

THE SARASOTA

No. 38 — June 7, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

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INCHING FORWARD

NO DEAL

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

Publication days like June 6, when tropical storm force winds were gusting and the rain occasionally was coming down in sheets, make us all the happier we can put together *The Sarasota News Leader* without having to go anywhere.

Of course, those gusting winds can wreak havoc with power lines, creating Internet connection problems, but as I write this, I am crossing my fingers to ward them away.

Even though we have been working online since September, when we launched the full digital publication, we sometimes do have to pause and reflect on how amazing it is that we do not actually have to see each other to put the *News Leader* together every week.

Of course, occasions arise when we realize it might be helpful to talk in person to weigh an idea or suggest changes in a layout, but it is hard to fault the ease of email — as long as the Internet service is working (fingers still crossed, making typing a tad difficult).

While Tropical Storm Andrea was much on our minds as we finished up this week's issue, we did not give her any of the spotlight. Storms play havoc with any publication these days, because anyone can learn up-to-the-minute details by checking the Web. In fact, we are hoping Andrea is a thing of the past for Sarasotans as you read this.

Instead of tropical storm news, you can learn about the latest on the county's plans to sell Transfer of Development Rights, the Warm Mineral Springs saga, the County Commission's plans regarding a domestic partnership registry and what city commissioners think about parking downtown. And that is just a sample!

On the *Sarasota Leisure* side, Otus has some news you must not miss this week, and, once again, plenty is happening on Siesta Key.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





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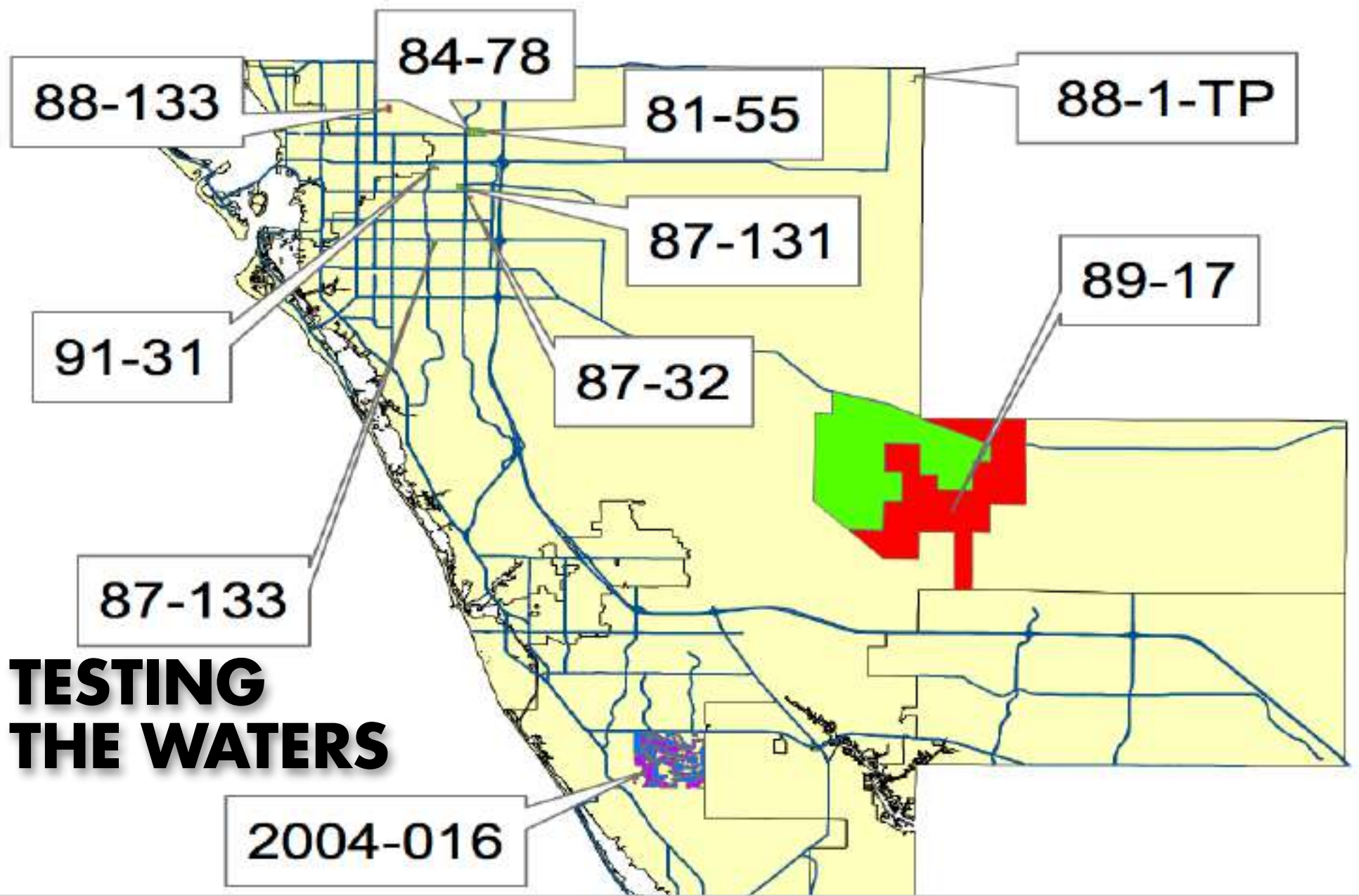
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TESTING THE WATERS

A graphic shows areas in green that would be 'sending zones' for Transfer of Development Rights; they are parcels that would remain undeveloped. Areas in red would be 'receiving zones,' where denser development would be allowed. Image courtesy Sarasota County

COUNTY OFFERS LOW 'TEASER' PRICE FOR FIRST TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

It wasn't quite as dramatic as a mattress salesman chain-sawing a bed in half to advertise his Labor Day half-off sale, but the Sarasota County Commission did move this week to slash the proposed price for the first 100 Transfer of Development Rights associated with county-owned environmentally sensitive lands.

Transfer of Development Rights (referred

to as TDRs in planning lingo) are part of a system that allows a property owner to sell the right to develop his or her property, which in turn allows the purchaser to apply those rights to build on his or her own land. The intent is to encourage the preservation of open space while also pushing development into the most desirable areas. But in Sarasota County, nobody knows how much a TDR should

“The public needs to know there is no right answer here.”

Charles Hines
Commissioner
Sarasota County





Jono Miller, former chairman of the county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee, addresses the County Commission on May 14. Photo by Rachel Hackney

cost — a major problem as the commission looks to sell TDRs associated with properties acquired through the county’s Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program.

Two months ago, county staffers came before the commission to propose setting the price at 10 percent of the median sale price of homes, but the discussion was kicked back to the county’s Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee amid complaints the committee had not had a chance to review the proposal in full.

The Oversight Committee later recommended altering the staff proposal by suggesting the TDRs should be priced at 10 percent of the median sale price of *new* homes. Since the TDRs would be used to build new units, the thinking went, the price shouldn’t be weighed down by sales figures for foreclosures and other distressed properties.

But the County Commission went in the opposite direction Wednesday, June 5, moving to offer the county’s first 100 TDRs at a significant discount.

“We need to get it going,” argued Commissioner Joe Barbetta, who eventually suggested selling the first 100 TDRs at a quarter of staff’s recommended price of \$17,850. He said


discussion of the issue has dragged out for years and that the only way to determine a fair price is to sell the TDRs at a low figure and start debating offers.

But in real estate, “you don’t set your price low and get higher offers,” Commissioner Nora Patterson countered. You set your price high and get lower offers. Looking for compromise, she pushed to set the price for the first 100 TDRs at half the value recommended by staff. No one backed up her proposal.

“There’s no perfect number here,” said Commissioner Charles Hines. If Barbetta’s 25 percent price is too low, the commission can easily adjust it going forward, Hines argued. “The public needs to know there is no right answer here,” he added. “This is the teaser.”

“I’m trying to figure out the market demand, and the only way to do that is to test it,” said Barbetta. His motion passed unanimously.

“I’m going to vote for it because it’s time we got off the dime on this subject,” said Patterson.

She doesn’t “mind it as a teaser,” she said. However, if developers want to purchase the other 500-plus TDRs in the county’s pilot program for that same price, she added, “I’m not going to be there.” 

TDR PRICE EXAMPLES (2012)

| PBC Median Sales Price* | TDR Price (10%) | WHP Price (5%) | AHP Price (1%) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Single Family: \$197,000 | \$19,700 | \$ 985 | \$ 197 |
| Multi Family/Condo: \$ 82,500 | \$ 8,250 | \$ 413 | \$ 83 |
| Neighborhood Plan Price | | | |
| Single Family (75% of TDR) | \$14,775 | \$ 739 | \$ 148 |
| Multi Family/Condo (75% of TDR) | \$ 6,188 | \$ 309 | \$ 62 |
| CCRT Area Price | | | |
| Single Family (25% of TDR) | \$ 4,925 | \$ 246 | \$ 49 |
| Multi Family/Condo (25% of TDR) | \$ 2,063 | \$ 103 | \$ 21 |

* Data Source: Realtors Association of the Palm Beaches Median Sales Price, March 2012



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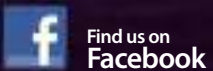


PHOTO BY FRANKATURA





INCHING FORWARD

A Sarasota County resident told the County Commission during the Public Comments portion of its June 5 meeting that many older couples, for a variety of reasons, do not want to marry but want the rights a domestic partnership registry can confer. Photo by Steve Hillebrand of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service via Wikimedia Commons

THE COUNTY COMMISSION HAS DIRECTED THE COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TO PREPARE DRAFTS OF A DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY SO IT CAN NARROW DOWN THE DETAILS BEFORE HOLDING A PUBLIC HEARING

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

It took the better part of an hour of discussion, but the Sarasota County Commission unanimously voted on June 5 to direct the County Attorney's Office to draft two versions of a domestic partnership registry for the unincorporated areas of the county.

The commissioners agreed they will discuss those drafts and settle on what they want the final document to include before they advertise it for a public hearing.

Commissioner Christine Robinson specified in her motion that the drafts offer options on reciprocity — one draft would leave out that provision altogether while the second would make it clear that people coming into

the county who have registered as domestic partners in another jurisdiction would have only the rights accorded to Sarasota County domestic partnership registrants.

“ *This is a device to give partners in a domestic relationship some basic rights so that their relationship can function the way that any relationship ought to function.* ”

Ken Shelin
Resident
City of Sarasota

Commissioners also instructed County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh to leave out any enforcement provision. Former Sarasota City Commissioner Ken Shelin, who appeared before the board on June 5 to advocate for creation of a county registry, pointed out that the City of Sarasota Domestic Partnership Registry allows the city “some wiggle room” to pursue legal action in the event of “egregious serious noncompliance” with provisions of the ordinance that created the registry.

However, DeMarsh cautioned the County Commission against allowing the county to become involved in enforcement matters.

“The county really doesn’t have [the necessary information] and really should not ... get involved in trying to compare legal documents to affidavits” signed when partners register, he pointed out.

Robinson also told DeMarsh to leave out any language in the drafts relative to dependents of domestic partners. Having worked as a family law attorney, she pointed out, she felt there was too much potential for problems if stipulations regarding dependents were included.

DeMarsh indicated he would include in his drafts “an expansive disclaimer that people

Relevant Data

- 2000 US census data documented 380,000 households identified as unmarried couples. 90% were identified as opposite sex couples
- US 2010 census data indicates that there are now at least 6.8 million households (over 12% of Americans) maintained by domestic partners nationally – a major increase over 2000
- In the City of Tampa, census data documents that there are over 9000 such households
- Since Orlando’s DPR went into effect 1/12/2012 and 4/20/2012, 391 couples have been registered as domestic partners

should not use this [registry] as a substitute for estate planning” and similar legal agreements.

Of the five commissioners, only Chairwoman Carolyn Mason did not take the opportunity during the discussion to criticize state legislators for refusing to create a registry.

Although Commissioner Charles Hines said he felt the board had no choice but to follow through with county action at this point, he added, “The state’s ignored this issue. So what do you do? You create chaos across the state,” with different jurisdictions implementing domestic partnership registries with conflicting provisions.

“I really think the state should cover this, so when you travel throughout the state, your rights are the same,” he said.

Referring to the proposed county registry, Hines continued, “From what I’m hearing [from fellow board members], it would almost just have to be a ‘paper tiger’ ...”

“I think the State of Florida has done everybody an injustice by not addressing this issue,” Robinson said. “I really, truly do. It’s creating a bureaucratic mess for everybody.”

“We’ve been trying for five years” to get a state registry created, Shelin pointed out. He testified in March before the Children, Families

Rights Conferred by the DPR Certificate

- Health Care Facility Visitation
- Health Care Decisions
- Funeral/burial Decisions
- Correctional Facility Visitation Rights
- Emergency notification of Family Members
- Preneed Guardian Designation
- Participation in Education of a Dependent
- Rights conferred are not construed as recognizing the domestic partnership as a marriage

and Elder Affairs Committee when it took up the bill introduced again this year by Sen. Eleanor Sobel of Hollywood, he added.

That bill never got out of the committee, Shelin continued, and a companion bill never was heard in the House. “[The creation of a statewide domestic partnership registry is] not going to happen in the state Legislature,” he said.

“But it is a practical matter,” Shelin pointed out. “How do you help these people ... if you keep saying it’s the state’s responsibility, when, in fact, the state’s demonstrated an unwillingness to do it.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson responded that much of what he was proposing in a county registry could be handled by partners signing healthcare surrogate forms and other legal papers.

“The state’s ignored this issue. So what do you do? You create chaos across the state.”

Charles Hines
Commissioner
Sarasota County

However, Robinson said she felt conferring healthcare and funeral/burial rights to individuals “are valid things we can do” through creation of a registry.

Patterson told Shelin, “I guess I feel like what you’re trying to accomplish is a good thing,” but the only way she could support a county registry was if it had no enforcement or reciprocity provisions. Otherwise, she said, “I think we’re kind of misleading people on this, that we’re giving them some rights that we really don’t have the ability to give.”

THE BACKGROUND

During his presentation to the board on June 5 in Sarasota, Shelin noted that half of the state’s population lives within a jurisdiction that has a domestic partnership registry. Among those local government entities are



The County Commission considers a matter earlier in the year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Leon, Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties and the cities of Tampa, Orlando, St. Petersburg, West Palm Beach and Gainesville.

Along with the City of Sarasota in Sarasota County, the City of Venice has a registry, he added, and he believes North Port will have one soon.

Sarasota has had 153 people register since its ordinance went into effect in November 2012, he said. According to the City of Venice website on June 5, 10 people had registered.

Such registries are useful in the state, he pointed out, because power of attorney documents obtained by domestic partners “are often ineffectual and disregarded.”

Among the provisions of the county ordinance that Shelin proposed are the following: It would require that the registering adults be at least 18 years old and “competent to create a contract”; that partners not be married under Florida law or in another domestic partnership or civil union with anyone other than their co-applicant for the registry; that the registry would be gender-neutral; that each person would consider himself “to be a member of the immediate family of the other partner”; and that the partnership could be terminated in writing to the Clerk of Court’s Office.

Shelin noted that the City of Sarasota charges \$30 for a couple to register; \$20 goes to the city to cover its costs and the remainder goes to the Clerk of Court’s Office, since the partnership is registered there.

He had suggested the latter provision with the registries in Venice and Sarasota, Shelin noted, to give the documents the appropriate status.



County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh reads a document at the dais. File photo

QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Among the questions the commissioners posed, a number focused on healthcare ramifications. Hines pointed out that Shelin’s county proposal — modeled after the City of Sarasota ordinance — would nullify a domestic partnership in the county if one member of the couple chose later to register as a domestic partner with someone else in a different jurisdiction. Hines talked about the confusion that could ensue in a medical care situation after the change in partners.

“The hospital doesn’t check your marriage license when you claim that you are married,” Shelin responded. “They have to accept at face value what you tell them and what documentation you provide them.”

Robinson pointed to the fact that the City of Sarasota ordinance is not specific about the residence the partners shared. "Is this a way to skirt homestead?" she asked, referring to the property tax break couples get on their primary residence under state law.

"No," Shelin told her with a chuckle. "This isn't an ordinance to regulate [home] ownership," he added. The key phrase in the proposed ordinance is "mutual residence," he said.


Robinson also noted the proposed ordinance had no provision for one party to notify the other if one terminated the domestic partnership. "I think a notification requirement would be important," she said, "to protect the other domestic partner."

Robinson further pointed out that it had been brought to her attention that some older cou-

ples choose not to marry to make it possible for them to keep Social Security and other benefits, such as pensions of deceased spouses. However, they would be able to register as domestic partners and maintain those benefits, she added.

"Oh, I think it's outrageous to say something like that," Shelin told her.

"This would only apply to heterosexual couples," Robinson replied. "It's been asked of me."

"This is not a sneaky device!" Shelin said. "This is a device to give partners in a domestic relationship some basic rights so that their relationship can function the way that any relationship ought to function." 

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NO DEAL

(From left) North Port City Commissioner Rhonda DiFranco, Vice Mayor Jim Blucher, Mayor Linda Yates, Commissioner Cheryl Cook and Commissioner Tom Jones. Photo courtesy City of North Port

THE COUNTY COMMISSION REJECTS NORTH PORT'S OFFER TO BUY OUT ITS SHARE OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS AND OBJECTS TO THE CITY'S UNILATERAL MOVE TO NEGOTIATE A SHORT-TERM LEASE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE RESORT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

No, the Sarasota County Commission does not want to sell its share of Warm Mineral Springs to the City of North Port.

And, yes, it does object to the North Port City Commission's May 28 vote to proceed on its own with negotiating a short-term agreement to keep the resort open past the June 30 termination of the current lease.

However, the County Commission steered clear of including in its formal response to the North Port board any language about pursuing the next step on a path to litigation over the springs.

Instead, on a unanimous vote, the County Commission's letter asks the North Port board to consider approving the interlocal agreement County At-

“*There are three [North Port] commissioners who are hell-bent on running [Warm Mineral Springs] and not the way that a majority of the parties involved want to run it.*”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

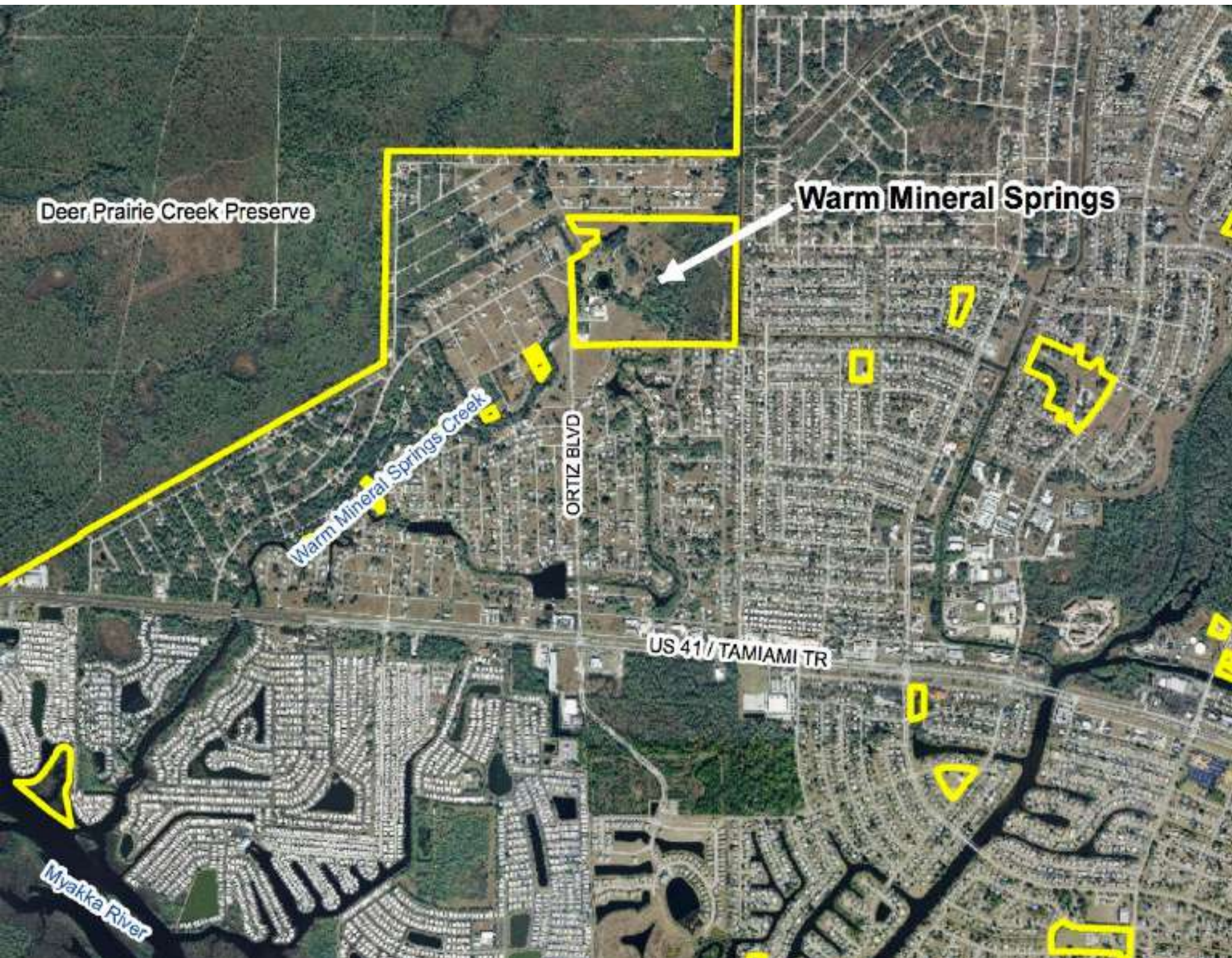


torney Stephen DeMarsh and his staff prepared subsequent to a joint meeting of the two boards on April 17 regarding the future of the springs. At the end of that facilitated session, the commissions agreed on the idea of a short-term lease followed by a process similar to an Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) for proposals on the long-term management of the resort.

However, if the North Port Commission does not accept that interlocal agreement when it votes on the document during a June 10 meeting, county commissioners indicated they felt

the next step in the legal process outlined in the state's Conflict Resolution Statute — mediation among the county administrator, city manager and the attorneys for both boards — would be a waste of time.

“There are three commissioners who are hell-bent on running [Warm Mineral Springs] and not the way that a majority of the parties involved want to run it,” County Commissioner Joe Barbetta said during his board's regular meeting in Venice on June 4.



An aerial map shows the location of Warm Mineral Springs. Image courtesy Sarasota County

He was referring to North Port Mayor Linda Yates and her fellow board members Cheryl Cook and Rhonda DiFranco.

“I don’t think they’re fairly representing their community or the county,” Barbetta added.

During the North Port board’s May 28 meeting, Yates reiterated the women’s position: “Three of us want preservation and protection, ensuring that the public gets to use [the springs] for their place, not [have] a private developer just come in and use this as a resort.”

However, Vice Mayor James Bucher pointed out that since Cook and DiFranco were elected in November 2012, “this commission has not been able to decide the usage [of the springs]. We have not been able to come up with a consensus ...”

Blucher added, “The county has asked us a number of times ... to try to give them something that they could work with as far as the ... future of the springs and we never have.”

Cook said she wanted to preserve the property and “preserve the over 40 jobs and the 122,000 ticket-holders who are currently enjoying the springs ...”

The county commissioners have been intent on an ITN process, Cook added, “by which they can find somebody to build on the property. ... There

doesn’t seem to be any neutral territory.”

“Development is not a friend of preservation, period,” DiFranco said.

“Three of us want preservation and protection, ensuring that the public gets to use [the springs] for their place, not [have] a private developer just come in and use this as a resort.”

Linda Yates
Mayor
City of North Port



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

PAST AND PRESENT

North Port City Attorney Rob Robinson and City Manager Jonathan Lewis appeared before the County Commission on June 4 to present the proposals from the North Port Commission.

Rob Robinson outlined the points in a May 30 letter Lewis sent to County Administrator Randall Reid.

The letter said the City Commission rescinded its previous motion to sell the city's interest in Warm Mineral Springs (WMS), and it sought the county's support for the city to enter into a 12-month lease with Cypress Lending, which has been managing the resort. "This would allow the City and County time to negotiate the sale of the property without the closure of WMS," the letter continued. "The City would share all revenues equally, after expenses, with the County."

Robinson added, "We're hoping today that you would be receptive" to allowing Lewis to discuss the details of the purchase with Reid.

"I'm not in the mood for entertaining a sale," Barbetta responded. The County and City commissions voted 9-1 to purchase the springs jointly in 2010 for \$5.5 million, he pointed out, and in July 2010, the boards voted 10-0 to seek an ITN that would allow for "the proper rehabilitation and development of the springs. ... Now it's 7-3, and we can't get anything done, and I have no faith whatsoever in the springs being taken care of" if the county sells its share to North Port.

County Commission Vice Chairman Charles Hines concurred with Barbetta about Yates, Cook and DiFranco "controlling the decisions on this [for the North Port board], and of the three ... there's not even consensus and agreements as to the future of [the resort]."

Barbetta added that the looming closing date for the springs is "on the backs of the North Port Commission. That's not on our backs. We've always been ready, willing and able to perform" to keep the resort open.



County Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson consider an agenda item during a meeting earlier this year. File photo

Commissioner Christine Robinson said, “I’m not 100 percent positive that the City of North Port will guide this asset where it needs to go.”

She pointed out that Reid just moments earlier had informed the County Commission of the University of Miami’s interest in selling Little Salt Spring to the county. Also located in North Port, the site is an [underwater archaeological and ecological preserve](#); it “has produced the second-oldest dated artifact ever found in the southeast United States — a sharpened wooden stake some 12,000 years old,” according to the website of the University of Miami’s Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Science.

“We’ve got to make sure that we keep these in local, public ownership,” Commissioner Robinson added of Little Salt Spring and Warm

Mineral Springs, “and create in North Port an educational, environmental, archaeological and, in the case of Warm Mineral Springs, a tourist destination for the future of the city and the county.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson interjected, “I think in the end we all want the same thing, but the path looks pretty twisted and difficult to follow ...”

Patterson added that when the boards bought Warm Mineral Springs, county commissioners had concerns about damage to the property that could result from overdevelopment. “Now the roles seem to be totally reversed and the majority of the North Port City Commission seems to want no economic development on-site, and somehow there seems to be a suspicion that we want to overdevelop it. I think this is truly ironic.”

Click to watch
the video



The video clip above is from the North Port Commission’s May 28 meeting.

She would support selling WMS, however, Patterson said, “if we were made whole entirely with a check from the City of North Port” and the contract included a provision that the nature of the property would be protected.

Patterson ended up voting “No” on a motion by Robinson to decline to sell the county’s share of the springs. “I just don’t reject that as some future possibility if we can’t reach an agreement [with the City of North Port],” Patterson said.

“I certainly don’t want to see the springs closed,” Chairwoman Carolyn Mason told her colleagues. Nonetheless, she added, “I’m just dumbfounded that several members of the current North Port City Commission have chosen to go in a different direction than the previous commission that agreed with us initially in purchasing it ... It’s a *huge* asset for both the City of North Port and Sarasota County.”

THE LEGAL DETAILS

Before making the motion regarding the letter protesting the City of North Port’s unilateral move on the short-term lease with Cypress Lending, Commissioner Robinson asked DeMarsh for clarification about how the county should proceed on that point.

Because of the state law, DeMarsh said, Sarasota County could not agree to awarding a new lease agreement for WMS without going through a competitive bid process.

Robinson then pointed out that the County Commission could have sought to pursue similar action on its own. “But it wouldn’t have even entered into my frame of mind to do that to a partner, so I’m a little perplexed as to how

they think this could be helping,” she said of the North Port Commission.

DeMarsh noted that the County Commission could say in the letter that it did not agree with the City Commission’s unilateral action on the lease “and leave for another day what enforcement action would be taken.”

If the city proceeded with a lease agreement, he continued, the County Commission could decide then what legal action it wished to pursue.

DeMarsh also reminded the County Commission that it had gone through the first two steps set forth in the state’s Conflict Resolution Statute. The third step would be mediation among the city and county administrators and attorneys.

Even without mediation, he added, he believed a supermajority of the County Commission could vote to file a lawsuit to slow down any city action it felt was in violation of its interests as co-owner of the property.

“I think we all know what’s going to happen there,” Barbetta said of mediation. It would be a waste “of a lot of time and money,” he added.

Patterson agreed with him.

“I implore [Yates, Cook and DiFranco] to think about the county and to think about their constituency when they take their vote on Monday,” Barbetta said, referring to the interlocal agreement.

Eventually, economic development is going to happen at Warm Mineral Springs, Patterson added, “because people will see the potential and push for that.” 

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, smiling slightly. She is holding a very large sandwich with both hands. The sandwich is made with a long, crusty, golden-brown roll. It is filled with layers of fresh green lettuce, a thick slice of white onion, a slice of red tomato, and a dark, textured filling that appears to be meat or a veggie patty. The background is a plain, light color.

This may take a while.

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SUSTAINABLE FREE PARKING?



A parking meter is bagged in front of City Hall in May 2011, before the city removed all the meters from downtown. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION WRESTLES WITH WHETHER IT CAN AFFORD TO KEEP METERS OUT OF THE PICTURE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

A freshly scabbed-over wound was briefly reopened Monday, June 3, when the city committee advising Parking Division Manager Mark Lyons presented to the Sarasota City Commission a set of five “guiding principles” and an overall mission statement.

After the presentation, city commissioners quizzed Lyons about finances.

“Is your office profitable?” asked Mayor Shannon Snyder. “If we cannot be profitable, are we going to subsidize this forever? This is an economic question, not so much a parking question.”

“*If we cannot be profitable, are we going to subsidize this forever?*”

Shannon Snyder
Mayor
City of Sarasota

Lyons said his staff could not issue enough tickets to put his department in the black. “Revenue through enhanced enforcement is not sustainable,” he added.

The parking meter fiasco of two years ago — put 'em in, take 'em out — put Lyons in a bind. “We’re trying to develop a strategic plan,” he said.

Newly elected — and hence unscarred from the “parking meter wars” — Commissioner Susan Chapman asked, “Are there other best practices for revenue besides parking meters?” Lyons replied that he would start to examine that “over the next couple of months.”

The scarred but re-elected proponent of parking meters, Commissioner Suzanne Atwell, observed, “Parking management funds suffered greatly after we took out the meters.”

Chapman noted the money to run the city’s parking program — building and operating parking garages, enforcing hourly limits, booting and towing scofflaws — must come from somewhere. “Free parking for customers and staff is a public subsidy,” she said. “It is a city subsidy.”

Meanwhile, it is back to usual downtown, with merchants and their employees playing a game they are very familiar with — “the parking shuffle”: moving their vehicles from one Main Street space to another every two hours to avoid tickets. Customers regularly find it is easier to locate open parking spaces at the malls.

STATE STREET GARAGE PASSES MILESTONE

In the meantime, the city is preparing to build another parking garage downtown. It is compelled to have it finished by the end of December next year according to a contract with the developer of Pineapple Square, a downtown project.



Mark Lyons (left), the city’s parking division manager, and Chris Gallagher, chairman of the Parking Advisory Board, speak with the City Commission on June 3. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The garage will have a minimum of 300 public spaces. The project will be one of mixed use, with retail on the ground floor of the structure and — possibly — condominiums on the higher levels. The commissioners received an update on the plans following Lyon’s presentation of the “guiding principles.”

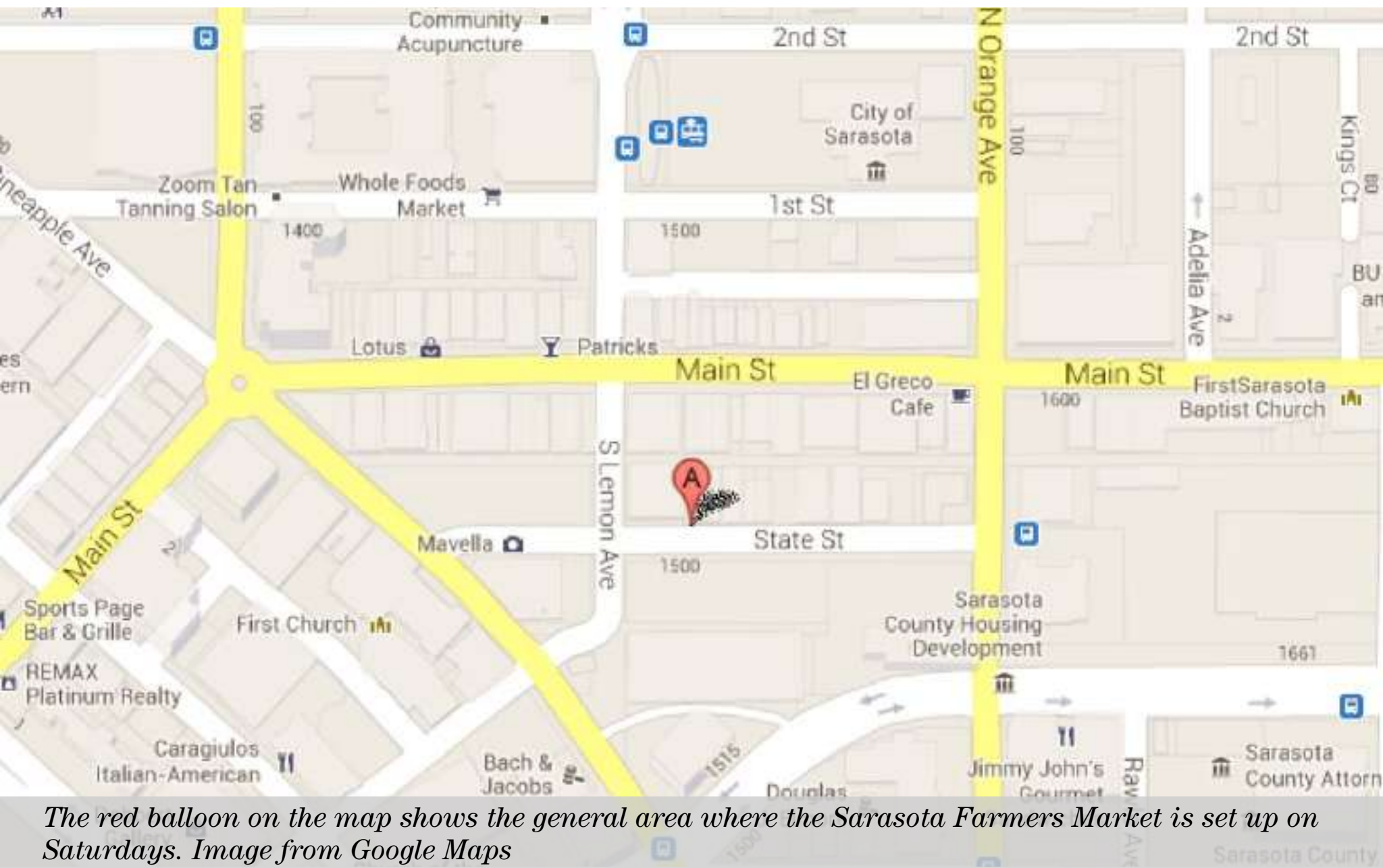
City Planner Steve Stancel said \$7.2 million has been set aside to build the structure, which could include up to 14,000 square feet of retail and commercial space. Commissioners expressed a desire to have tenants or owners in the space when the building is finished. They are still smarting from the extra year of delay it took to get somebody into the ground

floor space at the Palm Avenue garage. Louies Modern and The Francis, a restaurant and banquet space, respectively, opened in early April.

The State Street project is using a softer approach to design than normal. City commissioners demanded the public and other stakeholders have a voice in the design and orientation of the building. A public meeting in March led the designers to believe a 20-foot-wide sidewalk is preferable to a 12-foot walkway around the structure, for example. The architectural team then asked the commissioners their preferences for the mix of uses for the final design. Should private developers take over the upper stories to build condominiums? How tall should the building be? Where should the elevator be? How can the



Mayor Shannon Snyder. Photo by Norman Schimmel



The red balloon on the map shows the general area where the Sarasota Farmers Market is set up on Saturdays. Image from Google Maps

structure facilitate the weekly Farmers Market?

“We don’t want to talk about the architecture yet,” said Rebecca Smith, president of AD Morgan Construction. Her firm was selected to design and build the project. “We’re holding the reins back so each element is deliberative. That will maximize flexibility into the process as long as possible,” she added.

Pineapple Square developers also plan to build condominiums downtown. Therefore, Chapman asked, “How does this interface with Pineapple Square’s plans? We will be competing with the project that requires us to build this.”

Stancel replied, “I don’t know.”

SURFACE LOT UNDER THE HAMMER


Meanwhile, at the same City Commission meeting, the board agreed to push forward with an “Invitation to Negotiate” (ITN) over land in the Rosemary District that includes a surface parking lot.

Part of the property includes the old community garden on Sixth Street by the former box-

ing club. The city kicked the gardeners out, thinking it would build affordable housing on the spot. But the Great Recession intervened, and the gardeners were never asked back. The other part of the property lies across the alley, facing Fifth Street; it is an odd-shaped lot used for parking.

Commissioners want to see the two properties developed to spark activity in the Rosemary area. The ITN would allow private firms to weigh what would be economically feasible on the property and then present their proposals to the city.

“Folks would get 90 days to prepare their plans,” said city Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker. “They’d send them to a selection committee, and short-listed folks would get to make a pitch [to the committee].” The finalist would appear before the City Commission to seek formal approval of a “purchase and sales” contract.

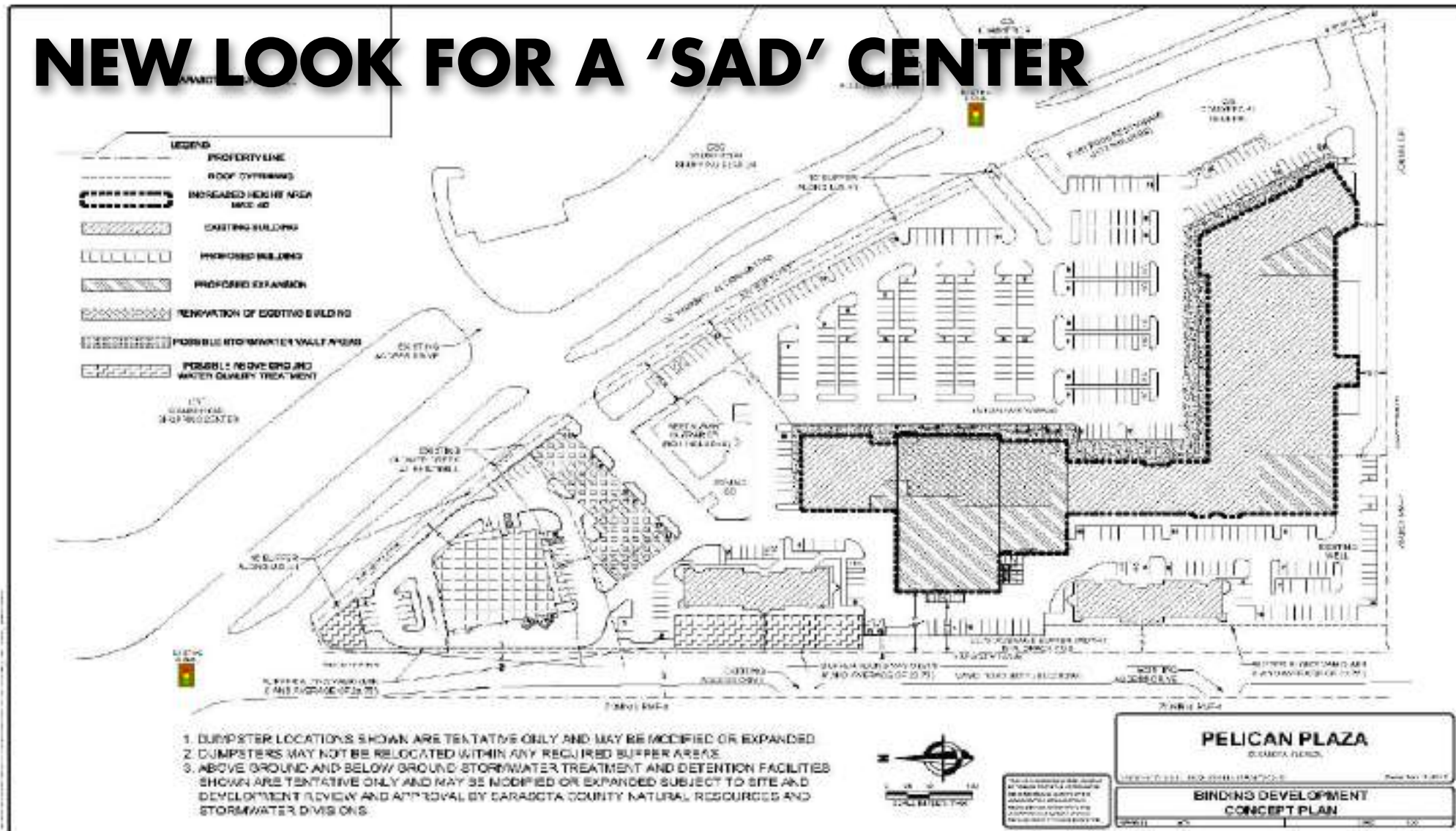
Allan Friedman, a representative of the Rosemary District Association, said he supported the plan, and he believed it would “serve as a catalyst and gateway to the district. It will add a great incentive for other development.” 

“They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” — *Benjamin Franklin*

The Sarasota News Leader

No-Nonsense Reporting

NEW LOOK FOR A 'SAD' CENTER



An engineer's drawings show the plan for the new Pelican Plaza. Image courtesy of Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION GIVES UNANIMOUS APPROVAL TO A REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR A SOUTH TRAIL SHOPPING COMPLEX

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission this week gave a unanimous thumbs-up to a proposal to redevelop a mostly abandoned shopping center right across South Tamiami Trail from Westfield Sarasota Square mall.

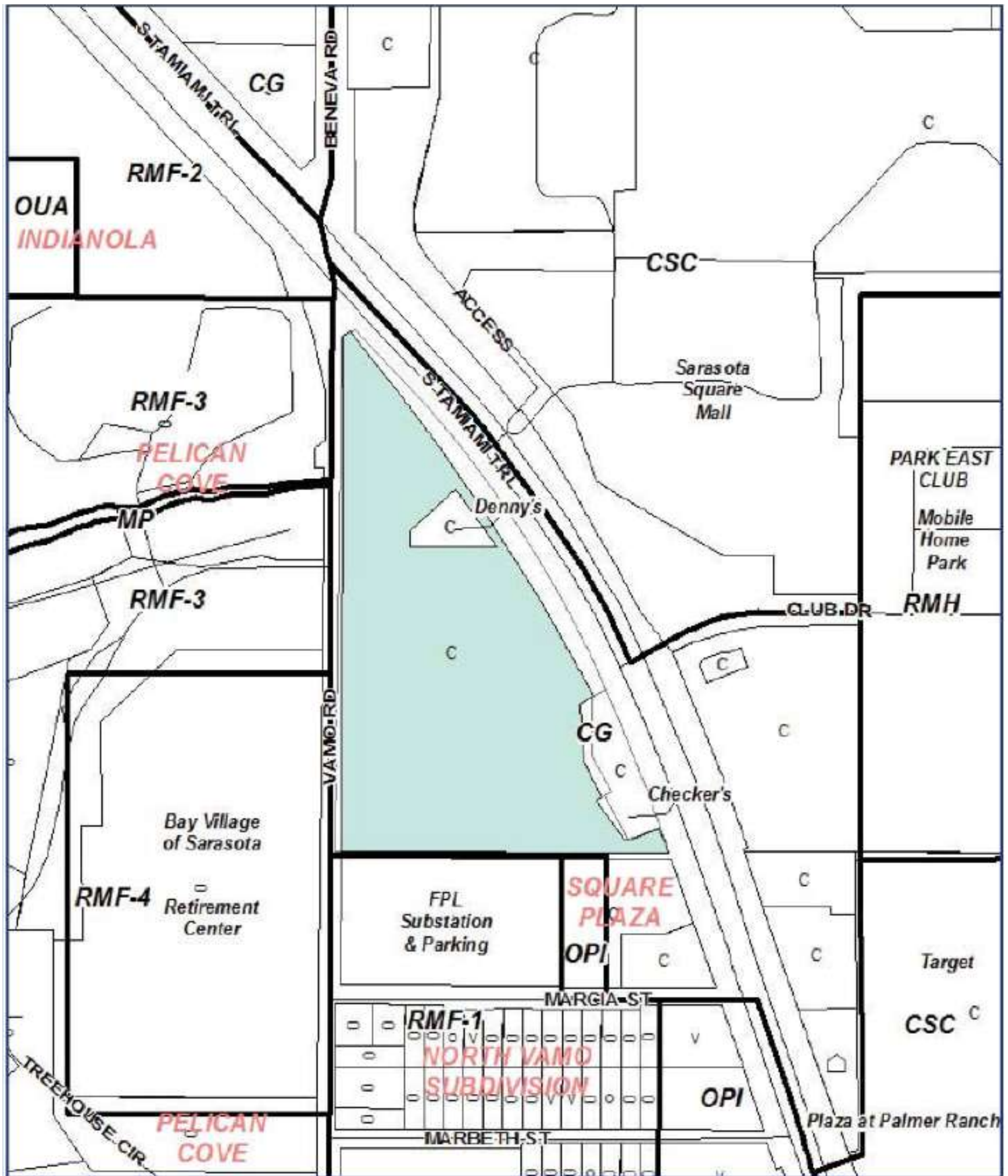
The property in question sits to the southwest of U.S. 41 and to the east of Vamo Road; the triangular parcel adds up to just over 13 acres of land. Most passers-by probably know it from the Denny's situated in the parking lot, or from the Linens 'n

Things that dominated the plaza before being shuttered years ago.

The proposed redevelopment won't change the footprint of the L-shaped building itself. Todd Mathes — the director of development for Benderson Development, the company steering the project — tells *The Sarasota News Leader* the company intends to “reuse a bunch of that existing building,” while making “a big investment” in upgrading the structure's aesthetics.

“After the Linens 'n Things left it's almost a blight on that corner.”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



A zoning map shows the location of Pelican Plaza (in pale blue) and the surrounding area, which has considerable residential multi-family housing (RMF). Image courtesy Sarasota County



An aerial image shows the location of the Pelican Plaza shopping center. Image courtesy Sarasota County

It's still not clear exactly what types of businesses will eventually call the shopping center home. Mathes says "a number of existing retail tenants" in Benderson's other shopping centers are "very excited" about the prospect of opening up in the redesigned building, but the company's still working to identify the best options. "We're trying to make the right decision about what would be the right fit for that community," he says.

One major change included in Benderson's Binding Development Concept Plan, presented to the County Commission Wednesday, June 5, would be the construction of a stormwater "vault" to replace the pond dug into the property's northern corner. "Large concrete underground chambers" is how Mathes describes such vaults, which he says have been used in several other Benderson projects. The vaults "create an empty space on top of which you would build."

Mathes told the commission that Benderson's work on the plan began 50 weeks ago, and it has already included a round of neighborhood meetings with residents of Pelican Cove, the 75-acre gated community just across Vamo Road from the shopping center. The Pelican Cove Condominium Association supports the project, crediting Benderson for listening to residents' concerns about buffers along Vamo and the changes to the stormwater pond.


Questions from the commissioners mostly revolved around the construction of that storm-

water vault, as well as a requested variance that would allow Benderson to skip a requirement to build a sidewalk along U.S. 41 and another variance to allow the shopping center structure to rise 5 feet higher than the zoning code normally would allow. Mathes told the commission that the height change is needed to upgrade the aesthetics of the building. Benderson wants to build a screen wall to hide eyesores such as air conditioning units.

Commissioner Christine Robinson, who drives by the empty center twice a day, said the property had "deteriorated" and that she supported the Benderson proposal. "After the Linens 'n Things left it's almost a blight on that corner," she said, "and I'm hoping it improves the community as a whole." Her friends, she added, "hate driving by it as much as I do."

She recalled hearing concerns about the ugly vacant space from Pelican Cove neighbors.

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who asked the most pointed questions about the stormwater plans as well as the sidewalk variance, eventually voiced support for the project, too. "This site right now is a sad one," she said. "It doesn't speak well of the Pelican Cove community."

"My hope is that the job you do with the drainage modifications will not prove negative to Clower Creek," she said. "I am putting a lot of trust with Benderson and our staff in that regard." 

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CRANES COMING BACK

The Jewel will be built at the corner of Main Street and Gulfstream Avenue in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ONE PALM DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR DOWNTOWN SARASOTA HEADED TO THE SARASOTA PLANNING BOARD FOR DISCUSSION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The cranes are coming back.

Tom Mannausa's The Jewel is approved and going up 18 stories. And John Meshad's One Palm is headed for a final round of "adjustments" by the Sarasota City Planning Board on June 12.

Meshad wants to build a 10-story tower on the northeast corner at the intersection of Palm Avenue and Charles Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Preliminary plans indicate the structure will house a 148-room hotel, 147 condominium units

and 6,000 feet of retail space slated to become a restaurant on the ground floor.

The building would face the Church of the Redeemer across Palm Avenue. The property is currently open space. The street address is 240 S. Pineapple.


Almost all authorizations for construction downtown require only administrative approval by the City of Sarasota staff. However, adjustments, special exceptions and variances from the building codes do require examination and specific approval

by the Planning Board, or in certain cases the City Commission.

One Palm needs three adjustments to the zoning codes, two for the use of drainage easements and one to save a grand Live Oak tree. The Planning Board has just four members following the election last month of former member Susan Chapman to the Sarasota City Commission.

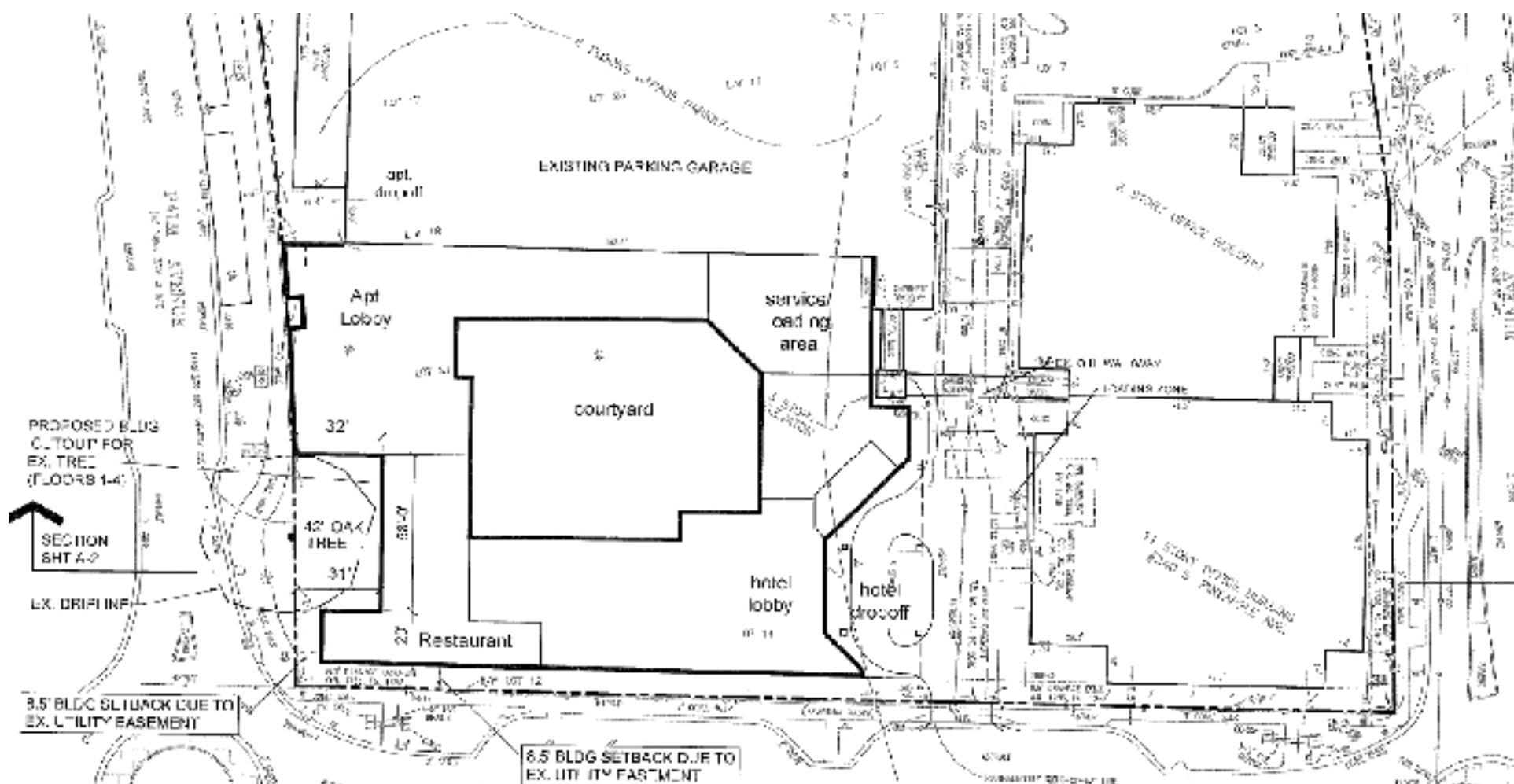
The building design cannot be completed until the “adjustments” are approved. The provision to save the tree, for example, would call for the building’s higher stories to cantilever over the oak.

“The actual story at which the building cantilevers over the tree canopy may also change (or be eliminated) prior to final approval,” the staff evaluation says. “Any cantilever over the tree canopy will require certification by [a] city-approved certified arborist or Florida registered landscape architect that it will not negatively impact the health or growth of the tree.”

The building would complete the development of the block, which is bound by Palm Avenue, Ringling Boulevard, Pineapple Avenue and McAnsh Square. 



A sign advertises The Jewel on the property where it will be built in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel



John Meshad's One Palm complex is planned as a 10-story tower at the intersection of Palm Avenue and Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



ANOTHER ROWING BID CHECKMARK

County Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Carolyn Mason present the top trophy to Sarasota Crew at the conclusion of a rowing regatta at Benderson Park in 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

AFTER RECEIVING ASSURANCES THAT THE ACTION WOULD NOT HINDER SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES, THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES A LETTER GUARANTEEING IT WILL HELP COVER ANY WORLD ROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS COST OVERRUNS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

To mix sports metaphors: It was not a slam dunk, but the Sarasota County Commission did finally vote unanimously on June 4 to approve a funding guarantee letter required as part of the effort to land the 2017 World Rowing Championships at Nathan Benderson Park.

The letter says simply that the county “will support the organization of the [championships] up to the level of \$2,782,000.”

Assistant County Administrator Lee Ann Lowery pointed out that the Manatee County Commission unanimously approved the same type of letter at its meeting earlier in the day.

What the letters mean is that Sarasota County and Manatee County together guarantee that

if the region lands the 2017 World Rowing Championships bid, the county governments will cover any cost overruns up to the specified monetary level.

“Isn’t that going to be a problem in getting sponsors?”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



The county's Tourism Development Council, which Commissioner Nora Patterson chairs, was caught by surprise by the request for the letter when it learned of it during a May 16 meeting. At that time, both Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, and Paul Blackketter, president of Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates (SANCA) — which manages events at Benderson Park — explained that FISA, the international rowing federation, is used to governments, not private entities, hosting major events. Therefore, FISA representatives had requested that Sarasota and Manatee counties make it clear they will cover any remaining expenses associated with the World Rowing Championships if revenue from the event does not pay for everything.

A June memo from Lowery to the County Commission says that Visit Sarasota County conservatively estimates the economic impact of hosting the rowing event would be \$12,970,000 — in today's market — given the expected direct spending by participants and attendees. The tourism office's conservative estimate for the total regional economic impact is \$24,615,000, the memo adds.

Those figures do not include the value of marketing the championships to more than 130 million international television viewers (the last four days of competition are televised worldwide, the memo notes); the value of marketing Benderson Park and Sarasota County at all FISA events between 2013 and the 2017 World Championships; the economic impact of Benderson Park hosting the 2016 World Cup Games, which typically is included in the award of the championships; and the economic impact of teams from around the



Assistant County Administrator Lee Ann Lowery addresses the County Commission in Venice on June 4. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Paul Blackketter addresses the crowd celebrating the completion of the North Cattleman Road extension during a ceremony on May 24 at Benderson Park. The extension provides motorists with a new north-south alternative to Interstate 75 from University Parkway to Fruitville Road and complements other improvements at the park. Photo by Norman Schimmel

United States and other parts of the world coming to Benderson Park for general training, including those preparing for the 2016 Olympics in Brazil.

However, Patterson raised a new concern during the County Commission discussion. According to the documentation provided with the agenda item, she said, “part of what we’re signing will cause us to have to remove or cover any commercial signage during the Championship meets. Isn’t that going to be a problem in getting sponsors?”

Patterson added that she had been told another \$10 million to \$20 million is needed to complete all the planned facilities at Benderson Park, “so isn’t this going to put a big impediment in our path?”

Blacketter explained that the names of corporate sponsors on buildings or other facilities would have to be covered only if those sponsors were not also supporting the World Championships.

The intent, he pointed out, is to create “a clean site.” The FISA stipulation motivates corporate sponsors to support the World Championships, he added.

It is standard operating procedure for FISA, he noted.

Moreover, part of the documentation the local entities would receive from FISA if the region wins the bid for the championships would allow Benderson Park to sign four major corporate sponsors for the event, he said.



The crowd spills out of a tent at Benderson Park during the May 24 celebration of the extension of North Cattleman Road. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Attachment C



Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates. • 290 North Cattlemen • Sarasota, Florida 34243 • www.worldclassrowing.com

May 29, 2013

To whom it may concern:

The budget submitted to FISA with the final bid for the 2017 World Rowing Championship will be the roadmap to guide our planning of the event. Funding from Sarasota and Manatee Counties will be needed for initial costs prior to fundraising activities. As sponsorships, donations and in-kind services are obtained and/or planned expenditures are reduced, the counties' funding guarantees will be reduced.

When revenues from the actual event are collected, the counties can also be reimbursed for expenditures. SANCA is committed to making meaningful efforts to minimize the use of county funding for the 2017 World Championship Rowing Event.

Thank you.

Paul A. Blacketter
President
SANCA

SANCA's attorneys did review the language in the other agreements that will be part of the package for the championships, Blackketter added.

When Patterson asked whether the County Attorney's Office also had reviewed the materials, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh said, "I don't think we've been involved in that issue at the same level. ... As I understand it, SANCA will be executing those instruments with FISA."

DeMarsh then sought to clarify Patterson's concern: "The question is, do you get to negotiate any of the terms? The answer is, probably not," he added with a chuckle.

Lowery said she had clarified with FISA representatives that the hosts would get specific commercial rights if they were awarded the bid.

The host for the 2017 World Championships will be named in early September in South Korea.

"All right, I'm counting on you," Patterson told Lowery.

At that point, Sarasota County Clerk of Court Karen Rushing pointed out, "There's a *lot*

of activity going on now. ... As you struggle with this discussion about something as fairly simple as signage, you can imagine what I'm thinking," in terms of who will pay for what and how Clerk of Court's staff will be able to audit the funding-related materials.

Rushing added, "I would just encourage the board to be real specific as you move forward with this documentation" to make sure everything is done correctly.

Lowery sought to reassure Rushing: "We will be sure to include your office" in all discussions about budgets and auditing requirements laid out by FISA.

As Patterson continued to raise concerns, Blackketter told her, "We had a *lot* of discussion" with FISA representatives regarding the sponsorships. SANCA officials spent almost an entire day with FISA staff, he pointed out, going over all the budget details and who will be responsible for what.

"We feel very confident that we are able to execute this and meet our goals and obligations," Blackketter added.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta made the motion to approve the letter to FISA. Commissioner Christine Robinson seconded it. 



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

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GIVING DAUGHTERS NEW LIFE

(From left) 12th Judicial Circuit Court Judge Charles Williams, New College President Donal O'Shea and Longboat philanthropist Dan Boxer announce the Daughters for Life scholarship program. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

NEW COLLEGE TO OFFER 10 SCHOLARSHIPS TO YOUNG MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Partnering with the Toronto-based foundation Daughters for Life, New College of Florida plans to offer up to 10 full-ride scholarships to young Middle Eastern women from Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon starting in 2014.

The foundation was created by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian physician who lost three daughters to an Israeli tank attack during the Intifada resistance in 2009. His response was a book: *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey*.

New College becomes the third organization of higher education

to participate in the scholarship plan. Trent University in Toronto and Tufts University in Boston have been joined by New College.

Abeulaish attended a press conference this week, via Skype, with New College President Donal O'Shea and Longboat Key philanthropist Dan Boxer.

Boxer invited Abeulaish to Sarasota earlier this year as a speaker for the *Embracing our Differences* celebration. "I came to Sara-

sota and didn't expect much," said Abeulaish. "But good will prevailed to help make a difference in this world."

“Education is the strongest and most effective weapon to face injustice.”

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish
Daughters for Life Foundation

Officially the local program will be called “New College — Daughters for Life Community Initiative.” It will provide for the tuition, fees, room, board and expenses of up to 10 qualified women. The first group, known as Daughters for Life Scholars, will be admitted in the fall of 2014. They will meet all the academic requirements of other incoming freshmen, including grades and test scores; plus, they must demonstrate a proficiency in English.

The college has pledged to continue the effort as a pilot program for at least three years. The plan was officially announced by 12th Judicial Circuit Judge Charles Williams on May 24 at the New College commencement.

“Peace means listening and learning about both sides and each other’s cultures and differences, and we hope that everyone will change and grow in their understanding,” Williams said.

Williams and Box will serve on a steering committee to organize community support for the program, including identification of host families and fundraising.

Abuelaish told those attending the press conference held at New College, “Education is the strongest and most effective weapon to face injustice. We need to strengthen the women and recognize their suffering and recognize the suffering of others. We should not turn a deaf ear or blind eyes.”

He hopes the Daughters for Life scholars will return to their homelands and work in their communities.

Abeulaish was born in Gaza; he became the only Palestinian physician granted privileges to work in an Israeli hospital, where he served as an obstetrician-gynecologist. His book has been translated into 17 languages.

Moreover, he has been nominated three times — including this year — for the Nobel Peace Prize. 



Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish speaks from his office in Toronto, Canada, via Skype. Photo by Stan Zimmerman



Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish. Photo by Jacob Stevens via Wikimedia Commons



Le Grand Bisou is located in Siesta Center, at 5129 Ocean Blvd. Photos by Rachel Hackney

SIESTA VILLAGE BUSINESS OWNERS AGREE TO WORK TOGETHER ON MODIFYING COUNTY REGULATIONS TO ALLOW THEM GREATER MARKETING OPTIONS ON THE KEY

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Martha Smith saw sales at her Siesta Village shop, [Le Grand Bisou Caribbean Boutique](#), drop from \$1,600 a day to \$195 a day in one week after a Sarasota County Code Enforcement officer told her it was a violation of the local zoning code to display clothes on racks outside the shop.

“I spent a lot of money on the mannequins and certainly my inventory,” Smith told about 30 people Tuesday morning, June 4, at the regular meeting

of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA). “And right now [my store] looks like a sardine can.”

James Ritter of [Siesta Village Outfitters](#) added that he saw his sales drop 90 percent the day after a Code Enforcement officer said he had to stop displaying his sports rental equipment outside.

“For us, having something that just shows the customer that we’re open is crucial,” he told the SKVA members.

“*We need a majority. We are a democracy.*”

Cheryl Gaddie
President
Siesta Key Village Association

As a result of Smith's, Ritter's and others' concerns about the stipulations in the Siesta Key Overlay District — the county zoning code that governs businesses on Siesta Key — a group of Siesta Village business owners has begun an initiative they hope will lead to changes in that code and result in improved marketing options.

Along with Smith and Ritter's complaints, Jeff Madden, owner of [Beach Bites](#) at 217 Avenida Madera — and an SKVA board member — took the opportunity during the SKVA meeting to criticize a county regulation that prevents businesses from soliciting at Siesta Public Beach.



Siesta Village Outfitters is at 5200 Ocean Blvd., close to The Broken Egg.

SKVA officers said that while they are not involved at all in enforcement of the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD), they would work with the business owners to help them determine whether changes can be made in it.

The SKOD was enacted to ensure Siesta Village remains attractive to tourists, said Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck and Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar and past president of the SKVA. Additionally, the goal is to have all businesses “on the same playing field,” he noted.

Any modifications of the SKOD would have to be approved by the Sarasota County Commission, Matthes pointed out.

By mid-afternoon on June 4, Smith told *The Sarasota News Leader*, she already had about

six people willing to serve on an SKVA committee with her to try to change portions of the SKOD.

By early next week, she said, her goal is to set a date for the committee’s first meeting.

RAISING AWARENESS

On May 21, at the SKVA’s request, Sarasota County Zoning and Code Enforcement staff held a meeting with Siesta Village business owners to educate them about the many facets of the SKOD.

Kay Kouvatsos, vice president of the SKVA, pointed out during that organization’s June 4 meeting that she had opened that informational session by telling everyone, “None of this is new.” The SKOD was implemented in 2001,



Beach Bites opened in September 2012 in the space formerly occupied by Anna’s Deli in Siesta Village.

she added, “and it’s been out there consistently.”

However, many of the newer business owners in Siesta Village were unaware of its provisions, added Kouvatsos, who is co-owner of Village Café on Ocean Boulevard.

Smith was one of those people caught unaware of the prohibition against having merchandise outside a shop.

When she opened her business on Nov. 24, 2012 in Siesta Center, Smith told *The Sarasota News Leader*, a person she declined to identify — but “someone who I thought would be absolutely 100 percent sure of the answer” — said she could put racks with clothing in the area covered by the roof overhang above her shop “as long as no one complains.”

During the SKVA meeting, she pointed out that she had just been made aware of the SKOD prohibition on such action.

County Code Enforcement Officer John Lally told the SKVA members he had spent all of June 3 writing citations for businesses with merchandise outside their doors. The only violator he knew of he had not cited was one he had not discovered until late that day.

Ritter protested that prior to the 8:30 a.m. start of the SKVA meeting, he already had spotted shop owners with items outside again.

“We can’t stop them from doing it,” responded SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie, owner of CG Designs.

On a different point, Madden said he thought he understood during the May 21 session that



Visitors bike and walk in Siesta Village on a cloudy morning earlier this week.

waving signs to draw people to specific businesses is legal anywhere in the county. “I figured maybe the beach might be in the county,” he continued, “so I sent my sign waver out to [Siesta Public Beach], and my phone lit up and I had a great day, probably the best day I’ve ever had.”

He opened Beach Bites in late September 2012.

Then, on the third day of the promotion, when he was waving the sign on the beach, a deputy informed him that it was not legal, Madden said — that he could be arrested for soliciting.

“My question is, if it’s not soliciting over here [in the Village], how can it be soliciting [at the beach]?” he added. “I would have never gone out there if I wasn’t told at the [May 21] meeting that it was acceptable anywhere in the county.”

Then the deputy explained to him that the beach has its own rules, Madden continued.

Chris McGregor, a Sheriff’s Office deputy attending the meeting, responded that County Ordinance 90-33 prohibits solicitation of business in county parks and at county beaches. Code Enforcement staff deals with situations on private property, McGregor added, while deputies enforce the county ordinances at the beach.

Lally said the County Attorney’s Office is working on straightening out language in the zoning code to make it clear where sign waving for businesses is allowed. The current county zoning chief has been interpreting the code to restrict sign waving to the business’ property or to the shopping center site where a business is located, he pointed out.

“You cannot ban sign wavers,” Lally added, “but you can regulate them.”

“I’m not an attorney,” Madden responded, “but I’m going to have to get one. I think, if I remember the First Amendment, you can’t regulate free speech.”

Madden added, “Now does the county want to go through a legal battle, an expensive legal battle, to fight over free speech?”

Lally replied that the Florida Supreme Court had upheld a City of Lakeland ordinance that regulates where sign waving is allowed. He suggested Madden check with Donna Thompson, the county’s assistant zoning administrator, to clarify what is and is not allowed in Sarasota County.

Maura Thompson, a representative of Jonny’s Beach Rides, pointed out that drivers for the service used to pass out their cards at the public beach, but deputies told them to stop. Likewise, she said, “I was sitting out there one day, waiting for customers, and I got told [by a deputy] to leave because that was soliciting.”

McGregor pointed out that deputies allow the drivers to drop off and pick up customers who are using the service; however, the drivers cannot randomly drive through the beach parking lot as a means of advertising the business.

Regarding cards promoting the business: McGregor suggested Thompson check with the beach concessionaire, who rents space from the county. He had seen the firm allow businesses to put out cards just in the space the firm rents from the county, McGregor added.

PAST EXPERIENCE

As an example of how the SKOD can be changed, Matthes explained that he had worked with county zoning officials and the County Commission a couple of years ago on the inclusion of a new measure in the code to regulate the placement of newspapers in modules on the island. That initiative was designed to beautify the key.

If a committee working to change the SKOD's provisions about outdoor merchandise displays can win over the business owners as well as the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce and the Siesta Key Association — which represents island residents — then the County Commission would change the ordinance, Matthes pointed out.

"We need a majority," Gaddie added. "We are a democracy."


"That's great," Smith said. "In the meantime, it's severely impacted my business ... 'cause people think I'm closed now."

Mark Smith of Smith Architects, a past Chamber chairman and SKVA president, suggested Smith look into pulling temporary use permits (TUPs); the county Zoning Office can issue those to a business owner four times a year, and they can be used for outdoor displays.

Matthes noted each TUP is good for nine consecutive days.

Lally added that he thought the cost was \$30 to \$40 per TUP.

"If I'm not allowed to put anything outside," Ritter replied, "I might as well shut my business down, and I don't believe that's fair."

"We understand that," Gaddie told him. "We will do what we can to help you." 

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Overall Sarasota County property tax values are up 3.4 percent over last year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

PROPERTY TAX VALUES UP 3.4 PERCENT IN THE COUNTY

Sarasota County's property tax values have risen 3.4 percent from 2012, with the City of North Port showing the highest increase in values since last year, at 5.34 percent, according to preliminary taxable values released by the Sarasota County Property Appraiser's Office.

The total estimated taxable value of county property is \$40,459,591,691, according to the figures.

County property values declined almost 40 percent over the period following the start of the recession in 2007.

Last year, the final figure for Sarasota County was down 1.1 percent from 2011. The Property Appraiser's Office by law must release the final figure no later than July 1 every year.

As of early February, state budget staff had estimated Sarasota County would see an increase of 2.5 percent for 2013. In December 2012, the state projection was for a 0.7 percent

rise in property values for this year; for Fiscal Year 2015, the estimate was for a 3.1 percent increase; and by FY 2018, the December projections showed, the county should see a 5.1 percent hike.

According to a memo sent to the County Commission on June 4 by Karen Fratangelo, a fiscal consultant in the county's Office of Financial Management, the county will have an additional \$4.2 million in revenue, assuming the commissioners maintain flat millage rates.

During the board's last budget workshop — on May 14 — the commissioners made it clear they did not intend to raise millage rates for the 2014 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

Fratangelo told the commissioners in her memo that the higher property values will mean an increase of \$3.5 million for the county's general fund; "(we originally estimated a \$1.1 [million] increase using state projections)."

The commission will hold its next budget workshop on June 12, when it will discuss the operating budget for FY 2014.

The other preliminary taxable values for Sarasota County are as follows:

- Sarasota County School Board: up 4.48 percent over the 2012 figure, with a total value of \$43,601,207,507.

- City of Sarasota: up 3.74 percent, with a total value of \$7,131,631,602.
- City of Venice: up 2.84 percent, with a total value of \$2,775,761,673.
- Town of Longboat Key: up 2.28 percent, with a total value of \$3,379,484,986.

The preliminary taxable value of property in North Port is \$2,387,070,645.

Rachel Brown Hackney

SHERIFF KNIGHT APPOINTED TO PDMP FOUNDATION BOARD

As of May 31, Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight began serving on the Board of Directors of The Florida Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) Foundation, the Sheriff's Office has announced.

The foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group that operates as a direct support organization for the Florida Department of Health, a news release says. The foundation's goal is to raise private funding to operate the PDMP, which requires \$500,000 annually, the release adds.

In a letter announcing Knight's appointment, Florida Surgeon General and Secretary John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS, states, "We need people like you to donate time, energy, and experience to aid in reducing the scope of prescription drug abuse and diversion in Florida."

Since 2009, Knight "has worked to crack down on the prescription drug problem, launching a special investigative unit to address these crimes and forming a community partnership with medical professionals to combat this crisis," the release points out. Those activities include promoting the creation of Florida's PDMP and advocating its widespread use, the release adds.



Sheriff Tom Knight/Contributed photo

The foundation consists of a board of directors appointed by the Florida state surgeon general, "plus community and business leaders working to save lives by fundraising for the PMDP to combat the deadly consequences of drug abuse and diversion," the release says.

For more on the foundation, visit www.flpdmpfoundation.com.

PUBLIC INVITED TO WORLD OCEANS DAY FAMILY FESTIVAL JUNE 8

Sarasota County residents and visitors are invited the [World Oceans Day Family Festival](#) from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, June 8, at Mote Aquarium, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, the county has announced.

This year's event will feature games and crafts focused on "green" sustainable practices, marine science and conservation by Mote and other local organizations, a county news release says.

During the festival, Sarasota County environmental officials, along with members of the Science and Environmental Council (SEC), will promote their [Be Floridian](#) campaign, which encourages the protection of the areas waterways, bays and beaches, the release notes. "Visitors also can learn best practic-

es for lawn care during the summer to help protect some of our most precious natural resources," it says.

World Oceans Day was created in 1992 at the Earth Summit and declared a holiday by the United Nations in 2009. Official sponsors of World Oceans Day are the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, The Ocean Project, Dr. Seuss and Random House Children's Books, the release continues.

The event is free with admission to Mote Aquarium. Admission is \$19 for adults; \$18 for seniors over 65; \$14 for children ages 4-12; and free for youngsters ages 3 and younger. Mote members also will be admitted free.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 (TTY 7-1-1).



FAMILY FESTIVAL!
Saturday, June 8th • 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

SBEP ANNOUNCES 2013 BAY PARTNERS GRANT RECIPIENTS

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) has awarded grants to nine local organizations as part of the 2013 Bay Partners Grant Program, the organization has announced.

The fully funded projects include those from Anna Maria Elementary School, Ballard Global Studies Magnet School, New College of Florida, Plymouth Harbor and Save Our Sea-birds, a news release says. The partially funded projects include those of Keep Manatee

Beautiful, Mote Marine Laboratory, Nature's Academy and Sarasota Audubon Society.

Since 2003, the SBEP has awarded nearly \$232,000 in Bay Partners Grants to support 113 organizations, the release adds. A subcommittee with the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) selects the recipients.

The next deadline for submitting grant applications is March 1, 2014. Visit SarasotaBay.org to learn more about the Bay Partners Grant Program.

CORRECTION

The May 31 story *City embarks on visionary zoning exercise* contained an error. Euclidian zoning was not named after the Greek mathematician. It was named for the city of Euclid, OH, following a 1926 U.S. Supreme Court decision which laid the foundation for legal land-use controls in the United States.



Nine local organizations have received grants to pursue projects designed to improve water quality in Sarasota Bay. Photo by Norman Schimmel

FREE EDUCATIONAL EVENT SET ON ELDER FRAUD AND EXPLOITATION

In recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, the Community Alliance of Sarasota Stakeholders in Aging Consortium will host its second annual free educational forum on elder fraud and exploitation prevention on Friday, June 14, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at The Salvation Army Fellowship Hall, 1701 S. Tuttle Ave., Sarasota.

“This year’s event will focus on educating community members and professionals who work with older adults about the reality of elder fraud and exploitation,” a news release says.

Among the topics to be presented are the following: how to identify potential abuse; what to do when financial abuse is suspected; available resources; the legal process of handling fraud and exploitation cases; key elements in exploitation cases; and tips from community organizations dedicated to elder abuse and exploitation. Speakers will include community experts from law enforcement, the Florida Department of Children and Families’ Adult Protective Services Program, the State Attorney’s Office, law firms specializing in seniors’ issues and several local organizations that advocate for the safety and well being of older adults, the release adds.

“Every year an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are victims of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation,” the release points out. “That is only part of the picture. Experts believe that for every case of elder abuse or neglect reported, as many as five cases go unreported,” it adds.

“The MetLife Mature Market Institute estimates the cost of financial abuse of the elderly is at least \$2.9 billion a year, a number that may be grossly underestimated,” the release

continues. “Additionally, it is believed that seniors lose an average of \$145,000 each year from fraud committed by family, friends, caregivers and others.”

“Remember, elder abuse can happen to anyone and can occur anywhere — in a person’s own home, in nursing homes or assisted living facilities, even in hospitals,” said Anne Ridings, director of the Guardianship Services in Sarasota at Lutheran Services Florida, in the release.

“It affects elders across all socioeconomic groups, cultures and races. Based on available information, women, elders who are homebound or isolated and individuals ages 80 and older are most at risk,” Ridings added in the release.

Perhaps most surprising is that the mistreatment is usually perpetrated by the individual’s own family members, the release points out.

“If you suspect elder abuse, report it,” Ridings said in the release. “Act to protect seniors by bringing suspected abuse to the attention of the appropriate authorities. You do not need to prove that abuse is occurring; it is up to the professionals to investigate your concerns and suspicions.”

Even if it is determined no crime has been committed, counseling or other services may be suggested. To report suspected abuse, contact the 24-hour toll-free hotline: 1-800-96ABUSE.

A continental breakfast and a boxed lunch will be provided for registered attendees at the forum. Space is limited. To register, visit www.elderexploitationsrq2013.eventbrite.com, contact Raquel Sikes at Raquel_sikes@doh.state.fl.us or call 861-2575.

FLAG DAY CELEBRATION PLANNED IN FIVE POINTS PARK

Three local groups — the ACLU of Sarasota, Florida Veterans for Common Sense and the Sarasota Chalk Festival — will host their second Flag Day celebration on June 14 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Five Points Park in downtown Sarasota.

“The goal is simply to celebrate our flag and the values for which it stands,” a news release says. “It is strictly non-political, non-partisan and a way to bring our community together each year.”

The observance will feature live music, honor guards from the Sarasota Police Department and Vietnam Veterans Group, proclamations from the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County, a children’s chalk drawing contest (for the best American flag), the distribution of free flags, “Tom Paine” (in Colonial attire) walking around chatting with the attendees, a couple of brief speeches, face painting and performances by a youth chorus and local magicians.

“Everyone is invited to join us,” the release says. The event is free.



Five Points Park is located in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CITY LAUNCHES TEEN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In conjunction with numerous community partners, the City of Sarasota has launched a teen self-awareness and improvement program known as the Honorable Alliance for Reclaiming Destiny: North Sarasota Original Chapter (HARD:NOC), the city has announced.

A small group of young men and women, ages 13-15, were selected to participate in a year-long pilot program; it will focus on exposing them to various opportunities as well as on self-improvement, including character building, a news release says.

An orientation ceremony was held May 30 at the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex (RLTCC) on 34th Street to officially induct the participants into the program. Lonnetta M. Gaines, a local writer, dancer, artist and motivational speaker, addressed the group, the release notes.

“This is a comprehensive program,” Jerry Fogle, RLTCC manager, said in the release. “We want our kids to reach their full potential. Through HARD:NOC, we want to broaden their view and let them know there’s no limit to what they can do or become.”

The 16 participants will meet twice a week for approximately two hours, with the boys and girls in separate groups, the release continues. The curriculum will cover an array of topics, with the help of community partners, and it will include round-table discussions and field trips.

“We will begin with classroom expectations, rules and code of conduct. Then, we will move through sessions in avoiding conflict, inter-

personal communication, health and personal safety,” Brunie Neira, the recreational specialist coordinating the program, said in the release. “We’ll go over healthy relationships, self esteem, character building, etiquette, table manners, being a good citizen, volunteerism, responsibility and we’ll wrap up with art appreciation,” Neira added.

Many aspects of the HARD:NOC curriculum are already taught by various nonprofit organizations throughout the Sarasota community, the release points out. Each week a different community partner will participate in HARD:NOC by providing a lecture, roundtable discussion or field trip. For example, the Sheriff’s Activity League of Sarasota will take the students to an obstacle course to teach them about team building, the Sarasota Literacy Council will discuss interpersonal communication and We R 4 Kids will present an anti-bullying lesson, the release continues. “Plans also are in the works for a fine dining excursion in downtown Sarasota to take the students out of their comfort zone, expose them to a new experience and build their self confidence,” it adds.

“A lot of agencies and organizations in the area already have impressive teen programs that are specific to one topic,” City Manager Tom Barwin said in the release. “With HARD:NOC, we’re compiling these assets in a comprehensive manner. This is something new for the city and the community. I’m optimistic we’ll enrich some young lives and make them realize they have choices available and then become mentors themselves,” he added in the release.

The participants were required to write essays about why they wanted to be in the program and what they would like to change about their lives, the release notes. A panel comprising representatives of the city's community partners reviewed the applications, it adds.

"The children selected are excited to be a part of this pilot program," Vice Mayor Willie Shaw said in the release. "Our goal is for them to graduate from the program and pass their new knowledge and experiences to other teenagers in the North Sarasota community."

HOFFMAN SELECTED TO ATTEND FBI NATIONAL ACADEMY

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that Maj. Kurt Hoffman, Administrative Division Commander, has been selected to attend The Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy.

Participation in The FBI Academy is by invitation only, a Sheriff's Office news release points out. "The professional course of study serves to improve the administration of law enforcement agencies worldwide," the release adds. "Its mission is to enhance the personal and professional development of leaders."

Among the subjects are behavioral science, forensic science, understanding terrorist mindsets and communication, which are designed to prepare the officers "for complex, dynamic and contemporary challenges," the release notes.

Hoffman has a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice from Saint Leo College, a Master of Science in criminal justice from International College and a Juris Doctorate from Nova Southeastern University, the release says. A former state prosecutor, he is a graduate of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's Police Legal

HARD:NOC is based on a similar program in High Point, NC, which City of Sarasota leaders visited last year to learn about a successful community policing program that helped residents take back their neighborhoods, the release points out.

The City's partners with HARD:NOC are Brotherhood of Men; Brothers & Sisters Doing the Right Thing Inc.; CARES Outreach Service Inc.; First Step; Planned Parenthood (with SPARCC and The Source); Sheriff's Activity League of Sarasota; Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall; and We R 4 Kids.



Maj. Kurt Hoffman/Contributed photo

Advisors Training Program and a member of the Florida Bar's Labor and Employment Law, and City, County and Local Government Law sections, the release continues.

In 2011 he completed the FBI's Florida Executive Development Seminar.

"Participation in The FBI Academy and other respected leadership training programs is important to developing the professional workforce that we are committed to providing and is part of our strategy to plan for the future of the sheriff's office," said Knight in the release. 



The scene of a stabbing in downtown Sarasota on June 5 is marked off by police tape. Photo courtesy of the Sarasota Police Department. Inset photo: Sheri Tolbert/Contributed photo

WOMAN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH DOWNTOWN STABBING

The Sarasota Police Department has arrested Sheri L. Tolbert, 32, a transient, in connection with a stabbing that occurred just after 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, June 5, near the intersection of Ninth Street and Central Avenue in Sarasota, the Police Department has reported.

Officers said Tolbert and another transient female, with a history of fighting, began arguing at approximately 6:22 p.m. at the intersection, which is across the street from the Salvation Army, according to the report.

Officer Ron Dixon, the Rosemary District foot patrol officer, drove up on the incident in progress while he was patrolling his assigned area, the report adds. He saw the two women in the dirt alongside a fence, the report continues. The victim was trying to cover her face, the report says, and Dixon noted he “never

saw the victim try to fight back or throw any punches.”

Dixon was able to pull Tolbert off the victim without incident, the report notes. At that time, Tolbert still had the knife (a folding box-cutter) in her right hand, the report says.

The victim suffered three wounds: one minor laceration to the head; one under the jaw, which was minor; and a deep wound about an inch long on her left bicep, the report says. She “also had a very bloody and swollen left eye,” according to the report.

The victim was transported to Sarasota Memorial Hospital, the report adds.

Tolbert has been charged with Aggravated Battery with a Deadly Weapon.

441 MOTORISTS CITED FOR NOT WEARING SEAT BELTS

During the Click It or Ticket campaign, which ran from May 20 to June 2, Sarasota County Sheriff's deputies wrote 441 citations to motorists who were not wearing seat belts, the office has announced.

"The effort was part of a nationwide push to save lives by intensifying efforts to educate the public about seat belt laws and enforce them with all motorists around the clock," a press release says.

"Nighttime drivers and passengers continue to be among those least likely to wear seat belts," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release.

"Consequently, they are also among those most likely to die in motor vehicle crashes and we want to prevent that."

In Florida, all motorists are required to buckle up when they are riding in the front seat, and passengers under the age of 18 must use proper seat restraints regardless of where they are seated in a vehicle.

Because of high-visibility enforcement and awareness campaigns such as this, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that seat belt use reached 86 percent in 2012, the news release notes.

MAN CHARGED WITH THREE COUNTS OF ATTEMPTED ROBBERY

A man with no known address has been arrested by the Sarasota Police Department after allegedly attempting to rob three different people, the department has reported.

Reggie Randall, 38, was arrested after the victims positively identified him in a police lineup, a report says.

On Thursday, May 30, at approximately 9:11 p.m., Police Department patrol officers responded to the Shell Gas Station at 1801 South Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, where they spoke with the three people — two men and a woman — who said Randall had approached them, the report continues. The victims told the officers that Randall started yelling and threatening them, the report adds. The victims also said Randall grabbed a gas pump hose, aimed it at them and threatened to spray gas on them, the report notes.



Reggie Randall/Contributed photo

Victims told officers Randall yelled, "Give me everything you have," according to the report. Then he allegedly added, "I don't give a f--- about anything and I'll f--- you up."

The report notes that Randall was known as "Red" to one of the victims, adding that one of the victims also owed him \$20 "from a while ago and that perhaps the offense stemmed from that."

The report says Randall continued to make verbal threats as he held the gas pump hose. "The victims did not give Randall anything of value," it notes.

When a Sarasota Memorial Hospital public safety officer pulled into the parking lot in her

marked vehicle, Randall allegedly said he did not care about the police and began to walk away, the report continues.

Witnesses said they watched Randall head in the direction of apartments in the 2000 block of Arlington Street, the report adds.

Randall was arrested after the police line-up. The victim who said he owed money to Randall was able to provide police with a cell phone number for the defendant, according to the report. After officers located Randall, the report continues, they charged him with three counts of attempted robbery.

CONVICTED FELON ARRESTED WITH COCAINE AND FIREARM

On May 28, the Sarasota Police Tactical Narcotics Unit, with the assistance of the Strategic Narcotics and Street Crimes units, arrested Dove Giles, 39, and charged him with Armed Trafficking in Cocaine with a quantity between 28 and 200 grams, the Police Department has reported.

Detectives executed a search warrant at 1124 32nd St. in Sarasota, where they seized 52.3 grams of rock cocaine, 3.8 grams of marijuana, a handgun, ammunition, drug paraphernalia and \$6,259.00 in U.S. currency, a police report says.

Giles is a convicted felon with a history of narcotics arrests, the report adds.



Dove Giles/Contributed photo



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WIFE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH DEATH OF HER HUSBAND

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested Leslie Williams, 45, in connection with the death of her husband in the driveway of their home on Oakford Road in Sarasota on March 17, the office has reported.

Just after midnight that day, the couple's son called 911, requesting an ambulance for his father, who was lying in the driveway and not breathing, the report says. Deputies who responded along with EMS personnel found 48-year-old Christopher Williams dead at the scene, the report adds.

According to witnesses, Leslie and Christopher Williams were arguing inside the home and then went outside, the report continues. During the confrontation Leslie climbed into her 2006 GMC Yukon Denali, and Christo-

pher walked towards the gate at the end of the driveway, according to the report. Investigators learned that Leslie put the Yukon in drive and struck the victim with the front of the vehicle, knocking him into the gate, according to the report. "Leslie continued driving, running over Christopher as she fled the scene. Deputies found Leslie and the vehicle at her mother's home shortly after the crime," the report notes.

Detectives obtained an arrest warrant for Leslie Williams, and she turned herself in on the morning of June 5. She is charged with Vehicular Homicide and Leaving the Scene of a Crash with Death. Williams was booked into the Sarasota County Jail, where she is being held without bond.



Leslie Williams/Contributed photo



A map shows the location of Oakford Road, east of Fruitville Road. Image from Google Maps

THREE ARRESTED IN SARASOTA POLICE MDMA BUST

Three people were arrested on Thursday, May 30, after detectives with the Sarasota Police Department's Strategic Narcotics Unit — assisted by the Tactical and Street Crimes units — conducted an undercover buy/bust operation in the 1000 block of North Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, involving MDMA, the department has reported.

The drug is commonly referred to as Ecstasy or Molly, a news release says.

An undercover police detective negotiated the purchase of 1 ounce of crystalline MDMA from a female juvenile suspect, the report says, noting the drug has a street value of approximately \$3,000.

Other suspects met with an undercover detective in the 1000 block of North Tamiami Trail, where another subject was also involved in the transaction, the report continues. Following the transaction, "the subjects were arrested without incident," it adds. Another suspect on the scene was also arrested on an unrelated warrant, the report notes.

"The crystalline form of MDMA is part of a new trend of 'designer' or 'club drug' popular with teenagers and young adults," the news release points out. "Some forms of this drug




A bag with MDMA. Contributed photo

can be purchased from other countries online," it notes.

Other, similar types of substances include Methylone, or "M1," and can be found in bath salts, the report says. "Abuse and overdose could lead to serious health issues," the news release points out. "Parents are urged to monitor their children's online activities."

Those arrested follow:

- Devon M. Ellis, 23, of 7217 Alderwood Drive, Sarasota, who was charged with Conspiracy to Traffic in MDMA.
- Travis J. Pipes, 24, of Bradenton, who was charged with Conspiracy to Traffic in MDMA.
- Kirk A. Leach, 21, of 704 64th Ave. East, Bradenton, who had an outstanding warrant for Driving While License Suspended. 



Travis Pipes/Contributed photo



Devon Ellis/Contributed photo



Kirk Leach/Contributed photo

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OPINION



'DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE'

EDITORIAL

Europeans understandably are somewhat disdainful of American get-out-the-vote efforts, which normally employ a slogan along the lines of, "It doesn't matter who you vote for. Just vote."

In European countries, the "lunatic fringe" of both the Left and Right extremes of the political spectrum, espousing views that range from obstructive to nihilistic, frequently fields candidates for elections.

So it matters a great deal in those countries for whom a voter casts his or her ballot.

While we do not have fringe groups espous-

ing anarchy or the destruction of our capitalist system, we do have candidates who for various reasons — an ax to grind, slavish devotion to incompatible ideologies, intellectual deficiency or a struggle to maintain a firm grasp of reality — simply do not present good alternatives for voters seeking to fill public offices. And often candidates are not known well enough by voters, their idiosyncrasies not revealed until after those candidates have taken office.

Joined by North Port Mayor Linda Yates, who was elected in November 2010, Cheryl Cook and Rhonda DiFranco have turned their city's government on end.

One might argue such was the case with the recent additions to the North Port City Commission. Two new

OPINION

commissioners — Cheryl Cook and Rhonda DiFranco — were elected in the general election last November. Their mien throughout the campaign could not have given an impartial observer any expectation of their behavior after they took office in December.

Joined by North Port Mayor Linda Yates, who was elected in November 2010, the three women have turned their city's government on end. No act better illustrates this fundamental shift in rational governance than the new majority's handling of North Port's joint ownership of Warm Mineral Springs with Sarasota County.

The county and North Port decided in 2010 to jointly purchase Warm Mineral Springs for \$5.5 million, and in July 2010, the two commissions agreed unanimously to pursue efforts to secure permanent management of the springs and proceed with its development. The sale of the springs to the county and city was finalized in December 2010, around the time that Yates joined the North Port Commission.

Fast-forward two years, and Yates, now joined by Cook and DiFranco, put the brakes on any effort to secure permanent management or to develop the springs as a tourism destination. In December 2012, the three voted instead to sell the city's share of the springs, effectively ending the partnership with Sarasota County.

The county responded by making a good-faith offer to purchase North Port's share for \$2

million, provided that the city de-annexed the property so the county could proceed with planning without interference from the city. The city rejected that offer out of hand, and it declined to even make a counteroffer.

The North Port Commission also rebuffed efforts by the county to move forward with negotiating a new contract for an operator for the springs; the contract with the current operator, Cypress Lending, expires at the end of June.

Finally, the city and county came to the negotiating table, in compliance with state law that spells out the steps needed to be taken in conflict resolution. In an all-day session on April 17, guided by a facilitator, the two local government bodies at last agreed that they needed to proceed with negotiations for a new operator of the springs. This decision was reached because DiFranco finally sided with Vice Mayor Jim Blucher and Commissioner Tom Jones, leaving Yates and Cook in the minority. The county was tasked with the responsibility of drafting an interlocal agreement that would memorialize the agreements between the two commissions.

Unfortunately, about 5:30 the next morning, DiFranco sent an email to the North Port city manager announcing her decision to reverse her vote. That email was never brought up in the next meeting of the North Port Commis-

OPINION

sion, so the County Commission voted to proceed with the drafting of the interlocal agreement.

Yet the North Port Commission has not yet formally reviewed or acted upon that agreement. That discussion is set for June 10. Nonetheless, based on previous actions, it appears the city and county are at an impasse that ultimately will have to be resolved in court.

On May 28, the North Port Commission surprisingly voted to rescind its December 2012 motion to sell its half of the property. The commission also voted to proceed unilaterally with negotiating a one-year extension of Cypress Lending's contract, and it offered to buy the county's share of the springs.


Understandably taken aback, the County Commission voted in its meeting on June 3 not to sell its share of the springs. Moreover, it formally objected to North Port's intent to negotiate unilaterally with Cypress Lending, in violation of both the ownership agreement and the county's purchasing standards, which require competitive bidding.

So now we see the harm that can come when voters care less about whom they vote for and just vote. Three commissioners stopped dead in its track the cooperative effort by the city and county to secure long-term management and development of the springs.

For six months the two governments have wasted many hours and untold dollars in an effort to find a solution to the impasse. In a move that defies credulity, the three North Port commissioners effectively proclaimed, "Never mind!"

Make no mistake, however: The intransigence of these three commissioners is not at an end. Yates, Cook and DiFranco appear ready to negotiate a solution to the conflict between the city and the county ... as long as the county agrees wholeheartedly with their dictates.

As County Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out in the June 3 meeting, the two governing bodies agreed 10-0 in 2010 to proceed with preserving and developing the springs. Three years later, the two bodies still agree 7-3. A minority of the two commissions — but, sadly, a majority of the North Port Commission — holds hostage the effective utilization of an asset owned by the taxpayers of North Port and Sarasota County.

Their ham-handed mismanagement of this entire process has cost those taxpayers greatly, and possibly imperiled the future of a vital resource in Warm Mineral Springs. Their intransigence and, yes, ineptitude, further provide a cautionary tale: It *does* matter for whom you vote! 

OPINION

IF CLOTHES MAKE THE PERSON ...



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

My 5-year-old granddaughter and I wear the exact same type of “play clothes” — sandals, shorts and T-shirts decorated with pretty drawings and some clever words.

Hers might be about “Hello Kitty” and mine might be from a recent exotic trip, but the concept is exactly the same: Our wardrobe is not indicative of our age.


Mind you, I am not complaining. I love pretending that picking out the right T-shirt to match my shorts is a major decision. But when did casual clothes for all ages start to reflect a similar look?

My mother liked to wear something on her legs called “pedal pushers.” These well tailored, cotton pants came right below the knees and were usually accompanied by a colorful cotton blouse, probably covering her upper arms and coordinating perfectly with her pants.

And let us not forget the platform sandals that matched and made her “outfit” complete.

According to the thinking of that day, my mother’s children and potential grandchildren would not have worn an outfit similar to hers for play or beach wear. Lifestyle was more structured, and the clothing styles were in sync with the times. When, and why, did clothes become more casual and more homogenized? I am guessing it was in the ’60s, when many girls put aside traditional lifestyles and wanted to assert themselves and prove they were independent thinkers. T-shirts with a variety of sayings and prints became popular. Rock groups even began authorizing the production of T-shirts with their names and images of their album covers. Thus began the whole phenomenon.

Everybody, including younger kids, began seeking out T-shirts expressing their own thoughts and/or preferences.

And even though my mother was very comfortable wearing her casual attire, she probably would have laughed out loud to imagine herself dressed exactly like a 5-year-old. 



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OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PUBLIC HEARING ON SIESTA RIGHT OF WAY NEEDS TO BE REOPENED

To the editor:

The slacker landlocked lot owners in a Siesta Key subdivision just gave away their access to a public canal by not showing up for a public hearing and telling the County Commission where to get off ([Trumping the 'comp plan,'](#) May 31).

How much is water access worth in regard to the value of their land? Where was the vaunted Siesta Key Association during this hearing? The three commissioners (Charles Hines, Joe Barbetta, Carolyn Mason) who approved this need to be raked over the coals for giving up public right of way for nothing.

So much for the comp plan. This hearing needs be reopened.

Richard C. Thomas
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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ASK OTUS
SIESTA SEEN

Inside



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.

WITH THE MYSTERY BIRD IDENTIFIED, AN EXCITING SUMMER LIES AHEAD FOR A CERTAIN WELL-KNOWN OWL

Dear Readers,

Yes! The answer is the Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) in its juvenile form.

Many of you were puzzled by last week's mystery bird because I had written, "Search as hard as you can and you will never spot a single white feather in these Little Blue Heron photos!" What I had also written was that I was presenting you with photos of the *adult* Little Blue Heron. You overlooked that

part, didn't you? Tricky of me? No, just simply wicked!

It is a bit of a mystery to ornithologists that the Little Blue Heron "... is the only heron species in which first-year birds and adults show dramatically different coloration. First-year birds are pure white, while adults are blue." Cornell Lab of Ornithology further expands on this subject under the delightful heading of "**COOL FACTS**":



An immature Little Blue Heron. File photo

“The Snowy Egret tolerates the close proximity of white Little Blue Herons more than that of dark Little Blue Herons. A white Little Blue Heron catches more fish in the company of Snowy Egrets than when alone. This relationship may be one reason why young Little Blue Herons stay white for a year. Another advantage of white plumage is that young Little Blue Herons are more readily able to integrate into mixed-species flocks of white herons, thus gaining a measure of protection against predators.”

To show you how this lovely bird slowly morphs into its adult stage, I have gathered together the accompanying, revealing photographs. Whatever shade of white or blue the Little Blue comes in, nothing seems to diminish its appetite for frogs! I am particularly fond of the frog and wakame salad photo even though it did make me a bit hungry!

Thank you for participating in the mystery bird guessing game!











HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD!

Many of you may remember that my earlier identification in these pages of a mystery bird as a roc, that fabled, terrifying bird of the *Tales of the Arabian Nights*, met with some skepticism, if not outright derision, by both journals of the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology, birding's highest authorities in the country. After I submitted my manuscript, the editors actually suggested I had "rocs in my head." Imagine my chagrin!

My spirits having hit roc bottom, I determined to resign from the column, mothball my iPad (after feasting on as many moths as I could stuff into my craw), abandon the study of cryptozoology and devote myself to nocturnal mousing.

Then, and to my complete surprise, there came an email from 21st Century Fox. Normally, I avoid foxes (as well as Bobcats, Great Horned Owls, Unidentified Flying Hawks, Snakes, Blue Jays, Monarch Butterflies, Cuban Tree Frogs — imagine a phobic Adrian Monk sprouting Owl feathers!), but curiosity got the better of me. I opened the email.

A famous producer, whom I cannot name until our contract is roc solid, asked to "option" my roc article as a soon-to-be-made TV sitcom on which I would be the principal scriptwriter. Well, all my feathers fluffed up to the point where I could be mistaken for the fabulous fuzzy phoenix, or even a roc! Anyway, we agreed to "take a meeting" (that's Hollywood parlance for "talk") and that "his girl would call my girl" to arrange details. I guess Ne-



bougepas! is “my girl.” Nebougepas! is French for “Don’t move!” and she does not; nor does she speak! I actually had to answer the phone myself. I know, it comes across as a bit gauche and rube-like when you are dealing with a famous Hollywood “mover and shaker” like Swifty Lazar, but, hopefully, my royalties will soon pay for elocution lessons for “my girl.”

Then Mr. Hollywood’s “girl” sent me a box of Cuban Montecristo No. 2 cigars (Arnold’s favorites!). I sampled several of them and was disappointed not to find a single *Lasioderma serricorne*, commonly known as Cigar Beetle, in the lot. I concluded that Cuba is a country whose population has exquisite epicurean tastes because the cigar rollers eat these beetles rather than export them with the cigars. Nevertheless, Hollywood protocol demands an exchange of gifts. So I scoured under my



A Luna Moth wing. File photo



Charlie's sheephead on the dock. File photo

oak tree limb through my neat, little piles of regurgitated indigestible meal parts for an appropriate one. I found a lovely Luna Moth wing and a lovely sheepshead that Charlie, the Great Blue Heron, had left on the dock.

I carefully wrapped both in Spanish moss and boxed them in palm bark. I then flew the package to the post office at Davidson's Drugs in Siesta Village, as Nebougepas! was not about to move. After Tammy affixed the correct postage, she leaned over the counter and whispered to me, "Good luck, Otus! But be careful. It's an owl-eat-owl world out there." Tammy is a kind and wise woman!

My first encounter with Mr. Hollywood was highly successful. As a result of that initial "brainstorming" (the term sounds a bit brutal, but that is how they formulate all those brilliant ideas in Hollywood), it was decided that I would author a TV sitcom along the lines of the Rock Hudson/Doris Day bedroom comedy classics, except this would be an action thriller set in Alcatraz against the backdrop of a prison and called, *The Roc*. Sean Connery might even reprise his earlier role.

Now, I do not want you to think that *3rd Roc from the Sun Moon* (I'm nocturnal!) will be just another lightweight, mindless show that will make you roc with laughter. My producer suggested introducing a mélange of reality TV and *cinéma vérité* with film noir's subtle overtones — a veritable roc'y horror picture

show! So, there will be some really heavy stuff in the series as it explores the darker side of relationships by introducing characters straight out of Sartre's *No Exit* — those doomed, lost souls who are stuck between a roc and a hard place. It is kinda like they can never find closure. The director decided they all will be overshadowed by a Eugene O'Neill matriarchal prototype — the autocrat who, after a few too many bourbons on the rocs, shines as the sinister grande dame. She will sport dazzling bling — rocs (the size of skating rinks!) on her fingers, glaringly noticeable when the cameras all pan in on the hand that rocs the cradle.

The sets — à la Norman Rocwell, of course! The musical score? Roc 'n' Roll variations on a theme by Roc Maninoff.

3rd Roc from the Moon sure sounds like another big winner in Hollywood's new fall season lineup, doesn't it?

All this is by way of saying that I will be in "La-La Land" this summer working on the script. My next appearance in these pages will be in September.

Until then, dear readers, thanks for sharing throughout this past year. YOU ROC!

Ta-ta! Ciao! Kiss, kiss! (That's *au revoir* in Hollywoodese!)

Otus

Take Your Time You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night



OTUS in HOLLYWOOD

3 FT 6 IN



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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REPORT REVEALS THE REAL STORY ABOUT THE DEPUTY AND THE MAN ON THE BEACH WITH THE PARROTS; 2013 CRYSTAL CLASSIC DATES SET; ANOTHER SNAG DEVELOPS IN THE BOLLARDS SAGA



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Any regular attendee of Siesta Key Association or Siesta Key Village Association meetings through the years probably has seen Deputy Chris McGregor of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

And if you have had the chance to get to know him — as I have — you understand he is a good-hearted person with a fine sense of humor. He is about as far removed from the image of a bad cop as any law enforcement offi-



A county sign at Beach Access 8 on Siesta Key advises people that pets are not allowed. Similar signage is at every beach access on the island. File photo

Siesta Seen

cer I have met. And believe me, I have met a few of them through the years!

That was why I was especially distressed last week to see McGregor's name in a very unflattering light in regard to a Siesta Beach incident over Memorial Day weekend. Once I read the actual Sheriff's Office report about what happened, I realized many of the facts had been, shall we say, misrepresented.

Just before 11:30 a.m. on Memorial Day, May 27, McGregor was on patrol near Beach Access 7 on Siesta Key when he saw a man later identified as Wade N. Pitzer, 54, of Land O'Lakes with a parrot perched on one shoulder and another Pitzer was showing to someone at the beach, the official report says.

McGregor advised Pitzer that animals are not allowed on the beach. "[Pitzer] stated that they were birds, and that it was a 'ridiculous law,'" the report continues.

Then McGregor asked Pitzer to remove the birds from the beach. This was just a verbal warning, the report says. "[Pitzer] continued to argue the fact that the birds should be allowed to stay," the report adds.

After Pitzer kept disagreeing with McGregor over the law, McGregor said he needed Pitzer's name so he could give him a written warning, the report goes on. "The defendant [Pitzer] stated that he did not need to give me his name," the report says. "I then advised the defendant that at this time I would be issuing him a civil citation for the birds on the county beach and that if he refused again to give me

his name he [risked] the chance of going to jail for obstruction," McGregor wrote.

At that point, the report notes, Pitzer said the birds belonged to his young daughter and that he would give McGregor her name and date of birth. "I told him that he was in possession of the birds and that he would be the one who gets the citation," McGregor added in the report. Once again, Pitzer told McGregor he would give the deputy his daughter's information since the parrots were hers. And, once more, McGregor advised that Pitzer would be subject to arrest unless he complied with the deputy's request. "He once again refused," the report says.

At that point, McGregor called for Sgt. Scott Osborne — leader of the Sheriff's Office's Community Policing Station on Siesta Key — and Deputy Jason Strom as back-up, the report notes. When they arrived, the report continues, "they observed the defendant not giving [McGregor] his name and attempting to walk away several times saying that he was getting his things and leaving."

McGregor told Pitzer not to leave because he was conducting an investigation. When Pitzer yet again began to walk away, Osborne and Strom put him in handcuffs. Then Pitzer said he would give McGregor the information so the deputy could write him the citation. "I [advised Pitzer] it may be too late at his point," McGregor notes in the report.

When Pitzer's wife and daughter realized Pitzer might go to jail, they became upset, the report adds. Therefore, McGregor talked to

Siesta Seen

the daughter and told both her and her mother “that I would do everything I could to not take [Pitzer] to jail.” The daughter then began pleading with her dad to give McGregor the information for which the deputy had asked at the outset.

“After such pleading from the defendant’s daughter he finally gave me his information,” McGregor noted in the report, so he could issue the civil citation.

McGregor added the last line: “Writer felt that it was in the best interest of the child and the defendant’s wife to release him and not press criminal charges.”

Section 90-33 of the Sarasota County Zoning Code, approved on Dec. 11, 2007, lists *prohibited* conditions, activities or uses for the beaches. Under (a)(2) of that section, it says, “Dogs, cats, and other pets outside of areas specifically designated for activities involving such animals, except for dogs trained to assist or aid disabled or handicapped persons when such dogs are actually being used to assist or aid such persons. Any dog, cat or other pet found in violation of this section may be impounded and held in accordance with provisions of the Sarasota County Code of Ordinances.”

The fine for violating any part of that ordinance is \$97.

I think the average reader will draw very clear conclusions about Pitzer’s level of cooperation and McGregor’s leniency, especially given the circumstances.



Easily visible in the daytime, crosswalks in Siesta Village — and the people using them — can be hard to spot at night. Photo by Norman Schimmel

BOLLARDS SAGA GOES ON

When the estimate is for \$72,000, another \$400 really does not make that much difference, does it.

Apparently that was the conclusion of county staff regarding the latest chapter in what is now a 17-month-old saga to illuminate seven Siesta Village crosswalks at night.

When the Sarasota County Commission voted on May 7 to have staff proceed with vendors already under contract for the purchase of 14 bollards with LED lighting for the Village, that \$72,000 estimate was \$46,000 below the only formal bid the county received for the project. Now make that \$72,400.

In his weekly written report for the County Commission dated May 20, James K. Harriott Jr., the county’s chief engineer, wrote, “Staff

Siesta Seen

is in the process of procuring the lighting fixtures/bollards for the project. *Stonelight*, the lowest bidder, cannot provide the appropriate product liability insurance. *Evolucia*, the next lowest bidder can provide the appropriate insurance. The total cost difference is \$400.00.”

No specific date has been provided for the installation. Staff told me after the May 7 vote that the goal is to have the bollards in before season begins again. Ryan Montague in the county’s Mobility/Traffic Office said he hoped the work would be done no later than November.

CRYSTAL CLASSIC DATES SET

The organizers of Siesta’s signature master sand sculpting competition, the Crystal Classic, announced this week that 10 teams from the United States and abroad will compete Nov. 15-18 during the fourth annual event.

One big new feature this year will be off-site shuttle service from Riverview High School, located at 1 Ram Way off Proctor Road, on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 16 and 17. Each year, the organizers have worked especially



Fossil Fuel won top honors in the 2012 Crystal Classic. Contributed photo by Peter Acker



A close-up shows one detail of the multi-faceted second-place winner of the Crystal Classic in 2012, Fine Print. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

hard to come up with an easier transportation system for people attending the event. The last two years, parking was offered at Phillippi Estate Park on South Tamiami Trail for those who wanted to take buses to the beach.

Yet another new feature this year will be sculpture viewing with a special “Mobi-Mat” on the sand for people who have difficulty walking on the beach to see all the works in progress. The **Mobi-Mat** will be available on Monday, Nov. 18.

According to the website of the French company Deschamps, the “Mobi-Mat® Beach-Access Mat (BAM) is a medium grade polyester roll-out mat system” designed to facilitate movements over sand, gravel or pebble beaches. Not surprisingly, it has quite a few military uses.

A news release notes, “The Crystal Classic has become a favorite of many of the professional sand sculptors who have competed here. Citing the beauty and cleanliness of the pristine white sand, sculptors have remarked that their sculptures look almost as if they are ‘carved in marble.’”

The four-day art event will include all-day viewing Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday as the sculptors work; the presence of more than 50 vendors on the beach; live entertainment; and an amateur sand sculpting contest on Saturday.

Sponsorships and vendor spaces are available. For more information visit www.SiestaKeyCrystalClassic.com, call the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce at 349-3800 or email Chamber Executive Director Kevin Cooper at Kevin@siestakeychamber.com.

VIP parking packages with multi-day passes starting at \$49 will be available for purchase online in the next few weeks, the release adds.

Proceeds of the Siesta Key Crystal Classic benefit Mote Marine Laboratory’s sea turtle research and conservation programs.

COUNTY OFFERS CAMPGROUND SPECIAL

Turtle Beach Campground on south Siesta Key “is one of only a handful of spots in Florida where campers can pitch their tents or park their recreational vehicles (RVs) only a few short steps away from the Gulf of Mexico,” says a county news release issued on May 31.

And now through Aug. 12, Sarasota County residents can stay two consecutive nights for the price of one at the campground, that release says.

To be eligible for the buy one, get one free (BOGO) special, guests must show proof of residency and stay two consecutive nights on the same site.

“Turtle Beach Campground is incredibly popular with visitors and frequently sold out,”

Siesta Seen

Tricia Wisner of Sarasota County Parks and Recreation said in the release. “We wanted to offer Sarasota County residents a special incentive so they can experience this hidden jewel of our parks system.”

Turtle Beach Campground can accommodate RVs with full hookups and tent campers, and

it offers such amenities as Wi-Fi and laundry and shower facilities, the news release points out.

For more information and reservations, contact the Turtle Beach Campground at 349-3839 or visit website at www.scgov.net/turtlebeach-campground. 



Sarasota County is offering a special two-nights-for-one package at Turtle Beach Campground this summer. Photo courtesy Sarasota County



Newport Shore by Tom Swimm. Contributed photo

SUMMER SHOWCASE ON VIEW AT DABBERT GALLERY

Through Sept. 30, Dabbert Gallery in downtown Sarasota will present *Summer Showcase*, an exhibit featuring works by five sculptors, one printmaker, 18 painters, one pastel artist and one photographer, the gallery has announced.

The artists are a diverse, award-winning group — hailing from Southern California to Sydney, Australia, to Prince Edward Island and Quebec in Canada to Vero Beach, a news release says.

Eleven of them are among Sarasota's best, the news release adds.

Dabbert Gallery is located at 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. For more details, visit www.dabbert-gallery.com.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.



After the Bath by Thyra Davidson-Wexler



Saint Armands by Robert Baxter

FRIDAY FEST RETURNS TO THE VAN WEZEL ON JUNE 21

For many Sarasotans, summer brings back a not-so-secret sunset hot spot, the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, which hosts Friday Fest.

From June through September on the third Friday of the month, the Van Wezel “opens up its waterfront terrace to beach chairs, local vendors and the finest local entertainment,” a news release says. “This summer’s lineup is sure to keep you dancing until the sun goes down.”

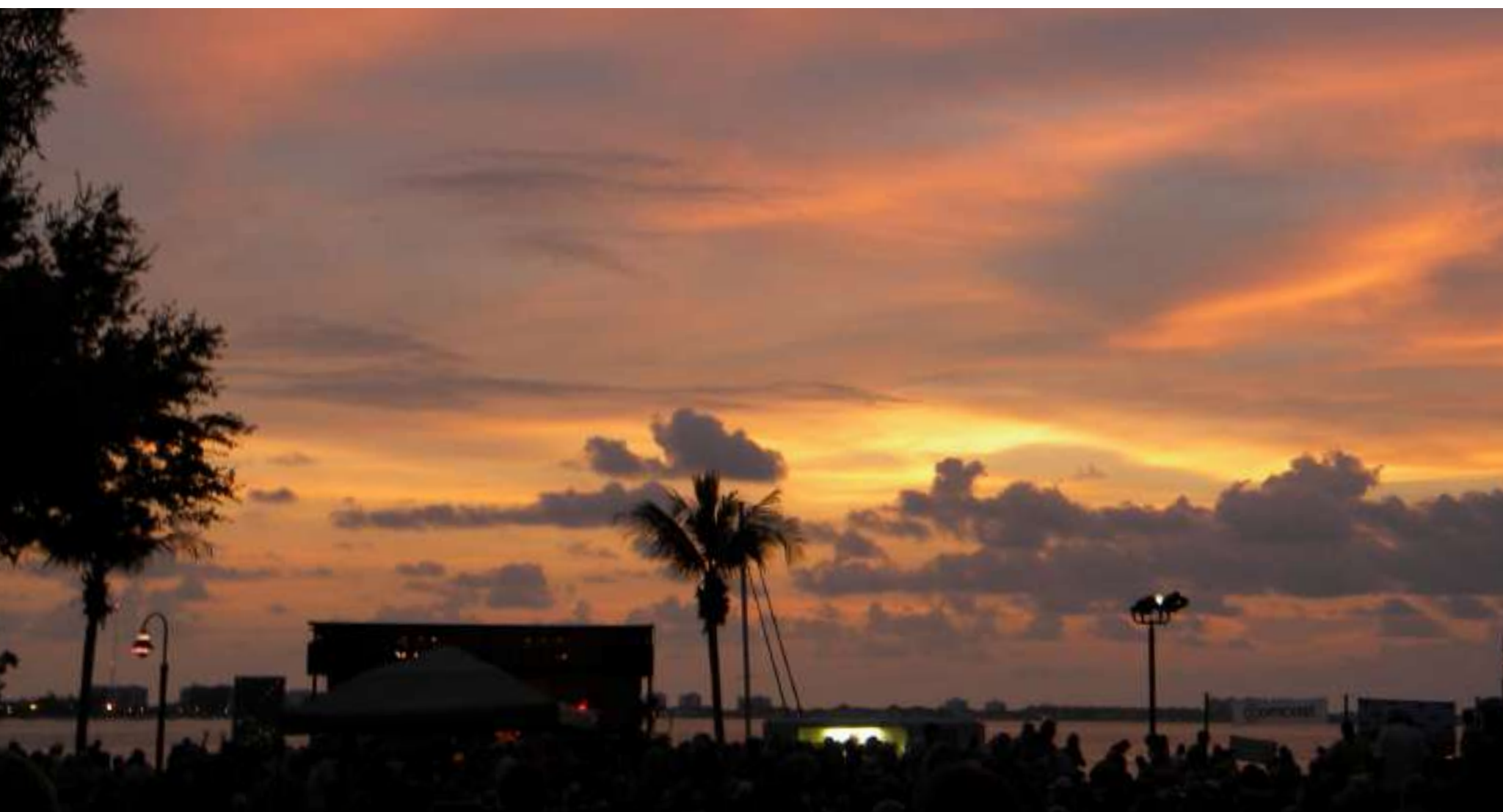
Kicking off the Friday Fest Series on June 21 will be Yesterdayze, a '60s throwback band “with enough flower power to put a smile on anyone’s face,” the release notes. July 19 will feature the bluesy classic rock sounds of Kettle of Fish, which has toured all over the country, “opening for some of the biggest acts in

the business,” the release adds. On Aug. 16, “the island vibes of Impulse will have you on your feet” with its danceable mix of reggae, zouk and calypso, the release continues. Finally, closing out the season on Sept. 20 will be the Sarasota group One Night Rodeo, playing a high-energy brand of contemporary country.

Those who plan to attend the concerts are encouraged to bring blankets or chairs and their sunglasses and to enjoy “a beautiful sunset over Sarasota Bay whilst listening to some great tunes, surrounded by great people and great food,” the release notes.

No outside beverages, food or coolers are allowed.

Friday Fest is a free event. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org.



The crowd enjoys the music with a dramatic sunset backdrop during a past Friday Fest. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WBTT ANNOUNCES ITS 2013 SUMMER SEASON

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe (WBTT) will produce two musical revues this summer, one world premiere and one repeat of a previously sold-out run, the Troupe has announced.

Best of Stevie Wonder, a new musical revue adapted and written by Nate Jacobs, will run July 17-28. *Sammy Tonight!* “with the multi-talented De’zhon Fields as Sammy Davis Jr.,” will be back Aug. 21 through Sept. 1, a news release notes.

Part of the 2012 season, *Sammy Tonight!* virtually sold out every performance for its limited run, the release adds.

“This will be another summer when WBTT showcases great music by legendary African-American artists,” Founding Artistic Director Nate Jacobs said in the release. “Who doesn’t love Stevie Wonder? He is truly a performer that is loved and admired by music fans of all ages. Sammy Davis Jr. is another legend who needs very little introduction. His music and personality were bigger than life and De’zhon’s interpretation of him will make you feel like you are in a Vegas club with the master himself.”

The Best of Stevie Wonder features an ensemble of eight singers from the Troupe — four



De’zhon Fields will reprise his role as Sammy Davis Jr. for Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe performances this summer. Contributed photo

women and four men. No one plays Stevie Wonder, the release notes, but the cast will recall parts of his life as it focuses on “a dynamic presentation of his music,” the release adds. Wonder has recorded more than 30 U.S. Top 10 hits and has received 22 Grammy Awards, the most ever awarded to a male solo artist, the release points out.

Sammy Tonight! features all the hits Davis made famous, including *I’ve Gotta Be Me*, *Mr.*

Bojangles and *Candy Man*, the release continues. For the past 10 years, Fields has traveled worldwide, “showcasing his homage to the superstar known as ‘Mr. Entertainment,’” the release adds.

Times for all shows are Tuesday through Saturday at 8 p.m., with Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. Tickets to each show, which are \$29.50, may be reserved online at wbttstrq.org or by calling the box office at 366-1505.

HERMITAGE WRITERS, PERFORMER TO PRESENT *STORIES ON THE BEACH*

The Hermitage Artist Retreat will host a beach reading on Friday, June 7, featuring novelists Josh Barkan and Richard Currey along with Ivan Talijancic, a performance artist who will tell stories of his international work, the Hermitage has announced.

The campus will open at 6:30 p.m. for historic home tours. At 7:30 p.m., *Stories on the Beach* will begin, “followed by Mother Nature’s sunset at 8:24 p.m.,” a news release says.

The Hermitage is located at 6660 Manasota Beach Road, Englewood. The event is free and open to the public. Those planning to attend are encouraged to bring beach chairs and refreshments, the release adds

“We are thrilled at the popularity of our beach programming,” said Bruce E. Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage, in the release.

Barkan, who grew up in a variety of places — from California to Iowa, Tanzania to Paris, Nairobi to New Delhi — developed an interest in politics, history and literature, the focus of his writing, the release notes. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Yale and received his



Richard Currey/Contributed photo

Master of Fine Arts at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. His first published work was the novella, *Before Hiroshima*, which Saul Bellow published in his literary magazine, *News from the Republic of Letters*, the release points out. Barkan's next book, the novel *Blind Speed*, was published by Northwestern University Press/TriQuarterly Books and was named a finalist for the 2009 Paterson Fiction Prize.

"Currey is a writer of exceptional range and versatility, publishing short fiction, poetry, essays and investigative journalism," the release says.


His *Crossing Over: The Vietnam Stories* became a cult hit, and was named a *Best Title of the Year* by the Library Journal, the release adds. "His novel *Fatal Light* established Currey's international reputation, with widespread critical acclaim and 20 different editions published in 11 languages," the release notes. The book was nominated for the PEN/Hemingway Award, and it won the Vietnam Veterans of America's Excellence in the Arts Award as well as a Special Citation from the Ernest Hemingway Foundation.

Talijancic is a director, choreographer, visual and graphic designer, video-/filmmaker and curator, the release notes. He is also



Ivan Talijancic/Contributed photo

co-founder and artistic co-director of Wax-Factory, a New York-based multidisciplinary performance group "dedicated to exploring a multiplicity of theatrical visions," the release adds. Talijancic's work has been seen throughout the world, and he has taught and been artist-in-residence at many universities in the United States and abroad, the release continues.

For more information about the Hermitage Artist Retreat, call 475-2098 or visit the [website](#). 

Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

- Lifesaving cancer screenings
- Parent & teen education
- Annual GYN exams
- Birth control



New Temple Emanu-El Preschool student Simone Velez donned sunglasses and hit the wading pool at Splash Shabbat. Contributed photo

TEMPLE EMANU-EL KIDS RELISH THE WATER DURING SPLASH SHABBAT

A hot summer day was the perfect setting for the final session of Temple Emanu-El's monthly Tot Shabbat program, as young children and their families enjoyed Splash Shabbat on May 25.

From a wading pool stocked with fishing nets, balls and toys to bottles of bubbles to sticks of colorful chalk to a sprinkler set up in the shade of the sandbox, youngsters had everything they needed to beat the heat and enjoy a special Shabbat morning, a Temple news release says.

After playtime and a breakfast of bagels, cream cheese, juice and slices of fresh water-

melon, families dried off for Shabbat prayers, blessings, songs, movement and a story with Rabbi Brenner Glickman, the release notes. An *oneg* — or reception — of popsicles and more free play concluded the fun, and every child received a colorful lei as a souvenir of the Shabbat morning, the release adds.

In partnership with the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, Temple Emanu-El will launch a new season this fall of Tot Shabbat programs for young Jewish and interfaith families. For more information, please email elaine-glickman@comcast.net.



Kim Sheintal kept Molly Gersh dry while Molly's big sister enjoyed water play at Temple Emanu-El's Splash Shabbat. Contributed photo

CHJ TO HOST **FOOD-FUN AND FOND MEMORIES PROGRAM**

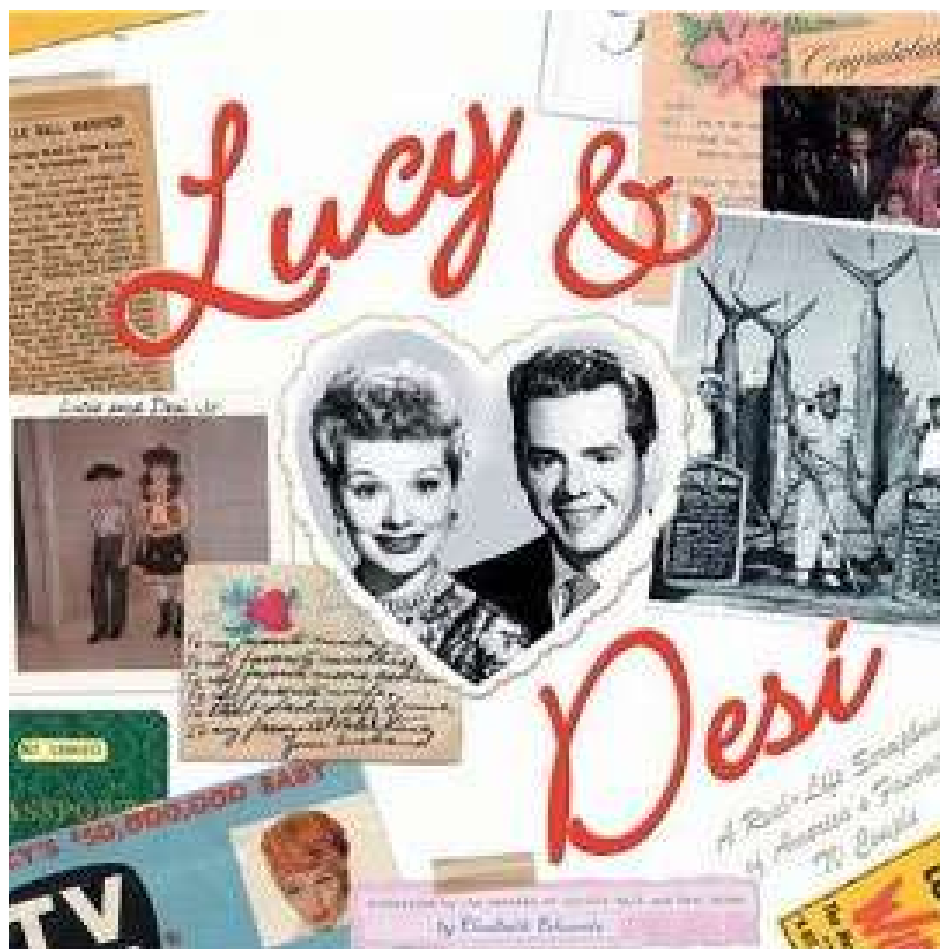
On June 18, the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) will present a program titled, *Food-Fun and Fond Memories*, featuring “the laugh-out-loud classic” Lucille Ball/Desi Arnaz film, *The Long, Long Trailer*, the Congregation has announced.

The movie will begin at 4 p.m. Pizza and soda will be served following the presentation; beer and wine also will be available, a news release says.

Trivia games will add to the fun and memories, the release adds.

The event will take place at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road, Sarasota.

The deadline for reservations is June 11. The cost is \$10 for CHJ members and \$15 for non-members. Make checks payable to



B. Sack (note CHJ in the memo line) and mail to B. Sack, 4903 Waterbridge Down, Sarasota, FL 34235.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL LAUNCHES FILM SERIES WITH HANK GREENBERG

The popular summer film series at Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, will begin on Sunday, June 9, at 2 p.m. with a screening of *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*.

This award-winning documentary, filled with interviews and archival footage of the first

Jewish baseball star, will be shown on the Temple's state-of-the-art film projection system, a news release says.

Admission is \$5, and all community residents will be warmly welcomed, the release adds.

For more information, call 349-4367. 

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

07+
JUNE

Noah Racey's *Pulse*

Through June 16 (times vary), FSU Performing Arts Center, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$20 to \$72. Information: 351-8000 or Asolo.org.

07+
JUNE

Florida Studio Theatre presents *The World Goes 'Round*

Through June 23 (times vary), Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$18 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

07+
JUNE

Dabbert Gallery presents *Summer Showcase*

June 7 through Sept. 30, 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Admission: free. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com.

08
JUNE

Double Author Event for Young Teens

June 8, 11 a.m., Ransom Riggs, author of *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, and Tahereh Mafi, author of *Shatter Me* and her new book, *Unravel Me*, will be at Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St., for a dual signing. Only books purchased from Bookstore1 are eligible for signing. For more info: www.bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900.

08
JUNE

WSLR presents the *Wholetones*, plus Justin Layman

June 8, 8:30 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court. Admission: \$8 in advance or \$10 at door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

14
JUNE

Club Scene for Teens in Grades 6-8

June 14, 7-11 p.m., teens will be able to dance to a DJ, play in the game room or just hang out with their friends at the Lee Wetherington Boys & Girls Club, 3100 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Refreshments will be served. Event presented by Community Youth Development and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County. For more information, call 366-7940.

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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PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader
Issued 04/01/2012 Expires 03/31/2013

SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

EMBRACING MANY FORMS OF ART



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.