

THE SARASOTA

No. 51 — September 6, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

**WORKING ON A PLAN
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WAECHTER AND THE FEC**

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

I am sure County Editor Roger Drouin will be happy to see Stan Zimmerman return from sabbatical, because Roger has been very busy this week on the City of Sarasota beat.

Although the City Commission did not pack as much into its Sept. 3 meeting as the County Commission did in two days last week, let us just say Roger did not have to scrounge around for news.

Still, local government topics are not the only ones making headlines this week.

Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker has an update on the 2012 campaign contributions saga involving former Sarasota GOP Chairman Bob Waechter, and I learned some surprising news regarding the case of the allegedly drunken driver who struck and killed a Siesta Key runner on Jan. 7, 2012.

Of course, I would be most remiss if I did not mention the big coup for Nathan Benderson Park. Call it “old news” at this point if you will, but I expect many folks would argue this is one of the most exciting stories for this community in some time. Although I had every hope the park would land the 2017 World Rowing Championships, hearing the news was one of those “pinch me to be sure it is true” moments.

On a different but also compelling note: Cooper has provided us with a preview of local plans to mark the 50th anniversary of another major event in this nation’s Civil Rights Movement. This incident was as tragic as the 1963 March on Washington was inspiring.

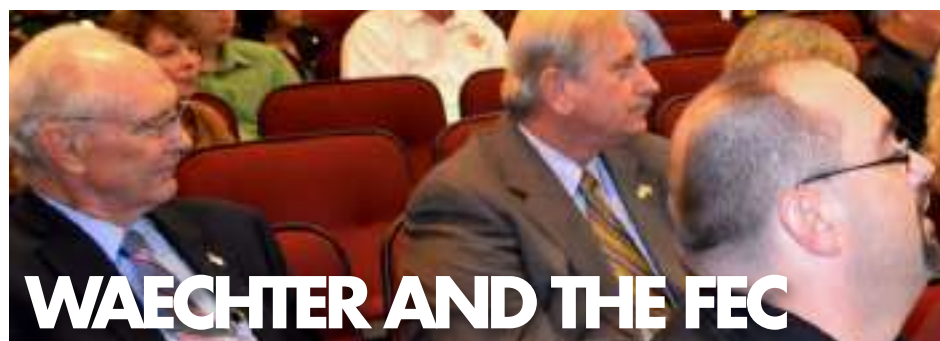
I think it is safe to say we have another “smorgasbord” of stories for you this week.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher





WORKING ON A PLAN



WAECHTER AND THE FEC



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WORKING ON A PLAN

Robert Marbut takes a quick lunch break in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Roger Drouin

DR. ROBERT MARBUT'S APPROACH IS REALLY A BALANCE BETWEEN TWO EXTREMES, AND HE STRESSES 'SMART LOVE'

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

As he sits outside Pastry Art in downtown Sarasota, Dr. Robert Marbut nibbles an oatmeal raisin cookie and sips iced tea. This is his lunch.

During this second official visit to Sarasota, the homeless-issues consultant has been “going all day,” as the saying goes — heading out early each morning and returning to his hotel room just before 10 p.m. He usually grabs something quick, such as a

pastry or a protein bar, for lunch. Labor Day was no different.

“I’ve had more meetings in 10 days here than I’ve had overall in almost any other community,” said Marbut, who lives in San Antonio and has worked on homeless issues for more than three decades.

As he formulates his suggestions to help the area deal with issues related to a growing homeless population, he has met with non-

“ *There are families living in cars behind malls, and no one knows what to do. It's horrible.* ”

Dr. Robert Marbut
Consultant
Homelessness Issues

profit organization directors, homeless service providers, church leaders and just about every elected official in the county.

He also has spent time with people who are homeless, including some families living in their cars in parking lots.

Marbut's goal is to write a report to turn in to Sarasota city and county officials.

"The faster I get that report, the better," he said.

Then the real work begins, Marbut pointed out. But having traveled to about 600 communities in 22 states for his work, he already can offer observations after just a short time in Sarasota.

During an interview Monday, Sept. 2, with *The Sarasota News Leader*, Marbut shared some of those initial thoughts. He thinks some good work is under way, in many cases by nonprofits working on shoestring budgets. But Sarasota County government officials and other leaders need to take bold action, he points out — or the homeless population here will increase 20 to 30 percent in a few years.

BUILDING SOLUTIONS

Marbut does not call facilities that house homeless people "shelters."

"A shelter is somewhere you put people and lock the key," he noted.



Homeless people gather along Central Avenue in downtown Sarasota in February. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Marbut says two types of facilities are needed in Sarasota County if local officials want to address homelessness.

The first is a “portal” for families and children who find themselves living on the street, like some of the families Marbut has met here in Sarasota.

“There are families living in cars behind malls, and no one knows what to do,” Marbut told the *News Leader*. “It’s horrible.”

The good news is that Marbut has been talking to representatives of two nonprofit organizations who he said are willing to take the initiative on setting up two portals, one in North County and one in South County.

“There is some alignment with what [the organizations] are doing right now, and they would

repurpose some of their operations,” Marbut noted of those nonprofits.

The portals would be safe places where families could go immediately when a crisis occurred. Community leaders would be able to refer families to those facilities.

“A police officer or a city commissioner or church deacon will know where the portal is,” Marbut said.

It appears the community is poised to put the portals in place ahead of the second type of facility he recommends, which he calls a “transformational center.”

The latter is the kind of place most consider when they discuss shelters.

Pinellas Safe Harbor in Clearwater, which Marbut helped open, has been the model



Homeless people gather in the parking lot of City Hall in downtown Sarasota on Sept. 3. Photo by Norman Schimmel

during recent discussions at the County Commission and City Commission daises.

Marbut's vision for a transformational center combines beds with services such as job training, medical and mental health assistance and substance-abuse programs.

Such a facility can be built from the ground up, or an existing building can be transformed into the type of space needed. A third option is to bring in portable buildings, similar to what the U.S. military does at its overseas bases.

No matter the setup, establishing and operating the center comes at a cost.

On Tuesday, Sept. 3, the City Commission voted 3-2 to set aside \$500,000, including \$289,000 from an already allocated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), for a shelter. (See the related article in this issue.)

The County Commission voted unanimously on Aug. 20 to set aside \$500,000 to deal with the issue of homelessness in the area.

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo has led the effort to allocate city funding for a public homelessness center.

It has not been an easy task. He put the item on the agenda last month to build support from his fellow commissioners, but at that meeting, commissioners were not in a hurry to act on his request.

Before that session, Caragiulo toured Pinellas Safe Harbor.

Marbut said Caragiulo contacted him after attending a workshop Marbut had conducted.

"[Caragiulo] called me up that night and said he wants to work with me," Marbut said.



*Selby Public Library in downtown Sarasota has been a common gathering place for the homeless.
Photo by Norman Schimme*

Marbut was shocked, he added, but impressed by Caragiulo's changed course. "Six or seven weeks ago, he wasn't for what I was saying."

The county and city, along with nonprofits and faith-based organizations, would all have to team up to build and operate the center.

As an example, Marbut points to [Pinellas Safe Harbor](#), where the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office is the facility manager while nonprofit groups support its work, and faith-based organizations provide all of the food.

It is up to Sarasota leaders to determine which organizations will play specific roles, if a center is built here. But one is clear for Marbut:

The overall goal of both the portals and transformational center should be to create pathways for homeless people, to help them find work and a home and the assistance they need to get off the street.

In addition to building facilities in Sarasota County, Marbut said, area nonprofits need to collaborate with each other.

"Meeting once a month is not working together," Marbut pointed out.

A 91-PERCENT REDUCTION

Marbut said he has seen communities that follow through on his recommendations re-



Pinellas Safe Harbor has been called a model facility for helping the homeless. Photo courtesy of Pinellas Safe Harbor

port an 80-percent decrease in the number of homeless people staying in parks, on beaches and in public areas.

“We can get a really good reduction,” Marbut noted.

In Pinellas County, after Pinellas Safe Harbor opened, the county recorded a 91-percent decline in the number of homeless people living on the streets.

Those communities where Marbut has devised a plan also have seen a 50-percent increase in the long-term success rate for people who graduate from programs aimed at getting them into secure homes.

Ending homelessness, however, is not his objective.

“I don’t come in saying I will end [it]. We engage homelessness,” he said.

Marbut’s approach is really a balance between two extremes that communities often use to battle the issue.

On one end, people to the left of the political spectrum sometimes will want to feed the homeless in parks and allow them to sleep in public spaces, he pointed out.

The other extreme wants to “arrest” a way out of homelessness or create ordinances to make homelessness illegal.

“The solution is not in jail, and it’s not in parks,” Marbut said.

He does not want to see homeless people constantly incarcerated, nor does he want to “coddle them.”

“I will do everything I can to ensure people get into a program,” Marbut said. “That is how you get people off the street.”

If Sarasota does not do anything, he predicts a continued increase in the homeless population, due in large part to the high number of veterans leaving the military with post-traumatic stress disorder. Another factor is a job market showing no signs of recovery for employees without four-year college degrees.

“If Sarasota doesn’t do anything, I can almost guarantee a 20- to 30-percent increase,” Marbut pointed out.

‘SMART LOVE’


Marbut’s advice to Sarasota residents who hand out money to panhandlers is to “redirect” that money to one of the organizations in town such as [Family Promise](#), [Harvest House](#), The Salvation Army or [Resurrection House](#).

He notes that a newspaper headline once labeled him “Dr. Tough Love,” but he dislikes that title. The approach he advocates is more like “smart love,” he contends.

“If people want to do something to be generous, help those organizations that have a high success rate,” Marbut said.

He has been surprised at how many nonprofits are doing good work with shoestring funding, such as Family Promise, which operates on an annual budget of \$85,000.

Goodwill — which employs 800 people, about two-thirds of whom are disabled — is another organization he regards highly, he pointed out, especially with its job training and employment efforts.

Still, Marbut said, “Family Promise and the Harvest House are two of the best programs I’ve seen. And they are doing all this good work right under our noses.” 



NO DEAL

The Judge Lynn Silvertooth Judicial Center in downtown Sarasota is the setting for county criminal proceedings. Photo by Rachel Hackney

AFTER THE DRIVER IN A 2012 VEHICLE CRASH THAT KILLED A SIESTA KEY RUNNER DECIDES NOT TO ACCEPT A PLEA OFFER FROM THE STATE, HIS TRIAL IS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The man arrested on Jan. 7, 2012 for hitting and killing a Siesta Key runner while he allegedly was driving drunk turned down a plea deal this week that would have sent him to prison for 15 years, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

Instead, Blake Talman, 24, of Bradenton is expected to go on trial in mid-November in connection with the death of 53-year-old Donna Chen of Sarasota.

Talman was scheduled to appear in 12th Judicial Circuit Court on Sept. 4 to accept the plea

deal on the vehicular homicide charge and multiple counts of DUI damage to property, Assistant State Attorney Amanda M. Gambert told the *News Leader* in an interview.

However, Gambert said she received notification the morning of Sept. 4 that Talman would be rejecting the plea deal after all.

She was surprised by the decision, she added.

“We were looking to find a resolution today,” Gambert told the *News Leader*, “just because we would like to see the family have some closure.”

The *News Leader* was unsuccessful in reaching Talman's attorney, Public Defender Patricia Edwards, for a comment.

Additionally, with the case going to trial, Gambert said, the state has amended one charge against Talman. A count of DUI Property Damage has been changed to DUI and Serious Bodily Injury in regard to the 2012 incident's effects on Talman's passenger, David J. Brewer of Sarasota.

Evidence in the case indicated "that was the appropriate charge," Gambert noted.

As for the actual trial date: Because the docket for the week of Nov. 12 will be a full one — the courts are closed for Veterans Day, Nov. 11 — Gambert anticipates the Talman case will not begin until Nov. 18.



Blake Talman was treated for injuries at the hospital before he was booked into the Sarasota County Jail in January 2012. Photo courtesy of the Sheriff's Office



Residents who live near the curve on Midnight Pass Road where Donna Chen was killed in January 2012 have called that a dangerous stretch of road. File photo

Talman previously had been scheduled to go on trial the week of Sept. 9 or 16; however, the plea deal that was structured last month pre-empted that.

In the meantime, he remains free on the same bond conditions he was placed under upon his release from the Sarasota County Jail on June 20, 2012. According to those terms, Talman must remain under house arrest with a GPS system allowing law enforcement officers to track his location at all times. He also was ordered not to consume alcohol or use drugs.

Additionally, he has been required to wear a SCRAM device, which measures the amount of alcohol in a person's respiration, according to law enforcement officials. The tamper-resistant equipment fits around a defendant's ankle.

After Talman was arrested at the scene of the January 2012 incident on Siesta Key's Midnight Pass Road, he was transported to Sarasota Memorial Hospital for treatment of injuries and then placed in jail under \$118,000 bond.

Chen was running northbound on the sidewalk at a curve near St. Michael the Archangel Church when Talman — driving a 2000 Nissan Altima — struck her about 1:10 p.m. on Jan. 7, 2012, according to the Florida Highway Patrol report. At the time, the report said, Talman was fleeing from another vehicle crash that resulted in property damage.

His vehicle "failed to negotiate the left curve in the roadway" near the church, the report adds. Then the Altima swerved onto the eastern shoulder of the road, struck a metal pole and continued northbound, hitting Chen, who died at the scene.



The Sarasota County Justice Center, on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota, is home to the State Attorney's Office. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THE CIVIL CASE

Along with the criminal case, a civil lawsuit filed against the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office in December 2012 remains active. It seeks \$15,000 in damages.

In that case, Chen's husband, Wellington C. Chen, says Talman "was clearly intoxicated and had an open bottle of liquor in one hand and his car keys in his other hand" when deputies stopped him on Siesta Public Beach earlier on the day Donna Chen died.

"At the time of the detention and/or questioning of [driver] Blake C. Talman [the deputies] instructed Mr. Talman that he must leave [the beach] or he would be arrested," the complaint continues. "By instructing Mr. Talman to leave while [he was] clearly intoxicated and with his car keys in his hand," it says, deputies "knew, or through the exercise of reasonable care, should have known that Mr. Talman would proceed to his car in the nearby parking lot and drive away from the beach."

The complaint adds, "In fact, after being instructed to leave the beach or be arrested, Mr. Talman walked to the parking lot, got into his car and drove away from the beach traveling on Midnight Pass Road."

Deputies who encountered Talman, Brewer — who was 24 at the time — and a third man, Michael E. Blakey of North Port, then 26 — at the beach found no outstanding warrants for the men, the Sheriff's Office reported in January 2012. Research undertaken after Chen's


death determined Talman had a record of six felony and 23 misdemeanor charges, Wendy Rose, community affairs manager for the department, told this reporter at the time. The deputies who talked with Talman and his two companions at the beach had no knowledge of that information, she pointed out.

Deputies had been alerted by a lifeguard that the trio of young men was bothering teenage girls at the beach, according to the report.

Deputies did end up arresting Blakey on a charge of Disorderly Intoxication, because he was being rude, Rose said. However, because neither Talman nor Brewer displayed any rude behavior — and neither was observed breaking any laws — deputies had no grounds to arrest them, Rose pointed out.

After a third encounter the deputies had with Talman and Brewer, Rose said, the deputies watched the two men walk toward the beach.

Depositions have continued in the civil case over the past months, with more scheduled, according to Sarasota County Clerk of Court records. On Sept. 20, the Mallard Law Firm of Sarasota has scheduled a deposition with Warren LaBonte, co-owner of the concession at Siesta Public Beach. According to the Sheriff's Office report, LaBonte at one point on Jan. 7, 2012 informed deputies that Blakey had returned to the concession stand after the deputies had talked with the three men earlier.

A case management hearing originally set for July 17 in the civil case was moved to Dec. 18, the Clerk of Court records show. 

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WAECHTER AND THE FEC

Bob Waechter (far left, second row) watches the swearing in of county commissioners in November 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

STATE AUTHORITIES FINE FORMER SARASOTA GOP CHIEF

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Former Republican Party of Sarasota County Chairman Bob Waechter's criminal trial won't start till next month, but in the meantime, the Florida Elections Commission has found "probable cause" of an election law violation and fined him \$750.

Prosecutors charged Waechter late last year with [Criminal Use of Personal Identification Information](#), a third-degree felony, for allegedly making donations to two 2012 Democratic candidates, Keith Fitzgerald and Liz Alpert, in the name of Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations President Lourdes Ramirez. A Republican, Ramirez is a likely 2014 County Commission candidate.

Waechter's trial isn't scheduled to begin till Oct. 21 (with a docket sounding planned for Oct. 7), but the state Elections Commission, responding to a complaint lodged by

Ramirez, has already weighed in on one of the fake donations. According to a four-page document given to *The Sarasota News Leader* by Ramirez, the Elections Commission has reached a "consent final order" agreement with Waechter in the case of the Alpert donation and fined him for his role.

The \$35 Alpert donation was made online in Ramirez's name on Oct. 2, 2012 with a prepaid VISA credit card. According to the Elections Commission, a card loaded with \$500 was purchased that same day at a Sarasota Sweetbay by "an individual resembling" Waechter.

Elections Commission staff and Waechter reached an agreement in May to settle the issue, with Waechter accepting the \$750 fine. The commission itself ratified the order just last month.

Waechter tells the *News Leader* he's not commenting on the issue, but says he's not concerned that the agreement might affect his criminal trial. He points out that the settlement stipulates that it does not "constitute an admission against interest or acknowledgment of guilt as to any criminal charge." He says settling was "cheaper" than fighting the allegations.

Ramirez also lodged a complaint with the Federal Election Commission about the fake donation to Fitzgerald's campaign. That body oversees presidential and congressional elections. All FEC matters remain confidential till they're resolved.


Waechter served as head of the local GOP from 2004 to 2006, and he has long been influential in conservative politics. He co-chaired the county's Bush-Cheney reelection campaign and last year supported the campaigns of County Commissioners Carolyn Mason, Christine Robinson and Charles Hines, each of them victors. After being arrested, Waechter left positions on the county's Tourism Devel-



Bob Waechter appears in a mug shot. Photo courtesy of the Sheriff's Office

opment Council, the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority.

Waechter's attorney in the Elections Commission settlement, Emmett Mitchell IV, has a long, controversial history in Florida politics and elections. *The Palm Beach Post* reported last fall that Mitchell wrote the first draft of the 2011 state bill that cut early voting days from 14 to eight and cracked down on voter registration drives, among other restrictive measures.

The *Post* also called Mitchell the "architect" of then-Secretary of State Katherine Harris' 2000 felon voter purge, which misidentified thousands of Floridians — a "disproportionately high number" of them black — as felons, preventing them from voting. According to the article, the Tallahassee law firm Mitchell works for, Coates, currently represents the state Republican Party. 



Liz Alpert has her own law firm in Sarasota. Image from <http://www.lizalpertlaw.com>



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CARAGIULO EKES OUT A VICTORY

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo listens to discussion during the Sept. 3 meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

IN A 3-2 VOTE, THE CITY COMMISSION SETS ASIDE \$500,000 FOR HOMELESSNESS – INCLUDING A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANT AND \$211,000 IN ADDITIONAL MONEY

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Following a County Commission pledge last month to set aside \$500,000 to deal with homelessness issues in the area, a split 3-2 City Commission voted Tuesday, Sept. 3, to match that.

The divided city board took the action after a discussion about funding for a homeless shelter, which has also been called a “transitional center” by consultant Dr. Robert Marbut.

Commissioners Paul Caragiulo and Suzanne Atwell and Mayor Shannon Snyder voted to dedicate the money to initiatives for the homeless.

“*I know the difficulty in setting aside a blank check for something you haven't seen. But what I am asking is that you set it aside.*”

Paul Sutton
Chairman
Community Alliance Committee
on Homelessness

Commissioners Willie Shaw and Susan Chapman said they could not support the effort. Although Snyder and Atwell voted for the funding, they did voice concerns about the overall cost of building and operating a new facility.

The \$500,000 includes \$289,000 in the form of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) that had already been allocated for a homeless center. Thus, the City Commission effectively put up another \$211,000 for the proposal.

During Tuesday's meeting, the commissioners did not determine a budget source for that extra money.

"I know the difficulty in setting aside a blank check for something you haven't seen," Paul Sutton, retired Sarasota police captain and chairman of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County's committee on homelessness, said to the commissioners before the vote. "But what I am asking is that you set it aside."

Sutton noted there is "a lot of energy" right now behind efforts to find solutions for the issue of homelessness in the community; therefore, the funding vote would come at a key time.

Valerie Guillory, executive director of Trinity Without Borders — her own initiative to help the homeless — pointed out that Caragiulo has "achieved superhero status" among the homeless for what he has been trying to do.

Caragiulo has been the driving force behind the effort to set aside city funding. But Caragiulo faced some opposition at the City Commission dais.

Vice Mayor Willie Shaw said he could not support allocating money unless it was clear a shelter would not be built in North Sarasota.



Valerie Guillory has created her own small homeless shelter in the north part of Sarasota. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

“It is a problem for me in District One, when the most-deprived district in this community is being selected for the site of the homeless [facility],” Shaw pointed out.

District One includes Newtown.

Caragiulo has told his fellow commissioners they do not need to commit to a shelter location or other specifics yet, but getting some initial funding in place was necessary.

Chapman added that she could not support setting aside the \$211,000 in addition to the Community Development Block Grant.

“We already have a major commitment,” she noted.

Chapman added that in Pinellas County, cities contributed \$250,000 towards the Pinellas Safe Harbor shelter, with the county funding the majority of the project.

According to its [website](#), “Pinellas Safe Harbor is a homeless shelter designed to be a safe haven for those currently homeless and who require services to get back on their feet.”

“*I wonder why we are required to match half.*”

Susan Chapman
Commissioner
City of Sarasota

“I wonder why we are required to match half,” Chapman said, referencing the County Commission vote on Aug. 20.

Chapman raised the issue of dual taxation. She said city residents already pay county taxes and city taxes, and the city should not take on “half of the cost of a regional issue.”

Although Snyder voted for the funding, he also expressed concerns about the city having to shoulder so much of the total cost for building and operating a shelter.

“This is a regional issue,” Snyder pointed out. “We can’t pay for half of all of it.”

Atwell had some concerns as well about the overall cost of a project.



The City Commission sits in session on Sept. 3. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“I want to look at this very carefully,” she said. “I think we have done a lot, given a lot.”

Atwell also asked, “Where would this come from?” about the \$211,000.

“Staff would have to come back with some options,” Caragiulo replied. “I would like to see a number of options.”


City Manager Tom Barwin said the CDBG money has to be spent by August 2014. He agreed with Snyder that the city should not be matching the county dollar for dollar on the project.

“I’m afraid this will cost more than we can ante up,” Barwin said.

Eileen Reid, a homeless person who spends nights at The Salvation Army shelter, told the commissioners that more public space is needed for homeless people.

Reid added that The Salvation Army is doing some good things, such as charging only \$1 a night for women to stay at its 10th Street facility. But the sleeping quarters there are “not enough to hold all the homeless.”

Reid asked the commissioners to set aside the funding Caragiulo was proposing.

“I invited four other [homeless] people to come, and they backed out,” Reid said. “They didn’t think it would make a difference.” 



Paul Sutton addresses a community meeting about homeless issues this summer. Photo by Roger Drouin

This may take a while.

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PAID PARKING — AGAIN

The Palm Avenue garage is a distinctive structure in downtown Sarasota thanks to the architect's 'sails' design. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY OF SARASOTA WILL START CHARGING PEOPLE WHO USE THE PALM AVENUE GARAGE

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Free parking in the Palm Avenue garage is about to end.

The Sarasota City Commission voted 3-2 Tuesday, Sept. 3, to implement paid parking in the garage, a move expected to bring in \$285,000 in revenue and reduce a growing Parking Department deficit.

The commissioners also approved a business employee parking program that will set aside spaces for downtown employees

who pay \$10 a month. Workers will be able to use the program as an alternative to timed on-street parking, which requires them to move their vehicles every two hours.

“This is an employee parking permit for a very low rate of \$10,” said City Manager Tom Barwin.

That program is anticipated to net an estimated \$41,400 in revenue for the city coffers.

“*We need to cut this subsidy. I think we should start in the garage.*”

Suzanne Atwell
Commissioner
City of Sarasota



Palm Ave Parking Garage Projected Revenue and Rates

Notes:

First 90 minutes Complimentary

\$1 for first 2 hours, \$3 for 3 hrs, graduating to
\$16 maximum daily rate

Conservative calculated elasticity included

Time Band - Distribution of Cars				Avg Price		
Hours	% of cars	Cars	Minutes	\$ Rate	Daily Rev	Per Hour
0.5	3.42%	9.88	0 - 30	complimentary	\$ -	0
1	8.32%	24.04	31 - 60	complimentary	\$ -	0
1.5	15.15%	43.78	61 - 90	complimentary	\$ -	\$ -
2	14.45%	41.76	91- 120	\$ 1.00	\$ 41.76	\$ 0.50
2.5	14.63%	42.28	121 - 150	\$ 2.00	\$ 84.56	\$ 0.80
3	9.32%	26.94	151 -180	\$ 3.00	\$ 80.83	\$ 1.00
4	12.65%	36.55	181 - 240	\$ 5.00	\$ 182.77	\$ 1.25
5	10.27%	29.69	241 - 300	\$ 6.00	\$ 178.14	\$ 1.20
6	4.00%	11.56	301 - 360	\$ 8.00	\$ 92.48	\$ 1.33
7	2.41%	6.98	361 -420	\$ 10.00	\$ 69.76	\$ 1.43
8	1.48%	4.29	421 - 480	\$ 10.00	\$ 42.90	\$ 1.25
9	1.10%	3.17	481 - 540	\$ 12.00	\$ 38.10	\$ 1.33
10	0.95%	2.75	541 -600	\$ 14.00	\$ 38.44	\$ 1.40
11	0.50%	1.46	601 - 660	\$ 16.00	\$ 23.34	\$ 1.45
12	0.24%	0.69	661- 720	\$ 16.00	\$ 10.98	\$ 1.33
13	0.21%	0.60	721 -780	\$ 16.00	\$ 9.61	\$ 1.23
14	0.60%	1.73	781 -840	\$ 16.00	\$ 27.74	\$ 1.14
15	0.12%	0.35	841 -900	\$ 16.00	\$ 5.55	\$ 1.07
16	0.09%	0.26	901 -960	\$ 16.00	\$ 4.16	\$ 1.00
17	0.01%	0.03	961 - 1020	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.94
18	0.01%	0.03	1021 - 1080	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.89
19	0.01%	0.03	1081 - 1140	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.84
20	0.01%	0.03	1141 - 1200	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.80
21	0.01%	0.03	1201 - 1260	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.76
22	0.01%	0.03	1261 - 1320	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.73
23	0.01%	0.03	1321 - 1380	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.70
24	0.01%	0.03	1381 - 1440	\$ 16.00	\$ 0.46	\$ 0.67
289					\$ 935	
86,973 total annual exits					\$ 285,125	Annual Rev

A chart shows anticipated revenue from charging people to park in the Palm garage. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

Combined, the two programs will reduce the city budget subsidy of the Parking Department from \$475,000 to \$250,450, according to city staff.

The impetus for charging at the 740-space public garage was to decrease the department's deficit, Barwin said. City staff needed to lower it without being able to count on revenue from parking meters downtown, which an earlier City Commission voted to remove.

"We need to cut this subsidy," said Commissioner Suzanne Atwell. "I think we should start in the garage."

Mayor Shannon Snyder and Commissioner Paul Caragiulo voted against the parking programs.

"We don't have a parking problem," Snyder said. "We have an over-management problem."

Snyder added that the city should have privatized the garage when it had a chance to do so.

Caragiulo said he would have preferred that the city's Parking Advisory Committee review the plan for paid garage parking before the agenda item came to the City Commission for a vote.

"My comfort level is not where it should be," Caragiulo added.

The first 90 minutes in the garage will remain free, but fees will apply after that. Motorists will be charged \$1 for the first two hours and \$3 for three hours, with the fees graduating to a \$16 maximum daily rate.

The garage, which opened in 2010, has always been set up for paid parking. Since the pay-in-lane equipment is in place, city staff just has to turn it on.




Sarasota Parking Manager Mark Lyons (left) and Chris Gallagher, chairman of the Parking Advisory Board, discuss the parking revenue situation with the City Commission in June. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Sarasota Parking Manager Mark Lyons said about 26 percent of the garage's users leave vehicles there for less than 90 minutes and thus will be able to take advantage of the complimentary parking.

For those going to the theater or a longer dinner date, get ready to pay. At least motorists will not need to fumble for their change because all of the fees will be at dollar intervals.

"Pay with coins is cumbersome," Lyons said.

The employee parking program will set aside 125 spaces in the Palm Avenue garage, another 75 in the State Street lot (while it is available for use; a garage proposed on that site, too); 75 spaces on Second Street; 10 on Cocoanut Avenue; 50 on First Street; and 10 on Orange Avenue. 



'CAT AND MOUSE'

Smokin' Joe's has been the source of numerous noise complaints downtown. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE NOISE DISCUSSION TURNS TO ENFORCEMENT AFTER THE CITY COMMISSIONERS LEARN ABOUT A GAME AT SEVERAL MAIN STREET BARS THAT SEEM TO BE EVADING THE CITY'S SOUND ORDINANCE

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

City commissioners said this week that they want the city attorney to tighten the current noise regulations, combining two ordinances into one. They also directed Police Chief Bernadette DiPino to meet with several bar owners about continuing problems.

Then in November, the City Commission will once again take up the issue of downtown sound.

In the meantime Mayor Shannon Snyder had a direct message for DiPino and police officers to send to several Main Street bar owners — including those at Tequila Cantina and Smokin' Joe's — who are evading the city's noise laws. Snyder called them “problem children.”

“They will understand: Turn the volume down.”

Shannon Snyder
Mayor
City of Sarasota

“We have a problem with two or three businesses that don't want to comply,” Snyder

der said. "It's time for these folks to get the hint."

During the Tuesday, Sept. 10, regular City Commission meeting, the mayor talked about limiting the hours liquor can be sold downtown to 11 p.m. to underscore his message.

"If these guys can't get on the right page and can't get cooperating, I have no problem cutting them off at 11," Snyder said. "They will understand: Turn the volume down."

The mayor's comments came after DiPino and Sarasota Police Sgt. Dimitris Konstantopoulos made a presentation about their latest efforts to deal with city noise issues.

At the direction of DiPino, on May 18, Konstantopoulos and two undercover officers conducted a clandestine operation.

That uncovered what City Commissioner Susan Chapman called "a cat and mouse game."



Tequila Cantina is located on Main Street in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

According to a Sound Enforcement report that Konstantopoulos and DiPino summarized at Tuesday's meeting, on May 18, at 12:35 a.m., the two undercover officers waited outside Smokin' Joe's and Tequila Cantina.

Both bars were playing music at a level that made them "potential sound ordinance violators," according to the report.

As Konstantopoulos, in uniform and driving a marked police car, arrived and walked up to the bar, the bouncer at Smokin' Joe's immediately closed the front door and pulled down a partition.

By doing so, the bouncer silenced all noise coming from the interior. The music volume at Tequila Cantina also appeared to decrease at the same time.

After speaking with management at both bars, Konstantopoulos left.

"Within seconds, the bouncer of Smokin' Joe's opened both the front door and the partition," the report reads. "The music volume at the Tequila Cantina increased. The officers conducted a reading that measured 80 decibels."

Konstantopoulos agreed with Chapman's assessment: "There is a little cat and mouse game sometimes."

A PROBLEM

DiPino said the Police Department will continue to carry out "very strict and proactive and standardized enforcement."

In addition to Tequila Cantina and Smokin' Joe's, noise issues have been reported at Club Ivory.

A total of 11 different bars or restaurants throughout the city have been issued warnings, she told the commission, while two others received notices to appear in court.



Mattison's City Grille has a special exception that allows it to present music later into the night. Photo by Norman Schimmel

But DiPino noted that the majority of bar and restaurant owners are in compliance or willing to work with officers to make sure they abide by the ordinance in the future.

She asked the commissioners if they wanted to consider stiffer penalties for noise scoff-laws. One option is to revoke liquor licenses after bar owners receive one noise citation.

“Some people know if there is a \$100 or \$200 fine, that may not impact them very much,” DiPino said. “They may make that much in cover charge [fees] in the first hour.”

Snyder is not the only commissioner frustrated with those bar owners who seem to be ignoring the noise ordinance.

Chapman said the problem is more than just two or three businesses.

“I agree our fines are not enough,” Chapman told her colleagues.

“It’s clear some folks are not taking our ordinance seriously,” Commissioner Paul Caragiulo added. “I would think that is a problem.”

“It’s very discouraging if people are openly thumbing their nose at the ordinance,” Caragiulo added.

Commissioner Suzanne Atwell said stiffer penalties should be on the books.

“There has to be consequences here,” Atwell pointed out. “We keep coming back here talking about the same things.”

Then the commissioners directed city staff to combine two different ordinances that regulate noise violations.



Mayor Shannon Snyder. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Further changes could be forthcoming.

“I think we need to have a comprehensive review of where we fall down,” Chapman said about problems related to the city’s sound regulations.

She noted that big cities such as New York and Chicago have specific policies that do not allow any outdoor amplified sound.

As far as policies and decibel levels, that “is a decision the commission needs to make,” DiPino told the board members.

“We will enforce anything you tell us to,” DiPino added, but the city has to be careful not to put into place rules that are overly broad.

“A lot of cities have been sued over freedom of speech issues with noise,” DiPino noted.

Chapman also mentioned Mattison’s City Grille, on Lemon Avenue, which has a special allowance to play music an hour later during

the week, until 11 p.m., and until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

“If Mattison’s is the exception that is allowing everyone else to keep music on, I think maybe we should look at that exception,” she added.

WEIGHING IN

During a City Commission meeting in March, nearly 20 residents spoke about the sound levels downtown, with half supporting less-restrictive regulations and the other half wanting more.

About half a dozen downtown residents came to express views about noise Tuesday, with several telling the city commissioners the recent police report confirms what they have been saying all along about bars skirting the rules.

“I thank Chief DiPino and the Police Department for their efforts,” said Dennis Adams. “It’s obvious many late night clubs and bars continue to be an issue downtown.”

Faye Beloff, who lives in a condo above Club Ivory, added, “There are still problems.”

Cheryl Walker, a resident at 100 Central Ave., pointed out she has long noted the custom of bars leaving “doors open to entice more drinkers with sound.”

“This has to stop,” Walker said. “We, who live downtown, pay our taxes and patronize the business establishments, ask that you do something about the sound ordinance.”

Walker suggested the city add personnel to the Police Department to help with noise enforcement. **SNL**

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A GRISLY ANNIVERSARY



Members of the Congress of Racial Equality and All Souls Church in Washington, D.C., marched Sept. 22, 1963 in memory of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing victims. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

A SEPT. 10 SARASOTA PROGRAM WILL REFLECT ON THE BIRMINGHAM, AL, BOMBING THAT KILLED FOUR BLACK GIRLS 50 YEARS AGO

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Two weeks ago, thousands of Americans gathered in Washington, D.C., to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the occasion of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s epochal "I Have a Dream" speech. Next Tuesday, Sept. 10, dozens of Sarasota residents will gather at the North Sarasota Library to remember the 50th anniversary of a much grislier event in the civil rights struggle: the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist

Church in Birmingham, AL, that killed four black girls preparing for Sunday school.

Next week's event, dubbed 50 Years and Then Some, will begin with freedom song sing-alongs, led by the library's Arlen Bensen, one of the co-designers of the program. Bensen

will play his guitar and lead the audience in classics of the Civil Rights Movement: *We Shall Overcome*, *We Shall Not Be Moved* and more. The pro-

“*Four innocent little girls in Sunday school of all places. In Sunday school.*”

Carolyn Mason
Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission

gram will continue with four young library patrons, who will introduce each of the four girls killed in 1963: Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair. There will be poetry, more music and a reading from King's eulogy for the victims, presented by Newtown minister Kelvin Lumpkin.

The following section of the program, *Reverberations*, will highlight the original poetry of none other than Sarasota County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason. "Isn't that something?" asks North Sarasota Library Artist in Residence Lonnetta Gaines, one of the organizers of the event. She didn't learn that Mason wrote poetry till she traveled to Denver with the commissioner to represent Sarasota in this year's All-America City competition.



Commissioner Carolyn Mason. Photo by Norman Schimmel



The aftermath of the Sept. 15, 1963, bombing. Photo courtesy Flickr

Mason tells *The Sarasota News Leader* she's been composing verse for years. She began writing poetry as a single mother as a way to relieve stress, and she's even considered trying to have her work published. "I thought about maybe publishing one day to share my poetry with the world because I write based on experiences I've had," she says, "and so I want to share it in the hopes of helping somebody somewhere. That's why I write."

Mason's favorite poet is Maya Angelou, perhaps most famous for her autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The work Mason will be reading Tuesday includes a piece about the murder of the four Birmingham girls, as well as other works that touch

on violence. She was too young at the time of the Alabama bombing to be fully aware of its significance and meaning. She only recently dug deep into the event.

"I did some research and read about where it happened, how it happened, and it was just so moving," she says. "Four innocent little girls in Sunday school of all places. In Sunday school."

After the *Reverberations* portion of Tuesday's program, participants will issue a "challenge to all of us to remember the power of the Civil Rights Movement and to courageously act out against injustice," notes Gaines. The event will then open up to the audience members,




The 16th Street Baptist Church in 2005. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

who will be encouraged to offer “meaningful sharing” by telling their stories.

Gaines says the response from the community has been ecstatic. The fire code means only 99 people can attend the event, and every spot is booked. The library has created a waiting list for those interested in attending should someone bail, but there’s no guarantee everyone who shows up will find a seat.

Mason says she’s happy to be part of the event. “I’ve been involved in the community for a long time and part of that involvement has included working on ways to eradicate racism,” she points out. “The Civil Rights Movement, when you think about it, was about eradicating discrimination and so this is something that’s near and dear to my heart.”

50 Years and Then Some: The freedom song sing-along begins at 5:40 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 10, with the full program following at 6. The event will be held at the North Sarasota Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd., Sarasota. Call 861-1363 or email Arlen Bensen at abensen@scgov.net to reserve a spot on the waiting list. 



(Clockwise from top left) The four girls killed in the bombing: Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair. Photo courtesy Wikipedia

“Find a place inside where there’s joy, and the joy will burn out the pain.” — *Joseph Campbell*

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BRINGING HOME THE BID



The sign welcomes visitors to the world-class rowing venue at Benderson Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel

BENDERSON PARK SCORES THE 2017 WORLD ROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS; NOW THE FUNDRAISING BEGINS IN EARNEST

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Twelve and a half months ago, Paul Blackketter — at that time, executive director of planning for Benderson Development Co. Inc. — drove the chairwoman of the Sarasota County Commission and a trio of tagalong journalists all over Benderson Park.

As he stopped at various points, Blackketter referenced artist's renderings on his iPad, showing where various structures would be located when both the rowing and running facilities were completed.

Reporters, a photographer and a cameraman earlier had swarmed all over a 150-foot-long dredge owned by a Kansas City, MO, firm

hired by Benderson Development to scoop out the 2,000-meter area of the park's borrow pit transformed into a lake. The project was necessary to achieve the 3.5-meter depth required for international rowing competitions.

That same day — Aug. 10, 2012 — Blackketter said he hoped that in about five years he would see the park host the first World Rowing Championships in the United States since the 1990s.

After all, since March 2009 — following Benderson Park's first rowing regatta — Blackketter had been traveling the world, visiting all the finest rowing venues to learn what worked

and what did not, to continue refining plans for the park when he returned home.

Benderson Development representatives even were working with Svetla Otzetova, the chief architect for the *Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron* — the International Federation of Rowing Associations (FISA), Blackketter pointed out. She designs all the rowing courses used in the Olympics, he said. FISA officials “actually designed this lake to meet all their specs,” he added as then County Commission Chairwoman Christine Robinson and news media reps surveyed the lake from the bridge of the dredge.

Flash forward to Sept. 2, 2013 in Seoul, South Korea: With a Sarasota/Manatee delegation be-

hind him, Blackketter stood before members of the FISA Congress to accept the bid award for the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

On Sept. 1 at 9:15 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, the first email popped up in the county’s public folder with the subject line, “We got it ... telling world media!”

At 11:04 p.m. on Sept. 1 — Eastern Daylight Time — County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason was the first board member back home to respond: “AWESOME!”

On Sept. 4, Benderson Park hosted a celebration and show of thanks to government leaders, sponsors and supporters who have strived to help the facility achieve the goal.



Paul Blackketter of SANCA and Commissioner Joe Barbetta give a ‘thumbs up’ in front of a World Rowing sign at Benderson Park on Sept. 4. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Benderson Park bustles with boats and people on the overcast morning of Aug. 17 during the US-Rowing Masters National Championships. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Rowers square off in a competition on Aug. 17 during the USRowing Masters National Championships at Benderson Park. Photo by Rachel Hackney

The heat and humidity caused beads of perspiration to roll down some faces, but the party spirit was not dampened.

“This is an exciting time for Sarasota County and the whole Suncoast area,” Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson told *The Sarasota News Leader* afterward. “I was in awe just looking around the tent and seeing all of the people who had a role in making this happen.”

She added, “From the volunteers to the state legislators, this was a true community win and would not have happened without the support and work of the entire community. Everyone had a role in making this happen.”

THE CONCERTED EFFORT

On Jan. 17, Blackketter appeared before the Sarasota County Tourism Development Council to report that USRowing, the national governing body for the sport, and FISA “want to bring international rowing back to the United States.” He added, “We are referred to, when we travel, as the United States delegation, the United States course.”

That meeting also marked the first public airing of the statistics Sarasota County touted in its press release this week about winning the bid: more than 1,500 Olympic-caliber athletes from more than 70 countries are expected to participate in the World Championships



(From left) Paul Blackketter, president of SunCoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates; Manatee County Administrator Ed Hunzeker; Don Langford, USRowing board president; Dave Gustafson, executive director of the Bradenton Downtown Development Authority; Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County; Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta; Randy Benderson, president of Benderson Development; Dan Schlandt, assistant Manatee County administrator; Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid; Manatee County Commissioner Larry Bustle; and Elliott Falcione, executive director of the Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Contributed photo by Igor Meijer of FISA

— a precursor to the Olympics that year. The competition will be broadcast to a worldwide television audience of 130 million people. “An estimated 40,000 spectators are expected to attend the event,” the release adds.

Even more important, tourism officials have pointed to what Blackketter told the TDC on Jan. 17 was “a very conservative number” for the potential economic impact on the region: \$24 million.

Although the exact date for the World Championships has not been set, Blackketter wrote in an Aug. 6 email to the Sarasota County Commission, “We originally proposed the first week of October ... We provided all the data to FISA demonstrating that in later September our rain drops off, temperatures are cooler, [fewer] hurricanes and less humidity. Most

likely FISA may settle on the last week of September, but we will still [push] October. The bottom line, FISA has all the facts regarding our weather and they will make a very [intelligent] decision on this.”

He added, “[W]e are sending FISA weekly weather updates from now to end of October down to the hour so an educated decision is made.”

GOING FORWARD

When the 136-member FISA Congress made its formal announcement of the bid award on Sept. 2, the delegation present to represent Benderson Park included local government representatives from Sarasota and Manatee counties, Visit Sarasota County, the SunCoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates (SANCA)



The meeting of the FISA Congress gets under way in Korea. Photo courtesy of Randall Reid/Sarasota County

— the nonprofit organization that manages events at the park — and USRowing. “The commitment by Sarasota and Manatee counties, SANCA and the support of USRowing convinced FISA’s world congress that returning to the United States for the World Championship was the correct vote,” the county news release said.

“More than \$40 million in public and private sector funds have been committed to help transform a former borrow pit into Nathan Benderson Park,” the release adds. Sarasota County’s investment of \$19.5 million comes from Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue. Those funds have paid for Phase I (dredge and fill) and Phase II (installation of park amenities, hardscaping and landscaping). Phase III of the project — construction of a state-of-the-

art boathouse, timing towers, grandstands and other amenities — will be funded by SANCA and corporate support, the release points out.

In a Sept. 3 email to Reid and her colleagues on the Sarasota County Commission, Commissioner Nora Patterson wrote, “I too offer congratulations and huge thanks to all who have worked so very hard on this. The list is long. In addition we need to say thank you to the taxpayers who have supported the venture knowing that local dollars as well as state money have [created] this great opportunity.”

The Legislature has committed \$10 million to the rowing venue over the past several years. Gov. Rick Scott was a guest at the facility during the USRowing Masters National Championships last month.



Commissioner Nora Patterson and Randy Benderson, president of Benderson Development, celebrate at the reception on Sept. 4. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE DOLLARS

On Aug. 27, just days before the local delegation flew to Korea, the Sarasota County Commission approved a revised reimbursement agreement with Manatee County and SANCA that specifies “The participation in the reimbursement funding of the planning, hosting and staging of the [World Rowing Championships] by [each of the counties] shall ... not ... exceed \$2,782,000 ...”

Assistant County Administrator Lee Ann Lowery explained to the commission that both Randy Benderson, president of Benderson Development, and the Manatee County Commission had signed off on the agreement. The Sarasota board passed it unanimously.

An amendment to the agreement says, “It is anticipated that the Counties’ cash contribution of \$5.564 million together with the revenues raised by or raised in conjunction with

the Event ... are adequate to deliver the Event consistent with the Project Budget ... If additional funds are needed ... [not including money necessary for in-kind services not in the budget, such as those for security, maintenance, traffic control and emergency services], Benderson Development Company LLC will make those funds available through its participation in SANCA by way of sponsorships, obligations or combination of commitments necessary.”

The total expenses for the event — \$7,671,320.03 — are balanced by revenue expected to be generated by the championships, according to the documents provided to the County Commission.

Ticket sales are pegged at \$80 for VIP seats; \$40 for other seats; and \$20 for general admission. Use of the “Presidents Grandstand,” for example, is estimated to bring in \$18,400 in U.S. dollars, while seats in the FISA Family



What is a party without a cake? Guests at the Benderson Park reception on Sept. 4 were treated to one with appropriate decorations. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Grandstand are expected to generate \$217,000. Add to that the income from reserved seats of \$644,250 and general admission ticket sales of \$114,500.

Among the expenses, local transportation utilizing up to 34 buses is anticipated to cost \$654,500.

The opening ceremony expense is expected to be \$74,350 for 2,000 to 3,000 guests (with non-alcoholic drinks, the budget notes).

The FISA estimate for the cost of interpreters is \$23,277.47, with the expense of “translation equipment rental” pegged at \$6,000 (four rental booths with 300 headsets, the line item says).


The bottled water cost in the budget is \$10,000 (100 cases for five days or “alternate-refill stations for environmental sustainability if acceptable,” the line item notes).

Among the biggest expenses, though, are those for the new facilities — among them, the following:

- Start area structures, including a tower and intermediate timing huts: \$27,600.
- Finish area, including a tower and a public address system: \$101,825.62.
- Technology, including a scoreboard, telephone lines, walkie-talkies and an intercom system: \$337,828.95.
- Boats and fuel: \$128,340.
- Boathouse, with team facilities and services: \$309,520.
- Television production: \$977,845.63. The biggest portion of this expense — \$808,245.63 — is estimated for broadcasting the events.

THEY SAID IT

Sarasota County’s Communications Department staff gathered a number of quotes from the delegation members after the Sept. 2 announcement in South Korea. Among them were the following:

- “Sarasota County and the Gulf Coast region have a long tradition of providing some of the best venues for amateur and professional athletes to train and compete in. We are proud to have been chosen to host such a high-profile international event and look forward to showing the world why we are one of the premiere destinations for athletes from around the globe.” — Joe Barbetta, Sarasota County Commissioner
- “USRowing would like to recognize and thank the State of Florida, Sarasota and Manatee Counties and the cities of Bradenton and Sarasota for their support of this project and the impact it will have on the growth of rowing. I also would like to personally recognize Randy Benderson and Benderson Development for their innovative vision that has created a truly unique American rowing venue.” — Glenn Merry, USRowing chief executive officer.
- “It’s great to see the World Rowing Championships returning to U.S. soil for the first time in 25 years. I am even more excited that it will be taking place in my home state of Florida. Regardless of where my rowing career takes me, I am sure to be in attendance in Sarasota in 2017.” — Stephen Young, Tampa native, 2013 U.S. national rowing team member and world champion. 



A CLEARER POLICY REQUESTED

Lourdes Ramirez addresses the County Commission in April. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A COUNTY COMMISSION MOTION TO BILL A RESIDENT RETROACTIVELY FOR A PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST FAILS ON A 2-3 VOTE, BUT THE BOARD CALLS FOR NEW GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE CHARGES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta failed last week in an attempt to bill Siesta Key resident Lourdes Ramirez retroactively for a public records request that necessitated a county employee sit with her for about nine hours while Ramirez reviewed the documents.

Ramirez, president of the [Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations](#), has been researching the history of the county's

[2050 Plan](#) for development east of Interstate 75. Barbetta has argued over the past several months for changes in the plan, saying its parameters are too restrictive to make development possible.

“I think we’ve been taken advantage of, but going forward, I want us to rigorously enforce this. It’s not fair to the staff or the taxpayers.”

Carolyn Mason
Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission

During almost exactly 45 minutes of discussion on Aug. 28, the five commissioners did agree that all county departments should bill people in the future for staff time in situations simi-

lar to the one involving Ramirez. Furthermore, County Administrator Randall Reid said he would make certain a revised public records policy indicates a deposit will have to be put down for any request that appears to necessitate staff spend a considerable amount of time on it.

While Vice Chairman Charles Hines agreed with Barbetta that current policy would permit sending a retroactive bill to Ramirez, Chairwoman Carolyn Mason joined Commissioners Nora Patterson and Christine Robinson in opposing such action.

Patterson called the retroactive charges “unfair,” but Robinson told her colleagues, “We need to ‘fess up’ to what really happened ... We just didn’t do what we were supposed to do” in requiring payment from Ramirez at the records review.

In an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* this week, Ramirez said she was not watch-

ing the board meeting when the discussion began. She received a call about it afterward, she said. “I was shocked,” she added. “It was just bizarre.”

Having purchased her own portable scanner, she continued, her intent was to save staff time by not having to ask for copies of documents after she finished going through all the boxes of material. “Then,” she said, “to turn around and to try to charge me retroactively ...”

During the board discussion, Barbetta called for equitable handling of all public records requests the county receives. Nonetheless, it is common knowledge he is supporting a candidate Ramirez may challenge in 2014 for the commission seat Patterson will have to vacate because of term limits. That candidate, Alan Maio, is a vice president in the Sarasota office of the design firm Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc.



County Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson consider public comments during a meeting earlier this year. File photo

None of the board members or any staff member present used Ramirez' name while the discussion ensued.

SEEKING GUIDANCE

During his routine report to the commission on Aug. 28, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh referenced the completion of an assignment Barbetta requested before the commission took its summer break. That effort was to research charges regarding public records requests. In its summary, DeMarsh's memo said, "We have determined that the County may charge for staff time spent monitoring members of the public ... reviewing public records to make sure that the integrity of the records is maintained."

The memo notes that Section 119.07(4)(d) of the Florida Statutes authorizes several types of charges for providing or copying public records, including billing for employee time.

Reid pointed out that staff usually likes to let people know what the charges will be ahead of time for public records requests.

"We'll be happy to update the [county] policy," he said, "but we would like some guidance."

When Barbetta asked for clarification about whether staff already is charging the public for public records requests, DeMarsh told him people pay for copies of documents or discs on which material has been uploaded.

When Barbetta pointed to provisions of the state law as outlined in the memo, DeMarsh said the board could make clear in the county policy that people would be charged for staff time as well.

"We should have been doing [the billing]," Barbetta replied.

DeMarsh explained the county has been charging for staff time to gather materials for public records requests. However, he said, "As far as I know, we're not consistently charging

to have someone sit in a room with a bunch of boxes when someone's looking at [the material]."

"That's just not fair," Barbetta replied.

A staff member recently spent "an entire day, from 9 [a.m.] to 5 [p.m.] with a certain

constituent who brought her own copier or scanner, and that person should be charged for that time," Barbetta said, referring to Ramirez.

"And I think it would be advisable to tell people in advance," DeMarsh continued, "if you're going to charge them for something and not bill them after the fact."

"In other words," Barbetta said, "they're getting around the system by bringing their own copier ... That's just uncalled for, so I want that person billed."

Barbetta added, "That person is making a ton of public records requests lately," referring

“That person is making a ton of public records requests lately. I want to see all payments received from her for the past six months. ... I’m hearing that there aren’t payments being made. ... We lost an assistant for an entire day.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

again to Ramirez. “I want to see all payments received from her for the past six months. ... I’m hearing that there aren’t payments being made. ... We lost an assistant for an entire day.”

Mason said that any time a staff member had to sit with someone going through materials in a public records request, the person who sought the documents “should be charged for that [employee’s time] accordingly.”

“I don’t disagree with that,” Patterson said. Nonetheless, she continued, she did not believe it would be fair to charge a person retroactively, as Barbetta had suggested. Further, she noted, the charge should be an appropriate one, not \$100 an hour, for example.

People need to be told in advance if they will be required to pay for staff time, she also pointed out.

That is the common local government practice around the state, Reid said.

Robinson did not understand why the county had been charging to gather materials but not for an employee to stay with a person reviewing the records, she told her colleagues. “To me, it’s the same thing,” Robinson pointed out. “You’re expending staff time for a public records request.”

Reid noted that some departments had not been charging in situations such as those when people review documents at the front counter. However, he agreed that a person should be charged for the time an employee has to stay in a room for a public records review.

Reid also pointed out that he inherited the policy from his predecessor, Jim Ley, who re-



Vice Chairman Charles Hines listens to a presentation. Photo by Norman Schimmel

signed in May 2011. Staff is in the process of updating it.

OTHER FACTORS

In the situation involving Ramirez, Communications Department staff member Crystal Pruitt told the board, staff did not anticipate in advance the amount of time that would be involved. “Had we known,” Pruitt said, “we would have given [her] an estimate of the number of boxes and tried to allow for the amount of time. But [policy] has not been consistent over the years.”

Pruitt asked the commission to provide policy direction, reiterating that the Ramirez incident “is unusual. We’ve never had a citizen come in for an entire day, reviewing files. ... I myself was surprised that it took as long as it did.”

Had staff had any idea about the staff time that would be invested, Pruitt added, Ramirez would have been asked to pay upfront.

Reid advised the commissioners that he could send a bill retroactively to Ramirez if they wished, even though he understood she was not notified in advance that she would be charged for the staff time.

Pruitt confirmed the latter assertion.

“So if we have 10 people walk in at the same time, we’ve got to give each of them a conference room and put an employee in with them and do exactly what [Ramirez] did that day,” Barbetta said. “That makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. That person needs to be billed.”

Mason told her colleagues, “I think that we need to establish a policy to address [such situations]. ... We’re *not* trying to prohibit people from accessing public records. But what we want to do is make sure we have some compensation for the amount of time staff has to spend on just that ...”

When Hines asked DeMarsh whether he felt the board should follow the Alachua County policy and charge for any request that takes more than 30 minutes of staff time, DeMarsh responded, “I don’t think you need to be very detailed.”

Reid would revise the county policy and bring it back to the commission for review and approval, DeMarsh noted.

“It’s very clear that this commission as a whole is saying that this type of charge needs to be added” as a matter of policy, Hines responded, referring to staff time to stay with someone reviewing records. Charges could be posted on the county website, he said, and the policy could make it clear that if a specific expense would be high, the county could require a de-



County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh advises the board on a matter. Photo by Norman Schimmel

posit. If the staff time was less than anticipated, Hines said, the member of the public would have the extra money returned.

Barbetta also reiterated that he wanted to see a copy of the bills given to Ramirez and receipts for payments she had made for public records requests over the past six months. “Because I’m hearing from other people in the community who have made public records requests, and they’ve had to pay from day one,” he pointed out. “So they’re talking to me about selective enforcement.”

In response to a question from Reid, Pruitt said she could provide the board with the exact amount of time Ramirez spent reviewing the records. She also could provide the documentation of charges and receipts from the past public records requests Ramirez had made, she added.

When Barbetta asked whether Ramirez had any outstanding charges, Pruitt replied, “No.”

Additionally, Pruitt pointed out, Ramirez had put in a new request for about 17 boxes of material to review; Pruitt had provided Ramirez with an estimate of the cost for that.

THE VOTE

“If we’re going to bill retroactively [for the day-long incident Barbetta cited],” Patterson said, “that needs to be a commission vote.”

Robinson said she believed the county policy already in place necessitated a payment from Ramirez for staff time, but Ramirez was not charged. Therefore, Robinson pointed out, the board should not bill Ramirez retroactively.

Barbetta pointed out again that the relevant state statute allows a county to bill in situations like the one involving Ramirez. He made a motion to send Ramirez a bill retroactively.

Hines seconded it.


Hines added that he would like the revised county policy to require a deposit for requests that would appear to take a lot of staff time.

Patterson argued once more that Ramirez should have been notified ahead of time that she would be charged. “This is going to be a several-hundred-dollar bill,” Patterson pointed out. However, she said, “I think [the revised policy] should be applied rigorously in the future.”

“I’m very upset that we lost money that day,” Robinson said. “We lost productivity that day. This is taxpayer money that we lost. Other people paid for this.”

Nonetheless, she continued, while she understood Barbetta’s and Hines’ points, “I just can’t support billing [Ramirez] because we screwed up.”

When Mason called for the vote, it failed 2-3, with only Barbetta and Hines approving it.

Afterward, Mason pointed out that she was “very unhappy” about having to cast a “No” vote. She told her colleagues, “I think we’ve been taken advantage of, but going forward, I want us to rigorously enforce this. It’s not fair to the staff or the taxpayers.” 

Background

Section 119.07(4)(d), Florida Statutes, which authorizes several types of charges for providing or copying public records, allows for charging staff time as follows:

(d) If the nature or volume of public records requested to be inspected or copied pursuant to this subsection is such as to require extensive use of information technology resources or extensive clerical or supervisory assistance by personnel of the agency involved, or both, the agency may charge, in addition to the actual cost of duplication, a special service charge, which shall be reasonable and shall be based on the cost incurred for such extensive use of information technology resources or the labor cost of the personnel providing the service that is actually incurred by the agency or attributable to the agency for the clerical and supervisory assistance required, or both.

An Aug. 13 memo from County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh to the commission includes a section of the state law regarding charges for public records. Image courtesy Sarasota County

TOO HIGH A PRICE



Two employees of Mega Mowers work in a Sarasota County neighborhood in late August. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THE COUNTY COMMISSION HAS AGREED TO NEW ONE-YEAR MOWING CONTRACTS IN FOUR ZONES BUT IT ALSO WILL PURSUE A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE SCOPE OF WORK WITHIN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Yes, they want the county to look good. No, they do not want to see the price continue to escalate.

Those were the primary sentiments expressed by Sarasota County commissioners last week as they voted 4-1 to approve four new one-year contracts with firms taking over in areas where companies had decided to abandon the work.

However, with the extra cost of \$1,484,700.59 — a slight decrease from the earlier estimate of \$1,514,000 — the commissioners agreed

“We come in and save you guys. This is our second or third time coming in after a failed contract. ... We get everything done on time; our work passes, and we never get a full contract.”

Brigitte Campfield
Mega Mowers

that changes probably will be necessary in the scope of work. The most likely target will be residential mowing, a subject about which Commissioner Nora Patterson asked numerous questions on Aug. 27 and 28, before the final vote came.

The standard for residential mowing that county staff included in the current scope of work for its contractors costs about \$1 million more per year, Spencer Anderson, director of field services, told the board.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta was in the minority on the board action, not only reiterating his frustrations with the history of abandoned mowing contracts but also his allegations that some county staff members have exacerbated the situation. Although he did not mention any names, Barbetta has pointed in the past to the county Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr., who heads up the Public Works Department.

“I’m not proceeding with anything,” Barbetta told his colleagues when Spencer Anderson, director of field services — including mowing — initially appeared before the board on

Aug. 27. Citing a nine-page email the commissioners received Aug. 25 from an owner of the mowing firm Storm Tech, Barbetta said he was not going to approve any new action until the allegations in the email were addressed.

Tom Giddens, co-owner of Storm Tech, opened his email with the following comments: “The reasons for Sarasota County’s past ‘mowing fiasco’ [have] been attributed to many things. The REAL problem is that the true costs for roadside mowing services in the past have always been suppressed by staff. The County is finally beginning to realize the price of having its grass cut to the specifications written in its own mowing contracts ... contracts that have gone largely unenforced by managers assisting vendors because [the vendors] ‘cannot not fail.’”

▪ Typical Maintenance Condition of Residential Roadways



County photos show a steep ditch bank (left) compared to a flatter residential right of way that contracted workers have been mowing. Image courtesy of Sarasota County

Mowing in the county “[has] been a mess ... since 2008,” Barbetta said. Noting that Storm Tech is going out of business, he added that he felt county staff actions had been a factor in the owners’ decision.

“Spencer, it’s not your fault,” Barbetta continued, speaking directly to Anderson. “But the same people are here that put us in this position, and, unfortunately, because of our charter, I can’t do anything about it.”

The county charter specifies that County Administrator Randall Reid and County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh are the only employees of

the County Commission. Reid is ultimately responsible for all other hiring and firing decisions.

Officially, the motion the board approved on Aug. 28 calls for one-year contracts to be awarded to firms that were the next-low bidders to mow the zones where the other companies had ceased working.

DeMarsh concurred with Anderson that the board had no obligation to renew for another year the contracts it approved on Aug. 28, even though renewal options were included in the documents.



Right of Way Mowing and Median Maintenance

CONTRACT LEVEL OF SERVICE: Includes regular mowing, edging, trimming, and litter pick-up

- **Urban Roadways/Airport**
 - 3 cycles per month May through October (every 10 days)
 - 2 cycles per month in March, April and November (every 15 days)
 - 1 cycle per month December through February (every 30 days)
 - Edging of uncurbed roadways 3 times per year
- **Residential Roadways**
 - 1 cycle per month (every 30 days)
 - Edging of uncurbed roadways 2 times per year
- **Rural Roadways**
 - 2 cycles per month May through October (every 15 days)
 - 1 cycle per month November through April (every 30 days)
 - Edging of uncurbed roadways 2 times per year
- **Celery Fields**
 - Rights of Way and Flat Areas
 - 2 cycles per month May through October
 - 1 cycle per month November through April
 - Slope Areas
 - 1 cycle per month

The motion also called for a re-examination of the scope of work and the re-solicitation of bids for lower-cost alternatives in the mowing program. Without that reduced scope, Steve Botelho, the county's chief financial planning officer, told the commissioners, the county would run out of its economic uncertainty reserve fund in the 2015 fiscal year instead of FY 2016. The extra expense would leave a shortfall in the FY 2015 budget of \$1,846,600, he noted. If the contracts were renewed at the levels approved on Aug. 28, he continued, the board would be looking at a budget hole of \$27,054,092 in FY 2016 and a shortfall of \$22,492,264 in FY 2017 — barring any changes in revenue and other expenses.

When Commissioner Christine Robinson asked whether it would be feasible for county staff to take over the zones abandoned this summer, Anderson responded that it would not.

The day before, Patterson voiced her reluctance to approve the contracts. Nonetheless, she said, "If you're not a well-kept county and a well-kept area, I don't know why anybody would invest here for a home or business."

RESIDENTIAL RIGHTS OF WAY AND DITCHES

"Have we changed our standards in the last few years to make them require more frequent

cuts?" Patterson asked Anderson at one point during the discussions.

Mowing had become more frequent in the residential zones, Anderson told her. Previously, he said, contracts called for quarterly mowing in those areas; now it is done monthly.

What led to the change, he explained, was that the county began logging more calls from residents complaining about grass growing too tall in yards. The situation made it difficult for county Code Enforcement staff to cite people in neighborhoods for letting their lawn grass grow higher than 12 inches, as provided

in the county code. People pointed to county rights of way where grass was taller than that, Anderson said.

When Patterson then asked whether such residential service is provided in all unincorporated areas of the county, Anderson responded, "As it is required."

"A lot of people mow that [county right of way] themselves," Patterson pointed out.

"Yes, ma'am," Anderson replied.

Most municipalities require in their codes that homeowners mow city rights of way, Patterson added.

"I brought that up years ago," she continued, "and nobody [on the County Commission at that time] really wanted to change [the county code]."



We do our best to evaluate their resources as far as staff and equipment and their ability to produce a schedule that shows us they can get the job done. But in the end, we cannot run the business for them.

Spencer Anderson
Director
Field Services Department
Sarasota County



Reid advised the board it would be better to announce a change in policy during season, so snowbirds would understand they had to take on the responsibility of right of way mowing.

“It’s just a fairly small strip they’d have to add,” Patterson noted.

The following day, Anderson showed the board two photos — one was of a steep ditch bank — to illustrate the types of residential areas the county has covered in its mowing contracts.

Referring to the ditch photo, Vice Chairman Charles Hines said, “With that steep a slope, that would be difficult for just your average homeowner with a lawn mower to deal with.

... This throws a little curve ball in it to say to that homeowner, ‘You’re able to handle that.’”

“But I think it could be done,” Patterson said, “especially [since] most counties don’t deliver this service.”

OTHER DETAILS

In response to questions from Robinson, Anderson said Sarasota County maintains approximately 2,200 acres, while Manatee County, for example, has about 400 acres.

“So there’s a significant difference in level of service,” Anderson pointed out. “I haven’t found many counties that maintain even close to the number of acres that we maintain.”



Commissioner Nora Patterson reviews budget materials during a workshop this spring. File photo

Robinson told her colleagues that when she returned in August from a vacation out of state, she deliberately chose to detour through a number of Florida counties so she could look at their mowing situations. “We definitely have a higher standard than any other county I drove through once I entered Florida,” she noted.

“I’m not saying we shouldn’t have those standards,” she added.

“You pay for that,” Patterson responded.

During his initial presentation to the board on Aug. 27, Anderson said of the contract issues, “I believe they are the result of our low-bid process.”


“We do our best to evaluate their resources as far as staff and equipment and their ability to produce a schedule that shows us they can get the job done,” he continued, referring to vendors. “But in the end, we cannot run the business for them.”

Other Florida counties comparable to Sarasota are experiencing similar problems, he pointed out. “So this is somewhat of a systematic-type process with the low bidders ...”

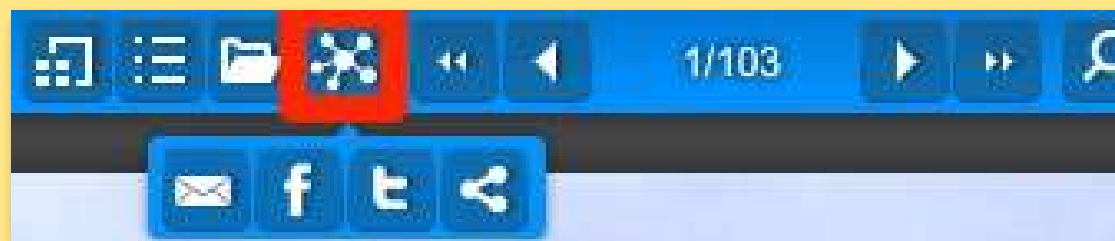
During the public comments portion of the Aug. 28 meeting, Brigitte Campfield of JLC Hauling Inc. — which does business with the county as Mega Mowers — told the board, “We did not find the contractor specs [for mowing] to be hard to read at all. You mow; you edge; you weed-eat; you pick up garbage; and you blow. As long as you’re accounting for all your costs in that, we had no problem with the contract.”


However, she said, “We just kind of feel like we’re always getting shorted on all of these contracts. We are never the lowest bidder, because we feel we bid appropriately for the work ... We come in and save you guys. This is our second or third time coming in after a failed contract. ... We get everything done on time; our work passes, and we never get a full contract.”

Campfield added, “We work very hard for you guys, and we do not feel the loyalty in return.”

Finally, Patterson made the motion to accept Anderson’s recommendation to award the four new contracts. However, she said, “It’s my intent that somewhere during [the next 12 months], we figure out a way to lower the costs.” 

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A HAZARDOUS SITUATION CONFIRMED

Vehicles are parked on the grass right of way on the south side of Avenida de Mayo in March. Photo courtesy of Marlene Merkle

THE COUNTY COMMISSION ASKS STAFF TO WORK ON STRIPING PARKING SPOTS ON PORTIONS OF AVENIDA DE MAYO, WITH SIGNAGE TO ALERT DRIVERS TO NO-PARKING ZONES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sarasota County's fire chief has agreed with residents of Siesta Key's Avenida de Mayo that parking on both sides of the street creates a potential safety hazard.

As a result of Chief Mike Tobias' assertions in an Aug. 16 memo, Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson has won consensus from her fellow board members for county transporta-

tion staff to work with Tobias and his employees in striping parking spaces and erecting signage to remedy the situation.

The decision came late during the commission's Aug. 28 regular meeting in Sarasota.

"Any costs there should be very minimal," Patterson noted of her request.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason and Commis-

I think the biggest issue here is [Avenida de Mayo's] proximity to the Village, and it gets the overflow parking.

Michael Shay
Vice President
Siesta Key Association

sioner Joe Barbetta voiced agreement. No other board members offered a comment.

Marlene Merkle, the Avenida de Mayo resident who petitioned the county's Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) last year to address the parking problem, told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week she was pleased with the action. No one representing the county had notified her of it, she added.

"Oh, that would be wonderful," she said when the *News Leader* relayed the board decision to her on Sept. 3.

Asked if the parking problems had persisted since she appeared before the County Commission in May as a follow-up to the TAC meeting, Merkle said, "Sometimes it's not as bad, but [Labor Day weekend] was a mess."

The municipal lot in Siesta Village — which has an entry/exit onto Avenida de Mayo — was full by 10:30 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday, she continued, and cars again were parked all along Merkle's street.

A MONTHS-LONG PROCESS

On March 11, Merkle appeared before just four members of the eight-person TAC who were present to hear her request a parking ban at least on one side of Avenida de Mayo. Because the advisory board had so few members in attendance, TAC Chairman Frank Domingo recommended forwarding the matter to the County Commission after a 2-2 vote on the request.

On May 21, Merkle told the commissioners she was seeking a ban on parking on the south side of Avenida de Mayo, which connects Canal Road to Avenida del Norte just outside Siesta Village.



Cars are double-parked on Avenida de Mayo near the Canal Road intersection. Photo courtesy of Marlene Merkle

Merkle explained that residents on the street where she has lived for 25 years occasionally had experienced problems with parking, but the situation has grown worse over the past few years because of the street's close proximity to Siesta Village and beach accesses.

"I don't know if [fire trucks and rescue squads would] be able to get down our street if there were a true emergency," Merkle added.

She provided photos showing vehicles double-parked, parked next to a fire hydrant and blocking the line of sight of drivers trying to turn onto Avenida de Mayo from side streets.

The commissioners split 3-2 on a vote to deny Merkle's request. However, the motion Patterson put forth that day called for county transportation staff to work with Tobias' office and the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office on a recommendation regarding routine parking violations along the street that might hamper the passage of emergency vehicles.

Patterson was joined by Mason and Commissioner Christine Robinson in approving the motion.

In his Aug. 16 memo to the County Commission, Tobias wrote, "Surveys by Fire Department staff over the past several months have identified that several streets in this area become congested with overflow parking on weekends and impassable to Emergency Vehicles during special events. Avenida de Mayo is the worst example with Calle Minorga, Calle Menorca and Avenida Madera also affected to a lesser degree."

The memo goes on to explain that the National Fire Protection Association Code "requires access roads to have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet and clear vertical clear-

ance of 13 feet 6 inches," because emergency vehicles "are substantially wider and taller than passenger vehicles ..." The width of the travel area is designed to enable one emergency vehicle to move around another one that is parked, "as would be the case if an Ambulance needed to move past a Fire Engine to access a patient," the memo continues.

"If we could make parking spots in some way," Patterson told her colleagues, "it might be possible to do some parking on either side or both sides of the street, just not as much as there is today."

However, Tobias wrote, "Recognizing that Fire/EMS, residential and business activities must coexist and that the roads [in that area



An aerial view shows the location of Avenida de Mayo just outside Siesta Village. Image courtesy Sarasota County

of Siesta Key] have a history of challenges,” he offered the following recommendations:

- “Regardless of the parking configuration allowed, the Fire Department requires a minimum clear width of 12 feet 6 inches” for a rescue squad or fire truck.
- Parking should not be allowed on both sides of public roads and rights of way unless staggered parking is implemented.
- If staggered parking is provided on both sides of the road, “a transition zone that is clear of parked vehicles must be provided.
- Parking spots must be clearly designated.
- Areas where parking is prohibited must also be clearly marked, especially areas in front of fire hydrants; by law, a vehicle must be no closer than 7 feet 6 inches in either direction of a hydrant.
- The restrictions must be enforced.

Michael Shay, vice president of the Siesta Key Association, brought the Avenida de Mayo issue to the attention of that organization this

spring. Patterson had sent the SKA a copy of Tobias’ memo, he told the *News Leader* on Sept. 3, which “backs up our feeling that something has to be done on de Mayo about the parking situation.”

What the SKA board had sought, he continued, was a prohibition of parking on the north side of Avenida de Mayo, because the fire hydrants are located there. However, the south side of the street has a sidewalk that abuts a grass right of way, he noted. The SKA recommended parking be allowed on the south side of the street, where cars could park on the grass.

However, he said, the organization suggested no parking be allowed on the south side of the street from the entrance/exit of the municipal parking lot to the Canal Road intersection.

“I think the biggest issue here is [Avenida de Mayo’s] proximity to the Village, and it gets the overflow parking,” Shay added.

“I’ll be real curious to see what happens next,” Merkle told the *News Leader*. “I guess those [county government] wheels turn a little slowly, but that’s cool.” 



Residents report that the municipal parking lot in Siesta Village — between Avenida de Mayo and Avenida Madera — stays full more frequently. Photo by Rachel Hackney



NEWS BRIEFS

COUNTY LIFEGUARD HOURS MODIFIED AFTER LABOR DAY

Sarasota County's beach lifeguard operational hours changed as of Sept. 3, coincident with the end of summer and the close of Labor Day weekend, the county has announced.

Lifeguards are on duty from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily on Sarasota County's guarded beaches,

which are Lido, Siesta, Nokomis, North Jetty, Venice and Manasota beaches, a news release says.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.



Siesta Public Beach's lifeguard towers are easy to spot, with their bright colors. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSION TO HOLD SPECIAL BUDGET WORKSHOP SEPT. 6

The Sarasota County Commission will hold a special budget workshop at 11 a.m., Friday, Sept. 6, at the Sarasota County Administration Center, 1660 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota.

The commissioners will review recent expenditures included in the proposed Fiscal Year 2014 budget and consider potential cost-saving measures.

Commissioner Christine Robinson asked for the meeting near the end of the board's Aug. 28 regular session, winning her colleagues' consensus. Robinson has been among the

commissioners arguing for a need to reduce deficit spending in the county.

The first public hearing on the FY 2014 budget will be held at 5:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 9, at the Sarasota County Administration Center in Sarasota; the second will be held at 5:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 23, at the Robert L. Anderson Center, 4000 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice.

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



The county commissioners listen to department head budget presentations in June. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CONA TO PRESENT FORECLOSURE MESS UPDATE ON SEPT. 9

Last year the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations Inc. (CONA) presented *Foreclosure Mess 101*, a standing-room-only event featuring April Charney and Matt Weidner, “two attorneys at the forefront of the foreclosure mess,” a CONA news release says.

On Sept. 9, CONA will present *Foreclosure Mess 101: an update by April Charney* covering the following topics:

- “Nothing-backed” securities and the failure of loan ownership.
- Risk of municipal bankruptcy presented by unfunded pension obligations.
- The urgent need for Florida counties and cities to ramp up efforts to convert the failure of loans.
- An update on home loan defaults of 30 and 90 days and bank “walkaways.”
- Avoiding the unlicensed practice of law while coping with foreclosure.
- Systemic ongoing fraud in residential foreclosure litigation in Sarasota County.
- Problems and potential of properties under water in debt-to-value ratios.

- New Florida foreclosure laws.

Charney is a consumer protection attorney “whose foreclosure defense work became a specialty for which she has garnered acclaim,” the release points out. From 2004 until early last year, Charney worked as a senior staff attorney in the consumer law unit at Jacksonville Area Legal Aid. She is a member of the National Association of Consumer Advocates, the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys and a graduate of Max Gardner’s bankruptcy boot camp, the news release notes.

A 1980 graduate of the University of Miami School of Law, Charney practiced law in Sarasota between 1991 and 2003 as a managing and staff attorney with Gulfcoast Legal Services.

CONA meetings are free and open to the public as well as members of the 72 associations and the individuals the organization represents.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Sarasota Garden Club, located at 1131 Boulevard of the Arts in Sarasota, at the intersection of Tamiami Trail (south of the Municipal Auditorium). Parking is reached from Van Wezel Way.

SALVATION ARMY REOPENS EMERGENCY FAMILY DORM

The Salvation Army of Sarasota has announced that it reopened its Emergency Family Dorm on Aug. 30 at its Tenth Street complex, providing “five safe, secure rooms for families experiencing homeless episodes.”

Additionally, Maj. Ethan Frizzell reported that through an expanded partnership with the YMCA, The Salvation Army’s social service

staff will work with a network of social workers throughout the Sarasota County School District to help identify school-age children whose families may be at risk for homelessness, a news release says.

“The most cost-effective homeless service we can provide is helping families stay in their homes,” Frizzell pointed out in the release.

“We will have the added benefit of a view into the family situation through the student perspective.”

The initial goal is to raise \$150,000 to pay for secure housing and enable families to maintain social connections in the community, the release continues.

Additionally, The Salvation Army will launch the Emerge Program in October in combination with its traditional Christmas programs, the release notes.

Capt. Jim Spencer, an officer at the 1701 S. Tuttle Ave. Center for Worship and Service, describes this initiative as a way to provide families with more than toys and clothes. “It allows us to develop relationships and serve the entire family year-round — not just children during the Christmas holiday,” he said in the release.

The Emerge Program will provide free memberships for entire families at The Salvation Army’s Tuttle Avenue community center, which will include supervised gymnasium activities, a game room and computer lab, after-school programs and many child-centered activities, according to the release. It also will allow families to participate in special events for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and other holidays, again at no cost. Further, the release says, the program will feature incentives for students throughout the year to earn good grades and perfect attendance records.

Plans also are in the preliminary stage to offer eligible children a week of summer activities at Camp Keystone in Starke.

Watch the website, www.salvationarmysarasota.org, and The Salvation Army [Facebook page](#) for more details on the program, the news release notes.

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR SAL HALF MARATHON IN DECEMBER

Registration is open for the Sheriff’s Activities League Half Marathon on Palmer Ranch, which will be held Sunday, Dec. 1, organizers have announced.

This will mark the fourth year of the event, with all proceeds benefitting the Sheriff’s Activities League of Sarasota County (formerly PAL), a news release says.

The 13.1-mile race will take runners on a USA Track & Field-Certified course “through the scenic communities of Palmer Ranch and along the Legacy Trail,” the release points out. Runners who do not want to tackle the full distance may opt for a relay option, with each runner covering 6.55 miles, the release continues.

The post-race party will include “great music, prize drawings, vendors, fabulous food by Carrabba’s Italian Grill and the awards ceremony,” it adds.

To register, visit www.salhalfmarathon.org or go to www.active.com. Local running club members and high school track team members may register for \$55; the fee for non-club members is \$60. Club member relay teams may register for \$110; the cost is \$120 for non-club members.

Schools, clubs and organizations that want to offer volunteer assistance for the event may contact SAL through the above website or by calling Bo Keusch at 809-8979, the release notes.

9/11 CEREMONY TO BE HELD AT SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Sarasota Police Department will join the City of Sarasota, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and the Sarasota County Fire Department to remember Sept. 11, 2001, the Police Department has announced.

A ceremony will be held Wednesday, Sept. 11, at 8:30 a.m. at the front entrance of the Sarasota Police Department, 2099 Adams Lane in downtown Sarasota.

This event is free and open to the public.



A 9/11 memorial stands in the lobby of the Sarasota Police Department on Adams Lane in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

PATRIOTS PARK TO HOST ANNUAL 9/11 MEMORIAL CEREMONY

Members of the public are invited to attend the annual 9/11 Memorial Ceremony at Patriots Park in Venice from 10 a.m. to noon on Wednesday, Sept. 11.

Organizers say more than 3,000 American flags will be placed around the park grounds for the event, a news release says.

Additionally, the Wave Grill in the Ramada Venice Resort at 425 U.S. 41 Bypass North in Venice will hold a luncheon for interested persons and guest speakers from the ceremony. It will begin shortly after noon. The cost is \$7.95 plus tax, the release adds. For more information or to make reservations, call 308-7700.

The reservations are being accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis, the news release notes.



The American flag is draped between fire trucks during the 9/11 Memorial Ceremony at Patriots Park in Venice in 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COUNTY COMMISSION MAKES PRESENTATION TO WALLENDAS

Recognizing his “outstanding achievements in demonstrating the power of the mind and human spirit against the forces of nature and fear,” the Sarasota County Commission on Aug. 27 presented a proclamation and plaque to Sarasotan Nik Wallenda.

“You’ve proven that a person’s destiny is limited only by his or her imagination,” Chairwoman Carolyn Mason read from the proclamation.

With a chuckle, Mason referenced residents’ thrills in watching Wallenda’s June walk across the Grand Canyon.

Mason added that the board members had deliberated over a number of photos taken by Sarasota resident Norman Schimmel to find

the best one to frame and present to Wallenda. “I would be remiss if I didn’t say ‘Thank you’ to Norman Schimmel for his outstanding photography,” Mason continued.

To Wallenda, she said, “Thank you so much for what you do for Sarasota County and the whole state of Florida.”

Wallenda thanked the commissioners for their support, including granting him permission to train at Nathan Benderson Park in preparation for the canyon walk. He added that it always is a pleasure to turn the world’s spotlight “on this beautiful city I live in” and that it “truly is an honor to call this place home. ... This is a worldwide destination.”

Rachel Brown Hackney



The Sarasota County commissioners and Sarasota resident Norman Schimmel (far right) listen to remarks by internationally known aerialist Nik Wallenda. Contributed photo by Kelly French



(From left) County Commission Vice Chairman Charles Hines holds the plaque as Commissioner Nora Patterson and Chairwoman Carolyn Mason watch Nik Wallenda's reaction. Contributed photo by Kelly French

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION VP SELECTED FOR LEADERSHIP FLORIDA

Local nonprofit executive John Annis, who serves as vice president for community investment for the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, has been selected to join the 32nd class of [Leadership Florida](#), the Foundation has announced.

He is one of just 55 leaders in Florida “chosen to participate in a stimulating and thought-provoking eight-month educational program that consists of a series of five sessions held in cities throughout the state,” a news release says. The culmination of the program will be the equivalent of a sixth session, where participants will join fellow Leadership Florida members at the organization’s annual meeting, the release notes.

“I am excited about the opportunity to learn and share with such an amazing group of leaders,” Annis said in the release. “I’ve been fortunate to work with many Leadership Florida alumni and know how committed they are to our great state. And I’m grateful to the leadership of the Community Foundation for its support of my participation in this venture.”

In Annis’ current role at the Community Foundation, he leads the team responsible for grants, scholarships and nonprofit services, including The Giving Partner, an online resource that helps to connect donors to nonprofits and causes they care about, the release continues. “His leadership has been crucial to engaging the Community Foundation in partnerships including Campaign for Grade Level Reading, which aims to ensure that all area school children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade, and the summer enrichment and career training program at Alta Vista Elementary School, to benefit students and their parents,” the release notes.



John Annis/Contributed photo

“The Alta Vista program is inspired by Ascend at the Aspen Institute, a proponent of the ‘two-generational approach’ to lifting families out of poverty,” the release points out.

“I congratulate my colleague John Annis on being selected from a very competitive process for the Leadership Florida program,” said Community Foundation President and CEO Roxie Jerde, a member of the Executive Leadership Florida class of 2012, in the release. “He is compassionate and cares deeply about this community — he will be a wonderful representative for Sarasota County and our organization in Leadership Florida.”

“Created in 1982 by the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Florida builds a sense of statewide community by identifying and training individuals with the passion and commitment to help make great things happen,” the release notes.

CYD TO HONOR BAILEY AND MATTISON AT LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST

Community Youth Development of Sarasota County (CYD) will honor attorney Dan Bailey and Chef Paul Mattison at its Eighth Annual Leadership Breakfast on Thursday, Sept. 19, at the Lee Wetherington Boys & Girls Club, the nonprofit organization has announced.

Each year, CYD recognizes people “who have demonstrated a commitment to empowering youth as leaders in our community,” a news release says.

Registration and breakfast service will begin at 7:30 a.m. Tickets, which are \$30 per person, may be purchased at www.cydonline.org.

Masters of ceremony will be Lisa Carlton, former Florida state senator and past CYD Leadership Breakfast honoree, and Carlton Robinson, a senior at Cardinal Mooney and a [STAR Leadership Training](#) graduate, the release continues.

Bailey, who is an attorney at Williams Parker Harrison Dietz & Getzen in Sarasota, serves as general counsel to the Sarasota-Manatee Airport Authority and practices in the area of land use planning and zoning, the news release notes. He also is on the boards of The Patterson Foundation, the Community Leadership Council of the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee and the Community Board of the Sarasota Regional Campus of the Florida State University College of Medicine.

Mattison, executive chef and proprietor of Mattison's, operates a successful culinary group on Florida's Gulf Coast, the release adds. He also serves on the advisory boards for Kaiser College, Sarasota County Technical Institute's Culinary Arts Program and Sarasota's Downtown Farmers Market. Additionally, Mattison is on the boards of All Faiths Food Bank and Florida Winefest & Auction, the release says.

CORRECTION

The *News Leader* included incorrect information in two recent articles involving the Sarasota County Commission's vacation of a right of way on Calle de Costa Rica on Siesta Key.

In response to a *News Leader* request for clarification regarding the articles, *'Trumping the comp plan'* (May 31, 2013) and *Siesta Seen* on Aug. 30, Diane C. Kennedy, the Sarasota County real property title examiner and researcher who made the staff presentation about the Calle de Costa Rica request during the board's May 21 regular meeting, explained that when the County Commission vacates a right of way, the title normally is vested equally with the abutting property owners. Petitioners are not required to ask the county to vacate the

entire width of a right of way, she pointed out in an email. In the case of the Calle de Costa Rica petition, William and Katherine Baumann of 601 Avenida de Mayo did choose to ask the board to vacate the entire 60 feet of right of way, Kennedy added. “This simply means that they worked jointly with their neighbor and owner of the property that abuts the westerly right-of-way line of Calle de Costa Rica,” Kennedy continued. “As a result, the vacated right-of-way is divided into two equal parts and title is vested in the appropriate abutting property owner.”

The owner of the property on the west side is DCA Fidu Inc. Trust Estate, represented by Michael J. Silvers. 



Evidence recovered in the cloned credit card case is spread out on a table in the Sheriff's Office. Contributed photo

TWO ARRESTED IN CLONED CREDIT CARD SCHEME CASE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two Lehigh Acres men for allegedly attempting to commit fraud at several Sarasota area stores with dozens of cloned credit cards, the office reported on Sept. 3.

Deputies located Alfredo Torrella, 35, and Orlando Rodriguez, 39, on the night of Aug. 30 after they tried to purchase Home Depot gift cards with several credit cards that were declined, the report says. During a search of their rental vehicle, deputies found 120 counterfeit credit cards, personal information for 29 different victims and a fake driver's license, the report adds. "The suspects admitted purchasing the cards and information from someone in the Miami area for about \$4,500 and were frustrated because many of the cards didn't work," a news release notes. "While the suspects made purchases in two stores, it appears deputies stopped their crime spree shortly after it began," the release adds.

A deputy initiated the traffic stop because Rodriguez — the passenger — was not wearing his seatbelt. The men already were suspects in the credit card case, the report points out.



Orlando Rodriguez/Contributed photo

After he walked up to the car, the report says, the deputy noticed Rodriguez “making erratic hand movements in the area of the center console.” Once Torrella had given verbal consent for deputies to search the vehicle, the report continues, a deputy found multiple cut-up credit cards in the area where he had seen Rodriguez making the hand movements.

Torrella is charged with 29 counts of Possession of Personal Identification with Intent to Use, two counts of Criminal Use of Personal Identification and one count of Trafficking in Fraudulent Credit Cards. Rodriguez is charged with three counts of Criminal Use of Personal Identification, one count of Trafficking in Fraudulent Credit Cards, Possession of a Counterfeit Driver’s License, Tampering with Evidence and Obstruction.



Alfredo Torrella/Contributed photo

NEW INITIATIVE NOTIFIES THE PUBLIC OF SEX OFFENDERS/PREDATORS

The Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office is launching a new initiative to notify residents more publicly of sex offenders and predators who register a local address for the first time the office announced Sept. 5.

When a sex offender or predator is released from jail or prison, or moves to a new address, the person must register with the Sarasota County Jail, a news release points out. When an offender registers in Sarasota County for the first time, the Sheriff’s Office will issue a press release, publish it on its [website](#) and post a notification to the agency’s [Facebook page](#), “which will include the person’s mug shot in a distinctive graphic that should become recognizable to residents,” the release says.

“We want citizens to know when someone who has been labeled a sex offender or pred-

ator moves into this county and where they plan to live,” said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. “We do this to keep people informed of potential dangers and to provide them with the information they need to accurately understand the situation.”

In addition to including residential information, the release will state when the person’s crime occurred, provide context about the case, note the sentence the person received, explain whether the person has been declared a sex offender or predator and list whatever restrictions the person has been accorded by the judicial system.

The Sheriff’s Office still recommends that people sign up for sex offender alerts from the [Florida Department of Law Enforcement](#) or by clicking [here](#).

FUGITIVE CAPTURED DURING RETAIL THEFT INVESTIGATION

During the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office's arrest of two people during a retail theft investigation, detectives learned the male suspect was a fugitive from justice, the office has reported.

Detectives investigating two incidents in which laptops were stolen from the Venice Walmart circulated photos of the suspects to deputies, a news release says. Deputy Dave Clark "recognized them from his routine patrols of South Venice" and located the woman Sept. 3 on U.S. 41 near Sunset Beach Drive, the release notes. She was identified as Sara King, 29, of 5543 Kenwood Drive, North Port. King told deputies they could find her boyfriend at work, the release adds.

John Seals, 35, of the same address as King, had a felony warrant for an escape in South Carolina, the release points out. A judge had ordered Seals to wear a GPS electronic monitor in July following his arrest on multiple drug charges, but Seals cut it off and left the state, the release continues.

Regarding the retail theft case: The report says a loss prevention officer from Walmart came to the Sheriff's Office on Sept. 2 to report that three laptop computers valued at approximately \$1,481 were stolen from the store the previous day. The Walmart representative said that during a review of surveillance video, a couple was seen about 6:30 p.m. on Sept. 1, pushing a baby stroller as they entered the store's tool department. The video subsequently showed the man selecting a pair of pliers and a hat from the shelf, and then proceeding to the electronics department, where he cut the security wires off the three computers on a shelf, according to the report. The man placed the laptops in the stroller, and the couple proceeded to the store exit without stopping at any of the checkout counters, the report says. The couple left through the garden center, the report adds.

Seals is charged with two counts of Grand Theft. He will be held without bond on the Fugitive from Justice charge. King is charged with two counts of Grand Theft.



Sara King/Contributed photo



John Seals/Contributed photo

REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER LIVING AT VENICE ADDRESS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is advising the public that William Huff, 49, has registered as a sexual predator living in Sarasota County.

Huff was just released from prison after serving 17 years of a 20-year sentence for Sexual Battery on a Child under 12, which was amended to "Attempted" when he agreed to plead guilty, a news release says. It is his only known arrest, the release adds. Huff is living at 9055 S. Tamiami Trail, Apt. 66, Venice. "Mandatory neighborhood notifications have been made," the release notes.

Huff was designated a Sexual Predator by the court and is under Florida Department of Corrections supervision until Aug. 25, 2023, the release continues. "He cannot have unsupervised contact with children and is not allowed to work or volunteer in a setting that involves children."



William Huff/Contributed photo

This information is also being posted on the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office website and on the agency's Facebook page as part of a new initiative to more publicly notify citizens of sex offenders and predators who register a local address for the first time.

TWO BRADENTON MEN ARRESTED ON DRUG, WEAPONS CHARGES

Two convicted felons were taken into custody after officers with the Sarasota Police Department's Street Crime Unit stopped their car about 4:50 p.m. on Aug. 29 at 1025 Putnam Drive, in Sarasota, the Police Department reported.

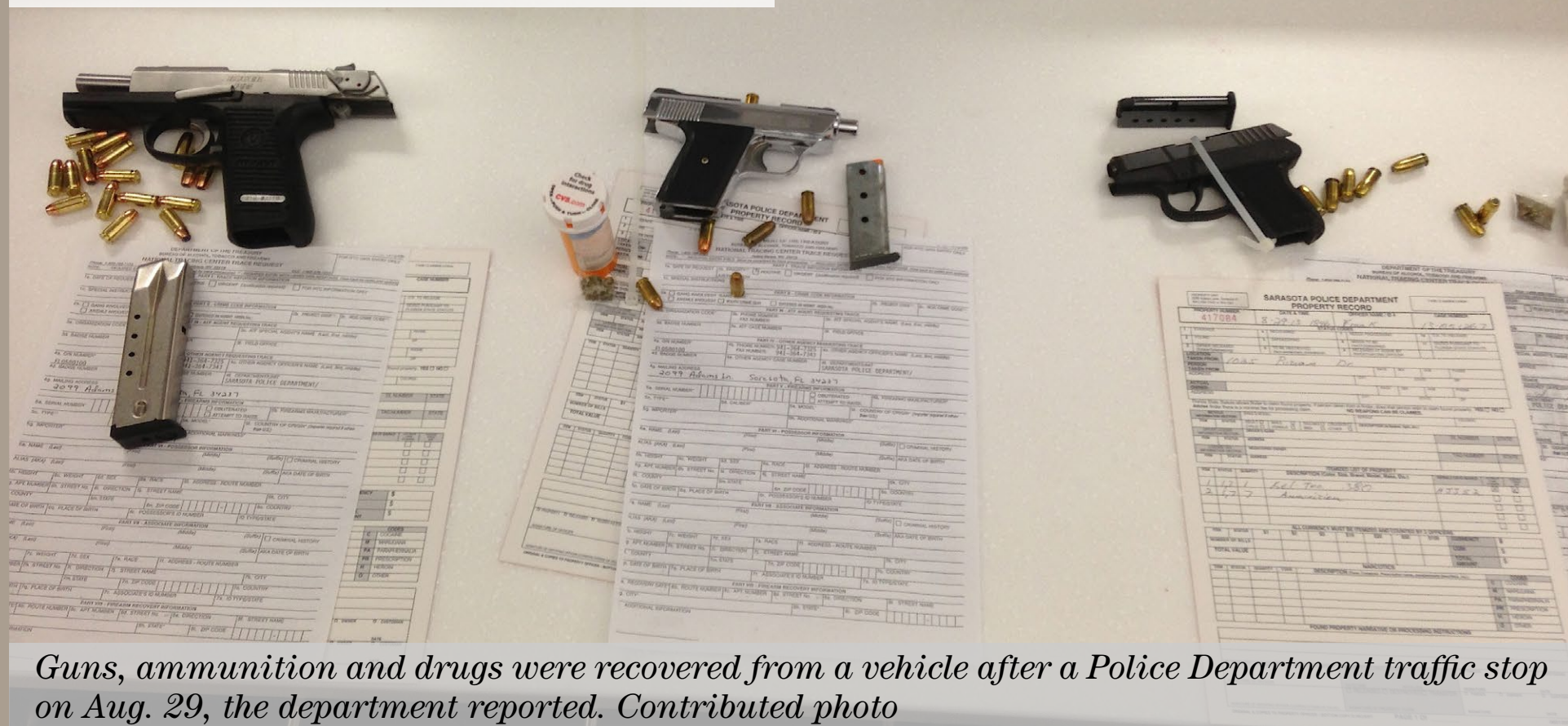
The men were found in possession of several firearms and drugs after running from officers, a news release says.

The Street Crime Unit stopped the men's vehicle "because it was believed to have illegally tinted windows," the release notes. After the vehicle halted, several subjects ran from offi-

cers, but they were caught after a short foot chase, the release continues. Officers recovered three guns, crack cocaine and marijuana, the release adds.

Jalen J. Bellamy, 21, of 6516 Third Avenue Northeast, Bradenton, was charged with Felony Carrying a Concealed Firearm, Felony Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon, Felony Possession of Ammunition by a Convicted Felon, Felony Possession of Crack Cocaine with Intent to Sell within 1,000 feet of a Church and misdemeanor counts of Resisting Without Violence and Obstruction.

Terry L. McDonald, Jr., 21, of 908 Sixth Court East, Bradenton, was charged with Felony Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon, a misdemeanor count of Resisting an Officer without Violence and a misdemeanor Possession of Marijuana Less than 20 Grams, the report noted.



Guns, ammunition and drugs were recovered from a vehicle after a Police Department traffic stop on Aug. 29, the department reported. Contributed photo



Jalen Bellamy/Contributed photo



Terry McDonald/Contributed photo

ARMED ROBBERY SUSPECT TURNS HIMSELF IN AT POLICE DEPARTMENT

An armed robbery suspect seen on surveillance video from an incident this week at the North Washington Boulevard 7-Eleven in Sarasota has turned himself in, the Sarasota Police Department announced on Sept. 5.

The video showed a black male entering the 7-Eleven on Wednesday, Sept. 4, at approximately 5:30 a.m., a news release notes. A male store employee told officers the suspect approached the counter and said to the employee, "Bro, I got something to tell you," the report says. The man then began to walk behind the counter, at which point the employee saw the man had a 2- to 3-foot-long stick in his possession. The man told the employee, "Give me all you got," the report continues. The employee opened the cash register and gave the man cash, the report adds, though it does not provide the amount of money.

The man approached the counter again and told the employee, "Don't call the cops. I'll pay you back later, bro," according to the report.

On Sept. 4, at 11:30 p.m., Fabian L. Morrison, 22, of Ocala, showed up at the front desk of



Fabian Latrell Morrison/Contributed photo

the Police Department "after seeing himself on the surveillance video that was played on the news that night," the release adds. Morrison's mother was with him when he came to the front desk, the release notes.

When he was interviewed by detectives, Morrison admitted he was the person on the video, the release continues. He was charged with Armed Robbery and transported to the Sarasota County Jail.

RESIDENTS WARNED ABOUT A TELEPHONE SCAM

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has received a number of complaints concerning people receiving telephone calls that attempt to convince them to wire money to free from jail or otherwise assist a relative in distress, the office has reported.

All of the complaints received so far have a common telephone number originating in Massachusetts, according to a news release.

Anyone receiving a similar call is advised immediately to contact the person supposedly needing aid to make certain the facts are true. "Do not just wire money without confirmation

that the call is legitimate and not a scam," the news release urges.

A person who receives such a call is asked to phone the Sheriff's Office non-emergency number — 316-1201 — and ask to be connected to a desk officer who will take a report, the release notes.

Anyone with information about this investigation can contact the Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigations Section Office at 861-4900; Crime Stoppers at 366-TIPS (8477); or send a text message by texting TIP109 plus a message to CRIMES (274637).

INFORMATION SOUGHT ABOUT CRIMINAL MISCHIEF INCIDENTS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is asking the public to help stop whoever is shooting at a number of Sarasota area businesses during the overnight hours.

Since Aug. 19, four different businesses have suffered damage from what appears to be a pellet or BB gun, a Sheriff's Office news release explains. Windows have been shot out at Hot Diggity Dog, 5666 Swift Road; Deme trio's Pizzeria, 4410 S. Tamiami Trail; Davidson Drugs, 5125 Ocean Blvd.; and twice at Stragglers Bar, 5580 Swift Road, the release adds. The latest case happened early on the morning of Aug. 29, the release notes.

"With few investigative leads and no suspect descriptions," the release adds, detectives need members of the public "to provide whatever tips they may have to help stop this crime trend. The suspect or suspects are facing multiple charges of Criminal Mischief and Shooting a Deadly Missile into a Building — both felonies," the release points out.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call Criminal Investigations at 861-4952; leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com.



A window was found shot out at Hot Diggity Dog on Swift Road, the Sheriff's Office reports. Photo courtesy of the Sheriff's Office

SOCIAL MEDIA ASSISTANCE LEADS TO ARREST OF SUSPECT

Thanks to an “assist” from social media, a Lakewood Ranch man who was wanted by detectives with the Sarasota Police Department has been captured in Bluefield, VA, the Police Department reported on Aug. 30.

A family member of Christopher Schenks saw the man’s photo on the Police Department’s social media sites, where Schenks was listed as wanted, and called Sarasota detectives, a news release says. Schenks was arrested and charged with local counts as well as counts in Bluefield, VA, the release adds.

Detectives had been looking for Schenks since June 2012, the release notes. He is suspected of “stealing computer equipment from a girlfriend and selling it to a pawn store in Sarasota,” the release adds.

Schenks is facing charges of Dealing in Stolen Property and Fraud, as well as a charge related to making a false statement to a pawnbroker.



Christopher Schenks/Contributed photo

THREE BURGLARS CAUGHT IN THE ACT NEAR WILKINSON ROAD


Members of the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office Tactical Anti-Crime (TAC) Unit arrested three burglars last week after being contacted about suspicious activity and then watching the men commit several crimes, the office has announced.

A resident notified the Sheriff’s Office about three young men possibly going through mailboxes near Wilkinson Road in Sarasota, a news release says. After patrol deputies were not able to confirm a crime had occurred, the release continues, “members of TAC conducted surveillance and saw the subjects enter a vehicle inside an open garage,” then go behind another house and come out with a jar of coins.

According to the report, an officer observed a man coming out of one Nelson Avenue house and walking to the end of the driveway, then look up and down the street. The officer talked with the man, who said he was working in his garage when his wife asked for help with something on their computer. He had been inside the house only a short time, the man said, when someone he later identified as Molnar knocked on the door, the report says. When the man went to the door, Molnar asked for some water and a ride. The man told the officer he and his wife gave Molnar water but declined to give him a ride, so Molnar left, the report continues.

When the man went back into his garage, the man said, he found the GPS missing from his SUV. A second vehicle in the garage — a truck — also had been entered, the man reported, and the contents of the center console had been strewn around the cab.

After all three suspects had met up again, officers converged on them and detained them, the report adds. The trio admitted to two crimes on Nelson Avenue as well as to removing the screen from a window on a Pasadena Avenue home, the news release says. They told officers they left when they could not gain access to the Pasadena Avenue residence, according to the report.

Michael Molnar, 19, of 3933 Nelson Ave., is facing three felony charges for Burglary. His accomplices — Alexander Mohr, 19, and Charles Nigh, 18, (neither has a permanent address) — are both facing two felony Burglary charges, the release notes. 



Michael Molnar/Contributed photo



Charles Nigh/Contributed photo



Alexander Mohr/Contributed photo

OPINION



A DARK CLOUD OVER GOVERNMENT IN THE SUNSHINE

EDITORIAL

On Aug. 28, Commissioner Joe Barbetta led his fellow commissioners in a 45-minute condemnation of Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations and an expected candidate to replace Commissioner Nora Patterson on the County Commission.

What did Ramirez do to earn such invective? She was exercising her rights as a citizen, under the Florida constitution, to inspect and copy public documents.

Barbetta's pique ostensibly was due to the assignment of a county staff person to monitor Ramirez' inspection of those documents — 17 boxes of them — without the county charging Ramirez for the cost of that staff person's time. The staff person was with Ramirez for almost nine hours.

While the state constitution was amended in 1992 to allow for broad access to public records, the Legislature provided that government entities could charge the public for the cost of making copies and the staff time required to provide the requested documents, especially if the volume of the request incurred extensive involvement of personnel.

The county has routinely been charging for the costs of providing copies of public records, but apparently it has had no explicit policy for charging for staff time. It is for that reason that Ramirez was not asked to pay. She brought her own portable scanner to free staff from the need to make copies of documents she reviewed, so only the monitor's time was expended.

No one with the county gave Ramirez any indication that she would be expected to pay

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for her monitor. She spent the day inspecting records, scanning copies as needed, and then left.

Yet, to hear Barbetta's account, Ramirez was guilty of some grand subterfuge, a scofflaw flagrantly fleecing county taxpayers.

He even refused to utter her name — referring to her always as “that person” — as if saying her name three times in succession would result in her automatically being made a member of the commission.

Even after county staff members explained that they had no consistent policy on charging for staff time, and it was their failure that accounted for Ramirez not paying for her monitor, Barbetta continued to fume. He insisted that Ramirez be billed retroactively for the monitor's time, despite the county attorney pointing out that Ramirez had never been advised there could be a charge for such monitoring.

To their discredit, the rest of the commissioners did not shut down this petty tirade. Instead, they generally agreed with the notion that individuals requesting access to public records, as guaranteed by the state constitution, could be taking advantage of the county and costing taxpayers huge amounts of money.

But to their credit, three commissioners — Nora Patterson, Christine Robinson and Chair-

woman Carolyn Mason — refused to side with Barbetta in his pecuniary offensive, as his motion to retroactively bill Ramirez failed 2-3.

This entire episode is deeply troubling on several levels.

“The question should not be, ‘Why was a person not charged for staff time?’ The question should be, ‘Why are we, in the second decade of the 21st century, still generating so many paper documents?’”

First, the allowance by the Legislature for the charging of fees for access to public records was a loophole to frustrate the will of the people, just as the Legislature's allowance for faux candidates to close what

otherwise should be open primaries vitiates the constitutional amendment providing for open primaries.

But even ignoring that fact, the right to charge citizens for public records does not automatically equate to need or obligation to assess those charges.

Barbetta's tirade was uttered in 2013, not 1963. In the last half century, technology with regard to the handling, storage and retrieval of documents has exploded. The question should not be, “Why was a person not charged for staff time?” The question should be, “Why are we, in the second decade of the 21st century, still generating so many paper documents?”

If the County Commission wants to adopt a meaningful policy, it should start with the edict that no record generation will begin on paper. All documents created for county business should be recorded first in digital form,

OPINION

then printed as needed (and only as needed). Any documents provided to the county by outsiders would immediately be scanned and converted to digital form for storage and easy retrieval.

If the county had begun this policy a decade ago, Ramirez could potentially have spent her day at a public-access terminal, locating documents that she needed and downloading them to a flash drive she brought with her for portable data storage.

It is the county's antediluvian attachment to 19th century records storage that is costing taxpayers money unnecessarily, not the free exercise by citizens of their right to inspect government records.


But there is another, sinister subtext to Barbetta's vitriol. Public officials who gain election with a preset, personal agenda are among those term limits were intended to eliminate. That intent is diminished when such a public official, when unable to realize said agenda, seeks a like-minded person to succeed him in office for the purpose of continuing his initiatives.

Most courthouse observers expect Ramirez to run for Commissioner Patterson's seat in 2014. And just as many likely know Barbetta has endorsed Alan Maio, an individual whose professional experience might lead one to believe he will be as cozy with developers as Barbetta has been.

Ramirez has openly challenged Barbetta's plans to eviscerate the county's 2050 Plan,

which imposes more control over development east of Interstate 75. Barbetta obviously would be happier with Maio, who could not reasonably have received Barbetta's endorsement without similarly wanting drastic changes in the 2050 Plan.

Barbetta uses the unequal application of fees for public records access as cover for his more likely intent: to publicly criticize a potential opponent for his handpicked candidate to succeed Patterson.

This sort of "back room" machination is a far more egregious affront to the county taxpayers than a few dollars in staff time. It is an attempt to fray the very fabric of democracy in our county. Let us hope the voters do not buy it. 



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*.

Sarasota Leisure

**SIESTA SEEN
COMMUNITY CALENDAR
SCHIMMEL SIGHTING**

Inside

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

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Siesta Seen

THE SIESTA VILLAGE RECYCLING EFFORT TAKES ANOTHER STEP FORWARD; WITH THE BOLLARDS IN, THE FOCUS SWITCHES TO THE BEACH WAY AND AVENIDA DEL MARE CROSSWALK LIGHTS; SKVA TO HOST A SOCIAL; AND THE BEACH SAW A VERY BUSY LABOR DAY WEEKEND



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The recycling initiative for Siesta Village moved ahead a bit on Sept. 3, as members of the [Siesta Key Village Association](#) (SKVA) agreed to seek informal proposals from companies that provide garbage collection and recycling services in Sarasota County.

Michael Shay, vice president of the Siesta Key Association (SKA), reported at the outset of the meeting that Larry Alexander, the coun-

ty's manager of solid waste collections, had sent him the list of those firms. Alexander addressed SKVA members last month about recycling.

"Where do we go from here?" Shay asked.

"Dollars," replied SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos, co-owner of Village Café. "We need to find out how much."



Some business owners on Siesta Key have suggested that recycling bins in the Village should resemble the garbage cans placed along Ocean Boulevard. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

“Or how much they’ll pay us,” Shay responded, referring to the firms. “Do you want me to look into that?” he asked.

“Yes,” SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie told him.

Some firms might be willing to provide the bins and pick up the recycling at no charge, Shay said, because of the value of the materials collected. “Let me find out from them ... what they’re willing to offer.”

When Dave Magee, owner of The UPS Store on Beach Road, asked how many locations the SKVA was considering for recycling bins, Shay said he had put together a list of about a dozen spots on Ocean Boulevard in Sies-

ta Village. However, Shay was quick to add, “There’s nothing etched in stone there.”

He based the locations on the volume of recyclables he had observed in garbage cans, he pointed out.

In response to a question from Rami Nehme, owner of Blasé Café, Shay said he would be happy to provide a copy of that list to interested people.

Shay also told the approximately 20 people present that he was not certain the SKVA should pursue the recycling of paper. He did note, however, that when new local newspapers are delivered each week, he finds piles of



Vice President Kay Kouvatsos (left) takes the minutes of the August Siesta Key Village Association meeting as President Cheryl Gaddie watches. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

the previous editions dumped in garbage cans on Ocean Boulevard.

“For the most part,” he continued, the recyclable materials he has found are cans and bottles, especially water bottles. Moreover, he pointed out, “Those items have the most revenue attached to them.”

LIGHTING UPDATE

With the long-awaited bollards installed at seven crosswalks along Ocean Boulevard, county attention is shifting to residents’ request for new warning lights for the crosswalks at Beach Way and Avenida Del Mare on Beach Road.

During the Feb. 5 SKVA meeting, SKA Secretary Peter van Roekens brought up the constantly flashing lights at those intersections,

saying drivers had become inured to them — a dangerous situation.

Further discussion at the subsequent SKA meeting led to talks with residents of Siesta Isles — including SKA board member Deet Jonker — about the desire for the same type of “wig-wag” lights at the Beach Way and Avenida Del Mare crosswalks that the Florida Department of Transportation put up last fall on Midnight Pass Road between Beach and Stickney Point roads.

As part of his Aug. 19 Public Works Department project update for the County Commission, Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. reported that staff had received all three quotes it had sought for the strobe flashing crosswalk signs at those two intersections on Beach Road.



New pedestrian crosswalk lights may be installed as early as mid-November at the intersection of Avenida Del Mare and Beach Road. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

“The low quote is \$2,212.50 per sign,” Harriott added. “Four signs will be installed at the two ... crosswalks.” Staff will proceed with the purchase on Oct. 1, he continued, which is the first day of the new fiscal year.

Harriott also noted that staff is reviewing similar signs for installation on Midnight Pass Road at the Stickney Point Road intersection.

Ryan Montague in the county’s Traffic/Mobility Office has estimated it will take four to six weeks to get the new lights for Beach Way and Avenida Del Mare, indicating they could be installed by mid-November.

As for the bollards: Shay told me after the SKVA meeting, “I think they’re classy. ... They give off a good amount of light.”

Van Roekens, who spurred the effort to get those bollards in place with LED illumination to put more light on Village pedestrians at night, was not present at the Sept. 3 SKVA meeting.

CORRECTION

I normally put news of goofs at the end of this column or in the News Leader’s *News Briefs* section, but I am hopeful regular readers will see this, because I made a big mistake in my reporting last week on plans for the fourth Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition planned for Nov. 15-18.

Founder Brian Wigelsworth — a master sand sculptor himself who lives on Siesta Key — will *not* be in Kuwait when the Classic takes place; he will be on Siesta Public Beach.

During the August SKVA meeting, I misunderstood a report Wigelsworth gave about a big event in Kuwait taking place at the same time as the Crystal Classic. He had to replace members of some of the teams originally committed to the Crystal Classic, because they are going to Kuwait instead.

LABOR DAY ON THE KEY

Sgt. Steve Leavitt, a new representative of the Sheriff’s Office on the island, provided the latest law enforcement update to SKVA members on Sept. 3.

The beach “was very packed” over the weekend, he said. “Yesterday, not as bad,” he added of Labor Day itself.

A few traffic problems occurred in the beach parking lot, Leavitt said, but they were typical, given the demand for spots. Things were pretty quiet on the beach itself, he noted.

Then Michael Shay asked him about an accident on Ocean Boulevard at the Sand Dollar Lane intersection (the entry to the Banyan Club enclave of homes on the Gulf of Mexico).

“No one was injured,” Leavitt said.

The driver was 30-year-old Jason Allen Robey of 2029 Peppertree Way, Sarasota, according to the Sheriff’s Office arrest report. The incident, which was reported on the afternoon of Sept. 2 (Robey was arrested at 3:30 p.m.), involved Robey crashing a vehicle into a wall on Sand Dollar Lane, Leavitt said. Robey was inside the vehicle when a deputy arrived and called for backup after determining the vehicle had been reported stolen.

Siesta Seen

Robey, who was identified in the arrest report as a server at Café Gabbiano in Davidson Plaza in Siesta Village, was charged with a third-degree count of Vehicle Grand Theft as well as Resist Officer/Obstruct without violence. He was placed under a total bond of \$2,000.

CRIME AT SKOB

Speaking of Sheriff's Office reports from Siesta Key: A person hired as a handyman this spring at the Siesta Key Oyster Bar (SKOB) was arrested in August and charged with a count of Fraud-Swindle: Obtain Property Under \$20,000.

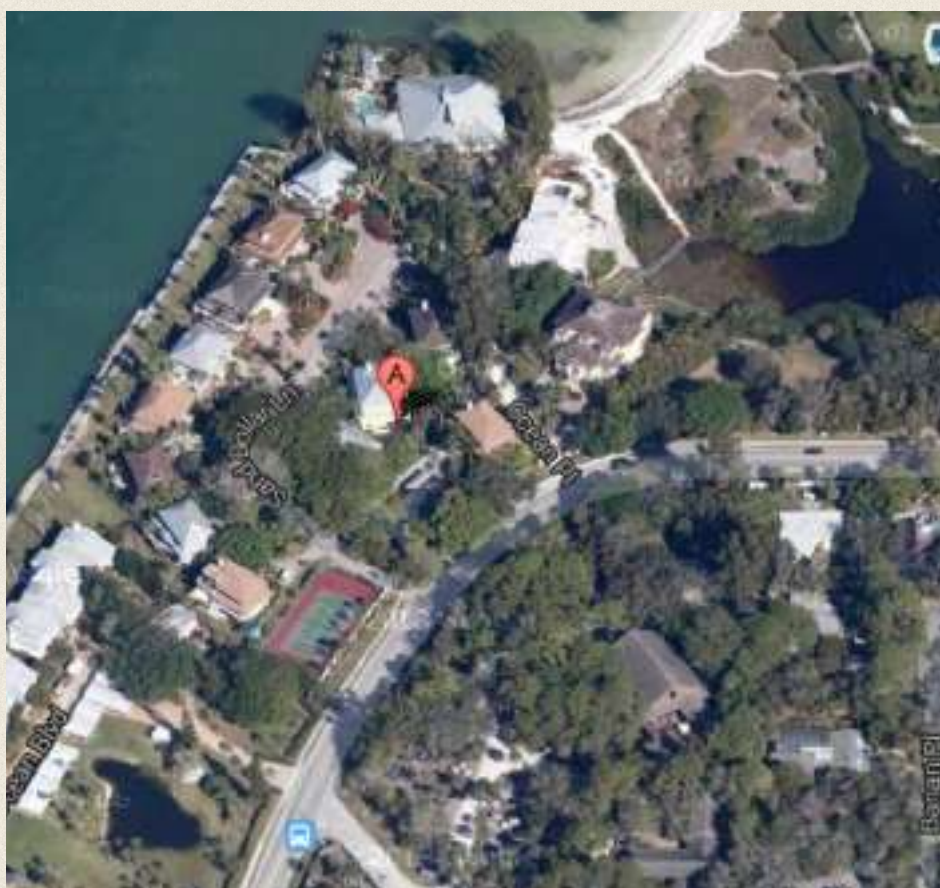
According to the Sheriff's Office report, Joshua T. Linehan, 31, of 42 W. Oak St., Lot A15, in Osprey, was hired on May 13 at SKOB and

given permission to make purchases utilizing the restaurant's business account, because, as a contractor, he could receive such discounts.

The report says Linehan was able to obtain blank checks from SKOB to make purchases, but SKOB management learned later that Linehan allegedly was using the checks to buy gift cards at Walmart, Lowe's and Home Depot. From June 8 through June 17, Linehan obtained cards with a total value of approximately \$1,200, the report continues.

After a detective obtained video surveillance from the stores, along with copies of receipts, the detective was able to confirm Linehan was the one who had made the purchases, the report adds.

Linehan was placed in jail under \$1,500 bond.



The Banyan Club homes are located on Sand Dollar Lane off Ocean Boulevard on north Siesta Key. Image courtesy of Google Maps



Jason Allen Robey/Contributed photo

Siesta Seen

The **Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar** in Siesta Village will host the Siesta Key Village Association Social planned from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 19.

The event will feature free drinks and hors d'oeuvres for all SKVA members and their guests, SKVA President Gaddie said during the Sept. 3 meeting.

"I hope that you can all come and bring a neighbor or a friend so that everyone can get to know each other and know what we do," she added.

Past SKVA President Russell Matthes, a co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar, Gaddie and the board members see the event as one opportunity for people to learn more about the organization's activities, but in a fun setting. The SKVA always welcomes new members, Gaddie and Matthes have pointed out. 

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS



SKVA SOCIAL

"Bring a Neighbor"
&
"Meet a Neighbor"

Thursday Sept. 19th
5:30pm-7:30pm
Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar
Siesta Key

Free Drinks
and Hors d'oeuvres
for all SKVA
Members and Neighbors

Cheers!

SIESTA KEY VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

The poster features a yellow background with a green vertical stripe on the right. At the top, the text 'SKVA SOCIAL' is in large, blue, block letters. Below it, the phrases 'Bring a Neighbor' and 'Meet a Neighbor' are in purple, separated by an ampersand. The date and time 'Thursday Sept. 19th 5:30pm-7:30pm' are in blue and orange. The venue 'Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar Siesta Key' is in red. The offer 'Free Drinks and Hors d'oeuvres for all SKVA Members and Neighbors' is in pink and green. 'Cheers!' is in large red letters. At the bottom, there are colorful silhouettes of people holding drinks. On the right side, there is a graphic of a palm tree, a beach lamp, and waves, with the text 'SIESTA KEY VILLAGE ASSOCIATION' in orange below it.



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 community calendar, I always know what the most exciting happenings are each week. Plus, it is simply so beautiful, with photography that takes my breath away.

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

You have a whole week.

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A&E BRIEFS

The cast of *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* has fun at a photo shoot: (standing from left) Ava Podewitz, Katie Dunn-Rankin, Patty McGuire, Moriah Haley, Reese Balliet, Samantha Crawford, (from left on floor) Leah Henry, Taylor Reister, Nathan Oss, Jillian Alexander, Jake Cooper and Sarah Beth Johnson. Contributed photo by Renee McVety

VENICE THEATRE TO PRESENT **SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK LIVE!**

Venice Theatre's Generations Series will present *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* — the musical version of the Emmy Award-winning Saturday morning series, *Schoolhouse Rock* — from Thursday, Sept. 12, through Sunday, Sept. 29, the theater has announced.

Schoolhouse Rock Live! — like the television show many parents of today's youngsters grew up watching in the '70s and '80s — teaches English (*Conjunction, Junction, What's Your Function?*), math (*Zero, My Hero*), social

studies (*Just A Bill*) and science (*A Victim of Gravity*) through upbeat pop songs and imaginative lyrics, a news release says. The original *Schoolhouse Rock* was the brainchild of an advertising executive who noticed his son could remember all the words to popular songs on the radio, but the son could not memorize the multiplication tables, the release points out. *Schoolhouse Rock* was born and quickly adopted by ABC-TV, which broadcast the series from 1973 to 1985, the release continues.

Schoolhouse Rock Live! adds a storyline to help unify the songs. It introduces audiences to Terry (played by Pine View High School student Katie Dunn-Rankin), a nerve-wracked teacher who is nervous about her first day in a classroom. As she tries to relax by watching TV, various characters representing facets of her personality emerge from the set and show her how to win over her students.

The stage show, conceived by writer/director Scott Ferguson, opened in Chicago in 1993. It played for eight months to sold-out houses in the basement theater of an eclectic vegetarian restaurant, the release adds. It then moved to larger venues in Chicago and won several awards as well as critical acclaim. The *Chicago Sun-Times* gave the production an A+ calling it “sheer joy.”

Schoolhouse Rock Live! moved to New York City in 1995, where it enjoyed an 11-month off-Broadway run, receiving positive notices from CNN, MTV News and *Entertainment Tonight*, the release points out.

Performances will take place on the Pinkerton Stage at 7 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and at 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets are \$10 for students and \$17 for adults. They may be purchased online at www.venicestage.com or by calling the box office at 488-1115. Discounts are available for groups of 20 or more, as well as for educators and families who attend the Saturday matinees.

Box office hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and one hour before show time. The theater is located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. in Venice.

FLORIDA WATERCOLOR SOCIETY'S ANNUAL EXHIBITION PLANNED

The Florida Watercolor Society's 42nd Annual Exhibition will be held Sept. 16 through Oct. 25 at Art Center Sarasota, the Society has announced.

The show will present “100 of the best works by artists from Florida and around the country,” a news release says. Among them are 40 works of west central Florida artists, including Kris Parins, Helen Burkett, Elaine Charney and Diane Schmidt of Sarasota; Roger Parent of Osprey; Gary Morgan of Nokomis; Marilyn Priem and Deb Wicks of Venice; Roger Rockefeller of Longboat Key; Pauline Boston of Parrish; Anne Abgott and Susanna Spann of Cortez; and Kathy Simon-McDonald and Linda Lucas of Bradenton, the release notes.

The opening reception will be held Sept. 20 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Art Center Sarasota, 707

N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. The event is free and open to the public.

Awards will be presented at a gala dinner on Sept. 21 at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota, 1000 Boulevard of the Arts in Sarasota.

“The exhibition is one of the highlights of the Florida Watercolor Society's (FWS) annual conference,” which is scheduled Sept. 19-22 at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota, the release continues. The convention will feature demonstrations by 20 artists, critiques from award-winning artists and an extensive trade show with vendors from across the United States offering products at exclusive prices, the release adds.

Internationally renowned watercolorist Linda Baker has been named the judge for the exhi-



Seatcovers by Pauline Boston. Image courtesy of the Florida Watercolor Society



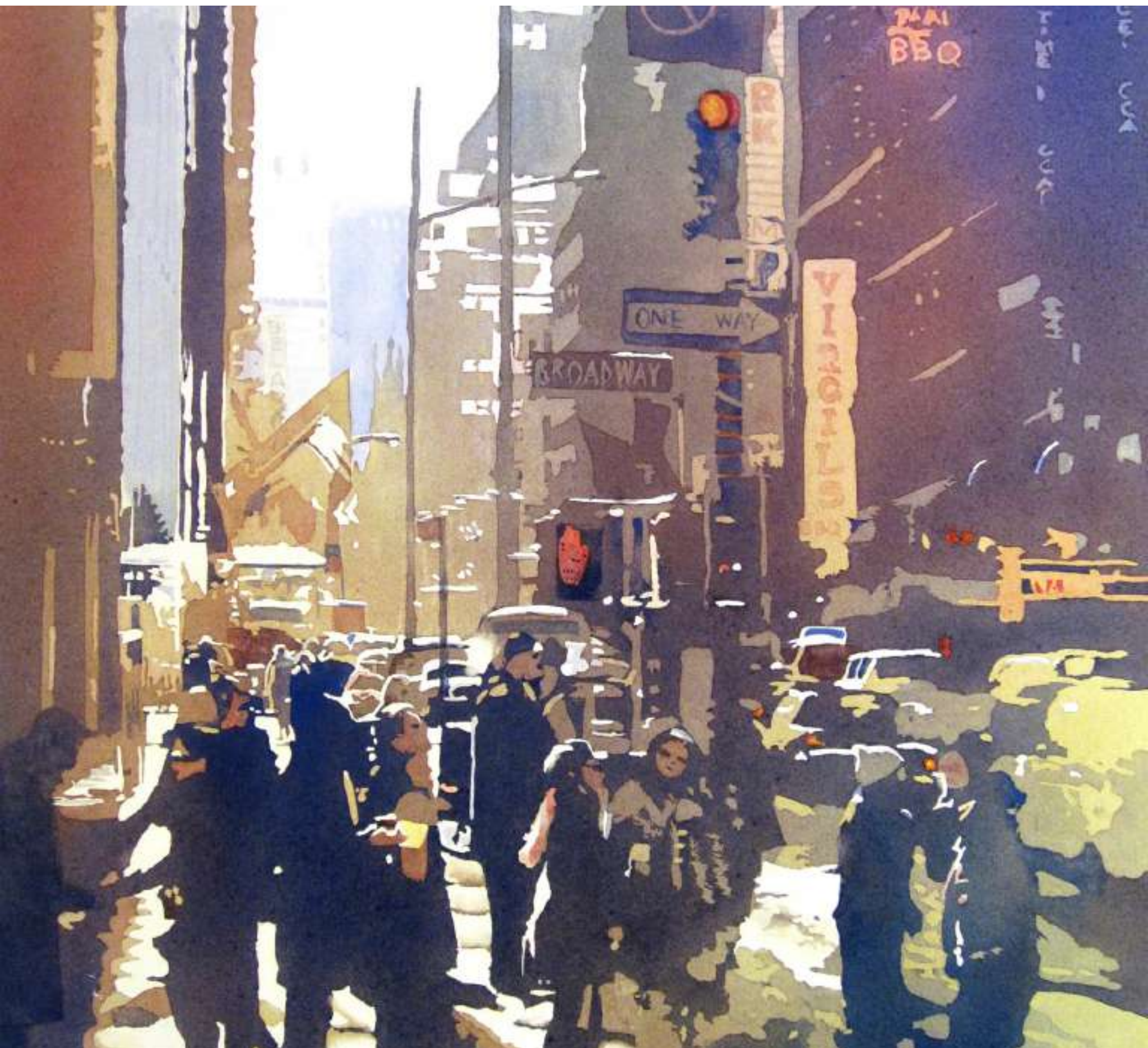
Crystal and Pears by Roger Rockefeller. Image courtesy of the Florida Watercolor Society

bition, the release points out. Baker selected the show's entries from among 596 submissions from 492 artists, the release says.

"With more than 1,000 members, FWS is one of the largest state-based watercolor societies in the United States," the release notes. Membership is open to all artists residing in the state of Florida. For more in-

formation about the exhibit or convention, visit www.floridawatercolorsociety.org. Registration for all events will be available on the FWS website.

For more information about the annual exhibition, call 365-2032 or visit www.artsarasota.org.



City Lights by Kris Parins. Image courtesy of the Florida Watercolor Society

DE WARREN TO OFFER DANCE APPRECIATION CLASSES AT SCTI

The Sarasota International Dance Festival, the presenting organization for the Carreño Dance Festival, will continue its program this fall with classes at the Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI), festival organizers have announced.


Robert de Warren, president of the festival, will offer two dance appreciation courses through the Adult Community Enrichment (ACE) curriculum at SCTI, a news release notes.

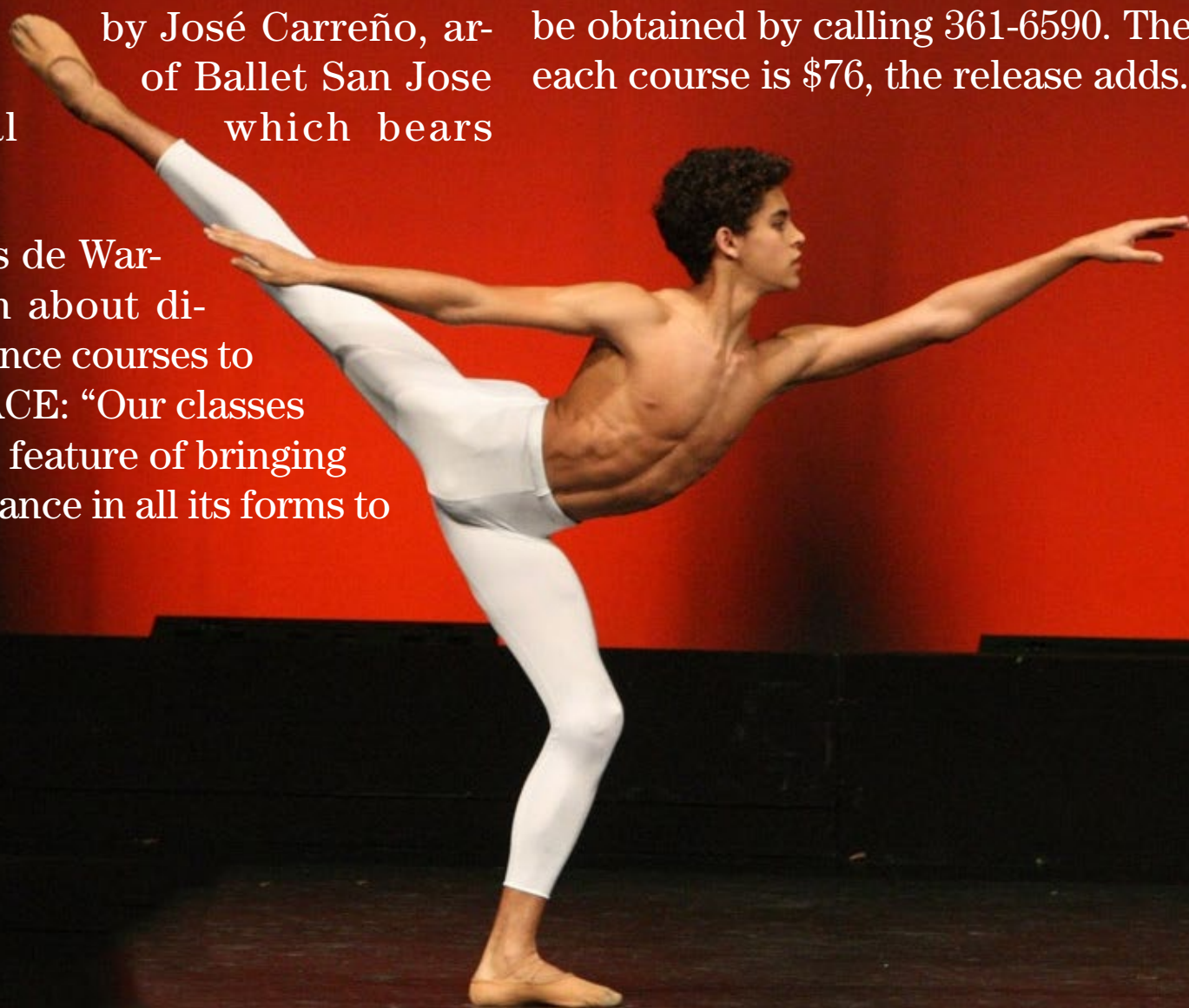
The Carreño Dance Festival recently completed its third season of Summer Master Class Intensive classes for pre-professional dance students “with an impressive Festival of Stars performance at the Sarasota Opera House,” the release adds. “The prestigious international faculty was led by José Carreño, artistic director of Ballet San Jose and the festival which bears his name.”

The release notes de Warren’s enthusiasm about directing the first dance courses to be presented by ACE: “Our classes at SCTI are a new feature of bringing appreciation for dance in all its forms to our community.”

The first of the two courses is called *From Crinolines and Heels to Tutus on Pointe*, the release notes. It will be an in-depth look at the origins of ballet and dance’s development over the past 300 years. Its sessions will be held on Oct. 3, 10, 17 and 24 and will include demonstrations by several young pre-professional dancers, the release points out.

The second class will be offered on Oct. 31 and Nov. 7, 14 and 21, providing an overview of modern and contemporary dance. It will feature a guest speaker.

The sessions of each course will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. in the new SCTI complex at 4748 Beneva Road in Sarasota (at the corner of Beneva and Proctor roads) in the dance studio of Building 3-114. Registration information may be obtained by calling 361-6590. The cost for each course is \$76, the release adds. 



Pre-professional dancer Francisco Serrano was featured in the Festival of Stars performance last month. Image courtesy of the Carreño Dance Festival and the International Ballet Competition



American Friends of Leket Israel Executive Director Lauren Yoked (center) was joined for lunch by Temple Emanu-El members Sally Yanowitz, Sybil Broh, Irv Broh, Sandy Schneiderman, and Allan Schneiderman. Contributed photo

LEKET DIRECTOR EDUCATES TEMPLE MEMBERS ABOUT HUNGER RELIEF

Did you know 25 percent of Israelis live below the poverty line?

Did you know nearly one million Israeli children have food insecurity?

Did you know over 30 percent of food in Israel is wasted?

These were among the sobering facts shared by Lauren Yoked, executive director of American Friends of Leket Israel, during her visit with Temple Emanu-El on Aug. 30, a news release says. “Speaking at a Mediterranean luncheon hosted by Temple Emanu-El Rabbi

Brenner Glickman, and during the synagogue’s Shabbat services that evening, Yoked brought news of the tremendous problem of hunger in Israel — and how Leket Israel is fighting it,” the release adds.

Only a decade old, Leket is Israel’s national food bank, working with 180 nonprofit agencies to provide food to more than a million Israelis in need, the release points out. With 50,000 volunteers, about 12 refrigerated trucks and a staff of paid employees — including Arab and Druze women enjoying “dignified employment for the first time in their lives,”

Yoked said — Leket partners with hundreds of farmers across Israel to glean crops that would otherwise go unharvested; rescues unused food from restaurants, hotels, corporate cafeterias and event halls; prepares a million sandwiches each year for hungry schoolchildren; and manages several orchards that produce crops exclusively for those Leket serves.

The relationship between Temple Emanu-El and Leket began in 2012, when participants in the Temple's Israel trip volunteered to pick tomatoes in Leket's fields, the release notes. Yoked's visit enabled Temple Emanu-El members to learn more about Leket "and to deepen understanding of hunger in Israel and ways to help," the release adds.

For more information about Leket Israel, please visit www.leket.org.



Rabbi Brenner Glickman (left) and Temple Emanu-El member Mitch Leon display their Leket Israel information packets. Contributed photo


FIRST CHURCH TO OFFER 10-WEEK COURSE ON ESTHER

First United Methodist Church at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in downtown Sarasota invites women to join a 10-week group study on the topic of *Esther: It's Tough Being a Woman*, prepared by Beth Moore.

The "in-depth and personal examination of this story of threat and deliverance" has been scheduled for Tuesdays from 6:30 to 8 p.m. beginning Sept. 10, a news release says. "The

materials and discussions will show how contemporary and applicable Esther is to the hurried, harried and pressured lives of today's women," the release adds.

The class includes a DVD presentation and facilitated group discussions. The donation for materials is \$15.

Call the church office (955-0935) for additional information or to register. 

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I am so incredibly pleased, with my beautiful smile
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

06**SEPTEMBER**

Too Hott Too Fast, featuring DJ Saint & Veronica Pastore (benefiting Designing Daughters and Designing Women Boutique)

Sept. 6, 10:30 p.m. to 2 a.m., Prana Restaurant & Lounge, 1118 N. Washington Blvd. Admission: \$20 (\$40 for a VIP ticket). Information: [Too Hott Too Fast event page](#).

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; \$12 at door. Information: 894-6469 or [WSLR.org](#).

06+**SEPTEMBER**

Dabbert Gallery presents *Summer Showcase*

Through Sept. 30, 76 S. Palm Ave. Admission: free. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](#).

06+**SEPTEMBER**

Allyn Gallup Gallery presents *Some Wonderful Abstractions*

Through Oct. 5, 1288 N. Palm Ave. Free admission. Information: 366-2454 or [AllynGallup.com](#).

12**SEPTEMBER**

4th Annual Hair of the Dog Charity Fundraiser

(benefiting Gimme Shelter Pet Adoption)

Sept. 12, 7 to 11 p.m., The Ritz-Carlton, 1111 Ritz-Carlton Drive, Sarasota. Admission: \$25. Information/tickets: [gimmeshelterpets.com](#).

12**SEPTEMBER**

WSLR presents *Grandpa's Cough Medicine*

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

14**SEPTEMBER**

Venice Theatre presents *Yesterdayze in concert*

Sept. 14, 8 p.m., 140 W. Tampa Ave., Venice. Tickets: \$20. Information: 488-1115 or [VeniceStage.com](#).

20**SEPTEMBER**

Rocking through the Ages – Gatsby Soirée

(benefiting Make-A-Wish Central & Northern Florida)

Sept. 20, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., Michael's On East, 1212 S. East Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$75 in advance; \$100 at the door. Information: 952-WISH or [RockingThroughTheAges page](#).

YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST

9/11: NEVER FORGET

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader
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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



New York City

*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.*