

THE SARASOTA

April 5, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



**IN PURSUIT OF MAJOR CHANGE
A DISTINCT DISPLEASURE SHOWN
JUST A COINCIDENCE?**

Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

Easter may mark the traditional end of high season in these parts, but — fortunately for us — plenty of interesting things continue to happen.

For example, this week, Cooper Levey-Baker reports on an initiative gaining momentum that would see the county charter amended to create non-partisan County Commission races. That surely will spark a lot of discussion.

Stan Zimmerman had his hands full not only with a regular City Commission meeting but with vandalism at the Ringling Shopping Center —where Walmart wants to build a Supercenter — exciting news for “Tube Dude” creator Scott Gerber and a vote on the future of the St. Armands Business Improvement District.

Additionally, Stan took off his City Editor’s cap to begin a series this week on Florida’s early history, based on a chapter in his latest book.

Scott Proffitt took time to delve into the world of media specialists in the Sarasota County Schools. Budget constraints have those people’s jobs on the line, but they make a very good case that they are far more than librarians.

A Sarasota County staff report on new impact fees provided some good fodder for me to tackle this week. The County Commission will be tackling them in-depth, too, in about a month.

And as usual, plenty was happening on Siesta Key — from vandalism in a beach-nesting bird buffer area to more talk of code enforcement in the Village.

On the lighter side, Tyler Whitson’s article on Eat Local Week should have you checking out the farmers’ markets if you do not do so already, and Otus lets us into the intriguing world of “Toe-Biters.”

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



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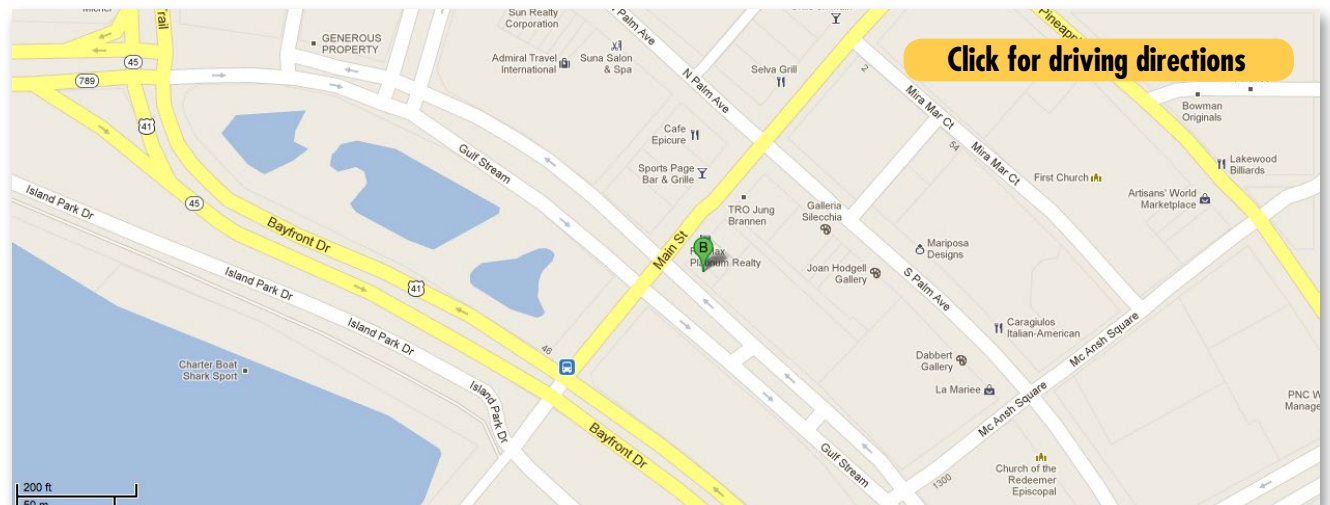
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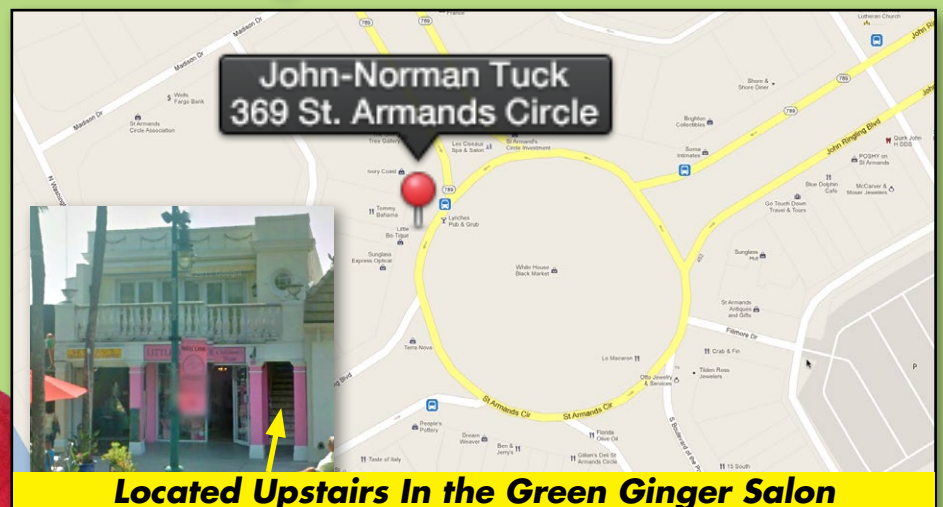
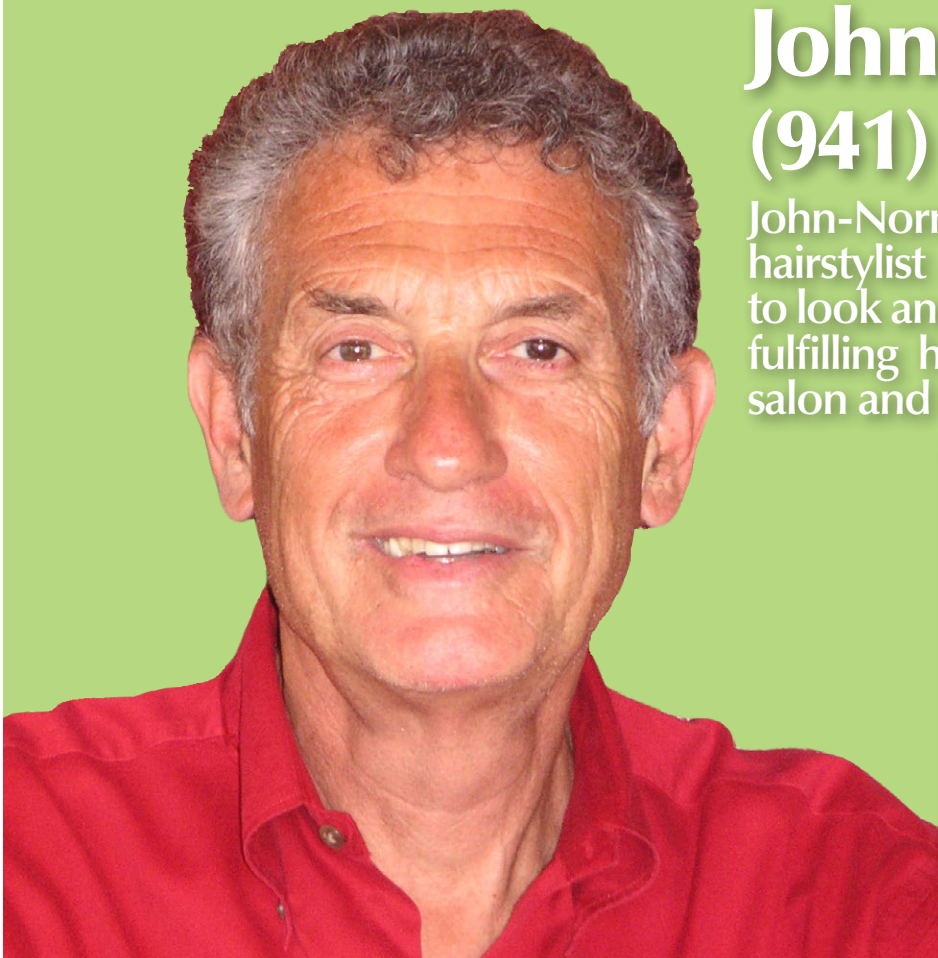


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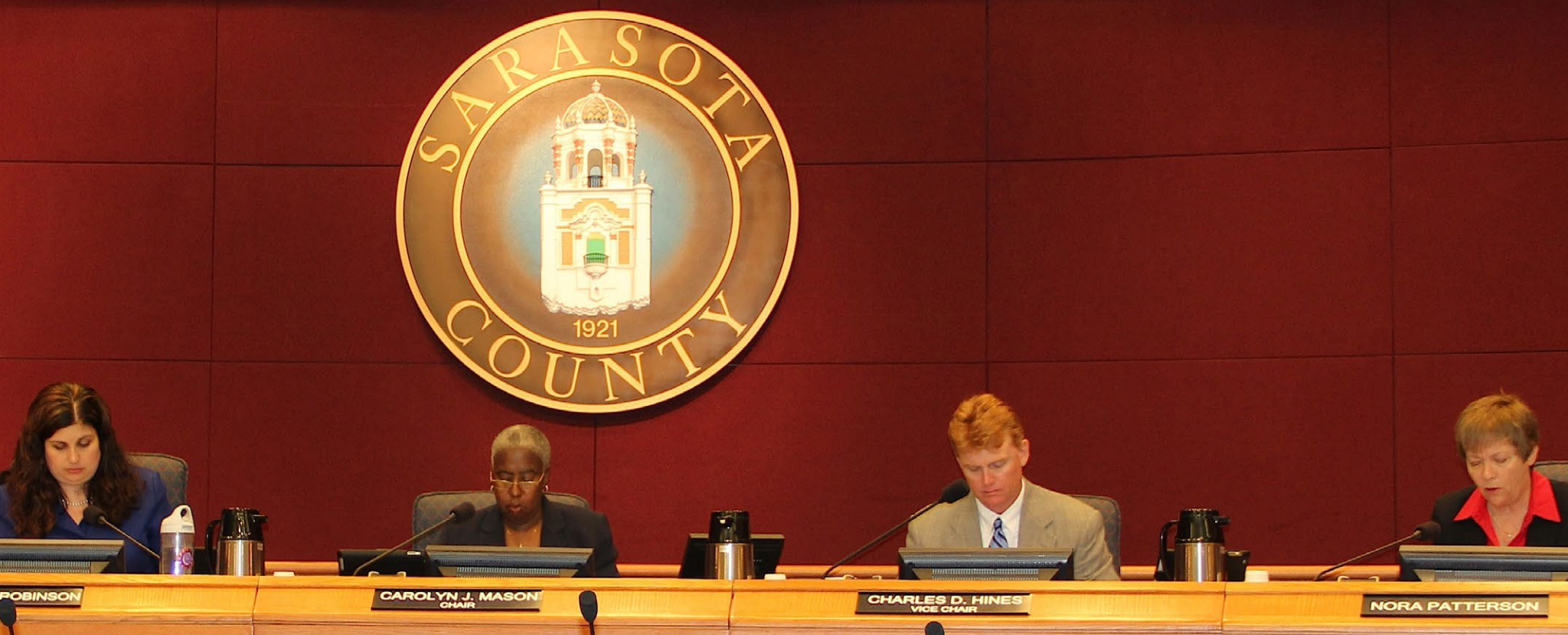
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IN PURSUIT OF MAJOR CHANGE



The Sarasota County Commission sits in session in March. File photo

IS THE FUTURE OF COUNTY POLITICS NONPARTISAN?

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Take party politics out of county politics? That's what one activist group would like to do, and its members are organizing now to bring the issue to voters before the 2014 cycle.

Last year, community activists in the Public Interest Coalition, made up of representatives from groups such as the Council of Neighborhood Associations, the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, came together to discuss the state of county elections. Bill Zoller, the president of Citizens for Sensible Growth in Sarasota County, says there was real outrage about tactics and loopholes that were preventing large segments of the population from participating.

One example: the use of fake write-in candidates to close primary elections that would otherwise be open to members of all parties.

During last year's Republican supervisor of elections primary, Longboat Key's Victoria Brill filed paperwork to run as a write-in for supervisor of elections, although she intended to have no genuine role in the race. The move blocked more than 150,000 Democrats and Independents from being able to vote in the Republican primary between Jon Thaxton and

Kathy Dent, depriving a majority of county residents from having a say in who their supervisor of elections is. **Only 7.8 percent** of county voters cast a

“*We're all victimized by the way things are going.*”

Gayle Reynolds
Member
Public Interest Coalition



ballot for Dent, yet the supervisor kept her seat.

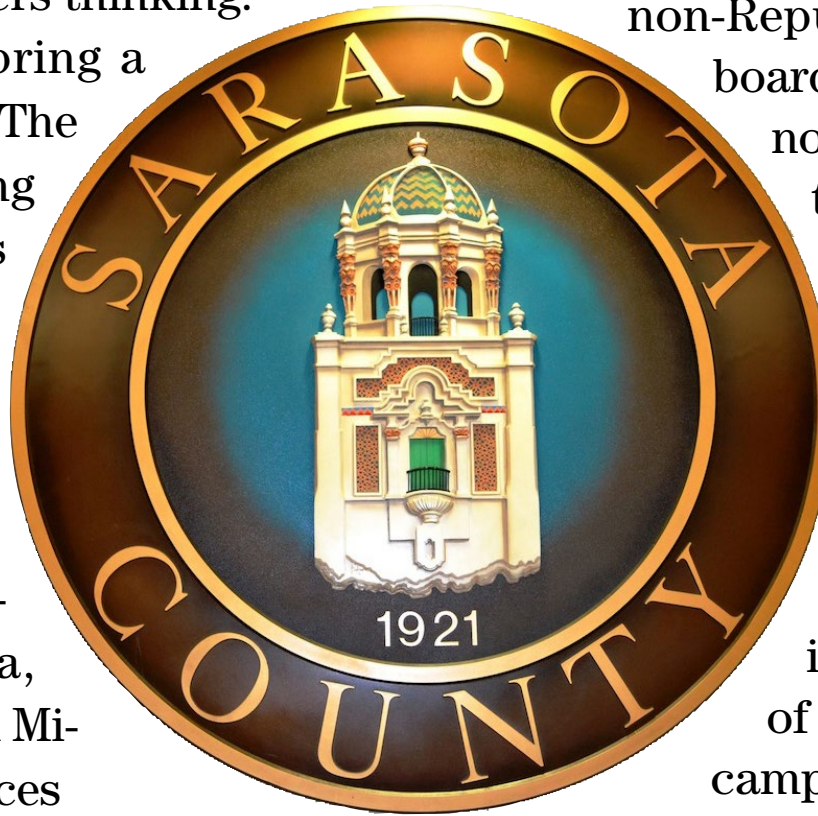
Zoller says stories like that got the Public Interest Coalition members thinking:

“What could we do to bring a better sense of balance?” The group started researching different county charters around the state.

According to Zoller, there are 20 charter counties in Florida, five of which have nonpartisan county elections: Columbia, Leon, Orange, Volusia and Miami-Dade. Nonpartisan races stop candidates from identifying themselves as representatives of particular parties, and they would also close the loophole exploited by Brill last year. With no partisan primaries, everyone would be able to vote in every contest, regardless of party affiliation.

But making that shift means changing the county charter, a proposal the Public Interest Coalition is preparing to bring to voters, hopefully before the 2014 elections.

Gayle Reynolds, a Public Interest Coalition member and the former conservation chairwoman of the local Sierra Club, says the change would “empower” independent voters and foster more competition. “I think it’s important for all county races,” she adds, “but the County Commission in particular has been fraught with corruption the last couple years.”



The Sarasota County Seal. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Reynolds argues that more vigorous elections would open up the process and allow for new viewpoints. The GOP has had a lock on the County Commission for decades. No

non-Republican has served on the board since 1970, and only three non-Republicans have sat on the commission since 1956.

That GOP supremacy remains intact today, even though only 43.6 percent of registered voters are Republicans. Reynolds says the situation consolidates power in the hands of a few and lets a handful of campaign donors control elections: “We’re all victimized by the way things are going.”

But would nonpartisan elections really limit the influence of parties? Republican Party of Sarasota County Chairman Joe Gruters scoffs at the idea. Just look at the current City of Sarasota elections, he says. While the races are technically nonpartisan, both major parties are endorsing candidates and working to turn out voters. Nonpartisan elections would do nothing to prevent parties from inserting themselves into elections.

Gruters argues that removing party labels does a “disservice to the voters” by depriving them of a crucial bit of information. Party affiliation is “the easiest way to identify people” for those who do not have time to research the candidates, he says. “I think all races should be partisan, because right now all races *are* partisan.”

But what about closing loopholes that limit the votes of independents?

“My advice to voters is: Don’t register as Independent. We live in a closed primary state,” he says.

Gruters’ own father is a registered Independent, but those who register with neither major party “take themselves out of the primary,” he adds. “And they’re stuck with the results.”

“The process is open and we’re always looking for new members,” Gruters says. “We’d be happy to register people over, and I’m sure we and the Democrats feel the same way.”

Does he think the nonpartisan charter change has a shot? “Anybody that votes for nonpartisan races is a fool, because they’re trying to trick everybody else,” he responds. “Why have the parties do everything in secret and behind closed doors?”

Reynolds acknowledges that nonpartisan elections would hardly eliminate party influence over the process, but she says that reality is trumped by how the change would give a voice to voters who are now shut out.

There are four ways to get a charter change on the ballot: the state Legislature or the County Commission can support it, the Charter Review Board can recommend it or citizens can gather signatures from 5 percent of the population.


The legislative and review board routes would take too long, Zoller says, but the Public Interest Coalition would like to bring the proposal to the County Commission to have the board add it to the ballot. Given the all-Republican makeup of the board, he doesn’t feel confident



Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent. Photo by Norman Schimmel

that the commissioners will endorse the idea, but he thinks it’s worth a shot.

If the commission says, “No,” that leaves the petition-gathering option. According to the Supervisor of Elections Office, any petition would need 13,869 signatures to make it onto a countywide ballot. Zoller says the Public Interest Coalition is prepared to mount that campaign and to then convince voters that the change is needed. There’s “quite a lot of enthusiasm” among civic groups for the idea, he adds, and he thinks the proposal is a winner. “There are those that think it’s time to level the playing field.”

Zoller, himself a Republican, dismisses Gruters’ charge that nonpartisan elections would only further cloud the process. After the Brill mess, the write-in candidacy that closed last year’s election of County Commissioner Charles Hines and the felony charge against former Sarasota County GOP Chairman Bob Waechter, “How much worse can it get?” he asks. “That’s about as low as you can go.” 



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A DISTINCT DISPLEASURE SHOWN

A fencing company truck was defaced at the Ringling Shopping Center this week. Contributed photo

FENCE GOES UP AT RINGLING SHOPPING CENTER ONLY TO BE VANDALIZED

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The absentee owner of the Ringling Plaza Shopping Center tried to put up a chain-link fence separating his property from the Terrace Gardens neighborhood this week after neighbors testified they regularly cut across the property to walk their dogs and go to Payne Park.

Reaction was swift. The day after workers started to build the fence, somebody knocked down several of the poles in the night. Someone also spray-painted the fencer's truck with "F**K-WAL-MART."

City police were called to investigate the vandalism. Damage could be more than \$1,000.

The local agent of property owner Louis Doyle said she could not answer questions, and she asked they be submitted in writing. At press time there was no response as to why the fence was being erected.

The site was proposed for a Walmart Supercenter. Last month the Sarasota City Commission, by 3-2 vote, upheld an appeal of a favorable decision by the Planning Board to allow the new facility, effectively stopping the project. Walmart may take the City Commission decision to Circuit Court this month.

The Walmart Corp. had the property under contract with the Doyle family, which holds


the nine-acre parcel in a family trust. According to the permit, the fence cost the Doyles about \$8,000.

The appeal of the Walmart decision was launched by the nearby Alta Vista neighborhood, which does not directly abut the Doyle property. Some neighbors in Terrace Gardens blamed Alta Vista for the fence. One woman said it was the owners' retribution for losing the land sale to Walmart.

However, others suggest the Terrace Gardens residents may have triggered the erecting of the fence by testifying under oath at the Planning Board and City Commission public hearings about cutting across the shopping center site to reach Payne Park to the west. Habitual and unenforced trespass raises liability issues with owners.

Technically speaking, the nearby neighborhood association is called The Gardens of Ringling Park, but it has not had a meeting or held elections in many months. The area adjacent to the shopping center traditionally was called Terrace Gardens before it was included in a merger with other dormant neighborhoods to form the "Gardens."

Residents on both sides of the Walmart issue are furious about the fence. One woman who opposes the Supercenter said her son broke out in tears when he saw the structure. "How are we going to get to the park?" he cried.

Myron Nichols, the last elected president of the Gardens of Ringling Park, laid the responsibility for the fence on the figurative shoulders of the Alta Vista neighborhood. "They don't live here, and this is what we get," he said. "This property is going to be vacant for 10 years if Walmart doesn't move in here." 



*The fencing started on Tuesday, April 2. In the background is the site of the old Ringling Publix.
Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



The posts are set in cement just inside the property line of the Ringling Shopping Center. Neighborhood residents used the area as a type of 'mini-park' for decades. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



By Wednesday, workers were beginning to string the chain-link mesh. This span blocked the historical (and paved) path between the Terrace Gardens neighborhood and the shopping center. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



At the dead-end circle of Lemon Avenue, the fencing has been destroyed. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

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JUST A COINCIDENCE?

The general area where a brush fire was reported before dawn Sunday off Siesta Public Beach showed no apparent damage just a couple of days later. Photo by Rachel Hackney

SARASOTA AUDUBON VOLUNTEERS REPORT VANDALISM AT A BUFFER FOR BEACH-NESTING BIRDS ON SIESTA KEY JUST DAYS BEFORE A FIRE ERUPTS NEARBY

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Sarasota Audubon volunteers are wondering whether it is more than just a coincidence that stakes and plastic tape were removed from a known nesting area for endangered birds on Siesta Key and a fire erupted in the same general area three days later.

Siesta resident Catherine Luckner told *The Sarasota News Leader* that while no snowy plover nests had been discovered in a conservation easement area just north of Siesta Public Beach, “[someone] actually had to go to a lot of trouble to remove an entire buffer” for the birds late last week.

The incident occurred either the night of March 28 or very early in the morning on March 29, she added, because an Audubon

volunteer discovered the damage on the 29th when he was making his rounds on the beach, searching for any signs of nests.

The plovers’ nesting season generally is from March through September, according to Audubon representatives.

Some of the stakes had been broken in the buffer area, Luckner said, indicating the incident was not the result of a dog running loose, for example.

Then about 4:15 a.m. on Sunday, March 31, the Sarasota County Fire Department received a call about a brush and grass fire between Beach Accesses 8 and 10, part of the same area where the snowy plovers have been known to nest over the past several years.

Dawn Wright, assistant to Capt. Susan Pearson — the public information officer in the Fire Department — told the *News Leader* on April 2 that the report indicated the fire was put out in about 10 minutes. She added that it had covered an area of about 100 feet.

Asked whether the firefighters had been able to determine anything about the cause of the blaze, Wright said, “Not that we’re aware of,” based on the report.

The report does note that it was difficult reaching the area with a fire hose, with the crew having to use 950 feet of hose plus a 100-foot “rapid deploy kit.”

It adds that the firefighters were able to begin spraying water on the area at 5:02 a.m.

Luckner was especially concerned about the fire, because, as she pointed out, “It wouldn’t take much with those old wooden cottages out there” to go up in flames if the fire had spread fast.

The buffer area that was destroyed, Luckner continued, is on a private piece of property owned by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. As a result, she pointed out, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) also had posted “No Trespassing” signs in the area. “They are still missing,” she said of those signs, adding, “It’s



A 'Share the Shore' sign posted by Sarasota County at Beach Access 8 on Siesta Key seeks to educate visitors about beach-nesting birds. Photo by Rachel Hackney

very distressing to think anybody would be so mean-spirited.”

Sgt. Scott Osborne, who leads the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office Community Policing Station on Siesta Key, told the *News Leader* on April 2 that he had stipulated special patrols in the rebuilt buffer area since the incident occurred last week. March 30 was the first day for those patrols, he said. Officers have been making a point of checking the area early in the morning, Osborne added.

Additionally, he contacted the FWC officer responsible for matters on Siesta, Osborne said, and FWC has directed its game wardens to keep an eye on the area.


“It could be anyone,” Osborne added of the perpetrator, even a resident. “We’ve had some issues in the past” in the areas marked off for the plover nests, he pointed out. “There’s no telling.”

A couple of years ago, Audubon volunteers reported extensive damage from people and dogs in some of the nesting areas.

“I don’t know if they get mad that [the Audubon volunteers are] closing off part of the beach,” Osborne said.

However, Luckner emphasized that the buffer area damaged last week was not beside a public pathway.

Moreover, a county ordinance forbids dogs on the Siesta beach, but Audubon volunteers also have cited numerous incidents over the past several years of dog owners ignoring the law. Last summer, the Sheriff’s Office stepped up patrols in the evenings during the height of nesting season, with officers issuing citations for violations.

Dogs will scare nesting plovers away from the nests, even if the birds are trying to hatch eggs, Audubon members have pointed out. Many times, the birds will not return to the nests after such an incident. 



A snowy plover on the beach. Photo by Fran Palmeri



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PAYING FOR ROADS

One of the most recent road projects set for completion in Sarasota County is the extension of North Catlemen Road, which will help with traffic flow at Nathan Benderson Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WITH NEW DATA AVAILABLE, THE COUNTY COMMISSION HAS OPTIONS ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED WITH CHARGING IMPACT FEES IN THE FUTURE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Although the Sarasota County Commission voted on Jan. 16 to maintain impact fees at a lower level for another two years, the release of updated data could prompt reconsideration of the action.

In a report to the commission dated March 4, Interim Transportation Planning Director Jonathan Paul provides what he refers to as “several *apples-to-apples comparative analyses*.”

“Based upon updated travel characteristics and construction cost estimates,” he writes, “the 2013 rates are [about] 35% lower than 2007 rates.”

The county has been using 2007 rates until new data became available.

The commissioners in 2007 adopted rates that were 68 percent of the full fees. In 2011, the board slashed those adopted fees by another 50 percent, calling the move a way to stimulate the economy in the wake of the real estate collapse.

Although the board had expected to have new data before its January vote, a spreadsheet error by then Transportation Director Clarke Davis in December forced a delay.

Davis resigned shortly after he revealed the mistake to County Administrator Randall Reid and the commission.

Reid told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week that two hours have been set aside on the County Commission’s morning agenda for May 8 to discuss the findings.

ROAD PROJECTS STATUS - 2012

North County Road District		
Project Title	Project #	Status
Bee Ridge Road Extension	75830	Design is underway-construction to start in Fall 2013
North Cattlemen Road	85829	Construction is underway - complete in Spring 2013
Cattlemen Road, Phase 2	95804	Under design, no funding for construction
Cattlemen Road, Phase 5	95805	Under design, no funding for construction
Signals, Intersections & Safety	95790	Various projects, on-going
Central County Road District		
Project Title	Project #	Status
Bee Ridge Road Extension	75830	Design is underway-construction to start in Fall 2013
Proctor Road, Phase 2	95766	Design complete
McIntosh Road, Phase 1	95771	Preliminary design complete – final design pending
Honore Avenue, Pinebrook Ext	95798	Phase VI construction completed, Phase VII construction is anticipated to start in the Fall of 2013
Honore Avenue, Clark to Proctor	95823	Design for the Ashton/Honore intersection is underway
South County Road District		
Project Title	Project #	Status
Englewood Interstate Connector	95760	Design complete- Construction of US 41/ River Road intersection is underway - complete in the Fall of 2013
Future Design	95843	No activities
City of Venice Road District		<i>No activity in FY2012</i>
City of Sarasota Road District		
Project Title	Project #	Status
New Lockwood Ridge	95744	Pending
US 41 & Fruitville Road	95747	Pending
12 th Street	95830	Pending
Myrtle Street, Phase 2	95871	Design Pending
City of North Port Road District		
Project Title	Project #	Status
Englewood Interstate Connector	95760	Design complete- Construction of US 41/ River Road intersection is underway - complete in the Fall of 2013

February 1, 2013 - MAL

A chart shows the list of county road projects as of Feb. 1. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Paul pointed out in his report, “Several 2013 rates had ... differences that [were] substantially different than the [approximately] 35% average. These changes in rates are principally due to either changes in trip generation rate, pass-by trips or average travel length characteristics.” (A “pass-by” trip, the report notes, is one when a person already is on a particular route for a different purpose and simply stops at another place; for example, someone driving home from work could stop at a convenience store.)

Commissioner Nora Patterson told the *News Leader* on April 3 that she found the travel reference noteworthy: “People are putting less strain on the capacity of the road system.”

“That’s definitely been the case,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta concurred in an interview with the *News Leader* this week.

The reduction was no surprise, Patterson pointed out, with the cost of gas having risen over the past months.

Paul offered three options for the County Commission in regard to the new rates. One calls for the commission to phase in the full 2013 rate by June 1, 2015.

Commissioner Christine Robinson told the *News Leader* that in her review of the new data, “It looks like we were somewhat accurate” in maintaining the rates adopted in 2011.

For example, in Paul’s “apples to apples” comparison, the current adopted road impact fee for construction of a single-family or multi-family unit is \$1,276. At the full 2007 rate, the amount would be \$3,762. The full 2013 rate would be \$2,434.

In his chart, Paul showed the biggest decrease in applying the full rates of 2007 and 2013 would be 65 percent for the construction of a hospital — \$14,196 at the full 2007 rate compared to \$4,995 at the full 2013 rate.

The smallest difference would apply to construction of a recreational or community cen-



Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson listen to a presentation during a regular County Commission meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

ter: \$11,112 at the full 2007 rate compared to \$8,947 at the full 2013 rate, a decrease of approximately 19 percent.

Patterson indicated she was not in favor of the commission applying the same percentage decrease to the 2013 rates that it had applied to those from 2007. The current impact fees “are pretty low,” she said.

“Personally,” she added, “my goal on this has been to keep [the impact fees] low” for another year, then phase in the full 2013 rates over the next two or three years.

During the board’s January discussion, she said she could not support the two-year exten-

sion of the current impact fees, noting that the problem with continuing such a reduction is that no one ever wants the fees to go back up.

REVENUE

In a separate March 20 report on the county’s impact fee collections for the 2012 fiscal year, Tom Polk, director of Planning and Development Services, and Mark Loveridge in Planning Services noted the road impact fees totaled \$3,459,382, while staff had budgeted \$2,759,706.

The City of North Port fees showed the biggest increase over budget — almost 161 percent.

Road Impact Fee Rate Comparison				Full Rate Comparison			Option 1 Comparison			Option 2 Comparison			Option 3 Comparison		
Land Use Code	Category	Land Use	Development Unit	Full Rate	Full Rate	% Difference	Adopted Rate	Option 1 Rate	% Difference	Current Adopted Rate	Option 2 Rate	% Difference	Option 3 - Phasing the Difference between Adopted 2011 & Full 2013		
				2007	2013	2007/2013	2007	2013	2007/2013	2011	2013	2011/2013	2013	2014	2015
				100%	100%	(% below rounded)	68% of 2007 Full Rate	68% of 2013 Full Rate	(% below rounded)	Full 2007 Rate Reduced 68%, then reduced 50%	Full 2013 Rate Reduced 68%, then reduced 50%	(% below rounded)	2011 Adopted Rate	50% of Difference between 2011 /2013	Full 2013 Rate
210/220	Residential	Single Family or Multi-Family Unit:													
210/220	Residential	Less than 500 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$3,762	\$2,434	35%	\$2,552	\$1,655	35%	\$1,276	\$828	35%	\$1,276	\$1,855	\$2,434
210/220	Residential	500 – 749 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$5,040	\$3,262	35%	\$3,419	\$2,218	35%	\$1,709	\$1,109	35%	\$1,709	\$2,486	\$3,262
210/220	Residential	750 – 999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$5,880	\$3,808	35%	\$3,989	\$2,589	35%	\$1,994	\$1,295	35%	\$1,994	\$2,901	\$3,808
210/220	Residential	1,000 – 1,249 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$6,511	\$4,216	35%	\$4,417	\$2,867	35%	\$2,208	\$1,433	35%	\$2,208	\$3,212	\$4,216
210/220	Residential	1,250 – 1,499 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$7,015	\$4,541	35%	\$4,759	\$3,088	35%	\$2,379	\$1,544	35%	\$2,379	\$3,460	\$4,541
210/220	Residential	1,500 – 1,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$7,622	\$4,935	35%	\$5,171	\$3,356	35%	\$2,585	\$1,678	35%	\$2,585	\$3,760	\$4,935
210/220	Residential	2,000 – 2,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$8,511	\$5,512	35%	\$5,774	\$3,748	35%	\$2,887	\$1,874	35%	\$2,887	\$4,200	\$5,512
210/220	Residential	3,000 – 3,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$9,363	\$6,061	35%	\$6,352	\$4,121	35%	\$3,176	\$2,061	35%	\$3,176	\$4,619	\$6,061
210/220	Residential	4,000 sq. ft. or more Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$9,982	\$6,464	35%	\$6,772	\$4,396	35%	\$3,386	\$2,198	35%	\$3,386	\$4,925	\$6,464
240	Residential	Mobile Home/RV Park	1 space	\$4,207	\$2,719	35%	\$2,854	\$1,849	35%	\$1,427	\$924	35%	\$1,427	\$2,073	\$2,719
253	Residential	Adult Cong. Living Facility	1 Dwelling Unit	\$1,698	\$1,101	35%	\$1,152	\$749	35%	\$576	\$374	35%	\$576	\$839	\$1,101
130	Industrial	Industrial Park	1,000 sq. ft.	\$5,856	\$3,719	36%	\$3,973	\$2,529	36%	\$1,986	\$1,264	36%	\$1,986	\$2,853	\$3,719
140	Industrial	Manufacturing	1,000 sq. ft.	\$3,215	\$2,081	35%	\$2,181	\$1,415	35%	\$1,090	\$708	35%	\$1,090	\$1,586	\$2,081
150	Industrial	Light Industrial & Warehousing	1,000 sq. ft.	\$4,174	\$1,940	54%	\$2,832	\$1,319	53%	\$1,416	\$660	53%	\$1,416	\$1,678	\$1,940
151	Industrial	Mini-Warehouse	1,000 sq. ft.	\$1,520	\$946	38%	\$1,031	\$643	38%	\$515	\$322	38%	\$515	\$731	\$946
310/320	Commercial (Lodging)	Hotel/Motel	1 room	\$3,025	\$1,931	36%	\$2,052	\$1,313	36%	\$1,026	\$657	36%	\$1,026	\$1,479	\$1,931
420	Commercial (Recreational)	Marina	1 berth	\$1,437	\$894	38%	\$975	\$608	38%	\$487	\$304	38%	\$487	\$691	\$894
430	Commercial (Recreational)	Golf Course (open to public)	1 acre	\$2,448	\$1,523	38%	\$1,661	\$1,036	38%	\$830	\$518	38%	\$830	\$1,177	\$1,523
445	Commercial (Recreational)	Movie Theater	1,000 sq. ft.	\$16,684	\$12,962	22%	\$11,319	\$8,814	22%	\$5,659	\$4,407	22%	\$5,659	\$9,311	\$12,962
495	Commercial (Recreational)	Recreational/Community Center	1,000 sq. ft.	\$11,112	\$8,947	19%	\$7,539	\$6,084	19%	\$3,769	\$3,042	19%	\$3,769	\$6,358	\$8,947
520	Commercial (Institutional)	Elementary School	1,000 sq. ft.	\$6,757	\$3,995	41%	\$4,584	\$2,717	41%	\$2,292	\$1,358	41%	\$2,292	\$3,144	\$3,995
530	Commercial (Institutional)	High School	1,000 sq. ft.	\$6,011	\$3,337	44%	\$4,078	\$2,269	44%	\$2,039	\$1,135	44%	\$2,039	\$2,688	\$3,337
560	Commercial (Institutional)	House of Worship	1,000 sq. ft.	\$5,535	\$3,104	44%	\$3,755	\$2,111	44%	\$1,877	\$1,055	44%	\$1,877	\$2,491	\$3,104
565	Commercial (Institutional)	Day Care Center	1,000 sq. ft.	\$11,661	\$6,053	48%	\$7,911	\$4,116	48%	\$3,955	\$2,058	48%	\$3,955	\$5,004	\$6,053
610	Commercial (Medical)	Hospital	1,000 sq. ft.	\$14,196	\$4,995	65%	\$9,631	\$3,397	65%	\$4,815	\$1,698	65%	\$4,815	\$4,905	\$4,995
620	Commercial (Medical)	Nursing Home	1,000 sq. ft.	\$4,925	\$2,871	42%	\$3,341	\$1,952	42%	\$1,670	\$976	42%	\$1,670	\$2,271	\$2,871
710	Commercial (Office)	Office, General and Medical	1,000 sq. ft.	\$8,856	\$5,768	35%	\$6,008	\$3,922	35%	\$3,004	\$1,961	35%	\$3,004	\$4,386	\$5,768
812	Commercial (Retail)	Building Mat./Hardware/Nursery	1,000 sq. ft.	\$19,494	\$12,669	35%	\$13,225	\$8,615	35%	\$6,612	\$4,307	35%	\$6,612	\$9,641	\$12,669
820	Commercial (Retail)	Shopping Center/General Retail	1,000 sq. ft.	\$16,684	\$10,780	35%	\$11,319	\$7,330	35%	\$5,659	\$3,665	35%	\$5,659	\$8,220	\$10,780
841	Commercial (Retail)	Auto Sales/Repair	1,000 sq. ft.	\$7,915	\$4,984	37%	\$5,370	\$3,389	37%	\$2,685	\$1,695	37%	\$2,685	\$3,835	\$4,984
851	Commercial (Retail)	Convenience Store	1,000 sq. ft.	\$31,856	\$20,701	35%	\$21,612	\$14,077	35%	\$10,806	\$7,038	35%	\$10,806	\$15,754	\$20,701
890	Commercial (Retail)	Furniture Store	1,000 sq. ft.	\$2,186	\$1,420	35%	\$1,483	\$966	35%	\$741	\$483	35%	\$741	\$1,081	\$1,420
912	Commercial (Financial)	Bank/Drive-Through	1,000 sq. ft.	\$17,958	\$7,013	61%	\$12,183	\$4,769	61%	\$6,091	\$2,384	61%	\$6,091	\$6,552	\$7,013
931	Commercial (Service)	Restaurant, Sit-Down	1,000 sq. ft.	\$18,446	\$11,985	35%	\$12,514	\$8,150	35%	\$6,257	\$4,075	35%	\$6,257	\$9,121	\$11,985
934	Commercial (Service)	Restaurant, Fast Food	1,000 sq. ft.	\$40,156	\$26,093	35%	\$27,243	\$17,743	35%	\$13,621	\$8,872	35%	\$13,621	\$19,857	\$26,093
946	Commercial (Service)	Gasoline Station	1 fuel position	\$5,774	\$3,751	35%	\$3,917	\$2,551	35%	\$1,958	\$1,275	35%	\$1,958	\$2,855	\$3,751

A chart compares the 2007 road impact fees with those updated for 2013. Image courtesy Sarasota County

The collections for the City of Sarasota were up about 158 percent over projections — \$128,897 compared to the budgeted amount of \$50,000.

Conversely, the road impact fees for north county came in below expectations — \$402,006 compared to the budgeted amount of \$684,000.

Among the other impact fee collections, the report shows the following data:

- Park impact fees totaled \$1,390,754, compared to the budgeted amount of \$654,915, almost 53 percent higher.
- Library impact fees came in at \$390,258, while the budget projection was \$187,481.
- EMS impact fees totaled \$134,871, compared to the budget amount of \$68,307.
- Fire/rescue impact fee revenues came in at \$167,453, while \$132,922 was budgeted.

“Things definitely have picked up,” Barbetta told the *News Leader*, referring to construction.

Patterson said, “The construction industry’s coming back a little bit,” but the impact fee revenue falls short of what the county had expected by this point. She also noted that even at their full level, the impact fees cover only a portion of the county’s expense for new roads.

STATE ACTION

Barbetta and Patterson this week also pointed to action in the Florida Legislature that would suspend for three years the road impact fees and concurrency charges for commercial developments smaller than 6,000 square feet.

Supporters have cited the bill as a means of encouraging infill development in cities.

House Bill 321, sponsored by Rep. Mike La Rosa, R-St. Cloud, was on the schedule for an April 3 hearing in the Finance & Tax Subcommittee. A companion bill in the Senate, SB 1716, won unanimous approval on April 2 in the Senate Community Affairs Committee.

Barbetta sees merit in the legislation, though he said he had not had the opportunity to check with staff to learn how the bills in the Legislature might affect Sarasota County.


Nonetheless, he said, “I think we need to start looking at zones” for construction where no future road development would be possible.

For example, the new restaurant on the ground floor of the Palm Avenue parking garage in downtown Sarasota — Louies Modern, which formally opened April 3 — had to pay \$95,000 in impact fees, he said. However, he pointed out, no changes would ever be expected for Palm Avenue.

“People walk to that restaurant, and the garage is already there,” he added. Likewise, a new business opening on Bee Ridge Road would have to pay a road impact fee when it would be relying on current traffic for customers, with no expansion for that road on the horizon, he continued.

The county still will benefit from property and sales taxes from those businesses, he added.

In the meantime, Robinson and Barbetta both say they are looking forward to a presentation on the new impact fee data.

Robinson praised Paul, saying, “He’ll tell you how it is. He seems to give you factual information as opposed to opinion.” 

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.



MISSING A PART

Business owners along the North Tamiami Trail have advocated for new development options to bolster the area. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY COMMISSION APPROVES THE NORTH TRAIL OVERLAY DISTRICT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

In a vote sure to enrage pro-development forces in the on-going Sarasota elections, the city commissioners voted 3-2 to emasculate the North Trail Overlay District (NTOD) on Monday, April 1.

The overall NTOD plan was approved by the same 3-2 margin, but without the administrative site plan approval considered key to encouraging developers' interest. In the words of Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown, "It doesn't have a carrot anymore."

The vote capped a three-year policy mar-

athon propelled by interests along the North Tamiami Trail from the city limits south to 10th Street that tired of the neglect and crime along the corridor. Similar plans to improve the city's "gateway" have foundered for more than two decades.

North Trail property owner and business operator Jay Patel urged commission approval of the whole package. "Please pass this as it's presented. It's just a tool. The economics are right, right now," Patel said. "Administrative site plan review is a very important aspect."

“It doesn't have a carrot anymore.”

Marlon Brown
Deputy City Manager
Sarasota



After a lengthy public hearing, Commissioner Paul Caragiulo moved to approve the NTOD with an expiration date in 2020. Mayor Suzanne Atwell seconded the motion. Commissioner Terry Turner then proposed an amendment.

THE CRITICAL AMENDMENT

“It is not a friendly amendment,” said Turner.

Under the city’s rules of procedure, an amendment is “friendly” if the maker of the motion agrees with the intent and language of the amendment.

“I move to delete the administrative site plan approval,” said Turner. He further indicated the entire idea was “fundamentally flawed.” He told supporters, “Your vision is not bold enough. Neighbors in general were consistently excluded from the development of this.”

“Administrative approval is problematic. The community gets nothing, and it is unclear what the developer gets,” said Turner. “This needs to start over with a bigger vision.”

The comments were expanded upon by Commissioner Shannon Snyder. “The developers and the neighbors both want the same thing — certainty,” said Snyder. “The neighbors are as frustrated as everybody else.”

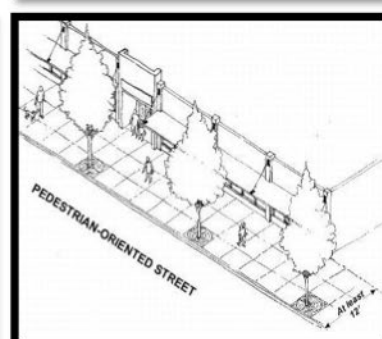
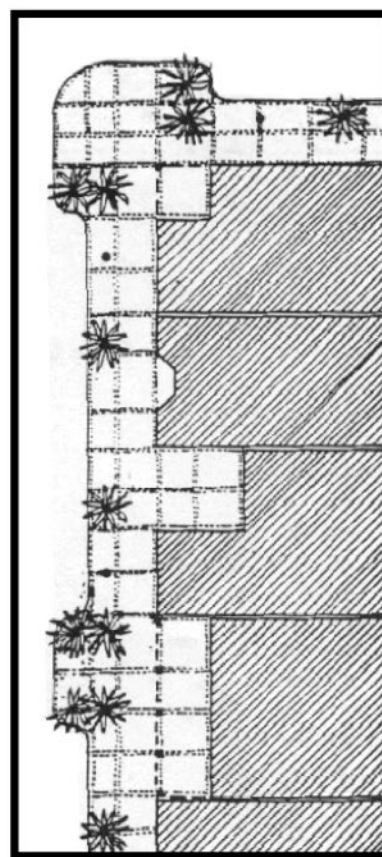
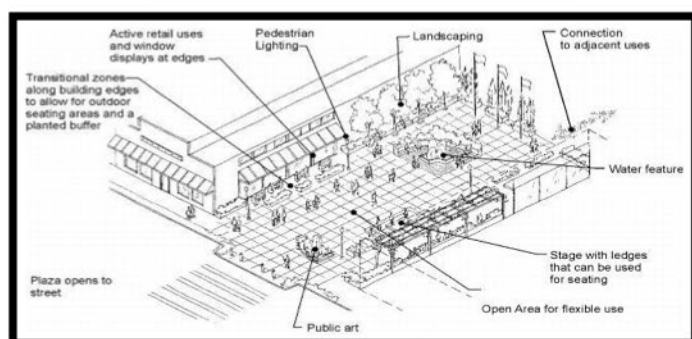
Builders and developers have long complained about confusion and delay at City Hall. They are even more caustic about watching their plans undergo the scrutiny of public bodies such as the Planning Board and City Commission. Administrative approval would have stopped that, allowing staffers to give the go-or-no-go decision.

Commissioner Willie Shaw noted that none of the five neighborhoods in the NTOD area endorsed the idea.

“Without our input as neighborhoods, we don’t get anything,” he said.

The motion to yank administrative site plan approval from the NTOD passed with Atwell and Caragiulo in the minority.

Another amendment made it into the plan as well. Instead of setting up the NTOD in perpetuity, commissioners agreed to include a “sunset



Urban frontage features of the North Trail Overlay District remained in the final document. Image courtesy City of Sarasota


provision,” demanding the City Commission revisit the plan in five years. The NTOD would die a natural death unless a future commission decided to extend it.

Still in the plan is an increase in allowable height to 45 feet, providing one additional story for any new building the NTOD covers. Revised parking requirements and incentives to push the frontage closer to the highway also remained. The plan contains no increases in residential density.

In some areas along the Tamiami Trail, the additional height could allow for a rooftop view of the bay. A “water view” from a flat and accessible roof could mimic Caribbean and Middle-Eastern architecture, where families often use roofs as living and sleeping spaces in the summer.

Even though the NTOD is now on the books, without administrative site plan approval, it may prove problematic if a developer wants to be the first “on the block” to attempt implementation of the 131-page document in the face of public hearings before the Planning Board and possibly the City Commission.

The city planner who shepherded the NTOD through endless meetings and iterations — Ryan Chapdelain — mentioned a previous planning effort for the North Trail more than a decade ago. Speaking before the motions and voting, he said, “Gateway 2000 was mentioned, and nothing really came of it.”

That unused plan now sits on a shelf at City Hall. Only time will tell if the NTOD suffers a similar fate. 



The draft North Trail Overlay District plan envisions a new look for businesses. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



BETWEEN A ROCK AND A ... GREAT PLACE

Booker Middle School's media center still boasts a lot of books, even in a modern electronic age. Photo by Scott Proffitt

WHILE LEADERS OF THE SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS SAY THEY DO NOT WANT TO LOSE DISTRICT MEDIA SPECIALISTS, THEY ALSO POINT OUT THE DISTRICT HAS BEEN DIPPING FAR INTO ITS 'RAINY DAY FUNDS'

By Scott Proffitt
Staff Writer

Helen Harvey has a room full of students on computers in her media center, which is a doublewide portable on the edge of campus.

The media specialist for Booker High School handles the comings and goings, the questions from the youth — and the interruptions — with a calm that comes from being a seasoned professional.

On April 3, when *The Sarasota News Leader*

visited the campus, Harvey was also leading a class discussion of *Macbeth*. “These kids are getting college credit for this class,” she pointed out.

“*Our library is an oasis for our students. Libraries are filled at lunch, before school and after. This will affect over 18,000 students in our district.*”

Donna Heath
Media Specialist
Sarasota County Schools

While there are books in the center, the focus is on computers, and the person in charge — whether an aide or specialist — has a job description quite different from that of a school librarian in the past.

“We aren’t just librarians. We are guidance counselors, teachers, college advisors. I had two kids come in today who asked for private time to talk with me,” Harvey continued.

But her position may disappear. Next year an aide — a category of employee with substantially less training — may be in charge of the new media center under construction. That fact was the major topic of discussion — both by the public and by School Board members — during the April 2 Sarasota County School Board meeting.

“I don’t think they’re seeing how much this is going to cost them in the long run,” Harvey told the *News Leader*. “I have three college-level classes I teach. We are spending a



While construction of the new facility is under way, Booker High students are making the best of a media center in a doublewide portable unit on campus. Photo by Scott Proffitt



A new media center will be part of the rebuilt Booker High School campus in Sarasota. Photo by Scott Proffitt

whole lot of money on technology and computers. You are going to have a group of aides who historically have a high turnover.”

She added, “Look at all of the computers we have. Every period of the day we have kids who are taking virtual school class [through the Internet], so we have a lot of equipment that needs highly trained staff. We can barely keep up with the needed training now.”

The School Board earlier had agreed to eliminate the media specialists as part of a large bucket of cuts aimed at balancing its budget for the next fiscal year. This measure is planned for every middle school and high school in the district.

“The cut in media specialists was done at the elementary school level three years ago,” said Gary Leatherman, the director of communications and community relations. “The people in charge of the media no longer have certification as media specialists,” he added. They are aides instead, he said.

Media Specialist Donna Heath addressed the School Board Tuesday night: “Our library is an oasis for our students. Libraries are filled at lunch, before school and after. This [action] will affect over 18,000 students in our district.”

She pointed out, “Elementary school has survived [the cuts] because the kids are led in each week or so and check out another few books. This is not what would happen in the middle and high schools, where we teach kids

how to do research [and] cite references and teach the teachers how to use the systems.”

“[We] have a budget and I don’t want us to cherry-pick,” said board member Carol Todd.

Board member Shirley Brown added, “If we want to change [this decision], I don’t know where else to cut at this time.”


But board member Caroline Zucker took a firm stand against the plan to eliminate media specialists: “I will not vote for this. I just cannot

vote for this budget,” she said, adding it would be the first time in her many years on the board that she had voted down the proposed spending plan.

District administrative staff point out that the schools have suffered

as a result of the Great Recession, given the combination of decreased money from local property taxes since 2007 and state cutbacks. The Florida Legislature also has had to wrestle with budget shortfalls over the same period, though its members may be said to feel the influence of political forces prompting them to choose where to spend the dollars they have.

“Since 2007, over 680 positions are gone, and we’ve reduced the budget by 30 percent,” said Lori White, superintendent of Sarasota County Schools, at Tuesday night’s board meeting.

“We are limited to what we can do to meet the gap,” she added. “I feel responsible to live within the revenues we get from the state. We’ve been dipping into savings ... savings that are disappearing.” 

I feel responsible to live within the revenues we get from the state. We’ve been dipping into savings ... savings that are disappearing.

Lori White
Superintendent
Sarasota County Schools



HARNESSING A POT OF GOLD

Downtown Sarasota has benefited from the expenditure of CRA funds. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ANALYSIS: FOR THE CRA, THE FUTURE WILL BE HERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Combine a lame-duck city commissioner with a pot-of-gold tax scheme, failing budgets, unmet capital needs and a county unsure of the direction of its future and you get ... an 11-member committee.

Let us take 'em one at a time.

Lame duck? City Commissioner Terry Turner announced months ago he was not interested in a second term. And he will be missed greatly for his financial acumen. A former economics professor, en-

trepreneur and budget wizard, there is no one — either a sitting commissioner or candidate, city or county — who can take his place.

Pot of gold? Could you stand \$3.5 million in your pocket every year, no strings attached? It is called a “Community Redevelopment Agency,” a complicated property tax scheme to attack “slum-and-blight.” But the pot o’ gold for the city disappears in 2016. Then what?

Failing budgets? Sarasota — city and coun-

“*We have over-invested in downtown — to good effect — but it’s time to stop because there are so many other areas in the city that need attention.*”

Terry Turner
Commissioner
City of Sarasota



ty — cannot balance their budgets. They have been tapping into reserves to make ends meet. But the real end of the road is in sight. For the city, the coming fiscal year may drain the savings account. For the county, the timing is not much further away.

Unmet capital needs? For decades the City of Sarasota poured resources into downtown and Newtown. Call it the “two-towns” strategy. Every other area of the city has starved. A St. Armands parking garage to serve the city’s toniest shopping district? Sorry. Sidewalks, curbs and gutters for the southern half of the city? Sorry. A Lido Beach pavilion to serve the city’s primo beach? Sorry. Lido Pool? Sorry. Anything outside the “two towns” is off the capital-improvement charts.

County unsure? Will the county stick with the 2050 plan or let developer interests gut it? Do the county commissioners believe the urban core of the City of Sarasota has any importance to the county’s future? Can they, will they devote any resources to keeping the core alive?

That 11-member committee? Stay with me.

ALL IN THE NUMBERS

At this point, 95 percent of readers will go elsewhere, even though the future of the downtown, Newtown and the remainder of the city teeter in the balance, because numbers are hard to understand. Thought is required. But if you are willing to put your brain to work, follow along.



The Sarasota City Commission in session. Photo by Norman Schimmel

In 1986, the city and county embarked on an experiment called the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). The two governments agreed — for a prescribed area downtown for 30 years — the 1986 tax roll would become a “floor.” Any subsequent improvement in city and county property tax collections would accrue to the CRA. In other words, if property values rose, the increased city and county property tax revenue would go to the CRA to help the defined area.

Much later a CRA was established for Newtown, but property assessments kept dropping and the agency is effectively “underwater.” City commissioners are syphoning off downtown CRA dollars to keep the Newtown CRA alive.

Today the difference between the “floor” and current assessments in the downtown CRA is \$6.6 million. That is \$3.1 million from the city taxes, and \$3.5 from county property taxes (because county tax rates are a bit higher than those in the city). Over the years the city — acting as the CRA — spent the money in the defined area to make downtown Sarasota viable.

While other Florida downtowns became wastelands, Sarasota’s became a destination, thanks to the CRA (to say nothing of volunteers, partnerships, etc.). Bond issues were used to make major improvements, paid for by CRA money. All this increased property values, and a “virtuous spiral” was formed.

The CRA will expire in 2016. But when the curtain comes down and the bond issues are paid, where will the city lie? For Newtown, the “syphon” will run dry.



County Commissioner Joe Barbetta. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The answer to the question about the future of the city and the CRA is the crux of Commissioner Turner’s proposal.

KILL THE CRA? OR TAME IT?

The CRA numbers today are easy to understand, if a bit unsettling. The city gets \$3.1 million, and it immediately kicks back \$2.6 million into the general fund for necessary services. That includes \$539,457 for landscape maintenance in the CRA area, \$1 million for police in the area, \$263,000 for street and highway maintenance in the area and more than \$700,000 to staff redevelopment offices. These are costs the city would normally bear, but they are conveniently covered by the CRA — convenient, but these are the city’s tax dollars anyway.

If the CRA were to go away in 2016, the city would have to start paying the above expenses out of regular tax money — which it could, because the city would receive \$3.1 million in regular — and unrestricted — property tax revenue when the CRA has expired.

But today the \$3.1 million from the base-versus-current taxes formula generates only about \$500,000 in new money for the city (\$3.1 minus the \$2.6 million). Everything else covers existing services.

The \$3.5 million in county taxes kicked back to the CRA? Almost all of it (\$3.4 million) covers debt service for prior bond issues. In other words, this CRA scheme made possible a series of bond issues to build capital projects, and it funded ongoing city services. What is left from the \$6.6 million total is a mere \$500,000 for anything new.

If this is hard to read, it is also hard to write. I am neither a financial genius nor a brilliant business correspondent. But the crux of this is the finances of our city, its future and ours.

ON BASE? OFF BASE?

When the CRA ends in 2016, the city would collect the same \$3.1 million, but it could spend the money anywhere. No longer would the money be tied to downtown and Newtown.

The county is already factoring its \$3.5 million share into proposed out-year budgeting, filling a gap between expected revenues and anticipated expenses in 2016 and beyond. But at least one and maybe more county commissioners are willing to consider extending the CRA.



During a February joint City-County commission meeting, city commissioners pressed the county to extend the CRA, but none suggested for how much longer — or whether it would be a true “extension” using the same 1986 “baseline,” or if the CRA should be re-established using a “baseline” from another year.

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta favored the extension but said he wants to change the administration of the CRA. Other county commissioners were lukewarm to the extension, but all agreed to establish a study committee to look at an extension or a re-establishment and what kind of governing structure should be used.

At their April 1 City Commission meeting, 11 people were appointed to sit on the committee to study the future of the CRA; the County

Commission is expected to vote its approval of the group as well.

CAN CITY AFFORD IT?

At first sight, this seems like a no-brainer. The county forgoes \$3.5 million per year in taxes and lets the city determine how best to spend the money. So far the funds have been used to support bond issues for infrastructure projects.

However, the county does not pay to operate or maintain those projects. The cleaning, painting, landscaping, staffing and other costs are borne by city taxpayers. A good example is the construction with CRA money of commercial space on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way at the Janie Poe complex just west of the railroad tracks.

The offices and retail space sit empty, with no takers even at \$6 per square foot. Meanwhile, the CRA must pay to maintain and secure the property. While “new” empty storefronts are better than “old” empty storefronts, what they share is a dearth of entrepreneurial activity.

Turner used an analogy to explain how the CRA funding works: “If I give you \$1,000 to spend as you want, you’d like that,” he said. “If I give you \$1,000 but said you can only spend it on ice cream, it’s not quite the same.”

“There are other problems with restricting your monies,” Turner added. “We’ve started on the North [Tamiami] Trail. St. Armands needs a parking garage. We need some kind of parking facility in Southside Village [aka Hillview


Street], and there’s the Lido Pavilion. We have over-invested in downtown — to good effect — but it’s time to stop because there are so many other areas in the city that need attention.”

Meanwhile, soaring pension and health benefits for city employees and retirees create unsustainable pressures on the budget. The city is looking at a \$4.8 million shortfall for the coming fiscal year, and it is planning to cut seven police officer positions and five other employees. But the \$4.8 million is a fraction of the \$20 million shortfall projected in 2022 as benefit costs swell from \$22.7 million today to \$41.7 million.

CAN THE COUNTY AFFORD IT?

Turner offered a solution: “There is a history of the county wanting to partner with the cities. There should be a CRA in each of the cities with county money only, to be spent in any way the county wants,” he said. “It’s time for the county to get a new mindset, and that is, ‘We’re going to do good things in the cities to help them prosper.’”

Commissioner Shannon Snyder added a warning: “They’re either going to help or they’re going to inherit us. We’re on a short leash here.”

All of this gets dropped in the lap of the 11 volunteers who will be asked to polish their crystal balls, dust off their calculators and unseal their political tarot cards. Should there be a CRA in the future? How many? What baseline? And the most important question of all is who decides where the money goes? 



A BLOSSOMING BUSINESS

The TubeDude gift shop is on Main Street in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

TUBE DUDES: FINE ART, PUBLIC ART, SIGNATURE ART, YARD ART OR OBSTACLE?

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota Downtown Improvement District this week called on two senior city staffers to answer questions about the increasing number of “Tube Dudes” in the city. Meanwhile, “the dudes” themselves are soon to expand nationwide.

“The first time we saw it, it had a sign in its hand,” said Gretchen Schneider, general manager of Neighborhood and Development Services. “Is it a sign? Or is it art?”

That is what the DID members wanted to

know. They also wanted to know if and how the city could regulate the “dudes.” “We drew the line if they were holding a commercial message,” Schneider said. “Without a sign, we allow it as ‘yard art’ like a pink flamingo.”

However, downtown does not have yards, or even private property outside storefronts. It is public right of way along sidewalks, and the city can regulate that area.

“*When it's on public property, there is a case for the Public Art Committee to put it to the test.*”

Elizabeth van Ripper
Chairwoman
Sarasota Public Art Committee

“Our city code talks about obstruction of pedestrians,” said City Engineer Alexandria



A TubeDude stands outside a Main Street barbershop. Photo by Norman Schimmel

DavisShaw. “If [the inspector] sees anything in the walking area, he will notify the property owners. A sandwich board or a Tube Dude and it’s not in the walking area, he has not cited them.”

TUBE DUDES SETTING OFF

Scott Gerber is the creator (Inventor? Sculptor?) of the smiling figurines made of extruded aluminum tubes and then powder-coated in bright colors. They can be shaped to represent anyone from a hairstylist with a blow drier to a fisherman with a catch. Each one has a smile.

“Every city has its defining art. Chicago has its bulls. Bradenton has its geckos on the wall. Sarasota has the Tube Dude,” said Gerber. “When people buy one and take it home, they say it reminds them of their visit [to Sarasota].”

Gerber added that his creation has attracted private investors, and he is planning on opening nine showrooms across the United States in the next 18 months. He said four of his creations were at the arena for the recent NCAA Men’s Basketball Championship games, and four giant Tube Dudes are going into New York’s linear High Line Park over the lower west side of Manhattan.

Another two giant dudes are being installed in Atlanta. “Everybody we deal with considers this art,” he said.

Next up? “We are in negotiations with the Ringling [College] of Art and Design for a commercial venture,” Gerber announced.

“And we are negotiating production of a Tube Dude toy.”

As for proliferation downtown, Gerber said there are only five. The last one was installed 14 months ago.


HOMETOWN RESPONSE HEATS UP

Not everybody is wild about Gerber’s colorful gang. The Main Street Merchants Association began a straw poll, asking members and a few downtown residents about sandwich boards, clothing racks, Tube Dudes and other impedimenta along the sidewalks.

“Better than one-third [of respondents] are offended by the sandwich boards, and a smaller percentage by the clothing racks on display every day. This is not a scientific poll,” said Ron Champion. “I personally like the Tube Dudes, but about one-third of the people don’t. But even those people who said [the Tube Dudes] were tacky did not ask for any restrictions.”

Nonetheless, one local group may be thinking about a “hunting license” for the dudes. Elizabeth van Ripper is the chairwoman of the city’s Public Art Committee. She told the DID at the outset that she was speaking strictly for herself, adding that the Tube Dudes are on the group’s next meeting agenda, in May.

“We have a heritage of fine art and authenticity. Many coastal communities have whimsical do-dads,” she said. “We have to be differentiated.”

Asked if the committee has its sights on Gerber’s statues, she replied, “When it’s on public property, there is a case for the Public Art Committee to put it to the test.” 



A 'lady' TubeDude welcomes customers to Aries Salon. Photo by Norman Schimmel



DREDGING THE PASSES

City of Sarasota officials are considering a plan to put three adjustable groins on the south end of Lido Key. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS SOON WILL BE SCHEDULING PRESENTATIONS TO THE CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS ON PLANS TO RENOURISH LIDO BEACH AND BUILD GROINS ON THAT KEY

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has indicated insufficient sand of the quality needed is available offshore for the renourishment of Lido Beach, making the shoals in Big Pass and New Pass the likely sources for the project, Laird Wreford, Sarasota County's coastal resources manager, told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

The Corps' project manager for the renourishment initiative, Milan Mora, met last week

with City of Sarasota officials and representatives of the Lido Key Residents Association, Wreford reported in a March 27 email to County Administrator Randall Reid. Because of his position with the county, Wreford was invited to attend the session, he noted.

The city's plans include not only seeking state permission for the use of sand from Big Pass' ebb shoal and channel, Wreford added in the email, but also for the placement of three groins at the southern end of Lido Key.

Because of concerns about adverse effects on the passes themselves and other areas — including Siesta Key — Mora suggested the sand might be removed in alternating intervals from the passes, Wreford told the *News Leader*. That way, he added, the natural systems would have time to replenish their deposits.

“[The Corps of Engineers does not] want to do any kind of work that would have an impact [on the passes’ navigability],” he pointed out.

The Corps has been working on modeling for the sand removal process as well as for the

construction of the groins, Wreford continued. That modeling will have to show no detrimental impact on Big Pass or Siesta Key before the Corps will allow the initiative to proceed, he noted.

The groins have been proposed “to help stabilize that one corner” on the southern tip of Lido, he added. The Corps would have to determine through a cost-benefit analysis that future Lido renourishment projects would be “extended out much longer” before approving the construction of the groins, which are similar to small jetties, Wreford said.



The dredging of New Pass is likely to supply sand for the upcoming Lido Beach renourishment. Photo by Norman Schimmel

During the meeting last week, he added, Milan suggested that removing the groins from the proposal “won’t necessarily show that much of a cost benefit ...”

“They’ve indicated that they’ve pretty much completed the modeling,” Wreford added. The next step in the process, he said, is for the Corps to schedule meetings with both the county and city commissioners, to apprise them of the findings, as well as with community groups.

“They want to make sure that the best possible factual information” is available to the local government boards and residents, he noted.

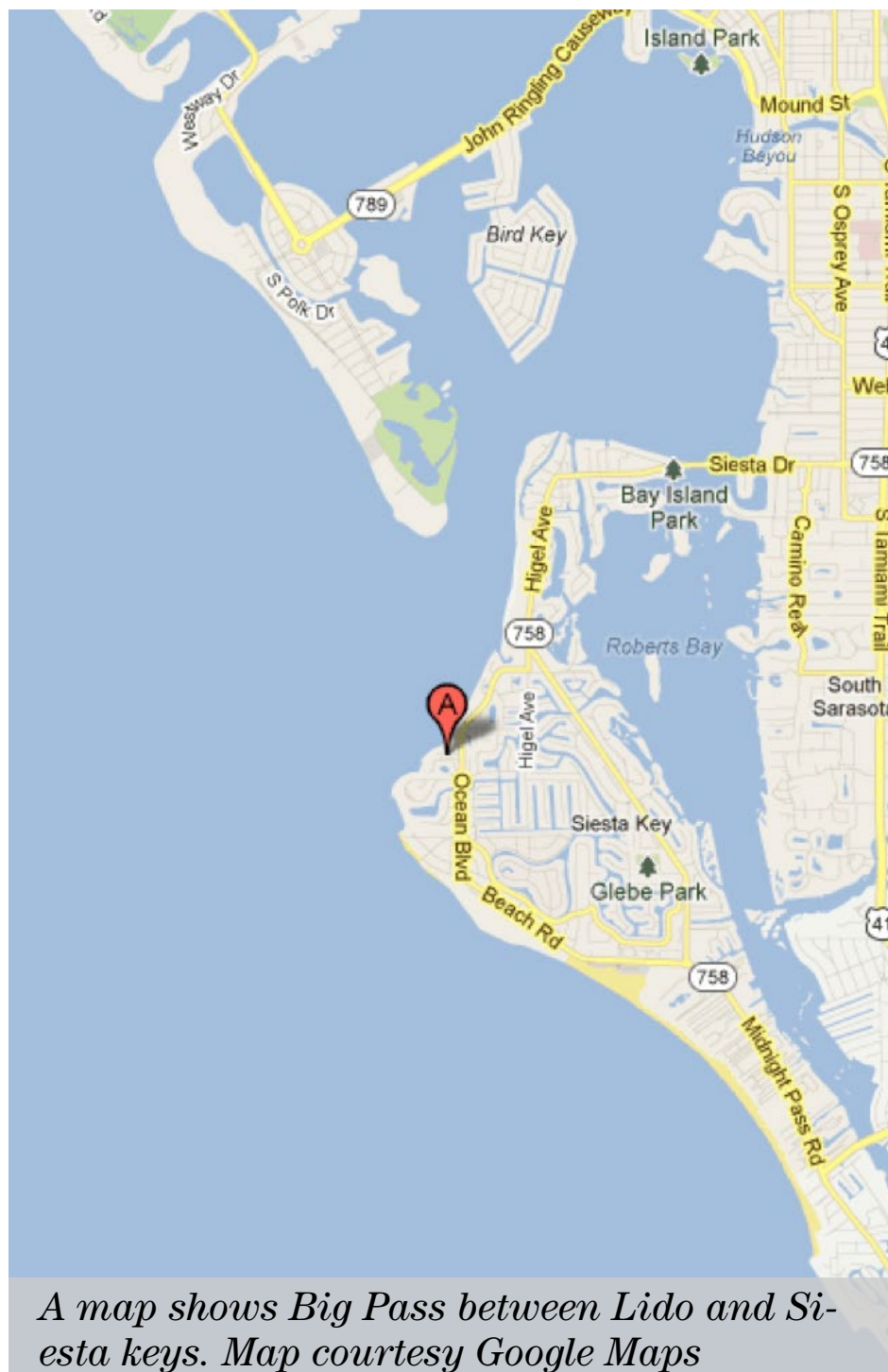
“I don’t know of any specific dates yet” for the public presentations, Wreford said, adding that Mora indicated he was eager “to move this forward.”

Sarasota City Engineer Alexandria DavisShaw said in an April 2 interview with the *News Leader* that Corps representatives would be bringing City Manager Tom Barwin and Reid up to speed on the project before scheduling those other meetings.

She pointed out that both men are relatively new in their positions: Reid became administrator in late January 2012, while Barwin took over as city manager in September 2012.

LIDO’S NEEDS

DavisShaw emphasized the importance of the renourishment on Lido. The beach was designated “critically eroded” around 1990, she added. Although the planting of dunes has helped, “there have been some significant infrastructure issues,” including concerns about the road.



Asked about the timeline for the latest effort, she replied, “That’s really hard to pin down at this point ... It’s been very difficult to get funding,” even though the project has federal authorization.

The last time the beach was renourished was in 2009, under the aegis of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, DavisShaw said. Although a renourishment had been completed in 2003, erosion resulting from subsequent hurricane seasons necessitated the work be done again earlier than originally anticipated, she noted.

SIESTA WORRIES

Siesta Key Association Secretary Peter van Roekens has been trying to make sure Siesta residents and area boaters receive detailed information about the renourishment as soon as possible.

During the Feb. 7 SKA meeting, van Roekens told members the groin proposal was “still on the horizon,” adding that any mention of such structures “makes me nervous” because of the effects he has seen them have on the movement of sand.

However, DavisShaw told the *News Leader*, “I think there’s a lot of improvement in technology” regarding the design of groins, “so they are better able to address the needs” of the areas where they are placed.

Permeable adjustable groins on Longboat Key, for example, “have been working well,” DavisShaw pointed out. “I do think they have come a long way ...”

She added that the Corps and city officials would not want to construct any structure that would cause future problems.

Regarding the possible dredging of Big Pass, van Roekens said during the Feb. 7 SKA meeting, “I am extremely leery of that. ... I am very concerned about Siesta Beach and also about navigation.”

SKA President Catherine Luckner pointed out that Big Pass was among the few on the Gulf Coast that never has been dredged.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who was a guest at the meeting, pointed out that

the shoal in Big Pass “has grown hugely” over the past 15 years.


“Part of the conversation [about] Big Pass is that it is being altered,” she explained, because sand on the west coast of Florida drifts south.

Although an effort to dredge Big Pass was halted years ago, Patterson noted, modern science has shown that removing sand “off the tail end” of the shoal would make Big Pass more navigable.

As she had in a January presentation to the Siesta Key Condominium Association, Patterson added that the Corps of Engineers would make the final decision on whether the dredging should be allowed: The County Commission “can participate in the discussion, but the county is no longer in charge.”

DavisShaw told the *News Leader* the Corps has guidelines it must follow for any project, but it is working with the city and the county on the Lido renourishment. For example, she said, Corps officials are utilizing the county’s Inlet Management Plan in its modeling.

“They definitely are trying to do this in cooperation and conjunction” with the two local governments, she added. “They are trying to be very responsive and respectful.”

This week, van Roekens told the *News Leader* he is continuing to work on scheduling presentations about the project for an upcoming SKA meeting as well as for members of the Sarasota Yacht Club and the Boaters’ Coalition. 

GOING, GOING, GONE



ELECTION 'KILLS' ST. ARMANDS DISTRICT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Ten years of good deeds came to an end Wednesday, April 3. By a substantial 65 percent to 35 percent margin, the property owners of St. Armands Circle voted to discontinue their Business Improvement District (BID).

The district levied a two-mill tax on property, raising about \$220,000 per year. The money was used to beautify the shopping mecca, promote it as a destination and leverage partnerships with other entities.

Shoppers and diners enjoy a sunny morning on St. Armands. Photo by Rachel Hackney

On March 4, a total of 65 ballots were mailed to the property owners, who had until April 2 to get them back to Sarasota City Hall. Only 34 ballots were returned, and one was disqualified because its signature had not been witnessed. Thus, the turnout was roughly 50 percent.

However, this election was different. Only property owners were entitled to vote, and their votes were based on the assessed value of their property. The “vote” of the owner of a \$5 million property was worth 10 times the “vote” of the owner of a \$500,000 property.

As the ballots were opened, a pattern began to emerge. Of the 33 valid votes, 28 were in

favor of continuing the business improvement district. But each of the five voting “No” was in the million-dollar-plus category.

Another wrinkle tilted the vote. All ballots not returned — reflecting owners deciding not to have their say — were counted as “No” votes. Since half the ballots were not returned, half of the unweighted votes counted against continuation.

When all was tallied, 35.29 percent of the “property” voted to continue the improvement district. The other 64.71 percent prevailed, thus ending a decade-old experiment of self-taxing for self-improvement.




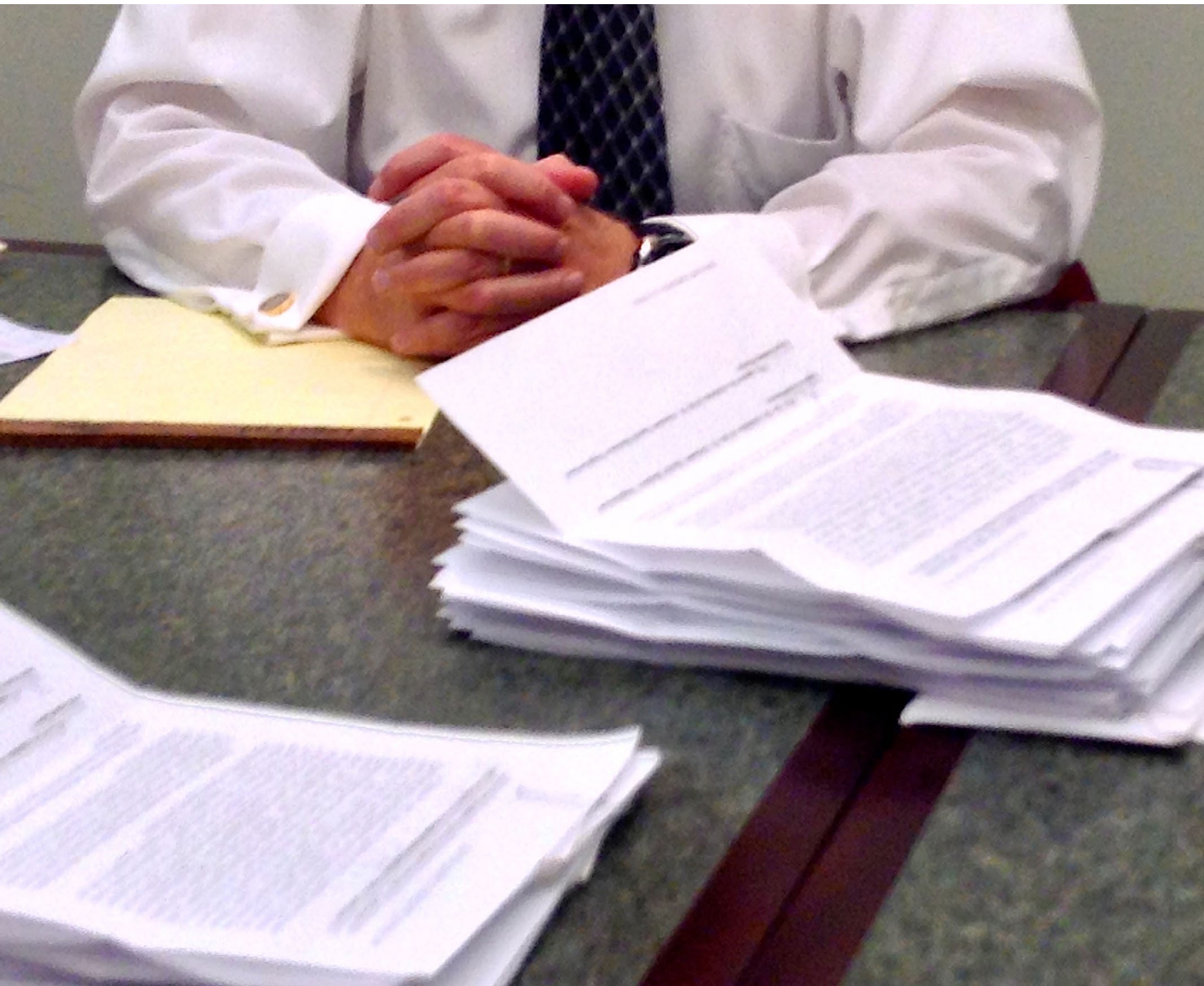
City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini slits open an absentee ballot while Lori Rivers prepares to tally the votes as a percentage of assessed value. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

The St. Armands experiment provoked others to try the same approach. Golden Gate Point and downtown Sarasota approved similar self-taxing districts (without the cumbersome “property share” aspect), leading to significant civic capital improvements in both areas.

After the votes were tallied this week, BID Chairman Marty Rappaport said, “Well, we’ve got to figure out a new way of doing it.”

Of equal importance is the elimination of the BID governing board’s ability — working under Florida’s Government in the Sunshine law — to cooperate with senior city staff to solve problems. In effect, the vote terminates the voice of St. Armands at City Hall.

The St. Armands BID will expire on Sept. 30, the last day of the fiscal year. The city then must shoulder the burden for any improvements and maintenance, such as landscaping. 



The big pile is outweighed by the smaller pile. The big pile represents little properties voting ‘Yes.’ The little pile reflects big properties voting ‘No.’ The little pile won. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



Shortly, the Ringling Bridge will be bathed in blue after the sun sets. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A BLUE RINGLING: COMING SOON

Seldom does an idea get to the Sarasota City Commission backed by acclamation. But Katie Klauber Moulton's concept of changing the color of lights under the Ringling Bridge to blue tickled a lot of official fancies.

The Florida Department of Transportation, a normally stuffy bureaucracy, "is very much in favor of the project," Moulton told the commission April 1.

The U.S. Coast Guard regulates all navigation lights, and it, too, supports the blue. "It is the predominant color used in under-bridge lighting," she said. "Barry Dragon with [Coast Guard] District Seven endorses the idea."

And the man considered the godfather of the 65-foot-tall bridge — Gil Waters — is on board as well. Moulton read an email from Waters saying, "I hope the bridge will shine in a new, blue light."

All this group-think was too much for longtime civic activist Kafi Benz, who was in the

April 1 commission audience for another issue. She stepped forward to be the only contrary voice. "The bridge is elegant, and coloring it could add a honkey-tonk tone," she said.

That did not scare the commissioners, who voted unanimously to endorse the change.

The effort began as a way to publicize Child Abuse Prevention Month, which uses the color blue as a marketing technique. But the idea took off when a local manufacturer of light-emitting diode lighting offered to supply the hardware. Then another local company offered to provide the labor and engineering.

Between Evolucia's LED lights and Roadrunner's construction staff, the project is ready to get under way. With Moulton having cleared the bureaucratic decks, the causeway could be blue by May.

Stan Zimmerman

SIESTA WINS ANOTHER HIGH BEACH RATING

With Easter marking the traditional end of high season, Siesta Key may enjoy a longer burst of tourism thanks to [Trip Advisor](#) naming it the No. 2 beach in the United States.

The Internet travel site based its rankings on “feedback from millions of Trip Advisor travelers,” a news release notes.

The spotlight on Siesta calls it “Paradise,” noting the best time to go is “Year-round.”

Trip Advisor added that visitors could choose among 13 hotels, two bed and breakfast/inn facilities and 205 beach rentals.

No. 1 on the list is Ka’anapali Beach in Lahaina, HI.

Two other Florida beaches made the Top 10: No. 3, Gulf Islands National Seashore at Pen-

sacola Beach; and No. 4, Fort Desoto Park in Tierra Verde.

Hawaii led the way with a total of four beaches. The others were Lanikai Beach in Kailua at No. 5, Wailea Beach in Wailea at No. 6 and Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve in Honolulu at No. 10.

Rounding out the Top 10 were Assateague Beach in Virginia at No. 7; La Jolla Cove in La Jolla, CA, at No. 8; and Laguna Beach in California at No. 9.

Through January, Siesta Key had collected 26.97 percent of all the tourist development tax revenue in Sarasota County, according to the latest figures from the Tax Collector’s Office. The total for the key was \$433,191.46. The amount is about a 10 percent increase over the \$389,348.72 collected in January 2012.

Rachel Brown Hackney



Sun worshippers make themselves at home on Siesta Public Beach in late March. Photo by Rachel Hackney

RESIDENTS CAUTIONED ABOUT DISTRACTION BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is warning residents about distraction burglaries, "a common but preventable crime this time of year," a news release says.

A distraction burglary occurs when one suspect contacts the homeowner and identifies himself as a utility worker, salesperson or laborer, the release notes. Once inside the house, the person distracts residents and steers them away from the door "so another suspect can sneak inside and steal valuables," or the person will say he has to go to a specific room to look at something, the release continues.

Others take residents outside under the guise of showing them needed repairs while someone undetected enters the home, it adds.

To protect yourself, never open the door for someone who arrives unannounced and never

allow the person into your home, the release points out. If a person claims to be from a business, ask him to leave a card in the door.

"Never allow someone to perform home repairs on the spot," and after a person leaves, check his reputation with the Better Business Bureau or county government, the release says.

If someone claims he needs assistance, tell him you will contact the Sheriff's Office to provide that help.

If you are concerned, try to get a tag number and description of the vehicle the person is driving, the release continues. "Notify law enforcement so deputies can determine the real reason the person or persons are in your neighborhood," the release notes. Call either 911 or the non-emergency number: 316-1201.

SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT WARNS SCOOTER OWNERS OF THEFTS

The Sarasota Police Department has cautioned residents that between January and April, numerous scooter thefts have been reported in the neighborhoods east of North Tamiami Trail between 18th Street and Mecca Drive.

Most of the thefts have occurred during the morning hours, when the scooters or mopeds have been parked in front of residences, some locked with cables or chains, the notice says. The suspects are breaking the locks, taking the locks with them and pushing the scooters away, it adds. "This leaves no evidence at the scene."

The police believe it is better to lock a scooter/moped/small motorcycle to a non-movable object with a thick, strong chain or cable, the notice says. "The weaker the cable or chain, the easier it is to cut and remove," it points out.

Parking the scooter inside a garage or keeping it locked under a carport is preferred, the notice adds. "It is recommended that you use the steering column lock if one is provided on the scooter."

An alarm, which deters the thief once the scooter is touched or moved, can be purchased as well as disc brake locks and grip locks, the notice points out. The more layers of theft protection on a scooter, the less likely it will be stolen, the notice says.

"Remember to keep alert for suspicious activity in your area," the notice continues. "If you see it, report it."

The Sarasota Police Department non-emergency number is 316-1201. In an emergency, dial 911.

ELEVEN STORES CITED FOR UNDERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Eleven local convenience store clerks were cited for selling alcohol to minors during an undercover operation conducted by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Juvenile Alcohol Task Force on March 11 and March 29, the office has reported.

The following businesses were found to be in violation of selling alcohol to a person under the age of 21; each clerk was given a misdemeanor Notice to Appear citation:

- Save-on, 2522 Stickney Point Road, Sarasota.
- 7-11, 3156 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- 7-11, 4400 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- RaceTrac, 5600 Fruitville Road, Sarasota.

- 7-11, 3090 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- G&S Discount Beverage, 2316 Gulf Gate Drive, Sarasota.
- Stop 'N' Shop, 4201 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.
- Sunoco, 4131 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.
- Mobil 7-11, 1698 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice.
- Hess, 350 Commercial Court, Venice.
- Mobil Circle K, 1050 Bobcat Trail, North Port.

"Another 64 businesses were found to be in compliance and were sent a letter to commend owners and employees for helping reduce the sale of alcohol to minors," the office reported.

COUNTY OFFERING FREE WORKSHOPS ON SAVING ENERGY, MONEY

Sarasota County residents can benefit from the county's sustainability expertise with a free 30-minute Energy Upgrade workshop that will provide information, tips and materials to help people identify opportunities to save money, energy and water, the county has announced.

The home efficiency strategy workshops are open to civic groups, clubs, faith organizations and nonprofit associations, as well as businesses that would like to offer the program to their employees, a news release notes.

"Most homes waste a surprising amount of energy and we want to help homeowners put those energy dollars back in their pockets," said Lee Hayes Byron, Sarasota County sustainability manager, in the release. "This workshop will provide an opportunity to learn where to start saving energy and what works best for them."

In addition to getting the expert advice, workshop participants will receive a free Do It

Yourself Energy Saving Kit with products valued at more than \$30 to help them start saving energy (limit one per household), the release notes.

"Reducing a home's energy usage can lower utility bills and provide a more comfortable living environment," the release notes. "Energy-efficient homes also have a competitive financial advantage in a tough real estate market and contribute to a more sustainable Sarasota County," it adds.

Sarasota County developed the Energy Upgrade program to help residents understand the many benefits of improving a home's energy efficiency. The program received funding from the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Program, the release notes.

To schedule a free Energy Upgrade workshop, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 and ask about Energy Upgrade workshops or email sustainable Sarasota@scgov.net.

COUNTY LIBRARIES TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

Libraries in the Sarasota County Library System will celebrate National Library Week April 14-20, encouraging residents and visitors to stop in and experience “why libraries are a vital part of the community,” the county has announced.

The theme for the 2013 National Library Week is “Communities Matter @ Your Library.”

“Sarasota County libraries offer a wide range of services and activities designed to assist and empower people,” a news release says, including “diverse programs that mirror the interests of Sarasota County.” From job seekers looking for resources, to parents looking for free activities for children, to students searching for help with homework, libraries provide

resources that can help people achieve those goals, the release adds.

“Sarasota County libraries help level the playing field by making print and digital information affordable, available and accessible to all people,” it notes.

“Something is always going on at one of our nine libraries,” says Sarabeth Kalajian, general manager of the Sarasota County Library System, in the release. “Our libraries offer services, programs and a wealth of information, so this year’s theme is very appropriate and I encourage residents and visitors to stop in to a library today,” she adds.

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



Selby Public Library is on First Street in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ORIOLES SET FRANCHISE SPRING TRAINING ATTENDANCE RECORD

With the March 30 crowd of 7,642 for their 2013 Grapefruit League finale against the New York Mets at Ed Smith Stadium, the Orioles set a franchise record by drawing 120,455 fans for their 17 home games, the team announced.

The figure also represents a new spring training season attendance record for Sarasota, a community which has hosted spring training since 1924, a news release notes.

The previous record for both the Orioles and Sarasota, set in 2011, was 115,506 in 16 home dates, the release notes.

On March 14, the Orioles drew an Ed Smith Stadium record 8,797 fans for a game against the Tampa Bay Rays, one of nine sellouts this spring.

“The Baltimore Orioles are proud to shatter our spring training attendance record in 2013 at the beautifully remodeled Ed Smith Stadium,” said David Rovine, vice president for Orioles-Sarasota, in the release. “We are grateful for the fans from the Sarasota region, the Mid-Atlantic states and beyond who came out to enjoy the ballpark and support the local charitable causes we spotlighted on game days. This new record not only demonstrates the powerful attraction of professional baseball in Sarasota, but also underscores the positive relationship that continues to grow between the Orioles and the Sarasota County community,” he added.



Orioles center fielder Adam Jones bats against the Minnesota Twins. Photo by Norman Schimmel

PANEL TO DISCUSS HOW CITY BECAME A PERFORMING ARTS DESTINATION

Sarasota's reputation as a vibrant city with performing arts amenities of a much larger metropolis did not happen overnight "or without concentrated effort by both visionary professionals and talented volunteers," a Historical Society of Sarasota County news release says.

Learn how Sarasota became a performing arts destination when a panel of experts led by director Howard Millman takes the stage at The Crocker Memorial Church on Tuesday, April 9, at 7 p.m. for a conversation among colleagues that reveals how and why Sarasota celebrates the performing arts, a society news release says. The church is located at 1260 12th St., just off the Tamiami Trail in Pioneer Park.

This history-oriented event is the seventh in a series of yearlong panel discussions organized and produced by the Historical Society with support from SARASOTA Magazine. "Conversations at The Crocker events highlight specific aspects of Sarasota's past and examine pivotal events and people who have influenced Sarasota today," the release adds. Conversations are free to Historical Society members; guests pay \$10.

Appearing with Millman (the theater) will be Jean Weidner Goldstein (ballet), Trevor Cramer (music) and Richard Russell (opera). "Audience members can expect lots of revealing backstage stories as these experts chart the turbulent course of the performing arts in our community," the release notes. They also will give their perspectives on the state of the performing arts today and observations



The Sarasota Opera House. Photo by Norman Schimmel

for the future of Sarasota, it adds. Audience members will be invited to participate in a question-and-answer session after the panel discussion.

For more information, visit www.hsosc.com or contact Site Manager Linda Garcia at 364-9076.

COMMUNITY ORCHARD CEREMONY SET AT COLONIAL OAKS PARK

Staff from Sarasota County Parks and Recreation and Sarasota County Extension will host the installation of the Community Orchard Project fence and plots at 9 a.m. Thursday, April 11, at Colonial Oaks Park, 5300 Colonial Oaks Blvd., Sarasota.

The project, which is a partnership between Sarasota County and Home Depot, is intended to teach families about growing their own

food. Families will be invited to adopt various fruit trees such as pomegranate and lychee trees, among others. Extension staff will also provide classes and instruction on proper care and maintenance of the trees.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000, or visit www.scgov.net.

CITY FINANCE DEPARTMENT WINS PRESTIGIOUS BUDGET AWARD

The City of Sarasota Finance Department recently was honored by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada with the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the city has announced.

Receiving this award means the City of Sarasota's budget met or exceeded guidelines in four categories: policy document, financial plan, operations guide and communications device, a news release notes.

Budget Manager Michelle Valentich was presented with the award, the release adds. This is the 23rd consecutive year the city has received the award.


"To be honored 23 years in a row with this award underscores the quality staff we have in the vitally important Finance Department," said City Manager Tom Barwin in the release. "As we continue to face challenging times with the budget, it is reassuring we have high-quality professionals watching over the city's finances."

More than 17,500 government finance professionals are served by the Government Finance Officers Association, the release notes. Approximately 1,000 received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, it adds.

PUBLIC WELCOME AT AUSCS CHAPTER MEETING

The Sarasota-Manatee Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State will meet on April 11 at 2 p.m. in the Selby Library, 1331 First St., Sarasota.

The meeting is open to the public.

For more information contact chapter President Rich Cannarelli at 735-0266. 

The Sarasota News Leader

No-Nonsense Reporting

AT PLANNED PARENTHOOD, CARE IS MUCH MORE THAN THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE; IT'S THE WAY WE APPROACH OUR WORLD.

WE CARE.

DEEPLY. WITH RESPECT. WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

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.



**Planned Parenthood Of
Southwest And Central Florida**

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OPINION



DON'T BOGART THAT BILL, LEGISLATORS!

We were gratified at the recent decision by the State Attorney's Office not to pursue charges against Robert Jordan, the Parrish man who was cultivating marijuana plants in his backyard to benefit his wife, Cathy, who has suffered for years with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Cathy Jordan is one of the 5 percent of ALS patients who survive 10 years or more with the disease. Most die within three to five years. She and her husband attribute her longevity to the use of marijuana.

For years, the couple has had a dual mission: cultivating the marijuana she needs to survive and lobbying the Legislature to legalize the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes. So far, they have been successful only with the former.

Their current legal difficulties began when a building inspector next door spotted the plants through their fence and notified law enforcement. Sheriff's deputies who responded discovered the plants and confiscated them. However, after being informed by Jordan that the plants were for his wife's medical treatment,

deputies did not arrest either of the Jordans, leaving it to the state attorney to decide whether charges should be filed.

In early negotiations between Jordan's attorney and the State Attorney's Office, he was offered a plea deal that would have required him to stop cultivating the plant. He turned down that deal.

While the State Attorney's Office could have charged him with cultivating the illegal plant, it would have faced a vigorous defense at trial.

Despite there being no law that allows the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, "medical necessity" has been employed successfully as a defense in some court cases. The first such case was 25 years ago, when a Broward County judge acquitted a woman who was using marijuana to prevent glaucoma from robbing her of all sight, deeming it a "medical necessity."

Other cases over the years have been decided in favor of defendants in similar circumstances, when the courts have allowed common sense and compassion

OPINION

to trump laws that were unsympathetic to human suffering.

The Jordans have been tireless advocates for the legalization of medical marijuana. In fact, a bill currently before the Legislature is titled, "The Cathy Jordan Medical Cannabis Act." It is the third year in a row that a bill to legalize medical marijuana has been filed. And although 18 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for medical purposes, no bill has ever even been heard in committee in Florida.

The Republican-controlled Legislature, especially the House, is loath to allow any legalization of marijuana, despite the significant medical benefits for those with glaucoma, cancer, ALS and a host of other conditions.

What is most difficult to understand about the issue is the apparent hysteria that persists among those opposed to the drug's use, especially for medicinal purposes.

By the mid-1930s, marijuana was illegal in every state, considered a dangerous drug. Severe criminal penalties were assessed in most states against those charged with even simple possession.

In the 35 years that medical use of marijuana has been part of the national dialogue on illegal drugs, the empirical evidence of its benefits has been mounting steadily. But controlled clinical trials have not been possible because the federal government has taken a very aggressive stance with regard to enforcement of anti-drug laws, and many medical researchers have not wanted the scrutiny that attempting to conduct medical marijuana research might have brought them.


In Florida, a state with the largest percentage nationally of citizens 65 and older, the need to utilize the drug for curative, maintenance and palliative purposes is great. Yet, the Legislature will not even allow a hearing on a medical marijuana bill.

That leaves only one option for the people: a referendum on a constitutional amendment legalizing the drug for medical purposes. While it is a long shot for the 2014 ballot, it is not out of the question.

Earlier this year, People United for Medical Marijuana, a PAC advocating for a ballot initiative, published a poll that showed 70 percent of Floridians favored the legalization of marijuana for medicinal use.

After Colorado and Washington legalized marijuana for medical use, they discovered the attendant evils predicted since the 1930s did not materialize. So they allowed their citizens to vote on a referendum to legalize marijuana in small quantities for recreational use. Both initiatives passed.

It is difficult to believe that marijuana was universally criminalized in the United States only a few years after women were first given the right to vote. It would be another two decades before racial segregation was struck down, almost four before a man walked on the moon and more than five before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet well into the 21st century, there still are entrenched forces determined to resist a more enlightened approach on marijuana use, even for humanitarian purposes.

Let us hope, for the sake of Cathy Jordan and many more like her, that People United for Medical Marijuana and other advocacy groups are successful in getting the question on the ballot in 2014. Should such a referendum pass in the state, Florida's infirm citizens might finally earn some respite from debilitating disease. 



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*.

Sarasota Leisure

Featuring



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SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR

**SLOWING DOWN AND CHIPPING IN
ON THE EVE OF INVASION
ASK OTUS**

Inside



PHOTO BY FRANK ATURA

Sir Frederick Ashton's
La Fille mal Gardée
{The Wayward Daughter}

**This spectacular full-length ballet will be accompanied by
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SLOWING DOWN AND CHIPPING IN

Children and families learn about beekeeping at one of the Crowley Folk School booths at the Eat Local Week Festival of Reskilling at Phillippi Estate Park on March 12. All photos by Arielle Scherr

THIRD ANNUAL EAT LOCAL WEEK ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO BUY LOCAL FOOD, INVEST IN LOCAL FARMS AND BUSINESSES

By Tyler Whitson
Staff Writer

For the past three years, greater Sarasota's Eat Local Week has been a celebration of fresh food and community and local businesses in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and Desoto counties.

Beyond that, it has challenged consumers to really consider where their food comes from and to make purchasing decisions that support the local food economy. The observance does that through festivities, farmers'

markets, tours, tastings, workshops, lectures, discussions and more that highlight what the area has to offer.

Transition Sarasota, the principal organizer of Eat Local Week, does not want the effort to stop there, however. The sustainability advocacy organization would like to see the participants take the principles espoused during the festivities — which lasted from Friday, March 22, to Friday, March 29, this year — and apply

them to their daily lives in ways that add up year-long.

Specifically, Transition Sarasota has been asking community members since 2011 to pledge that they will begin to grow or locally purchase at least 10 percent of their food on a consistent basis.

ADDING UP THE NUMBERS

In an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* during an Eat Local Week farmer's market and skills workshop on March 27, Transition

Sarasota founder and Executive Director Don Hall explained that, though 10 percent may seem like a small number, it is likely far greater than the status quo. "Right now, we probably produce less than 1 percent of the food that we consume in Sarasota County," he said.

Hall was referring to a 2006 study by Ken Menter of the Minnesota nonprofit community advocacy organization Crossroads Resource Center, which found that only 0.7 percent of food products are sold by farmers directly to consumers in Sarasota County.



Transition Sarasota founder and Executive Director Don Hall commented on how eating locally functions for the community: 'I think it's something that brings a lot of people together from all sides of the political spectrum,' he said. 'People from all walks of life get interested in getting to know their farmers and creating a direct relationship with the person that grows their food.'

Hall went on to cite a different result of the same study, which found that every 5 percent increase in the amount of Sarasota's food budget spent to purchase food directly from a local farmer would add \$40 million in farm income to the local economy. That means, he said, there would be an enormous combined effect on the local economy were enough people to meet the 10 percent challenge.

This transition, Hall joked, has been referred to by some as moving toward "a relationship

economy," rather than "a one-night-stand economy."

There have even been discussions during Eat Local Week about what an eventual 25 percent local food boost would accomplish. "That could be potentially an added \$200 million in farm income," Hall pointed out. "There's no proposal on the table for economic renewal in this community that's on that scale," he continued. "And we're just talking about 25 percent; we're not talking about being like



Lareina DePalma and other instructors from the Crowley Folk School organized booths and presented new skills to attendees at the Eat Local Week Festival of Reskilling at Phillippi Estate Park on March 12. Among those skills were vegetable gardening, beekeeping, composting and mushroom cultivation.

Barbara Kingsolver and trying to eat entirely local minus chocolate or coffee,” he added, referring to the American novelist and non-fiction writer who documented this personal challenge in her book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*.

Moving up to 25 percent, Hall explained, would not prove to be an enormous challenge for many people.

“It’s a beautiful thing,” he said, gesturing toward the attendees wandering around a farmers’ market on a sunny Wednesday afternoon.

“You come out on a beautiful day like this to your market, hang out and you can do your 25 percent just doing that,” he continued. “It’s not that hard.”

However, Hall went on to explain, that is only the first part of the localization process. “People are going to need to step up and not only think about going to the farmers’ market and buying their weekly vegetables there,” he said, “but also taking a small amount out of their investments in Wall Street and putting them to work on ‘Main Street’ in these small food businesses.”



Locally grown produce, flowers, plants, prepared foods, beauty products and more were available for sale at the Eat Local Week Festival of Reskilling at Phillippi Estate Park on March 12. Crowley Folk School instructor Lareina DePalma noted that the produce sold in supermarkets often travels hundreds of miles from where it is grown to where it is sold.

SLOWING DOWN THE MONEY

Although the idea of redirecting investments has been touted for years in communities in the United States, it has begun to pick up steam in the past four years or so as part of what some view as a national movement. Reflecting this, Eat Local Week organizers invited Colorado entrepreneur and author Woody Tasch to present the program's keynote speech on March 22 and explain to attendees how they can expand local food economy investments in Sarasota.

One of the most high-profile advocates of this movement in the United States, Tasch is the founder and chairman of the national nonprofit organization Slow Money, which describes itself on its website, www.slowmoney.org, as a network of "experienced investors, leading food entrepreneurs, social investment pioneers, organic farmers and just plain old regular folks who are worried about where their investments are going or who want to chip in small donations."

In a follow-up phone interview with the *News Leader* on March 28, Tasch explained some of the core concepts behind the Slow Money organization, which are laid out in detail in his 2008 book, *Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money: Investing as if Food, Farms and Fertility Mattered*.

Going beyond how they spend their dollars, Tasch said, community members must be proactive about nurturing the local food economy. "If you have the gumption and the wherewithal," he said, "just roll your sleeves up and start collaborating with your friends and neighbors to put your investment dollars

to work, looking for small food businesses to invest in."

Slow Money, he added, already has a group of investors in Sarasota that is in its nascent stages; he hopes to see progress quickly.

Growing momentum in the local food movement in Sarasota, Tasch said, would have many benefits for consumers aside from local economic stimulation. "You'll have more healthy food," he pointed out, along with "more farmers, more fertility in the soil, more water in the aquifer, less carbon in the atmosphere and, long-term, just greater health for most of the people as individuals and for the community as a whole."

REINFORCING THE CYCLE

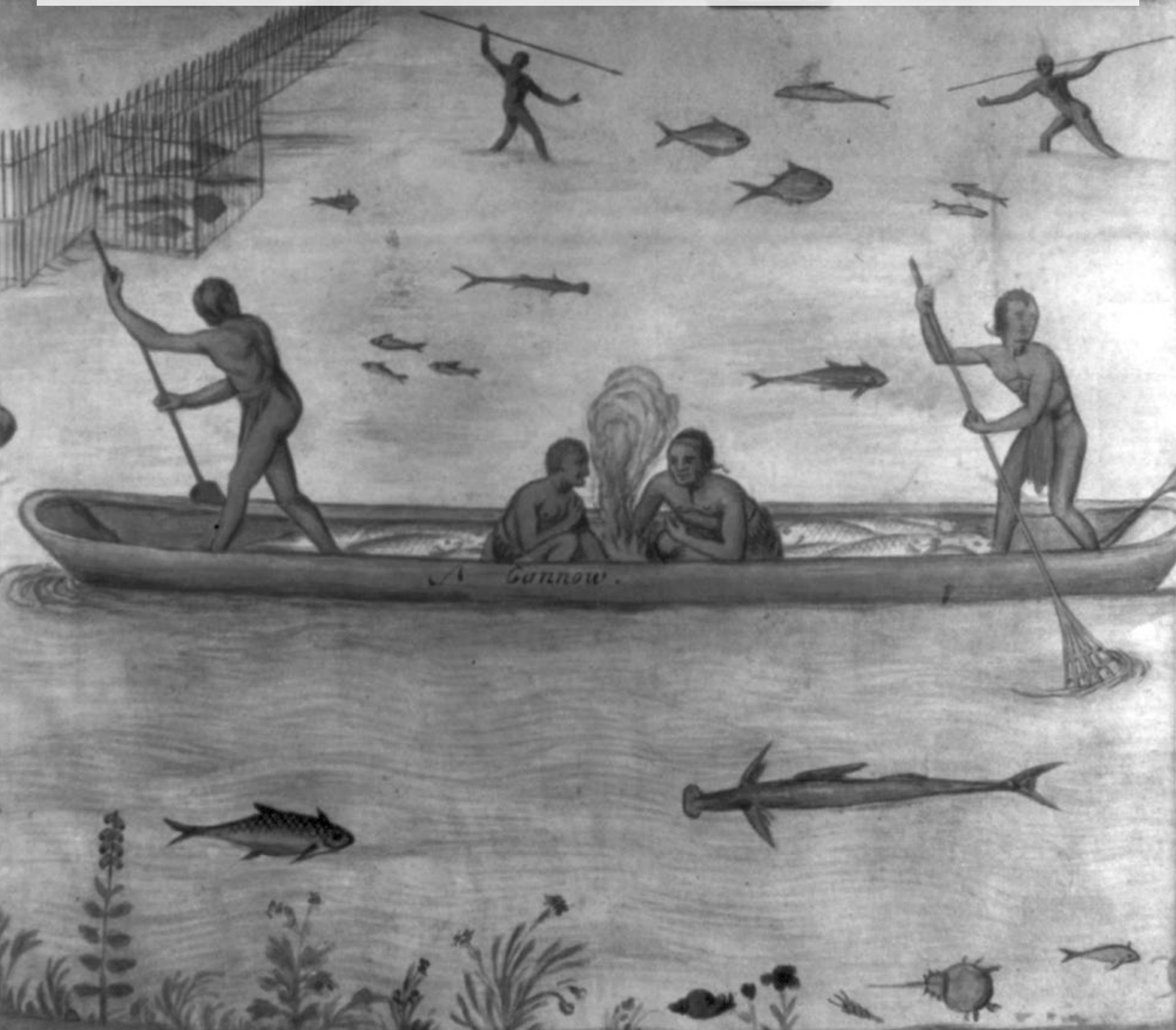
Tasch went on to explain that, although investing is an essential element in localizing an area's food economy, raising awareness of the efforts of local farmers, businesses and investors through programs such as Eat Local Week is extremely important to the movement's foundation.

"They get people to start thinking about where their food comes from," he said; "start thinking about where the restaurants we eat at get their food; start thinking about how much local food is in the supermarket."

Those who missed Eat Local Week this year but are interested in local farmers' markets, local food discussions, investment club meetings and more events that take place year-round can visit www.transitionsarasota.org for a comprehensive guide to eating locally in Sarasota. 

ON THE EVE OF INVASION

Editor's note: To celebrate Florida's 500th anniversary, The Sarasota News Leader is happy to serialize portions of the second chapter of City Editor Stan Zimmerman's forthcoming Maritime History of Florida. Here he looks at the historical, religious, financial and psychological motives of the Spanish as they are about to explode into the New World. Next week, we will continue with the story of one of them — Juan Ponce de León, the man who named Florida.



Jacque le Moyne was a French artist in Florida in 1565. Although the authenticity of this drawing is questionable, it still gives viewers an idea of the fish and fishing techniques practiced by indigenous Floridians at the time of the Spanish 'entrada.' Image from The New World: the first pictures of America in the Library of Congress

WEALTH AND FAME BECKON THE IBERIANS

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

The path leading to the European invasion of the Americas begins, ironically, with the closing of another path — the ancient trading route between Europe and China called the Silk Road. In 1453, the Suljuk Turks under Mehmed II captured Constantinople and changed its name to Istanbul. The Turks quickly commandeered the profitable luxury trade with China and placed an embargo on Christian Europe. Suddenly, Europe had no access to the riches of the East.

The struggle between the Christians of Europe and the Muslims of the Near East was not confined to the eastern Levant. In Spain, Christians were rising up against their Moorish conquerors and pushing them back city-by-city. This religious, political and economic contest would result in the European explosion into the Western Hemisphere, Florida included.

With caravan trade with the East halted, one European leader decided to try to establish another route by sea. Prince Henry of Portugal gathered sea captains and mapmakers to his court and established a school of navigation to systematize exploration by sea. He demanded his captains keep regular logbooks, in which they noted the weather, landmarks, currents and other useful navigational information. These books, called roteiros, were prized and protected. They were “trade secrets,” because without a rotiero, you could not navigate to a trading destination.



A portrait of Henry the Navigator from the 15th century book Cronicas dos Feitos de Guine via Wikimedia Commons

Henry's ships slowly worked their way down the west coast of Africa, with the crews erecting stone columns at various headlands so future captains would know not only where along the coast they were, but to serve as reminders to later crews that their ships were in known territory.

In 1485, a Genoa-born sailor named Christopher Columbus presented a proposal to the Portuguese to sail west instead of south to reach the riches of the Far East, but his plan was rejected.

Two years later, in 1487, Bartolomeu Dais reached the southern tip of Africa and aptly named it The Cape of Storms (later renamed The Cape of Good Hope). And in 1499, Vasco da Gama succeeded in reaching India and returning. Henry's navigators had not only reopened trade with the Far East, but they also had pioneered the naval architecture and navigational techniques necessary to conduct exploration over the open ocean.

The Portuguese success in sailing south around Africa did not deter Columbus. He took his proposal to Spain, where he was placed on a stipend to keep him from seeking support elsewhere.

The Christian-Muslim war in Spain ended on Jan. 2, 1492, with the fall of the last Moorish city — the mountaintop stronghold of Grenada. Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon capped 700 years of conflict to unify Spain as a Catholic nation. Columbus was present at the fall of Grenada, and he renewed his proposal. Isabella rejected it, but Ferdinand agreed at the last minute. Italian investors (mostly Genoese) already had put up half the cost of Columbus' expedition. The Spanish king and queen would supply the rest, although contrary to popular legend, Isabella did not pawn her jewelry to pay the royal share.

This context is important, because it illuminates the reasons behind the Spanish explosion into the New World. One was mercantile — a desire to renew the rich trade with the Far East, as their Portuguese neighbors had done. A second reason was religious — to spread Christianity, by the evangelical sword if necessary. A third reason was political: Having defeated the Moors, the now-unemployed




In small and awkward ships, the Spanish sailed west into the unknown. This photo shows a replica of Columbus' Santa Maria made for the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Photo by Edward H. Hart in the Library of Congress

members of Spanish nobility needed a new outlet for glory and personal gain, or they might set their sights on replacing Ferdinand and Isabella.

The men who followed in Columbus' wake were hard. Their leaders were soldiers, cruel and resourceful. They were devout, strengthened by an unshakable belief in their God. They were also proud of an aristocratic heritage and a superior culture. They thought themselves unconquerable.

And they shared another, often-overlooked trait. They were the product of romantic chivalry. Raised on tales such as *Tristan and Isolde* and *El Cid*, they believed fame and riches were within their grasp, if they practiced knightly virtues and professed piety.

As these men and their followers swept into the New World, only one area would expose their weaknesses and destroy them — Florida. 



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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ASK 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.

GIANT WATER BUGS PROVE TO HAVE A FASCINATING STORY

Dear Otus,

My family is visiting us from Germany and my grandson, Franz, loves photographing the myriad bugs we have around Sarasota. I am sending you one of his beautiful photos.

A couple of weeks ago we came home and there was this huge bug lying dead on our condo's walkway right by our front door. We've never seen anything bigger. Franz really want-

ed to take it back to Munich and show it off to his schoolmates, but as he started to pick it up it started moving and he didn't want to hurt it. He took a ruler and measured it. It was almost 3 inches long.

I sent the photo to *What's That Bug?* but haven't heard back from them and thought maybe you might know what it is.

Proud Grandmother in Sarasota



A Giant Water Bug. Photo courtesy of Franz from Munich

Dear Having Every Reason to Be Proud,

By the time I have eaten a Giant Water Bug (*Lethocerus americanus*) and regurgitated its indigestible parts (wings, proboscis, mandibles, etc.), it is not in the proper condition for hemipteran insect taxonomy or identification, so I greatly appreciate the chance Franz's superb photo provides me to research this fierce, but highly beneficial, Florida native predator and divulge its mysterious ways.

This utterly fascinating bug, which I am nicknaming Letho, from its Latin name, is also known as the "toe biter" and "electric light bug."

Letho actually plays possum when it feels threatened by people. Playing possum is a clever defense mechanism based on the theory that a possible predator — a cat, dog or even a human — eventually will grow bored by this lifeless creature and walk away. And they usually do walk away. But Franz did not! When he came upon it, even though it was probably dying, it instinctively "played dead" until Franz came too close to it with the ruler.

Had Franz picked it up, Letho would have viciously defended itself by seizing Franz's finger in its hook-tipped forelimbs and injecting Franz's digit with a powerful toxin through its semi-retractable proboscis. What a close call! Well, it is not as though I have not warned readers before not to willy-nilly pick up snakes or other creatures until they seriously consider the consequences.

Wiki states that Letho's "bite is considered one of the most painful that can be inflicted by any insect ... excruciatingly painful." Why? Because its injected toxin dissolves flesh and

liquefies body tissues so that after 10 to 15 minutes, Letho can suck them up, much like guzzling an extra-large protein milkshake.

Letho is a water denizen, thus the nickname "toe biter," because people are sometimes bitten by it when they are wading in a pond or even in a swimming pool.

Letho's diet consists of aquatic insects, from miniscule larvae (including millions of mosquito larvae!) and crustaceans, to small fish, adult frogs, baby turtles and snakes. One source claims that Letho is capable of catching and eating an animal 50 times its size. That seems unlikely, but it is a fun (and painful) thought on which to reflect as well as one that allows the imagination to run wild!

Letho is 3 inches long. Multiply that by 50 and you end up with a prey that is about 12½ feet long. A snake meal now sounds feasible, does it not?

Do you know how much money is generated by the recreational snorkeling tourism industry? Neither do I, but I do know that Letho does not contribute a penny to it because Letho is born with its own pair of snorkels! It is an aquatic insect which cannot breathe underwater. Attached to Letho's rear end are two breathing tubes that extend to the water's surface, drawing in air. The air is trapped under its wings and enters the bug's abdomen through little holes, basically tracheal openings.

Now, this is where I am anxious to describe another unusual characteristic of genus *Letho*. As is common in the animal kingdom, the female chooses a mate. In the *Letho* world, rath-

er than waiting to be courted, the female actively seeks out her mate, and in four of the six Florida species, the female then lays her eggs — up to 150 of them — on the male's back, and he carries and protects them until they hatch. That is paternal care to an almost unimaginable extreme. I have provided a superb photo of Mr. Mom with those eggs on his back.

In the other two species, the eggs are deposited on a plant leaf and guarded by Mr. Mom.

As long as we are on the topic of sex and reproduction, let me get to the “electric light bug” nickname. Letho grows rather lethargic during our cooler winter days and hangs around the water. Come spring, when love is in the air, Letho begins its nocturnal search for a mate. While it is flying around displaying its size and powerful physique and emitting pheromones (a male sexual scent), it will be drawn to light bulbs, much as the proverbial



'Mr. Mom' carries the eggs on his back until they hatch. Photo by noisecollusion via Flickr and Wikimedia Commons

moth to a flame. That is why you discovered your bug on your condo's walkway, rather than near a pond.

Here is a fascinating description from *Florida's Fabulous Insects*. It is a fun book with gorgeous photos and interesting reading for the layman, as are all in that series of *Florida's Fabulous*, sold at Davidson's Drugs, local bookstores and tourist shops:

".... the hemipterist William Blatchley wrote in 1926: 'When electric street lights were first installed our larger species [Lethocerus a.] were attracted to them by the hundreds, and for the first time the average human learned that such bugs were denizens of the earth ... and their uncouth shape and sprawling motions, when on the ground beneath the lights, usually cause him to regard them with a holy terror.'"

Imagine coming home and finding hundreds of them crawling about the stoop under your porch light! Yummy!

Yes! Letho's family members are considered a scrumptious delicacy in almost every country outside of North America and Europe, where entomophagy is pretty much taboo, except for the occasional fly in one's soup. They are eaten deep-fried, sautéed or steamed.

Besides that, in Vietnam and Thailand, for example, the essence extract from the male Letho pheromones is added to various dipping sauces for rice noodle rolls or it is added to a chili sauce used as a condiment. Readers, please do not worry that you will encounter this extract at Sarasota's ethnic restaurants! Its cost is so prohibitive that most of the essence on the market is imitation, rather like

the vanilla extract one buys at supermarkets. The true insect extract is saved for true gourmets, who will pay dearly for it.

Wiki also states, "Lethoceros makes a fascinating aquarium pet, creating little waste and preferring inherently to feed on small crustaceans and feeder shrimp rather than more valuable aquarium fare. However, when choosing to care for a Lethoceros/Lethoceri one must be sure that the aquarium lid is completely secure with no room for the insect to escape (as Lethoceros has the ability to fly)." Well, "duh," of course we knew it could fly!

Here's a fun link to a [blog site](#) about a family that actually did take it in as a pet. The photos and descriptions, particularly those of Letho injecting its venom into a goldfish, bring to mind the phrase, "A picture is worth a thousand words." So, see for yourself what Letho is all about and then decide if you really want to keep one in your home!

Not that anyone asked, but my overall thought on this pet idea is that it would be cruel to keep this specimen and deprive me and every insect-eating (entomophagic) bird and animal of the chance to savor its flavor and benefit from its nutrients, as well deprive Letho of the chance to be a parent and spawn hundreds more mosquito larvae-eating wee ones. But, it is your call of the wild!

Thank you for Franz's superb photo and the opportunity to discuss this truly unusual Florida-friendly native bug. As for your submission to [What's That Bug?](#) let me say that you will probably hear back from it at some point. The website is staffed by exceedingly knowledgeable volunteers who dedicate so much of their free time to helping people ID bugs. It is sim-

ply that there are millions of bug species, and all, just like O. Henry's *The Four Million*, are worth knowing! Please be patient!

I leave my readers with a provocative thought and my own mystery bug.

Why are insects attracted to electric light? Well, some entomologists are thinking that the insects are not at all attracted to it, but while flying too close to a human-made light source, the bug becomes disoriented — discombobulated by this artificial light environment — and then, when finally exhausted by

trying to recover its original flight path, it ends up defeated and dying on the ground, where people find it and wonder, “What is that bug?” Well, it's something to think about!

My mystery photo is of one of the prettiest water bugs I ever ate. It is a “Predacious Diving Beetle” family member and from *What's That Bug?* I think I have narrowed it down to possibly *Cybister fimbriolatus*. Any reader who knows exactly what it is, please just tell Otus!

Otus 



Can you identify this beetle? File photo

THE 'GREATEST LITTLE SHOW'

For decades, the students in Sailor Circus have been wowing crowds with their athleticism and artistry. From March 28 through April 4, 120 youth in grades 4 through 12 from throughout the county kept that tradition alive.


With the theme, *Let The Music Move You*, the students shone in acts on the ground and in the air under their own “big top” on Bahia Vista Street in Sarasota. For more information visit the [Sailor Circus website](#) 



Photo by Peter van Roekens



Photo by Peter van Roekens



Photo by Peter van Roekens



Photo by Peter van Roekens





Photo by Peter van Roekens



Photo by Norman Schimmel



Photo by Norman Schimmel



Photo by Peter van Roekens



COUNTY ZONING STAFF HOPES TO HOLD MEETING FOR SIESTA VILLAGE BUSINESS OWNERS LATE THIS MONTH; NEW OFFICER SLATE PROPOSED FOR VILLAGE ASSOCIATION



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The Sarasota County Zoning Administration staff is hoping to hold a meeting with Siesta Key business owners on Tuesday, April 23, or Thursday, April 25, to discuss the rules that apply to the Overlay District for Siesta Village, Siesta Key Village Association board member and Village Café co-owner Kay Kouvatsos told

members during the SKVA's regular meeting on April 2.

Kouvatsos added that she and SKVA director Cheryl Gaddie had met about a week earlier with Donna Thompson, the county's assistant zoning administrator, to follow up on a discussion Thompson and other county repre-



Siesta Public Beach is popular with all kinds of people, including the Amish and Mennonites. Photo courtesy of Chambliss Skidmore

Siesta Seen

sentatives had had with the SKVA board of directors in February.

That earlier discussion focused on noise complaints and signage violations in the Village.

SKVA President Russell Matthes reminded the approximately 20 members present on April 2 that the objective is to open up better lines of communications among the county zoning office, Code Enforcement and Village businesses about what is and is not allowed in the Overlay District, including “how [rules are] interpreted and how they’re enforced.”

“We wanted to get everybody on the same page,” he added.

Kouvatsos pointed out that after she and Gad-die talked with Thompson, Thompson promised to clarify some issues regarding signage with other county staff members, including those in the County Attorney’s Office, before holding the session for business owners.

Thompson did point out, Kouvatsos noted, that “sandwich boards ... are not allowed at all.”

Additionally, Kouvatsos reported that John Lally, the Code Enforcement officer who has worked on Siesta Key for a number of years, is back on the job. Lally had been out on medical leave since late last year.

SKVA member Glenn Cappetta, owner of Sun Ride Pedicabs, reminded the members that Kevin Burns, the Code Enforcement officer who works part-time in the Village, had con-

fiscated illegal signs a few weeks ago. Since then, Cappetta heard from some business owners that other people “have just basically thumbed their noses [at the ordinance] and have sandwich boards up again on a regular basis.”

“It’s going to be up to John Lally,” Kouvatsos told him. “It’s all enforcement.”

Matthes also pointed out that some organizations had contacted the County Commission to ask for more Code Enforcement overtime than the 15 hours Kevin Burns is allowed per week.

The Siesta Key Association sent a letter on March 15 to the County Commission, saying Burns’ hours “are not adequate given the variety and volume of code enforcement issues reported.”

The letter added, “Our community needs consistency in oversight, responsiveness and enforcement. Without Code Enforcement Staff availability, there isn’t a reliable means to develop compliance to [the] ordinance.”

Matthes pointed out that, with Lally having been out sick for months, “In reality, we went from a 40-plus-hour employee to a 15-hour employee, so there’s no way [the ordinance] could have been enforced aggressively or properly.”

With Lally back on the job, Matthes added, “This will be the first time we’ll get to see if it’s actually going to work” with Burns helping out in the evenings and on weekends.

Siesta Seen

Gaddie also told the group that Thompson had explained to her and Kouvatsos that when a person applies for a county business license, the person receives material with bullet points about what is and is not allowed under the zoning code. After Thompson completes that clarification process Kouvatsos had referenced, Gaddie said, Thompson had suggested such material could be provided to every person seeking to open a new business in Siesta Village.

AS FOR THE NOISE ...

Given the cooler weather during March, noise issues had not seemed to be much of a problem in Siesta Village, in spite of the number

of spring break visitors, Matthes noted during his report on April 2.

However, he said, "I figured this last weekend would be pretty rough," with a big crowd on the key for Easter.

When he asked Peter van Roekens, a Terrace East representative to the SKVA meetings and the secretary of the Siesta Key Association, for any comments on that issue, van Roekens replied that Friday night around midnight, noise did become a problem. Therefore, he said, he called Sgt. Scott Osborne, leader of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Community Policing Station in Siesta Village.

As a result, "Saturday was perfect," van Roekens reported.



Terrace East residents in Siesta Village have contended with noise issues more than some condo owners because of their proximity to live musical performances. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

NEW DIRECTORS

During the SKVA's regular meeting on May 7, members will have the opportunity to vote on new officers and board members.

Secretary Helene Hyland announced the following nominations for officers: president — Cheryl Gaddie; vice president — Kay Kouvatsos; secretary — Hyland; and treasurer — Roz Hyman. Hyman and Hyland both have been holding those posts for a number of years.

The directors nominated are Wendall Jacobs of Beach Bazaar, Mark Smith of Smith Architects, Matthes, Anne Johnson of fresh. PR and Marketing, Bob Kirscher of The Broken Egg, Keith Cipielewski of Siesta Key Oyster Bar, Dave Magee of The UPS Store, Glenn Capetta of Sun Ride Pedicabs, Rami Nehme of Blasé Café and Jeff Madden of Beach Bites.

Hyland noted that nominations also would be accepted from the floor during the May meeting.

Additionally, Kouvatsos pointed out that she and Gaddie had set as one of their goals getting more new businesses involved in the SKVA. "The last three years," Kouvatsos added, "attendance at these meetings has gone way up. We would love to get some of the new businesses in, and some of us would gladly step back" from holding office and directors' seats.

She pointed out that some of the directors had held their posts for 15 years.


If new people are interested in seats on the board, Kouvatsos said, "I *promise* you somebody will step down."



New banners with the same design soon will be going up on the light poles in Siesta Village. Photo by Norman Schimmel

NEW BANNERS

During the SKVA meeting, Matthes also made note of the fact that new banners will be going up in the Village. Sun Graphic Technologies of Sarasota had been able to produce them for \$2,293, he said. Installation probably will cost between \$300 and \$500.

"They look good," he told the members. "They'll be fresh going into summer." 



(From left) Benjamin Williamson, Amanda Lynn Mullen and Brian Nemiroff in the FSU/Asolo Conservatory's production of *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw. Photo by Frank Atura

FSU/ASOLO CONSERVATORY TO PERFORM *CANDIDA*

The Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training will present *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw April 9-28 in the Cook Theatre in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

"In *Candida*, a minister's wife must choose between a passionate young poet who is smitten with her and her older but far more reliable husband," a news release notes. Shaw, who wrote this "sparkling comedy about love, passion and the liberated woman," was one of the 20th century's "most vibrant playwrights," the release adds.

Greg Leaming, director of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory, explains in the release that he always includes plays from classical dramatic literature when choosing the season's four productions.

"Our second-year students get to stretch their muscles, push themselves creatively and explore a stimulating mix of roles and situations in both classic and modern masterpieces," he points out in the release. "Simultaneously, our audiences get the rare opportunity to see works that aren't often performed. *Candida* is a terrific ensemble piece. Our students will breathe new life into it and make it completely appealing to contemporary audiences," he adds.

Director Andrei Malaev-Babel approaches Shaw's text with respect. "This is going to be George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, not a piece of conceptual theater," he says in the release. "Shaw was very specific about his stage directions, and we are going to honor his intentions. We are not going to put our own contemporary spin on the play, or set it in a

different time period. Shaw is a true genius, and when a true genius tells you how the material should be performed, you honor that suggestion. Audiences are going to be coming for Shaw, and Shaw is what they're going to get," he continues.

Tickets are \$29 for evening shows; \$28, for matinees. Students receive 50 percent off with advance ticket purchase. Tickets may be purchased in advance at the Asolo Repertory

Company's box office at the FSU Center for Performing Arts. For more information, call 351-8000.

On Tuesday, April 9, at 7:30 p.m., audience members are invited to attend a production of *Candida* and pay whatever they can afford for their tickets. These special tickets are available on that day of performance only, the release notes.

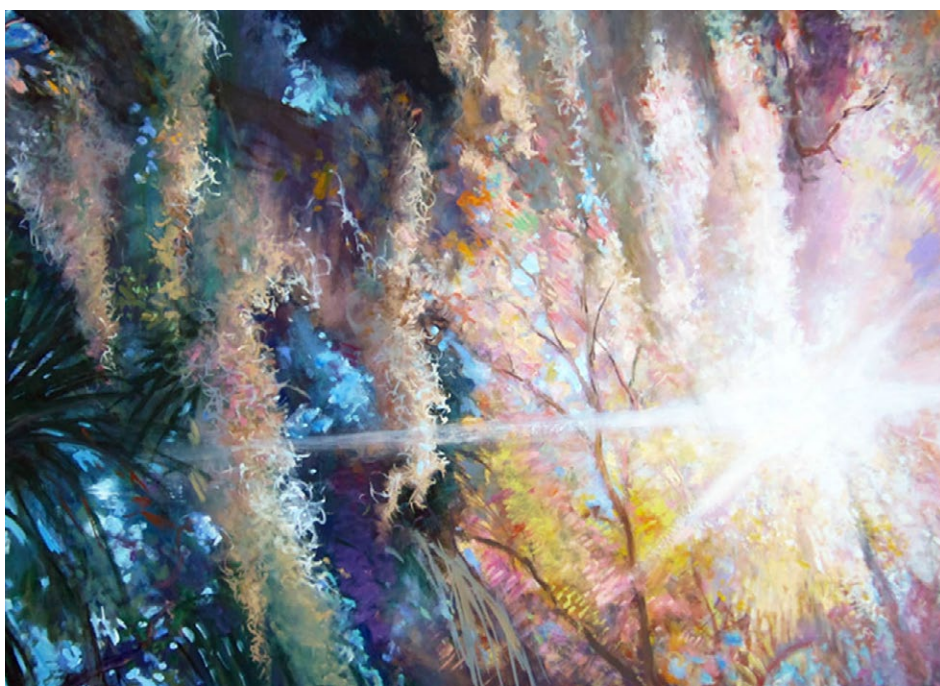
DABBERT GALLERY PRESENTS *LASTING IMPRESSIONS*

The Dabbert Gallery, located at 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota, will present *Lasting Impressions*, featuring the works of five artists, April 5-29.

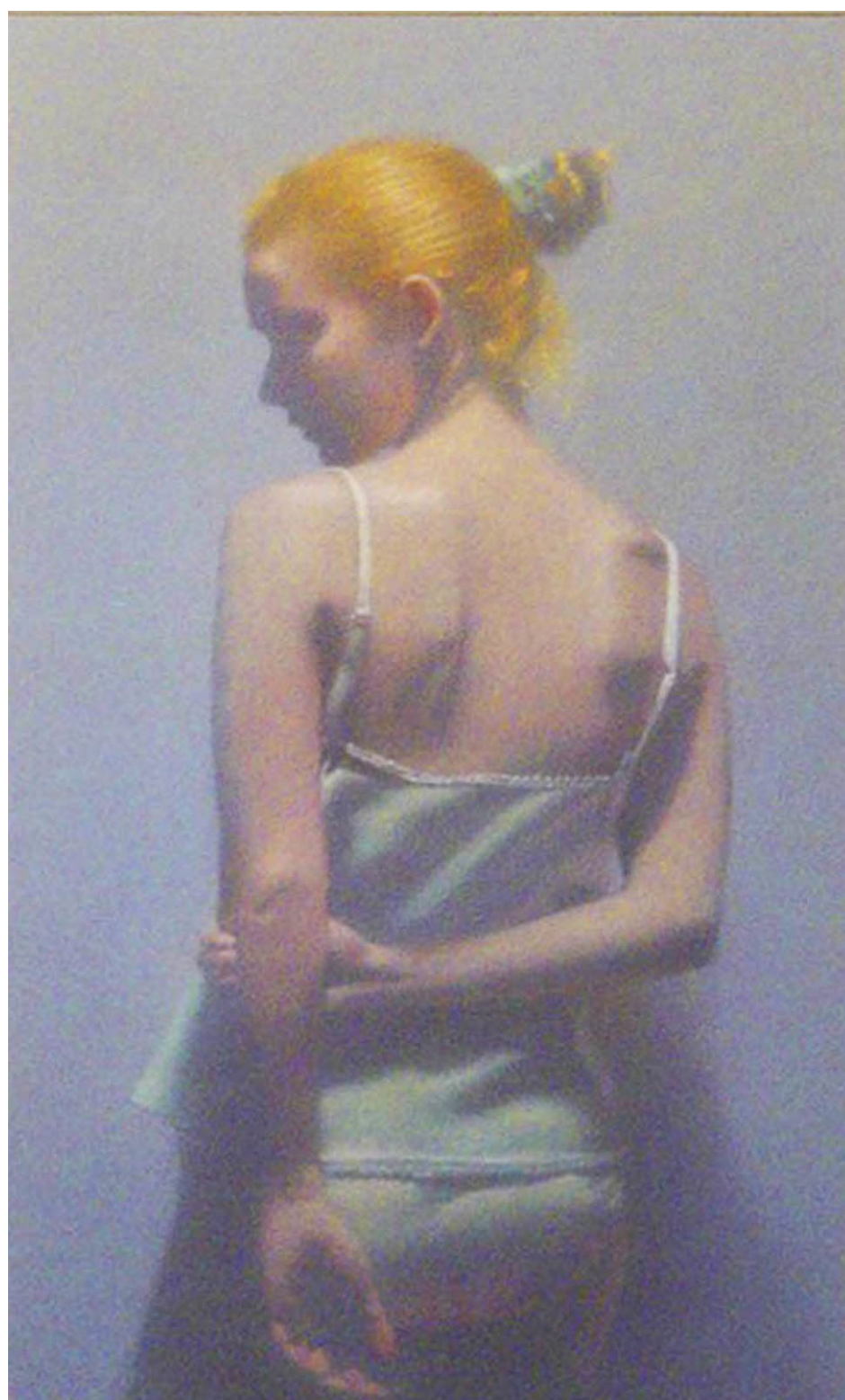
The artists are Jeff Cornell, James Griffin, William Jerdon, Beatrice del Perugia and Nancy Turner.

An opening reception will be held Friday, April 5, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. The artists will be present to greet members of the public. The reception is free.

For more information, visit www.dabbertgallery.com or call 955-1315.



In Excelsis by James Griffin. Contributed photo



The Waitress by Jeff Cornell. Contributed photo



Siesta Gold by Beatrice del Perugia. Contributed photo

THEATRE ODYSSEY ANNOUNCES THE 2013 FESTIVAL WINNERS

Theatre Odyssey has announced the winner of this year's Ten-Minute Play Festival is *A Little Help*, written by Bernie Yanelli and directed by Catherine Randazzo.

An Honorable Mention went to *They're Gonna Kill Gertie*, written by Connie Schindewolf.

New this year was an Audience Favorite Award, which was presented to Connie Schindewolf for her comedy, *Leaving Nic*, starring Ross Boehringer as Nic and Mary Jo Johnson as Sue.

"The actors and directors did a terrific job," said Tom Aposporos, vice president of Theatre Odyssey, in a news release. "Telling a story on stage in 10 minutes can be a challenge. It's always exciting to see what the actors and directors do with the playwrights' work. This year's finalist selections were half comedy and half drama, so we had a good mix and an excellent group of professionals to present the work."



(From left) The cast of *A Little Help*: Bernie Yanelli, Tami Vaughn, Jenny Aldrich and Don Walker. Contributed photo

Theatre Odyssey was founded in 2006 to encourage and promote the efforts of local playwrights and actors, the release notes. "Over the years, the group has premiered almost 70 plays written, directed and performed by Gulf Coast playwrights, actors and directors," the release adds. For more information about Theatre Odyssey visit www.theatreodyssey.org.

VAN WEZEL TO WELCOME SMOKEY ROBINSON

Smokey Robinson will return to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall on April 11 at 8 p.m., the hall has announced.

"A true legend of musical artistry in every sense of the word, [Robinson] has been writing, producing and performing for almost 60 years," a news release says. "[He] has propelled himself to the top of the Billboard charts with numerous hit songs, including *Being With You*, *You've Really Got a Hold on Me*, *Just to See Her*, *Tracks of My Tears* and *Cruisin'*."

Tickets are priced from \$30 to \$95. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org.

The Van Wezel is located at 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.



Smokey Robinson/Contributed photo

SARASOTA BALLET BRINGS TWO-ACT PRODUCTION TO THE VAN WEZEL

Celebrating the triumph of young love over the plotting of others, The Sarasota Ballet presents *La Fille mal Gardée* (*The Wayward Daughter*), April 18-19 on stage at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota.

“A romantic comedy, this heartwarming story ballet will make young and old laugh out loud,” a news release says.

With a clear narrative and engaging characters, the ballet follows the story of a young girl, Lise, who is in love with a young man named Colas, the release continues. Unfortunately, Lise’s mother, Widow Simone, intends for her daughter to marry the son of a wealthy vineyard owner, the release notes. “Opening to a pastoral panoramic set, this ballet happily embraces classical ballet along with elements of folk dance, pantomime and romantic ballet,” the release points out.

In his original choreography, Sir Frederick Ashton

let his gifts for comedy and portraying character through dance and mime be among the highlights of the work, the release adds.

“Everyone will enjoy this ballet,” says Iain Webb, director of The Sarasota Ballet, in the release. “It’s humorous and a perfect experience for the whole family.”

Staged by Webb and Margaret Barbieri, the assistant director of The Sarasota Ballet, this popular production will be performed by the company for

the first time, the release says.

With sets and costumes from the Birmingham Royal Ballet, the ballet’s colorful backdrop and attire “will stir the imagination of all those in attendance,” it adds.

John Lanchbery’s arrangement of Ferdinand Hérold’s score will be performed by the Sarasota Orchestra, the release notes.

“I won’t say exactly how [the ballet] ends,” adds Webb in the release. “But I will say this, when the curtain falls, the audience will be smiling.”

Tickets may be purchased online 24 hours a day, seven days a week with Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover. The box office can be contacted by calling 359-0099, Ext. 101.

For more information, visit www.sarasotaballet.org.

Kate Honea and Ricardo Graziano in the Sarasota Ballet production of La Fille mal Gardée. Photo by Frank Atura



MARIA WIRRIES CONCERT TO BENEFIT HAITI

Fifteen-year old soprano Maria Wirries, a sophomore and honor student at Manatee School for the Arts, will perform in a concert to benefit Haiti, on Sunday, April 14, at 4 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church in Sarasota.

All proceeds from the concert will go directly to support Faith Lutheran's mission in Haiti, the church has announced.

Born in Haiti and reared in the United States, "Wirries is a talented and sought-after performer; she will be accompanied by Alan Jay Corey on piano," a news release notes. The duo will perform Broadway tunes and contemporary songs in a 75-minute concert followed by a meet-the-artist reception.

"Faith Lutheran has a longstanding relationship with Haiti, and over the years has provided financial and medical support, as well as provided computers and sports equipment for young children," the release points out. In addition to its efforts through The Lazarus Project, the church works in ministry to support the Little Church of Jesus, an orphanage in Haiti for physically challenged young children, the release adds.

The concert will include a short video presentation about Faith's work in Haiti.


"In 2012, Wirries performed with Gloria Musicae in Italy at the Amalfi Coast Music and Arts Festival, where her singing was greeted with great enthusiasm from audiences," the release says. The young singer has performed locally with the Sarasota Orchestra and the Sarasota Orchestra Jazz Ensemble; she also sings with the Schola Cantorum at St. Boniface Episcopal Church.



Maria Wirries and Alan Jay Corey. Contributed photo

As an accompanist, Corey has performed with international ballet companies, the Chicago White Sox and the Florida Theater Conference, the release points out. He also is a musical director and has directed more than 100 productions throughout Southwest Florida, including musicals at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and the Sarasota Opera — where he was artistic director of the Sarasota Youth Opera. He sings at St. Boniface Episcopal Church, as well, and is the pianist for Gloria Musicae.

Tickets are \$15; they may be purchased online at www.faithsarasota.com, at the church during business hours or at the door the day of the event, pending availability of tickets.

Faith Lutheran Church is located at 7750 Beneva Road in Sarasota. For more information, visit the website or call 924-4664. 



The Church of the Pines welcomed residents and visitors alike to the nondenominational Easter Sunrise Service at 6 a.m. on Lido Beach on March 31.

A light illuminated the cross as the participants gathered in the dark by the Gulf of Mexico.

Photos by Norman Schimmel



SONIA FUENTES TO SPEAK ON A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) will present a program by Sonia Pressman Fuentes at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 6, titled, *A Journey of Discovery*.

“Few people know what Germany has and is doing for the Jews in that country today and it is a revelation,” a news release says.

“People also do not know that most of the Jews in Germany are of Russian origin and that many Israelis live there as well,” the release adds. Fuentes’ presentation, accompanied by slides, will present a broad picture of Jewish life in Germany, the release notes.

CHJ meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota.

Services and programs are open to the public at no charge.

For more information, call 929-7771 or visit www.chj-sarasota.org.



Sonia Pressman Fuentes/Contributed photo

TEMPLE EMANU-EL SISTERHOOD TO HONOR ELAINE ROSE GLICKMAN

On Sunday, April 14, Temple Emanu-El’s Sisterhood will honor Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman during its annual Honors Luncheon.

The event will take place at 12:30 p.m. at the Lakewood Ranch Country Club (7650 Legacy Blvd., Lakewood Ranch), the Temple has announced. Proceeds will benefit the Temple Emanu-El Religious School.

“We are honoring Elaine because she is a powerhouse at Temple Emanu-El, for Sisterhood and the community at large,” says event chairwoman Cindy Gilburne in a news release. “Her endless mitzvot (good deeds), wit, charm and constant efforts continue to inspire all of

the women in Sisterhood and we want her to know how much she is appreciated, loved and admired!”

In the six years since Glickman and her family arrived in Sarasota — her husband, Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, began his service at that time as the spiritual leader of the congregation — “she has been an incredibly active part of the temple family,” the release says. “She has built the annual Mitzvah Day, or day of community service, program into a 200+ volunteer effort; led countless educational sessions for participants of all ages; headed up the congregation’s social committee efforts to offer fun programs to engage and connect temple

members; and successfully submitted enough publicity about the congregation to local news outlets to make any area media professional green with envy,” the release points out.

A rabbi, writer, teacher, wife and mother of three children, Glickman received her Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and her ordination from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the release continues. Her book, *Sacred Parenting: Jewish Wisdom and Practical Guidance for Your Family's Early Years*, was a finalist for the 2009 National Jewish Book Award. She is also the author of *Haman and the Jews: A Portrait from Rabbinic Literature* and *The Messiah and the Jews*, with a novel, *My Golem*, in the works, the release adds. Her articles and letters to the editor have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Jewish News*, *Mommy Magazine*, the *Pelican Press*, the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, the *Temple Emanu-El Bulletin*, *The Sarasota News Leader* and *Tufts Magazine*.

She also serves as a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Reform Judaism*, as a member of the Sarasota-Manatee Rabbin-



Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman/Contributed photo

ical Association and as an executive board member of All Faiths Food Bank. She was a longtime instructor in the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee's Florence Melton Adult Mini-School and remains active in many social and service committees, the release points out.

Admission to the luncheon is \$45 per person. For further information, call Cindy Gilburne at 812-4858 or email cgilburne@gmail.com.

TEMPLE TO MARK HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY WITH FILM


Yom HaShoah — Holocaust Remembrance Day — will be marked at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, with a screening of the film *Journey to Justice* on Monday, April 8, at 7 p.m.

This event is free of charge and open to the entire community.

Hailed by FOX-TV as “moving, powerful, revelatory,” *Journey to Justice* “tells the searing story of Howard Triest, who at 16 fled Nazi Germany, then returned as an American soldier and as a Nuremberg Trials interpreter,” a

news release says. His sister, Margot Coville, was rescued from a detention camp and later escaped to Switzerland — saving 10 other children with her, the release adds. Howard and Margot's parents were killed at Auschwitz.

Ms. Coville will attend the film screening, and a question-and-answer session with her will follow it, the release notes

Journey to Justice is presented in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee. For more information, call 371-4546. 



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

05
APRIL

Sarasota appearance by author Wendy Wax

April 5, 6 p.m., the author of *While We Were Watching Downton Abbey* will be at Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St., for a book signing and to lead participants in a challenging game of Downton Abbey Trivia. More info at www.bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900.

05
APRIL

WSLR presents Rita Hosking

April 5, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court. Tickets: \$10 advance; \$12 at the door; purchase them at WSLR.org.

05+
APRIL

A Tribal Collection: Rainforest Masks of Costa Rica

Through April 19, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 900 S. Palm Ave. Exhibit free with regular admission. Free to members and to children under age 6. Admission for non-member adults, \$17; for children 6-11, \$6. Information: 366-5731 or Selby.org.

05+
APRIL

Venus in Fur (for mature audiences)

April 5-28, 8 p.m. and some matinees; Historic Asolo Theater, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$25-\$40; purchase at 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org.

06+
APRIL

La Musica International Chamber Music Festival rehearsals

April 6-19, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. daily, Mildred Sainer Pavilion, 5313 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota. Free for series subscribers and New College faculty, staff and students. All others pay \$50 for a festival pass to all rehearsals or \$10 for a daily pass. Click [here](#) for a complete rehearsal schedule.

14
APRIL

The Best of Chroma Quartet

April 14, 2:30 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road. Tickets: \$15, including wine and cheese reception with artists. Information at UU Sarasota Concerts.

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

HOW PROUDLY THEY WAVE



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



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.