

THE SARASOTA

No. 32 — April 26, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

WALMART BOWS OUT AT RINGLING

WALMART WINS COUNTY'S OK

WEIGHING THE ODDS

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The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

Whew! What a week it has been — for us, at least.

Stan Zimmerman proved to be the “Scoop Master” — reeling in a couple of stories before anyone else had them. The first was about the owners of the Ringling Shopping Center filing suit over the City Commission decision to deny Walmart the right to build on that site. The second is about the new deputy chief of police in Sarasota.

As of this writing, another publication had picked up the scent of the shopping center suit, but I can vouch for Stan’s sniffing it out first.

For Cooper Levey-Baker and me, it was *County Commission Extravaganza*. Reporters never know whether what appears to be a hot agenda item will prove that exciting once it is aired. Concomitantly, engaging topics not on the agenda just pop up. The County Commission meetings this week featured examples of both situations.

Cooper had the worse end of it, however, because he sat through hours of the Bee Ridge/Beneva Walmart discussion on Wednesday — which I was covering by live video streaming — awaiting a presentation on Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs). Finally — after a county staff member reportedly suggested the commissioners might be very late eating dinner that night — the TDR agenda item was delayed until June. Good thing, too, since the Walmart matter wrapped up well after 5 p.m.

Cooper and I did trade duties this week on covering Warm Mineral Springs, after his late-breaking work last week. Thankfully, though, I had all his past reporting as backup material.

When you make it beyond our news stories, you will see an expansive Opinion section, including a very well-researched commentary by David Staats about the deceased suspect in the Boston Marathon bombings.

To complete the issue, our *Sarasota Leisure* section has plenty of light offerings, thanks to Tyler Whitson, Otus and contributors Fran Palmeri and Elinor Rogosin.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



WALMART BOWS OUT AT RINGLING



BAN BEGINS MONDAY



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Front cover: *Violaceous Twilight* - Norman Schimmel

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WALMART BOWS OUT AT RINGLING



The Ringling Shopping Center sits vacant with a chain-link fence surrounding it. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SHOPPING CENTER OWNER FILES APPEAL WITH COURT

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Walmart will not fight a Sarasota City Commission decision denying its proposal to demolish the Ringling Shopping Center and build a “supercenter.” The company had until April 24 to file an appeal.

Instead, the owner of the shopping center filed a last-minute appeal in 12th Judicial Circuit Court to reverse the city’s Feb. 26 decision. The Doyle Family Trust — represented by Lewis and Diana Doyle — are challenging the city action. Attorney John Harllee of Bradenton will represent the trust. Reached by telephone, Harllee would only say, “No comment.”

Walmart Spokesman William Wertz told *The Sarasota News Leader* by email, “While we have chosen not to pursue a lawsuit appealing the city council’s decision, we will continue to evaluate opportunities in Sarasota and remain focused on serving customers at our existing stores here.”

“*It’s clear that our Ringling Shopping Center proposal would have been a common sense solution for residents who want to see economic development, jobs and affordable shopping options at this location.*”

William Wertz
Spokesman
Walmart

On April 24, the Sarasota County Commission voted to allow a Walmart Neighborhood Market — with just groceries and a pharmacy — to be built at the intersection of Beneva and Bee Ridge roads. ([See related story in this issue.](#))

The company had hoped to demolish the Ringling Shopping Center two blocks east of the historic downtown courthouse and build a 98,000-square-foot store at the former Publix site.

The suit by the site's owners seeks to overturn the City Commission's 3-2 vote to deny a site plan offered by Walmart. In other words, if the Doyle Family Trust prevails, that would allow only for the construction of the supercenter proposed initially by Walmart.

At press time, it was unclear whether the agreement between the Doyle Family Trust and the retailer to purchase the property remains in effect. It is also unclear if the trust is acting on behalf of Walmart or acting on its own.

Both the city planning staff and the Planning Board recommended approval of the Walmart

site plan. But the nearby Alta Vista Neighborhood Association paid a \$1,597 fee to appeal the decision to the City Commission. The neighborhood nearest the proposed store site — Terrace Gardens — took no stand on the issue.

The appeal to the City Commission required two separate votes. The first necessitated that a supermajority of commissioners agree to hear the appeal. After a tense public hearing on Jan. 7, the neighborhood appeal cleared that hurdle thanks to a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Paul Caragiulo in the minority.

The actual appeal before the City Commission required two evenings of evidence, testimony and analysis — more than eight hours of information. On Feb. 26, the city commissioners voted 3-2 to deny Walmart's site plan, with Commissioners Caragiulo and Suzanne Atwell in the minority.



A new Walmart Neighborhood Market opened on North Tamiami Trail in September 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

On the prevailing side, Commissioner Terry Turner said the project was “not compatible — the bulk, the 24/7 [hours of operation], the truck noise and traffic and the intensity of the project in a neighborhood area.”

Wertz’ email to the *News Leader* struck a defiant tone. “It’s clear that our Ringling Shopping Center proposal would have been a common sense solution for residents who want to see economic development, jobs and affordable shopping options at this location.

In fact we’ve heard from many who have expressed disappointment in the City’s final determination,” he wrote. “Moving forward we will continue to expand access to low prices and lead on issues that are important to our customers like nutrition and local sourcing.”

The last-minute appeal by Harllee and the Doyle Family Trust will now climb its way through the Circuit Court process — hearings and depositions — before reaching either a settlement or a trial. 



A tarred and feathered replica of a Walmart logo sits outside City Hall before a City Commission meeting in January. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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WALMART WINS COUNTY'S OK



The River's Edge Community Church is visible through stately oaks on the property. Photo by Robert Hackney

IN SPITE OF RESIDENTS' PROTESTS ABOUT ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC, A NEW WALMART WILL BE COMING TO THE BENEVA/BEE RIDGE INTERSECTION

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

After almost three hours of comments during an April 24 public hearing— with all but four of 22 speakers in opposition to the request — the Sarasota County Commission approved an amendment to the county's comprehensive plan and the rezoning of 4.033 acres to allow a Walmart Neighborhood Market to be built on the southwest corner of Bee Ridge and Beneva roads.

It will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Commissioner Nora Patterson was in the

minority on the two votes, voicing concerns — as most of the speakers had — about the additional traffic the Walmart would bring to that intersection. She also expressed disdain for action of the Florida Legislature in 2011 that allows a developer to pay a “proportionate share” of the cost for needed road improvements as a result of a new project,

instead of a higher expense through impact fees.

In the case of the Walmart, according to testimony from Paula Wiggins, the county's

“*I travel that road all the time, and it really does have a lot of traffic.*”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



transportation planning manager, the developer would pay \$31,822 as its proportionate share for improvements, whereas the total cost would be \$528,012. In response to an earlier question from Patterson, Wiggins said the county does not have funding in its budget for that work.

“I think what the Legislature did to us ... is just incomprehensible,” Patterson added. “I would hope we would find [the road improvement] affordable and go ahead and do it,” she continued. In terms of the county’s transportation spending, she said, “It’s not a humongous bill.”

Patterson told her fellow board members, “I travel that road *all* the time, and it really does have a *lot* of traffic.”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta made the motion to amend the comprehensive plan to make the 41,180-square-foot Walmart possible. “This is a commercial corridor,” he pointed out. “The land uses are there.”

In seconding that motion, Commissioner Christine Robinson concurred. The future land-use designation “has been in place” for that parcel, she noted. “I hear what the residents are saying,” she added, “[but] this is a reasonable use for the property.”

Patterson countered that the comprehensive plan change was necessary because the current zoning would not allow as intense a use of the parcel as requested. “By [rezoning] it to Commercial Corridor,” she said, “what we’re doing is essentially expanding the square footage of retail that’s usable.”

“My intent was not to get into a back-and-forth with you,” Robinson told Patterson, noting that the current zoning already would allow similar uses. “It is a slight increase” in intensity, she added.

Regarding the rezoning: Robinson made the motion, with Barbetta seconding it.

“Something’s going on that property,” Barbetta pointed out, noting the pastor of the River’s Edge Community Church already had testified that his congregation wants to sell the property.

(Pastor David McCoy said during the public hearing that the church members decided to put the property on the market in the fall of 2010. It actually went on the market in December 2010, added the church’s Realtor, who was in the audience. That was “way before anybody came and offered us a sales contract,” McCoy told the commissioners.)



A panoramic view shows the River’s Edge Community Church at the southwest intersection of Bee Ridge and Beneva Roads in Sarasota. Photo by Robert Hackney

If the Walmart were not allowed there, Barbetta said, the site could end up being the home of a combination bank and office building, “which would generate equal to or greater the traffic than [the Walmart] is proposed to do.”

Moreover, Barbetta said, he believed the Walmart was going to draw a lot of its business from the residents who already live in that area.

Commissioner Charles Hines said he would support the rezoning as well. “I’m really struggling with the neighbors saying there’ll be increased new traffic from people out of the area,” he added.

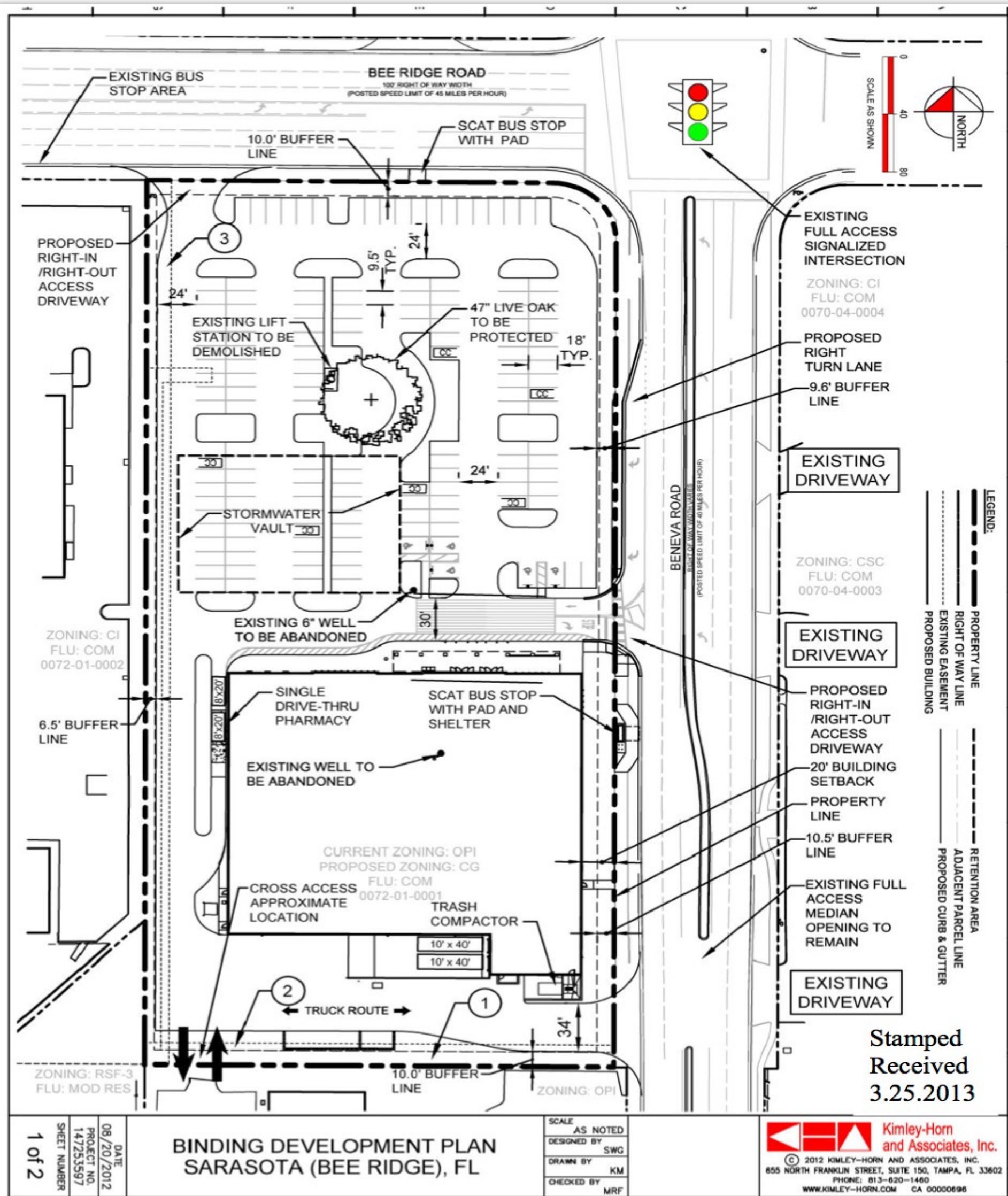
A staff analysis based on standard traffic formulas indicated the potential of 251 more trips per day through the Beneva/Bee Ridge intersection



People fill most of the seats in the County Commission chambers for the Walmart discussion on April 24. Photo by Norman Schimmel



County Planner Tim Lampkin makes a presentation to the County Commission about the Walmart proposal. Photo by Norman Schimmel



A site plan shows how the new Walmart will be situated at the intersection of Beneva and Bee Ridge roads. Image courtesy Sarasota County



An aerial photo shows the River's Edge Community Church at the Bee Ridge/Beneva intersection with Gettel Automotive west of it on Bee Ridge Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

as a result of the Walmart's opening. Twenty-nine of those trips were predicted to be during the peak travel time.

The analysis noted that the store is expected to have an impact on Bee Ridge Road from Lockwood Ridge Road to Beneva Road as well as an impact on Beneva from Wilkinson Avenue to Bee Ridge. It adds, "The impacted Bee Ridge Road and Beneva Road segments are built to their ultimate configurations."

It also says, "The project's traffic triggers the need for a southbound to westbound right turn lane."

Scott Gilner of Kimley-Horn and Associates, acting as the project engineer for Walmart, told the commissioners the expectation is that most of the Walmart's customers would live roughly within a 1.5-mile radius of the new store.

Agreeing with Patterson, Hines continued, "What is *absolutely* clear is we have a traffic problem on those two roads that I think our county needs to look at ..."

THE BACKGROUND

Don Neu, the agent representing Beneva Land Trust/River's Edge Community Church Inc., told the commissioners during his presentation that the project would employ about 100 construction workers on a temporary basis. Once open, the store would have 80 to 100 full-time employees.

According to material accompanying the agenda item, the average wage for those workers will be \$12.64 per hour.

"I'm really struggling with the neighbors saying there'll be increased new traffic from people out of the area."

Charles Hines
Commissioner
Sarasota County

Moreover, Neu said, the store would add approximately \$1.75 million a year to the county's coffers through sales and property taxes.

Referencing residents' remarks from the public hearing, Patterson chided Neu that if the store does draw customers away other nearby grocery stores, then his estimate might be too high in terms of sales tax revenue.

Still, Neu pointed out, "This is a non-performing parcel here."

Regarding the landscaping on the site, Neu said that one live oak on the property designated a "Grand Tree" because of its 47-inch diameter will not be cut down. However, "Not necessarily all trees will be saved," he added.

The developer of the project — Jim Bridges of Jebco Management — told participants at a Jan. 30 neighborhood meeting that once the project "gets through the pre-development stage it should take approximately one year to complete," according to the agenda material for the commissioners.

PROTESTS

Among the speakers who addressed the County Commission during the public hearing, Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA), voiced concerns about the de-

livery truck traffic at the site. Moreover, she said, “Right now, there isn’t a need for another grocery store with a drug store [in that area]. They would be cannibalizing off each other.”


She also argued that Sarasota is “losing a lot of office space to commercial uses.”

Sharon Whalen, a homeowner in the Village Plaza Condominiums located northeast of the proposed store site, held up a sheath of petitions signed by people opposing the project.

The area has seven full-service grocery stores within two miles of her home, she added. If the board approved the new Walmart, the traffic on Bee Ridge and Beneva roads will be “a bigger mess.”

Referring to the “proportionate share” of the road impact expense the company would shoulder, Whalen continued, “That’s a very small price for them to pay for mucking up our neighborhood pretty badly.”

Resident Cindy Grier protested “commercial creep” in the area. “We do not want Bee Ridge to be the next [U.S.] 41,” she said, adding, “We’re not exaggerating the danger here” in regard to the traffic.

The few speakers supporting the store spoke of their interest in being able to shop at a wide variety of times and the opportunity to pay lower prices for groceries and drugs. 



Commissioner Nora Patterson. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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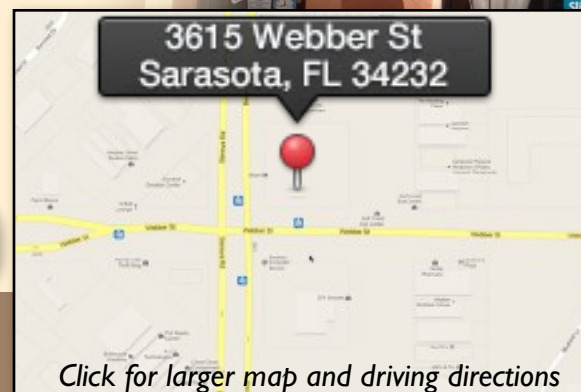
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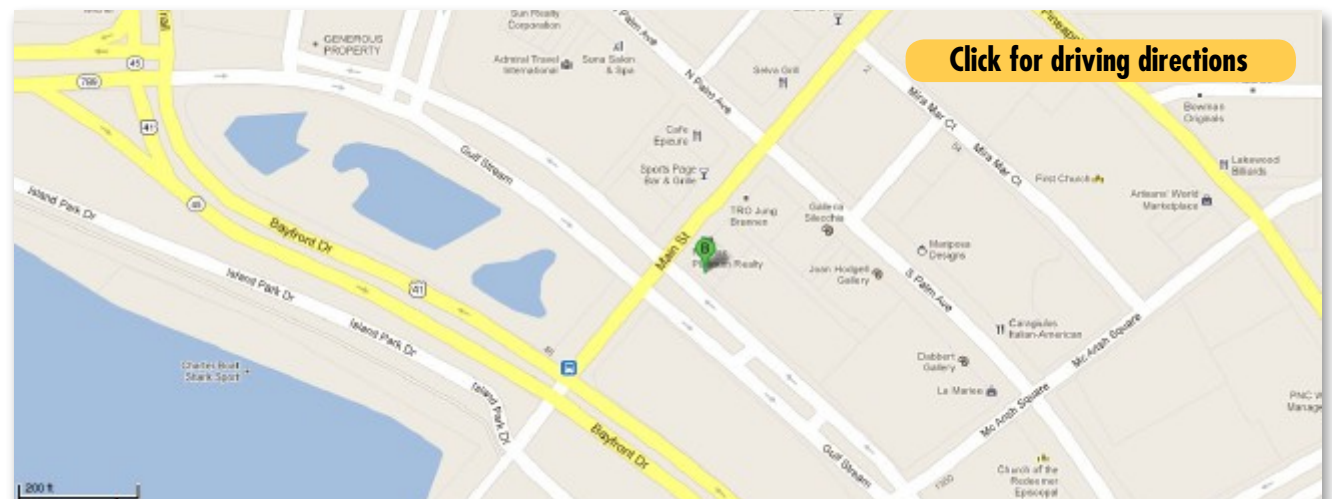


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WEIGHING THE ODDS

Guests at Warm Mineral Springs participate in a class. Photo courtesy City of North Port

UNSURE OF WHAT THE NORTH PORT COMMISSION WILL DO, THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES THE DRAFTING OF AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT ON WARM MINERAL SPRINGS FOR BOTH BOARDS TO SIGN

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A North Port city commissioner who indicated a change of heart on the future of Warm Mineral Springs only hours after a facilitated meeting between her board and the Sarasota County Commission made no mention of that flip-flop during the city's regular session on April 22.

Therefore, Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson won approval from three of her fellow commissioners the next day to direct

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh to draft an interlocal agreement for both boards to sign, memorializing their actions during that April 17 facilitated meeting.

However, Robinson included the caveat in her motion that the North Port City Commission vote first on the legal document. "If they reject this agreement," Robinson said of the North Port commissioners, "then all bets are off. ..."

“It's really sad that we've come to where we are. But we're still trying to move forward in good faith.”

Carolyn Mason
Chairwoman
County Commission



Commissioner Charles Hines cast the “No” vote after about 20 minutes of discussion during the County Commission’s regular meeting on April 23 in Sarasota.

“... *The pending selling of the city’s interest [in Warm Mineral Springs] is still there.*

Linda Yates
Mayor
City of North Port

”

North Port and the county jointly acquired the 81-acre springs property for \$5.5 million in 2010.

After eight hours of facilitation on April 17, however, a North Port Commission ma-

On April 17, as part of a process outlined by state law, the two commissions met with a facilitator to discuss how to break a months-long impasse over Warm Mineral Springs. In July 2012, the two commissions agreed to pursue an Invitation to Negotiate on the long-term management of the resort. The election of two new North Port commissioners in November 2012 shifted that board’s majority to one opposing the ITN process.

jority embraced the idea of a short-term lease followed by an ITN-like process. Then North Port Commissioner Rhonda DiFranco sent an email at 5:30 a.m. April 18 to North Port City Manager Jonathan Lewis saying she had changed her mind.

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta asked on April 23 how the County Commission should proceed. County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh replied that the city and county needed to



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

work on the interlocal agreement, as outlined by state statute.

“What was agreed to?” Barbetta retorted.

DeMarsh responded that the majorities of both commissions had agreed to advertisement of a 10-month lease and some type of process to identify the long-term management of the Springs.

Barbetta replied, “Her email was pretty clear,” referring to DiFranco.

Then Robinson pointed out that she had watched the end of the North Port Commission meeting on April 22. “There was no official action taken by the city commissioners last night,” she said.

“We know how she’s going to vote [on an interlocal agreement],” Barbetta said of DiFranco. “I don’t want to waste any more time on this.”

Robinson reiterated, “There was *no* discussion about stopping the process last night.”

“So you would be willing to go for-

ward on a tenuous thing like that, kick the can down the road for 10 months with a lease, knowing that at the end of 10 months, we’re going to have the same problem we have now?” Barbetta asked Robinson.

“It’s one agreement,” she replied of the interlocal document. “So they’re going to sign the agreement to go forward or they’re not,” she added of the North Port commissioners.

‘A PENDING SALE’

During the April 22 North Port meeting, City Attorney Robert K. Robinson explained the need for the interlocal agreement or a resolution memorializing the decisions during the April 17 facilitated session — just as DeMarsh did the next day.

Mayor Linda Yates objected to the fact that neither commission had been informed about that part of the process.

Attorney Robinson pointed out that city and county staff members had



discussed the requirements of the statute after the two commissions left on April 17.

Lewis read from the state statute to underscore Attorney Robinson's comments.

Yates pointed out that if one or both commissions chose not to sign that interlocal agreement, "the pending selling of the city's interest [in Warm Mineral Springs] is still there."

(Earlier this year, the city rebuffed an offer by the county to pay \$2 million for Warm Mineral Springs, with the condition the city de-annex the property.)

Yates added it was unclear on April 17 whether the commissions would be proceeding with seeking a short-term lease or an ITN.

"I think that's your characterization of the process," Robinson told her, noting that the facilitator of the April 17 session would be available to discuss the matter further with the City Commission.

Every settlement of a dispute usually results in the drafting of an agreement memorializing the settlement, Attorney Robinson pointed out, "and all the parties sign it. I really can't say it any simpler than it is."

"And the selling of the city's half [of the resort] was pending a successful outcome" of the facilitated meeting, Yates reiterated.

WORRIES ABOUT THE FUTURE

Hines told his fellow county commissioners on April 23 that he agreed with Barbetta's worries about DiFranco's change of mind.

Speaking to DeMarsh, he continued, "I would not feel comfortable having you spend hours and hours and hours working on an agree-



*County Commissioner Christine Robinson.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

ment" until the North Port Commission votes on how it wishes to proceed.

Commissioner Robinson reminded him that the statute called for the interlocal agreement to be signed first, then the boards could proceed with an ITN.

"Has she withdrawn her email?" Barbetta asked about DiFranco.

"She didn't say she wasn't going to [during the April 22 meeting]," Commissioner Robinson told him.

County Administrator Randall Reid said Lewis had informed him that DiFranco had taken no formal action regarding her email, "but you do have her email stating her intent."

“I think her intent is changeable,” Commissioner Nora Patterson said.

“The [North Port] Commission changed once by tenor of election and the commission can change again by tenor of elections,” Patterson pointed out.

“I believe the worst thing that could happen to the Springs is that it close,” Patterson continued. The only alternative to pursuing a short-term lease, she added, is to proceed with a plan to have North Port city staff or county staff keep the resort open with bare amenities, “and I *really* don’t like that. To me that’s an absolute last gasp.”

Commissioner Robinson concurred with Patterson. Once a local government began managing the facility, she added, she feared the situation would become permanent.

Reid noted that if no short-term lease were signed, the county would be obligated to maintain security at Warm Mineral Springs, to prevent people from just wandering in to swim.

With the current lease set to expire on June 30, DeMarsh said he and his staff would proceed with drafting a short-term lease agreement that could be advertised. That would be provided to the North Port Commission concurrently with the interlocal agreement. The next regular North Port Commission meeting is set for May 13, he added.

Finally, Barbetta told his fellow board members, “I’ll support the [legal] process. That’s the only thing I’ll support.”

Still, he said of the facilitated meeting, “We’d have to be in a cave not to have heard what the [North Port] commissioners said there. They think [Warm Mineral Springs] is a public park, a \$5½ million public park.”

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

If the two boards cannot agree on the interlocal agreement, DeMarsh explained, typically the county attorney and county administrator would be sent as delegates of the County Commission to work with their city counterparts and a mediator to determine whether any resolution could be reached.

The parties could simply decide to terminate the legal process, he noted. On the other hand, he said, “Either party would be lawfully able to sue ... But you don’t have to do anything.”

Moreover, DeMarsh said, “The County Commission would be under no time pressure to bring a lawsuit.”

“From the day we voted to purchase [Warm Mineral Springs jointly with the City of North Port], this commission has operated in good faith,” Chairwoman Carolyn Mason said. “And it’s really sad that we’ve come to where we are. But we’re still trying to move forward in good faith.” 

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BAR MORATORIUM DIES

Smokin' Joe's is among the bars on Main Street in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY COMMISSION PREPARES FOR 'EPIC' NOISE DISCUSSION IN MAY

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota city commissioners on Tuesday, April 23, backed off a proposal to ban new bars downtown. The idea had represented another attempt to placate downtown property owners who complain about noise.

A motion to impose a moratorium actually passed on the afternoon of April 15, when the City Commission was in regular session. However, at the urging of City Attorney Robert Fournier, it was rescinded in the evening. Fournier promised to

bring it back Tuesday, April 23, during a budget workshop.

The action marked the second major flip-flop the commission had made on the noise issue in six weeks.

After a special meeting also was called for April 23, the moratorium issue was moved to the special meeting agenda. Fournier set the stage by outlining the legal steps necessary to make any moratorium defensible in court. "Moratoria are

“ We do not need any more nightclubs. They bring only drunkenness, fights and drugs. ”

Barbara Campo
Resident
Downtown Sarasota

often challenged by owners of property alleging it is a taking of their rightful use of property," he said.

At present six bars, nightclubs or taverns (a zoning definition) operate downtown. They serve hard liquor, and they often have either live or recorded music. The only outdoor music venue allowed downtown is Mattison's City Grille on Lemon Avenue. It must abide

by a 75-decibel limit, and it must stop performances at 11 p.m.

Other bars, nightclubs and taverns must contain their music indoors, but they frequently open their doors, permitting the sound to escape.

A zoning code provision banning amplified outdoor music by any business has been suspended on constitutional grounds, so ampli-



*Tequila Cantina in downtown Sarasota has a moderate crowd early on a recent Saturday night.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

fied recorded music is being played downtown as well.

Other bars, taverns and nightclubs may be in the wings. Already, three have paperwork filed with the city, asking for the major conditional use permits necessary to open their doors.

In early March, the City Commission voted 4-1 not to create a proposed *ad hoc* committee to examine the noise problem top-to-bottom. Five people were waiting for the go-ahead to serve on that committee. But the idea was scrapped when Commissioner Paul Caragiulo asked for more stringent enforcement of the



Patrick's remains busy after its move a couple of years ago from Five Points to just west of the Main Street/Lemon Avenue intersection. Photo by Norman Schimmel

current sound ordinance before unleashing the *ad hoc* committee.

Caragiulo late last year and earlier this year hosted town hall-style meetings to hear what residents thought about the impact of the so-called noise ordinance. His first meeting was primarily attended by younger people and entertainers who urged relaxation of the restrictions to create “a more vibrant downtown.”

When word circulated that people were urging looser rules on sound, Caragiulo’s second meeting was packed with downtown condominium residents urging shorter hours for music, less noise and serious enforcement.

THE FATE AND FACE OF DOWNTOWN

Caragiulo has said from the beginning the discussion is not about sound, it is about planning the future of downtown. And that comment — from both sides of the issue — has been intellectually embraced and amplified, although the two sides have different ideas about what the future of downtown should be.

“We have a quality of life issue for the future,” Barbara Campo told the commissioners April 23. The long-time downtown resident said, “We do not need any more nightclubs. They bring only drunkenness, fights and drugs.”

Another downtown resident, Patrick O’Brien, said, “It’s our job to raise the problem. It’s your job to find a solution. And what type of downtown we are going to have, that’s your job, too.”

After public comments ended, Fournier reminded the commissioners of the city powers that already exist to monitor and control new bars, nightclubs and taverns coming into downtown.

“You can control the duration of the permit and the hours of operation. You can demand sound attenuation plans by an engineer. You can hold a second public hearing after the Planning Board finishes [addressing a request], if you think it should be approved with [more] conditions,” he said. “Or you could deny it.”

The commissioners, by consensus, agreed to defer the idea of a moratorium until conditions outlined by Fournier have been met. Those include holding two public hearings and resolving questions about four legal issues revolving around a moratorium — duration, evidence of potential harm, justification and constitutionality.

The commission will take up the sound ordinance issue in a major way at its regular meeting on May 6. It has asked the Sarasota Police Department to offer up information about enforcement, sound levels, complaints, calls for service, citations and arrests.

“I have made it mandatory there will be documentation on any noise-related call,” Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino told the commissioners.

She said she is “holding our officers to [a requirement to] write down [complaints] and keep track. We have a detail going out proactively enforcing the noise ordinance. I have officers assigned to the bar closings and talking to bar owners. We have 17 police officers trained [on noise enforcement] across all the shifts. Please call us if you have a problem with noise.”

DiPino added that she is working with fire inspectors and code enforcement officers. “We’re hoping this is temporary,” she said.

All of this comes to a head May 6. 

This may take a while.

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Complaints about the increasing number of apparently homeless people soliciting money from motorists have led to a new panhandling ban in the city. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION APPROVES A NEW ORDINANCE TO PREVENT PANHANDLING, BUT THE CITY LIKELY WILL FACE A LEGAL CHALLENGE OVER IT

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

On Monday, April 29, a new city ordinance will go into force, banning solicitation along the roadways. City police are now training on the enforcement of it, to minimize the chance a mistake will land the city in court again.

The previous city ordinance banning roadway solicitation was repealed in January, but a person was arrested after that repeal. The arrest led to a court challenge of city behavior on free-speech grounds; the matter ended up with the city under an injunction.

The new ordinance tries to avoid the free-speech issue, but a representative of the local chapter of the American

Civil Liberties Union says the city could be vulnerable.

“We believe this ordinance is dead on arrival in federal and state court,” Michael Barfield with the Sarasota chapter of the ACLU told a special meeting of the Sarasota City Commission on April 23.

The meeting had been called to put the ordinance in place quickly.

Barfield urged the commission to give City Attorney Bob Fournier a little more time to fine-tune the new regulation. “Getting this ordinance passed today means nothing,” he said. “This proposal, we believe, would

“ *We believe this ordinance is dead on arrival in federal and state court.*

Michael Barfield
Representative
Sarasota chapter ACLU



not face a legal challenge” following further attention to its crafting.

OFF THE MEDIAN

The ordinance bans people in the roadway from soliciting motorists. Most commonly, people stand in the medians of busy streets near stoplights at intersections.

The ordinance was passed on first reading on April 15, with an expedited second reading added to an already scheduled budget workshop on April 23. Fournier said the effective date would be April 29.

The intent is to keep the public off the medians. “This is aimed at people going into the roadway to have an interaction with the occupants of a vehicle,” said Fournier. “This will not allow anyone, including firemen, unless we change it later.” Firefighters in the past have run their “fill the boot” fundraising campaigns from medians.

The ordinance utilizes the thoroughfare plane section of the city’s comprehensive plan to designate which streets are included in the ban.

“There are five classifications of streets: major and minor arterials, major and minor arterials and interstate connectors,” said Fournier. “This reinforces the safety issue in a non-arbitrary way. It makes the ordinance more defensible.”

One area used for “sign flying” does fall outside the comprehensive plan’s orbit — Orange Avenue south of Mound Street. However, the medians there are away from traffic signals.

Commissioner Shannon Snyder moved to send the ordinance back to Fournier for more work. But the motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Terry Turner then moved to approve the ordinance, and the motion passed 4-1 with Snyder in the minority.

“I do think we’re going to have a problem and it won’t stand up to a [legal] challenge,” said Snyder. “I think we’ll be back here in 60 days, reinventing the wheel.”

The ordinance does not apply to activity on the sidewalks, including political sign waving, commercial advertising (“dancing signs”) or panhandling in general. 



The intersection of Beneva and Fruitville roads in Sarasota is one where people regularly stand in the medians, seeking handouts from drivers. Photo by Norman Schimmel



ASKING FOR ADVICE

Dan Lobeck (left), president of Control Growth Now, makes public comments to the County Commission on April 24 regarding the transfer of development rights. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSION KICKS TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS DISCUSSION BACK TO ADVISORY BOARD

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Why have advisory boards if you're not going to ask for their advice? mentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee (ESLOC) — which

That was the question posed to the Sarasota County Commission Wednesday afternoon, April 24, by Jono Miller. The New College professor asked that the county's Environ-

“*My contention is that if an item's going to the Board of County Commissioners on the 24th, and you're meeting on the 4th, staff should have put that on the agenda.*”

Jono Miller
Professor
New College of Florida

he previously chaired — be given a chance to review full county data on the hot-button issue of Transfer of Development Rights. Showing written notes from past meetings, Miller pointed out that

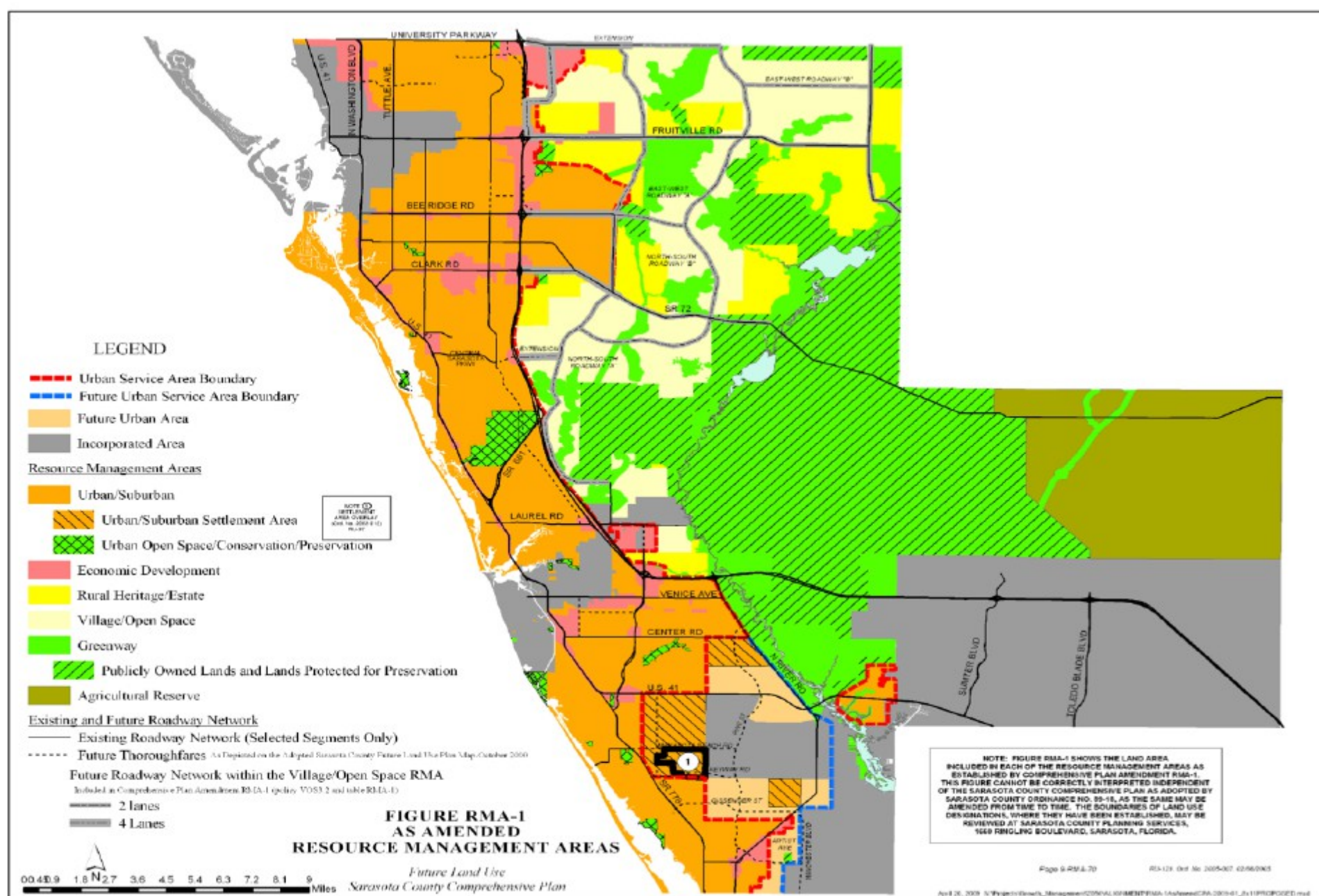
there was no discussion of TDRs — as Transfer of Development Rights are handily known — at the Oversight Committee’s most recent session, held April 4.

“My contention is that if an item’s going to the Board of County Commissioners on the 24th, and you’re meeting on the Fourth, staff should have put that on the agenda,” Miller tells *The Sarasota News Leader*, arguing that the ES-LOC should have been asked to weigh in on staff’s three TDR recommendations. “None of that happened.”

Miller calls the commission’s decision to forgo the Oversight Committee’s review “frustrating.”

Whether it was Miller’s persuasiveness, or the dozens-long list of citizens waiting to speak about the proposed Walmart supermarket at Bee Ridge and Beneva, the commission listened. As the Walmart discussion dragged on (and on — see the related story in this issue), Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason announced that the board would push back the TDR discussion to June 5, giving the Oversight Committee time to review all the TDR data and offer its proverbial two cents’ worth.

Mason acknowledged that while the Oversight Committee had been given some TDR information to work with at previous meetings, the group never had had a chance to review



Transfer of Development Rights are a component of Sarasota County’s 2050 Plan, which was designed to guide development east of I-75. Image courtesy Sarasota County

everything the county was considering. In particular, Miller says, the ESLOC was never informed about the potential value of county TDRs: Estimates range from \$30 million to \$90 million.

“That’s really important information,” says Miller. “The public needs to know the magnitude of the amount of money we’re talking about.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson tells the *News Leader* she supported Mason’s decision to move back the discussion. “I would have raised that issue and asked that it be postponed,” she says. The proposals had changed significantly since their last pass through the Oversight Committee, she notes, particularly the value estimates.

The basic concept behind TDRs is to allow a landowner to sell the right to build new dwellings on his or her property. The purchaser is then allowed to apply those development rights to other areas, pushing higher density to already developed areas. The goal is to protect open space while encouraging urban infill.

But how much should TDRs cost? That’s what the County Commission is trying to figure out, as it looks to sell TDRs associated with publicly owned lands.

The TDR discussion has been in the works since last year, when the County Commission asked staff to compile a list of potential county TDRs and to research “existing methodologies for setting a value on publicly owned TDRs,” per a staff report. County employees eventually proposed setting the price at “10 percent of the median sales price of a sin-

gle-family residential unit or residential condominium unit,” numbers established through real estate sales data.

Staff also suggested creating a TDR pilot program on 503 acres of county-owned, environmentally sensitive land in the Deer Prairie Creek area. The plot would yield 635 TDRs, according to county analysis.


Control Growth Now President Dan Lobeck spoke against the proposal Wednesday, arguing that the free market should determine how much TDRs are worth. “Let the market decide,” he said. “We’re all Republicans here.”

He called the TDR plan an attempt to “low-ball” the county.

“I agree with Mr. Lobeck,” Miller said, after asking the commission to allow the Oversight Committee to weigh in. “I think you need to let the market decide. I think the Republican position should be to trust the market.”

Other speakers chimed in, saying the county’s development rights should be preserved to protect the value of county property.

Miller tells the *News Leader* the Oversight Committee next meets May 6, when he expects it should review the county’s TDR data. A call to Oversight Committee Chairman Gary Serviss was not returned by deadline for this issue.

“We just feel like we haven’t been appropriately in the loop and that the county really should be turning to their advisory boards for their combination of technical insight and reading the pulse of the public,” Miller says. “It’s aggravating.” 



APPROVAL WITH DISPLEASURE

A graphic shows the plan for extending a pipeline from an area adjacent to Siesta Public Beach into the Gulf of Mexico to allow the discharge of treated stormwater runoff. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES THE SIESTA BEACH STORMWATER PROJECT BUT REPEATS OBJECTIONS TO A CONSULTANT'S ESTIMATE THAT WAS ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE BID'S EXPENSE FOR THE SPECIFIC WORK

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Reiterating their ire over a consulting firm's mistake in estimating the cost of one part of the project, the Sarasota County commissioners on April 23 nonetheless voted unanimously to award a bid of \$4,550,683.28 to Forsberg Construction Inc. of Punta Gorda to undertake the new stormwater project at Siesta Key Public Beach.

Program Manager Carolyn Eastwood told the commissioners staff planned to work with the County Attorney's Office and the Procurement Department on measures that might be

“It's almost a slap in the face to give that small amount back to us.”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



permitted as recourse against Erickson Consulting Engineers of Sarasota for its estimate of \$681,475 for part of the project that was put at \$2,291,200 in the Forsberg bid.

(The administrative review of the Procurement Manual was completed April 8, Reid advised the County Commission in an email that same day. With the board's approval of the new code on March 19, he pointed out, the review was the "final milestone in the formal revision of the purchasing process" for the county.)

When Commissioner Nora Patterson asked whether Karyn M. Erickson, president of Erickson Engineering, had offered any explana-

tion about the wide discrepancy between her estimate and the corresponding part of the bid, Eastwood said Erickson had suggested that horizontal drilling firms have been picking up a lot more work over the past six months, which might have encouraged them to put in higher bids for the stormwater project.

Still, Eastwood said, "It's hard to imagine there would be that much difference in costs, to be honest with you."



About 10,000 cubic yards of soil removed to create an approximately 1-acre stormwater retention pond will be stockpiled at the Siesta Public Beach park for use in upcoming park improvements. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“It is bizarre,” Patterson responded.

On the other hand, Eastwood continued, “This is pretty particular work” for the stormwater project on Siesta. The horizontal directional bore for the pipeline will begin on land and terminate about 2,000 feet in the Gulf of Mexico, she pointed out. “It is very specialized work,” she added.

“[Erickson] must have known that,” Patterson responded. Regardless of that, Patterson continued, “I’m relying on the staff that it’s useless to go out for another bid on this.”

“That’s correct,” Eastwood said.

Not only was Erickson off on her estimate, Patterson noted, but the county’s other two consultants were as well.

The Feb. 13 memo explained that Kimley-Horn and Associates had estimated a cost of \$1,314,890.17 for another segment of the project, but the Forsberg bid for that work was \$1,655,746. Additionally, the WilsonMiller/Stantec estimate for a third part of the project was \$24,000, while the Forsberg bid for that segment was \$30,800.

“There’s no point in improving the beach [park] if we can’t do what we can to make sure the beaches aren’t closed for pollution issues,” Patterson continued, referencing the county’s upcoming renovations at Siesta Public Beach.

The stormwater project was designed to prevent future “No Swimming” notices at the



Carolyn Eastwood/File photo

beach as a result of bacterial counts in the gulf considered harmful to people. The stormwater runoff was identified as the primary source of those high bacterial levels.

EXTRA FUNDING HELP

Eastwood also told the commissioners that staff has been in recent contact with representatives of the Southwest Florida Water

Management District (SWFWMD) regarding increased grant funds to cover the higher cost of the stormwater project. "So far, the discussions have been positive," Eastwood pointed out.

The SWFWMD Governing Board will meet on April 30, Eastwood said, with the request for extra funding on the agenda. County staff had supplied the documentation supporting the increase, she added, "and I'm hopeful we will get some additional funding."

A press release from SWFWMD says the organization will hold the meeting at 9 a.m. on April 30 at the Tampa Service Office, located at 7601 Highway 301 North, Tampa.

Originally, SWFWMD had agreed to reimburse the county up to \$975,000 for the project after it was completed. Delays in starting the work put those funds in jeopardy at one point.

"Should we be approving this [agenda item] before we know whether we get the funding?" Patterson asked of the new request.

"Just the opposite," Eastwood replied, noting the original grant has deadlines that have to be met.

"We're already late, actually," Patterson said, referring to the delays in completing the stormwater project.

"It is rough to come up with this [extra] money," Patterson said. "Of all the mis-bids, this is the biggest I've ever seen."

"I still have some heartburn with this," Commissioner Joe Barbetta said. "Obviously, a major mistake has been made along the way," he continued, adding his disappointment that Erickson Consulting Engineers had no liability exposure for its underestimation. When the commissioners discussed the matter on [March 19](#), he suggested staff pursue malpractice options against Erickson.


"It's a \$3 million hit, and it's not easy to just sit back and not wonder why," he added on April 23.

Nonetheless, he said, "I want the project to go forward."

Commissioner Charles Hines concurred with Barbetta. "[The project] has to get done; we all agree on that. But [for Erickson] to forgo a portion of their estimating fee is kind of funny when they totally missed their estimation."

Barbetta also pointed out that the SWFWMD money comes from taxpayers, just as the county funds do.

Patterson finally made the motion to approve a budget amendment for the extra \$2.7 million cost of the project and to award the bid to Forsberg; Robinson seconded the motion.

The project should take about 190 days, according to a staff memo prepared for the County Commission, with completion set for November. "The project is permitted to be constructed during turtle nesting season and the design reflects concern for nesting turtles," the April 23 memo notes. 



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EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

The White Buffalo Saloon's homepage offers information about its events. Image from thewbsaloon.com

COUNTY LETS WHITE BUFFALO SALOON ENTERTAIN AFTER 10 P.M.

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Let there be entertainment!

The Sarasota County Commission voted Wednesday, April 24, to approve a request for a special entertainment exception for the White Buffalo Saloon, the newish watering hole near the intersection of McIntosh and Ashton roads in Sarasota.

The exception allows White Buffalo to offer live entertainment after 10 p.m., a rarity in many parts of the county, and particularly in White Buffalo's neighborhood.

"Entertainment" can mean a lot of things. The county defines it as "live musicians, disc jockeys, comedians, karaoke performers and the like," according to the staff report the com-

mission reviewed Wednesday. That means that after 10, if you don't have a special exception, you can't even have a mime.

County Project Manager Mark Loveridge says his office sees special exception requests "fairly infrequently," and the ones that do exist are mostly in Gulf Gate or out on Siesta Key. "We've really only had a handful of them probably in the last 10 years," he tells *The Sarasota News Leader*.

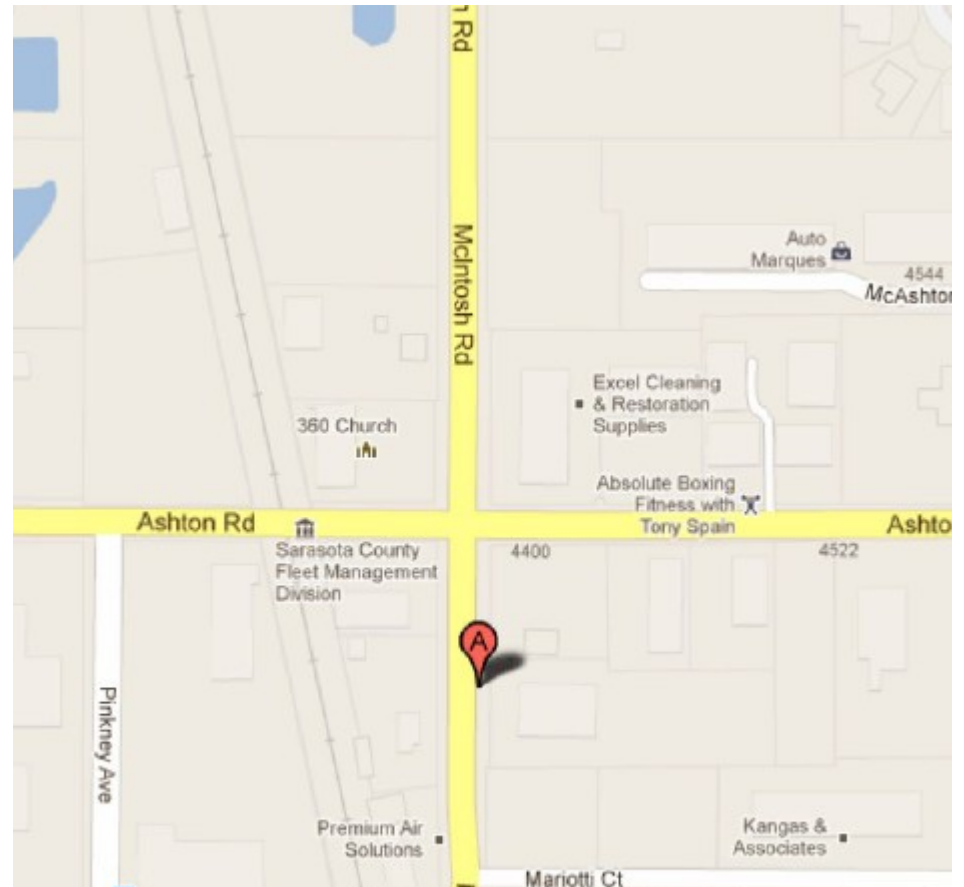
The Planning Commission had unanimously approved the request, and Loveridge says there was little opposition from White Buffalo's neighbors. "They're kind of in the middle of an industrial district," he adds.

And it's not as though the entertainment exception gives White Buffalo the right to blast music out late into the night. Noise restrictions still apply, and the bar will be required to keep its doors and windows shut, aside from normal access.

According to Loveridge, the county has a "safeguard" measure, too, which allows the board to modify or revoke an exception if it's being abused.

The special exception request was brought by consultant Joel Freedman on behalf of Michael Evanoff, one of the entrepreneurs behind the Evie's chain. White Buffalo was in the news last fall, when the venue objected to a \$220,000 county impact fee that was later reduced to around \$50,000.


Evanoff did not respond to voicemails asking about his plans for late night entertainment, but the bar is known for its vibrant honky-tonk vibe. In a voicemail, Freedman says he's "not authorized to speak" about the exception, but he notes that anyone curious about



A map shows the location of the White Buffalo Saloon. Image courtesy Google Maps

the bar's plans should come out Friday night and see for themselves.

Sounds like a good time.

White Buffalo Saloon is located at 5377 McIntosh Road, Sarasota. Find out more by calling 927-6655 or visiting thewbsaloon.com. 



The County Commission meets in session earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel



City Hall has its own share of mechanical needs, including a new air conditioning system for the Information Technology Department. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ANALYSIS: CITY COMMISSION TAKES HALF AN HOUR TO PONDER SPENDING \$384 MILLION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The classic image of government waste and inefficiency is 10 guys standing around a hole watching one guy dig with a shovel. On Tuesday, April 23, there were more than 10 guys — all high-ranking city staffers — sitting in upholstered seats waiting for hours until the commissioners dispensed with leftover trivialities.

The afternoon meeting was scheduled months ago as part of the Sarasota City Commission's in-depth review of the proposed budget — you know, the one that starts \$5 million in the red; the one that calls for laying off cops to make ends meet.

Until last week, the April 23 meeting schedule showed hours set aside for the commission-

ers to pry into the city's \$384 million capital improvement budget and plan their spending.

The back-up material for the discussion included 36 pages of financial spreadsheets outlining every capital improvement project for the next decade. All the big ones are there: beach renourishment, bridge replacements, roundabouts and major street projects such as those on Myrtle and Brother Geenan Way. The little stuff was there too: replacement Tasers for cops, more street trees, dredging at the 10th Street boat ramps and other projects.

One of the spreadsheet columns carried the heading, "Funding," and more than a few of the spreadsheet cells contained the word, "Undetermined." Some of the needs listed are

small but hardly insignificant. The boiler in the Federal Building is scheduled for replacement, but funding is “undetermined.” The air conditioning in the server room of the Information Technology Department in City Hall needs replacement, and the source of that funding is “undetermined,” too, even though computers do not work when they overheat. In all, more than \$4 million in proposed projects are in the “funding undetermined” category.

At the same time, the City Hall elevator is at the end of its useful life, as is the one at the City Hall Annex, as are the fire alarms in both buildings. And the Municipal Auditorium needs its boiler replaced as well.

MEANWHILE, DOWN ON THE DAIS

Discussion of all these pages and pages of high- and low-cost expenses was jammed into less than 30 minutes, as commissioners appeared antsy to get home to dinner. Their afternoon had been consumed by listening to residents vent over homeless people panhandling and downtown noise issues.

Then the commissioners listened to at least half an hour of historical recitation about the role of golf in Sarasota. That came courtesy of an advisory board member who wants to build a new clubhouse at the city-owned Bobby Jones Golf Club and rearrange all the holes. And no, the man did not have a clue where the \$8 million would come from.

Throughout these hours of vain testimony, at least 15 senior city staff members sat waiting in the back of the chambers. A rough calculation came up with \$2,150 in staff time burnt up waiting, with cellphones off and no wire-



The members of the City Commission consider a matter during a meeting earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

less Internet service available (so no email, either).

After having slashed the city payroll by 30 percent to cope with the economic downturn, the city commissioners will often say, “We can’t do that; there’s not enough staff time.” It has become a common refrain from the commissioners as they put off requests to study something.

But the commissioners kept their top staff — their ace managers, budgeters and financial experts — cooling their heels on Tuesday, twiddling their thumbs and waiting for the “peanut gallery” to empty so they could get to work and brief their “masters” on plans to spend \$384 million in public tax dollars over the next few years.

It was a very short discussion. Dinner was waiting. 



CLOSING IN ON A SETTLEMENT

This photo of The Hub shows one brick sidewalk between decorative fencing and a second one that runs in front of the parking spaces. File photo

ALL THAT REMAINS TO RESOLVE A SIESTA VILLAGE PROPERTY OWNER'S LAWSUIT AGAINST THE COUNTY IS A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE VACATION OF RIGHT OF WAY

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A public hearing still will be necessary, but the majority of the Sarasota County Commissioners on April 24 approved a settlement with Siesta Village property owner Chris Brown in a lawsuit Brown filed against the county in October 2011.

With Commissioner Charles Hines recusing himself because of a conflict of interest and Commissioner Nora Patterson in the minority, the board voted 3-1 to pay Brown \$75,000 and proceed with plans for a public hearing on vacating 804.1 square feet of county right of way near Brown's restaurant The Hub Baja Grill in Siesta Village.

According to a memo County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh provided to the commissioners, "The [right of way to be] vacated includes the brick sidewalk area immediately adjacent to [The Hub], and part of the landscaped planters' outside the building.

In exchange for the payment and the vacation of the right of way, DeMarsh explained to the commissioners on April 23, the county would receive a general release of liability from Brown.

DeMarsh's memo points out, "If the Board does not vacate the right-of-way at the public hearing, then the settlement agreement is void."

In response to a question from *The Sarasota News Leader*, DeMarsh wrote in an email, “I would anticipate that the hearing would take place approximately 60 to 90 days from [April 24].”

Patterson said during the April 24 discussion, “I don’t have a problem with the vacation of the right of way, [because it] does not appear to harm the public, and obviously it gives the business the opportunity to enhance itself.”

However, she added, “It’s a little bit of a heart-ache that that is part of a lawsuit, just like [the right of way on the Ocean Boulevard side of The Hub] that we vacated. ... I do have a problem with somebody settling a lawsuit and coming back for another bite at the apple.”

She continued, “And while it may be cost-effective not to spend money litigating this in court, I think it kind of sends the wrong message.”

In settling the first of three lawsuits Brown has filed against the county since the fall of 2007 — all in some way related to parking issues in Siesta Village — the County Commission agreed to pay \$35,000 and vacate a portion of its Ocean Boulevard right of way. (Brown had been accused of allowing outside tables at the restaurant to encroach on that county property.)

Reached by the *News Leader* shortly after the April 24 vote, Brown declined to comment because of the pending public hearing.

However, his attorney, Morgan Bentley of Bentley & Bruning in Sarasota, told the *News Leader* in an email, “We are really glad that this issue has been resolved. We were slightly disappointed in Commissioner Patterson’s comments that seemed to blame The Hub and Chris Brown for these cases. After all, if it weren’t for the multiple actions of the County



The Hub Baja Grill is adjacent to The Cottage on Avenida Messina in Siesta Village. Photo by Norman Schimmel



over the last five years, none of these lawsuits would have been necessary in the first place. There are always at least two sides to every story. But in the end, an amicable resolution is a good thing for everyone and we look forward to working with the County for a long time to come.”

The County Commission had rejected two previous offers from Brown to settle this third lawsuit. The first, in August 2012, was for \$277,219.22. The second, in October 2012, was for \$315,000.

Brown had claimed more than \$1.7 million in damages in the latest suit, which he filed after receiving parking assessments in 2010 for three of his properties in Siesta Village that were up significantly from the 2009 assess-

ments. In the case of the parcel where Blu Que Island Grill stands on Avenida Messina, the assessment was up about 1,500 percent. At the same time, assessments for other Village properties went down — some as much as 30 percent, according to county tax records.

Brown said it was only about a month after the county reimbursed him \$2,500 for excessive parking assessments in 2009 — the crux of his second lawsuit — that he received his new tax bill with the higher figures.

Prior to a 3-2 vote on Aug. 21, 2012 in which the County Commission rejected the first settlement offer, Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out of those later assessments, “If that isn’t singling somebody out — I think we have some incredible exposure here.”



Assessments to cover property owners' share of the cost for the municipal parking lot in Siesta Village were the focal point of the third lawsuit Chris Brown filed against Sarasota County. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THE RIGHT OF WAY

During his April 23 report to the board, DeMarsh brought up the terms of the settlement. Although it had been tentatively hammered out during mediation on Feb. 8, county staff subsequently determined that the right of way for which Brown originally had requested the vacation was almost twice the size staff had estimated. Moreover, according to Brown's attorney, Morgan Bentley, because it is bordered on all four sides by county property, by law, the county could not give it to Brown.

The roofline of The Hub extends to the county property line — legally, Bentley pointed out to the *News Leader* in February — but the county would need to deed over more right of way than it had anticipated to resolve the issue.

During the April 23 board discussion, Patterson raised the point that the area to be vacated includes a sidewalk, “and I think it is an area where people walk a bunch, especially considering you can barely get parking [spaces].”

DeMarsh also pointed out that while he and his staff did not believe the county's interest “would be negatively affected” by the vacation of the right of way, the county would have to work with Brown to make sure the utility easements in that area would be protected.

Commissioner Christine Robinson raised concerns about whether someone in a wheelchair, for example, would be able to continue along another walkway or sidewalk if the county vacated the right of way. If she could be assured no access problem would arise, she noted, “I'm for the settlement.”

Additionally, Patterson told DeMarsh, “It'd be nice to feel pretty ironclad that we're not going to have a third round with exactly the same issues. I may be wrong, but it did seem the issues raised [in the latest lawsuit] were repetitive of the first time.”

DeMarsh pointed out that the County Commission voted last year to abolish the Siesta Village Parking Public Improvement District, for which Village property owners had been assessed annual fees. Those payments were designed to cover the Village's portion of the county's expense in building the municipal parking lot between Avenida Madera and Avenida de Mayo.

“I just don't want to keep going back and litigating the same things,” Patterson told him.

“I believe we've structured this as well as we can for the county's interests,” DeMarsh replied, “but I cannot control the actions and decisions of another party.”

Nonetheless, DeMarsh pointed out, “In signing the release, the plaintiff is telling you they don't want to be involved in litigation anymore. That's certainly the message we're getting.”

With uncertainty about the walkway configuration from the aerial photograph DeMarsh provided, the board members continued the discussion until April 24.

MORE PICTURES

DeMarsh and James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer, provided additional photos to the board on April 24 regarding the configuration of both the sidewalk in the right of way to be vacated and a parallel sidewalk.

Harriott pointed out that the latter “continues all the way contiguous down to within one lot of waterfront on North Beach Road.”

In looking at the first photos Harriott presented, Patterson asked, “So part or all of that brick sidewalk there [in the area to be vacated] enclosed within the fence [adjacent to The Hub] is actually right of way today?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Harriott responded.

“What strikes me as weird about those pictures, and I never quite realized it,” Patterson said, “is that somehow we’ve given permits for somebody to essentially fence in the right of way in the first place. How could that happen?”

“I don’t have the information on how it was presented,” Harriott told her. However, he pointed out, when he had been in the Village in the evenings with his children, they had been


able to walk along that sidewalk to which she was referring, underneath an overhang from The Hub.

“It’s sort of like a downtown setting where you’re walking through, in between tables and chairs,” as on St. Armands, Harriott added.

“But they don’t fence [in right of way on St. Armands],” Patterson noted.

“There’s no gate or anything; just a fence,” Harriott said. “It’s just a railing or a fence that runs right along that landscaping area.”

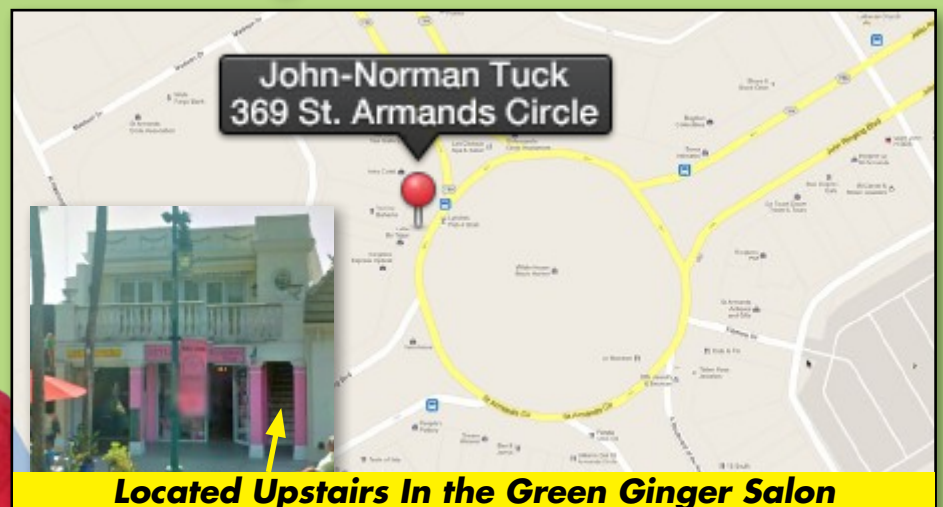
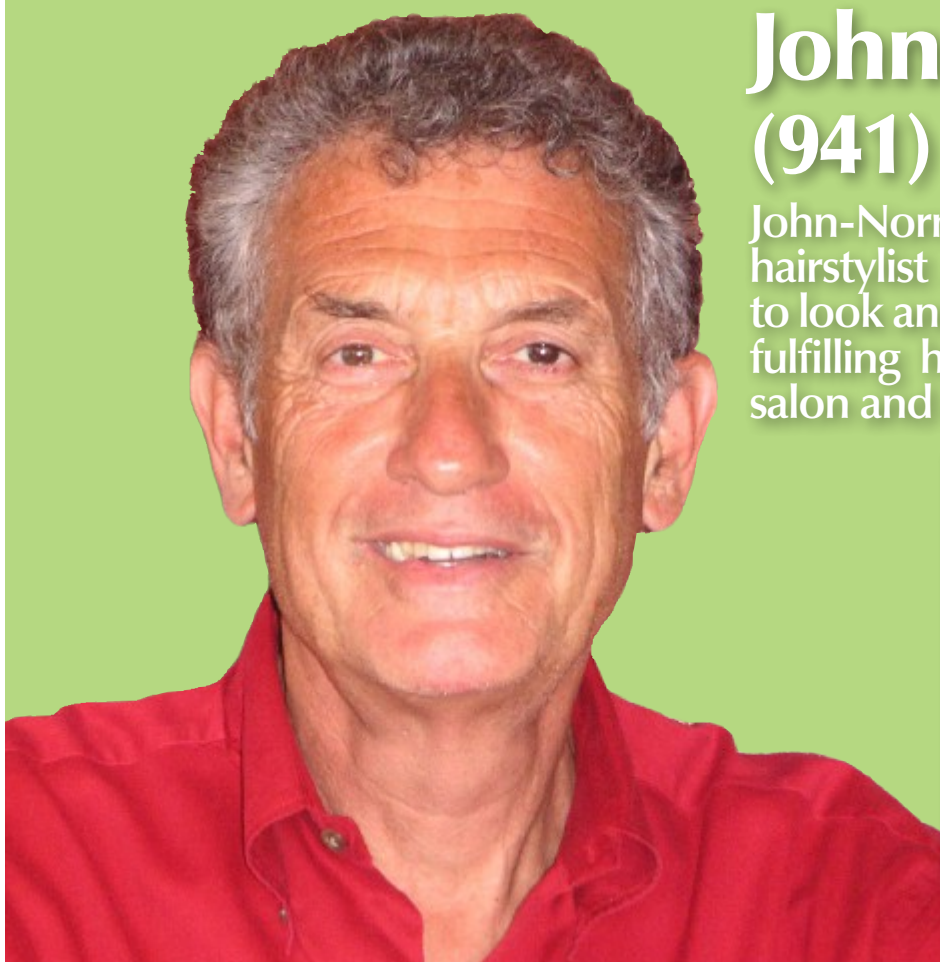
With Robinson’s concerns allayed, she made the motion to approve the settlement, contingent upon the vacation of the right of way. Barbetta seconded the motion.

“Thanks for getting the pictures, Mr. Harriott,” Robinson said. “That was very, very helpful for this.” 

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Michael Jones (left) accepts his check during the Most Improved Students program on April 17. Photo by Scott Proffitt

SARASOTA COUNTY STUDENTS HONORED FOR THEIR PERSEVERANCE

By Scott Proffitt

Staff Writer

Kayla Wilkins, now a senior at Booker High, suffers from Myasthenia gravis, a debilitating and life-threatening illness that left her on a respirator with a collapsed lung and home-bound for more than a year.

But she fought back, worked hard and will attend college next year. She wants to major in chemistry.

Callie Marie Murphie attends Sarasota High School. She also works more than 35 hours a week to support herself, and she tutors other students. She will be attending the National Aviation Academy next year.

Kelly Anne Altenbernd, who also goes to Booker High, was born with a type of multiple sclerosis. She has endured injuries, surgery and a lot of missed school hours. Nonetheless, she has maintained a 3.6 grade point average and plans to attend the University of Florida, where she wants to major in education.

Michael Jones, another Booker High senior, was a highly decorated athlete who suffered severe knee injuries in combination with a drop in his grades. This all happened as his family suffered a financial downturn. Yet, as a result of his efforts to improve his academic

standing and rehabilitate his injuries, several colleges are showing interest in recruiting him to play football in the fall.

They are among 40 Sarasota County high school students who have been in foster care and shuffled between parents and grandparents — often with no one to help or care — who have persevered beyond trials and travails most people dare not imagine. From different schools with different backgrounds and differing dreams, they all were honored at the 15th Annual Most Improved Student Awards, held at Michael's on East on April 17. Each of them had been selected for the recognition by a principal or guidance counselor at Booker, Riverview, Sarasota and Venice high schools.

The luncheon was more than just recognition of how these students had overcome hardship. Each of them received a \$1,000 check to help fulfill the dream of higher education.

Even without the accolades and the money to mark their achievements, it is clear they all are winners.

The sponsors of the Most Improved Student Award Program are Northern Trust, the Harold C. and Jacqueline F. Bladel Foundation, the Evalyn Sadlier Jones Foundation, the Annette J. Hagens Memorial Foundation, the Hunkele Family Foundation, Eluned and Edward Russell Charitable Foundation and Sarasota County School District Pupil Support Services. 



(From left) Riverview High School Most Improved Students Alexis Romine, Elexis Ousley, Jayson Torreno, Maiyah Newsome, Jacquelyn Cavender stand with Principal Linda Nook to show off their \$1,000 checks. Photo by Scott Proffitt



*Sarasota County Commission action this week will keep extra funds flowing to beach maintenance.
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

EXTRA BEACH MAINTENANCE FUNDING WINS APPROVAL

With no speakers present to address the issue on April 24, the Sarasota County Commission unanimously approved a change to the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) ordinance that will keep extra beach maintenance funding in place for another two years and provide for a biennial review of the allocation instead of holding further public hearings on the matter.

The extra money originally had been set aside for beach renourishment. This year, budget projections show \$523,000 going to beach maintenance out of the TDT revenue.

Although they questioned “chargebacks” for other departments out of the TDT beach maintenance allocation when they considered the matter during an April 9 discussion, no questions arose April 24 on that point.

After the discussion, Commissioner Joe Barbetta told *The Sarasota News Leader* the county’s method of accounting for staff work would be one topic of discussion when the commission holds a budget workshop on April 30.

During the April 24 meeting, Ed Exner, manager of horticulture services for the county, reported that beginning in the 2010 fiscal year, staff began using TDT revenue to cover all possible permitted expenses “as a strategy to assist with shortfalls in the general fund” because of the recession.

In the 2011 fiscal year, he noted, additional maintenance staff was added at the beaches to provide more service in the evenings and on weekends as well as for special events. In the 2012 fiscal year, Exner continued, the TDT revenue enabled his department to add five support personnel, making it possible to reduce some contractual services. Those extra people worked at the Lido, Siesta and Nokomis beaches along with beaches in the Venice area.

In making the motion to approve the ordinance change, Commissioner Nora Patterson said, “It’s logical ... It enables us ... even in times of tight budgets ... to maintain our beaches to the standards that the commission has wished ... as well as the public.”

Rachel Brown Hackney

POLICE DEPARTMENT NAMES DEPUTY CHIEF

Steve Moyer, formerly with the Maryland Highway Patrol, was named the new deputy chief of the Sarasota Police Department on Thursday, April 25.

The position had been vacant for more than six years.

Moyer will start work Monday, April 29, when he will begin training to be a certified Florida police officer. After he completes that process, he will assume the duties of deputy chief.

New Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino is also from Maryland. During an April 5 get-together in Sarasota with local reporters and the six deputy chief candidates, Moyer said he worked with DiPino in Ocean City, MD, providing “help and support.”

Moyer was with the Maryland Highway Patrol for 24 years, ending his career as a lieutenant colonel, a position he described as “deputy chief, effectively.”

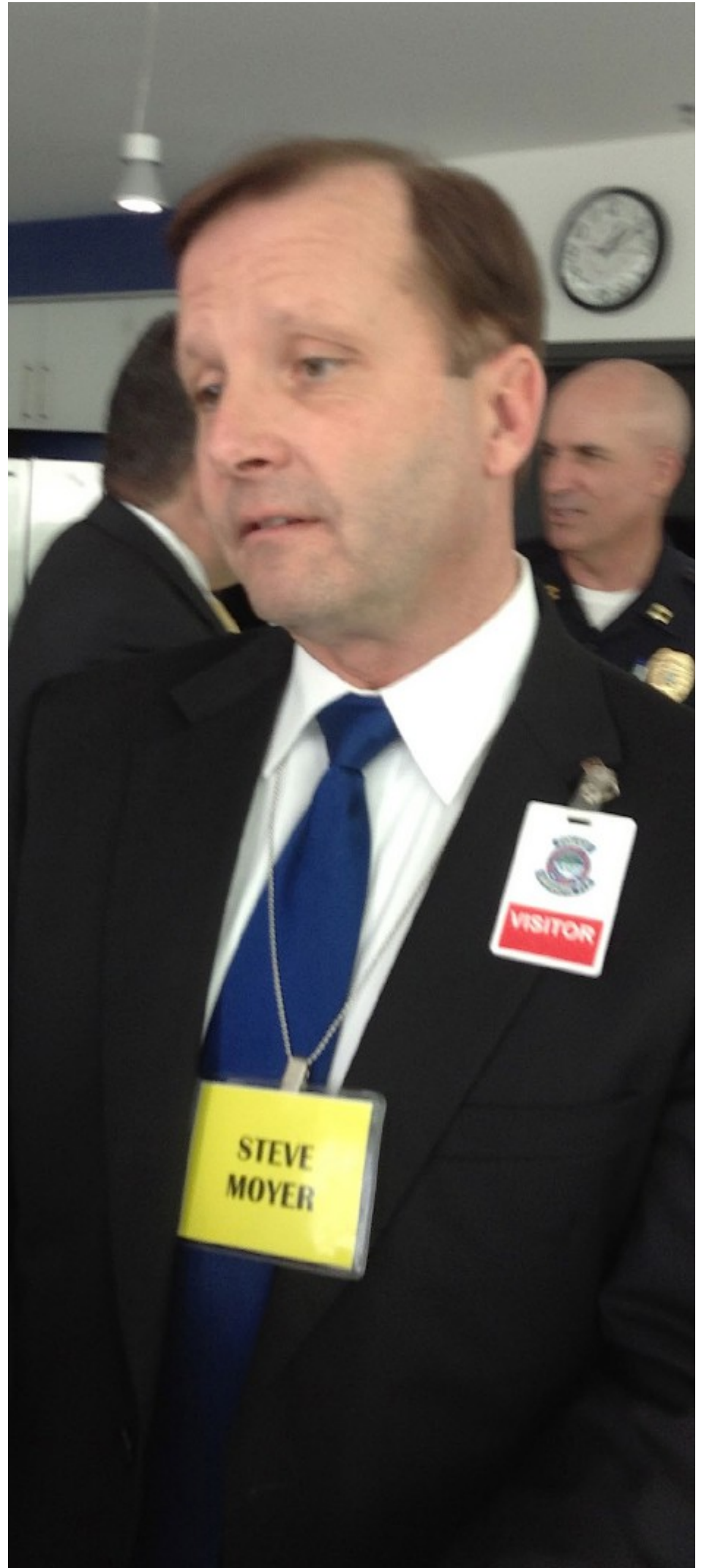
Moyer said, “I can have a conversation with anyone. I can relate to people and reach collective agreements.” He urged more training for police officers.

He has a master’s degree from Johns Hopkins University and a Bachelor of Arts from Towson University. He is 52 and has been married 27 years; he and his wife have two sons.

“The best thing I bring here is support for a community policing policy,” he added. “I have budget and management experience.”

He is currently the director for security at the University of Maryland’s Shock-Trauma Center in Baltimore, MD.

Stan Zimmerman



Deputy Chief Steve Moyer. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

SCHOOL DISTRICT TO BEGIN AFTER-SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Sarasota County School Schools will create a pilot after-school nutrition program at three Sarasota elementary schools beginning Wednesday, May 1, the district has announced.

The program, sponsored by the Florida Department of Health in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will be offered at Alta Vista, Emma E. Booker and Gocio elementary schools, with serving times from 3:30 to 4:15 p.m., a news release says. Those schools have high percentages of students receiving free and reduced-price lunches, the release adds.

The after-school nutrition program, also known as a supper program, “will provide nutritious afternoon/evening meals for their students,” the release notes. It will replace an existing after-school snack program, which has

provided a small snack to children enrolled in after-school programs.

“The principals of these schools are excited about the program,” said Beverly Girard, director of Food and Nutrition Services for the school district, in the release. “They see firsthand the need for healthy afternoon meals for their students and the impact that good nutrition has on academic success.”

If the new program is successful, the district’s Food and Nutrition Services Department plans to expand it in the 2013-14 academic year to other schools and community agencies that have approved educational or enrichment programs, the release adds.

The program will be funded through the federal Child Care Food Program.



Students in the pilot Eaglets Academy pre-kindergarten program at Alta Vista Elementary School enjoy lunch in the cafeteria last summer. File photo

MANY VETERANS GET NEEDED SERVICES AT STAND DOWN EVENT

The April 20 *Stand Down* event for veterans drew large numbers of people, including homeless veterans, organizers report.

“For many veterans who were not connected to the system, it was gratifying to see them access a range of needed services in this one-stop setting,” said Chip Taylor, director of the Operation Military Assistance Program (OMAP), in a news release. OMAP, which is a federally funded program initiated by Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Sarasota-Manatee Inc. to assist veterans with obtaining or maintaining permanent housing, organized the event.

Taylor and other partners in the event say this year’s Veterans *Stand Down* event was

expanded to include more services at the Sarasota County Health Department, located at 2200 Ringling Blvd., in Sarasota, and at the city’s nearby Payne Park auditorium, a news release notes.

More than 25 organizations were represented, including Resurrection House, First Step of Sarasota, Coastal Behavioral Healthcare, Legal Aid of Manasota, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, the Suncoast Workforce Board, the Center of Hope of South County, Goodwill Manasota, Harvest House, Turning Points and Manatee Glens.

Those attending were able to get help in accessing Veterans Administration benefits and services, legal services, health screenings,



Several veterans won bicycles at the Stand Down event. Contributed photo

employment assistance services and referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment, the news release continues. Housing assistance also was available for homeless veterans,

“A big draw was the bags that were filled with non-perishable food provided by All Faiths Food Bank and personal care items purchased with funds provided by a grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families and National Veterans Homeless Support Inc.,” the release notes. Additionally, the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Operation New Hope distributed surplus items such as boots, clothing and blankets. The Salvation Army provided food and refreshments at the event, and haircuts and manicures were offered by student barbers and stylists from the Manatee Technical Institute, the release adds.

“The city of Sarasota’s support as a partnering organization this year meant that we had participation from all levels of government — federal, state, county and city — as well as the nonprofit sector,” said Taylor in the release. “This helps to ensure that homeless veterans know about all the benefits and services they may be qualified to receive,” he added, noting, “We were also pleased to have agencies serving veterans in Manatee County—such as Turning Points and Manatee Glens—join us for the *Stand Down* this year.”



Manatee Technical Institute personnel provide manicures to veterans during the April 20 Stand Down event. Contributed photo

“Veterans are an essential part of our community. We were pleased with the turnout and received a lot of good feedback about the event,” says Sarasota County Health and Human Services Director Chuck Henry in the release. Henry also is a veteran, with a career in the U.S. Navy that spanned more than two decades the release says.

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

COUNTY COMMISSION TO ADDRESS SIESTA VILLAGE CROSSWALKS

Almost 16 months after the idea first was broached during a Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) meeting, the Sarasota County Commission on May 7 will discuss how to proceed with illuminating seven crosswalks in Siesta Village, county staff has reported.

Ryan Montague in the county’s Traffic/Mobility Office told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week by email, “We are finalizing the memo as part of a discussion item that we currently have scheduled for May 7th (pending any delays.)”

He expected the memo to be completed this week, he added.

After first receiving no bids in response to a county advertisement in January, the county began a new procurement process. It received one bid on Feb. 13 for the bollards to light the crosswalks. The amount was \$118,500.

Last year, county staff had estimated the cost of installing the structures with LED lights would be \$31,500.

After the February bid opening, county staff began investigating another way of getting the work done. The Public Works Department sought quotes from two firms just for installing the bollards. The first company offered a \$40,000 quote; the other came in with a \$60,000 quote, Tom Maroney, general manager

of business operations in Public Works, told the *News Leader* this week.

County staff had learned they could purchase the bollards directly for \$12,000, Maroney pointed out.

Peter van Roekens, then vice president of the Siesta Key Association, was the person who proposed illumination of the Village crosswalks during the January 2012 SKVA meeting. He pointed out how difficult it is to see pedestrians at night as they cross Ocean Boulevard.

During the April 4 SKA meeting, van Roekens — who is now the organization's secretary — reported that he had been in contact with Ryan Montague and that he was pleased the initiative finally was moving along again.

Rachel Brown Hackney



Drivers have reported difficulty seeing people crossing Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village at night, especially near the Daiquiri Deck and Gilligan's Island Bar & Grill. File photo

COUNTY TEAMS HEADING TO ODYSSEY OF THE MIND WORLD FINALS

Teams from three Sarasota County public elementary schools — Brentwood, Lakeview and Tatum Ridge — will participate in the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals May 22-25 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI, the school district has announced.

The teams successfully competed in the Odyssey of the Mind Sun Region competition held in Fort Myers in March and came in first in their division/problem at the State Finals in Orlando on April 6, a news release notes.

Odyssey of the Mind is a creative problem-solving program for students in grades K-12 and college, the release adds. “The goal is to learn creative problem solving, teamwork, brainstorming, self-reliance and respect for the individual strengths of team members,” it adds. “Teams of five to seven students devel-

op solutions to one of six long-term problems over several months, while practicing for a spontaneous problem that is presented at the competition.”

Teams, problems and competitions are organized into five divisions by age groups, the release points out. In 2011 a team from Brentwood placed first in the World Finals in Extreme Mousemobiles, Division I, in which mousetrap-powered vehicles traveled through an obstacle course.

The Lakeview team qualified for World Finals by placing first in the State Finals in It’s How You Look at It, Division I. The team created and presented an original humorous performance that included two characters whose actions seemed “normal” to them, but odd to those around them, the release says. “The per-



Tatum Ridge Elementary Odyssey of the Mind team members are (from left) Michael Moloney, Amber Baylis, Lena Khader, Samantha Pulawski, Cassidy Park and Velouria Gaertner. Contributed photo

formance included a meter that indicated the degree of odd/normal behavior,” it adds.

The Brentwood team qualified for World Finals by placing first in the State Finals in Pet Project, Division I. Teams designed, built and operated three vehicles that delivered parts for a previously extinct “animal.” Team members assembled a “dwarf elephant” from the parts and taught it to perform a trick, the release says

The Tatum Ridge team earned its berth by placing first in the State Finals in The Email Must Go Through, Division I. The problem included an original performance with a creative representation of messages being sent by email. The team had to meet various technical challenges along the way, the release adds.

The schools are holding fundraising activities to help cover the cost of sending teams to the



Brentwood Elementary team members are (from left) Taylor Tyle, Sandy Scott, Greg Karcz, Lucas Maxwell, Kassie Greenan, Maren Schwied and Rylee Miller. Contributed photo

World Finals, the release notes. Community members who would like to learn more about each school’s fundraising efforts may call Brentwood Elementary at 361-6230, Lakeview Elementary at 361-6571 or Tatum Ridge Elementary at 316-8188.



The Odyssey of the Mind team members from Lakeview Elementary are (from left) Bailey Olson, Ava Robinson, Sam Elliott, Nicklaus Elliott, Weston Trandem, Mackenzie Gregory, Ameila Seger and Bryana Sherman. Contributed photo

I LOVE SARASOTA BAY PHOTO CONTEST ANNOUNCED

The Sarasota Bay Water Festival is encouraging local photography enthusiasts of all ages to prepare entries for the *I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest*.

The winning submissions will be displayed at the regional water festival set for Saturday, Nov. 2, at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota, festival representatives have announced. "The photo contest helps to celebrate the beauty and importance of Sarasota Bay," a news release notes.

Contest guidelines are posted at sarasotabay-waterfestival.com.

"We had some impressive photos last year and we are excited to see the contest expand with

earlier promotion," said Randy Moore, the festival director, in the release. "Photos can have a direct or indirect association with Sarasota Bay."

Among other highlights of the 2013 water festival will be the first Dragon Boat Races on Sarasota Bay; live music performed by top area bands; artists selling unique gift items; workshops that promote bay-friendly living; food trucks and local restaurants; exhibits of vintage boats; activities for children; and exhibits promoting recreational boating, fishing, kayaking, paddleboard sports, scuba diving, cycling, birding and other activities associated with Sarasota Bay, the release adds.



Makeala Franford won first prize in 2012 in the 12 and under division of the Sarasota Bay Photo Contest. Contributed photo

OAKS WOMEN'S CLUB PRESENTS SCHOLARSHIPS

As high school graduation time nears, the more than 350 members of The Oaks Women's Club are helping send seven young women of Sarasota County to the colleges of their choice.

During the 2013 Scholarship Luncheon held on Wednesday, April 10, each of the seven students received \$5,000 from the club, a news release notes. The event served as a celebration of these young women and their accomplishments, the release adds.

"The scholarship process is rigorous as we review dozens of applications and then narrow it down to seven Sarasota County senior high school women," said Oaks Woman's Club

Scholarship Chairwoman Wendy Nowitz in the release.

The scholarship recipients for 2013 are as follows:

- Kelsey Anthofer, Riverview High School.
- Rachel Hayden, Sarasota High School.
- Ljubica Nikolic, Booker High School.
- Laura O'Connell, Pine View School.
- Rachel Schuchert, Venice High School.
- Sandra Waliczek, Pine View.
- Emily Zastempowski, Venice High.



Student winners (from left) are Rachel Hayden, Kelsey Anthofer, Ljubica Nikolic, Sandra Waliczek, Rachel Schuchert, Emily Zastempowski and Laura O'Connell with Oaks Women's Club Scholarship Chairwoman Wendy Nowitz (center left) and Jane Perkins, co-chairwoman (center right). Contributed photo

PEOPLE ALLEGEDLY IMPERSONATING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is urging residents to be cautious following a report early this week that a group of individuals impersonated law enforcement officers in north Sarasota.

A Sarasota couple reported being pulled over early Saturday, April 20, near 17th Street and Dodge Avenue by someone in a black four-door sedan — possibly a Dodge Charger or Chevrolet Impala — with chrome rims and a red-and-blue light bar in the windshield, according to a report. The male victim was ordered to get on the ground, but when the female victim was ordered out of the car, she noticed scratches and damage to the front end of the supposed law enforcement vehicle and remarked that it was not a real police car, the report says. The suspects fled, the report adds.

The suspects are described as three black males in their 20s or 30s wearing black shirts with the word, "SHERIFF" on them, black

boots and black pants. They had two wooden stock shotguns and a gold semi-automatic handgun with a black grip, the report notes.

Anyone with information on this crime, the suspects involved or the vehicle is encouraged to call Criminal Investigations at 861-4900; leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers at 366-TIPS (8477); go online at www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com; or text TIP109 plus a message to CRIMES (274637).

Motorists who are concerned about being pulled over by an unmarked vehicle should call 911 to let the call taker know what is going on, give their location and have the 911 call taker provide directions on what to do, a Sheriff's Office news release says. Staff at the 911 Call Center "can confirm if you are being pulled over by a legitimate law enforcement officer, and if you are not, dispatch units to that location immediately," the release adds.

STRING OF BURGLARIES REPORTED IN THE ALTA VISTA AREA

The Sarasota Police Department is investigating several burglaries that allegedly have occurred between the 2000 block and the 2500 block of Bay Street and in the 800 block of South Shade Avenue, which encompasses the Alta Vista neighborhood, the department has reported.

"The burglars are entering unlocked homes and quietly taking items, so as not to disturb the sleeping homeowners," a news release says. Among the items reported stolen are laptops, jewelry, cash and homeowners' vehicles.

One victim awoke to find two teenage black males with shaved heads in her bedroom, the release adds. "When she screamed, they ran," it notes. "It appears they stole a car from the

area as well." The vehicle was left abandoned in the 2000 block of North Euclid Avenue, the release says.

The Police Department is advising residents to lock all doors and windows of their homes at night and whenever they leave their houses.

Anyone who sees anything suspicious or unusual is asked to call the Police Department at 316-1201, which is the non-emergency number. In case of an emergency, dial 911.

Anyone with information about the burglary cases is urged to contact Det. K. Laster at the Sarasota Police Department Criminal Investigation Division at 364-7327 or leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477).

NATIONAL DRUG TURN-IN EVENT SET FOR SATURDAY

Law enforcement agencies throughout Sarasota County will participate in the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) national event to “take back” and properly dispose of prescription medication on Saturday, April 27, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has announced.

The Sheriff’s Office has permanent drop boxes at the Criminal Justice Center, 2071 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota — which is open 24 hours a day — and at the south county office, 4531 State Road 776, Venice, where the hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., a news release notes.

The Sarasota Police Department, Venice Police Department and North Port Police Department also have permanent drop boxes in each of their lobbies and are participating in Saturday’s event as well, the release points out.

“Medication turn-in is always anonymous,” the release says. “Prescription and over-the-counter solid dosage medications such as tablets and capsules are accepted.” While all of these drop boxes are available to the public year-round, the release adds, the agencies participate in the national take-back initiative

to publicize the permanent option for proper disposal.

New College Campus Police also will be collecting unwanted, unused or expired prescription drugs on April 27 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the Campus Police Station, 501 College Drive, the college has announced.

Officers will dispose of the medications, and participation is completely anonymous, said Mike Kessie, New College of Florida police chief, in a news release.

College Drive is one block north of University Parkway on U.S. 41, on the College’s bayfront campus, the release notes. The public should park in the Heiser Natural Sciences lot opposite the police station. Contact Chief Kessie at 487-4210 or mkessie@ncf.edu with any questions.

“This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health issue,” the Sheriff’s Office release continues. “Prescription drug abuse rates in the U.S. are alarmingly high, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses due to these drugs. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet,” it points out.

MAN ARRESTED FOR LEWD ACTIVITY ON SIESTA BEACH

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has arrested a 69-year-old Illinois man for exposing himself to teenage girls swimming at Siesta Key Beach.

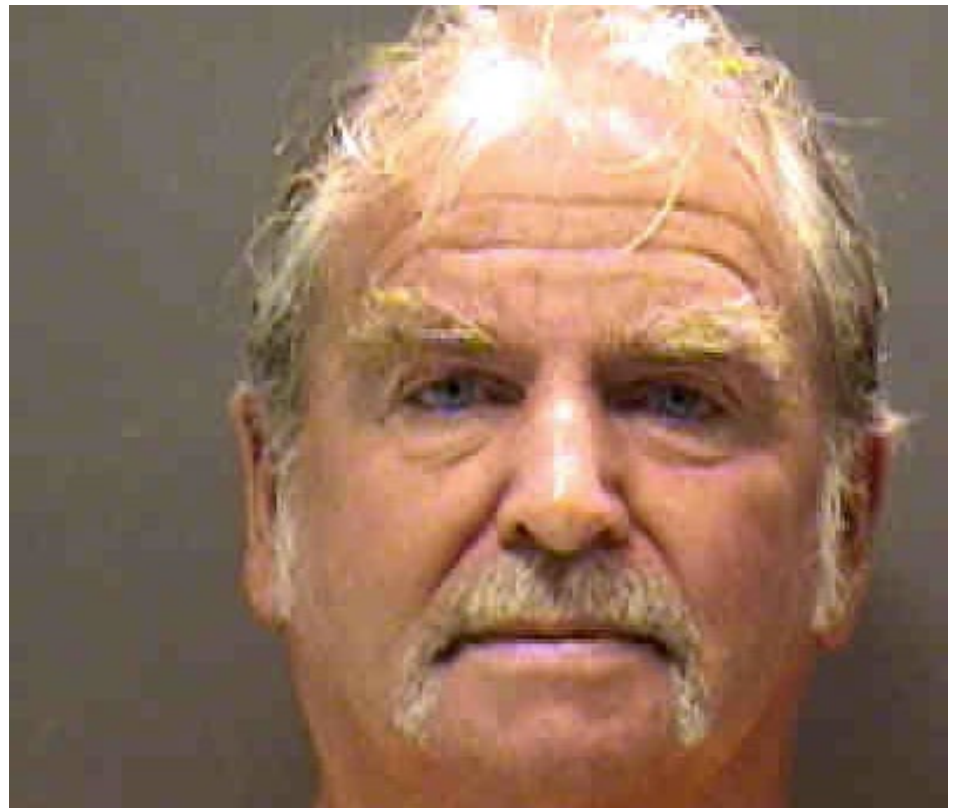
Around 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 18, a Sarasota County lifeguard alerted deputies

to Tom Petcher of Hillsboro, IL, after two 14-year-old girls said they were swimming in the Gulf of Mexico when they noticed he had his swim trunks around his ankles, a Sheriff’s Office report says. They added that he tried to brush the legs of one girl with his buttocks, according to the report.

As the girls moved away from him, Petcher floated on his back with his genitals exposed, the report adds. He continued this activity for at least 15 minutes, swimming toward the girls every time they tried to get away, the report says. "Whenever they would move away from him he would continue to get closer to them," the report notes.

When deputies confronted Petcher, "he was walking quickly toward the parking lot to try to avoid being detained," the report continues.

He was charged with two counts of Lewd and Lascivious Exhibition and placed under a bond of \$7,500.




Tom Petcher/Contributed photo

VENICE AREA BOARD OF REALTORS® AWARDS STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Since 1992, the Venice Area Board of Realtors® has raised more than \$240,000 for local graduating seniors going to college.

This year, a news release says, the board awarded \$15,000 (\$1,000 each) to the following students: Abigal Blow, Brittany Ring, Caleb Courville, Julianna Konsulian, Alicia Miller,

Hannah Knoke, Bo Walters, Lucas Molenda, Brittany Detert, Kevin Deiter, Justin Taylor, Zachary Carroll, Frankie Holcomb, Andrew Micciche and Rachel Schuchert.

The board raised the money from its annual Golf Tournament and Yard Sale, the release adds. 



(From left) Abigal Blow, Brittany Ring, Caleb Courville, Julianna Konsulian, Alicia Miller, Scholarship Chairman Tony Moore, Committee members Michelle Moore and Steve LaFountain and students Hannah Knoke, Bo Walters, Lucas Molenda, Brittany Detert, Kevin Deiter and Justin Taylor. Contributed photo

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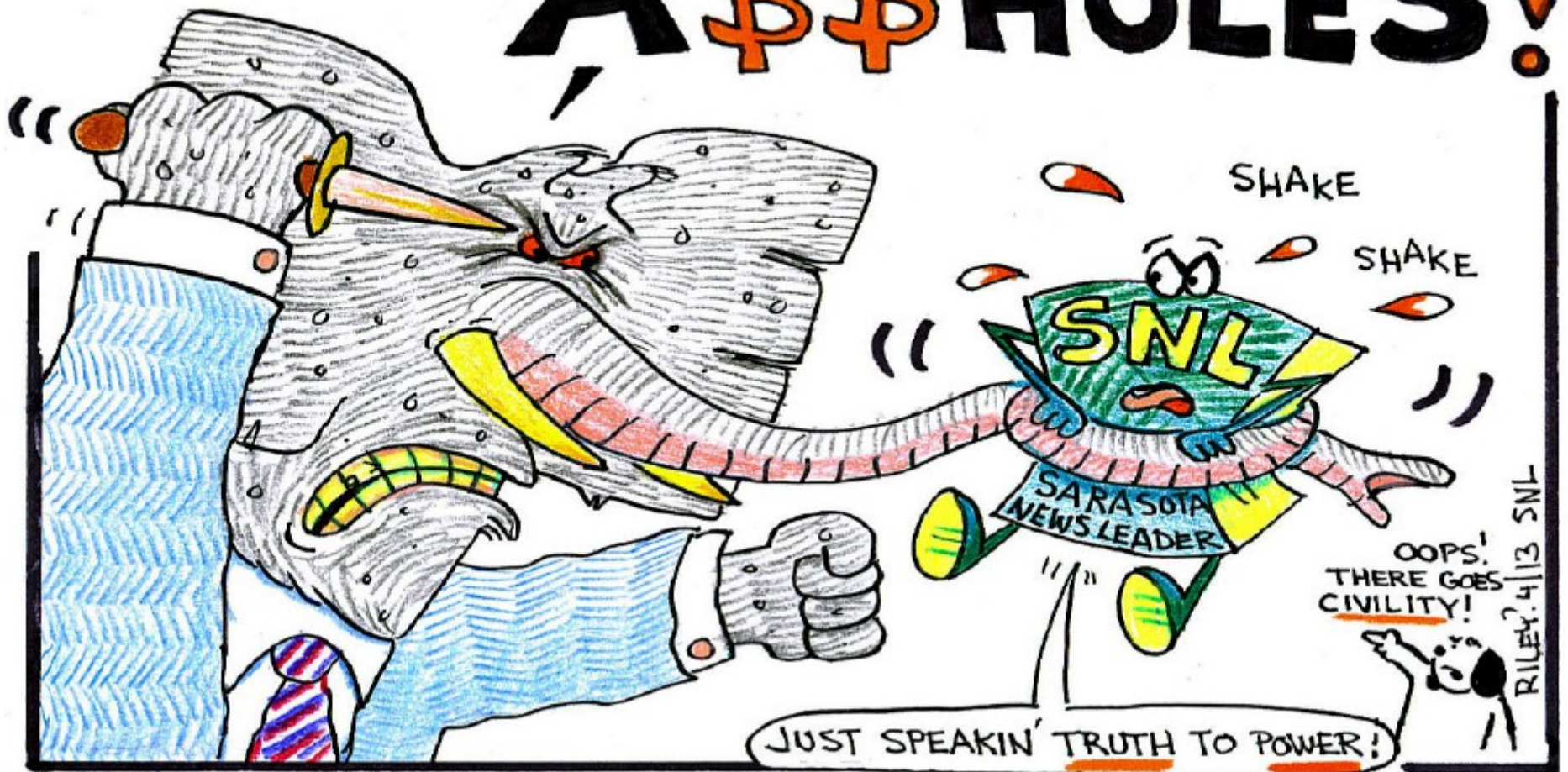
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OPINION

"A \$\$\$ HOLES!"



REPUBLICANS HARSH IN OPPOSING FAIR ELECTIONS

EDITORIAL

Quite a few counties in Florida — and Sarasota is among them — are dominated by Republican local officeholders, despite Republicans being a minority of registered voters in those counties. That is because Florida historically has been a “closed primary” state, meaning only Democrats vote in Democratic primaries and only Republicans vote in Republican primaries ... and Independents (what we refer to in Florida as No Party Affiliation, or NPA) are essentially disenfranchised.

Should one party not field a candidate in a general election, then that party’s voters and NPAs effectively have no voice in the election of that officeholder, who wins *de facto* after surviving his or her party primary.

With more new residents of Florida relocating from states where Independents are not shut

out of primary elections, a citizens initiative passed in 1998, amending the state constitution to allow the opening of a primary when only one party is fielding candidates in the general election. Unfortunately, it was left to the Legislature to codify this change and, like the proverbial rats being in charge of the cheese inventory, the Republican-dominated Legislature carefully inserted a loophole that undid the constitutional amendment: If a write-in candidate was qualified (and it should be pointed out that “qualify” is a very loosely defined term here, since we all can “qualify” as human beings almost as easily as a write-in candidate can “qualify” for an election), then the primary would remain closed to all but registered voters of that party.

Admittedly, the loophole has been employed by Democrats in counties where they have a strong majority, but that was more a defen-

OPINION

sive response to the many more counties where Republicans shut out Democrats and NPA voters by putting up “straw” opponents in the general election by means of write-in candidates. These write-in candidates almost never did any campaigning or spent money on advertising, and they typically dropped out of the races once the primaries had been decided, ceding victory to the primary winners.

The most recent example in Sarasota County was the Republican primary battle between Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent and challenger Jon Thaxton, who was term-limited from retaining his County Commissioner seat. As no Democrat filed to run in the general election, the Republican primary should have been open to Democrats and NPAs, since the primary became, for all intents and purposes, the general election.

But Republican bigwig Jack Brill had his 24-year-old daughter enter the race as a write-in candidate, shutting out all but Republican voters and denying Jon Thaxton the moderate voters he needed to oust the unpopular Dent. Party ideology trumped electoral fairness.

To rub salt in the wound, Victoria Brill conceded publicly, when she withdrew her straw candidacy, that she never had any intention of actually running for the office. She only wanted to prevent almost 70 percent of Sarasota’s voters from having a voice in the election of a supervisor of elections.

In the April 5 issue of *The Sarasota News Leader*, we reported on the efforts of the Public Interest Coalition — made up of groups including the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, the Sarasota Audubon chapter and the Sierra Club — which is pro-

posing a simple solution to the inherent unfairness of our local electoral process: make county offices nonpartisan.

With prospective county commissioners and other county officeholders running in nonpartisan races, every voter would have the opportunity to have a say in choosing the winners. Certainly, candidates’ party affiliation still would be known, and perhaps trumpeted by prospective candidates. That seems to be the case in municipal nonpartisan races here and in other states. But, while the voters might weigh party affiliation or ideology in making their choices, no one would be denied the right to vote because of a cloistered electoral methodology that is antithetical to the democratic process.

In our article, we quoted Joe Gruters, Republican Party of Sarasota chairman, voicing opposition to the idea, because he claimed all races were indisputably partisan. He did not explain why the partisan affiliation of candidates and a nonpartisan race were mutually exclusive, perhaps because, as we already have observed, that would be a ridiculous claim.

Bill Zoller, a Republican and president of Citizens for Sensible Growth in Sarasota County, was identified in our article as a leading advocate for a shift to nonpartisan races. After the fake candidacy of Victoria Brill and the arrest of Republican stalwart Bob Waechter for identity theft in an effort to falsely impugn another Republican, Zoller wondered, “How much worse can it get? That’s about as low as you can go.”

Apparently, Jack Brill took exception to our article and sent an email that stated the following:

OPINION

*"It is time to send in a response. Other wise [sic] you will continue to be compared to Waechter and taking shots form [sic] these a**holes!!!!~*

Respectfully Yours,

Jack Brill"

(Note: The asterisks are ours; they replaced the actual "S's" Mr. Brill indiscreetly used.)

Unfortunately, he neglected to change the "to" address in his email to his intended recipient (likely Joe Gruters), so the email came back to our subscription manager.

In psychological terms, his behavior is known as "projection." Rather than acknowledge fault for one's transgressions, one fixes the blame upon those who give voice to the transgres-

sions — sort of an adult version of the school-yard retort, "Oh, yeah? Well, so are you!"

The truth is that excluding more than two-thirds of the county electorate so a minority party can control the electoral process is neither fair nor democratic. It amounts to ideological apartheid. That is why state voters amended the constitution 15 years ago, and why county voters may well take the next step in restoring credibility to representative government in Sarasota County.

Gruters, in opposing a change in the electoral process, asserted that anyone who voted to make county races nonpartisan was "a fool." But perhaps county voters might respond, as George W. Bush once said, "We won't get fooled again." 

PLEASE VOTE FOR ATWELL AND CHAPMAN

EDITORIAL

On May 14 City of Sarasota voters will choose two at-large city commissioners from a field of three. We urge you to pick Suzanne Atwell and Susan Chapman.

The reasons for each are different because each carries totally different tools, abilities and resources to the job. Alas, we cannot put them in a blender to puree them to create one perfect at-large city commissioner.

But we expect once elected, they will recognize the skills each brings to the commission table and respect the need for different approaches to governance.

Suzanne Atwell is a social worker by trade. She is everybody's best friend, and she revels

in her current role as mayor. When it comes to kissing babies and cutting ribbons and spreading oil on troubled waters, she is uncannily smooth. Peace follows in her wake. But she sometimes is lost in the details of policy, and she can be uncertain and sometimes silent on complex issues.

Susan Chapman is a lawyer by trade. She has proven time and again to be a friend when one is needed. Her terms on the city's Planning Board have tempered her, but she is capable of scorching the earth in pursuit of fairness. She is fearless and tough as a top-kick sergeant. By standing up for neighborhoods from all over the City of Sarasota in their times of need, she has won sincere admiration from the poorest and richest residential areas in town.

OPINION

Both candidates have made enemies for various reasons. As the only incumbent in the race, Atwell takes all the arrows for bad commission decisions in the past. Parking meters, the Bartolotta witch hunt, a seeming (but not actual) flip-flop on Walmart: Four years is enough time in office to irritate everybody about something.

Sarasota is very hard on incumbents, and the landscape is littered with one-term commissioners — which is all the more reason to vote for Atwell. She has made appropriate decisions, but more importantly, she brings consensus building to City Hall. We need that more than ever before.

Chapman does not carry the burden of official incumbency, but her efforts on behalf of neighborhoods and citizens have been polarizing. After the Alta Vista neighborhood failed to stop a proposed School Avenue high-rise project before the recession, Chapman helped to craft the appeal to the Department of Community Affairs that brought harmony back to the development and neighbors. And after multiple complaints of police misconduct, Chapman led a city advisory group, which resulted in the creation of two civilian oversight boards.

Chapman's service on the Planning Board has been another source of controversy. Even though the huge majority of decisions are unanimous, Chapman has been in the minority at times, finding legal basis for oppos-


ing controversial projects. Her "department stores not allowed there" opposition to the Walmart at Ringling Plaza is but one example. The City Commission found her argument persuasive enough that it overturned the Planning Board's approval of the Walmart proposal.

Both Atwell and Chapman — because of their service to the city — are extremely knowledgeable about civic affairs.

Both Atwell and Chapman — because of their service to the city — are extremely knowledgeable about civic affairs. They should be able to "hit the ground running" to tackle existing and

looming troubles.

We have less good to say about the third candidate in the race, Richard Dorfman. His knowledge of — and involvement in — civic affairs is thin and sketchy. And he has yet to master his "ready-fire-aim" method of problem solving. While he purports to be the candidate of business, his recent business history has allegedly had many failures. He is considerably less qualified on many levels to serve as a city commissioner.

When voters take up their ballots, they can vote for two of the three candidates. While you will hear people urge that you vote for only one, because that purportedly gives some statistical edge, do not heed their advice. We need two qualified and eager commissioners. While their traits may differ, their commitment to Sarasota is both deep and strong. **Vote for Suzanne Atwell and Susan Chapman.** 

OPINION

THE DECEASED BOSTON BOMBING SUSPECT TRAVELED A YEARS-LONG PATH INTO RELIGIOUS FANATICISM



By David Staats
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

Since last week's shooting death of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and the capture of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the two ethnic Chechen brothers who are the prime suspects in the Boston Marathon bombing, much has been written and broadcast by the news media and on blog sites speculating on their possible motives for having undertaken this act of terrorism.

Thus far, only one commentator seems to have the right answers: Ruslan Tsarni, the men's paternal uncle. He called his nephews "losers," adding that Tamerlan, a convert to a radical form of Islam, had corrupted his younger brother.

Reporting on the Tsarnaevs' life in the U.S. describes a highly dysfunctional family. Anzor, the father, was trained as a lawyer and held responsible positions in the Kyrgyzstan bureaucracy. He is an ethnic Chechen. His wife, Zubeidat, is an ethnic Avar. Between 1991 and 2002, they and their children shuttled between Kyrgyzstan and Dagestan. In each location, and for differing reasons, they were considered undesirables. In 2002, Anzor, Zubeidat and their younger son, Dzhokhar, immigrated to the U.S. as refugees. Their elder son, Ta-

merlan, and their two daughters joined them in 2003. The family was reunited in Boston.

In Boston, Anzor found work as an auto mechanic. Although skilled, he could not support his family as a mechanic. After a decade of struggling, Anzor returned to Russia in May 2012. He explained that he was leaving to seek medical treatment for injuries stemming from a severe beating he received sometime before emigrating from Russia. Zubeidat was a beautician who saw female clients only in the family's apartment. Clients praised her facials. Zubeidat followed her then ex-husband to Russia a short time later, reportedly because she was homesick.

Another incentive for her to return may have been her arrest on June 19, 2012 for shoplifting clothing valued at \$1,624 from the Lord & Taylor store in Natick, MA. She also attempted to disable the anti-theft tags attached to the clothes.

While still in the U.S., Anzor and Zubeidat divorced. The cause was irreconcilable differences. The source of those differences was Zubeidat's embrace of conservative Islam. She encouraged Tamerlan to follow her down this path. He did.

OPINION

Tamerlan was born on Oct. 21, 1986 in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan. He claimed (falsely) in an interview with the *Lowell Sun* that he had been raised in Grozny, Chechnya, before entering the U.S. Tamerlan showed early promise as a boxer. He also exhibited talent as a musician. As a part-time student at Bunker Hill Community College, however, his performance was unimpressive and he stopped going to classes. It was about this same time in 2008 that Tamerlan's interest in his mother's brand of conservative Islam began to take root.

The following year, Ruslan Tsarni told CNN, Tamerlan, in a telephone call, declared that studies and work were irrelevant to him because Allah had a mission for him.

TURNING POINTS

Also in 2009, Tamerlan was charged with domestic abuse for slapping his then girlfriend. Later, he lost in the first round of the Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions in Salt Lake City.

Tamerlan married Katherine Russell in the summer of 2010. A Christian, Katherine converted to Islam. Tamerlan stayed home to care for their daughter while Katherine worked long hours as a home healthcare aid to provide for the family. They also applied for, and received, welfare payments.

In early 2011, the Russian Federal Security Service requested the FBI to investigate Ta-

merlan, whom they suspected to be a Muslim militant. The FBI reportedly replied to the Russians that it found Tamerlan without a connection to any militant group.

Tamerlan departed the U.S. for Russia on Jan. 12, 2012, returning on July 17, 2012. He visited Chechnya and Dagestan, but the details of his activities there are not known. After his return to the U.S., Tamerlan created social media accounts, several with postings which glorify *ji-had*. The Imarat Kavkaz (The Emirate of the Caucasus), which the U.S. has declared a terrorist organization, is also featured. Tamerlan warned Muslims not to allow their children to watch Harry Potter movies.

On Sept. 5, 2012, Tamerlan applied for U.S. citizenship. Two months later he interrupted a sermon at his local mosque, calling the imam an "infidel" and a "hypocrite" for encouraging Muslims to join in Thanksgiving Day celebrations.

Tamerlan's descent into fanaticism began in childhood. During the Soviet period, he and his family lived in "internal exile" in Kyrgyzstan, whose native population had little in common with, and scant sympathy for, Chechens. After the implosion of the USSR in 1991, the veneer of official Kyrgyz tolerance for "displaced" minorities, such as Chechens, Uighurs and Koreans, was peeled away. These "foreigners" were not wanted by the Kyrgyz. Tamerlan's father lost his high-level government post and moved the family to the North

OPINION

Caucasus. Life there was so much worse that the family returned to Kyrgyzstan within a year and applied to the U.S. for refugee status.


In the U.S., Tamerlan aggressively pursued amateur boxing. It was to be his way out of poverty and obscurity. Tamerlan aspired to join the U.S. Olympic boxing team and hoped one day to turn pro. For a number of years Tamerlan did well in the ring.

Tamerlan did not have the skills necessary to become a champion. After losing an important bout, he gave up boxing. Later, and after converting to conservative Islam, he explained that he disavowed boxing because no Muslim should hit a man in the face. Muhammad Ali might have differed with him on this point. One can almost hear Tamerlan speak the lines spoken by Marlon Brando's character, Terry Molloy — another washed-up boxer — in the film *On the Waterfront*: "I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody, instead of a bum, which I am, let's face it."

Tamerlan was a bum. He failed at everything he touched: boxing, school, work, marriage.

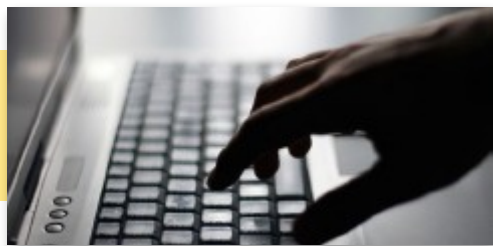
His status as a househusband steadily eroded his self-esteem. Katherine earned money and put bread on the table; he changed diapers. Tamerlan felt himself shamed as a man. A man provides for his family; but like his father, he could not. His father was a loser. Tamerlan was a second-generation loser.

Tamerlan's conscious drift into religious fanaticism was the logical next step toward self-destruction. In order to confirm to himself the correctness of his commitment, Tamerlan needed a pliable acolyte whom he could manipulate. His brother, Dzhokhar, proved a willing recruit. Dzhokhar appears to have had no moral compass whatsoever. He neither supported terrorism, nor disavowed it; he simply rationalized it in order to please his elder brother.

Tamerlan made no escape plan. He was shot to death in a gun battle with law enforcement officers, becoming — in his own mind, at least — *shahid*, a martyr for Islam. As of this writing, no one has claimed his body for burial. Burial is a prerequisite for entering the martyr's paradise, so even in death, Tamerlan remains a loser. 

The Sarasota News Leader
No-Nonsense Reporting

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHAPMAN A DESERVING CANDIDATE FOR COMMISSION

To the editor:

Sarasota City Commission candidate Susan Chapman is a 23-year resident of the city of Sarasota and has actively participated in shaping the city's future, but she also recognizes the importance of preserving, protecting and enhancing Sarasota's heritage.

Sarasota has a long history of inclusive community planning. As a result, the city has successfully guided, encouraged and approved many significant development projects and hundreds of new residential units in the core of downtown. In recent years, only a few examples of this success include the Ritz-Carlton, Whole Foods, Plaza at Five Points, City Place and the Rivo at Ringling.

In addition, Palm Avenue, Golden Gate Point, the Rosemary District, Laurel Park and Gillespie Park are more desirable communities than ever. The people who live in these neighborhoods and new buildings (some with white hair) are customers for the many new businesses. These residents, simply by their presence, have enlivened downtown and improved public safety.

Unfortunately, selective campaign rhetoric ignores how much successful development and redevelopment the city has achieved. Candidates who were not even living in Sarasota when the community planning occurred now present their "new" ideas, already adopted

in the Downtown Master Plan, as a means to cure the city's financial "crisis."

Ms. Chapman understands the city must continue to grow and embrace newcomers, but not at the expense of violating the public trust or ignoring the community development regulations that have successfully remade Sarasota into a great place to live, work and play. As a member of the Planning Board and as an attorney, Ms. Chapman will make a difference on the City Commission by bringing fact-based decision making to the table.

The city needs leaders — not politicians. Susan Chapman is a leader and the only candidate who can be trusted to shape Sarasota's future by being inclusive.

Mike Taylor
Sarasota



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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LIGHTS! CAMERA! DISCUSSION!

HEALING CREATION

ASK OTUS

Inside



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LIGHTS! CAMERA! DISCUSSION!

It Felt Like Love Director Eliza Hittman accepts the Narrative Feature Competition's Special Jury Prize for Creative Achievement at the Sarasota Opera House on April 13. She is joined on stage by (from left) jury members Joshua Rothkopf, Miranda Siegel and Alicia Van Couvering. All photos by Arielle Scherr

2013 SARASOTA FILM FESTIVAL SCREENS AND HONORS PROVOCATIVE FILMS; FOSTERS DIALOGUE BETWEEN AUDIENCE MEMBERS AND FILMMAKERS

By Tyler Whitson
Staff Writer

Late-term abortion clinics, LGBT issues, school violence, conservation of indigenous cultures and potable water shortages in underdeveloped countries were just a sampling of the provocative topics presented in the films recognized this year at the Filmmaker Tribute Awards, which closed the 15th annual Sarasota Film Festival (SFF).

The ceremony took place at the Sarasota Opera House on the evening of Saturday, April 13, featuring both jury and audience-selected awards in narrative and documentary feature divisions and other categories.

Hosted by comedic actress, director and producer Cheryl Hines (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Suburgatory*), the event was followed by a closing night screening of *Frances Ha*, a light-hearted indie film about friendship and the difficulties of fitting into modern society. It was written and directed by Noah Baumbach (*The Squid and the Whale*, *Margot at the Wedding*).

OPENING REMARKS

In her introduction to the Filmmaker Tribute Awards, Hines lauded Sarasota for being an

environment that fosters filmmaking. "I know how hard it is to make a film ... and I know how important it is for filmmakers to feel support from the community," she said. "I really feel that here from the community and from other filmmakers supporting each other."

Still, Hines was not afraid to poke a bit of fun at the SFF, pointing out its penchant for sometimes lavish parties, many of which she was obliged to attend as host of the awards ceremony.

"I've been to a lot of film festivals ... and I've never seen so much mandatory partying," she joked. "I feel like I'm doing my best, but I can't keep up with you people!"

Hines went on to introduce SFF Director of Education Allison Koehler, who gave a short

presentation about the free festival program she oversees; it reached more than 5,000 public school students of varied ages this year.

For example, the Young Filmmakers Showcase gave students the opportunity to submit short films in a competition for scholarships, other prizes and screenings.

Koehler noted that SFF Education also teaches students media literacy skills through a variety of programs, including Classroom Critic and See Jane Studio, which focus on basic film analysis and exploration of gender representation in film, respectively.

THE TERRY PORTER VISIONARY AWARD

The first prize presented at the Filmmaker Tribute Awards was the Terry Porter Visionary



Sarasota Film Festival President Mark Famiglio thanks sponsors at the beginning of the SFF's Filmmaker Tribute Awards.

Award, named after the late Sarasota resident and SFF ally who managed the independent video rental store Video Renaissance. Created three years ago, the award goes to a film that pushes boundaries and is not afraid to challenge audiences with unique conceptual ideas and innovative processes.

The 2013 winner, *Computer Chess* — a narrative feature set in the early 1980s — is about an annual conference of computer programmers, where developers tested their own chess-playing applications against each other in the hopes of eventually defeating a human chess master. Recorded primarily in black and white on period equipment, it features an accurate representation of computer technology from the time.

Robin Schwarz, an actress in the film, was present for the honor. “On behalf of all of the men in *Computer Chess*, I would like to thank you guys for this award,” she said, nodding slyly to the fact that she plays the only female programmer in the movie. “I know that everybody in the film would have been the type who would have wanted to hang out with Terry,” she added.

AUDIENCE AWARDS

The next prizes were the Audience Awards, which were tabulated directly from votes of audience members who filled out and turned in ballots to SFF volunteers following the 2013 screenings.



(From left) Pasadena cast members Peter Bogdanovich, Cheryl Hines and Alicia Witt and Director Will Slocombe answer questions from audience members following the film's world premiere at the Regal Cinemas Hollywood 20 on April 13.

The first honor presented in this division was for Best in World Cinema; it went to Ken Loach's *The Angel's Share*, a Scottish comedy about an ex-convict who wants to create a better life for his newborn son and discovers that the fine malt whiskey business might be the way to do so.

Recognition for Best Documentary Feature went to Suzanne Mitchell's *Running Wild*, an American film about the life of an elderly cowboy, conservationist and author named Dayton O. Hyde, who dedicates much of his time to protecting wild horses.

The Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature went to Andrew Mudge's *The Forgotten Kingdom*, an American and South African film about a young man named Atang who lives in Johannesburg but returns to his ancestral

village in the small nation of Lesotho for his father's funeral. There, he develops a renewed interest in his heritage and the country's cultural traditions.

The final Audience Award, for Best Short Film, went to Chad Hartigan's *This is Normal*, an American and Zambian documentary about how nearly half the world's population must walk several miles daily to collect water that is often contaminated or unsafe to drink.

JURIED AWARDS

Next, the juried prizes were presented by members of the groups that made the selections. Each category includes two awards — first prize and runner-up.

The first of these sets was in the popular Independent Vision category, reserved for unique



(From left) Angela Wright Co-Producer, Screenwriter and lead actress Genevieve Farrell; *The Opportunity Office* Director, Producer, Screenwriter and lead actress Chelsea O'Connor; and *Tipping Point* Director, Producer and Screenwriter Leonardo Foti pose on the red carpet prior to the Filmmaker Tribute Awards. All three films are narrative shorts.

films that accomplish a lot with very limited resources.

The primary award went to Matthew Johnson's *The Dirties*, a Canadian narrative feature about two socially awkward high school students who are frequently bullied by a group of students referred to as "The Dirties" and the fantasies they have about exacting revenge.

The secondary award — known as the Golden Pond Award for Artistic Accomplishment — went to Chad Hartigan's *This is Martin Bonner*, an American narrative feature about a lonely man in his 50s who attempts to start a new life in Reno, NV, and ends up forming

an unlikely friendship with a man who has recently been released from prison.

In the Documentary Feature Competition, the main award went to Martha Shane and Lana Wilson's *After Tiller*, an American film about the four remaining late-term abortion physicians in the United States, their clinics, their employees, their patients and the risks they take daily to do their work.

The competition's Special Prize for Direction went to Benjamin Greené's *Survival Prayer*, a Canadian and American film about members of an indigenous community who live on a small archipelago northwest of British Columbia called Haida Gwaii. The movie focus-



Narrative short *Tina for President* Director Carmen Emmi (right) poses for photos with his mother on the red carpet prior to the Filmmaker Tribute Awards. The film was shown as part of the SFF's Youthfest program for children.

es on how they face the threat of losing their ancient language because of the after-effects of Colonialism.

Finally, a group of jurors took to the stage to announce the Narrative Feature Competition winners. The principal award went to Xavier Dolan's *Laurence Anyways*, a Canadian film about a transgender woman, her romantic struggles and the discrimination she faced in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Narrative Feature Competition's Special Jury Prize for Creative Achievement went to Eliza Hittman's *It Felt Like Love*, an American film about a young girl's journey to adulthood,

her efforts to find love and her experiences navigating a world dominated by masculinity.

SPOTLIGHTS AND CENTERPIECES

In addition to the award-winning films, the closing night movie and the opening night film — *Blackfish* — a number of spotlight and centerpiece films received special attention at the SFF. For all of them, the directors and sometimes cast members were present to answer audience members' questions.

This year's centerpiece films were Barbara Koppel's *Running from Crazy* and James Ponsoldt's *The Spectacular Now*. The spot-



Narrative short *Shades of Living* Director Aurora Fearnley poses for photos on the red carpet prior to the Filmmaker Tribute Awards.

light movies were Carlos Puga's *Burma*, Justin Schwarz's *The Discoverers* and Will Slocombe's *Pasadena*. All were produced in the United States.

One of these special screenings had a particularly bright glow: It was the first time anyone not close to the production had seen it.

Pasadena, which concluded its premiere just before the Filmmaker Tribute Awards, is a comedic drama about a ludicrously dysfunctional and idiosyncratic family trying desperately to get along on its first Thanksgiving together in several years. The film stars Peter Bogdanovich, Alicia Witt and Hines, who made her way to the Sarasota Opera House right after the post-showing Q&A session. That session featured all of the aforementioned cast members as well as Slocombe.

The director stayed at the theater for a few minutes after the discussion, agreeing to a short interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*.

Asked about debuting his film at the SFF, Slocombe responded excitedly, "I feel great about it!" he said. "I've felt so taken care of from the second I landed," he continued. "This has been fantastic."

When asked what he knew about the SFF prior to his own involvement with it, the Los Angeles-based director said he has seen it as a "legitimate, up-and-coming festival" and that it is highly esteemed by many of his colleagues and peers. "I think it's a really fast-growing, really good festival," he added. "Everyone told me that this would be a great fit and it has been."

Slocombe went on to note that SFF Director Tom Hall "is incredibly well-respected," with a strong reputation among members of the national film programming community. "I think that he sort of has the ear of New York, in some interesting ways," Slocombe noted.

A GROWING REPUTATION

Slocombe pointed out in the interview that he is impressed with how quickly the SFF has developed, growing from an eight-day/eight-film program 15 years ago to a nine-day festival screening more than 220 films from 30 nations this year.

According to the SFF's website, www.sarasotafilmfestival.com, turnout for this year's festival was particularly impressive, too, with a sold-out opening night at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and a number of sold-out screenings. In addition, the SFF website notes the festival received a record number of submissions from filmmakers all over the world this year, a clear indication word about the event has been spreading.

This year's success, however, has not dazzled the SFF staff members into complacency. Rather than resting on their laurels, they have already begun planning for next year's festival.

A quick visit to the SFF website reveals, by way of a conspicuous banner, that the dates for the 16th annual SFF have already been confirmed. The projectors will roll once again from April 4-13, 2014. If this year's success can be taken as a sign, SFF fans have plenty to look forward to in the future. 



HEALING CREATION

LET NATURE BE THE TONIC FOR TRAUMATIC TIMES

Story and Photos By Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer

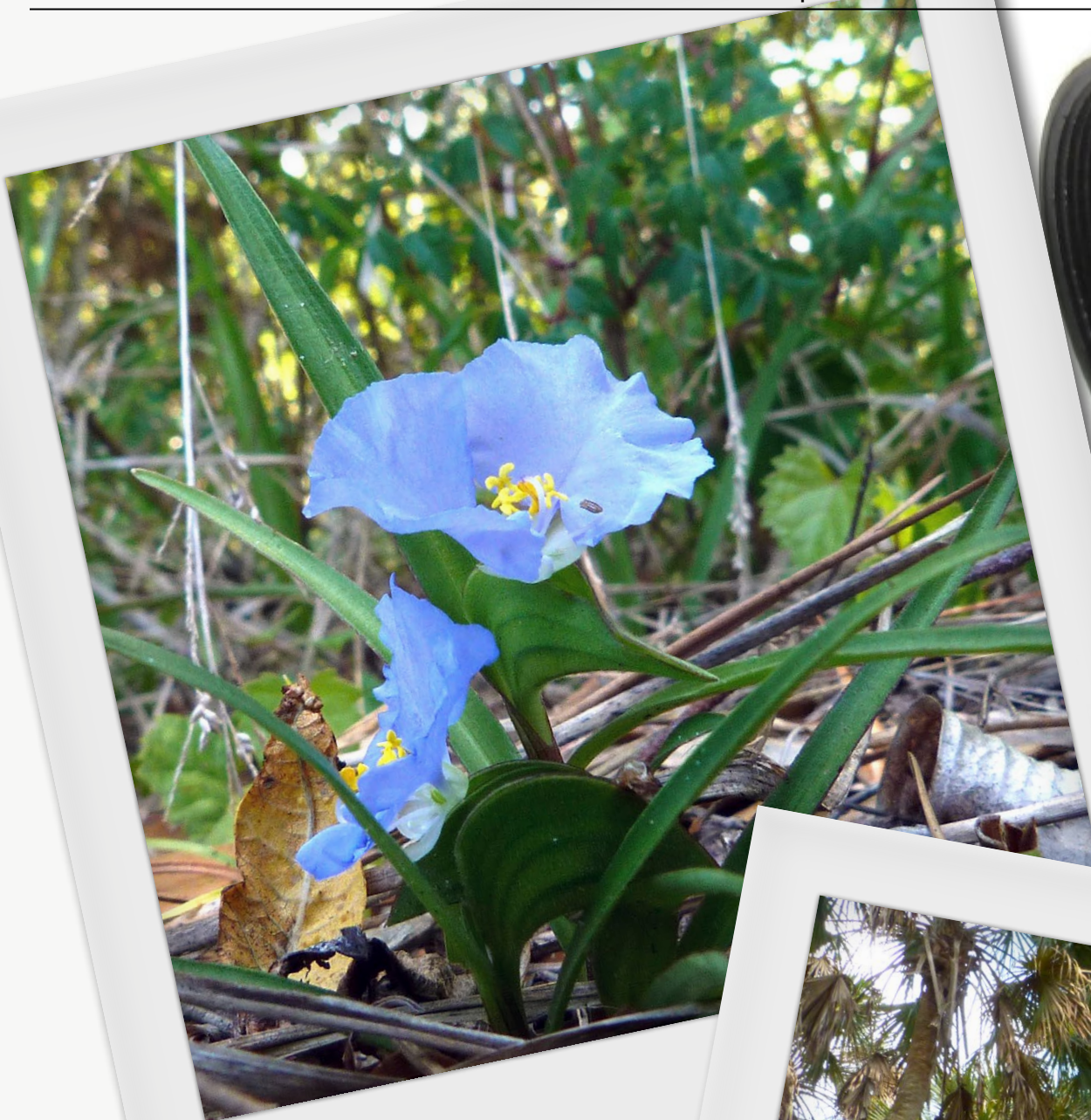
Feeling depleted by the news from Boston last week, I abandoned my schedule and took to the woods.

At Sleeping Turtles Preserve in Venice, I stepped out of the van onto a carpet of wildflowers — frog fruit, blue-eyed grass, day-flowers. On the trail around the lake, beautiful scenes presented themselves. A giant sulphur butterfly circled 'round and 'round me. Dewberries ripe for the picking were sprinkled along the path.

Nature can be a restorative tonic! “In the woods we return to reason and faith,” Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote. The conserva-

tionist John Muir could hardly wait to get out “in heaven’s light.” On his thousand-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico, he convalesced from malaria at Cedar Key, lying beneath the “ample arms of live oaks listening to the winds and the birds.”


Recent experiments have shown that brain function can be improved by a visit to a green space. Being close to trees builds the immune system, protecting people from cancers and other diseases. Daniel Janzen a conservation biologist says we will be “at the top of our game” with occasional forays into a green world.

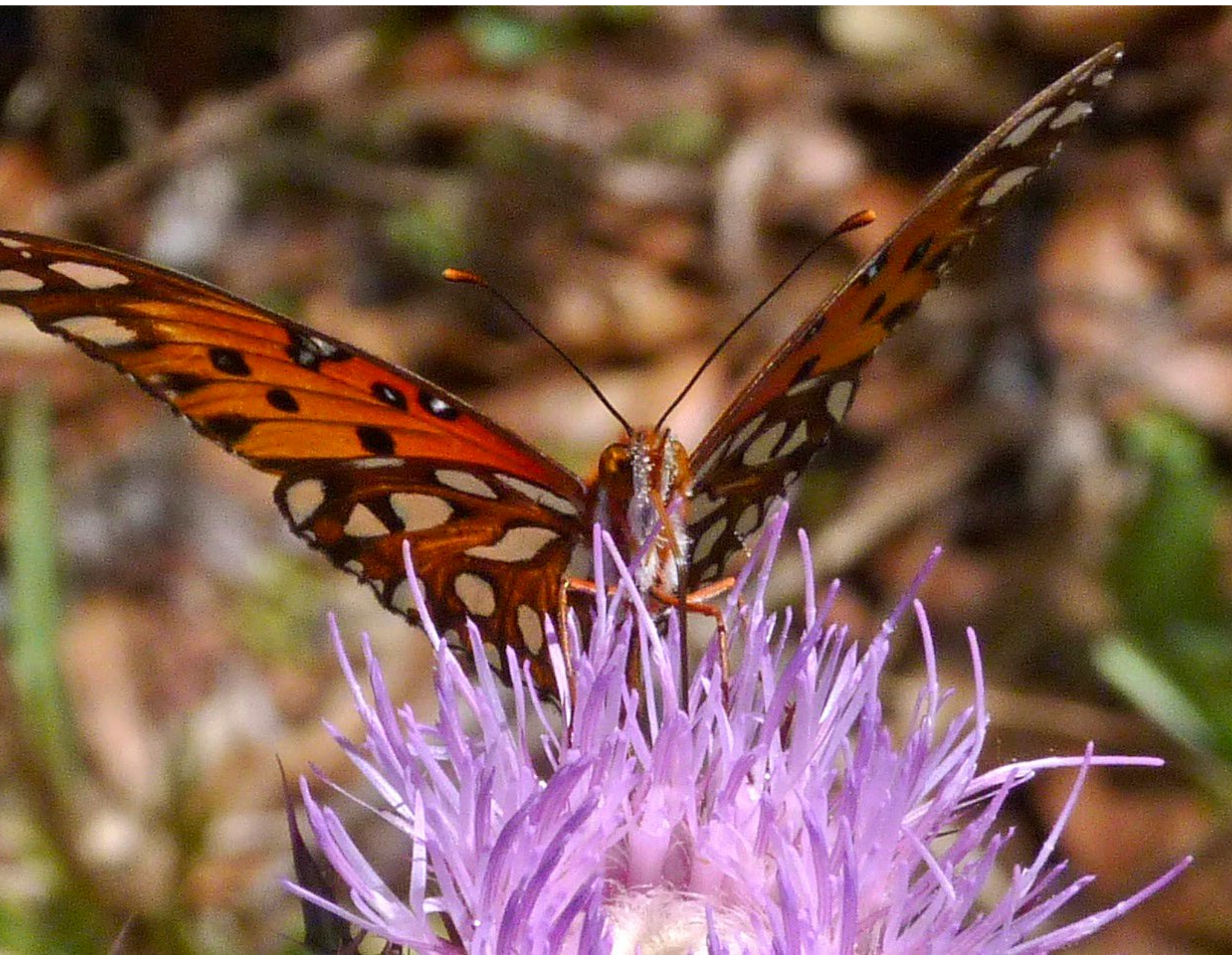


If you are stuck in a leafless place, bring the outdoors in. New Yorkers are masters of this. Enduring memories I have of a stay in Manhattan are trees “sprouting” from the tops of skyscrapers and flower sellers on every corner.

Nature is not just a place to “visit.” It is the slowing down, the change of pace, the “being” that is important. In *Pilgrimage to Villambrosa* John Elder writes, “Our expeditions away from routine are not for the purpose of discovering wildness in the world outside ourselves but rather for recovering it within us.”

Wildness is easy to come by in this area. Sarasota County has dozens of parks (visit www.scgov.net). Two state parks — Myakka River and Oscar Scherer — offer miles of trails. But you do not have to hike. You can picnic or sit on a bench and take in the view.

“Wilderness settles peace on the soul” says Edward O. Wilson, the Harvard biologist who has spent a lifetime studying the natural world. So when you are depressed by the news or your appointment book is overly full, remember that healing creation is always available to us. 





I like to take my time.

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

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

You have a whole week.

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ASK OTUS

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

A READER SUBMITS A HEARTWARMING STORY ABOUT THE RESCUE OF A GREAT BLUE HERON ON SIESTA KEY

Dear Readers,

In 1736, Benjamin Franklin, writing his *Almanack* under the pseudonym Poor Richard, declared that "Fish & Visitors stink in three days." Franklin's problem with stinky house guests and fish was due to the unavailability in 18th century Philadelphia of electric power. That lack led to improperly controlled cold storage and to quick decomposition of perishable items.

Aware of this, Franklin would devote the next 16 years to working feverishly on problems of electrical conductivity. In 1752, he invented the lightning rod, which, when grounded in

a particular way, is an effective, albeit somewhat drastic, means of ridding oneself of noisome four-day-old houseguests and fish.

Poor Richard, indeed! If only he could be here now to see the splendid improvements in cold storage made possible by harnessed electrical power. Today's state-of-the-art refrigerator keeps houseguests fresh as daisies, although you might need to change the fish every few days. If your houseguests have eaten the fish, you will need to buy another fish.

And writing this reminds me that it is now time to check on the fish!

Otus



Otus' house guest in the 'fridge.' File photo

Dear Otus,

I thought you would be interested in this story of a wonderful bird rescue on Siesta Key.

Tatiana Staats

Dear Tatiana,

Interested? I was downright fascinated and I would like to share your tale and your superb photos with my readership. It is not every day

people have the opportunity to see the step-by-step process involved in the rescue of a wild bird, especially one this size with a formidably dangerous beak and sharp talons. A picture is worth a thousand words, so all I have to say is thank you and the volunteers at Wildlife Center of Venice. Thank you ever so much!

Otus

Charlie, a Great Blue Heron who lives on south Siesta Key, became entangled in fishing line to such an extent that he was hobbled at the ankles in such a way that he was able to stand on one foot only. His left foot was bound awkwardly to his right leg. Fishhooks appeared imbedded in both legs.




Charlie rises to the bait. All photos courtesy of Tatiana Staats



Charlie was clearly in pain and exhausted. Unable to hunt and fish, he was slowly starving.

Residents in the area where Charlie made his home telephoned The Wildlife Center of Venice Inc., which rescues and rehabilitates injured birds and other animals. Successfully rehabilitated animals are released back into the wild. Those unable to be returned to the outdoors spend their lives comfortably at the Center.

Charlie takes the bait and is expertly and harmlessly secured by the rescue line.



Rescuing wild animals can be a dangerous undertaking in any circumstances. A terrified Great Blue Heron, for example, may attack a rescuer's eyes with its beak. Please leave rescues to persons who have been trained for this highly specialized work. If you see an injured wild animal, call the Center at 941-484-9657.

On Saturday afternoon, April 20, the Center dispatched two volunteer rescue specialists, Jan Stebel, a Siesta Key resident, and Jessi Leis.

Jessi Leis and Jan Stebel assess damages to Charlie. While cutting off filaments, they see two fishing hooks embedded in both his feet.



Jessi tossed fish to Charlie, who ate them greedily, luring him closer to her. When Charlie was within capture range, Jan tossed a fish secured on a hookless fishing line. Charlie went after the bait as Jan reeled it in. Before Charlie could make good his catch, Jessi tackled him, carefully securing his beak and legs. Jan quickly clipped the fishing line from Charlie's feet and legs and then helped Jessi carefully place Charlie in a travel case for a large pet, which they put in the back of Jessi's SUV. Once secured in the travel case, Charlie fell asleep.

Jessi and Jan's cursory inspection of Charlie upon capture led them to say that with proper medical attention, regular feedings and suffi-

cient rest, he should make a full recovery. This prognosis was subsequently confirmed by one of the Center's veterinarians, who examined Charlie.

Once Charlie's convalescence was complete, the veterinarian said, he would be returned to south Siesta Key to resume his normal life.

Charlie's condition requires professional veterinary attention and convalescent time.




By the way, Charlie may be the only Great Blue Heron on Siesta Key to ride in a chauffeured Lexus.

Early Saturday afternoon, Jan and Jessi were able to return Charlie to his pond on south Siesta Key. After emerging from his travel case, Charlie spread his wings and flew gracefully away.

Charlie is ready to be released into the wild.



For more information on the work of The Wildlife Center of Venice Inc., as well as its resources, activities and volunteer opportunities, please visit www.wildlifecenterofvenice.org. The Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All donations to it are fully tax-deductible. 

Once again, Charlie's legs are free.

A CLEAR WINNER



Kate Honea and Ricardo Graziano in La Fille mal Gardée. Photo by Frank Atura

SARASOTA BALLET DELIGHTS AUDIENCES WITH FULL-LENGTH ASHTON PRODUCTION

By Elinor Rogosin
A&E Writer

No doubt about it: Sarasota Ballet has a “winner” with “La Fille mal Gardée.” It is a whimsical, entertaining fluff of a ballet that has been an audience favorite since Sir Frederick Ashton debuted his clever 1960 transformation of the 1789 original.

The story — and it is a full three-act story ballet — is simple: A domineering mother (Ricki Bertoni) wants her daughter (Kate Honea) to marry the childish son (Logan Learned) of a wealthy man (Steven Windsor) instead of the poor farmer (Ricardo Graziano) the daughter loves. But when the ballet opens with the

entrance of a large cockerel (Alex Harrison) flapping its wings, it is obvious we are in Ashton’s world.

Yes, the mother (Widow Simone) is always performed in drag. Ricki Bertoni’s exaggerated rump and shuffling demeanor, though edging towards caricature, captured the widow’s mixture of greed and concern. But that did not stop him from happily clicking his wooden heels in the clog dance, one of the set pieces that make this ballet so delightful.

There are other set pieces in this peaceful bucolic world (the charming sets and costumes



The set design was by Doug Nicholson. Contributed photo

were borrowed from the Birmingham Royal Ballet), with the entire cast weaving through the colored ribbons of an improvised maypole or juggling sticks while balancing sheaves of wheat and filling the stage with balletic folk dancing. However, the focus of the ballet is on the storytelling, and Ashton has choreographed a defining solo for each of the main characters that challenges both their acting and dancing ability.

Logan Learned, in his role as the childish, innocent Alain — the rich man's son and prospective bridegroom — was not able to capture the heart of Lise, as his father intended, but he did capture the heart of the audience at Thursday night's performance. Completely immersed in his role, Learned was amusing and pathetic as he made his way across the stage in

mincing steps. There was a hint of a recurring smile and a knowing nod to his head as he turned his umbrella into a hobbyhorse and charged forward in fast, unrelenting scissor kicks; or when he delighted in jumping like an automated toy. Always charismatic, Learned was both touching and eloquent in his portrayal of a young man lost in childhood.

Ricardo Graziano (Colas, the boyfriend) has an easy presence. He was graceful and musical, handling the many challenging bravura solos that followed one another

like a rushing cascade — including inventive jumps and turns that climaxed in the high, split jumps of the bottle dance — with a natural élan. He was an attentive part-



The cover of the program for La Fille mal Gardée features a scene from the clog dance. Cover photo by Frank Atura

ner and playful in his relationship with Kate Honea (Lise), but their relationship was like puppy love with little ardor.

In their first challenging *pas de deux*, when they played with a long pink ribbon that cleverly brought them together in a “cat’s cradle,” they handled the tricky choreography with ease; but there was little or no sexual tension. However, it was Ashton’s version of a bucolic world and, choreographically, playfulness may be the correct interpretation of the characters. Nonetheless, I do think that this is a ballet in which each of the individual portrayals is an important part of the entire production.

Honea handled the difficult choreography with a joyful exuberance that reflected the happiness of her character. She met each challenge of Ashton’s intricate, technically demanding vocabulary of quick-spinning pirouettes fol-



Logan Learned/Contributed photo



Ricki Bertoni/Contributed photo

lowed by bounding leaps, solo balances and especially the *on pointe* fleet footwork with a quick deftness. While Honea has always had an affinity for roles depicting saucy, piquant characters, creating the part of Lise gave her an opportunity to fully explore this aspect of her talent.

It was an added pleasure to have an orchestra for this performance and the music, by Ferdinand Herold —arranged by John Lanchbery — sparkled under the baton of Ormsby Wilkins, the guest conductor from American Ballet Theater. Both Sarasota Ballet Assistant Director Margaret Barbieri and Director Iain Webb danced in productions of *La Fille mal Gardee* under the watchful eye of Sir Frederick, and together they staged this production.

The Sarasota Ballet season will end in May with a program choreographed by individual members of the company. 



Siesta Seen

VILLAGE PROPERTY OWNERS CAN EXPECT TO PAY THE COUNTY LESS FOR UPKEEP IN COMING YEARS; DATA SHOWS THE RADAR SIGNS ON SIESTA ARE SLOWING DOWN DRIVERS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Mark Smith, chairman of the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp., is spreading some excellent news to the property owners who are assessed for the upkeep, he told me last week.

The county fiscal year will not end until Sept. 30, but all signs indicate the property owners will see a significant reduction in their assessments in coming years, Smith said on April 17 — about 50 percent over the next three years.

The actual bills so far for FY 2013 total \$53,456.54, Smith pointed out, but a few other encumbrances bring the tally to about \$62,000.

Yet, for this fiscal year, the total district assessment was \$210,719, Smith noted. In a recent meeting with Sarasota County staff members Ryan Montague of the Traffic/Mobility Office and

Tom Maroney, general manager of business operations in the Public Works Department, Smith reviewed all the expenses that have been incurred, he reported.

In September 2012 — 13 months after the county had taken over the upkeep — Championship Landscape Maintenance Professionals of Fort Myers began keeping the Village clean, having won the approval of the County Commission with a bid of \$97,417.70.



Mark Smith. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Bottom line, Smith said on April 17: With Championship on board, “it’s costing us less.”

It always creates an uneasy feeling, he added, when a local government body “has more of your money than they’re supposed to,” but it appears the situation this time will work out well for the property owners.

Siesta Seen

The County Commission will have to vote formally on the reduced assessment before it goes into effect, he added.

RUMOR HAS IT ...

It has come to my attention recently that residents have been talking in very preliminary stages with representatives of the Florida Department of Transportation about the possibil-

ity of FDOT constructing a roundabout at the intersection of Stickney Point Road and South Midnight Pass Road.

When I broached that topic last week with Robin Stublen, the communications specialist with FDOT in District One, he was quick to reply by email, "There has not been a decision made as this is only one option for this area."



Lower costs for keeping Siesta Village clean this year will lead to reduced assessments for property owners, county officials say. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

When I asked for more details, Stublen called. “They haven’t really done anything,” he said of FDOT engineers in Sarasota County. “It’s just like a water-cooler-type deal” at this time, he added. No studies have been undertaken yet of the possibility.

He promised to let me know if the situation changes.

THAT LIGHT POLE

On a not-so-happy note from my discussion with Mark Smith: Regular readers of this column will recall that shortly after Championship took over the Village maintenance last year, a driver knocked down the light pole near Siesta Beach Resort & Suites, located at 5311 Ocean Blvd.

An allegedly drunken female driver was at fault, Smith has explained in past Siesta Key Village Association meetings, and Sarasota County staff has been pursuing payment for a new pole from the driver’s insurance company.

During the SKVA meeting on April 2, Smith noted the pole “is currently missing in action.”

When I asked for an update on that status last week, he replied, “The light pole [situation] has just been a fiasco. ... I feel like it’s being held hostage by the company that has [the pole].”

The latest news, Smith said, is that Championship has paid about \$2,600 for the new pole, but “it just hasn’t been shipped.”

Smith added for verification that he has seen Championship’s invoice.

“Hopefully, in our lifetime, we’ll get [a pole] back,” he said.

SPEAKING OF SPEEDING DRIVERS ...

During the April 4 Siesta Key Association meeting, Ryan Montague from the county’s Traffic/Mobility Office reported on data from the radar signs the county installed on Siesta Key about 18 months ago at the urging of the SKA.

He explained that the signs were set in “stealth mode” at the outset, to create a baseline for the information they would record about drivers’ speeds. In that “stealth mode,” he pointed out, they were on but not flashing speeds as vehicles passed them.

During that initial period, Montague said, traffic heading west near Siesta Public Beach drove an average of 32 mph, while eastbound traffic registered an average of 30 mph.

The speed limit on that portion of Beach Road is 30 mph.

For Ocean Boulevard: traffic headed northbound out of Siesta Village had an average speed of 34 mph in the 35 mph zone, and northbound traffic on Midnight Pass Road had an average speed of 51 mph in the 40 mph zone.

SKA members long had complained of traffic moving rather fast on the long straight stretch of Midnight Pass Road near the Higley

Siesta Seen

Avenue intersection, where that one sign was installed.

Then Montague presented the latest speed data compiled from December 2012 through late March:

- For westbound traffic near Siesta Public Beach, the average speed had dropped to 22 mph.
- For eastbound traffic near the beach, the average speed was 19 mph.
- For the northbound traffic on Midnight Pass Road, the average was 37 mph, “which is

a pretty significant reduction,” Montague noted.

- For northbound traffic on Ocean Boulevard, the average was 28 mph.

“We’re doing good; that’s really good,” he said.

The highest speed recorded by any of the signs was 94 mph — for northbound Midnight Pass Road traffic. (Montague explained he had no figures for the sign facing southbound traffic on Midnight Pass Road, which was installed after the other signs went in. Apparently a computer glitch made it impossible for him to obtain the data.)



Nearby homeowners say drivers ignore caution signs advising a lower speed limit in the curve near St. Michael the Archangel Church on Midnight Pass Road. File photo

Siesta Seen

The fastest speed recorded by the Ocean Boulevard sign was 69 mph, he said.

In response to the audience and board members' gasps at the mention of those speeds, Montague said, "It's important to note that these devices are not infallible." For example, he pointed out, they sometimes pick up the speed of bicycle spokes. Moreover, the speeds recorded are not just for cars and trucks; they also can include bicycle traffic.

Overall, less than 2 percent of the vehicles traveled at a rate of speed above the posted limit on Midnight Pass Road and less than

1 percent was above the posted speed on Ocean Boulevard, Montague pointed out. "That's pretty unique for Sarasota County," he added. Generally, as indicated by radar signs in other areas, 15 percent of the vehicles operate faster than the allowed speed limit.

When SKA Vice President Michael Shay pointed out that the speeds were recorded during season, Montague responded that the data the signs had recorded was pretty consistent over the past 18 months. "There's nothing that jumped out at me" to indicate the recent figures were related to seasonal drivers and traffic tie-ups, he pointed out.



Siesta Isles residents on Siesta Key may seek county help in reducing speeding through the curve near their neighborhood. File photo

Siesta Seen

When Shay asked whether he had looked at the data for June, July and August 2012, Montague replied, "It wasn't significantly greater."

"Interesting," Shay mused.

Drivers tend to become inured to radar signs in other areas, Montague also noted, gradually letting their speeds rise in areas after the signs have been up for a while. That has not been the case on Siesta, he said, adding, "We don't expect that to change."

However, Deet Jonker pointed out that residential areas on the island continue to experience problems with speeders. Siesta Isles residents, for example, remain concerned about speeding in the curve by their neighborhood, Jonker added.

That is the curve near St. Michael the Archangel Church on Midnight Pass Road.

"They want calming devices," he said of the Siesta Isles residents. "Now, none of us want bumps in the road," Jonker continued, but radar signs in both directions probably would have the same effect.

When Jonker then asked whether the county intends to put more radar signs on Siesta, Montague said no such plans are in the works. Still, Montague added, "If we get a request, we'll evaluate it."

The radar signs cost about \$2,000, he noted.

When SKA President Catherine Luckner asked whether county staff had any plans to move the current signs to other locations, Montague

said no such plans existed. "At this time, [the signs are] basically considered permanent."

"Sure seems like they're doing a great job," Luckner told him.

Montague agreed: "These signs are more effective than what we see with speed tables."

TOURNEY TIME REMINDER

[The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce](#) is seeking donations of silent auction items, with preparations in full swing — so to speak — for its 14th Annual Paul Ralston Golf Tournament, set for Monday, May 6.

"Silent Auction donations not only are a great way to be seen and to gain new clientele, but are fundamental to the success of our Golf Tournament as one of the major fundraisers for the Chamber," a note to members says. "Your generosity supports the many functions that benefit our members and our surrounding community!"

One big event the Chamber's fundraisers support is the July Fourth fireworks show at Siesta Public Beach.

For silent auction donations and information, contact Chastanna at 349-3800.

The tournament will be held at [The Founders Club](#), 3800 Golf Hall Drive, Sarasota. For single players who wish to stay for the dinner and auction, the fee is \$150. For members of foursomes planning to participate in the dinner and other evening activities, the cost is \$550. A person interested just in attending the dinner pays only \$35.

Siesta Seen

KEEP THAT BEACH CLEAN

Finally, and certainly not the least of the island news this week, it is not too late to sign up for The Great American Cleanup on Saturday, April 27.

The Siesta Key Association will have groups working from Beach Access 2 to Access 11.

The county's Keep Sarasota County Beautiful office will supply T-shirts, gloves and trash bags to those who sign up in advance, while supplies last. Anyone interested in joining the SKA volunteers may send an email to info@siestakeyassociation.com. 



The Siesta Key Association will have volunteers participating in The Great American Cleanup on Siesta Public Beach April 27. Photo by Rachel Hackney



SARASOTA HIGH TO STAGE STUDENT VERSION OF *LES MISÉRABLES*

The Sarasota High School Theater Department will present a special student production of *Les Misérables*, the musical by Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boubil with English lyrics by Howard Kretzmer.

The play is based on the novel by Victor Hugo.

Performances began on Wednesday evening and will continue at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, with an additional performance at 2 p.m. Saturday. The show will be staged in the SHS Theater, a school news release says.

“We’ve prided ourselves through the years on taking chances and pushing the limits,” said drama teacher Melissa Dweck in the news release. “As a teacher and director, I’ve enjoyed watching the students grow, not just as actors, singers and performers, but as people. The harder the show, the more pressure they are under. It isn’t just learning their lines or music but managing their time, and keeping their grades up.”

Dweck added in the release that her students knew going into *Les Miz* “that it would be one of the hardest musicals they have tackled and that there might be people who thought they couldn’t do it.” She said that inspired them, like the characters in the show, to “fight on” and prove themselves.

“I hope that when audiences finish watching this show, they will understand the passion, the sweat and the love that has gone into every second of this musical — from the sets, to the costumes, to the emotion that hangs in every word they sing,” she notes in the release.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and seniors. Cash, checks and credit cards are accepted. The SHS Theater box office is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4 to 7 p.m. The phone number is 361-6288.

The SHS Theater is located at 1000 S. School Ave., Sarasota.

Kelsey McNatt (foreground) and Chris McCoy (with rifle prop) join fellow cast members as they rehearse for the Sarasota High School production of Les Misérables. Contributed photo

JOHN KOKAJKO PHOTO EXHIBIT TO OPEN MAY 5

Inspiration and Collaboration, featuring photography by John Kokajko, will open in the Unitarian Universalist Gallery in Sarasota on May 5 and continue through July 3, the gallery has announced.

A reception will be held from noon to 1 p.m. on Sunday, May 5. The public is welcome.

Kokajko says in a news release, "Photography has been an important tool for me since the 1960s. In 2011 I set myself the challenges of creating a series that expresses my central artistic vision; in addition I stepped up my collaborative efforts, joining Claudia Deschu for an ArtSlam2011 team project, *Art in the*

air: 1,000 colorful paper aircraft launched to soul-stirring music."

The release adds that, using native and imported plants found on the Florida Gulf Coast as his subject matter, Kokajko also has created images that express his respect for form and structure. "Cues for actual size are missing or altered," the release notes. "A spiral coiled fern becomes visually equivalent to a Hubble telescope view of the Whirlpool Galaxy," for example, it says.

The gallery is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and on Sundays after services. It is located at 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota.



A photo by John Kokajko shows Ann Rogers leading a choir. Contributed image

SARASOTA BALLET ANNOUNCES ITS 23RD SEASON LINEUP

Building from the momentum of its current season, The Sarasota Ballet says it “is prepared to awe and inspire ballet patrons and newcomers alike” with its 2013-2014 season.

Described by Director Iain Webb as “another exhilarating step forward,” the Ballet’s 23rd season will feature seven different programs and end with the *Sir Frederick Ashton Festival 2014*, which will celebrate the international dancer and choreographer, a news release says.

“We’ve scheduled everything purposefully and strategically, hoping to continually build and meet the expectations of our audiences,” said Webb in the release.

Normally reserved for the end of each season, the *Theatre of Dreams* program will open the season in October, the release notes. Highlighting the original works of select Sarasota Ballet company members, “this program is always a favorite,” the release adds.

Following in November, Program Two will showcase George Balanchine’s *Serenade*, Ashton’s *Les Illuminations* and Balanchine’s *Who Cares*. As a company premiere, *Les Illuminations* “will complement Balanchine’s ballets perfectly,” the release notes, because both were “huge successes when they originally debuted at The Sarasota Ballet.”

In December, the company will revive Matthew Hart’s *John Ringling’s Circus Nutcracker*, which had its premiere in December 2012. This circus-themed production “was inspired by the rich heritage that Sarasota shares with the Ringling Bros. Circus,” the release says. It



Sarasota Ballet Director Iain Webb (seated front center) poses with the company before the start of the 2012-13 season. Contributed photo

follows the traditional storyline and uses the Tchaikovsky score.

The fourth program of the season will feature Balanchine’s *Four Temperaments*, a Will Tuckett world premiere and Ashton’s *Sinfonietta*. In February 2014, the Ballet’s fifth program will bring yet another world premiere to the Sarasota community, choreographed by company principal Ricardo Graziano. Also in Program Five will be Ashton’s *Monotone’s I & II* and Agnes DeMille’s *Rodeo*.

Program Six, in early April 2014, will comprise Ashton’s *Birthday Offering*, Graziano’s *Symphony of Sorrows* and Antony Tudor’s *Gala Performance* — the Tudor piece yet another company premiere.

For Program Seven, April 25-26, 2014, The Sarasota Ballet will feature performances by Johan Kobborg, Alina Cojocaru and a number of their friends from major ballet companies throughout the world, the release notes.

Kobborg and Cojocaru last appeared in Sarasota in the lead roles in a 2009 production of *Giselle*.

ACTORS WELCOME TO SIGN UP FOR ASOLO REP AUDITIONS

The Asolo Repertory Theatre will host local auditions by appointment for its 2013-2014 season on Sunday, April 28, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Monday, April 29, from 3 to 7 p.m., the theatre has announced.

Actors who audition must be able to attend callbacks on Monday, June 24, from 4 to 8 p.m., a news release says. The production team is seeking to cast Equity and non-Equity roles for the fall musical *Show Boat* and for other roles throughout the 2013-2014 season, the release adds, noting, "The theatre is seeking a wide range of diverse actors and is looking to cast a significant number of local adult and child actors."

Asolo Rep Literary Manager and Local Casting Director Lauryn Sasso says in the release,

"We are thrilled to have such a large number of roles open for potential casting from the local community. ... It's a very exciting year to be auditioning for Asolo Rep."

Full information regarding the available roles may be found on the AEA casting notice website, www.actorsequity.org, or on the Asolo Repertory Theatre website at www.asolorep.org/auditions.

Auditions will be held in three-minute slots in the Asolo Repertory Theatre Rehearsal Hall located in The Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts on the grounds of The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

To schedule an appointment, call the audition hotline at 351-9010, Ext. 3311, and leave



The Asolo Repertory Theatre will be holding auditions for its upcoming season. Photo by Ebaybe via Wikimedia Commons

a message with the name of the person auditioning, contact number, preferred time slot and whether it will be a dramatic or musical audition, the release points out. "For dramatic auditions, please prepare two contrasting monologues, no more than three minutes total," the release adds.

"For musical auditions, please prepare either a brief song (musical theatre, pop/rock, or

gospel) or 16 bars of a song and a one-minute contemporary monologue. An accompanist will be provided. Please bring two copies of headshots with resumes attached," the release notes.

Asolo Rep is also seeking mature men and women, young men and women and children between the ages of nine and 13 to fill understudy roles throughout the 2013-2014 season, it says.

FST TO PRESENT THE SARASOTA FESTIVAL OF NEW PLAYS

Florida Studio Theatre has announced its annual Richard and Betty Burdick New Play Reading Series will present three performances of works by contemporary American playwrights in the Keating Theatre on Monday, April 29; Monday, May 6; and Monday, May 13, all at 7 p.m.

The events are part of FST's *Sarasota Festival of New Plays*.

The series will begin on April 29 with *Two Point Oh* by Jeffrey Jackson, "a thrilling play that questions the limits of technology and the reality of existence," a news release says. "Though Elliot leads the world in software development, he dwells far back in the ranks of husbands. But when he dies in a plane crash, a mysterious disk appears in ... wife Melanie's pile of mail. When loaded into a computer, Elliot seemingly springs back to life in the virtual world, sustained by software he had written," the release adds.

Gidion's Knot by Johnna Adams will be performed on May 6. "There are some things that just aren't expected after the death of a child," the release continues. "One of those is a parent-teacher conference. When Corryn shows up for her scheduled appointment, Heather

uses every stalling technique in her teacher handbook until she finally reveals why Corryn's child was suspended the day before he killed himself. The play is a heartfelt exploration of loss and art."

In the final play of the series, *Hell: Paradise Found* by Seth Panitch, recently deceased lawyer Simon Ackerman "suddenly finds himself desperate to get into Hell, which, God forbid, turns out to be the better place to both visit and spend Eternity," the release adds. "Struggling against the demons before him as well as the demons within, Simon encounters other proud and famous denizens of Hell."

Each of the plays is in varying stages of development, from draft to post-premiere edits, the release points out. Every reading will be followed by a discussion with the playwright, giving audience members the opportunity to provide feedback.

Tickets for all three plays are \$25; individual play readings are \$10. Additionally, Friends of FST may purchase a subscription for the series for \$15.

Tickets are available at the FST box office at 366-9000 or by visiting www.floridastudiotheatre.org.

JAZZ CLUB TO PRESENT JAZZ ON THE WATER MAY 5

The Jazz Club of Sarasota will present its annual *Jazz on the Water* cruise Sunday, May 5, 3 to 5 p.m., aboard LeBarge, which departs from Bayfront Park in downtown Sarasota.

“Guests will enjoy the swinging sounds of Henry Ashwood and his Ashwood Jazz Trio,” a news release says.

Ashwood’s style of sax playing has been likened to that of jazz legend Paul Desmond, the release adds, noting “he is in constant demand as a performer at venues throughout the state.

Drummer Fred Edinborgh and keyboardist Kevin Wilder will join Ashwood in this concert “that they guarantee will have audience members ‘snapping their fingers and tapping their feet,’” the release continues.

Edinborgh has been performing professionally for more than 25 years, playing with such jazz notables as Chet Baker, Tom Harrel and Ray Drummond. Wilder “is known for combining

jazz, pop, soul and funk in unexpected ways,” the release says. He has played with such jazz luminaries as Duke Ellington, Woody Herman and Ray Charles.

“The jazz cruise has been a favorite Jazz Club event for over 10 years,” says Rick Gee, a Jazz Club of Sarasota board member, in the release. “What better way to enjoy a beautiful spring day than to sail on Sarasota waters while enjoying great jazz? Our mission is to present the finest jazz music on Sarasota waters. We believe we do just that with this event.”

Tickets are \$30 for Jazz Club members and \$35 for non-members. Snacks and beverages will be available for sale; guests are requested not to bring coolers. Boarding will begin at 2:30 p.m. For tickets and more information, call 366-1552.

For more information about the Jazz Club of Sarasota, visit www.jazzclubsarasota.org. 



LeBarge will depart from the Bayfront Park docks on May 5 for Jazz on the Water. Photo by Norman Schimmel



The director of the new Sarasota Zen Center will speak at the Unitarian Universalist Church on May 3. File photo

ZEN TO BE FOCUS OF MAY 3 PROGRAM AT UNITARIAN CHURCH

The Rev. Daito Zenei Thompson, a Zen priest and the spiritual director of the new Sarasota Zen Center, will give a one-hour Zen talk at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Friday, May 3, starting at 10 a.m.

The church is located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

“Zen is a Japanese school of Mahayana Buddhism emphasizing the value of meditation and intuition that encourages a clear, *don’t know* mind,” a news release says. “If you do not know anything about Zen, you are in the proper frame

of mind to learn,” it adds. “If you would like to learn, the time for Zen is now. People from many religious and philosophical traditions practice Zen,” the release continues.

Thompson’s presentation is sponsored by the Free-thinkers Forum, created in 2007 to stimulate discussion on a wide range of issues affecting religion, morality, justice and ethics in society. The Forum meets monthly at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, serving Sarasota and Manatee counties, the release notes.



*The Rev. Daito Zenei Thompson/
Contributed photo*

TEMPLE EMANU-EL SISTERHOOD FETES RABBI ELAINE ROSE GLICKMAN

More than 150 attendees feted Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman at Temple Emanu-El Sisterhood's annual Honors Luncheon, held April 14 at the Lakewood Ranch Country Club.

Glickman was recognized for her service to Temple Emanu-El — where she serves on the Sisterhood board; chairs the religious school social committee, Tot Shabbat and the preschool; teaches adult learning courses; and oversees Mitzvah Day, which draws more than 225 volunteers annually for hands-on community service projects — and the general community, where she serves on the executive board of All Faiths Food Bank and supports many other charitable organizations.

During the event, Glickman was presented with framed original artwork bearing the Hebrew phrase, *Eshet Chayil*, which means *Woman of Valor*.

In addition to words of tribute and blessing from Temple President Michael Richker; Glickman's father, Dr. Larry Rose; and board member/good friend Sharon Kunkel, the event featured a video presentation, door prizes, a raffle, a silent auction and a performance by local singer Alli Fuchs, accompanied by guitarist Scott Stevenson. Glickman was also presented with a proclamation from the Sarasota County Commission marking April 14 as *Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman Day*.

Event co-chairwomen were Cindy Gilburne and Ethel Gross. Luncheon proceeds benefited the educational and scholarship programs of Temple Emanu-El Religious School.

Glickman's husband is the Temple's spiritual leader, Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman.



The Glickman family is (from left, clockwise) Rabbi Elaine, Eden, Rabbi Brenner, Mo and Leo. Contributed photo



(From left) Faith Lipton, Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman, Temple Emanu-El President Michael Richker and Temple Emanu-El Religious School Director Sabrina Silberberg. Contributed photo



Event Co-Chairwoman Cindy Gilburne presents the Woman of Valor award to Rabbi Elaine Rose Glickman. 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 Quartet, 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

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

26+
APRIL

***Candida* by George Bernard Shaw**

April 26-27 at 8 p.m., April 28 at 2 p.m., Cook Theatre, FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$29, evenings; \$28, matinee; 351-8000 or Asolo.org.

26+
APRIL

FST Improv presents *April Fools*

April 26-27, 8:30 p.m., John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$12; 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

26+
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 to \$40; purchase at 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org.

26+
APRIL

Dabbert Gallery presents *Lasting Impressions*, featuring five local artists

Through April 29, Dabbert Gallery, 76 S. Palm Ave. Free admission. Visit DabbertGallery.com.

11
MAY

WSLR presents the Whitney James Jazz Quintet

May 11, 7:30 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$12 in advance; \$15 at the door; 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

18
MAY

Bryan Adams' Solo and Acoustic Tour

May 18, 8 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$35 to \$75; call 953-3368 or buy them online at VanWezel.org.

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



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SARASOTA'S MASTER CALENDAR



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

CITY LIGHTS

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.