

April 12, 2013

**THE SARASOTA**

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*

**SHOWDOWN**

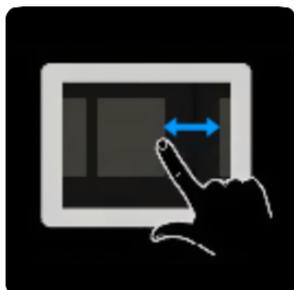
**PROCEED WITH REPLACEMENT**

**RETURN TO SENDER**

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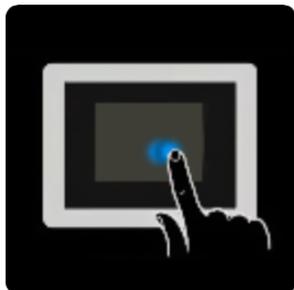
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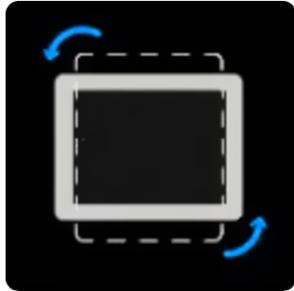
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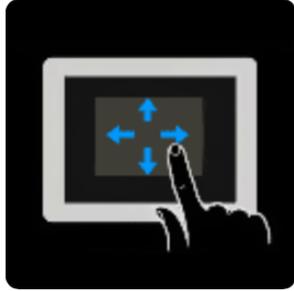
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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# Welcome

This issue of the *News Leader* is a momentous one for all of us: It marks the first anniversary of our existence.

Although we did not premiere the formal digital publication until late September 2012, we started posting stories on our WordPress blog site in mid-April last year.

My husband rarely gets sufficient credit for founding the *News Leader*. I may have been burnt out when I left the *Pelican Press* a year ago last month, but he knew it would just be a matter of time before I would be itching to cover local government meetings again.

After more than 30 years in journalism, I will be one of the first to admit that it is terribly difficult to get printer's ink out of the bloodstream! The great thing for us, of course, is that we no longer have to rely on ink to put out a product — a point legendary journalist Tom Brokaw made just this week during his Ringling Town Hall Series lecture in Sarasota.

While my first blog posts last spring may all have been news-related, our issue this week is a great combination of news and features. Yes, the County Commission kept Cooper Levey-Baker and me busy, but Stan Zimmerman was able to don his historian's cap for more than one article and take some great shots of lovingly crafted ships.

Giving Tyler Whitson a break, contributor Harriet Cuthbert has a sweet story about the couple who created Used Book Heaven on Siesta Key; a new contributor, Rick Wielgorecki, offers insights about gardening; and Otus has a lot to report about a trip he took — by Jaguar, no less — to Crowley's Nursery.

We appreciate so much all that you, our readers, have done to spread the news yourselves — about the *News Leader*. It is amazing how much we have grown in such a relatively short space of time.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher



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# SHOWDOWN

*Warm Mineral Springs draws tourists from around the world. Photo by Rachel Levey-Baker*

## **FUTURE OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS THE HOT TOPIC AT JOINT COUNTY-CITY MEETING**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

“Doodle-oodle-oodle-oooh, wah-wah-wah.” Yep, it’s showdown time for the Sarasota County and North Port commissions, which meet next Wednesday morning, April 17, to discuss and debate the future of Warm Mineral Springs.

The last time the city and county held a joint meeting, the two boards agreed unanimously to issue an Invitation to Negotiate to solicit ideas for how to develop and manage the springs, which was purchased by the two entities for \$5.5 million in 2010. Since that har-

monious meeting, held last July, things have not gone so smoothly.

In November, after the election of two new commissioners, the North Port board voted to reject the Invitation to Negotiate and to request another sit-down with the county. Frustrated, the county scuppered that suggestion a

week later. Shortly after that, the North Port board moved to rid itself of the issue completely, voting to sell its 50 percent share in the springs property.

“*I never know what to expect when it comes to two governing boards.*”

Linda Yates  
Mayor  
City of North Port



But nobody's buying, at least not yet, and June 30, when the contract with the company now managing the springs runs out, is quickly approaching.

That's something the North Port Commission tried to address Monday afternoon, April 8, discussing a variety of backup plans should that deadline come and go. Mayor Linda Yates proposed researching how much it would cost the city to keep the springs open as just a "swimming hole," maintaining access to the springs while shuttering the property's restaurant and other facilities. The commission voted down that idea amid concerns about the city and the county managing such a "complex" facility.

The board also shot down a proposal by Commissioner Cheryl Cook to explore signing a

long-term lease with Cypress Lending, the company currently in charge of the springs.

So what could the commission agree on? Vice Mayor Jim Blucher eventually moved to have the city manager notify the county about the city's desire to set up a short-term lease, with revenue-sharing, to make sure the springs stay open, even if no long-term deal is in place July 1.

With so much back and forth already, is it conceivable that the two boards might iron out their differences before then? Next week will give us a clue.

The agenda for Wednesday's meeting is vague, with just one "joint discussion item": "Discussion between the County Commission and the City of North Port Commission, pursuant to



*Both county and North Port commissioners seem leery of having the resort close, even for a short time. Photo via Wikimedia Commons*

Florida Statutes, Section 164.1055, regarding the use, sale and/or purchase of the Warm Mineral Springs Property owned by the County and the City of North Port as Tenants-In-Common.”

Yates told her commission Monday that the current stalemate is a result of the sharp disagreement about what the “future use of the property” might look like: public preserve or full-on spa-and-hotel resort?

When asked by *The Sarasota News Leader* if she thinks that can be resolved next week, Yates laughs. “I never know what to expect when it comes to two governing boards,” she says. “I think the hope is that all the issues can be ironed out. I think that’s the hope of everybody.”

One possibility: a 50-50 division of the property. But that’s a thorny question. Who would get the actual springs? How do you evaluate how much the assets are worth? Yates says her goal is to ensure that the public can use and benefit from the springs “forever and ever,” regardless of who owns what. “We should be

able to come up with an amicable divide of the ownership,” she says.

The County Commission voted Tuesday to approve discussions between the county administrator and the city manager about a short-term lease. The board also asked staff to prepare recommendations by next Wednesday’s conference.

County Commissioner Christine Robinson called North Port’s action on the issue “encouraging.” She wants to keep the issue out of the courts. “My goal is not litigation for this,” she said. “My goal is to get a resolution to this.”

The only no vote on the proposal was from Commissioner Joe Barbetta, who said he wouldn’t support any new lease, even one as short as six months. “Ten months ago we made a deal,” he said, “and it was a 10-0 vote. We’ve lost 10 months. Now we have to go through mediation.” He called the short-term lease “appeasement.”

*Additional reporting contributed by News Leader Editor Rachel Brown Hackney.* 



*The sign welcomes visitors to Warm Mineral Springs. Photo by Ebaybe via Wikimedia Commons*



Barbara Lee

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# PROCEED WITH REPLACEMENT

*The County Commission sits in session in a recent meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## AMID CONCERNS ABOUT 'BUGS' IN THE TECHNOLOGY, A SPLIT COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES BUYING NEW PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

On a 3-2 vote, the County Commission on April 10 authorized staff to proceed with steps necessary to replace an outdated public safety radio system with modern digital technology at a cost of about \$18.5 million.

The dissenters — Commissioners Christine Robinson and Nora Patterson — said they felt they needed more information about alternatives and more details about “bugs” other users

have found with the type of system recommended.

“I don’t want to experience problems that could be avoided as a result of [not] going forward with a first-generation system,” Robinson said.

“*I don’t want to experience problems that could be avoided as a result of [not] going forward with a first-generation system.*”

Christine Robinson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

“I feel a little bit like we’ve been getting a sales job on this thing,” Patterson added, noting she would prefer a workshop explaining the technology extensively before taking a vote.

She added she also had reservations — in spite of reassurances from county financial staff — that the new infrastructure could be paid for through bond revenue.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta made the motion to move forward with what is called a “P25 system,” saying the alternative — upgrading the existing equipment for use through 2017 — would lock the county into a sole-source vendor for new

equipment in the future. Moreover, he pointed to the county’s ability to work with Manatee County officials on the new equipment and infrastructure, with the potential for cost savings.

Commissioner Charles Hines agreed Robinson had valid concerns, but he also was swayed by the advantages of working with

Manatee County and the disadvantage of the single vendor matter.

“*We’re aware of some of the issues with P25 deployments around the country, but that’s largely anecdotal information.*”

Bill Hutchison  
Former Public Safety Director  
Manatee County



County Commissioner Christine Robinson. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason cast the swing vote.

Mike Tobias, the county fire chief and emergency services director, reminded the board members they are holding a joint session with the Manatee commissioners on April 16. The radio system upgrade is on that agenda.

The County Commission voted 3-2 on Sept. 12, 2012 to give the Emergency Services Depart-

ment the go-ahead to advertise a request for proposals for a consultant to help staff work out specifications for the new public safety radio system to replace 16-year-old equipment for which parts no longer are manufactured. (Barbetta and Robinson were in the minority that time.) However, when the County Commission met on March 8 in a joint session with the Charlotte County Commission, members of the latter board pointed to concerns about

### Advantages

- Less expensive. Defers the balance of the project cost until 2016.
- Quicker installation, approximately 6 months
- Will start us on the road to P25 implementation
- Public Safety agencies can identify compatible field equipment and begin replacement.

### Disadvantages

- Moving an active radio system to the new EOC is “like changing a jet engine mid-flight”.
- Some complete downtime is inevitable
  - Radio system
  - Voice recorder
- Stagger-moving consoles will decrease capacity of the system
- Feature such as Fire Station Alerting, extended area coverage and interoperability with other counties will be temporarily lost.
- Moving the consoles will leave limited capabilities at the Backup Center (Replacement consoles available for additional \$2.4 million).
- This will obligate us to continuing with Motorola when the balance of the infrastructure is replaced, unless the updated equipment in this proposal is scrapped.
- Does not expand coverage into the areas of St. Armand’s/Longboat Key and the eastern area of North Port.
- The cost of the update now and replacing the balance of the system in the future adds approximately \$600,000 to \$800,000 to the overall project cost (\$19.1 - \$19.3 million).
- This option may delay the immediate formation of a regional radio system (Manatee/Sarasota/Charlotte).

potential bugs in the new technology and talked of plans to proceed with an upgrade for their radio equipment.

Tobias made a presentation to the Sarasota County Commission during its regular meeting on April 10 in Sarasota to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of proceeding with the purchase of new equipment compared to upgrading the existing system.

## THE SYSTEM

The Motorola SmartZone 800 MHz Digital Trunked Radio system Sarasota County began using in 1996 was the first of its kind in the nation, Tobias explained. It provides radio communications to all the fire and EMS departments in the county — except the Longboat Key Fire Department — as well as to all the law enforcement agencies except for those on Longboat Key. It also serves non-public safety agencies such as the Sarasota County School Board, Sarasota County Area Transit and public works agencies throughout the county.

Altogether, the system has 5,000 field radios, he noted.

“We are way ahead of the curve when it comes to interdependability,” Tobias pointed out, referring to the fact that all those people can communicate with each other through the same system.

During 9/11, New York City Police Department and Fire Department personnel were unable to communicate with each other, he noted, exacerbating the tragedies of that day.

County surtax revenue originally was programmed to pay for replacing the system, he



*Chief Mike Tobias/Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

pointed out. However, that revenue has come in at a lower rate over the past several years because of the Great Recession.

As a result of the age of the 800 MHz system, Tobias said, replacement parts are available only on the market for used equipment. The county has been acquiring a supply of replacement parts to keep on hand.

A memo he provided to the commission says, “We have had 2 major component failures since November 2012. We used parts from our stock to make the repairs.”

The memo adds, “Each time we have a failure and have to restart [the master site controller], we run the risk of it not restarting. That would be a catastrophic failure and potentially lead to a communications blackout throughout Sarasota County.”

## THE NEW AND THE OLD

Tobias explained that the new system, as planned, would include two extra antennas to eliminate current coverage problems on St. Armands and north Longboat Key as well as an area east of North Port.

Additionally, fiber optic cable would be laid between the county’s new Emergency Operations/911 Center on Porter Way and the antenna sites. The present system utilizes leased telephone lines that cost the county about \$52,000 a year, he added.

It also would have a microwave network for redundancy purposes.

One other component would be GPS tracking capability for all the radios, which could save lives by enabling public safety officials to locate a first responder who stopped communicating for an unexplained reason. If the person were immobile for a period of time, the radio would alert the dispatch center, Tobias noted.

It would take a full 18 months to implement the new system, he pointed out.

Means to pay for the new radios themselves has not been identified except for those required by the county Fire Department, Tobias told the commission; that expense will be \$3.9 million.



*Sarasota County firefighters learn early on how critical a piece of equipment their radios are, Chief Mike Tobias says. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

Another \$1.6 million will have to come out of the county’s general fund for the non-public safety officer radios, for example, he said.

Replacing the Sheriff’s Office radios will cost about \$6.9 million.

Alternatively, a system upgrade would cost about \$5.3 million, Tobias noted, and it could be implemented in about six months. However, if the county pursued that option, it would have no choice but to keep using Motorola’s equipment when it went ahead with the P25 system.

That would end up making the total project cost between \$19.1 million and \$19.3 million, he said.

## THE DISCUSSION

When Patterson asked whether Sarasota County public safety personnel can communicate with their counterparts in Manatee County now, Tobias replied, “We have limited capabilities” because of coverage problems. Dispatch personnel have to manually place

calls through the 911 centers in the two counties to make communication possible.

With the new system, he said, “We would have mutual channels on our radios ...”

Robinson told Tobias she had spent about 15 minutes on the Internet researching the P25 equipment and had found complaints in various major metropolitan areas.

“Any time you install a complex system ... across a wide network, there’s bound to be, as you call them, ‘bugs,’” he told her. However, the vendor typically works with the local government to make sure issues are resolved, he pointed out.

When Robinson continued that she had found some information about the federal government looking into creating a compatibility certification process for P25 systems to ensure interdependability, Tobias said he was unaware of that.

Referring to Charlotte County officials, Robinson added, “They had done much more research on this issue and the bugs involved in it, and I’m concerned that we haven’t. ... I want to know what the problems are ahead of time and make sure that we’re making a good choice to go with this now ...”

She continued, “If the second generation [of P25 equipment] is right around the corner ... I might be willing to pay that money to take [it] over the first [generation].”

One reason his office had sought approval for hiring the consultant, Tobias replied, was to

help guide county staff “through the pitfalls that you have just described ...”

He added, “If the consultant couldn’t allay all of our concerns ... then we would be out very little money by hiring the consultant” and not buying the first-generation equipment.

Robinson said she felt county staff should be researching the issues before hiring the consultant. (Tobias earlier had said the request for proposal to be advertised for the position was nearly complete.)

Tobias also asked Bill Hutchison, the former Manatee County public safety director, to address the commission.

Hutchison recently retired, he said, but he is still working as a consultant to Manatee County.

“We’re aware of some of the issues with P25 deployments around the country,” he said, “but that’s largely anecdotal information.”

Numerous P25 systems have been installed in Florida, he pointed out, indicating they are working well.

He cautioned the commission that because technology is evolving rapidly, “You should not expect to get 20 years of life out of the radio system that you’re contemplating putting in ...”

The advantages of both Sarasota and Manatee counties installing the same new system are of high importance, he added. “That’s why we’re pushing forward as hard as we can on this regional concept.” 



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## RETURN TO SENDER

*St. Armands shows little signs this week of season having ended. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

### **THE ST. ARMANDS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT FEELS THE BALLOTS ON THE FUTURE OF THE BID NEVER REACHED THE RIGHT PEOPLE AND WILL EXPLORE A NEW VOTE**

**By Scott Proffitt**  
*Staff Writer*

The chairman of the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID) said this week he believes the correct people did not receive ballots to enable them to vote on the district's continuation and that was why the vote failed last week.

The BID members plan to work with City of Sarasota staff to hold a new vote, they announced during their April 8 meeting.

*The Sarasota News Leader* reported last week on the demise of the BID, based on the ballot count at Sarasota City Hall on April 3.

“*The City Clerk's Office made a critical error and provided us with mailing labels addressed to the property, not to the owner of the property.*”

Marty Rappaport  
Chairman  
St. Armands Business Improvement District

The BID, a separate taxing district, was created on St. Armands 10 years ago and is considered a success by a majority of stakeholders. The BID was steered into existence by, among others, current Chair-

man Marty Rappaport. The assessment was voted upon by the commercial property owners, but the taxes have been paid by their tenants.

On Monday, April 8, when the members of the BID – which is set to expire on Sept. 30 — met at City Hall with City Manager Tom Barwin and other staff, Rappaport dropped his bombshell: “We had sent out an informational packet to property owners. Fifty percent of them were returned as undeliverable mail.”

These packets went out several weeks prior to the city staff’s mailing ballots on the future of the district, Rappaport added. After looking into the matter, he said, it appeared the mailing list was for tenants, not for the property owners. In other words, city staff used the wrong mailing list, he said.

“The City Clerk’s Office made a critical error and provided us with mailing labels addressed to the *property*, not to the owner of the property,” said Rappaport.



*The assessment revenue for the St. Armands Business Improvement District has made a number of new and better features possible to draw shoppers and diners. Photo by Scott Proffitt*

Were those the same addresses to which the actual ballots were mailed?

“This is a question we will never have an answer to because [the ballots were not] sent out certified mail, return receipt requested,” Rappaport continued.

In response to questions from the *News Leader* following the BID meeting, City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini wrote in an email, “Unfortunately, I have no knowledge of what was provided to the St. Armands Business Improvement District for its informational pamphlet mailing. The employee who produced that list is no longer employed with my office as of November 2012.”

She added, “I do know that the actual ballots were mailed to a list of property owners as provided by the attorney for the District.”

“The BID directors were well aware that over the last 10 years there has been a substantial turnover of landlords,” Rappaport pointed out at the BID meeting. “The majority of the landlords do not reside in Florida and aren’t aware of the capital improvements that have been implemented these past 10 years.”

“Why would the landlords not vote in favor of a referendum ... when it did not cost them additional money? ... It is passed on to the tenants as terms of the lease,” Rappaport continued.

The Merchants Association members in the district support the tax, which has brought updated seating areas, lighting, music and public space to the Circle over the last decade, he pointed out.

“The merchants are in a state of shock,” said Diana Corrigan, director of the St. Armands

Circle Association. “Our businesses have supported this 100 percent.”

That is true for the St. Armands Residents Association as well.

“The residents support your efforts, and we want to see this work out successfully,” said Vice President Jim Grace, who expressed the same level of surprise about the failed vote as all the other organization representatives did at the meeting.

“A lot of the improvements you have done have ramifications for the residents,” he added. “Our interests dovetail with yours.”

Several people asked whether the BID and the city could nullify the vote and have the property owners cast ballots again.

“We are the first commercial BID in Florida of this type,” Rappaport noted. “This is a special circumstance and I think we have a legal reason to request [a new vote].”

The BID made plans to have its attorney meet with City Attorney Robert Fournier to explore the legality of sending out another ballot, along with the informational pamphlet, but sending them by certified mail this time, with return receipts requested.

In response to a question from the *News Leader*, Fournier said in an email, “To the best of my knowledge, without having spent time to verify, there is no required waiting period in the controlling statute (Sec. 163.511 F.S.) that would prohibit a second vote until a specified period of time has expired. Of course, if the City is asked to proceed with a second election, that is a question I would want to fully research to be sure.” 

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black top, holding a large sandwich. The sandwich is made with a crusty, golden-brown roll and is filled with lettuce, tomato, onion, and a dark meat patty. The woman's hands are visible on either side of the sandwich, holding it steady. The background is a plain, light color.

# This may take a while.

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## CITY ELECTIONS

*Susan Chapman addresses supporters at the Federal Building on April 10. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### CHAPMAN SUPPORTERS DECRY DORFMAN'S REMARKS

By Stan Zimmerman

*City Editor*

At a press conference held Wednesday, April 10, nine former Sarasota mayors endorsed Susan Chapman in the race to fill two at-large city commission seats. One of them upstaged the rest.

During the “speechifying,” former Mayor Kelly Kirschner said, “Shame on all of us as former elected officials if we aren’t here standing up for you and speaking out to say you are most qual-

ified to be on the City Commission and a future mayor.”

He then noted, “The rhetoric is heating up in terms of sexism directed at Susan Chapman, in terms of ageism directed at Susan Chapman and those white-haired women who support her. It’s really abhorrent.” He was stopped there by cheers and jeers from Chapman supporters.

“Shame on all of us as former elected officials if we aren’t here standing up for you and speaking out to say you are most qualified to be on the City Commission and a future mayor.”

Kelly Kirschner  
Former Mayor  
City of Sarasota



“What we are now hearing is the electioneering-communication organizations affiliated with the gentleman who was arrested that are now looking to funnel thousands of dollars to coordinate with the campaigns to go after and attack Susan Chapman,” Kirschner continued. “It’s really despicable. We should have learned from what took place this last fall.”

Kirschner’s “gentleman who was arrested” is a reference to former Republican Party chairman Bob Waechter, who was charged in December 2012 with a felony for his electioneering tactics. Waechter stepped back from his positions on two local boards following his arrest.

## ON THE RADIO

On Saturday, April 6, City Commission Candidate Richard Dorfman appeared on the radio talk show of Phil Grande. About 17 minutes into the program, Dorfman said, “You can’t just listen to the white-haired ladies that come down to the [City] Commission meetings every day and argue, ‘No, no, no, you can’t do anything.’ You’ve got to listen to everybody.”

He continued, “You can’t depend on people who are in the twilight of their years to hold back the city. They want things to stay the way they absolutely are. They are the past.



*Susan Chapman supporters crowd around the Federal Building in downtown Sarasota. At left is former Mayor Kelly Kirschner. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

They are not the future. Unfortunately, the big mouths are the people who want the status quo.”

Unfortunately for Dorfman, these “people in the twilight of their years” represent the dominant voting block in the city. This is doubly true of the “white-haired ladies.” Neither group is accustomed to being dismissed with scorn by a political candidate needing their votes to win.

Dorfman has been a full-time resident in Sarasota for four years. Two years ago he ran unsuccessfully for the City Commission seat in District One, missing the runoff by a handful of votes.

This year he came in third in the March 12 six-person primary, but that showing was good enough to put him in the final election on May 14.

The third candidate is incumbent Suzanne Atwell, who scored second in the primary.

## MEANWHILE BACK AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE ...

Twelve former Sarasota mayors endorsed Chapman, and nine showed up in person for the press conference at the Federal Building at Ringling Boulevard and Orange Avenue. In attendance were Fredd Atkins, Elmer Berkel, Mollie Cardamone, Dick Clapp, the Rev. Jerome Dupree, Kirschner, Bill Kline, Richard Martin and David Merrill. They all made short remarks supporting Chapman’s candidacy. Also there to support Chapman was the sitting vice mayor, Willie Shaw.

Jack Gurney, Nora Patterson and Lou Ann Palmer were not there but have lent their endorsements as well.



(From left) Sarasota City Commission candidates Suzanne Atwell, Susan Chapman and Richard Dorfman listen to remarks by CONA debate moderator Kafi Benz on April 8. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Cardamone, who was the emcee for the event, noted the support of so many former mayors “was unprecedented.”

Atkins said, “I can’t remember a more important election in the city.” Clapp said Chapman “stands out head and shoulders over the other candidates.”

The Wednesday event was a counterpoint to another press conference held by Atwell and Dorfman on March 26. They received the endorsement at that time of two non-prevailing candidates in the race. Both Linda Holland and Kelvin Lumpkin said they were backing Atwell and Dorfman, after failing to make it into the final election. The sixth candidate in the primary, Pete Theisen, has not endorsed any other candidate.

However, Theisen reacted strongly to the radio program during which Grande belittled several people. “Calling Commissioner [Shannon] Snyder a ‘conehead.’ Referring to Commissioner Shaw as having a brain the size of a thimble. Saying Susan Chapman is a ‘dead rock,’” wrote Theisen in a posting to the Sarasota Voices blog. “Dorfman let it all be said and did not object or disagree.”

Theisen posted a link to the April 6 [program](#).

## CAMPAIGN ACCOUNTS GROW ANEW

Dorfman spent just about every dime he raised to get into the final election. Rounding up the number through March 22, he had raised \$40,000 and spent \$39,000. During the reporting period for March 6-22, he raised just \$600 of the total. By the March 12 primary, Dorfman had brought in more money than the



*Susan Chapman addresses the CONA audience on April 8. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

rest of the candidates combined; now he must raise more as the race enters its final month.

Atwell has raised a total of \$20,000 and spent about \$17,000 so far. That leaves her a \$3,000 war chest for the final election. Her accounts include a \$7,000 loan to her campaign.

Chapman has raised \$18,000, including \$2,400 in new donations after the primary. She has spent about \$15,000, leaving her, too, with a \$3,000 balance.

The three finalists finished in an inverse relationship to the funds they have raised, an oddity in American politics. Chapman finished first in the primary, but she has raised only \$18,000. Atwell was second, raising \$20,000. Dorfman was third after raising \$40,000.

*Editor's note: April 15 is the last day to register to vote in the upcoming May 14 city election.* 



**IT'S A GO!**

*The Tilted Kilt moves past the downtown Sarasota crowd during the Festival Parade of Boats in June 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **THE COUNTY COMMISSION VOTES TO ALLOCATE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUE TO SUNCOAST CHARITIES FOR CHILDREN SO IT CAN HOST THE SUNCOAST GRAND PRIX THIS SUMMER**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Hours after the Sarasota County Commission approved a grant to cover the sanctioning fee for the 2013 Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix, Lucy Nicandri, vice president of Suncoast Charities for Children, told *The Sarasota News Leader*, “I’m feeling much better ... You have no idea!”

She added, “Now I’ve got to ramp up all the events.”

“*This is not a precedent for any other festival to come to us out of the budget cycle ... This is going to be a special exception. This will certainly not be the rule for this commissioner.*”

Christine Robinson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

Three weeks after the County Commission voted 3-2 to award Suncoast Charities \$10,000 to replace state funding it had lost for its annual Grand Prix Festival — plus \$3,500 in in-kind expenses — the com-

mission on April 9 unanimously voted to give Suncoast Charities \$79,200 out of a fund designated for tourism promotion, so the organization could afford to hold the Grand Prix. That fund is made up of county tourist development tax (TDT) revenue.

The commission rescinded a March 19 grant of \$10,000 out of its general fund. However, it also indicated a willingness to cover the sanctioning fee in future budget years.

In a press release sent out April 9, Nicandri wrote, "This Festival and Race have been a tradition in this community for 28 years, and we are extremely grateful to both the County and City Commission for their support in our efforts to sustain it as an annual event ...."

The City Commission on March 4 approved \$36,582 in in-kind services for the events this summer, a \$5,175 increase over 2012, the release added. The press release noted the Sarasota County Sports Commission also had given Suncoast Charities \$15,000 as a sports marketing grant.

Commissioner Charles Hines raised the issue of the Grand Prix funding during the Commission Reports part of the board's regular meeting on April 9 in Venice. He asked first whether staff could make a presentation at an upcoming meeting on money being allocated out of TDT revenue for the race, adding that that revenue has been coming in higher than projected so far this fiscal year.



*The public is able to get a close-up look at the Grand Prix boats each year at Centennial Park in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Commissioner Joe Barbetta — whose March 19 motion to allocate the sanctioning fee for Suncoast Charities out of the county's general fund failed — pointed out to Hines, “The problem with that [request] ... is they have a deadline.”

The Suncoast Charities board originally set an April 5 deadline to see whether enough community donations would come in to enable it to hold the festival for the 29<sup>th</sup> year. The board later pushed back the date to April 11.

Barbetta then made a motion for the sanctioning fee to be allocated out of Fund 189 of the TDT revenue.

Hines seconded the motion, but he asked whether Barbetta intended for the County Commission to reverse itself on the \$10,000 it had approved out of general fund revenue on March 19.

“I would rather you substitute the \$79,000 for the \$10,000,” Commissioner Nora Patterson said.

“That's fine,” Barbetta responded.

Hines made an amendment to the motion to formally strike that \$10,000 grant from the general fund. It passed unanimously.

Then Commissioner Christine Robinson pointed out she had spoken with Nicandri and Suncoast board President Jack Cox after the March 19 meeting, explaining to them that her concern about approving their request had been “we would see a bleed that wouldn't stop,” with their returning for more funding every subsequent year.



*Sarasota County's 2012 Annual Report includes a photo from a Super Boat Grand Prix in Sarasota Bay under the heading, 'Economic Development.' Image courtesy Sarasota County*

They told her, Robinson continued, that if the board approved the sanctioning fee on a regular basis, they would not seek any other county grant funds except for those available to nonprofit organizations, for which all interested groups apply on a competitive annual basis.

Therefore, Robinson made another amendment to the motion to include the sanctioning fee in future county budgets and to approve a contract with Suncoast Charities stipulating it would not seek any other revenue except competitive grant funds.

Hines seconded that motion as well.

However, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh cautioned against including the language in the amendment relative to a multi-year contract.

In response to a question from Barbetta, Robinson also clarified that she was not seeking to eliminate the in-kind funding.

She added, “The reason for this is that last year, they did come and ask us for money and



*Lucy Nicandri of Suncoast Charities for Children addresses the County Commission on March 19. File photo*

said they would not come back to us again, and they did come back to us ... with a *significantly* higher amount this year.”

On March 19, there seemed to be “no end in sight” for such action, Robinson pointed out.

The request for the 2013 sanctioning fee should have come to the commission last year during preparation of its current fiscal year budget, she noted. “I don’t want to be put into a position where we got our backs pressed to the wall because of the timing in which they come to us,” she said.

Moreover, “This is not a precedent for any other festival to come to us out of the budget cycle,” Robinson pointed out. “This is going to be a special exception. This will certainly not be the rule for this commissioner.”

Hines concurred with her, adding, “This is an important event for our community.”

On March 19, Nicandri presented the board with an economic impact study, commissioned by Suncoast Charities, showing the 2012 festival brought \$14,306,173 into the county, up 12.1 percent from the 2011 amount of \$12.7 million.

Nonetheless, Patterson told her fellow board members, “We are going to get other requests based on this. ... These dollars are coming out of promotional dollars that were leftover from last year,” according to information she had received from Steve Botelho, the county’s chief financial planning officer, and Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, the county’s tourism office.

“It’s not totally clear that [Visit Sarasota County is] going to have additional reserves” in future years beyond the reserve amount it is required by state law to maintain, Patterson pointed out. “I think in our heads we’re going to have to figure out some way to draw a clear distinction between this event and many other pretty neat events that take place in the community,” she continued, “especially those that are produced in order to produce a charitable end.”

The profit from the Suncoast Grand Prix Festival is used to cover expenses for maintaining facilities Suncoast Charities has built over the decades for special needs children in the county, its [website](#) says.

Patterson added that she would support Barbetta’s motion, “because I did feel kind of badly for leaving [Suncoast Charities’ board and

staff] in a situation where they were seriously considering abandoning the event.”

Still, she said, “I didn’t much like the way the request was handled,” out of the budget cycle and “without a full explanation” of the organization’s budgeting for the event.

## SPORTS PROMOTION

Patterson also told her fellow board members, “If we’re going to support sports events more greatly than we are, we need to develop a budget where we have a larger amount [for them].”

“I’m all for that,” Barbetta said, adding that the current sports promotion budget is set at \$150,000.

Sports tourism, he noted, “brings in *tens* of millions of dollars into the county.”

He pointed out that the budget for tourism promotion from TDT funds has grown from \$3.2 million in the 2010 fiscal year to \$5 million this year. “There’s no reason why we can’t take another look at that and put more money into sports tourism ... because sports tourism has carried us through these past several years.”

Every time he has a speaking engagement, he added, he fields questions about the impact of sports tourism on the county’s economy.

Additionally, he pointed out, people who attend sporting events in the area prove to be “walking billboards” about Sarasota County when they return home.

Barbetta continued, “If we can get an event, that can be much better than a TV ad.”

Patterson countered that while “\$5 million sounds like a lot,” he should look at how much other Florida counties are spending on tourism promotion.

During the March 21 Sarasota County Tourism Development Council meeting, Bill Geist, a consultant to Visit Sarasota County, pointed out that Palm Beach has an annual promotion budget of about \$9 million, while Fort Lauderdale’s budget is \$18 million and Miami’s is \$22 million.

Barbetta responded to Patterson, “In 2013, advertising is different. It’s not about TV. It’s not about magazines and newspapers. It’s about YouTube. It’s about events. ... The person who leaves [Sarasota County after an event] is your advertising.”

He added, “This day and age, a lot of us skip right by commercials [on TV].”

## GRAND PRIX FESTIVAL

According to the [website](#), the Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival this year will run from June 29 through July 7. The boat race will be on the final day.

Among the events, the popular Festival Parade of Boats is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Friday, July 5, on Main Street in downtown Sarasota.

The website also shows the July Fourth fireworks continuing on the Sarasota bayfront near Island Park.

Nicandri pointed out on March 19 that Suncoast Charities receives no direct financing from the City of Sarasota for the fireworks show. 

# A QUANDARY

North Port Commissioner Tom Jones. Photo courtesy City of North Port

## NORTH PORT HALTS DISCUSSION SPARKED BY COMMISSIONER'S MEDICAL LEAVE

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

The North Port City Commission this week blocked discussion of how the city should handle extended absences by city officials, a charter question made pertinent by the ongoing recovery of Commissioner Tom Jones, who suffered a stroke in January.

The commission was scheduled to discuss the issue Monday afternoon, April 8, per an agenda request made by Mayor Linda Yates, but a 3-1 vote at the beginning of the meeting took it off the table. Vice Mayor Jim Blucher made the motion, saying he felt the item should never have been on the agenda in the first place.

A memo from City Attorney Robert Robinson lays out the background.

“In early January, Commissioner Tom Jones suffered a stroke,” Robinson wrote to the commission in late March. “Since then he has been unable to fulfill the duties of a Commissioner including attending Commission meetings and workshops. At the February 25 Commission meeting, Mayor Linda Yates raised the issue and requested the City Attorney report back to Commission on the matter.”

According to the memo, Robinson met with Jones, Jones' wife and attorney Adam Tebrugge, representing Jones. “Commissioner Jones looked well,” Robinson wrote. “We talked about his ongoing medical recovery. He stated to me his plans to return to the Com-

“*The commission delaying the conversation doesn't take the conversation out of the public.*”

Linda Yates  
Mayor  
City of North Port



mission as soon as released by his doctor. The only difficulty I noticed was his speech which was slow and careful.”

When might Jones be able to return to the board? No one can say for sure.

“The consensus is that he needs to focus on his recovery right now,” Tebrugge tells *The Sarasota News Leader*. “The only other thing I would add is that I’m very encouraged by his progress. I’ve had a fair amount of contact with Tom over the last month, and I’m very encouraged.”

Tebrugge adds Jones will return as soon as his doctors give him the O.K.

In the meantime, Yates says, she gets asked all the time about the five-person commission having only four members, and what the plan is should Jones’ seat remain vacant. She tells the *News Leader* she asked Robinson to research the charter to reassure the public, not to float the possibility of replacing Jones.

“I think the impression was that this particular item was about removing Commissioner Jones,” she says. That impression was wrong. “The situation with Commissioner Jones brought to the surface these things that are kind of rare. And that situation actually brought up a very valid question of the citizens: ‘Well, what do we do?’”

According to Robinson’s research, the city can’t do much. “Vacancy in office occurs with the death or resignation of a Commissioner,” he concluded. Commissioners can be removed by the governor or the state ethics commission, or they can be recalled by the public. “A City Commission has no authority to remove a City Commissioner,” Robinson wrote.

Yates says she wishes the commission had addressed the memo Monday, so the public could be informed about the situation. “I’m doing my job as far as being a commissioner being responsive to the community,” she adds. “And I’m putting it on an agenda to discuss it with my commission because I can’t talk about it outside of a meeting.”

Right after the meeting began Monday, Blucher asked the commission to remove Yates’ item, along with one other task on the agenda. He didn’t discuss the issue much, and he did not respond to a *News Leader* call for comment. “I just don’t even feel they should be on the agenda,” he said Monday of the items.

Commissioner Rhonda DiFranco agreed about the discussion on Jones: “It shouldn’t even be up there.” She, Blucher and Commissioner Cheryl Cook quickly voted to block the item.

Yates tells the *News Leader* the public won’t be satisfied with that: “The commission delaying the conversation doesn’t take the conversation out of the public.”

The screenshot shows the City of North Port Florida website. At the top, there's a header with the city logo and name "City of NORTH PORT Florida". Navigation tabs include HOME, ABOUT NORTH PORT, LIVING, WORKING, PLAYING, CITY HALL, and I WANT TO... A search bar is also present. The main content area features a weather widget showing "Mostly Cloudy, 84° F". Below this is a section titled "What We're Achieving Today..." with a message about the city's 500th anniversary. To the right is a "Community Connection" section with links to "View Aquatic Center Information" and "Your Community Information". The "Your News Now!" section lists several news items: "Residents invited to Citizen Summit on April 16", "City sponsors Lunch and Learn", "Weekly Highlights: April 5, 2013", and "Ribbon cutting ceremony for new Reverse Osmosis Water". A central navigation menu lists various city services and departments: CITY COMMISSION, CITY SERVICES, EMPLOYMENT, PARKS & RECREATION, JUST 4 YOUTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, and PROJECT UPDATES. The "What's Happening?" section lists upcoming events: "North Port Community Baby Shower & Pre-School Expo", "2013 Citizen Summit", "North Port City Commission Joint Meeting with Sarasota Board of County Commissioners", "District Meetings", and "Commission Regular Meeting". The footer contains contact information, legal notices, and a copyright notice.



## CITY COMMISSION PREVIEW

*The organizer of the annual Chalk Festival in downtown Sarasota will be seeking city support again this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **TAX INCREASE, CHALK FESTIVAL, SIDEWALKS ON THE APRIL 15 AGENDA**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

The Sarasota City Commissioners meet on Tax Day, Monday, April 15, to consider a full agenda. Up for discussion is an increase in the business tax, switching to mobility fees from road impact fees and a long list of changes in zoning text amendments.

Panhandlers in the medians face a ban, and the item “numbers junkies” have been waiting for — the annual audit of city finances — shows only a tiny glitch.

#### **SOLICITATION BONANZA OVER SOON**

The commissioners will try to unscramble an almost certain recipe for disaster when they open a public hearing on a new ordinance to ban solicitation along public roads. Last Janu-

ary the commission repealed its old ordinance banning solicitation from people travelling in vehicles because of a possible constitutional challenge.

The change brought homeless panhandlers with cardboard signs to the medians of the city’s busiest and fastest intersections. Only inches separate them from speeding tons of chrome and steel.

City Attorney Bob Fournier has drafted a more narrowly tailored ordinance to skirt the free speech problem, but it would still get panhandlers out of the medians.

The ordinance also bans panhandling at a variety of locations, including bus stops, side-

walk cafés, public beaches, sporting facilities or within 20 feet of an ATM or entrance to a bank.

## **BUSINESS TAX JUMP PONDERED**

With property tax revenue plummeting over the past five years, cities and counties have turned to other revenue sources. For the City of Sarasota, the old occupational licensing fee has represented one pool. In 2006 the Florida Legislature changed the fee's name to the Local Business Tax, and it approved a bill to allow cities to hike their rates 5 percent every two years.

So at the April 15 meeting, the city commissioners are poised to make the rates jump another 5 percent for the next two years. In the

evening session, they will hold a public hearing on the hike.

The amounts vary wildly for each type of business. A golf instructor would pay \$38.80 annually, while a dog track would pay \$77.58 per day.

A single newsstand on private property would pay \$51.20, while "carnivals, circuses and rodeos" would pay \$127.22. Nonprofit, charitable and educational organizations are exempt from payments.

## **ZTA IS NOT AN ACNE MEDICATION**

A host of zoning text amendments is the subject of a public hearing in the evening. They have been under development and study for more than a year.



*The City Commission on April 15 will address a new ordinance dealing with panhandling. Photo from dreamstime.com*

These ZTAs govern the rules and the procedures needed to operate the city's zoning codes, future land-use map and other planning tools. What is the difference between "provisional use" and "conditional use?" Consult the ZTAs.

In other words, these provisions set the stage for "What goes where?" and "What does it take?" The amendments to the zoning text will add some permitted activities to the land-use categories, for example, allowing daycares in the "institutional use" category. Another change would allow bed-and-breakfast establishments in the downtown zoning district.

The Planning Board last month approved the changes unanimously.

## **MOVING TOWARDS TRUE MOBILITY**

The city engineer Monday will ask the commission to change the concept of "road impact fee" to "multi-modal fee" within the city limits. The road impact fee funds can be spent only on roads, intersections and other vehicular needs.

The multi-modal fee would broaden the application to sidewalks, bicycle paths and mass transit. Alexandria DavisShaw, the city engineer, led several public meetings to discuss the idea.

"Frequently the community does not want the road to be extended or widened, but does want improvements to sidewalks, bike lanes or transit stops," she wrote in the backup memo for the agenda item. "One tool that would allow the city to better accommodate multi-modal improvements would be to have a multi-modal fee instead of roadway impact fees."

The switch would require approval of the Sarasota County Commission as well. City staff is asking permission to ask the county for the flexibility to make the change.

## **'CHALKFEST' SEEKS WAIVERS**

Denise Kowal is on the agenda, too, coming forward to ask the city to be a sponsor of the annual Chalk Festival in Burns Square. She will be asking the city to waive between \$7,000 and \$13,000 in fees and services, including police and parking charges.

The festival is set for Nov. 13-18 this year. It has been growing in attendance as it enters its fifth year. It does not charge admission, and it attracts thousands of people and artists from all over the world.

Each year Kowal seeks funding from the city and from the county's Tourist Development Council.

## **CITY AUDIT IS CLEAN**

For most people there is no better way to get to sleep than to read the audit of a city's finances — the jargon, the endless columns of numbers and then dreamland. However, finance makes the world go 'round, and auditing is one way to detect inefficiencies — and sometimes even waste or fraud.

The City Commission Monday will receive the audit for the 2011-12 fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2012. Audits can follow "fashionable issues," and this one is no exception, paying particular attention to the city's pension liabilities.

The 200-page report ranges widely over all city departments and services, including some semi-autonomous bodies such as the St. Ar-

mands Business Improvement District, which can raise and spend property tax revenue independent of the central city government.

This particular district is of interest because it was voted out of existence earlier this month. But it still may owe a substantial debt equal to about one-year's worth of tax revenue.

Under "Note 7," the auditors wrote, "The St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID) obtained an unsecured bank line of credit from Northern Trust Bank of Florida to be used for capital improvements and promotional expenses. As of September 30, 2011, the BID owed \$300,000 on this line of credit. The initial interest rate was 3.25 percent and is based on changes in the lender's prime rate. On November 17, 2011, the BID repaid principal of \$150,000. Principal of \$150,000 and unpaid interest is due on October 18, 2013."

The BID's status at present is uncertain, because its chairman thinks the ballots went to the wrong addresses. (See the related story in this issue.) The city auditor and clerk disagrees. If the district is dissolved, that would occur on Sept. 30 — or about two weeks before the note comes due.

The audit identified issues with the city's unfunded pension liabilities as well. For the general employee defined benefit plan, the shortfall between current assets and actuarial liability was \$55,265,825. The figure for the firefighters' defined benefit pension plan was \$53,807,717. And for the police officers' defined benefit pension plan, the figure was \$63,945,033 in "unfunded actuarial accrued liability." 



*Tourists stroll past a St. Armands Circle restaurant in late March. The latest city audit points to funds the St. Armands Business Improvement District still owes the City of Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



## MORE ACCOUNTING QUESTIONS

*Garbage receptacles are generally available at the ends of the pathways from Siesta Public Beach to the beach access parking lots. Photo courtesy Peter van Roekens*

### THE COUNTY COMMISSION PUTS OFF A DECISION ON CONTINUING EXTRA BEACH MAINTENANCE FUNDING WHILE STAFF UNTANGLES THE FIGURES

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

The Tourist Development Council may have given its approval with no pause, but the Sarasota County Commission this week backed away from continuing an extra influx of funds for beach maintenance for two more years until staff can provide extra details about “chargebacks” for county departments.

The commissioners did vote unanimously to proceed with holding an April 24 public hearing on a change in the county ordinance to allow biennial review of the continued

funding, which has been allocated since the 2010 fiscal year. That change would eliminate future public hearings on the allocation.

However, as Commissioner Christine Robinson put it, “I’m looking forward to some of that information that Commissioner [Nora] Patterson requested” before renewing approval of the funding stream itself.

As she had during the Jan. 17 Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting, Doreen Buonpastore of

“It seems like it’s grown about a million dollars in the last four or five years.”

Nora Patterson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



the county's Office of Financial Planning Services explained to the County Commission on April 9 that since FY 2010, 20 percent of the revenue from one penny of the tourist development tax (TDT) has been allocated to provide additional beach maintenance services.

A PowerPoint presentation to the board shows \$523,000 has been projected in proceeds for the current fiscal year.

Ed Exner, manager of horticultural services for the county — whose department has the authority for beach maintenance — explained that the extra funds have paid for more staff hours at all the county's beaches, including those in south county and Lido and Siesta public beaches. For example, he noted, more staff is available on weekends and a swing staff works on Siesta between the evening

and early-morning shifts "to cover the high volumes" of needs.

George Tatge, Parks and Recreation Department manager, added that the funds also help pay for signage directing people to beach accesses, restoration of habitat, three program coordinators who manage special events on the beaches and educational efforts.

Further, Tatge said, the money has made it possible to pursue annual certification for four of the county's beaches, with an initiative for a fifth planned this year.

He explained that the certification brings national awareness about the quality of the beaches and their upkeep. For example, Tatge said, the certification for Siesta helped it earn the No. 1 ranking by Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman — aka Dr. Beach — in May 2011.



## Loss of Funding Impacts

- **Loss of contractual staff to collect trash and clean restrooms from 2:00 – 10:00 pm as well as some weekend shifts**
- **Loss of protection initiatives**
- **Loss of human resources and support of events such as the Crystal Sands Sandsculpture event, Beach University, Beach Volleyball Tournaments, Volunteer Coordination (Beach Ambassadors)**
- **Loss of vehicles needed for maintenance operations**

## THE FIGURES

As Buonpastore showed the commissioners the figures for beach maintenance over the past several fiscal years, Patterson pointed to how much the numbers had grown. “Is that because of the year we just went through, with red tide and everything?” she asked.

Buonpastore replied by indicating how the maintenance funds had been apportioned, including about \$1,638,000 going to the Operations & Maintenance Department this year. The total allocated to Parks and Recreation staff for the 2013 fiscal year is \$1,087,000.

“It seems like it’s grown about a million dollars in the last four or five years,” Patterson pointed out.

According to a chart provided by staff, the total cost of beach maintenance budgeted for the 2012 fiscal year was \$2,456,315, a 13 percent increase over the previous fiscal year.

The increase from the 2010 fiscal year to the 2011 fiscal year was 4 percent, Buonpastore noted.

Exner explained that prior to the 2009 fiscal year, Parks and Recreation shouldered all the beach maintenance costs.

When Patterson asked whether he meant the classifications for some of the expenses had changed, he told her, “Yes, ma’am.”

“Labor and overhead jumped considerably from 2010 to 2012,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta said.



*Additional beach maintenance funds over the past couple of years have helped pay for more staff time to keep the beaches clean. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Exner noted that part of the increase had gone to Operations & Maintenance as a chargeback for staff services. His office had been careful to budget everything with TDT revenue that those funds could cover, he added.

“Are any of these phantom charges in there that we’ve seen [with other projects]?” Barbetta asked, referencing a discussion several weeks ago about chargebacks for staff work included in the overall cost of the new South Lido Beach restrooms.

“I’m sure part of that is for our chargebacks,” Exner said.

“That’s my concern,” Barbetta told him. “That’s not a true expense.”

“It isn’t a phantom cost,” Patterson interjected. “It just comes from another pocket.”

For example, she said, if Chief Financial Planning Officer Steve Botelho and his staff spend time on beach maintenance issues, money allocated for beach maintenance would cover their time. “Either you pay it out of your general fund or you try to attribute it to your different departments,” she said.

Nonetheless, Patterson continued, “If [accounts are] padded, I agree with [Barbetta], but if it’s simply allocation of time spent, you’re going to pay for it one way or another.”

She pointed out that the County Commission several years ago discussed such apportioning funding for staff time on various projects “and did decide that it was fair to do that.”

Still, Barbetta pointed to how the chargeback to Operations & Maintenance had increased about \$300,000 from FY 2010 to FY 2012.



*Commissioner Nora Patterson/File photo*

Exner responded that “small percentages” were going out of the beach maintenance funds to a number of offices, including those for the county’s fleet and administration.

“In my opinion,” Barbetta said, “it inflates costs,” adding he suspected more staff members from various departments were sitting in on meetings just to make sure funds were charged back to their departments.

“I guess I’d like to assume that’s not the case,” Patterson said.

“What has changed over the past years to make that number [for Operations & Maintenance] jump like that?” he reiterated. “We’re still maintaining the beaches the same.”

“We’ll get a report on that specific item,” County Administrator Randall Reid told him.

“This has got to come back to us,” Patterson finally concurred with Barbetta.

Pointing to the increasing TDT revenue over the past few years, Barbetta continued, “I guess I don’t want the money being spent just because it’s coming in. There should be some earmark where we say, ‘This is your budget.’ ... We need some better control over that increase that’s coming in.”

“Our budget was directed to be flat for this year,” Exner said.

## CLEANER BEACH ACCESSES

With Tatge still at the podium, Patterson took the opportunity to raise a related issue.

On Sunday, April 7, she said, she went to Beach Access 5 on Siesta Key between 5 and 6 p.m. All the garbage receptacles were over-

flowing, she pointed out. “They’re pretty small trash cans, and there’re probably eight of them down there.”

Bags were on the ground, she added, and plastic bottles were blowing about.

Either the county needed to purchase bigger receptacles or the cans needed to be emptied more often, she said. “I was not proud [of the beach] and usually I am,” she added.

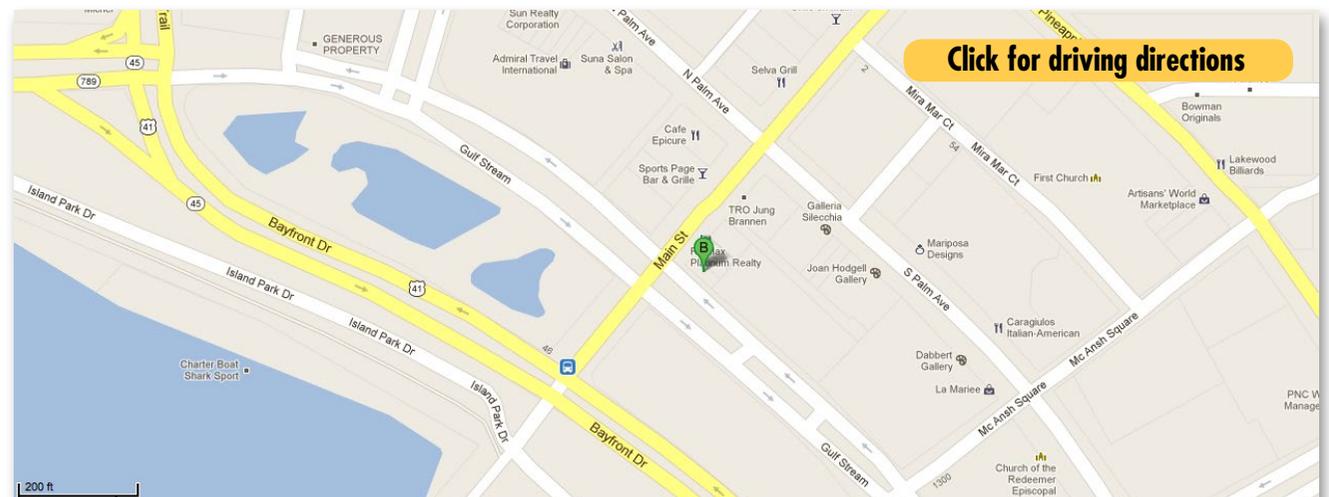
“It is a logistical issue this time of year,” Tatge told her. The frequency of garbage pickups had been increased, he said, adding that staff was experimenting with a trash-compacting receptacle at Turtle Beach on Siesta Key.

The county also has been looking at types of wildlife-proof receptacles, he noted, to keep out raccoons, for example, which will pull garbage out of cans. 

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# A BIG IDEA



## **TOM BROKAW BRINGS HIS VISION FOR UNITY TO SARASOTA**

**By Vicki Chatley**

*Contributing Writer*

“A big idea.” That is Tom Brokaw’s prescription for bringing Americans together and ending the deep divisions that have marked the recent national and legislative landscapes.

Speaking April 8 at the final lecture of the Ringling College Library Association’s Town Hall 2013 series, Brokaw, well-known as a longtime NBC news correspondent and anchor, suggested he would have a conversa-

tion with the audience, a conversation in which, he readily admitted, he would do the talking.

It was, perhaps, that conversational approach that made him a favorite among the viewing public and gained him interviews with such noted figures of their times as Madeline Albright; Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister of Great Britain (whose death he announced upon taking the

*Tom Brokaw addresses the news media during an April 8 briefing at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota. Photo by Vicki Chatley*

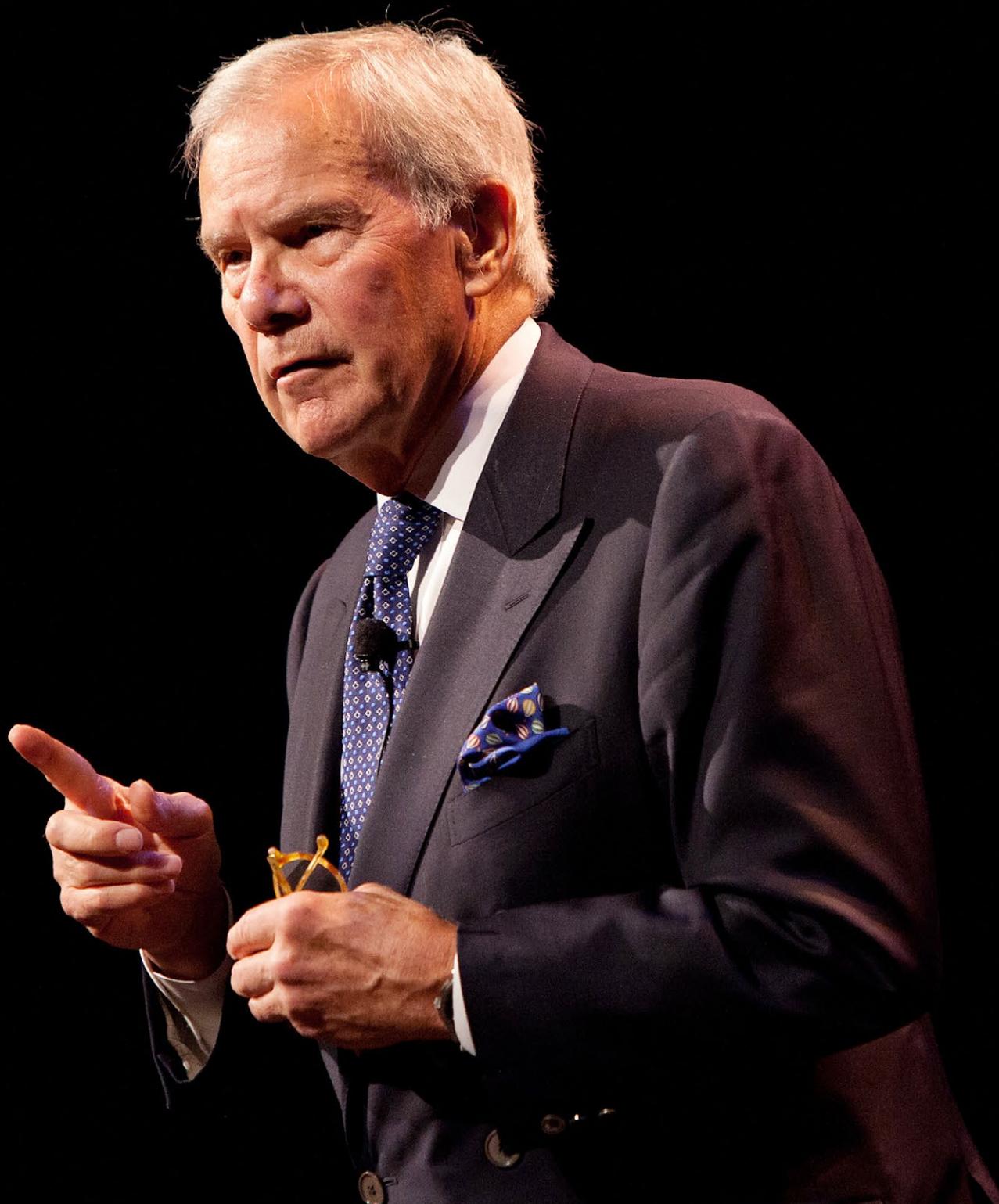
Van Wezel stage); and former Soviet statesman Mikhail Gorbachev, with whom he remains in contact.

“The genius of this country has been when ... we do find common cause,” he said. “We’re at our best when we’re united by big ideas and not divided by small ones.”

He mentioned a number of big ideas that not only gained widespread popular support, but also resulted in positive gains for our country.

Among them: the GI Bill of Rights that gave recognition to the sacrifices made by servicemen while also giving generations of veterans the opportunity to attend college and provide the country with a well-educated work force.

John F. Kennedy’s big idea was to “go to the moon,” a venture that led to advances in science and technology. In the Silicon Valley, Brokaw added, “They were transforming the world ... and it’s not over yet.”



*Tom Brokaw speaks to the Van Wezel audience on April 8. Photo courtesy of Robert Pope Photography*

Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream and promoted it to reality in a non-violent manner. The '60s, Brokaw noted, was a decade of bringing about equality, both racial and gender.

Other big ideas included the Marshall Plan, devised to aid in the rebuilding of European countries devastated by World War II; Richard M. Nixon opening relations with China; and Ronald Reagan's formation of a "partnership with Gorbachev" that brought the Cold War "to an end without a shot being fired."

The mantra, he said, is to "be disruptive [and] challenge convention" to find better ways to connect us. His idea is to form a new model for private/public service through the establishment of academies at six land-grant colleges. He envisions, for example, a section for agriculture that, with support from the business community, would offer "public service fellowships" in the search for new ideas.

Brokaw commented that community colleges are currently filling the need for the "real definable skill set" required in today's workplace.

Several times he commented on the changing role of women, noting that when he began his career only white male reporters would be present at a press conference. At a media briefing prior to the lecture, female reporters far outnumbered their male counterparts.

He also noted "a lot of key players" around the world are women, including many U.S. military and civilian personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Brokaw's long, distinguished journalism career began in 1966 at the Los Angeles bureau

of NBC News. From that perspective he readily answered questions related to the changes on the news/information front.

He identified "access" as the greatest improvement. However, he cautioned the consumer must personally be more diligent about gathering news with so many sources available.

He noted "the world is much smaller and more connected." As a result there is no longer a blockbuster item on the 6 p.m. news. By that time everyone already knows the story; viewers "want to know what it means." The focus shifts to interpretation.

Brokaw expects "print [journalism] will go away;" online is already in play. Personally, he hopes print survives in some form; he likes the feel of holding a newspaper in his hands. He does think broadcast journalism, including cable and news channels, will be around for some time.

Watergate was his toughest assignment in terms of getting it right. "At the end of the day ... you've got to get it right."

Although retired from NBC Nightly News, Brokaw remains active in the journalistic world. Currently he is working on a documentary about Kennedy.

His essays are published in *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone* and other periodicals and newspapers. He has written six books, including 1998's *The Greatest Generation*, wherein he describes Americans who grew up during the Depression, fought in war because "it was the right thing to do" and built America into a superpower. 



*A committee approved by the City and County commissions will weigh whether a special taxing district should continue for downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES CRA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

With a unanimous vote on April 9, the Sarasota County Commission approved the 11 members already given the nod by the Sarasota City Commission to serve on a committee to determine whether the two local governments' Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) will be extended for downtown Sarasota.

The CRA is set to expire in 2016. According to recent figures, \$3.1 million from city taxes and \$3.5 million from county taxes are going toward improvements in the defined area of the CRA. Of the city's share, \$2.6 million is going back into the general fund for necessary services.

The committee members are Andy Dorr, Chris Gallagher, Mark Huey, Katie Leonard, Michael Beaumier, Frank Carol, David Merrill, Bill

Russell, Joel Freedman, Casey Colburn and Ernie DuBose.

In related action, County Commissioner Christine Robinson made a motion, which also was approved on a 5-0 vote, to direct the committee members to provide a historical report on how the CRA funds have been spent and the effectiveness of those expenditures, to evaluate the current structure of the CRA and to recommend how the CRA could be structured in the future if the two local governments decide to keep it in place.

Robinson pointed out, "I am completely non-committal ... at this point" about whether the CRA should be extended.

"I think that's a great idea," Chairwoman Carolyn Mason said of the motion. "I know [the

information] certainly would help me to make a decision.”

“I’m fine with that,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta concurred. “I think there’s always been a concern as to what the money’s been spent on ...”

He added that the City and County commissions should get the information about the CRA’s history of expenditures at the same time it is provided to the committee.

Robinson said she expected the committee members to make a judgment call on how the money was utilized.

After the vote, Commissioner Nora Patterson updated the other commissioners on [remarks City Commissioner Terry Turner made](#) at the

April 1 City Commission meeting regarding figures staff had provided him about the expenditures. According to Turner, she said, the majority of the money had been spent “on enhanced landscaping in the downtown, enhanced maintenance in the downtown and added police in the downtown.”

Those expenditures, he indicated, normally would be expected to come out of the city’s general fund, Patterson noted. Nonetheless, Turner noted the city could not afford to lose that CRA revenue for such expenses because of its other pressing budget needs.

“I thought that was interesting and something I wasn’t really expecting to hear,” Patterson added.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

## BOBBY JONES GOLF CLUB TO HOST MEN’S CITY CHAMPIONSHIP

The Bobby Jones Golf Club, Sarasota’s municipal golf course, will host the 42<sup>nd</sup> Men’s City Championship the weekends of April 27 and May 4, the city has announced.

The tournament is open to any amateur male golfer.

The field is limited to the first 144 paid entries, a news release notes. The deadline to register is Monday, April 22, at 5 p.m.

The registration fee is \$185; it includes a golf cart, green fees, prizes, an awards banquet and refreshments, the release adds. To download a registration form [click here](#). Completed forms should be dropped off at the course or mailed to Bobby Jones Golf Club, 1000 Circus Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34232.

The Men’s City Championship, a 72-hole tournament, will be played on the British course



*The Bobby Jones Golf Club is located on Circus Boulevard in Sarasota, near the intersection of Beneva and Fruitville roads. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

with tee times starting at 7:30 a.m. each day, the release adds.

The Bobby Jones Golf Club is owned and operated by the City of Sarasota; it offers three courses with a total of 45 holes.

## OPERATION DRY SPRING RESULTS RELEASED

During a five-week operation designed to protect youth who might experiment with drugs and alcohol, Sarasota County Sheriff's Office deputies made 141 arrests for alcohol possession by a person under 21, the office announced April 11.

After conducting 75 business checks, deputies cited 11 people for selling alcohol to minors during Operation Dry Spring, a news release says. Marijuana was seized in three cases, and one adult was arrested for contributing to the delinquency of a minor, the release adds.

"The goal of Operation Dry Spring, a statewide initiative of the Florida Sheriffs Task Force, was to prevent underage teens from purchasing and using alcohol, tobacco and synthetic drugs to protect them from the potentially harmful effects of these substances," the release says.

"The safety of Sarasota County's children, and those visiting our community, is paramount," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "What was sobering for us was the age of some of the minors cited, including one as young as 14. We hope the encounter with law enforcement emphasizes to parents that some kids are making poor decisions and need help understanding the potential health and legal consequences of their actions."

Nearly 190,000 people under 21 visited an emergency room for injuries or conditions connected to underage drinking in 2010, the release notes. In addition, more than 7,000 adverse incidents from use of synthetic drugs such as bath salts and spice were reported nationwide in 2011, the release adds.



*Sun worshippers of all ages enjoy Siesta Public Beach during the height of spring break activities in March. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **SARASOTA COUNTY NAMED 2013 ALL-AMERICA CITY AWARD FINALIST**

Sarasota County has been named one of 20 finalists for the All-America City Awards, a nationwide contest established by the National Civic League that recognizes communities demonstrating innovation, civic engagement and cross-sector collaboration.

Sarasota County won the award in 2006.

This year's All-America City finalists were selected on the basis of initiatives that honor and benefit military veterans and their families, a county news release says. Sarasota County's submission focused on the first-of-a-kind partnership between The Patterson Foundation and the National Cemetery Administration, which resulted in the following:

- Patriot Plaza, a ceremonial amphitheater at Sarasota National Cemetery.
- Legacy of Valor, a community-connecting campaign to honor veterans and their families.

Sarasota County also highlighted its collaborative community work at the North Sarasota Library "to foster intelligence, integrity and inspiration in the neighborhood's youth; and a community-driven effort to establish the Institute for the Ages as a global test-bed for aging innovation," the release adds.

"One of the most important roles local government can play is as a facilitator, to create opportunities where individuals and organizations can bring reality to vision," said Sarasota County Administrator Randall H. Reid in the release. "As a society, we owe a place of honor

to those who have made the greatest sacrifices, and support for their families. Our society will not flourish if we do not meet the needs of our youth, and a project like the Institute for the Ages could revolutionize how we age as a society. Community partners like The Patterson Foundation are crucial to the success of such ambitious projects," he added.

Since its establishment in 2010, The Patterson Foundation has focused on supporting collaboration locally and beyond, according to Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation, in the release.

"From the first-ever partnership with the National Cemetery Administration to construct Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery, to the inspiring community partnerships that are forming to honor veterans and their families, we're proud of how our community comes together to create new realities," said Jacobs in the release.

Once described by pollster George Gallup as a "Nobel Prize" for civic accomplishment, the All America City Awards have been given to more than 600 communities since their inception in 1949, the release notes. Cities, neighborhoods, towns, counties and metropolitan regions are all eligible to apply. Sarasota County joins Miami Lakes and Fort Lauderdale as finalists this year. The National Civic League will name the winners June 14-16.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 (TTY: 7-1-1), or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).

## TAYLOR CENTER RECEIVES PERFECT INSPECTION MARKS

The Robert L. Taylor Community Complex (RLTCC) received a perfect score during the most recent food service inspection conducted by the State of Florida, the City of Sarasota has announced.

Just 40 other food service establishments throughout the state received a similar excellent rating out of the 108,731 facilities that were inspected, according to a city news release.

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation conducted the inspections during the last fiscal year (July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012) looking for safety and sanitation violations, the release adds. "RLTCC did not have any violations," it points out.

The RLTCC management received a [letter](#) from Gov. Rick Scott applauding the achievement.

"I'm proud of this recognition," said Jerry Fogle, RLTCC manager, in the release. "The state's inspection process is comprehensive to ensure that there aren't any safety or sanitation concerns. With zero violations, we're in the top echelon in the entire state. That's outstanding. And, it's a testament to our dedicated staff members who make sure the food concession area is always safe and clean," he added in the release.

State of Florida food service inspections include checking the conditions of electrical wiring, appliance installation, grease removal, food storage, food preparation surfaces, fire extinguishers, exits and restrooms, the release continues. Food service establishments are defined as seated and non-seated eating



*A worker at the Robert Taylor Community Complex dishes up a hot dog. Contributed photo*

places, hot dog carts, vehicles (such as food trucks) and vending machines, it notes.

Hot dogs, hamburgers and other food items are prepared and served in the RLTCC kitchen in the evenings and on weekends during youth and adult athletic league events, the release adds. "An average of 160 hamburgers and 120 hot dogs are grilled and gobbled each month," it says.

RLTCC is located at 1845 34<sup>th</sup> St. and is open to the public. The 44,000-square-foot facility features a fitness center, gymnasium, auditorium, aquatic center, teen room, dance room, computer lab and commercial kitchen.

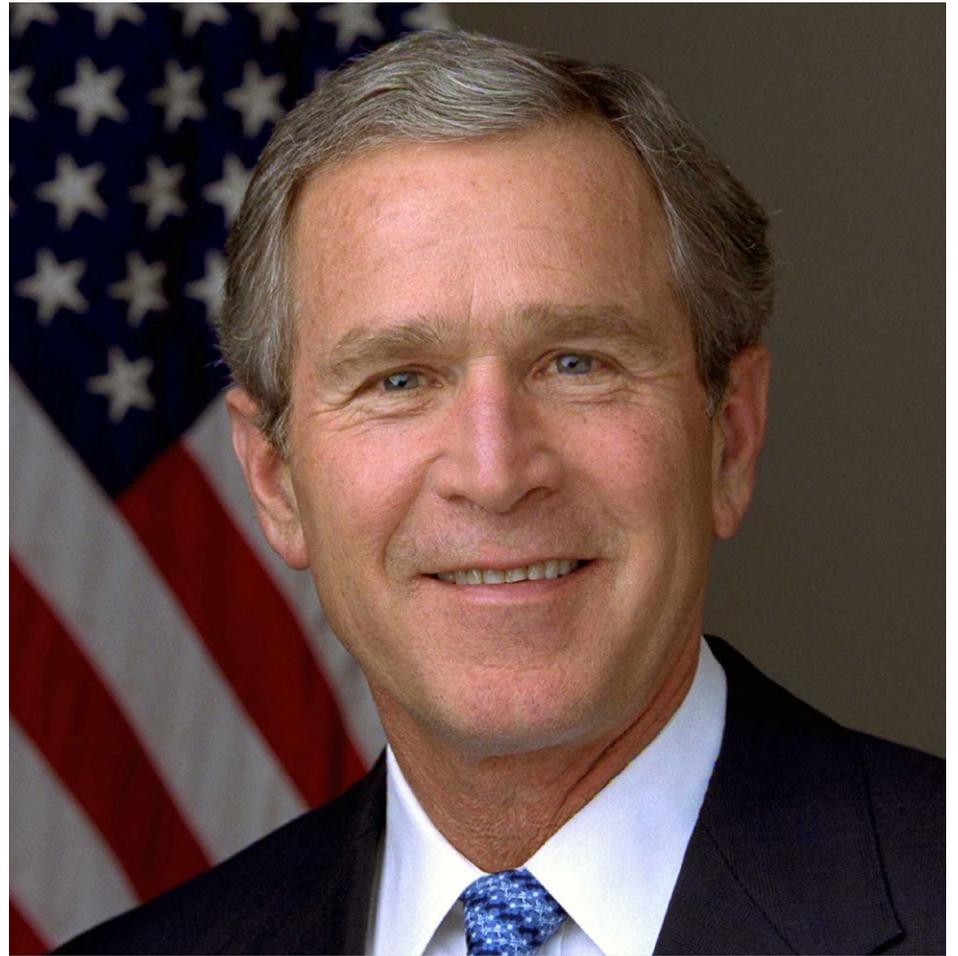
## GEORGE W. BUSH TO SPEAK AT TOWN HALL 2014

A collective gasp of excitement spread through the capacity audience at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall on April 8 as it realized, spurred by clues from Jay Logan, chairman of the Ringling College Library Association's Town Hall 2014 Committee, that the first speaker is scheduled to be George W. Bush, 43<sup>rd</sup> president of the United States.

It will be a family affair as his daughter, Jenna Bush Hager, will be the Platinum Dinner speaker on Jan. 13, 2014, the evening before Bush's address. Hager is the chairwoman of UNICEF's Next Generation steering committee, among other accomplishments.

The guest speakers for Town Hall 2014 will include the following:

- Platon, well-known photographer — Jan. 28.
- Lara Logan, South African journalist and war correspondent — Feb. 10.
- Wes Moore, host of *Beyond Belief* on the Oprah Winfrey Network — March 6.
- Leon Panetta, former director of the CIA and former secretary of defense — March 20.



*President George W. Bush in 2003. Photo by Eric Draper, courtesy of the White House via Wikimedia Commons*

The Town Hall Lecture Series benefits The Ringling College Library Association. For more information call 925-1343, email [rclassociation@comcast.net](mailto:rclassociation@comcast.net) or visit [rlassociation.org](http://rlassociation.org).

*Vicki Chatley*

## BETTER GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION TO HOST NON-PARTISAN FORUM

The Better Government Association of Sarasota is inviting members of the public to a free, non-partisan forum at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 23, at the Waldemere Fire Station, 2070 Waldemere St., Sarasota.

The topic will be *Sarasota 2050 Growth Management Plan — What Now?*

The panelists will be Dan Lobeck, president of Control Growth Now, and Steve Queior, pres-

ident and CEO of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce. Ayse Somersan, president of the Better Government Association, will be the moderator.

The forum will be held in the second floor meeting room.

The event has been planned to last about 90 minutes.

For more information, call 343-0423.

## FINANCIAL PLANNING BASICS OFFERED DURING MONEY SMART PROGRAM

Financial professionals in banking, investments, retirement planning and more will host a series of presentations during *Money Smart Week @ Your Library*, April 19-27 at Sarasota County Libraries, the county has announced.

Experts from financial institutions, government agencies, not-for-profit organizations and community groups will offer a full week of free events to help people of all ages better manage their finances, a county news release says. Among the topics covered will be budgeting properly; investing wisely; Medicare; how to set up wills, trusts and estates; navi-

gating landlord/tenant issues; and preventing identity theft.

All programs are free and open the public. *Money Smart Week @ Your Library* is a partnership of the [Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago](#) and the American Library Association.

Visit the library website at [www.scgov.net/library](http://www.scgov.net/library) to find a complete listing of programs and presenters.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

## LOUIES MODERN & THE FRANCIS OPEN DOWNTOWN

Downtown Sarasota's newest dining and special events venues, Louies Modern and The Francis, officially opened their doors to the public on Wednesday, April 3.

Louies offers nightly dinner service starting at 4 p.m., while the adjoining Louies Modern Barista Bar is open at 7 a.m., offering coffee drinks and light breakfast snacks. Daily lunch



Servers are ready to assist customers at Louies Modern Barista Bar. Photo by Norman Schimmel

service starts at 11:30 a.m., a news release notes.

The Francis, Sarasota's newest special events venue, is available year-round for groups and bridal parties ranging from 10 to 250 people. "This stylish multi-function space offers creative and innovative cuisine from a top-notch culinary team that artfully blends inspiring food and ambiance with professional and attentive service," the release adds. The facility includes state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, a private dining room and complimentary covered parking.

Located at 1280 N. Palm Avenue, Louies Modern and The Francis are adjacent to each other on the street level of the award-winning

Palm Avenue garage complex, providing 700 covered parking spaces free of charge to diners and guests.

Louies Modern and The Francis are owned and operated by the Libby's Café + Bar partners — Steve, Joe and Pat Seidensticker and Jeff Greco. "Louies Modern pays tribute to Steve's father, Louie, a self-taught culinary master who held a shared passion for good food and drink," the release adds.

The interior design of the facilities was created by Daroff Design in Philadelphia, while Fishman & Associates of Venice handled the kitchen design. The local architect was Jonathan Parks Architect of Sarasota.



*Diners enjoy lunch in Louies Modern on the first floor of the Palm Avenue parking garage in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## PHOENIX ACADEMY DIRECTOR NAMED OAK PARK SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Sarasota County Superintendent of Schools Lori White announced April 1 that she has recommended Phoenix Academy Program Director Edwina Oliver as the new principal at Oak Park School, one of two district facilities dedicated entirely to exceptional student education.

Oliver will succeed Ron Dipillo in the position. Dipillo was appointed assistant director for career and technical education at the Sarasota County Technical Institute, a news release says.

Oliver, 41, is a Sarasota native and a graduate of Booker High School. She holds a bachelor's degree in specific learning disabilities and a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of South Florida, the release adds.

She began her career in 1993 as a special education teacher in Palm Beach County and was named Boca Raton Rotary Teacher of the Year in 1999.

That same year she returned to Sarasota to teach at Emma E. Booker Elementary School, the release notes. She was named Teacher of the Year at Booker Elementary in 2000.

In 2002 she joined the Booker Middle School faculty, serving as a resource reading teacher for students with disabilities, an exceptional student education liaison and the coordinator of the after-school program.

She was appointed assistant principal at Booker High School in 2007 then appointed program director of Phoenix Academy in 2012, the release continues.



*Edwina Oliver/Contributed photo*

Former Booker High Principal Constance White-Davis, who supervised Oliver for several years, said in the release, "Ms. Oliver is an exceptional and gifted instructional leader. Her unique ability and personality to connect with students and their well-being is inspiring. Ms. Oliver's impact is also felt outside of the school by the way she communicates with parents and the community."

"I am elated to be able to continue my pursuit of working with students with disabilities on a larger scale," Oliver said in the release. "I do believe that every step on my journey has led me to Oak Park, where I can continue to learn and grow as an instructional leader."

Oliver's appointment is expected to be submitted for School Board approval this month.

## 2013 VETERANS 'STAND DOWN' EVENT PLANNED FOR APRIL 20

The 2013 Veterans Stand Down event will take place from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 20, Sarasota County has announced.

Registration for the event and most of the services for veterans will be available at the Sarasota County Health and Human Services (Health Department) building, 2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota. Other services will be offered at the Payne Park Auditorium, a short walk away, a news release says.

There is no cost to those who attend. Event organizers say the Stand Down “is a way for veterans not connected to the system to readily access available services in a one-stop setting,” the release adds.

Veterans who attend the Stand Down will be able to get help in accessing VA benefits and services. Housing assistance also will be available for homeless veterans, the release notes.

Additionally, local organizations will have representatives on hand to provide referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment; and legal services and employment assistance services will be available, along with free health screenings, at mobile medical units accessible in the nearby parking lot, the release continues. The latter will include the Sarasota County Health Department’s Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit and the Hedges Health

Mart Pharmacy’s Community Awareness Resources & Education Services Mobile Unit.

Veterans should bring their ID (VA card or DD-214 form), if available.

“Because of the significant interest in haircuts last year, there will be a team of barbers, hair stylists and nail technicians from Manatee Technical Institute on hand,” the release notes. Non-perishable food items, personal care items and VA surplus items such as blankets also will be provided. The Salvation Army will offer food and refreshments.

“Veterans are an essential part of our community. Unfortunately, the transition from active duty to everyday civilian life can be overwhelming,” said Chip Taylor, director of the Operation Military Assistance Program (OMAP), a federally funded program initiated by Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Sarasota-Manatee Inc. to assist veterans with obtaining or maintaining permanent housing, in the release. “The City of Sarasota will be a partnering organization this year, meaning that we will have participation from all levels of government — federal, state, county and city — as well as the nonprofit sector,” he added in the release. “This will help ensure that homeless veterans know about all the benefits and services they may be qualified to receive.”

For more information, visit <http://www.jfcs-cares.org/> or call 366-2224. 

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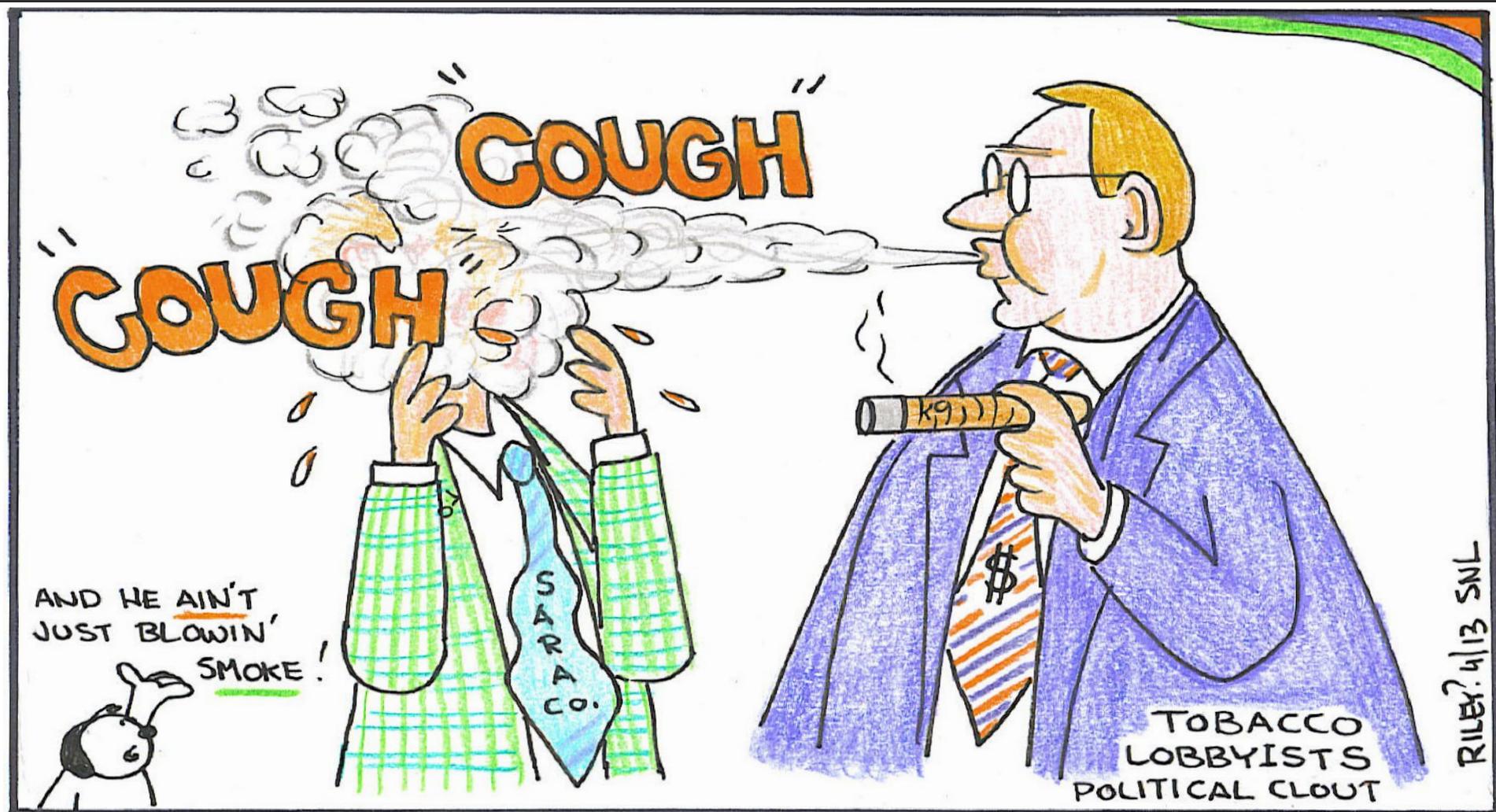
**Planned Parenthood Of  
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# OPINION



## STATE LEGISLATURE SELLS OUT ... AGAIN

**EDITORIAL** (Hack!) (Cough!) (Wheeze!) There will be a lot more of that happening on Siesta Beach in the coming year, and it will have nothing to do with an outbreak of red tide. Instead, innocent beachgoers will be gagging on the filthy effluent emanating from the purulent pleura of tobacco addicts. Thanks to the Florida Legislature, these diseased nicotine junkies may burn dried leaves in their mouths to their hearts' content, with nary a concern for the choking hordes surrounding them.

You see, the Legislature, in its customary ineptitude, passed a law several years ago banning smoking in most public places, but it did not give local governments any authority to extend the healthful effects of that ban on their own property. This detail was not prominent at the time. Instead, it was discovered in December when a 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court

judge in Sarasota ruled the City of Sarasota could not restrict smoking in public parks because the state statute did not confer that authority. And with a single stroke of the judicial pen, public smoking bans in cities and counties around the state were struck down.

The Legislature, which was about to convene its annual session, was urgently requested to remedy this oversight by amending the law to allow local governments the ability to continue regulating smoking in other public locations.

The bill actually made some progress in the Senate, but the House of Representatives, that great bastion of term-limited opportunists seeking to enrich themselves during their short tenure at big business' teat, deemed that extending such authority to local governments would be "overreaching." It simply would not

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# OPINION

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do to allow cities and counties to trample on the rights of those poor nicotine fiends as they spew their effluvium onto their hapless victims —otherwise known as the vast majority of Florida residents and our free-spending tourism visitors, who collectively, at least in the eyes of the Legislature, apparently have no rights to take a deep breath without gagging.

In a particularly galling display of callous timing, the House let the bill die last week, just in time for the statewide observance of Tobacco Free Florida Week, April 6-13.

Tobacco Free Florida was created as a result of the overwhelming passage in November 2006 of a constitutional amendment that mandated the reinstatement of a statewide tobacco education and use prevention program. This is the fifth year of Tobacco Free Florida Week, which seeks to raise awareness of the risks of smoking and secondhand smoke.

State officials report that about 72,000 Floridians have managed to kick the noxious habit directly as a result of Tobacco Free Florida interventions. All told, more than 500,000 adult smokers in Florida have kicked the habit in the past five years, along with more than 70,000 youths. As a result of these important lifestyle changes, the state's healthcare system has saved more than \$4 billion.

Regardless of the hard work of Tobacco Free Florida, 28,000 Floridians still die each year from smoking and tobacco-related diseases. The state shoulders almost \$20 billion in healthcare costs and lost productivity as a result of smoking.

In a perfect world, the Legislature would be doing all in its power to encourage and nurture the important work of Tobacco Free Florida, given the tremendous benefits of healthier citizens and a healthier economy. But there is nothing perfect about the cloistered world of the state capitol.

Legislators are unconcerned about the child who will never grow to adulthood because his asthma is so uncontrolled each breath is a torment. They are unconcerned about the lung cancer patient wasting away to a sliver of her former self. They are unconcerned about the emphysema sufferer slowly drowning as his lungs fill up with fluid. They are unconcerned about colds, flus and allergies made significantly worse for millions in the state because nonsmokers cannot escape those whose "rights" are protected and who continue polluting the air around them.

In prostituting themselves with the powerful tobacco lobby, state legislators, especially House members, have sold, if not their souls, certainly their integrity and credibility. Their smarmy platitudes about "overreaching" and "personal freedom" are as abominable as the grim instruments of death and despair that Tobacco Free Florida seeks to banish. Their callous disregard for the health and welfare of Floridians is a tacit breach of their commitment to the people they were elected to serve.

Perhaps each county's elections supervisor henceforth should encourage smoking at the entrance of every polling place. And perhaps voters, as they navigated a putrid haze of smoke and toxic chemicals, would reflect on the Tallahassee malefactors who made such a gauntlet possible ... and vote accordingly.

# OPINION

## MY ROSH CHODESH NISAN WITH WOMEN OF THE WALL

By Sue Huntting  
Contributing Writer

**COMMENTARY** Three things will never be the same for me: Rosh Chodesh (the first day of a Jewish month); my associations with the Kotel (the Western Wall) in Jerusalem; and my choice to wear a tallit for Jewish prayer.

These all came together on Tuesday, March 12, as my husband, Rabbi Geoff Huntting, and I — along with Elana and Mark Margolis — joined several hundred women and men to pray on the morning of the first day of the Jewish month of Nisan, clearly in defiance of the laws governing women's prayer at the Kotel.

We were prepared. Israeli law protects holy places from desecration, including religious ceremonies not “according to local custom, which may hurt the feelings of the worshipers toward the place.” For almost 25 years, women have been gathering to pray at the Kotel, organized by the association Women of the Wall — under the leadership of Anat Hoffman — to challenge the religious authorities' discrimination against women praying at the Kotel and wearing tallitot.

It was an intense morning: We felt relief at moving smoothly through security entering the Kotel plaza ourselves, yet anxiety over whether Anat Hoffman and the three women Knesset members accompanying her, wearing tallitot, would also be allowed through; being approached by a police officer and informed that wearing my tallit was illegal; straining to follow a morning service over the rowdy singing and shofar blasts coming from the men's



*Rabbi Geoff and Sue Huntting and Elana and Mark Margolis in Jerusalem after visiting the Western Wall in March. Contributed photo*

side; and the constant ranting of several Haredi women amongst us, all intended to disrupt our *kavannah* (intention).

We watched the security officers' careful efforts to keep raised voices and physical confrontations to a minimum. Knowing that coverage by the media was important, we were yet resentful of their intrusion during a worship experience.

We also felt the wonderful support of the many men standing behind us in solidarity.

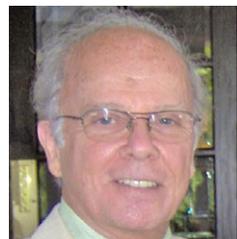
Unlike in previous months, no one was arrested or detained, most likely because of the participation of the brave and principled Knesset members. I was so honored to participate in this act of civil disobedience in support of equal religious access and expression for Jewish women, and I am in awe of the women who stand up for these rights every month.

Mark your calendar: Rosh Chodesh Sivan is on May 10, 2013.

*Sue Huntting is the Religious School director at Temple Sinai in Sarasota.* 

# OPINION

## THE SUPREME COURT, SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND YOU — OR MAYBE A NEIGHBOR, RELATIVE OR FRIEND



By Rodger Skidmore  
Contributing Writer

### COMMENTARY

*Editor's note: Because of the length of this article, we are providing the first segment "in print" and inviting you to read the entire commentary in a PDF format, as indicated.*

Whether you are for or against same-sex marriage, it is a really hot button for both this season and the next. It is a button that was pushed on March 26 and 27 but we will not hear the resulting screams of joy or despair until June.

Same-sex marriage and a number of connected issues have now been argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. The first was California's Proposition 8, which is referenced as "Prop. 8." That state's supreme court had previously ruled that same-sex marriages were, under the state's constitution, legal. Prop. 8, passed by California voters in 2008, added a clause to the Constitution stating, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

Note: More than \$20 million was contributed by Mormons — members of The Church of Latter-Day Saints — in support of Prop. 8, with additional funding by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the Eastern Orthodox Church and a myriad

of evangelical Christian organizations along with many words of support from the Roman Catholic Church. All of this religious organization money was donated to ensure the outcome of a religious law in our country where church and state are supposed to be separate.

In August 2010, a U.S. District Court volleyed back a ruling that Prop. 8 is unconstitutional, specifically relative to due process and equal protection clauses of the U.S. Constitution. The court's reasoning went along the lines that the Constitution says all people in the U.S. should be treated equally under the law; gays and lesbians are people; therefore, they should be treated equally — sort of like, what part of YES don't you understand?

Apparently that ruling did not satisfy those against same-sex marriage, and the controversy was bumped up to the U.S. Supreme Court for a final judicial decision.

The other issue up for review is the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA): a federal law defining marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman for federal and interstate purposes. Now we know why Congress has not been passing meaningful legislation since 1996 (when DOMA was passed): It must be busy drafting laws defining the other 170,000-plus words in the Oxford English dictionary.

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It should not have taken 17 years for DOMA to be challenged, and it might have been challenged earlier if the mayor of San Francisco had continued officiating at the marriages of same-sex partners — which were not illegal acts.

Prop. 8 was only one sentence-long. It indicated that marriage between two men or two women would not be valid or recognized in California. It did not state that such marriages could not be performed and thus be recognized in other states. This would have set up a situation where a marriage performed in California would not have been recognized there but would have been recognized in Massachusetts, for example.

Allowing that situation to go forward might have brought the states rights advocates into the mix (perhaps against their will), and DOMA might have been challenged back in 2008, right after Prop. 8 was passed.

## MOVING FROM THEN TO NOW

Support of same-sex marriage has been growing over the years, state by state, partly because there does not seem to be any concrete evidence that marriages of gays and lesbians have harmed heterosexual couples. Just talking about the subject in a reasonable way has helped as well. One such discussion took place on TV back in 2010 when, on Bill Moyers' *Journal*, Moyers spoke with lawyers Ted Olson and David Boies about their legal challenge to Prop. 8. They had opposed each other as the attorneys in *Bush v. Gore* before the Supreme Court when it heard that case

following the disputed election of 2000, but they had joined forces on this new issue.

Their points, in line with their thinking on the due process and equal protection under the law clauses in the Constitution, all seem valid. People in committed relationships should have the right to visit their partners when those partners are in the hospital, but many current laws and regulations state that only relatives and spouses may do so. Similar restrictions are written in the form of thousands of laws across the country relative to the IRS, etc.

However, all Olson and Boies' arguments were based upon *their* understanding of the law and *their* views of morality and of those who agreed with them — all very goody-goody and well meaning, but would these be strong enough to convince Justices Samuel Alito, Anthony Kennedy, John Roberts, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas? Coming in second in the Boston marathon is commendable but not quite so great in a case before the Supreme Court.

Instead of looking at the Constitution and the issue of right versus wrong, perhaps a more direct approach would be to look at the very basis of both Prop. 8 and DOMA: the definition of marriage — the key word being *definition* and, of course, what is being defined; not marriage, but who is being married — the man and the woman.

Once the words *Man* and *Woman* are defined, all else falls into place. Certainly the Constitution and morality are to be the building blocks

# OPINION

for an argument before the Supreme Court, but the cement between them should be in keeping with the laws being challenged. Using this approach, I have developed the following points. One can call this straight-line logic in a curvilinear world — taking a simple point and then extending it as far as one can while still remaining in context.

One could also call it *wordsmithing*, but then, when one is defining things before the Supreme Court, that is what one does if one wishes to win.

## DEFINITIONAL ASPECTS OF PROP. 8 AND THE DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT

For the state or any other governmental body to permit marriage between only one type of person and another is, simply put, to ban marriages between *people* with the definition of *people* being arbitrarily chosen by the deciding body. The initial question one might ask, therefore, is: How does this permitting and not permitting relate to the equal protection clause in the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution?

If the state is to permit marriage only between one type of person and another, one must be able to accurately and definitively describe the types of persons that are being permitted to marry and those not being permitted to do so, in a fashion similar to defining *interstate commerce*.

Words connected with marriage that come to mind are *male, man, husband, female, woman* and *wife*.

If men are to only marry women, and women are to only marry men, one must define exactly what a man is and what a women is and how one is to tell them apart in order for the law to be enforced effectively.

The laws under review and any law crafted in the future on this subject must be workable. To that end one must create a workable set of definitions.

The framework for those definitions as outlined below is not meant to be disrespectful to the court or to any party attempting to resolve this controversy. It is structured in a way that illustrates the enormity of the problem. Taking a simple premise and extending that premise to its logical, or illogical, conclusion may show the validity of that premise or the lack thereof — sort of a “let the chips fall where they may” way of viewing the law.

Other ways of challenging a law, such as whether it is covered in the Constitution as that document originally was written or whether it is moral or fair may also be used, but, when push comes to shove, for any law to be enforced, one must know against whom it is being enforced and how to differentiate those people from the ones being “protected.” 

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# Sarasota Leisure

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## JOHN RINGLING VISION FOR ST. ARMANDS KEY

John Ringling (1868-1932) foresaw a people-friendly plan of hotels, restaurants, "beachfront houses," electrical stations, bath buildings, stages, shops and restaurants, and a central park for musical performances. His travels to the fashionable cities of Italy inspired his vision. The coastal scenery he saw combined the realistic portrayal of individual beauty and the romantic aspects of Italianate beauty. Recovery was a key element of his vision as he began marketing lots on St. Armands Key in 1927. At that point it contained only the streets, boulevard, bus terminal, station, seawall, subdivision plat, one commercial building and a handful of houses. Due to the increasing Florida land crash, the Depression, and World War II, it would be 30 years before the commercial and residential districts would be built.

"Save Our Statues", undertaken in 2007 and chaired by Key resident Edward Fiske, had the goal of preserving the Ringling-era statues dating to the 1920s and restoring this legacy with 11 new classically-themed statues in white marble.

St. Armands Residents Association and its President, William Fiske, thank the Peninsula Improvement District, Ringling Museum of Art, City of Sarasota, St. Armands Circle Association, Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Leo Kay Foundation and the many individual contributors for their support. Also particularly thanks to the Sarasota County Commission and Commissioner Joseph Barbetta, St. Armands District 2 Representative, for making this plaque possible.

**BOOKS TO GO**

**A LADY PAYS A VISIT**

**ON THE EVE OF INVASION: PART II**

*Inside*



Sir Frederick Ashton's

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mal Gardée*  
{The Wayward Daughter}

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SARASOTA MAGAZINE





*Bob and Pat Orlando. Photos by Rachel Hackney*

## **FOR READERS, THIS IS A HEAVENLY PLACE**

Remember the good old days (about two years ago), when almost all of our reading material was only available in its original format?

I am referring to the timeless method of holding a book/magazine in our hands, turning the actual pages and reading them as is. There is still hope for us “bookies.” I am recommending a marvelous, old-fashioned used-bookstore, located in Siesta Village, and called, appropriately, Used Book Heaven.

The store is located in The Arches, behind the Bonjour French Cafe. (The actual address is 5216D Ocean Blvd.)

Looking at Used Book Heaven from the outside, you have no idea what to expect. The windows are almost completely blocked with books piled high, almost daring you to enter this fabulous little nook. As you open the door,

the chimes ring cheerfully and welcome you inside. There is almost always music from an AM station playing in the background, usually recognizable tunes that we used to call “oldies but goodies.” And suddenly, without at first having realized it, you see you are surrounded by at least a zillion books: hardcovers, paperbacks, kids’ books, fiction, nonfiction — everything from the latest best-seller to an art book you just cannot live without.

The inside of this heavenly hangout is huge. Every shelf is filled, with many shelves appearing almost overloaded.

Pat Orlando, who owns the store with her husband, Bob, is usually sitting behind the counter, either reading or helping a customer. The Orlandos are originally from New Jersey; they have owned the store since they opened it in

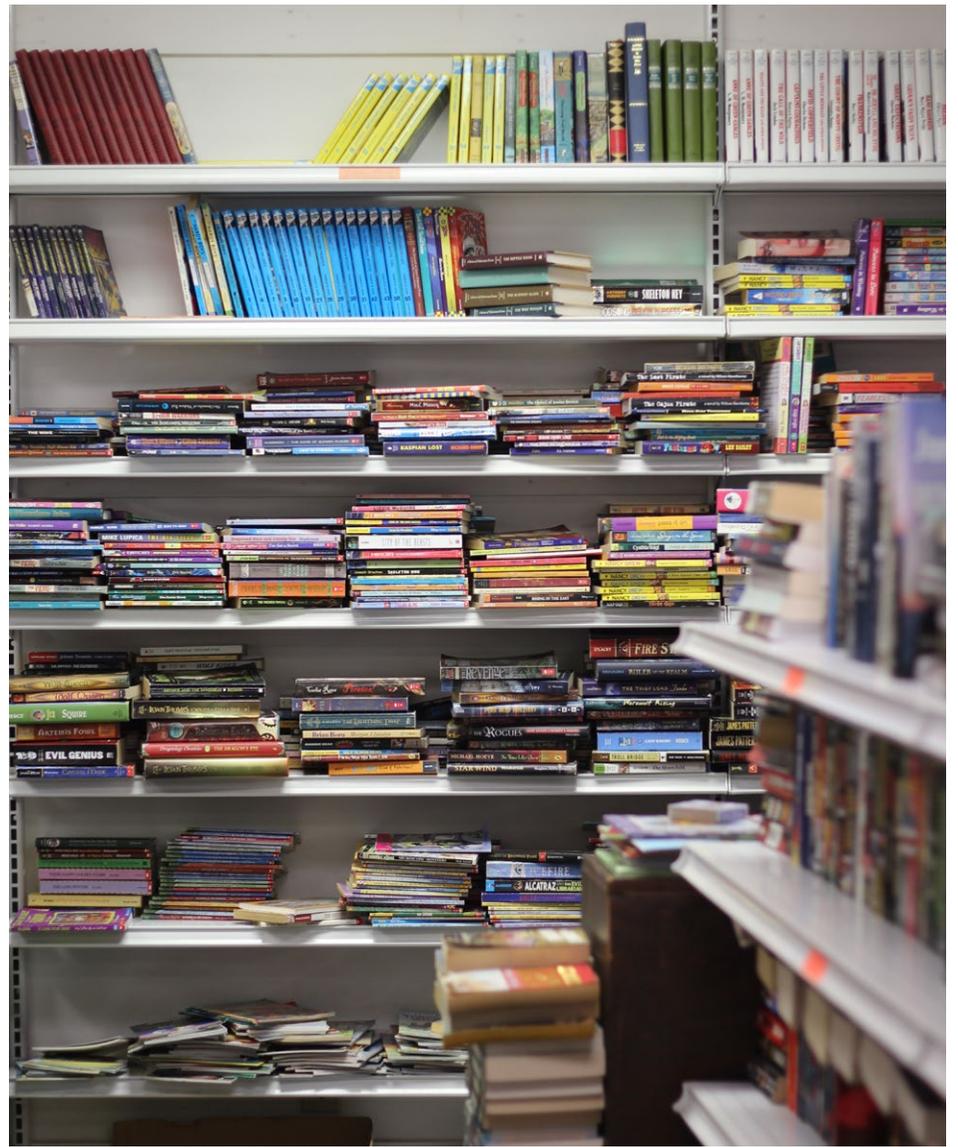


*Pat Orlando is surrounded by volumes of paperbacks at the front desk of Used Book Heaven.*

December 1994. Bob says it was always Pat's dream to have her own used-book shop.

Back in New Jersey, she worked and volunteered as a librarian in an elementary school. In college, she was a library science major, and she never lost her love for books.

Pat has instituted her own method of payment for purchases. Regular customers, such as myself, usually come in with some books from home to trade toward new purchases. Pat prices the books and records the amounts on an index card with the customer's name. (Her index file is enormous, and it is her only database). When I am ready to buy more books, she looks up my name in the file box and then completes the transaction.



If this all seems like the 1950s to you, I could not agree more with that observation. Pat says owning a computer to keep records is very expensive, and her method works perfectly for her. She keeps track of her inventory because (a) she has a phenomenal memory; and (b) she puts the books on the shelves, so she can remember exactly where they are.

A visiting tourist who has no books to trade can just pay cash and get a free in-store bookmark with the books to go.

Bob says he and Pat agreed on plans for operating the bookstore from the start. Their jobs are well defined: Bob does the bookkeeping and Pat sells the books.

She has truly followed her dream, and her husband of 50 years would never have done anything to keep that from happening. 



# A LADY PAYS A VISIT



*Vic Bickel, first mate, knows every line and spar aboard the pair of 500-year-old designs. Photos by Stan Zimmerman*

## COLUMBUS' FAVORITE MAKES A PALMETTO PORT CALL

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

They come from a time when people were smaller, when adventure meant putting your life on the line, when the smallest mistake could send ship and crew to a watery grave — from a time when courage was a given.

Replicas of two of Columbus' three-ship fleet are berthed at the Regatta Point Marina in Palmetto through this weekend. The *Niña*

and *Pinta* are like time machines warped 500 years into the future. You are invited aboard.

If you were Juan Ponce de Leon or Anton de Alamenos, you would feel at home aboard the *Niña* (Spanish: "the girl"). She is as close a replica as can be made of the 1492 vessel that sailed on all three of Columbus' voyages of discovery. It was upon similar ships that



*The ships were built in Brazil with the same type of hand-hewn tools and techniques used 500 years ago. There were no plans, only these models.*

de Leon and Alamenos found Florida in the spring of 1513.

When the *Santa Maria* foundered on Christmas Eve 1492 off Cape Haitien, Haiti, it was the *Niña* that sailed Columbus home. And after a hurricane in 1495, *Niña* was the sole survivor. Columbus (and 120 passengers) went home to Spain aboard the (extremely crowded) 65-foot caravel.

“She was built with no power tools,” said First Mate Vic Bickel. He came aboard five years ago as a volunteer. The retired aerospace en-

gineer worked on the Space Shuttles and now is second in command of a “time machine.”

“She is authentic as could be made,” added Bickel. “There are modern materials used, for sure. Safety is important. But this is as close [to authentic] as we know how to make it.”

The sails are no longer linen, which is so easy to tear and hard to repair. The lines are no longer hemp, prone to rot and decay. And down below is a Perkins six-cylinder diesel engine you could eat off of. Considering the degree of maintenance required on any wooden sea-go-



*The Pinta: Every line and block has a purpose only a sailor could understand.*

ing vessel, the *Niña* would pass any mother-in-law's white-glove test from masthead to bilge.

The ships are regularly inspected by the U.S. Coast Guard because they carry passengers. And carefully concealed — so as to not spoil the *mysterio* — are all the modern electronics needed by a captain. A radio, global positioning system, depth sounder and radar all are handy to the helm.

And what a helm it is. As the original was launched 200 years before sailors discovered the steering wheel, the *Niña* uses a massive 10-foot tiller to operate an equally massive, barn-door rudder. In heavy weather, said Bickel, the tiller can knock a grown man down. *Niña* is not for day sailors.

Regarding notes for naval architects: *Niña* carries 2,000 square feet of sail on four masts; two masts are single-spar square-rigged; the aft masts are lateen. She carries 20 tons of stone ballast set like a paved surface above the keel; such stones were later called “Belgian blocks” and used to pave some streets of Washington, New York City and Richmond, VA, among others.

*Niña* displaces 76 tons, giving her roughly a 25 percent ballast-to-displacement ratio. And that accounts for her motion at sea. “She rolls,” said Bickel. Today each ship is crewed by four to seven people; in the 1490s, crews were around 25 in number because the voyages were longer. In all weathers, the crew slept, ate and lived on deck. Today the storage hold has been converted to berths and a galley for the much smaller crew.

The *Pinta* and *Niña* are U.S.-flagged vessels owned by the Columbus Foundation, which is registered in the British Virgin Islands. They have passed repeatedly through the Panama Canal on their educational and recreational voyages along the U.S. East and West Coasts and around Central America and the Caribbean islands.

The ships are among the rarest of maritime relics, functional and operational replicas of technology 500 years old — kept running on ticket sales, donations, grants and sheer guts. In Amsterdam and London and even Adelaide, Australia, you will find tall ships at museums. All are berthed ashore or floating outside the facilities. None of them is working the sea.

There is a stillness to a museum ship. To walk the deck of *HMS Victory* or the *Cutty Sark* is a thrill, but absent is the tug of the ocean on the deck of a live vessel. A boat is as incomplete without the sea as a dog is without a master or a vicar without a soul.

As we celebrate Florida's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of discovery by Europeans, the *Niña* is something we can wrap our imagination around. It is not some fake artifact like a “fountain of youth.” On the *Niña* we can imagine the endless voyage west, hear in our mind the lookout cry, “Land ho” and see anew the feast of flowers that would become Florida.

Your time machine awaits.

*The ships will be available at Regatta Point Marina in Palmetto through April 16. Admission is \$8 for adults.* 



# ON THE EVE OF INVASION: PART II

## PONCE DE LEON MAKES A FAMOUS DISCOVERY 'IN THE TIME OF FLOWERY EASTER'

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

*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.*

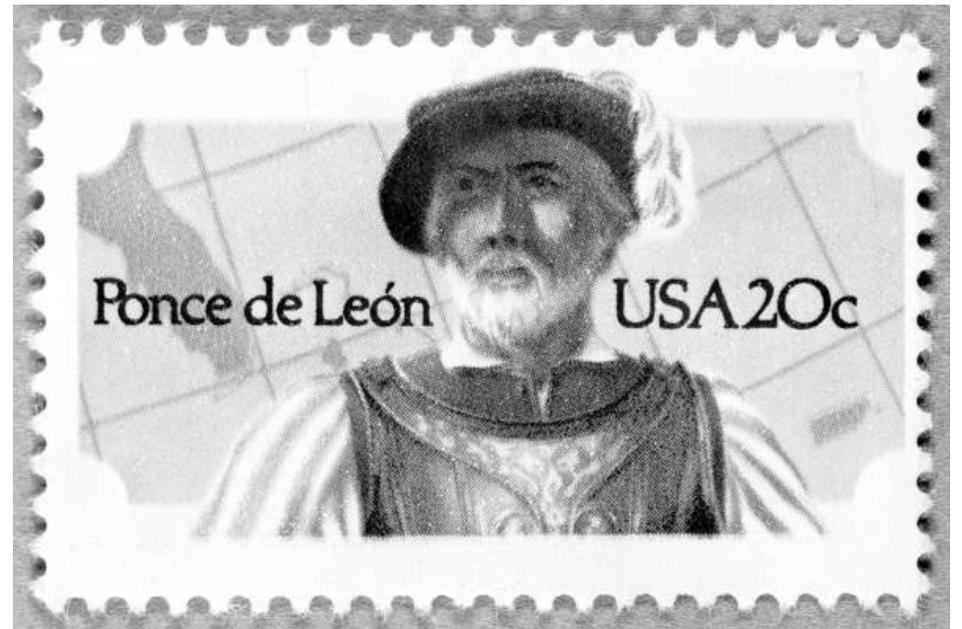
The man who discovered Florida and named it was born in 1460 at the town of San Servas in León, Spain. Juan Ponce de León, a nobleman of royal descent, accompanied Columbus on his second voyage in 1493.

Ponce was a soldier, and in 1506-1507, he led the “peaceful conquest” of Puerto Rico. He was appointed governor of that large island in 1509 by the Spanish crown, and he managed the early colonization efforts. For his

*This is 500 years of naval architecture in one frame. What will airplanes look like 500 years from now, or cars? Who knows? But here 1513 meets 2013. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

efforts, Ponce received a commendation from the king.

During his time in Puerto Rico, Ponce heard rumors of a land north of Cuba. The Spanish called it Bimini. In 1511, he sought from Charles V — the king who so recently had commended him — a royal license to search for Bimini. A map published in 1511 also shows a landmass north of Cuba, labeled *Isla de beimeni parte*. It was drawn by Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, a priest in the court of Fernando II of Aragon.



*No images remain of Ponce de Leon — no portraits; no statues; no engravings; nothing. Everything is made up. So let this U.S. postage stamp suffice. Image courtesy of the U.S. Postal Service*



*Aboard caravels like this one, Juan Ponce de Leon sailed north from Puerto Rico, past the Bahamas, to find Florida and then conduct a flawless investigation of the lower Florida peninsula. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

Ponce and d'Anghiera suspected a land existed north of Cuba, based on rumors and reports from Spanish sailors searching for slaves and other treasure. It is highly likely the first Europeans to set foot on Florida soil were slavers and smugglers, because slavery was not legalized in the Spanish-claimed lands of the New World until 1508. But since Ponce was the first to record his claim to Florida, he gets credit for the discovery.

When Ponce finally arrived in Southwest Florida, he found a native who understood Spanish and many more who practiced an art the Spanish understood very well — war. Prior predation by slavers explains why Ponce was greeted with hostility at every turn.

The Spanish crown approved Ponce's request for the expedition on Feb. 23, 1512 and proclaimed him Adelantado of Bimini. The title bore heavy responsibilities for both Ponce and the Crown. After court battles with Columbus, the King of Spain demanded his explorers sign an extensive legal document outlining the rights and responsibilities of all parties. Ponce would be the supreme governor with jurisdiction for life over all the lands he could discover and possess. In return, Ponce would pay for all settlements out of his own purse, while the Crown would fund fortifications. Ponce would be Florida's first Adelantado, but not its last.

A central figure in the discovery and exploration of Florida waters now appears — Anton de Alaminos de Palos. A navigator who accompanied Columbus, he probably met Ponce on the second voyage. Alaminos remained be-

hind in the New World as the earliest colonies were founded, and he embarked on a long and colorful career as navigator for several expeditions. Ponce asked Alaminos to be his navigator for the Bimini expedition. Because the exploration went flawlessly, it is likely Alaminos had visited Florida earlier, perhaps on one of the suspected slaving expeditions.

On March 3, 1513, Ponce and Alaminos left Añasco Bay in western Puerto Rico with two caravels and a much smaller bergantina. At the time, Alaminos was 38 years old, and Ponce was 53.

On March 27, after skirting the eastern shore of the Lucayans and passing south of Great Abaco and Grand Bahama, the fleet sighted land: Florida had been discovered.

In one of the most famous passages in early Florida's record, historian Antonio de Herrera — 100 years later — described what followed: "And thinking that this land was an island, they called it La Florida, because it was very pretty to behold with many and refreshing trees, and it was flat, and even: and also because they discovered it in the time of Flowery Easter [Pascua Florida], Juan Ponce wanted to agree in the name, with these two reasons." Thus the peninsula was christened.

Ponce and Alaminos sailed south, where they encountered the powerful, northbound Gulf Stream near Lake Worth Inlet (which he called Cabo de las Corrientes — Cape of the Currents). There the ships were swept backwards despite favorable winds. Alaminos discovered,

by sailing extremely close to shore, that the current could be avoided. This was a counterintuitive strategy for fragile wooden boats and thus one indication Alimos knew what he was doing.

On April 2, Ponce anchored and went ashore at an undetermined point, probably in search of firewood and fresh water and to satisfy his curiosity about this new land. In landing, Ponce became the first European to set foot officially on North American soil.

Ponce's arrival was met with an attack of arrows tipped with fish bone. Two Spaniards were wounded. They captured one assailant and sailed away. This was the first of many skirmishes between the Spanish and the original Floridians.

Ponce's fleet continued to hug the shoreline to avoid the current, sailing south along the coast and into Biscayne Bay (where a large native town was noted), then further south and westward around the Florida Keys. Going beyond the Marquesas (the islands west of Key West) — while staying clear of the treacherous reefs — the little fleet then turned north. It was as if Alimos had a chart, so exact was his navigation.

Ponce's expedition is believed to have made landfall on San Carlos Bay at the mouth the Caloosahatchee River; the fleet anchored off the southeastern tip of Sanibel Island. Calusas attacked the ships from canoes and catamarans, killing one European. Ponce named

the island "Matanzas," the Spanish word for "slaughter."

After nine days in the area, Ponce decided to return home. On the way, he came upon Las Tortugas (now called the Dry Tortugas, islands west of the Marqueses), which he named for the turtles he found there. After a brief passage due south, Ponce hugged the Cuban coastline and made for Puerto Rico.

Alimos made several very important discoveries on this journey. He sketched a rough outline of the peninsula from Cape Canaveral to Sanibel; he found the furious Gulf Stream and escaped its grip by sailing extremely close to shore; and he confirmed the Florida Keys were not part of the mainland and avoided (and probably noted) the treacherous reefs.

Additionally, he used the wide channel between the Marquesas and Tortugas to make a passage from the Straits of Florida to the western coast of the peninsula, then discovered a good anchorage at San Carlos Bay. Heading home, he located the Dry Tortugas (and the shallow banks which surround them).

After six months of exploration, the fleet returned to Puerto Rico. No ships were lost, and there is no record of anybody running aground. This is a stark contrast to other Spanish voyages of exploration during the same period, when ships commonly ran aground or were lost. 



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

### **ON A 'PASSAGE TO INDIA,' OTUS HAS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A CLOSE-UP OBSERVATION OF PEACOCKS**

Dear Readers,

This is what happened.

One roseate dawn during High Season, I realized that despite a few good rains I had not quite found the number of “creepy crawlies,” as people often refer to them, necessary to supplement my high-protein, low-fat diet.

The yard crew had just put down the lawn pesticides and “pickins” were slim. An important Member of the Condo Bored and head of the

volunteer landscaping committee was walking to his car when a neighbor called out, “Hey, Bored VIP, where are you off to so early?”

“Crowley’s Nursery,” he replied. “I’ve got to get a start on the traffic ahead of all those wonderful tourists and swell, brainy college kids on spring break, those whose annual pilgrimage during high season to the pristine sands of Siesta Beach — voted the No. 1 Beach in the USA — enrich our county coffers and contribute to our knowledge of cultural diversity



and grace Siesta Key's south bridge with their marvelous and multitudinous presence."

Of course, that is not what he said! But I do not want to scare off the tourists by repeating what he actually said.

As any hungry owl might reasonably do, I misheard "Crowley's Nursery" as "Crawlies' Nursery," and with visions of plump centipedes and Giant Water Bugs dancing in my head, I made a quick swoop through his car grille and settled in to enjoy the long but free ride to breakfast.

Just a few days earlier, [a Great Horned Owl made national news by hitching a ride in a Florida woman's SUV](#). When he was finally discovered, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officers removed him, unhurt, and probably cited him for hitchhiking. I was not about to make the same mistake. I was ensconced in a sleek Jaguar, invisible to all sheriff's deputies whose eyes might have been on the traffic rather than their 7-Eleven donuts and hot dogs.

It was one long, hot, noisy, dusty, miserable trip; I do not recommend this means of transportation to anyone. At first, I tried to distract myself by playing that favorite travel game *Name That Road Kill!* but Mr. Bored was driving way too fast for that. So, I passed the time by contemplating the history of wordplay in English literature. I began with the delightful homophonic pun, when two words that sound alike have different meanings. But considering that is what got me into this dreadful situation, I quickly moved on to the double entendre. That is a word or phrase having a double meaning whose second meaning is risqué.

When used by Chaucer or Shakespeare it is downright bawdy fun.

A true master of the double entendre and its tongue-in-cheek ribaldry was James Bond's creator, Ian Fleming. He could turn any character's name into a sexual innuendo. And he did! However, while imprisoned behind a car's grille, I recalled more subtle examples of his wordplay from *Live and Let Die*, in which Fleming set a more sinister tone for James Bond's mission to save the U.S. from international narcotics traffickers.

"Go ahead," said Bond, who was riding safely in the passenger seat. He was glad to keep silent and gaze out at his first sight of America since the war, with the exotic pungency of the road signs: "SOFT SHOULDERS"; "SHARP CURVES"; "SQUEEZE AHEAD"; "SLIPPERY WHEN WET."

However, none of the above fatalistic musings had been necessary. As Mr. Bored drove into Crowley's parking lot, I immediately saw butterflies, dragonflies and all sorts of flying insects enjoying the warmth of that early morning. A Gossamer-Winged Damselfly even greeted me personally inside my compartment. It was quite tasty, and the treat did much to restore my spirits.

[Crowley Nursery & Gardens](#) uses only natural pest controls, so its fruit plants are naturally pollinated, berries of the Miracle Fruit are safe to eat and butterflies can flutter and nectar. And they did! The staff actually ensures the nursery will have succeeding generations of *Lepidoptera* by hand-removing caterpillars from host plants available for sale to the ones on permanent display.

After Mr. Bored parked and walked to the citrus grove in search of a Meyer lemon tree, I hopped out of my compartment and into the woods. Early in the morning, it is not unusual to see an Eastern Screech Owl (that's me!) hopping on the ground, hunting for insects. I heard a rustling in a pile of dead leaves and rotting wood and as I honed in on it, I saw that it was an immature Skink, tiny to people but just the right size for me.

The Five-Lined Skink is a beneficial Florida native insectivorous lizard. On Siesta Key, because of predation by the invasive Cuban brown anoles, iguanas and tegus, skinks have become so rare that when people do spot one, they assume it is a baby iguana or tegu. Indeed, the skink is an unusual looking creature, particularly the male when he sports a

red head during mating season. When threatened, skinks' tails turn a shade of blue.

Skinks are fast-moving creatures, but so am I. I hopped in full pursuit of the skink, deeper into the woods. That is when I was magically transported to India. I saw my first feral peacock in full breeding plumage. The unexpected sight of his beauty took my breath away. He stood atop a dirt mound, serenely surveying his lek, that domain a peacock establishes during mating and brooding season. Behind him, I spotted four peahens, a part of his harem, scurrying into the thick undergrowth.

A group of peafowl is most commonly called a "pride" or "ostentation." Both of these very appropriate terms reminded me of the account in Herodotus' *Histories* of Croesus and Solon. Croesus was the Lydian king of ancient



A Five-Lined Skink. File photo



Greece made vain by his vast riches. When the wise Solon of Athens visited the kingdom, Croesus led him through his treasure rooms and asked Solon if he had ever seen greater opulence. Solon answered that he had. Gold and gemstones, he said, pale before the incomparable beauty of birds like peacocks. Later, the gods punished Croesus for his vanity, but that is another story!

As Solon noted, other birds possess incomparable beauty. For example, take the iridescent Velvet-Purple Coronet, a species of hummingbird native to Ecuador. In this case, we are so amazed and impressed by his small size, i.e., the exquisite delicacy of his makeup. From his tiny feet to his miniscule enameled breast feathers, he is a hovering bijou, glittering in the sunlight.

In the case of the peacock, size really matters. When in full mating regalia, the male *Pavo*, a member of the pheasant (*Phasianidae*) family, is one of the world's largest flying birds, up to six feet in length. You will probably never see a peacock in full flight. They are ground



*A Velvet-Purple Coronet. Photo courtesy Rick Greenspun*

dwellers, and around here they only fly several yards to perch on a fence or the roof of a porch; and at night they fly up to roost safely in trees or elevated cotes people have constructed for them. I have provided you a spectacular photo of a peacock in his native India, which enables readers to see what he looks like in full flight.



*A flying peacock. Photo by Servophbabu via Wikimedia Commons*

Back at Crowley's: From the perspective of an owl, hopping through the grass and looking way up at this breathtaking opulence, it was his magnificent gams that really wowed me! In virtually all the medieval descriptions of a peacock, attention is drawn to "his ugly feet." Many accounts claim he grows his "tail" feathers simply to detract attention from his feet. Powerful and boasting a sharp, hard spur, his legs and their enormous taloned feet are designed for foraging, digging, defending his lek and harem and attacking rivals.

In his native country, his rival is another peacock seeking to woo away one of his peahens. But that is India and this is Sarasota. Around here, the principal rival to a peacock is his reflection in a shiny just-washed, black luxury car. Well, that is the myth promulgated

by the wealthy Croesuses on Longboat Key, where feral peacocks rule the roost and quite often the streets. Truth is, the color of the car and its price tag are of no importance to the peacock. Any shiny car with sparkling clean hubcaps will do! And when a peacock does attack his reflection, perceiving it to be his rival, he whooshes up with legs extended and talons splayed — and mightily crashes into that arrogant intruder, slashing him with his spur. Well, just picture soccer great Pelé performing a bicycle kick while wearing ice-skates and you will get an idea of how much damage a peacock can do to a car. I felt relieved that Mr. Bored's lovely Jaguar was dust-coated and mud-spattered after the trip.

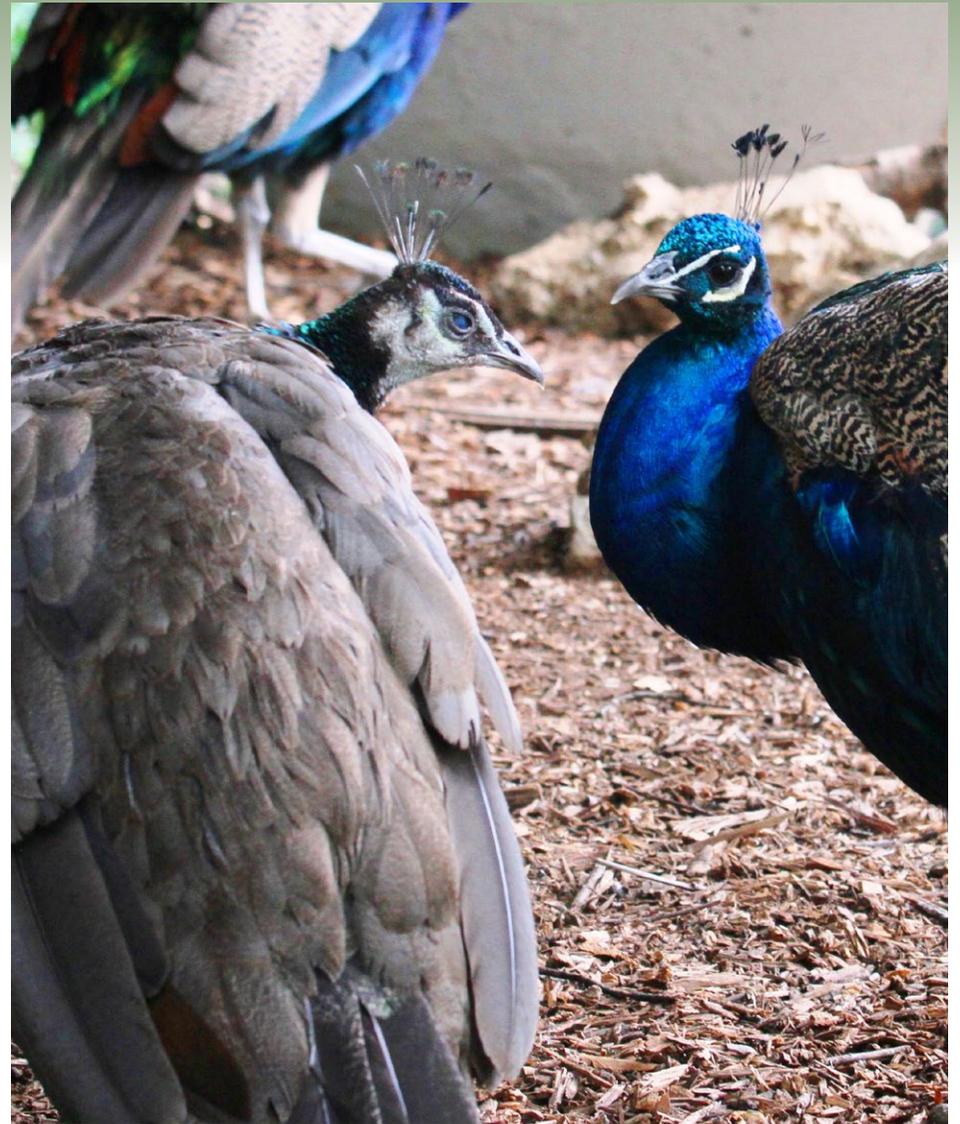
As you know, the peacock's tail is not a true tail. It is simply covert (meaning "covering")



*A peacock's leg spurs are easily visible. File photo*

tail feathers grown over his brown, foot-long, real tail feathers, which provide support for his train when he displays it and elevate it a bit above the ground when he struts about. He sports his train for only about five months of the year. After the mating and brooding season, he sheds these 150-200 magnificent feathers, which are eagerly collected by people and used for decorative purposes. Beginning in late fall, he starts to molt. This brings me to his mate, the peahen.

The peahen is consistently described as “drab with dull brown and gray feathers.” Not true! And I will explain why by asking you to take a look at a photo of a peahen and peacock taken at the end of September, just as they are molting and slowly dressing themselves into their finery in time for the spring mating game. What is cool about the photo is seeing them in this state of dishabille, with crown



*A peahen and cock. File photo*



*A peacock growing new feathers. File photo*

feathers missing and jutting every which way, while train feathers are just beginning to poke out, like crocuses through the melting snows. At this stage, neither raggedy bird will make the cover of *WWD* or *GQ*!

No, the peahen is beautiful in her own way. Mother Nature designed her to blend in with the ground and bushes while she nests and incubates her eggs, endowing her with an iridescent green crown and neck feathers intermingling with rich pearl-gray and earth tones.

I found a good video illustrating this. It was filmed outside the gift shop at the Los Angeles County Arboretum. In it, a mama peahen's seven precocial chicks hatch. It gives one an appreciation of how beautiful and caring a mother she is and demonstrates to perfection the term "precocial." Yes, that is the term I keep using to describe how some chicks just pop out of that egg all feathered, open-eyed, able to hold up their heads and walk and peck at food! They are so amazingly different from us altricial birds. Warning! [This video](#) is 14 minutes long. I think 2 1/2 minutes of viewing time will convey the points I have made.

It was time to break the enchantment and leave India to return home. Mr. Bored was closing his car trunk on a handsome Meyer lemon tree and, of all things, a Miracle Fruit bush. The Meyer will flourish on our key, but the air is probably too saline for the Miracle. But it is an unusually intriguing plant and worth the try.

I slept the return trip until we reached the turnoff to Siesta Key's south bridge. Despite his well-laid plans, Mr. Bored's timing was off. We sat in traffic for a while, a great while. A

group of those nice, brainy college kids on spring break occupied the van in front of us. The Maine license plate read, "Vacationland." I thought it was awfully sweet of these kids to give up their vacation and drive all the way to Siesta Key to enrich our county's coffers. The van's engine was turned off, but the van gently rocked from the blare of the rap music emanating from it. The lyrics had a lot to do with killing a pig. I assumed the kids were planning to do a big luau at the grills by our key's beautiful No. 1 beach in the USA. Mr. Bored and a lot of other drivers were wildly supportive of this idea and expressed their enthusiasm by loudly honking and occasionally yelling something I could not hear over the music and honking.

Now, safely perched on my old oak limb and quietly reflecting on this wonderfully adventurous and educational day, I took great pride in two accomplishments. First, I not only survived my passage to India but also immensely enjoyed it and all its exotic beauty. Second, I never once pruriently speculated on how Ian Fleming might have toyed with the word "peacock."

And, as long as I am not thinking about that ... Did you know that one of the most famous examples of the naughty double entendre in English literature occurs in Chapter Nine of *Oliver Twist*? That is the chapter in which Fagin begins training Oliver to become a pick-pocket. It involves handkerchiefs and a lad named Charley Bates. I think you have to be a 14-year-old schoolboy to truly appreciate it.



# DOWNTON DOWNER

*Highclere Castle by garybembridge via Flickr and Wikimedia Commons*

## A GRAND PALACE KEEPS ITS NATURAL ADORNMENTS AT A DISTANCE

By Rick Wielgorecki

*Contributing Writer*

As I was enjoying the most recent installment of the PBS nighttime soap opera *Downton Abbey*, I was startled by the contrast between the interior and the exterior of the mansion. The real-life Highclere Castle was one of the inspirations of author Julian Fellowes. Inside, no expense was spared in decorating the walls with rich wood paneling and exquisite artwork. The castle's cavernous chambers are filled with elaborately upholstered furniture and stately accessories. Wooden columns tower in the library; gilt balustrades surround the upper floors; and grand arches beckon one to stroll the plush carpeted floors and wander from room to fantastically appointed room.

Immediately outside, by contrast, the foundation is completely devoid of a single tree, a solitary leaf or an isolated flower. The choice for enhancing the perimeter of this grand cha-

teau is a surface of gloomy gray gravel. The immediate environs around the Abbey seem to my taste to be strange, stark and sterile.

Once the camera pans away from the palace proper, there are spectacular gardens and wooded areas — out on the “back 40,” as it were. That is perhaps the prerogative of the spectacularly wealthy — to keep untidy living things at a distance. Trees drop messy leaves in the autumn and go bare in the winter, and many plants turn brown or go into dormancy when temperatures plummet. This is the province of hired gardeners, to deal with the landscape through all seasons, whether cultivars are at the zenith or at the nadir of beauty.

Here in “the Colonies,” we commoners generally abide in more modest structures. However, the foundation of almost any home will be decorated with small trees, shrubs, oc-

asionally a hedge and maybe even a bed of colorful annuals. These soften the geometric lines of our humble habitats. They give us a view of something soothing and green, and they delight us with a splash or two of color. They also allow us to commune with nature to some degree.

So, “*vive la différence!*”

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

I am focusing on a plant that is controversial at this time because of a persistent pest that must be dealt with if you are to grow it in your yard. I am talking about *Cycas revoluta*, the King Sago. Its nemesis is the Southeast Asian cycad scale.

Only the most resolute gardener will want to take up the challenge of growing this cultivar, because keeping it healthy will require con-

stant vigilance and determined action in the face of the scales’ attack.

Where clients require that we maintain these beautiful trees, I have been able to preserve them in a state of good health for many years at some considerable expense.

Why grow such a plant? These venerable species have been around for hundreds of millions of years; they were literally the food of dinosaurs. Japanese natives, they provide a handsome and, some believe, essential component of Japanese formal gardens — an impact that cannot be duplicated.

So if you, like others, love the look of the King Sago, proceed with caution and be prepared for a fight.

*Rick Wielgorecki provides landscape consultations, installations and maintenance. He may be contacted at 362-0600 or by email at [wielgo@hotmail.com](mailto:wielgo@hotmail.com).* 



*Cycas revoluta. Contributed photo*



# Siesta Seen

## COUNTY COMMISSION POSTPONES A VOTE ON LOWERING THE SPEED LIMIT ON PART OF SOUTH MIDNIGHT PASS ROAD; SIESTA FIESTA WEEKEND COMING UP



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

People interested in a lower speed limit on a portion of South Midnight Pass Road will have to wait until May 8 for the County Commission to decide on the request.

That was the unanimous vote on April 10, when the commissioners asked a lot of questions about the real purpose behind the request for the stretch of Midnight Pass from Vista Hermosa Circle to Sanderling Road.

That real reason? Folks want to be able to drive golf carts on the road, Commissioner Nora Patterson said.

The petition for lowering the speed limit from 40 mph to 35 mph was submitted to the county on Nov. 12, 2012 by William Cooper, the security chairman for the Sanderling Club Board of Directors, according to a memo provided to the County Commission by Paula R. Wiggins, transportation planning manager, and County Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr., dated April 10.

During its Dec. 10, 2012 meeting, the Sarasota County Traffic Advisory Council (TAC) heard the petition and voted to recommend the reduced speed limit, the memo notes.

In her presentation to the commission during its regular meeting on April 10 in Sarasota, Wiggins pointed out that Midnight Pass Road has 11-foot-wide travel lanes with 4-foot-wide bicycle lanes and a 5-foot-wide sidewalk on the west side. Four crashes were recorded on the selected segment of road from Jan. 1, 2009 to Dec. 31, 2012, Wiggins added.

The average daily traffic count is 6,700 vehicles, with a speed of 49 mph recorded for those in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of the count.

Cooper's petition, provided to the County Commission, says the lower speed limit was being requested "in order for the 100 residents of the 100 homes in Sanderling Club, and the commercial interests that serve that community, to be able to safely enter Midnight Pass Road, from what is their only access point to the road. At times of heavy traffic (especially during the winter season) it can be extremely hazardous to pull out and [onto] Midnight Pass, due to speeding cars. Visibility is also limited, which means exiting from Sanderling Club requires pulling out, very close to the road, in order to see the oncoming traffic."

# Siesta Seen

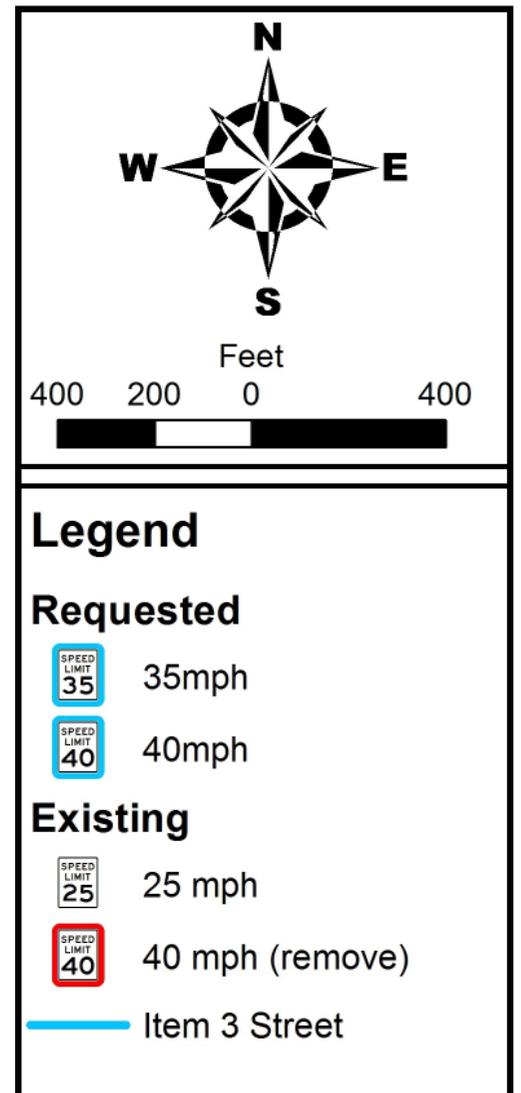
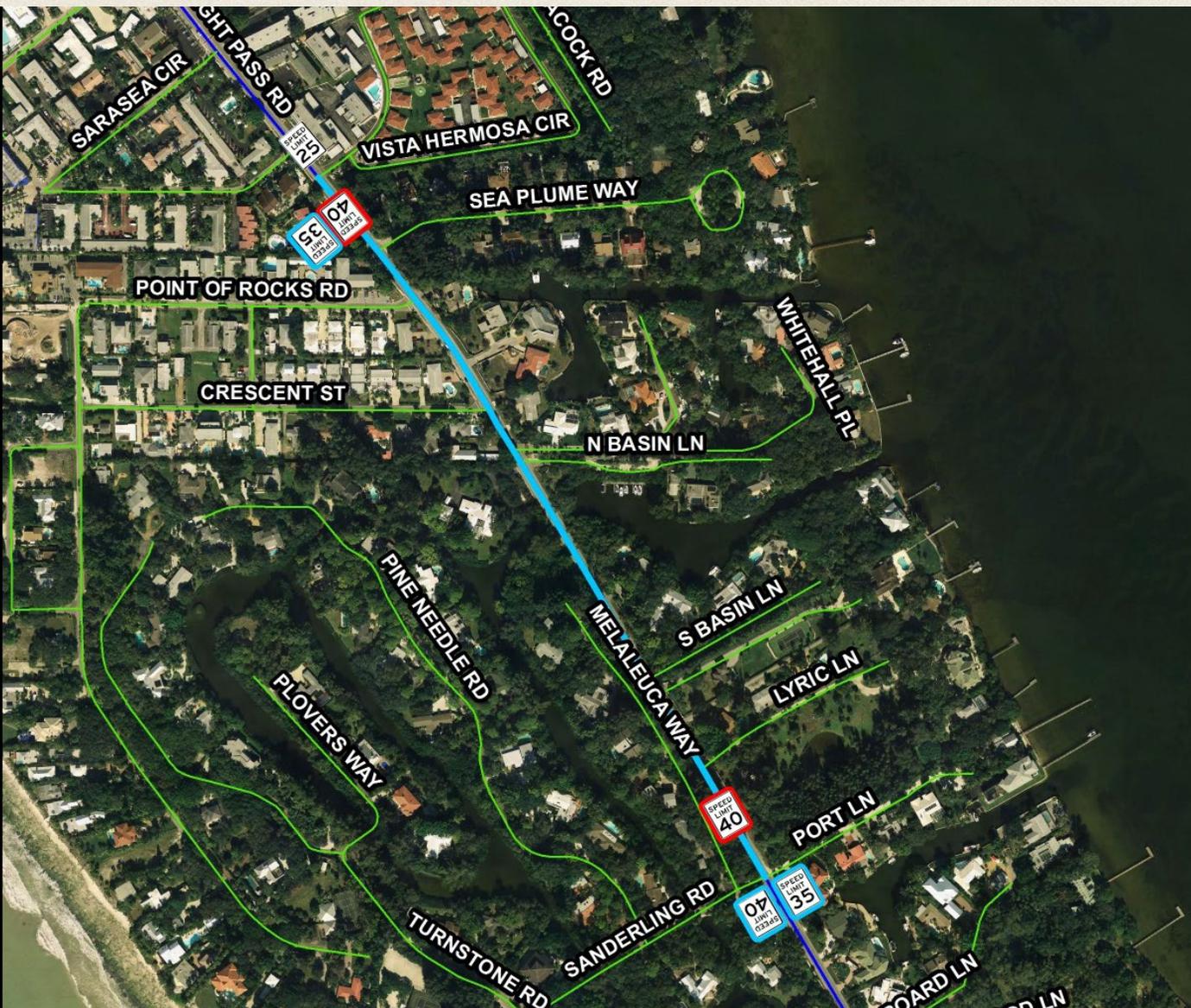
“I’ve actually received three different phone calls over the last year from individuals who live in the area who would very much like to see the speed limit on all roads on Siesta Key lowered to 35 mph,” Patterson — who lives on the island — told her fellow board members.

She added that the petition was started by one person who recently moved into The Sanderling Club “who wants to be able to take a golf cart into [Siesta] Village.”

Patterson pointed out that she already sees plenty of golf carts on Ocean Boulevard in the Village, where the speed limit is 20 mph.

After asking a number of questions, she continued, she had learned that a state law allows people to drive golf carts on roads with speed limits of 35 mph or less, if the carts are equipped with headlights.

However, she said, a golf cart’s maximum speed is 25 mph. Referring to the key’s transportation infrastructure, she added, “These are narrow roads, and I guess part of my concern is there are a lot of people who will not only be irritated on a main road when they are confronted with a golf cart going 25 mph, but a number of these folks will pass these golf carts, and these aren’t the safest roads to pass people.”



A graphic shows the area where petitioners want the speed limit lowered from 40 mph to 35 mph. Image courtesy Sarasota County

# Siesta Seen

Wiggins told the board her understanding is that Patterson is correct — that golf carts may be allowed on a road with a speed limit of 35 mph or less if they are “street legal,” equipped with headlights and other safety features.

Moreover, Wiggins said, the county would have to approve use of golf carts on a county road with the appropriate level of speed limit before anyone legally could drive a golf cart on the road.

When Patterson asked whether the County Commission ever had given its approval for use of golf carts on Ocean Boulevard, Wiggins’ response was, “Not to my knowledge.”

“OK,” Patterson said, “but there are golf carts on Ocean Boulevard ... quite often. So that’s weird.”

“They may be operating illegally,” Wiggins replied. “I’m not aware of anything coming to the board designating that [street] as a golf cart use.”

To which Commissioner Joe Barbetta said *sotto voce* into his microphone, “Scary.”

“I’m not trying to stop the golf carts in the Village,” Patterson continued. “I do have a little bit of a problem were we to extend this all the way down the county portion of Midnight Pass and then deal with the state roads as well.”

She added, “Siesta Key isn’t just a resort area.” Some residents drive to work, for example, she pointed out, and others — as well as tourists — drive all over, including down to Turtle Beach on the south end.

“That traffic on Siesta Key’s extremely heavy,” Barbetta said, “and the odds are pretty good the golf carts are going to get way over to the right [of the road], meaning the pedestrians are going to get hit by the golf carts ... So I think we open a can of worms up if we let that happen.”

Barbetta added, “I’d be more worried about somebody being hit by a car [if the person is operating a golf cart] or a golf cart hitting a pedestrian. So we need to give this, really, an awful lot of thought and at what point on the Key do we cut it off?”

Commissioner Christine Robinson pointed out that speed limit reductions usually are requested to improve safety on a road, but it appeared this petition had been propelled by a different desire.

Before lowering the speed limit, she said, the commission should make sure Siesta residents have a chance to weigh in on the matter during community meetings.

Wiggins concurred that the staff member who originally handled the request — who left county employment — had learned the petition was founded in a desire for golf cart usage on the road.

When a petition is grounded in a safety concern, Commissioner Charles Hines said, “There are many, many people ... that will show up” for the public hearing on the issue at the TAC meeting. With this agenda item, he pointed out, only the petitioner came to the TAC meeting.

# Siesta Seen

Moreover, Hines said, a situation where little segments of road with a lower speed limit are interspersed with segments having higher speed limits poses a dangerous situation. “It’s going to be a law enforcement problem.”

“I would be concerned about those golf carts on the Key as well,” Chairwoman Carolyn Mason added.

Just a few weeks ago, when she last was on Siesta, she said, “It took me 45 minutes to get to the Stickney Point bridge from the Village

Café.” In the stop-and-go process, she continued, one driver used the continuous turn lane on Midnight Pass Road to get in front of other vehicles, “which is crazy, but we all know it’s done.”

She told the other board members, “Safety is a real concern for me.” As Barbetta had pointed out, she added, “Pedestrians and golf carts — it just seems like a recipe for trouble.”

Patterson made a motion to deny the request for the lower speed limit. It died for lack of a second.



*County commissioners are wary of opening up Siesta Key roads to golf cart transportation, regardless of how the vehicles may look. Photo by Sfoskett via Wikimedia Commons*

# Siesta Seen

Barbetta said he felt the 40 mph speed limit was too high on the segment of Midnight Pass Road under consideration, but he needed more assurances about how the golf cart situation would be handled.

Besides, Barbetta said, if the speed limit goes down to 35 mph, “[Drivers are] going to go 44.”

“This particular segment of Midnight Pass is straight as string,” Patterson said, “and it’s actually not as dangerous as some of the further-south areas that are twisty and turny and fairly narrow.”

Hines suggested the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office be asked to weigh in on the matter before the board takes it up again.

When Robinson asked whether the Sheriff’s Office representative on the TAC voted in favor of the request, the response was that he did.

Barbetta made the motion to continue the discussion to the commission’s morning session on Wednesday, May 8, adding a request that Wiggins check with the Florida Department of Transportation beforehand about the state statute regarding golf cart usage on roads.

Patterson also asked that the county’s engineers as well as the Sheriff’s Office weigh in. Referencing Barbetta’s earlier comment, she added that if most vehicles already are traveling at 49 mph when the speed limit is 40 mph, lowering the limit to 35 is going to pose more enforcement issues.

Wiggins concurred with the latter part of the remark, noting more drivers would be breaking the law.

“More tickets,” Barbetta said.

“They’ll give ’em tickets,” Wiggins added, referring to deputies.

“Ultimately, that will lower the speed they’re going,” Patterson said with a chuckle.

## THE STATUTE

After listening to the County Commission discussion, I contacted FDOT about the state statute regarding golf cart use on roads.

Robin Stublen, communications specialist with the department, directed me to the [statute](#). The very first part reads as follows:

“A golf cart may be operated only upon a county road that has been designated by a county, or a municipal street that has been designated by a municipality, for use by golf carts. Prior to making such a designation, the responsible local governmental entity must first determine that golf carts may safely travel on or cross the public road or street, considering factors including the speed, volume, and character of motor vehicle traffic using the road or street. Upon a determination that golf carts may be safely operated on a designated road or street, the responsible governmental entity shall post appropriate signs to indicate that such operation is allowed.”

It will be up to the County Commission, then, to make those determinations.

# Siesta Seen

## FIESTA TIME

This weekend — April 13-14 — the Siesta Key Village Association will host the 35<sup>th</sup> annual Siesta Fiesta fine arts show along Ocean Boulevard.

Hours will be from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday.

Ocean Boulevard will be closed between Canal and Beach roads for the event, to allow arts and crafts vendors to set up their booths, the SKVA's newsletter, *Boulevard Buzz*, points out this month.

About 250 artists and other vendors are expected, offering collectibles ranging from

paintings to sculpture to jewelry to photography to unique crafts. A Green Market will feature orchids, dips and soup mixes, according to the *Buzz*.

Members of both the SKVA and the Siesta Key Association will be selling Siesta Fiesta T-shirts as well. Repeat customers have been a tradition, SKVA President Russell Matthes pointed out during that organization's April 2 meeting.

Peter van Roekens, the SKA secretary, noted that a total of 288 T-shirts will be available at a price of \$15 each. The booth will be close to the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar at 5254 Ocean Blvd.



Ocean Boulevard will be lined with booths Saturday and Sunday for Siesta Fiesta. Photo by Norman Schimmel

# Siesta Seen

Siesta Fiesta is put on by Howard Alan Productions and American Craft Endeavors in conjunction with the SKVA.

Volleyball, too

Along with Siesta Fiesta, The Fiesta on Siesta Key, “one of the largest collegiate sand volleyball competitions ever held,” according to a news release, will return for its fifth year April 12-14 at Siesta Public Beach.

The format for the Fiesta on Siesta Key will differ from that of past years, the news release says. With Florida State University, Tulane and other institutions having added sand

volleyball programs, the schedule had to be expanded.

Among the other participants will be Stetson University, the University of Alabama-Birmingham, Ava Maria, Florida Gulf Coast University, Georgia State, St. Petersburg College, Miami, South Carolina, South Florida and Webber International University.

The NCAA Sand Dual matches will begin at noon on Friday, April 12. The Championship tournament is set to start at 9 a.m. on Sunday.

For more information, visit [www.fiestaonsiesta.com](http://www.fiestaonsiesta.com). 

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## ART UPTOWN FEATURING MEDITATIVE PAINTINGS OF MARO LORIMER

The abstract seascapes of Holmes Beach artist Maro Lorimer are featured in *Meditations*, a one-woman show at Art Uptown, 1367 Main St., Sarasota.

An artist's reception is scheduled for Friday, April 12, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the gallery. The public is invited.

Originally from a waterfront village on eastern Long Island, the artist is a graduate of Brown University. She lived in the Colorado mountains for many years before moving to Anna Maria Island 14 years ago, a press release says. She also has spent considerable time in New Zealand.

"I have spent much of my life staring at the water," Lorimer says in the release, "and, when I lived inland, I spent my time dreaming of it. I call these paintings 'meditations' because

they come from staring and dreaming. I paint spontaneously, exclusively from my memories and my imagination."

"The Florida landscape first inspired her to express the intimate beauty of natural beach paths, always with just a glimpse of the water at the end of the path," the release notes. This series of beach path collages was presented in a solo exhibit at the Studio at Gulf and Pine in Anna Maria three years ago, the release adds.

"From the beach paths, the artist's viewpoint emerged onto the wide-open beach, and, eventually, out onto the water," the release continues.

In recent years, Lorimer's work has been presented in solo exhibits at Sarasota Orchestra's Harmony Gallery and the Palmetto Art Center as well as at the Studio at Gulf and Pine, the

release adds. She was the first-place award winner at Art Uptown's *Dog Days* show last summer. (In the previous two years, she had won second and third place.)

This is her first season as a member of Art Uptown, the release notes.

*Meditations* will run through April 26. The gallery is open Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. During the monthly First Friday Gallery Walks on Palm and Main streets, evening hours are 6 to 9 p.m. For more information, call 955-5409 or visit [www.artuptown.com](http://www.artuptown.com).



*Farewell Point* by Maro Lorimer. Contributed photo

## IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES OPENS APRIL 12

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe (WBTT) opens its fourth show of the 2012-13 main season, *It Ain't Nothin' But The Blues*, on Friday, April 12.

The show will run until Sunday, May 12.

"This show is guaranteed to cure the blues, not give them to you," says Founding Artistic Director Nate Jacobs in a news release. "For starters, the Broadway production was nominated for four Tony Awards and three Drama Desk awards. Add to that the talented cast and director we have pulled together for our version and we know it's going to be a real crowd pleaser," he adds.

*It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues* takes a journey through time, tracing the evolution of the blues from African chants through Southern spirituals "to the electrifying songs of postwar Chicago nightclubs," the release adds. "The show captures the heart and soul of this musical genre."

In celebrating the history of the Blues, it also pays homage to the many artists who have contributed to the music's evolution, including Ethel Waters, Jelly Roll Morton, B.B. King and Koko Taylor, the release notes.

Directing the show is WBTT veteran Harry Bryce, his seventh production with the company. "Bryce has been developing visionary works as a director, choreographer, writer and arts educator for more than 30 years," the release says. In 1997, he founded the Memphis Black Repertory Theatre and served as producing artistic director for five seasons, during which time he garnered 17 theater awards, the release adds.

The cast members are a combination of Troupe members and new talent. Audiences will recognize Tsadok Porter, Ariel Blue and Earley Dean, all Troupe members, the release notes. Donald Frison, previously in *Five Guys Named Moe*, returns to the WBTT stage, as

does Horace Smith, seen in *Jitney* earlier this season.

Whitney Mignon Reed, JL Cash Sr. and Greg Burke are new to WBTT productions.

Tickets, which are \$29.50, may be purchased online at [wbttstrq.org](http://wbttstrq.org) or by calling the box office at 366-1505. Performances are Tuesday through Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. The WBTT theater is located at 1646 10<sup>th</sup> Way in Sarasota.



The cast of the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe's *It Ain't Nothing But the Blues* includes (from left) Ariel Blue, Horace Smith, Tsadok Porter, Whitney Mignon Reed and Earley Dean Wilson.

## 10TH ANNUAL EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES EXHIBIT OPEN

Since 2004, Embracing Our Differences' annual juried art exhibit has graced downtown Sarasota's bayfront with billboard-sized images created by artists, writers and students from around the world reflecting their interpretation of the message, "enriching lives through diversity," a news release notes.

This year, a grant from the William G. and Marie Selby Foundation enabled the organization to mark its 10th anniversary with an expansion of the exhibit to Bradenton. The Embracing Our Differences artwork will be showcased in Sarasota's Island Park through June 2; at the Anthony T. Rossi Waterfront Park in downtown Bradenton through April 29; and at North Port High School, May 1 to June 2, the release adds.

According to Michael Shelton, executive director of Embracing Our Differences, nearly

250,000 people visited the exhibit in Island Park in 2012. "By creating simultaneous exhibits in Bradenton and Sarasota, we expect to increase audiences by 25,000 for this year alone," Shelton adds in the release. "We look forward to providing even more opportunities for our community to deepen its awareness that respecting the views of others and standing up against hatred and prejudice will lead to a better world for everyone."

Shelton notes the organization received more than 4,000 pieces of art and statements from people in 52 countries, including Kenya, Malaysia, Israel, Iran, the Philippines, Singapore and the United Kingdom, as well as the United States. Students from 128 elementary, junior and high schools comprised 60 percent of the individuals submitting art and quotes, the release points out.



*The artwork is displayed throughout much of Island Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

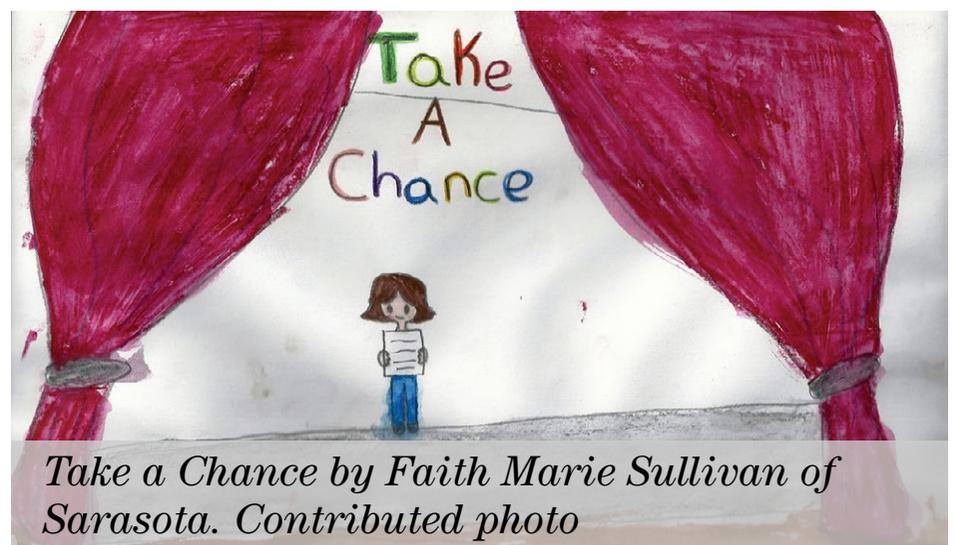
Area residents, especially students, fared well in the competition, the release continues. Artwork and quotes from students in 43 schools in Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte counties were chosen for the exhibit, including artwork created by an entire kindergarten class from Phillippi Shores Elementary and works by two Ringling College of Art and Design students, the release adds.

In all, entries from 22 area artists and 28 area quote writers were chosen, with 19 of the artworks and 20 of the quotes created by local students, the release points out. Two more local student artists also received honorable mentions.

For more information about the exhibit or Embracing Our Differences, call 323-1010 or visit [www.embracingourdifferences.org](http://www.embracingourdifferences.org).



*A sign welcomes visitors to the Embracing Our Differences exhibit in Island Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Take a Chance by Faith Marie Sullivan of Sarasota. Contributed photo*



*Students in a Phillippi Shores Elementary School kindergarten class show off artwork they created for Embracing Our Differences. Contributed photo*

## BELOVED, BIZARRE ADDAMS FAMILY COMING TO SARASOTA

The 2013/2014 National Tour of the new musical *The Addams Family*, based on the bizarre and beloved family of characters created by legendary cartoonist Charles Addams, will make its Sarasota premiere April 22 at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, the hall has announced.

*The Addams Family*, which began performances in March 2010 at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre and ran through December 2011, immediately became one of Broadway's biggest hits, a news release notes. Chris Jones of the *Chicago Tribune* described the production as "classic, full-tilt, fast paced, old-fashioned musical comedy!" and John Simon of *Bloomberg News* called it "uproarious! A glitzy-gloomy musical entirely worthy of the macabre drawings by Charles Addams," the release adds.

*The Addams Family* features a book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice and music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa.

The production features an original story, and "it's every father's nightmare," the release

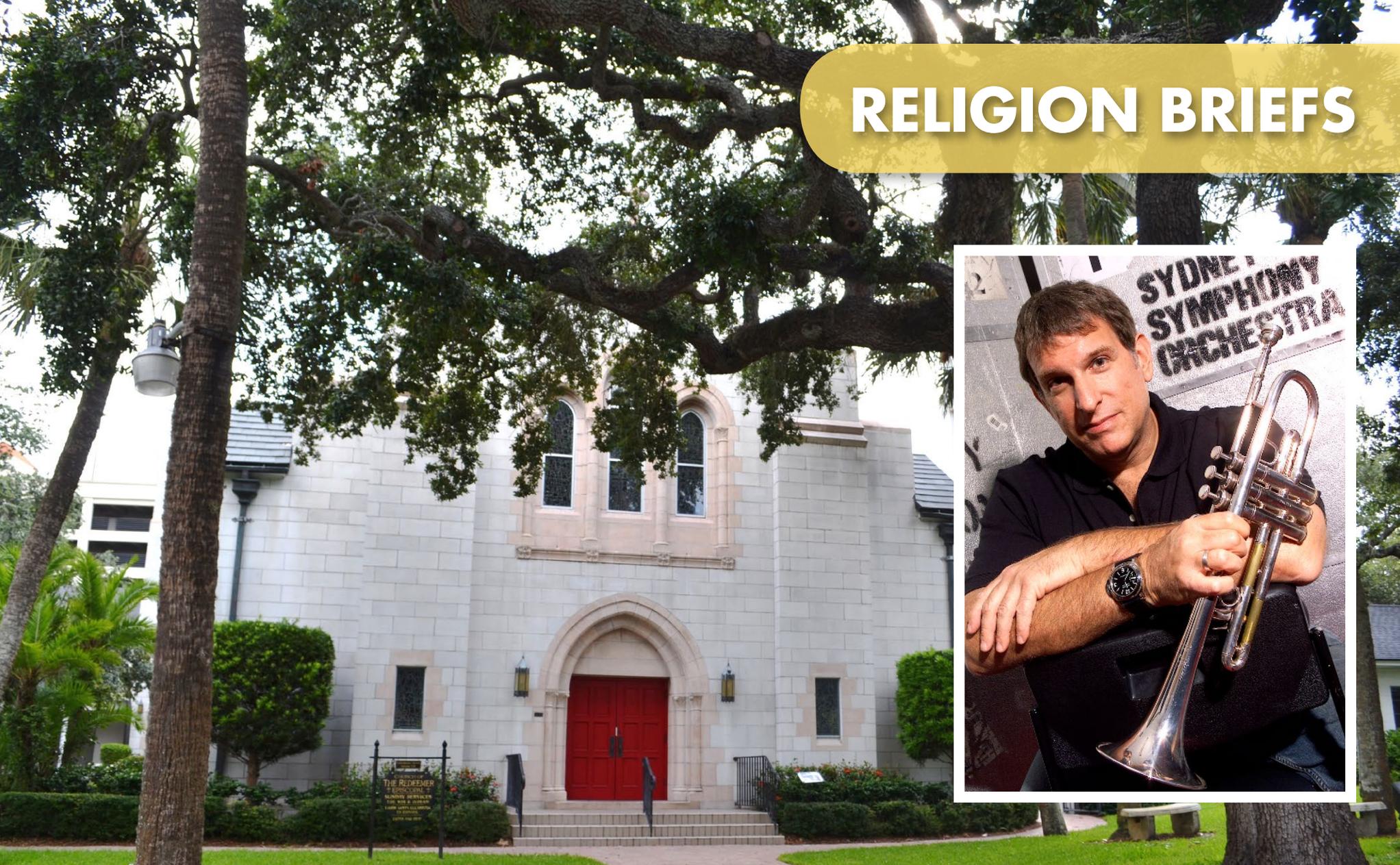
notes. "Wednesday Addams, the ultimate princess of darkness, has grown up and fallen in love with a sweet, smart young man from a respectable family. A man her parents have never met. And if that weren't upsetting enough, she confides in her father and begs him not to tell her mother," the release continues. "Now, Gomez Addams must do something he's never done before — keep a secret from his beloved wife, Morticia. Everything will change for the whole family on the fateful night they host a dinner for Wednesday's 'normal' boyfriend and his parents," it adds.

"In a prolific career spanning six decades, Charles Addams created several thousand cartoons, sketches and drawings, many of which were published in *The New Yorker*. But it was his creation of characters that came to be known as The Addams Family that brought Addams his greatest acclaim," the release points out.

Tickets are priced from \$30 to \$75. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [www.VanWezel.org](http://www.VanWezel.org). 



The creepy, kooky Addams Family will make an appearance on the Van Wezel stage this month. Photo by Carol Rosegg



*The Church of the Redeemer is in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel. Inset: Daniel Mendelow/Contributed photo*

## RENOWNED SOPRANO AND TRUMPETER TO PERFORM IN EVENSONG

Soprano Rebecca Price and trumpeter Daniel Mendelow will perform as part of the Church of the Redeemer's penultimate Solemn Evensong of the 2012-2013 season, at 5:15 p.m. Sunday, April 21, the church has announced.

Price is known for singing in the altissimo soprano range, a full octave above high C. She debuted at Lincoln Center in 1997 and is recognized for performing works by Handel, Vivaldi, Bellini and Donizetti, a news release says. "She has won numerous prestigious awards for her singing and performs worldwide," the release adds.

Mendelow is the former principal trumpet for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, where he played for 34 years. He is trumpeter in residence at Redeemer, and he takes part in many

chamber music performances and recitals in the area, the release continues. He participated as a soloist and panel judge at the 2012 International Trumpet Guild Conference and recently held Bach clinics at Vandercook and Northwestern Universities, it notes.

The April Evensong anthems will be *The Soldier Tir'd* from *Artaxerxes* by Thomas Augustine Arne, *Let the Bright Seraphim* from *Samson* by Handel and *Service in C* by C.V. Stanford.

Evensongs are free; donations are accepted. The Church of the Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave., in downtown Sarasota. For more information, visit [redeemersarasota.org](http://redeemersarasota.org) or call 955-4263.

## STUDENT SPEAKERS TO MARK ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) will celebrate Israel Independence Day with student speakers Haven Miller, Jesse Schein and Janae Newmark during a program at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 19.

The event is free and open to the public.

“Following a rigorous selection process,” a news release says, these students were named recipients of a trip to Israel through the Bob Malkin Young Ambassadors Teen Leadership Mission program. Young Ambassadors attend

at least five pre-mission training sessions to bond and to learn about Israel’s history and culture, the release notes.

Once back in Sarasota, they are expected to become community leaders and volunteers and share their experiences in Israel, the release adds.

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

For more information call 929-7771 or visit [www.CHJ-Sarasota.org](http://www.CHJ-Sarasota.org).

## TEMPLE SINAI TO HOST RECEPTION FOR ABRAMSON, AVERY

In honor of the upcoming wedding of Chazzan Cliff Abramson and Jamie Avery, a celebratory reception will be held at 5:15 p.m. on Friday, April 19, at Temple Sinai, the Temple has announced.

During the 6 p.m. service that will follow the reception, the couple will be given an *Aufruf*, a special blessing, before they are showered with candy, a news release says.

A Spring Supper will top off the evening “with a tasty meal created by Chef Alyson Zildjian,” the release adds. Call the Temple (924-1802) for reservations.

Temple Sinai welcomes guests to share in all the festivities, the release notes.

The Temple is located at 4631 S. Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota. (Enter off Proctor Road between Beneva and Swift roads.)

For more information, call 924-1802 or visit [templesinai-sarasota.org](http://templesinai-sarasota.org).



*Chazzan Cliff Abramson of Temple Sinai and Jamie Avery. Contributed photo*

## SARASOTA ORCHESTRA PRINCIPAL CELLIST FEDER TO DEBUT KADDISH

Sarasota Orchestra principal cellist Abraham Feder will perform Ravel's *Kaddish* during Shabbat services at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, on Friday, April 26, at 7:30 p.m., the Temple has announced.

This Sarasota debut of *Kaddish* is free and open to members of the community, a news release says.

"In addition to being an acclaimed cellist who also performs with the Sarasota String Quartet and Chroma Quarter, Feder is a member of Temple Emanu-El who lends his musical talents to the congregation," the release adds.

His performance of *Kaddish* will be preceded by a brief talk by Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, who will introduce the piece and explain the significance of the Kaddish — the Jewish prayer for the dead — in Jewish ritual.

For more information, call 371-2788. 

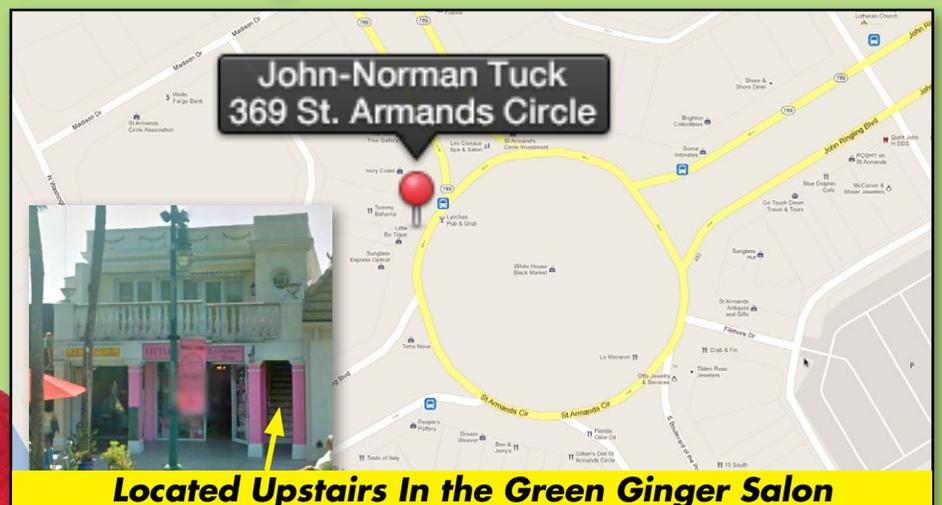
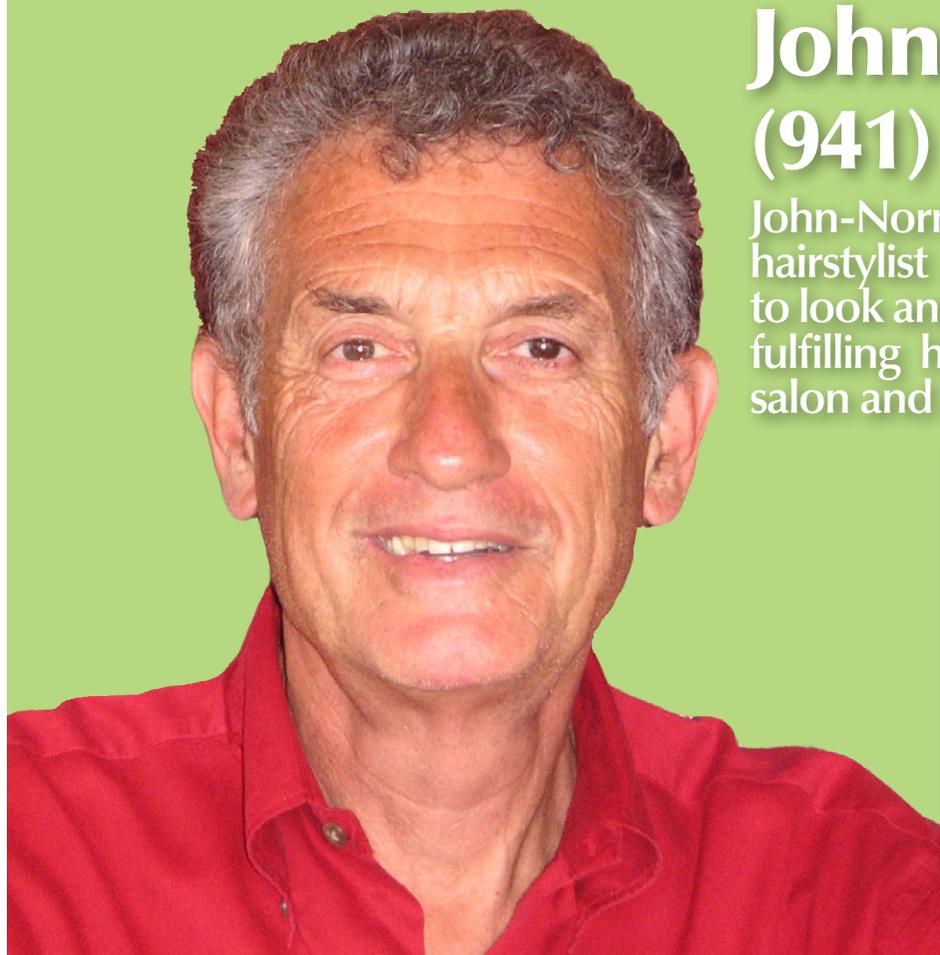


Abe Feder/Contributed photo

## SARASOTA'S HAIR COLOR SPECIALIST

### John-Norman Tuck (941) 928-1203

John-Norman Tuck is Sarasota and Bradenton's premier hairstylist and hair color artist. Getting his customer's hair to look and feel it's best is his passion. John-Norman started fulfilling his customers' hair dreams in his Pasadena, CA salon and now has brought his talents to Sarasota.



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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**12+**  
APRIL

### **La Musica International Chamber Music Festival rehearsals**

Through April 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.

**12+**  
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](#).

**12+**  
APRIL

### **Venus in Fur (for mature audiences)**

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

**13+**  
APRIL

### **35th annual Siesta Fiesta**

April 13-14, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Siesta Village on Siesta Key, along Ocean Boulevard and part of Beach Road, featuring about 250 arts and crafts vendors and a Green Market. For more info, visit [www.siestakeyville.org](#).

**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](#).

**14**  
APRIL

### **Stuart Woods will sign his new book**

April 14, 3 p.m., author Stuart Woods returns to Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St., to greet fans and sign his latest Stone Barrington mystery, *Unintended Consequences*. More info at [bookstore1sarasota.com](#) or 365-7900. Only books purchased through Bookstore1 will be eligible for signing. Pre-order in person at Bookstore1 or by phone at 365-7900.

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



thisweekin  
**SARASOTA.com**  
SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR

# OH, THE TALES IT COULD TELL



## 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.*