

THE SARASOTA

No. 49 — August 23, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



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RAISES, WITH CAVEATS

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The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

Just as I predicted before we went on vacation last week, we found no dearth of news to report when we returned to work. The County Commission budget workshop alone on Tuesday served up so much fodder I could not manage to write all the stories for this issue.

County Editor Roger Drouin has a temporary change of hats, so to speak, as of this week. Stan Zimmerman is on a much-deserved sabbatical, but Roger is an old pro when it comes to city business — thankfully! He had a busy start with the City Commission meeting on Monday.

Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker wore a number of different hats this week — from reporting on the latest in the effort to modify the county's 2050 Plan to making us aware of upcoming events designed to promote equal rights for all people.

Beyond news, our Sarasota Leisure section is bubbling over with features in this issue. Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel visited Benderson Park last week, as preparations were under way for the USRowing Masters National Championships. Norm really showcases the beauty of that venue. We also are delighted to present another splendid set of nature photos from contributor Fran Palmeri and one of her equally captivating essays.

Our Opinion section also is brimming with contributions this week, thanks to three diverse commentaries and a couple of letters to the editor. I should take this opportunity to plug the talents of John Riley, too. It is easy to see why he has won so many awards from the Florida Press Association.

The break last week was good, but we are happy to be back.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher





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SHELTER PLAN STALLS

A visit by City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo to Pinellas Safe Harbor Shelter in Clearwater changed his idea of what the city 'should be doing in this community,' he says. Photo courtesy of Pinellas Safe Harbor Shelter

CITY COMMISSIONER PAUL CARAGIULO PUSHES FOR A FUNDING COMMITMENT FOR A SHELTER, BUT FELLOW CITY COMMISSIONERS OPT TO HOLD OFF ON THE PROPOSAL

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo said now is the time to start planning for a public homeless shelter in the city of Sarasota — and setting aside funding to build it.

During the Monday, Aug. 19, City Commission meeting, Caragiulo said the details — ranging from a site to the number of beds to who will operate the facility — can be worked out later, but he urged his fellow commissioners to take action before the city and county finalize their budgets for the upcoming year.

Before the meeting, Caragiulo had met with Dr. Robert Marbut, a homeless expert hired by Sarasota County and the city. Marbut, who helped open Pinellas Safe Harbor Shelter in Clearwater, has suggested the need for a shelter near Sarasota's core that could help the chronically homeless in the city.

“*Homelessness is an emergency. We've avoided calling it that.*”

Diana Hamilton
Downtown Sarasota advocate

After touring the Pinellas facility at the urging of Marbut, Caragiulo said he was impressed by how the shelter was operated, and it “changed my

idea of what we should be doing in this community.”

“I just wanted to have a very general discussion with our commission about how we feel about funding such a facility,” Caragiulo told his fellow board members.

Setting aside some funding would then allow the city to “put it to the County Commission to see if they want to jump on board, or not jump on board.”

The other commissioners, however, were not interested in pursuing plans in a hurry, and Commissioner Willie Shaw said he did not want to move forward with a city shelter at any speed. (See the related story in this issue on the County Commission’s different reaction to shelter plans.)



Commissioner Paul Caragiulo in the City Commission Chambers. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Homeless people gather outside Five Points Park in May, when the city had it fenced off for maintenance. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“This is not a city issue, and to think we are going to solve it ourselves is ludicrous,” Shaw added.

“If we ask for help from anyone else,” Caragiulo replied, “we need to discuss what we can contribute.”

“Our budget process is going on now, so we should look at this now,” Caragiulo pointed out.

The city started its budget process in July, holding workshops to go over line items.

A CLASH

Commissioner Susan Chapman said Monday she would not commit to a shelter project without more information, adding that pursuing it would be impulsive at this point. Chapman noted that Marbut would need time to complete his research before he makes final recommendations. “He’s been in town for four days, and he hasn’t shared his opinions with me.”

Chapman and Caragiulo clashed after she added that she was never invited to travel to Pinellas Safe Harbor.

“I asked to be included,” Chapman said about recent trips by county leaders to the facility. “I’m not about to engage in an impulsive process.”

Caragiulo said his visit was not an organized trip; he went to Clearwater on his own accord to check out the shelter after he had talked about it with Marbut. Caragiulo did not travel with other elected city officials.

“I’m sorry you weren’t invited,” Caragiulo said. “I don’t know what to say to that.” But he also cautioned that commissioners should not travel together because such action could open the doors to a Florida Sunshine Laws violation.

Later in the meeting, Assistant City Attorney Mike Connolly also warned the commission-



Homeless advocate Valerie Guillory has created an outdoor shelter off 10th Street, though nearby residents have complained to city officials. Photo courtesy of Valerie Guillory

ers against more than one traveling together in a group to Clearwater.

“I’m not asking you to jump into anything,” Caragiulo told Chapman. “I am just saying this is a good time to discuss this.”

Caragiulo became visibly frustrated with the discussion, at one point, asking Chapman, “Do you want to work with the county, or do you want to say, ‘No one invited me to the party?’”

Mayor Shannon Snyder, who also separately toured Pinellas Safe Harbor — joined by County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason — was the most willing of the city commissioners to consider options for a shelter in the city, but he said he wanted more information about how it would be run and which entity would oversee its operations. The Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office manages Pinellas Safe Harbor.

“I don’t like to spend money, but I was impressed by it,” Snyder said. “I am interested, but I need some more details about who is going to do what.”

Snyder pointed out that the Pinellas facility was built before it was turned into a shelter. It was designed as a minimum-security prison.

Commissioner Suzanne Atwell also opted to put a hold on the funding discussion. “I am a fan of Dr. Marbut, but the devil is in the details,” Atwell said.

Earlier this month, the city and county approved hiring Marbut, a San Antonio-based consultant, for up to four months. The Town of Longboat Key offered \$1,000 towards covering that cost.

Caragiulo did have some support on Monday. Downtown advocate Diana Hamilton agreed that the time is ripe to start planning for a permanent public shelter in the city.

“It’s perfect right now,” Hamilton said in an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* before the City Commission meeting. “We have a little momentum. We have Dr. Marbut, and we have Commissioner Caragiulo, who sees [the need]. He is willing to take ownership to see this through. If not the solution, this is at least the beginning of a humane response to homelessness.”

She predicts a public backlash if plans move ahead for a downtown shelter, but just doing nothing should not be an option, she points out.

Hamilton used a storm analogy: If a hurricane strike were imminent, the city would not wait to declare an emergency and open a shelter.

“Homelessness is an emergency,” Hamilton said. “We’ve avoided calling it that.”

Although Caragiulo was disappointed by the lack of movement at the City Commission dais, he found encouragement the next day in the unanimous County Commission vote to set aside \$500,000 for a shelter. In an interview with the *News Leader* after that vote, Caragiulo said he plans to raise the topic again at the City Commission’s Sept. 3 meeting.

“I’m ecstatic and very grateful,” Caragiulo said about the County Commission’s decision. “The board members there see the value right out of the gate.” 



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PUTTING MONEY ON THE TABLE



The County Commission prepares for the next topic of discussion during its Aug. 20 budget workshop. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY COMMISSION VOTES UNANIMOUSLY TO COMMIT \$500,000 TOWARD SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS IN THE AREA

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The day after the Sarasota City Commission tackled the same topic (see the related story in this issue), the County Commission voted unanimously to set aside \$500,000 in a fund to be used to deal with the issue of homelessness in the area.

The actual expenditure of the money will be linked to a proposal developed by Dr. Robert Marbut, an expert on homelessness, who is working as a consultant for the City and County of Sarasota.

The decision came on Aug. 20, as the County Commission held its final budget workshop before its September public hearings on the spending plan for the next fiscal year.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out that Marbut probably would not have a report ready for about 60 days. However, Barbetta continued, Marbut had suggested the local government bodies be ready with funds to act once the proposal has been reviewed and the city

“*It's now up to the citizens to turn to others and say, 'They contributed; it's your turn to commit.'*”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



and county governments have decided how to proceed.

That way, Barbetta said, “another six months of bureaucracy doesn’t go by and [the report] doesn’t get addressed.”

Barbetta added that he recently had taken a trip to the [Safe Harbor](#) homeless shelter built in Pinellas County at Marbut’s recommendation. “It’s a good system,” he said. “It seems to be working.”

The facility even treats homeless people who are alcoholics, he noted. People with nowhere to live are able to get off the street, he continued, even during the daytime. Safe Harbor’s staff works to help them reach a point of self-sufficiency so they can get jobs and live on their own again, he added.

Commissioners Carolyn Mason and Charles Hines also have visited the shelter, Barbetta noted, as has Sheriff Tom Knight.

Barbetta made the trip with City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, Public Defender Larry Eger and the Rev. Tom Pfaff of the Sarasota Ministerial Association, he told his fellow board members.

During his visit to Safe Harbor, Hines pointed out, he learned that if a homeless person is stopped for having an open container of alcohol, the person has the option of going to the facility — with no criminal charge — or going to jail. Such a system in Sarasota County would free up time the State Attorney/Public Defender offices’ staff members are committing to handling local arrests of the homeless,



Commissioner Joe Barbetta responds to a fellow board member during the Aug. 20 workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Hines said. “It would affect this [FY 2014] budget in a positive way.”

“The investment that we make will lower our jail costs,” said Commissioner Christine Robinson, a former prosecutor.

Mason agreed with Hines’ remarks. However, she said, “If there isn’t political will to do this, we might as well stop right now. From the interest I’ve seen on this side of the table, there is political will,” she added, as well as support from municipalities in the county.

“There’s an obvious need to do something,” Robinson pointed out, “and setting aside the money doesn’t guarantee we will spend it, but it shows that we’re going to tackle the problems.”

Robinson continued, “It will be up to the community to tell those who aren’t [at the table] that you need to be [there]. I think just setting aside the money at this point would be a huge step. It’s up to everybody else to — excuse me — put up or shut up.”

“I agree,” Mason said.

Then Commissioner Nora Patterson made the motion for setting aside the funds.

When County Administrator Randall Reid asked her whether she wanted the money to come out of an \$8 million pool freed up by a County Commission vote on a policy change regarding the reserve fund for operating after a disaster, Patterson replied, “No. I’m not saying that, because I don’t support the \$8 million [decision].”



Homeless people lived along a section of Florida Avenue in Sarasota earlier this year, before law enforcement officials warned them away. Photo by Norman Schimmel

(The County Commission is scheduled to vote Aug. 27 on a resolution making that policy change official, Steve Botelho, the county's director of financial planning, pointed out. See the related story in this issue.)

Her view, Patterson continued, was to take the money from reserves.

Barbetta seconded the motion. However, he suggested amending it to make certain the money would not be spent until the county had documentation of a formal proposal on how the funds should be allocated.

"That's the intent," Patterson said. "If we're going to build a facility, a half a million [dollars] isn't going to do it."

"Well, it may," Barbetta responded.

Some of the funds could end up being used for counseling, for example, Patterson told him.

Nonetheless, Patterson agreed to amend her motion but noted the board might deviate somewhat from Marbut's final recommendation in how it chooses to spend the funds.

"It's a step in the right direction," Patterson said. "We'll see what happens."

"And I thank you for that," Barbetta responded, adding, "I think the City [Commission] needs to listen to this discussion and a couple of 'em need to put aside egos and address the problem straight up."

Barbetta also pointed out that Marbut had suggested during his visit to Sarasota several weeks ago that "the bulk of the [homelessness] problem seems to be [in North County]," so that area will be addressed first. However, Barbetta said, a second phase of the initiative will tackle problems in the cities of Venice and North Port.



A group of homeless people gathers outside Selby Library one evening in April. Photo by Norman Schimmel

EARLIER DISCUSSIONS


Hines noted that during a joint City/County commissions meeting in February, City Manager Tom Barwin suggested the county spend money for case managers to help the homeless, but Barwin did not offer a formal proposal for how the money would be utilized. That was why the County Commission chose not to approve the funding, Hines said.

Building a facility similar to Safe Harbor, Hines continued, would be a genuine effort to help homeless people become productive members of society.

Robinson pointed out, as she had during a May discussion with representatives of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County, that the County Commission already has been

committing millions of dollars annually to initiatives to help the area's homeless.

Prior to that May 22 meeting, Pauline Tracy, the county's human services manager, provided the commissioners documentation showing research she had undertaken regarding such spending by counties with population levels comparable to Sarasota County's. Only Palm Beach County allocated more funding to its health department in the 2012 fiscal year — \$3,447,244 — than Sarasota County did — \$3,313,368 — for handling issues related to homelessness.

"This is adding to that," Robinson said of the \$500,000 reflected in Patterson's motion. "It's now up to the citizens to turn to others and say, 'They contributed; it's your turn to commit.'" 

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RAISES, WITH CAVEATS

Steve Botelho (left), the county's chief financial planning officer, and County Administrator Randall Reid address the County Commission during a June budget workshop. File photo

THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES A MERIT PAY PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES, WITH THOSE RECEIVING THE LOWEST PERFORMANCE RANKINGS TO RECEIVE NOTHING

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

On a 4-1 vote Aug. 20, the Sarasota County Commission agreed to provide up to 3 percent in merit pay raises for non-union county employees who receive the top two scores on evaluations to be conducted in the new fiscal year.

Those employees who earn a 3 out of 5 — with 5 reflecting superior work — would get a boost up to 2 percent, while those rated 1 or 2 would received

nothing, according to the motion put forth by Commissioner Joe Barbetta.

“The concern I have is a lot of 4s and 5s ... are watching the 1s or 2s mail it in, showing up, doing the minimum and collecting their check,” Barbetta said. “We need to reward

those that are working hard to be 4s and 5s.”

Commissioner Christine Robinson cast the “No,” vote, as she did last year when County Administrator Randall

“There’s nothing wrong with paying quality people their worth.”

Charles Hines
Vice Chairman
Sarasota County Commission



Reid proposed a \$1,000 lump sum payment to non-union employees.

“This is *hard*,” Robinson said, “because the people I work with — it directly impacts them. But I can’t, as long as we’re deficit spending, take on more deficit spending ...”

If staff had been able to suggest cuts in the 2014 Fiscal Year budget to free up the \$927,000 estimated for raises, she added, “I might have been able to swallow it.”

Another \$973,000 will come out of county utility funds to cover the merit pay, for a total of \$1.9 million in 2014 fiscal year costs for just employees of Sarasota County departments overseen by Reid.

Barbetta emphasized that not all county employees will receive the merit pay, so the final figure spent should be less than \$1.9 million.

The projection for the cost of raises to all non-union county employees — including those working for the constitutional officers, such as the sheriff and tax collector — is \$4,160,275.

However, Steve Botelho, the county’s chief financial planning officer, told the commissioners he was hopeful the county would use only about \$14 million this year from reserves to cover expenses. In the 2012 fiscal year, the county utilized \$9.2 million from a reserve it had built up in the event of an eco-



Compensation External Trends

- Average salary increase nationally in 2013 = 2.8% (Mercer survey)
- Average salary increase nationally in 2014 = 2.9% (Mercer survey), 3.1% (WorldatWork survey)

Per WorldatWork Survey: 2013 Merit Increase Awarded by Performance Category

	High Performers	Middle Performers	Low Performers
Percentage of employees estimated to be rated in this category	25%	68%	6%
Estimated average merit increase	4.1%	2.7%	0.6%
Source: WorldatWork 2013-2014 Salary Budget Survey			

conomic downturn; that fund is separate from the reserve the county maintains for operations in the event of a disaster. The 2014 fiscal year budget calls for \$26.7 million from the reserves to cope with the economy and another \$26 million in FY 2015, with the county running out of that reserve pool in FY 2016.

“I honestly don’t see how we do *not* give [merit pay raises],” Commissioner Nora Patterson said. “I think it’d be really unfair to support raises” for the constitutional officers’ employees and union members without offering them for other county workers, she pointed out.

County employees also have lost 3 percent of their salary per year because of action by Gov.

Rick Scott and the Legislature in 2011 to require all government workers to begin paying that amount into the Florida Retirement System to offset the state’s investment, Patterson noted.

The Florida Supreme Court upheld the legality of that action in a 4-3 ruling early this year.

THE CASE FOR RAISES

During the morning session of the Aug. 20 budget workshop, Joanie Whitley, director of human resources for Sarasota County, presented material to the commissioners in support of greater employee compensation.

“Recruiting for the best talent has become challenging,” she said.

Budgeted Increases for Compensation by Elected/Appointed Official

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
BCC Departments*	\$ 927,000	\$ 973,000	\$ 1,900,000
Sheriff's Office	\$ 1,741,596		\$ 1,741,596
Property Appraiser	\$ 183,032		\$ 183,032
Tax Collector	\$ 118,844		\$ 118,844
Clerk of Circuit Court	\$ 116,459		\$ 116,459
Court Administration	\$ 49,091		\$ 49,091
Supervisor of Elections	\$ 48,870		\$ 48,870
Guardian Ad Litem	\$ 2,383		\$ 2,383
Total Request for FY14	\$ 3,187,275	\$ 973,000	\$ 4,160,275

* Non-bargaining only

A chart shows the amount of money budgeted for merit pay raises for all non-union county employees in the 2014 fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Offering a brief history of county action regarding employee pay, she pointed out that in 2004 and 2005, then-County Administrator Jim Ley asked the Human Resources Department staff to work on a recruitment and retention strategy because the number of county government workers leaving for the private sector had reached an annual level as high as 13 percent. “We had not had turnover like that in the past,” Whitley noted.

When Patterson clarified that was during the area’s construction boom, Whitley confirmed that was correct.

Then, in 2007, when the economy began its slide, Whitley continued, layoffs of county staff were necessary to lower costs.

With the economy improving once again, Whitley pointed out, and the private sector seeing a rebound, “we will lose talent in the organization.”

In recent weeks, she said, several county department chiefs had expressed concerns about employees leaving and had asked whether extra compensation would be possible.

She said the county was looking at a turnover rate of 7.8 percent for the current fiscal year, compared to 7.2 percent in FY 2012.

Further, Whitley pointed out, 25 percent of the county’s workforce is eligible for retirement over the next five years.

A lot of costs are involved in turnover, Whitley explained — recruitment of new workers,



Vice Chairman Charles Hines studies a slide during the Aug. 20 budget workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney

training time, lost productivity and the loss of institutional knowledge among them. “It’s just really hard to put a value on talent,” she added.

When Robinson said she understood the cities of Venice and North Port were not offering raises for the next fiscal year, Reid replied that many municipalities are dealing with pension issues, necessitating tighter control of expenses. County workers are typically covered by the Florida Retirement System, he added.

THE DETAILS

Barbetta pointed out that he believed a merit pay plan should be seen as an incentive for workers to achieve 4s and 5s in their evaluations. In response to a question, Whitley told

him she felt the majority of county employees would be rated 3 to 4.

“I was pretty supportive of *not* giving raises for a while, because I felt like we couldn’t afford it,” Patterson said. “But I guess my feeling is, it’s time ... both for morale ... and to recognize good performance ...”

She added that some employees have had to take on extra work over the past few years because of layoffs.

Patterson and Vice Chairman Charles Hines voiced support for Barbetta’s suggestion regarding how the merit pay should be allocated. Since he took office last year, Hines said, he had been surrounded by “hard-working quality people” who had not had raises since

the 2009 fiscal year. “They’re also taxpayers in Sarasota County,” he noted, which means they understand that if they want to keep the merit pay, their taxes could go up in succeeding years.

Moreover, Hines said, if a business owner calls to talk about opening a new location in the county, or if someone has a complaint about county operations, “I want those 4s or 5s answering the phone and being creative and thinking about ways to help our overall economy. ... There’s nothing wrong with paying quality people their worth.”

Reid told the commissioners they would receive quarterly reports on worker evaluations in the coming fiscal year, so they will be aware of how the merit raises are being paid out. **SNL**

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TWEAKING THE TWEAKS

2050 CHANGES KICKED DOWN THE ROAD

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Property owners hoping to revamp sections of Sarasota County's 2050 land-use plan punted last week, requesting a delay to rethink parts of their proposal before coming back to the Planning Commission in October.

An aerial map shows the area along Clark Road at the center of the latest proposed 2050 Plan changes. Image courtesy of Sarasota County

The Planning Commission was scheduled to take up the item last Thursday, Aug. 15, but county Long-Range Planning Manager Allen Parsons announced at that gathering that the property owners had requested a continuance to Oct. 3. Williams Parker Harrison Dietz & Getzen attorney Charlie Bailey, who is representing the owners, told the commission that county staffers' "thoughtful review" of the changes had prompted them to reconsider and "clarify" some of their requests.

The original comprehensive plan amendment would have significantly altered portions of Sarasota 2050, affecting 4,638 agricultural acres along Clark Road. The proposal called for a reduction in the amount of open space that would need to be preserved, as well as the elimination of affordable housing requirements and the rule that commercial space be located inside a new neighborhood rather than on its edges. Overall, according to the proposal, the 2050 changes would have allowed the owners to build 9,110 units on the land, located south of Clark and to the east of Ibis Street and the neighborhood of Serenoa.


Those changes would have come on top of the larger ones being considered by the County Commission, which has pushed to overhaul several sections of 2050 since last year. The plan was originally approved a decade ago to encourage the development of environmentally friendly, walkable neighborhoods, but it has come under fire because developers say it is stifling new construction.

County staffers had asked several questions about the Clark Road proposal, as evidenced



Charlie Bailey. Image courtesy of Williams Parker Harrison Dietz & Getzen

by the bundle of paperwork presented to the Planning Commission. Staff had requested more details and a number of clarifications, including a "detailed narrative" that would address questions such as "What about this property is unique that justifies the proposed modifications?"

How might the owners' reworked proposal differ from the one posted to last week's agenda? It's unclear. Parsons tells *The Sarasota News Leader* his office expects a revamped proposal this week or next, "removing a number of things that they had asked for." 



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ROUNABOUT SCULPTURES PROPOSED

An example of whimsical roundabout art stands in Grand Junction, CO. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

ROUNABOUT ADVOCATE ROD WARNER SAYS THE VISIBLE PUBLIC ART ON U.S. 41 COULD BECOME THE CITY'S THIRD ICON

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Nothing would set Sarasota apart more than a corridor of large sculptures rising up from the center of roundabouts.

That is what roundabout advocate Rod Warner told the city's Public Art Committee Aug. 14.

Large highly visible art situated in 10 planned roundabouts on U.S. 41 — from the North Trail to downtown — would create a “sense of place,” Warner said.

“There is an opportunity in the roundabout

centers to display iconic sculptures, each becoming a landmark,” Warner pointed out. “It would validate Sarasota as a cultural center on the coast of Florida.”

Plus, it would look “cool,” Warner said. “One icon is the bayfront. One icon is Ringling Bridge,” Warner added in an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*. “We need a third,

which is a grand boulevard with iconic artwork that would connect all three.”

In addition to eye-catchers amid the 10 proposed U.S. 41

“*The trick is putting the pieces of the puzzle together.*”

Virginia Hoffman
Artist



roundabouts, Warner suggests smaller-scale sculptures in the middle of roundabouts in Sarasota's downtown core, such as the new Main Street and Orange Avenue roundabout planned for construction in 2014.

The Public Art Committee liked the concept, voting 5-0 to convey its support to the City Commission and lead discussions in the effort to build momentum for the initiative. On Monday, Aug. 19, the city commissioners also supported the project, moving forward the initial concept of center island sculptures as part of the planning process for the new, multi-lane roundabouts on U.S. 41.

Some in the local arts community have also vocally backed the project.

Artist Virginia Hoffman told commissioners that other cities offer driving tour directions for public art; she envisions that happening in Sarasota if sculptures are placed in the roundabouts.

"I believe the will does exist to do something like this in Sarasota," Hoffman added.

Public Art Committee member George Haborak called the roundabout sculptures a "tremendous idea." Haborak even suggested the possibility of relocating *Complexus* — the giant modern red sculpture looming beside U.S. 41 at the Gulfstream Avenue intersection — to a visible new home in the center of one of the roundabouts.

"This is a rare opportunity to make a statement about our community," said Public Art Committee Chairwoman Elizabeth Van Riper.

Committee member Trulee Jameson said she would like to see a comprehensive plan for all 10 U.S. 41 roundabouts.



Roundabout art can range from modern, as shown in Federal Way, WA, to monumental. Image courtesy of the City of Sarasota



Sarasota roundabout advocate Rod Warner says roundabout icons, such as the Musica sculpture on Music Row in Nashville, TN, brand a community. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



This sculpture in Idaho Falls, ID, incorporates a waterfall. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

On Monday, Mayor Shannon Snyder had a favorable reaction to the concept for the big displays.

“We need to plan for some artwork in there,” Snyder said.

But the mayor noted that a slow approach would be best. “We should not rush trying to fill these things before they are built,” Snyder added of the roundabouts.

“It’s critical we get [the artwork] on the books with FDOT,” said City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), which oversees U.S. 41, has never before constructed a multi-roundabout project with public art in the middle, Warner said. But the sculptures have been incorporated in other states’ projects. And several Florida cities have included public art in smaller roundabouts.

Cities from Anchorage, AK, to San Antonio, TX, have also put art in their roundabouts. Bend, OR, even has a smartphone app so visitors can read a description of each sculpture

and learn about the artists and how the pieces were created, Warner said.

Atwell discussed how Warner and other roundabout advocates have convinced some residents that roundabouts are the way to go in Sarasota.

“A lot of people had fear about roundabouts,” Atwell said. “And here, today, we are talking about how we decorate roundabouts. We have elevated [roundabouts] to so much in this community. Because this is what works. It is wonderful that we are at this point.”

FUNDING

As with any other public art project, how to secure funding often becomes a significant challenge — and in the early conceptual phase of the roundabout art project, it is a very big question.

“The sculpture(s) need to be large, and the expense will be large,” said Public Art Committee member Jeffrey Weisman.

One initial estimate puts the total cost at \$2.5 million to \$3 million for the 10 roundabouts on U.S. 41.

Warner does not think money should come from the city or county, although both local governments will have to work closely with FDOT to plan the roundabout art.

“Funding for the centers will not come from the taxpayer,” Warner said. “That will come from contributions from foundations and donations.”

There is a possibility that nearby universities, such as the Ringling College of Art and Design, and some corporate partners could be

interested in contributing funding, Warner noted.

Van Riper suggested the committee could set aside \$40,000 for public art in each of the roundabouts to get the project started. The committee, however, did not vote on that proposal.

Ron McCollough, a member of the roundabout advocacy group US41 Momentum — who has been working with Warner to bring the U.S. 41 roundabout project to a reality — told the Public Art Committee that someone needs to take up the cause.

That entity or person will then work closely with arts and cultural organizations to seek possible funding, said McCollough.

“Our focus is on creating the multimodal corridor,” McCollough added. “We are here to let

you know that an opportunity is here. Hopefully, someone in the art community will take the banner and run with that.”

GOING VERTICAL

The roundabout project for U.S. 41 has been rolling ahead. The first two of the multi-lane roundabouts on the bayfront thoroughfare received the go-ahead from the Federal Highway Administration in April.

As the planning phase advances, Warner said the timing is perfect to consider a plan to fund and install public art in the middle of each of the roundabouts.

Something vertical — either a flagpole or trees — usually is placed in the center of a roundabout to warn motorists that a circle is up ahead.



This bear sculpture is artwork befitting a roundabout in Anchorage, AK. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

“The question mark is what,” Warner said.

Whatever fills the multi-lane roundabouts will have plenty of space.

While the Five Points roundabout is about 45 feet wide, those on U.S. 41 will be 100 feet wide, said Phil Smith, a landscape architect with David W Johnston Associates, a firm working with the city on the structures’ design.

Any public art in the roundabouts should be planned in a way that does not encourage people to walk out to view the art in closer detail, said City Engineer Alex DavisShaw. Another challenge is to install art that does not distract drivers.

A NEW FOCUS

The first roundabouts to be built — and the first that could see public art — will be those at the intersections of U.S. 41 and 10th Street and U.S. 41 and 14th Street; along with the smaller roundabout at Main Street and Orange Avenue.

FDOT has begun the design process for the pair on U.S. 41.

“So there is some urgency now,” Warner said.

At Monday’s City Commission meeting, commissioners also heard from supporters of roundabout sculptures on the North Trail.

Former City Commissioner Ken Shelin said he felt there should be a connection between the roundabout sculptures on U.S. 41.

“The Tamiami Trail should be a gateway,” he pointed out. “There should be a theme if possible, a unity and cohesiveness.”

Setting aside \$500,000 to \$600,000 for each sculpture on U.S. 41, the overall budget would run an estimated \$2.5 million to \$3 million, Hoffman said.

“The trick is putting the pieces of the puzzle together,” Hoffman told the commissioners.

Jim Shirley, executive director of the Arts and Cultural Alliance, which serves as the public art advisory committee for the county, said the art could become a big asset to the area.

“It can help brand this community even further,” Shirley noted. 



City Commissioners listen to various roundabout aesthetic options at the regular City Commission meeting Monday. Photo by Roger Drouin

This may take a while.

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'WHAT ARE WE DOING WRONG?'



A MegaMowers employee trims a county right of way in a neighborhood on Aug. 21. Such work is provided through county policy, Commissioner Nora Patterson says, though most homeowners mow rights of way and ditch banks adjacent to their yards. Photo by Rachel Hackney

WITH MORE MOWING FIRMS HAVING ABANDONED COUNTY CONTRACTS, THE COUNTY COMMISSION ON AUG. 27 WILL BE FACED WITH APPROVING AN EXTRA \$1.5 MILLION ON NEW ONES IN ITS CURRENT BUDGET

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Almost exactly two months after he last stood before them with a problem, Spencer Anderson, director of field services for Sarasota County, will be back before the commissioners on Aug. 27 with yet more mowing woes.

This time, it appears the board will be facing not only the need to approve new vendors, but an increase of \$1,514,000 — about 58 percent — in the

amount it had budgeted for the services in the current fiscal year.

On Aug. 21 — the day after the board wrestled with income and expenses for the 2014 fiscal year — Commissioner Nora Patterson told

“It’s ... another budget issue, but I don’t see that we have any other choice.”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

The Sarasota News Leader, “It’s ... another budget issue, but I don’t see that we have any other choice.”

The commissioners join residents in want-

ing the county to look good, Commissioner Joe Barbetta told the *News Leader*. “We’re going to have to bite the bullet.”

However, Barbetta — who has been most vocal about the numerous failed mowing contracts over the past two years — said he felt it was time for county staff members to invite representatives of the top three or four mowing firms — those with proven track records in handling county contracts — to sit down with them and discuss a revision of the county’s specifications. Staff needs to say, “Help us here,” Barbetta added. “What are we doing wrong?”

In an email he sent to County Administrator Randall Reid and Deputy County Administrator Tom Harmer on Aug. 16, Anderson wrote, “Recent contract developments ... have required staff to further utilize Alternate vendors to provide continual County-wide maintenance. These Alternate vendors will remain active until new contracts are awarded to permanent vendors.”

Anderson added, “Considering all of the implemented and proposed contract changes, there is an overall proposed increase in the annual contracted cost for right of way maintenance from \$2,591,500 [as of April 23] to \$4,105,500



County workers maintain the rights of way and medians on some ‘gateway roads,’ including Beneva Road. Photo courtesy of Sarasota County

(net increase of \$1,514,000 or 58%). This includes amounts previously approved by the Commission on June 18, 2013 for Zone 1 and subsequent increases to the Palmer Ranch Master Homeowners Association reimbursement contract.”

PAST AND PRESENT

On June 18, Anderson appeared before the County Commission meeting to say that the firm hired in late April to handle right of way mowing and median maintenance in the county’s North Urban Zone had been unable to perform according to the county’s specifications. Accepting Anderson’s recommendation, the board members voted unanimously to award a new contract for that zone. It went to JLC Hauling Inc., dba MegaMowers, Anderson reminded them in his Aug. 16 email, and the bid was \$295,736.90 higher than the bid of Main-scape Inc. of Sarasota, which had won the contract in April.

The North Urban Zone encompasses areas north of Bee Ridge Road and west of Interstate 75.

Anderson added that MegaMowers started work on July 9, and its fourth cycle, set to end on Aug. 20, was “anticipated to [be] complete as scheduled,” with no further problems expected in that zone.

However, in the North Residential Zone, Jackson Landscape Professionals abandoned its contract on July 24 after completing two-thirds of the maintenance, Anderson continued. MegaMowers also had accepted the proposed award of a contract for that zone, too, he continued. That contract will be presented to the commissioners on Aug 27.

Jackson Landscape’s bid was \$291,585.60, while the MegaMowers bid for the zone was \$337,978.84 higher, the email pointed out.



Grass grows high in a median on Webber Street in August 2012, when the county was struggling with a backlog of work related to failed contracts. File photo

Additionally, Anderson wrote, representatives of the firm that won the bid in the North Rural Zone — StormTech Inc. — had notified staff of their intentions to end their services and dissolve the business. Again, MegaMowers had accepted the proposed award of a contract for the area, at a higher cost of \$174,709.28. That contract also will come before the commission on Aug. 27.

Finally, Anderson wrote, Jackson Landscape also had abandoned its contract in the South Residential Zone; that occurred on July 24. Reynolds Mowing Services — the first available alternate vendor — accepted a temporary assignment in that zone, he continued. It began work the first week of August in the areas Jackson Landscape had failed to complete.

The Reynolds Mowing contract also will come before the County Commission on Aug. 27. It will be \$357,957.60 higher than the Jackson Landscape bid.

Barbetta pointed out to the *News Leader* that whenever he sees a “huge discrepancy in bids, there’s usually a problem.”

DISCUSSIONS THIS WEEK

Anderson met with each of the commissioners separately on Aug. 21 to apprise them of the latest problems. The “one-on-one” discussions are necessary to prevent violations of Florida’s Sunshine Laws.

Barbetta pointed out to the *News Leader* that Anderson “inherited the whole process,” adding that the county had had problems for some time before County Administrator Reid put Anderson in charge of the Field Services Office — and the mowing contracts. “The specs probably aren’t written properly,” Barbetta said.

On June 18, Anderson noted that Mainscape had been the third vendor to fail in the North Urban Zone over the past year.

When Vice Chairman Charles Hines asked whether that indicated a problem with that particular zone, Anderson replied, “It’s the only zone where we’ve had a recurring vendor that’s been new to roadside mowing.”

However, Barbetta took the opportunity then to raise the issue of the specs. Anderson’s response was that all three of the firms that had to withdraw were inexperienced in right of way mowing, though they seemed to have sufficient personnel and equipment.

Commissioner Christine Robinson said, however, that Anderson told her other counties are experiencing similar problems.

“We do have a high amount of acreage that we mow here,” she added. “That helped me put it into perspective a little bit.”

Anderson noted in the Aug. 16 email, “I am requesting information from several of our Comparable Counties on their costs and contract processes for similar services. This information is expected to be helpful in understanding the commonality of these issues across Counties.”

Patterson told the *News Leader* Anderson had indicated to her the latest problems were more examples of companies thinking the jobs were smaller than they actually were, and the firms were “unable to break even, much less make a profit.”

Unfortunately, by having to hire the second- or third-low bidders to handle the work, Patterson added, the county incurs more expenses than it had planned on for the budget.


YET ANOTHER UNRESOLVED ISSUE

Along with the news of the latest failed contracts, Anderson provided an update in his Aug. 16 email regarding the board's April 23 authorization for the hiring of 21 new full-time employees (FTEs) to maintain University Parkway, Honore Avenue, Beneva Road, North Cattlemen Road, Fruitville Road, Jacaranda Boulevard, U.S. 41 in Venice and State Road 776. The latter is a 25-mile route that links southern Sarasota County to Charlotte County.

The commissioners approved those new positions, they said at the time, out of desire to make certain the community's "gateway roads" were as presentable as possible to tourists.

Anderson wrote, "Staff has been working to hire these new FTE's but, to date, the existing labor pool has not produced sufficient qualified applicants. Therefore, these maintenance crews are operating with reduced personnel or reduced crews."

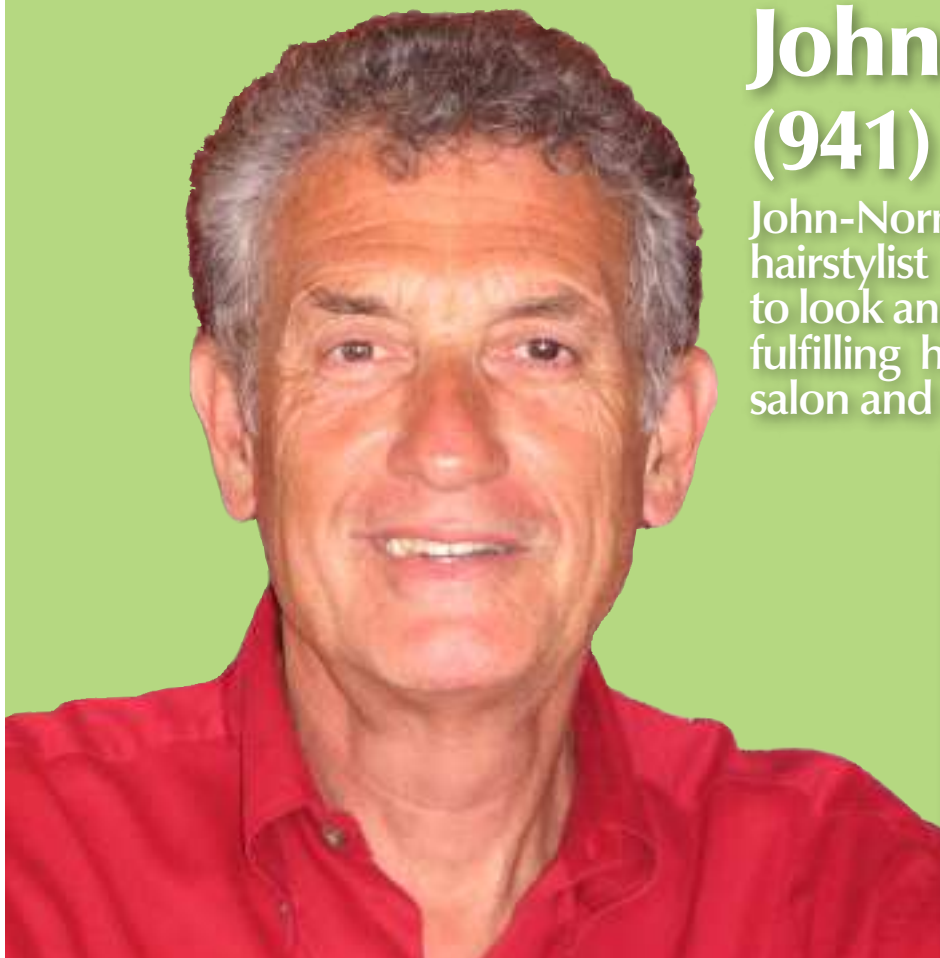
He added, "Positions will remain advertised and we will process applicants until the positions are filled. With reduced County resources, this zone is being maintained but not as frequent as planned ... every 20 days rather than every 10 days. We are utilizing approved overtime funds to further close the gap on planned vs. actual cycle times."

Robinson summed it all up for the *News Leader*: "We're going to keep working on it. ... We've got some good companies that are doing [the mowing] now." 

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HOTEL RACE

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*We can start and complete this in 16 months ...
That is pretty exciting to us.*

Jim Bridges
President and CEO
Jebco Ventures Inc.

”

The Embassy Suites planned at 202 N. Tamiami Trail would include 200 hotel rooms, a restaurant and a seventh-floor pool. Contributed photo

JEBCO VENTURES INC.'S EMBASSY SUITES BECOMES THE FIFTH HOTEL TOWER PROPOSED DOWNTOWN

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

When developer Jim Bridges did his own due diligence to see if a hotel would be a good fit for a parcel of land on U.S. 41 in downtown Sarasota, he was encouraged by the results.

The research concluded downtown was lacking in the range of 600 to 700 hotel rooms to meet anticipated need. “Our studies show there to be a shortage of hotel rooms in Sarasota right now,” Bridges said.

Bridges, CEO and president of Jebco Ventures Inc., purchased the property at 202 N. Tamiami Trail — at the northeast corner of U.S. 41 and Second Street — in 2005 with the goal

of building a hotel there; the research showing a shortage of hotel rooms cemented his idea. Bridges submitted preliminary plans last month to the city for a 200-room, 18-story Embassy Suites property.

The hotel, featuring a seventh-floor pool and units with Sarasota Bay views, will showcase modern architecture and include six floors of parking, a ballroom/conference area and a restaurant.

The proposed Embassy Suites could become one of a handful of tower hotels that would transform the look of downtown, fostering its



An aerial view shows the location of 202 N. Tamiami Trail in downtown Sarasota. Image from Google maps

transition into even more of a tourist destination.

The Embassy Suites project also becomes the fifth hotel tower proposed recently for downtown. The others are the Floridays hotel on Palm Avenue; a 275-room hotel at Gulfstream Avenue and Tamiami Trail; a Kimpton Hotel at Main Street and North Washington Boulevard; and One Palm at South Palm Avenue and Ringling Boulevard.

On Aug. 15, Jebco Ventures also pitched a proposal to the city for the construction of a smaller, 100-room hotel and 30 residential units above the planned State Street parking garage.

The State Street venture would have to be selected by the City Commission to be part of

the city's public-private parking garage. If approved, the State Street hotel would become the sixth proposed hotel downtown. A special City Commission meeting to consider the project will be held Aug. 29.

The Embassy Suites plan could provide Bridges with a slight advantage in the race to build all these new downtown hotels. The project does not require any city zoning adjustments — expediting the process — and it is already in the “design phase,” Bridges told *The Sarasota News Leader*. He hopes to start construction in summer 2014, with a work schedule showing completion in less than a year and a half.

“I believe the timing is right,” Bridges said. “Interest rates are still favorable.”



The property where a Kimpton Hotel is proposed at the intersection of Main Street and Washington Boulevard serves as a parking lot for 12th Judicial Circuit Court. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“We can start and complete this in 16 months,” Bridges added. “That is pretty exciting to us.”

Across the street, 275 hotel rooms are slated as part of a proposed two-tower development at Gulfstream Avenue and U.S. 41, the former site of the proposed Grande Sarasotan, a project that failed during the Great Recession.


The Embassy Suites — along with the Gulfstream project and anticipated redevelopment of the former Quay site — would drastically change the several-block stretch of Tamiami Trail through the core of the city.

“It is just a fun place,” Bridges said when asked by the *News Leader* why downtown draws hotel concepts.

“You could have asked the Ritz [Carlton] that question years ago when it was built, and it is doing very well.”

Bridges pointed out that his hotel would fill a different niche than its nearby neighbor: The Embassy Suites would “be a luxury hotel with some five-star characteristics, but not in the price range of the Ritz.”

Bridges is optimistic the project will “[take] on its own identity” at a visible location downtown.

“We believe we make a statement, and this is a place to make a statement,” he added. 



A 275-room hotel is planned for the intersection of U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel



THE \$8 MILLION QUESTION

BMX riders compete during an event at the Sarasota track. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS THIS WEEK DEBATED SAVING FUNDS FREED UP BY A RESERVE POLICY CHANGE OR USING THEM FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WITH AN AUG. 27 VOTE SET TO CONFIRM THE DECISION THAT MAKES THE MONEY AVAILABLE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Two world champions and a representative from an Ohio firm that designs and constructs all the major BMX tracks stood before the County Commission on Tuesday, Aug. 20, imploring the board to approve about \$1 million in funding to make Sarasota County an international center for BMX training and events.

Their request was left on the table until at least Aug. 27, when the commission will be

asked to take a formal policy vote on whether to keep a 75-day reserve fund for operations after a disaster or the current 90-day fund.

The 15-day change would free up more than \$8 million that could be spent on a variety of economic development projects, Commissioner

Joe Barbetta has maintained, including the addition of a 5-meter ramp and the reconfiguration of the track at the [BMX facility on 17th Street](#).

“*Sarasota is the holy ground for BMX in the United States.*”

Todd Harper
Elite Trax Inc.

During their May 14 budget workshop, the commissioners split 3-2 on a vote to change the reserve policy. At that time, the county's chief financial planning officer, Steve Botelho, reported that the action would give them an extra \$8,131,269 that they could choose to spend in the coming fiscal year.

During the Aug. 21 budget workshop, Botelho informed the commissioners they would have to vote on a formal resolution to change the policy. That is the action scheduled for Aug. 27, when the board holds its next regular meeting, scheduled at the Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota.

Although Barbetta urged his fellow commissioners on Aug. 20 to act on several sports tourism-related proposals costing about \$1,045,000 out of that potential \$8 million, he managed to succeed with only one motion.

That was authorization for the county to buy a specific type of boat needed for major rowing regattas at Benderson Park. The cost will be about \$20,000.

County Administrator Randall Reid pointed out that the Manatee County Commission was considering purchasing one of the boats as well. If both boards acted, Reid said, boats christened "Miss Sarasota County" and "Miss Manatee County" would be added as equipment at the park, which hopes to host the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

If Benderson wins the bid for that international event, Reid continued, the park will have to have five or six of those specific boats ready for use.

Commissioner Nora Patterson was willing to make a motion to purchase one boat, but she

“ *I'm not trying to spend money here that we're not going to get a return on investment on.*

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

”



The BMX venue in London was used during the 2012 Olympics. Photo by carlbob via Wikimedia Commons

specified the money not come from the anticipated \$8 million.

“I can second that [motion],” Barbetta said. “I think we can finalize where [the money] comes from next Tuesday.”

That vote passed 4-1, with Commissioner Christine Robinson in the minority.

Robinson earlier had voiced concerns about the county dipping into its economic uncertainty reserve fund to balance the 2014 Fiscal Year budget.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE

In discussing the county’s reserves, Botelho referred to a chart showing an estimate that the county would spend \$26.7 million of the

economic uncertainty reserve during the next fiscal year. (See the related story in this issue.)

If the county spent another \$26 million in the 2015 fiscal year, he added, it would have only about \$2.5 million left to mitigate any shortfalls in the FY 2016 budget; otherwise, it would have to dip into the 75- or 90-day disaster reserve.

Using the latest state economic projections, Botelho pointed to a conservative estimate that the county would have to plug a \$44 million budget hole in FY 2016. State estimates show the county’s revenue increasing by 4.1 percent in FY 2015 and 4.8 percent in FY 2016, he told the board.

The March state revenue projections indicated only a 2.4 percent uptick for FY 2015 and



BMX World Champion Percy Owens addresses the County Commission on Aug. 20. Photo by Rachel Hackney

a 3.4 percent increase for FY 2016, a budget chart shows.

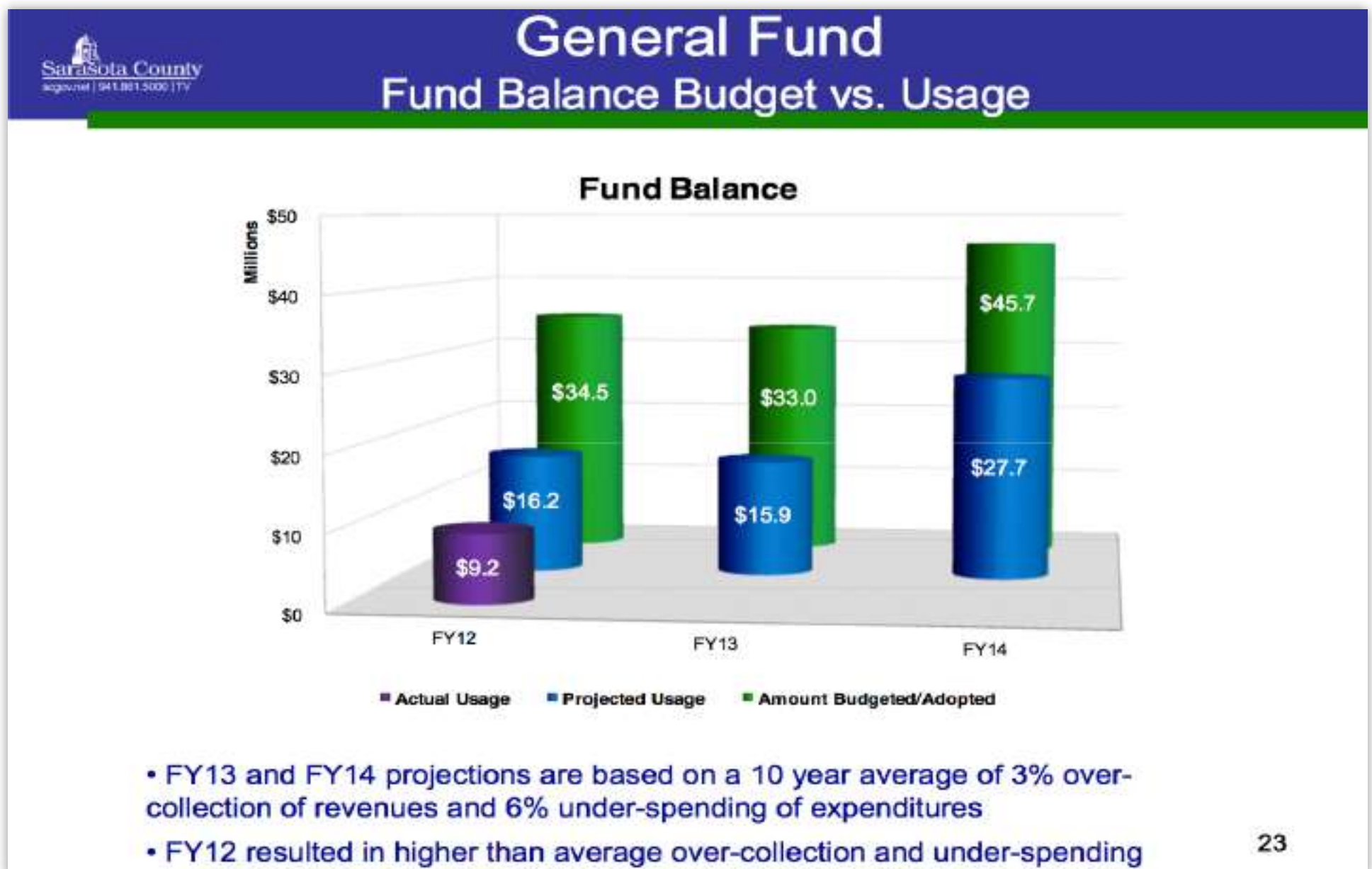
Patterson characterized the economic uncertainty reserve figures as “a fairly dismal projection.”

Vice Chairman Charles Hines said the chart “is ... great ... for us to use to talk to the community and explain to them what’s going to happen over the next two to three years. I don’t know that I would use the word ‘dismal.’”

Hines added that he felt previous County Commissions had done “a great job of setting aside money and reinvesting it in our community.”



Commissioner Nora Patterson studies agenda material during a budget workshop earlier this year. File photo



A June graphic shows projections for spending from the county’s economic uncertainty fund (in blue). The purple cylinder indicates the actual expense in the 2012 fiscal year, while the green cylinders represent the county’s disaster reserve fund. Image courtesy of Sarasota County

The question, Hines continued, is “How do you increase those reserves in ’15 and ’16?” The current commission has voiced a commitment to avoid tax increases, he added, which means, as Barbetta has noted on numerous occasions, that the county should sell surplus property and broaden its economic development initiatives.

If the board does foster economic development, Barbetta pointed out, and the county once again begins to experience the growth rate it recorded before the Great Recession, the County Commission in FY 2016 could be looking at adding tens of millions to its economic uncertainty reserve.

Robinson argued for controlled spending. “We’re still on an unsustainable path,” she

said. “We’ve got to get control of this in some sort of way at some point.”

SPORTS TOURISM

In their final discussion during the budget workshop this week, Barbetta fought again for tourism initiatives.

That morning, Percy Owens, 38, of Sarasota, told the board the “local impact of Super Cross [at the county’s BMX facility] will be awesome.”

A world BMX champion, Owens said the track already has more than 1,000 local riders. If the county spends the money to improve the facility, he pointed out, “It will bring all kinds of attention from a national standpoint.”



The Baltimore Orioles’ games at Ed Smith Stadium over the past several years have contributed to the rise in the county’s Tourist Development Tax revenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Amanda Carr, 23, a Punta Gorda native and the world amateur BMX champion in 2005 and 2006, pointed out that because the only Super Cross track in the United States is in California — and it is very difficult for athletes from overseas to get training slots there — Sarasota would become a Mecca for those athletes if it invested in the improvements.

Todd Harper of Elite Trax Inc. in Ohio said his firm was looking at moving its home base to Sarasota, if Barbetta's BMX proposal won approval. The city would become a regular site for the sport's World Cup events, Harper pointed out, and his firm would host an invitational competition here every year, which is a major event for riders training for the Olympics.

He cautioned that the County Commission's decision was time-sensitive, because two other Florida cities are looking at building BMX Super Cross tracks.

Nonetheless, Harper said, "Sarasota is the holy ground for BMX in the United States," as the city has the longest-operating track in the nation.

Barbetta failed on the afternoon of Aug. 20 to even get a motion on the floor for the approximately \$1 million in funding for the BMX track improvements.

First, other commissioners said they wanted to hear a report next week from County Administrator Reid about how Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue might be utilized for some of Barbetta's proposals. Botelho said he was working with the County Attorney's Office on research for that report.

When Barbetta proposed the county spend about \$25,000 for a feasibility study to determine what would be necessary to create a proposed youth baseball academy at the Babe Ruth complex the county owns next to Robarts Arena on Fruitville Road, Robinson told him, "If we were using TDT [revenue] for it, I could be supportive of [it]."

Hines concurred with her.

Although Barbetta put his proposal for that study into the form of a motion, it died for lack of a second. It is very likely, he said, that TDT revenue could pay for the analysis.


"I'm just trying to [propose] revenue-generating things in the community, coupled with benefiting the youth of our community," he said. "Those two things are a primary goal. ... I'm not trying to spend money here that we're not going to get a return on investment on."

Finally, Chairwoman Carolyn Mason asked him if he would be willing to wait on his proposals until the board hears the report on which Botelho is working.

Barbetta agreed to do that.

Earlier, Patterson reminded him that the May vote on the reserve policy was 3-2. "Here's the problem," she said: "Even if you agree the 90 days should be cut back to 75, did you really mean to do that and spend all the difference at once?"

"No," Barbetta told her.

"One of the reasons I disagreed with [the policy change] is because we will spend it all immediately," Patterson added, "[but] it could help the people who are still on the board in 2016 who are trying to balance their budget." 

BUILDING ON THE DEATH OF DOMA



Image courtesy of eqfl.org

LGBT GROUP PUSHES AHEAD TOWARD FUNDRAISING GOAL

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Hoping to build off the blast of energy delivered to the marriage equality movement by the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), local representatives of Equality Florida, the state's biggest LGBT civil rights organization, are inviting supporters to a Host Committee kickoff party next Wednesday, Aug. 28.

The reception, to be held at Northern Trust in Sarasota, is the first in a pair of events designed to encourage folks to join Equality's Gala Host Committee, which is responsible for putting together a Sarasota fundraising blowout on Nov. 10.

Equality board member and former Sarasota City Commissioner Ken Shelin, who has become a vocal proponent of LGBT rights via domestic partnership registries in recent years, says the goal is to raise \$100,000 in the Sarasota area in 2013. Good news: The organization is more than halfway there. Shelin credits individual generosity, as well as the support of major businesses such as U.S. Trust, JetBlue and Citibank for the group's success so far.

"We know a lot of people, obviously, and we're growing, but we'd like to grow more," Shelin says. "There's still a lot that needs to be done."

Indeed. While the demise of DOMA has invigorated marriage equality supporters, both the Florida Constitution and state law prevent gays and lesbians from marrying here, and the state lacks comprehensive protections against discrimination in housing and employment.

Locally, while municipalities such as Sarasota, Venice and Holmes Beach have embraced the concept of domestic partnership registries, Shelin has encountered resistance with the boards in both Manatee and Sarasota counties. "I often wonder about the composition of our County Commission," he says. "Domestic partnership registers have been around for 20 years."

And then there's the recent controversy over Venice's Casa Di Amici, a condo that has drawn national headlines for a new rule banning unmarried couples. "Sorry gays," the *Miami New Times* quipped.

According to attorney Dan Lobeck, the Casa Di Amici board was scheduled to meet Thursday (after *The Sarasota News Leader* goes to press) to consider repealing the ordinance. "The restriction, although legal under local, state and national laws, was inadvertent and was not intended by Association leaders to discriminate against gays or other unmarried couples," Lobeck wrote in an email sent out Wednesday.


In addition to work on those fronts, Equality has launched a new campaign called Get Engaged! which seeks to build support for a push to overturn the ban on same-sex marriage in the state constitution. It may be a few years before that becomes reality, Shelin says. Amending the state constitution requires 60 percent approval from the electorate, and ac-



Ken Shelin. Contributed photo

tivists need to build a winning coalition first. Equality is also considering a lawsuit that might overturn the restriction.

But all that work means more money is needed, and that's where November's gala comes in, as well as next week's reception and another party scheduled for Sept. 14. The gala will cost you \$100; next week's reception is free. DOMA is dead, but much work remains.

The Equality Florida Host Committee kickoff party starts at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 28, with "drinks and nibbles." The event will be hosted by Northern Trust, 1515 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota. For more information about Equality Florida, visit eqfl.org. 



The West John Ringling Causeway Park has been closed for about a month so the seawall and sidewalk can be repaired. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WEST RINGLING CAUSEWAY PARK CLOSED TEMPORARILY

The West John Ringling Causeway Park temporarily closed as of Aug. 19 while crews repair a seawall and sidewalk, the City of Sarasota has announced.

The park is expected to reopen in approximately one month, a news release says. The sidewalk under the Ringling Bridge adjacent to the park will remain open to the public, the release adds.

An orange construction fence has been erected around the park to protect the public from the construction, which involves heavy machinery, the release notes. Motorists along John Ringling Causeway near Bird Key are advised to watch for slow-moving construction vehicles entering and exiting the area.

To create an access point for the machinery, crews recently removed several large trees, including Washingtonian palms, sabal palms and crape myrtles, the release points out. Un-

der the guidance of a city arborist, each tree will be returned and replanted after the construction is completed, the release continues.

Over the years, the seawall and sidewalk have eroded because of high surf, the release points out. The project is being funded through a WCIND (West Coast Inland Navigation District) grant.



A sign alerts the public that the park is closed. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY TO HOST WORKSHOP ON COASTAL FRINGE FLOOD PROTECTION

Sarasota County staff will host an open house workshop from 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 5, at the Englewood Sports Complex, 1300 South River Road, Englewood, to present a newly completed study that examines neighborhood flooding resulting from excessive rainfall, the county has announced.

Preliminary findings highlight areas that are prone to flooding in the Lemon Bay coastal watershed, the release notes. Staff will discuss areas that are being considered for potential flood risk mitigation projects. Representatives from the Sarasota County Stormwater, Environmental Utilities, Public Works and other departments will be on hand to answer ques-



A 2010 graphic shows elevation levels in the Lemon Bay Watershed. Image courtesy of Sarasota County

tions and accept comments from residents, the release points out.

“This workshop is about gathering input from residents about flooding in their neighborhood and what we can do together to try to mitigate it,” said Scott Woodman, specialist with Sarasota County Utilities, in the release. “We used new technologies for this study and we are hopeful the accuracy of the results matches up with what residents have observed.”

Developed as a requirement to Sarasota County’s Comprehensive Plan, the study was paid

for by Sarasota County with a 50 percent matching grant from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), the release says. The Lemon Bay Coastal study area begins from Center Road in Venice and continues south to the Charlotte County line, west of U.S. 41 and State Road 776 through Englewood.

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

COUNTY HOLDING NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT WORKSHOPS

A series of free grant orientation workshops under the auspices of the Sarasota County Neighborhood Grant Program will be held from late this month through October at several locations around the county.

During each two-hour workshop, residents may learn what improvement projects are eligible for the program and how to apply for a neighborhood grant, a news release says. Attendance at a workshop is required for grant applicants, the release notes. Additionally, all attendees must RSVP.

Providing matching grant funds to neighborhood associations is an initiative to preserve and enhance the quality of life throughout Sarasota County, the release adds.

Workshops are scheduled as follows:

Sarasota

- Fruitville Library, 100 Coburn Road: Friday, Aug. 30, 10 a.m. to noon; Saturday, Sept. 28, 10 a.m. to noon.

- Sarasota County Administration Center, 1660 Ringling Blvd., first floor: Tuesday, Oct. 1, 10 a.m. to noon.
- Colonial Oaks Park, 5300 Colonial Oaks Blvd.: Saturday, Sept. 14, 10 a.m. to noon.

Venice

- Venice Library, 300 Nokomis Ave. South: Tuesday, Aug. 27, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Englewood

- Elsie Quirk Library, 100 W. Dearborn St.: Wednesday, Sept. 11, 10 a.m. to noon.

North Port

- North Port Library, 13800 Tamiami Trail: Wednesday, Sept. 25, noon to 2 p.m.

For more information or to arrange for a grant workshop, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 or email kvieira@scgov.net.

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BEACHGOERS REMINDED TO DO 'STINGRAY SHUFFLE' TO AVOID INJURY

Stingray season has begun and is expected to last through the rest of the summer, Sarasota County has advised the public.

Lifeguards are reminding beachgoers to avoid injury by doing the "stingray shuffle" when entering the Gulf of Mexico. "By shuffling your feet in the sand, you will scare off any stingrays that might be around," a news release says.

If stingrays are present at a beach, a purple flag will be visible from the lifeguard tower in addition to signs that will be posted, alerting the public to be cautious, the release adds. Flags were up early this week "and will be flown as needed," the release notes.

Stingrays by nature are not aggressive; however, the problem arises when bathers unknowingly step on them. This happens close to the shoreline, where stingrays tend to burrow in the sand, usually during the summer months

when they are searching for food or mating, the release points out.

Stingrays are capable of inflicting a laceration or a penetrating type of wound. "The injury is serious and can be very painful," the release adds. Anyone who has suffered a stingray wound must take immediate and effective action in its treatment.

If stung by a stingray, the release says to do the following:

- Seek a lifeguard or go directly to the nearest medical facility for treatment or someplace where you can get hot water.
- Soaking the wound in water as hot as the person can stand should be the first step in treating the injury. That action will help relieve the pain

For more information, contact Sarasota County Lifeguard Operations at 861-5000 or visit www.scgov.net.



Stingrays are not aggressive, but if they are surprised, they can make it plain how they earned their name, Sarasota County lifeguards say. Photo by Barry Peters via Wikimedia Commons

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP. MOVES TO HUB BUILDING

The City of Sarasota is welcoming the Economic Development Corp. of Sarasota County (EDC) on its upcoming move to downtown Sarasota, the region's business core.

The EDC announced its relocation plans last week. The new office will be located at the HuB, along Fruitville Road, after being based on Cattleman Road since 2005.

"We're excited about this news," City Manager Tom Barwin said in a news release. "Downtown Sarasota is integral to doing business in

the area. Having the EDC downtown will bolster the synergy between the city, county and other partners to grow businesses and attract diverse companies to our area," he added in the release. "We welcome the EDC and I personally look forward to working closely with them to make our region even more vibrant."

The EDC of Sarasota County is a private not-for-profit corporation that leads the economic development strategy throughout the region, the release notes. To learn more visit www.EDCSarasotaCounty.com.



Partygoers celebrate the HuB's relocation in December to a building on Fruitville Road. Photo by Scott Proffitt

MOTORISTS URGED TO AVOID OLD BRADENTON ROAD

As part of the City of Sarasota's Old Bradenton Road improvement project, a significant traffic diversion began on Aug. 8, with northbound and southbound traffic near 47th Street diverted through a semicircular area, the City of Sarasota has announced.

Two-lane, two-way traffic will go around the semicircle, which has road striping and construction barricades. "Drivers are advised to be vigilant and follow the traffic control devices," a news release says. Flag persons will be on site to direct motorists.

"This temporary traffic pattern will be a significant change," the release notes. Because of the reconfiguration during construction, a slower speed limit will be in place around the semicircle, and extensive road signage will be visible, the release adds. "Additional caution is strongly encouraged after nightfall," the release points out.

"Although Old Bradenton Road will be open to traffic, motorists are strongly encouraged to

use alternate routes including U.S. 41, Myrtle Street and U.S. 301," the release says.

The east side of the intersection is scheduled to be closed initially for about two more weeks while Verizon constructs an underground vault for its utilities, the release points out. Afterward, the road contractor will begin construction of a roundabout at Old Bradenton Road and 47th Street. The temporary traffic diversion will remain in place until the roadway improvements are completed in that phase of the project, the release adds.

The City of Sarasota will continue to inform the public about future traffic changes on Old Bradenton Road, including when the standard north-south configuration will return. The public may register to receive email updates on the project by visiting www.SarasotaGov.com. People also may follow the progress on Twitter [@CityofSarasota](https://twitter.com/CityofSarasota).

CITY'S STREET PAVING PROJECT CONTINUING

The City of Sarasota's annual street paving project is continuing, with approximately 12-13 miles of streets slated for resurfacing through November, the city is reminding the public.

[Click here to see a detailed tentative map for mid-August through September.](#)

Prior to work commencing, signs will be posted in neighborhoods to provide specific dates

when crews will be in the area, a news release says.

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

CLARIFICATION

An article in the Aug. 9/16 issue titled, *A thousand new hotel rooms*, reported on a discussion during a Downtown Improvement District meeting about the hiring of private security personnel to work at Selby Library and the Sarasota County Area Transit bus transfer station on Lemon Avenue.

A spokesman for Sarasota County asked the *News Leader* to make it clear that all people are welcome at each one of the county's libraries, including Selby. However, security is provided to assist staff in dealing with patrons who violate the code of conduct that everyone is expected to follow, the spokesman said.

NEW CITY HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR APPOINTED

Stacie Mason has been promoted to human resources director by Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin, the city announced on Aug. 9.


Mason had served as the interim chief of that department for the previous six months, a news release says.

“Stacie has performed exceptionally well as the interim human resources director,” Barwin said in the release. “Her attention to detail has served us well as we continue to assemble and maintain a strong team of employees. It’s healthy for an organization when you have a good, qualified candidate who can be promoted from within.”

Mason “recently played a key role” in facilitating the hiring of Police Chief Bernadette DiP-

ino, Finance Director John Lege and Utilities Director Mitt Tidwell, the release adds.

Mason has worked for the City of Sarasota for 10 years, the release continues. She is involved with the employment of the municipality’s 700 workers, including overseeing benefit management for all active employees and retirees. Mason also has assisted with Teamster negotiations, facilitated the opening of an employee health center to help lower medical costs for the city and managed the city’s self-insurance funds for medical, workers’ compensation and liability coverages, the release points out.

This is the fourth major department chief’s position Barwin has filled since he started work as city manager 11 months ago, the release notes. He also appointed the chief of police, the finance director and the utilities director. 

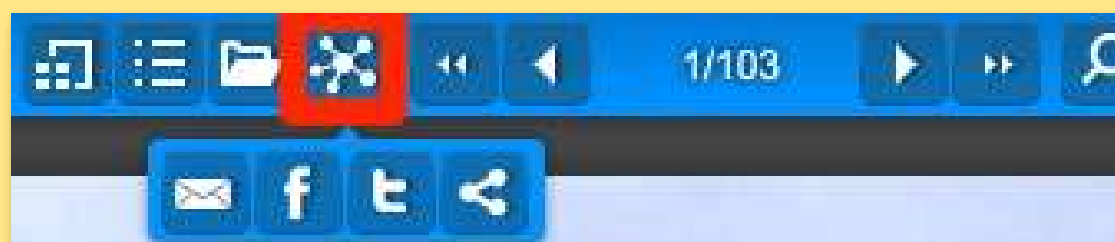
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CRIME BLOTTER

(Left) A female suspect is seen on video shot at the 7-Eleven on Clark Road. (Right) A male person of interest is also seen on video at the 7-Eleven. Images courtesy of the Sheriff's Office

HELP SOUGHT IN IDENTIFYING ROBBERY SUSPECT

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is asking the public to help identify the female suspect in a robbery at the 7-Eleven, located at 5754 Clark Road, that occurred at 4:40 a.m. on Aug. 18.

The woman was wearing a black, hooded sweatshirt and what appeared to be a blonde wig, according to a Sheriff's Office news re-

lease. She left in an older model, white Oldsmobile Aurora. Detectives also would like to identify two other subjects who were possibly with the suspect earlier that evening.

Anyone with information is asked to call Criminal Investigations at 861-4900; leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers, 366-TIPS (8477); or go online at www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com.



A video camera caught this shot of the suspects' vehicle. Image courtesy of the Sheriff's Office

SARASOTA COUPLE ARRESTED ON PRESCRIPTION FRAUD CHARGES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a Sarasota couple on multiple charges of obtaining controlled substances by fraud, the office has announced.

A pharmacist contacted investigators with the Pharmaceutical Diversion Unit in early July about a possible fraudulent prescription for Shannon Moulton, 40, of 2888 Grazeland Drive, Sarasota, a news release says.

The criminal report says the pharmacist called the doctor's office on July 6 in an attempt to verify the prescription with the physician. An employee who identified herself as "Shannon" answered the phone, the report continues, "and advised that the doctor was not available. It was later determined that [the doctor] had left the dermatology practice in December 2012," the report notes.

The investigation revealed that over a period of 15 months, Moulton called in and faxed dozens of allegedly fraudulent prescriptions to a variety of pharmacies to obtain approximately 1,760 Hydrocodone pills and additional doses of antibiotics, the news release adds. She used the names and DEA numbers of doctors she had worked with at a dermatology office, the release notes.

Moulton turned herself in to the Sarasota County Jail on Aug. 21 to face 52 charges, including Obtaining a Controlled Substance by Fraud, Obtaining a Legend Drug by Fraud and Criminal Use of Personal Identification Information.

Her husband, Claiborne Moulton, 42, is facing 28 charges, including Obtaining a Controlled Substance by Fraud and Principal to Obtain a Controlled Substance by Fraud.



Claiborne Moulton/Contributed photo



Shannon Moulton/Contributed photo

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DRUNK DRIVERS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and the Sarasota Police Department both are participating in Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over, the national crackdown on impaired driving, which will continue through Labor Day weekend.


According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), nearly 10,000 people die on the road each year as a result of drunk driving. To stop this deadly epidemic, law enforcement officials in every state and most U.S. cities will be cracking down on drunk driving through Sept. 2, a Sheriff's Office news release says.

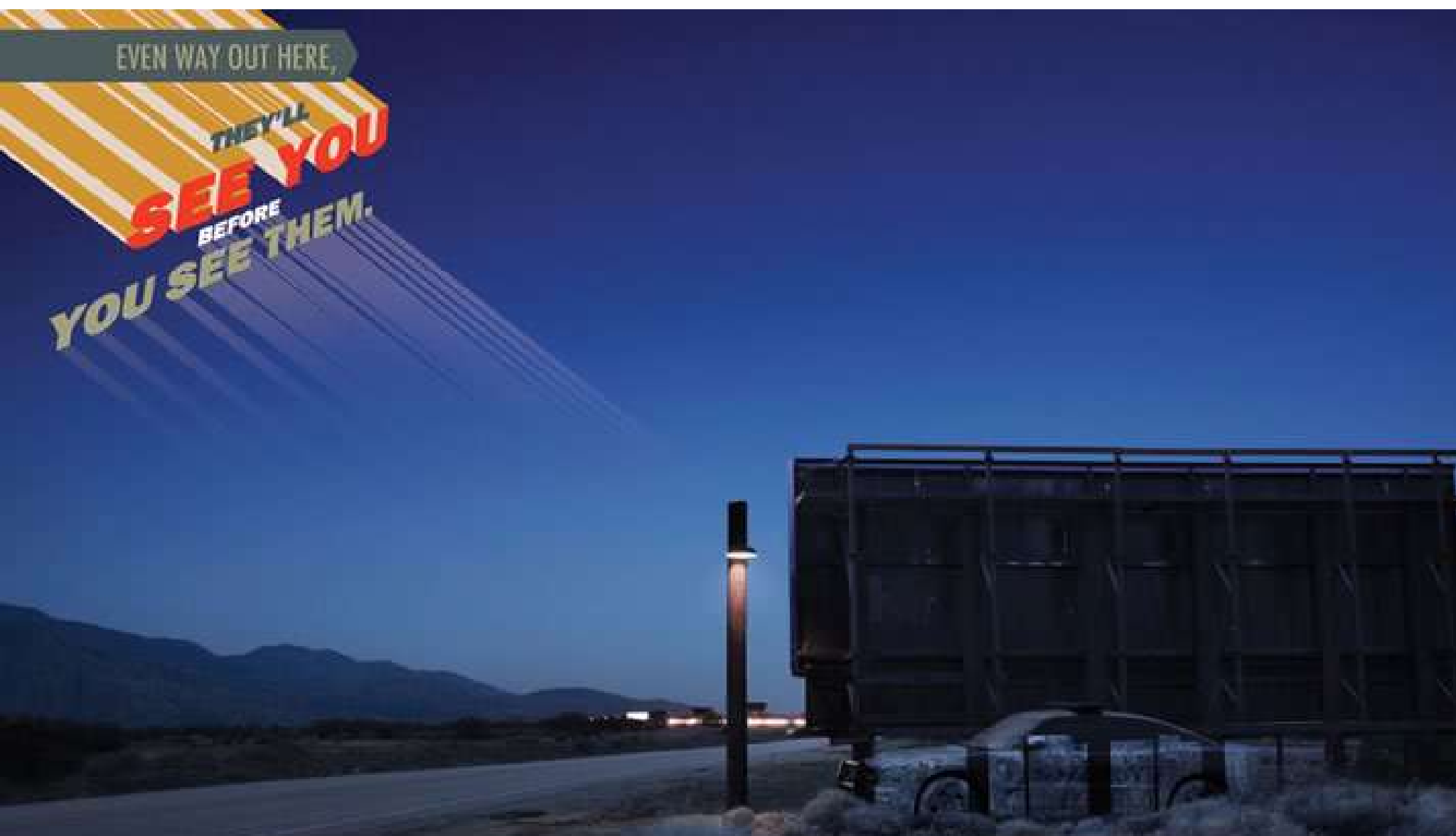
"The enhanced enforcement is in addition to our regularly scheduled monthly saturation patrols to remove dangerous, uninsured or

drunk drivers from local roadways to keep all motorists safe," the release adds.

Following the nationwide campaign, September saturation patrols will be conducted on the 6th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 21st, 27th and 28th of September, the release notes.

Saturation patrols are conducted instead of what is referred to as a "DUI Checkpoint," the release points out. The patrols include a number of deputies working targeted zones at the same time to monitor driving activity. Because saturation patrols are designed to be mobile, they take place in different areas of the county, the release says.

To report a suspected impaired driver in the city of Sarasota, a Police Department news release says, call 911 or 316-1199. 



The national Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign is under way. Photo courtesy of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

OPINION



NATURE MUST TAKE ITS COURSE ON LIDO BEACH

EDITORIAL

For millennia, conventional wisdom has discouraged the building of one's structures upon the sand. Modern engineering techniques have made that proscription somewhat less axiomatic, but there is one reality that challenges even modern engineering: when the sand goes away ... and it always does.

Perhaps that is the basis for avoiding building on sand. It is entirely too transitory, especially when structures are expected to remain for centuries.

The allure of the sea has long drawn us to the beach and, once there, we are further tempted to remain. Hence the application of our inventiveness to resolve the more immediate stability problems encountered when building upon the sand. As for the longer-term concern

that sand tends to come and go, historically we have figuratively buried our heads in that sand.

How else could we explain our persistent — and, to date, futile — efforts to keep the forces of wind and tide in abeyance, denying to sand the mobility it has possessed since the dawn of time.

The latest example of that sad futility is being played out on Lido Key, as the City of Sarasota seeks permission to renourish the eroding southern end of Lido Beach by dredging bottom sand from adjacent Big Pass, and to build groins to protect the new sands from doing what sands have always done. And the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is undertaking an exhaustive study to determine if it will allow the project to move forward.

OPINION

The city understandably wants to preserve a valuable tourist destination within its corporate limits. And, without intervention, Lido Beach will continue to diminish. Sadly, that is the nature of coastal geology. Sand is not a permanent fixture and efforts to hinder that impermanence stand as constant witnesses to the proverbial Law of Unintended Consequences.

More frustrating is that this current proposal is, to quote Yogi Berra, "... déjà vu all over again." In 1994, when Venice wanted to preserve its diminishing beaches, the Corps looked at the shoal sands in Big Pass as a good source for the more than 2 million cubic yards it needed for that project.

A study undertaken then by D.G. Aubrey, a senior scientist at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, and Robert Dolan, a professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia, pointed out that the stability of the sands just to the south on Siesta Key was a result of the shoal sands in Big Pass, which protected the key from the effects of storms and acted symbiotically in the natural transport of sand among Big Pass, the shoal and Siesta Key. In the end, the Corps of Engineers abandoned the plan to dredge Big Pass for sand to renourish beaches, and the pass never has been dredged.

The science of coastal geology has taken on increased urgency with the realization that climate change is leading to more rapid rises in sea levels. The normal forces of wind and tide are being magnified by the effects of more water encroaching upon the shore.

Experts such as Stanley Riggs, distinguished professor of geology at East Carolina University, and Orrin Pilkey, James B. Duke profes-

sor emeritus at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, have for decades advocated for allowing nature to take its course in coastal and estuarine waters. Their considerable

research long has established that beach renourishment is only a temporary replacement of that which cannot be maintained, and that groins and other structures meant to extend the life of renourished beaches are the epitome of "robbing Peter to pay Paul" — sands retained by groins only accelerate erosion elsewhere on the coastline.

That acceleration is precisely what concerns residents of Siesta Key, as any dredging of Big Pass likely would increase erosion on that island. And adding groins to Lido Beach to preserve the new sands will make the situation on Siesta Key commensurately worse.


The City of Sarasota must make a choice. Either the inevitable diminishment of Lido Beach must be allowed to happen, or replacement sands from offshore should be used for

The science of coastal geology has taken on increased urgency with the realization that climate change is leading to more rapid rises in sea levels.

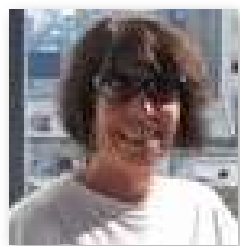
OPINION

renourishment. Those sands will not be as refined as the sands that make the beach so distinctive, but that is the only practical alternative. Moreover, adding groins to Lido Beach to extend the life of any renourishment is delusional folly. Those groins will alter the natural transport patterns of sands on both islands and also Big Pass, which divides them. If the

city persists in desiring the shoal sand from Big Pass, it is incumbent upon the Corps of Engineers to make the tough choice and deny that request.

Let us hope the City of Sarasota does not persist in playing the role of the mother who agreed for King Solomon to cut the living baby in half. 

AN AUGUST VISIT WITH ANGELINA



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

It is very quiet here today. Something is missing — and someone I miss a great deal is not around my house.

As the cliché goes, all around is the sound of silence. What am I not hearing or seeing or touching? Where is the little girl we had so much fun with the previous five days?

The pool is empty, with not a single ripple visible. The tubes are resting quietly on the surface, waiting for a 5-year-old to jump in and enjoy using them. The water pistols are thirsty. They need somebody to refill and shoot them at the top of the pool cage, toward the sky.

The pink noodle is looking for a smiling, happy girl in a pink swimsuit to play with and bat the big beach ball to the deep end of the pool.


The beautiful dollhouse that is a favorite of my daughter's — the dollhouse Angelina now calls her own — is sitting comfortably in our

living room, furniture all askew and fairy princesses in different rooms, waiting to be repositioned correctly in their special “home.” Even princesses like to bake, and I bet their cupcakes are delicious.

Our special arts and crafts area is vacant now, too. Paint boxes with 10 vivid colors, paint brushes and stacks of plain white paper are waiting to be enlivened with beautiful pictures by their masterful creators.

And all those wondrous books we did not get a chance to finish reading lie there undisturbed now, with stories as magical and fantastic as the little girl who read some of them to me. As she likes to tell me, “Grammy, I’m on Step 2 now, and next time I will be on Step 3.”

Thank you, Angelina Juliette, for giving us so many wonderful memories and celebrating your “almost 6” birthday with us.

We will be waiting for your next visit; and I promise to keep the pool heated. 

OPINION

RAND PAUL AND PARKING METERS



By Rodger Skidmore
Guest Columnist

COMMENTARY

One of the latest examples of the bashing of Republicans by Republicans took place when Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky criticized New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and the residents of that state for wanting to be bailed out after Hurricane Sandy struck last year — for wanting more than their “fair share.”

Christie pointed out in response that for every dollar New Jersey sends to Washington in federal taxes, it receives in return just a bit more than 60 cents. However, for every dollar paid by Rand Paul and the people of Kentucky, \$1.51 is returned to them.

The reason for the difference is that federal taxes go into a general fund and then are distributed based on various national and state requirements: the military, education, roads, etc. ... including disaster relief. This is sort of a — sorry to put it so bluntly — communist approach: from each state according to its ability, to each state according to its needs.

It is the same in Florida. Businesses that earn a lot of money pay more in taxes than businesses that do not. Counties that bring in more in sales tax revenue (those where the people have more money and thus spend more) pay more to Tallahassee, and counties in which people spend less, pay less. This tax revenue goes into Florida's general fund and then is

paid out for education, healthcare (just not for Obamacare), roads, etc.

Based on this seemingly universal approach to taxing and spending, it is hard to understand the feeling of leaders in the City of Sarasota that their Parking Division needs to break even — and further, that if the department does not cover all of its own expenses, then parking meters should be reinstalled. Again. Or to be more accurate, re-re-re-installed.

As with federal, state and county tax revenue, all of the city's forms of revenue (parking fines, fees for licenses, its portion of sales tax revenue, etc.) should go into its own general fund and be distributed for salaries, pension payments and other city expenditures as needed. While there is no legal requirement for any one department to “break even,” one may agree that managing financial resources well can help the bottom line.


Since running a red light is somewhat akin to parking too long in one spot (a traffic violation), there should be no problem is using payments from red-light runners to cover any shortfall in the area of parking enforcement.

Actually, the Tea Party and the Libertarians should both love this approach, as they do not like adding new taxes without eliminating existing ones. They certainly have been up in

OPINION

arms about receiving traffic tickets with hefty fines, decreases in accidents with loss of life notwithstanding.

Perhaps every time the subject of fines for running red lights comes up at City Commission meetings, the commissioners should say,

“Yes, one may consider the red light fines to be a form of tax, but remember, we didn’t re-re-install the parking meters.” Voters would feel happy about not having to feed the meters and might even feel sorry for the commissioners, thinking the latter were stuttering. 

HUMANITY: THE SPRINGS PROVIDE INSIGHTS INTO THE PAST AND PRESENT



By Bill Goetz
Guest Columnist

COMMENTARY

Most modern residents of our area feel a detachment from the humans of past millennia who inhabited the land we live in. We do not seem to relate to the people who lived, loved and died here thousands of years ago. Some of us feel that no relationship exists between “us” and “them” — that a distinct separation exists between peoples of now and then.

Part of that derives from the fact that most of our ancestors arrived from other continents. Some of us with Native American ancestors do feel a stronger connection with people of the past who lived here. However, all of us share a human connection with them. As humanity lived and died in this place, we of the present live and will die here as well. People of the past also raised and cared for their children as we do today.

Additionally, we have found evidence of people caring for those who could not care for

themselves in the environments of the past, which could be harsh and unforgiving. Remains discovered of those crippled from birth indicate they survived into their late teens, benefiting from the nurturing of others in a time when people had to work hard every day just to survive.

When one talks about examples of our cultural heritage found at archaeological sites that reveal so much about our past, people also wonder how these items relate to them. Humanity’s past is a mystery into which many have spent their lives trying to get just a small glimpse. Understanding how we relate to each other can be difficult enough just in our present society. When we add in the difficulties of learning how humans lived and died in the past, it can become an overwhelming task.

We have come up with concepts such as that of “prehistory,” denoting the absence of written language — even though there are forms of oral history and traditions that have con-

OPINION

veyed information (just as valid) from the past millennia into the present. Oral traditions can be even more effective in conveying facts, as 60 percent of non-written communication is nonverbal. Tone, inflection and gestures are ways we communicate emotion and feelings without ever giving much thought to the process. These expressions cannot be easily conveyed through the written word, but they have been passed down in oral traditions. We should look to these types of histories for their ability to convey far more information than the written word.

People could argue that the children's game of "telephone" shows how information passed down verbally can change from one person to the next; however, the same can be said of the historian writing information he has heard secondhand.

When we write the copy for Sarasota County historical markers, we research old newspaper articles and talk to people who lived during the time of the particular event and therefore experienced it. If no one is still alive to talk to us, we rely on newspaper articles and books written by people who might or might not have had firsthand experience of an historical event.

One would think that a book or an article on a subject would denote an authoritative perspective. An author may be considered an authority on a subject. We also can look for authors with various academic degrees that indicate they have even more knowledge of the subject matter. Going one step further, we can read journals that have been peer-re-

viewed by experts from the given field of research.

Would you be more likely to believe historical information from someone who experienced it or from an "expert" who read about it. When we see the value of learning about where humanity comes from, we (of Western thinking) see that we have missed so much by ignoring oral histories.

This concept of "prehistory" devalues cultures that relied on oral history, as it indicates that written word is the only valid form of historical information transference. This can be seen in the state of Florida's current Viva 500 Celebration commemorating Juan Ponce de León "discovering" the region he called "La Florida." How could he "discover" a place where people had lived for at least 12,000 years?

We have lost so much of our past by disassociating ourselves from others. We all have value systems that influence what we feel is relevant. Some of us choose to separate ourselves from others using criteria such as religion, gender and ethnicity. We look to categorize our values through bias and justify them with perceived stereotypes.

Humanity does not have enough information about itself to justify this way of thinking. In fact, the more we learn about ourselves (even at the genetic level), the more the perceived distinctions of humanity become blurred and disappear.

We live in an area that has unique windows into the past. Our local springs hold information from the last 5,000 to 15,000 years of humanity. Most information from this period

OPINION


worldwide comes from very limited fossil records discovered at sites and in environments where bone could only be “pseudo morphed” into stone and thus preserved for the future. The unique properties of Little Salt Spring and Warm Mineral Springs actually preserve wood, cloth and bone as well as artifacts. Remains as delicate as insect wings and pollen have been found; they can even tell us about the climate and environment in which our ancestors lived.

Before Bill Royal’s discovery of human remains alongside saber cat remains at Warm Mineral Springs, most accredited archaeologists believed that humans came to our area no earlier than 4,000 years ago.

Our inventive and artistic ancestors utilized all of the materials available to them to survive and create a lifestyle that conserved their environment and allowed them to be part of it

in ways whose details modern researchers are only just beginning to learn. We have found how these ancient peoples wove complex fabric, carved beautiful wood and bone artifacts, and fashioned some of the oldest jewelry in the world. For example, the two greenstone pendants discovered at Little Salt Spring are made from materials found at least 600 miles away, having been expertly crafted into jewelry around 8,000 years ago.

Warm Mineral Springs, Little Salt Spring and Nona Spring are the only constantly flowing springs south of Interstate 4, and they are hydrologically and geologically unique. These natural treasures continue to preserve humanity’s story with their unique properties.

Additionally, as only up to 5 percent of the area of these sites has been excavated, they have so much more to share. 

When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy’. They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life. — *John Lennon*

The Sarasota News Leader
No-Nonsense Reporting



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOLF CARTS ON SIESTA ROADS PORTEND MANY PROBLEMS

To the editor:

Golf carts on Siesta Key streets? That notion reminds me of The Villages.

Golf carts there, the norm, populate the narrow, planned development roads. On Siesta Key, with larger randomly sized roads, cars are king. Simply and thankfully, Siesta Key does not want to become The Villages.

We assume the carts would have access to the key's roads. They are way too wide to relegate to bike lanes. And then what do the bikers do?

Carts will have an effect on speed limits. They go slow. And while some people may see that as a benefit, a line of cars behind a cart could present a problem. Think of a weekend day in season, a cart inhibiting cars from getting to the beach or the Village: horns, trying to pass, tempers — not a happy sight.

Who might use these carts? Probably seniors. One must not generalize, but their slower driving habits coupled with a decline in visual acuity could create other problems.

Last, Siesta Key has a distinct lack of adequate parking spaces. Do we think it appropriate that a cart take the spot of a car? This doesn't seem like the best use of resources.

For the reasons stated, we see the introduction of golf carts to Siesta Key as a poorly conceived idea. Still, let's hear what the proponents have to say. Might they have a one-month test program? Then let the people vote.

That seems a fair idea.

Jeffrey Weisman
Siesta Key

2050 PLAN IS UNWORKABLE FOR MANY REASONS

To the editor:

I read your latest article on Sarasota 2050 (*More tweaks to 2050?* — Aug. 9/16) with a little interest. All of the advocates for minimal (i.e., no) growth like the plan because it makes growth in the undeveloped areas of the county nearly impossible, with its demands to meeting all of the fussy and specific regulations for self-contained and self-sustaining communities.

I would not like to see an urban clump of five- to 10-story condo developments in the middle of green space. That's what it would take to

sustain any business development in isolation except for deliveries. It all sounds like a plan for Sarasota's own International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)/UN Agenda 21, Theresienbad or Potemkin Village. The last place I saw the term "hamlet" used was in South Vietnam. Do you want to live in a fenced-in residential area?

There are two half-functional examples of Sarasota 2050's ICLEI "happy village." The Meadows is one whose stores only partially meet the residents' needs. Another one is the Bee Ridge Extension area. It's not exactly

walkable, but people get about easily with bicycles and golf carts.

Walkable retirement communities are an unreal idea. People with either young children or physical handicaps still need to drive. Until four years ago the Bee Ridge Extension area residents had to drive to Cattleman Road to shop. That has been partially solved, but some residents opposed the shopping area.

Doesn't it say something for Sarasota 2050 when its advocates live in very urban areas? It tells me it will not work as it is. Shred it and let the property owners make the decisions about their communities. We do not live in the USSR or [Commonwealth of Independent States](#) yet.

Paul A. Cajka Sr.
Sarasota



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

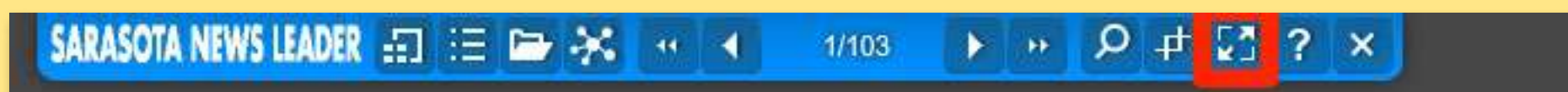
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Sarasota Leisure



THE HOME COSMOGRAPHER

FABULOUS, INDEED

THE BEAUTY OF BENDERSON PARK

Inside

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

AT PLANNED PARENTHOOD, CARE IS MUCH MORE THAN THE SERVICES WE PROVIDE; IT'S THE WAY WE APPROACH OUR WORLD.

WE CARE.

DEEPLY. WITH RESPECT. WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

WE ARE UNWAVERING IN OUR BELIEF THAT ALL PEOPLE DESERVE HIGH QUALITY, AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE. WE ARE TIRELESS IN OUR EFFORTS TO PROVIDE EDUCATION AND INFORMATION SO PEOPLE CAN MAKE THEIR OWN HEALTH DECISIONS. WE PROUDLY FIGHT FOR WOMEN TO BE ABLE TO GET THE REPRODUCTIVE SERVICES THEY NEED. WE DO ALL OF THIS BECAUSE

WE CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HELPING WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE
LEAD HEALTHY LIVES.

NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE. NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO GET THEM THE CARE THEY NEED. BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRULY CARED FOR, THEY WILL MAKE THEIR LIVES, THEIR FAMILIES – AND EVEN THE WORLD – BETTER AND HEALTHIER.
PLANNED PARENTHOOD. CARE. NO MATTER WHAT.



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THE HOME COSMOGRAPHER

“ *It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar.*

Walden
H. D. Thoreau

”

Tarflowers stretch to the sky.

WHY TRAVEL AFAR WITH SO MUCH TO SEE RIGHT HERE AT HOME?

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer

For months I have been trying to get out of town to explore other parts of the world, but events have conspired against me. I walk neighborhood parks feeling, “It’s the same old, same old.” At Curry Creek Preserve, I set out with the resolve to move along briskly only to be stopped in my tracks by Tarflower — inaptly named; incomparably beautiful.

Then, captivated by the skies, I nearly step on an Eastern Glass Lizard — a legless “herp” I have read about but never seen before. In a skirmish with a predator, its long tail may break off, but it can regenerate that body part.

Butterflies and Iridescent Dragonflies soaking up in the sun are other good reasons to linger. My resolve soon melts away. An hour’s outing grows to two.

Off in the distance, I see thin veils of falling water, which are suddenly upon me. I run for shelter, cramming my camera into a plastic bag. The storm over, I take a detour to the Myakka River to discover a pregnant alligator resting on the bank.

The other evening, as I walked a trail at Oscar Scherer State Park, a Florida Scrub Jay landed



An Eastern Glass Lizard is wary of passersby.



An Iridescent Dragonfly makes clear how it gained its name.



A pregnant alligator rests on the bank of the Myakka River.



on my hat. We chatted a bit; then, I continued my walk. On the way out, my newfound friend landed on my hat again. It is not every day that I am greeted by this rare species TWICE in one hour!

Birders come to Oscar Scherer from all over to add the jays to their “life lists.” Recently, I ran into a young man on the Blue Trail who ran down the list of birds he had already seen, but as of that point, no Scrub Jays. When I mentioned they live along that trail, he asked

if he could accompany me. He identified a speck high in the sky (Chuck Will’s Widow) and one perched on a distant tree (Rufous-Sided Towhee). Bobwhites we heard scrabbling in the brush. I asked him how he started birding. He said his dad took him birding in Fargo, ND, where he grew up, and one of the first birds he identified was a Snowy Owl. Now he takes *his* child — a little girl — birding.

On our way out of the park, as if on signal, the jays showed up to wish us a good night.



Fran Palmeri snaps a photo of herself with a Scrub Jay atop her hat.



Another Scrub Jay makes an appearance.



Yellow Bladderwort.




A Robber Fly.

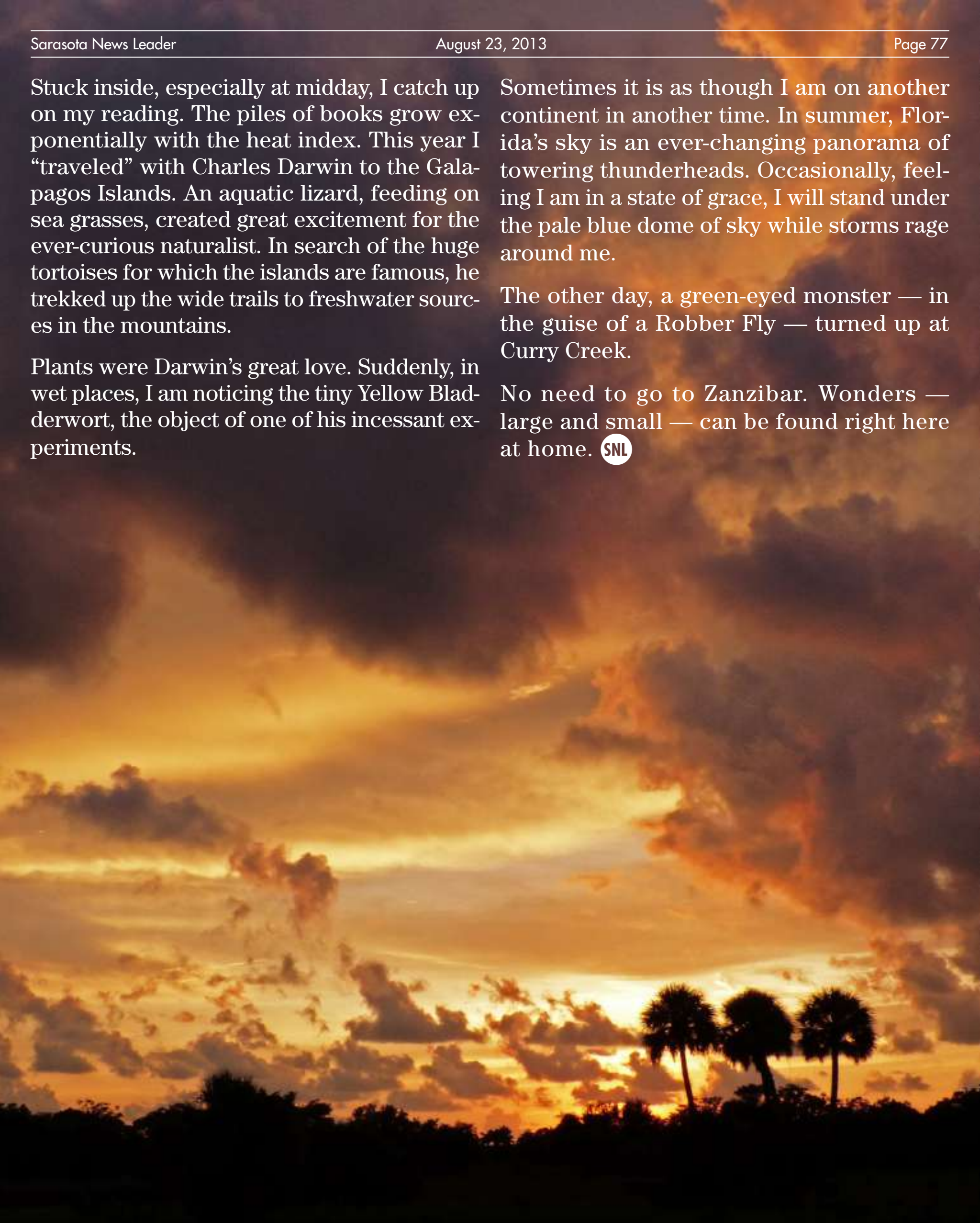
Stuck inside, especially at midday, I catch up on my reading. The piles of books grow exponentially with the heat index. This year I “traveled” with Charles Darwin to the Galapagos Islands. An aquatic lizard, feeding on sea grasses, created great excitement for the ever-curious naturalist. In search of the huge tortoises for which the islands are famous, he trekked up the wide trails to freshwater sources in the mountains.

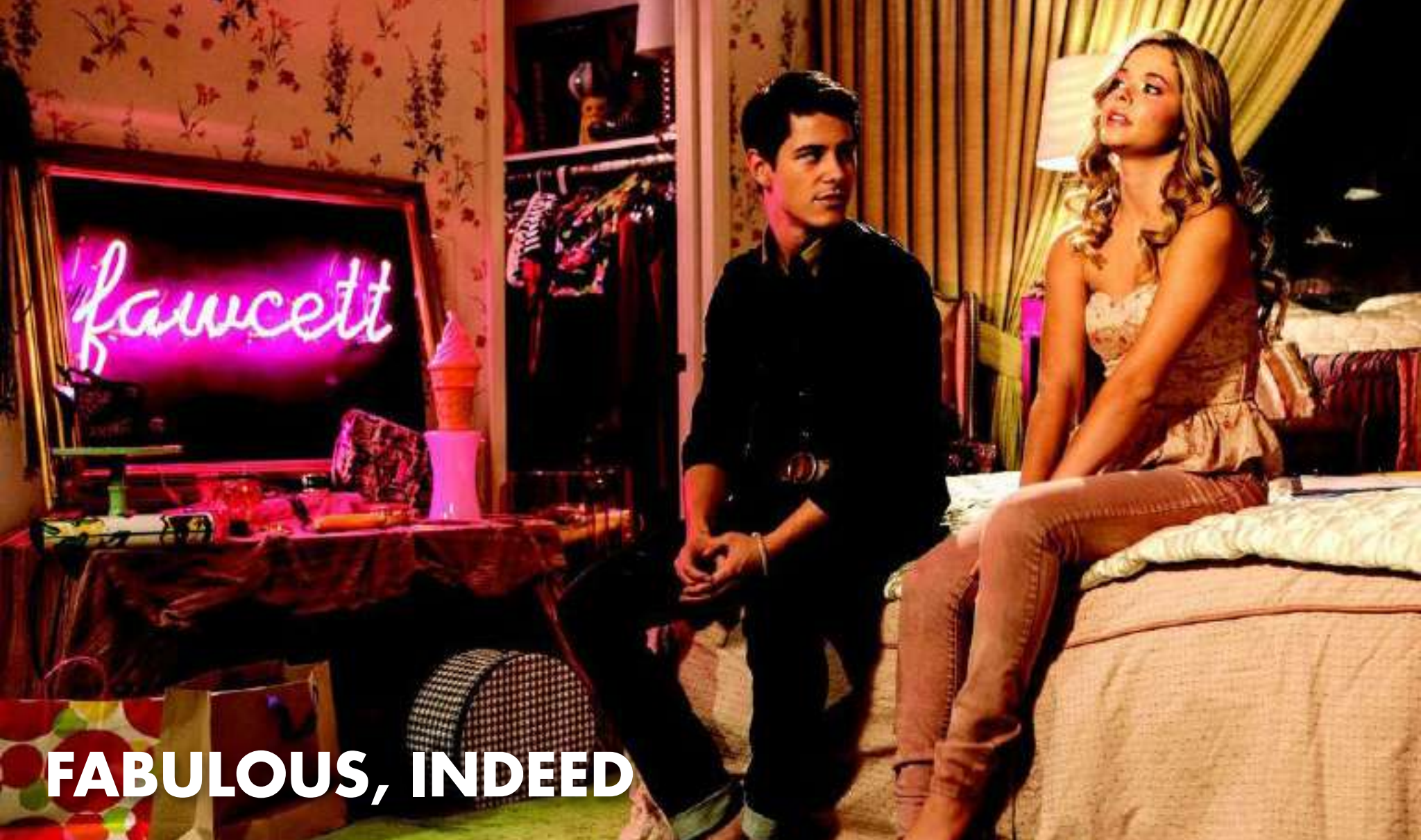
Plants were Darwin’s great love. Suddenly, in wet places, I am noticing the tiny Yellow Bladderwort, the object of one of his incessant experiments.

Sometimes it is as though I am on another continent in another time. In summer, Florida’s sky is an ever-changing panorama of towering thunderheads. Occasionally, feeling I am in a state of grace, I will stand under the pale blue dome of sky while storms rage around me.

The other day, a green-eyed monster — in the guise of a Robber Fly — turned up at Curry Creek.

No need to go to Zanzibar. Wonders — large and small — can be found right here at home. 





FABULOUS, INDEED

A still from G.B.F., the Fabulous Independent Film Festival's Opening Night Film, which screens at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 23. Image courtesy of Magida Diouri

FILM FESTIVAL NOT ONLY CELEBRATES DIVERSITY, IT ALSO ENCOURAGES ACCEPTANCE ON ALL LEVELS

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Why did Magida Diouri launch the LGBT-themed [Fabulous Independent Film Festival](#) two years ago? Simple: “It needed to be done.”

Diouri previously worked at the Sarasota Film Society, the parent nonprofit of Burns Court and Lakewood Ranch Cinemas, and while she was there she programmed the organization’s annual Gay and Lesbian Film Celebration. After a “mid-life crisis”

in which Diouri “quit everything,” the Society skipped the event one year. Diouri felt she had to bring it back.

“*I have this notion that we need to celebrate diversity and it needs to be seen and heard.*”

Magida Diouri
Founder
Fabulous Independent Film Festival

“I have this notion that we need to celebrate diversity and it needs to be seen and heard,” she says. “It seems that there’s a lot of talk about diversity, but still it’s not fully accepted, and that’s on all levels. It can be on the sexual level, on the race level, on

a language level. I really think that we need to make a bigger effort in accepting people's differences."

What began in 2011 as a small, one-day affair with just three films has blossomed into a full weekend event, starting with Friday's Opening Night Film *G.B.F.*, running through Saturday's Centerpiece film *Interior. Leather Bar* and concluding with the Closing Night Film, *Hot Guys with Guns*. Burns Court Cinemas will host all the screenings.

Altogether, nine films will be shown, and the movies cover a wide stylistic ground. *G.B.F.*, for example, is a "fun, silly" (Diouri's phrase) variation on the classic teen comedy, while *Valentine Road* probes the dark story of a 15-year-old California boy's murder. *Gore*

Vidal: United States of Amnesia, meanwhile, offers an intimate portrait of the acerbic author in his final years.

Perhaps most intriguing is *Interior. Leather Bar*, an experimental film co-directed by James Franco that takes as its subject an attempt to recreate the 40 minutes of material excised from William Friedkin's 1980 film *Cruising*. Friedkin has said the missing footage included graphic homosexual material that had to be cut to secure an R rating.

"It's really more of a thought-provoking film and pushing the boundaries and seeing where our comfort zones are," Diouri says of *Interior*. The film inspired both excitement as well as negative reviews when it played at Sundance last winter.

HOME FILMS EVENTS SPONSORS GET INVOLVED

TICKETS

purchased online will be held at will call at Burns Court Cinemas on Friday 08/23, Saturday, 08/24 and Sunday 08/25 from 2:30PM to 8:00PM. TICKETS ARE NON EXCHANGEABLE AND NON REFUNDABLE.



FIRST PERIOD

Saturday, August 24, 3:00PM
U.S., 2013, 100 min.
\$8.50 - Tickets will be held at will call

Add to Cart



G.B.F. - Opening Night Film

Friday, August 23, 7:30PM
U.S.A., 2013, 99 min.
\$10 - Tickets will be held at will call

Add to Cart



GORE VIDAL: UNITED STATES OF AMNESIA

Sunday, August 25, 3:00PM
U.S.A., 2013, 69 min.
\$8.50 - Tickets will be held at will call

Add to Cart



THE HAPPY SAD

Friday, August 23, 5:15PM
U.S.A., 2013, 87 min.
\$8.50 - Tickets will be held at will call

Add to Cart



HOT GUYS WITH GUNS - Closing Night Film

Sunday, August 25, 7:30PM
U.S.A., 2013, 110 min.
\$10 - Tickets will be held at will call

Add to Cart



INTERIOR. LEATHER BAR - Centerpiece

Saturday, August 24, 7:30PM
U.S.A., 2012, 60 min.
\$8.50 - Tickets will be held at will call

Add to Cart

To select her films, Diouri tracks what's happening at most of the North American festivals and then issues invitations. Unlike other festivals, with this one, there's no infrastructure for accepting submissions, and no filmmakers will be able to attend this weekend's festivities. Like most things, "it comes back to the budget," Diouri says.

But the festival keeps growing, and Diouri notes the Film Society has been "very generous" in sponsoring the event and hosting it at Burns Court. She hopes that will continue. And as for the festival getting even bigger, well, that might be out of her control. She only got three hours of sleep the night before we spoke.

"I have a couple friends that are crazy and tell me I just need to add more films," she says, "and I am just not well and I say, 'You're right!' I don't really know how much work it is."

The Fabulous Independent Film Festival runs from Friday, Aug. 23, to Sunday, Aug. 25. Visit fabulousiff.com for a complete list of films and parties. Screening tickets cost either \$8.50 or \$10. 



A still from Gore Vidal: United States of Amnesia, which screens at 3 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 25. Image courtesy of Magida Diouri



I like to take my time.

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

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

You have a whole week.

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THE BEAUTY OF BENDERSON PARK

FROM ITS WAVING BANNERS TO ITS WELL-GROOMED REGATTA ISLAND, BENDERSON PARK BECKONS ROWERS

Staff Reports

From Aug. 15-18, Nathan Benderson Park welcomed thousands of participants and spectators to the 2013 USRowing Masters National Championships.

The Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates (SANCA) — which manages regattas at the park — and USRowing hosted the event, which offered competition in more than 200 categories.

The official program's welcome from Glenn Merry, CEO of USRowing, noted, "This world-class rowing venue is among the most exciting developments in our sport in the United States ..."

The \$40 million already committed to the facility — \$19.5 million of which is from Sarasota County — has paid for the excavation of a 2,000-meter course, the development of a



All photos by Norman Schimmel.



A banner welcomes the USRowing Masters competitors to the park.



White tents dot the landscape as Benderson Park prepares for the USRowing Masters National Championships.

wave-attenuation system and the creation of an island with hospitality services, Merry continued. Those features are just the beginning of a project that, by the end of 2014, is slated to boast 2,200-meter racing lanes, coaching lanes, a multifunction boathouse and athlete training facility and grandstands, the program pointed out.

Benderson Park hosted its first two regattas in 2009, followed by four in 2010, seven in 2011 and another seven in 2012.

As the park prepared for its latest event, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel captured the prep work. He was back at the park on Aug. 16, shooting scenes of a party hosted for volunteers and sponsors.



A bridge from North Cattlemen Road allows direct entry into the park.



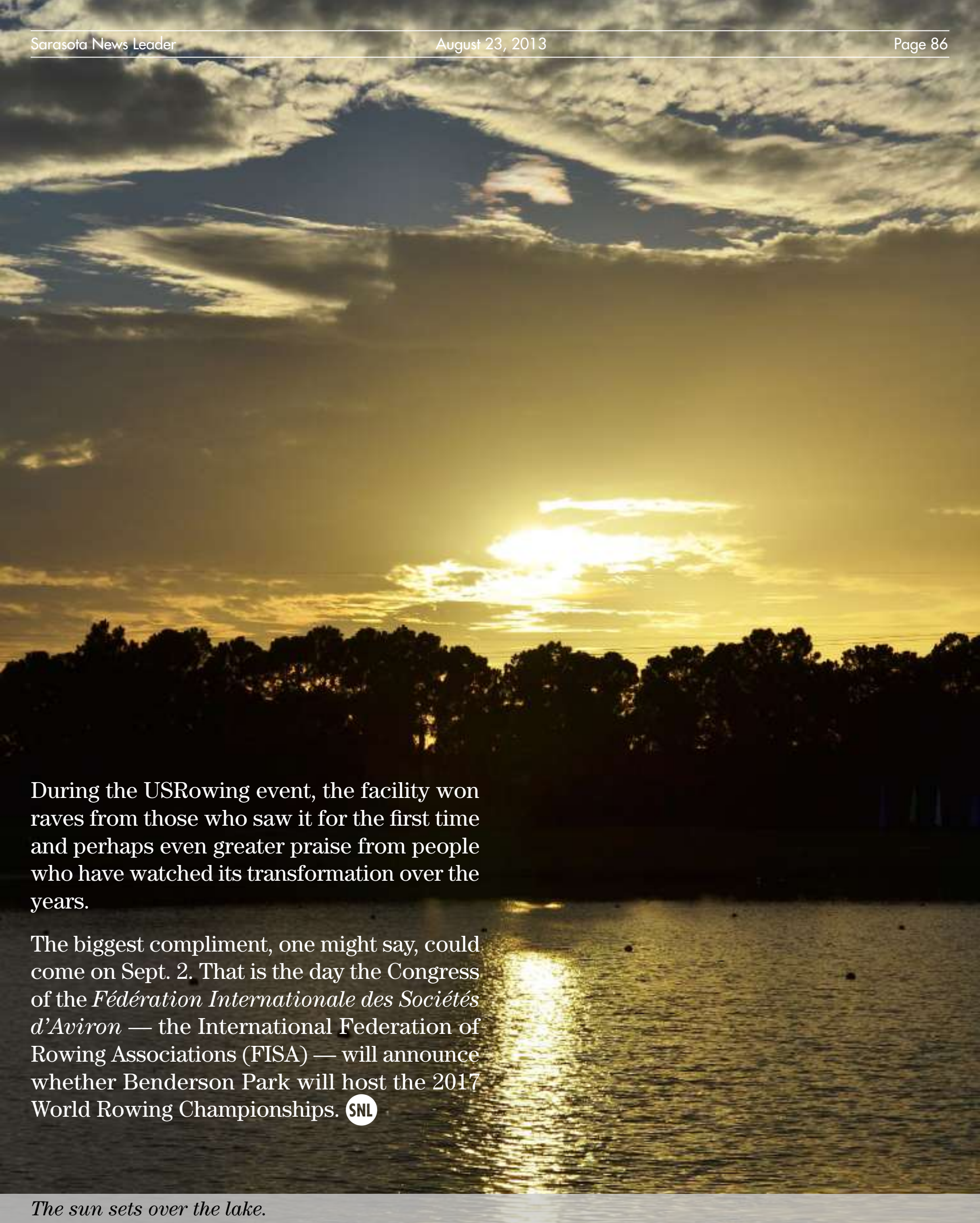
The unloading of shells gets under way two days before the event begins.




People wander among the tents during an appreciation party held on the evening of Aug. 16 for volunteers and sponsors.



Decorative 'rowers' are illuminated at night by the edge of the 2,000-meter course.



During the USRowing event, the facility won raves from those who saw it for the first time and perhaps even greater praise from people who have watched its transformation over the years.

The biggest compliment, one might say, could come on Sept. 2. That is the day the Congress of the *Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron* — the International Federation of Rowing Associations (FISA) — will announce whether Benderson Park will host the 2017 World Rowing Championships. 

The sun sets over the lake.



Siesta Seen

WITH THE SIESTA BEACH PROJECT NEARING THE 90-PERCENT DESIGN STAGE, THE COUNTY PLANS TO GET A BANK LOAN TO COVER THE COST; EAT HERE SOON WILL BE FORMALLY NOTIFIED OF ITS PARKING PLAN VIOLATION; THE BOLLARDS INSTALLATION CONTINUES



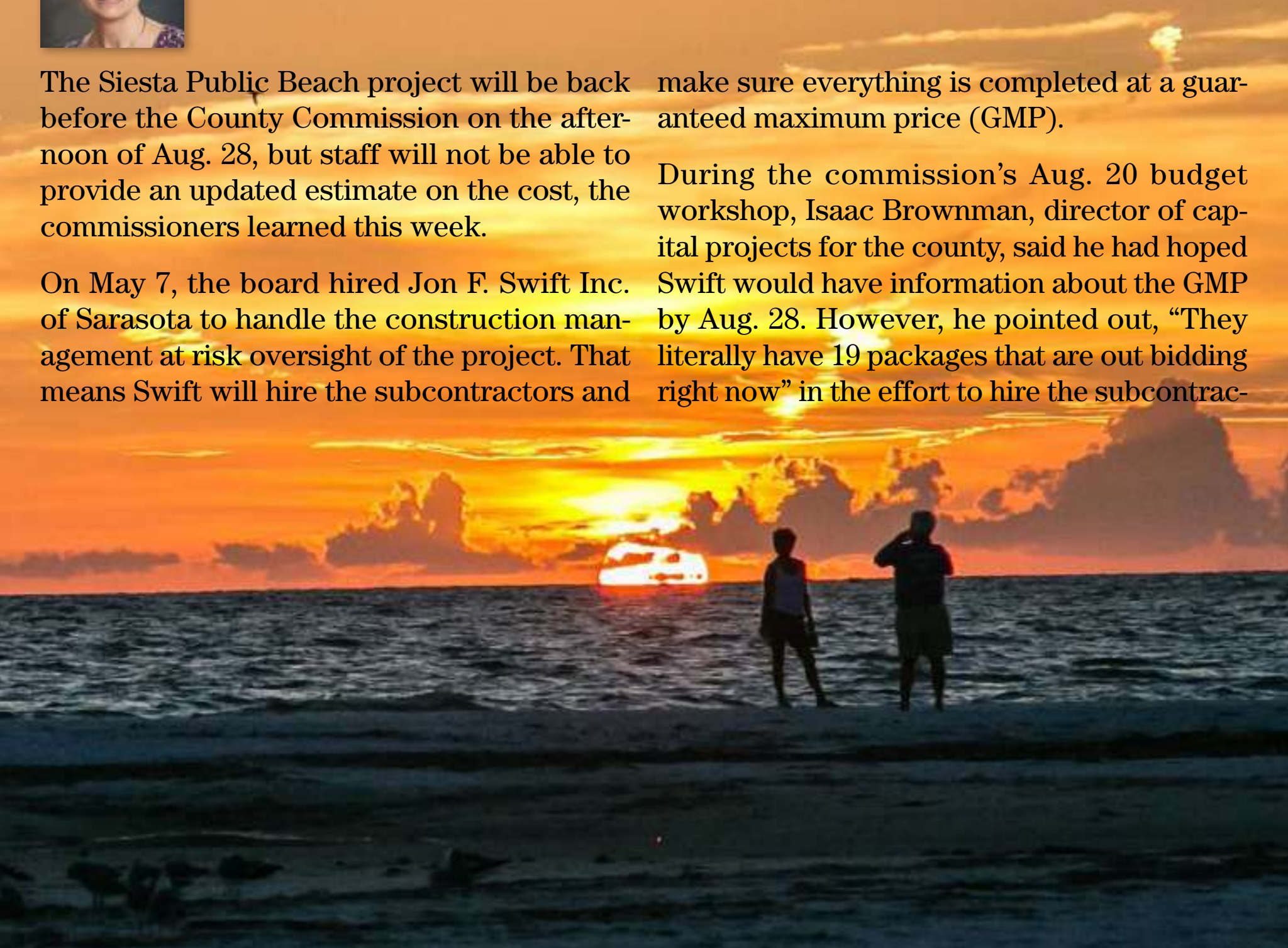
By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The Siesta Public Beach project will be back before the County Commission on the afternoon of Aug. 28, but staff will not be able to provide an updated estimate on the cost, the commissioners learned this week.

On May 7, the board hired Jon F. Swift Inc. of Sarasota to handle the construction management at risk oversight of the project. That means Swift will hire the subcontractors and

make sure everything is completed at a guaranteed maximum price (GMP).

During the commission's Aug. 20 budget workshop, Isaac Brownman, director of capital projects for the county, said he had hoped Swift would have information about the GMP by Aug. 28. However, he pointed out, "They literally have 19 packages that are out bidding right now" in the effort to hire the subcontractors.



A couple on Siesta Key Beach watches the sun sink into the Gulf of Mexico. Photo courtesy of Peter van Roekens

Siesta Seen

tors. Therefore, Swift staff will not be able to review the bid responses in time to make that estimate.

Nonetheless, Brownman told the board, Swift is confident the project still can be completed for \$16.7 million or less. That number is what the board has approved for construction.

Brownman also reported that the project is close to the 90 percent completion point with both the civil engineering and landscaping design work, "but we're still working towards 90 percent on the architectural drawings."

Commissioner Joe Barbetta, who, in 2011, first proposed using bond revenue to speed up the project timetable, told Brownman his

concern was that bond rates "are starting to just take off." If the Siesta project and others that will be paid for with bond money are not begun soon, Barbetta added, "It's going to add hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars to the costs ... so time is of the essence."

Later during that budget workshop, Richard Gleitsman, a member of the Analytics staff in the Office of Financial Planning, appeared before the board with the news that the Siesta Beach Park improvements will be covered with a bank loan.

An agenda item on that discussion is set for Oct. 9, Gleitsman said, with the loan set to close on Oct. 11.



Umbrellas line the shore of Siesta Public Beach on Sunday, Aug. 18. The County Commission will get an update on the plans for beach improvements when it meets on Aug. 28. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

He was hopeful, he added, that the tentative \$14 million estimate for the loan could be reduced by about \$1.5 million in Tourist Development Tax revenue; staff is investigating that part of the funding matter.

The contract for the beach project is set to come before the board on Oct. 22 or 23, Gleitsman noted.

When Commissioner Nora Patterson asked why staff was pursuing a bank loan for that work as well as for the construction of the new Emergency Operations Center and improvements to Bee Ridge Road Extension, Gleitsman told her banks are providing loans up to 10 years with fixed rates. In fact, he said, bank loan rates have been very competitive, and the county will save money by not having to pay underwriter fees, which would be necessary if it pursued bonds.

"I guess I'm just not used to seeing such big bank loans," Patterson replied.

THE LATEST ON EAT HERE

Readers of our July 19 issue may recall the [article](#) I wrote about how county Zoning and Code Enforcement staff had been made aware of the fact that Eat Here Siesta Key no longer is in compliance with the parking plan it submitted to the county before it opened.

Zoning Administrator Brad Bailey confirmed the violation for me this week and said he is at work on a letter to the owners of Eat Here and the property to make them aware of it and

to invite them to come up with possible solutions. "There's obviously a problem," Bailey told me on Aug. 21.

The parking plan Bailey approved last year, which was submitted by Siesta architect Mark Smith said the restaurant would utilize spaces left vacant after other businesses in the same plaza closed. That way, Eat Here would be able to comply with the new Siesta Village parking ordinance standard, which specifies a certain number of spaces per number of seats in an establishment.

However, it turns out that one business whose spaces were utilized in the count for Eat Here — Coldwell Banker — does not close before the restaurant opens.

Smith said he was going by what John Davidson — owner of Davidson Drugs and lots of Siesta Key property — had told him when Davidson was negotiating with Eat Here proprietor Sean Murphy.

Neither Murphy nor a representative of Davidson would comment on the situation.

Baily told me he had consulted with Deputy County Attorney Alan Roddy about the matter. "I've never rescinded an approval before," Bailey pointed out. He wanted to be sure how to handle the situation.

Among the possible solutions, he said, would be use of a lot zoned for commercial use, where valets could park restaurant patrons' vehicles. Another option is to modify the restaurant's hours of operation.

Siesta Seen

The Coldwell Banker office stays open seven nights a week until 8:30 p.m., I learned last month.

“And they might come up with [other] things,” he added of Murphy and Davidson.

If the restaurant’s parking plan is not brought into compliance, Bailey said, he would have no choice but to ask a Code Enforcement officer to cite Eat Here for the violation. If the situation still was not corrected, he pointed out, the matter would be heard before a Special Magistrate.

However, Bailey said, “I’m hoping it doesn’t come to that.”

BUSY WITH BOLLARDS

During his report to the County Commission for the week of Aug. 13, Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. indicated the installation of bollards at seven crosswalks in Siesta Village is on schedule.

The bollards themselves — which will provide LED illumination — were scheduled to be delivered on Aug. 19 and installed shortly thereafter.

Siesta Key Association Secretary Peter van Roekens — who lives in the Terrace East condominium complex in Siesta Village — told me this week, “As far as I know, everything’s going right ahead.”



Work is under way to install bollards with LED illumination at seven Siesta Village crosswalks. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Van Roekens was the person who suggested the need for better lighting of the crosswalks — especially in the vicinity of Daiquiri Deck and Gilligan's Island Bar & Grill — to enable drivers to see pedestrians clearly. He made that suggestion at a Siesta Key Village Association meeting in January 2012.

ALSO MOVING AHEAD

Yet another project seeing progress is the plan for more parking spaces along North Shell Road.

In a recent update for the county commissioners, James K. Harriott Jr. — the chief county engineer — reported the following: “Staff has surveyed the street and developed a concept plan that formalizes the parking along the street. That plan was presented to Commissioner Patterson on August 14, 2013. Staff also met with a concerned property owner.”

The conceptual plan, he continued, creates about 20 spaces along the shoulder of the road. Most are completely off the pavement.

“Parking areas would be delineated with a post and rope barrier,” he added. “The spaces may be filled with shell [to maintain them]. At this time the project is estimated to cost between \$17,000 and \$50,000, depending on how much shell fill is used or needed.”

He continued, “As a result of the meeting with the one property owner, staff will revisit the site and verify the location of two possible additional property access points and some new landscaping.”

The next steps include completion of the conceptual plan and finalizing the cost estimate; presenting a report to the County Commission with graphics as well as project element and cost details; and seeking direction to proceed with the expenditure.

Once staff members have the go-ahead from the board, he said, they will meet with the adjacent property owners to review the plan with them, then proceed with permitting — if ultimately needed — and the purchase of materials.

“We expect to provide you a written report by the end of August 2013,” Harriott wrote.

UNHAPPY OVER THE STORMWATER PROJECT

Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta Key — has had a few recent email exchanges with both a property owner and the general manager at the [Gulf & Bay Club](#), which stands adjacent to the site of the new stormwater retention pond, next to Siesta Key Public Beach.

On Aug. 15, the property owner wrote the following:

“Nora, we have previously corresponded via email ... [when] I expressed my opposition to many of the Siesta Beach renovations. In particular, I adamantly opposed the piping of storm water run-off into the Gulf water.

“Well my nightmare is coming true. Have you been to Siesta Key Beach recently? More specifically, have you walked in front of the Gulf

Siesta Seen

& Bay Club (beach side) property? It's a complete disaster.

"I respectfully request your immediate attention [all the italics are the writer's emphasis] to rectify the lack of county preparation and contractor neglect to mitigate project water run-off from county property onto the beach [in] front of residential property. The contractors (removing brush, trees, etc. to install the new retention pond) are piping ... water via a diesel pump directly westward (beach side) and it's draining directly from county property (project construction area) to the front footage of Gulf & Bay beach dunes. The result is profound!!! Residents wanting to cross the

dunes to enjoy the beach must walk through (accumulated) standing scum water 6-8 inches deep. It smells and attracts bird waste. Despite sending the occasional County official to test the new and accumulated pond water for mosquito larva, the dirty water is a complete health hazard. Moreover, this total oversight by the county (and its contractors) has now allowed significant soiled water to taint the beautiful white sand and the magnitude of the drainage effects has actually begun to change the contour of the beach."

The owner added, "If a project of this magnitude was being managed by a residential property owner and they affected their neighbor



Gulf & Bay Club condominium towers rise in the background of the site where the stormwater retention pond will be built near Siesta Public Beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

the way the County and contractors have affected Gulf & Bay Club residents/beach front, County officials would cite violations, most likely issue fines and shut the project down until resolution was made. Instead, Gulf & Bay Club residents are met with a large (County sponsored) project continuing to progress with *NO ACTION*.

“I find the situation disgusting and unacceptable.”

Patterson responded on Aug. 16:

“I have relayed an earlier series of correspondences from the board and manager of Gulf and Bay to county staff and they are working with the contractor to correct the situation. Indeed, during the recent heavy rains, the project itself had a temporary measure that apparently exacerbated the situation, which I believe has been or will shortly be corrected. Prior to the recent heavy rains and the start of construction our staff also met with the Gulf and Bay folks on the beach itself to view what has been a long-term issue, although to a lesser extent. I was present on the request of Gulf and Bay to see the issue. In fact, a good bit of the problem prior [her emphasis] to construction was apparently caused by the storm water facilities of the complex itself, built at an earlier time when storm water outflow was less regulated. Discussions were had as to how to alleviate [the long-term problems].

“The current issue that may have been made worse temporarily during construction is be-

ing worked on or [was] corrected earlier this week. In the end, the intent of the storm water project as designed is to reduce the rainwater outflow to the beach area rather than the reverse.”

Patterson continued, “I appreciate your concern and it is shared by staff and project manager and very apparently getting immediate attention from all.”

Later that same day, Curtis Smith, the project manager of the stormwater initiative, emailed Patterson:

“Your explanation of the matter is both thorough and accurate, and we have nothing to add at this time. Please be assured that staff will continue to monitor the situation daily and take appropriate action when needed. Thank you very much.”

However, just a few minutes later, Thomas Fastiggi, general manager of the Gulf & Bay Club, wrote Patterson — copying the previously mentioned owner and others — to say, “I have not seen or had a site visit from any county staff since my initial meeting last week.

“In order to protect the interests of Gulf and Bay, we have hired an environmental engineering firm as well as a lab to test the surface contaminants deposited on our property during this project.

“Upon receipt of their reports, I will be in touch with the county as to the extent of re-


Siesta Seen

mediation and cleanup required to restore our property,” he concluded.

During the budget workshop on Aug. 20, Isaac Brownman, the director of capital projects, told the county commissioners, “Things seem to be progressing well” with the project. Efforts were continuing to mitigate the concerns of the adjacent property owners, he added.

The project includes the installation of a pipeline to discharge treated stormwater into the Gulf of Mexico, about 2,000 feet from shore.

Barges are visible from the beach as that work proceeds.

By the way, some Siesta residents will remember that planning for the stormwater project was delayed for more than a year because of county efforts to appease Gulf & Bay Club residents over the configuration of the stormwater pond and landscape buffering around the site. That delay nearly cost the project grant funding from the Southwest Florida Water Management District. 



Franz and Ashlee Wesner, recent visitors to Siesta Key, set up a camera to capture one of the spectacular sunsets. Photo courtesy of Peter van Roekens

SAMMY TONIGHT RETURNS TO THE WESTCOAST BLACK THEATRE TROUPE

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe (WBTT) has brought back *Sammy Tonight! A Tribute to Sammy Davis, Jr.*, “a runaway hit from the 2012 season,” the Troupe has announced.

The musical revue features De’Zhon Fields, who has traveled the world performing as the legendary icon, a news release says. The

show opened Aug. 21 and will run through Sunday, Sept. 1.

“De’Zhon and I collaborated on expanding his already successful show and the end result was *Sammy Tonight*,” said WBTT founder and Artistic Director Nate Jacobs in the release. “In 2012, ticket sales confirmed Mr.

(Above) De’Zhon Fields is bringing Sammy Davis Jr. back to life in performances through Sept. 1 at the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe. Contributed photo

Davis' appeal and audience response confirmed Mr. Fields' talent. Even before opening night, we knew we had to add two Saturday matinees in order to accommodate all of the requests. The show sold out. We know some of our regular fans missed it, so we've brought it back for another run," Jacobs added.

Sammy Tonight features songs considered "Sammy Davis classics" as well as other musical favorites from the same era, the release notes. Among the hits included are *Old Black Magic*, *Mr. Bojangles*, *Candyman* and *I've Got the World On a String*. In *Sammy Tonight*, the multi-talented Fields is supported by two female backup singers who are members of WBTT, the release continues. Regulars to WBTT will recognize Tsadok Porter and Ariel Blue, who have appeared in many of WBTT's plays and revues. Tsadok was also an original cast member for *Sammy Tonight*.

Fields has been singing and dancing since he was 10, the release adds. "He was told most of his life that he looked like Sammy Davis Jr., which inspired him to research the performer," it notes. "He realized he identified with [Davis] in many ways."

"Audiences will feel like they are back in the club scene with one of the most popular performers of all time," continued Jacobs in the release. "It's no wonder Sammy Davis Jr. was called Mr. Entertainment! He captivated so many fans during his amazing career" as a singer, actor, dancer and comedian, Jacobs pointed out in the release.

Evening performances run Tuesday through Saturday at 8 p.m. Matinees are at 2 p.m. on Sundays. Tickets, which are \$29.50, may be purchased by calling the box office at 366-1505 or visiting www.wbtttroupe.org.

PAINTINGS BY KRASNER TO BE FEATURED AT ART UPTOWN

Transitions: Big & Small, a solo show featuring recent oil and wax paintings of Sarasota artist Jill Krasner, will open Sept. 6 at Art Uptown on lower Main Street in Sarasota.

An artist's opening reception is scheduled from 6 to 9 p.m. that evening at the gallery.

"The works represent the positive, very personal transitions" that Krasner experienced after becoming a full-time resident of Sarasota, a news release says. The paintings she has selected for the exhibit include abstracts of landscapes, buildings and other architectural structures. "Symbolic circles and lines and blocks of bold color contrast with detailed mark-making," Krasner noted in the release. The show will include very large paintings, along with smaller canvases.

"The smell of the Gulf, the view of cottages lined up along the shoreline, palm trees reaching up toward clear blue skies are all reflected in my art," added Krasner in the release.

Pointing out that she has been designing, illustrating, painting and writing most of her life, Krasner continues, "My work is an expression of my travels along life's path — a sometimes complicated, frequently challenging journey of love. Creating with oil paints, oil sticks and cold wax is delightfully messy. I work fast and the paint gets everywhere: on my clothes, on every surface in my studio, even on my dog."

Krasner typically works on several canvases at once, as her process requires the application of one thin layer of color on top of another, allowing ample drying time between layers



Building by Jill Krasner. Contributed image

on each canvas, the release notes. A canvas might have as many as eight or 10 layers of color and texture before she starts the final image making, the release says.

Krasner has exhibited in many juried shows and has received numerous awards, including first place at the Deep See exhibition at the Sarasota Art Center last year for her painting *New Beginnings*, the release points out. Her work is in hundreds of national and international collections.

Krasner's paintings will be showcased at Art Uptown through Sept. 30. The gallery, located at 1367 Main St., Sarasota, will also display works of the gallery's 27 other member artists.

Art Uptown is open Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays, noon to 5 p.m. During the monthly First Friday Gallery Walks on Palm and Main streets, evening hours are 6 to 9 p.m.

For more information, call 955-5409 or visit www.artuptown.com.



Haze by Jill Krasner. Contributed image



African Beach Houses by Jill Krasner. Contributed image

VENICE THEATRE RELEASES FALL CLASS SCHEDULE FOR CHILDREN, ADULTS

Registration is open for Venice Theatre's fall 2013 classes, which include opportunities for children and adults, the theater has announced.

The fall schedule will begin the week of Sept. 16, a news release says. Classes, which will run six to 10 weeks, will be taught by instructors John Andzulis (Venice Theatre's technical director), Amy Blake, Sandy Davisson (VT's director of education and outreach) Kristofer Geddie (VT's director of diversity), Tarah Hart, Becky Holahan, Peter Madpak, Ron Myroup (VT's playwright in residence), Brad Wages (VT's lead teacher) and Kelly Woodland, the release notes. Interested students and parents should visit www.venicestage.com, call Venice Theatre's Education and Outreach

Department at 486-8679, or e-mail Candace at candaceartim@venicestage.com. A limited number of scholarships are available for qualified applicants.

Offerings include beginning, intermediate, advanced and specialty classes for students in all grades — from kindergarten up — as well as for adults, the release points out. For the youngest students, the theater has play classes: *Telling Tales! Creative Play for K-1* and *Shake It Up! Creative Play for Grade 2*. Both are “fun-filled adventures into the world of theatre that build the students’ self-confidence and social development,” the release adds.

For students in grades three through five and grades six through eight, Venice Theatre of-



(From left) Students performing in this summer's MainStage show, *Back to the Beach: Surf's Up!* are Logan Schultz, Toni Hajroja, Jason Gill, Charlie Kollar and Jacob Hawkins. Photo courtesy of Venice Theatre

fers the popular *Act 1: Beginning Acting*, *Act 2: Intermediate Acting* and *Act 3: Advanced Acting*. "From finding the actor's voice to skill-building techniques to creating superheroes, these classes are designed to further students' creative ability," the release continues.

For adult students age 18 and up, the theater is offering "exciting new classes taught by professionals in their fields." For example, in *The Biz of Show!* Kristofer Geddie will answer questions ranging from how to pair a monologue with music to where to find auditions and coaching assistance. That class is limited to 10 students.

For another example, the release notes, *Directing with Kelly!* will be an opportunity to take a class with one of VT's award-winning directors, Kelly Woodland. Further, in *Improv!* Ron Myroup will help students learn the benefit of improvisational skills and how those affect and improve acting, the release adds.

One other offering will be *Creative Dramatics for Developmentally Challenged Adults*,

taught by Gladys Varga, a confidence building and life skill approach using theater exercises and acting study, the release says.

In addition to seasonal classes, Venice Theatre offers a unique Technical Theatre Apprenticeship Program (TTAP) as well as a customized program for Girl Scout and Boy Scout badges, the release points out.

The TTAP is a career-track technical training program for students 16 years and older; it is accredited by the Florida Department of Education.

Online registration is available at www.venicestage.com. To register by phone, call the Education and Outreach Department at (941) 486-8679. To register in person, stop by the theatre's main box office at 140 W. Tampa Ave. Payment in full and a completed registration form are required to guarantee space in a class.

All classes take place at Venice Theatre, located at 140 W. Tampa Avenue on the island in Venice.

WBTT ANNOUNCES OPEN AUDITIONS FOR 2013-14 SEASON

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe (WBTT) has announced it will hold auditions for the 2013-14 main season on Saturday, Sept. 7, from 1 to 4 p.m., with callbacks scheduled that evening from 7 to 10 p.m.

Auditions will be held at the theater located at 1646 10th Way in Sarasota. No prior theatrical experience is required, a news release says, but actors should be 18 years of age or older. All ethnicities are encouraged to attend.

"Anyone interested in auditioning for musical theater should come prepared with a 16-bar

song and a one-minute monologue," the release points out. "An accompanist will be provided so please bring your own sheet music."

Actors who wish to audition for straight plays should prepare two contrasting monologues, the release notes. Those receiving callbacks for musical theater roles will be given an additional song selected by WBTT.

"WBTT has discovered wonderful new talent at each of our previous open auditions," said Nate Jacobs, founder and artistic director, in the release. "Since we hold them at the the-

ater, we are able to attract many local actors [whom] we may or may not be aware of. It's always a very important and exciting day."

The play list for the season includes two award-winning shows, an original musical revue and one drama. In chronological order the shows are *Purlie*, running Nov. 13 to Dec. 15; *The Whipping Man*, Jan. 2 through Feb. 2; *Harry and Lena*, from Feb. 19 to March 23;

and *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, April 9 through May 11.

Auditions are free. Requests should be submitted online at www.wbttsrq.org/about-us/employment. A time slot and a number will be sent in a confirmation email, the release says. Callback songs will be listed on the confirmation.



In celebration of the 2012-2013 season, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Barbetta and Mr. and Mrs. Norman Schimmel of Sarasota recently presented gifts, in the form of hanging plaques, to Mary Bensel and Julia Mays of the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota. (From left) Norman and Patti Schimmel, Mays, Bensel and Joe Barbetta hold the plaques. Contributed photo by Kelly French

WHITE TO SIGN COPIES OF HIS NEW BOOK ON SEPT. 4 IN SARASOTA

On Wednesday, Sept. 4, at noon, Bookstore1Sarasota will welcome *New York Times* bestselling author Randy Wayne White, who will sign and discuss *Deceived*, a mystery featuring his newest sleuth, Hannah Smith, the shop has announced.

The popular Florida writer introduced Smith, a “plucky and tough fishing guide/private investigator,” in his earlier book, *Gone*, a news release notes. *Deceived* is centered around

a 20-year-old murder and a real estate scam “that threatens Hannah’s village of Sulfur Wells,” the release adds.

Purchase of the novel at Bookstore1Sarasota is required for those who would like copies signed, the release points out.

Bookstore1Sarasota is located at 1359 Main St.

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



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EVENT DETAILS

Click on the month link to find out more about Bookstore1Sarasota's events.

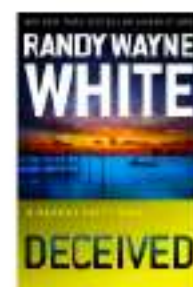
[August](#)

[September](#)

[October](#)

[Click here for a list of our prior speakers.](#)

UP NEXT AT THE BOOKSTORE



**September 4
at Noon**

Randy Wayne White

will introduce his latest novel, *Deceived*

Hannah Smith returns in the stunning new adventure in the *New York Times*' bestselling series from the author of the Doc Ford novels.

A twenty-year-old unsolved murder from Florida's pothauling days gets Hannah Smith's attention, but so does a more immediate problem. A private museum devoted solely to the state's earliest settlers and pioneers has been announced, and many of Hannah's friends and neighbors in Sulfur Wells are being pressured to make contributions. The problem is,

NEXT BOOK CLUBS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20 AT NOON

MALLORY'S ORACLE

by Carol O'Connell





RELIGION BRIEFS

Laura Freedman, Temple Sinai's director of early childhood learning, and Sunny Brownrout, vice president, prepare to greet visitors at last year's Open House. Contributed photo

SARASOTA-MANATEE SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL ANNOUNCES OPEN HOUSE

The Annual Community-Wide Synagogue Open House will take place on Sunday, Aug. 25, from 1 to 4 p.m., organizers have announced. Nine of the area congregations — from Bradenton to North Port — will be welcoming prospective members. “This is a wonderful opportunity to tour their facilities and meet the clergy, staff and the lay leadership of these synagogues,” a news release says.

Representatives will showcase the various offerings, auxiliaries and programs that each Temple provides, the release adds. “It is a great way to get a taste of what each congre-

gation is all about.” The event is free, with no reservations required, and most, if not all, of the synagogues will offer refreshments.

The nine participating congregations comprise the membership of the Synagogue Council of Sarasota-Manatee and represent various denominations and sizes. They are (in alphabetical order) Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, Congregation Kol HaNeshama, Congregation Ner Tamid, Jewish Center of Venice, Temple Beth El (Bradenton), Temple Beth El (North Port), Temple Beth Sholom, Temple Emanu-El and Temple Sinai. Address-

es may be found on the website, www.synagoguessarasotamanatee.org.

“While it will be the dead of summer, the timing is planned so that people are able to commit to a temple family prior to the High Holidays and the start of religious school classes,” the release notes. “Most congregations are sensitive to the economic times and will make financial arrangements to accommodate a person’s ability to pay,” it continues. “Don’t let monetary concerns keep you from visiting.”

Laurie Lachowitzer, president of the Synagogue Council, said in the release, “Our Sarasota-Manatee community is unique in the way that our congregations work with a spirit of cooperation to coordinate this event. This simultaneous Open House is not something that occurs often in other cities, and it says a lot about the collaboration and goodwill that exists in this part of the world.”

“Join a Congregation; Find a Community” is the motto for the council.

TEMPLE SINAI RECEIVES AWARD FROM CAMP COLEMAN

For more than 20 years, Temple Sinai has been sending significant numbers of both campers and staff to the Union for Reform Judaism’s Camp Coleman in Cleveland, GA, for summers of fun, Jewish growth and lifelong friendships, the Temple notes in a news release. In recognition of the Temple’s ongoing support and the number of its children who attend Cole-

man, Rabbi Geoff Huntting and his wife, Sue, accepted an award on behalf of the Temple during the camp’s first Coleman Summit, held in July, the Temple has announced.

Eighty camp lay leaders and representatives from congregations throughout the region attended the two-day Shabbat program, which included camper and staff-led worship ser-



(From left) Sue Huntting, Temple Sinai Religious School director; Temple Sinai’s Rabbi Geoff Huntting; Bobby Harris, camp director; Andi Solomon, assistant camp director; and Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. Contributed photo

vices, lots of singing and *ruach* (spirit), a visit from Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) President Rabbi Rick Jacobs “and two special moments for the community — a counselor’s Bar Mitzvah (he read Torah for the first time) and the *aufbruch* (wedding blessing) of a former camper/counselor and her fiancé, a news release says.

Though rain prevented the participants from praying together in the recently renovated outdoor Hillman Chapel, the renovation campaign’s donor plaque — including the Hunting family names and Temple Sinai — was installed and ready for viewing when the clouds cleared, the release notes.

Believing strongly in the importance of summer Jewish experiences for its youth, Temple Sinai leaders saw others among its young

members attend Kutz Camp, Ramah Darom and Camp Judea this summer, the release continues. Additional students participated in The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee’s Young Ambassadors trip to Israel, [NFTY in Israel](#) and [USY on Wheels](#).

“The high number of our youth who participate in *all* kinds of Jewish summer experiences is a testament to our families’ values and the support our scholarship fund has been able to provide,” the release points out.

The URJ is the umbrella organization of the 900-plus Reform congregations throughout North America; it also oversees 14 summer camps, the release says. Camp Coleman, established in 1962, served almost 900 children this summer, primarily from the Southeast.



(Back row, from left) Sue Huntting, Becca Huntting, Mackenzie Dyrda, Maris Freedman, Jay Manson, Zach Friedman, Rabbi Geoff Huntting; (front row, from left) Katherine Carnes, Jake Dillon, Jake Carnes and Savi Quale participated in the second session of the camp. Contributed photo

TEMPLE EMANU-EL RECOGNIZED AT INAUGURAL CAMP SUMMIT

The leadership and families of Temple Emanu-El were recognized for outstanding support of Jewish camping at the inaugural Camp Coleman Summit on July 27 in Cleveland, GA, the Temple has announced.

A premier Jewish overnight camp, Camp Coleman is administered by the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). It serves Jewish and interfaith children in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and eastern Tennessee, a news release says. The inaugural Camp Coleman Summit represented more than 80 Jewish congregations in this region and included a visit from URJ's international president, Rabbi Rick Jacobs.

Among the highlights of the summit was the presentation of awards to "a select few con-

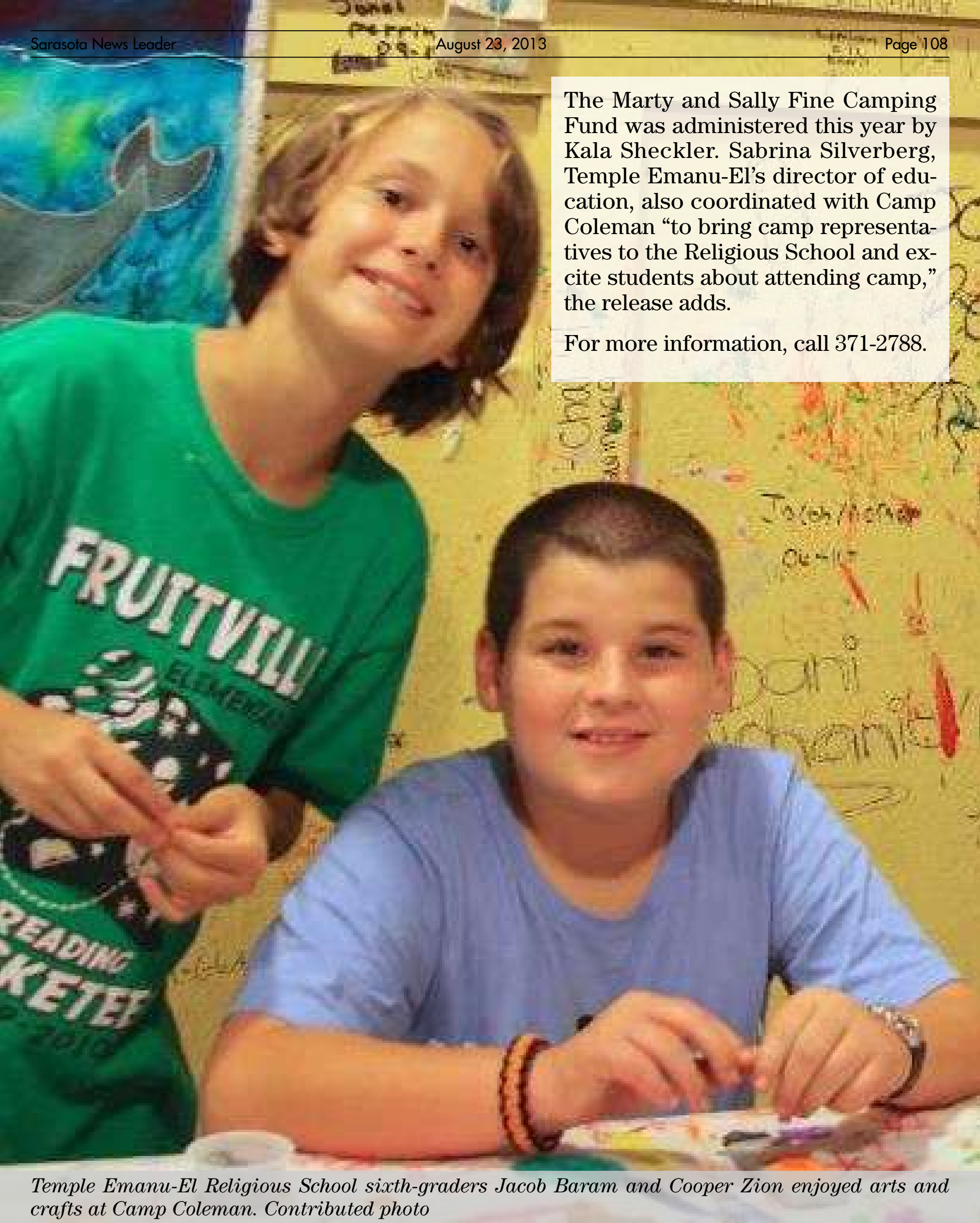
gregations ... whose registration numbers at URJ camps are at the highest levels throughout the district," announced Camp Coleman Director Bobby Harris and Chairman Mark Silberman in the release. Temple Emanu-El was "honored and asked to come forward and receive this special commendation," the release notes.

The increased number of Temple Emanu-El children attending Camp Coleman was "dramatic and significant," added Harris and Silberman in the release.

Rabbi Brenner Glickman credited the synagogue's Marty and Sally Fine Camping Fund with the large number of Temple Emanu-El children attending Camp Coleman, noting that the fund provides scholarships that make overnight camping possible for many families.



Temple Emanu-El Religious School student Eitan Seldin-Schneider tried kayaking at Camp Coleman. Contributed photo



The Marty and Sally Fine Camping Fund was administered this year by Kala Sheckler. Sabrina Silverberg, Temple Emanu-El's director of education, also coordinated with Camp Coleman "to bring camp representatives to the Religious School and excite students about attending camp," the release adds.

For more information, call 371-2788.

Temple Emanu-El Religious School sixth-graders Jacob Baram and Cooper Zion enjoyed arts and crafts at Camp Coleman. Contributed photo

TEMPLE SINAI WELCOMES GUESTS AT HIGH HOLIDAYS SERVICES

Members of Temple Sinai warmly invite guests to many of their services and activities over the High Holidays.

Tashlich will be celebrated at Siesta Key Beach on Thursday, Sept. 5, at 5:30 p.m. with a potluck picnic and a sing-a-long, the Temple has announced. “This is a time to symbolically toss our sins into the ocean and start anew for the year ahead,” the release says.

The gathering will take place in the pavilion south of the main building at the beach.

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah — Friday, Sept. 6 — the creative service planned at 10 a.m. was written by Rabbi Geoff Huntting, the release adds. “It’s an intimate and comfortable service that participants find most satisfying,” the release notes.

The Yom Kippur service will begin at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14. This will include the traditional Yizkor Memorial Service, a nurturing Healing Service and the traditional Break-Fast

light bite following the closing N’ila Service, the release adds.

Families with young children may participate in two distinctive services created especially for them, on Thursday, Sept. 5, and Saturday, Sept. 14, at 1:30 p.m. These services will offer music-filled interactive experiences featuring Rabbi Huntting and Chazzan Cliff Abramson with his guitar, the release continues. There also will be a hands-on project in the social hall following the Yom Kippur service on Sept. 14.

Simchat Torah, to be held on Wednesday, Sept. 25, this year, “is always a lively time,” the release points out: “There is singing and dancing with the Torah as we complete its reading and then start again at the beginning.” The service will begin at 5:15 p.m.

Neither reservations nor tickets are needed for these services, the release notes. Please call 924-1802 for further information or visit templesinai-sarasota.org.



Temple Sinai invites members of the community to attend Tashlich at Siesta Key Beach, to symbolically cast away the sins of the year and share in a potluck supper. Contributed photo

TEMPLE EMANU-EL WELCOMES PEOPLE TO ITS OPEN HOUSE

Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, has announced its annual Open House will be held on Sunday, Aug. 25, from 1 to 4 p.m. Prospective members and all those “interested in learning more about this welcoming and vibrant Jewish congregation are warmly invited,” a news release says.

Attendees will be greeted by Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, Religious School Director Sabrina Silverberg, Preschool Director Elaine Sharrock and representatives of the board of directors, adult education committee, social action committee, Brotherhood, Sisterhood and congregational youth. Tours of the facility,

snacks and children’s activities will be provided, the release adds.

“The fastest-growing Jewish congregation in Sarasota-Manatee, Temple Emanu-El offers meaningful and spiritual worship services, excellent educational and social programs, plentiful opportunities for community service and a tremendous array of activities for young families,” the release points out. New members and new preschool and religious school students are always welcome.

For more information, call the Temple Emanu-El office at 371-2788.

CONGREGATION FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM PLANS OPEN HOUSE

Members of the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism invite members of the community to their Open House on Sunday, Aug. 25, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Humanistic Judaism embraces a human-centered philosophy that combines rational thinking with a celebration of Jewish culture, history and identity, a news release notes.

“It affirms that human beings possess the power and responsibility to shape their own lives and that ethics and morality are human responsibilities,” the release adds.

“A welcoming, affirming congregation, CHJ offers meaningful services (in English) and relevant speakers, educational programs and special events throughout the year,” the release notes.

Reservations are being taken now for the High Holiday services: Rosh Hashanah on Sept. 5 at 10:30 a.m.; the Kol Nidre service on Sept. 13 at 7:30 p.m.; and Yom Kippur Memorial and Break the Fast on Sept. 14 at 3 p.m.

The Congregation meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road, Sarasota. Call 929-7771 and/or visit the website, www.chj-sarasota.com. 

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on My Smile.*



I am so incredibly pleased, with my beautiful smile
and my comfortable and natural bite. - Barbara Lee

For a complimentary consultation call 941.923.5406 | Christine Koval, D.M.D. | www.askdrkoval.com



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

23+
AUGUST

FST Summer Improv

Aug. 23 and 24, 8:30 p.m., John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave. Tickets: \$12. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

23+
AUGUST

Banyan Theater presents *Time Stands Still*

Aug. 23 to 25 (times vary), Jane B. Cook Theatre, FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail. Tickets: \$28.50. Information: 351-2808 or BanyanTheaterCompany.com.

23+
AUGUST

Sammy Tonight! A Tribute To Sammy Davis Jr.

Aug. 23 to Sept. 1 (times vary), Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Admission: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or WBTroupe.org.

23+
AUGUST

Dabbert Gallery presents *Summer Showcase*

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

06
SEPTEMBER

WSLR presents Jonathan Byrd in concert

Sept. 6, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court. Tickets: \$10 in advance or \$12 at door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

14
SEPTEMBER

Venice Theatre presents *Yesterdayze in concert*

Sept. 14, 8 p.m., 140 W. Tampa Avenue, Venice. Tickets: \$20. Information: 488-1115 or VeniceStage.com.

YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST

JAMMIN' AT FRIDAY FEST



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.