

THE SARASOTA

No. 40 — June 21, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

A LAW ENFORCEMENT QUAGMIRE

TENT CITY OPENS

JUSTIFYING NEW POSITIONS

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

I have said it before, but it is a mantra every news editor learns to repeat — and often: “Expect the unexpected.”

Certainly that was the case this week, when Sheriff Tom Knight surprised a lot of people, I daresay, during a presentation to the County Commission. He was there to talk about a workforce study he had commissioned for his department (more on that in an upcoming issue), but he ended up talking bluntly about how his deputies have been providing a lot more assistance to the Sarasota Police Department in recent months.

This is a story with impact on both city and non-city residents, especially given the new leadership in the SPD and the much-publicized fact that it costs the City of Sarasota an incredible amount of money to keep operating its own police force.

Not only do we provide an in-depth accounting of the sheriff’s discussion with the County Commission, but our Editorial Board also felt it was a critical matter to address. You will see we urge the city to meet this challenge head on.

Another unexpected story had bearing once again on a Siesta Key conservation easement area that has proven popular with the snowy plovers that nest in Sarasota County each season. People driving down Beach Road cannot help but notice the construction of a three-story condominium complex that is at the center of this latest story.

As for the “expected,” on the county side, the commissioners continued this week to grapple with North Port’s elected board over the future of Warm Mineral Springs. On the city side, City Editor Stan Zimmerman provides his own inimitable takes on a proposed tent city for the homeless, a return visit to Sarasota by urban planner Andres Duany and an “air rights” controversy with the county over a downtown parcel.

In our *Sarasota Leisure* section, contributing writer Fran Palmeri offers some interesting facts – and breathtaking photography – of orchids in the wild. Current and prospective home gardeners also will not want to miss Rick Wielgorecki’s latest advice on how to create beautiful landscaping.

And there are plenty of other Siesta Key happenings in this week’s *Siesta Seen*.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



TENT CITY OPENS

FROM WHOLE FOODS
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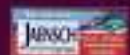
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A LAW ENFORCEMENT QUAGMIRE

The Sarasota County Commission meets earlier this year in Sarasota. File photo

THE SARASOTA COUNTY SHERIFF SAYS DEPUTIES ARE BEING CALLED MORE AND MORE FREQUENTLY TO HANDLE SITUATIONS IN THE CITY OF SARASOTA, INCLUDING NOISE-MONITORING COMPLAINTS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

If the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office continues to respond to more and more requests to assist with situations in the city of Sarasota — especially in the northern part of the city — the Sheriff's Office might as well take over responsibility for that area, Sheriff Tom Knight told the Sarasota County Commission during its regular meeting on June 18.

"I can assure you we have rescued the City of Sarasota more in the past two months

than we have in the previous four-plus years I have been sheriff," he told the commission. "I can assure you we will be rescuing them again in the future."

"That's going to have to be addressed as soon as possible," said Commissioner Joe Barbetta.

“*The bad guys are running back and forth across jurisdictional lines.*”

Col. Stephen Moyer
Deputy Chief
Sarasota Police Department

In an interview after his presentation to the county board, Knight stressed to *The Sarasota News Leader* that his two primary concerns are the safe-

ty and security of the city's residents and the safety of law enforcement personnel.

When the city police call for deputies to help in emergencies, Knight pointed out, it is more likely that "people [will] get hurt."

Commissioner Christine Robinson told Knight, "The City of Sarasota is supposed to be the lead agency within the city limits, so this concerns me ... It sounds like you're taking some lead responsibilities in the City of Sarasota ... That can create some administrative cha-



Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino accepts congratulations from City Manager Tom Barwin after taking her oath of office in January. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota

os, actually, if they're not being responsive to what's going on ... There will be a hole, eventually, that happens, and you're trying to do the patchwork."

"When bad things happen ... they call the sheriff," Knight replied. "Is it becoming more frequent? Yes. Is it becoming a major concern of mine? Is it affecting my overtime? Yes. Yes. Does it create a continuity of command and control? Yes."

"I pay as much in taxes to the city as I pay to the county, and probably half of that goes to the police, and they actually have a higher manpower per citizen than you enjoy," Commissioner Nora Patterson told Knight. "Nevertheless," she continued, "[the city also has] a higher crime rate ..."

When Barbetta asked if Knight and his staff are logging their expenses in the city cases, Knight responded, "It's really hard to track. ... Last weekend, we had a lot of extra duties, deputies" in Newtown, Knight added, noting later that he had 20 deputies involved in one recent case in that community.

Knight told the *News Leader* his deputies also are getting called in to help with noise code enforcement on Main Street in Sarasota.

"Is the city administration being made aware of it?" Barbetta asked.

"Our watch commanders talk to [city] watch commanders all the time," Knight said.

The sheriff was scheduled to appear before the County Commission on June 18 to present the findings of a workforce study he had commissioned for his office. The discussion about his personnel assisting the Police Department arose during that session.



Sheriff Tom Knight. Contributed photo

Knight said he had seen other law enforcement agencies — including local ones — fail to plan properly for future staffing needs, and they are "really struggling financially" to keep enough personnel.

He did not want to have to come back in five or seven years asking for an extra \$12 million, for example, he told the *News Leader*, because he had not adequately gauged his needs as a result of having to continue to handle calls in the city.

Knight said he felt one reason his officers are being asked to assist more regularly in the city is because of the reduction of force in the Police Department.

Knight pointed out to the *News Leader* that when he took office in January 2009, the city had 203 police officers. Last week, *News Leader* City Editor Stan Zimmerman reported the total number of police officers is 175.

Knight added that he understood the City Commission also is considering whether budget constraints will force it to eliminate additional positions in the next fiscal year. "If they cut more, [my deputies] will be in there more," he said.

The *News Leader* reported on March 1 that retiring city Finance Director Chris Lyons told the City Commission in late February that seven police officers were being cut from the 2014 fiscal year budget to try to balance it.

CITY POLICE RESPONSE

The *News Leader* was unsuccessful in reaching Police Chief Bernadette DiPino this week for a response to Knight's comments; her assistant said she was away at a conference. However, her deputy chief, Col. Stephen Moyer, told the *News Leader*, "We have all decided we need to work collectively together," referring to the Police Department and Sheriff's Office.

Moyer added, "We meet on a regular basis with all the local sheriffs and police chiefs" in the area.



Commissioner Joe Barbetta. File photo

Knight told the *News Leader* he had met with DiPino three times since she began work on Dec. 31, 2012. On one of those occasions, May 6, Knight invited DiPino and Moyer for lunch with him and his staff.

"The bad guys are running back and forth across jurisdictional lines," Moyer told the *News Leader*, which necessitates a coordinated approach.

"And we'll back them up as often as we can as well," he added of the Sheriff's Office.

"We're not in Maryland," Knight told the *News Leader* in response to Moyer's comments. Both DiPino and Moyer had long

“When bad things happen ... they call the sheriff. ... Is it becoming more frequent? Yes. Is it becoming a major concern of mine? Is it affecting my overtime? Yes. Yes. Does it create a continuity of command and control? Yes.”

Tom Knight
Sheriff
Sarasota County

careers in Maryland law enforcement before coming to Sarasota.

While the Police Department and Sheriff's Office do work together, Knight said, "that doesn't mean that one agency is the primary responder" with the other agency to be considered backup.

The number of assists his office has been providing the Police Department over the past couple of months has been "inordinate," he emphasized. It has been an unusual situation not just for him since he became sheriff but for his staff members, some of whom have been with the office for 31 years, Knight pointed out.

"If the city doesn't think they're going to have the resources for the future, they need to let me know now," he added.

In an interview with the *News Leader*, Mayor Shannon Snyder — who had a 25-year career with the Sheriff's Office before retiring — said if he had sufficient votes, he would eliminate the Police Department and turn over all city of Sarasota law enforcement responsibilities to the Sheriff's Office. "In my personal opinion, the sheriff would do a better job," he added.

Because of Knight's intelligence-led policing approach, Snyder pointed out, Knight has reduced crime significantly in the county. A report released earlier this year showed that since Knight took office, Sarasota County has had the largest reduction in crime for all counties in Florida with a population of 100,000 or more.




Intelligence2Action
Sarasota County Sheriff's Office

When he took office in 2009, Sheriff Tom Knight implemented a program designed to prevent crime. Image courtesy Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's Office's annual report for 2012 showed crime dropped more than 16 percent that year compared to 2011.

Yet, according to the last data he had seen — from 2010 — Snyder said Knight has 1.3 officers per 1,000 people compared to the city figure of 3.3 officers, or, as Snyder put it: "one-third of the personnel; half the crime [of the city]."

However, Snyder said, "We don't have the management team [in the city] to correct this [situation]."

Snyder added that he was referring to "the city manager on down ... [but] I'm the only one screaming this." 

The Sarasota News Leader

No-Nonsense Reporting



TENT CITY OPENS

Homeless people gather at Selby Library in April. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ONE WOMAN CREATES A SANCTUARY FOR THE HOMELESS IN SARASOTA WHILE CITY OFFICIALS AND NONPROFIT GROUPS PONDER OTHER WAYS TO HELP THOSE WITH NO PLACE TO CALL THEIR OWN

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

It seemed as though everywhere you turned this week, people were talking about homelessness. At the City Commission meeting on June 17, at the County Commission dais, at a focus group session in City Hall and at the meeting of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County, people talked about partnerships, counseling, caseworkers, emergency shelter and transitional housing.

But one person — for better or for worse — was actually doing

something. Vallerie Guillory parked her motorhome on a 3.6-acre parcel Tuesday, June 18, and called it the headquarters for the Sanctuary of Sarasota.

Guillory has a lease for \$1 per month on the property at the northwestern corner of the intersection of Washington Boulevard and the Seminole Gulf Railway tracks at 10th Street. The land is immediately north of Gillespie Park and east of the city's sewer plant. She

“We'll be snowed in before the county opens a homeless shelter.”

Shannon Snyder
Mayor
City of Sarasota



is inviting the homeless to bring their tents and claim their spots, and she is setting up a pair of Porta-Potties. The best spots, with shade, are already taken.

Her action in defiance of the city is certain to raise the stakes in the ongoing debate about homelessness in Sarasota. But Guillory is far from defenseless.

CITY AMBIVALENCE

The city Commission on Monday, June 17, made it clear: There is no interest in establishing another facility for the homeless within the city limits. “Who could have imagined during the [recent City Commission] campaign this would emerge as the top issue?” said Commissioner Susan Chapman. “But the

public agrees: We don’t want another facility in the city. A regional solution is required.”

However, Mayor Shannon Snyder suggested nobody hold his breath while waiting for the county to act. “We’ll be snowed in before the county opens a homeless shelter,” he said.

The property leased by Guillory is zoned Commercial, and city staffers say it will require at least a special exception to the zoning rules for her to set up a campground of any sort. “This administration will not talk about another homeless cluster [housing] facility in the City of Sarasota,” said City Manager Tom Barwin on Monday.

Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown reported previously that the tent city did not meet City of Sarasota standards.



A new tent city for the homeless has been created on property at 1003 N. Washington Blvd. in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Steve McAlister, a backer of the sanctuary concept, said, "We are working on the zoning. Marlon Brown made it quite clear: The city is not behind us on this. Personally, I see it as an opportunity. And we're looking to create something like this in the county in the future."

"There are families out there; there are children out there," Tina Steele pointed out. She is a member of the Homeless Strike Team of the Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD).

NEW GROUP FORMED

While the city commissioners were grumbling about lack of county help, the Community Alliance of Sarasota County was appointing a committee to work on the homeless issue;



City Commissioner Susan Chapman. Photo by Norman Schimmel



(From left) Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, Mayor Shannon Snyder and Commissioner Susan Chapman sit in session in May, after Chapman and Suzanne Atwell were sworn in for four-year terms. Photo by Norman Schimmel

it will be chaired by former Sarasota Police Capt. Paul Sutton.

“The Alliance wouldn’t exist without county funding,” said the Rev. Tom Pfaff with the Sarasota Ministerial Association.

Barwin noted the group has invited to town a well-known expert in helping the homeless transition back into civil society.

“Dr. Robert Marbut is coming here on July 18,” Barwin said. “He’ll meet with the Community Alliance and then speak at a public forum at New College. The foundations will be listening carefully to see how he is received by the community.”

Marbut helped establish a couple of facilities for the homeless in Pinellas County. One, for homeless people with criminal backgrounds, is an adjunct to the county jail; the other and larger facility requires screening and accepts families.

Pfaff said Sutton would be looking for stakeholders. The group will report back monthly. “We now have tremendous momentum,” said Pfaff.

‘MILLION-DOLLAR MURRAY’

Since 2009, Liz Nolan has chaired a homeless focus group, starting at the Selby Library in downtown Sarasota and relocating to City Hall in 2011. This week, she cited an *Atlantic Monthly* article about the cost of one homeless individual in Nevada, a man dubbed “Million-Dollar Murray” because that is what it cost the state to take care of him.

“When you run the numbers and throw money at the issue, it’s a never-ending cycle of street-hospital-jail,” she said. “That’s what my research tells me,” she told the group on Tuesday afternoon, June 18.

Barwin is engaged in finding out what those numbers are in Sarasota. “I had a retired auditor from the Department of Interior visit my office, and she offered with two friends to determine the true cost of homelessness in Sarasota,” he said. “With 100 homeless in the jail on any day, and 1,200 visits to the emergency room at Sarasota Memorial every year, that’s \$5 million,” he added. “I wouldn’t be surprised to see it grow to \$7, \$8, \$9 million.”

‘LAWYERING UP’

While Sutton gears up his new committee, Chapman said Guillory “faces overwhelming opposition to what she is proposing. But that does not deter her; she is a woman on a mission. She is lawyering up ... but, unfortunately, that isn’t problem-solving.”

Guillory foresees the Sanctuary of Sarasota as a place for tents and trailers, storage and education, for the homeless. Residents of Gillespie Park, meanwhile, are fuming.

Guillory shrewdly retained Andrea Mogensen of Sarasota as her attorney. She is claiming Guillory’s “Trinity without Borders” is a faith-based organization and therefore does not need city permission to practice its religion.

Mogensen has regularly bested the city in legal challenges over Sunshine Law and public records violations. 

JUSTIFYING NEW POSITIONS

Item #	Department	Fund	Issue Title	FTE's	2014	2015	Notes
37	Gen Svcs	001	1 FTE - Facilities Services - Inventory Technician	1.00	\$ -	\$ -	Funding available within operating budget. Change from temporary staff
38	Gen Svcs	001	1 FTE - General Services - Administrative Specialist	1.00	\$ -	\$ -	Funding available within operating budget. Change from temporary staff
39	Gen Svcs	001	2 FTEs - General Services Horticulture - Labor	2.00	\$ -	\$ -	Funding available within operating budget. Change from temporary staff
40	OFM	001	1 FTE - Procurement Analyst (from OPS)	1.00	\$ -	\$ -	Funding available within operating budget. Change from temporary staff
41	Communications	001	1 FTE - Communications - Graphics Designer	1.00	\$ -	\$ -	Funding available within operating budget. Change from temporary staff
42	Communications	001	1 FTE - Communications - Administrative Assistant #2	1.00	\$ -	\$ -	Funding available within operating budget. Change from temporary staff
43	Ethics and Compliance	001	1 FTE - County Adm - Compliance Specialist		\$ 78,941	\$ 76,541	
44	Sustain.	001	1 FTE - County Adm - Sustainability Outreach Spec	1.00	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	Partial funding available from operating budget.
45	Court	001	1 FTE - Court Admin - Admin. Specialist	1.00	\$ 37,620	\$ 37,620	
46	Econ. Dev.	001	1 FTE - ED - N County Small Business Coord	1.00	\$ 70,533	\$ 68,133	
47	Gen. Svcs.	001	1 FTE - Compliance Maint Specialist - Libraries	1.00	\$ 93,843	\$ 65,344	Support facilities maintenance and operations at all 9 library branches
48	Codes	001	1 FTE - PDS - Code Enforcement	1.00	\$ 79,889	\$ 59,378	Assist with increased workload Needed to offset workload of staff for RESTORE, PDRP and Siesta Key renourishment.
49	Nat Resources	001	1 FTE - NR - Coastal Project Manager	1.00	\$ 71,983	\$ 71,983	
50	Fire	001	1 FTE- Public Safety Communications- PSC/911 Manager		\$ 85,556	\$ -	Succession planning; no FTE requested
Total Budget Issues for Position Requests (GF) - Recommended				13.00	\$ 452,809	\$ 398,999	

A chart shows 13 positions that were requested by Sarasota County departments for the 2014 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS QUESTION REQUESTS FOR NEW STAFF POSITIONS IN THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR, CITING THE CONTINUED USE OF RESERVE FUNDS TO BALANCE THE BUDGET

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

How many more employees does Sarasota County Government need for the next fiscal year?

That is a question the County Commission will have to answer before it completes its 2014 fiscal year budget, which will go into effect Oct. 1.

In advance of their June 12 budget work-

shop, County Administrator Randall Reid provided the commissioners a list of 13 new positions requested by county department chiefs that would necessitate spending \$452,809 in the 2014 fiscal year. He recommended those positions be filled.

“We have to decide to live with [the hiring] or not.

Charles Hines
Vice Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

“I’d like you to look at these and see what you can live without and still run a quality county,” Commissioner Nora Patterson told

him after the board had spent some time reviewing them.

“I’m having a hard time with these,” Commissioner Christine Robinson added. “We’re already going to use ... reserves” to balance the FY 2014 budget, she pointed out, and the commissioners earlier that day had heard a presentation from Reid about providing a 3 percent merit raise for non-union county employees. “I’ve got to get the justification for each and every one of these things,” Robinson said of the position requests.

According to graphs provided by Steve Botelho, the county’s chief financial planning officer, the preliminary FY 2014 budget includes \$45.7 million in reserve funds. The FY 2013 budget included \$33 million from reserves.

However, Botelho pointed out, the county had \$34.5 million from reserves allocated for the FY 2012 budget, and it ended up using only \$9.2 million. He estimated the same figure would be the minimum used again during the current fiscal year.

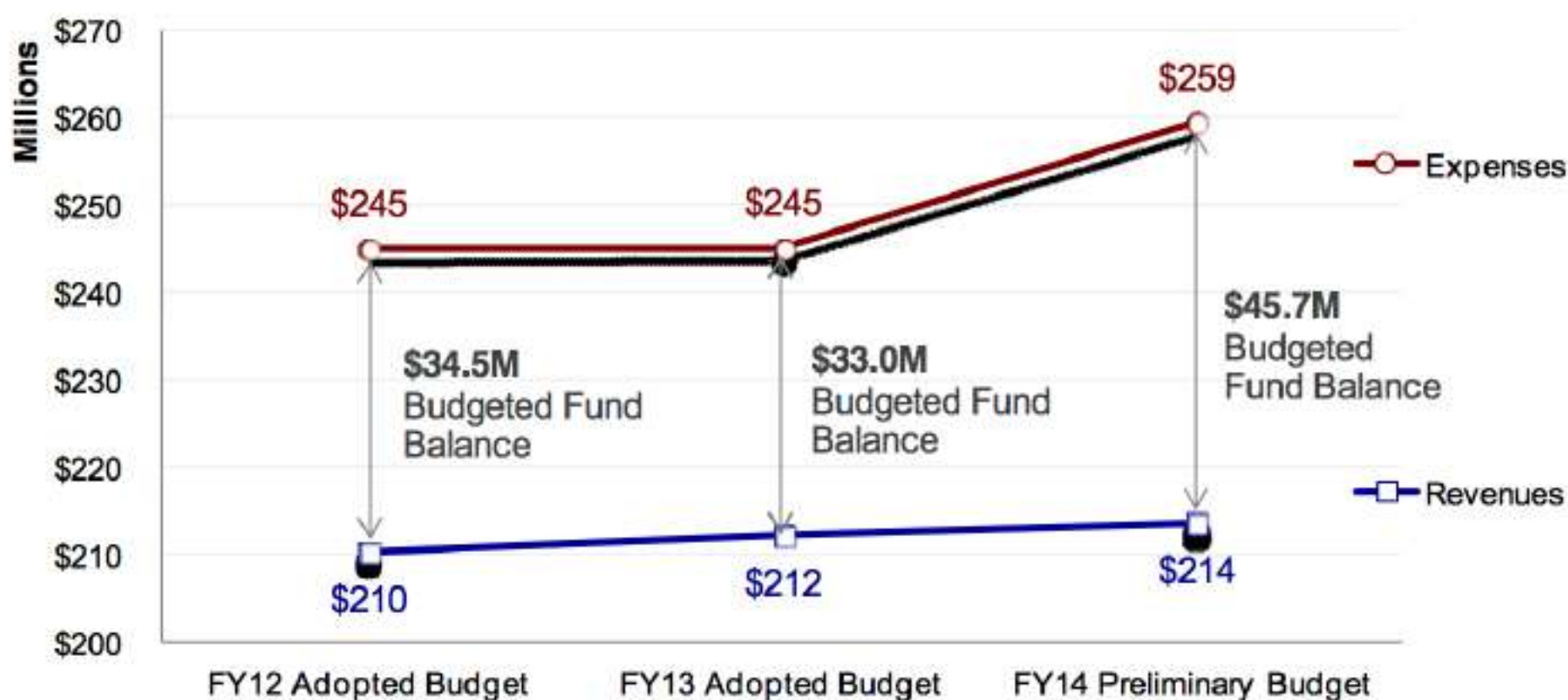
By June 13, Reid and his staff had talked with the department heads and pulled together a revised list of nine requested positions, which he sent to the commissioners. “It is not our goal to add positions needlessly,” he wrote.

The total impact on the FY 2014 budget by adding all nine positions would be \$645,061, according to a *Sarasota News Leader* tally.

The commissioners will meet again on Friday, June 21, to hear budget requests from the



General Fund Budget Comparison



A graph compares Sarasota County budgets over the past three fiscal years, with revenue and expense amounts shown as well as the figure for reserves plugged into those budgets. The FY 2014 budget has not been approved yet. Image courtesy Sarasota County

county's charter officers — including Sheriff Tom Knight and Karen Rushing, clerk of the 12th Judicial Circuit Court. The positions reviewed on June 12 also are expected to be on the agenda.

THE OVERVIEW

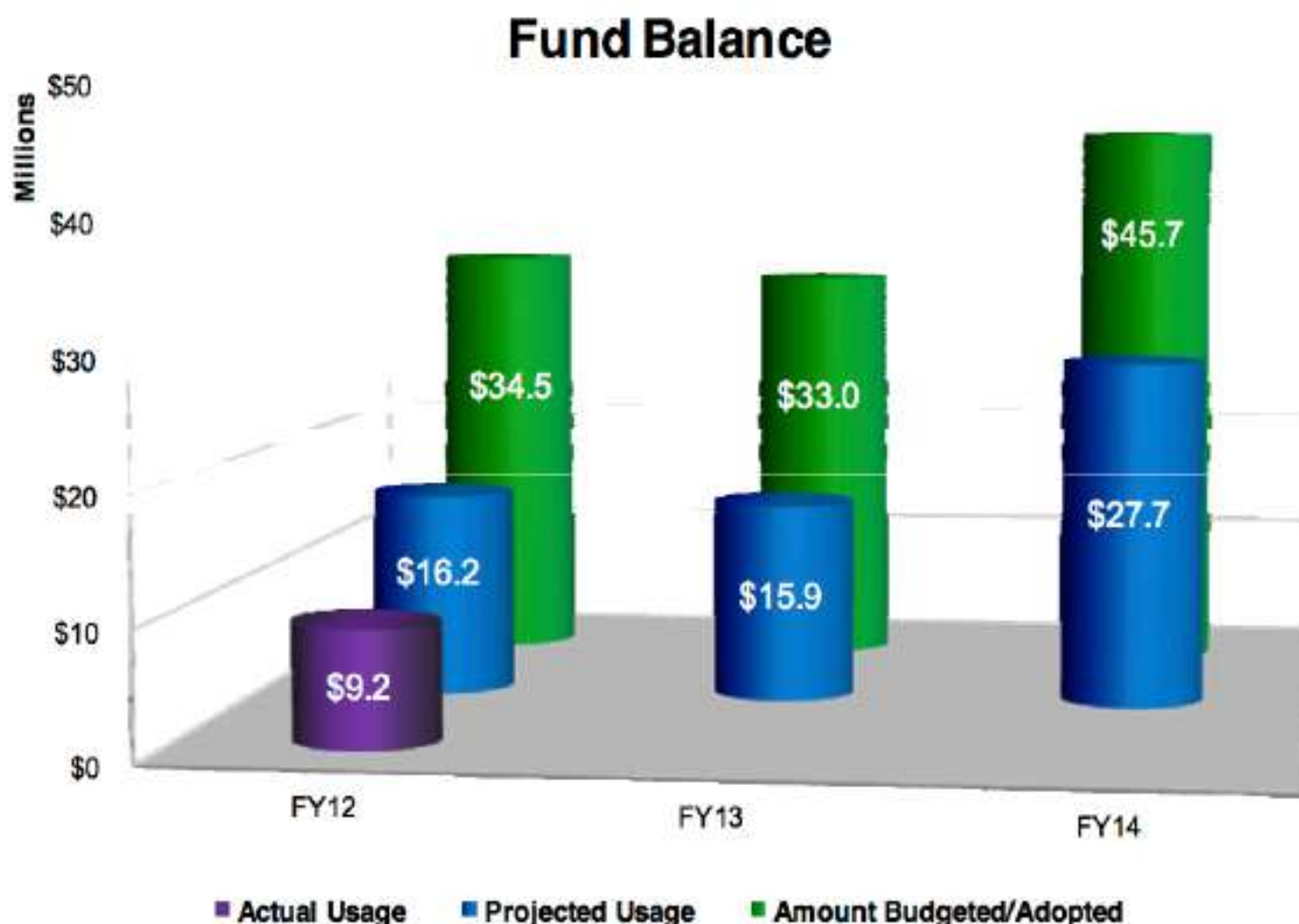
The first request for a new employee to raise questions during the June 12 budget workshop

was for an Ethics and Compliance Office position at a cost of \$78,941 in the FY 2014 budget.

“This is in addition to [Steve] Uebelacker?” Commissioner Joe Barbetta asked, referring to the ethics and compliance officer hired in the aftermath of the Procurement Department scandal in 2011.

When Suzanne Gable, strategic and financial planning director in the county's Office of Fi-

General Fund Fund Balance Budget vs. Usage



- FY13 and FY14 projections are based on a 10 year average of 3% over-collection of revenues and 6% under-spending of expenditures
- FY12 resulted in higher than average over-collection and under-spending

A graphic shows actual and projected figures for use of county reserves to balance the budget. Image courtesy Sarasota County

nancial Planning, said, “Yes,” Barbetta asked for more details.

County Administrator Randall Reid said the new employee would follow up on internal audits and make sure staff complied with any guidelines recommended for implementation as a result of the audits.

When Barbetta then asked whether somebody in the Office of Financial Planning should be handling that responsibility, Reid replied that Botelho normally would follow up on compliance, but multiple checks are needed to make certain nothing is overlooked.

With benefits, the cost of the Ethics and Compliance Office already is about \$200,000, Barbetta pointed out. When the Sarasota County Clerk of Court’s Office conducts an audit, he continued, it should be up to the manager or director of the department audited and the Office of Financial Planning to collaborate on compliance.

“I’m worried about creating a bureaucracy here,” Barbetta added.

“I’m not happy with that [position request], either,” Patterson said, noting that Rushing already had said she planned on hiring an inspector general for her office. “This sounds pretty duplicative to me,” Patterson pointed out of the Ethic and Compliance Office position. “I think we’re just building staff. ... It’s a real problem if you have an audit and two years later it hasn’t been followed up on.”

The county should not have to employ two full-time people to make sure of compliance with issues noted in audits, Patterson continued.

Staff would work with Rushing to determine how the proposed new Ethics and Compliance



County Administrator Randall Reid. File photo

Office employee would collaborate with her new inspector general, Reid said.

When Robinson clarified whether staff was not just following up on recent audits but having to go back and determine compliance with past audits, Reid said some issues with audits going back to 2008 and 2009 needed to be addressed.

When Robinson then asked whether a temporary hire could handle the additional work in the Ethics and Compliance Office, Reid said that was possible, but he felt, for the sake of continuity, that the position should be advertised as one lasting at least a year. He pointed out that when temporary employees learn of permanent positions, they are inclined to seek those. Turnover in that new Ethics and Compliance Office position might create even more delays in resolving the problems that had prompted the request for the new employee in the first place, he added.

After the board members discussed the next position on the list — a proposed sustainability outreach specialist — Patterson said it was too early to add new staff — that the county needed to remain conservative in spending.

Reid pointed out that with the extra revenue generated by the 3.37 percent preliminary increase in property values, the commissioners could consider his proposal for a salary boost for non-union employees, approving the requested new positions or pursuing renewal of ongoing contracts that would require extra funding.

The Office of Financial Planning has estimated the additional revenue for the county's general fund at \$3.5 million.

Referring to the list of proposed employees, Reid noted, "These positions are basically the top positions [sought by] the departments ..."

Barbetta pointed out that the county has about 100 fewer employees than it had before the recession began. "We were way over-staffed [then]," he added. "I want justification for the new hires."

Reid responded that 171 positions were eliminated as a result of the recession. "We're not


going to get back to that [prior staffing level]," he stressed.

The commission already agreed earlier this year to add the equivalent of 67.88 positions at a cost of \$2,971,567 in the FY 2014 budget, Reid noted. Twenty-four of those were for in-house employees to help with the county's roadside mowing; another 18.88 were hired to handle athletic field maintenance, which also had been overdue in a number of cases; and nine were added as operators for the Sarasota County Area Transit bus system.

All those positions, he pointed out, "touched on areas that were crumbling when I got here." Reid began work in January 2012.

Referring to the 13 proposed new employees, Robinson said she wanted details on them as soon as possible.

Vice Chairman Charles Hines also requested that staff give the board members information about services that would not be provided if the board decided against funding the positions.

The commissioners then would have the necessary information to explain their decision to the public, he said. "We have to decide to live with [the hiring] or not." 



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STILL TRYING

Visitors enjoy the 87-degree waters of Warm Mineral Springs. Photo from Wikimedia Commons

THE COUNTY COMMISSION PROPOSES CHANGES IN THE NORTH PORT CITY COMMISSION'S REVISION OF AN AGREEMENT REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS, WITH A SHORT-TERM CLOSURE OF THE RESORT PENDING

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Over two days, as the Sarasota County commissioners crafted another version of an interlocal agreement over the future of Warm Mineral Springs, the majority agreed certain points had to be made clear to the North Port City Commission: State law will not allow the county to engage in any lease to keep the facility open without going through a competitive bid process; the two local government bodies are equal partners in the resort;

and the two boards did agree in July 2012 to work together on how best to manage the springs in the future.

Referring to the North Port city commissioners, Commissioner Joe Barbetta said, "If they can't handle the truth, then we have a problem. ... This isn't a psychology game. These are legal documents and it's about doing what's right for the taxpayers."

“If anybody's been waving a red flag, [the North Port commissioners] have.”

Carolyn Mason
Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission



Nonetheless, Barbetta argued that trying to re-work the interlocal agreement was a waste of the County Commission's time. Since shortly after two new North Port city commissioners — Cheryl Cook and Rhonda DiFranco — were elected in November 2012, the city and county have been at an impasse over the future of the springs. Cook and DiFranco have been joined by North Port Mayor Linda Yates in a wariness about development of the property, while the county commissioners have pointed to the agreement they reached with the North Port City Commission in July 2012 on an Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) to consider future development options.

County Commissioner Christine Robinson pointed out to her colleagues during their regular meeting on June 18 why she felt they



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



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

should press forward with the latest effort to reach an agreement with the city commissioners: “For the very, very, very first time in six months — well, seven months — we finally received something from them,” referring to the revised interlocal agreement sent to the county with a June 14 letter from North Port City Manager Jonathan Lewis. “So I don’t want to quit on this,” Robinson added.

Barbetta cast the single “No” vote on June 19 that directed County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh to complete the revised document and send it to the City of North Port as soon as possible. However, he was adamant about putting back in clauses regarding the two boards’ decision in July 2012 to seek an ITN as well as the fact that the county had initiated the conflict resolution process provided by the state as a means of avoiding a lawsuit.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason agreed with Barbetta on both points. “They are statements of fact,” she said.

“I don’t know why you run from the truth,” Barbetta added.

A third provision for which Barbetta won the majority of board approval says in part,

“The Parties affirm that they are fully equal partners in the ownership and operation of Warm Mineral Springs and agree that any use or operation of the property shall be made only with the mutual approval of both parties.”

With the management lease for Warm Mineral Springs set to terminate on June 30, the commissioners asked DeMarsh to make certain



*County Commissioner Christine Robinson.
File photo*

the revised interlocal agreement was in the hands of the North Port board members before the latter hold their next regular meeting, on June 24.

When *The Sarasota News Leader* contacted the City of North Port on June 19, Marilyn D. Garlick, senior executive assistant in City Manager Lewis’ office, said that while the regular meeting will begin at 6 p.m. June 24, the agenda already had been distributed.

Nonetheless, DeMarsh told the County Commission he would comply with its request.

Commissioner Nora Patterson also won agreement from her fellow commissioners at the end of nearly 45 minutes of discussion on June 19 to send the revised agreement with “a nicely worded letter from our chair.”

“I don’t know why you run from the truth.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

RESORT EXPENSES

Before the commissioners began their in-depth discussion of the draft interlocal agreement Lewis had sent them, County Administrator Randall Reid asked Carolyn Brown, director of the county's Parks and Recreation Department, to provide an overview of what it would take to keep Warm Mineral Springs open on a short-term basis.

Brown told the commissioners she and her staff had been collaborating over the past few days with City of North Port staff, "although our plans differ."

To keep just the swimming area open — with lifeguard and janitorial services provided — would necessitate 16 employees working seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Brown said. That expense would be about \$17,000 per week, she noted.

Moreover, she recommended an inspection of the buildings on the property. "It's our understanding that there are some significant items that would have to be addressed" from a safety standpoint, Brown told the board.

PARSING THE POINTS

During the county commissioners June 19 discussion of provisions they wanted to put back into the interlocal agreement, Vice Chairman Charles Hines pointed to the "equal partners" wording. "It's a statement of fact. ... We're tenants in common with this. ... We should be working together, moving this forward."

Barbetta agreed: "It should be in there."

However, Robinson and DeMarsh explained it was their understanding that the North Port commissioners felt they were waiving rights by including that section in the document.



County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh. Photo by Norman Schimmel

When Hines asked whether the North Port city attorney was providing the board that advice, Robinson replied, "I didn't say that."

DeMarsh also demurred on identifying the source of the information. However, he said, it was his understanding that the North Port commissioners felt "they give up some rights as tenants in common" if that section is included. "It's not a belief I share in," DeMarsh told the county commissioners.

If the North Port commissioners felt that language should not be included, Hines said, "then they're telling us they're willing to proceed individually without us" in managing the future of the resort.

Hines added that he did not believe the public ever had indicated it wanted the city to act on its own. Such a scenario "turns into a major disaster," he said.

“I agree,” Mason added of the language. “It should be left in.”

While he did not want to influence them, DeMarsh told the county commissioners, “My guess is that it’s really important to [the North Port board].”

“I think it’s a deal-breaker, honestly,” Robinson added.

“Why?” Hines asked. “We are partners in this deal. Either we work it out together or we split up. It’s as simple as that.”

DeMarsh responded that his understanding was the North Port commissioners felt the equal partners clause had not been voted on during a joint meeting of the boards, so it did not belong in the interlocal agreement. His legal advice, DeMarsh continued, is that “we believe they have much more limited rights as tenants in common than they may think.”

Earlier this month, the County Commission rebuked the North Port Commission over a vote the latter took on May 28 to unilaterally try to negotiate a short-term agreement to keep Warm Mineral Springs open. The County Commission again pointed out that state law

necessitates a competitive bidding process because the county is co-tenant of the property.

Mason, Hines and Barbetta agreed they wanted the equal partners language to be in the latest revision.

At one point during the June 19 discussion, Patterson pointed out, “The truth is that elected bodies do change in composition. ... It’s unfortunate what we’ve gotten into on this. But [the North Port commissioners] do have the right to change that position. ... While I disagree with the approach that they’ve taken ... I also believe that ... the three who have essentially put us into a problematic disagreement are doing the best from their perspective of what’s right for the city.”

Patterson added, “I think that we should do as little as possible to back them into a position of really being upset with us. ... I feel like we ought to try not to wave a red flag in front of them.”

“If anybody’s been waving a red flag, they have,” Mason told Patterson.

“I feel like we’re waving a white flag right now,” Barbetta said. 

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NOT AGAIN!

Tall grass in medians and on county rights of way last summer sparked a number of residents' complaints. File photo

THE COUNTY COMMISSION LEARNS THAT YET ANOTHER FIRM HIRED FOR MOWING HAS BEEN UNABLE TO PERFORM THE WORK AND PONDERES THE REASONS ONE ZONE SEEMS TO BE THE FOCUS OF PROBLEMS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

One might say Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta was channeling Yogi Berra late on the afternoon of June 18 with an implied burst of “It’s like *déjà vu* all over again.”

When Spencer Anderson, director of field services, stood before the County Commission to present the last agenda item for the regular meeting on Tuesday, he delivered news that the firm hired in late April to

handle right of way mowing and median maintenance in the county’s North Urban Zone had been unable to perform according to the county’s specifications.

“*I know we have to look for the lowest price, but it hasn’t worked out too well in this zone. Each time we find it, we find somebody who can’t perform.*”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

In other words, Anderson was telling the commissioners they were going to have to hire another firm to take over the work.

“How can this many people fail that quickly?” Barbetta asked.

“I’m really concerned that we can’t get our hands around this mowing.”

Barbetta was among the commissioners who had voiced great misgivings about a mowing contract awarded in early 2012 that ultimately led to the county’s falling far behind in mowing last summer, prompting a multitude of complaints about overgrown medians and rights of way. The situation grew so bad that the commissioners finally agreed in February to hire 24 new employees to ensure the county could keep up with the mowing and especially to make certain the view along the major

roads leading into the county are maintained in tip-top form.

By the end of the June 18 discussion, the commissioners had unanimously agreed to award the contract for the North Urban Zone mowing to JLC Hauling Inc. of Myakka City, but they declined a staff recommendation that a lower bid for the work be sought before the contract expires in 10 months.

JLC Hauling’s bid was about \$200,000 higher than the bid of Mainscape Inc. of Sarasota, which had won the bid in April.



Right of Way Mowing and Median Maintenance

Term Maintenance Contracts awarded on April 23, 2013

- **Zone 1 North Urban:** Mainscape, Inc. (Sarasota, FL)
– \$684,655.13 Annual Limit
- **Zone 2 North Residential:** Jackson Landscape Professionals, Inc. (Bradenton, FL)
– \$241,544.16 Annual Limit
- **Zone 3 North Rural:** Storm Tech, Inc. (Myakka City, FL)
– \$205,920.00 Annual Limit
- **Zone 4 South Urban:** Jackson Landscape Professionals, Inc. (Bradenton, FL)
– \$774,635.90 Annual Limit
- **Zone 5 South Residential:** Jackson Landscape Professionals, Inc. (Bradenton, FL)
– \$179,060.64 Annual Limit
- **Zone 6 South Rural:** Reynolds Mowing Services, Inc. (Venice, FL)
– \$139,004.78 Annual Limit
- **Zone 7 Celery Fields:** Reynolds Mowing Services, Inc. (Venice, FL)
– \$83,364.60 Annual Limit

Annual costs for maintenance of County rights of way in the amount of \$2,426,562.14 (includes cost for Palmer Ranch agreement).

A chart shows the contracts awarded in April for county right of way mowing and median maintenance. Image courtesy Sarasota County



A portion of Beneva Road has been mowed recently. Image courtesy Sarasota County

WHY ALL THE PROBLEMS?

Anderson noted that Mainscape was the third vendor to prove unsuccessful in the North Urban Zone over the past year. That zone encompasses the areas north of Bee Ridge Road and west of Interstate 75.

“Which makes me think it might be our specs,” Barbetta told him.

Vice Chairman Charles Hines asked whether any unique feature of that zone exists “that makes it more difficult than the other ones to maintain.”

“It’s the only zone where we’ve had a recurring vendor that’s been new to roadside mowing,” Anderson replied. The three most recent firms the county had hired were “all unprepared for right of way mowing,” Anderson added. Their experience was in handling contracts for landscape maintenance in developments, he noted.

These are not small companies, Anderson pointed out. “But they just have not been prepared to do that [right of way] work.” The problems did not seem to be rooted in personnel or equipment issues, he said.

With Mainscape, Anderson pointed out, “It’s been a collective thing from the first day they started work.” Before recommending the firm win the contract, he added, staff visited the company shop and inspected the equipment, which was brand new. “We met all their staff and we did as much as was reasonable to assure that they had the staff and the equipment to get the job done,” Anderson said.

Commissioner Nora Patterson commended Anderson for “keeping a short leash [on the



firms hired for mowing] and a close eye [on the situation]. ... I think you’re doing exactly the right thing.”

His short-term recommendation to resolve the problem, Anderson told the commissioners, was to hire the firm that had offered the second-highest bid for the North Urban Zone in the latest procurement process. JLC Hauling, dba MegaMowers, had bid \$834,682.38. Jackson Landscape Professionals Inc. bid \$607,491.90, according to the documentation provided to the board, but it had bid on other zones as well, Anderson noted.

Because Jackson had won contracts for three of those other zones, he said, the firm did not feel it could pick up another one.

That left Mainscape as the next low bidder, at \$622,413.75.

Either the county is writing its specs improperly, Barbetta said, “or the people bidding aren’t being vetted.”

Hines suggested that Anderson keep track of the costs the county is absorbing for its mowing crews' work — including fuel expenses — so the totals could be compared to bids from firms in the future. That should give staff a better idea, Hines said, about whether a vendor could handle the work for the amount of money it proposed being paid.

"It's possible that we're paying too little," Patterson noted.

In the past, Anderson responded, he understood the county had paid about \$90 per acre. The average expense with the most recent bids, he noted, is about \$85 per acre.

A FURTHER KINK

Then Barbetta pointed to another problem: Anderson's recommendation to hire JLC Hauling for the remaining 10 months of the contract year included a stipulation that JLC would have to bid again for the work at the end of that period if it wished to keep the contract. However, Barbetta noted, the contracts awarded to the other firms in April had given them two automatic one-year extensions.

"These guys are going to come in and bail us out for 10 months,' Barbetta said of JLC, "and we're telling them even though the previous bidder had two more years, 'We're not going to give you two more years.'"

Anderson replied that the County Commission would have the option of renewing the contract for each of the two succeeding years. However, he said, the language about the rebidding was included to enable staff to determine whether another firm would bid less.

"We would have the option to do that in any zone," Anderson added.

"Why is it different?" Commissioner Christine Robinson asked of the language in the recommended contract for JLC.

"Because it's \$200,000 more," Patterson interjected, referring to JLC's bid.


Anderson pointed out, for example, that the Jackson bid was \$60 per acre per cycle. "It is prudent for us to investigate [less expensive options]," he added. JLC's bid of \$120 an acre "is certainly above our budget."

While JLC representatives seemed willing to take on the contract for 10 months with the potential of not being able to renew it, Anderson conceded, "They were not particularly pleased with that possibility."

Anderson then pointed out that the commission could direct staff not to seek new bids for the North Urban Zone before the contract expired as long as JLC was performing the work well.

"Frankly, if they're doing a crackerjack job, I might not [want to solicit new bids] at the end of 10 months to rock the boat," Patterson said.

She made a motion to award the bid to JLC Hauling with the same option for two years of automatic renewal as the other bidders received in April.

Barbetta seconded the motion. "I know we have to look for the lowest price," he said, "but it hasn't worked out too well in this zone. Each time we find it, we find somebody who can't perform." 



FROM WHOLE FOODS TO TARGET

Laurel Park's bungalows are practically next-door to some of Sarasota's high-rise condominium complexes. Photo by Norman Schimmel

NEW URBANIST PLANNER ANDRES DUANY RETURNS TO THE 'SCENE OF THE CRIME' TO PROVIDE THE CURRENT CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS AN UPDATE ON HIS VISION OF THE COMMUNITY

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

It was a vintage Andreas Duany performance: part bluster, part prescience and pure brass.

"The older folks — the Baby Boomers — cannot retire in the suburbs. You can only survive if you can drive. [The suburbs] are the future slums. All those 'McMansions' are on the way down," he told a joint meeting of the Sarasota City and County commissions on June 19.

Add to the non-driving Boomers the Millennial Generation that grew up in the suburbs. "The 'Millenials' don't want to live there, either. What's hot are the cities; they both want cities — the young and the old," said Duany. "In the next 10 years, get set to thrive on this piece of demographic good luck."

Now one of the most recognized urban planners of his era, Duany has problems with the

present and the past. "I don't recognize a lot of the things I said 12 years ago," he said, referring to his prior work on a master plan for downtown Sarasota. "In my field the present is almost irrelevant."

THE POWER OF NIMBY

"Not In My Backyard" is a phrase that strikes terror into the hearts of developers, planners and politicians. The fury of organized and irate neighbors is a force hard to ignore. "NIMBY is a suspicion of growth," said Duany. "There is quite a good chance whatever the change is, it will make their lives worse."

"NIMBY is a rational position," he continued. "And it needs the kind of respect that allows growth to happen."

According to Duany's organic philosophy of urban growth, Sarasota skipped the fun part. "You've got little bungalows next to Miami Beach high-rises, and not a stone's throw away, empty lots," he said. "You never had your teenage years." Those would have been a time of the five-story buildings common in metropolitan areas in both North America and Europe.

"Now the suburbs are competing with the city. This is really strange and new," he added. "If you make it difficult to build downtown, go to the suburbs — if it's too much of a pain to redevelop downtown. Except every building that goes to the suburbs is an economic and ecological disaster."

Duany is a believer in global warming, that the carbon economy is ruinous in the long term and that higher density — not sprawl — is an

appropriate solution. He urged the City Commission to work out a master plan in cooperation with neighborhood decision-making.

City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell asked Duany for advice in the aftermath of Monday's City Commission vote to start crafting a form-based code for Sarasota. (See the related story in this issue.)

He pointed to the Sarasota County manual for low-impact development, which is a way of treating stormwater. "Why does it have to be 100 pages long?" he asked. "A developer wants a dashboard version, with a dial that tells him how fast he's going and another that tells him how much resources are available. He doesn't want to hire a consultant to read [the manual] for him."

In my field the present is almost irrelevant.


Andres Duany
Urban Planner



The Plaza at Five Points towers over shops on Main Street. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“It doesn’t have to be perfect,” Duany continued. “I’m intrigued by dashboard codes and pink overlay districts to lighten red tape. Young people want to start a business, but red tape smashes people. Creeping regulations. But pink codes: Where has that been done? Never; nowhere.”

On a more tangible subject, Duany called for a big-box store downtown by name. “If you can get a Target downtown, suddenly you can live downtown. I saw a sketch at lunch with a pedestrian bridge over Fruitville [Road] with a Target and a conference center on the other side. That would activate the two northern neighborhoods. All you have to do is not fight these developers,” he said.

It was Duany’s plan for downtown Sarasota at the turn of this century that called for a new grocery story. It required a city subsidy to tempt Whole Foods to build here, but a decade later, nobody thinks it was a bad idea. 



Andres Duany. Image courtesy University of Georgia



Urban planner Andres Duany says downtown Sarasota needs a Target store. Photo by Jay Reed via Wikimedia Commons



The City Commission is in session on June 17. Photo by Norman Schimmel

LINDSEY EDGES ANTUNES FOR SARASOTA PLANNING BOARD SEAT; FORM-BASED CODE WORK APPROVED FOR THE CITY

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

The Sarasota city commissioners restored an old hand to their Planning Board during their meeting on Monday, June 17. Bob Lindsey was their pick. It will be his third tour on the board, which advises the City Commission on planning decisions.

Lindsey, who has lived in Sarasota for 63 years, is the scion of the family that formerly owned *The Sarasota Herald-Tribune*. He is extremely well versed in downtown planning issues, having served on the Planning Board during the development of a downtown plan in the 1980s called [RUDAT](#), and again in 2002 for the Andres Duany plan that focused on

New Urbanism — or a more walkable downtown environment.

Lindsey received three of five commission votes to secure the position. Mayor Shannon Snyder and Commissioners Suzanne Atwell and Paul Caragiulo supported him, while Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and Commissioner Susan Chapman voted for Cathy Antunes, a 2010 candidate for County Commission.

CITY OKS ZONING 'DESIGN STUDIO'

A three-year effort begins next month to rewrite the City of Sarasota's zoning code. It would replace the current code, which dates from 1974.

Two contract employees will be hired for the duration of the project, and city planners will participate as well. Karin Murphy and Andrew Georgiadis will spearhead the effort to reorient the zoning effort from the current Euclidian zoning method to the modern “form-based code.”

Newly elected Commissioner Chapman had a flurry of questions for Murphy. “Is this citywide or a review in transitional zones where neighborhoods abut commercial areas?” she asked.

“We’ll have that discussion with you,” said Murphy.

The effort will proceed in phases, and the public is cordially invited to participate.

“For this to succeed, we will have to open up the arms of City Hall and get the engagement of all the neighborhoods,” said City Manager Tom Barwin.

The studio physically will be located in the Federal Building on the northeast corner of Orange Avenue and Charles Ringling Boulevard. The building has a large room for the studio, an open area called the “rotunda” and even an outdoor public garden on the north side of the building.

The effort will kick off with about \$100,000 available through the end of September; its annual budget has been estimated at \$300,000.




The Federal Building in downtown Sarasota will be the site for work on a new form-based code for the city. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ARCHITECTURE DESIGN STUDIO IN THE OFFING

The University of Florida plans to create a [graduate program in architecture in Sarasota](#), similar to one in Orlando. Barwin made the announcement during the discussion of form-based codes.

“It will be just around the street in about a year,” he said.

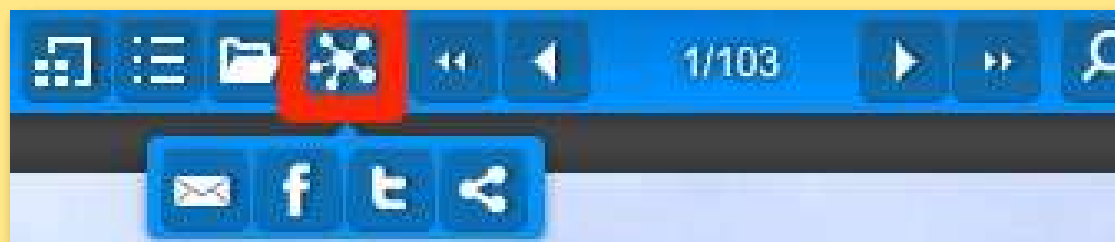
The effort could involve as many as 50 students. It will be housed in the current Sarasota County “print shop” on South Orange Avenue, a building in the Sarasota School of Architecture motif.

Local architect Guy Peterson, who is an associate professor at UF, was instrumental in creating the graduate program. 



Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin stands outside City Hall. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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STILL HAUNTED BY THE MOU

Rubble remains after the old Sarasota Police Department headquarters was torn down in the spring of 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PRESS CITY LEADERS TO GET 'AIR RIGHTS' SQUARED AWAY OVER A DOWNTOWN PARCEL EYED BY A DEVELOPER AS THE SITE OF A NEW HOTEL

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

One month shy of 10 years ago, Sarasota County Government held a figurative gun to the head of the Sarasota City Commission and made its members sign an agreement. This was a matter of “Sign, or the county seat is moving to the interstate.”

The county wanted the land under the old city police station to build a new court complex. The city subsequently floated a bond issue to build a new police headquarters only 100

feet away. The old HQ was then torn down; today it is a vacant lot.

To provide a little political cover in 2003, then-County Administrator Jim Ley tossed a few crumbs to the city. At the time they seemed meaningless, including “air rights”

over an 80-odd-space parking lot north of the historic courthouse downtown.

Now a developer wants to build a hotel on the property, and



Does the city have air rights or not? ... Time is of the essence.

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County





The new Police Department headquarters is on Adams Lane. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the County Commission is hot to strike a deal — except for those pesky air rights.

In what could resemble a comedy of errors, all these maneuvers were never “memorialized” in a legal document filed at the courthouse. For example, the land Ley coveted for a new judicial tower still officially belongs to the city. And those air rights? “Do they start one inch off the ground?” City Attorney Bob Fournier asked back in March when county staff first broached the issues laid out in the old memorandum of understanding (MOU).

At the joint City-County commissions meeting Wednesday, June 19, County Commissioners Christine Robinson and Joe Barbetta worked over the city. “What’s the city’s interest?”

asked Robinson. “Where should we go from here?”

“Does the city have air rights or not?” asked Barbetta. “Time is of the essence.”

City and county lawyers will huddle and report back. Regardless of the status, shape or size of the “air rights,” any hotel or other building must comply fully with city land-use and zoning codes. The property in question is zoned G for Government. To make the development possible, a future land-use map change would be necessary in the comprehensive plan and then a rezoning of the property to Downtown Core if the hotel is to be higher than five stories. **SNL**



An aerial map shows the parcel, marked as the ‘North Parking Lot’ in the upper left-hand corner, where a developer proposes to build a hotel in downtown Sarasota. It is at the intersection of U.S. 301 and Main Street. Image courtesy Sarasota County



AN IMPROPERLY CLEARED PATH

The path through the conservation easement is required to be no more than 4 feet wide. News Leader measurements found it to be as much as 9 feet wide in places. Photo by Robert Hackney

A CONSERVATION EASEMENT AREA ON SIESTA KEY THAT WAS THE SITE OF ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLATIONS LAST YEAR LINKED TO NEARBY PROPERTY OWNERS HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF A NEW VIOLATION THIS WEEK

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A little over a year ago, raking and sand grooming violations were reported in the area of a conservation easement on Siesta Key involving property at 610-612 Beach Road.

This week, a witness reported seeing someone using a tractor to widen a path to the beach through that conservation easement. Although the path is supposed to be no more than 4 feet wide, it is at least double that, according to observers.

A Sarasota News Leader site visit determined the path is 9 feet wide in numerous places.

The conservation easement property is a favored nesting area for the endangered snowy plovers on Siesta Key. Sarasota Audubon volunteers last week were dealing with two incidents of vandalism to a buffer area not far from that path.

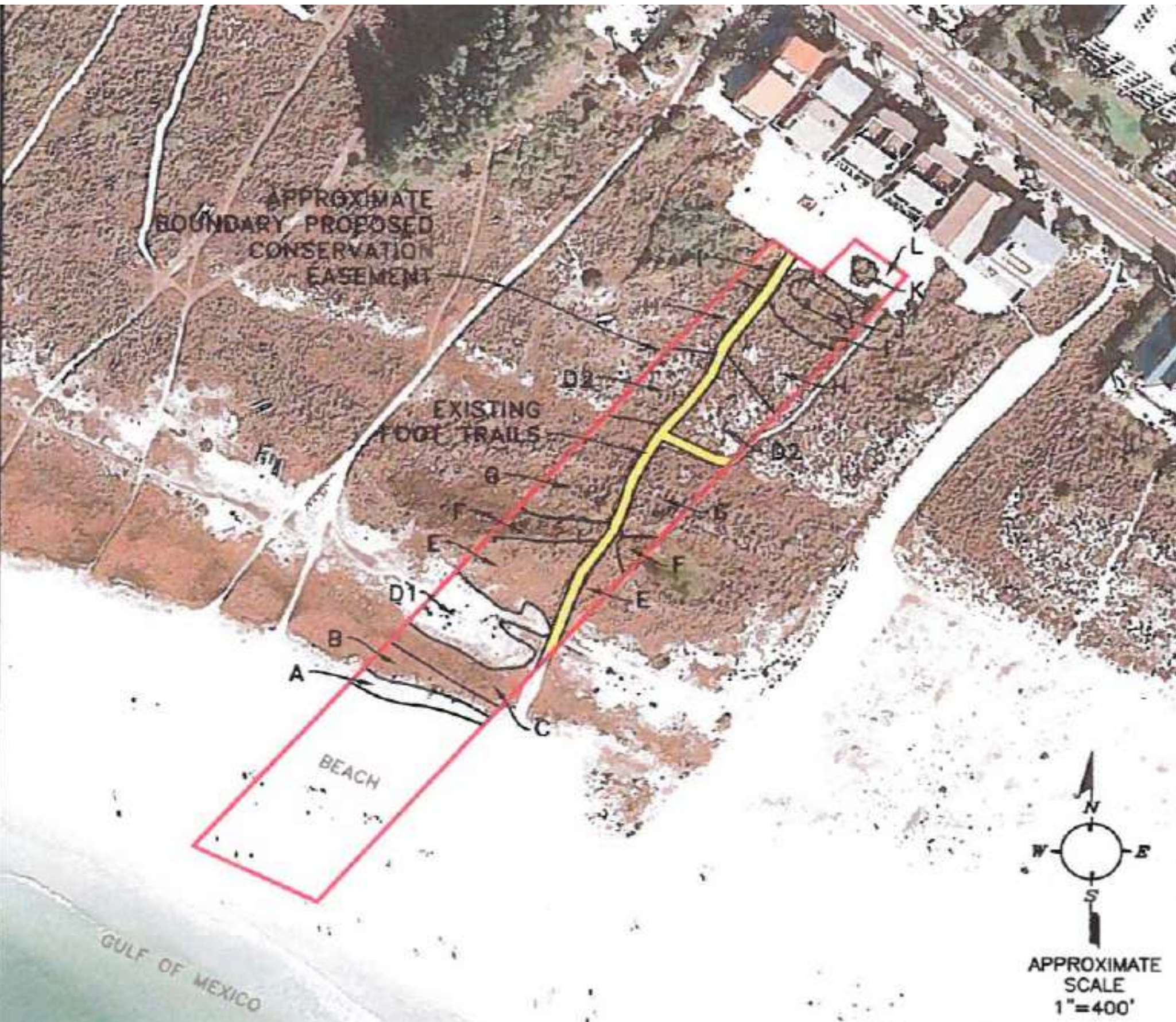
After investigating the situation on June 18 and reviewing the stipulations of the easement, Matt Osterhoudt, manager of conservation and environmental permitting in the Sarasota County Natural Resources Department, told the *News Leader* staff members had confirmed the violation regarding the path. They also had talked with the agent of the prop-

erty owners to request a meeting, he added, to discuss how best to resolve the situation. Osterhoudt said the property would have to be re-vegetated.

Staff members hope to resolve the situation amicably with the property owners, Osterhoudt told the *News Leader*. "There's no reason to believe we won't be able to," he added.

He was not certain when the discussion would take place, he said. The formal letters sent to both the owners and the agent to point out the violation asked that they get in touch with staff to set up the meeting.

Staff would take the opportunity during that session to review all the other facets of the variance the County Commission granted last



An aerial photo shows the conservation easement property behind 610-612 Beach Road on Siesta Key in December 2011. Image courtesy Sarasota County

year for construction of new condominiums at 610-612 Beach Road, he added. Work is continuing on the site.

Catherine Luckner, president of the Siesta Key Association, was the one who contacted Natural Resources Department staff this week to point out the situation with the beach path through the easement.

On June 18, she wrote an email saying someone had reported seeing the path “being mechanically altered” to road width by a large tractor.

All activity on the path had ceased by the time he visited the site, Osterhoudt told the *News Leader*.

He emailed Luckner on June 19 to report to her that the site inspection was conducted the previous day, with the determination “that there is an enforcement matter regarding consistency with the Coastal Setback Variance, the recorded Conservation Easement (CE), and the Resource Management for the CE. We have informed the property owner and their legal representatives ... that they should cease any further activity within the CE.”



A three-story condominium complex is under construction at 610-612 Beach Road. Photo by Robert Hackney

Luckner added in her email that in a similar situation, another property owner on Beach Road was required “to *restore a path to its original state.*”

THE CONDOS AND THE EASEMENT


During their April 27, 2011 regular session, the county commissioners agreed to a coastal setback variance for the condos at 610-612 Beach Road. The owners had petitioned the board for construction of a new pile-supported, three-story multi-family residence with six units and a swimming pool immediately landward of the Tenacity Lane right of way. The original footprint for the structure called for 6,365 square feet. At the county’s request, the revised site plan called for 5,736 square feet.

According to the Sarasota County Property Appraiser’s Office, William W. Merrill III of Sarasota remains the agent for the owners,

Siesta Key LLC, as he was during appearances before the County Commission in 2011.

A memo provided to the board in April 2011 noted staff was working to make the property owners aware of the language in the conservation easement.

“This particular piece was not discussed too much” before that April 2011 board vote, Osterhoudt told the *News Leader*, referring to the path to the beach.

The Native Habitat Management Plan for the conservation easement area — stamped as revised on Dec. 19, 2011 —allows “use and maintenance of one 4 foot wide sand path, clear of vegetation, for access from the landward boundary of the conserved area to the open beach and waters of the Gulf of Mexico ... subject to all applicable procedures for use and maintenance of sand paths” 

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ROAD CLOSED AHEAD

PART OF 12TH STREET TO BE CLOSED TEMPORARILY IN THE CITY

Twelfth Street between Osprey Avenue and Gillespie Avenue will be closed Friday, June 21, starting at approximately 6 p.m., the city has announced.

The road is expected to reopen the following morning at approximately 6 a.m., a city news release says. Motorists should follow the posted detour signs.

The partial road closure is necessary while crews test the city's new deep injection well, the release notes. To conduct the test, an 18-inch pipe will be stretched across 12th Street from the Utilities Department building to the nearby well, the release adds.



Image courtesy Google Maps

FREE HIV TESTING OFFERED DURING NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Free HIV testing will be available to the public at locations in Sarasota County as part of the 19th annual National HIV Testing Day observance during the week of June 22-28, the county Health Department has announced.

While the focus is on providing HIV testing to those who may not know their HIV status, some locations also will offer testing for other sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis and gonorrhea, as well as blood pressure and glucose (blood sugar) screenings, a news release says.

Health officials note that this marks the 32nd year since the start of the AIDS pandemic. “Despite advances in testing and treatment, many people who are HIV positive still do not even know it,” the release points out. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one out of five people living with HIV in the United States is unaware of his or her HIV status.

“Early diagnosis is the key. When I learned that I was HIV positive 20 years ago, I made positive lifestyle changes,” said Valerie Wojciechowicz, a Sarasota resident who educates and advocates for women living with HIV, in the release. “Today, my quality of life is good even with HIV, in part because of the early diagnosis and treatment.”

The risk factors for HIV infection are having unprotected sex and sharing needles or syringes. If persons have never been tested, or if they have had unprotected sex or shared a needle since their last test, now is the time to get an HIV test, the release notes. Knowing their HIV status can help them get medical

treatment earlier, take steps to stay healthy and keep from spreading the virus to others.

“HIV testing is fast and easy,” the release says. The Clearview® HIV Test, done with a finger prick, provides preliminary test results in only five minutes. Test results are always kept private and are not shared with anyone, including family members, significant others, employers or landlords, the release points out.

Among the free, locally sponsored HIV testing and educational opportunities are the following:

SARASOTA

- HIV testing, blood pressure and glucose screening: Thursday, June 27, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Salvation Army — Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit, 1400 10th St.
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and HIV testing: Mondays, 1-4 p.m.; Wednesdays, 8:30-11:30 a.m.; and Thursdays, 1-5 p.m., William L. Little Health and Human Services Center, 2200 Ringling Blvd., Room 1127.
- HIV and sexually transmitted diseases testing, incentives and food giveaway: Friday, June 28, 2-5 p.m., Genesis Health Services, 3333 N. Washington Blvd.

VENICE

- HIV testing, blood pressure and glucose screening: Tuesday, June 25, 9:30 a.m. to noon, Goodwill Center — The Rialto (look for Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit), 650 S. Tamiami Trail.

- HIV testing, blood pressure and glucose screening: Habitat for Humanity Re-Store, Tuesday, June 25, 1-3 p.m., 1400 Ogden Road.
- HIV testing, blood pressure and glucose screening, Wednesday, June 26, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Salvation Army Family Store (look

for Health In Motion Mobile Medical Unit), 1160 U.S. 41 Bypass South.

For more information on HIV testing opportunities throughout the year, call 861-5000 or visit the website of the HIV/AIDS Network of Southwest Florida (HANS), www.hivsarasota.org.

COUNTY EARNS DISTINGUISHED BUDGET PRESENTATION AWARD

The Sarasota County Office of Financial Management once again has received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, this time for its 2013 fiscal year budget, the county has announced.

“The award is the highest professional recognition in governmental budgeting and is presented by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA),” a news release says. “The county has won the award for 23 consecutive years,” the release adds.

National recognition is based on how well a budget serves as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide and communications device; it is rated based on 27 specific criteria, the release points out. Budget documents must be rated either “Proficient” or “Outstanding” by two out of three reviewers in all four categories — and for all 14 mandatory specific criteria — to receive the award, the release notes. “Sarasota County received at least one ‘Outstanding’ rating in 21 of the 27 overall specific criteria,” it adds.

“This recognition shows the county’s continued commitment to professional budgeting standards and to public transparency in budget information,” said county Chief Financial Officer Steve Botelho in the release.

For budgets produced over the same period of time, more than 1,340 government entities re-



Steven Botelho/Contributed photo

ceived the award. Recipients “have pioneered efforts to improve the quality of budgeting and provide an excellent example for other governments throughout the country,” the release says.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association serving more than 17,800 government finance professionals throughout North America. The GFOA’s Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program is the only national awards program in governmental budgeting.

TWO CONTRACTS AWARDED FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO COUNTY FACILITIES

The Sarasota County Commission on June 18 awarded contracts for construction of a deep-injection well pump and piping system and for the Terrace Building generator project.

The \$1.1 million contract awarded to Close Construction LLC of Okeechobee is for Phase 3 of the deep-injection well pump and piping system work, a county news release says. "One of the county's regional wastewater treatment facilities, the Central County Water Reclamation Facility at 7905 McIntosh Road, Sarasota, was identified as the best location for a deep-injection well that can handle effluent when the demand for irrigation is low and the water storage ponds for reclaimed water are nearing full capacity," the release points out.

Phase 3 is the final phase of that project, the release notes. The total price for all three phases is about \$4 million. Construction of the

last segment is expected to take about nine months, the release notes.

The contract for the generator project at the Terrace Building, located at 101 S. Washington Ave. in downtown Sarasota, was awarded to Halfacre Construction Co. of Sarasota. Built in 1926, the Terrace Building was purchased by the county in 1972, the release says. It once served as a county Administration Center and now houses the offices of the Tax Collector, the Supervisor of Elections, the Property Appraiser and Teen Court.

The Terrace Building improvements include relocation and upgrade of the existing transformer and upgrades to the transfer switch system, as well as replacement of the main switchboard. With the completion of those upgrades, the generator will be able to sustain the full electrical load of the building, the news release points out. The project is expected to be completed in approximately five months.

FHSAA HONORS RIVERVIEW HIGH FOR OUTSTANDING SPORTSMANSHIP

In recognition of the vital role good sportsmanship plays in shaping today's student-athletes, the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) last week announced that Riverview High School in Sarasota is among the recipients of this year's Fred E. Rozelle Sportsmanship Awards.

The recognition honors schools whose athletic teams demonstrated exemplary sportsmanship during the 2012-2013 regular season and the FHSAA State Series, a news release says. Altogether this year, "20 high schools and three middle schools received the prestigious award," the release adds.

"This is a special award for our member schools, honoring those who truly do things the right way," said FHSAA Executive Director Dr. Roger Dearing in the release. "Sportsmanship is the most important value we can install in our young student-athletes, and the schools we honor today have demonstrated a deep commitment to integrity and the spirit of fair play."

The award, presented annually since 1991, is named in honor of FHSAA Commissioner Emeritus Fred E. Rozelle. "It is presented to one school in each classification whose total sports program best exemplifies the qualities of sportsmanship as demonstrated by its

coaches, players and spectators,” the release points out.

Criteria for selection of the winners includes programs and activities implemented within the school and community to promote sportsmanship; the number and type of unsportsmanlike ejections; the number and type of exceptional sportsmanship reports; and the source of the nomination.

Section winners will each receive \$500 and a commemorative plaque.

MASON TO BE GUEST SPEAKER AT NEIGHBORHOOD EXPO

Sarasota County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason will be guest speaker at a free neighborhood expo to be presented by the Nokomis Area Civic Association (NACA) and Sarasota County Government on Saturday, June 22.

The expo will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Ave., Venice. It is open to the public, a news release notes.

A continental breakfast will be served, and workshops will be offered throughout the event. Admission is free, but registration is required by June 21, the release points out.

After opening remarks from Mason, Emergency Management Chief Ed McCrane will offer tips on hurricane preparation and provide hurricane guides for participants, the release continues. Additionally, Sarasota County’s Sustainability team will host a workshop on energy efficiency, during which residents can get free Do-It-Yourself Energy Saving Kits with products valued at more than \$30, the release notes.

Other workshops planned are titled, “Robert’s Rules of Order” and “Connecting with Local Government.” County staff from the Neigh-

CORRECTION

The early version of the June 14 article, *SCC preview*, contained an error. Sheriff Tom Knight is not removing School Resource Officers from city of Sarasota schools for budgetary reasons. The sheriff has said he believes the Sarasota Police Department should be providing the officers because those schools are in the Police Department’s jurisdiction. Five deputies had been working at Booker and Sarasota high schools and at Brookside Middle School.



County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason. Photo by Norman Schimmel

borhood Services, Solid Waste and Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) departments as well as the Sheriff’s Office will share tips and recommendations for protecting and preserving Sarasota County neighborhoods, the release says.

Email ExpoSouthRSVP@gmail.com by June 21 to reserve a space.

For more information about the expo, call the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 (TTY 7-1-1) or email kjohnsto@scgov.net.


25 GRADUATE IN LATEST CITIZENS LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY CLASS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office graduated another 25 people recently from the 39th class of the Citizens Law Enforcement Academy (CLEA).

CLEA, which is held one night a week for 10 weeks, gives citizens an inside look at Sheriff's Office operations, a news release notes. The course includes a tour of the jail and courthouse as well as activities such as a ride-along with patrol, conducting felony traffic stops and firearms training. There are also sessions in law enforcement procedures and criminal investigations, along with those provided by members of the K-9, SWAT and Forensics

units; each is taught by a subject matter expert, the release notes.

Inspired by a visit to the local Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranch, CLEA class members donated \$1,455 to the ranch at their graduation ceremony, the release adds.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has conducted CLEA twice a year for the past 20 years with nearly 800 citizens graduating, the release continues. The next class — scheduled for fall 2013 — is already full, but applications are being accepted for spring 2014. They may be found on www.SarasotaSheriff.org under the Crime Prevention tab click, "Get Involved." 



The latest graduates of the Citizens Law Enforcement Academy gather with Sarasota County Sheriff's Office personnel. Contributed photo



The Silvertooth Judicial Center and the Terrace Building loom behind the historic courthouse in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Scott Proffitt

DETECTIVES SEEKING MAN WHO TRIED TO BREAK INTO WORK TRAILER

Detectives with the Sarasota Police Department are looking for a man who was caught on camera trying to break into a work trailer, the department has announced.

The incident reportedly occurred between 11 and 11:15 p.m. on Sunday, June 9, at Andy's Professional Grounds Maintenance, located at 2175 Ninth St. in Sarasota, a news release says.

In the video, a Caucasian male can be seen walking up to the trailer and attempting to break into it by using some type of tool or metal bar, the release notes. "Detectives believe the man broke in through a locked fence," it adds. The video shows that after the man was unsuccessful in his attempt, he walked away.

Detectives say the man was last seen wearing blue jeans, a camouflage long-sleeved shirt and a white and dark-colored baseball cap with writing on it, the release notes.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call Sarasota Police Detective Darrell Nixon at 954-7078 or leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477), going online at www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com or sending a text message by texting TIP109 plus a message to CRIMES (274637).



INTERACTIVE CRIME MAPPING TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that a new mobile version of the interactive crime mapping program is available on the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office website.

The technology provided through a partnership with Crimemapping.com™ makes it easier for residents to view current incidents in unincorporated Sarasota County, a news release says. The Sheriff's Office has made the web-based tool available since 2011, it notes. Information is updated daily and can be filtered by different crime types or viewed within a chosen radius of a desired address.

To download the [free new iPhone app](#), visit the App store and search for Crimemapping.com. Then search for an address or use the "Agencies" button to see crimes reported to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, the release continues.

The web-based program may be accessed from the agency website, www.SarasotaSheriff.org, under the "Public Interest" tab. Resi-



Crimemapping

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dents also may sign up to be notified about crimes occurring in a specific radius of an address, the news release points out.

"Making crime data available to the public through this visual tool is another measure of transparency," said Knight in the release. "Crime was down more than 16 percent last year in Sarasota County, and programs like this enhance our ability to build a crime prevention partnership with the community through education and awareness which will help continue that downward trend."

To protect the identity of victims of certain types of crimes, reports of child abuse, sexual assaults, exploitation of the elderly and stalking will not be included in the material made available, the release adds



REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER ARRESTED FOR ADDITIONAL CRIMES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested Tyler Kuntz, 22, of 6023 Viola Road, Venice, for allegedly molesting two young girls when he worked in the aftercare program at their school, the Sheriff's Office has announced.

"The victims came forward separately in January and June of this year to report that they were touched inappropriately by Kuntz in 2011," a press release reports. "One girl said she was in kindergarten at the time and the other said she was in first grade when the alleged incidents occurred."

Kuntz was employed by Taylor Ranch Elementary School as a program attendant from October 2009 to September 2011, the report continues. The Charlotte County Sheriff's Office arrested him on Sept. 29, 2011 for Lewd or Lascivious Molestation of a Child for an incident that occurred at a private home, the release adds. Kuntz is on probation for that offense and is a registered sex offender, the news release notes.



Tyler Kuntz/Contributed photo

Detectives arrested Kuntz on the morning of June 17 and charged him with six counts of Lewd or Lascivious Molestation of a Child Less than 12 Years Old. He is being held without bond, the news release adds.

MAN ARRESTED ON CHARGE OF EXPLOITING THE ELDERLY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a man who already had an extensive criminal record and charged him for allegedly stealing several thousand dollars worth of household items and jewelry from an elderly woman who had hired him to do yard work and odd jobs around her home, the department has announced.

The 92-year-old victim said she hired Joseph Schum, 45 — whose last known address was



Joseph Schum/Contributed photo

2902 Bougainvillea St., Sarasota, according to the report — but after a few months, she realized she was missing numerous items of International brand sterling silver dinnerware, Minton china, a gold necklace with a rare silver Spanish coin and possibly cash.

Detectives learned Schum had pawned some of these items in January and February of this year, the report adds. He was arrested on June 13 and charged with Exploitation of the Elder-

ly as well as three counts each of Dealing in Stolen Property and Providing False Ownership Information to a Pawn Broker, the report continues.

This is Schum's 20th arrest for similar crimes as well as charges of Burglary, Aggravated Assault and Possession of Crack Cocaine, a news release says. He is being held without bond on two charges plus \$150,000 in bond on the remaining counts, the release adds.

17-YEAR-OLD CHARGED AFTER FLEEING FROM DEPUTIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a 17-year-old driver who fled from deputies, crashed his car into a light pole and fled on foot.

Around 10:45 p.m. on June 13, deputies observed a speeding gold Chrysler convertible traveling south on Tuttle Avenue and then turning left at the Eighth Street light from the center travel lane, a report says. When deputies attempted to stop the vehicle, it fled through several residential streets, turned west onto Fruitville Road and then crashed into a light pole as it made a wide right turn onto East Avenue, the report adds.

The driver, Quinton Davis, 17, of 4088 Velarde Lane, Sarasota, ran from the vehicle. A juvenile passenger surrendered without incident and was released to his mother without charges, the report continues.

Members of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Tactical and Patrol units, with the assistance of the Sarasota Police Department, established a perimeter, and the Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit pilot and tactical flight officer were able to use the helicopter's Forward



Quinton Davis/Contributed photo

Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) camera system to direct an SPD K-9 officer to Davis's location, the report notes. Davis had taken off his white T-shirt in an attempt to avoid detection, the report adds.

BUSINESS OWNER ARRESTED IN GRAND THEFT CASE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested Matthew Nemeth, 39, of 11516 Sweet-flag Drive, Bradenton — a business owner who allegedly took thousands of dollars from a customer but never performed the work he was hired to do, the department has reported.

The victim contacted Atmospheres Kitchen and Bath Artistry on North Washington Boulevard in Sarasota in December 2012 to renovate her kitchen countertops, the report says. After receiving a written estimate, the woman signed a contract with the company and gave Nemeth a check in the amount of \$6,000 for partial payment, the report continues.

Work never began, the report adds, and after numerous failed attempts to contact Nemeth or to obtain a refund of her \$6,000, the victim contacted the Sheriff's Office.

Detectives arrested Nemeth on June 13 and charged him with Grand Theft. He was released after posting \$20,000 bond.



Matthew Nemeth/Contributed photo

POLICE SEEKING SARASOTA MAN IN CONNECTION WITH PROPERTY THEFT

Detectives with the Sarasota Police Department are looking for a Sarasota resident in connection with a case that involves dealing in stolen property, defrauding a pawnbroker and grand theft, the office has announced.

Joshua Michael Furr, 19, of 3003 Eighth St., Sarasota, is a white male, 6 feet 1 inch tall of unknown weight with black hair and blue eyes, a report says.

Anyone with information regarding this case is asked to call Detective Darrell Nixon at 954-7078. 



Joshua Furr/Contributed photo

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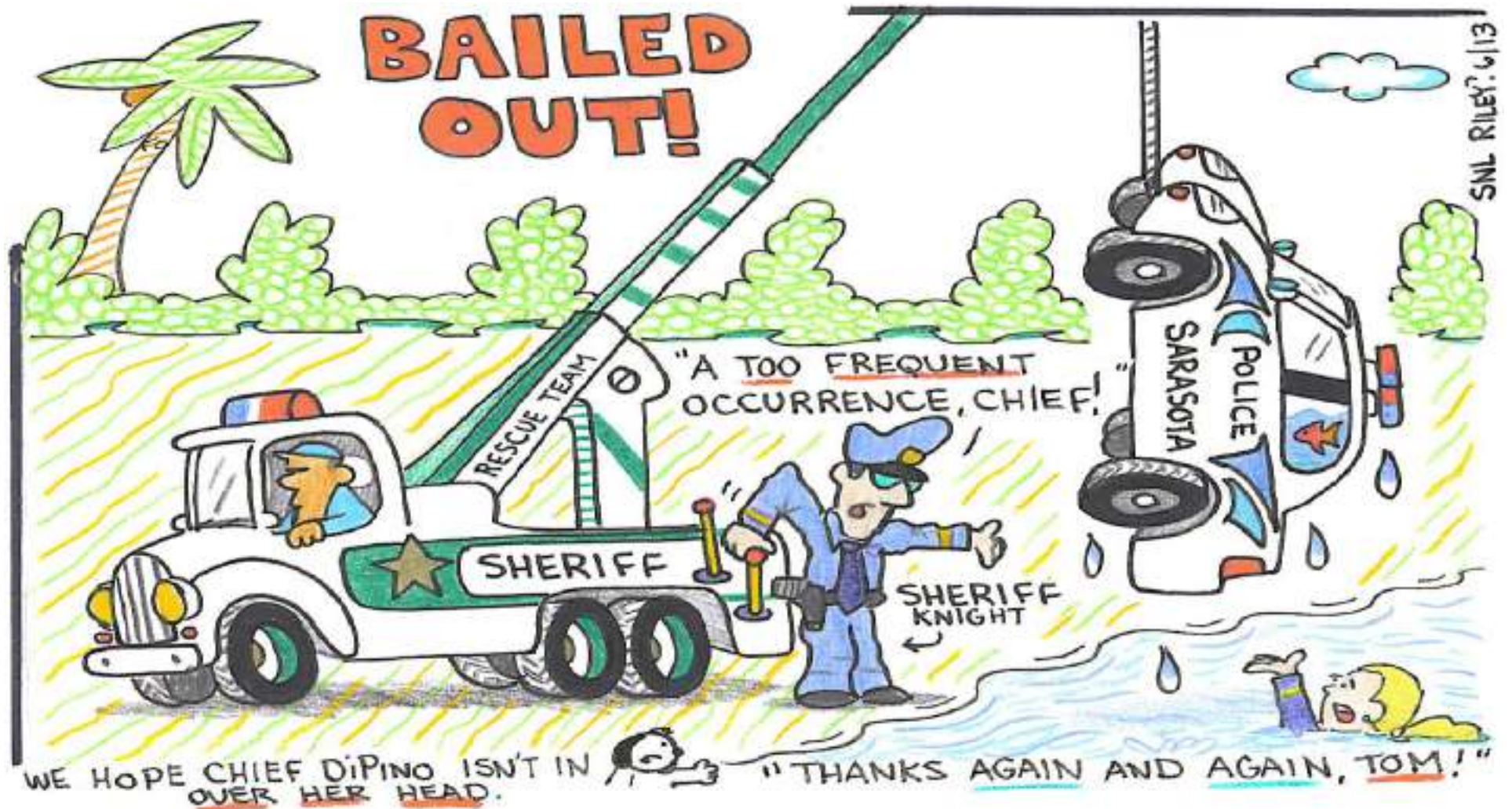


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OPINION



SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT INADEQUACIES TAXING SHERIFF'S OFFICE

EDITORIAL

The revelation this week by Sarasota Sheriff Tom Knight that his office is responding with greater frequency to requests for assistance from the Sarasota Police Department was an unsettling one. Knight indicated the Sheriff's Office has responded to more situations in the city in the past two months than during the entirety of his previous four years as sheriff.

Our concern with this situation exists on several levels, not the least of which is the disproportionate percentage of the city's budget consumed by

the Police Department. With that level of financial commitment, one would presume the city would be capable of fielding a police force that could handle the law enforcement needs of its residents.

Another concern is the matter of transparency. Based on the comments offered to *The Sarasota News Leader* by Mayor Shannon Snyder, it could be inferred that

the City Commission is unaware of this situation. Is the city manager similarly unaware?

Finally, the over-reliance of the SPD on the Sheriff's Office creates

“Given Knight's concerns about his officers most frequently being called into specific areas of the city, one cannot help but wonder if the new chief's concept of community policing is 'the community south of Fruitville Road.'”

OPINION

unnecessary danger for city police, sheriff's deputies and the citizens both mean to protect. Knight has indicated his officers are more likely to receive a call for assistance "when bad things happen." Yet his officers are entering unfamiliar territory with no real awareness of the participants.

When Knight first took office, he implemented his "Intelligence2Action" — or I2A — initiative, a program designed to maximize the Sheriff's Office's awareness of essential background information that seemed germane to most crimes. And it has worked, as crime in the county has fallen to the lowest level in the state for counties with populations in excess of 100,000.

When deputies respond to calls in the city, however, they lack that important intelligence, a deficiency that places them at greater risk of injury or death at the hands of violent criminals, and the situation puts innocent civilians at similar risk.

The buzzword in the SPD, meanwhile, is "community policing." Indeed, Chief Bernadette DiPino was hired in part for her experience with this concept. However, given Knight's concerns about his officers most frequently being called into specific areas of the city, one cannot help but wonder if the new chief's concept of community policing is "the community south of Fruitville Road."

When he took leave of the City Commission last month, Commissioner Terry Turner pro-

vided a blunt assessment of the economic ills that plague the city, principal among those being the cost of maintaining the SPD.

"The cost of the Police Department is going to ultimately bankrupt our city if we don't manage it differently," he told his fellow commissioners in his final remarks at the dais.

Turner cited problems with the police union as the single greatest obstacle to proper management of the department, pointing out contractual rules that impact everything from hiring and firing to training and promotions.

Certainly, the Sarasota Police Department should be as capable as the Sheriff's Office in handling the law enforcement needs of its jurisdiction, if not more so.

As of this week, SPD had 169 sworn officers enforcing the peace in a 14.66-square-mile area that is home to 52,811 residents. That works out to more than three officers per 1,000 residents and more than 11 officers per square mile of city terrain.

The Sheriff's Office has 388 sworn officers, but they cover 555.87 square miles and protect a population of more than 386,000 residents. There is barely one deputy per 1,000 residents, and each deputy has responsibility for an average 1.43 square miles of county terrain.

The city has three times the force per thousand residents and more than 16 times the force per square mile of jurisdictional area. Yet, despite this clear superiority in force, the

OPINION

SPD apparently is incapable of handling its job in the City of Sarasota, calling on the Sheriff's Office more and more frequently for help.

The problem has reached a critical stage for the Sheriff's Office, as demands by the city create more officer overtime and more expense. Knight has pointed out that he will have to begin planning for extra staffing needs if he is to continue to provide this enhanced level of service to the city.

This should be of great concern for the taxpayers of Sarasota County, especially those who live in the city of Sarasota. Outside the city, county taxpayers will be asked to pick up the tab for an expanded Sheriff's Office that will not benefit them directly. Inside the city, taxpayers are left to wonder what sort of value they are receiving for their city tax dollars, when the SPD appears incapable of performing the duties expected.

The mayor was blunt in his desired solution. He would like to disband the SPD and officially turn over law enforcement in the city to the Sheriff's Office. "In my personal opinion, the sheriff would do a better job," he stated.

While we have not agreed with some of Snyder's other proposals as a city commissioner, we believe he makes a good point in this case.


If the Sarasota Police Department, with all its resources, is unable to provide law enforcement for the city without assistance from the

Sheriff's Office, how will the City Commission address this problem?

Certainly, it could increase funding for the department and put more officers on the streets, eliminating the need for the Sheriff's Office to constantly run interference. But such a solution, frankly, is throwing good money after bad ... and the city cannot afford to do so.

No, the time has come for the City Commission to face the hard truth: The cost of maintaining its own police force has consumed too much of the city's resources, and that force still fails to accomplish the primary mission of effective law enforcement. Accordingly, discussions should begin with the county to have the Sheriff's Office formally assume responsibility for law enforcement within the city limits.

Of course, city financial concessions will be needed to ease this transition. There will be the rather complex logistics of absorbing the city police officers into the larger force of the Sheriff's Office. And the handling of the pension fund for existing police retirees must be dealt with. But complexity should not be a deterrent to action.

The Sarasota city commissioners, now that they are aware of this dire situation, should move with all deliberate speed to effect a prudent and equitable solution. And that should include getting the city out of the law enforcement business. 

OPINION

A SEDER BEHIND BARS`



By Rabbi Ari Shapiro

Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

It was Erev Passover, the night of the first Seder, and people around the world were gathered together in homes and communities, with family and friends discussing the Passover story, their personal significance of *Mitzrayim*, a narrow place and their passage towards freedom.

But what happens when your home or community is a fortress of stone and metal fences topped with razor wire? You are alone, with no family, with no real friends, even though there are hundreds of people in this community. The impact of your crime and the length of your sentence loom large in your mind.

As the Jewish chaplain at a large state prison in Arcadia, I spend every Friday with the Jewish inmates, and it has been my custom to be with them for the first Seder of Passover as well.

Each of the 17 inmates present at our Seder this year took part in the service by reading a portion of the *Haggadah*. The meal was sumptuous and made possible by donations raised by Jewish Family and Children's Services and the families of some inmates.

Following *Birkat HaMazon* (grace after meals) and the singing of traditional Passover songs, I asked, "What is your *Mitzrayim*?"

What is your narrow place that prevented you from living a good life and caused you to enter a life of crime?"


At first there was silence. It took a moment or two for one person to speak, but once the ice was broken, the discussion gained momentum. In the safety of our little community, each person bravely told his story and spoke of his struggles while the others listened respectfully. It was as if the Sea of Reeds parted and they were walking through.

I then said, "Many of you have long sentences; some are doing life. Is it possible to find freedom in here?"

Again a moment of silence, and then, "These walls can only imprison my body, but my mind and my soul are free. The system can make me do as it wishes and make me go where it says, but it cannot direct my mind."

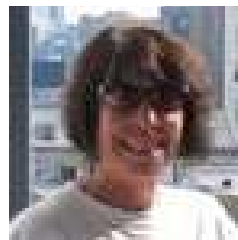
It is true. Those inmates who come to terms with their incarceration and do not fight the system do "easy time." Mentally, they can be "carried on eagles' wings" and soar freely through the universe.

May their flights be peaceful.

Rabbi Ari Shapiro teaches adult education and Religious School classes at Temple Sinai in Sarasota. 

OPINION

OUR NIK



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

Editor's note: Sarasota News Leader contributor Harriet Cuthbert drove up to Benderson Park on June 12 to watch aerialist Nik Wallenda practice for his next feat.

COMMENTARY

The fans are going wild. Their mouths are wide open but not a sound is uttered. They would not dare make a noise because they are watching Nik Wallenda practice walking a high wire in preparation for his Grand Canyon Walk on June 23.

Given the fact that he is internationally famous, it is no surprise reporters and photographers are following his every step. Aside from them, the people watching him seem to be almost all Sarasotans.

Nik has been practicing about five days a week over the past two weeks at beautiful Nathan Benderson Park, where his team has installed a five-eighths-inch-thick cable about 1,500 feet long and 25 feet above the ground.

Promptly at 10:30 a.m. on this particular day, I see Nik climbing up to his starting point. I also see people of all ages — from toddlers with their moms to older folks sitting comfortably in their folding chairs — stop whatever they are doing and focus on Nik.

It is the perfect day for a wire walk. He carefully places his water bottles on the platform in anticipation of quenching his thirst on the

return trip. His manager checks all the basics, and then Nik steps gingerly onto the wire, wearing those beautiful soft leather shoes that are made with such love by his mom. He has fantastic concentration, plus a lot of confidence, as he seems to glide across the cable.

We fans are having a hard time keeping up with him and we are just walking on level ground. As Nik reaches the halfway point and begins his return, the puffy white clouds above him form an almost heaven-like backdrop and add to his aura. He then seems to almost race back to his water bottles and safety, once again.

Nik Wallenda is definitely a man on a mission. We wish him all the best and look forward to watching him conquer his latest challenge.

The Grand Canyon awaits ... 



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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MAGIC

RARE IN THE WILD, ORCHIDS CAPTIVATE THOSE LUCKY ENOUGH TO SEE THEM

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri


Contributing Writer

We are not even looking for them when suddenly there they are, trailing down the live oaks at Jelks Preserve in Venice.

Members of the Florida Native Plant Society are on a nature walk with Dr. Mary Jelks, whose family foundation helped fund the purchase of this county park that runs along the Myakka River. Fluttering in the breeze, the orchids resemble butterflies — which gave them their common name, “butterfly orchids.” Their Latin name, *Enclycia tampensis*, refers to Tampa Bay, where they were first collected in the mid-1800s and sent to herbariums.

Orchids have always captivated humans. For thousands of years, the Chinese celebrated them in art and literature and used them for medicinal purposes. In his *Herbal*, of 1647, English astrologer/physician Nicholas Culpeper placed “Orchis” under the Dominion of Venus because they “provoke lust exceedingly, which they say, the dried and withered roots do restrain ... Being bruised and applied they heal the king’s evil.”

Two centuries later, the English bourgeoisie lusted after orchids to raise in their greenhouses. Collectors searched the globe for new




species to satisfy the demands of their rich patrons. Around that time, settlers were wading through the Fakahatchee Strand in south Florida, stripping orchids and other epiphytes off the trees, despite snakes, alligators and clouds of mosquitoes.

Over-collection has thinned our flora. That, along with loss of habitat and fire suppression, has caused plants to become rare or extinct. Though butterfly orchids are relatively common in central and south Florida, it is illegal to collect them — and other orchids — from the wild.



In the early 1900s, naturalist Mary Francis Baker ran across orchids while gathering material for her book, *Florida Wild Flowers*. “The very word orchid calls up suggestions of grace and of grotesqueness, of strange beauty and uncanny mimicry. In extravagant variety of form the flowers rival all others,” she wrote.

Thankful to find them at Jelks, we are charmed by their “grace” on this beautiful day in June. 



Dr. Mary Jelks.



Myakka River at the Preserve.



WHY WHITE?

A fairy lily is bright white against green foliage. Photo by Kenpei via Wikimedia Commons

A PLETHORA OF SHADES IN A LANDSCAPING BED CAN BENEFIT FROM THE ADDITION OF SOME 'COOL' BLOOMS

By Rick Wielgorecki
Contributing Writer

For some time, when considering planting annuals or mass plantings, I could not see the point of including ones that produced white flowers. "What lack of imagination," I thought. With all the colors of the rainbow and beyond available, why choose with boring, white blooms?

Eventually, I think at the suggestion of a close, artistic female friend, I gave white plants a chance, and since trying them I have decided they are not only viable but also essential! They are the quintessence of cool colors. Maybe it is because white is a combination of all colors that they fit so well. Maybe it is because

the white blossoms give the viewer a chance to pause and take relief from the intensity of a scene that a myriad of shades creates.

When orchestrating a chromatic riot in a flowerbed, I have always tried to include both warm and cool colors. Red, purple and vivid pinks heat up the bed and draw the eye into the arrangement. White, along with salmon, yellow and light pinks, provides the counterpoint to keep things interesting.

So if your landscapes' colors need some toning down, look to white to provide neutralizing light.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Continuing the idea that white has a place in the garden, I have chosen a plant that requires dense canopy to thrive. It in turn provides not one, not two, but three colors in the bargain. This is a real boon because the number of cultivars that provide color in the shade is limited.

My nominee, which was chosen by the Florida Nurserymen and Growers as the plant of the year in 2008, is the Triostar ginger, *Stromanthe sanguine*.

Triostar is a low-growing, tropical plant which will not tolerate much direct sunlight. Dense oak canopy is an excellent environment in which it will flourish. An umbrella of foliage will also offer it some protection from cold,

winter weather. The top surfaces of Triostars' leaves are variegated with shades of white and green; the lower surfaces are a dark rich pink. The flowers emerge on narrow stems and are shaded a brighter, more vivid pink. A healthy specimen will ultimately grow to a height of 2 to 3 feet.

I employed Triostar at a client's home in a bed that was composed of some played-out dwarf India hawthornes in a mass planting. My intention was to liven up the area with some much-needed color.

That autumn my client (who has impeccable taste) suggested we enhance the ginger with white impatiens. The result was a great success.

Rick Wielgorecki may be contacted at 362-0600 or wielgo@hotmail.com. 



White impatiens enhance landscaping that includes Triostar ginger. Contributed photo



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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A PUBLIC HEARING HAS BEEN SET FOR RIGHT OF WAY VACATION NEXT TO THE HUB BAJA GRILL; COUNTY STAFF LAYS OUT A PROPOSAL TO CREATE MORE PARKING FOR BEACH ACCESS 1 ON NORTH SHELL ROAD; EXTRA SPACES HAVE BEEN CREATED AT ACCESS 7



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Anyone interested in commenting on the Sarasota County Commission plan to vacate right of way by The Hub Baja Grill in Siesta Village should plan on attending a public hearing shortly after 9 a.m. on July 10 at the County Administration Center in downtown Sarasota.

The County Commission voted 3-1 on June 18 to set the date for the hearing, with Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta Key — casting the “No” vote as she did when the board voted on April 24 to approve a lawsuit settlement with Chris Brown, owner of



*The Cottage restaurant (left) is adjacent to The Hub Baja Grill on Avenida Messina in Siesta Village.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Siesta Seen

The Hub. Commission Vice Chairman Charles Hines recused himself from both votes because his law firm has represented Brown in legal matters.

Before the commission agreed to the settlement during its April 24 meeting, Patterson said, "I don't have a problem with the vacation of the right of way, [because it] does not appear to harm the public, and obviously it gives the business the opportunity to enhance itself."

What she objected to, she pointed out, was that the county vacated right of way along Ocean Boulevard to settle the first lawsuit

Brown filed against the county several years ago. "I do have a problem with somebody settling a lawsuit and coming back for another bite at the apple," she added.

Barring any comments that prompt a change in view of the majority of the board members, the public hearing is expected to be the penultimate action to resolve the lawsuit, which was filed in October 2011. The commissioners will have to cast a formal vote on the right of way vacation after members of the public have had an opportunity to speak.

Officially, the public hearing will address a county-initiated "petition to vacate, abandon,



An aerial map shows the area where Sarasota County would vacate a right of way as part of a lawsuit settlement with the owner of The Hub Baja Grill. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

discontinue, and close the County's interest in a portion of an improved 80-foot wide, platted, public right-of-way known as Columbus Boulevard, lying within Mira Mar Subdivision," a June 18 staff memo says.

That memo to the County Commission from James K. Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer, and Diane Kennedy, a real property acquisition agent for the county, points out that the vacation of the right of way "will not adversely impact roadway safety in its present configuration."

Brown's parking suit was the third he has filed against the county since the fall of 2007; all dealt with Village parking issues in one way or another.

Along with the vacated right of way, the settlement in this third lawsuit calls for the county to pay Brown \$75,000.

ANOTHER LONGTIME ISSUE

During the March 27 county board meeting, Commissioner Patterson raised a topic that has reared its head multiple times over the years: public access to the beach on North Shell Road on the key.

Patterson asked staff to investigate the situation and try to determine what county workers could do to improve it.

According to a May 1 memo from county Chief Engineer Jim Harriott to the County Commission, North Shell Road is approximately 580 feet long, connecting Higel Avenue on the northern part of Siesta Key with Beach Access 1. The



A map shows the location of North Shell Road on Siesta Key. Image courtesy Google Maps

road has open drainage and is built on an 80-foot-wide right of way. The pavement is not centered in the right of way; it is closer to the southern boundary, Harriott noted. That leaves 30 to 50 feet between the north edge of the road and the right of way, he pointed out.

In a follow-up memo on June 17, Harriott wrote that the road itself has about 22 feet of pavement within the 80 feet of right of way. "Although the width varies, the pavement is on average about 16 feet from the south right-of-way line and on average 40 feet from the north right-of-way line," he added. County staff verified those dimensions through a survey completed on June 13, he pointed out.

A privacy wall runs along the entire south side of the road; it was constructed by the Solymar subdivision, which has one driveway, Harriott continued. A house at the westerly end of

Siesta Seen

the road has two driveways, he noted. “On the north side there are 6 residences with different types of access configurations, including some circular driveways with two access points,” he wrote. The north side of the right of way is heavily vegetated. Additionally, some homeowners on both sides of the road “have unlawfully placed landscape rocks, bollards and wood stoppers within the right-of-way,” he continued.

The westerly 50 or so feet of North Shell Road is basically a park identified as Access 1, Harriott pointed out in the memo. Room is available to park only five or six vehicles perpendicular to the beach, he added.

Furthermore, only a 350-foot section of concrete sidewalk exists on the south side of the road in front of Solymar. “Pedestrians walking from Higel Avenue to the [beach] are required to travel the road surface,” he noted.

Thanks to the 80 feet of right of way and the pavement’s being closer to the southern right of way line, he continued in the June 17 memo, enough room exists “to accommodate some parking along the north edge of pavement.” A rough estimate, he wrote, indicated that up to six parallel parking spaces or 10 to 15 perpendicular spaces could be added. That work will necessitate the removal of vegetation, including some established mangroves.

In the past, Harriott continued, property owners along the north side of the road opposed any parking on that side. “To minimize needed improvements, clearing along the north right-of-way line could be done to provide a wid-

er grass parking area,” Harriott added. “This would allow vehicles to park more on the shoulder of the roadway and open the travel lanes of North Shell Road for emergency access and general traffic circulations.”

The staff recommendation, he wrote, is to clear at least 9 feet of vegetation along the North Shell Road pavement edge to allow parking off the road.

Not surprisingly — given the County Commission’s recent budget discussions — no money is available for that work. Harriott also recommended that staff create a project that could be funded at some point in the future.

WORK THAT WILL BE DONE SOON

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has announced that it is time for more maintenance on the Stickney Point bridge on the southern part of Siesta.

An FDOT news release says that the right westbound lane will be closed on Monday, June 24, and Tuesday, June 25, from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. for the work to be completed.

“Motorists are advised to use caution while in the area and to expect possible, short-term delays,” the release adds.

MORE PARKING

Key residents know that good news about parking is almost as rare as the sight of a glacier gliding through the Gulf. However, I noticed just last week that one beach access is boasting more spaces.

Siesta Seen

Thanks to a reorientation of a fence, 22 spaces are available in the new parking area at Access 7 on Beach Road. Originally, the site had 20 spots, but an email provided to me this week by Carolyn Brown, director of the county's Parks and Recreation Department, said that after staff members observed how people were using the new lot, they "decided to make a couple of small changes to better accommodate folks."

Along with the 22 extra spaces at Access 7 are two handicap-access spaces near the front door of the cottage on the property.

On May 21, Brown had sent Commissioner Patterson an email saying staff had to work with Florida Power and Light to have a light pole relocated so the parking area at Access 7 could be reconfigured. "A purchase order was just issued this past Friday and an order for post and rope has been made," Brown noted at the time.

In an email to Brown the previous day, Patterson had pointed out that the county purchased additional property at Access 7 several years ago "largely for parking. There was an agreement to limit that parking to some-



*The new parking spaces at Beach Access 7 combine with the original area to create an L-shaped lot.
Photo by Robert Hackney*


Siesta Seen

where around 40 or 50 spaces and not go west beyond the dune line,” because the county would not allow a private developer to go beyond that point as a means of protecting the environment.

Then Sarasota Audubon members and volunteers made county staff aware that the area around Access 7 had become a popular nesting place for the endangered snowy plovers.

Patterson continued in her email, “[T]he agreement was that the parking would be gradually developed and we would work with Audubon and as plover nesting developed there at the access, the path to the beach would be closed and foot traffic diverted to other accesses. I think we are still doing that and I know that many people have devoted a lot of hours to trying to protect baby plovers.”

Assistant County Administrator Lee Ann Lowery notified Patterson by email on May 21 that she had met with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission representatives about the snowy plover concerns. “I have a meeting scheduled with staff to review their suggestions for protecting this area for the plover,” Lowery added. “I am confident we can implement their recommendations.”

I have to add extra special thanks at this point to Carolyn Brown for getting the latest information to me about parking at Access 7. She always has been among the best county employees for responding quickly to my calls for help. However, she went above and beyond the call of duty this week: She and her staff were in a flurry of activity, gathering information the County Commission asked her to obtain on June 18 as part of the ongoing Warm Mineral Springs saga. 



Foliage was planted along the fence at Beach Access 7 on Siesta Key to screen the parking area from neighboring residences. File photo from September 2012



The Underpants will open on June 28 in Florida Studio Theatre's Keating Theatre. Image courtesy Florida Studio Theatre.

THE UNDERPANTS OPENS JUNE 28 AT FST

Florida Studio Theatre will present the comedy *The Underpants*, by Carl Sternheim with an adaptation by Steve Martin, beginning Friday, June 28, at 8 p.m. in the Keating Theatre.

The Underpants “combines Martin’s wacky sense of humor” with intelligent insight into human nature, a news release says.

FST’s Artistic Director Richard Hopkins adds in the release, “Steve Martin has taken a German Expressionistic comedy from the first half of the 20th century and adapted it into a delightful, insightful, fully relevant, always humorous, offbeat comedy that speaks to the contemporary American consciousness. And yes, it’s funny,” the release adds.

FST’s production features returning company members Gil Brady and Daryl Embry. Brady last appeared in FST’s Cabaret production of *Reel Music*; Embry returns after last appearing in *Perfect Wedding*, the release notes. Making their FST debut will be company members Jennifer Joan Thompson, Mary Ann Conk, Danny Bernardy and Chet Carlin. Conk, although a newcomer to FST, has performed in *The Underpants* once before — at Geva Theatre in Rochester, NY, the release continues.

Tickets for *The Underpants* will be on sale through July 28; they may be purchased by phone at 366-9000, online at FloridaStudioTheatre.org, or by visiting the box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.



The Underpants is a comedy by Carl Sternheim, adapted by Steve Martin. Image courtesy Florida Studio Theatre

I LOVE SARASOTA BAY PHOTO CONTEST OPEN TO ADULTS, CHILDREN

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

The winning submissions will be displayed at the regional festival on Saturday, Nov. 2, at Ken Thompson Park in Sarasota, the festival has announced. Attendees will have an opportunity not only to enjoy viewing the entries, but they also will be able to vote on a People's Choice award winner, a news release notes. "The photo contest celebrates the beauty and importance of Sarasota Bay," the release adds.

Contest guidelines are posted at sarasotabay-waterfestival.com.

"Photography is a terrific way to express the emotional connection many people feel about Sarasota Bay," said Randy Moore, the festival director, in the release. "That can include photos of birds, aquatic life and other wildlife

as well as images of people enjoying water sports and recreational activities."

The contest winners from the three age divisions in 2012 were Makeala Frankford of Sarasota, Mary Lou Johnson of Longboat Key, Victoria Holcomb of Sarasota, Kristina Carreras of Bradenton, Caroline Griffith of Sarasota, Larry George of Lakewood Ranch, Dick Plaff of Sarasota, Ronald Hecox of Parrish and Terry Frankford of Sarasota. Makeala is Terry's granddaughter, the release notes.

Other highlights planned for this year's water festival include the first Dragon Boat Races on Sarasota Bay, live music, artists selling unique gift items, practical workshops promoting bay-friendly living, dining options presented by food trucks and local restaurants, vintage boat displays, activities for youngsters and a multitude of exhibits promoting recreational activities associated with Sarasota Bay, the release adds.



Eagle by Sandy Hedgepeth was a 2012 contest winner. Contributed photo

GERSHWIN TO BE PRESENT FOR PREMIERE OF *GETTYSBURG ANTHEM*

Composer Alan Gershwin will be in Sarasota for the Florida premiere of his *Gettysburg Anthem*, a musical celebration of the Gettysburg Address, the choral group Gloria Musicae has announced.

The premiere will be a highlight of *Celebrating America*, “Gloria Musicae’s Independence Day concert paying tribute to American composers and to the American spirit,” on July 4 at 4 p.m. in the First United Methodist Church, 104 S. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota, a news release says.

The multimedia concert, featuring the Gloria Musicae Singers, will showcase works by George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Stephen Foster and the Andrews Sisters, as well as songs made famous during the Big Band era, the release adds.

“We’re honored that Alan Gershwin, the son of the great George Gershwin, and a celebrated composer in his own right, will be here to share his inspired homage to Lincoln’s milestone address,” says Dr. Joseph Holt, Gloria Musicae’s artistic director, in the release. “We’re pairing this dynamic, moving work with a rousing choral rendition of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, so it promises to be a choral tour de force.”

“For decades, Alan Gershwin has paid tribute to the work of his legendary father while adding to the repertoire of American music with his own critically acclaimed compositions,” the release points out.

A fully orchestrated version of *Gettysburg Anthem* premiered in 2009 at a Kennedy Center concert celebrating Abraham Lincoln’s 200th



Alan Gershwin/Contributed photo

birthday, the release notes. The present version, for tenor solo, chorus, organ and trumpet, debuted in 2012 at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington D.C., the church regularly attended by the Lincoln family following his inauguration in 1861, it adds.

Tickets are \$35 for general admission and \$15 for students with ID. Ample, free parking is available at the Zenith Garage on Mira Mar Court, the release notes. For tickets, call 360-7399 or visit www.gloriamusicae.org.

WOMAN'S EXCHANGE AWARDS MAJOR GRANT TO PMP/SUNCOAST

The board of directors of the Woman's Exchange Inc., recently awarded The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast (PMP/Suncoast) a \$15,000 grant to fund the organization's Education Outreach Program.

PMP/Suncoast's development director, Margaret Ann Behrends, explains in a news release that the three-week, in-school residency is entirely funded by PMP/Suncoast through grants, sponsorships and individual patrons.

"We're honored that the Woman's Exchange has acknowledged this program again this year with such a generous grant," says Beh-

rends in the release. "Thanks to the grant we received from the Woman's Exchange last year, our in-school residency program reached nearly 4,000 local students. This is a wonderful way to celebrate the advent of our 10th anniversary!"

Now in its fifth year, PMP/Suncoast's Education Outreach Program brings professional teaching musicians — alumni of The Perlman Music Program — into area schools in Sarasota and Manatee counties during three separate, one-week residencies. Members of the acclaimed Ariel Quartet were the art-




(From left) Fran Lambert, president of The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast (PMP/Suncoast); Karen Koblenz, executive director of the Woman's Exchange; and Elizabeth Power, executive director of PMP/Suncoast. Contributed photo

ists-in-residence for the 2012-2013 season, the release notes. They will return for the 2013-2014 season during October, February and May to present interactive performances and hands-on training for area music students and their teachers, the release continues.

Behrends adds in the release that the program served 23 schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels during the 2012-2013 season. "Our Education Outreach Program provides area music students and educators the rare opportunity to witness the creative process up close and to interact with professional musicians on a personal level. Some students may decide to further their music studies. All will leave these sessions bet-

ter informed, and perhaps more passionate, about classical music. This approach is the *raison d'être* of The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast. We're not simply training classical musicians of tomorrow — we're building the classical music audiences of the future."

The PMP/Suncoast Education Outreach Program was launched in October 2009 with the support of The Juilliard School, Columbia University's Teacher College, Toby and Itzhak Perlman and the faculty of The Perlman Music Program.

For more information about The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast, visit www.PMPSuncoast.org or contact Elizabeth Power, executive director, at 955-4942. 



Margaret Ann Behrends, development director of The Perlman Music Program/Suncoast, and Jules Rose, board member of the program. Contributed photo



The Women's Interfaith Network and the Center for Religious Tolerance will host a program on June 22 at the North Sarasota Library, located at 2801 Newtown Blvd. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST KENYAN WOMEN TOPIC OF PROGRAM

The Women's Interfaith Network of Sarasota/Bradenton and the Center for Religious Tolerance will present *Stories of Hope from Three Generations — Eliminating Violence Against Women In Kenya* on Saturday, June 22, from 10 a.m. to noon at the North Sarasota Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd., Sarasota.

The featured speakers will be Marcella Moraa; her daughter, Jackie Ogega; and Ogega's daughter, Norah Moturi, the organizations have announced. The women will be discussing *Obogima*, a Kisii term meaning "the dignity of life," a news release says.

"Through [*Obogima*] women of faith gather weekly in a rural village in southwestern Kenya to tell their stories of pain and violence and share their hope for healing their trauma and reclaiming their inherent dignity," the news release adds.

The program is free and open to the public.

Eliminating Violence Against Women In Kenya: Stories of Hope from Three Generations

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

Marcella Moraa, her daughter Jackie Ogega, and Jackie's daughter, Norah Moturi.

OBOGIMA is a Kisii term which means the dignity of life. This theme is at the center of the *Obogima* program that Mpanzi launched in 2011 with support from the Center for Religious Tolerance. Through this program, women of faith gather together every week in a rural village in southwestern Kenya to tell their personal stories of pain and violence. These women also share hope in healing their trauma and reclaiming their inherent dignity. Please join Marcella Moraa from Kisii, Kenya, who brings us stories of hope from the *Obogima* program. Marcella will tell her own personal story, together with her daughter Jackie Ogega and granddaughter Norah Moturi, on how they have finally eliminated Female Genital Cutting in their family in 3 generations. Come let us share in faith and hope.



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TEMPLE EMANU-EL PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION CONTINUES


Registration is continuing for the 2013-2014 year at Temple Emanu-El Preschool, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, the Temple has announced.

The academic year begins Monday, Aug. 19, a news release notes.

“Nationally accredited and the recipient of Gold Seal certification by Sarasota County’s Early Learning Coalition, Temple Emanu-El Preschool offers secular and Jewish early-childhood education for ages 18 months through 5 years” — including voluntary pre-kindergarten — “in a nurturing, clean, safe environment,” the release adds.

Traditional preschool hours are available, as well as extended care from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., it notes.

Students enjoy weekly classes in gymnastics, karate, Spanish, music/movement and computers, “as well as Shabbat celebrations with Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman and an optional Jewish enrichment class that teaches about prayer, holidays, the Hebrew language, Bible stories, God and Jewish values through engaging, hands-on activities,” the release adds.

For more information or to schedule a tour of Temple Emanu-El Preschool, contact Elaine Sharrock at 377-8074 or preschool@sarasota-temple.org. 

“It may be necessary temporarily to accept a lesser evil, but one must never label a necessary evil as good.” — *Margaret Mead*

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Friday Fest at the Van Wezel, featuring Yesterdayze

June 21, 5 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail. Admission: Free. Information: 953-3368 or VanWezel.org.

21+
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.

21+
JUNE

Dabbert Gallery presents *Summer Showcase*

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

22
JUNE

WSLR presents Ben Prestage's *One Man Band*

June 22, 8:30 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court. Admission: \$10 in advance or \$12 at door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

28+
JUNE

Florida Studio Theatre presents *The Underpants*

June 28 to July 11 (times vary), Keating Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$18 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

12
JULY

Golden Gates: *Traditional Song and Dance of Russia and Ukraine*

July 12, 7 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 104 S. Pineapple Ave. Admission: Donation. Information: 955-0935 or firstsrq.com.

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



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SARASOTA.com
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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

'MAKE WAY FOR DUCKLINGS'

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.