

THE SARASOTA

No. 42 — July 4, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



**THE FIGHT GOES ON
EVEN BETTER FINAL NUMBERS
ANOTHER UNFUNDED MANDATE**

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

Because Independence Day falls on our normal deadline day, we decided to follow the lead of other weekly publications and move up our latest issue's release by one day. That also gives you extra time to spend perusing our latest offerings before the July 12 News Leader arrives in your inboxes.

And while we have plenty of city and county news as usual this week, I especially want to encourage you to check out the News Briefs. In that compilation, you will see the announcement about the newest member of our staff: Roger Drouin has signed on to become county editor.

After long stints of getting to know all the inner workings of City Hall, Roger is eager to take on this new challenge, and we are doubly eager to welcome him.

Both Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker and I will continue to handle some of the county issues we have been following while Roger settles in, but having Roger take over the county beat will enable Cooper to focus again on the types of in-depth stories and political reporting he does so well, and I can spend more time delving into the many activities taking place on Siesta Key.

We do wish all of you a very safe July Fourth. Kevin Cooper, executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, reassured members of an island organization this week that the weather forecast looks good for Independence Day fireworks. We have our fingers crossed for everyone anticipating the annual spectacles that brilliantly illuminate the sky up and down our coastline.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher





THE FIGHT GOES ON



EYEGGLASSES MAY BREAK THE CYCLE

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THE FIGHT GOES ON



Former volunteer Greg Para discusses the Save Our Seabirds situation at Saturday's rally. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker.

THE CITY COMMISSION WANTS A DEEPER PROBE OF SAVE OUR SEABIRDS

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

After listening to wildly conflicting claims about the quality of care offered to injured birds at Save Our Seabirds, the Sarasota City Commission voted unanimously Monday, July 1, to deepen its probe of the City Island nonprofit.

For weeks, former volunteer Greg Para has been leveling serious charges against SOS, describing a facility where rats are killing caged birds and where injured birds are being euthanized more quickly than neces-

sary. Para alleges that the standard of care at SOS has taken a nose-dive since the firing of founder Lee Fox this spring, and that the organization is violating the terms of its lease with the city.

After hearing Para's allegations, the City Commission requested a status report on the operation, which was delivered Monday by city Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker. On June 20, she and another staff member

“ *I can say that I'm very uncomfortable with what I've heard so far.* ”

Paul Caragiulo
Commissioner
City of Sarasota

conducted an unannounced inspection of the facility; Tucker told the commission they found no reason to be concerned. There were no dead birds, no visible rats and the bird hospital was full of patients. She said that, overall, the facility was “in the best condition we have seen it.”

SOS CEO David Pilston also took part in the presentation, laying out the organization’s long-term vision, which includes greater school outreach and an emphasis on generating revenue in addition to the nonprofit’s

traditional focus on “the three Rs”: rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing injured seabirds.

That rosy picture came under swift attack.

Cally Lajeunesse, who began working as an SOS admissions attendant in August 2012, described a very different facility. She testified that she had seen rats “brutally killing” birds and stealing their food and that one ceiling was covered with a noxious black mold. “The birds are actually breathing in this black mold,” she said.



A bird perches on a wooden railing in its cage at Save Our Seabirds. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“I’m an animal lover, and I couldn’t stand to see that mistreatment,” Lajeunesse told *The Sarasota News Leader* after the meeting. She said she tried to get the attention of SOS superiors, but they wouldn’t listen. “They didn’t see it as a priority.” She also disagreed with the new SOS euthanization policy, which she said led to black garbage bags full of dead birds, and by May she had become so fed up that she quit.

“It’s just not OK,” Lajeunesse told the commission. She said she had heard stories from visitors who were shocked by the conditions. “I don’t understand why something hasn’t been done.”

When questioned by Commissioner Susan Chapman, Tucker said she had seen no black

mold at the facility. Her PowerPoint presentation included several pictures of the property, none of which showed any mold, but Lajeunesse offered commissioners a photo of the mold she had taken with her phone.

“This is a storage room that is not used,” noted Pilston, dismissing the image. “This is a room that has been in disrepair for many years, and it’s not used for anything.”

“I can say that I’m very uncomfortable with what I’ve heard so far,” Commissioner Paul Caragiulo said after seeing the mold photo.

Mayor Shannon Snyder asked Tucker if she had copies of any inspections performed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation



The buildings and walkways have a rustic appearance at Save Our Seabirds. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Commission (FWC) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the two entities responsible for managing animal rehab permits. Tucker had not asked for those. Did she obtain copies of any complaints lodged against SOS with those agencies? No, she had not.

Snyder later made a motion to ask staff to gather copies of any inspections or complaints and to have regulators conduct new inspections. He also called for a code inspector to visit SOS to evaluate the mold situation. Caragiulo quickly seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Tucker said she would return with the necessary information in the next couple of months.

Para has also alleged that since Fox's departure, SOS has been operating without the proper permits. Pilston told the *News Leader* last week that regulators allow for a "grace period" when a permit-holding individual (in this case, Fox) leaves an organization. He said FWC had recommended a new permit application for approval, and that it was just a matter of time before the permits would be in order.

Tucker testified Monday that SOS had applied for its new permits May 3 and that she had contacted the state and federal agencies to ask if they had any pending plans to shut down SOS. Their response was that they had "no intention of closing down the facilities."

Para began volunteering at SOS last July, after returning from a military deployment in Afghanistan. Eventually, he started spending six days a week at the facility. He told the *News Leader* the experience was part of his "healing" process. But that all changed when Fox was let go.


"I would not even be here if the 27-year legacy of Lee Fox was not being tarnished," he told the commission. "I would not be here if I was not being treated poorly as a veteran." He said city staff lacked the qualifications needed to evaluate the condition of the birds at SOS, but he also emphasized that he does not want to see the facility shut down.

SUPPORTING FOX AND PARA

Para's comments were echoed at a rally held outside SOS Saturday morning, two days before the commission meeting. A few dozen former volunteers, staffers and bird lovers gathered with signs bearing slogans such as "Bring back founder Lee Fox," "SOS is operating without permits" and "Stop killing birds! Save them."

Activists with Florida Veterans for Common Sense were also on hand, supporting Para. President Gene Jones told the *News Leader* the organization felt Para "was perhaps treated a little shoddily" and that animal issues are important to veterans because of how effective animal therapy can be for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Volunteers from the Cat Depot, the no-kill cat rescue organization, also showed up.

Asked Tuesday for his reaction to the City Commission's decision, Para told the *News Leader* he was pleased. "The birds are going to win," he said. "It's a win that the city took it seriously enough to make sure that the birds are going to get the proper care."

That doesn't mean he's going to rest on his laurels till the next commission action: "We're not going to stop." 



ACROSS THE COUNTY, PROPERTY VALUES HAVE INCREASED EVEN MORE THAN PRELIMINARY FIGURES INDICATED IN JUNE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sarasota County Property Appraiser Bill Furst provided a sneak peak of the good news at the end of his June 21 budget presentation to the County Commission, but his staff made it official on July 1: County property values are up for 2013 — ranging from a 4.22 percent increase for Sarasota County to about 6.74 percent for the city of North Port.

For the county, that means an extra \$4.4 million in general fund revenue for the County Commission to consider spending when it meets again on July 10 to set the tentative millage rates for the 2014 fiscal year, according to Steve Botelho, the county's chief financial planning officer.

The preliminary countywide values, released in early June, showed an increase of 3.37 percent for the county, Botelho pointed out in a July 1 email to *The Sarasota News Leader*.

The latest news from Furst's office means an extra \$931,000 above what was indicated by the June figure, Botelho added.

In Sarasota County, the total value of taxable property is \$40,791,927,760, compared to \$39,129,815,981 in 2012.

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

EVEN BETTER FINAL NUMBERS

Higher property values all across Sarasota County will mean more operating funds for local government boards. Photo by Norman Schimmel

This is the first increase in property value for the county since the start of the Great Recession. The total value plummeted approximately 40 percent because of the economy's struggles, county commissioners have pointed out.

The increases for the other taxing entities in the county for 2013 are as follow:

- City of Sarasota: up 4.8 percent, with a total taxable value of \$7,205,951,871.
- City of Venice: up 3.87 percent, with a total taxable value of \$2,803,751,805.
- Town of Longboat Key: up 2.9 percent, with a total taxable value of \$3,400,203,897.
- Sarasota County School Board; up 4.65 percent, with a total taxable value of \$43,671,190,496.
- Sarasota Memorial Hospital Board: up 4.22 percent, with a total taxable value of \$40,812,665,951.

The city of North Port's total taxable value for 2013 is \$2,418,931,525, compared to \$2,266,049,616 in 2012.

For Sarasota County in 2013, the just value of all real property — including agricultural and conservation par-

cels and those classified as historic but used for commercial purposes — is \$52,353,764,300.

The total for all personal property is \$2,098,157,896.



The County Commission is scheduled to meet again at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 10, to discuss the budget, with a number of issues left outstanding from its last workshop on June 21. Among those are whether the board will approve County Administrator Randall Reid's proposed 3 percent merit pay increase for non-

union employees and how to allocate about \$8 million freed up by the reduction of its operating reserve fund from a 90-day value to a 75-day value.


The commissioners have made it clear in workshops over the past couple of months that they do not intend to raise the total millage rate of 3.3912 it set for the 2013 fiscal year.

One final budget workshop is set for Aug. 20. The board will hold formal public hearings on the 2014 fiscal year budget on Sept. 9 in Sarasota and on Sept. 23 in Venice. Both sessions are scheduled for 5:30 p.m.

The new fiscal year will begin Oct. 1. 



Sarasota County Chief Financial Operating Officer Steve Botelho. File photo

A tall, multi-story building with many windows and arched balconies, identified as the Terrace Building in downtown Sarasota. It is a light-colored building with dark accents around the windows and balconies. The building is situated on a street corner with traffic lights and a street sign visible. The sky is clear and blue.

“ *The big issue is the 5,000 [annual] road tests that we will have to handle.*

Barbara Ford-Coates
Tax Collector
Sarasota County

”

ANOTHER UNFUNDED MANDATE

Renovations of the Tax Collector's Office will be necessary in the Terrace Building in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Scott Proffitt

THE TAX COLLECTOR'S OFFICE IS ESTIMATING IT WILL COST \$4.5 MILLION IN FACILITIES EXPENSES FOR IT TO TAKE OVER ALL DRIVER LICENSE SERVICES BY JUNE 2015, AS REQUIRED BY THE LEGISLATURE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Because the Florida Legislature approved a 2011 bill mandating that county tax collectors take over all driver license services no later than June 2015, the Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office will need about \$1 million to renovate existing facilities and probably a maximum of \$3.5 million for a new, central location to serve customers, Tax Collector Barbara Ford-Coates has told the Sarasota County Commission.

In two years, she explained, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehi-

cles no longer will provide those services at any other location, including its facility at 601 S. Pompano Ave. — off Fruitville Road — or the AAA office at 3844 Bee Ridge Road.

In presenting her budget for the 2014 fiscal year, Ford-Coates said she also has planned for four new employees next year and another eight for the 2015 fiscal year to make the transition possible.

With her office taking over all the drivers' license services, she told the County Commis-



Sarasota County Tax Collector Barbara Ford-Coates (right) chats with county Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent during a break in the June 21 budget workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney

sion on June 21, she is anticipating an extra 45,000 walk-in customers at her offices, resulting in a 30 percent increase in transaction time.

Already, Ford-Coates continued, she and her staff have been working with Sarasota County Property Appraiser Bill Furst about remodeling her offices in the Terrace Building in downtown Sarasota — with Furst moving employees out of the first-floor space they have been occupying. Remodeling will be necessary as well at the R.L. Anderson Administration Center in Venice.

The changes in those two buildings will cost about \$1 million, Ford-Coates said.

Another challenge downtown will be parking, she pointed out. Her employees and county staff, she added, also are working “to determine the best solution to that.”

However, she noted, “The big issue is the 5,000 [annual] road tests that we will have to handle.”

Among the possibilities for a central office, she continued, are pinpointing a site the county already owns, leasing a facility or purchas-



*Gulf Gate Library opened in its temporary space in Westfield Sarasota Square Mall in late February.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

ing property near Interstate 75 and constructing a building. Her goal, she said, is to settle on “the best, most cost-effective way” to provide the tests. Already, she noted, it is apparent a person needing to take a road test will have to make an appointment for that.

Because of the changes in staffing, she continued, her budget probably will have to go up “a little over a million dollars” in each fiscal year beginning in FY 2016, depending upon whether the county decides to pay for the capital expenses outright or bond them.

“The unfortunate piece of this,” Ford-Coates pointed out, is that the fees her office collects are projected to increase only \$400,000 a year. “This is an unfunded mandate, unquestionably,” she told the commissioners.

Along with driver licenses, the Tax Collector’s Office sells hunting and fishing licenses and handles business taxes and motor vehicle registrations.

However, the Florida Tax Collectors Association has made its No. 1 legislative priority a change in how driver license fees are collected, Ford-Coates pointed out. Right now, county tax collectors impose an extra \$6.25 fee to serve customers seeking new licenses or renewals. The rest of the money goes to the state. “That’s not fair,” she added. The state needs “to provide the funding to fully cover the cost of our operations.”

Otherwise, Ford-Coates told the board, “I do have to say that it makes total sense to me to move drivers’ licenses to the local level. ... It is the right place to provide these services to our citizens.” Nonetheless, she added, “It’s painful to get there.”



A map shows the location of the county's R.L. Anderson Administration Center in Venice. Image courtesy Google Maps

When Commissioner Christine Robinson asked whether the state’s tax collectors are working with the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) on the fee change at the legislative level, Ford-Coates responded that she had asked the County Commission in the past to include that as one of its top legislative priorities.

Robinson asked County Administrator Randall Reid to make sure the county staff members who oversee the commission’s legislative priorities provide the board an update on those efforts relative to the driver license fees.

Both Robinson and Commissioner Nora Patterson — who are active in the FAC — said they would work with that association, too, to try to rectify the situation.

CENTRAL SITE OPTIONS

Regarding a new central location for drivers’ license tests Commissioner Charles Hines suggested Ford-Coates and her staff look at the

possibility of utilizing a facility near a commercial center, which would make it convenient for people to do errands or some shopping as well. That also would be a boon to the commercial enterprises, he noted.

The Gulf Gate Library's temporary location at Westfield Sarasota Square Mall, for example, Hines said, has been beneficial to both library patrons and the businesses in the shopping center.

Then Patterson suggested the possibility of the Tax Collector's Office leasing the 18,000-square-foot storefront in the mall after the new Gulf Gate library is completed in late 2014. "You might just take a look at that space," she told Ford-Coates.

"We'll look at it," Ford-Coates responded, noting, though, that the goal will be convenience, enabling people to complete their driving tests in as little time as possible.

However, Robinson pointed out that, because that is a commercial space, the cost would be high.

"I thought we got a super deal," Patterson replied, referring to the library lease.

Robinson said that, as an attorney, she had handled commercial leases in the past. Such long-term leases have escalators, she noted. The library lease "was outside the normal because it was a temporary lease."

"I figured they also sort of looked at us as a magnet and were really quite anxious to have [the library]," Patterson said of the deal with Westfield.

The lease calls for the county to pay \$5,441.58 per month, plus \$80 a month for water/sew-

er and fire detection services. The lease went into effect as of Dec. 15, 2012, and it ends Jan. 31, 2015, according to a memo provided to the County Commission in November 2012. The Westfield Sarasota Square Mall offered the county a cost per square foot that was \$7 less than other sites staff investigated, according to a staff report.


Reid told the commissioners that Ed Gable, the county's director of general services, would be looking at all the possibilities for a central location for the drivers' license center Ford-Coates needs. "We will get the best deal we can," he added.

GENERAL BUDGET DETAILS

In her presentation to the County Commission, Ford-Coates pointed out that the county's general fund does not cover her office's expenses. That funding comes from the \$15 million in fees her staff takes in for various services, she said.

Moreover, Ford-Coates noted, "Our costs per capita continue to be significantly lower than all other tax collectors on the west coast of Florida."

Last year, she said, her office returned about \$8.5 million to the county.

Her projected budget for FY 2014 shows operating costs up 6.3 percent from FY 2013, Ford-Coates said, with 4.8 percent of that related to rising healthcare expenses and the 3 percent merit pay raise Reid has proposed for county employees. The remainder is for the two new employees she is proposing to add in both her Sarasota and Venice offices as her staff prepares to take over all the driver license responsibilities. 

This may take a while.

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EYEGLASSES MAY BREAK THE CYCLE

The Judge Lynn Silvertooth Judicial Center (right) is close to the Sarasota Police Department (left) and the Sarasota County Jail. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A CHAPLAIN AT THE COUNTY JAIL WANTS TO REDUCE THE RECIDIVISM RATE BY ENABLING AND ENCOURAGING INMATES TO READ

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Research from a decade ago indicates jail and prison inmates who read well have a significantly greater chance of never coming back “into the system.” In fact, states use the literacy rates of fifth-grade students to predict the number of prison cells they will need in the future.

If a prisoner is literate, he has a 16 percent chance of recidivism. If the prisoner is functionally illiterate, that number skyrockets to 70 percent. Reading ability is a major, if not

the major factor in the “revolving door syndrome,” in which people oscillate in a cycle from the street to the emergency room to the jail.

Dave Norris, a chaplain at the Sarasota County Jail, is developing a promising effort to stop the revolving door with one simple tool — eyeglasses.

“You can’t take up a self-improvement program, work on the GED or read the Bible if you can’t see the words.”

Dave Norris
Chaplain
Sarasota County Jail

“We provide about 300 pairs of reading glasses per month,” he said. “With roughly 1,000 people in jail,

that means 30 percent don't have the ability to read because they need glasses."

For some of the inmates, getting a pair of glasses is a life-changing event. "You can't take up a self-improvement program, work on the GED or read the Bible if you can't see the words," Norris noted.

It has taken a couple of years for Norris to recognize the problem and then work out the kinks. "This began about four years ago in church, during Lent, when the priest suggested doing something positive," he explained. "I looked at a variety of ministries and then the jail ministry."

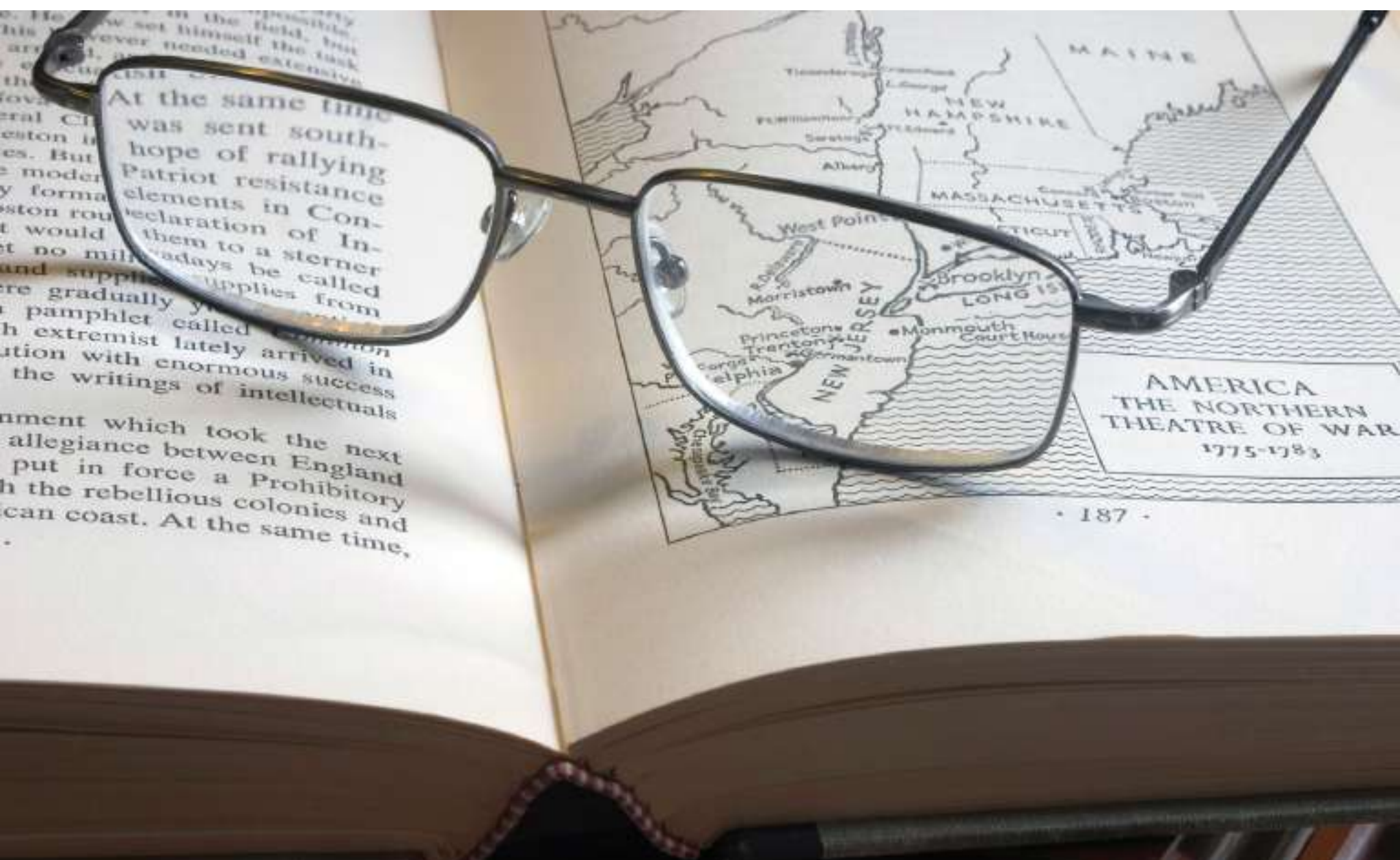
Norris began counseling prisoners and learning the rules. When a prisoner asked for a pair of reading glasses, Norris returned with a pair

but was told only plastic lenses and frames were permitted. The results were so positive, he formed a nonprofit foundation in March of this year to broaden the initiative. It is called the Inmate Ministry Foundation.

"We're applying for grants and working on fundraising," he said.

Norris found a vendor willing to sell seven pairs of glasses for \$2.50. He needs to build an inventory because non-prescription glasses come in strengths ranging from 1 to 350.

By this time next year, Norris would like to provide the service to 10 county jails in Southwest Florida. "Most [inmates] can read at some level. I know very few are totally illiterate," he said. "But the level generally stops [depending on] when they left the education system."



A chaplain has started a program to provide glasses to jail inmates. Photo from www.morguefile.com

MAKING USE OF LITERACY

Being able to see the page does not do an inmate much good if there are no pages to read. Norris also is working with Goodwill Industries and the Sarasota County Library System to stock the jail library. So far, he has been able to put 7,000 new books at the inmates' disposal.


Not all of them are of the self-help or detective fiction variety. There are children's books in the mix to help start another of Norris' initiatives — Read to Me.

Children younger than 12 are not allowed to visit the jail. So Norris wants to make a video of an inmate reading a book to his or her child and even get a bus pass so the child can visit the library and use the computer to view the DVD.

"We've got *Goodnight Moon*, *Is Your Mama a Llama*, *Runaway Bunny*, *Alphabet Rescue*," he said. "All of this ties together — the glasses, the library, the Read to Me."

Sarasota County Jail personnel do not screen inmates for literacy, but they do ask all prisoners if they have children under the age of 10.

"There's a few hundred," said Norris. "And this may be the only way for those kids to see their dad."

All of this work is in a formative stage right now. Norris is developing a funding plan, buying a computer to make the DVDs, acquiring an inventory of eyeglasses and keeping about 400 books per month going into the jail library. He can be reached at 888-985-3619 (a toll-free number) or at inmateministryfoundation.org. 

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Tonya was the nurse who prepped Linda for surgery after she was hit by a drunk driver while walking with her husband and their dog. In spite of her pain and the anxiety that precedes any surgical procedure, Linda gazed up at the nurse and immediately felt at ease. "You have a beautiful smile," she said. That's when Tonya shared with Linda the person responsible for her beautiful smile, Dr. Christine Koval.

For over 25 years, Dr. Koval has been one of the area's most trusted experts in creating beautiful, natural smiles using the latest advances in restorative, cosmetic, laser and general dentistry. Most new patients come to her based on referrals from people who just can't stop smiling.

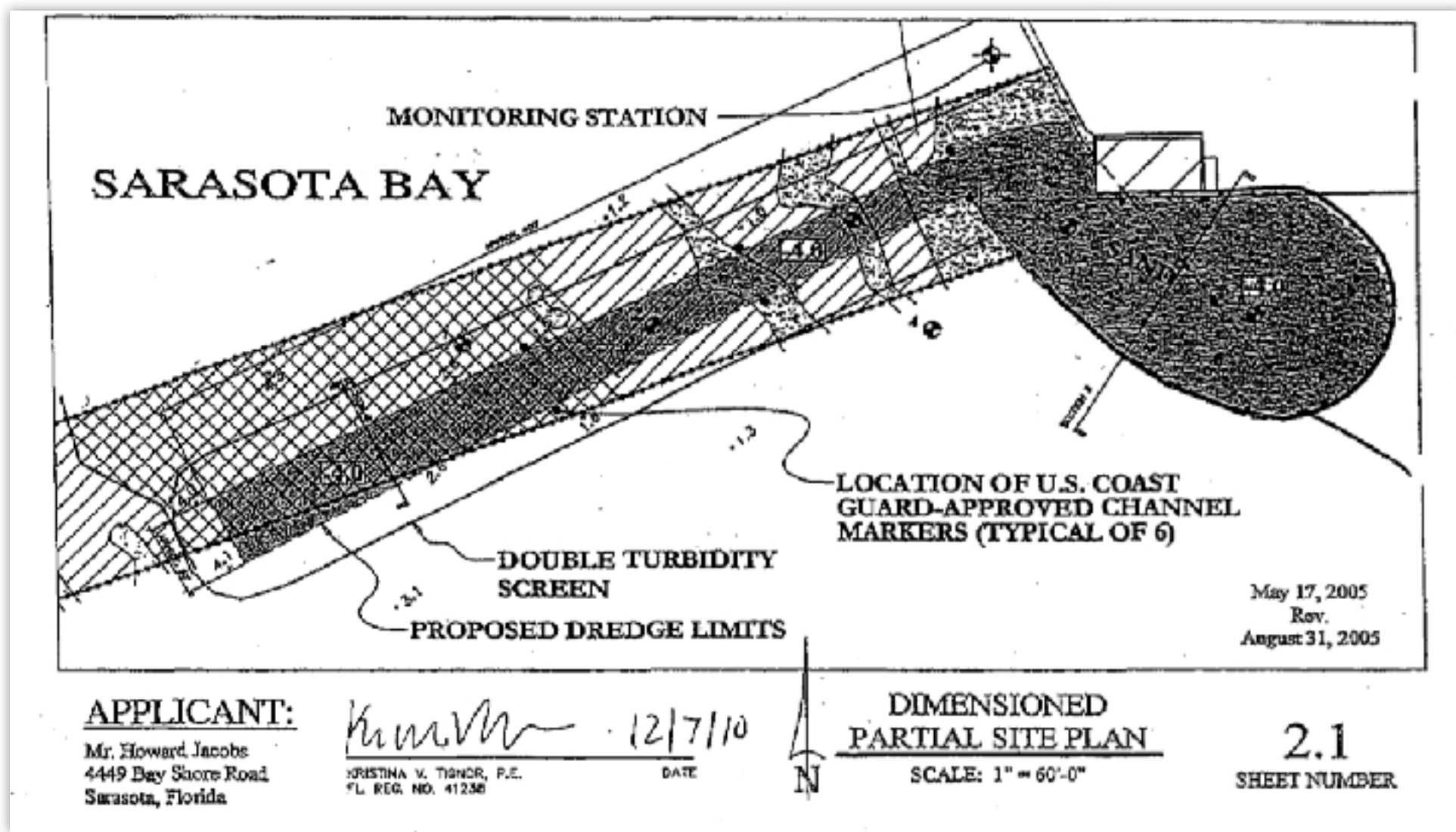
Linda turned to Dr. Koval to repair her smile and jaw which was so misaligned she couldn't chew her food properly. "Tonya's comforting smile and advice gave me hope and direction," she says. "I'm so grateful to her, and of course to Dr. Koval. Now I have a smile that I love to share with everyone I meet."

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DEFINITIONS SKEWER DREDGE DREAM



An engineer's drawing shows a partial site plan for the dredging of a channel associated with property on Bay Shore Road. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

THE CITY COMMISSION DENIES THE REQUEST OF THE OWNER OF THE SECOND-LARGEST RESIDENCE IN THE CITY TO REOPEN A CHANNEL INTO HIS YACHT BASIN

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The guy who owns the largest private house in Sarasota received an unexpected setback Monday, July 1, when the City Commission refused to approve his plan to re-dredge a channel into his yacht basin.

James Armour owns the home at 4449 Bay Shore Road, a 39,000-square-foot domicile patterned after the casino in Monte Carlo. The only residence larger in Sarasota County is about a mile up the road at John Ringling's old place, the Cà d'Zan.

Armour, like John Ringling, wanted to dock his yacht outside his house. But unlike Ringling, Armour has to cross a seagrass flat to get there. His attorney, Deborah Getzoff, showed the City Commission photographs of an old channel and asked for a "maintenance dredge" permit back in May.

But how "old" must a channel become before it is not a simple matter of "maintenance" to make it function? There was testimony and video evidence given by Jono Miller — head



A map shows the location of the house at 4449 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

of environmental studies at New College — that you can walk straight across the “channel” at low tide and not get your ankles wet. Whatever was there is now totally filled in and covered with flourishing seagrass.

Armour would like to cut a trench 400 feet down to a level 4 feet below mean lower low water (the sounding used on charts). The request was delivered last May. A stir erupted in City Hall over the definition of the word “maintenance” — and a second stir resulted when city and county staff disagreed over who actually has the power to issue or deny a permit.

The city’s zoning code, while brief, is explicit: “There shall be no dredging operations seaward beyond established mean highwater [sic] lines, except for those dredging operations necessary to maintain boat channels and basins.”

Armour first tried to get permission from the county, but he was turned down 5-0 by the

County Commission. “It is my understanding that the County Commission ruled that the channel is no longer there,” wrote Deputy City Attorney Mike Connolly. “Consequently there is no channel to maintain with the dredge.”

REPLACING A BURNED-DOWN HOUSE

Even if no channel exists today, does that mean new owners cannot reopen an old channel? At what point does “maintenance” end and “restoration” begin? Tim Litchet, director of neighborhood and development services for the city, said the existing zoning code for the City of Sarasota does not define “maintenance.”

A dictionary says it is an activity to keep something in working order. If it is not in working order, then it must be “restored.” Litchet used the example of a house that burned down to its slab. “Under existing zoning interpretation we would view the reconstruction as new construction, and not maintenance,” he wrote in a memo.

“When the channel is gone, there is nothing there to maintain,” he told the city commissioners on July 1.

“In my 25 years with the city, I cannot recall any citizen ever requesting a 400 foot ‘maintenance dredge’ to get to the inter-coastal waterway [sic], in a channel that has nearly completely silted in and now has sea grass growing in the area where the channel was located.”

Tim Litchet
Director of Neighborhood and
Development Services
City of Sarasota

Lawyer Getzoff disagreed. She showed the commission a series of pictures and said the channel was visible as recently as 2005. And in 2009, there was a “remnant channel” leading to the boat basin at 4449 Bay Shore. “The state says if the channel was legally done originally ... it can be maintained,” she added. “It’s a riparian right; it was originally legally done. And we have an easement from the trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund ...”

“In my 25 years with the city, I cannot recall any citizen ever requesting a 400 foot ‘maintenance dredge’ to get to the inter-coastal waterway [sic], in a channel that has nearly completely silted in and now has sea grass growing in the area where the channel was located,” Litchet wrote in a June 19 memo to City Manager Tom Barwin.



New College Professor Jono Miller addresses the County Commission earlier this year. File photo



Environmental regulations have been designed to help seagrass flourish, because of its importance in the cycle of sea life. Image courtesy of NOAA

CUTTING TO THE QUICK OF IT

In May, staff requested commission guidance about whether the city should adopt the county's standards or retain its sovereign right over dredging in the bay. In July, staff members returned to the City Commission to ask for more guidance about what constitutes maintenance as they refine a new ordinance.

Mayor Shannon Snyder was not having any of it. "We are trying to write an ordinance while we're holding these folks up," he said. "We're holding these folks up, and we're going to court. They came in under easier rules, and now we're trying to change the rules."

Commissioner Susan Chapman did not buy that. "I'm not at all worried about the term 'maintenance,'" she said. "It's clear maintenance does not cover where a channel does

not exist. Even Ms. Getzoff talked about the remnant of a channel."

Commissioners asked for more information before making any decisions. Did the state advertise the lease of sovereign submerged land to Armour? "Is the state rubber-stamping everything," asked Commissioner Suzanne Atwell.

Chapman moved that the staff use the county ordinance's approach to maintenance dredging, and for the Armour application, staff should use the "plain and simple definition of maintenance." Atwell seconded it, and the motion passed 3-2, with Snyder and Commissioner Paul Caragiulo in the minority.

For now, James Armour will have to park his \$3.5 million Viking 74 sport fisherman yacht someplace else. **SNL**

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As a result of City Commission action this week, Unconditional Surrender will remain solitary in its bayfront eye-catching site. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION APPROVES LEASHES FOR PETS IN ALL OF PAYNE PARK; THE IWO JIMA BAYFRONT PLAZA PLAN DIES; AND TAXICAB LICENSE RENEWALS ONCE AGAIN BECOME A POLICE DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Taxicabs get a new “master,” dogs get leashes for Payne Park and a Marine Corps memorial on the bayfront goes up in political smoke: These were a few of the issues that were resolved at the July 1 meeting of the Sarasota City Commission.

HACKS GET NEW REGULATOR

The annual renewal of licenses for taxicabs creates a madhouse in the Sarasota City Clerk and Auditor’s Office as “a great convergence” occurs annually just before the Oct. 1 start of the new fiscal year.

The renewals were a police function, but when the old police station proved too small for the “convergence,” the function was transferred to City hall. Now it is going back to the Police Department.

“We have a brand new police station with lots of parking out front and lots of volunteers,” said Mayor Shannon Snyder. “It’s a good idea for them to have an idea who’s out there at night.”

Snyder cited several reasons for the relocation. One involved security of the clerk’s

employees. Another was the fact the city approval of the licenses is accepted without reservation by local and regional authorities.

“Currently we’re being used as a catch-all. The airport, Longboat Key, the county, all depend on us for doing background checks and everything,” he said.

Staff was told to prepare for the transition to the Police Department from the Auditor and Clerk’s Office and to make the move before Sept. 30, the end of the current fiscal year. Staff was also told to look at a new fee schedule to possibly raise more money. Right now a cab license costs \$50 to renew while the fee for a pedicab license is \$100.

NEW PARK FOR LEASHES

On July 1, Payne Park was added to the list of city parks requiring owners to keep their dogs on leashes. It joins Gillespie, Arlington and Bayfront parks, which also require leashes on dogs.

Only one member of the public came forward to speak on the proposed ordinance, and she was supportive of it. No pet owners spoke.

IWO JIMA MEMORIAL ‘PEARL HARBOR’ED

Plans by an art patron to put a sculpture of the U.S. Marines’ Iwo Jima flag raising on the bayfront were assailed Monday night, with



Dog owners long have had to keep their pets on leashes at Bayfront Park. Photo by Rachel Hackney

two commissioners deriding a scheduled special meeting of the Public Art Committee to fast track the decision.

“There are a lot of red flags here,” said City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell. “The process has been hijacked by a small number of people.”

Tom Savage was instrumental in raising funds for two bayfront sculptures, *Unconditional Surrender* and *Complexus*. But his third attempt bombed.

“*Mr. Savage has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for this community. I have never seen such treatment of an individual who has brought so much to this community.*”

Shannon Snyder
Mayor
City of Sarasota

Commissioner Susan Chapman raised the issue, asking why there was a special meeting of the committee set on the day before a long national holiday. “This is a very controversial issue, and I don’t think this gives enough opportunity for public testimony,” she said.

There also was concern expressed in public comment that the statue was made of concrete with rebar reinforcement, similar to one erected in Cape Coral as a marketing gimmick. “The twin of this monument is in Cape Coral,”



City Commissioners Susan Chapman (left) and Suzanne Atwell. Photo by Norman Schimmel

said Public Art Committee Chairwoman Elizabeth van Riper.

Chapman moved “to slow the process down.”

Mayor Snyder did not support the motion. “Mr. Savage has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for this community. I have never seen such treatment of an individual who has brought so much to this community,” Snyder added. “This hasn’t been to the Arts Committee yet, and we’re already trying to kill it.”

The motion passed 3-2, with Snyder and Commissioner Paul Caragiulo in the minority.

The next day Savage said he was giving up, and the special meeting was cancelled.

ROADWORK AHEAD

It is summer, and that means it is time for roadwork. The city’s regular repaving program will cover about 12 miles of streets in

the next three months. On the Monday after the Fourth of July, Main Street will start seeing improvements, too; work there should be done by Thanksgiving.

Perhaps the biggest change will come on Old Bradenton Road between 27th Street and University Parkway. The city will use the project to demonstrate several new techniques to create a “complete street.”

While the road will continue as a two-lane thoroughfare, it will see the addition of a 5-foot-wide median separating the lanes. It also will get two roundabouts: one at Myrtle; the other, at 47th Street. And bike lanes will be added to both sides, painted green.

The reconfigured Old Bradenton Road is certain to become an alternative for students on bicycles going up and down the university corridor. The project should be finished in January. **SNL**



City Hall no longer will be the place for taxicab license renewals. Photo by Norman Schimmel



QUESTIONING AUTOMATIC RENEWALS

Although Sarasota Ford offered the lowest bid for a county fleet contract in 2010, it did not provide all the required information at the time. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASK A LOT OF QUESTIONS BEFORE AGREEING TO KEEP A CONTRACT WITH CHARLOTTE COUNTY FORD FOR CARS AND LIGHT TRUCKS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

It was not the first time Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta pulled an item from a consent agenda to probe for more details. This time, Barbetta remained insufficiently satisfied with staff answers that he cast the lone “No” vote on a motion to continue a deal dating to 2010 — the third automatic renewal allowed under the original contract’s terms.

And while Vice Chairman Charles Hines supported the renewal — with Charlotte County Ford — he cautioned staff that the questions it

prompted showed the current commissioners want far more details in these types of situations — especially when out-of-county firms are involved.

“Don’t assume [these renewals] are automatic,”

“What this really comes down to is why have an annual renewal that we have to approve if we’re not going to have any information to justify why we should or shouldn’t approve it.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Hines told county Procurement Official Ted Coyman.

The June 18 consent agenda item called for renewal of the 2010 contract with Charlotte County Ford to provide Sarasota County with Ford cars and light trucks for one year in an amount not to exceed \$4.5 million.

A June 18 staff memo said, "There have been no changes in the bid terms with the exception of a County request for a 3rd set of keys and the resulting cost."

Charlotte Ford's markup fee remained at 1.25 percent, the memo noted, adding that, under the terms of the bid, the county "receives any Government Price Concession, Commercial, or Fleet discounts available at the time of purchase."

Further, Ford Motor Co. sets the pricing for all the vehicles at a specific index for Ford dealers in Florida.

The memo also said that staff in the county's Fleet Management Office "has found Charlotte County Ford to be extremely [credible], reliable, and efficient when handling quote requests and processing the resulting orders. This vendor also provides excellent after delivery support."

Barbetta asked whether county staff had checked with the two Sarasota County Ford dealers — Sarasota Ford and Matthews Currie Ford in Nokomis — to compare their prices for the same types of vehicles.

"We do keep an eye on what the prices are [at other dealers]," responded Ed Gable, director of the county's General Services Department. Charlotte County Ford's prices "are still pretty good," he added.



Commissioner Joe Barbetta. Photo by Norman Schimmel

"I've got nothing to go on that [these prices are] still competitive going into 2014," Barbetta told Gable. "Did we even check with the other two Ford dealers here?"

Without pricing from those dealers, he added, he could not support the contract renewal.

"We did not do any kind of informal bid," Gable replied.

"That's the problem with these renewals," Barbetta said. "It's kind of an automatic, and I don't look at it as an automatic because it's a lot of money. ... I'd think, in this economy in four years, prices have changed, become more competitive."

Then Norm West, the county's fleet replacement coordinator, stepped to the podium. The Charlotte County Ford bid, he stressed, is 1.25 percent over net invoice; that had not changed since the contract first was awarded in 2010.

“We shop *all* of these bids — see who has the best fit for the job and the best price for the taxpayer,” West continued.

Moreover, West said, county employees can take the vehicles to any dealer for service. Fleet vehicles in North County go to Sarasota Ford, he added, and those in South County go to Matthews Currie Ford.

DELVING INTO THE BIDS

When Commissioner Nora Patterson began asking for more details about the original bids for the contract, Ted Coyman, the county’s procurement official, stepped to the podium next, explaining that in 2010, the Procurement Department received two other bids — from Sarasota Ford and Don Reid Ford in Maitland. Sarasota Ford’s markup was 0.5 percent, Coyman added, while Don Reid’s was 1.4 percent.

Why was the Sarasota Ford bid not recommended in 2010, she asked. Coyman told her the company “was deemed non-responsive” at that time, meaning it had not provided all the documentation requested to accompany the bid.

The Sarasota Ford quote, Patterson pointed out, was three-quarters of a percent below the Charlotte Ford bid, which is “quite a bit of money.”

When she then asked how much trouble it would be for staff to seek new quotes on the bid, Coyman said staff would be happy to do that if it was the commission’s wish.

However, Coyman noted, because of the amount of money involved, the Procurement Department would be obligated to pursue the normal competitive bid process.



Commissioner Nora Patterson. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“If it saves us \$100,000, that’s real money,” Patterson replied. “But if it costs us that in staff [time], maybe not.”

“What this really comes down to,” Barbetta said, “is why have an annual renewal that we have to approve if we’re not going to have any information to justify why we should or shouldn’t approve it.”

Patterson won consensus for staff to come back the following day with answers to the questions she and Barbetta had raised. She emphasized that she wanted details about the non-responsive bid from Sarasota Ford. Then, if it appeared seeking new bids might result in better pricing, “I personally will support [putting the bid] back out.”

THE NEW DOCUMENTATION

When Gable appeared before the County Commission again the following day, he reported that staff had done some pricing comparisons for two of the most popular Ford vehicles.

Using figures from the [Florida Sheriffs Association](#) — a nonprofit organization that supports the needs of the state's law-enforcement community, according to its website — the price of a new Ford Explorer would be \$25,465, or 2.4 percent higher than the price from Charlotte Ford if the contract were extended, he continued. For a Ford F-150 pickup truck, Gable said, the price would be 4.9 percent higher from the Sheriffs Association: \$22,001.

Gable added that the county does not typically buy those types of vehicles from the Florida Sheriffs Association.

In researching comparable contracts in other counties, he said, the best deal staff found was the agreement Mike Davidson Ford of Jacksonville has with the Cities of North Port and Boca Raton as well as Hillsborough County. That dealership provides a 2 percent markup for vehicles, compared to the 1.25 percent markup Charlotte Ford gives Sarasota County.

Barbetta said he still was upset that staff had not checked with Sarasota Ford and Matthews

Currie Ford to determine whether either or both could offer lower prices.

When Commissioner Christine Robinson asked for a reminder about which counties Sarasota County considers for local preference in vendor contracts, Gable replied that Charlotte and Manatee are the only two.

Therefore, Robinson said, the Sarasota County Procurement Department treats firms from those counties as if the firms are based in Sarasota County.

"They would have been given the local vendor preference, yes," Gable told her.

Robinson said she understood Barbetta's points, but this was the first time she could recall a board discussion pitting Sarasota County businesses versus Charlotte or Manatee county companies. "We do an awful lot of business with Manatee County," she added. "I want to take a step back and wonder what kind of effect this is going to have on discussions in the future."



From left) Ed Gable, director of general services; Glenn Zimmerman, information technology director; and Deputy County Administrator Tom Harmer listen to county budget discussions in June. Photo by Rachel Hackney

When she then asked how far Charlotte County Ford is from the Sarasota County line, West told her the dealership is closer to the county's vehicle delivery site in Venice than the two Sarasota County Ford businesses.

"What's going through my head," Patterson said, "is whether we've got the cheapest price. ... But the real question is ... we couldn't take advantage of [the Sarasota Ford bid] because of the rules."


When she asked whether Gable had any reason to believe the county could get a lower bid now than it did in 2010, Gable said he did not. Regarding the Sarasota Ford bid, he added, "That was almost unrealistically low. ... The 1.25 percent [markup from Charlotte Ford] is an outstanding deal."

Moreover, Gable said, staff had doubts that Sarasota Ford would have been able to

comply with the contract at such a low markup "and they had some major omissions in the bid," particularly in regard to a requested listing of concessions it provided to government agencies.

"Of course, we don't know if that was deliberate or accidental," Patterson said of the Sarasota Ford bid action.

She continued, "It's easy in your heart to say we'd like ... the most local of all local people to get our business, but, I guess once again, I'm putting my faith in our staff's efforts and assuming they've done due diligence on this one."

She made a motion to approve the contract renewal with Charlotte Ford. Robinson seconded the motion, which passed 4-1 with Barbetta remaining firm in not supporting the decision. 

ANNUAL AGREEMENT

This Annual Agreement is entered into as by and between Charlotte County Ford (Vendor) and Sarasota County Government, a political subdivision of the State of Florida (County).

WHEREAS, County issued Bid No. 101075ND (Bid) on June 2, 2010, and Vendor submitted a response on June 16, 2010 which was found to be the lowest responsive and responsible bid; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2010 County posted a Notice of Bid Action awarding the Bid to Vendor; and

WHEREAS, the Bid and any addenda thereto, and Vendor's response to the Bid are incorporated herein by reference.

NOW THEREFORE, Vendor and County agree as follows:

- EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Annual Agreement shall become effective on the date it is signed by the County.
- INSURANCE:** Vendor agrees to maintain Insurance at all times during the term of this Agreement, in accordance with the requirements of the Bid.
- TERMS AND CONDITIONS:** Vendor agrees to comply with all terms and conditions contained in the Bid.
- FEES:** County agrees to pay Vendor for products and services in accordance with Exhibit A, Fee Schedule.
- TERM:** The initial term of this Annual Agreement shall begin on the Effective Date and shall continue for one (1) year. Thereafter, this Annual Agreement may be renewed for three (3) additional one (1) year terms upon agreement of both the vendor and the County.
- RECITALS:** The above Recitals are incorporated and made a part of this Annual Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, Vendor and County have executed this Annual Agreement.

<p>SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT</p> <p>Name: <u>Jennifer Slusarz</u></p> <p><u>J. Slusarz</u> Signature</p> <p>Title: <u>Procurement Manager</u></p> <p>Date: <u>6/30/10</u></p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Signature of Witness</p>	<p>CHARLOTTE COUNTY FORD</p> <p>Name: <u>Dustin KASTON</u></p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Signature</p> <p>Title: <u>Owner Auto MGR</u></p> <p>Date: <u>6-29-10</u></p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Signature of Witness</p>
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06/29/2010 16:08 FAX 841 235 2882 0219181198 FAX 841 235 2882 06/29/2010 14:14 FAX 841 235 2882

The County Commission last month renewed an annual contract with Charlotte County Ford. Image courtesy Sarasota County



MORE THAN CARETAKING

Lawn chairs have been secured at Warm Mineral Springs until the resort reopens. Photo courtesy City of North Port

WITH THE COUNTY CALL CENTER FIELDING LOTS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS, COUNTY AND CITY STAFF MEMBERS ARE AT WORK ON DETAILS THAT NEED TO BE HANDLED BEFORE A SHORT-TERM MANAGER IS HIRED

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Although a \$4,500 fence was not expected to be erected around the swimming area of Warm Mineral Springs until July 5, so far, no problems have been reported on the property, Sarasota County spokesman Curt Preisser told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

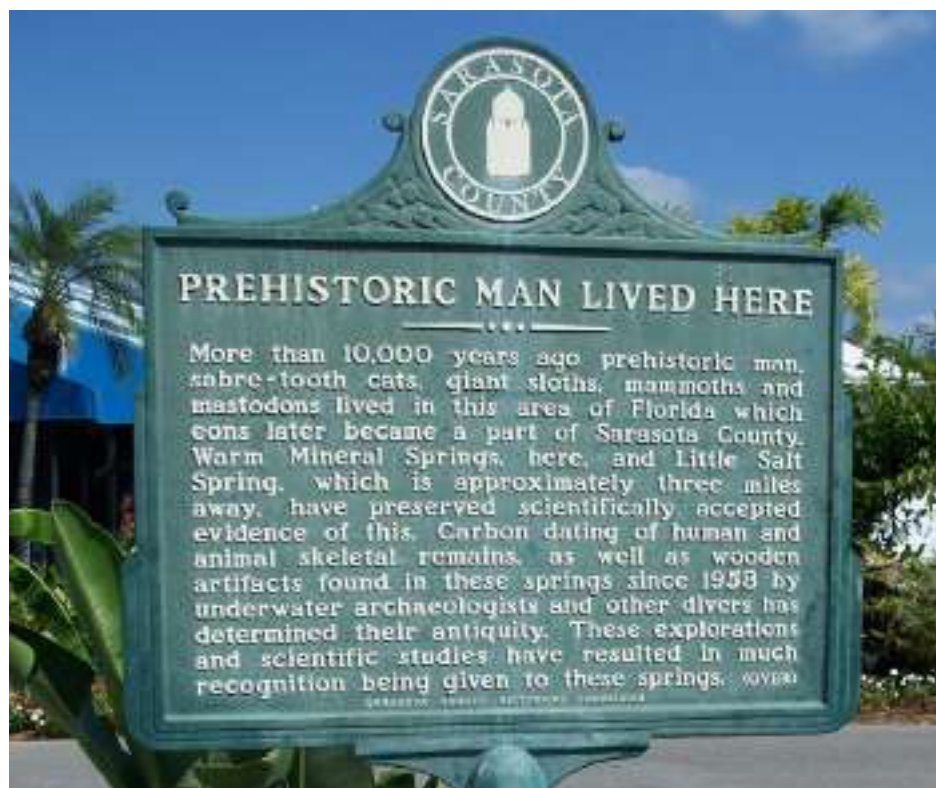
“We’re working as quickly as we can [to get the fence up],” he added on July 2.

The cost of that fence, by the way, will be split evenly between the county and the City of North Port, Preisser pointed out, per a Mem-

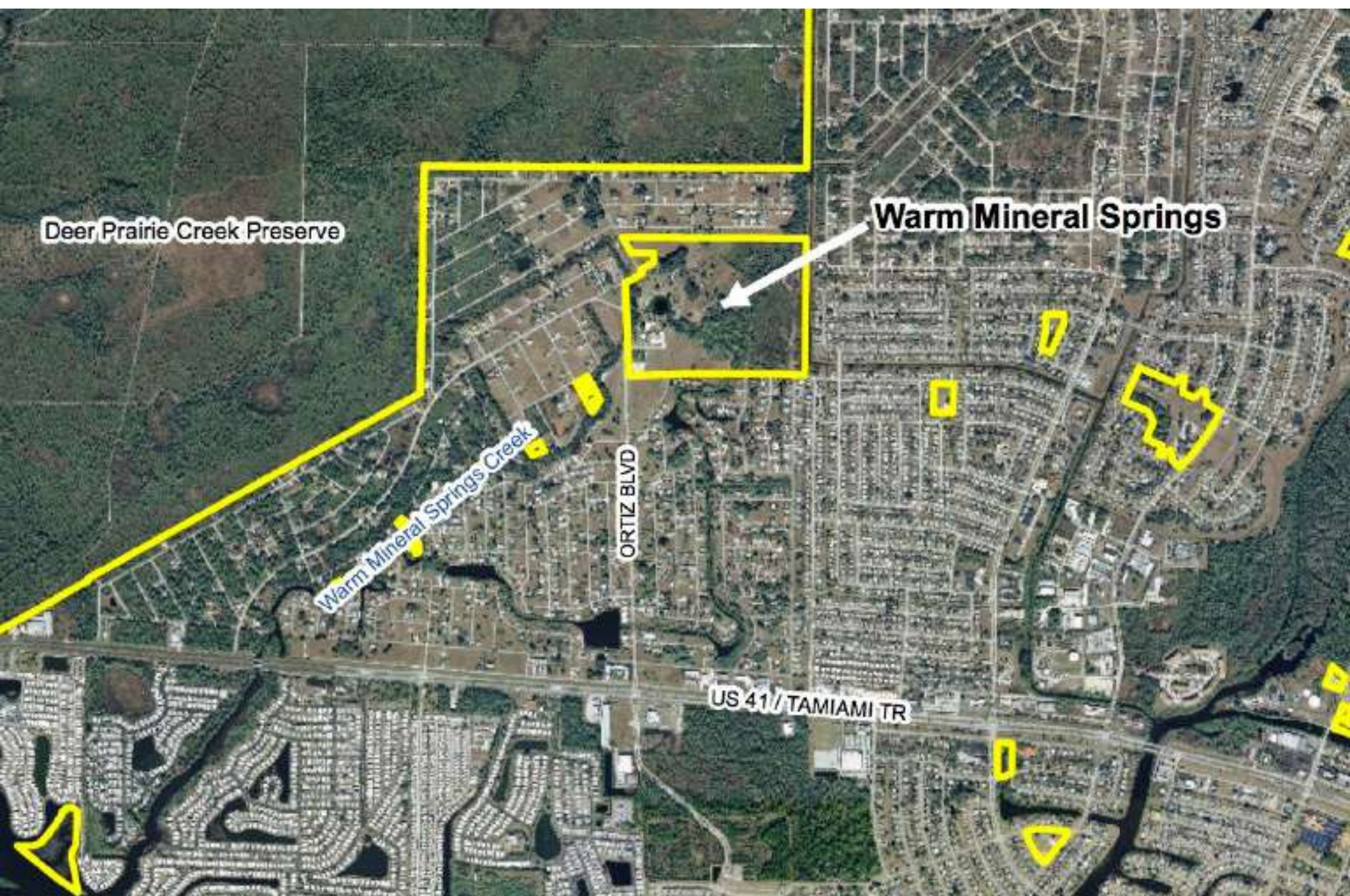
orandum of Understanding between the two local government bodies.

In the meantime, a few tourists have shown up, unaware that the 81-acre resort closed temporarily, effective at 5 p.m. June 30. Around-the-clock security guards who have been patrolling the grounds since that afternoon told the visitors Warm Mineral Springs is expected to open again by late summer or early fall — probably September, Preisser noted.

With a unanimous vote on June 24, the North Port City Commission approved a revised interlocal agreement with Sarasota County that calls for the city to undertake a competitive bid process to secure a manager for a period no longer than 12 months, although that contract could be renewed if the City and County commissions choose to do so while they figure out long-term plans for the resort. The latter process is what ultimately led to the closure. Three North Port city commissioners — two of whom were elected in November 2012 — had been intent on keeping Warm Mineral Springs more like a park while the County Commission continued to point to a joint city-county agreement inked in July 2012



A county marker at Warm Mineral Springs points to the history of the site. Photo by Eby-abe via Wikimedia Commons



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

that called for the parties to seek an Invitation to Negotiate for potential new development on the site.

Although North Port City Manager Jonathan Lewis informally notified County Administrator Randall Reid last week that city staff would be working on the advertisement of bids for a short-term lease, Lewis made that news formal in a June 26 letter.

Lewis wrote, “City staff has immediately begun work to comply with the short term competitive selection process identified in the interlocal. It would be useful if you could identify the appropriate personnel to consult with City procurement staff to ensure the cooperative nature of the process and compliance with any required laws impacting the County which may not apply to the City.”

County commissioners over the past several months have pointed out that state law necessitates a competitive process regarding contracts for any new management of the Springs.

The interlocal agreement calls for the city to make a “good faith effort” to secure a management firm no later than 60 days after the City Commission’s June 24 vote. The County Commission then will have 30 days to act on North Port’s recommendation.

IN THE MEANTIME ...

While the City of North Port works through the bid process, county staff this week was dealing with multiple issues — from people contacting the county’s Call Center about Warm Mineral Springs to how best to handle refunds to those who had bought annual resort passes to making sure “there are no un-



North Port and Sarasota County commissioners hope Warm Mineral Springs will reopen by late summer. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons

identified environmental concerns within the existing chain link fence in regards to mowing and pesticide application,” as Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Manager Carolyn Brown put it in a memo to Assistant County Administrator Lee Ann Lowery on July 1.

Regarding the Call Center, Brown noted in her memo that staff is “working hard to calm WMS customers.”

Preisser told the *News Leader* early on the afternoon of July 3 that the Call Center had fielded about 100 calls from people, with most interested in knowing when the resort will reopen. The Call Center staff is letting them know “we are doing our best to expedite the process,” he added.

As for the annual passes, Brown told Lowery in the email that staff had received an initial list from Cypress Lending, which had held the management lease on the site through June 30. “Cypress has concerns about the sales taxes paid and how they could document the taxes were refunded back to the customer if we were providing the refunds,” Brown added. “They asked if they could issue the refunds.”

Her staff is working with the County Attorney's Office on an answer, Brown noted.

Regarding holders of 10-day passes: Brown wrote that the County Attorney's Office had confirmed the county is not obligated to provide refunds on those, "especially since Cypress Lending does not have any accounting or funds to support refund requests."

However, Brown continued, "This may cause some very angry customers," because Cypress Lending was selling 10-day passes as recently as two days prior to the closing of the resort. "Customers are already calling to complain," Brown pointed out. The county's Frequently Asked Questions document regarding Warm Mineral Springs was being updated with the 10-day pass information, Brown wrote.

Additionally, an Interstate 75 billboard advertising Warm Mineral Springs has been removed, Brown reported, and the website has been taken down — replaced by "a very brief message that the facility is closed."

Among other points in her email, Brown noted the following:

- City of North Port staff was stacking any remaining chairs and relocating all external garbage cans, etc., for security and mowing purposes.
- Brown and other Parks and Recreation Department staff members conducted a walk-through on July 1, with a final one scheduled no later than July 3 with representatives of Cypress Lending.
- "Further discussions with the City of North Port are needed regarding the facility and property," Brown added.

On May 2, Lowery had sent an email to Reid, saying staff members from the City of North Port and Sarasota County had conducted a reassessment of Warm Mineral Springs "in anticipation of the June 30 termination of the agreement with Cypress Lending."

She noted, "The original assessment occurred in December 2010 [when the city and the county jointly purchased Warm Mineral Springs from Cypress Lending] and identified issues with the buildings and presented questions regarding wells and septic tanks that could not be determined at the time. The 2013 report is in the process of being finalized at which time a copy will be provided to Administration and [County Commission]."

"However," Lowery continued, "as we are in the budget process, it is noteworthy that major repairs are anticipated to be needed. In fact, staff from both jurisdictions will likely be recommending that a firm specializing in building and system evaluations be hired for a more thorough review. [Cypress Lending] appears to have made a number of cosmetic improvements but some of the electrical and plumbing repairs may not have been made in accordance with the Building Code. We know the septic system is in need of major repairs and the site should be connected to the public sewer system."

THE LEGAL COMPLAINT

In her July 1 email, Brown also noted that a meeting had been scheduled on July 18 with representatives of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection "to address the complaint that was filed by the Friends of Warm Mineral Springs."

13. Petitioners are entitled to information about the status, operation, and continuing functioning of Warm Mineral Springs park as public lands.

14. On or about May 13, 2013 public records requests were made by Petitioner(s) to the CITY OF NORTH PORT, which included a public records request for:

“An accounting of the funds received by Cypress Lending or any of its affiliated entities in the operation of the leased premises. The citizens desire to know, specifically, the following details:

- a. Number of visitors to the facilities including a breakdown of admission fees paid
- b. Additional revenues incurred from those visitors through the operation of the spa, salons, restaurants and other facilities
- c. An accounting of all expenses”

15. On May 16, 2013, CITY OF NORTH PORT Assistant City Manager Daniel Schult responded that

“The license agreement entered into with Cypress Lending for Warm Mineral Springs did not subject Cypress Lending’s operations to the requirements of FS 119. Nevertheless, the City is not in possession of such documents.”

16. This public records request was repeated in person to the City at the CITY OF NORTH PORT May 20, 2013 North Port City Council Special Meeting¹.

On June 10, representatives of the Friends of Warm Mineral Springs Neighborhood Alliance — identified in legal papers as “a group of property owners /taxpayers and/or residents of the City of North Port and/or Sarasota County” — filed a legal complaint asking the 12th Judicial Circuit Court to compel the City of North Port and Cypress Lending to produce public documents the group had sought through a public records request on May 13. Among the information the group seeks is the following:

- A list of repairs and maintenance actions that have occurred on the property since Dec. 2, 2010, following the city/county purchase of the resort.
- A copy of all cleaning supplies used on the premises since Dec. 2, 2010. (A May 16 email response from city staff, included in the complaint, says, “The City is in possession of no such documents.”)
- What has been done to comply with requirements regarding remediation of the hazardous waste on the property. “Specifically,” the May 13 public records request said, “the parties desire disclosure of the steps that have been taken to comply with the recommendations of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection [FDEP]) issued in correspondence dated 18 Nov 2010 ...”

The May 16 email from North Port staff says, “The City is not in possession of the referenced FDEP document.”

However, Bill Delp, one of the plaintiffs, responded to that email, saying he personally had hand-delivered the FDEP documents to


each city commissioner, the city manager and the city attorney at a regular commission meeting.

- An accounting of the funds received by Cypress Lending for operating the premises, including the number of visitors and a breakdown of the admission fees paid, along with an accounting of all expenses.

In a July 1 email to County Administrator Reid, Delp wrote, “Bioluminescence Institute, Inc. (aka Dive Back In Time) has had a continuous presence on the WMS property since 1999 producing and providing breathing gases (AIR, NITROX, TRIMIX and USP grade Oxygen) as well as dive safety support personnel. These products and services have been provided at no charge to properly authorized and certified dive teams that were and are required to conduct underwater reconnaissance and photo documentation of the conditions existing in WMS.”

He added that the Springs “is considered a high exposure/technical diving environment,” primarily because of its depth, overhead geology and the water temperature, which is about 87 degrees.

The email says the firm has approximately \$100,000 of breathing gas production and storage equipment on the property “in a secured structure affectionately known as the Col. Royal Dive Shack.”

Finally, Delp pointed out, “I would like to remind you that there are sites within the [300-foot] protected boundary that are likely human burial locations ... so you can incorporate this fact into your planning.” 

NEW PASS TO BE CLOSED MOST OF SUNDAY FOR GRAND PRIX

New Pass will be closed to public boat traffic from 10 a.m. until the conclusion of the Suncoast Offshore Grand Prix (approximately 3 p.m.) on Sunday, July 7, the City of Sarasota has announced.

The navigable channel of New Pass intercedes the Grand Prix racecourse, a city news release notes.

Big Pass, Longboat Pass and Venice Inlet will be open and unaffected by the annual event, the release continues. Local law enforcement officers will be present west of New Pass bridge to notify vessels of the closure during the affected time on Sunday, the release adds.

For a detailed schedule of all the events associated with the Grand Prix, visit www.suncoastoffshore.org/events.php.



DROUIN NAMED NEW COUNTY EDITOR FOR THE NEWS LEADER

Veteran Sarasota reporter Roger Drouin has been named the new county editor for *The Sarasota News Leader*, Editor and Publisher Rachel Hackney has announced.

“Especially given Roger’s impressive track record as a reporter over the past several years for the *Sarasota Observer* and the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, it is a genuine pleasure to add him to our staff,” Hackney said.

Drouin reported on City Hall, public safety and downtown development for the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* and the *Sarasota Observer*. During a two-year period, he wrote more than 90 articles alone on the saga behind the attempt to fund a new spring training stadium in Sarasota.

His reporting and essays have also appeared in journals such as *EarthSpeak Magazine*, *The Explicator* and *Sugar Mule Literary Magazine*. His novel, *No Other Way*, was published in May 2012 by Moonshine Cove Publishing.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Rollins College and a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from Florida Atlantic University.

In his free time, Drouin enjoys hiking or biking Sarasota’s natural areas, “getting almost lost way out in the woods,” he says. Some of his nature photography and environmental



Roger Drouin/Contributed photo

writing may be found on his blog, www.rogersoutdoorblog.com.

“Adding Roger to our staff will enable us to broaden our coverage of Sarasota County government and provide more in-depth analysis of critical issues,” Hackney said. “We feel very fortunate to welcome him aboard.”

The Sarasota News Leader

No-Nonsense Reporting

COUNTY LIBRARIES ADJUST POPULAR RESERVE AND HOLD POLICY

In an effort to respond to the high demand of new and popular titles, as well as an increase in requests for items to be reserved for pick-up, the Sarasota County libraries have adjusted the period that reserved items will be held to seven business days (Monday through Saturday), the county has announced.

“The ability to place a reserve online and select a pickup location is among the most popular services provided by the Sarasota County Library System,” a news release says. The number of reserve requests has increased

steadily, from 163,000 in 2009 to 186,000 in 2012, the release adds.

Once they make requests, library patrons have the option of being notified by phone, email or letter when their items arrive, the release notes. “After seven business days, the item will be removed from the shelf and notification for pickup will be sent to the next person who placed it on reserve, or it will be placed back into circulation,” the release points out.

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



Selby Library is a landmark in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SARASOTA STREET-PAVING PROGRAM TO GET UNDER WAY

The City of Sarasota's annual street paving project will begin Monday, July 8, and continue through November, with approximately 12-13 miles of streets to be resurfaced, the city has announced.

In July, 20 streets are scheduled to be repaved, weather permitting, a city news release says. Prior to work commencing, signs will be posted in neighborhoods providing specific dates

when crews will be in the area. Click [here](#) to see a detailed map for July.

Streets are slated for repaving based on criteria established by an asset management team within the Public Works Department, the news release notes. Throughout the year, crews use a scale of 1-100 to rate roads as they drive around the city, the release adds. "Staff also takes residents' recommendations into consideration," it says.

COUNTY LIBRARIES INTRODUCE FAMILY SUSTAINABILITY KITS

Sarasota County libraries and the county's Sustainability Office are teaming up with the creator of the *Easy Going Green Flash Cards* to help families learn how to become more sustainable in their everyday lives, the county has announced.

Julie Radlauer-Doerfler will be a guest speaker at two events on Friday, July 12, to discuss the initiative: 10 a.m. at North Port Library, 13800 S. Tamiami Trail, North Port; and 2 p.m. at Selby Library, 1331 First St., Sarasota.

Radlauer-Doerfler will talk about how she created the *Easy Going Green Flash Cards* and ways parents can begin discussions with children about conservation and sustainability efforts, as well as "simple ways everybody can work together," a county news release says.

"By teaching children at an early age the different ways they can lead a more sustainable lifestyle, we are giving the next generation the knowledge and tools to help preserve a better tomorrow," said Sustainability Director Lee Hayes Byron in the release.

Following the presentation, children will be invited to take part in craft activities, includ-

ing creating their own Sustainability Flash Card.

The Family Sustainability Kits may be checked out from libraries throughout the county. "They are designed as a fun, interactive family activity to help children understand the concepts of conservation, stewardship and sustainability," the release points out. Each kit includes books, a compact disc of songs and flash cards that get returned to the library. In addition, the kits provide a reusable bag of Do It Yourself (DIY) energy- and water-saving materials "that families can use to begin making a difference in their homes right away," the release adds.

Each DIY kit includes an ENERGY STAR compact fluorescent light bulb, WaterSense faucet aerator, wall switch and outlet insulating gaskets. Among the items for children are stickers, temporary tattoos and water cycle wristbands, the release continues.

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

JUNIOR LAW ACADEMY GRADUATES ITS LATEST CLASS

On Friday, June 21, more than 30 incoming seventh-graders graduated from the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Junior Law Academy (JLA), the Sheriff's Office announced.

The two-week program introduces students to the legal system by teaching them about law enforcement, courts and corrections, a news release notes. "They also learned about crime scene investigations, polygraph techniques and defensive tactics and saw demonstrations by the K-9, Mounted Patrol and Bomb Squad units, the release adds.

The Sheriff's Office Youth Services Section held the first JLA in June 2001 at the Sarasota Criminal Justice Academy, the release says. The JLA "basic academy" is held for two weeks each summer with 30 to 40 mid-

dle-school students who will be entering the seventh grade. "The students, who are selected by school administrators and school resource deputies, must be good citizens and cannot have any arrests or disciplinary referrals," the release points out.

In addition to exposing the students to a variety of law enforcement activities and career paths, school resource deputies facilitate team building and leadership development initiatives throughout the two-week period, the release continues.

The JLA has received national recognition for its innovative approach in promoting relationships between community residents and law enforcement officers, the release adds.



Sheriff Tom Knight and other representatives of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office gather with the most recent graduates of the Junior Law Enforcement Academy. Contributed photo

WATER FESTIVAL SEEKING VINTAGE AND UNIQUE BOATS

Organizers of the Sarasota Bay Water Festival (SBWF) — which is set for Saturday, Nov. 2, at Ken Thompson Park on City Island — are seeking vintage and unique watercraft from private collectors and boat clubs “that bring attention to the history and continued allure of boating and fishing on Sarasota Bay,” the festival has announced.

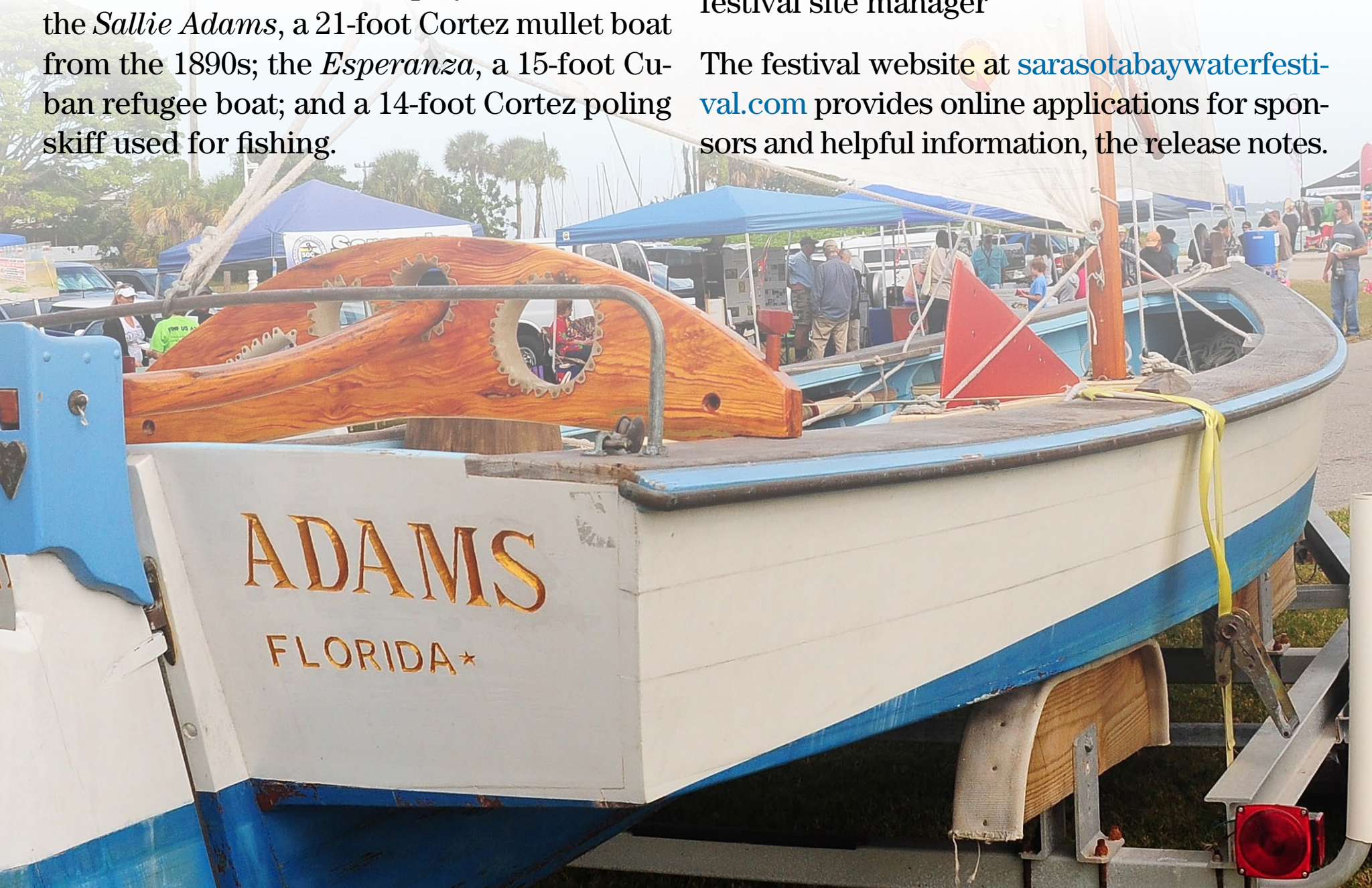
The event celebrates the importance of Sarasota Bay to the region’s environment, economy and quality of life, a news release points out.

Last year, the Florida Gulf Coast Traditional Small Craft Association displayed three boats: the *Sallie Adams*, a 21-foot Cortez mullet boat from the 1890s; the *Esperanza*, a 15-foot Cuban refugee boat; and a 14-foot Cortez poling skiff used for fishing.

Among other water festival highlights in November will be Dragon Boat Races, fine art exhibitors selling gift items, a display of the winning submissions to the *I Love Sarasota Bay Photo Contest*, local groups promoting conservation and wildlife protection, panel discussions with area experts focused on bay-friendly living, and exhibits and activities promoting boating, fishing, paddle board sports, scuba diving, birding and other fun activities associated with Sarasota Bay, the release says.

Boat enthusiasts and collectors interested in participating should contact Bryan Moore at bryan@triple3marketing.com. Moore is the festival site manager

The festival website at sarasotabaywaterfestival.com provides online applications for sponsors and helpful information, the release notes.



The Sallie Adams was on display at the inaugural Sarasota Bay Water Festival in 2012. Contributed photo by Pia Cormier


CRIME ANALYSTS RECEIVE STATE CERTIFICATION

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight recently announced that two crime analysts on his staff have received state certification giving them each status as Law Enforcement Analyst.

Anne Marie Bowser, a 20-year employee of the Sheriff's Office, graduated as a member of the 20th class of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Florida Law Enforcement Analyst Academy. Her colleague, Natalie Johnson-Mayer, received state certification last year, a news release says.

The academy, which began in 2003, is the first of its kind in the nation. During the six-week course — which met one week a month over the past six months — analysts learned criminal and intelligence analysis skills that are used by law enforcement personnel “to successfully prevent crime and conduct complex investigations,” the release adds.

“I am committed to providing Sarasota County with a well-educated workforce that possesses a progressive skill set,” said Knight in the release. “Advanced training through respected certification programs enhances the development and growth of personnel.”

“Robust information sharing and data analysis is the essence of the intelligence-led policing (ILP) philosophy that the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office follows,” the release points out. “The overall goal of this concept is to enhance proactive policing efforts and further the positive outcomes of law enforcement actions to protect the community. Consistent, quality information shared agency-wide is analyzed and made ‘actionable’ for the operators in the field, resulting in crime reduction, disruption or prevention,” the release points out. 



Cutline: Anne Marie Bowser/Contributed photo



Natalie Johnson-Mayer/Contributed photo



Tong Dak Chicken Drumettes are among the new summer menu items at Libby's. Contributed photo

SUMMER TAKES ON A SAVORY TWIST WITH LIBBY'S NEW MENU

With taste and dining value in mind, the Libby's Bar + Grill team has created a comprehensive and creative update for its new summer menus, the restaurant has announced.

“Diners will find new ways to enjoy grains, greens and entrees from the land and sea, including new crispy taco plates filled with Crispy Gulf Grouper, Chicken Fried Chicken, Cheesesteak or Cheddar Farro-Mushroom and Rainbow Chard, among others, a news release says.

On the small plate side, Tong Dak Chicken Drumettes with Slaw & Korean BBQ Glaze, Lamb Gyro Meatballs, Crispy Feta with Minted Watermelon and Tuscan Grilled Eggplant Cakes “bring new meaning to summer food,”

the release says. A new Heirloom Beet Salad with Candied Pistachio and Goat Cheese Greek Yogurt Dressing and Handmade Mozzarella Bocconcini add new flavor combinations for diners seeking some lighter fare options, the release continues. On the heartier side, Entrée Salads offer choices such as the Cracker Jack Crispy Pork Cutlet, Three-Cheese Prime Burger, Chilled Miso Poached Salmon and Crispy Calamari Arugula Caesar.

Among the seafood fare for dinner are Grilled Center Cut Scottish Salmon with Roasted Heirloom Beets and Cauliflower Puree, Cajun Roasted Gulf Grouper Filet with “Bar American” Shrimp and Heirloom Grits and Roasted Atlantic Cod Fillet with Crawfish-Black Eyed Pea Succotash, the release notes.

Meat and poultry fans can indulge in Honey Balsamic Roasted Pork “Filet Mignon,” Brisket-Shortrib “Chopped Steak” or the new Filet Mignon and Asparagus Negimaki.

Libby’s is continuing its early dining Prix Fixe, available daily from 4 to 6 p.m., the release adds. This summer, diners have new three-course menu options as well, including six first courses, 10 second courses and three dessert choices, plus a glass of house wine, beer

or nonalcoholic beverage, for \$15 per person for dinner.

Libby’s is located at 1917 Osprey Ave. in Southside Village; reservations are recommended. Parking is always free and ample in the private Morton’s/Libby’s lot across the street. For more information on specials and to preview menus, visit www.libbyscafebar.com or call 487-7300.



Libby’s summer menu also features a Spinach and Mushroom Philly. Contributed photo

SARASOTA ATTORNEY NAMED AMONG FLORIDA'S 'LEGAL ELITE'

Attorney F. Scott Westheimer, a managing partner of the Sarasota-based law firm Sypret Meshad, has been named to *Florida Trend* magazine's 2013 Legal Elite list.

This year's list of 1,348 Legal Elite attorneys represents approximately 2 percent of the more than 67,000 Florida Bar members actively practicing in Florida, a news release says.

In March, Westheimer was elected to the Florida Bar Board of Governors as a Twelfth Circuit Representative, representing more than 1,800 attorneys of the 12th Judicial Circuit, which includes Sarasota, DeSoto, and Manatee counties, the release adds. He won the office in a contested race against Timothy A. Knowles of Bradenton, the release notes.

Westheimer's practice area involves primarily the representation of plaintiffs in personal injury matters and various aspects of commercial litigation, the release continues. He is recognized as an AV[®] Preeminent Peer Review Rated[™] attorney by [Martindale-Hubbell](#), the release notes.

An *ex officio* member of the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division Board of Governors, Westheimer is also a past president of both the Sarasota County Bar Association and its



F. Scott Westheimer/Contributed photo

Young Lawyers Division, and he has served on the board of directors of the Humane Society of Sarasota

For more information about Sypret Meshad, visit www.smrl.com.

COMPANY OPENS COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS FUELING STATION

Waste Management (WM) recently celebrated the opening of its new compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station in Venice to serve the company's fleet of 43 CNG vehicles on Sarasota County routes, the company has announced.

Waste Management has 141 CNG vehicles operating throughout Florida, representing the largest CNG fleet in the waste industry in the state, a news release says. The company will add 70 more CNG vehicles in 2014 for a total of 211, the release adds. By 2019, WM "will

have more than 500 CNG vehicles serving its residential and business customers throughout Florida,” the release notes.


The Venice CNG Fueling Station is one of 40 such company facilities nationwide, the release points out. In Florida, WM has three; besides Venice, they are in Fort Walton Beach and Pompano Beach, the release says. A fourth is planned for Tampa later this year.

The Pompano Beach CNG Clean N’ Green Fueling Station is open to commercial and municipal fleets as well, the release notes. “In Venice, a public station option will be determined in phase three of the project,” it adds.

To date, Waste Management has invested more than \$50 million in CNG trucks and fueling stations in Florida alone, the release points out.

“Since natural gas-powered collection trucks run cleaner and quieter, we’ve made the commitment to use more in our local operations,” said WM Florida Area Vice President Tim Hawkins in the release. “We are dedicated to providing our customers with outstanding service while doing business in the most sustainable manner possible.”

Among its sustainability goals, Waste Management has committed to increasing its fleet’s fuel efficiency by 15 percent and reducing its fleet’s emissions by 15 percent by 2020, the release adds.

“Every truck we replace with natural gas reduces diesel use by an average of 8,000 gallons per year and cuts annual greenhouse gas emissions by 22 metric tons,” added Hawkins in the release. 

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A wide variety of vessels are berthed at the docks in Bayfront Park in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ARRESTS MADE, CITATIONS ISSUED DURING OPERATION DRY WATER

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office conducted 23 vessel inspections; issued three Uniform Boating Citations and seven written Boating Safety warnings; and made one Boating Under the Influence arrest during Operation Dry Water, a national Boating Under the Influence awareness and enforcement campaign held June 28-30, the office has announced.

Additionally, two teens were arrested Saturday, June 29, for underage alcohol possession, according to a news release.

Over the course of the operation's three days, activities included increased patrols, life jacket checks and boater education, the release

notes. "Alcohol limits are the same on the water as on the road," it points out. "Anyone caught boating with .08 blood alcohol content or above can be arrested."

According to the United States Coast Guard, alcohol use was the leading contributing factor in fatal boating accidents in 2012, the news release continues, and it was listed as the sole leading factor in 17 percent of fatalities from recreational boating accidents.

"While this operation has ended, Marine Patrol deputies continue to be vigilant and will increase patrols again throughout the Fourth of July holiday weekend," the release adds.

ANIMAL CRUELTY CHARGE LEVELLED AFTER DEAD AND SICK CALVES FOUND

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a man for failing to care for his animals after finding two dead and two sick calves on his property, the office has announced.

Deputies encountered David Damschroder, 63, of 16419 Winburn Place, Sarasota, around 10:30 a.m., Monday, July 1, after receiving a report of a suspicious person in Damschroder's neighborhood, according to the report. After a third officer arrived on the scene, the report continues, Damschroder "appeared to be very agitated and argumentative." The report says he even challenged one of the other deputies to a fight.

After it began raining, Damschroder agreed to let the officers transport him to his home, the report notes.



David Damschroder/Contributed photo



Once they reached his residence, Damschroder said he had dairy calves in the back pasture. When deputies went to check on the animals, they found two dead calves and two that were weak and sickly, the report continues. One calf was lying down and did not get up as a deputy approached it. That calf had visible ribs showing, as well as its backbone, the report says.

One deputy noticed several bowls near the calves, but none contained water. Finally, another deputy located “a large blue barrel that had about 6 inches of water in it,” the report adds. “Unfortunately the height of the barrel did not allow the calves to easily access the water,” the report notes.

One deputy then filled two of the small bowls with water and let the calves drink it, which they did eagerly, the report adds.

Damschroder told the deputies he did not know any of the calves were dead, according to the report.

During the course of the investigation, the report also notes, Damschroder “started wandering around the property and gradually became argumentative and aggressive” toward the officers. “The defendant would start cursing at the other deputies and me,” one officer wrote in the report. At one point, according to the report, Damschroder approached a deputy and used his left hand to push the deputy in the chest, “as if to push [him] back.”

The two sick calves are being treated at West Coast Veterinary Center/Braden River Equine on State Road 72 in Sarasota, where they were doing well on July 2. “[They] are still in need of medical care,” a news release notes.

Damschroder has been charged with four counts of Confinement of Animals without Sufficient Food and Water, one count of Battery on a Law Enforcement Officer and one count of Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer, the report says.



A veterinary clinic staff member feeds one of the rescued calves. Photo contributed by the Sheriff's Office

SARASOTA COUPLE ARRESTED IN CHILD ABUSE CASE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a man and a woman who drove to a Sarasota home allegedly to buy drugs with a 2-year-old girl in the car.

Just before noon on Thursday, June 27, deputies spotted a car leaving a home associated with a history of drug-related crimes. The report notes that occupants of the residence "change nearly weekly, and the majority of arrests/encounters with persons at the location" are drug-related.

Deputies stopped the vehicle after recognizing the driver from previous dealings and realizing his license was not valid, the report says.

The driver, Kameron Orser, 23, of 5190 Island Date St., Sarasota, told officers he went to the home to buy drugs and he injected them while at the house. He admitted to knowing his li-

cense was suspended, the report says; yet, he still drove the car.

The woman in the car, Barbara Valdez, 48, of the same address as Orser, said she knew her boyfriend was buying illegal drugs and that his license was suspended, the report notes.

Valdez told deputies, "[Orser] was only driving for a minute," the report continues. She added that "she was aware of his addiction to pills and his drug habits," according to the report.

Orser, who has been arrested 22 times, was charged with Child Abuse, Driving While License Suspended with Knowledge and two counts of Violation of Probation. Valdez was charged with Child Abuse and Permitting an Unauthorized Person to Drive.

The child was released to an adult relative, and deputies notified the Florida Department of Children and Families, the report notes



Kameron Orser/Contributed photo



Barbara Valdez/Contributed photo

WOMAN CHARGED AFTER BITING ANOTHER WOMAN'S EAR

A Sarasota woman has been charged with a felony count after biting another woman's ear, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

When officers responded to Fredd Atkins Park about 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 26, they met with Linda Watkins, 38, of 1857 22nd St., Sarasota, according to a news release. "She was suffering from a severe bite to her left ear," the release adds.

Watkins told officers that she and Kesha Taylor, 32, of 2722 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Sarasota, had become involved in a dispute over a phone when the altercation turned physical, according to the report.

After Taylor bit her, Watkins told officers, Taylor drove away, the report says. Watkins was transported to Sarasota Memorial Hospital for treatment, the report notes.

While officers were still at the scene, the report continues, Taylor returned, telling them she knew "she could be in more trouble" otherwise, the report continues. Taylor said Watkins had struck her in the mouth and bitten her nose, the report says. "Taylor admitted to



Kesha Taylor/Contributed photo

'losing it' when this happened," she told the officers, according to the report.

No other witnesses could be located, the report notes.

Taylor was charged with Aggravated Battery in that she intentionally or knowingly caused great bodily harm, permanent disability or permanent disfigurement, the report says.

19-YEAR-OLD PENSACOLA MAN CHARGED IN ARMED ROBBERIES

John Coates, 19, described as a homeless man from Pensacola, has been charged by the Sarasota Police Department with two counts of Armed Robbery, along with Resisting Arrest, Possession of Crack Cocaine and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia in connection with armed robberies on June 30 and June 14, the department has announced.

Coates was charged for the armed robbery of the 7-11 at 511 N. Washington Blvd. — reported at approximately 2:30 a.m. on June 30 — and the armed robbery of the Smoke Shop

— located at 2815 N. Tamiami Trail — on June 14, a news release says.

Surveillance photos of the June 30 incident were circulated to the Patrol Division of the Police Department on Sunday, according to the release. About 5:30 p.m., Sunday, Officer Tammy Featherstone observed the suspect wearing the same shirt and shoes as seen in the photos, the release adds.

Coates "immediately attempted to conceal himself," then entered the Salvation Army facility at 1400 10th St., the release continues.

Featherstone called for backup and went inside after him, according to the release. When she approached Coates, “she was positive that it was the same suspect and asked him to place his hands behind his back,” the release says.

Coates “immediately attempted to flee after he picked up a chair from the dining room and threw it at Officer Featherstone,” the release adds.

After a foot pursuit east on 10th Street to Lemon Avenue, Coates was apprehended with assistance from Officer Chris O’Donnell, the release notes.

At that time, he was found to be in possession of a vial with seven pieces of crack cocaine, according to the release.

Coates confessed to being responsible for the armed robberies of both the 7-11 on June 30 and the Smoke Shop on June 14, the release says.

MAN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH HOME INVASION

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has arrested a home invasion suspect whom deputies found hiding in the shadows just minutes after the crime was reported, the office has announced.

About 11 p.m. on June 26, occupants of a home on Horizon Road in Venice saw an unidentified man on a surveillance camera that was positioned with a view of their rear door, according to the report. One of the victims thought the man had left, the report says, so a man in the group went outside to investigate. The man was confronted by the suspect, who pointed a gun at him, the report adds.

When those remaining in the house spotted the gun on the surveillance camera, they locked the rear sliding glass door, the report continues. The suspect initially tried to smash the glass door with the gun, it adds. When that did not work, the suspect forced the victim at gunpoint to the front of the home and inside through the open garage; he then ordered the victim to open a safe located in a bedroom, the report says. The victim told the suspect he was not a resident of the home, so he did not know the combination. The suspect then tried unsuccessfully to open the safe himself, the report says. When he failed, he fled on foot, according to the report.



Rondell Taylor/Contributed photo

Deputies responding to a 911 call placed by the victims found the suspect hiding in the yard of a nearby house, the report adds; the officers had arrived about six minutes after the 911 call came in.

Rondell Taylor, 25, who has no known permanent address, was arrested and charged with Home Invasion Robbery With A Firearm. 

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OPINION



THERE IS NO INDEPENDENCE WITHOUT EQUALITY

EDITORIAL

This year, the annual commemoration of our nation's independence from Great Britain falls only a day after the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War. That provides a proper context for us to weigh two important documents on this day: The Declaration of Independence and Abraham Lincoln's eponymous Gettysburg Address.

In fact, the Gettysburg Address was yet another expression of Lincoln's feelings about the true meaning of the Declaration of Independence — for we owe him for one of

the most progressive and meaningful understandings today of that timeless document.

During the 1850s, Lincoln sought to deflect the interpretation — advanced primarily by those sympathetic to slavery — that the phrase “all men are created equal” applied only to white men.

In a debate against Stephen Douglas, Lincoln stated:

“It becomes obvious that the struggle for equality in this country continues because we have not been good students of history or good stewards of the legacy of those who birthed this nation.”

“I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include all men, but they did not mean to declare all men equal in all respects. They did

OPINION

not mean to say all men were equal in color, size, intellect, moral development, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness in what they did consider all men created equal — equal in ‘certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ This they said, and this they meant. They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth that all were then actually enjoying that equality, or yet that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the right, so that the enforcement of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit. They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society which should be familiar to all, constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even, though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people, of all colors, everywhere.”

It is remarkable that, 155 years later, many in this country are reluctant to share that enlightened view of our Founding Fathers’ intent in wording the Declaration of Independence as they did.

Were one to modify Lincoln’s gender specific language — as he doubtless would do if he were making the same statement today — it becomes obvious that the struggle for equality in this country continues because we have not been good students of history or good stew-

ards of the legacy of those who birthed this nation.

Our Founding Fathers acknowledged a divine gift that conferred equality upon humanity. They further gave to every succeeding generation the sacred duty of bringing that stated promise of equality closer and closer to reality.

Eighty-seven years later, when Lincoln stood on ground that was witness to such bloody conflict only months earlier, he observed that continuing challenge.

In paying tribute to the dead, he said, “It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.”

Ironically, almost exactly a century later, Martin Luther King Jr. would use the same arguments to advance the cause of equal rights for African-Americans:

“When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every tenement and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old spiritual, ‘Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.’”

And now, a half-century after King uttered those words, this nation still struggles to

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achieve the vision articulated in a Philadelphia boarding house 237 years ago.

With such a clear path for the nation to follow, why has so much time passed and equality remained elusive for many in our country?

Perhaps it is because when reading the Declaration of Independence, too many infer those rights and liberties to be intended for them individually, or to their kinfolk, or to their kind.

Perhaps men read it and do not grasp the clear implication that women also are gifted with this equality.

Perhaps white people read it and do not grasp that those of other races, ethnicities and nationalities are their equals.


Perhaps members of a particular faith read it and do not grasp that those of other faiths and beliefs are equal in the eyes of the Creator.

Perhaps those who are heterosexual read it and do not grasp that those who might be gay or lesbian or bisexual or transgendered are no less equal.

Perhaps we are so devoted to our own selfish interests that we fail to see the larger truth embodied in those famous words. We so covet “our” liberty and “our” rights that we fail to realize that those liberties and rights are for all.

King observed, “An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

What our Founding Fathers declared for us, what Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. clarified for us, is that the greatness of America is dependent on its citizens striving for the full realization of that vision of equality.

When we not only have come to regard all citizens as equals, but have established the means whereby that equality is a continuing reality, preserved by not just the vigilance of government but by the vigilance of each of us, then we can rightfully celebrate the courage and brilliance of a handful of men who charted our course on this day more than two centuries ago. 



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*.

OPINION

THE NEW 'COLONISTS' SEARCH FOR A HOME



By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

COMMENTARY

If there is one day of the year Americans could agree to resist government oppression, it would be the Fourth of July. And sometimes the feeling gets extended. As Mark Twain said before American troops left Tampa in 1898 to fight for Cuban independence from Spain: "It is a worthy thing to fight for one's freedom; it is another sight finer to fight for another man's."

Those in government rarely see their acts as "oppression." And government acts all the time: regulators, cops, inspectors — all in the "do it my way" business. Most of us know enough to stay on the right side of the law. But for Sarasota's homeless, it is harder to figure out the rules.

ON THE RUN

Summer is the cruelest season in Sarasota, especially if you are homeless. Think of the rains we have endured this past week. What if you had to sleep outside?

The recent rains are atypical. The punishing tropical sun and blinding humidity are our common lot in the summer. Where, if you were homeless, would you escape them?

But what the homeless are really fleeing is the rich. "The wealthy condo owners object

to observing poverty," said Sarasota attorney Andrea Mogensen. So Sarasota started moving "poverty" out of sight.

In Sarasota's "Whac-A-Mole" approach, homeless congregations have been hustled from Five Points Park to Cocoanut Avenue to Florida Avenue. The latest daytime congregation point before the rains came was the City Hall parking lot. Employees were stepping over passed-out/laid-out/knocked-out people to get to work.

City Hall has become one of the last bastions of freedom for the homeless, one of the few places where they will not get roused. Fifty feet from *Nobody's Listening* and *Billy Bowlegs*, you can poll Sarasota's homeless amid the artwork.

Downtown merchants have hired a private security force to keep the homeless and vagrants out of shady doorways and away from shoppers. The Selby Library retains private security to patrol inside and outside to "protect" patrons.

The lack of public toilets in the downtown area coupled with a "patrons only" policy in local businesses only increases the probability of public urination and defecation.

OPINION

Meanwhile, the meter is running on the cost to local taxpayers. The expense of jail stays and emergency room visits runs into the millions of dollars, the city manager has estimated. He has asked a couple of volunteers to try to assemble a better number.

At the same time, city officials are keeping a close eye on four acres near 10th Street that are on the verge of turning into a tent city for the homeless, a place to call their own.

PEEKING IN ON THE NON-TENT CITY

On Monday morning, I went to visit Valerie Guillory on 10th Street at her self-proclaimed “Sanctuary of Sarasota” for the homeless. It was raining lightly. She has created a foundation called Trinity Without Borders to support her outreach to the homeless.

One Good Samaritan leased her nearly 4 acres on the western side of Washington Boulevard, where it crosses the railroad tracks behind an auto service center. She and others were under a shady canopy, sheltering from the weather.

Her original aim was described by Mr. Quick, as he identified himself: “She was trying to create a safe haven for people to sleep.”

However, city officials said the property is not zoned for that, and they have since set Code enforcement officers to act as watchdogs on the area. Guillory said, “I had to drop the tents for compliance.”

Instead she and volunteers — homeless and housed — are starting to landscape the property, knocking back the weeds while other plans are developed. And she is starting a Friday morning prayer brunch at 11 a.m.

“It’s all about faith. It starts with faith,” she said. “We’re discussing what we’d like to see here. We’re trying to hear from the community and the homeless what we want here.”

Mr. Quick proposed one idea that seemed to resonate within the small group. “How do we make the homeless a help to the city?” he asked.

City staff, in combination with the Salvation Army, is already supporting the Street Team crews of homeless people in their Day-Glo-green T-shirts, picking up trash around town in the mornings. About half of the Street Team members have accepted offers of employment while on the trash detail.

MEANWHILE, MORE MEETINGS

As we spoke in “the sanctuary,” the Homeless Strike Team was meeting at the Sarasota County Health Department. And there is a Homeless Focus Group that has met in the community for the past four years.

Last month, the Community Alliance of Sarasota County established a homeless committee chaired by former Sarasota Police Capt. Paul Sutton. City Manager Tom Barwin said that group, now recruiting members, will

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serve as his advisory body to help guide the development of city policy.

All the players are waiting for July 18 and the appearance of Robert Marbut. He has helped establish homeless facilities and create master plans for other Florida communities.

A crucial meeting occurred Friday, June 28, when Guillory and her attorney, Andrea Mogensen of Sarasota, met with city zoning officials and the city attorney for a face-to-face discussion of what can and cannot happen in “the sanctuary.” Guillory wanted to know what she could do with the property; the city

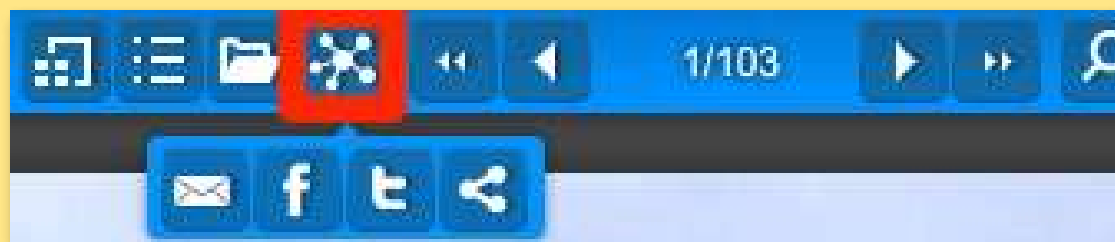
staff could say only what could not be done, noted Mogensen.

For example, sleeping in a vehicle is allowed; sleeping in a tent is not.

“The perception is the city and the church are in opposition,” said Mogensen. “And this is a church; it just doesn’t have a structure, a building.”

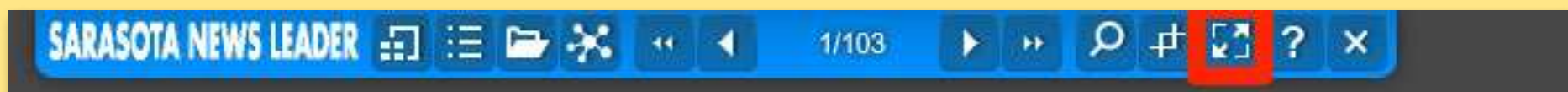
She added that the dialogue will continue on paper, as Guillory and city representatives ask questions and swap ideas. I would ask for a stable and a manger. Maybe by Christmas, they might be approved. **SNL**


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Siesta Seen

THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATION DISCUSSES KEEPING DUMPSTERS COMPLIANT AND GETTING A SOLID START ON RECYCLING; JULY FOURTH VIP PICNIC PACKAGE TICKET SALES ARE DOWN, BUT THE FIREWORKS SHOW THEY PAY FOR WILL GO ON



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

“Variations on a theme” might be the best way to sum up the primary discussions on Tuesday, July 2, during the monthly meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association. Not only did dumpsters get attention, but focus was renewed on how to handle recyclables in Siesta Village.

As noted last week in *Siesta Seen*, Prudie Varro, the resort manager at Sunsets by the Key — located at 5203 Avenida Navarra — complained recently to the Sarasota County commissioners and county staff about overflowing and improperly situated garbage dumpsters near the inn.



Siesta Key Village Association members added bunting to the gazebo at the Canal Road/Ocean Boulevard intersection to mark the July Fourth holiday. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Michael Shay, vice president of the Siesta Key Association, provided SKVA members with the background on [Varro's ordeal](#).

On June 24, county staff notified the owner of The Arches plaza that he had 10 days to put doors on the enclosure for a dumpster on the Avenida Navarra side of The Arches property, Shay noted. That still had not been taken care of when he checked before the SKVA meeting began, Shay pointed out.

Still, "the bottom line is ... the county is working on [the situation]," Shay added, referring to the need for all the dumpsters in Siesta Village to be compliant with the county's zoning code.

He promised to stay on top of the matter.

"It's no secret that it's our dumpsters," Bob Kirscher, co-owner of The Broken Egg in the Key Corners plaza, told the 16 other people present. However, he explained, county staff allowed the owner and manager of Key Cor-



Sunsets on the Key Manager Prudie Varro recently raised the issue of code violations with dumpsters in Siesta Village. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

ners to relocate the restaurant's dumpster area to make way for equipment Siesta Village Outfitters rents — kayaks, canoes and bicycles, for example. The changes left little room for the dumpster.

“Our landlord should be responsible for [making sure sufficient space is available],” Kirscher stressed.

Nonetheless, when he learned of the problems related to the dumpster, he said, he acted on them, making sure employees understood the dumpster had to stay in its enclosure.

Waste Management — which owns the dumpsters — does not take any responsibility, either, Kirscher added. The company is supposed to wash out the dumpsters regularly, he noted, but he has no evidence that is being done.

“The smell permeates the area,” Varro added.

Another problem, Kirscher said, is that renters often throw waste in his dumpster when they are getting ready to leave Siesta Key. “We have no control over it.”

Kirscher pointed out, “There has to be accountability for the property owners” as well as Waste Management.

Varro confirmed that Kirscher's staff “did an excellent job” of handling the dumpster until it was relocated on the property. “It is the responsibility of the property owner” in these cases, she added.

SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos, co-owner of Village Café, pointed out that when ci-

tations are issued for code violations, those ultimately go to the property owners.

Kirscher further noted that because other restaurants on Avenida Messina — the street where The Broken Egg is located — leave garbage out overnight, a rat infestation problem has arisen.

“That's why I have a cat on my property,” Varro told the SKVA members. “He's getting fatter every day.”

SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie, owner of CG Designs, pointed out that she already planned to invite a representative of Waste Management to the August meeting of the organization to discuss another issue. (See below.) That would be a good time to address concerns about the dumpsters, she added.

When Peter van Roekens — treasurer of the SKA and a representative to the SKVA from the Terrace East condominium complex — asked whether it might be possible to get some of the Village property owners to attend that meeting as well. His question was met with wry chuckles.

“I've never met my landlord,” Kirscher said. “In six years, I've never met her.”

Shay also took the opportunity to inquire about the status of plans to enclose the Village dumpster, located in the municipal parking lot.

“The county is moving at their usual break-neck speed,” Mark Smith of Smith Architects, chairman of the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp., responded. Smith works with

Siesta Seen

management of Championship Landscaping LLC to ensure the Village upkeep meets the appropriate standards. (Those who regularly attend the SKVA meetings are well versed with Smith's sense of humor.)

Smith added, "My understanding is a fence is in the works that might happen here next month."

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO TRASH

On what might be viewed as the opposite side of the garbage matter, Shay told the SKVA members he undertook a survey of the garbage pails in the Village last month and determined 12 locations where recycling bins

would be most effectively placed, based on the contents of the trash dumped at those spots.

Shay first broached the idea of a recycling initiative for Siesta Village about two years ago, he noted, but he focused on it more intently after getting SKVA encouragement during the June meeting.

During his survey, Shay continued, he discovered "a lot of water bottles; a lot of cans and glass bottles." However, the majority appeared to be water bottles, he added, noting that a number of stores have signs up asking people not to enter with food or beverages.



As of July 2, the dumpster in the municipal parking lot in Siesta Village still had not been enclosed by a fence. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

“Believe it or not,” he said, the garbage can at The Beach Club had a large number of water bottles. That made him wonder whether the club offers water to patrons at night.

Kirscher confirmed that it does.

Then Russell Matthes, past SKVA president and co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck and the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar, pointed out that the island of Venice, in the southern part of the county, has solar-powered recycling bins that compact items placed in them. “It seems to be working pretty well,” he said of that system, and “aesthetically, they look pretty cool.” Beyond that, he said, they represent “clean energy.”

Shay responded that he is familiar with that type of unit; a company similar to Waste Management services the equipment.

“I’m sure it’s something we can look at,” Shay added, though “I do recall ... they’re pretty expensive.”

Perhaps the SKVA could work on obtaining a grant for such units in the future, Matthes said.

When Gaddie asked whether he had investigated how other communities — besides Venice — handle recycling, Shay said he had not done that yet.

Going back to the aesthetics theme: Shay suggested the Village probably should have similar-looking garbage and recycling bins.

Smith proposed the SKVA invite a Waste Management representative who handles recycling

matters to come to a meeting to discuss what options that firm could offer.

“Awesome!” Gaddie said.

THE FOURTH

Two days before the big fireworks show at Siesta Public Beach, Kevin Cooper, executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, said ticket sales for the VIP holiday picnic the Chamber sponsors had not been selling as well this year.

“It’s really strange,” Cooper told me, especially because the economy has been improving.

Part of the problem may be that too few people understand that the income from those sales covers the biggest portion of the approximately \$35,000 cost of the fireworks, he added.

The fireworks are going to happen, Cooper emphasized, but “we can’t operate on a loss.” The event is “break even,” he stressed.

The VIP package includes a gourmet picnic at the beach; a parking pass; beer, wine and soft drinks; and live entertainment before the fireworks light up the sky.

Early in the afternoon of July 2, the Chamber sent out another email blast from July Fourth event Chairwoman Alana Tomasso, saying, “[W]e need help raising \$5,000 more by July 4th. Please purchase your VIP tickets so we can raise enough money to fund the fireworks.”

Siesta Seen

The email added, “If you can’t make it to the party, please purchase tickets for your clients, friends, family members or make a donation at the chamber ... we will all benefit from keeping the fireworks on [Siesta Key]!!!!”

The ticket sales will continue until July Fourth, a Chamber volunteer told me Tuesday afternoon. Call the office at 349-3800 for details; click [here](#) for the order form; or email chastanna@siestakeychamber.com.

‘A GIANT PARKING LOT’

Anyone needing incentive to buy the tickets should focus on the fact that premium parking at the beach is part of the package.

By the way, Sgt. Scott Osborne, leader of the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office’s Community Policing Station on the key, told the SKVA members that last year was the first time in years that deputies allowed vehicles to head



Two days before July Fourth, plenty of tourists were walking, biking and running through Siesta Village. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

north on Beach Road — toward Siesta Village — after the fireworks; they will do that again this Fourth.


In his eight years on the island, he added, the Sheriff's Office has tried numerous traffic patterns in the effort to enable vehicles to leave faster. Deputies have yet to find one that is superior to the others. For two hours, Osborne summed it up, "It's just a giant parking lot no matter what you do."

POLES AND TREES

Florida Power & Light Co. soon will be replacing poles on Siesta Key to upgrade its system

"and provide better reliability to our customers," according to an email from James Black, senior vegetation specialist with the company.

"Tree trimming will be required to install the new poles," his email notes. That work began on July 1.

Representatives of Asplundh Tree Expert Co. were scheduled to put door hangers out for all affected residents, the email added, noting that Asplundh Planner Greg Pearson will be available to meet with any residents to discuss the required trimming. Pearson may be reached at 219-2343. 



Lavender and green dots show the locations where Florida Power & Light Co. poles will be replaced soon on Siesta Key. Image courtesy FPL



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.

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The Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe will perform Soul Crooners at the National Black Theatre Festival this summer. Contributed photo

WBTT TO PERFORM AT NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL

The Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe has been invited to perform its original musical revue *Soul Crooners* at the 2013 [National Black Theatre Festival](#) (NBTF) in Winston-Salem, NC, the troupe has announced.

The biennial festival will be held this summer from July 29 to Aug. 3, a news release says. *Soul Crooners* will be performed four times, twice each on Aug. 2 and August 3, the release adds.

This is the first time a WBTT production has been invited to perform, although Artistic Director Nate Jacobs has presented *Aunt Rudele* at the festival, “to great acclaim,” the release points out.

“What a great honor and opportunity this is for WBTT,” Jacobs said in the release. “The NBTF is the most important gathering of Af-

rican-American actors, directors, producers and others interested and involved in the entertainment industry. To have the opportunity to present one of our original works at NBTF is very exciting and we are thrilled to be a part of the programming.”

“The NBTF was founded in 1989 by Larry Leon Hamlin to unite black theater companies and ensure their survival,” the release continues. Maya Angelou served as the festival’s first chairwoman, the release adds. That inaugural year, the festival offered 30 performances by 17 companies and attracted national and international media. The *New York Times* called it “one of the most historic and culturally significant events in the history of black theater and American theater in general,” the release notes. More than 10,000 people attended the performances, the release adds.

Now in its 22nd year, NBTF attracts more than 65,000 people during its six days, the release points out. WBTT will be among only 35 black theater companies from across the country participating in it.

Soul Crooners was first presented to Sarasota audiences in the early years of the Troupe, the release continues. In 2011, it opened the summer season in the Troupe's official home theater. The musical adaptation ran for only 12 performances, but it was such a hit it was brought back for another week in October of that year, to accommodate all the people who were unable to get tickets during the summer,

the release says. Consequently, a second version, *Soul Crooners 2*, was developed as part of the 2013 season.

"*Soul Crooners* is a celebration of the music that ushered in a new era of soul" during the 1970s, the release notes. "The music was known for combining lush orchestrations with great vocalists who could sing unforgettable melodies and harmonies," it adds. The show features more than 40 hits sung by an all-male ensemble.

For more information on WBTT, visit the website at www.wbttstrq.org, follow it on Facebook or call 366-1505.



Cast members of *Soul Crooners* perform in Sarasota. Contributed photo

CONCERT ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES 2013-14 *MUSICALE* PERFORMERS

The Sarasota Concert Association (SCA) has announced dates and performers for its 2013-14 *Munchtime Musicale* series, a long-running community outreach program designed to showcase the talents of locally based, accomplished musicians who represent a vast array of musical styles, including classical, folk, jazz and pop.

The season will feature “renowned and charismatic concert pianist” Grigorios Zamparas, performing works by Bach, Ravel, Debussy and Liszt (Nov. 20); Bill Schustik, the “American Troubadour,” who is known “for his baritone voice, keen sense of drama, colorful array of folk instruments” and deep love of traditional American lore (Dec. 11); the Jerry Eckert Jazz Trio, “a perennial favorite among area jazz enthusiasts” (Jan. 15, 2014); Lee

Dougherty Ross and Joe Holt, performing a program of piano duets that will include pieces by Mozart, Schumann, Faure, Grieg, Bizet and Joplin (Feb. 19, 2014); Studio Artists from the Sarasota Opera, “Sarasota’s ambassadors of opera,” who often cover principal roles “and bring opera to communities well beyond the walls of the Opera House” (March 19, 2014); and the Gloria Musicae Singers, Sarasota’s professional vocal ensemble “known for stimulating performances of great choral music” (April 16, 2014), a news release notes.

All performances will be at noon at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. The series is free. Seating is open; no reservations are taken. For more information about *Munchtime Musicales*, call 351-7467 or visit www.sarasotaconcertassociation.org.



The Gloria Musicae Singers with Joseph Holt. Contributed photo by Bruce Lehman






STROHM TO MEET FANS AT BOOKSTORE1 SARASOTA

Stephanie Kate Strohm, author of young adult books, will greet fans on Saturday, July 6, at 11 a.m. at Bookstore1Sarasota, located at 1359 Main St., the shop has announced.

Strohm's first novel, *Pilgrims Don't Wear Pink*, "was warmly received with reviewers calling it 'a nearly perfect book for teens' (VOYA) and 'sweet as a piece of seaside taffy' (Booklist)," a news release says. Now Strohm is back with *Confederates Don't Wear Couture*, "another fast-paced adventure starring

Libby Kelting, history buff and fashion fanatic, which takes [Libby] into the sweltering Alabama heat" with her best friend, who is hawking his custom-designed gowns to wives and girlfriends of Civil War re-enactors, the release adds. "But, yikes, there's no Starbucks and a vengeful ghost is on the loose," the release notes.

More event information is available at www.bookstore1sarasota.com or by calling 365-7900. 




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Temple Emanu-El is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota. File photo

TEMPLE EMANU-EL'S YOUR MONTHLY JEWISH MOMENT CONTINUES

Temple Emanu-El's new summer program, *Your Monthly Jewish Moment*, will continue on Tuesday, July 9, at 10:30 a.m. at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

Facilitated by Peter Wells — retired executive director of the Jewish Federation of Dayton and a former consultant to *Moment Magazine* — these monthly discussions center on contemporary issues of Jewish interest, a news release says. "In an intellectual, enriching atmosphere, attendees are invited to explore and

discuss topics ranging from women's rights in Israel to the implications of Jon Stewart's political satire," it adds. All are welcome.

Your Monthly Jewish Moment is free of charge to Temple Emanu-El members, with an \$18 donation requested from guests. The program is sponsored by the synagogue's Adult Education Committee.

For more information, contact Peter Wells at 359-8235 or chaver39@yahoo.com.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL TO SCREEN *THE FRONT* ON JULY 14

Continuing its popular summer film series, Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, will screen *The Front* on Sunday, July 14, at 2 p.m.

A classic movie about blackballed Hollywood screenwriters — featuring Woody Allen — *The Front* will be shown on the Temple's state-of-the-art projection system, a news release says.

The cost is \$5, and popcorn and lemonade will be served.

The summer film series is sponsored by Temple Emanu-El's Adult Education Committee, the release adds.

For more information, contact Eunice Cohen at eunice.cohen@comcast.net. 



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

04
JULY

Gloria Musicae Celebrates America

(Stay for dinner downtown and fireworks on the waterfront.)

July 4, 4 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 104 S. Pineapple Ave. Admission: \$35. Tickets: 360-7399 or GloriaMusicae.org.

04
JULY

Independence Day fireworks

July 4, 9 p.m., Sarasota Bayfront Park; 9 p.m., Siesta Key Public Beach. Admission is free to both. For info on the downtown fireworks: 365-4232.

04+
JULY

Florida Studio Theatre presents The Underpants

Through Aug. 3 (times vary), Keating Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$18 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

04+
JULY

FST Summer Improv

Through Aug. 24, 8:30 p.m., John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$12. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

05
JULY

Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival Parade of Boats

July 5, 7 p.m., Main Street (from U.S. 301 to Gulfstream Avenue). Admission: Free. Information: SuncoastOffshore.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.

19
JULY

Friday Fest at the Van Wezel, featuring Kettle of Fish

July 19, 5 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail. Admission: Free. Information: 953-3368 or VanWezel.org.

**AHHH ... A JULY FOURTH
SEAFOOD BUFFET!**



SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



Each week, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel searches Sarasota County for iconic shots that underscore why the community is a favorite with residents and tourists alike.