

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 1 — September 20, 2013

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*



**'N'AWLINS' DESIGN TAKES A TACK  
A PATH TO COMPLIANCE  
CONFIDENCE AND CONTENTION**

*Inside*

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# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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# Welcome

Although we began celebrating last week, as we anticipated the start of the *News Leader's* second year, as I write this, I truly am savoring what a momentous occasion we are marking.

My husband never takes enough credit for his role in envisioning a digital weekly news publication that would serve not only my interest in staying on top of local events but also allow him to keep his writing and management skills honed.

And while I took the opportunity last week to credit the team members who have been with us from the outset, I cannot begin to lavish enough praise on them and Roger Drouin, who joined us this summer. I have been extraordinarily fortunate to work with some incredible journalists through the years, and our *News Leader* staff is most assuredly among them.

Many, many years ago, when I was a lowly college intern at *The News & Observer* in Raleigh, NC, an editor told me it was very difficult to find people who could write and report equally well. Yet, Cooper Levey-Baker, Stan Zimmerman and Roger Drouin all fit that hard-to-find profile. It is not just a pleasure to work with them, it is an honor.

I also want to put in much-deserved plugs once again for Norman Schimmel, Cleve Posey and Vicki Chatley. Without excellent photos, superior layouts and exemplary copy editing, our stories would not “shine.”

“Labor of love” may be a cliché, but it does describe what we do every week at the *News Leader*. And we love hearing from you, our readers. After all, you are the ones who truly have made this possible.

***Rachel Brown Hackney***  
Editor and Publisher





## 'N'AWLINS' DESIGN TAKES A TACK



## REOPENING AN OLD WOUND



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# 'N'AWLINS' DESIGN TAKES A TACK



*Plans call for the 18-story tower at Gulfstream Avenue and U.S. 41 to be a Westin hotel and condos.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## PLAN FOR GULFSTREAM AVENUE TOWER INCHES FORWARD

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Plans for another 18-story tower went before the City of Sarasota's Development Review Committee on Wednesday morning, Sept. 18. While there were snags and literal bumps mentioned by city staffers, the initiative will continue moving forward. The \$100 million project is called the "Sarasota Gulfstream," and it will sit adjacent to the Ritz-Carlton at the northwest corner of U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue.

The developer plans a 250-room Westin hotel and 144 condominiums on the higher floors. On Wednesday, the developer's staff responded to 12 pages of comments by city staffers.

The discussion of tree removal and replanting took some time, as the developer proposed continuing the line of royal palm trees flank-

ing the entrance to the Ritz-Carlton while removing other trees from the lot. Old-timers will recall the property used to be home to a Denny's restaurant and a Holiday Inn.

Those prior uses help the current owner meet traffic concurrency regulations, because those uses "grandfather" the current plans. One transportation headache remains, however, and that is how the development will permit continuation of the multi-use recreational trail that passes by the property.

Because the land use goes well back in Sarasota history, the site is a maze of underground utilities. Some of them are now considered environmentally unfriendly, while others need to be rerouted to make way for the new tower.





*Businessman Chris Brown will proceed with seeking City Commission approval for the galleries he wants to include in a redesign of the building at 1400 Main St. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

Another possible change to the architectural design is the need for windows at the end of hotel and condo corridors on the U.S. 41 side that will be large enough to handle evacuation via fire trucks in case of disaster.


Another fire-truck issue is the grade of the driveway to the entrance. At one point it is 8 degrees, which is marginal for the bigger rigs. These and other issues on those 12 pages will be ironed out over the coming months. And when all is done, there will be a community meeting to allow the public to examine the final plans.

### **'BIG EASY' BALCONY DISCUSSION DEFERRED**

Also on the DRC agenda this week — but pulled off — was businessman Chris Brown's plan for wrought-iron balconies (technically

called "galleries") that would jut out from the second floor of the old Patrick's building on Five Points, at 1400 Main St. The proposal has a distinct French Quarter air.

The construction requires a "major encroachment" under city zoning and building rules, which can be granted only by the City Commission. Therefore, Brown pulled his plans from the DRC agenda and will ask the commission directly for permission to create the design he and his architect have in mind.

If the commission gives its approval, Brown will return to the DRC to seek its OK of his plans and engineering drawings. Meanwhile, Brown has purchased the adjacent property at 1410 Main St. He paid \$1.35 million for that property. 



*Bruce Franklin, representative of the developer of the Gulfstream hotel/condo project, notes details in documents at the city's Development Review Committee meeting this week. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



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## A PATH TO COMPLIANCE

*The owners of 6537 Sabal Drive have been granted county permits to remove noncompliant construction on the property. File photo*

### OWNERS OF A SIESTA KEY HOUSE A RENTER CHARACTERIZED AS A FIRE HAZARD HAVE OBTAINED COUNTY PERMITS TO REMOVE STRUCTURES THAT VIOLATE COUNTY AND FEDERAL BUILDING REGULATIONS

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

A Bradenton contractor told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week he plans to pick up county permits “in about a week or so” to tear out structures of a Siesta Key house that has been the focus of a [legal complaint](#) Sarasota County filed in July.

According to John Lally, the Code Enforcement officer who works on Siesta Key, the permits were issued on Sept. 12. The contractor is Sarasota

Construction and Remodeling Co. of Bradenton, owned by Spiro Paizes.

A county Building Department spokeswoman told the *News Leader* this week that the contractor needed only to pay for the permits and pick them up before the work can begin.

When asked by the *News Leader* how long it would take to complete the project at 6537 Sabal Drive on the south end of the is-

“Our system is not designed to collect money. It’s designed to bring people into compliance.”

David M. Pearce  
Assistant County Attorney  
Sarasota County





land, Paizes said on Sept. 17, “I have no idea right now.”

On July 9, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh won approval from the County Commission to file a civil complaint against the owners of the Sabal Drive house because features of the structure violate facets of both the county’s building code and Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA) regulations for construction in a flood zone.

After a tourist renting the house notified county staff in November 2012 about her concerns that it was a firetrap, Code Enforcement staff cited the owner, Siesta Resorts LLC, for multiple violations.

Julie Miller Jones of Arden Hills, MN, wrote in a formal statement for Sarasota County Fire

Safety Inspector Katelyn Qualey that when Jones and her family members arrived at the house, “[W]e were concerned about the safety of all, but particularly families with babies staying in the lower level. None of the six rooms in the basement, billed as bedrooms, had windows, egress or sprinkler systems. For the entire space, there was only one door for egress and a plate glass window in the ‘kitchen’ which would need to be broken in the event of a fire blocking the other door.”

With no response from the owner or the attorney listed as the owner’s agent, Code Enforcement brought the two matters before a Special Magistrate in June. Those hearings resulted in the imposition of a fine of \$250 per day in each case for the first day of noncompliance, with the fine going up to \$500 a day for each



*An aerial view shows the location of the Sabal Drive house near Old Stickney Point Road (upper left) on Siesta Key. Image from Google Maps*



subsequent day the property remained in non-compliance.

That action still brought no response from Sarasota chiropractor Dr. Craig Siegel — who was listed in Sarasota County Property Appraiser Office records as having a life estate in the house; Siesta Resorts LLC, listed as the trustee of the land trust for the property; or The Daniels Law Firm, which county records showed to be the registered agent for Siesta Resorts LLC.

David M. Pearce, the assistant county attorney handling the case, told the *News Leader* in late August that he subsequently filed a motion seeking a temporary injunction to compel Siesta Resorts LLC to deal with the noncompliance issues. That motion is set to be heard Oct. 21 in 12th Judicial Circuit Court

in Sarasota, Pearce said on Sept. 17. However, if the violating structures were removed prior to that date, it would be up to the County Commission to determine whether it wanted to proceed with the case.

The complaint says a permanent mandatory injunction requires demonstration that a clear legal right has been violated; irreparable harm has been threatened; and an adequate legal remedy is unavailable.

Even if the house is brought into compliance, Pearce pointed out on Sept. 17, “There are the running fines.”

Siesta Resorts LLC could go ahead and pay the full amount, Pearce said, or it has the option of trying to demonstrate financial hardship and ask the Special Magistrate to reduce the liens the county has placed on the house.



*An outside staircase leads to the second floor of the house. File photo*



In the worst-case scenario, if Siesta Resorts LLC refused to pay the fines or even to negotiate with the county over them, Pearce pointed out, the county could foreclose on the property.

However, Pearce said, “Our system is not designed to collect money. It’s designed to bring people into compliance.”

## THE LAWSUIT

Prior to the recent permit action, Brandon M. Daniels of Daniels & Hannan on Fruitville Road in Sarasota acted as the attorney for Siesta Resorts LLC in filing an answer to the county’s civil complaint on Aug. 6.

In response to 11 of the 35 supporting statements Pearce included in the suit, Daniels

wrote, “Defendants are without knowledge and therefore deny the same.”

Among the statements to which Daniels replied in that manner were the facts that Lally issued a “Notice of Violation/Notice to Obtain Permit” to The Daniels Law Firm on Nov. 19, 2012, regarding the noncompliant structures at the house; that the property was owned by Siesta Resorts at the time Lally issued the notice; that Lally issued an Affidavit of Violation to The Daniels Law Firm, as the registered agent for Siesta Resorts, on March 25 of this year, stating the violations continued to exist on the property; and that on June 14 of this year, the Code Enforcement Special Magistrate found Siesta Resorts in continuing violation of the compliance order and imposed the fines.

The screenshot shows the VRBO website interface for vacation rentals in Siesta Key, Florida. The header includes the VRBO logo, navigation links (Rental Guarantee, Advantages, Community, Help), and user options (Traveler login, Owner login, List your property). The search bar shows "Private Homes, Siesta Key, Florida" with filters for Arrival, Departure, and Sleeps. Below the search bar, there are filters for Sort by (VRBO Sort), Bedrooms (Any), and All filters (Add+). The main heading is "Private Homes - 62 vacation rentals". A breadcrumb trail shows the location: Home > USA > Florida > Florida South West > Siesta Key > Private Homes. Five property listings are displayed with images and details:

- Property 1:** 4Br • 2Ba • Sleeps 10-12. FROM \$199 TO \$589/NIGHT+TAX USD ONLY.
- Property 2:** 4Br • 2Ba • Sleeps 11. \$1995 - \$2443 per week (USD).
- Property 3:** 2Br • 1Ba • Sleeps 6. \$595/wk, \$1995/mo (USD).
- Property 4:** 1Br • 1Ba • Sleeps 2-5. \$99 to \$259/nt+tax USD ONLY.
- Property 5:** 2Br • 2Ba • Sleeps 4. £107 - £155 per night (GBP).

Below the listings, there is a section titled "Private Homes Vacation Rentals" with a featured property:

- Featured Property:** Next to the Beach & 1 Block to the Village. 3 Bedrooms+ • 2.5 Bathrooms • Sleeps 10 • Private Homes #51906. \$189 - \$291 per night (2-7 night min stay).

*The Vacation Rentals by Owner website features 62 properties on Siesta Key, but the Sabal Drive listing no longer can be found. Image from [VRBO](#)*



Daniels did admit in his answer that both Siegel and Siesta Resorts have an interest in the Sabal Drive house. The county complaint says that on Dec. 31, 2012, “Siegel as Trustee executed and recorded a ‘Grant of Possessory Right and Beneficial Interest’” in official Sarasota County records. However, Pearce also stated in the complaint that no copy of the Land Trust Agreement purporting to convey that right to Siegel could be located in county records.

A Sept. 17 search of the Sarasota County Property Appraiser’s records still showed Siegel listed as an owner with a “life estate.”

Although the *News Leader* also learned in July that Siegel had applied for a homestead exemption for the Sabal Drive property, the record shows “no exemptions associated with this parcel.”

The 2013 just market value of the building and land is \$646,300.

## NO MORE LISTING

County documents showed Siegel was renting the house to tourists through the website [Vacation Rentals by Owner](#) (VRBO). A *News Leader* check of that site on Sept. 17 found 6537 Sabal Drive no longer was listed among Siesta properties. A search incorporating the house’s code number resulted in the response, “Oops, you stumped the VRBO search engine!”

Nonetheless, the *News Leader* received an email from a person on Sept. 6 identifying himself and family members as “snowbirds from up north, Southern Ontario and from Western New York,” who recently reserved the house for dates in March 2014 — the first trip they had planned to Siesta Key. The writer



*John Lally addresses members of the Siesta Key Village Association in August. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

said they were “completely shocked” to find the *News Leader*’s July 19 article about the county legal complaint, because “we just submitted a down payment for [the rental].”

After the *News Leader* suggested the writer get in touch with Sarasota County Code Enforcement staff or the County Attorney’s Office for an update on the civil case, the writer responded that he and his family members “will also be contacting our bank to try to resolve the situation.”

The writer added, “We are extremely concerned as no calls or emails have been returned to us regarding this property ...”

In July, the VRBO website listing said the house could accommodate up to 40 people, with a total of 10 bedrooms and five bathrooms. The site said rent was \$4,500 a week from January through April but it dropped to \$3,900 a week from September through December. 





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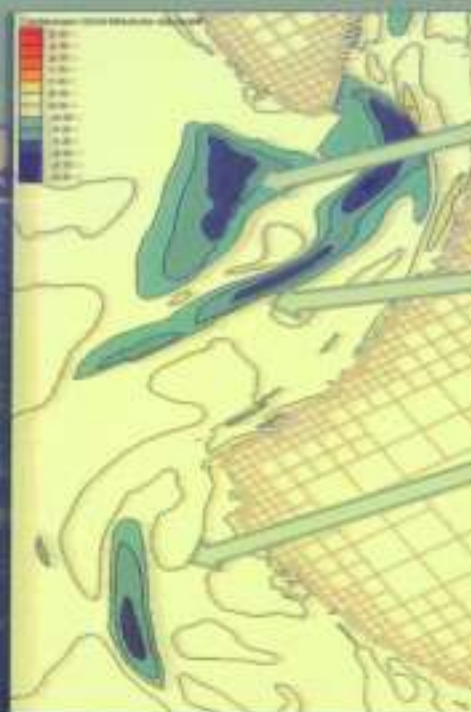
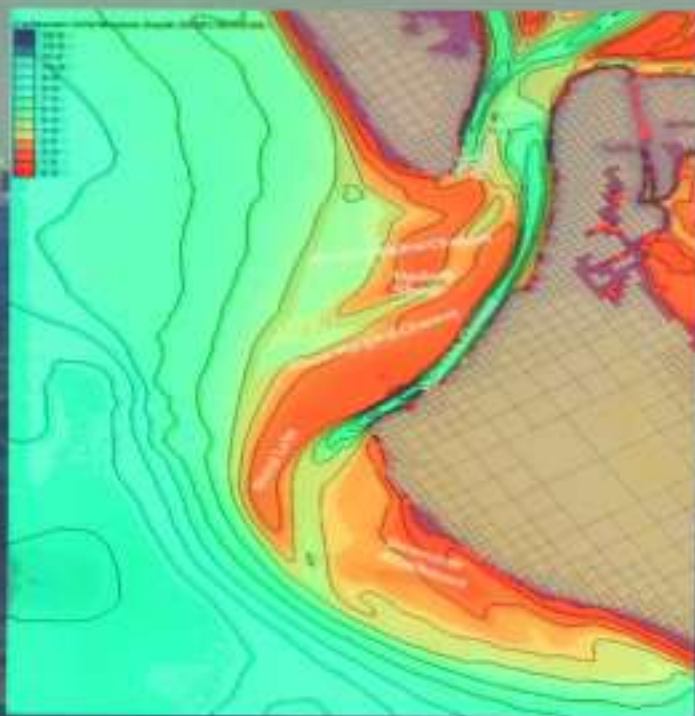
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## CONFIDENCE AND CONTENTION

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*A graphic shows the predicted effects on Big Pass from dredging and groin placement on Lido Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

### THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS SAYS IT CAN DREDGE BIG PASS FOR THE LIDO BEACH RENOURISHMENT AND INSTALL GROINS ON LIDO WITHOUT HARMING SIESTA KEY, BUT PUBLIC SKEPTICISM REMAINS

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manager in charge of the planned \$22.7 million Lido Beach renourishment project expressed confidence this week that dredging sand from Big Pass and placing three groins on the southern end of Lido would not harm either the pass or Siesta Key Public Beach.

“The only logical solution for initial construction and ... subsequent renourishment

material is to recycle the accumulated sand [from Big Pass], which originally came from Lido Key,” Milan A. Mora told members of the Sarasota County Coastal Advisory Committee and about 30 audience members on Sept. 18 in Sarasota.

Mora said the project team hopes to start the permitting process with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in the next month or two

“We think ... the results that have been provided are reasonable and that they do accurately predict what the effects might be, or lack thereof in this particular case.

Thomas P. Pierro  
Director  
Coastal Planning & Engineering Inc.



— late October or early November. He was hopeful, he added, that the state would grant the permit within a year, though he conceded he had no idea how long the review would take.

Nonetheless, funding for the Lido project is not included in the federal budget for 2014. Mora added that he hopes the funding would be granted for the 2015 fiscal year. “That’s the goal,” he pointed out. “I cannot comment on internal policy of the Corps, but it could be as early as 2015 ... It all depends on what Congress decides to appropriate, and right now, all I know is we’re asking for it.”

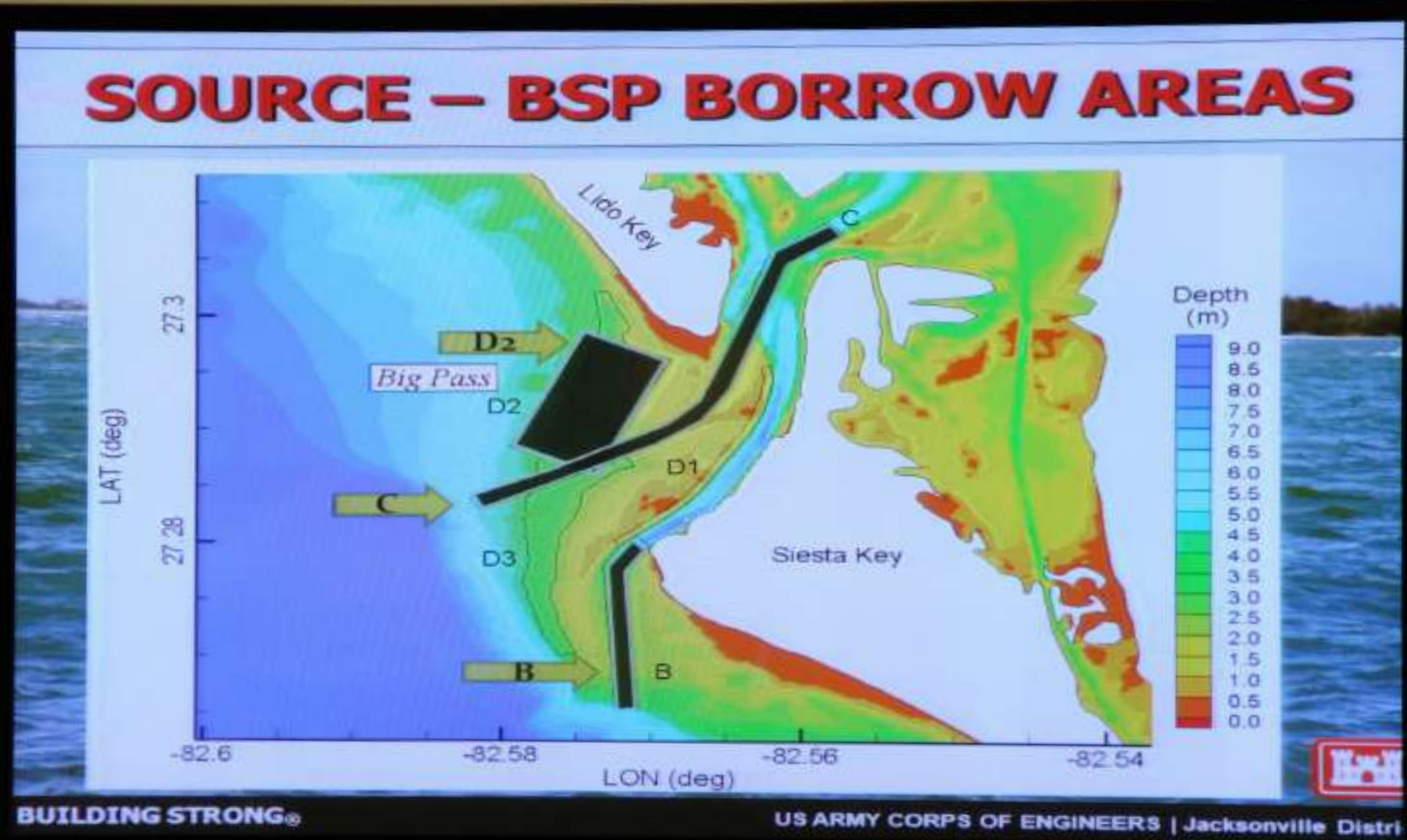
The Corps is responsible for 65 percent of the expense, while the City of Sarasota will be covering the rest of the cost, using Tourist

Development Tax revenue set aside for that purpose.

In response to an audience member’s question, Mora explained that if the groins were removed from the project, it could take 12 to 15 years to complete new studies necessary to redesign the project.

Several of the approximately 30 audience members took the opportunity to address Mora and his team. Among them was Jono Miller, a member of the Environmental Studies faculty at New College of Florida.

“We’re looking at a proposal that’s trying to fix a location for these coastal resources,” he said of the plan to dredge the ebb shoal of Big Pass and then use the groins to keep the renourished sand stabilized on Lido Beach. This



*A graphic shows the best places to obtain sand for the Lido renourishment are from Big Pass. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



project, along with a new initiative to reopen Midnight Pass on Siesta Key, Miller added, “I think are evidence of just how out of touch we are with our coastal strategy in Sarasota County.”

## THE PLAN AND MODELS

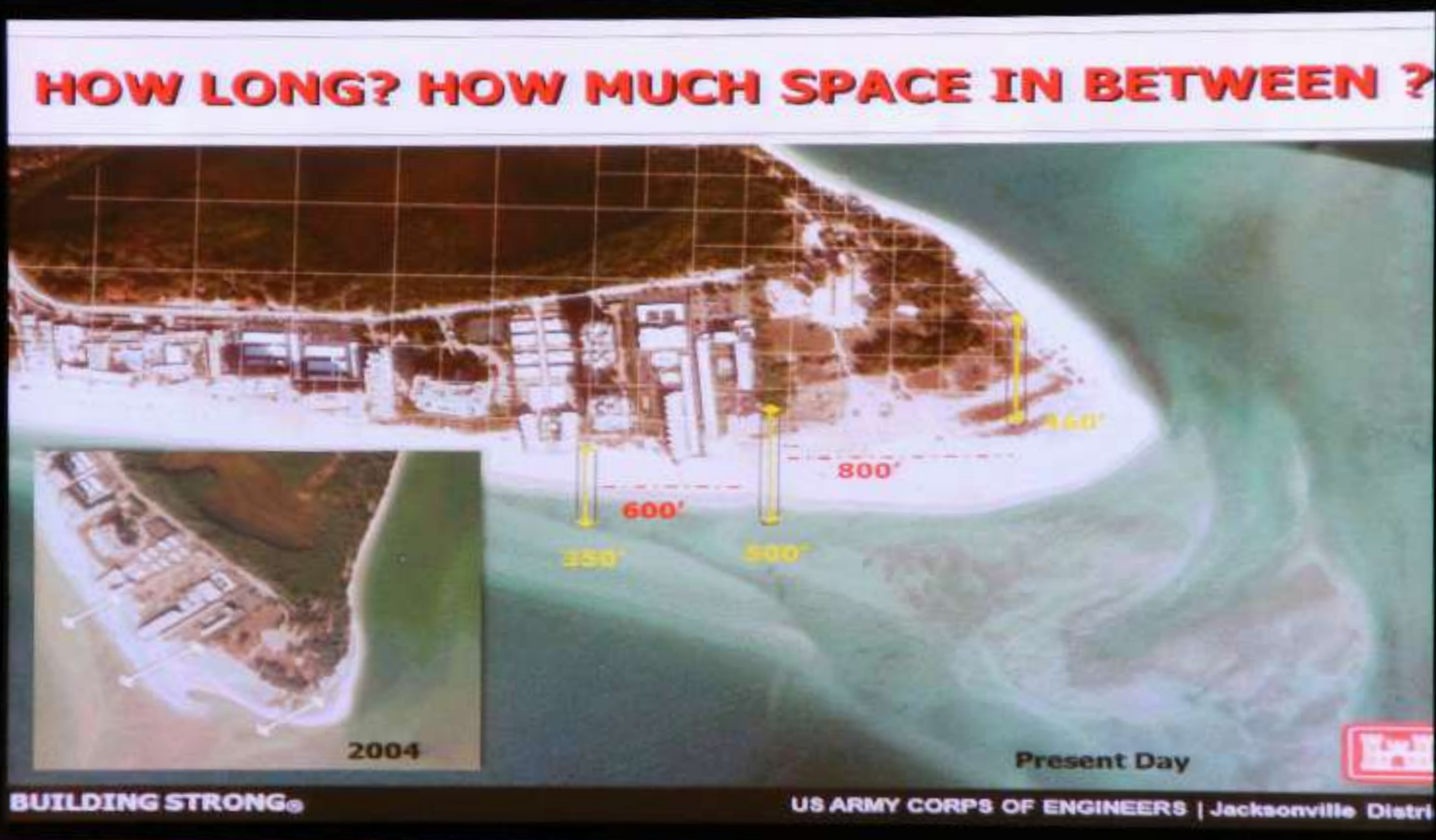
Using a PowerPoint presentation, Mora explained that 1.2 million cubic yards of sand would be dredged from Big Pass — and possibly New Pass, as well — to fill in Lido Beach over a 1.6-mile stretch from just north of John Ringling Boulevard to Lido Key Park.

The plan calls for renourishment intervals over a 50-year period, he continued. Every five years, another 615,000 cubic yards of sand would be used in those subsequent projects.

Mora also said that if a major erosion event occurred between the five-year renourishment periods, he was hopeful Congress would authorize emergency funding for an earlier initiative to restore the beach to pre-storm conditions.

Regarding the three groins proposed on the southern end of Lido Key, Mora said, “[They] are constructed to anchor the nourishment template, not to intercept sediment at the expense of down-drift beaches.” In other words, they are being planned to keep the new sand in place on Lido without harming Siesta Public Beach, as sand on Florida’s west coast tends to drift from north to south.

The Corps and its consultants have been working on models of Big Pass and the affected area over the past 18 months, Mora explained.



*A diagram shows where three groins would be constructed on the southern end of Lido Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



A major concern during that process would be the effect of the dredging and groins on Siesta Key, Mora said. "When using ebb shoal sand from any pass, you must be careful not to change its characteristics," he pointed out. The modeling had shown "no indication of increased erosion over the existing condition at Siesta Key," he added.

As far as effects on the Big Pass channel for boaters, Mora said the models also had provided assurance of "no significant differences in navigable water depth."

Thomas P. Pierro, director of Coastal Planning & Engineering Inc. in Boca Raton — a consultant who has been working with the Corps on the project since the feasibility studies began several years ago — concurred with Mora that Big Pass is the best source of sand. "We think ... the results that have been provided are reasonable," he said, "and that they do accurately predict what the effects might be, or lack thereof in this particular case."

People had asked a number of questions about the groins designed for Lido, Mora continued. The northernmost structure would be 250 feet long; the middle one, 500 feet; and the southernmost one, 460 feet in length. Eight hundred feet would separate the middle one from the southernmost groin, he added, while 600 feet would be the distance between the middle one and the northernmost groin.

On the beach, he said, "They will be practically covered." However, enough of the structures should be visible to swimmers and people on jet skis, for example, in the Gulf of Mexico. A groin is "not a navigation hazard," he pointed out.

If the groins are installed and the federal government decides it will authorize no more funding for beach renourishment projects, Mora continued, "you're gonna have some build-up of material here" on the southern end of Lido.



*Coastal Advisory Committee member Dean Mades (left) talks with Chairman Gary Comp. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



Pierro concurred again, saying that “some structure stabilization is required at the southern end [of Lido]” to maintain the 80-foot-wide renourished expanse of beach.

Even with a 20-year storm event, Pierro said, the 80 feet of sand should remain if the groins are put in place.

Pierro also pointed out that groins are “becoming a more preferred process” in renourishment projects.

When CAC Chairman Gary Comp asked whether the effect of wind might expose the groins on the beach over time, Pierro responded that sand “often piles up at the back of the beach,” especially given wind conditions on Lido. There, he noted, it often mounds against

the fronts of buildings. However, he said, that effect could be lessened through the planting of grasses. “It’s generally not a major factor,” Pierro added of the windblown sand.

CAC member Dean Mades asked for more details about the modeling, especially in regard to the effects of wave height and direction as well as the current in the Gulf of Mexico during a storm. “Have you looked at the robustness of this design?”

Another consultant working with the Corps explained that such factors had been taken into consideration. Some of the data incorporated in the study, the consultant said, was generated between May and November 2004, when Florida experienced a very active hurricane season.



*Milan A. Mora, the project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, addresses the committee members. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



When audience member David Munro, a resident of the area since 1998 and an avid boater, asked whether the Corps team used **LIDAR** data in the modeling, the answer was “Yes,” but that data was from 2004. One of the consultants pointed out the high cost of requesting a flight over a specific area — roughly \$1 million, to accumulate that information.

The consultant added that she did not believe new LIDAR data was necessary, “but I believe it’s prudent to understand long-term trends [in Big Pass].”


## NEXT STEPS

Mora said his team would repeat its Sept. 18 presentation during a joint meeting of the

Sarasota City and County commissions on Oct. 22. (See related story in this issue.)

On Dec. 5, the team will meet with members of the Siesta Key Association to present the models. Then, on Dec. 7, the Corps group will make the presentation to the Boaters Coalition at the Sarasota Yacht Club.

Laird Wreford, the county’s coastal resources manager, told the CAC members that the County Commission had not requested specific action from them this week. However, such direction might come after the Oct. 22 session.

Members agreed they wanted more information — and to await any direction from the County Commission — before weighing in on the renourishment plan. “There’s an awful lot to digest today,” Mades said. 



*David Munro addresses the project team and the Coastal Advisory Committee members. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



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PHOTO BY FRANKATURA







# REOPENING AN OLD WOUND

*Luke Wood Park stored stacks of construction material while the Lift Station 87 project was on hold last year. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE NEW PROJECT ENGINEERING FIRM HOLDS ITS FIRST OPEN MEETING AS THE CITY OF SARASOTA TRIES ONCE MORE TO COMPLETE LIFT STATION 87

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Construction crews are coming back to Avondale and Luke Wood Park, as work begins anew on Lift Station 87. In some ways, it is all starting from scratch.

Robert Garland is the project manager for McKim & Creed, the new engineering firm taking over where the failed contractor stopped. On Wednesday evening, Sept. 18, he introduced his team to City of Sarasota utility officials and began to outline his plan.

“This is Phase One of a two-phase project,” said Garland. “We will review the existing plans and information. There’s going to be a lot of activity at one time, a lot of overlapping tasks.”

The first phase is set to end Dec. 13 with distribution of a report containing four technical manuals on how to move forward.

He comes to the project fresh: “McKim has not had any responsibility for anything that has been done and built in the past.”

“The current design used a micro-tunnel under Hudson Bayou. We’ll look at that, may look at going deeper. We’ll also look at horizontal directional drilling.”

Robert Garland  
Project Manager  
McKim & Creed



## CHECK AND RECHECK

Lift Station 87 will handle about one-third of Sarasota's sewage. If you live south of Fruitville Road, you have a personal stake in the success of LS 87. It will handle as much as 2.7 million gallons per day, every day. Failure is not an option.

But the old system did fail. Lift Station 7 made repeated discharges of raw sewage into Hudson Bayou, right past the home of now-City Commissioner Susan Chapman. At times, this project has been her personal crusade — marshaling neighbors and neighborhoods — to force the city to acknowledge the failures and then push through a solution.

The solution was a new lift station, capable of handling up to 9.7 million gallons of peak

flow. It would have redundancy, so if one part of the system failed or needed repairs, a parallel structure would be ready. For peak flows, both would operate.

Most of the city's sewage flows under the force of gravity, which means that as the pipe goes further, it has to go deeper. By the time the collection pipes arrive at the site of the new Lift Station 87, they must be significantly below the bottom of Hudson Bayou.

To make that happen, the old contractor — without any prior experience — selected a technique called micro tunneling. While the reasons are in dispute (and in court), the contractor could not create the tunnel for the pipe. Eventually, he withdrew in a flurry of lawsuits.



*Osprey Avenue was closed at Mound Street for months while work proceeded on the lift station project.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Now Garland is taking up the mantle. He is in charge of a \$1.1 million contract to devise a plan to fix the project.

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED

“The current design used a micro-tunnel under Hudson Bayou,” said Garland at the Sept. 18 meeting. “We’ll look at that, may look at going deeper. We’ll also look at horizontal directional drilling. And we’ll look at alternative alignments, shifting to the right or left.”

The horizontal directional scheme would create an “inverted siphon” under the Bayou.

Starting next month, test borings will be conducted to recheck existing conditions. “We’ll need to get our drill rigs started,” noted Garland. “We’ll have them in the field Oct. 7.” In

addition, the company will undertake a hydrographic survey of the lime rock base of Hudson Bayou and examine the footers of the Osprey Avenue bridge.

Steve Topovski, the city’s project manager, said the neighborhoods will be alerted. And teams from McKim and Creed must follow the rules about using city right of way. “So you’ll need to give us a little earlier heads-up,” pointed out Steve Crumpton, a utilities manager for the city.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

This could be the most open project the city ever has attempted. There is a full-time public relations specialist involved, Michelle Robin-




*The Lift Station 87 group meets on Sept. 18. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*



son. There is a complaint line at 356-0871. And Robinson is building a website (not yet up) at [www.liftstation87.com](http://www.liftstation87.com).

Following the Wednesday technical meeting, the group held a Thursday evening meet-and-greet in the City Commission chambers with a short briefing and Q&A session.

But what really is out of the ordinary are plans to hold open meetings in the City Hall Annex on the second and fourth Mondays every month at 10 a.m. This is when the contractor and city staff will swap information, ask questions and make decisions. The twice-monthly meetings are open to anyone, so people can ask questions of the experts.

The city has invested about \$8 million so far in the project. If all goes well, the new lift station should be in full operation by August 2015. 



*City Commissioner Susan Chapman. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

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# WALMART AND PARKING WOES

*The Ringling Shopping Center in downtown Sarasota stood ready for a new Walmart before a neighborhood group's protests early this year derailed the plans. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE CITY COMMISSION LEARNS OF A NEW LAWSUIT IN THE WALMART/RINGLING SHOPPING CENTER SAGA, MAKES LITTLE PROGRESS ON THE STATE STREET GARAGE AND HEARS BURNS SQUARE PARKING WOES

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

The Walmart Corp. has terminated its contract with the owners of the Ringling Shopping Center, the City Commission learned on Monday, Sept. 16. That ends the company's attempt to build a nearly 100,000-square-foot "super-center" on the site of the city's oldest retail complex.

However, the owners of the center have filed a second lawsuit against the city seeking a declaratory judgment. City Attorney Bob Fournier notified

the commissioners of the action at the end of the afternoon portion of the regular board meeting.

Two California entities — identified as Doyle and the Doyle Family Trust — own the property. They allege the so-called "[appeal hearing](#)"

the City Commission held in the spring to address the Planning Board's recommendation of the Walmart plan should not have started over from scratch, as city rules

“We need to spell all this out to potential buyers. The broker needs to know.”

Robert Fournier  
City Attorney  
Sarasota





demanded. As Fournier put it: “They said the hearing should not have been *de novo*.”

The new suit also claims the electronic filing for an appeal by the Alta Vista Neighborhood Association should not have been accepted by the city, that only a paper application would have been valid.

Fournier added that the suit “alleges Walmart has terminated the contract.”

## MORE STATE STREET DITHERING

Two separate parking issues occupied most of the afternoon session. One rose during the open-to-the-public section; the second came from the exasperated city attorney trying to prod the commissioners into making a decision on the State Street parking garage.

The city is under contract with Pineapple Square to open a parking garage with at least

300 spaces by early 2015. The city wants to sell parts of the building to help cover the cost of the garage.

For example, it could sell the first floor for retail, office or restaurant space to defray three additional floors of parking. Or it could envision a 10-story building with first-floor retail, several floors of parking and several more floors of office or residential space. So far no decision has been made, which makes life nearly impossible for Ian Black, the Realtor hired to sell the property.

“What do you want to sell?” asked Fournier.

Each of the three options he proposed would require “adjustments” to the zoning code.

But one subjective decision still remains. The code requires “exemplary architecture” on all municipal buildings. Because the project starts with the city, staff assumes the “exemplary architecture” requirement stands.



*The City Commission Chambers was packed on Feb. 26, awaiting the decision on the Walmart proposed for the Ringling Shopping Center. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



“We need to spell all this out to potential buyers. The broker needs to know,” said Fournier. “If you can’t decide, then we may have to issue a request for proposals (RFP). The less sure you are, the more reason to go with an RFP. And that will have implications for the Pineapple Square agreement.”

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo said, “I would like to build something beautiful, something we can be proud of and something we don’t see the front end of cars sticking out of. I’m in favor of sending our [Urban Design Studio] guru out for two renderings. One design would maximize the use of all the floors.”

The Urban Design Studio has already finished three conceptual designs, one in Mediterranean Revival style, one in Art Deco and one using multiple styles. The studio is an in-house

collaboration between the city and two consultants to develop a form-based code for the city over the next three years.

The motion passed unanimously. However, until the commission decides what it wants to sell, neither Black nor any potential buyers have anything to review. Meanwhile, the clock is running.

## MORE PARKING WOES

A parking study long ago pointed out four areas downtown that needed garages. Two of those structures have been built — at Whole Foods and on Palm Avenue. The third, on State Street, is under what might be characterized as “leisurely discussion.” Now the fourth is starting to squeak, so to speak.



*Burns Square merchants are pleading with the City Commission to renew a parking lot lease for their employees and customers. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



At the opening of the commission meeting, during the public comment period, a gaggle of Burns Square merchants paraded before the commission to ask for parking relief. For several years, the city leased a lot on Orange Avenue from real estate firm Michael Saunders & Co. But this year the city terminated the arrangement. Last week, the lot was roped off and closed to the public.

That action sent the merchants squawking. “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in a state of holy agitation to deliver a petition from the Burns Square merchants,” said Cheryl Van Kirk to the commission. “We now have 161 employees and 155 parking spaces.”

The president of the merchants association for that area of the city asked for reinstatement of the lease. Her members backed her up.

“We are really, really in desperate need of parking,” said one. Another added, “I’m seeing owners and employees jockeying their cars around. Meanwhile, for clients and customers, there’s no where to park.”

Because the Burns Square merchants spoke during the open-to-the-public session of the meeting, the commissioners could not respond. But during the Commissioner Comments segment of the session, Caragiulo said he had met with 19 people about the issue. He suggested using contingency money from the downtown Community Redevelopment Agency account to pay for renting the lot and begin talks anew with Realtor Michael Saunders.



*North Sarasota residents are pleading for city help to make Atkins Park safer. Photo by Robert Hackney*



“There is an interest in reopening discussion on the lot,” said Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown.

## HAMPTON ROAD

The Tahiti Park Neighborhood Association scored a big win when the City Commission agreed to open a discussion on a 2008 change in the comprehensive plan that has paved the way for use of a parcel on Hampton Road without the neighbors knowing such plans were afoot.

The change allowed a physician to propose a medical spa on the property, to the neighbors' chagrin.

On Monday, the project was set for its fourth and final public hearing. Then the developer asked that the item be removed from the agenda while he prepared a full site plan for City Commission scrutiny before the board took a final vote on his plan.

Commissioner Susan Chapman said, “I have serious issues about the notice to the public on this comprehensive plan amendment. Many maps did not include this change. I would like to set an agenda item for discussion.”

Fournier replied, “This has to be done before the applicant submits his site plan.”

## FREDD ATKINS PARK

Three North Sarasota community leaders stepped forward under the open-to-the-public section of the meeting to ask for city help with Fredd Atkins Park.


Businessman Jetson Grimes said, “We are not trying to close the park. But at a community



*A map shows the site of the planned State Street parking garage in downtown Sarasota. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

meeting, a Sarasota Police officer said of 87 crime events in Newtown, 86 were in Atkins Park. We need to look at the design of the park.”

The park is named after Fredd “Glossie” Atkins, a long-serving city commissioner who represented north Sarasota and the African-American community. The facility is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of U.S. 301 and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Shea Barnett added, “Over the past few years, there has been a steady erosion of some of the positive aspects of the park. We see a lot of loitering, crime and drug activity. It reflects negatively on the community and is a point of discouragement.” 



# This may take a while.

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## SAY 'PLEASE'

*State Sen. Nancy Detert of Venice addresses legislators. Photo courtesy of myfloridahouse.gov*

### LAWMAKERS GET AN EARFUL ABOUT 2014 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

Dozens of government and nonprofit leaders stepped to the mic Wednesday, Sept. 18, to tell Sarasota County's state legislative delegation about their priorities for the 2014 legislative session, and while the list of issues was long and varied, one message kept being repeated: Expand access to healthcare.

Representatives from Sarasota Memorial Hospital, Planned Parenthood, First Step, Healthy Start and the League of Women Voters all called on the delegation to push either for the expansion

of Medicaid called for in ObamaCare, or something similar to the plan presented last year by state Sen. Joe Negron, R-Stuart. Negron's plan would have used federal healthcare dollars to offer low-income Floridians access to private health insurance, rather than enrolling them in Medicaid. It passed in the state Sen-

ate, but failed in the House, which refused to accept any money made available by the federal government to expand healthcare.

"The state has the opportunity to care for more people and to

***We have the opportunity to access \$50 billion in federal funds over many years to extend care. We hope you will consider this vital issue again this year.***

David Verinder  
Chief Operating Officer  
Sarasota Memorial Hospital





*State Rep. Jim Boyd and City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo stand outside the County Commission Chambers. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



save millions of dollars,” said Caitlyn Miller, Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida grassroots outreach manager, who argued the move would grant 641,000 women in Florida vital healthcare access. “Every dollar spent on publicly funded family planning saves taxpayers six dollars in Medicaid spending alone.”

Sarasota Memorial Chief Operating Officer David Verinder said Florida sits at a “critical decision point.”

“We have the opportunity to access \$50 billion in federal funds over many years to extend care,” he pointed out. “We hope you will consider this vital issue again this year.”

Verinder, like others, said the hospital would support either expanding Medicaid or a Ne-gron-style proposal.

No one from the delegation specifically commented on the decision the Legislature will face over ObamaCare, but state Rep. Jim Boyd, R-Bradenton, who was absent Wednesday, has said in the past he thinks the issue will reemerge during this fall’s committee hearings. The delegation, which was also lacking Republican state Rep. Greg Steube on Wednesday, did grow vocal over one proposal floated by the City of Sarasota: to revisit the state’s controversial Stand Your Ground law.

The measure, approved in 2005, says a citizen “has no duty to retreat” and allows one



*A City Commission request regarding the Stand Your Ground law has become controversial. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



to use deadly force if he or she “reasonably believes it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm.” A recent study by gun-control groups found the number of justified homicides has increased 53 percent in the 22 states that have such laws.

Minutes from the city’s Sept. 3 meeting show that Vice Mayor Willie Shaw suggested that “revisiting the State’s ‘Stand Your Ground’ law” should be added to the city’s list of legislative priorities. Indeed, “revisiting” was the exact word Shaw used. But the document eventually sent to Republican state Sen. Nancy Detert, the chairwoman of the delegation, indicates the city was calling for a “repeal” of the law.

Republican state Reps. Doug Holder and Ray Pilon both cited the high level of support for the law they’ve read via email and social media while criticizing the city’s request. Pilon said the Legislature would be holding hearings on Stand Your Ground. “It’s my hope that there will be clarity as to what the law does,” he added, “and that we will be able to divide fact from media fiction.”

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, who is running as a Republican for a seat on the County Commission, represented the city at the legislative delegation meeting Wednesday. He made it clear that the inclusion of revisiting Stand Your Ground in the city’s legislative priorities was not a “unanimous position.” During the Sept. 3 meeting he told his colleagues he wasn’t “comfortable knowing enough about the issue,” but he was “OK” with “carrying the message.”

Democratic state Rep. Darryl Rouson said he didn’t support repealing Stand Your Ground, but “it absolutely needs clarification.”

“People ought to be able to defend themselves in their castle or in certain places against imminent peril or even death, but this is a powerful issue across the state,” he pointed out. “We owe it to the people to look at it and do as much clarification as we can.”


Delegation members also pointedly criticized Sarasota County Schools Superintendent Lori White for what they called a lack of communication. The school system had asked the Legislature to delay assessments and performance pay metrics set to take effect in the 2014-2015 school year.

White told the delegation the Legislature could “wait for chaos to occur” and then try to fix it, “or we could thoughtfully work together.” She added that the school system still does not have details about what next year’s standards might look like.

“The use of ‘chaos’ annoys me,” Detert shot back. “We want to be collaborative, but if we don’t have a partner, then we make a decision with no input from the local people, and I wouldn’t know who to call.”

Holder echoed Detert’s complaint that he never hears from White. “We don’t meet,” he said.

“People that visit me regularly bring their problems and we try to get the job done,” Detert added. White hasn’t done that, she pointed out. “So don’t show up and say we created chaos for you.”

*The Legislature’s committee meetings begin next Monday, Sept. 23, but the full session doesn’t kick off till March 4.* 





# CONDOS WANT IN, TOO

*The Plaza at Five Points is a prominent structure in that part of downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD LEARNS RESIDENTS OF THE DOWNTOWN HIGH-RISES WOULD PAY EXTRA PROPERTY TAXES IF THE MONEY WENT FOR MORE SECURITY

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The Sarasota Downtown Improvement District (DID) meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 17, held two surprises, and they initially appeared contradictory. The first was a report from the Sarasota Police Department. The second was a request by downtown condo owners for higher taxes.

The DID is composed of commercial property owners in a defined downtown area. They levy a property tax on themselves to make improvements in the

district. The DID membership also serves as a springboard for ideas that can migrate to other bodies, such as the Community Redevelopment Area and the Sarasota City Commission.

With the increased focus on homelessness and vagrancy in the downtown area, the DID

board asked the police to provide some figures on crime. It turns out that arrests are virtually unchanged between the first eight months of both 2012 and 2013.

“*This is big for the DID. Residential condo owners have not had representation.*”

Tom Manaussa  
Board Member  
Downtown Improvement District





*The Orange Blossom building is at the intersection of Palm Avenue and Main Street. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Officer Ron Roberson, an analyst with criminal investigations, portrayed a static picture of crime in “zone five,” which is slightly larger than the area the DID encompasses. Roberson said the figures were through Sept. 12 of each year.

He offered the following results:

- Strong-arm robbery: seven cases in 2012; 11 in 2013.
- Aggravated assault: 82 cases in 2012; 84 in 2013.
- Theft (petty and grand): 157 cases in 2012; 145 in 2013.
- Burglary: 24 cases in 2012; 26 in 2013.
- Criminal mischief: 41 cases in 2012; 49 in 2013.
- Open container: 187 cases in 2012; 142 in 2013.
- Lodging (sleeping out of doors): 53 cases in 2012; 76 in 2013.

Clearly, the big jump was in the number of violations of the city’s Lodging Ordinance, which prohibits sleeping outside without the permission of the property owner. This may reflect increased police attention to the issue of vagrancy and homelessness.

“These are pretty flat numbers,” said Deputy Police Chief Steve Moyers. “Overall, it looks like about a 4 percent downward trend.” He added that in the next couple of months, “You’ll see more foot patrols downtown.”

## CONDO OWNERS SEEK MORE SECURITY

While the statistics are “flat” — in the word of the deputy chief — the perception of crime by downtown residents is obviously up.

“We’re not very well protected after 9 p.m.,” said Ron Rayevich, chairman of the residential portion of the Plaza at Five Points. He came before the DID with a proposal: Can the downtown condos join the DID and pay higher taxes if the money goes to greater security efforts?

He added that the residents of the Plaza have voted to join the DID and agreed to a property tax levy of one-half mill if the money is used for safety and security purposes. He said Plaza residents are interested in paying for a foot patrol from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m.

He also proposed the DID board be expanded to seven members, with two additional ones coming from the five downtown condominiums (Orange Blossom, 1350 Main, 50 Central, 100 Central and the Plaza).

Peter Fanning, representing the Downtown Sarasota Condominium Association, said those residents would add between \$90,000 and \$100,000 annually to the DID’s coffers. Right now the DID’s annual levy on commercial property owners raises about \$340,000.

“We’ve got \$40 million in residential property values in the Plaza,” said Rayevich. “We don’t want people throwing up on our front steps and bums hanging out in our lobby.”

The DID is a creation of the City Commission, which has the power to alter it in any way. The commissioners could expand the geographic area, allow in residential owners as well as commercial ones, modify the levy or make other changes.

“With your support, we’re ready to go to the city attorney,” said Fanning. “Commissioners have told us if there is a large opposition —



that could be five people with bags on their heads — they won't approve it."

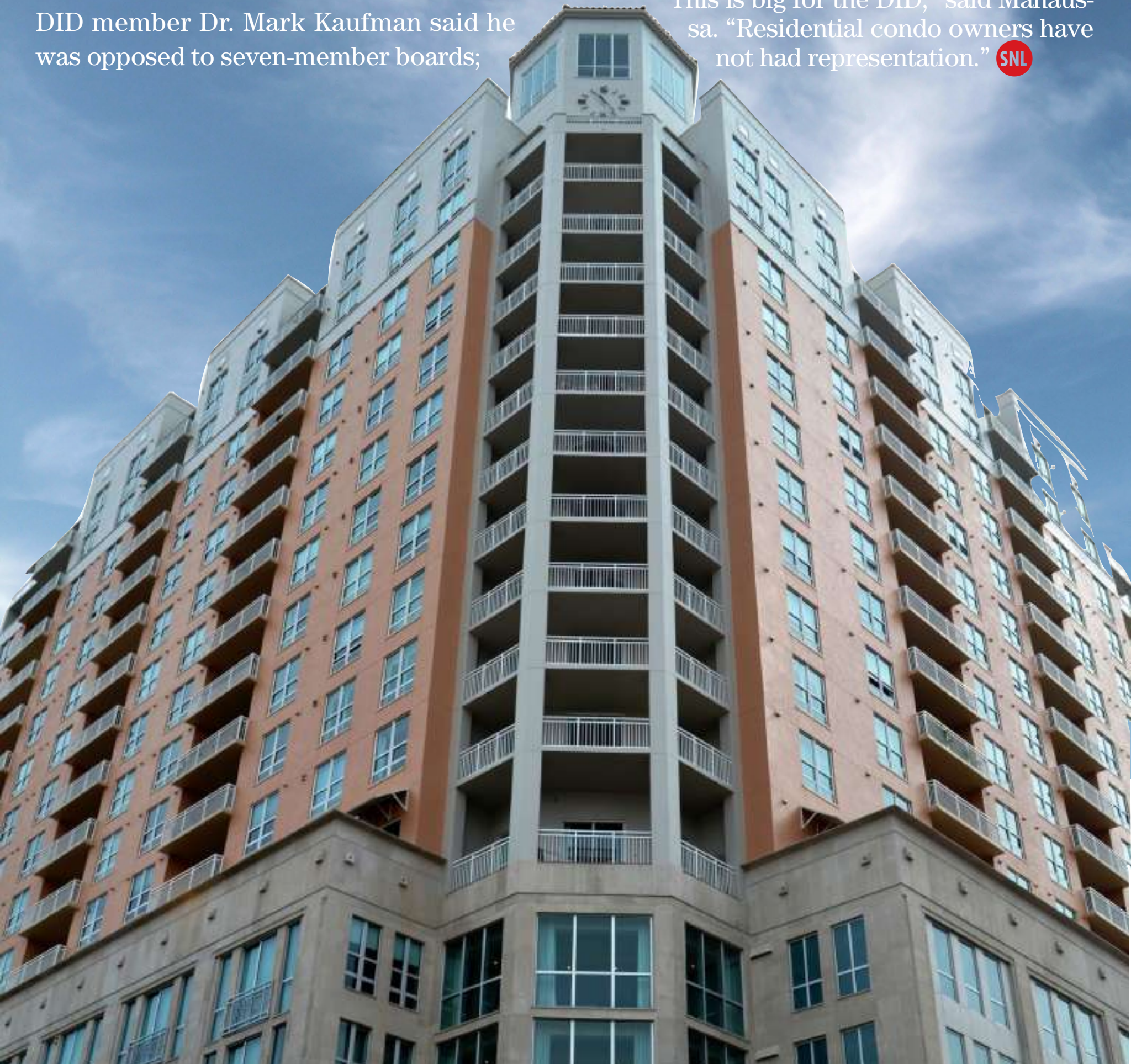
Fanning was referring to the tactic used by anti-parking meter advocates to kill the downtown paid parking plan.

DID member Dr. Mark Kaufman said he was opposed to seven-member boards;

he was supported on that by member Tom Manaussa.

Rayevich agreed to their decision, but he said he needed to run the change by the boards of directors of the five condominium complexes.

"This is big for the DID," said Manaussa. "Residential condo owners have not had representation." 



*The condominium complex at 1350 Main towers over nearby storefronts and restaurants. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



# DIGGING IN



*Longboat Town Mayor Jim Brown and Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason are side-by-side for the meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION AND LONGBOAT TOWN COMMISSION HEAR AN UPDATE ON THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS PLANS FOR RENOURISHING LIDO BEACH

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

During a joint meeting of the Sarasota County and the Longboat Town commissions on Tuesday, Sept. 17, county staff provided an update on the planned renourishment of Lido Beach, a city project that has aroused concern among Siesta Key residents and boaters.

The \$22 million undertaking would rebuild the beach that has been eroding at a rate of about 20 feet per year, according to the state's Department of Environmental Protection.

But one option for a sand source has revived intense political debate and opposition from the past.

Under the plan, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proposing the dredging of New Pass and, for the first time, Big Pass. The latter

prospect is one that historically has worried some Siesta residents who are concerned it could have an adverse impact on the accretion of sand on Siesta Key Beach.

**“The Corps has to address that the use of sand from [Big Pass] will not be detrimental at this time.”**

Laird Wreford  
Coastal Resources Manager  
Sarasota County





During the joint meeting Tuesday, County Commissioner Nora Patterson noted the “controversial history” related to past efforts to dredge Big Pass.

Sand dredged from either of the two passes would be used to rebuild Lido Key’s beach, which most recently suffered severe erosion when Tropical Storm Debby stayed offshore for several days in June 2012.

According to Sarasota County staff, the overall renourishment plan would solve “mutual problems” by providing needed dredging in the two inlets and less expensive near-shore sand for Lido Beach.

“Long story short, there is an opportunity here, at least potentially, to solve a lot of different problems,” Laird Wreford, the county’s coastal resources manager, said at the joint meeting.

The Lido Beach project has been approved by the Army Corps of Engineers, which will fund 65 percent of the cost. The initiative would pump close to 1.2 million cubic yards of sand onto the beach. The big challenge has been

finding the sand source. Because of shifting sands and the “ever decreasing volumes of suitable offshore submerged sand deposits in the area,” federal officials have been seeking a suitable source to replenish the beach, according to a Sept. 17 memo from Sarasota County staff.

## NEW PASS

The Corps has dredged New Pass in the past to keep it navigable, but it has hit a federal funding cap for such work, Wreford told the two boards.

As a result, future navigational dredging will not happen without authorization of additional federal funding. But there is another alternative that can permit the pass to be dredged again.

If sand from the pass specifically were to be used for Lido’s renourishment, the dredging could be covered by the federal funding set aside for the beach project. Any sand taken from New Pass has to be alternated between the city of Sarasota and Longboat Key under a longstanding agreement.



*Laird Wreford (left) addresses the County Commission and Longboat Key Town Commission as County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh (center) and County Administrator Randall Reid listen. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Even if sand is removed from New Pass, federal and local officials will likely have to find an additional source. “The volume of sand that is needed for the Lido Beach renourishment exceeds the expected available supply of sand that currently exists in New Pass,” reads the Sept. 17 county memo.

## BIG PASS

Because of the amount of sand in Big Pass, that inlet appears to be the most viable sand source for the Lido project, Wreford said.

Just north of Siesta Key, Big Pass has become the focal point for the Corps, Wreford added.

The Corps is working on a plan with the City of Sarasota to dredge the inlet. In that scenario, the main purpose of the undertaking would be to harvest sand to mitigate erosion damage on Lido, but dredging could also have a secondary effect — at least temporarily — of

making the inlet more navigable for boaters, county staff says.

At Tuesday’s meeting, Patterson referenced the “controversial history” related to past efforts to dredge the pass. “Some of that history would be good to bring back to our board,” she said.

A consulting team that studied the possibility of dredging Big Pass a number of years ago showed that some removal of sand from the pass’s ebb shoals — on the seaward southern portion of the pass — would be more positive than negative for the nearby stretches of beach.

“But the recommendation was that amounts [dredged] be limited,” Patterson pointed out.

Past attempts to dredge the pass have led to lawsuits and intense political debate.



*Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid (right) and Longboat Town Manager Dave Bullock are ready for the joint meeting Tuesday. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



After Tuesday's meeting, Patterson told *The Sarasota News Leader* that members of the community are not only largely divided over whether to dredge the pass but also split over how the work could be done.

While many Siesta residents are concerned about the Corps' interest in Big Pass, some limited dredging — along the lines of what the past consultants suggested — could garner some residents' support, she indicated.

"There has seemed partial acceptance of a dredge on the exterior part of the Big Pass shoal, a dredge suggested some years back, but this would not likely be navigational in nature from the first presentation we had exploring this idea," Patterson wrote in an April email when she first learned of the renewed effort to dredge Big Pass.

Some area boaters, however, are in favor of a deep dredge that would improve navigation in the pass; the channel depth remains about five-and-a-half feet. But that approach would require follow-up dredging every few years, Patterson said, adding she was not sure the county should fund that expense on a regular basis.

"There are challenges," Patterson added.

The Big Pass option is a preliminary one, with several public meetings scheduled to take place over the next few months, Wreford told the commissions. Corps officials have been studying the local coastal system, including how sand moves through it.

"The Corps has to address that the use of sand from [Big Pass] will not be detrimental at this time," Wreford added.

The Corps sent its engineering team to Sarasota this week to present information about the project during a Sept. 18 Sarasota County Coastal Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting. (See the related article in this issue.)

Federal officials will hold upcoming public workshops and "talk to boaters and various associations that may be involved," Wreford pointed out.

In addition to the Sept. 18 CAC meeting, on Oct. 22, federal officials will make a presentation to a joint session of the Sarasota County Commission and the City Commission. On Dec. 5, the Corps will discuss its plan with members of the Siesta Key Association. Then, on Dec. 7, the Corps will provide the same presentation to the Boaters Coalition at the Sarasota Yacht Club.

## BEACH GROINS

One other aspect of the beach project that could prove challenging is the Corps' proposal for three rock groins on Lido Beach.

The structures, essentially rock walls perpendicular to the beach, would be placed on the south end of Lido, according to current Corps plans. The groins are intended to trap the newly placed sand on the beach.

However, groins are discouraged in the county's comprehensive plan: "While there are a number of groins and jetties in Sarasota County, the County's current management guidelines discourage shoreline stabilization techniques that interrupt natural beach processes. Non structural approaches to beach/dune restoration are preferred." 



# BID WINS ON SECOND VOTE



*St. Armands is a popular shopping and dining venue, especially during the height of season. File photo*

## A NEW VOTE BY ST. ARMANDS CIRCLE PROPERTY OWNERS WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR EXTRA TAX REVENUE TO CONTINUE TO BE USED IN THE DISTRICT'S UPKEEP

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

The directors of the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID) earlier this year asked property owners in the swanky shopping district if they wanted to continue a property surtax to keep the place looking nice. To the great surprise of the BID board, the proposal failed by a substantial margin.

That meant the end of special promotions, special sidewalk cleaning, Muzak, landscaping and a host of small amenities to help peo-

ple enjoy their time on the circle. How could that happen?

BID Chairman Marty Rappaport found it hard to believe until he started looking at his membership. "We had a big turnover in ownership in the last 10 years," he said. So Rappaport convinced the Sarasota City Commission to let him try for another election.

*A lot of people were new to this process, and there were many new landlords over the last 10 years.*

Marty Rappaport  
Chairman  
St. Armands Business Improvement District

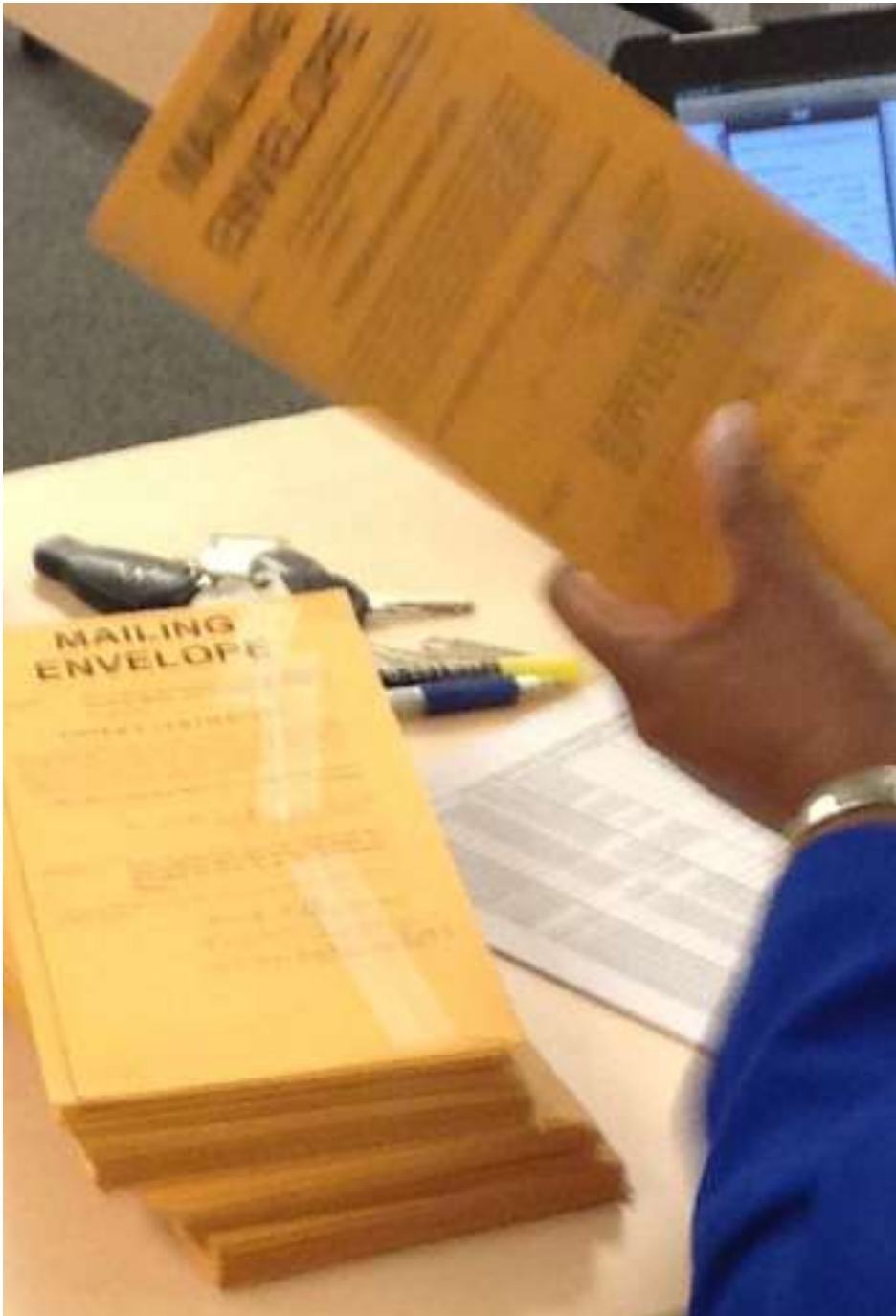
Timing was tight, because the city fiscal



year ends on Sept 30. With election deadlines and mailing times and other details, preparations for the election went to the wire.

Rappaport and other BID supporters manned telephones to contact the new property owners, who were presumably unaware of what the BID does. This is not a one-man, one-vote election. Each ballot carries the weight of the amount of acreage owned along the circle. Thus, a person with three lots casts a ballot three times as important as a one-lot owner.

To make it even tougher to get a majority, any ballot not returned counts as a “No” vote.



*Sarasota City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini opens a BID ballot. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*




*St. Armands Business Improvement District Chairman Marty Rappaport creates his own tally of votes. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

“A lot of people were new to this process, and there were many new landlords over the last 10 years,” Rappaport said.

On Wednesday, Sept. 18, the ballots were in and opened one at a time.

When all 58 were tallied, 68 percent of the property owners had agreed to extend the BID for another decade. Only 6 percent actually voted no. Eleven ballots were not returned, making up the remaining 26 percent.

What’s next for the rejuvenated district? Rappaport is conducting a feasibility study for a parking garage (or maybe two?) on city-owned lots. “Hopefully we’ll get a garage,” he said. 



# SLOW GROWTH



*Construction of University Town Center was well under way in early May. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## COUNTY REVENUES ARE RISING, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO KEEP UP WITH PROJECTED EXPENSES

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

In 2009, Sarasota County finance staff formatted an Excel forecasting program designed to gauge future county budgets based on projected revenues and expenses. The county implemented the spreadsheet program to guide administrators and county commissioners as they planned upcoming budgets during uncertain economic times.

The program now shows steady projected revenue growth from 2015 to 2018.

Sources of tax revenue — from property tax values to sales tax volume — are on the upswing, as the County Commission prepares to adopt the Fiscal Year 2014 budget on Sept. 23.

For instance, property tax values across the county increased a total of 4.2 percent this year — compared to a 1.1 percent decrease the previous year. State officials predict property values will go up another 4.1 percent in 2015.

“*We are hopeful these positive increases in ad valorem property values will happen. I don't know if it will be 8 to 10 percent.*”

Charles Hines  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County





State revenue sharing sales taxes are also trending upward as consumer spending increases. And county Tourist Development Tax dollars have increased 11.1 percent for the first 11 months of 2013.

The news on the fiscal horizon is not all rosy for county officials, however. Over the past six years, taxable property values sank 35 percent, and the county saw a nearly \$100 million reduction in major revenues. Even with projected property value increases every year out to 2018, the extra money is not enough to negate that 35 percent downswing. Expenses are also expected to continue to rise, and despite the uptick in revenue, the forecasting model predicts a \$21 million shortfall in 2018. (See the accompanying General Fund Outlook chart.)

“The economy is coming back slowly but certainly not at the pace it went down,” said Curt Preisser, public information officer for Sarasota County.

Property values and other revenue estimates are only projections; they can fluctuate as the still fragile economy slowly rebounds.

## ADDITIONS TO THE TAX ROLLS

A source of more quantifiable increases is forthcoming in the form of several slated new developments. Those projects, as long as they are built, will bring in additional tax revenue, but some of that money will not be seen until 2016.

Benderson Development’s mega mall, The Mall at University Town Center, is expected to bring in an estimated \$350,000 annually in property tax revenue.

That additional property tax revenue probably will not come onto the tax rolls until 2016, said Steve Botelho, chief financial planning officer for Sarasota County. Along with the higher ad valorem tax money will come another source of county income: “As we build new hotels and the new mall, sales tax revenue will likely go up,” Botelho pointed out.



*Vice Chairman Charles Hines and Commissioner Nora Patterson review budget material on Sept. 6.  
File photo*



The 77-acre, 247 home Esplanade development on Clark Road is also projected to boost revenue by an estimated \$210,000 from annual property taxes.

## BUDGET DEBATE

The county commissioners had a lively budget discussion at their Sept. 6 budget workshop, and part of it centered on projected revenue.

Commissioner Christine Robinson has been arguing against the county's dipping into its economic uncertainty reserve fund to balance the budget. "We can't erase the fact that we're spending more than our growth rate," she pointed out at that meeting.

Robinson favors a more conservative approach to projecting revenues, and she wants to see more of a focus on trying to trim expenses.

The County Commission voted to keep the total millage rate the same for the 2014 fiscal year, at 3.3912. Nonetheless, because property values rose 4.2 percent this year, a number of homeowners will see increases in their property tax bills.

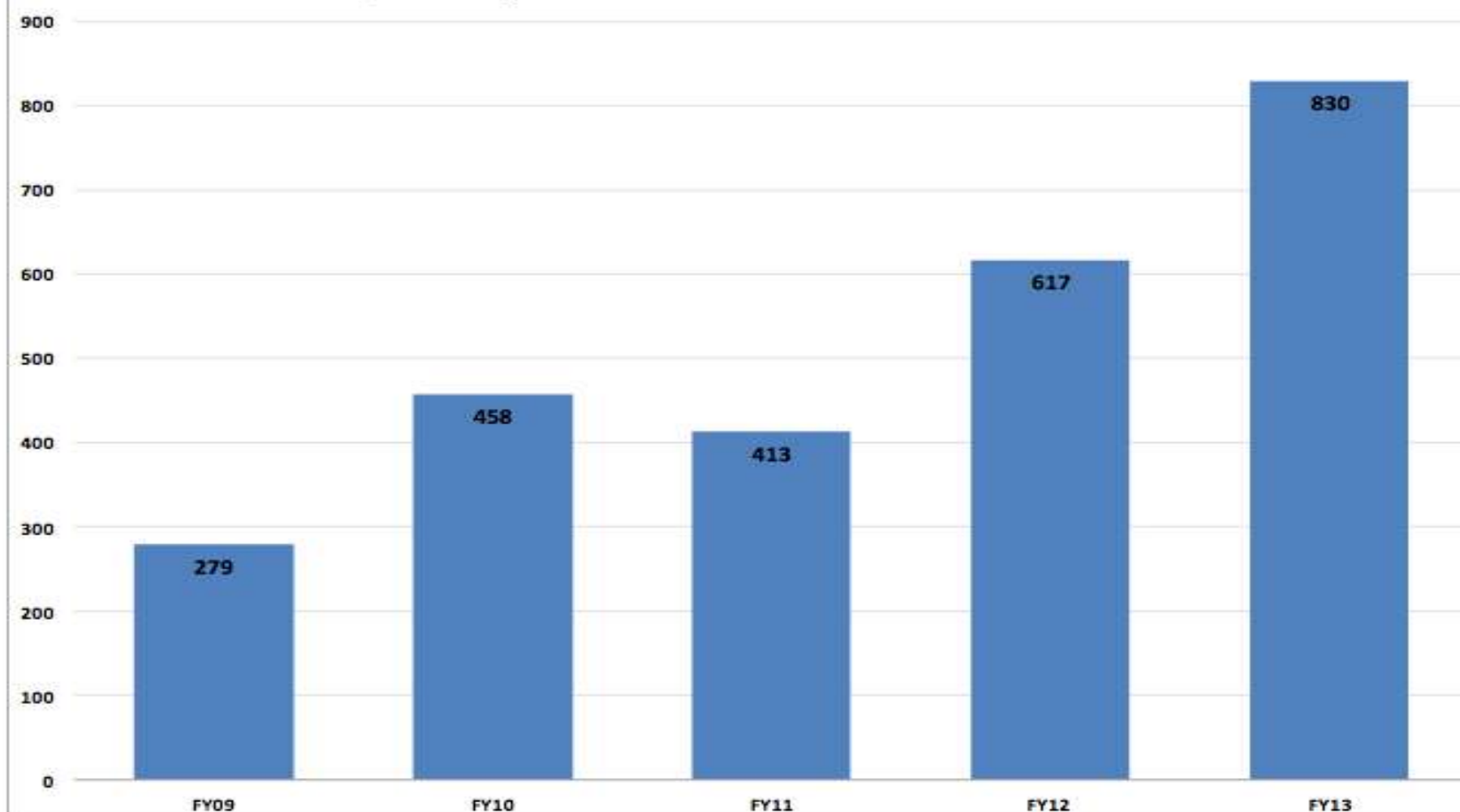
During the Sept. 6 workshop, Robinson noted the County Commission did not approve a "rolled back" rate that would have kept property tax bills level.

General Fund Outlook						
General Fund - Projected Revenues & Expenses						
	Amend. BUDGET FY13	Prop. BUDGET FY14	PROJECTED FY15	PROJECTED FY16	PROJECTED FY17	PROJECTED FY18
Revenue	\$237,600,525	\$214,845,589	\$220,208,090	\$227,543,603	\$235,559,048	\$244,070,117
Budgeted Fund Balance	\$35,980,681	\$46,998,659	\$45,976,705	\$17,638,586	\$18,323,061	\$19,024,190
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$273,581,206</b>	<b>\$261,844,248</b>	<b>\$266,184,795</b>	<b>\$245,182,189</b>	<b>\$253,882,109</b>	<b>\$263,094,306</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$273,581,206</b>	<b>\$261,844,248</b>	<b>\$269,135,851</b>	<b>\$275,646,381</b>	<b>\$278,608,738</b>	<b>\$284,506,851</b>
<i>Fund Balance Calculation: Amount budgeted (above) less projected over-collections &amp; under-spending</i>						
Over-Collections (3%)	\$6,254,421	\$5,695,407	\$5,856,282	\$6,076,348	\$6,316,811	\$6,572,143
Under-Spending (6%)	\$11,686,170	\$12,121,301	\$12,565,554	\$13,010,795	\$13,456,581	\$13,902,361
<b>Estimated Fund Balance Usage</b>	<b>\$18,040,090</b>	<b>\$29,181,951</b>	<b>\$27,554,869</b>			
<b>Shortfall</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>(\$2,951,056)</b>	<b>(\$30,464,192)</b>	<b>(\$24,726,629)</b>	<b>(\$21,412,544)</b>
<i>Shortfall line is the amount that cannot be funded using the assumed revenues &amp; expenditures. The shortfall is only created after the Economic Uncertainty Fund is depleted, but the Hurricane/Disaster Reserve always remains fully funded. Does not include Sarasota CRA extension (payments end in FY16). Not reflective of the one time \$8M available cash due to reserve policy change (90 to 75 Days).</i>						
<b>Changes since 8/20 include:</b>						
<b>\$412,807 ongoing increase for Sheriff's Office</b>						
<b>\$507,411 ongoing increase for Tax Collector's Office</b>						
<b>Transfers to HHS in FY15-FY18 plus</b>						
<b>\$100K for Legal Aid of Manasota</b>						

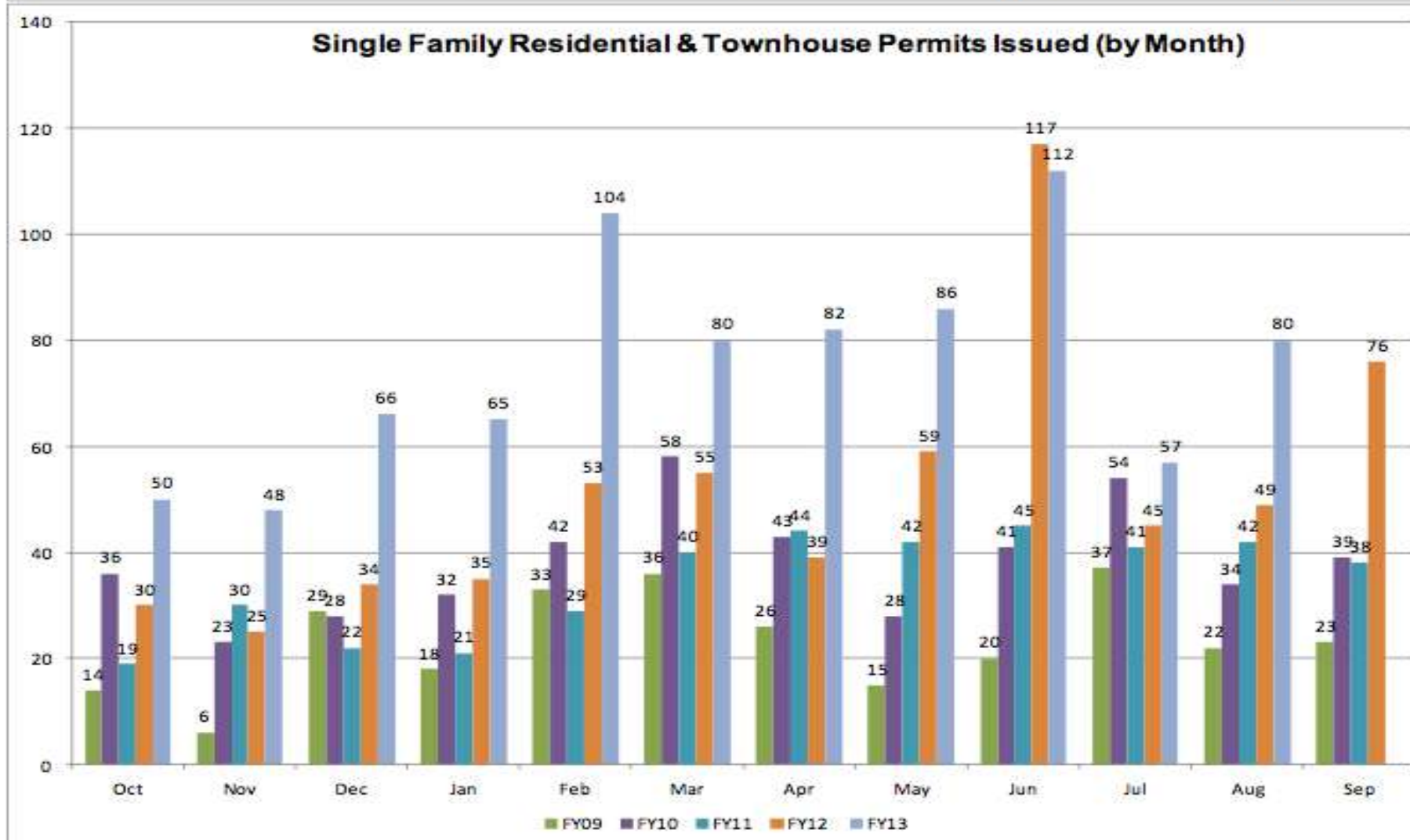


## PDS Charts – Permitting (August 2013 Data)

### Single Family Residential & Townhouse Permits Issued



### Single Family Residential & Townhouse Permits Issued (by Month)



Charts show comparisons of the number of home permits approved for Sarasota County for fiscal years from 2009 to 2013, through August. Image courtesy Sarasota County



“We are spending more than our growth rate. Period,” Robinson pointed out. “And as we are spending more than our growth rate, we are depleting our reserves.”

Even though revenue sources across the board are expected to rise, Robinson said she does not like the idea of banking too much on — projected — high tax increases. “Businesses and individuals don’t plan for money they don’t have, or don’t plan for money that they’re not sure when they will get, and we can’t plan that way,” she told her colleagues

The county could cut more than the 1 percent it has trimmed from the budget, she added.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta has emphasized projected revenue growth, noting that economic development and an “expanded tax base” are the keys to continued future growth in the county.

Barbetta already sees some positive revenue trends. If property values rise 6 to 7 percent in 2015 — which would be higher than the state-projected 4.1 percent — that will be enough of a boost to sustain the general fund with no shortfall.

“If it comes in at 6 or 7 percent, we will be fine for another two or three years,” Barbetta said at the Sept. 6 workshop.

The red numbers in Botelho’s charts, which indicate shortfalls in the forecasting model, would disappear if the county “expands the economic base,” Barbetta added.

The most positive indications for Barbetta are the new developments coming online.

He raised a few laughs at the Sept. 6 workshop when he suggested the possibility of another (presumably hypothetical) big development — “Lakewood Ranch South” — that would add more property to the tax rolls.

He said economic development must remain a priority in the county.


This year the county is expected to use \$11 million of its economic uncertainty reserve fund. “If we don’t use [those] monies we might as well just give them back to the taxpayer,” Barbetta said. “I look at my job as investing that money properly to expand our tax base so that we don’t have to raise taxes and so we stay at the third lowest tax rate in the state in millage.”

Commissioner Charles Hines also hopes property values continue on the upswing.

“We are hopeful these positive increases in ad valorem property values will happen,” Hines said. “I don’t know if it will be 8 to 10 percent.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson talked about how local governments across the state could see revenue align with spending within the next few years.

“The time will come where income meets your expenses,” Patterson said. “As things get better, I think boards should see that.”

Patterson attributed the county’s solid budgetary standing to the forecast model and long-term planning over the past few years. “If we weren’t looking several years down the road, we wouldn’t be in the good financial position we are in,” she pointed out. 





# CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH

*Save Our Seabirds has won a clean bill of health from inspectors. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## INSPECTORS FIND NO PROBLEMS AT SAVE OUR SEABIRDS

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**  
*Associate Editor*

Former volunteers and staffers this summer charged Save Our Seabirds (SOS), the Sarasota nonprofit that rescues, rehabilitates and releases injured birds, with a wide range of misdeeds. The organization was improperly housing birds, euthanizing them unnecessarily and operating without the proper licensing, they said. But a new round of inspections, ordered by the Sarasota City Commission, shows everything is in fact hunky-dory.

In July, the City Commission voted unani-

mously to have staffers and state regulators conduct a new round of visits at the SOS site on Ken Thompson Parkway and to compile any past inspections for review. Two days after the city meeting, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Inspecting Officer

Lar Gregory toured SOS and found the site in “overall good condition with all pools clean, adequate perching and enclosure safe for birds,” according to a report submitted to the city. Gregory wrote that

**“This is a great example of city government working properly for the public. Foremost the birds are much better off and the public benefits from the forced improvements**

Greg Para  
Former Volunteer  
Save Our Seabirds





the records-keeping system at SOS had been “vastly improved” since a 2011 inspection and that the “only discrepancy” was the need for “additional shelter” for larger birds during severe rain.

A former SOS employee, Cally Lajeunesse, testified to the City Commission in July that rats had been “brutally killing” birds, but Jack

Landess, a vet with Nokomis Veterinary & Exotics Clinic, visited SOS on July 18 and wrote in his report that he “did not notice any damage to caging, wire, wood, food and water bowls or to any birds themselves that could be caused by rodents.”

A Fahey Pest Management inspection, meanwhile, turned up no evidence of “live activity”



*A sign welcomes visitors to Save Our Seabirds on City Island in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*




from rodents, although it did note “gnawing marks” on piping near the office and hospital facilities. The inspector, Kyle Varona, wrote that the birdcages were “well-built to exclude rodents.”

Landess found all the birds to be in “very good condition” overall, and he called the facility “leaps and bounds” above the Pelican Man, the old City Island nonprofit replaced by Save Our Seabirds in 2008.

Former SOS volunteer Greg Para began raising alarm bells about the condition of the facility after the departure of founder Lee Fox this spring. Para also has severely criticized the management of CEO David Pilston, who was hired in 2012. Para calls the positive news from the recent inspections an example of responsive governance.

“Everyone was pleased that the SOS organization addressed all of the allegations I made and passed all ordered inspections,” he writes in an email. “This is a great example of city government working properly for the public. Foremost the birds are much better off and the public benefits from the forced improvements.”

“I don’t know anything,” says Fox, who was terminated earlier this year after turning down a one-year contract that would have had her working in Wimauma instead of Sarasota. She says she doesn’t hear news about what’s happening at SOS; she’s put the issue behind her. “The guy hijacked the organization,” she says of Pilston. “If he had problems after that it was up to him to solve them.” 



*Parakeets share a cage at Save Our Seabirds in June. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



A photograph of a tree-lined residential street. The street is paved and runs straight into the distance, flanked by lush green trees and lawns. Several houses are visible in the background, and a few cars are parked along the side of the road. The scene is bright and sunny, with dappled light filtering through the leaves.

# THE ECONOMY, ONCE AGAIN

**THE 2013 SARASOTA COUNTY CITIZENS SURVEY FOUND THAT WHILE 'ECONOMY/JOB'S' HELD ONTO THE TOP RANKING AS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE, THE PERCENT VIEWING IT THAT WAY FELL BY HALF**

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

For the sixth consecutive year, “economy/jobs” won the top ranking as the most important issue facing Sarasota County, according to the 2013 Citizens Survey, but only 18 percent of the 801 respondents put that in first place, compared to 36 percent in 2012.

Regarding the county’s current economic condition, the survey shows 69 percent of respondents think the county “is on the road to recovery,” up from 56 percent in 2012. However, the survey’s executive summary points out, “many still believe the economy is subject

*(Above) Fifty-four percent of the respondents to the 2013 Citizens Survey ranked the quality of life in neighborhoods as ‘excellent.’ File photo*



to some very real threats,” a pattern that has been observed nationally.

Overall, 48 percent of the respondents rated the quality of life in the county as “excellent,” compared to 55 percent in 2012. The proportion ranking it “good,” though, increased from 36 percent last year to 43 percent in 2013, according to the survey conducted under the aegis of Susan A. MacManus at the Florida Institute of Government, located at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

This is the county’s 22nd survey of citizens’ views on a variety of topics.

MacManus is scheduled to discuss the latest findings with the County Commission during its regular meeting on Sept. 24, County Administrator Randall Reid told the board last week.

Her presentation is tentatively set as the first agenda item following the Open to the Public portion of the afternoon session, which starts at 1:30 p.m., Leigh Sprimont, commission services manager, told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

Other topics cited in 2013 as the most important ones facing the county are “Traffic/transportation” and “Population growth/new



*Two people whose work puts them at the center of many economic development discussions in the county are Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, and Jeff Maultsby, director of business and economic development. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



development,” tied at 10 percent, followed by “Taxes” at 7 percent and “Government and elected officials” at 6 percent.”

The five most common responses to the question regarding the biggest threat to the county’s fiscal health are as follows:

- Economy/jobs: 41 percent.
- Government waste and inefficiency: 20 percent.
- Out-migration of people and industry: 13 percent.
- Property tax rates: 12 percent.

(The County Commission has committed to keeping the total county millage rate at 3.3912 for the 2014 fiscal year. Indications are that it will remain the third-lowest rate in the state, according to figures County Administrator Reid has provided.)

- Deterioration of the environment: 5 percent.

The executive summary also points out that over the past five years of asking the question

about the “biggest threat,” respondents consistently have perceived “loss of jobs” as the most serious. The summary continues, “The same pattern occurred with regard to government waste and inefficiency,” with the percentage citing it as the biggest threat falling slightly from 23 percent in 2011 to 20 percent this year.

Among other year-over-year changes, the overall rating for quality of life in neighborhoods dropped slightly, with 54 percent of those surveyed calling it “excellent” compared to 55 percent in 2012.

On a personal level, the survey shows that among the 58 percent of 2013 respondents who acknowledged they are experiencing their own fiscal stress, the most commonly cited reasons were linked to the following:

- Employment/jobs: 9 percent.
- Healthcare costs: 9 percent.
- Property taxes: 7 percent.
- Home insurance: 6 percent.
- Personal debt: 6 percent.
- Gas prices: 5 percent.

### Recommendations for Neighborhood Improvement

When asked to recommend changes that, over the next five years, could improve the quality of life within their own neighborhoods, 47% say “none are needed.” But, among those identifying needed improvements, the most common are related to:

• Traffic/transportation	15%
• Government services	6%
• Situations involving neighbors	5%
• Economy/jobs	3%
• Crime	3%



“There has been a steady decline [emphasis in the report] in the mention of issues that have a direct impact on personal economic well-being (economy/jobs; taxes; declining property values; health care; foreclosures; insurance; energy costs; affordable housing),” the executive summary points out. Cumulatively, the figure for those topics has fallen from the 51-percent level in 2010 to the 29-percent mark in 2013, the summary notes.

Conversely, the summary says, “There are signs of the reemergence of issues related to population growth/new development.” For example, the summary points out that “Traffic/transportation” was mentioned as a concern by 5 percent of respondents in 2011 compared to 10 percent in 2013. “Population growth/new development” was at the 3-percent mark in 2011 and at the 10-percent level in 2013, while “Taxes” was mentioned by 4 percent of the 2012 respondents and 7 percent of them this year.

The summary notes that the biggest decline recorded came in citizens’ citation of crime as a concern. That fell from 5 percent in 2012 to 2 percent this year.

## CONTACT WITH THE COUNTY

In a new section, the 2013 survey asked about the method respondents used most frequently to contact county offices or leaders. (It notes that 24 percent of respondents had communicated with a county office or official “to complain about something or to get information over the past year,” down from 29 percent in 2012.)

The answers were ranked as follows:

- Making a phone call directly to the person: 56 percent.
- Phoning the county’s Call Center: 47 percent.
- Sending an email: 29 percent.
- Meeting in person: 20 percent.
- Sending a letter: 8 percent.

The survey also shows a rise in negative reasons for the contact. “Voicing a concern” rose from the 24-percent level in 2012 to the 29-percent mark in 2013, while “reporting something” was up from 12 percent to 22 percent this year.

### Biggest Threats

The five most common responses to the question of what is currently the biggest threat to the County’s economy are:

○ Economy/jobs	41%
○ Government waste and inefficiency	20%
○ Outmigration of people and industry	13%
○ Property tax rates	12%
○ Deterioration of the environment	5%



At the same time, the survey section regarding responsiveness of county officials recorded its sharpest decline in the assessment of whether help came in a timely fashion. In 2012, 84 percent of those surveyed felt the assistance was prompt, compared to 70 percent this year.

Yet, “[t]he negative timeliness ratings were highest among unemployed residents looking for work,” the summary points out.

## BUDGET FACTORS

Another area that saw a big change, the summary continues, involved respondents’ views about the county’s budget and spending priorities.


The 2013 survey shows 34 percent of the respondents wanted to keep property taxes and services at the same level, while 15 percent said taxes should be cut and less vital services reduced. In 2012, 43 percent of respondents wanted to keep property taxes and service levels where they are.

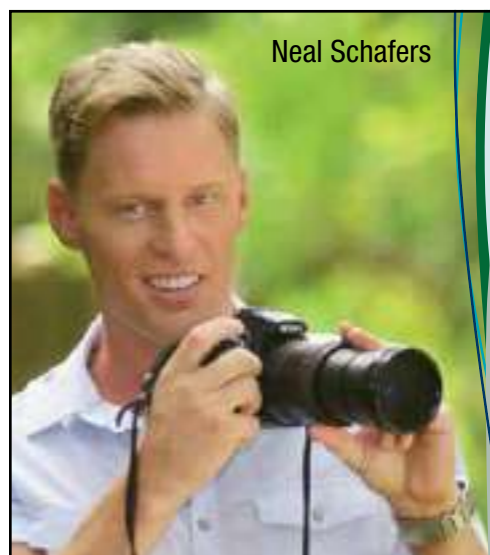
Support for creating a new revenue source — not linked to property taxes — that could be used for a specific service or project rose from 26 percent last year to 34 percent this year.

Asked whether the county’s spending priorities were “about right,” 47 percent said reprioritization is needed. Another 34 percent characterized the spending priorities as “about right” this year, while 19 percent had no opinion on the question.

The summary says little agreement was found among the 32 percent of respondents who were disgruntled because they felt the county was spending too much money on certain things. The results found 16 percent citing public officials’ salaries and perks; 14 percent pointing to parks, art and beautification; and 12 percent citing low priorities and waste.

Among the more positive notes, 32 percent of respondents said they felt they could trust a Sarasota County leader “almost always” or “most of the time,” compared to 28 percent saying the same for state government leaders and the 25 percent who provided those answers for federal government leaders.

*To read the 2013 Citizens Survey Executive Summary and past surveys, click [here](#).* 



Neal Schafers

*Find joy in a picture-perfect smile.*

My interest in photography reminded me about how my smile made me unhappy. A childhood accident caused my permanent teeth to come in askew. I had seen how Dr. Koval restored the smile of a friend’s father. With Dr. Koval, we discovered I also had cracked fillings and a shifted jaw – all which she corrected.

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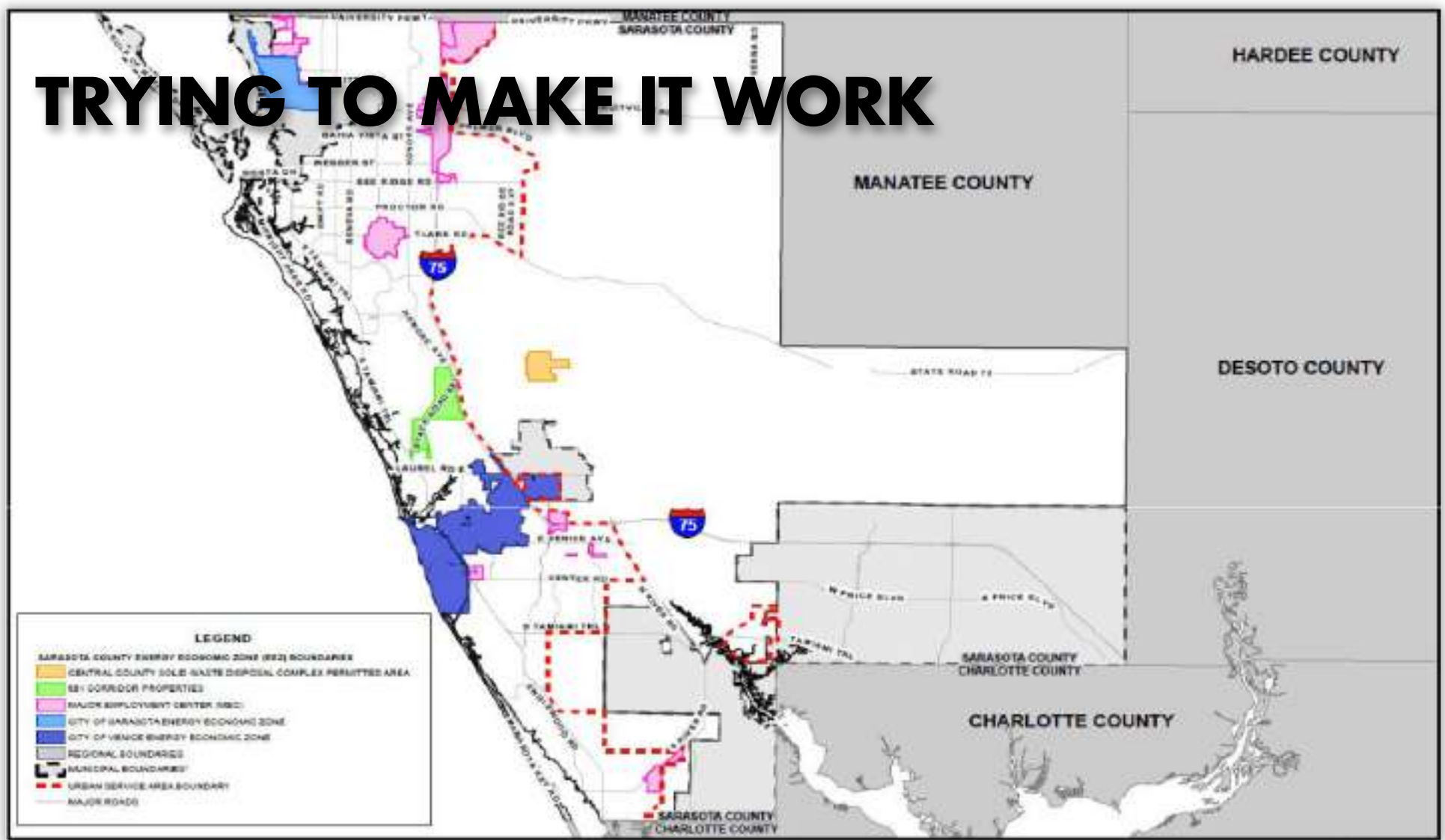
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Awarded 20 Gold Medals for Smile Makeovers by the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry.



# TRYING TO MAKE IT WORK



*A map shows the current Economic Energy Zone boundaries. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## WITH COMPANIES CITING LIMITATIONS HAMPERING THEIR ABILITY TO GAIN ECONOMIC ENERGY ZONE INCENTIVES, THE COUNTY COMMISSION WILL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING ON AMENDING FACETS OF THE PROGRAM

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

With no success realized yet in a program created to boost “green” economic development in the community, the Sarasota County Commission has agreed to hold an Oct. 9 public hearing on more tweaks to the program with the hope, finally, of spurring progress.

The public hearing has been set for Oct. 23.

The changes to be addressed in that hearing are the relaxing of the geographic boundaries of the Energy Eco-

nomics Zone (EEZ), revising energy usage standards for businesses applying for incentives offered through the zone and rebranding the effort as the Sustainable Energy Economic District (SEED) Incentive Program.

“*This is an economic development tool. I think the better we can make it, the better tool it becomes for expansion of our economic base.*”

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

The commissioners unanimously approved a motion by Commissioner Joe Barbetta to proceed with advertising the public hearing.

“Why have a program if it’s not working,” Vice Chairman Charles



Hines pointed out. “What can we do to tweak it to make it work?”

THE BACKGROUND

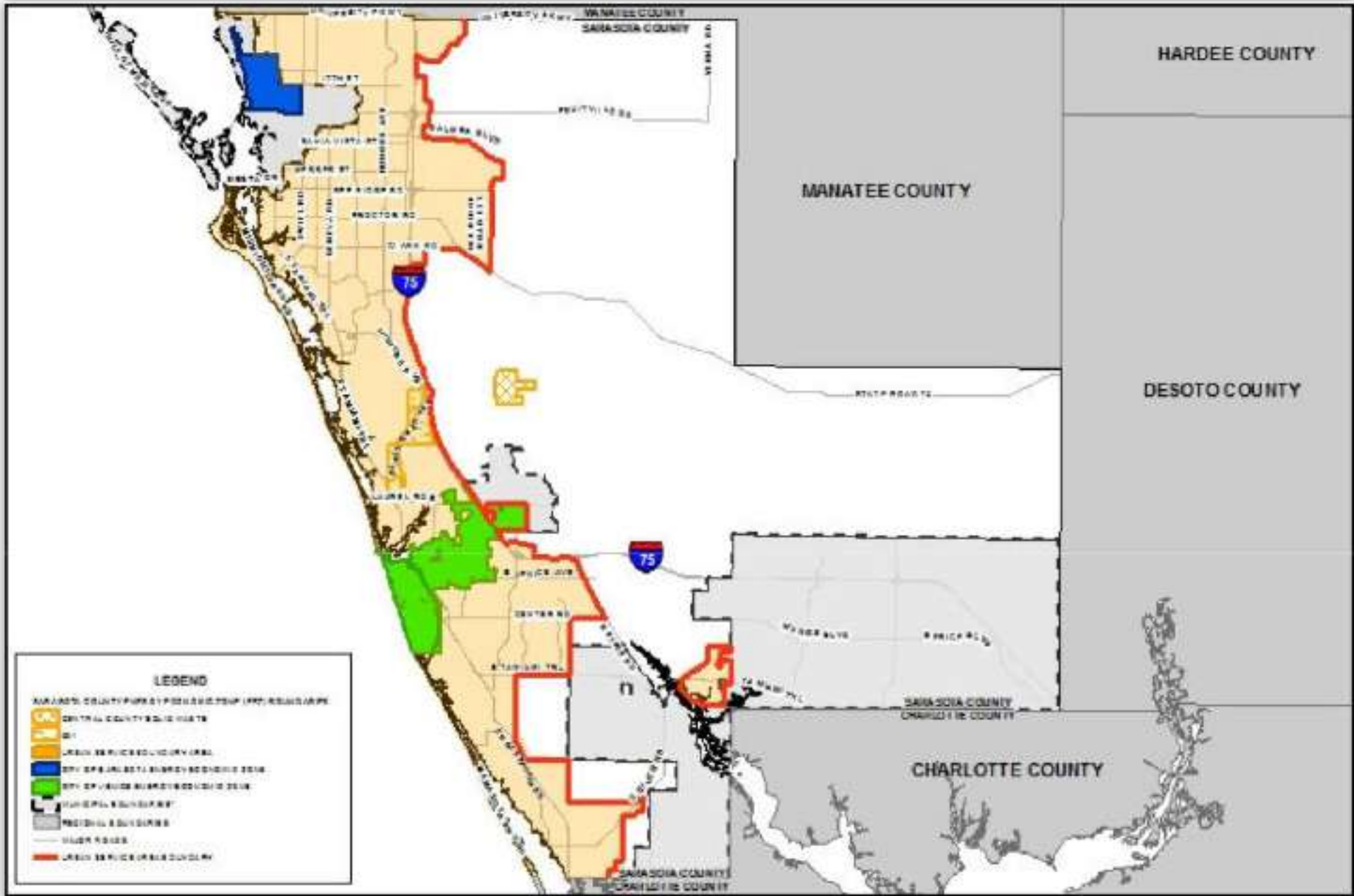
A memo provided to the County Commission by Jeff Maultsby, director of business and economic development for the county, explains that the Florida Legislature created the EEZ Pilot Program in 2009 “to assist communities in the development of a model to cultivate green economic development, encourage renewable electric energy generation and promote the manufacturing of products that contribute to energy conservation and green jobs.”

Sarasota County and the City of Miami Beach were selected for the pilot programs. Miami

Beach has not had any success with its program, either, staff told the County Commission.

In 2011, the Legislature amended the state law governing the EEZ Pilot Program “to provide that all the statutory incentives and benefits available to Enterprise Zones (EZ)” also be available within an EEZ, the memo points out.

To qualify for the state program, the County Commission had to adopt an ordinance on March 31, 2012 defining the EEZ’s boundaries, specifying applicable energy-efficiency standards for businesses within the EEZ and determining eligibility criteria for companies applying for EEZ incentives, the memo continues.



A map shows the proposed new Economic Energy Zone boundaries. Image courtesy Sarasota County

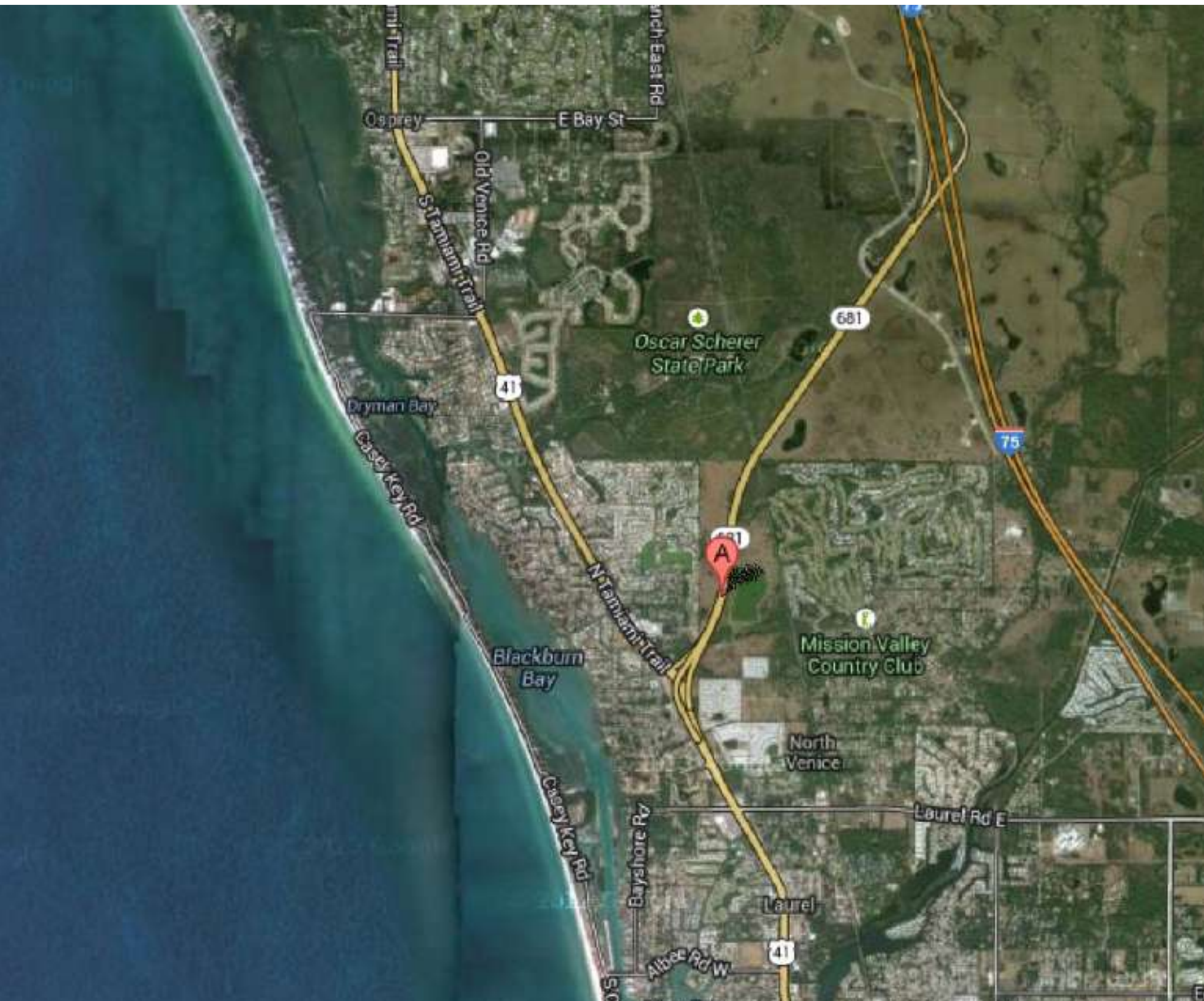


As outlined in the existing county ordinance, Lisa Damschroder of the Office of Business and Economic Development, explained to the board on Sept. 11, EEZ incentives are available to businesses located only within the State Road 681 corridor, major employment centers (MECs) and urban service areas within the cities of Sarasota and Venice, which have authorized resolutions to participate in the program.

The county landfill, by virtue of its location, also is within the EEZ boundaries, she noted.

The City of North Port, she added, is in the process of adopting an urban service boundary so it also can participate.

Damschroder and Lee Hayes Byron, manager of the county's sustainability program, discussed limitations that businesses have pointed to as the reasons the program has not worked thus far.



*An aerial map shows the location of State Road 681 in South County. Image from Google Maps*



For example, Damschroder said, 88.5 percent of the county's businesses are located outside the MECs. Additionally, a business job credit the County Commission approved on Sept. 12, 2012, is available only if the company hires a new employee who lives within the EEZ. However, Damschroder said, very few residences are in the zone.

Byron said businesses have had difficulty showing they can meet the energy standards for the zone.

Under those standards, she explained, a building must have an **Energy Star** rating of 60 or higher, "which essentially is about 10 percent more efficient than the average building [of the same] type."

Second, a new building has to have an energy rating that is at least 5 percent above the state code requirement for new construction. Finally, if a building gets **LEED** or Florida Green Building certification, it is eligible to be in the EEZ.

## SUGGESTIONS

In many cases, Byron said, buildings may be too old or inefficient to meet the energy standards or — because of the nature of tenants' use of space in them — it may be difficult to determine the necessary data from meters that record the electricity usage.

A performance-based standard, she pointed out, would make it easier for businesses to comply with the energy standards. She proposed that a company applying for the EEZ commit to a 10-percent reduction in energy usage over six months. That would lead to more energy efficiency, Byron noted, "but it wouldn't be an absolute standard, which is what we currently have."



*Commissioner Nora Patterson. File photo*

Another suggestion for the EEZ, posed by Damschroder, is to change the EEZ boundaries to encompass all of the unincorporated areas of the county and include the zones adopted by municipalities.

Finally, Byron suggested rebranding the program with "a more representative name ... that is actually appealing to businesses": Sustainable Energy Economic District (SEED).

That "would communicate that we are growing local and sustainable businesses through this program," she added.

After Damschroder and Byron asked for direction from the County Commission, Commissioner Nora Patterson said, "From my perspective, this whole concept has completely migrated from what it started to be. It was



really roughly centered in the areas immediately surrounding [State Road] 681 ...”

The project was, in a way, a gift to that part of the county, Patterson continued, as it opened up SR 681 as a transportation artery.

Additionally, Patterson noted, the \$300,000 the state agreed to provide annually for incentives for energy-efficient businesses “really [is not] a lot.” Spreading that countywide, she pointed out, meant only one or two grants a year probably could be awarded. Otherwise, she said, “it’s going to be like a micro loan, which could be a good thing, but it’s a far cry from where the intent really was.”

Commissioner Christine Robinson responded that the Legislature’s intent had been to provide more money for the incentives, but the impact of the Great Recession on the state’s budget had hampered that. The Legislature then decided to include the Enterprise Zone incentives in the EEZ pilot program to make up for the lack of extra funding.

Patterson said she felt it was appropriate for an Enterprise Zone such as the one in Newtown to incorporate the waiving of impact fee payments to the county, because that encouraged businesses to open in Newtown. However, she had reservations about making that option available to any company applying for the EEZ. “That would be a serious detriment to the [county] road program,” she noted.

When Patterson said she wondered “whether we should return to the roots of the idea” when the EEZ was proposed in 2009, Robinson explained that because the Legislature

had amended the program, she was uncertain the board could take such a step.


Damschroder indicated Robinson was correct in that assumption.

“Here’s something that we’ve created ... hoping to be a carrot for [economic development],” Hines pointed out, “and nothing’s happened, [and staff] spent a lot of time on this. If it’s not going to work, either we step back a little bit,” he added, or report to the state that the EEZ model does not work.

Finally, Barbetta clarified with Damschroder and Byron that they were seeking a board vote on advertising a public hearing to consider making the proposed changes part of the ordinance — the new boundaries, revising how companies could prove they meet the energy-efficiency standards and the rebranding. “I think all three are fine,” Barbetta said. “I think the energy standard has been a hold-up.”

He added, “This is an economic development tool. I think the better we can make it, the better tool it becomes for expansion of our economic base.”

Patterson told him she would go along with the motion if there was no way the county could go back to the original concept. If these new modifications in the program still did not lead to success, she continued, then future county commissioners might just have to seek permission to withdraw as host of a pilot program.

The board members needed to keep in mind, Patterson pointed out, “that a small amount of money sometimes works better when it’s precisely targeted.” 



# ROOMS WITH A VIEW

## **SARASOTA MEMORIAL MARKS THE OPENING OF ITS NEW COURTYARD TOWER**

*Staff Reports*

Sarasota Memorial Hospital welcomed members of the public to an open house Sept. 7 that celebrated the completion of its new Courtyard Tower.

The nine-story, \$186 million patient care facility includes cardiac and orthopedic units, an expanded Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and spacious labor and delivery and mother/baby suites, a news release notes.

*Kara Saunders and Laurie Dowd pause along the ninth-floor connector to the original section of the hospital.*





*The ninth-floor connector offers a bird's-eye perspective on the rest of the medical complex.*





“Designed to enhance patient, physician and staff satisfaction, improve safety and meet the community’s changing health needs, Sarasota Memorial’s Courtyard Tower replaces some of the oldest areas of the hospital,” the release points out. The project also includes a completely redesigned entryway “to help patients get to the care they need, quickly and efficiently.” Medical services in the new patient

care tower are connected to their counterparts in the existing hospital, making it easier for people to find their way throughout the facility, the release continues. “Perhaps most importantly from patients’ point of view, 70 percent of the Courtyard Tower’s rooms are private and feature the most advanced, patient-friendly, patient safe design amenities. The new building also has the latest hurricane









proofing available to help ensure continuing patient care in the event of a severe storm, as well as energy efficient lighting.”

People entering the Courtyard Tower at the ground level find themselves in a two-story lobby with floor-to-ceiling windows and a courtyard artfully landscaped with luscious trees and shrubbery and tranquil water features, the release notes.

Along with the Information Desk, patient registration, pre-admission testing, surgery reception, and the Courtyard Café, patients and

visitors will find wellness stations where they can check their blood pressure, pulse, weight and body mass indexes, the release adds.

The new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit on the fifth floor has 33 private rooms, neonatologists on site 24/7 as well as unrestricted visiting hours for mothers, their support persons and two guests, the release points out.

*Sarasota News Leader* Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel was among those who took the tour of the facility on Sept. 7, providing readers with views of the new features. 



*All photos by Norman Schimmel.*





## NEWS BRIEFS

*Sarasota County will mark National Voter Registration Day on Sept. 24. Image from Americanspirit-Dreamstime*

### **SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS SCHEDULES VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES**

In celebration of National Voter Registration Day, Sept. 24, the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections (SOE) Office will be conducting a number of voter drives during the week of Sept. 23-27, the office has announced.

“SOE staff will be out in the community to remind people of the importance of registering to vote and ensuring their voter information is current with the elections office,” a news release says.

“Every year, citizens forfeit the right to vote because they do not register or they register too late,” Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent said in the release. “In recognition of the 2013 National Voter Registration campaign, we want to highlight the importance of participating in the electoral process and give people another opportunity to register or to update

their voter records prior to the 2014 election cycle,” she added.

The following voter registration drives are scheduled:

- Monday, Sept. 23: North Port Library (13800 Tamiami Trail), 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, Sept. 24: Venice YMCA lobby (701 Center Road), 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.; State College of Florida Venice Campus (8000 S. Tamiami Trail), 10 a.m. to noon; FCCI Insurance Group (6300 University Parkway), 10 a.m. to noon; Riverview High School (1 Ram Way, off Proctor Road) in Sarasota, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; North Port Library, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, Sept. 25: Englewood YMCA lobby (262 S. Indiana Ave.), 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.; Frank G. Berlin branch of the Saraso-



ta YMCA (1075 S. Euclid Ave.), 10 a.m. to noon.

- Thursday, Sept. 26: Booker High School (3201 N. Orange Ave.) in Sarasota, 10:15 a.m. to 12:35 p.m.
- Friday, Sept. 27: Venice High School (1 Indian Ave.), senior government classes — all day; Imagine School in North Port (1000 Innovation Ave.), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A voter registration application may also be downloaded from the SOE website at [www.SarasotaVotes.com](http://www.SarasotaVotes.com).

Any business, organization or school that would like to partner with the Supervisor of Elections Office to host a voter registration drive, or anyone who would like more information about scheduled events, may call 861-8619.

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## BAR ASSOCIATION TO SPONSOR CITIZENS IN SUNSHINE SESSION

Do you serve on a government board or advisory committee? Do you represent others who do? Are you confused about social media, emails, text messages, social gatherings and the implications for Florida's Government in the Sunshine and Public Records laws? "Given today's technology and the increasing explosion of electronic communications, you are not alone," a Sarasota County Bar Association news release says.

On Friday, Oct. 11, attorney Pat Gleason, special counsel for open government for Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, "will present a practical, 'real world scenario' information session designed for those who serve on local government boards or advisory boards, those who represent them and individuals interested in the intricacies of open meetings and public

records laws," the release adds. "Bring your questions and get the answers you need," it continues.

The workshop will be held in the [Michael's on East](#) ballroom beginning at 8:30 a.m. with a continental breakfast. The program will run from 9 to 11 a.m. The cost is \$20 per person. Advanced registration is required; reservations may be made by clicking on the following link: [www.sarasotabar.com](http://www.sarasotabar.com).

This session is made possible by the support of two area law firms — Icard Merrill and Williams Parker —in conjunction with the Sarasota County Bar Association, the release notes.

For more information, contact Jan Jung at [scba@sarasotabar.com](mailto:scba@sarasotabar.com).

# Take Your Time You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night



## PAYNE PARK PLAYGROUND CLOSING TEMPORARILY ON SEPT. 23

With tens of thousands of visitors having enjoyed the Payne Park playground since it opened in June 2012, the heavy usage necessitates an annual inspection and subsequent upkeep projects, the City of Sarasota has announced.

The playground will be temporarily closed for approximately two weeks beginning Monday, Sept. 23, so workers can inspect, clean and maintain the equipment, a news release says.

The swings, children's bridge and crawling tunnel will be replaced, the release notes.

In addition, the shade sails over the toddler play area will be replaced with one large canopy; more drains will be installed at the splash pad; a curb will be installed around the perimeter of the play area sidewalk; and the mulch around the trees will be replaced with a different material, the release continues.

As part of the safety inspection, every fastener on the playground will be checked, the release adds.

It is anticipated the playground will reopen on or before Monday, Oct. 7.



*Payne Park's popular playground will close temporarily for maintenance beginning Sept. 23. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## COMMUNITY WELLNESS WALK PLANNED FOR SEPT. 21

Members of the Laurel Osprey Venice Nokomis (LOVN) Community Health Action Team, along with local participants, will take to the streets Saturday, Sept. 21, at 8 a.m. to raise awareness for mental health and wellness, Sarasota County has announced.

The event is free and open to the public. Registration will begin at 7:45 a.m. on the grounds of Summit at Venice, 200 Nassau St. North in Venice. Walkers donning lime-green clothing and ribbons — the color representing mental health awareness — will travel down Venice Avenue to Esplanade Avenue and back, a news release says.

“Although medications have improved, we at Mental Health Community Centers are well aware of the impact of healthy lifestyles and their vital contributions to a person’s recovery from mental illness,” said Carolyn Eagen, executive director of Mental Health Community Centers Inc., in the release.

The Community Wellness Walk is designed to promote healthful lifestyles while drawing attention to health concerns facing the community and fostering partnerships that pos-

itively address those concerns, the release adds. “Through this active display of public support, the LOVN Community Health Action Team intends to help break down the stigma associated with mental illness and get people talking about mental health and wellness,” added Eagen.

“Exercise makes one more alert and increases feelings of well-being,” the release quotes Dr. David V. Habif Jr., a physician, researcher and trustee of Washington University in St. Louis. “It negates emotional pain and negative thoughts. It enhances learning in the post-exercise period. It is a natural mood stabilizer, attitude adjuster and sleep enhancer,” according to Habif.

Information tables will be set up on the grounds of Summit at Venice, the release notes. Water and light refreshments will be provided.

Representatives of businesses and other organizations who would like to join the event may contact Blair Monnett at 237-1777 or email [admiss@heritagehealthofvenice.com](mailto:admiss@heritagehealthofvenice.com).

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## NATIONAL ESTUARIES DAY PHOTO CONTEST ANNOUNCED

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is joining its 27 sister National Estuary Programs around the U.S. in a nationwide “Toast to the Coast” in honor of National Estuaries Day on Saturday, Sept. 28, the organization has announced.

“We invite you to join us by lifting a glass, mug or cup in a salute to our very own Sarasota Bay,” a news release says.

“Snap a picture of yourself or a group of friends toasting to Sarasota Bay and email [it] to [info@sarasotabay.org](mailto:info@sarasotabay.org) to enter SBEP’s ‘Toast to the Coast’ photo contest,” the release continues.

“Creativity is encouraged, but all pictures must show Sarasota Bay in the photograph. Please be sure to reference where the photo was taken,” the release adds.

Those wanting to participate should submit a picture by Monday, Sept. 23, the release points out. Later that day, an album will be posted on the SBEP [Facebook](#) page with all the submissions. The picture that gets the most “likes” via the album will be named the winner on National Estuaries Day, Sept. 28. The winning submission will receive four [Sarasota Bay Explorers](#) tickets, the release notes.

Anyone with questions may contact Stephanie Hames at [info@sarasotabay.org](mailto:info@sarasotabay.org) or at 955-8085.



## SARASOTA 2050 PLAN TO BE FOCUS OF CLUB DISCUSSION

On Sept. 26, the meeting of the Sarasota Republican Club will feature a discussion of the “thorniest issue in Sarasota County,” a news release says: the 2050 Comprehensive Development Plan.

The panel will include Dan Lobeck, a local attorney and president of [Control Growth Now](#); Lourdes Ramirez, president of CONA (Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood

Associations); Jody Hudgins, a local banker who has served on the Sarasota Housing Authority and the Sarasota Planning Commission; and prominent environmental attorney Casey Colburn, the release adds.

The event will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at Marina Jack, located at 2 Marina Plaza on the Sarasota bayfront.



*The Marina Jack restaurant (left) is a prominent structure on Sarasota's bayfront. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY CELEBRATION SET FOR SEPT. 28

To mark National Public Lands Day on Saturday, Sept. 28, Sarasota County Natural Resources and Parks and Recreation staff members will host a volunteer event from 9 a.m. to noon at Red Bug Slough Preserve, located at 5200 Beneva Road, Sarasota, the county has announced.

“This event is an excellent opportunity for volunteers to help maintain the preserve’s amenities and natural features,” said Jeff Weber, environmental specialist and land manager for Red Bug Slough Preserve, in a news release.

Staff will work with volunteers to improve the existing butterfly garden with weeding, pruning, the replacement of nuisance exotic plants with Florida-friendly vegetation, installation of landscaping and mulch around the new restroom facility and erection of interpretive signs, the release notes.

To participate in the event, volunteers should register in advance online at [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net). Select the “Calendar” tab on the left, then click on “September” from the drop-down list and

click “Go.” Finally, choose “National Public Lands Day” on Sept. 28. Space for the event is limited to 25 volunteers, the release notes.

Volunteers are encouraged to bring loppers or hand pruners, work gloves, hats, sunglasses, water, bug spray and sunscreen, the release says. Volunteers should also wear closed-toe, closed-heel shoes such as hiking boots or sneakers.

“National Public Lands Day is the nation’s largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance America’s public lands,” the release points out. Last year more than 170,000 volunteers nationwide built trails and bridges, planted trees and plants and removed trash and invasive plants. This effort contributed an estimated \$17 million to the improvement of public lands across the country, the release adds.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 and ask for Natural Resources or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).



*Red Bug Slough on Beneva Road will be the site of the National Public Lands Day celebration on Sept. 28. Photo courtesy of Sarasota County*



## MAIN-PALM INTERSECTION REOPENED 12 DAYS EARLY

The downtown Sarasota intersection of Main Street and Palm Avenue reopened late on the afternoon of Sept. 13 — 12 days ahead of schedule — with newly installed brick crosswalks, the city announced.

“Our goal was to get the job done right as quickly as possible, so our merchants, residents and visitors would not be inconvenienced any longer than necessary,” said Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown in a news release. “We appreciate our contractor, Jon F. Swift, working so diligently to finish ahead of schedule and reopen in time for weekend traffic.”

The work was completed in five days, the release notes. The City Commission had directed staff to temporarily close the intersection in September and complete the work prior to the return of seasonal residents and tourists to the area, the release points out.

The city is collaborating with the Downtown Improvement District to make \$1.8 million in improvements at various locations downtown, from Gulfstream Avenue to Five Points and up to Goodrich Avenue, the release adds.

To receive email updates about the project, register online at [www.SarasotaGov.com](http://www.SarasotaGov.com).



*Improvements at the intersection of Main Street and Palm Avenue were completed ahead of time. Photo courtesy of the City of Sarasota*



## GOODWILL TO HOST FREE SPANISH LANGUAGE WORKSHOP

During the month of October, Goodwill Manasota will host a free, five-week-long workshop on conversational and practical Spanish as part of the nonprofit's Good Neighbor Program, Goodwill has announced.

Workshop classes, which are open to all members of the public, will be held every Tuesday, Oct. 1-29, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Goodwill North Trail at Mecca Community Room, located at 5150 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

Rosa Payson, "a gifted, tri-lingual entrepreneur born and raised in Colombia," and Julissa Baez-Pavon, co-owner of a local Allstate Insurance Co. office and a native of the Do-

minican Republic, will teach the classes, a news release says. Each week, they will teach new vocabulary words "using a method designed to make the language easy for students to speak and comprehend," the release adds.

The course will cover use of Spanish in meeting and greeting people, restaurant patronage and travel; it also will provide tips on how to improve communication with Spanish-speaking service providers and employees, the release notes.

To register for the course, call 355-2721, Ext. 163, or email [GoodwillRSVP@gimi.org](mailto:GoodwillRSVP@gimi.org).

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## FORTY COUNTY STUDENTS NAMED NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS

The National Merit Scholarship Corp. has announced that 40 students attending Sarasota County public high schools are among the approximately 16,000 semifinalists in the 59th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

The semifinalists have an opportunity to continue in the competition for about 8,000 National Merit Scholarships valued at about \$35 million, a Sarasota County Schools news release points out.

To advance to the finalist level for a Merit Scholarship, semifinalists must meet several requirements, the release says. About 15,000 semifinalists are expected to attain finalist standing; those who do will be notified in February 2014. More than half of those finalists will win a National Merit Scholarship, earning the Merit Scholar title, the release adds.

About 1.5 million juniors in some 22,000 high schools entered the 2014 National Merit Schol-

arship Program by taking the 2012 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, which serves as an initial screening of program entrants, the release continues. The nationwide pool of semifinalists, which represents less than 1 percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state.

To become a finalist, a semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by the high school principal and earn SAT scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test. The semifinalist and a high school official must submit a detailed scholarship application, which includes an essay by the student and information about his or her participation and leadership in school and community activities, the release says. Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments and



potential for success in rigorous college studies, without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin or religious preference, the release notes.

Three types of National Merit Scholarship will be offered in the spring of 2014. Every finalist will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit scholarships valued at \$2,500, which will be awarded on a state representational basis, the release says. "About 1,000 corporate-sponsored scholarships will be provided by approximately 240 corporations and business organizations for finalists who meet their specified criteria, such as children of the

grantor's employees or residents of communities where sponsor plants or offices are located," the release points out. In addition, about 200 colleges and universities are expected to finance some 4,500 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for finalists who will attend the sponsor institutions.

The 2014 National Merit Scholarship winners will be announced from April through July. "They will join more than 300,000 other distinguished young people who have earned the Merit Scholar title," the release concludes.



*Noelle Moon, a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist at Venice High School, accepts a certificate from her principal, Jack Turgeon. Contributed photo*




## SLAPP PROMOTED TO CAPTAIN IN SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight promoted Lt. Jeff Slapp to captain on Sept. 11, the Sheriff's Office has announced.

Slapp joined the sheriff's office in 1985 and rose through the ranks, becoming a lieutenant in 2006, a news release says. He has served the agency in a number of areas, most recently supervising the Training Section, and he is credited with introducing progressive skills and technologies to training programs agency-wide, the release adds.

"Slapp will now bring his management skills to the Public Safety Communications Center," the release notes.

"Jeff is always striving to better the production of his command," said Knight in the release. "He earned his new position through hard work and dedication."

Slapp has a master's degree in criminology from the University of South Florida. He is a 2009 graduate of the St. Leo University Command Officer Development Training Course and an adjunct professor at Keiser University, the release says. 



*Capt. Jeff Slapp (left) accepts congratulations from Sheriff Tom Knight. Contributed photo*



*The vehicle driven by John Tauber has visible damage after the crash. Contributed photo*

## **DRUNK DRIVER CRASHES INTO DEPUTY'S CRUISER**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a Venice man for Driving Under the Influence and other charges after he crashed into the back of a patrol car on the morning of Sept. 18 and tried to drive away, the office has reported.

Deputy Todd Mitchell was at the intersection of Center Road and Rockley Boulevard at 8:07 a.m. when another car struck the rear of his agency vehicle and then pulled around the car as the driver tried to leave the scene, the report says. Mitchell was not injured.

The driver, John Tauber, 26, of 409 Menendez St., Apt. 102, Venice, "had [a] very strong

odor of alcohol coming from his breath," according to the report filed by another deputy who responded to the scene. "[Tauber] had to be held several times so he didn't fall over or into traffic," the report continues. "Tauber was extremely belligerent to deputies, claimed he hadn't been drinking and refused to perform standard field sobriety tests," a news release adds. "However, once he was taken to jail he took the breath test and blew a .353 and .365, more than four times the legal limit."

Tauber is charged with DUI with Breath Alcohol Content above .15, DUI with Property Damage and Leaving the Scene of an Accident with Property Damage.





*John Tauber/Contributed photo*

*Rear-end damage is evident in the Sheriff's Office patrol car. Contributed photo*



## MAN RE-ARRESTED AFTER TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM POLICE OFFICERS

A 27-year-old Sarasota man who tried to escape from a Sarasota Police Department vehicle taking him to the North County Jail was detained and immediately rearrested on Sept. 16, the Police Department has reported.

About 6:45 a.m. on Sept. 16, officers were dispatched to the intersection of Second Street and Central Avenue in Sarasota, a news release says, where a passerby alerted them to a person sleeping on a bench in front of the Selby Public Library. The officers awoke Brandon R. Kesti, described in the report as a transient, and asked him for identification. He could not provide any, the report says. Then he gave the officers a false name. When one of the officers ran a check on that name, the report says, no record could be found.



*Brandon Kesti/Contributed photo*



*A Sarasota Police car crosses the pedestrian walkway near the Criminal Justice Center as it heads westward on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



The officers advised Kesti they needed his real name, the report continues. When Kesti provided another name, a records check on it brought up a photo that did not match Kesti, the report adds. The officers then arrested him for Lodging Out of Doors, a misdemeanor, and Giving a False Name After Being Lawfully Detained.

The officers handcuffed Kesti and placed him in the back seat of the patrol car, the report says. Again, they asked him for his name, and, again, he gave them another false one. Kesti did not provide his real name until the officers were approaching the Sarasota County Jail on Ringling Boulevard, the report continues.

Just after the officers passed the pedestrian walkway on Ringling, they heard movement

in the rear of the patrol car, the report says. Kesti had moved his handcuffs to the front and was escaping through the rear window on the driver's side, "which had been partially down for air flow," the report notes.

The officers immediately exited the patrol car and detained Kesti, the report says. Kesti tried to pull away and was able to stand up and flee, injuring an officer in the process, the report adds.

After the officers were able to regain control of him, the report continues, they escorted Kesti into the jail.

He also was charged with a felony count of Escape, the report notes, as well as a misdemeanor count of Resisting Without Violence.

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## **SARASOTA MAN CHARGED FOR TRADING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

Sarasota Police Detective Megan Buck and other officers of the Sarasota Police Department worked with the FBI to arrest and charge Ryan E. Bartley, 42, of 2226 Pineview Circle, Sarasota, with one federal count of Distribution of Child Pornography and one federal count of Child Pornography, the department announced on Sept. 18.

Bartley was arrested on Sept. 16, after detectives say he was found to have been trading child pornography over the Internet, a news release adds. Over the course of a week, detectives conducted an undercover sting and provided enough probable cause for a federal search warrant, the release notes.

"The purpose of [the] Child Exploitive Taskforce is to aggressively go out and seek people who commit crimes against children," Buck said in the release. "This taskforce is in place to protect our children from the predators on the Internet and the real world."

The Child Exploitive Taskforce is made up of representatives of the Bradenton Police Department, Cape Coral Police Department, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, Clewiston Police Department, Collier County Sheriff's Office, Lee County Sheriff's Office and the Sarasota Police Department, the release adds.

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# **The Sarasota News Leader No-Nonsense Reporting**



## BRADENTON MAN ARRESTED IN ATTEMPTED ABDUCTION CASE

A 19-year-old Bradenton man was arrested on Sept. 15 in connection with the report of an attempted abduction about 6:20 a.m. that day, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

The male victim told officers the driver of a white Honda Civic saw him standing near the intersection of 17th Street and U.S. 41 in Sarasota and instructed him to get into the passenger side of the vehicle, according to the report. After the victim entered the car, the driver headed southbound on North Tamiami Trail and allegedly brandished a handgun that he had stowed in the back seat, the report adds. The victim told officers the driver pointed the gun at him and said, "We are going to do this the hard way or the easy way," according to the report.

The victim told officers no agreement had been made for prostitution, but the driver "wanted to have sex with the victim," the report continues. After making a stop on the top floor of the Regions Bank parking garage at 1626 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota, the victim said the driver drove back to the area of 17th Street and North Tamiami Trail, where he dropped off the victim. Then the victim called 911 and provided a description of the vehicle, the suspect and the license tag number, the report says.

A few minutes later, officers observed a vehicle matching that description, the report continues. It was headed southbound on U.S. 41; then, it turned east on Boulevard of the Arts.

When officers tried to stop the vehicle, it fled, the report adds. Officers pursued it and were able to stop the Honda at the intersection of University Parkway and North Lockwood



*Dion Barnes/Contributed photo*

Ridge Road. Officers recovered a BB handgun from the vehicle, the report notes, and it looked like a real firearm, the report adds.

The operator of the vehicle was Dion Barnes of 3422 29th St. East, Bradenton, according to the report. He told officers he originally thought the victim was a female and that they had agreed on a price for a certain sexual act, the report says. However, after they stopped at the bank parking garage, Barnes told officers he began to question the gender of the victim and an argument ensued over the fee to which they earlier had agreed, the report continues.

Barnes was charged with Fleeing to Elude and Reckless Driving.





*Members of the Crime Stoppers executive board pose with their new sign on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota: (from left) Dan Valentino, Cal Erb, Sheriff Tom Knight, Howard Phipps, Lucy Nicandri and Bob Freedy. The nonprofit organization was established locally in 1985 to help law enforcement officers fight crime. Callers may remain anonymous, and they are eligible to receive cash rewards of up to \$3,000 for information leading to arrests.*

Simply put, Crime Stoppers relies upon the cooperation between the police the media and the community to provide a flow of information about crime and criminals.

**Call:** (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

**Click:** [SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com](http://SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com)

**Text:** Text "TIP109" plus your message to CRIMES (274637)

***All submitted tips are secure and anonymous***

941-366-TIPS (8477)

**Crime stoppers**  
of  
Sarasota County  
[www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com)



## SARASOTA MAN CHARGED WITH STEALING FROM HIS GRANDMOTHER

Detectives with the Sarasota Police Department arrested Peter Mohr, 22, of 3266 Jolson Drive, Sarasota, this week on several felony charges after they say he used his grandmother's debit card and a Sears MasterCard to make 166 fraudulent transactions totaling \$11,651.33.

On June 11, the 83-year-old victim told detectives Mohr and his girlfriend, Cristina Arteaga (no address given), fraudulently used her cards, according to the police report. Since May 1, approximately 47 fraudulent transactions were recorded on the victim's debit card in the city of Sarasota, totaling \$6,361.06, the report says. During the same time frame — involving the same debit card — about 119 fraudulent transactions occurred in Sarasota County totaling \$5,290.27, the report adds.


Mohr has been charged with felony counts of Exploitation of the Elderly, Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card and Criminal Use of Personal Identification. "More charges are pending and the actual amount of total loss is expected to go up," a news release says.

As of Sept. 17, Mohr's girlfriend had not been arrested but charges were pending against




*Peter Mohr/Contributed photo*

her as well: one count of Fraudulent Use of a Credit Card, four counts of Criminal Use of Personal Identification, four counts of Dealing in Stolen Property and four counts of Defrauding a Pawnbroker/Secondhand Dealer, the news release notes.

Anyone with information about the incidents is encouraged to call Detective Kim Laster at 364-7327; leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at [www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com). 

## QUICK TIP



For the best viewing experience on a computer click the  icon in the menubar to zoom to fullscreen mode.



# OPINION



## THE 'DAISY' APPROACH TO PARKING FEES

### EDITORIAL

A huge sigh of relief was breathed following the Sarasota City Commission meeting on Sept. 3 ... by the staff of the city's Parking Enforcement Division. The commissioners had just voted 3-2 to resume charging for parking in the 740-space Palm Avenue garage, an apparent reprieve for a division costing city taxpayers more than a million dollars each year.

Not so relieved are those same taxpayers, who might have hoped the commission instead would have scaled back parking enforcement to match the requirements of a downtown that featured free parking.

Only 547 days had passed since the City Commission, knuckling under to protests from downtown merchants, voted 3-2 to remove paid park-

ing from the city's streets and garages, scrapping practically new parking meters in the process.

The parking charges started with the installation of those \$10,000 parking meters in May 2011. Protests from downtown merchants began almost immediately, so the City Commission then voted in July to suspend charges for parking for three months.

In October, parking fees resumed ... for five months. Then the City Commission pulled all of the meters and reestablished free parking downtown in March 2012.

The city's approach to paid parking has been somewhat like a child's plucking of petals from a daisy, saying, "He loves me. He loves me not" ... only the city is saying, "We charge them. We charge them not."



# OPINION

The city had beefed up its Parking Enforcement Division, with an annual budget in excess of \$1 million. When the parking revenues were realized, along with fines from parking infractions, the cost of parking enforcement would be shouldered by downtown parkers, not by city taxpayers. At least, that was the theory.

The city spent around \$1 million to purchase and install the sophisticated parking meters on downtown streets. Since they were in use

only a total of seven months, that meant each month cost taxpayers — not parkers — more than \$140,000 just for equipment.

Meanwhile, parking revenue amounted to barely a quarter of a million dollars before the commission pulled the plug, leaving city taxpayers holding the bag for three-quarters of a million dollars in equipment costs *and* the entire operating budget for the Parking Enforcement Division, which exceeded revenues by more than \$600,000.

A prudent person might have asked why the City Commission, when it decided to forego an estimated \$1.6 million in parking revenue, did not at the same time scale back the Parking Enforcement Division. After all, if parking were to be free downtown, there should not be the need for such elaborate enforcement.

The staffing level for the division during Fiscal Year 2012 — the year that parking charges were in effect — amounted to nine individuals: four parking enforcement specialists; one parking maintenance technician (presumably

to keep the meters working); one parking collection specialist; one “garage concierge;” one manager of parking; and one supervisor of parking services.

For the current fiscal year, during which parking was free, the

staffing level declined by only one. There are now five parking enforcement specialists, one parking attendant and still both a manager of parking and a supervisor of parking services.

One would not need to be an accountant to guess that the largest salaries are being paid to the parking manager and the supervisor of parking services. One also should be excused for wondering why, with such a small staff, there has been a need for both a “manager” and a “supervisor.”

Practically speaking, with free parking, only three or four enforcement specialists should be needed, and they could report to an administrative officer in the Sarasota Police Department — no need for a special manager or a supervisor just for them.

There also should be no need for expensive automobiles outfitted with costly scanning

*“The city’s approach to paid parking has been somewhat like a child’s plucking of petals from a daisy, saying, ‘He loves me. He loves me not’ ... only the city is saying ‘We charge them. We charge them not.’”*



# OPINION

equipment to read license plates of parked cars (which, in case you are wondering, is why it is illegal downtown to park “backed in”).

The reality is that the decision to end paid parking should have been accompanied by an immediate reduction in the Parking Enforcement Division to ensure taxpayers did not continue to subsidize that cost.

Instead, the city commissioners have been wringing their hands at the prospect of losing almost half a million dollars again this year — a loss that must be supported by a subsidy from the general fund (i.e., taxpayers). The commissioners’ grand solution? Start charging for parking in the Palm Avenue garage to trim an estimated \$285,000 from the taxpayers’ subsidy of parking enforcement.


Never mind that the Palm Avenue garage was mostly underutilized until the opening in April of Louies Modern, a new restaurant on the first floor of the garage complex. Somehow we are supposed to believe that this time things will be different.

But even the most casual observer would prudently conclude that charging for the garage

but not charging for street parking will simply clog up prime parking spots on the streets and make the Palm Avenue garage the “Maytag repairman” it was a year ago.

If any parking charge were to make sense, it would be charging for street parking and keeping garage parking free. But then merchants and their employees would not be able to park in front of their establishments, and the same angry crowds would be back in front of the City Commission demanding the board remove the meters.

The city either should charge for all parking or make all parking free. And if parking is to be free — and we believe it should be — the scope of parking enforcement must be scaled back commensurately. The city taxpayers simply cannot be expected to pay more than a million dollars a year for parking “executive” positions and expensive unnecessary equipment.

Take some or all of that \$485,000 budget “shortfall” out of the Parking Enforcement Division budget. How much simpler could it be? 

# The Sarasota News Leader No-Nonsense Reporting



# OPINION

## PLANNING A TRIP IS ITS OWN FORM OF ADVENTURE



By Harriet Cuthbert  
*Contributing Writer*

### COMMENTARY

Recently, a friend told me he was planning a trip to the West Coast to visit his sons and his grandson. And as I thought about his excursion, I realized I have my own personal definitions regarding various types of travel, especially the difference between a trip and a vacation.

“Trip” can mean a business excursion, something arduous or possibly enjoyable, but still some kind of obligatory assignment from your manager or a necessity related to your job description. For many people, the act of “going on a business trip” connotes having a prestigious job wherein your company pays you to show up and represent it. In other words, the firm respects and trusts your expertise and hopes it can benefit from them.

And you, the traveler, might enjoy staying at nice hotels and eating at high-end restaurants (maybe even in interesting locales), all “on the company’s dime,” so to speak. And let us not forget the fun of earning frequent flyer miles if an airplane is required for transportation.

A second kind of trip involves visiting family/relatives. Whether you fly or drive to your destination, the end result is the same — you are going to check in with your loved ones. That is your priority on this trip. You might get lucky

and have relatives who live in a city or country you have always wanted to explore. Then you can combine the family visit with the bonus of sightseeing. But, usually, this does not happen on a trip, because family takes precedence (aka time), and you have not seen these particular relatives because you have been busy.

Additionally, many times on these types of trips, family members practically force you to stay with them, which means you miss out on the pleasure of spending time in a hotel and making all your own decisions about the activities you pursue.

All of the above leads me to that wonderful word, “vacation.” *Aaaaaahhh*. Just writing the word makes me feel much better. I can envision the wrinkles fading and a smile appearing on my face. Planning a vacation is always a positive experience, always something excellent to anticipate. The results will be worth your time in planning the details. You will be taking time off from work; leaving your daily routine behind; going to a brand-new place that might be on your bucket list; and feeling great about spending your hard-earned money on a vacation that is just for you, with no strings attached.



# OPINION

You might even want to leave all your electronics behind, too, or at least store them in your bag until departure time arrives at the end of your trip. Personally, I think the fewer reminders we have of our daily lives, the more enjoyable our vacations are.

Some of us are lucky enough to be able to separate our types of travel, having the luxury of visiting relatives on some occasions and then, at other times, journeying to exciting locales. I would rather have my family members visit me at home. That way, as they leave, I can wave goodbye and go off on my own well-earned vacation.

The adventure continues ... 



## 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](mailto:Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com), with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

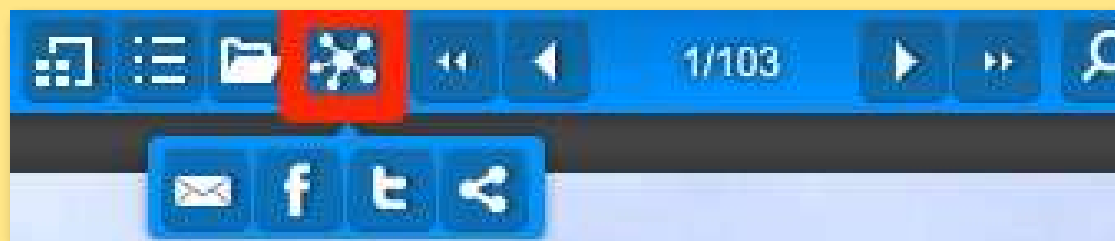
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# Sarasota Leisure

**SIESTA SEEN  
COMMUNITY CALENDAR  
SCHIMMEL SIGHTING**

*Inside*

**Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast**



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

# WE CARE.

DEEPLY. WITH RESPECT. WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

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

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

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

**A TINY NEW PUBLIC SPACE HAS BEEN CREATED ALONG OCEAN BOULEVARD; SGT. SCOTT OSBORNE PROVIDES A PRIMER ON 911 CALLS; THE SIESTA KEY CRYSTAL CLASSIC NEEDS SPONSOR SUPPORT**



**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department staff quietly has carved out a tiny public space on right of way next to a very popular parcel on Ocean Boulevard.

The news about this spot's existence arose during the August meeting of the Siesta Key

Association, but it took me a little time to nail down details about its creation.

Regular readers may remember that the lots adjacent to the right of way formerly were the focus of a Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast initiative to create a pocket park —



*A truck is in the space created along county right of way on Ocean Boulevard, while another vehicle is parked parallel to the road. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# Siesta Seen

an attempt neighboring condominium owners shot down in 2012.

The two pieces of property that create the Gulf-front vista — which are listed for sale with prominent Sarasota real estate firm Michael Saunders & Co. — are just south of Siesta Village. The entrance to the parcels is across Ocean Boulevard from Givens Street and next to the Windward Passage condo complex.

Beginning in the spring, county staff started working — as time permitted — on post-and-rope fencing to carve out one parking space on the right of way, county spokesman Curt Preisser told me this week. Eventually, a typical Parks and Rec kiosk was erected to make clear the site is public access.

The total investment for the work was about \$5,000, Preisser said.

On a side note, Preisser added that county research indicated the public right of way was established in the early 1900s.

This tiny area's makeover was news to Christine Johnson, president of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, who first addressed Siesta Key Association members in February 2012 about the possibility of the foundation's seeking private funding to purchase the two parcels on the Gulf of Mexico.

However, Johnson told me almost exactly a year ago, "There wasn't enough community support for [the proposal]." Moreover, she said, "the owner was intractable" on the price, which was reported to be between \$3.5 million and \$4 million.



*A kiosk provides standard county Parks and Recreation Department information next to the post-and-rope fencing. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# Siesta Seen

When I phoned Johnson in late August to ask whether she had heard about a new county pocket park there, she was skeptical. “It sounds like it’s the ‘Coconut Telegraph’ [spreading the news],” she added.

Preisser confirmed the public space’s transformation with George Tatge, a Parks and Recreation Department manager. SKA Vice President Michael Shay had communicated with Tatge about the changes on the site after Shay noticed them in late spring. In June, Shay emailed Tatge, suggesting the installation of one of the department’s iconic kiosks to make it clear the right of way is public property.

One factor behind that request, Shay told me, was that he had observed a couple of apparently homeless people camping on the site. Because such overnight stays are not permitted in county parks, deputies with the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office have been able to keep people off the property between midnight and 6 a.m., Shay said.

## A PRIMER ON CALLS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AID

During the Sept. 5 Siesta Key Association meeting, Sgt. Scott Osborne — leader of the Sheriff’s Office’s Community Policing Station on the island — offered some advice and dispelled some myths regarding calls for officer assistance.

First, Osborne pointed out, if anyone in any situation is perplexed about whether to call 911 or the non-emergency number for the Sheriff’s Office (316-1201), the person should

go ahead and call 911. All calls go to the same room of about 30 to 40 dispatchers, he stressed. A dispatcher might find herself responding to a non-emergency call right after she has handled a 911 call, Osborne said.

In response to questions about why dispatchers ask so many specific questions — including a caller’s location — Osborne explained that the Legislature passed a bill after a tragic case in 2008 involving the [abduction of a North Port woman](#). She was able to make a 911 call, he said, but it was routed to Charlotte County. Officers were not able to locate her in time, he added; she was sexually assaulted and murdered. The Denise Amber Lee Bill, which went into effect on Oct. 1, 2012, deals with specific training procedures for 911 dispatchers to try to prevent such tragedies in the future.

“Sometimes [dispatchers are] going to ask questions that are going to aggravate you,” Osborne told SKA members. While he acknowledged that callers already might be under a lot of stress, the dispatchers are only trying to follow the new state law and make sure they have all the information they need to handle the call appropriately.

SKA Director Ron Flynn pointed out that he and a neighbor both were upset earlier in the summer when they called with complaints about loud music emanating late at night from the county’s Turtle Beach Campground on the south end of the key. The dispatcher asked him to meet a deputy at the campground, Flynn continued, “and at 11 o’clock at night, I was in bed.”



# Siesta Seen

Osborne pointed out that the dispatcher in that incident was new and did not understand that it was unnecessary to have a caller meet a deputy.

“If you don’t feel comfortable leaving your home,” Osborne added, “don’t.”

Dispatchers may take up to 400 calls in a typical shift, he explained. “Sometimes, they’ll make mistakes, like all of us.”

An audience member who volunteered to watch out for nesting snowy plovers on the beach this summer complained that she did not always know her location when she called for assistance.

“All you have to do is say, ‘I’m at Access 5,’” for example, Osborne told her. When the dispatcher relays that detail to a deputy, he said, the address automatically pops up in a display in the officer’s vehicle.

In response to another question, Osborne said it is untrue that a report is not to be written about a disturbance if the person who called to complain refused to meet with a deputy. A report would be filed regardless of whether the caller wished to speak one-on-one with an officer, Osborne emphasized.

SKA President Catherine Luckner then mentioned reports from neighbors on North Shell



*Neighbors on North Shell Road have complained about people partying with loud music late at night as they enjoy Beach Access 1 at the end of the road. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# ***Siesta Seen***

Road about people creating a disturbance at Beach Access 1 at the end of that road. She referenced an occasion when residents told SKA officers that people had turned up the stereo system in a vehicle and left it running so they could hear the music by the water.

Osborne told the audience state law makes it illegal to leave an unattended vehicle running. The non-moving violation results in a \$116 fine, he added. The law was intended to prevent people from leaving pets in their vehi-

cles while they went shopping or ran errands, he explained.

“Well, thank you,” SKA Deet Jonker replied with a chuckle. “I learned something.”

A deputy responding to a complaint about music blaring from a running vehicle would have to find the owner or driver, Osborne added. “We can’t just write a ticket and leave it on the car.”

“I’ve never had any issues finding somebody,” Osborne continued. If the owner could not be



*Sculptors Karen Fralich and Sue McGrew work on their eye-grabbing depiction of a cat-covered Viking. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



# ***Siesta Seen***

located, a deputy could call a tow truck to remove the vehicle from the scene. When a tow truck shows up, Osborne continued with a laugh, the driver invariably shows up to claim the vehicle.

## **CRYSTAL CLASSIC SPONSORS**

With September on its downhill roll, autumn will be here in no time and with it will come the fourth Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition.

The event, which draws tens of thousands of visitors to Siesta Key Public Beach, has been scheduled for Nov. 15-18.

The Crystal Classic has begun offering sponsorship, ticket sales and donation opportunities online, organizers have announced. "Our sponsors receive high visibility before and during the event," a news release points out. It is "the opportunity to participate in a collaborative community event and a way to visibly support the cultural arts and our beautiful Siesta Beach," a news release says.

All proceeds benefit Mote Marine Laboratory's sea turtle research and conservation programs.

Online, visitors may do all of the following:

- Purchase admission tickets, with four-day passes only \$10.
- Purchase four-day VIP parking permits for \$49.
- Purchase a sponsorship package, starting at \$100.

- Donate any amount through the homepage, [www.siestakeycrystalclassic.com](http://www.siestakeycrystalclassic.com).

For more information about sponsorships or to offer donations, visit [the website](http://the website) or contact Chastanna Niemann at the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, 349-3800.

For more information about Mote Marine Laboratory's work, visit [www.mote.org](http://www.mote.org).

## **LIDO RENOURISHMENT**

The Sarasota County Commission and the Longboat Town Commission tackled the Lido Beach renourishment project this week, as did the county's [Coastal Advisory Committee](#) (see the related stories in this issue).

As the subject is of particular interest to Siesta Key residents — thanks to the talk of dredging Big Pass for the first time to provide the necessary sand — the Siesta Key Association will host representatives of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the Dec. 5 SKA meeting at St. Boniface Episcopal Church, SKA President Catherine Luckner reminded members during the Sept. 5 session.

Because of the Corps' need for drop-down screens to present some material, she said, the December gathering will be held in the big community room at the church — where the SKA holds its annual breakfast meeting each spring.

And instead of the usual starting time of 4:30 p.m., she pointed out, the Dec. 5 session will begin at 5 p.m.





*Master Sand Sculptor Abe Waterman works on a 2012 winning Crystal Classic entry called Fine Print. Photo by Norman Schimmel*




# Siesta Seen

Corps representatives are anticipated to present their latest recommendations at that time regarding the dredging of Big Pass and the installation of permeable adjustable groins on the south end of Lido Key, to try to keep the sand in place after the latest renourishment has been completed, Luckner added.

The City of Sarasota is working with the Corps on the project, which is not expected to begin for at least two more years. The timetable could be delayed, Luckner added, if too little

support is found for the dredging of Big Pass and the Corps has to research and plan alternatives.

When an SKA member asked whether the organization has taken a position on the project, Luckner said it has not, but board members have been especially concerned about the groins as they could affect the continued accretion of sand on the northern part of Siesta.

“You can count on us protecting the key,” she pointed out. 



*Big Pass separates Siesta and Lido keys. File photo*





# I like to take my time.

Sure, it's a temptation to rush. Each issue of *The Sarasota News Leader* is brimfull of in-depth coverage of all the news and goings-on in Sarasota County. And it has delightful and informative feature stories. Thanks to its 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.*

**SarasotaNewsLeader.com • Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.**





"Complexity" by Carol Staub

## A&E BRIEFS



**September 20 -  
October 27**

### **42nd Annual Florida Watercolor Society Exhibition**

*The 42nd Annual Florida Watercolor Society Exhibition opens on Sept. 20 at Art Center Sarasota. Image from [www.artsarasota.org](http://www.artsarasota.org)*

## **ART CENTER SARASOTA UNDERGOES RENOVATION**

Art Center Sarasota has a cool new ambience — and a bright new look — thanks to several generous donors, the gallery has announced.

“We’ve always had challenges keeping the atrium gallery comfortable when hosting large crowds,” says Lisa Berger, Art Center Sarasota’s director, in a news release. “The old air conditioning system couldn’t keep our space cool during our receptions, which often draw hundreds of people. Guests would grumble about the stuffiness, but most considered higher temperatures the price they paid to see inspired art. Now, with the new system, everyone can spend more time at the events enjoying the art — without the sweltering heat.”

Berger stresses this was not a repair or upgrade to the system, which was installed many years ago. “This is a brand new, state-of-the-art system that was custom-designed for our needs. We’re grateful to Howard and Betty Isermann for their gift in making Art Center Sarasota a cool place to visit.”

Berger adds in the release that the Isermanns “have consistently supported facility renovations in the past, including helping with gallery lighting, classroom windows and other projects.”

An additional gift from longtime board member and former board president Sam Shapiro was used to purchase and install new lighting in the entrance area, Berger also notes in the release. A third gift — from Art Center Sarasota member, volunteer and artist Elaine Charney — went toward renovating an entire gallery.

“Elaine always felt that the walls of Gallery 3 were dark and unwelcoming,” says Berger. “Thanks to her help, we were able to take down the former walls, which were covered with black carpet, install fresh drywall and paint the new walls.”

Berger points out that the renovations were completed just in time for the Florida Water-



color Society exhibition, which opens on Sept. 20. "We anticipate 600 people visiting the show at the opening reception," she says in the release. "At least we can rest assured they'll all keep their cool."

Art Center Sarasota will launch its 2013-2014 season on Nov. 7 with *CUBEMUSIC*, a site-specific installation created by renowned artist Craig Colorusso, "who explores the intersection of sound, light and space in his sculpture," the release continues. "The work comprises six, four-foot metal cubes that emanate light and music."

This exhibition will be accompanied by *Sun Boxes*, a solar-powered sound installation, also created by Colorusso. "Twenty speaker boxes will be placed around Sarasota County,

inviting viewers to experience an ever-changing environment of space, sound and light," the release notes.

The season opener also will include *Pulp Culture*, "a group exhibition showcasing the many ways paper can be used to create art," the release says. Further, a juried exhibition titled *miniatures* will showcase works smaller than 12 inches by 12 inches.

Finally, Art Center Sarasota's *Instructor's Exhibit*, featuring works by its class and workshop instructors, will be exhibited during the same cycle, which will run through Jan. 3, 2014.

For more information about Art Center Sarasota, call 365-2032 or visit [www.artsarasota.org](http://www.artsarasota.org).

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## **SOUTH FLORIDA MUSEUM TO FEATURE BOTANICAL ART**

Over the next three months, three exhibitions on view at the South Florida Museum will draw attention "to the delicate world of botanical art and scientific illustration," the museum has announced.

"One of the oldest art forms, botanical art is a history of the development of human civilization," a news release points out. Matthew Woodside, the museum's director of exhibitions and chief curator, says in a news release, "These works of art are reflections of how humans have played a role influencing global change through the discovery, study, cultivation and global dispersion of plants we use for medicine, commerce, fashion, ritual and survival. The exhibits will delight our senses, giving an opportunity to explore modern-day masterpieces and understand them for their beauty as well as the technical bravado artists use to execute these refined and life-like images."

He adds in the release, "More than compulsion drives these artists to relentlessly pursue an art form that has the power to transform our complex, three-dimensional world into two-dimensional, idealized microcosms."

The nationally traveling exhibition *Following in the Bartrams' Footsteps: Work from the American Society of Botanical Artists* opened in the South Florida Museum's East Gallery on Sept. 19. A collaboration between the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA) and Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia, the exhibition features contemporary botanical art works depicting plants observed and described by 18th century naturalists John and William Bartram during their travels, the release continues. Those plants often were studied and cultivated at Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia, PA, the release notes. "Native Florida species observed during William Bar-



tram's pioneering travels through Florida as a naturalist in the late 18th century are included," the release adds. "The exhibition reflects John and William's passionate observation and discovery of nature, which has influenced generations of artists and explorers throughout the world."

An opening reception will be held for the exhibition on Thursday, Sept. 26, from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

In addition to the national show, the South Florida Museum has coordinated two supporting exhibitions to further communicate the art and skill of botanical art. These exhibitions will be showcased on the second floor of the museum's galleries, running concurrently with *Following in the Bartrams' Footsteps* through Dec. 29, the release adds.

*Fine Art Botanicals by O.M. Braida* features the work of Olivia Braida, founder and an instructor at the Academy of Botanical Art in Sarasota and a member of the American Society of Botanical Artists and the Copley Society of Art. This exhibition will be located in the Rincon Gallery.

*Aspects of Art by Julia Rega* will be displayed in the Riverine Gallery. An alumna of the Academy of Botanical Art in Sarasota, Riga studied with Braida before focusing on art in college and becoming a professional graphic designer, the release continues. "The abilities and sensitivities she gained through the botanical arts paved the way for her career," the release says.

The South Florida Museum is located at 201 10th St. West in Bradenton. For more information, visit [SouthFloridaMuseum.org](http://SouthFloridaMuseum.org).



*The South Florida Museum in Bradenton is presenting exhibitions on botanical art and scientific illustration. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## FSU/ASOLO CONSERVATORY TO PRESENT OLEANNA ON SEPT. 30

The Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training will present *Oleanna*, a Special Late Night Series Event, at 8 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 30, the company has announced.

Produced and directed entirely by the Conservatory students, the two-character play by David Mamet “explores the power struggle between a university professor and his student,” a news release says. “The one-night-only production will star second-year FSU/Asolo Conservatory students Allie Henkel and Matthew Olson.

The play will be performed in the Cook Theatre at the Asolo Repertory Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, on the grounds of the Ringling Museum of Art.

The event is free and open to the public, the release notes.



*David Mamet appears at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival. Photo by David Shankbone via Wikimedia Commons*

## POTTERY AND FIBER ART TO BE FEATURED AT ART UPTOWN

Art Uptown, Sarasota’s oldest continuously operated cooperative fine art gallery, will feature guest artists Mary Chadsey, Nancy Morris and Carole Reiss during October in an exhibition of pottery and fiber art titled, *Thrown and Sewn*, the gallery has announced.

The show will run from Sept. 28 to Oct. 25, with an artists’ reception scheduled for 6 to 9 p.m. on Oct. 4. The gallery is located at 1367 Main St.

“The three artists work out of the studio they call Mariooch on South Tamiami Trail in Sarasota,” a news release notes. “Chadsey works in multiple media, including pottery and fabric arts, while Morris works in clay, producing pots and other functional vessels, and Reiss creates unique artwork with fabrics,” the release continues.



*Canisters, a flower purse and scarves will be among the works by Mary Chadsey, Nancy Morris and Carole Reiss on exhibit at Art Uptown during October. Contributed photos*



The artists are planning a “body butter” demonstration on Saturday, Oct. 12, at 11 a.m. at the gallery, featuring ceramic pots designed to contain organic butters and essential oils that are used to nourish the skin, the release adds.

Art Uptown is open Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. During the monthly First Friday Gallery Walks on Palm and Main streets, evening hours are 6 to 9 p.m. For more information, call 955-5409 or visit [www.artuptown.com](http://www.artuptown.com).

Owned by its members, Art Uptown has been continuously operating in its current location on Main Street for 33 years, representing local artists and offering affordable art and gifts, the release notes.



*Works by Mary Chadsey, Nancy Morris and Carole Reiss will be on exhibit at Art Uptown during October. Contributed photos*



## VAN WEZEL PARTNERING WITH BOOKER HIGH LAW ACADEMY

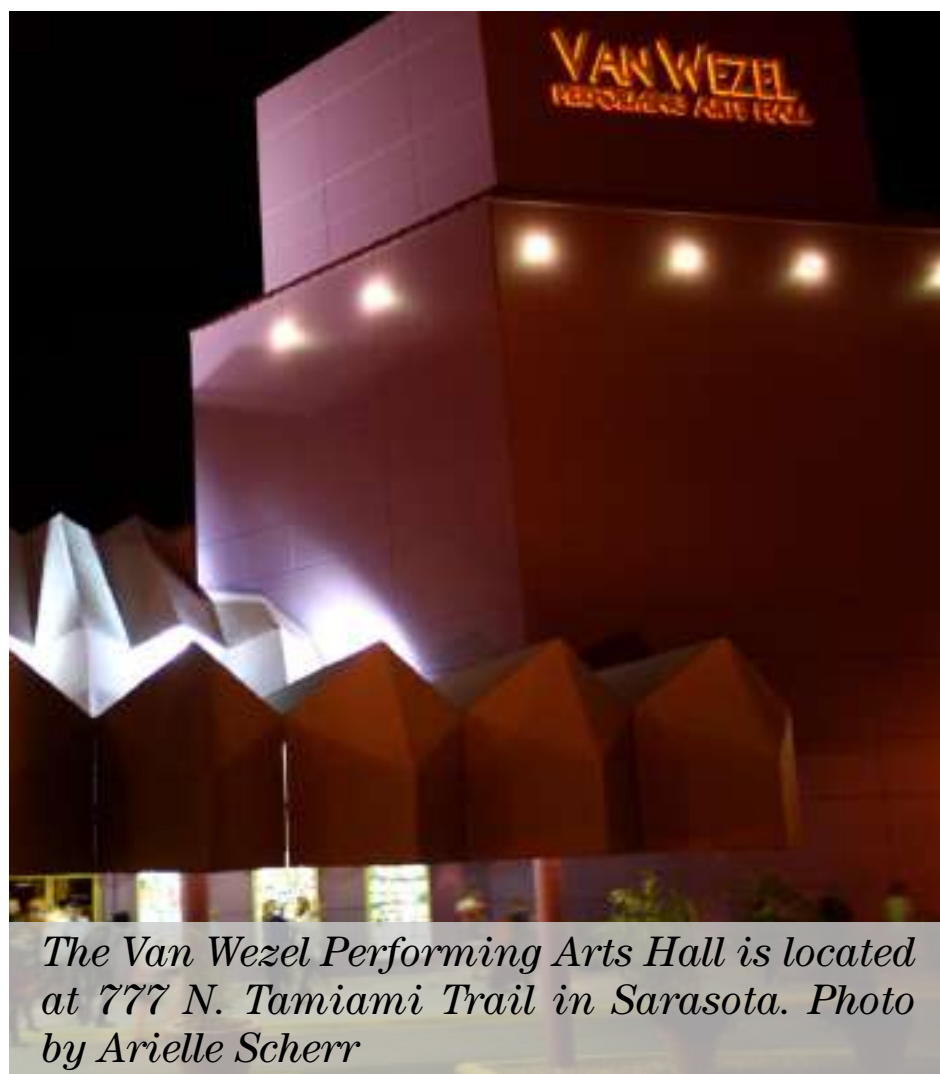
The Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota, which has been a partner in education with the Sarasota County School Board for 16 years, has received a highly competitive education grant given to just 10 theatres across the country by The Broadway League, “the national trade association for the Broadway industry,” the hall’s staff has announced.

The Broadway League is composed of more than 700 theatre owners and operators, producers, presenters and general managers in North America, a news release notes.

The grant will enable the Van Wezel to collaborate with the new Booker High School Law Academy, “a program that offers students the opportunity to receive an educational foundation in the legal profession and criminal justice system at the local, state and national level,” the release continues. The project will focus on *Chicago: The Musical*.


“The main objective of the program is to connect *Chicago: The Musical*’s provocative dramatic themes and characters to contemporary issues in criminal law while reinforcing the students’ knowledge and ability to participate in the ‘theatrics’ of the Academy’s mock trial proceedings,” the release points out. The goal also is to stimulate “an appreciation of the value of Broadway theatre,” especially among high school students “who may otherwise lack meaningful arts experiences,” the release points out.

Kelli Bragdon, the Van Wezel’s director of education and community engagement, said in the release, “This is a very exciting opportunity, to partner with Booker High School’s Law Academy to provide innovative arts integra-



tion strategies [in] a law and criminal studies curriculum. We ... look forward to exploring the ethics and glamorization of today’s legal system through the lens of the Broadway production *Chicago: The Musical*. I think this will be a truly innovative approach and model how arts organizations can partner with school programs to provide content-rich experiences [for] students.”

The project, which will begin in October, will include five monthly workshops featuring guest speakers with expertise in the legal system, journalism and the arts; those speakers will facilitate discussions on topics such as “the celebrity criminal,” the release points out.

After the March performance of *Chicago: The Musical* at the Van Wezel, a wrap-up roundtable discussion will be held and a project evaluation will be conducted, the release says. 





*Image courtesy of the Temple Sinai*

## THE GRANDPARENTS CIRCLE COMES TO SARASOTA

“It is no secret that intermarriage rates in the North American Jewish community are higher than ever before,” a Temple Sinai news release points out. “When an interfaith couple has children, the grandparents often feel unsure of how they can cultivate the religious identities of their grandchildren, especially when it is not always clear as to how the children will be raised.”

The Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI) has created a program called the Grandparents Circle that offers Jewish grandparents the skills and techniques to nurture, and in some cases establish, their interfaith grandchildren’s Jewish identity, the release continues. The program, which was piloted in Los Angeles, is rapidly expanding to new communities across the country. Starting Oct. 15, it will land at Temple Sinai in Sarasota.

“I’m excited to be able to bring the Grandparents Circle to my community,” said Sue Hunting of Temple Sinai in the release. “Grandparents can have such a strong influence on the religious identity of their grandchildren, even from a long distance, and this course will help them share Judaism with their grandchildren in an engaging and interesting way.”

The Grandparents Circle program, which is being funded by Temple Sinai’s Adult Education program, has a number of components, the release notes. The Grandparents Circle Course is a five-session educational program that will meet weekly. Family-friendly events for grandparents and their grandchildren often held during or close to Jewish holidays or school breaks will supplement the course.

The Grandparents Circle also offers a national email discussion “listserv” for all grandpar-



ents, including those who have not yet taken the course or who live in a city where it is not offered, the release points out. "The 'listserv' provides a supportive online community of peers from across the country to share their experiences, thoughts and questions," the release adds.

Jewish Outreach Institute program officer Andrea LeVine, who is the national coordinator of the Grandparents Circle, explains in the release that "the Grandparents Circle provides a safe, open-minded environment where people can share their achievements, express their concerns and acknowledge their challenges. It serves the Jewish community's needs by empowering grandparents who might be questioning their role in regard to their grandchildren who are being raised in interfaith homes. But more importantly, it gives grandparents the tools to help ensure that their family's Jewish identity is carried on for another generation."

The program is free of charge and open to all grandparents whose grandchildren are being raised in intermarried homes, the release continues. Class size is limited, but space is still available.

The Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI) is an independent, national, trans-denominational organization reaching out to unengaged and intermarried Jewish families, the release says. "It is helping the organized Jewish community better welcome them," it points out. "JOI conducts research, runs programs and serves as a national training institution and network for outreach professionals, guiding and supporting innovative outreach in communities throughout North America."

For more information, contact Temple Sinai at 924-1802 or email [GrandParentsCircle@gmail.com](mailto:GrandParentsCircle@gmail.com).

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## TEMPLE EMANU-EL PRESCHOOLERS ENJOY RENOVATED PLAYGROUND

New and returning preschoolers at the Temple Emanu-El Early Learning Center are enjoying a freshly renovated playground, butterfly garden and "grow boxes" for planting vegetables, the Temple has announced.

With the handiwork and planting having been undertaken by volunteers and families from Temple Emanu-El Brotherhood, "the refurbished playground is a labor of love and a gift to the young students," a news release says.

Temple Emanu-El Early Learning Center faculty member Tammy Libera expressed gratitude to the volunteers who made the playground improvements possible. "Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy," she said in the release. "You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live

in. We are fortunate to have a wonderful community of volunteers."

Coordinating Temple Emanu-El Brotherhood's efforts were president Neil Klaber and officers Uzi Baram and David Steinbach, the release notes. Leading construction on the butterfly garden and "grow boxes" were Alex Zalkin and Christian Harris. Harris is a botanist who also volunteers with Selby Gardens, the release adds.

Members of Temple Emanu-El's new Green Committee served as advisors on the project, ensuring the playground renovation incorporated eco-friendly elements such as sustainable mulch, the release says.

For more information about the Temple Emanu-El Early Learning Center, call 377-8074. 





*(From left) Jacob Menard, Lauren Lestorto, instructor Tammy Libera and Sloane Greer enjoy the refurbished playground at Temple Emanu-El Early Learning Center. Contributed photo*



*Temple Emanu-El Early Learning Center students Jude Menard, Mark Lowell, and Viki Cserni play in the renovated sandbox. Contributed photo*





# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**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. Tickets: \$75 in advance; \$100 at the door. Information: 952-WISH or [RockingThroughTheAges page](#).

**20+**  
SEPTEMBER

***Dabbert Gallery presents Summer Showcase***

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

**20+**  
SEPTEMBER

***Allyn Gallup Gallery presents Some Wonderful Abstractions***

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

**27**  
SEPTEMBER

***We've Got You Covered: A Toga Party!***

(a Halloween Bash pre-party)

Sept. 27, 8 to 10 p.m., Mr. Beery's in Gulf Gate, 2645 Mall Drive. Admission: Free (\$1 of every Magic Hat beer sold goes to Planned Parenthood). Information: [Toga Party Event page](#).

**03**  
OCTOBER

***Halloween Bash Pre-party: Second Annual Safe Sex Kiki***

Oct. 3, 8:30 to 11 p.m., Darwin's on 4th, 1525 Fourth St., Sarasota. Admission: Free. Information at [Safe Sex Kiki page](#).

**04**  
OCTOBER

***Jazz Club of Sarasota presents Jazz at Two, featuring Betty Comora's Happy Jazz Band***

Oct. 4, 2 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$7 (\$12 for non-members). Information: 366-1552 or [JazzClubSarasota.org](#).

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**



**AHHHH, SOME PEACE BEFORE  
THOSE ROWERS COME BACK**



## **SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS**



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