out of materials that are good for the environment and would make sense,” he said.

As a primary construction material, Renoux recommended autoclaved aerated concrete

(AAC) — which he jokingly described as “a new material that is 80 years old,” because it has been so underutilized — though he clarified it would be structurally appropriate for a building no taller than six or seven floors.



This Bauhaus school building in Dessau was designed by founder Walter Gropius and constructed in 1924. Photo by Tyler Whitson



Members of the Bauhaus school designed their own typeface and adopted the practice of writing the name of the school in lowercase letters only. Photo by Tyler Whitson

One of the most important characteristics of AAC, Renoux explained, is its safety. “It doesn’t burn, it’s non-toxic when you make it, it’s non-toxic when you use it, it’s non-toxic when you demolish it and it provides great insulation. It’s very light and it’s a very good material,” he said.

In terms of auxiliary materials, Renoux ruled out vinyl, especially polyvinyl chloride, better known as PVC, because of its toxic effects.

The next step, Renoux explained, would be to make the building as energy-independent as possible by using geothermal energy for cooling, installing solar panels for appliances and other power needs and using LED light bulbs, among other energy-efficient, daily-use items.

Finally, the building would consume as little water as possible via the utilization of composting toilets that were not attached to the sewer system and the collection of rainwater from the roof. A building with 3,000 square feet of floor space, Renoux pointed out, has the potential to collect 80,000 gallons of rainwater per year.

“And *that* would be a ‘green’ house,” he concluded.

Another environmentally pertinent aspect of Bauhaus designs that he discussed in the lecture and subsequent interview is the deliberate use of color to make the inhabitants of a space or the users of a product feel more content or at ease. Renoux explained how this could be applied in construction in at least two ways.

First, the colors of the roof and facade of a building are particularly relevant in Florida because they have an enormous impact not

only on the building’s internal temperature and the comfort of its occupants but also on the environment.

“Why is it that we have dark roofs in Florida or in Sarasota? Why is it that people paint their houses brown?” Renoux asked. “The darker the color, the more it will absorb the energy, the heat. It’s totally inefficient,” he said. “They really need to be white or extremely bright colors.”

Second, the choice of colors used inside a space was a very important aspect of the Bauhaus concept because the architects and engineers were designing living spaces for members of the working class, who would likely be limited in the amount of room they could afford. Exposing the workers to certain colors at home, the Bauhaus designers deduced, could reduce the stress or anxiety produced by living in a small space they likely would have to share with others. Although Renoux did not make this particular connection, the technique might prove particularly useful in designing environmentally conscious living areas that also make intelligent use of available floor space, especially in urban areas.

“The colors have an influence,” Renoux said. “Red is exciting. Green relaxes. Pink relaxes even more. Green is good on your eyes,” he continued.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES

Renoux lamented the underutilization of these strategies in Sarasota, in public buildings and spaces as well as private homes, because they have the potential to enrich people’s lives. “It’s hard to convince people that it is true, that it is the way it should be,” he said.


Asked whether any buildings in Sarasota adhere to the Bauhaus concepts, Renoux pointed to New College of Florida's set of dormitories dating to 2007. Those buildings, with features complying with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) requirements of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), were constructed with AAC. Renoux clarified, however, that that concrete is present only between columns of the buildings instead of being incorporated throughout the structures; that renders its inclusion less effective.

Additionally, in 2011, New College constructed its Academic Center, which was awarded Gold LEED certification by the USGBC. This building boasts a number of environmentally friendly innovations as well as a student lounge with an interior design that appears to have been influenced by Bauhaus. The lounge features vividly painted walls and bright, modern furniture. Not surprisingly, behind one of the colorful pieces of furniture in the Academic Center lies a box with a yet-to-be-assembled product from the international furniture and accessories store Ikea.

The Swedish company, with its simple, often colorful designs and af-

fordable products — which Renoux said are clearly influenced by the Bauhaus school — appears to be thriving in places like Tampa, despite the economic downturn. In fact, the company could actually be benefitting from the fact that many consumers are budget-conscious when shopping for their homes, choosing to buy its modest, affordable products rather than springing for more lavish items. As a result, a number of Americans may be furnishing their homes with Bauhaus-inspired products and designs without knowing it.

For people who shop at Ikea, "There is nothing to be ashamed of," Renoux exclaimed. "It may not be the Rolls Royce, but it's certainly not a Pinto, though it's the price of a Pinto," he said.

Although Ikea's popularity may just be a fad, the various ideas Renoux pointed out illustrate the numerous ways Bauhaus concepts have endured over time. Regardless of how they can be implemented — whether in the architecture of an environmentally friendly home or the design of a simple, sleek desk — Renoux made it clear the working class ideas and designs of the Bauhaus school continue to be relevant throughout the world. 



Jean Renoux chose to pose with Jack Dowd's Andy Warhol homage One's Company, Two's a Crowd out of a selection of pieces from the exhibition Artists Who Made Sarasota Famous — Part II at Art Center Sarasota. Photo by Tyler Whitson

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.

The first impulse is just to gobble it all up.

But it's better to take it slow and relish every news "morsel." There's no rush.

You have a whole week.



A 'HUB' OF CREATIVITY

The HuB's grand opening at its new quarters in downtown Sarasota included an audio-visual presentation projected on the building. Photo by Scott Proffitt

LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS SHOW OFF THEIR NEW QUARTERS DOWNTOWN AS RICH SWIER JR. TALKS ABOUT WHAT IT IS THEY DO

By Scott Proffitt
Staff Writer

It would be difficult for anyone who has spent more than a few years in Sarasota to attend the grand opening of the newly relocated HuB without more than a little skepticism.

Sarasota has a long history of people and companies arriving with grand plans to change the town — and to make lots of money doing so. But lots of sizzle and lots of glossy ads and grand events have been followed by lots of disappointment and lost money.

The Dec. 8 event for The HuB included a visual extravaganza projected onto an entire

side of the four-story building at 1680 Fruitville Road. It showcased the work of many HuB businesses and the creativity of a slew of Ringling College of Art + Design art students.

One theme of the evening was a running stream of comical comments by people involved in The HuB refusing to admit they knew what it really was.

To provide some clarity for readers, *The Sarasota News Leader* interviewed Rich Swier Jr., HuB founder, about what he and his group do and about Sarasota and his life.

IN THE BEGINNING ...

“To be honest, I came [to Sarasota] because my parents were here,” Swier admitted. “I’d graduated from [the University of Florida] and planned to spend a couple of months here and move to California. Of course, at UF we had [the] Internet, and my parents wanted Internet [access] so they would be able to email me, and so I was setting up a modem bank, and then their friends wanted Internet.”

That was in 1995.

“I came down here and started my first business, ‘Sarasota Online,’” Swier continued. “It was the first Internet provider in this area and one of the first in Florida. It grew quickly, and within a year, we were approached by Comcast, [which] acquired the company in 1996.”

The deal entailed his continuing to work for the company for awhile. “I helped them roll out the cable modem business in 30 cities across the nation,” he said.

Swier is calm and casual in an interview, but he nonetheless communicates excitement about his ideas. He readily concedes he was in the right place at the right time.

“We saw the first cable modem plugged in and lit up,” he pointed out. Sarasota was the first data market for Comcast’s broadband package.

“It was a pretty exciting time,” Swier said. “Everything was dial-up, and to bring a megabit into the home was not an easy thing. We kind of were inventing as we went along; everything was the first time. ... Nobody had done it before.”



Partygoers enjoy the changing light show as they gather outside the headquarters of The HuB. Photo by Scott Proffitt



“ *We kind of were inventing as we went along; everything was the first time. ... Nobody had done it before.*

Rich Swier Jr.
Founder
The HuB

”

With a degree in math, Swier taught himself all the technical stuff, including all the computer programming he has done.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Even now, his focus is on the possibilities of the future.

“I have a lot of businesses in the HuB,” he says. “... I realized I liked startups, so I started an incubator along with numerous companies. Around 2007-08, I realized that technology was no longer the competitive edge for me, because of several things: Sarasota doesn’t have a strong technology base, and in general technology is becoming more commoditized;

it’s more of a tool and less of a true product you can competitively market. I realized creativity was more important.”

He continued, “Technology, you can outsource to India. You can write software all day long, but there are thousands of people that can do that. The ones that rise above all that are the ones that are creative, and so that’s when I came up with the concept of The HuB not just embracing this fact that creativity was the asset of the future but embracing the fact that Sarasota was more prone to be a creative center than a technology center.”

Swier pointed out, “The town has a creative history and culture, huge supporters of the



The grand opening allowed participants to get a look at the interior of The HuB as well. Photo by Scott Proffitt

arts [and] probably the most culture-rich community in Florida, certainly per capita. And you have Ringling [College] and New College, which are huge assets.”

The HuB is by no means on any particular path, any more than Swier was when he arrived in Sarasota.


“When I decided to do The HuB, I decided to let it be organic. I wasn’t going to define what it was. I just leased some space in the Rosemary District and opened the doors, and people would come in and ask, ‘What do you do here?’ and I would ask, ‘What do you like to do?’”

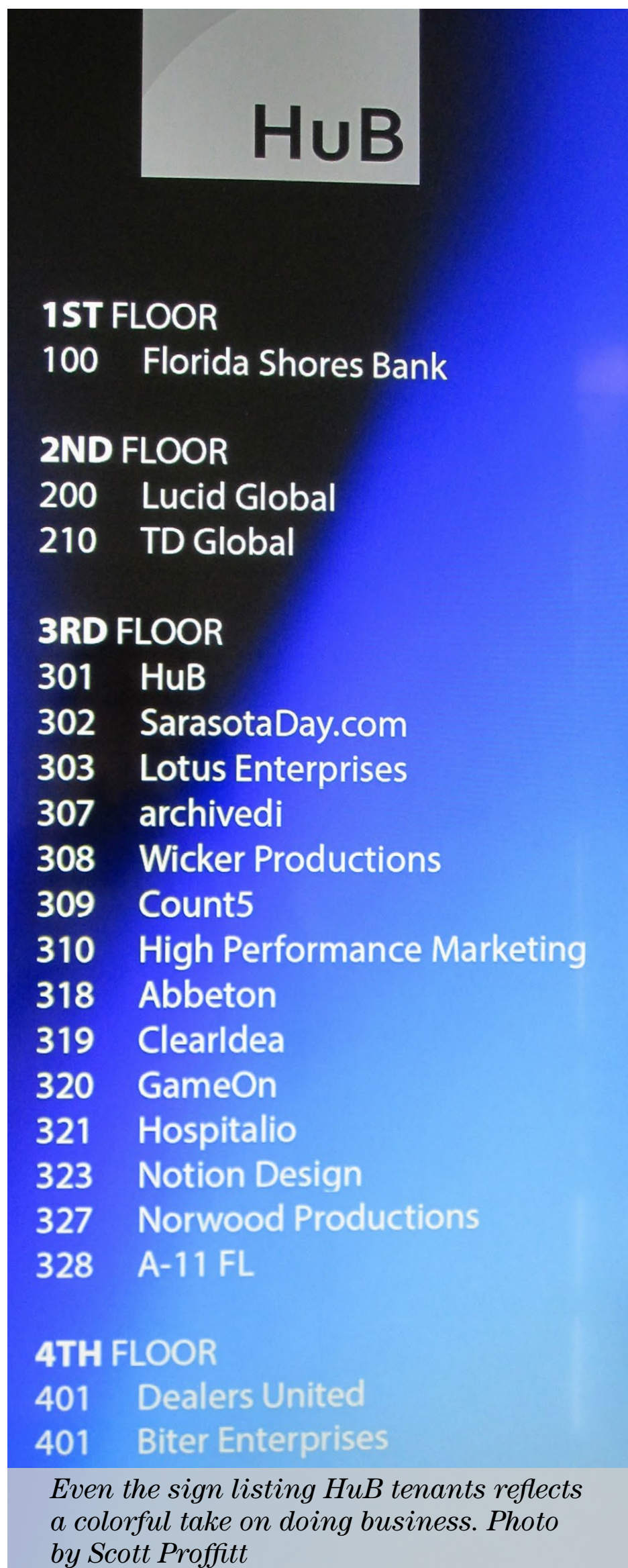
For every business that originated at The HuB, the roots can be traced back to one person walking through the door, he pointed out.

“And that’s why we are so big on the community,” Swier said. “The community feeds us. ... The growth of The HuB is just us harnessing the assets of the city. We are reaping the rewards of the collective efforts of the people, the city. I think The HuB is empowering to all the diverse elements of the town.”

Swier added, “I think that the town has hungered for something like this for a long time, but has been the victim of so many scams — people, groups wanting money, and they’ll do this or create jobs. But the city can point to [The HuB] as something that is real. There are real people that have done real things.”

“If the city is awesome and keeps and attracts the right minds,” he added, “then we will be successful.”

For more information, just go onto the broadband that Swier helped bring to this community and check out hubsarasota.com or richswier.com. 



HuB

1ST FLOOR
100 Florida Shores Bank

2ND FLOOR
200 Lucid Global
210 TD Global

3RD FLOOR
301 HuB
302 SarasotaDay.com
303 Lotus Enterprises
307 archivedi
308 Wicker Productions
309 Count5
310 High Performance Marketing
318 Abbeton
319 ClearIdea
320 GameOn
321 Hospitalio
323 Notion Design
327 Norwood Productions
328 A-11 FL

4TH FLOOR
401 Dealers United
401 Biter Enterprises

Even the sign listing HuB tenants reflects a colorful take on doing business. Photo by Scott Proffitt



ASK OTUS

LAST-MINUTE CHRISTMAS GIFT SUGGESTIONS OFFERED; DISAPPEARANCE OF BIRDS FROM FEEDERS EXPLAINED

Dear Otus,

I know it's late, but I still need a few things to put under the Christmas tree. The family likes nature stuff. Any ideas?

Bob in Bradenton

Dear Bob,

My theory of Christmas presents is that "it is better to receive than to give," so I may not be as helpful to you as others would. But since you asked, here goes.

If your family members like to read, get them good books. My favorite is John James Audubon's *Birds of America* (four volumes, 1827 to 1838). Unfortunately, there are only 120 original editions that are known to exist. This means that one does not come on the market very often. The last such appearance was in January 2012, when Christie's (New York) sold at auction the edition owned by the heirs of the fourth Duke of Portland (died 1854). The hammer price was \$7.9 million.

Already have a copy? Then I would recommend wildlife conservationist Gerald Durrell's humorously charming account of his boyhood years on the Greek isle of Corfu. Titled *My Family and Other Animals*, the book is available in paperback for about \$5 from Amazon. The narrative blends anecdotes of his eccentric family (including his brother, Lawrence, who wrote *The Alexandria Quartet*) with de-



An American Crocodile is available for 'adoption' at Sarasota Jungle Gardens. File photo

scriptions of the natural world that all readers in your family will doubtlessly enjoy.

The final book on my list is George Cera's *The Iguana Cookbook: Save Florida, Eat an Iguana*, which is available in paperback from Amazon for around \$10. Iguanas eat eggs and small birds, including Eastern Screech-Owls, meaning me! As far as I am concerned, the more iguanas that go into the stew pot, the better.

But if iguana tacos are not to your taste, then please consider iguana hide footwear, handbags and luggage. Fashion designer Manolo Blahnik offers bespoke stilettos made from genuine iguana skin for \$2,000-plus. Matching handbags and luggage cost more.

Exotic pets are wildly popular Christmas gifts, and you can "adopt" an American Crocodile or Black-Tailed Prairie Dog without ever having to take it home or nag the kids to walk, feed or clean up after it. The staff at Sarasota Jungle Gardens will maintain it for you. The cost begins at \$35.

For Sarasota Jungle Gardens' impressive list of rescued wild and exotic animals who now safely and permanently reside there, [click here](#).

Finally, you can give your loved ones their very own subscription to *The Sarasota News Leader*, the Suncoast's premier source of news, information, commentary and, of course, my "nature stuff" column. The cost: nothing. The best things in life are free!

Otus

ADOPT ME, PLEASE!



PUTTER

Dear Otus,

After my wife and I returned to our Sarasota home early this fall, we put out birdseed as usual. The first day, we saw cardinals, blue jays and a few other birds. However, none showed up on subsequent days. Fearing a problem with the seed itself, my wife hauled the bag back to the pet store where we had bought it, and management gave her a new bag. We put out feed from the second bag, but we still have not seen any of those birds we enjoy watching each winter. Did we get a bum rap with bad seed the first time around? Do birds actually let each other know what yards to avoid? What can we do to entice the birds back to our yard? We miss seeing them.

*Ed
Sarasota*

Dear Ed,

Let me understand this correctly. For many years you have had great success in attracting birds to your feeder. You scrub the feeder thoroughly every couple of weeks to keep it clean and mold-free; you buy fresh seeds from reliable pet centers; provide a water basin for the birds' thirst as well as a place to bathe; and you create a safe and attractive environment for them by planting bushy, thick shrubs close to their feeder so they can dive into them the instant the shadow of a Cooper's Hawk signals danger. And you have always shooed away your neighbor's cat (but never turned the hose on it).

In fact, you have done everything right and the proof is that the birds immediately visited



This blue jay enjoys a morsel from a feeder. File photo

your feeder upon your return. They remembered it and sought it out.

So, what happened? Well, something wonderful!

It rained all over Sarasota. And it rained often. The years of drought that drove the birds regularly to your feeder were washed away along with the birds' dependency on it. Meadows, gullies, woods and even the sandy stretches of dunes and scrublands were suddenly teeming with life — insect life!

Spanish Needles, Scorpion-tail, Lantana and Firebush revived and bloomed, attracting bees, wasps, butterflies and moths. Ponds, filled to their banks, swarmed with flies, beetles, centipedes and dragonflies. I get hungry just writing about it!

The insects, a vital component of a “backyard” bird's diet, were again plentiful. The grasses and sedges again provided a vast assortment of seeds. Bushes and trees bore berries, sea grapes, acorns. Mother Nature's cornucopia was overflowing. The birds, once so dependent on your feeder, could fly much further afield, nourished on their travels by their favorite berries, crunchy (but so juicy inside) beetles and flavorsome sea oat seeds.

Will they return to your feeder? And when?

The answer lies in the opera *Carmen* by the great composer and ornithologist Georges Bi-

zet. You see, ever since you wrote, I have not been able to get the *Habanera* aria out of my head. I have been humming it all night long! In the aria, Carmen explains that a bird is a rebellious and untamable love. The minute you think it is yours, it beats its wings and flies away. It will not come to you when called, but you still call and call to it, quite in vain. So you wait and wait and when least expected, **suddenly it is back!**

It is December and we are again in the dry season. The days are turning a bit chilly. Plants are starting to shrivel and insects have begun to die or hibernate. Cardinals will crave your black oil sunflower seed and the Blue Jays will so appreciate the corn in your feeder. Soon the birds will return to your feeder — maybe this week; maybe next month — when you least expect them.

Trust Carmen! She may have chosen men poorly, but she was downright perspicacious when it came to birds.

L'amour est un oiseau rebelle

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. Thank you.

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MAGICAL ILLUMINATION

ST. ARMANDS BIDS A WARM WELCOME TO THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Staff Reports

With Santa and Mrs. Claus having arrived on St. Armands Dec. 7 during the annual Holiday Night of Lights, Christmas cannot be far away.

Crowds lined the streets to get a good look at the special guests, and faces were bright with the lighting of the St. Armands holiday tree. 

The holiday tree is bright amid the festivities. Photo by Norman Schimmel



A wreath of holiday lights frames some of the statuary on St. Armands Circle. Photo by Norman Schimmel



No holiday event would be complete without the Jolly Old Elf himself. Photo by Norman Schimmel



A twinkling 'Welcome' greets event-goers. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Mrs. Claus arrives in a less traditional means of transportation. Photo by Norman Schimmel



BID SOLICITATION FINALLY GOES OUT FOR SIESTA VILLAGE CROSSWALK LIGHTING; PARKING AND TOWING ISSUES POP UP AGAIN



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

It was 11 months ago during a Siesta Key Village Association meeting when Peter van Roekens, vice president of the Siesta Key Association and the Terrace East representative to the SKVA meetings, first brought up the need for better lighting of crosswalks in Siesta Village.

For older drivers at night, especially, he pointed out, it is difficult to see pedestrians heading

from one side of Ocean Boulevard to the other — particularly in the area between the Daiquiri Deck and Gilligan's Island Bar and Grill.

After several Sarasota County Commission discussions of the topic and a few lighting equipment demonstrations in the Village during the summer, a request for bids specifying bollards with LED lighting finally went out at midnight on Dec. 8.



Drivers say it is difficult to spot pedestrians in many of the Siesta Village crosswalks at night. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

All bid responses are due by 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 9.

During both the SKA and SKVA regular monthly meetings last week, van Roekens announced the action was coming.

On Dec. 4 during the SKVA meeting, van Roekens said he had talked with Ryan Montague, the county Traffic/Mobility Office employee who has been overseeing the initiative, and had learned the process was nearing its final stages.

“It’s been hard to get this thing moving,” van Roekens said, “but I believe it finally is.”

“Peter’s been pushing to get this thing done prior to season,” SKVA President Russell Matthes pointed out.

Feb. 15, Matthes added, is the date Village businesses consider the official start of season.

“These [crosswalks] are important, I think, for the safety of our pedestrians,” Matthes said.

During the SKA meeting two days later, van Roekens expressed Montague’s hopefulness that the cross-


walk bid period would be shorter than the traditional 30 days. “We’ll see if that’s possible,” van Roekens added.

Apparently, it was not, based on the information on the county’s eProcure website for vendors.

Nonetheless, van Roekens emphasized during the SKA meeting, “The good news is this project is finally moving again, so we’re happy about that.”

At one point, several months ago, it appeared the County Commission was ready to approve a proposal for lighting to be installed at seven crosswalks in the Village. Ultimately, concerns about cost led them to proceed with the bid process.

Even though van Roekens, Matthes and Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce Chairman Mark Smith all had agreed during the summer on a specific type of bollard lighting to provide the illumination, county staff told me that, according to procurement guide-


ATTACHMENT "A"
SCOPE OF WORK / SPECIFICATIONS

1.0 Purpose
It is the intent of Sarasota County to solicit quotes to provide and install fourteen (14) LED bollards at seven (7) crosswalks at Siesta Key Village. The quotes shall include all material, equipment, labor and permits necessary to complete this job.

2.0 Technical Specifications

2.1 LED Bollards

a. Housing


1. Material: Pre-cast concrete
2. Shape: Rectangular
3. Dimensions: 44"x8"x8" to 46"x10"x10"
4. Color: Match Siesta Blend brick pavers
5. LED fixture shall be inlaid into housing at a 40 to 80 degree downward angle

b. LED

1. 14-18 watt
2. 5500K-6500K Color Temp

c. Power source

1. 240v UNV



3.0 Installation

3.1 Bollards must be installed in concrete and/or brick pavers, with concrete footers approximately 8-12" below ground surface.

3.2 All locates are the responsibility of the successful Bidder, a call to Sunshine State One-Call before digging shall be done by contractor, Sarasota County will assist with identifying, making aware of known underground piping and circuits.

3.3 Any dig-in will be reported immediately to the County Project Manager any repair will be approved and inspected by County Project Manager, no repair cost shall be paid by County.

A Sarasota County Procurement Department attachment sets out specifications for crosswalk lighting in Siesta Village. Bid package page courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

lines, the specifications would have to be included in a formal bid process.

It was not until Sept. 26, however, that the County Commission — on a unanimous vote — finally authorized the preparation of a bid package for bollard lighting.

That vote followed the board's receipt of a Sept. 13 memo from James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer, which estimated the cost of the bollards and their installation at \$31,000.

The bid solicitation material on [eProcure](#) says in Section 8.3, **"Do not submit a quote of more than \$50,000."** If your quotation would be in the amount of \$50,001 or more this requires sealed bids and you will have exposed your pricing. Simply write 'total exceeds \$50,000' in the quote total field."

The specifications call for rectangular bollards to be made of precast concrete, with dimensions from 44 inches by 8 inches by 8 inches to 46 inches by 10 inches by 10 inches. The color must "Match Siesta Blend brick pavers" and the LED fixture for each bollard should be "inlaid into housing at a 40 to 80 degree downward angle."

The LED lights themselves should be 14 to 18 watts, the specs say.

I was unsuccessful this week in getting an estimate from Montague or anyone else on how long it might take for the County Commission to approve whatever bid award is recommended.

However, I can point out that the due date for bids for the Siesta Village maintenance con-

tract was July 11, and it was not until Aug. 21 that the County Commission approved that contract.

THE NOISE

Season may not be in full swing yet, but noise complaints have been increasing in Siesta Village.

During the Dec. 4 SKVA meeting, President Russell Matthes pointed out, "There always will be concern about noise in the Village," given the proximity of residents to the restaurants and bars on Ocean Boulevard.

"I just want to keep the dialogue open," Matthes said, so we can communicate ... when there is an issue. ... I'm willing to be the middleman. I'm willing to do whatever it takes to just keep the peace."

He added, "We know what we need to do and we need to be responsible in doing so."

"On both sides," Blasé Café owner Rami Nehme responded.

"Correct," Matthes said.

Evidence that a violation has occurred should be presented before a complaint is lodged, Nehme added, "and not just hearsay. ... It seems to be always talk about it. I did some research. None of [the people lodging complaints] actually had evidence. No official complaint was filed."

"They can still voice their opinions, right?" Matthes replied.

Siesta Seen

“Of course,” Nehme said, though he added the county was wasting resources in responding to complaints that were not valid.

“If you want to call it ‘wasted,’ that’s fine,” Matthes said.

“I do,” Nehme replied.

“I wouldn’t call it a waste in the fact that there’s a lack of Code Enforcement throughout the community, anyway,” Matthes continued, “so having Kevin here is not a waste for multiple reasons.”

(“Kevin” is Kevin Burns, the Code Enforcement officer the County Commission authorized to work after hours and on weekends in the Village to handle complaints.)

“No, no,” Nehme agreed.

During the Dec. 6 SKA meeting, Peter van Roekens — who also has been that organization’s “point person” for the noise issue — told the audience and board that “serious violations have happened” regarding one local bar. However, he declined to name the business.

“Even the Beach Terrace, which is some distance from Terrace East, has been disturbed,” van Roekens pointed out.

The address for the Beach Terrace is 5400 Ocean Blvd., while Terrace East is at 5300 Ocean Blvd.

Van Roekens said during the SKA meeting that Burns has been checking the “A” scale reading only on his noise meter, whereas the real problems have been on the “C” scale. “That’s where the deep thumping bass comes from,” he said.



Blasé Café owner Rami Nehme has told Siesta Key Village Association members he has received complaints about noise prior to the 10 p.m. curfew for bands to reduce their sound levels. File photo

Siesta Seen

He and SKA President Catherine Luckner met the previous day with Sandra Jones, who heads up the county's Code Enforcement office, to discuss the matter, van Roekens added.

Each noise meter prints a receipt that shows the exact time, date and length of the reading and what levels were recorded on both the A and C scales, he continued; he had suggested Code Enforcement staff keep copies of those receipts for reference.

"We hope that that happens," he said.

He and Luckner had stressed to Jones the importance of building trust with both residents and business owners in the community, he added.

THE TOWING ISSUE, TOO

Although the noise issue has remained more at the forefront of Siesta Village discussions over the past year, towing is another matter that causes lots of consternation from time to time.

During the Dec. 4 SKVA meeting, Matthes told members he and Mark Smith, the Siesta Chamber chairman, had met recently with a couple of representatives of Benderson Development Co. regarding towing complaints related to two Benderson properties in the Village.

A local towing company had sent out a warning notice about inappropriate use of the parking lots for those businesses, Matthes explained, but the notice "kind of misrepre-



Benderson Development Co. employees have dealt recently with towing complaints regarding the firm's Siesta Village properties, including Hanna Plaza on Ocean Boulevard. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

sented Benderson,” which had not approved the document before it was issued.

The Benderson representatives — one of whom, David Nelson, was at the SKVA meeting — “were very responsive,” Matthes continued, “and I appreciate that. They’re not going to be doing any excessive towing, obviously.”

Nelson said the company had been reacting to tenants’ complaints, adding, “We’ve had a ‘No towing’ policy because we don’t want to tow ...”

The company preference, Nelson said, was for the tenants of its Village properties “to police their own lots. They know what’s better for their business than we do.”

The primary problem that led to the discussion, Nelson continued, was employees of other businesses parking long-term in the lots of Benderson’s tenants.

During season, Matthes pointed out, his Village businesses — the Daiquiri Deck and the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar — hire security personnel to make sure beachgoers do not leave their vehicles in the restaurants’ lots all day and to keep employees, including Daiquiri Deck workers, from using the lots long-term.

“It is a battle,” Matthes said. Hiring security personnel had produced the best results, he added.

Employee parking in the public beach accesses close to the Village was another issue Matthes raised during the meeting.

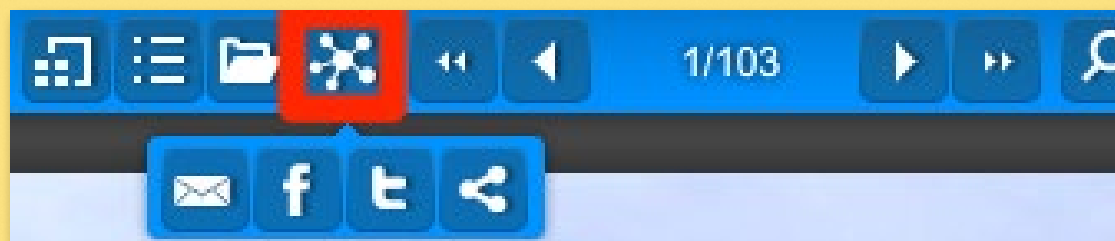
Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson had told representatives of the island organizations during a recent session of their Presidents Council that county staff planned to take some measures to keep employees out of those accesses, Matthes pointed out, so the public could use the lots, as intended.


She was unsure, Matthes said, whether some sort of signage would be erected to that effect.

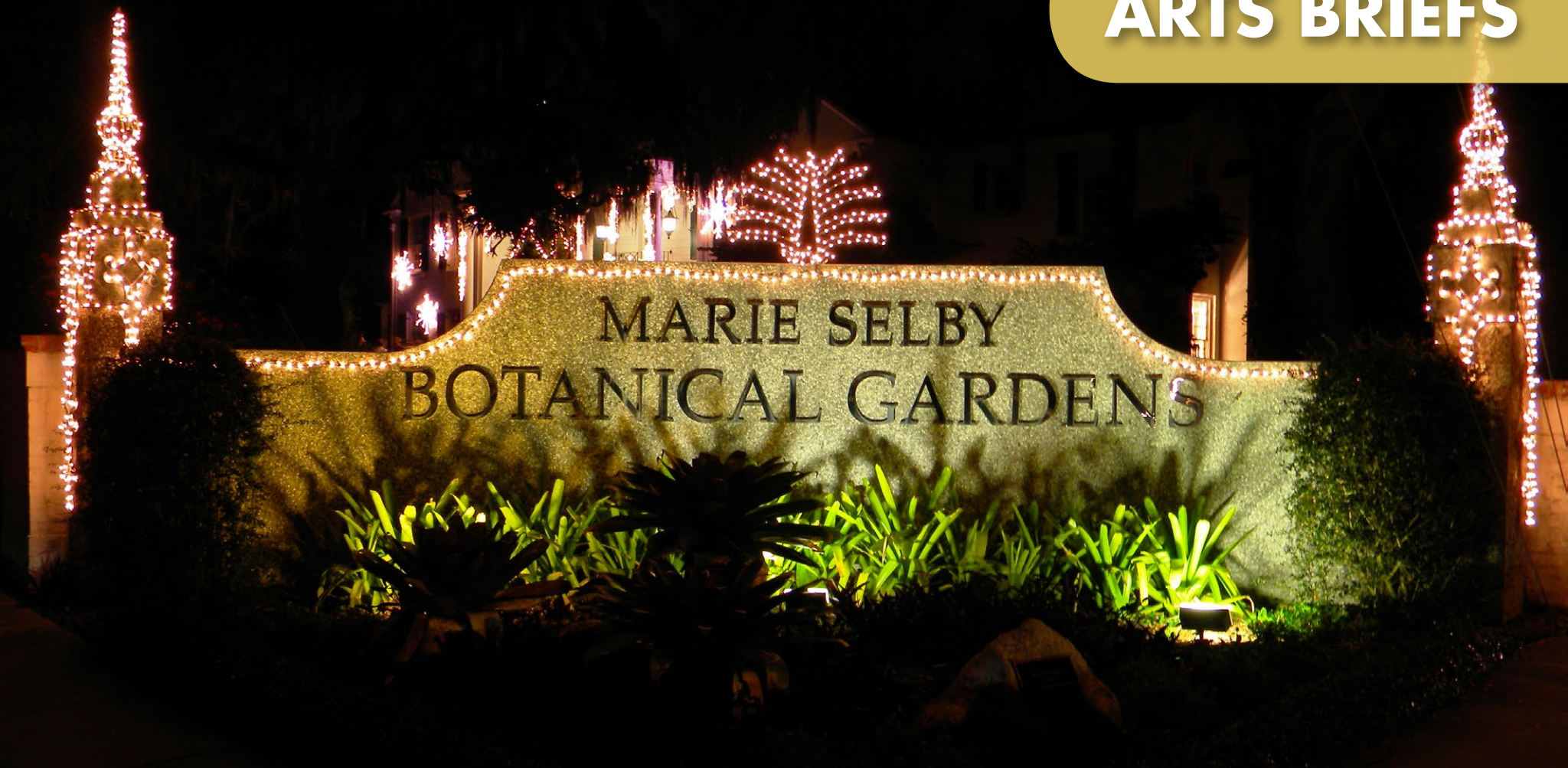
While business owners do not want their workers using the accesses for parking, Matthes said, “it is kind of a sticky wicket,” because the workers technically are members of the public, and the accesses are for the public.

Ideally, he said, the municipal lot at the end of Avenida Madera is where employees should park, but its spaces often are full, especially during season. 

QUICK TIP



Share stories by clicking the  icon in the menubar and choosing to share via e-mail, post to Facebook or Twitter, or many other sharing options.



Selby Gardens will be transformed into a holiday wonderland when Lights in Bloom opens again on Dec. 15. Photo by Norman Schimmel

LIGHTS IN BLOOM TO DECK THE HALLS OF SELBY GARDENS

For 11 evenings, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens will transform its Sarasota bayfront acreage into a fantasyland of themed light displays and holiday enchantment, the Gardens has announced.

The ninth annual Lights in Bloom: A Tropical Holiday Celebration will be open Dec. 15-23 and 26-27 from 6 to 9 p.m.

“Lights in Bloom designer Bob McComb is pulling together an unforgettable evening filled with brilliant lights and family-themed fun,” a news release says. “Every year, my goal is to make Lights in Bloom a fresh experience while bringing back everyone’s favorites,” says McComb in the release. “The best part is coming up with new ideas and finding a way to bring them alive — and working with

the dozens of fabulous volunteers who help to make this event happen,” he adds.

Most of the decorations for Lights in Bloom are custom-designed and handcrafted on site, the release points out.

Visitors to Lights in Bloom will be welcomed by Tree Man, “the event’s kindly but imposing greeter,” the release adds, and they will “traverse a landscape filled with larger-than-life, rainforest-themed light displays, dancing fairies, a colorful Wishing Tree, a Toyland featuring oversized games and a brand new snowflake forest,” the release notes.

Along the way, guests will enjoy live entertainment, and vendors will offer holiday fare, including Merry Meals for children, sweet

treats and festive drinks. Santa and his elves will make an appearance every night prior to Christmas. Children of all ages will enjoy garden-themed crafts in Kids Corner and the popular holiday train village.

Near the Payne Mansion, guests may take in Selby Gardens' signature Bromeliad Tree, participate in a nightly menorah lighting and explore a Holiday Splendor at Payne Mansion Showhouse, presented by the Florida West Coast Chapter of the American Society

of Interior Designers, the release adds. This year's showhouse, which uses bromeliads as its unifying theme, highlights the talents of more than a dozen local decorators, the release points out.

Admission is \$13 for Selby Gardens members and \$15 for non-members; children ages 11 and under may enter free. Tickets for Lights in Bloom may be purchased online at www.selby.org or in the Welcome Center.

FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR STUDENT 10-MINUTE PLAY FESTIVAL

Theatre Odyssey has announced the finalists for its first high school student 10-minute play festival, which will be presented on Friday, Jan. 25, at the David S. and Ann V. Howard Studio Theatre, located on the State College of Florida campus in Bradenton.

The finalists are *Untitled* by Joseph Grosso, Kasey Blanco and Jillian Smith of Lakewood Ranch High School; *The Date* by Kemery Colbert of St. Stephens Episcopal High School; *Therapy* by Summer Begalka and Sabrina Viotta of St. Stephens High; and *Friends Forever* by Francesca DiMaio, Melina Cuffaro and Amanda Robbins, of Lakewood Ranch High.

A cash prize of \$300 will be presented to the winners, along with a trophy for display at their school, a news release says. In addition, the winning play will be presented as part of Theatre Odyssey's 2013 10-Minute Play Festival in April.

"Theatre Odyssey is thrilled to add a student 10-Minute Play Festival as a community outreach project," said board President Catherine

Randazzo in the news release. "It's the perfect way to expand our programming. Our spring festival supports playwrights, theater and actors, giving them a vehicle to present their art. We are excited about the opportunity to take that experience and pass it down to students who may want to pursue the theater arts," she added in the release.

Auditions for actors to present the works at the festival will be held on Sunday and Monday, Dec. 16-17, 6 to 8 p.m., at State College of Florida in Bradenton. They will be in the Collegiate School, Building 19. For more information, email info@theatreodyssey.org or call 799-7224.

Theatre Odyssey was founded in 2006 to encourage and promote the efforts of local playwrights and actors. Over the years, the group has premiered more than 50 plays written, directed and performed by Gulf Coast playwrights, actors and directors, the release points out. For more information, visit www.theatreodyssey.org.

RIVERVIEW HIGH CHORUS AND KILTIE BAND TO PERFORM

The Riverview High School Performing Arts Center will be filled with sounds of the season when the Riverview Chorus joins the Kiltie Band for a holiday performance at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 18.

The 90-minute show will feature traditional Christmas songs and early English and Russian holiday music, a news release says. Donations of \$5 per person will be requested at the door.

"We love this special event because it showcases our Kiltie Percussion Ensemble, Bagpipers and Highland Dancers and Chorus," said RHS Music Director Mark Spreen in the release.

"The musical selections will range from *Carol of the Bells* to a Christmas medley in Big Band

style, a unique spin on familiar favorites," the release adds. An arrangement of Christmas carols that combines the talents of the Kilties with the Chorus will be another highlight of the performance, the release notes.

Spreen says this is a family-friendly event that will be enjoyed by people of all ages. "It's a great way to warm up for the holidays," he added in the release.

Reserved seating for larger groups may be arranged by contacting Miriam Thompson at 539-5383 or via email at miriamdenver@netcape.net. Tickets are also available from the Riverview High School Music Department.

The Riverview High School Performing Arts Center is located at 1 Ram Way in Sarasota.



The Riverview High School Chorus performs a holiday concert in 2011. At front and center are the school's choral directors, David and Whitney Verdoni. Contributed photo

SARASOTA OPERA RECEIVES NEA GRANT FOR EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Rocco Landesman has announced that Sarasota Opera is one of 832 nonprofit organizations nationwide to receive an NEA Art Works grant.

The opera was recommended for a \$30,000 grant to support performances of Carlisle Floyd's opera *Of Mice and Men*, as part of the third year of the Sarasota Opera's *American Classics Series*, "accompanied by significant educational programming," a Sarasota Opera news release says.

The opera, will stage six performances of *Of Mice and Men*, based on John Steinbeck's acclaimed novel and play; the performances will be part of the 2013 Winter Festival season. In 2011, the NEA awarded Sarasota Opera a \$20,000 grant toward its production that year of Robert Ward's *The Crucible*.

"The goal of these [*American Classic Series*] events is to increase our current audience's knowledge of these great works and to attract new faces to the opera," the release says.

Among the educational events held in conjunction with the performances will be screenings of both the 1939 and 1992 versions of the movie, a "conversation" with composer Floyd "and a repeat of the extremely popular *Spoken and Sung*" program in partnership with the Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, the release adds. Check www.sarasotaopera.org for more information.

In March 2012, the NEA received 1,509 eligible applications for Art Works that requested more than \$74 million in funding, the release notes. The 832 recommended grants total

\$22.3 million, spanning 13 artistic disciplines and fields and focusing primarily on the creation of work and presentation of both new and existing works for the benefit of American audiences, the release adds.



The Sarasota Opera is located on Pineapple Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ALIENS TO TAKE THE COOK THEATRE STAGE JAN. 2-20

The Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training will present *The Aliens* by Annie Baker Jan. 2-20 in the Cook Theatre in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

In Annie Baker's *The Aliens*, two social misfits befriend a naive young coffee shop barista in a sleepy Vermont town, a news release says. In doing so, "they teach him about friendship, commitment and what it means to grow into manhood," the release adds.

"Baker paints a portrait of their friendship with halting, understated and brilliant dialogue, evoking their sadness and quiet courage with an honesty and precise observation worthy of Chekhov," the release says.

"Annie Baker is one of the rising young talents of the modern stage,"

says Greg Leaming, director of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory, in the release. "When *New York Times* reviewer Charles Isherwood evoked both Beckett and Chekhov in his review of her and this play, he wasn't exaggerating. *The Aliens* is an extraordinarily beautiful, tender and comic portrait of friendship."

Tickets are \$29 for evening performances; \$28 for matinees. Students receive a 50 percent discount with advance purchase. Asolo Rep's box office at the FSU Center for Performing Arts may be reached at 351-8000.

On Wednesday, Jan. 2, at 8 p.m., audience members are invited to attend a production of *The Aliens* and pay whatever they can afford for their tickets. This is a day-of-performance deal only.



(From left) Ben Williamson, Brian Nemiroff and Zlatomir Moldovanski star in the FSU/Asolo Conservatory's production of *The Aliens*. Photo by Frank Atura.

SARASOTA-MANATEE DANCE ALLIANCE LAUNCHES WEBSITE

The Sarasota-Manatee Dance Alliance (SMDA), a dance-advocacy organization founded in 2011, has launched a website to benefit its members and the general public, the organization has announced. The [new site](#) serves as an umbrella for dance-related activities, providing information about classes, dance companies,

dance-related services, organizations and events, a news release notes.

"The website will be a valuable resource for those seeking information about the multitude of dance classes in Sarasota and Manatee counties, including those for adults, teens, children and preschoolers — from ballet to



hip hop, from pre-professional programs and master intensive workshops to dance classes for persons with special needs, from modern/contemporary dance to ethnic dancing, and from tap dancing to ballroom,” the release adds.

The new site also gives individuals and businesses that provide dance-related services opportunities to gain exposure, including choreographers, composers and musicians, videographers, costume designers, sound technicians and lighting designers, the release points out. In addition, a section of the website is dedicated to healthcare providers who offer dance-related services, including Pilates, yoga, Gyrotonic(R), massage therapy, physical therapy, exercise classes and acupuncture.

The website was made possible in part with grants from the Helios Foundation and an anonymous family foundation, the release notes.

Since its inception the SMDA has undertaken projects to promote its goals, the release says. For example, in 2011, in conjunction with The Hermitage Artist Retreat, SMDA sponsored *The Creative Process*, a community workshop conducted by New York choreographer, performance artist and dancer Ralph Lemon and Maria Jimena Paz, an Argentinian dancer and choreographer.

On Jan. 19, as part of the Ringling Museum of Art's ViewPoint series, SMDA is sponsoring *The Interplay between Music and Dance*, a lecture and demonstration by choreographer and dance educator Elizabeth Bergmann, with dancers from Moving Ethos Dance Company, the release adds.

Through Dec. 31, the organization is offering discounted memberships. For further information, visit www.smdance.org or call 922-5277.

YO GABBA GABBA! TOUR TO TAKE VAN WEZEL STAGE

DJ Lance Rock and a cast of colorful characters are calling all fans in Sarasota to get ready to jump, shake and shimmy during the *Yo Gabba Gabba! LIVE!: Get the Sillies Out!* tour stop at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall on March 21 at 3 and 6 p.m.

“*Yo Gabba Gabba!* is an award-winning, live-action television series and live stage show whose unconventional formula has created a triple-stacked fan base, making it one of the most popular entertainment properties among preschoolers, parents and indie music lovers alike,” a news release says.

Yo Gabba Gabba! premiered in the U.S. on Nickelodeon in Au-

gust 2007; it ranks as one of the most popular series on television, with broad appeal among preschoolers, parents, teens and adults, the release adds. Visit www.yogabbagabba.com.

The television show airs several times a day on Nick Jr.



The Yo Gabba Gabba LIVE! tour will be in Sarasota in March. Contributed photo

Hip-hop legend Biz Markie will join the cast on stage at the Van Wezel for Biz's Beat of the Day, the news release notes. The show will also feature Super Music Friends and Dancey Dance guest performances.

Tickets and Gabba Party Packages are on sale from \$27 to \$47. For details, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org.


VAN WEZEL ADDS ACTS FOR 2013

The Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall's 2012-2013 season has added shows to its January programming schedule.

The rhythmic masters of *STOMP* will perform a matinee show at 4 p.m. on Jan. 3, the hall has announced. The high-energy percussive group creates complex beats utilizing everything but traditional instruments while incorporating acrobatic dance styles in its movements, a news release notes.

Additionally, "The King of Rock n' Roll" will be making a stop in Sarasota with *Elvis Lives* on Jan. 17, the release says.

"This multi-media and live musical journey across Elvis's diverse career transports the viewer to another time that will never be forgotten," the release adds.

STOMP tickets are priced from \$30 to \$65. *Elvis Lives* tickets are \$10 to \$55. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org. 



Stomp is adding another show at the Van Wezel on Jan. 3. Contributed photo

Enter To Win A New iPad

When our "Likes" on Facebook reach 1,000, we will randomly select one of our subscribers to receive a new iPad.

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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.



The Messiah Sing Along conductors will be Ann Stephenson-Moe and Daniel Cartlidge. Contributed photo

MESSIAH SING ALONG TRADITION TO CONTINUE ON DEC. 23

All members of the community are invited to the Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota, on Sunday, Dec. 23, at 7:30 p.m., for the church's annual tradition of the *Messiah Sing Along* — “a joyous singing of Georg Friedrich Handel’s Christmas *Messiah* — one of the best-known, most-beloved and most frequently performed choral works in Western music,” a news release says.

This year’s performance will be dedicated to the memory of Redeemer’s longtime composer in residence, Dr. Daniel T. Moe, who passed away earlier this year.

The festive, family-friendly event features members of the choirs of Redeemer singing along with the congregation, accompanied by a chamber orchestra and guest organist Mi-

chael Stuart, performing under the direction of conductors Ann Stephenson-Moe and Daniel Cartlidge.

Each year, Redeemer’s *Messiah Sing Along* sells out, so advance ticket purchase is highly recommended, the news release says. Ticket donations are \$10; they may be made in advance online at www.redeemersarasota.org, or by calling or visiting the church.

Subject to availability, tickets will also be sold at the door on the day of the event.

Complimentary parking will be available at the BMO Harris Bank Parking Garage on McAnsh Square between 6 and 10 p.m.

For more information, call 955-4263 or visit www.redeemersarasota.org.

GUEST SPEAKER DISCUSSES MOVEMENTS IN JUDAISM

Congregation Kol HaNeshama hosted Rabbi Richard Hirsh, executive director of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, on Sunday, Dec. 2, at Hotel Indigo in downtown Sarasota.

Hirsch discussed the topic, "Where Have all the Movements Gone and Where Are They Going?" referring to the status of the various philosophical groups within Judaism.

Hirsch has served as rabbi of Reconstructionist congregations in Toronto, New Jersey, New York and Chicago. He also served as executive director of the Philadelphia Board of Rabbis/Jewish Chaplaincy Service of Greater Philadelphia, according to his biography on the

website of the [Reconstructionist Rabbinical College](#).



Rabbi Richard Hirsh (right) joins members of Congregation Kol HaNeshama: (from left) Maureen Binderman, president; Phyllis Labinger, program co-chairwoman; and Kayla Nile, chairwoman. Contributed photo

ORGAN RECITAL TO FEATURE FORMER SYDNEY SYMPHONY TRUMPETER

The Church of the Redeemer, 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, will offer a mid-day organ recital on Wednesday, Dec. 19, with organist/choirmaster Ann Stephenson-Moe performing on the church's massive 50-stop Nichols & Simpson pipe organ.

Daniel Mendelow, the former principal trumpet for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, will join Stephenson-Moe in this final recital of the Advent season.

The event will begin at 12:10 p.m. and end promptly at 12:40 p.m., a church news release says. All in the community are invited to attend this free musical offering in celebration of Advent.

For more information, visit www.redeemersarasota.org or call 955-4263.



Daniel Mendelow/Contributed

CONGREGATION TO HOLD OPEN HOUSE ON DEC. 15

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism will hold an open house from 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 15, for people wishing to learn more about how its members keep and celebrate their Jewish culture and heritage in this century.

“Humanistic Judaism, founded by Rabbi Sherwin Wine, combines the best of Jewish

tradition with the best of today’s humanistic philosophies,” a news release says.

The open house will be held at Unity, 3023 Proctor Road, Sarasota, between Tuttle Avenue and Beneva Road.

The congregation welcomes people of all backgrounds and religions, the news release points out.

GENTLY USED TOY DRIVE TO BENEFIT NEEDY CHILDREN

The December holidays will be brighter for local children in need as Temple Emanu-El undertakes a drive of gently used toys through Dec. 16.

Community members are warmly invited to participate in this effort, a news release says.

Although many worthy charities in the area collect gently used toys, several then sell the items and donate proceeds to the agencies, the release notes. Temple Emanu-El’s drive will focus on local groups such as Mothers Helping Mothers and the Salvation Army,

Advent Lessons & Carols
A Gift of Song & Story
Sunday, December 16 at 5:15 pm

Scripture reading and joyous singing
with choirs in preparation for the
celebration of the Birth of Christ.

A festive, fun, family-friendly event
offered free for the community.
Light reception follows.

The Church of the Redeemer
222 S. Palm Avenue / downtown Sarasota

*Complimentary parking at
BMO Harris Bank Parking Garage 3:30 to 9 pm*

955.4263 / www.redeemersarasota.org



which deliver toys directly to needy children, the release adds.

Temple Emanu-El Religious School parent Amy Meese, who conceived of the drive, explained that her idea came as an outgrowth of a holiday tradition she and her husband, David, instituted with their children, the news release notes. As an interfaith family with many generous relatives, the Meeses wanted to be certain that the “sea of well-intended presents” did not obscure the spirit of the holidays, the release adds.

“When the kids were really young, we started our holiday tradition of ‘charity first,’” Meese recalled in the release. “The first couple of years we had them pick a child their own age off the ‘Angel Tree’ at BJ’s, shop for toys off the child’s wish list, and prepare the gifts to deliver back to the store. They looked forward to doing it and were very deliberate in making their choices.

“Once they got a little older, ‘charity first’ changed,” Meese continued. “We wanted them

to understand how fortunate they were and have empathy for others. We talked to them in kid-appropriate ways about children who were homeless, living in poverty or had experienced catastrophic loss of their belongings, like in a fire. Our goals were for them to focus on the needs of others and to understand selflessness. That is when we instituted our ‘fill-a-box for charity’ tradition. The rule is, before any new gifts may be opened, each girl has to fill a box to give to charity,” she adds in the release.

“They mostly embrace it,” Meese said. “The toughest part for them is the rule that they must give away at least one thing they still care about. [But] the tradition had the desired effect: Our kids are excited to do things for others and participate in charitable efforts.”


Under Meese’s leadership, toys will be collected on Sunday, Dec. 16, from noon to 12:30 p.m. at Temple Emanu-El Religious School, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL TO PRESENT *YOO HOO, MRS. GOLDBERG*

Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, invites members of the community to a screening of the film *Yoo Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg*, on Sunday, Dec. 16, from 2 to 4 p.m.

From the maker of the acclaimed *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*, *Yoo Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg* is a documentary spotlighting television pioneer Gertrude Berg, the Emmy-winning creator of *The Goldbergs* radio show who

paved the way for women in the entertainment industry, a Temple news release says. The film includes interviews with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, actor Ed Asner and television producer Norman Lear.

Admission to the film is \$5. The program is sponsored by Temple Emanu-El’s Adult Education Committee; for more information, contact Beth Salzman at 351-8766. 



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF THE UPCOMING WEEK

14
DEC

World premiere: John Ringling's Circus Nutcracker

Dec. 14, 8 p.m., & Dec. 15, 2 & 8 p.m.

Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Admission: \$10 to \$90; 953-3368 or www.sarasotaballet.org.

14
DEC

1776 the Musical

Through Dec. 22 at the Asolo Repertory Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. For ticket information, call 351-8000 or visit asolorep.org.

14
DEC

Annie

Dec. 14-16 at The Players Theatre, 838 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. For ticket information, call 365-2494 or visit theplayers.org.

15
DEC

Ninth Annual Lights in Bloom

Dec. 15-23 & 26-27, 6 to 9 p.m., Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 900 S. Palm Ave, Sarasota. Admission: \$13-15; children under 12 admitted free. Tickets at Selby.org; information at 366-5731.

16
DEC

Sunday After Brunch Soiree

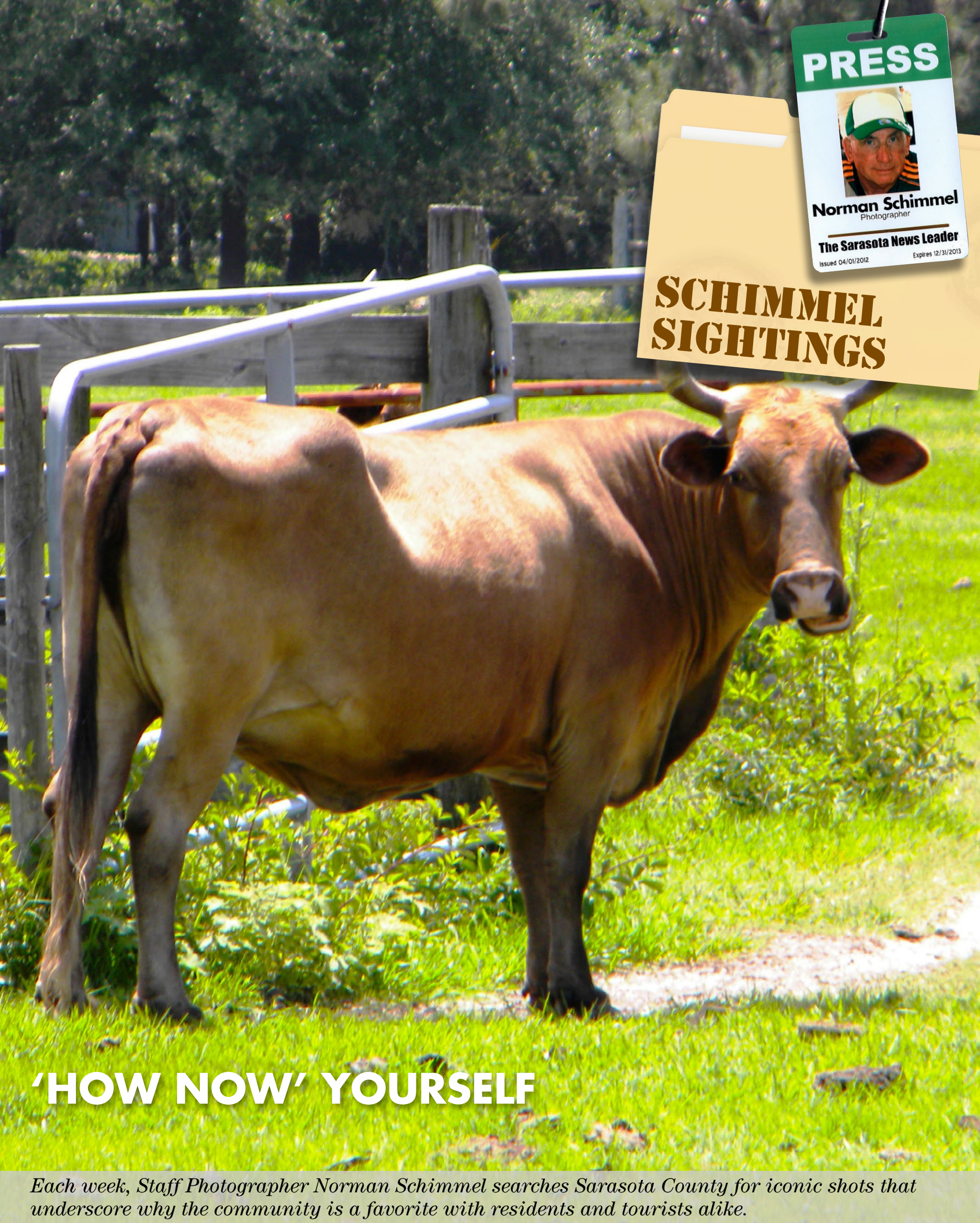
Dec. 16, 2 p.m., at Bookstore1Sarasota, featuring Rodrigo Garcia Lopes
Hermitage Artist Retreat artist in residence

For more information, visit www.bookstore1sarasota.com or call 365-7900.

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



thisweekin
SARASOTA.com
SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR



PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader
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**SCHIMMEL
SIGHTINGS**

‘HOW NOW’ YOURSELF

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.