

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 4 — October 11, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



YET ANOTHER HOLDUP

'A RACE TO THE BOTTOM'

TAKE TWO

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

When we took our children to Disney World many, many years ago, we all enjoyed a feature I am not sure even exists anymore. It was called “Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride.” It was a mad crazy exhilarating adventure — just what the name implies.

Sometimes when I start this letter on Thursdays, I feel as though I have been on that wild ride again. Not only have I been editing the work of my colleagues — and reviewing final page proofs — but also I often have had to turn out a story or two myself on deadline.

One of the nicest compliments I ever received from a co-worker occurred one afternoon a couple of years ago after I churned out a story from a County Commission meeting within an hour of my return to the office. My colleague voiced amazement that I had completed it so fast.

All of us veterans of the newspaper trade learn to write on deadline. Some days, though, it admittedly is much easier than others. You do not have to be a member of the Fourth Estate to recognize the stomach-churning feeling that comes with glancing repeatedly at a clock and knowing you have a certain amount of time to finish your work — yet the final quality cannot reflect the speed with which the work was done.

Now that my adrenaline rush is ebbing, I invite you to take a look this week not just at the late-breaking news, but also at what I consider to be a comprehensive roundup of many, many actions in Sarasota County this week.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher





YET ANOTHER HOLDUP



THE QUARTER-BILLION-DOLLAR GAME



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Barbara Lee

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YET ANOTHER HOLDUP



A class works out in the water at Warm Mineral Springs prior to its closing on June 30. Photo courtesy City of North Port

THE RECOMMENDED SHORT-TERM OPERATOR FOR WARM MINERAL SPRINGS WANTS MORE REPAIRS COMPLETED BEFORE REOPENING THE RESORT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The question of short-term management for Warm Mineral Springs will be back on the North Port City Commission's agenda next week, because the firm that won the bid to reopen the resort is demanding more repairs be made first, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

North Port City Manager Jonathan R. Lewis sent a memo Oct. 9 to his board and to County Administrator Randall Reid saying that as of his writing, "WMS Sarasota Management LLC has not provided

an executed contract. If we do not receive a signed contract by the end of today, I will be requesting Commission add an agenda item" to the Monday meeting, Oct. 14, regular meeting.

Lewis added, "The purpose of this item would be to consider rejecting the previously awarded bid due to failure on the part of WMS Sarasota Management LLC to provide an executed agreement."

“We’ll get it open.”

Daniel Schult
Assistant Manager
City of North Port

”

The firm — one of two that bid on a year-long contract to operate the springs

— did not provide the necessary documentation before 5 p.m. on Oct. 9, North Port Assistant Manager Daniel Schult told the *News Leader* on Oct. 10.

Instead, Lewis received an email on the night of Oct. 9 from Dr. Grigory Pogrebinsky, one of the principals of WMS Sarasota Management, saying the firm remained committed to the springs, “provided the life/health/safety issues that we have raised with the City administration are adequately addressed, since we cannot in good conscience ... take upon such serious public obligation as operating such an environmentally sensitive property as the Springs in its current conditions.”

The other firm that bid on the short-term contract was Cambridgeshire Investment LLC, based in Port Charlotte. Its principal, Michael

Meagher, said in his bid that he spent 22 years in the motel and restaurant business before moving to Port Charlotte in 1979.

In his Oct. 9 email, Pogrebinsky cited concerns expressed in letters that he said were sent to administrative staff on Oct. 3 and 6. Among them, he noted, were the state of the septic system, water quality and water pressure at the site.

In an Oct. 3 letter to Kevin Russell, attorney for WMS Sarasota Management, Schult pointed out that eight new showerheads would be installed in the women’s locker room. “Water pressure is an ‘AS IS’ issue and can’t be changed,” Schult added.

In an Oct. 8 letter to Russell, Schult wrote that the septic system was being delivered



The solicitation for a short-term operator included an aerial map of Warm Mineral Springs. Image courtesy City of North Port

“as is” as well. “The fact your client believes changes should be made for a different mode of operation is not germane to the execution of the current agreement,” he added.

Regarding water quality, Schult pointed out that as of Oct. 4, “algae has been removed from the Springs.” He noted that it was the operator’s responsibility to maintain the springs “in accordance with Florida Administrative code for bathing places,” adding, “There is no evidence WMS Sarasota, LLC has made any attempt to contact or work with the Department of Health to determine water quality.”

Schult also wrote that, as of Oct. 4, the firm still had not submitted a valid bond, as required.

A Sept. 5 memo from North Port Neighborhood Development Services Director Scott E.

Williams to Schult and Lewis pointed out that repairs could be made by Oct. 1 to several areas that especially demanded attention. For example, while the water and sanitary waste systems were operational, Williams wrote, they would be monitored and maintained after the Springs reopens. Additionally, North Port staff would take care of what he referenced as inadequate “support of fuel gas piping.”

“Unsafe electrical systems (exposed junction boxes and improvised wiring, among them)” had been corrected, he continued.

Finally, city maintenance staff also would repair three deteriorating interior roof rafters in the women’s locker room.

In his Oct. 9 email, Pogrebinsky also referenced a facilities assessment issued by the



The Kimley-Horn report pointed out inadequate support for the fuel gas piping. Image courtesy City of North Port

engineering firm Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc. of Sarasota that detailed numerous problems at Warm Mineral Springs.

An independent evaluation of the condition of the resort's structures was requested by the city and county while the process was under way during the summer to hire a new short-term manager. The lease with the previous operator, Cypress Lending, expired on June 30. The resort, which is owned jointly by the city and county, has been closed since then.

CONTINUING CONCERNS

In his Oct. 9 email, Pogrebinsky wrote that the Kimley-Horn report "identifies specific areas that are not merely advisable to repair, but are UNSAFE."

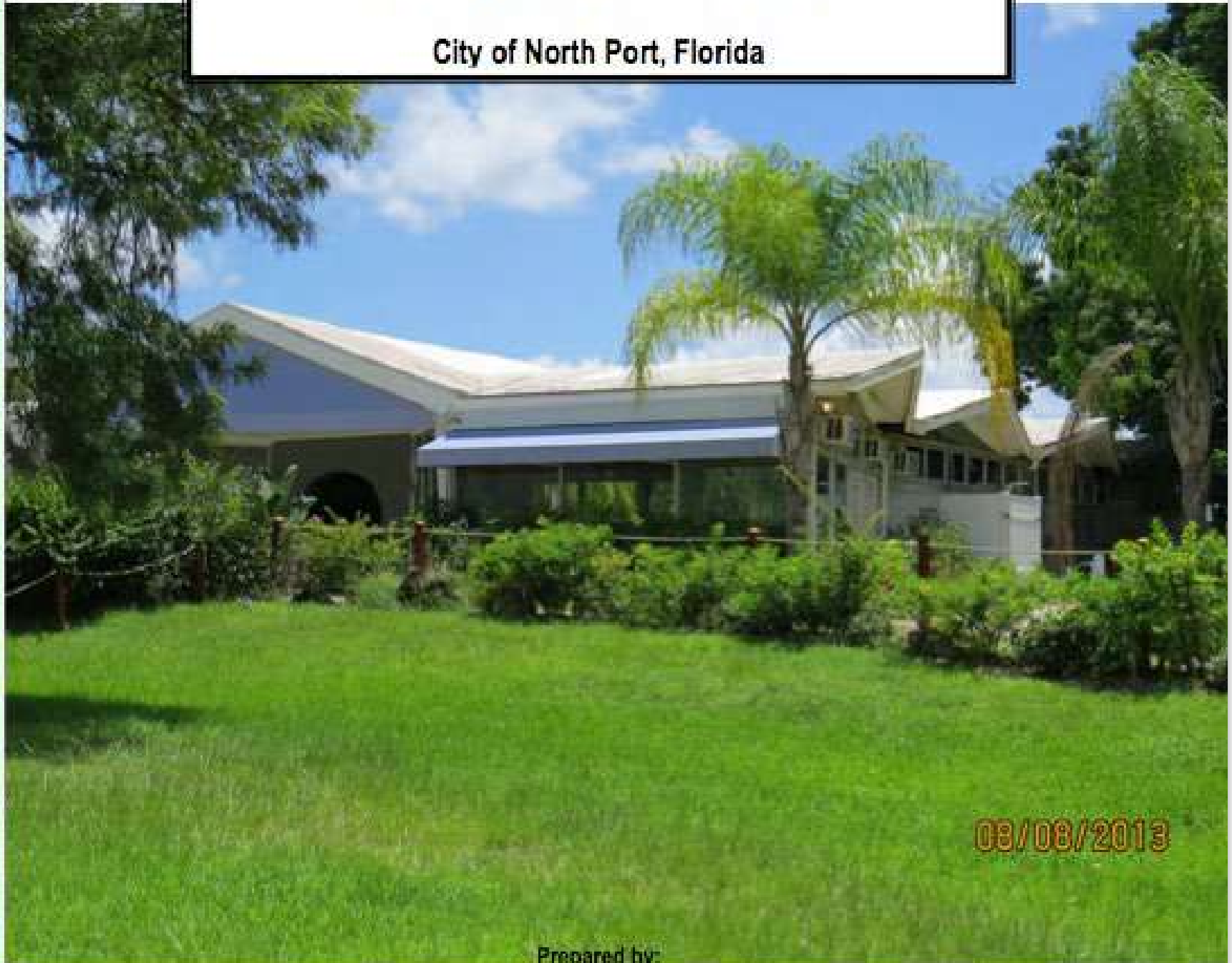
He added, "Additionally, during our visit the weekend of September 28-29, we had ... video and stills of the [facilities] taken, which visually demonstrate more overt unsafe and poor conditions. We, of course, did not have an opportunity to examine the September 5 [Kimley-Horn] report before the bid, nor the opportunity to conduct detailed professional examination ourselves, which examination should have been conducted long before expiration of Cypress Lending contract on June 30 or, at the minimum, immediately thereafter."

Nevertheless, Pogrebinsky continued, instead of engaging in a dispute with the city, he proposed the firm's operation of Warm Mineral Springs begin on Nov. 1, "so that in the meantime we receive written assurances from



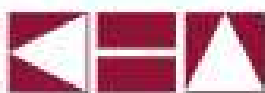
The Kimley-Horn report on Warm Mineral Springs included notes about the sanitary waste treatment system. Image courtesy City of North Port

Warm Mineral Springs
Building Condition Assessment
City of North Port, Florida



Prepared by:

Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
Suite 200
1920 Wekiva Way
West Palm Beach, Florida 33411
Certificate of Authorization No. 696
(561) 845-0665
September 5 2013



Kimley-Horn
and Associates, Inc.

the [city and county] as to the primarily life/health/safety issues identified ... Just to be clear, we fully recognize that some of these issues would require some time to be fixed.”

He also suggested that the firm manage the resort for the first four months for free, even though the agreement calls for it to remit to the city and county 24 percent of the gross monthly revenue, plus real estate taxes.

He added, “This would allow us to open the Springs on a limited basis so that the public would have access to swimming only ... After [the] 4-month limited start-up period, we suggest ... having 14 months to operate the Springs to try to recoup our substantial costs to be incurred in the startup period and beyond, on 24% revenue basis. (Please note that the license agreement allows for extension).”

During the Oct. 10 interview with the *News Leader*, Schult, the North Port assistant city manager, pointed out what he had stressed in his letters to the WMS Sarasota Management attorney — that the bid specified the operator would take over the resort “as is, where is.”

The subsequent communications from Russell “all came as a surprise,” he told the *News Leader*.

While Pogrebinsky feels he has an opportunity to negotiate the terms since his firm was awarded the bid, “that’s not the case,” Schult added. “You cannot do that.”

Moreover, Schult pointed out, all firms interested in the short-term management contract had the opportunity to meet with him on the

property before the bid deadline, so they could see everything for themselves and ask any questions.

He told the *News Leader* on July 29 that about 55 people showed up for his 1 p.m. tour of the facilities that day, but he was uncertain at that time how many of them represented prospective bidders.

After the city initially was contacted by Pogrebinsky’s attorney, Schult told the *News Leader*, he met with a representative of WMS Sarasota Management regarding the list of problems the firm wanted the city and county to address. City staff did agree to deal with some of them, he noted, such as trimming shrubs on the property. However, he said, “A lot of those things, the doctor was supposed to do.”

WHERE THINGS STAND

According to an interlocal agreement between the City of North Port and Sarasota County, both had to approve the award of the bid to WMS Sarasota Management. County Administrator Reid pointed out to the *News Leader* this week that the agreement also calls for the city to take the lead on the lease.

The North Port City Commission meeting will begin at 1 p.m. Monday.

Both that board and the County Commission expressed the desire in late summer to see the public return as soon as possible to Warm Mineral Springs.

“We’ll get it open,” Schult told the *News Leader* on Oct. 10. 

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'A RACE TO THE BOTTOM'

Customers enjoy dining al fresco at C'est La Vie, catercorner from Barnacle Bill's in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

BOARD MEMBERS OF THE CITY'S TWO COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DISTRICTS AGREE TO HIRE A CONSULTANT TO HELP THEM DECIDE ON WHETHER TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF RESTAURANTS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

A combined session of the boards of the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID) and the Sarasota Downtown Improvement District (DID) came close to fracturing several state laws until the city's purchasing director reeled them back in this week.

The two groups, meeting together for the first time, explored the idea of limiting the number of bars and restaurants in their

two shopping districts. "There is a proliferation of restaurants happening all over the county," said BID Chairman Marty Rappaport.

Both organizations represent commercial landowners willing to pay more property taxes to improve their shopping areas. Last month, the BID was renewed for another decade.

“If you want to pursue this, I suggest you do a planning study with a rational basis for the regulations you want to implement.”

Michael Connolly
Deputy City Attorney
City of Sarasota



"The two special districts are established

by ordinance that sets forth enumerated powers and no others,” said Deputy City Attorney Michael Connolly. “Each can contract for planning services and assistance.”

One power neither board has is the ability to dictate land use. “Only the City Commission has the power and authority to regulate that, and it would require a zoning text amendment, probably with an overlay district,” added Connolly.

If either or both boards want to explore how to limit the “proliferation” of bars and restaurants, he said, they need to start with a “professional opinion.”

Assistant City Attorney Joe Mladinich offered a case study about a city that tried to do what

the boards are proposing. “They had a restaurant moratorium in 1998. Then ‘Economics 101’ kicked in, and restaurant space rents went up. They raised money with drink specials. The original purpose of returning to retail was defeated by a race to the bottom for bigger and bigger drink specials,” he pointed out. “Eventually they came up with ‘good neighbor agreements’ that allowed more restaurants with additional conditions, and incentives for retail.”

“If you want to pursue this,” said Connolly, “I suggest you do a planning study with a rational basis for the regulations you want to implement.” Those regulations, he added, would have to withstand public and City Commission scrutiny or they would be doomed.



Among the restaurants on lower Main Street are First Watch, Mozaic and Café Amici. Photo by Norman Schimmel

FINDING THE PROBLEM

“People seem to want restaurants,” said DID Chairman Ernie Ritz, himself a long-time bar and restaurant owner. “Restaurants gross \$2 [million] to \$4 million a year,” he added. “A dress shop might show maybe \$600,000.”

Both Ritz and Rappaport kicked around various schemes. “There used to be a 500-foot rule between bars,” said Ritz. Connolly replied, “And that was based on studies to show the adverse economic impact of the proliferation of bars.”

“We could use the permitting process,” suggested Rappaport. “Restaurants have a much

greater density [of patrons] and parking becomes a problem. You could put linear frontage limits [in place].”

Rappaport recommended a workshop with planning and zoning staff, the city attorney and the BID and DID boards “to identify problems before we hire a planner.” Connolly said that was exactly the focus of the meeting under way.

Tim Litchett, city director of development and neighborhood services (which includes planning and zoning), told the boards he believed incentives rather than penalties were the key. “I heard about four different communities



Until its next-door neighbor, Napoli's, was razed this summer, the Daiquiri Deck in Siesta Village was in a line of several restaurants. It is right across the street from Gilligan's Island Bar & Grill and Lelu Coffee Lounge. Photo by Norman Schimmel

talking about what they did [in restaurant-limiting initiatives], and didn't hear anybody say they were successful. I don't think it is the responsibility of the [Sarasota] Planning Department to define the problem. What is the problem? And how do we look for solutions? We're messing around with the free market."

DID board member Dr. Mark Kauffman replied, "The two boards should hire an expert to tell us if we have a problem. Look at Siesta Key. It's chaos out there. "

Ritz responded, "Who's complaining? It's like Yogi Berra. They're so busy nobody goes there anymore?"

FLIRTING WITH THE LAW

Ownership in each business district is highly concentrated. John Moran, DID operations manager, said there are 120 commercial property owners downtown, but "Twenty own more than half the taxable value."

St. Armands has a similar situation. "We have 67 owners," Rappaport noted. "It takes about 20 to make up a majority."

Rappaport added that a previous consultant had cautioned St. Armands property owners about restaurants taking up an increasing amount of space on the shopping circle. "He warned us eight years ago we were facing a problem. If it continues, it is going to destroy the area."


Members of both boards began talking about hiring the same consultant until they were brought back to legal reality by city Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker. "You can't just go out and hire somebody," she said. "If [the expense is] over \$5,000, you are going to need bids. If



St. Armands Business Improvement District Chairman Marty Rappaport counts votes in the September referendum on the BID's future. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

it's over \$50,000, then you need a proposal we can use for a [Request for Proposals]. That way you can define what you are looking for," she added.

A board openly discussing hiring a specific consultant or contractor at a cost of more than \$5,000 flirts with violation of the state contracting rules.

Kauffman then suggested the city Purchasing Department put out a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant to examine the "present mix of bars, restaurants and food-related-consumption-on-the-premises businesses to determine if it is a proper mix." The motion was seconded by William Pettey, and both boards passed it unanimously. 

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TAKE TWO

Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent hosts the Tuesday session. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker

SECRETARY OF STATE PRESENTS REBOOTED PLAN TO PURGE NON-CITIZENS FROM VOTER ROLLS

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner began his roundtable discussion with seven regional supervisors of election Tuesday, Oct. 8, with an apology. Last year's attempt to remove non-citizens from the state's voter rolls, which prompted reports of false identifications, as well as accusations of partisan motives and racial profiling, had "deficiencies," Detzner acknowledged.

But the new process for removing non-citizens, the process Detzner traveled to Sarasota to discuss,

represents a marked improvement, he said: "We've learned from some of the mistakes that were made, and I accept full responsibility for those mistakes."

Launched directly by Gov. Rick Scott, last year's purge relied on data provided by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to determine whether registered voters were actually eligible to vote. That process originally generated

“*We're not throwing darts.*”

Maria Matthews
Director
Division of Elections



2,700 names, which Detzner's office sent to county supervisors of elections, instructing them to contact the voters to ask them to prove their citizenship.

But the list swiftly generated controversy. It contained lawful voters, for one thing. And a *Miami Herald* data analysis found that Latinos and Democrats were disproportionately likely to be targeted. The federal Department of Justice ordered the state to halt the purge, while the state in turn sued the Department of Homeland Security. Florida argued it had the right to access the department's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program, which it said could provide more reliable citizenship data.

Homeland Security eventually relented, and the Florida Department of State is now rebooting its effort, which includes accessing the SAVE database to identify potentially ineligible voters on a case-by-case basis. Detzner told the seven supervisors Tuesday that there is no timeline in place for the purge; the first step is to hold public roundtables, similar to this week's, around the state.

Division of Elections Director Maria Matthews delivered a detailed walkthrough of how the new purge will work. In addition to scanning for information on any new voters, the state will comb through records for the 12 million voters already registered in Florida, first using the Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles database, then moving on to SAVE if there's reason to believe a voter might be a non-citizen. Matthews emphasized that it will not be a "batch process" like last year's,



Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner listens to comments in Sarasota on Tuesday. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker

but will instead consist of individual case management.

"We're not throwing darts," she said.

If Homeland Security indicates a voter is a non-citizen, the state will dig deeper — for example, into records such as those for naturalization ceremonies — and then pass along a full case file to the appropriate supervisor of elections. The supervisor will contact the person who has been flagged. Voters will have 30 days to respond, to fight the process. Ultimately, according to Matthews, the supervisor will make the "final determination" to remove a voter from the rolls.

The discussion Tuesday seemed to give attendees confidence in the program. Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent, who had to leave the meeting early, told

The Sarasota News Leader the new process is “180 degrees different” from the one in 2012.

“Last year, what we were given was a spreadsheet with the names and the dates of birth,” Dent said.

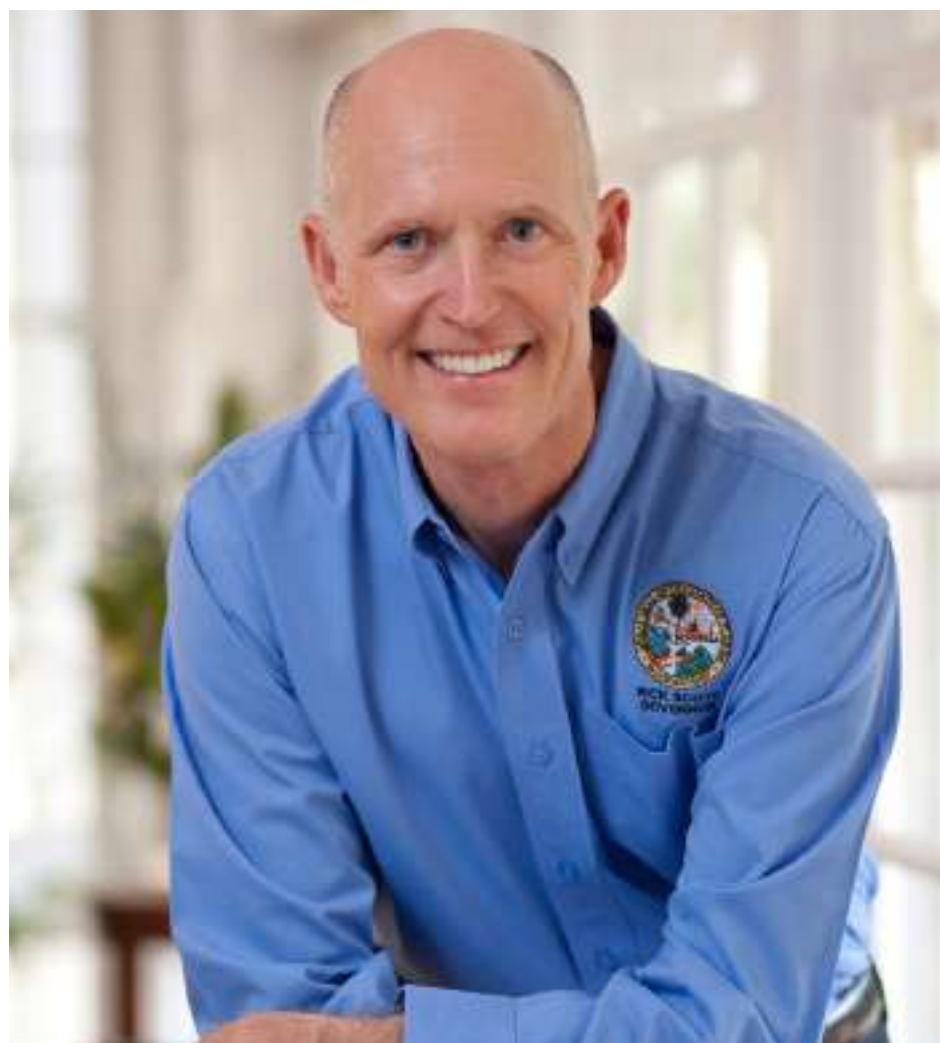
“This year they’re planning on giving us case files like they do with the felons,” she continued. “Following that, Sarasota County is going to take a look, and unless we’re 100 percent sure, we won’t remove anyone.”

Manatee County Supervisor of Elections Mike Bennett guaranteed that his office will ensure the accuracy of anything that comes in from the state or SAVE. “We will verify what they send us,” he told the *News Leader*.

Nancy Goethe, the voter service chairwoman with the local League of Women Voters, told the *News Leader* the new process is “200 percent better than last year’s.” In a written statement later emailed to reporters, the League argued that the purge needs to be “fully transparent” and that “past attempts at purging of the voter files in Florida have been disastrous.”

But some questioned whether the purge is even necessary. When Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections Craig Latimer asked for a rough estimate of how many non-citizens might be on the rolls today, Detzner said no one knows. “We don’t have the data,” he answered. “That’s what this process is about.”


Greg Para, an Afghanistan veteran who last week launched a Democratic campaign to unseat Republican state Rep. Ray Pilon of Sarasota, asked why the state was so focused



Gov. Rick Scott set voter purges in action in 2012. Photo from www.flgov.com

on a problem that may not exist. “The focus here is not whether there is a problem,” Matthews answered. Even if the eventual number of ineligible voters is low, “that doesn’t obviate our responsibility to make sure the rolls are clean,” she said.

Para told the *News Leader* after the meeting that making sure elections are conducted smoothly should be a higher priority than the purge. “I’m more concerned with hanging chads.”

Dent said she doesn’t expect a huge influx of names. Even last year, Sarasota County’s list only had 13 voters on it. The county did identify one Canadian on the list, who fessed up to illegally registering to vote, but that’s about it, Dent said. “In my mind, I don’t think we’re going to see very many.” 

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ACTION NOT INDICATED



School Board member Caroline Zucker (left) and Chairwoman Jane Goodwin prepare for a budget public hearing in July. Photo by Rachel Hackney

A COUNTY COMMISSIONER SAYS STAFF RESEARCH DOES NOT SEEM TO SHOW HIS BOARD CAN MODIFY THE DATE OF A SCHOOL BOARD REFERENDUM

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Research undertaken by the Sarasota County Attorney's Office indicates the County Commission has no authority to dictate when the Sarasota County School Board can hold its next referendum on continuing a special 1 mill tax, Commissioner Joe Barbetta told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

During his board's regular meeting on Sept. 24, Barbetta objected to the School Board's pending decision — confirmed on Oct. 1 — to hold the referendum on March 25 in

conjunction with the next election of commissioners for the Town of Longboat Key. That ballot also will include races for seats on the [Holiday Park Park and Recreation District Board](#).

He added that he felt voter turnout would be significantly greater in November, when state and congressional seats would be on the ballot.

In response, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh said he would research the

“ *It didn't say that we could reject the date.* ”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

commission's authority in regard to setting the date.

In an Oct. 2 memo to the board, Deputy County Attorney Kathleen F. Schneider wrote that Florida Statute 1011.71(9) provides that "a school district may levy, by local referendum or in a general election, additional millage for school operational purposes ..." She adds that the School Board is authorized to "direct" the county to call for the election and that it is required to provide the wording of the measure and ballot title. However, Schneider wrote, "[T]he statute does not provide that the School Board direct the County Commission as to the date of the special election."

She also noted that the previous referenda for the special 1 mill school district tax were held

in March in 2002, 2006 and 2010. "The current millage levy expires on June 30, 2014, which is the end of the School District's fiscal year," she added.

"It didn't say that we could reject the date," Barbetta noted of the memo in an Oct. 8 interview with the *News Leader*.

However, he said he did not feel the memo "really answered [the] question" about the commission's authority to set the date.

He continued to be concerned about two points, he added: the cost of the referendum — about \$400,000 to \$425,000 in March, according to the estimate Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent provided to the *News Leader* — and fewer people going to the polls in the spring.



Sarasota County School Board members are preparing their campaign to win voter renewal of a special 1 mill tax. Photo by Norman Schimmel

He characterized the expected voter total in March compared with November as “the difference between night and day,” saying, “Turnouts are incredibly poor in March.”

Barbetta added, “I know the School Board’s upset with me.”

He referenced a comment School Board member Caroline Zucker made to the *News Leader* last month, after he raised the issue during the commission meeting. Zucker said that because the School Board budget has to be finalized each July for the next fiscal year, the district literally could not afford to wait until November to hold the referendum. The special 1 mill tax added about \$40 million to the current district budget, she pointed out.

“I don’t think you’re going to lose \$40 million [with the later vote],” Barbetta told the *News Leader*.

However, School Board Chairwoman Jane Goodwin stressed Zucker’s points in an interview after the *News Leader*’s deadline for its Sept. 27 article on the discussion.

“So what would [he] have us do?” Goodwin asked. “Cut everybody’s pay” and then, if the referendum wins voter approval in November, restore the salaries to their previous levels?

Al Weidner, deputy chief financial officer for the school district, told the *News Leader* on Sept 25 that the referendum money is paying for 497 positions in the current school year.



Instead of supplies, the \$40 million in revenue from a special School Board tax enables the district to pay for staff it otherwise could not afford. Photo by Popolon via Wikimedia Commons

Barbetta pointed out to the *News Leader* this week that the County Commission makes periodic budget adjustments after the start of its fiscal year, so he saw no reason the School Board could not do the same thing.

Goodwin said another reason the School Board preferred the measure be on the March ballot was her fear that it would cost two or three times as much for the district to advertise the referendum in advance of a November election. Voters in the fall would have many more races to consider and the referendum would be far down on the ballot, she pointed out. It could be overlooked if the district did not work hard to make certain voters were aware of it.

ELECTION STATISTICS

According to a *News Leader* review of data on the [Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections website](#), 27.18 percent of the 254,266 voters then registered in the county turned out for the last referendum on the special 1 mill tax, which was held in March 2010. At that time, the referendum also was combined with the Longboat and Holiday Park elections.

In November 2010, when state and congressional offices were on the ballot, the turnout was 56.1 percent of the 264,382 registered voters.

In March 2006, 24.78 percent of registered voters participated in the special 1 mill referendum, which, again, was on the ballot with the Longboat and Holiday Park elections.


During the first district referendum, in March 2002, the turnout was 35.4 percent of the 225,918 registered voters.



Commissioner Joe Barbetta contemplates budget material in June. File photo

Although Sarasota County referenda generally are placed on November ballots, the County Commission did hold a special election on March 13, 2007. That ballot featured two county charter amendments sponsored by the local group [Citizens for Sensible Growth](#).

Both measures were approved by voters. One restricts the future annexation of rural lands by the Cities of North Port and Venice; the other requires a supermajority vote of county commissioners to amend the comprehensive plan to increase allowable land use density or intensity.

The charter itself includes specific guidelines about when referenda may be held on initiatives to revise it. In 2007, the charter provided that any amendment proposed to it by citizen petition be voted on during a special election to be scheduled within 60 days after the filing of the proposed amendment with the supervisor of elections. 



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THE QUARTER-BILLION-DOLLAR GAME



With two members having resigned and three absent, five members of the CRA Extension Study Committee ponder the fate of a quarter of a billion in tax dollars during their Oct. 8 session. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

ANALYSIS: NEW CHAIRMAN TAKES REINS OF THE CRA EXTENSION COMMITTEE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

David Merrill resigned Friday, Oct. 4, as the chairman of the Downtown Community Redevelopment Area Extension Study Committee. It sounds dry as dust until you realize as much as a quarter of a billion local tax dollars are at stake.

Merrill and nine others were entrusted with crafting a recommendation on the future of a revenue scheme that has poured millions into downtown Sarasota, but which faces expiration in

2016. Because the scheme melds city and county property tax revenue, any radical change would have impacts on the budgets of both local governments.

Thus, despite the dreary name of the committee, people who “follow the money” were watching closely when Merrill began taking heat from the Sarasota County Commission. His job was to make a recommendation about the future of the Community

“*We lost one member because we started looking off-topic. I ask us to stay to our charge and keep to that as best we can. I don’t want to see more negative conversation that gets in the way of presenting our ideas.*”

Andy Dorr
Chairman
CRA Extension Study Committee



Redevelopment Agency (CRA) encompassing downtown Sarasota.

In 1986, when legendary City Manager Ken Thompson was still at the helm, the city and county cut a deal. For a defined area of downtown, the city and county would freeze their property tax collections. Anything above that level, for the next 30 years, would accrue to the CRA under what is called “tax-increment financing,” or TIF.

Sarasota was an early adopter of a state law empowering the TIF mechanism to fund a

CRA. And it turned out to be a gold mine. In the early years, the money was plowed back into downtown investment. Businesses that wanted to leave were convinced to stay, and businesses that were sniffing at downtown — such as the Whole Foods grocery — were given an offer they did not refuse.

The CRA’s mission to fight “slum and blight” — for any number of external and internal reasons — succeeded wildly. Downtown in 1986 was a ghost town after dark. Downtown



*Downtown Sarasota has benefitted from millions in tax revenue dedicated to fighting ‘slum and blight.’
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

in 2006 was the envy of virtually every other city in Florida.

It was not just nightlife, either, that made it shine. Every day, an estimated 50,000 people came into town to work. New downtown condominiums created a population boom where virtually no population had existed before. Downtown became the economic hub of Sarasota — for business, banking, retail and entertainment.

But in slightly less than three years, the CRA will be kaput.

MERRILL THE 'TURBULENT PRIEST'

In the meantime, other communities in Sarasota County saw this economic miracle in downtown and wanted one of their own.

But for a variety of reasons, the Sarasota County Commission declined to create any more CRAs. There was one exception — in Englewood — which remains miniscule.

Merrill is a former Sarasota City mayor who now lives in Nokomis. He knows the virtues of having a CRA and the liabilities of not having one. Nokomis, for example, has begged the County Commission for more than a decade for a library.

Merrill wanted his committee to not only make a knowledgeable recommendation about the future of the Downtown Sarasota CRA, but to continue it with a model ordinance that could be applied elsewhere. That idea, however, drew the ire of at least three county commissioners. One urged Merrill to resign. So he did.



During summer budget workshops, county commissioners already were considering revenue projections for future fiscal years that included tax dollars now going to the downtown CRA. Photo by Norman Schimmel

It all seems redolent of Thomas Becket and Henry II of England. When the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to cede control of his church to the king, Henry cried, “Will no one will rid me of this turbulent priest?” Four knights took the king at his word and dispatched Becket with their swords during Vespers. Merrill wisely did not resist. He conceded to the County Commission.

THE NEW CHAIRMAN

Study Committee Vice Chairman Andy Dorr picked up the gavel on Tuesday, Oct. 8, to replace Merrill. And he set out where Merrill had left off, with one unspoken exception. Only once in the two-hour meeting did the word “model” come up, and it disappeared quickly.

Gone was any consideration of what a CRA could do for other communities. The focus was strictly on Sarasota. In a discussion of boundaries, it was suggested the CRA be expanded to include the North Tamiami Trail. Dorr suggested maintaining the current boundaries. “It would keep this conversation simpler. We won’t be discussing taking other areas out of the tax base, and for how long,” he said.

Instead of centering on one solution — a model ordinance, perhaps — the discussion focused on giving the County Commission a set of options. Extend the CRA? Make a choice among 10, 20 or 30 years for the future.

When members began thinking about a CRA supported by a split in sales tax revenue instead of property tax revenue, Dorr chided them. “We lost one member because we started looking off-topic. I ask us to stay to

our charge and keep to that as best we can. I don’t want to see more negative conversation that gets in the way of presenting our ideas,” he said.

Dorr is scheduled to make the committee’s first progress report on Oct. 22 during a joint meeting of the City and County commissions. “I’ll recap where we are,” he said. “We’re starting to get pretty far along.

The next topic addressed by the committee was the length of any renewal of the CRA. Compound interest works marvels, and that is no different with the CRA. Each year’s percentage increase in tax revenue goes atop the previous year’s funds.

Dorr said that if the CRA were extended another decade and it kept the 1986 “base year,” the income would be about \$75 million. If the CRA were extended another 30 years and kept the base year of 1986, it would collect between \$250 million and \$300 million.

Numbers like that keep city and county commissioners awake at night. A quarter of a billion dollars in the next 30 years could be going into a small area of downtown Sarasota — and no place else.

Other questions abound. Who would govern this future CRA? Today, the Sarasota City Commission oversees it, sitting as another body. If half the money comes from the county, should the county have a seat at the table? Or three? Should the money be split? Right now north Sarasota has a CRA, but it receives no county funding. Additionally, because its “base year” was 2007, property values have declined; it produces zero revenue. The city dips into the Downtown CRA pot to fund it.

FROM HERE ON

The big question now is what the committee's product will be. Will it provide recommendations backed by analysis and fact? Or will it offer up a decision-tree spreadsheet, an "if-then" document with infinite options?

Merrill was firmly in the "finished product" camp, looking to produce a model ordinance with the reasons to support a CRA downtown or anywhere else in the county. Dorr's aim cannot be clear after his taking over on short notice. His approach may emerge during his presentation at the joint city-county meeting later this month.

The tit-for-tat nature of the committee serving two masters continued this week at the City and County commission level. Earlier CRA Extension Committee Member Katie

Leonard resigned because she was leaving town. She was a city appointee to the board, while Merrill was a county appointment.

The city was slow to advertise for Leonard's replacement, but on Monday, staff agreed to start the search. On Tuesday, the County Commission decided not to seek a replacement for Merrill. But when informed the city was putting a new member on the committee, Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham said, "In that case, the county may revisit its position."

Merrill, however, should still be careful. A subsequent English king, Henry VIII, had Becket's bones destroyed and all mention of him obliterated from the historical record. After all, in Sarasota County, there is a quarter of a billion dollars at stake. **SNL**

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ON THE HORIZON

Most of the approximately 25 supporters of the countywide registry who attended the County Commission meeting wore red. Photo by Rachel Hackney

COUNTYWIDE DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY INCHES FORWARD

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission took another step, haltingly, toward creating a domestic partnership registry this week.

The measure, similar to ones already approved by the Cities of Sarasota and Venice, would grant unmarried couples rights such as emergency notification, burial decision-making, healthcare visitations and more. It has become a major rallying point for local LGBT rights activists.

County staff presented two possible ordinances Wednesday morning, Oct. 9,

identical except for one section dealing with reciprocity, a measure that would guarantee partners registered in other jurisdictions the same rights as those granted to partners registered in Sarasota County. Former Sarasota City Commissioner Ken Shelin, who has become the face of the local registry movement, pressed the commission to include the reciprocity language. He emphasized the high

number of tourists and other visitors who come to the county, sometimes for months at a time.

Vice Chairman Charles Hines wanted

“*Sometimes I think this commission worries things to death.*”

Ken Shelin
Advocate
Domestic Partnership Registry

a guarantee that the county would not be committing itself to granting rights extended by other jurisdictions that might not be included in the Sarasota ordinance, a concern Commissioner Nora Patterson echoed. She felt “goosy” about “this whole thing,” she said.

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh reassured the commissioners that the ordinance would grant only the rights specifically enumerated, even if visitors are entitled to greater rights in their hometowns. The proposed ordinance containing the reciprocity language in fact states that only “rights, privileges and benefits” outlined by the ordinance may be conferred to those registered elsewhere, and only while “such individuals are physically

located within the geographical area of Sarasota County.”

Hines eventually moved to approve the ordinance with the reciprocity language, and the measure was passed unanimously. But one provision Shelin argued for was left by the wayside.

Some jurisdictions give domestic partners the right to “educational decisions,” and Shelin asked the commission to include language granting that. The City of Sarasota, for example, allows domestic partners “the same rights to participate in the education of a Dependent of the register Domestic Partnership as a biological parent,” but if a biological parent objects, “only the participation of the biological parents shall be allowed.”



Ken Shelin addresses the County Commission. Photo by Rachel Hackney

“I am adamantly against that,” said Commissioner Christine Robinson. She called the educational language “overreaching.” Commissioners Patterson and Joe Barbetta joined her in blocking it.

While the ordinance was eventually approved for a public hearing, the commissioners posed several hypotheticals. How do administrative staffs of local hospitals feel about such ordinances? Would partners be allowed to claim two homestead exemptions? Would the county be obligated to extend benefits to partners?

While “glad” the county chose to include reciprocity language, “Sometimes I think this commission worries things to death,” Shelin tells *The Sarasota News Leader*. Local hospitals don’t demand to see a marriage license

before allowing a person they believe to be the spouse of a patient to make healthcare decisions, he points out. So why would a domestic partnership registry present additional hurdles? If a biological parent objects to a partner having input into a child’s education, then “the domestic partner’s input doesn’t count,” he says.

“They’re playing to their constituency,” adds Shelin. “And I think a couple of them aren’t too keen on [the registry], but they’re on the wrong side of history, because things are changing.”

The domestic partnership registry isn’t the only LGBT issue residents are asking the commission to address: Julia Nowak is pressing the board to act on a human rights ordinance. Nowak is the Englewood Realtor who first




Klaus Obermeit asks the County Commission to approve a domestic partnership registry for the county. Photo by Rachel Hackney

called attention to discriminatory language in documents approved by residents of Casa Di Amici, a Venice condominium complex. The rules allowed only married couples and individuals to buy condos, in effect banning gay and lesbian couples.

While the condo complex board this week officially voted to eliminate that language, which was added inadvertently, Nowak has spoken repeatedly at County Commission meetings to ask the board to pass a human rights ordinance to prevent such discrimination. The Cities of Sarasota and Venice protect residents against discrimination based on age, disability, gender, marital status, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and veteran status, but the county does not offer all those protections.

Nowak has now spoken in front of the commission four times, but she received zero response till Tuesday, when Chairwoman Carolyn Mason finally agreed to meet with Nowak about the human rights proposal. Mason's staff reached out to Nowak to set up a meeting next Thursday, Nowak tells the *News Leader*.

In August, Nowak vowed to the *News Leader* that she would speak at every commission meeting in South County till the board took action on the human rights ordinance. Whatever happens at next week's meeting with Mason, Nowak says she won't back down: "My intent is to keep pressing until something happens." 



Commissioner Christine Robinson directs a question to advocate Ken Shelin while he is at the podium. Photo by Rachel Hackney

SHAW SAYS, 'NO WAY!'



A homeless man takes shelter at a former service station on Pineapple Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WILL NORTH SARASOTA SEE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ANOTHER HOMELESS SHELTER?

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Wayne Applebee, the criminal justice policy coordinator for Sarasota County, will be the person charged with putting into effect the plan a consultant is developing for dealing with homelessness issues in the community.

That was the announcement Thursday morning, Oct. 10, by Paul Sutton, chairman of the Homeless Committee of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County, during a regular meeting of his group.

Applebee will be assigned that responsibility for two years

after consultant Robert Marbut releases his proposal, which is expected in November.

“Marbut is only the planner: I will be the coordinator and implementer,” Applebee told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

Having pointing out he will not remain in the community after he completes his proposal, Marbut had called for a point person on the project, Applebee added.

A suggestion for the site of a new homeless shelter in the community is expected to be part of Marbut’s

We as neighbors will not allow this [new] facility to be established in our neighborhood. We are not powerless. District 1 is no longer a dumping ground.

Barbara Langston
President
Amaryllis Park Neighborhood Association

Summary

Unduplicated Individual Records

Total Males (18+)	1,102	(75.5%)
Total Females (18+)	357	(24.5%)
Total Transgender (18+)	1	(0.1%)
Total Males + Females (18+)	1,460	
Total Beds Available for Single Men/Women	273	
Total Unmet Need (Unsheltered Individuals)	1,187	

County Breakdown

Total North County (including jail population)	1,249	(85.6%)
Total South County	177	(12.1%)
Total Served in both North and South County	34	(2.3%)

Jail Data

Jail Total - Males	190
Jail Total - Females	44
Jail Total - All	234

Record Allocation

Total HMIS-Only Records	471	(26.4%)
Total Survey-Only Records	684	(38.3%)
Total HMIS + Survey Records	305	(17.1%)

Other

Total Omitted Clients	27
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proposal, according to his consulting agreement with the City and County of Sarasota.

Just days before Sutton's announcement, in a bit of orchestrated political theater, Sarasota Vice Mayor Willie Shaw drove home a point at the end of the Monday, Oct. 7, City Commission meeting: He is adamantly opposed to building a shelter for homeless and vagrant people in his north Sarasota district.

Meanwhile, a census of "individuals in Sarasota County who were living on the streets, in encampments and in temporary or transitional shelter during the week of Sept. 15-21" was released on Oct. 9. For people 18 and over, the local census reported 1,460

people, with 357 of them women. No children were counted in the census, which was conducted by 29 local agencies. The report says 273 shelter beds are available, meaning there is an "unmet need" of nearly 1,200 beds.

The survey was released by the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness.

Shaw is concerned about what he is reading and hearing about Marbut's research into finding a site for a new shelter. A nationally recognized figure in helping cities with homeless and vagrancy problems, Marbut recently revealed some of the criteria he is using to develop his recommendation.



Homeless people gather on Central Avenue in downtown Sarasota earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Those include close proximity (“walking distance”) to existing social services and the county jail. With most social service agencies located in the northern half of the city, Shaw wanted to preempt Marbut from making what seemed an obvious decision.

“In the news we’ve heard, 10th Street, 12th Street or 18th Street. No one in District 1 has had any input in this,” said Shaw during the commission meeting. “Things are happening that are not transparent.”

Shaw was supported by a number of backers. Among the most vocal was Barbara Langston, president of the Amaryllis Park Neighborhood Association. “Harvest House! Resurrection House! Salvation Army! [All are facilities in

north Sarasota.] We as neighbors will not allow this [new] facility to be established in our neighborhood. We are not powerless. District 1 is no longer a dumping ground.”

She was preceded by the director of human resources at the Pines of Sarasota on Orange Avenue at 12th Street. “There are times when we have had problems hiring people because they didn’t think it was a safe area,” Dawn Crable said. “We only ask the commission to study this carefully. Any transitional housings would compromise our expansion.”


Another neighborhood president, Marge Sykes of Bayou Oaks, told the commissioners, “In about a month, Marbut will come up with decision and recommendations. We’re



Paul Sutton, chairman of the Homeless Committee of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County, leads a discussion on homeless issues during the summer. Photo by Roger Drouin

vulnerable because we work,” referencing the inability of many residents of District 1 to participate in community discussions on the plan.

The overall theme was taken up by Commissioner Susan Chapman. “Why is this now a local issue? Public health, mental health, veterans affairs — these were not city issues before. They used to be national and state issues. Why should the city bear the burdens for the region’s chronic homeless?”

The item was the last on the evening’s agenda. Shaw said at the beginning of his remarks, “I open this discussion to the entire community, especially north Sarasota. This has nothing to do with our community’s passion for the homeless.” 



Robert Marbut is working as a consultant on homeless issues in the community. Photo by Roger Drouin

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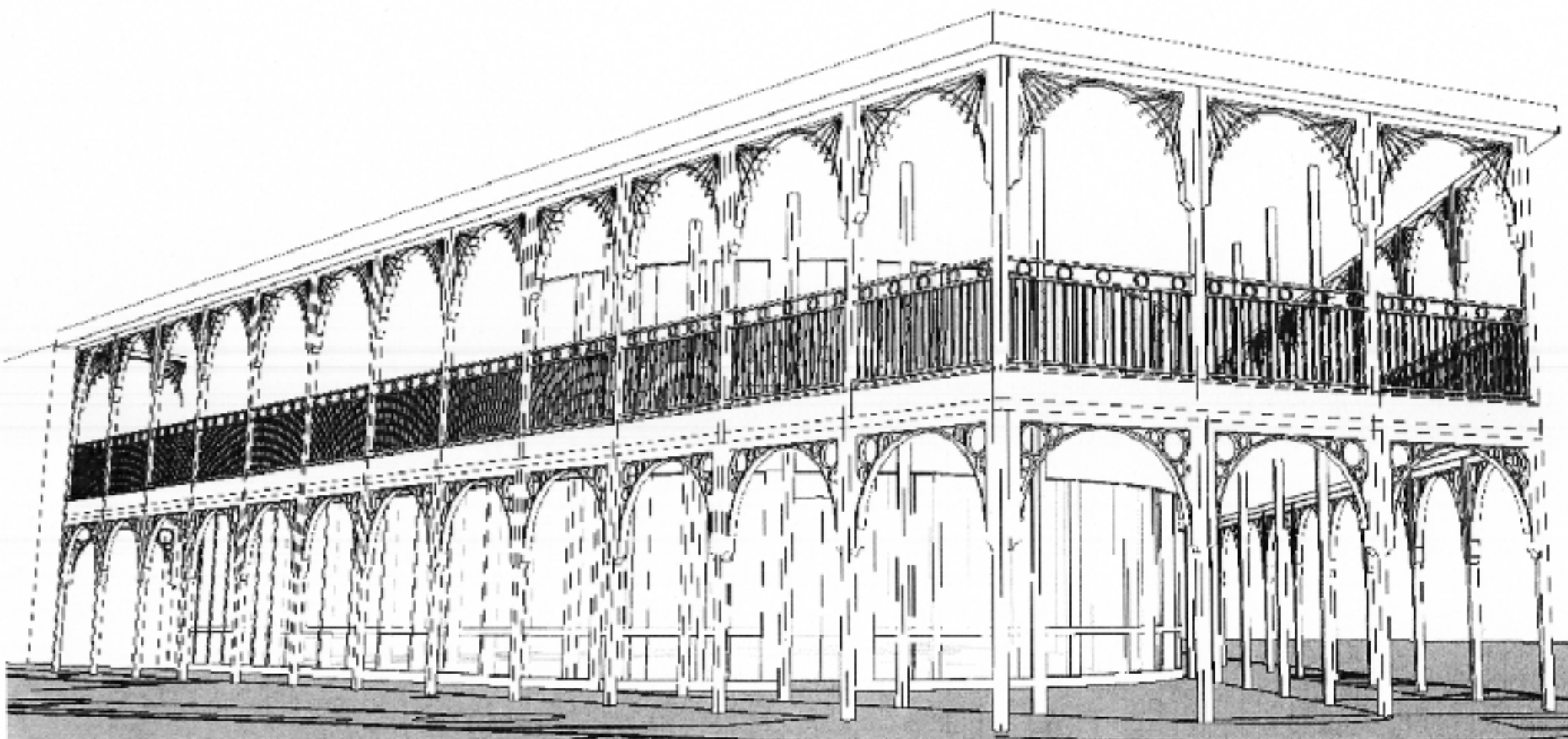


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'GALLERIES' TURNED DOWN



The City Commission turned down the proposed 'galleries' on the Kress Building at 1400 Main St. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

THE CITY COMMISSION NIXES A PROPOSED NEW ORLEANS-STYLE REDESIGN FOR A FIVE POINTS BUILDING AND HOLDS OFF AGAIN ON A PLAN FOR THE STATE STREET PARKING GARAGE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

During its Oct. 7 meeting, the Sarasota City Commission endorsed, rejected or approved several items. In a recap, they stopped a “major encroachment” proposed at 1400 Main St.; agreed to a St. Armands Circle parking study, a lease to permit the continuation of a homeless “way station” and a union contract; purchased a sculpture for Five Points Park; approved new construction on Whitaker Bayou; and again made no decision about the design of the State Street parking garage.

The item of greatest public interest Monday night was a proposal to wrap the old Kress Building at Five Points with “galleries.” The

structures would provide shade for the sidewalks and room for up to 78 café tables on a second-floor covered porch overlooking Main Street.

A total of 21 people spoke, most of them downtown residents opposing the plan.

“This is probably one of the largest major encroachment permits we’ve had downtown,” said city Development and Neighborhood Services Director Tim Litchett.

It was also the first application ever for a “gallery.” By a slim 3-2 margin, the commissioners turned it down, with Mayor Shannon

Snyder and Commissioner Paul Caragiulo in the minority. Vice Mayor Willie Shaw joined Commissioners Suzanne Atwell and Susan Chapman in opposing the request from businessman Chris Brown, who says he has been in discussions with a party that wants to put a “high-end restaurant” in the building.

In deferring a decision again on the design of the State Street garage, the commission this time acted on the advice of City Attorney Bob Fournier. Under a development agreement with Pineapple Square Inc., the city must provide 300 more parking spaces downtown by early 2015, so the clock is ticking. Fournier asked for a two-week delay on board direction so he could iron out legal issues with Pineapple Square’s lawyer.

At the urging of the Business Improvement District (BID) and its neighbors on St. Armands Circle, the commission approved a \$49,000 study by Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc. to look at how to end a parking deficit in that area. By one estimate, the commercial district is short 900 spaces. The leading proposed solution is to build a parking garage (or two) on city-owned lots. The study could validate that or offer other suggestions.

The commissioners Monday also extended the city’s lease agreement with The Salvation Army so it can continue to use the site of the former police substation on Central Avenue (across from the Rosemary cemetery) as a “way station” for homeless and vagrant people. The Salvation Army turns people out



The City Commission has agreed to a study to determine how best to handle a parking deficit on St. Armands Circle. Photo by Norman Schimmel



A BIG EFFORT

Bruce Dillon (left, at the table), vice president of Friends of the Legacy Trail, and Mike Gippert, president of Friends of the Legacy Trail, address the City Commission on Oct. 7. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A NONPROFIT GROUP BEGINS PLANNING A LEGACY TRAIL EXTENSION NORTH INTO DOWNTOWN SARASOTA, WITH FUNDING LIKELY FROM PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SOURCES

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

More than 120,000 bicyclists, runners and walkers use the Legacy Trail every year, according to electronic counters on the route. “Conceivably, it’s a huge project,” said Bruce Dillon, vice president of Friends of the Legacy Trail. “However, I think it’s a community goal.”

An effort is under way to extend the popular multi-use trail, expanding it from south of Clark Road, where it ends, into downtown Sarasota. The 8-mile extension would be a big effort that could take years.

“*We don’t expect that this project will be funded by all public dollars. Public dollars, from all levels of government, will be mighty handy, but we expect private dollars to be a part of that.*”

Bruce Dillon
Vice President
Friends of the Legacy Trail

The Friends of the Legacy Trail has been making presentations to local groups and elected officials — including one on Monday, Oct. 7, to the City Commission and an update to County Commissioners on Tuesday.

The plan would expand the route, which has become the backbone of outdoor recreation in the county, into the more densely populated northern neighborhoods and ultimately downtown. For instance, 27 schools are located within one linear mile of the border of the proposed extension, according to a map created by the Friends of the Legacy Trail.

Project costs are unknown, but if the original leg of the trail — slightly more than 10 miles — is any indication, the extension could cost millions.

The project, however, could be completed in phases, spreading out the overall expense — the same way the original leg of the trail was completed, Dillon told *The Sarasota News Leader* after Tuesday's County Commission meeting.

The first 10-plus miles of the Legacy Trail were completed in three major phases along an abandoned CSX railroad line: from the Venice Train Depot to Roberts Bay; from Roberts Bay to Dona Bay; and finally from Dona Bay north to Culverhouse Park just



An 8-mile extension of the Legacy Trail would bring it north to downtown Sarasota. A separate path would connect the trail to Payne Park. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

south of Clark Road. The trail cost a total of \$31 million, which included construction of two large trestles and an overpass across U.S. 41 in Venice.

The expense of the proposed extension, however, could be affected by the fact that the terrain is different along the northern rail line, Dillon said.

The proposed expansion would start at Sawyer Loop Road at Culverhouse Park, where the Legacy Trail currently ends, and run to a location near the intersection of Fruitville Road and U.S. 301, with a separate

pathway connecting Payne Park to the trail (see the accompanying map). The expansion, combined with the existing Legacy Trail and other pathways in place, would result in nearly 30 miles of continuous non-motorized, paved trail.

The need for three roadway overpasses — at Clark Road, Bahia Vista and Beneva Road — would likely comprise a substantial portion of the cost of the extension into downtown Sarasota.

In August, the County Commission authorized its Public Works Department to spend



The Legacy Trail has many fans countywide. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

\$75,000 on a feasibility study for the extension; that study will result in several options and price tags.

The total cost of that study is estimated at \$100,000 to \$150,000. The Friends of Sarasota County Parks, Friends of the Legacy Trail and Sarasota entrepreneur Jesse Biter have offered to rally resident and business support to raise funds for the project.

One option is for an 8-mile multi-use trail parallel to the existing railway, so legal “reversionary claims” and the possibility of federal government payouts to landowners could be avoided, Dillon said.

Under that option, the county would lease the land for the trail from Seminole Gulf Railway, which has a multi-decade lease for the railroad right of way from CSX.



The U.S. 41 Venice Bypass pedestrian overpass for the Legacy Trail opened in November 2011. Photo by Norman Schimmel

While this option might be less expensive and could avoid legal issues, one negative aspect is that it would map out costly public improvements on land that was not publicly owned.

At Monday's City Commission meeting, Dillon said the idea of constructing the trail adjacent to existing tracks came during a discussion with the CEO of Seminole Gulf Railway.

HOW DO WE DO THIS...

After Tuesday's County Commission meeting, Commissioner Christine Robinson said the feasibility study is the next major step in the project that could link Venice to downtown Sarasota.

"That will bring out 'How do we do this?'" Robinson pointed out.

The feasibility study will have several goals, including identifying possible encroachments in the rail corridor; reviewing environmental conditions; assessing infrastructure needs; and coming up with a conceptual plan and a detailed cost estimate for future budgeting and planning.

The Legacy Trail extension cannot be accomplished without private funding from residents and local organizations, Dillon said. And a big part of the upcoming focus will be on raising some of that money, both for the cost of the upcoming feasibility study and the expense of construction.

"We are working diligently to get word out on the extension of the trail," Dillon told the county commissioners Tuesday. He said



Legacy Trail users have the option to stop and learn about the history of the area. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

advocates for the trail extension were starting to both “raise awareness” and “raise funding.”

“We don’t expect that this project will be funded by all public dollars,” Dillon added. “Public dollars, from all levels of government, will be mighty handy, but we expect private dollars to be a part of that.”

The group has a catchphrase for its fundraising campaign: “Become part of the legacy.”

Dillon said Biter, the downtown entrepreneur, has had discussions about the project already with other members of the Friends of the Legacy Trail.

“He understands that [the extension] would be a wonderful thing, and it would make people in Sarasota happy and provide customers for businesses downtown,” Dillon told the *News Leader*.

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?

On Tuesday, the County Commission approved a Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan designed to improve pedestrian and bicycle access as well as safety throughout the county. The plan was developed over the past year, and the process included community input.

Sarasota cycling advocate Mike Lasche said one significant problem with the plan is that while it lists the proposed Legacy Trail extension as a deficiency, it does not include the project in its recommendations section.

“Those do have some weight,” Lasche said about the recommendations in an interview with the *News Leader*.

They direct political will to a specific project and can improve the chances that funding can be secured, he pointed out. Thus, adding the Legacy Trail extension to that section would have been a positive step for the project, Lasche said.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

During the Friends of the Legacy Trail’s presentation at Monday’s City Commission, members of the nonprofit organization touted the economic benefit of local trails, citing the \$42 million annual economic impact of such a route in Orange County.

The presentation also highlighted how an extended trail in Sarasota would improve the ability of students to walk and bike to school and foster families’ use of the pathway close to their neighborhoods.

The president of the group told the city commissioners Monday that once the feasibility study has been completed, the Friends will present the findings to city and county government officials. “We hope you will participate,” said Mike Gippert. “The city has some unique opportunity for grants that the county does not.”

The Legacy Trail’s northward expansion might not be the only extension in the future.

Robinson also mentioned the potential for another pathway that would lead from the Legacy Trail to North Port.

City Editor Stan Zimmerman contributed to this report. 



EXPANDING A STRATEGY

Lt. Pat Ledwith (far left) and Chief Bernadette DiPino (right) listen as Vice Mayor Willie Shaw addresses the audience. Shaw is a strong proponent of the High Point strategy. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

THE SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORTS INITIAL SUCCESS ON ITS 'HIGH POINT' MODEL FOR REDUCING CRIME

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

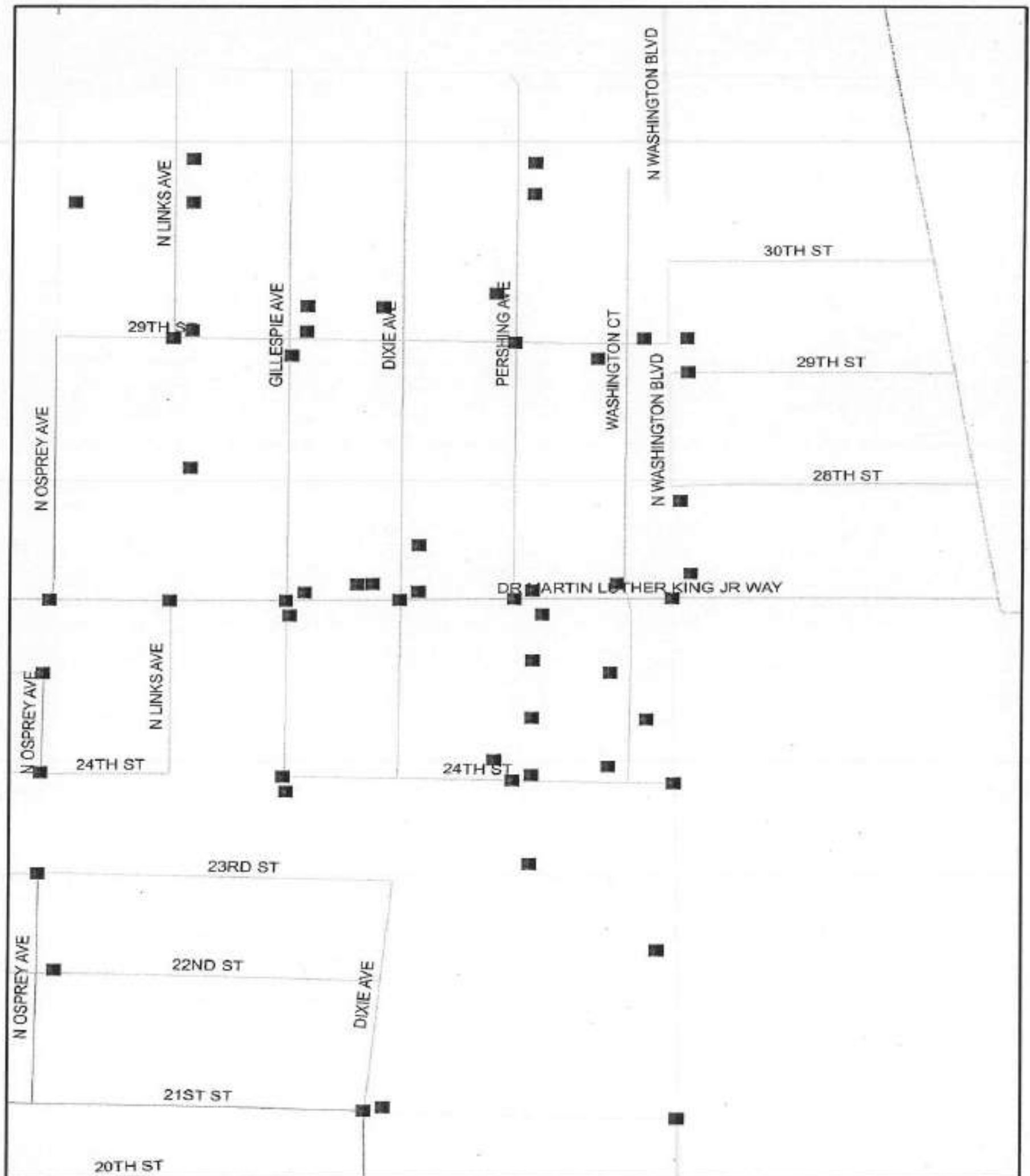
The “scared-straight” policing strategy pioneered by High Point, NC, and adopted by Sarasota has widened beyond street-level drug dealers to include prostitution.

Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino announced at a press conference on Wednesday, Oct. 9, that the six individuals who entered the “deferred prosecution program” in August remain crime-free. Further, a roadside roundup of prostitutes last month netted five women who have all volunteered to enter the program as well, DiPino said.

Sarasota Police call the program DMI, the drug market intervention strategy. Modeled

on High Point’s experience, intelligence is gathered and gleaned to locate crime “hot spots.” Undercover officers then are assigned to gather more intelligence in those areas and begin building cases against violators.

On June 11, the Police Department’s narcotics squad made 25 arrests in an area defined as a drug market hot spot. Six of the arrestees did not have a criminal record for violent crimes or gun offenses, nor had any of them served a lengthy prison sentence. The six were offered “deferred prosecution” if they would participate in rehabilitation, and all of them accepted the offer.



City police gathered data for months to zero in on a drug market in North Sarasota. This map from the intelligence division shows it was not simply a street-corner market, but spread over a much wider area of the Amaryllis Park neighborhood. Map courtesy of the Sarasota Police Department

If the individuals stay out of trouble, it is possible and even likely the charges will be dropped against them in the future. But this is not a short-term thing. Lt. Pat Ledwith, commander of the Bureau of Criminal Investigations, said the participants will have to stay straight until the statute of limitations expires on their initial criminal offenses.


Depending on what they were arrested for, it could take years for those limitations to expire. During that period, if any are identified in criminal activity, the “deferred prosecution” deal will expire, and they will face a judge on their original offenses.

Meanwhile, the six participants are the focus of a wide range of services, including job training, addiction and mental health counseling, educational opportunities and instruction in parenting skills. Mentors are available as role

models to help the group make better decisions about their lives.

The idea is to make a clean break with the past. Just as a smoker finds it tough to stop if he hangs out with people continuing to smoke, a person who has committed a crime should not keep the company of other criminals.

DiPino said the High Point strategy is a philosophical change for her department, not “a one-time deal.” Expansion of the program to tackle prostitution, she added, was a result of patrol deputies’ suggestions regarding that type of criminal activity on the North Tamiami Trail.

In the meantime, the Police Intelligence Bureau is looking at the statistics for other “hot spots” in town. While the program took on the DMI acronym at its start, it already has grown well beyond drugs. 



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

Lakewood Ranch Boulevard

- 4-lane 'on-site' segment
- Connecting from southern terminus of roadway to southern DRI boundary
- Developer financially responsible
- Construction prior to approval of 300th dwelling unit
- Developer financially responsible



IN OTHER BUSINESS ...

Schroeder-Manatee Ranch is committed to building a four-lane segment of Lakewood Ranch Boulevard that would connect the southern boundary of its Villages development to the existing southern terminus of the road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION AGREES TO A REVISED ROADS PLAN FOR THE VILLAGES OF LAKEWOOD RANCH SOUTH, A LOAN FOR THE SIESTA BEACH PROJECT AND A PUBLIC HEARING ON AN AMENDED ENERGY ECONOMIC ZONE ORDINANCE

By Roger Drouin and Rachel Hackney
Staff Editors

The Sarasota County commissioners on Wednesday, Oct. 9, approved a revised transportation agreement for the proposed Villages of Lakewood Ranch South development, agreed to a bank loan to pay for improvements at Siesta Public Beach and authorized the advertisement of a new ordinance governing the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ).

“ *I like the overpass option there, especially with development coming in to the east [of the interstate].*

Charles Hines
Vice Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

”

The unanimous Villages vote moves the large housing development one step closer to construction.

The agreement requires developer

Schroeder-Manatee Ranch Inc. (SMR) to construct certain roadways to serve both the interior of the Villages and the project's traffic.

SMR will pay for an east-west connector from Lakewood Ranch Boulevard to Lorraine Road through what the agreement terms "the Development of Regional Impact (DRI)."

It also is required to construct additional transportation improvements with a value of \$7.5 million through a "proportionate

share" clause in the document. The developer will fund one of two possible projects. SMR initially had focused on construction of two outer lanes of the future four-lane Iona Road, between Fruitville Road and Palmer Boulevard, but the county could opt instead for an east-west route that would include one overpass of both Interstate 75 and Cattlemen Road. The County Commission ultimately would have to make that decision within the next three years.



Proportionate Share Project

Alternative Proportionate Share Project: *East-West Overpass*

- County has 3-years to select this option
- Developer would provide \$7,500,000 contribution towards this
- Early stages of exploring feasibility, location, and funding



An alternate proposed project for the Villages initiative calls for an east-west overpass. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“I like the overpass option there, especially with development coming in to the east [of the interstate],” said Vice Chairman Charles Hines.

“We need to move this forward,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta said about The Villages of Lakewood Ranch South, which already has been in the approval process for more than three years.

BEACH FUNDS

The vote on a \$12.5 million loan to help pay for the \$21.5 million Siesta Public Beach Park improvements was 4-1, with Commissioner

Christine Robinson in the minority. Robinson has protested the county’s deficit spending, as the board has continued to dip into its economic uncertainty fund to balance its budget.

Richard Gleitsman, representing the county’s Office of Financial Management, told the board the plan originally called for a \$14 million loan. However, staff determined \$1.5 million could be allocated for it out of Tourist Development Tax revenue. Therefore, the borrow would be about \$12.5 million.

The exact figure, provided in staff material for the board, is \$12,543,000; that includes the issuance cost.

Project Overview



**Historic Pavilion,
West Concession
and
Public Safety
Building**



Artist's renderings show the planned designs of the new Public Safety Building at Siesta Public Beach and the restored historic pavilion. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Gleitsman added that six banks responded to the county's solicitation for a loan package. They provided nine funding variations representing both floating and fixed rates. The bank chosen is a subsidiary of SunTrust bank; it offered a 2.29 percent fixed interest rate for 11 years.

"That sounds really good. Thank you," Commissioner Nora Patterson told Gleitsman, referring to the rate.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta made the motion to approve the deal. "I want to get this project moving," he said. "It's been delayed long enough."

In response to a question from Barbetta, Gleitsman told the board the closing is scheduled for Oct. 10.

Brad Gaubatz, the county project manager in charge of the beach improvements, told members of the Siesta Key Village Association last week that the County Commission is scheduled to hear a presentation on Oct. 22 regarding a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) for the work. If the board approves the GMP, the work can get under way. It is expected to take two years.

The start of the work — which has been scheduled for November — could be delayed, though, Gaubatz said. It was supposed to begin after completion of the adjacent stormwater project on Siesta Key, but construction of the new stormwater pond has been on hold because of the rainy weather in September.



Richard Gleitsman addresses the County Commission about the loan for the Siesta Beach Park improvements. Photo by Rachel Hackney

EEZ PUBLIC HEARING

On the morning of Oct. 23, the County Commission will hold a public hearing at the Administration Center in Sarasota regarding proposed changes to its ordinance governing a pilot Energy Economic Zone (EEZ) in the southern portion of the county.

The vote to advertise the public hearing was unanimous.

On Sept. 11, the board approved tweaks that would change the geographic boundaries of the EEZ, revise energy usage standards for businesses applying for incentives through the zone and rebrand the EEZ as the Sustainable Energy Economic District (SEED) Incentive Program.

In her Oct. 10 presentation to the commission, Lisa Damschroder of the Office of Business and Economic Development, said the amended ordinance revises the boundaries to comprise all unincorporated areas west of the county's Urban Service Boundary, as well as the county landfill and Urban Service Areas within county municipalities, providing the cities have adopted resolutions or ordinances authorizing those areas to be in the zone.

Additionally, the amended ordinance would give applicants **one new energy efficiency standard** with which they could comply to be considered for the program. The original EEZ ordinance offered only three, which business representatives found difficult to meet, staff told the board on Sept. 11.

Finally, the ordinance calls for the County Commission to receive formal, semi-annual updates on the program.

Vice Chairman Hines commended Damschroder and Lee Hayes Byron, manager of the county's sustainability program, for their work on the amended ordinance. "It's a tool we can use to attract business here," he added, "[but] it hasn't worked so far. Hopefully, these amendments work [and] ... it will be an example for the state to follow."

The Florida Legislature created the EEZ Pilot Program in 2009 as "a model to help communities cultivate green economic development, encourage renewable electric energy generation, manufacture products that contribute to energy conservation and green jobs, and other activities related to energy efficiency




Lisa Damschroder reviews the proposed changes to the Energy Economic Zone ordinance. Photo by Rachel Hackney

and land use planning," says an Oct. 9 memo to the County Commission relating the history of the program.

In 2011, the Legislature modified the program, necessitating the County Commission to revise the original ordinance in March 2012.

Commissioner Christine Robinson pointed out that board members had been criticized because the ordinance did not appear workable. "Because we tightened it too much, we lost opportunities," Robinson added. "It's a big lesson learned."

Commissioner Patterson asked how much progress had been made with the state's other pilot program, in the City of Miami Beach.

Byron replied that that city's leaders have made their way through the rules process, but they have not implemented the program. 



TRANSIT TALKS

A regular SCAT bus and a bus designed for disabled passengers make a stop at Southgate Mall. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THE SARASOTA AND MANATEE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HAVE TO WORK OUT SEVERAL ISSUES REGARDING THE PROPOSED MERGER OF THEIR BUS SYSTEMS — STARTING WITH THE TIME FRAME

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The Sarasota and Manatee county commissions will meet Oct. 15 to talk about a possible merger of the two county's transit systems into one regional agency.

In addition to a possible combination of Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) and Manatee County Area Transit (MCAT), the two boards will discuss whether privatizing such a new entity is a viable option.

But the two boards have to reach an agreement on several issues and wrangle complexities before either option moves ahead.

Sarasota county commissioners and staff want to hire an independent firm to conduct a cost analysis before continuing the merger/privatization discussions.

Manatee County officials, however, are proposing a fast-track approach. It

“*I think it is an opportunity for us to work out an agreement on this and air some of this stuff out.*”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



skips over the independent cost analysis and calls for an evaluation committee to select bids from prospective operators interested in running the combined Sarasota-Manatee bus system, according to a Sept. 27 memo from Manatee County Commission Chairman Larry Bustle.

Sarasota commissioners voiced some concern this week that Manatee County's approach was a matter of rushing into the transit changes and grouping together the option for a merger and privatization.

"I always [thought] ongoing discussions on a possible merger were one thing. The other thing is potential privatization," Commissioner Joe Barbetta said during the Oct. 9 County Commission meeting. "I thought it was two different tracks. It appears Manatee wants to lump it all together."

Barbetta has a "more deliberative" approach in mind than Manatee County's plan, noted County Administrator Randall Reid.

During that Oct. 9 meeting, SCAT Director Glama Carter said Sarasota officials believe the independent cost analysis is required by the Federal Transit Administration before a transit authority can go through any major changes, such as merging with another organization. "We are adhering to federal requirements," Carter pointed out.

The analysis will give local officials an "idea of what other transits have done," Carter said.

It could take nearly six months before the County Commission determines whether it wants to move forward with a merger and/or privatization. That time frame includes 30 to 60 days for a consultant to complete the analysis, another 30 days to present the results



Signs mark a Sarasota County Area Transit stop on Gulfstream Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel

to the Sarasota County Commission, then 60 more days to gather public input. The county would then seek bids from prospective vendors interested in operating the bus systems.

Barbetta has cited potential benefits to a merged transit system, ranging from possible decreases in passenger waits for buses to a joint effort to maintain equipment. However, on Oct. 9, he pointed to concerns about how fast Manatee County wanted to move the process along.

In an interview last week with *The Sarasota News Leader*, Commissioner Nora Patterson said a merger would lead to a stronger transportation link between the two counties. "There are thousands who live in Sarasota and work in Manatee, or live in Manatee and work in Sarasota," Patterson pointed out.

But Patterson said privatization remained "an open question."

She repeated that sentiment at Wednesday's meeting: "I think the privatization is less of

a no-brainer than putting the two systems together.”

Manatee County’s current plan would “use a third-party potential operator as the mechanism to put the merger together,” Patterson added.

Another issue, she noted, is calculating how the regional transit agency would be funded by the two counties.

If the bus systems merge, the details have to be worked out on a funding agreement, since Sarasota County spends nearly three times more on its larger system. SCAT had about 3 million unlinked passenger trips in 2011, compared to MCAT’s 1.6 million.

A JOINT MEETING

Reid told the commissioners on Oct. 9 that Manatee County Administrator Ed Hunzeker had offered to delay the Oct. 15 joint meeting until the two counties’ staffs could iron out some of the issues.

“They want to have time to respond, and we may not be in the same position,” Reid said. “That would delay the [Oct. 15] meeting.”

Commissioner Christine Robinson said she wanted to hold to the meeting as planned because it could be an opportunity for the two

boards to talk about some of the complexities of the process and search for common ground.

“I think it is an opportunity for us to work out an agreement on this and air some of this stuff out,” Robinson said. “We may discover we can get past this stuff or that we can’t.”

Barbetta agreed. “We can decide at that meeting. We can put out an ITN (Invitation to Negotiate) to do both tracks, to explore the merger and explore privatization. Either way, we have to bring in someone independent to take a look at it.”

The evening of Oct. 10, Reid notified the commissioners that Hunzeker and Bustle had canceled the meeting until an agreement both sides can support has been crafted.

The Sarasota County commissioners also asked Reid if their staff could get an opinion from Federal Transit Administration representatives on whether a cost analysis would be required as the first step.

Reid said he would ask staff to do so, “If they are open.”

County staff did try to contact the federal agency before Wednesday’s meeting but was unable to do so because of the federal government shutdown. 



The County Commission meets in regular session in May. File photo



LET THERE BE NEW LIGHTS

The Baltimore Orioles face the Pittsburgh Pirates in the last Fall Instructional League game for the year at Ed Smith Stadium, held on Oct. 8. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY COMMISSION WILL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING ON OCT. 23 REGARDING FUNDING FOR A NEW LIGHTING SYSTEM NEEDED AT ED SMITH STADIUM

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

To make certain Ed Smith Stadium will be ready for the start of Major League Baseball Spring Training on March 1, new lights must be installed at the facility, Sarasota County's sports development and athletics manager told the County Commission this week.

A public hearing on the funding plan has been scheduled for the board's Oct. 23 session, Pat Calhoon told the commission during its regular meeting in Venice on

Oct. 8. After the hearing, the board will be asked to approve a budget amendment for the expense.

According to an Oct. 3 memo to County Administrator Randall Reid from Carolyn Brown, the county's director of parks

and recreation, and Calhoon, the cost of the project will be \$1,128,284. With the addition of a 10-percent contingency fee, the total is \$1,241,112.



I have dealt with system failures over there myself ...

Pat Calhoon
Manager
Sports Development and Athletics
Sarasota County



Part of the funds — approximately \$250,000 — will represent advances of the county's and Orioles' 2014 payments to the Capital Repair and Improvements Fund (CAPX) for the stadium, Calhoon pointed out, with each providing about \$125,000. The memo notes that those payments are routine, according to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the team and the county.

On Oct. 23, the memo continues, the County Commission will be asked to approve a contract with the "lowest responsive, responsible bidder."

The balance in the CAPX fund after the advance of the funds from the team and the county will be \$700,000, the memo says. Because the total project cost exceeds that amount, the memo adds, the County Commission will need

to hold a public hearing to authorize the use of Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue dedicated to Ed Smith Stadium operations to cover the remainder of the expense.

"Per the MOU," the memo says, the County Commission is responsible for the cost of items that "exceed the balance in the CAPX fund."

Spring training will begin on March 1, Calhoon said, so staff already is working to obtain quotes on the necessary equipment to enable the project to get under way no later than Feb. 1.

On Oct. 4, Calhoon told the board, the county's Procurement Department advertised a solicitation for quotes on specifications for a transformer (with an estimated cost



The Baltimore Orioles play the Boston Red Sox on Feb. 27 in Ed Smith Stadium. Photo by Norman Schimmel



David Rovine is the vice president of Orioles operations in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

of \$62,500) and custom-made switchgear (expected to cost \$15,000), as those purchases have “very, very long lead [times].”

According to the Oct. 3 memo, “The purpose of this project is to retrofit the existing lighting system at Ed Smith Stadium,” which is 25 years old and “at the end of its service life ...”

“I have dealt with system failures over there myself, and I know David has,” Calhoon said on Oct. 8, referring to David Rovine, vice president of the Orioles-Sarasota.

Brown and Calhoon added in their memo that the equipment had far exceeded the manufacturer’s expectations.

Calhoon explained that spring training night games “are very, very important” because they put “Sarasota in prime time throughout the mid-Atlantic area.” The games are carried on a Major League Baseball TV channel.


Furthermore, Calhoon pointed out, the new lighting will make the stadium more marketable as a venue for community events when the Orioles are not in town. After the project is complete, he added, the county also would have more flexibility in its charges for nighttime use of the facility. Right now, Calhoon pointed out, the metering system makes it necessary for the county to charge \$6,000

“just to turn the lights on,” even if they remain on for only a short time.

The memo also notes that after the new system is installed, “The ... operator will have the ability to segregate/adjust use to create the appropriate lighting levels required for different events.”

None of the board members asked any questions of Calhoon. However, in an email to him on Oct. 7, Reid wrote that he understood Commissioner Christine Robinson had “requested you provide financial information on the impact of this [funding] decision on the CAPX agreement and [the] future maintenance [of the stadium].”

Calhoon responded that he had received Robinson’s request but that she had let him know it would be fine for him to provide the information prior to the public hearing on Oct. 23.

During the board’s Sept. 6 workshop on its 2014 fiscal year budget, Robinson asked that staff apprise the commissioners of the impact of any funding decisions they make after the start of the new fiscal year, which began Oct. 1. She cited that measure as a means of trying to ensure the county does not continue deficit spending — drawing money from its economic uncertainty reserve fund. 



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A REVIVED MEMORIAL

Dan Peck (right) with the City of Sarasota and Jeff Sampsell with Sampsell Stucco, which assisted with repairs, set up the plaques in order before mounting them on the history wall in Fredd Atkins Park. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

NEWTOWN'S HISTORY WALL ONCE AGAIN PAYS TRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY PIONEERS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Last winter, some residents of Newtown were in a tizzy about the disappearance of a row of historical plaques from Fredd Atkins Park at the corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Way and Washington Boulevard.

The plaques, which were mounted on a wall, commemorated a number of African-American pioneers in Sarasota. But around Christmas 2012, residents noticed the memorials were gone.

At the time, metal thieves were stripping elements out of air conditioners and grabbing water meters and anything else they could

sell, so there were fears the plaques were headed for a literal meltdown.

The mystery was solved when Todd Kucharski, general manager of landscape, parks and environment for the City of Sarasota, reported that his crew had taken them down before repairing the wall. Beige tiles kept falling off the structure, and Kucharski decided to replace them with stucco.

That started another community conversation. Did people want the wall to remain beige or see it transformed with a more vibrant color? The decision ultimately was to go instead with a reddish-orange shade


to brighten the wall. And on Monday, Oct. 7, Kucharski's crew came back to reinstall the historical plaques.

While there was no official re-dedication of the monument, the moment was observed by former Mayor Fredd Atkins, current Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, City Commissioner Susan Chapman and community members Barbara Langston and Valerie Buchand.

Years ago, neighborhoods on the north and south sides of the city raised \$25,000 as a matching share for a \$75,000 grant from the

William and Marie Selby Foundation for the memorial initiative.

The Newtown Redevelopment Office, the (now-defunct) Front Porch and local banks joined the neighborhoods in making donations. Northern Trust, for example, supported creation of a memorial to the area's first teacher. The Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations urged members to participate by buying memorial bricks in the walkway.

Now the pioneer plaques are back in the sun. 



The wall stood clean of any adornment in mid-January. File photo



The Strider World Championships will return to Sarasota Oct. 11-13. Photo courtesy of Sarasota County

STRIDER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS RETURN TO SARASOTA

Sarasota County's BMX track, located at 1590 N. Tuttle Ave. in Sarasota, will host the 2013 Strider World Championships Oct. 11-13 for racers ages 2 to 5 from around the world, the county has announced.

The event will kick off on Friday, Oct. 11, with registration, followed by opening ceremonies at 5 p.m., a news release says. Then Strider riders "will take a few qualifying practice runs around the track to perfect their skills for Saturday's big race," the release notes. Spectator admission and parking will be free. Participant admission to the practice session is \$10, while race registration is \$25.

After a full day of riding, racing and fun activities on Saturday, "families and kids will love the low-key day on Sunday as parents and grandparents get one more chance to cheer

for their toddlers" at the *Striders in the Surf* parade on Lido Beach, the release notes.

Strider bikes have no pedals, "allowing toddlers as young as 18 months old to balance and ride on two wheels without the use of tricycles or training wheels," the release explains.

"When toddlers learn to ride on a Strider bike, the experience opens up a whole new world of balance, self-confidence, motor skills, teamwork and friendly competition," said Ryan McFarland, founder and CEO of Strider Sports International, in the release. "These children are having a blast and learning valuable life lessons every step of the way."

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 or visit the Strider website at www.striderbikes.com/worldchampionship.

PHILLIPPI SHORES 7K RUN TO CELEBRATE SEVEN CONTINENTS OCT. 12

Phillippi Shores Elementary School's fifth annual 7K Run, celebrating Earth's seven continents and the school's status as an International Baccalaureate World School, will start at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 12, at the school.

Runners of all ages are encouraged to join the festivities, a news release notes.

The event is part of the New Balance/Manasota Track Club Racing Series. The 7K racecourse (approximately 4.35 miles) "is a scenic route around the Phillippi Shores campus," the release says. "Throughout the course, participants will 'explore the world' with displays and creative props provided by students and staff."

The entry fee is \$12 for runners ages 18 and under and \$25 for runners 19 and older. The

family rate is \$60 (for two adults and up to four children living at the same address). The fee includes food, children's play in bounce houses, games and awards, the release adds. Each of the first 400 registered adults will receive a race T-shirt.

Awards will be given to the overall male and female winners, while age-category awards, including those in a youth division this year, also will be presented, the release continues. All participants in the New Balance 1-mile fun run will receive a ribbon.

More information is available at www.SarasotaCountySchools.net/schools/Phillippi.

Phillippi Shores Elementary is located at 4747 S. Tamiami Trail, at the corner of U.S. 41 and Proctor Road in Sarasota.



People of all ages participated in the Phillippi Shores 7K Run held in October 2012. In the foreground (from left) are Samantha Reisky, an unidentified woman, Jaeden Rae, Kevin Schrock and Tucker Schrock. Contributed photo

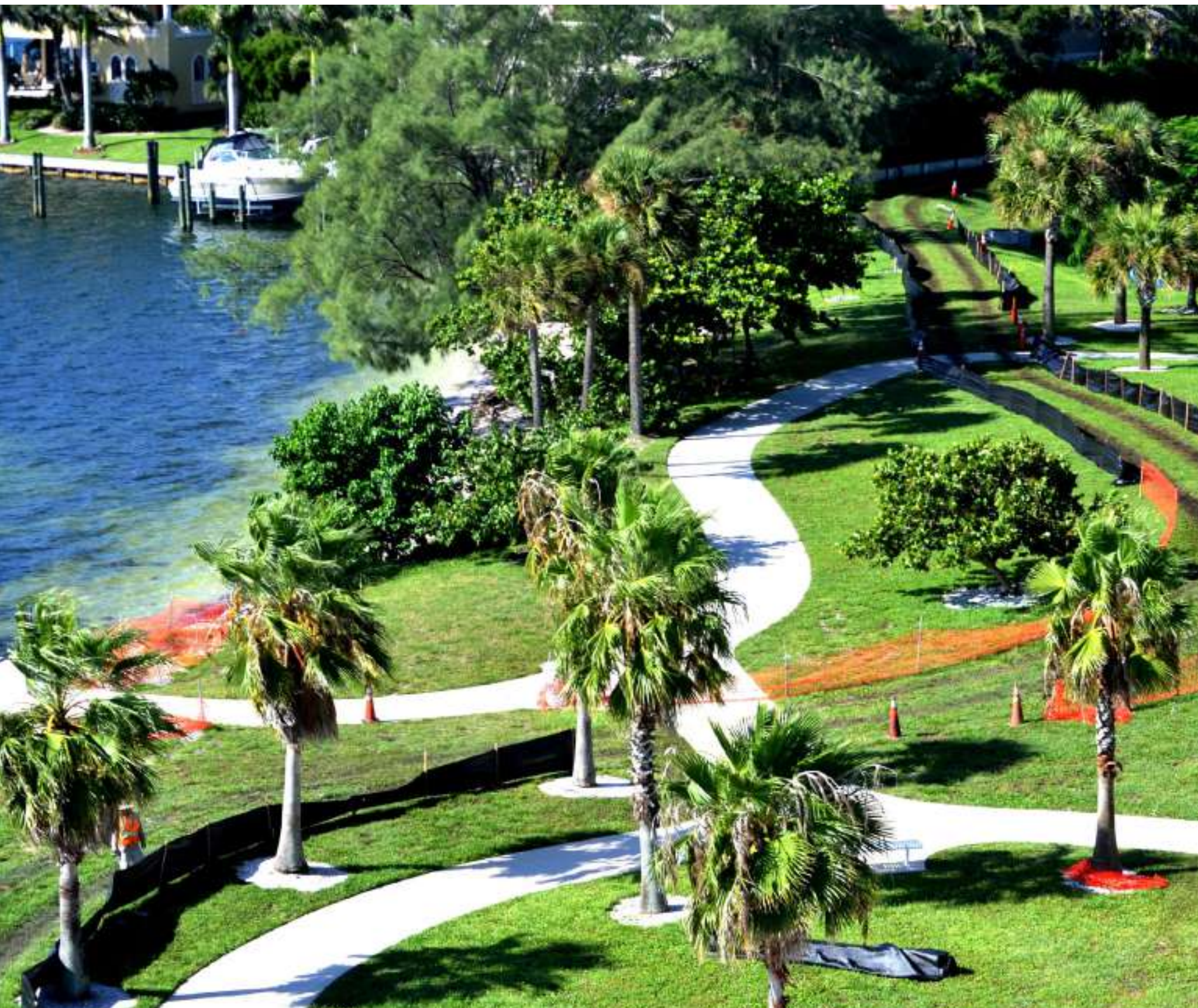
PAYNE PARK PLAYGROUND AND CAUSEWAY PARK REOPEN

The Payne Park playground and the West John Ringling Causeway Park are open to the public again following temporary closures for improvements, the City of Sarasota has announced.

“Crews conducted a comprehensive inspection of the playground equipment at Payne Park, a news release says. Some items, including the swings, crawling tunnel and bridge,

were still under warranty and were replaced, the release notes. A single shade canopy also was installed over the toddler play area.

At West John Ringling Causeway Park, a new sidewalk was installed and the seawall underwent improvements. Both structures had eroded over the years because of high surf, the release adds.



The West John Ringling Causeway Park improvements began in August. Photo by Norman Schimmel



MASTER GARDENERS ANNUAL PLANT SALE AND EDFEST SET FOR OCT. 12

Sarasota County Extension Master Gardeners will hold their Ninth Annual Plant Sale and EdFest from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 12, at the Sarasota County Extension offices, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota, the group has announced.

A wide variety of native and non-native plants will be available for sale, including edibles, trees, shrubs, vines, succulents, houseplants and many tropical plants, a news release says. Admission is free. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the Master Gardeners Chapter of the Friends of Sarasota County Parks, which supports educational outreach programs and community gardening projects in Sarasota County, the release points out.

Purchases may be made by cash or check.

In addition to the plant sale, the family-friendly fall gardening event will feature presentations on sustainable gardening, landscape problem diagnosis from experts and

displays about Extension's educational and volunteer programs in gardening, sustainable living and household money management, among other topics, the release continues. "Get expert information from University of Florida (UF) faculty and staff about Florida-friendly landscaping principles, irrigation audits and yard recognitions," the release says.

At the onsite Plant Clinic, trained UF Master Gardener volunteers will be on hand for plant identification or problem diagnosis. Visitors are encouraged to bring samples or photos for the experts to review.

Master Gardeners will also give demonstrations on composting, rain barrels, butterfly gardening, lawns and turf-grass, and edible gardening, the release continues.

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

VENICE PIER GROUP TO SEEK 100 EMPLOYEES AT JOB FAIR

The Venice Pier Group, owners of Sharky's, Snook Haven and a new restaurant, Fins, will hold a Job Fair Oct. 14-15 from noon to 6 p.m. as it seeks 100 new employees for Fins, the firm has announced.

The event will be held at Sharky's On the Pier both days. The restaurant is located at 1600 Harbor Drive South in Venice.

"Interested applicants who desire rewarding positions with a world-class restaurant group are invited to apply," a news release says. Line and prep cooks, servers, mixologists, bartenders, retail employees and greeters will be hired, the release adds. As an incentive, all those who join the company between now and Dec. 1 — and who are still with Fins on May 31, 2014 — will be eligible for a \$1,000 drawing, the release notes.

The Venice Pier Group is a family-owned business that has operated locally for 25 years, the release points out. New hires will be joining a "family" of 150 members at Sharky's on the Pier, Fins at Sharky's on the Pier (opening in December) and Snook Haven Smack Dab on the River, the release adds.

Come join our family!

We Need 100 New Team Mates!

What:
Looking for work? Hoping to obtain employment in a fast-paced, exciting setting? We have the opportunity for you! We have been family owned and operated for over 25 years with an opportunity for you to join our 150 "family" members. Here is what we can offer you: matching 401K, interest bearing savings plan, affordable health insurance, emergency fund, free YMCA membership, plus more. Interested applicants who desire a rewarding position with a world-class restaurant group are invited to apply.

Venice PIER GROUP FAMILY
Sharky's on the Pier • Snook Haven • Fins at Sharky's

Who:
Line Cooks • Prep Cooks
Servers • Greeters • Retail
Mixologists • Bartenders
(effluent bar experience a plus)

When:
Monday, October 14th (12 Noon - 6PM)
Tuesday, October 15th (12 Noon - 6PM)

Where:
Sharky's on the Pier
1600 Harbor Drive S., Venice
941-488-1456

All hires between now and December 1st are eligible for a \$1,000 drawing on May 31, 2014.
(Must still be employed at time of drawing.)

Drive and passion a must.
Must have great people skills and excellent customer service skills.
Should have a strong work ethic and the ability to work under pressure.
Serious inquiries only. Please bring resume.
Must enjoy a very busy environment.

All employees will be offered benefits, including matching 401(k) plans, an interest-bearing savings plan, an emergency fund, a free YMCA membership and affordable health insurance, the release continues.

COUNTY SEEKING SUGGESTIONS FOR PARCEL'S NAME

Sarasota County officials are seeking public suggestions for the naming of a natural land parcel adjacent to Oscar Scherer State Park, the county has announced.

The temporarily named Oscar Scherer Buffer site is located at 6403 State Road 681 in Nokomis. Sarasota County Natural Resources staff will host a neighborhood meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 16, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at the

Nokomis Community Center to solicit comments from the public, including proposed names, a news release explains.

Any resident or group located in Sarasota County may submit proposed names. Each must be accompanied by an explanation and any necessary documentation regarding how the proposed name satisfies the selection criteria, which include geographic location,

historical value and names based on an individual or group who has influenced, been involved with or contributed to the community, the news release points out.

The county acquired the 303-acre parcel in 1991. Sarasota County Natural Resources staff has provided land management since then, the release adds. Approximately 16 acres were used for the construction of the Honore Avenue connection to State Route 681 in 2011, resulting in the remaining 287 acres that have been called Oscar Scherer Buffer.

The county plans to open the parcel to the public for nature-based recreation and education, the release continues. Among the site habitats are flatwoods, wetlands, mesic hammock and a borrow pit. "This natural area provides nesting and foraging for bald eagles,



Sarasota County staff is seeking name suggestions for a parcel adjacent to Oscar Scherer State Park that has the same types of wildlife and habitats as seen in the park. Images courtesy State of Florida

swallow-tailed kites, sandhill cranes, white-tailed deer, bobcats, otters and wading birds,” the release says. Among the native plants on the parcel are lopsided Indian, bluestem and wire grasses, along with goldenrod, black-eyed susan and *Coreopsis*, Florida’s state wildflower.

Naming suggestions also may be sent to Brooke Elias at belias@scgov.net or by mail

to Sarasota County Natural Resources, Oscar Scherer Buffer — Name Submission, care of Brooke Elias, 1660 Ringling Blvd. Fifth Floor, Sarasota, FL 34236. The deadline for naming suggestions is Wednesday, Oct. 30.

For more information about Oscar Scherer Buffer or Sarasota County’s Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

SWFWMD TO HOLD MEETINGS FOR RECREATION EVALUATION

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) will hold a series of public meetings as part of its 2013 recreation evaluation process, the district has announced.

The public is invited to take a look at district staff’s preliminary findings from a review and evaluation of recreational opportunities on district-managed lands, a news release says. Public comments will be welcome at scheduled informational meetings, which will feature an open house format, the release continues. The meetings will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. at the following locations:

- Oct. 17: Sarasota Service Office, located at 6750 Fruitville Road, Sarasota.
- Oct. 24: Tampa Service Office, located at 7601 U.S. Highway 301 North, Tampa.
- Nov. 5: Bartow Service Office, located at 170 Century Blvd., Bartow.

The same information will be presented at each meeting, the release notes. Comment forms and a recreation survey will also be available at the sessions as well as on the district’s website, the release adds.

Results of the analysis, along with public comments, will be used to develop preliminary

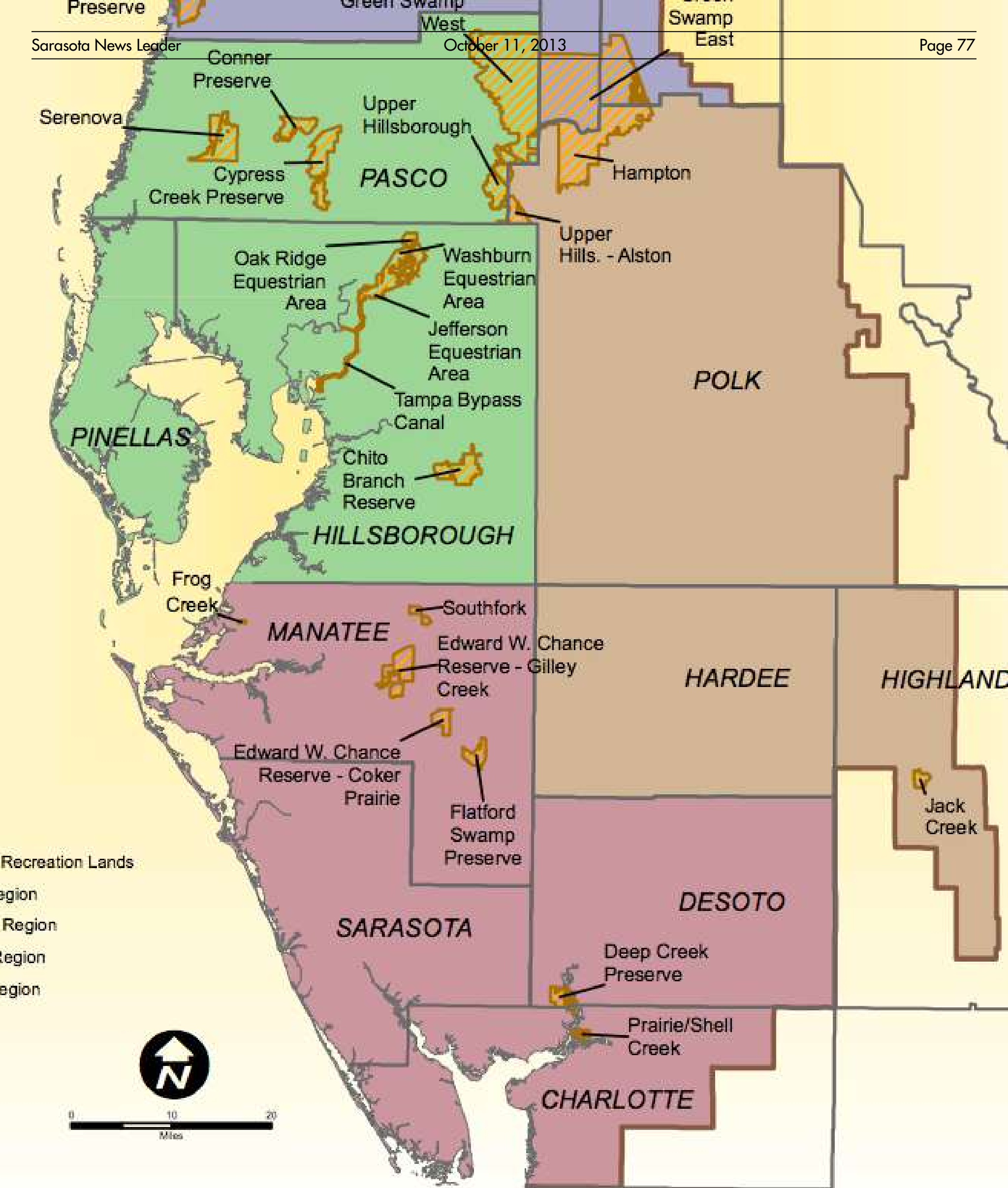
recommendations regarding district-managed recreational opportunities, the release continues. These recommendations will be presented to the district’s Recreation *Ad Hoc* Committee, comprising four SWFWMD Governing Board members, the release says; the final recommendations will be forwarded to the full Governing Board for review and approval.

The district’s recreation program covers approximately 225,000 acres of lands and consists of 472 miles of trails, 204 campsites and 10 public hunting areas, the release points out. Among the recreational uses are hiking, biking, horseback riding, birding, hunting, picnicking, camping, fishing and nature study/wildlife viewing.

For more information, visit www.watermatters.org/recreationevaluation

CORRECTION

Because the *News Leader*’s editor occasionally is directionally challenged when it comes to finding buildings in downtown Sarasota, a photo with the Oct. 4 article, *Refusing to give in*, incorrectly identified another structure as the Ellis Building in the background of a shot of the Farmers Market.



A map shows a portion of Southwest Florida Water Management District lands whose recreational opportunities are under review. Image courtesy of SWFWMD

PORTION OF MYRTLE STREET-OLD BRADENTON ROAD TO CLOSE OCT. 14-18

The west side of the Myrtle Street-Old Bradenton Road intersection will be closed Monday, Oct. 14, through Friday, Oct. 18, while utilities are installed under the road, the City of Sarasota has announced.

The eastbound and westbound lanes of Myrtle Street on the west side of Old Bradenton Road will be closed around the clock during that period, a news release says. The intersection temporarily will function as a three-way intersection, the release adds.

Drivers will be able to travel northbound and southbound on Old Bradenton Road and eastbound and westbound on Myrtle Street only on the east side of the intersection.

The closure is necessary while a 12-inch water main is installed under Myrtle Street

as part of the ongoing Old Bradenton Road improvements project, the release continues. Although the closure is expected to take five business days, "there is a possibility the construction work could extend through Sunday," Oct. 20, the release notes.

The project includes reconfiguring Old Bradenton Road into a two-lane divided roadway and constructing roundabouts at Myrtle Street as well as 47th Street.

City staff has coordinated alternative bus routes with Sarasota County Area Transit and the Sarasota County School District during the temporary road closure, the release adds.

Register to receive email updates about the ongoing project by visiting www.SarasotaGov.com. Also, follow the progress on [Twitter @CityofSarasota](https://twitter.com/CityofSarasota).



Work continues on Old Bradenton Road. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota

AMPHIBIAN CROSSING COMING?



A Sarasota County electronic sign facing traffic on Webber Street in Sarasota, just west of the Beneva Road intersection, may have confused drivers about just what type of project would be starting on Oct. 14. Regular users of the route hope to see a resurfacing project, but if it makes the local toads happy, too, that is just fine. Photo by Robert Hackney

SRQVOLUNTEEN ENROLLING EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS FOR FALL SESSION

Community Youth Development's (CYD) SRQVolunteer for eighth-grade students has begun enrollment for the fall session, CYD has announced.

SRQVolunteer, which will begin Saturday, Oct. 19, is a nine-week program during which students create and design their own volunteer project in partnership with a community organization, a news release explains. "The program allows students to earn community service hours, learn teambuilding and leadership skills, and positively impact their community," the release adds. Spaces are limited and registration is required to attend, the release notes. Anyone who would like to enroll may contact Suriya Khong at 922-5126.

Pine View senior and SRQVolunteer Co-Chairwoman Vanessa Rodriguez-Barrett understands the importance of being introduced to community service early, the release continues. "You're never too young to get involved in the community. I have been exposed to multiple opportunities to make a difference through being a part of CYD and volunteering," said Vanessa in the release. "There is so much that can be done and so much that just one person can do, so take the initiative."

Community Youth Development of Sarasota County engages young people in grades six to 12 "in programs designed to build skills they will use for a lifetime through activities that benefit the community," the release notes.



SRQVOLUNTEEN

HOME

ABOUT US

CONTACT US!

FEATURED EVENT

ANIMALS

THE ARTS

CHILD CARE

CIVIC/GOVERNMENT

EDUCATION

The mission of SRQVolunteer is to make it easier for youth to become more civically engaged in Sarasota County.

SRQVolunteer is a program of Community Youth Development designed to link youth who seek volunteer opportunities with local non-profit organizations.



Can't find what you're looking for?
Email Suriya at
suriya@cydonline.org



SRQVolunteer is not responsible for any content or errors on this website.

SUPERVISORS OF ELECTIONS GROUP AWARDED NEW FEDERAL GRANT

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) has awarded a \$1.8 million grant to a consortium of Florida counties — including Sarasota — to be used to expand outreach to members of the U.S. military who are absent from their voting jurisdictions and civilians living overseas, the program has announced.

The Florida project, titled *Our Mission: Your Vote*, was launched simultaneously by 13 counties in time for the November 2012 general election, a news release says. It provided an electronic ballot delivery system to simplify and expedite the absentee ballot process for those hardest-to-reach voters, the release points out. “The recent grant will allow the Florida coalition to expand from 13 to 34 counties, covering more than half of Florida counties and providing greater online access and higher absentee ballot return rates for voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA),” the release adds.

“*Our Mission: Your Vote* allows an absent military or overseas voter to request and then access online their blank ballot shortly after the request is validated,” Sarasota County

Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent explained in the release. The system is available to any absent uniformed services member, family member or overseas civilian who maintains a residence in any one of the participating Florida counties, the release says.

The online ballot delivery system is one of many steps being taken by *Our Mission: Your Vote* to increase voter confidence and ease voter concerns about the vote by mail (absentee) ballot process, Dent noted.

The original members of the coalition, led by Okaloosa County, included Baker, Bay, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Escambia, Leon, Nassau, Pinellas, Putnam, Sarasota and Wakulla counties. Joining the coalition as a result of the new grant, are Alachua, Charlotte, Citrus, Collier, Hernando, Highlands, Indian River, Jackson, Levy, Madison, Manatee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Okeechobee, Osceola, St. Johns, Santa Rosa, Sumter, Suwannee, Walton and Washington counties.

Eligible Sarasota County voters may request an online ballot by visiting the SOE web site at www.SarasotaVotes.com or by visiting www.OurMissionYourVote.us.

POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESENTS CHECK TO FOUNDATION

On Oct. 4, the Sarasota Police Department made a \$1,500 donation to the Inmate Ministry Foundation, the department has announced.

Chief Bernadette DiPino and Capt. Lucius Bonner presented a check to Brenda Zofrea, a volunteer with the foundation, a news release says.

The funds will be used to provide copies of the book, *Let's B Safe*, to the children of

incarcerated parents in the Sarasota County Jail, the release points out.

The Inmate Ministry Foundation's Read to Me Program, founded earlier this year by Dave and Bobbi Norris, is believed to be the first of its kind in Florida to promote literacy for inmates in collaboration with local libraries.

Zofrea, author of *Let's B Safe*, explained in the release, “The ... program provides a


much-needed community outreach initiative, because 70 percent of inmates cannot read above a fourth-grade level, and more than 60 percent of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate. With these statistics, it's easy to see how illiteracy is generational, and we're hoping that this program can help break the cycle of illiteracy with this demographic."

"The Sarasota Police Department is looking forward to working with the Inmate Ministry Foundation," said Bonner in the release. "This is an outside-the-box approach to improving literacy and protecting our children. This program involving the book, *Let's B Safe*, also helps children learn how to recognize sexual predators and how to respond in a safe manner," he pointed out.

The Inmate Ministry Foundation relies on donations to help purchase books and to

enable community volunteers to help record the inmates reading those books aloud at the jail, the release notes. Over the next several weeks, inmates will be making such recordings. Then, on Nov. 16, their children will be able to come to Selby Library in downtown Sarasota to get CDs of those recordings, along with library cards and free copies of the book. That way, they can read along as they listen to their parents' recordings, the release explains.

Sarasota County Area Transit will provide bus tickets for the children and their guardians so they can get to the library, the release continues.

This is an ongoing program, the release points out, with plans for it to be offered to inmates quarterly. To donate to the program, participate or volunteer, contact Dave Norris at 704-2312 or email DLNORRISBLA@AOL.COM. 



Capt. Lucius Bonner (left) and Chief Bernadette DiPino (right) of the Sarasota Police Department present a \$1,500 check to Brenda Zofrea of the Inmate Ministry Foundation. Contributed photo

CRIME BLOTTER



Video surveillance showing a robbery at the Golden Host Hotel in Sarasota led to an arrest in multiple armed robberies, according to the Police Department. Image from Google Maps. (Inset) Joseph Serrano/Contributed photo

SARASOTA MAN CHARGED IN STRING OF ARMED ROBBERIES AT HOTELS

The Sarasota Police Department has charged Joseph Serrano, 22, of 4815 Bradenton Road, No. 6, Sarasota, with two counts of Armed Robbery with a Firearm, two counts of Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon and Aggravated Battery with a Firearm, a news release says. The charges resulted from incidents at area hotels.

At 10:17 p.m. on Sept. 18, officers say Serrano walked into the lobby of the Golden Host Hotel at 4675 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, armed with a handgun. He allegedly pointed the handgun at the victim's face, demanded money, emptied the victim's pockets and punched him in the stomach before fleeing, a news release says.

On Sept. 25 at 12:52 a.m., officers say Serrano entered the Marriott Residence Inn at 1040 University Parkway — again armed with a handgun — and approached a hotel clerk, demanding money, the release continues.

The victim refused and tried to grab the gun, so Serrano hit her in the head with the gun before taking money and fleeing, the release says.

About 2:39 p.m. on Sept. 25, officers responded to Hyatt Place Hotel at 950 University Parkway in reference to a suspicious person. Hotel employees told officers that a male matching the suspect in one of the earlier robberies was sitting in the lobby, and he was not registered as a guest, the release notes. Serrano's physical build and clothing matched what was seen on the video surveillance from the Golden Host Hotel, the release adds.

When officers approached him, according to the report, Serrano told them he was there just to use the Wi-Fi. The officers contacted detectives, who arrived on the scene and interviewed Serrano, the report adds. He denied any involvement in the robberies, the report concludes.

TWO ARRESTED IN STABBING CASE IN NORTH SARASOTA

The Sarasota Police Department has arrested two homeless men in connection with a stabbing in Sarasota early on Oct. 9, the office has reported.

Just before 1 a.m. on Wednesday, a passerby told Sarasota Police officers a man had been stabbed in the chest near 16th Street and North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, a news release says. "When officers responded, they found Scott Wilson holding his chest," the release adds. Wilson told officers that the suspect who had just stabbed him was a male dressed as a female, the release continues. Wilson explained that he had pulled over at the intersection of 16th Street and North Tamiami Trail to pick up the person, later identified as Ricardo Toro, "since he believed her to be another female named Jessica," the release says.

Once Toro was in the car, Wilson realized he was not Jessica and asked Toro to get out immediately, the release adds. When Toro did not move, Wilson grabbed the end of a

wooden baton and told Toro again to get out of the vehicle, according to the report. Toro took out a knife and stabbed Wilson in the arm and chest, then grabbed the keys to the ignition and threw them from the vehicle, the release continues.

Wilson told officers that Toro left the truck and started walking southbound on North Tamiami Trail. Wilson climbed out of the vehicle to confront Toro, since he thought Toro still had the keys, the release notes. At that point, "Wilson was confronted by Toro's boyfriend, Josh Gaudette, outside the vehicle," the report says.

"Gaudette was unaware of the stabbing but saw Toro and Wilson in an argument and punched Wilson in the side of the head," the release adds.

Toro, 35, was arrested and charged with Aggravated Battery with a deadly weapon. Gaudette, 24, was arrested and charged with Battery.



Ricardo Toro/Contributed photo



Josh Gaudette/Contributed photo

TWO CHARGED IN ARMED ROBBERY AFTER VEHICLE CHASE

Two men have been arrested and charged with Armed Robbery after allegedly holding up a man at gunpoint and leading Sarasota police officers on a two-county chase, the Police Department has reported.

At approximately 3:15 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 6, the victim flagged down Sarasota police officers in the area of 24th Street and Pershing Avenue in Sarasota, telling them he had been robbed at gunpoint, a news release says.

The victim provided the officers a description of the suspects and the vehicle in which they fled the scene, the release notes.

Officers found a vehicle matching the description and attempted to conduct a traffic stop. The vehicle fled, the release continues, and a pursuit proceeded northbound on U.S. 301 into Manatee County.

After briefly losing sight of the vehicle, officers saw it in a ditch on 63rd Avenue East in Manatee County, the release continues.

Assisted by the Manatee County Sheriff's Office, the Sarasota Police Department arrested Elroy Johnson, 19, and Jermaine Conaway, 18, according to the report. Both men were later identified by the victim, the release says. They were transported to the Manatee County Jail, it adds.

A single-barrel shotgun was recovered at the intersection of 24th Street and Pershing Avenue, the release says. The suspects' Acura was reported stolen during a carjacking in Manatee County, it notes.

Other charges against the suspects are pending.



A vehicle with armed robbery suspects ended up in a Manatee County ditch on Sunday. Contributed photo

MAN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH NOKOMIS ARMED BURGLARIES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a man with a long criminal history in connection with several armed burglaries reported in Nokomis on the morning of Oct. 8, the office has announced.

Deputies responded to Shore T Road just before 6 a.m., when a resident contacted the Sheriff's Office to say that someone had broken into his SUV, a news release notes. "The man chased the suspect but stopped when the suspect threatened him with a gun," the release adds.

The suspect also told the victim, "I only took change" and "Don't call the police; I have kids!" according to the report.

As deputies set up a perimeter, they learned of another vehicle burglary on the same road. In that case, a .38-caliber Smith & Wesson handgun with five rounds was stolen from the center console of a truck, the report continues. During a search of the area, deputies located the suspect on Bayshore Road and took him into custody.

The suspect, identified as James Demaio, 30, with no permanent address, told investigators he also had burglarized a home in the 400 block of Bayshore Road. Detectives learned that Demaio took a cellphone, cash



James Demaio/Contributed photo

and jewelry while the female resident was asleep in that house, the release notes.

Demaio is charged with one count of Occupied Residential Burglary with a Weapon, three counts of Armed Burglary, one count of Aggravated Assault with a Firearm, two counts of Possession of a Firearm or Ammunition by a Felon and one count of Possession of Burglary Tools.

This is Demaio's 19th arrest since 2006, the release points out. He is being held without bond for the Aggravated Assault charge and \$76,500 on the remaining charges.

TWO ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH RETAIL CRIME SPREE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two men "after following them on a retail crime spree that included thefts at six major stores," the office has reported.

After receiving information about two people stealing tools at Home Depot, the Tactical

Unit learned the men also had committed thefts at two Lowe's locations, a news release says. TAC officers located the suspects' vehicle in Sarasota on Oct. 2 "and watched as the men drove to Walgreens and several Walmart stores to steal fishing rods and other items," the release continues.

At the Cattlemen Road Walmart in Sarasota, the report notes, one suspect was seen on video surveillance walking toward the garden center and going past all points of sale without paying for three fishing rods he was carrying, which had a value of \$309.88.

At the Walmart located at 5810 Ranch Lake Blvd. in Bradenton, video surveillance showed the same suspect selecting four fishing poles inside the store and then exiting without paying for them. Those also were valued at \$309.88, the report adds.

After selling rods at Value Pawn, “the men’s run ended at America’s Super Pawn when deputies took them into custody,” the news release says. “Both admitted their crimes plus a theft at another Walmart store.”

“It is important that the public understand we were investigating property crimes,” said Patrol Capt. Paul Richard in the release. “We knew who the suspects were, and our

personnel contacted each store after the suspects left, to gather evidence.”

Richard continued in the release, “Following them allowed us to gauge the full scope of their activity and determine if they had any potential associates.”

Anthony Henry, 19, of 5550 Rollingwood Drive, Sarasota, is charged with two counts of Dealing in Stolen Property, two counts of Grand Theft, one count of Petit Theft, Possession of a Controlled Substance, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and Driving with License Suspended.

Michael Rowe, 25, of 5311 Altoona St., Sarasota, is charged with two counts of Dealing in Stolen Property, two counts of Grand Theft, two counts of Petit Theft, and Fraud for providing false information to a Pawn Broker.

Additional charges are pending. “Both men say they lost their jobs and needed money for drugs,” the release notes.



Anthony Henry/Contributed photo



Michael Rowe/Contributed photo

27 ARRESTED ON DUI CHARGES IN SATURATION PATROLS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office conducted saturation patrols on eight different days in September, including the Labor Day holiday, resulting in 27 DUI arrests and 383 traffic citations for other offenses, the office has reported.

Deputies are conducting "monthly saturation patrols to remove dangerous, uninsured or impaired drivers from local roadways to keep motorists safe," a news release notes.

The above numbers are from the saturation patrols only, the release points out, and do

not include DUI arrests made outside those specific initiatives.

"Saturation patrols are conducted instead of what is referred to as a 'DUI checkpoint,'" the release says. They include a number of deputies in the Patrol and Traffic units working targeted zones at the same time to monitor driving activity, the release continues.

This initiative is conducted in partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and supported through a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation, the release says.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE JOINS SMART POLICING INITIATIVE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has been invited to join the Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) as an affiliate member, the office has announced.

SPI is a collaborative consortium composed of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), CNA — a nonprofit research organization that operates the Center for Naval Analyses and the Institute for Public Research — and more than 30 law enforcement agencies "that are testing solutions to serious crime problems in their jurisdictions," a news release points out.

The goal of SPI is to identify tactics and strategies that are effective, efficient and economical, as measured by reduced crime and higher case closure rates, which would be of great benefit to other law enforcement agencies, the release continues.

BJA requires each applicant to enlist a research partner, demonstrate the ability to collect and analyze data and "incorporate realistic and meaningful performance measures to assess the effectiveness" of its efforts. The Sheriff's Office partnered with a core group

of criminology professors from the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee in 2011 to consult with and assist in evaluating its direction with "Intelligence 2 Action," the agency's intelligence led policing model, the release notes.

"Joining SPI provides us with a national platform to share ideas and research on best practices for modern policing," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "The world of law enforcement and criminal justice is dynamic, with tactics and performance adjusting to societal trends as any social service or business must do," he added.

"The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is committed to being at the leading edge of evidence-based and data-supported initiatives that keep the community safe and secure and working with other agencies and academics with proactive strategies helps us achieve that goal," Knight said.

For more information on SPI, visit www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/.

BUSINESS OWNER CHARGED WITH BUYING STOLEN GOODS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested the owner of Commodity Exchange, located at 1918 Bay Road, Sarasota, after learning he was buying stolen goods and violating state laws and county ordinances that regulate secondhand dealers, the office has reported.

While investigating recent residential burglaries, detectives learned that multiple suspects were fencing stolen jewelry through Richard Dombro, a news release says. Detectives were told Dombro did not ask for ID or any records of the transactions. "They also confirmed that Dombro was not photographing or holding items for 30 days as required for secondhand dealers," the release adds.

Further, Dombro paid cash for items valued at more than \$100, which is also prohibited, the release continues. "After discovering the alleged violations, undercover detectives conducted two separate operations during which Dombro purchased jewelry and violated the laws," the release notes.

At points during the operations, the report says, a detective "conveyed to Mr. Dombro more than once ... that Mr. Dombro needed to get rid of the jewelry quickly and that he should not keep it at the business. Mr. Dombro also told the detective that he sometimes gets



Richard Dombro/Contributed photo

rid of his gold the same day or within a short period after taking it in," the report adds.

Dombro, 85, of 3225 Pinecrest St., No. 615, Sarasota, is charged with one felony count of Dealing in Stolen Property and two counts each of a Second Hand Dealer Transaction Form Violation, Not Keeping Required Transaction Records and a Second Hand Dealer Method of Payment Violation, all misdemeanors.

Dombro surrendered his second hand dealer license at the time of his arrest, the release notes. He has prior arrests for falsifying dealer purchase records, grand theft and exploitation of the elderly.

FURTHER CHARGES FILED AGAINST MAN ALREADY IN JAIL

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has filed additional charges against a man already behind bars for a burglary, the office has announced.


Detectives were able to connect 31-year-old Nicholas Bolduc — who has no permanent

address — to a string of crimes in Camelot East in Sarasota, a news release says.

Residents reported six burglaries in that neighborhood between Sept. 2 and 7, the release says; the Investigative Unit aide working the case received information that Bolduc

might be a suspect in the crimes. "A fingerprint comparison to those recovered from one of the scenes confirmed a match," the release notes.

Last week, when detectives arrested Bolduc for an unrelated burglary on Field Road, they were given his belongings as abandoned property, the release says. "During the inventory of items, they found a large amount of jewelry and notified the detective investigating the Camelot East cases," it adds. "He showed the jewelry to the victims and all six identified at least one piece as belonging to them."

In addition to Burglary of an Unoccupied Dwelling and Grand Theft charges filed against Bolduc on Oct. 1, he was also charged with six counts of Burglary of an Unoccupied Dwelling for the Camelot East cases. The investigation is continuing, with additional charges pending, the release says. 



Nicholas Bolduc/Contributed photo

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.

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OPINION



GOVERNING BY ANGRY MOB

EDITORIAL

Recently, we applauded Sarasota Vice Mayor

Willie Shaw and Commissioners Susan Chapman and Suzanne Atwell for adding the revisiting of Florida's Stand Your Ground law to the city's list of legislative priorities. There are occasions when such a simple majority can provide positive leadership for the city's residents.

However, the City Commission in general — and this majority in particular — has demonstrated a dismaying propensity to kowtow to every angry mob that shows up in the commission's chambers.

For example, only a few years ago the City Commission undertook a study of downtown parking and concluded that charging for street

parking would increase turnover and provide more spaces for shoppers who needed a spot for only a short while. The board even spent more than \$1 million to install sophisticated electronic parking meters for those who wished to park on downtown streets.

There was outrage, of course ... mostly from downtown business owners and employees who no longer could economically park in front of their establishments. They formed the core of an angry mob that stormed City Hall to demand the removal of the parking meters. At some of those appearances, the members of the angry mob even wore paper sacks over their heads, ostensibly to call metaphorically for "bagging" the meters ... not, one imagines, to preserve their anonymity.

OPINION

The City Commission, by a 3-2 vote, caved in to their demands and removed all parking meters, forfeiting almost all of the taxpayers' dollars spent on those expensive meters. The angry mob carried the day.

Then there was the proposal to build a Walmart Supercenter in the derelict Ringling Shopping Center. The store would occupy essentially the same footprint as the previous establishments there, would bring much-needed commercial diversity to that section of downtown and provide walking-distance employment for some of the residents in the area. For these and many other reasons, the city's planning staff endorsed the proposal and recommended approval, even finding that the store complied with existing zoning.

Later, the city's Planning Commission reviewed the request and agreed with the planning staff, approving Walmart's plans and paving the way for construction to begin.

Cue the angry mob.

Residents in nearby neighborhoods rallied against the proposal and stormed City Hall, demanding that the City Commission override the Planning Commission and send Walmart packing.

Once again, the City Commission caved in to those demands, voting 3-2 to reverse their

own planning professionals and the Planning Commission ... and thumbed their noses at the economic benefits Walmart might bring to a blighted portion of downtown (which, incidentally, is even more blighted today). Another victory for the angry mob.

The latest example of the City Commission's malleability comes with the request of restaurateur Chris Brown to significantly modify the exterior of the old Kress Building, which he recently purchased with plans to open an upscale restaurant.

The City Commission in general — and this majority in particular — has demonstrated a dismaying propensity to kowtow to every angry mob that shows up in the commission's chambers.

His architect designed New Orleans-style galleries to create an open-air second floor above the sidewalk. Had the design been approved, it would have created some of the most sought-after seating among downtown dining establishments, affording those lucky enough to sit there an expansive view of Five Points and beyond. It also would have helped Brown create a new restaurant downtown that would have raised everyone's game ... the proverbial rising tide that lifts all boats.

Cue the angry mob.

This time it was predominantly rich, elderly retirees who live in luxurious downtown condos who objected. Somehow, when they were considering their condo purchases, they seized upon the notion that the center of a city

OPINION

would be a quiet place to enjoy their twilight years. The shock of actually finding it rather noisy in the center of a bustling downtown has been a source of constant irascibility for them.

While most of us might spend our evenings at home watching television or reading books, these downtown denizens like to stand on the balconies of their luxury high rises, iPhones in hand, and hope that some of the ambient noise drifting up to them will trigger their sound-meter apps. Then they can call the police — anonymously — and complain about the noise.

They feared a popular restaurant in the heart of downtown, particularly with a balcony for *al fresco* dining, would generate too much noise and disturb their early-evening slumber.

Of course, they also objected to Brown's architectural choice, claiming that a Bourbon Street style would look out of place in the downtown area ... apparently not seeing the irony of how even more out of place huge steel-and-concrete monoliths are in our city center.

So the angry mob stormed City Hall and demanded that the City Commission reject


Chris Brown's request out of hand. And a cowed majority of the commission dutifully voted, 3-2, to do just that. The Sepulchral Set downtown had scored yet another victory against normal human activity along Main Street.

Brown's proposal certainly was unusual and unprecedented. However, it marked a freshness of vision that sadly is lacking in downtown. Had it been approved and built, the restaurant would have set a new standard for quality dining in the city.

Alas, it ran afoul of the angry mob ... the true force that governs the City of Sarasota.

The nation currently is in the grip of a constitutional crisis because Congress, which has the approval of only 5 percent of the people, is blithely ignoring the wishes of its constituents.

Meanwhile, the Sarasota City Commission seems to bend whenever a strong wind blows through City Hall.

Surely, for the sake of progress and good governance, there must be a happy medium. 

The Sarasota News Leader
No-Nonsense Reporting

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OCT. 4 EDITORIAL RIGHT ON THE MARK

To the Editor:

I can't tell you how much I enjoy *The Sarasota News Leader*. It has been a real breath of fresh air since the *Pelican Press* was taken over by the Observer Group, which was akin to a monstrous Neanderthal crushing the very life from a vibrant member of the Sarasota Community.

We had been subscribers to the *Pelican* for many years and read it after the takeover in 2011 with growing disappointment and disdain as our subscription ran out.

The *News Leader*, like the *Pelican* before 2011, is the same fair yet hard-hitting type of publication that provides the Sarasota community with great local, regional and — when timely and appropriate to the community — relevant national coverage. An example of the latter was the editorial (Oct. 4) about the notoriously reckless Tea Party-affiliated Congressman Vern Buchanan and his Tea Party colleagues.

The repeated lies and misrepresentations of these Republican members of Congress — that all they want is to negotiate some compromise — is best demonstrated by the fact that the budget provisions in the Continuing Resolution are already a compromise. In

fact, the compromises in the Continuing Resolution are those originally suggested by Speaker John Boehner, and they included the budget for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that Republicans are now insisting be removed. Had the ACA funding not been a part of the original compromise, the action would not now be referred to as de-funding, or removal, of ObamaCare.

The Tea Party has had its compromise and now it wants a second bite, and it has shut down the government and hurt millions of Americans in pursuing this absurd political selfishness.

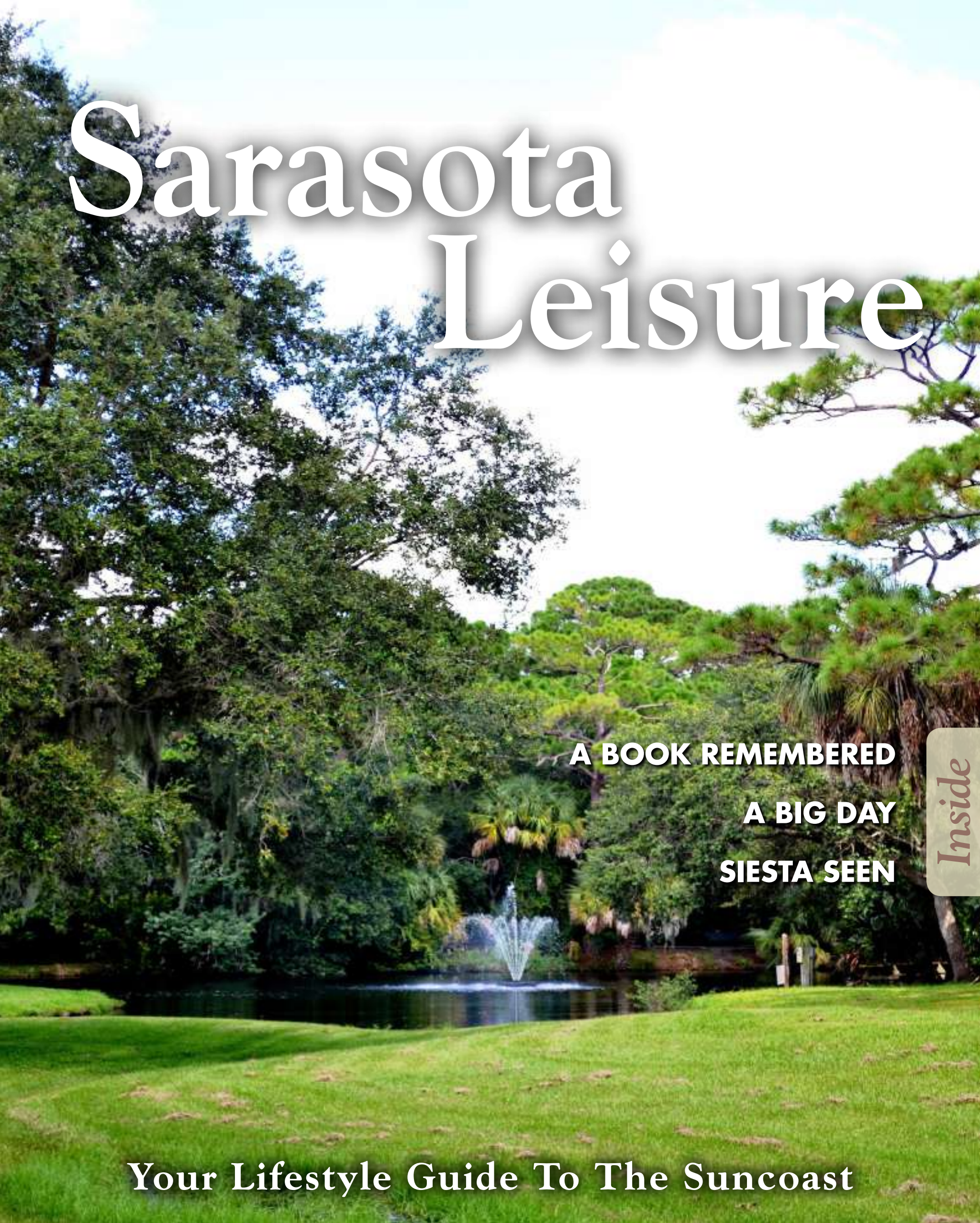
*Bernard P. Friel
Siesta Key and
Mendota Heights, MN*



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 in-

clude the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com, with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.



Sarasota Leisure

A BOOK REMEMBERED

A BIG DAY

SIESTA SEEN

Inside

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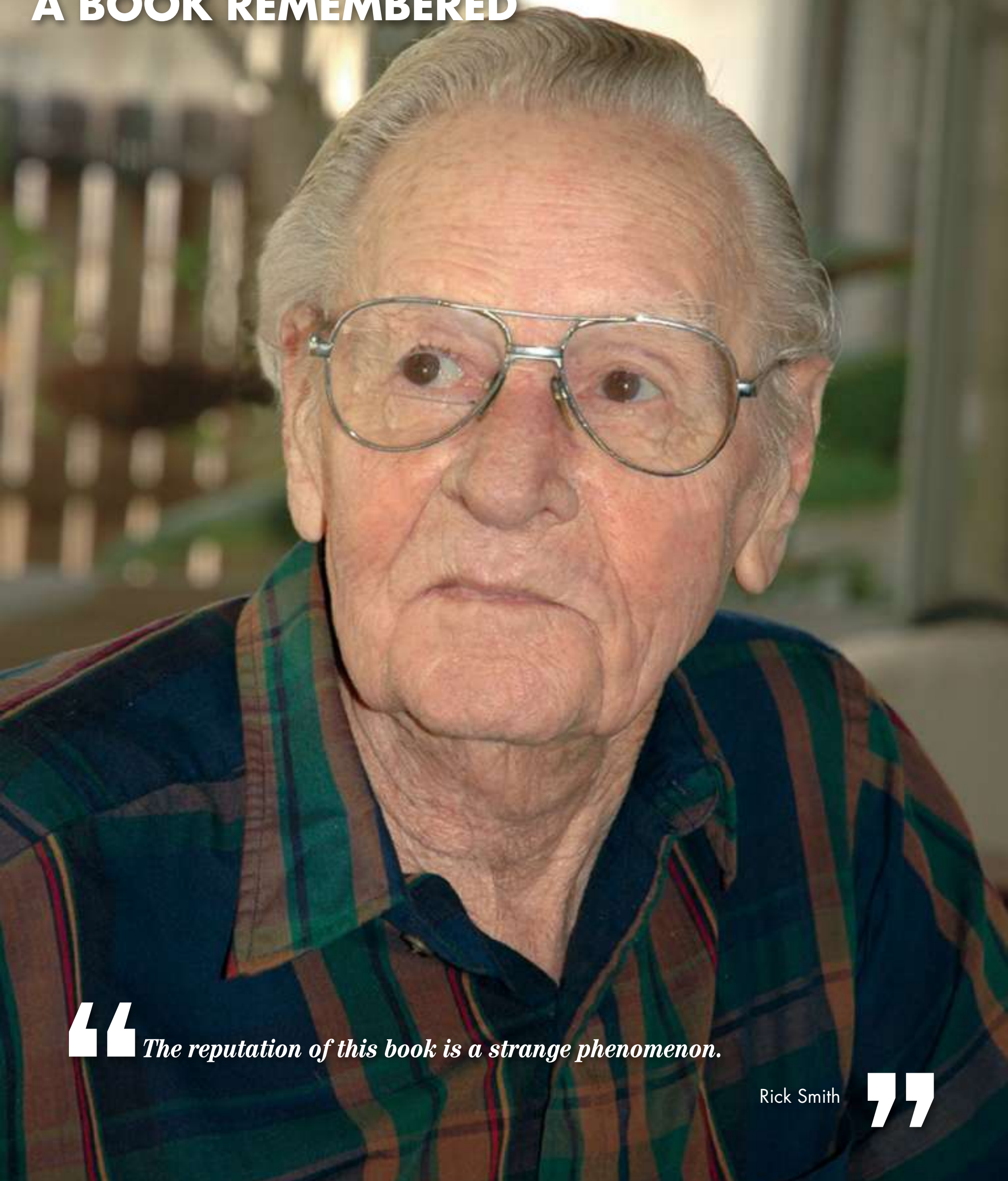
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PHOTO BY FRANKATURA



A BOOK REMEMBERED



“*The reputation of this book is a strange phenomenon.*

Rick Smith

”

Patrick Smith and his work are the focus of son Rick's programs. Photo courtesy Rick Smith

ONE BOOK ONE COMMUNITY RESURRECTS A CLASSIC

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Rick Smith had no clue how popular his father's novel, *A Land Remembered*, was until the Marco Island Historical Society asked if his dad, Patrick D. Smith, could visit and speak about his work. Rick told the society his father wasn't well and couldn't make it, but he offered to come in his father's place. Rick, who lives in California, didn't want to travel all the way to Florida for just one talk, so he started lining up other dates.

"I let a few other places know I was coming out, and all of a sudden, poof, I had 16," Rick tells *The Sarasota News Leader*. "People really want to hear this."

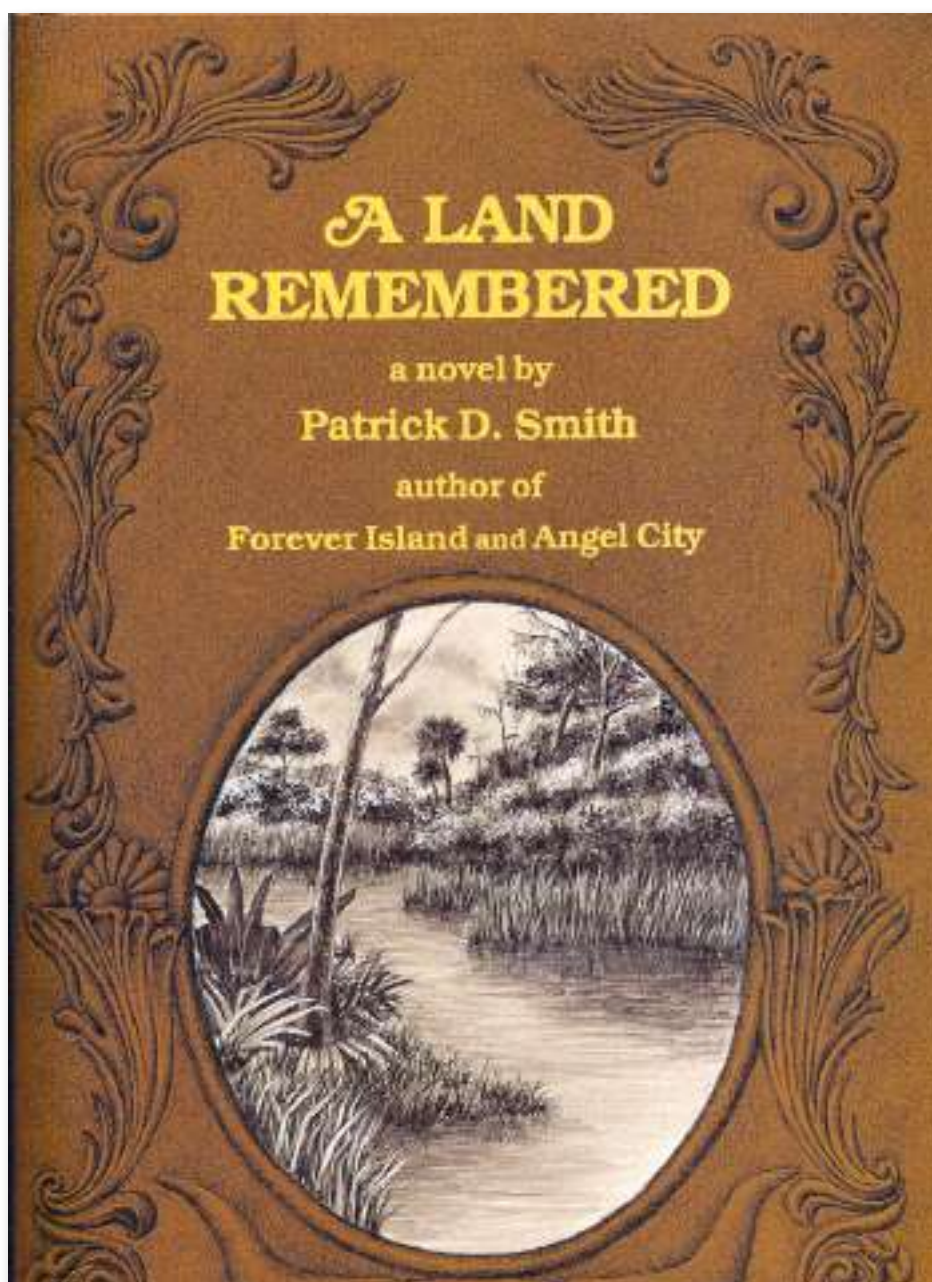
A Land Remembered was first published in 1984 by Sarasota's Pineapple Press, and the book's popularity has only grown in the decades since. The novel is now in its 41st printing, has attracted a legion of fans and is often required reading for Florida fourth- and fifth-graders. It was also the very first book selected by the Sarasota County

Library System's One Book One Community program 10 years ago.

One Book was created to encourage all county residents to read the same book at the same time, while the county library system offered events intended to generate conversations prompted by the book. The concept has flourished around the country; past programs here have featured works as diverse as *The Hunger Games* and *Unbroken*, a true-life story of survival during World War II.

To celebrate One Book's first decade, the libraries are looking to the past, and bringing back *A Land Remembered*. They will sponsor two events next week that will feature Rick speaking about the novel and, more broadly, his father's career.

Libraries Outreach Coordinator Barb McDonald says One Book organizers had heard about Rick's *A Land Remembered* road show and thought putting one on here would be a perfect fit.



The cover of A Land Remembered. Photo courtesy Rick Smith



Rick Smith will visit Sarasota next week. Photo courtesy Rick Smith

Ten years ago, the first One Book was “immediately successful,” she says. “It really did bring people out and it met all of the goals we had in promoting discussion about the same book.”

At next week’s presentations — one Thursday, Oct. 17, in Venice and one Friday, Oct. 18, at New College — One Book organizers will also unveil the book selection for 2014. McDonald says the still-unnamed author has already agreed to visit to discuss the work in late January.


Sarasota County won’t be Rick’s only stop. His last tour hit 16 towns; this one will feature 37. Rick says his father, who regularly traveled and discussed his work, “paved the way” for the presentations. Fans will frequently come up to Rick to tell him memories of hearing Patrick speak.

Rick’s show is more than just a dry recitation of facts. He dresses up in an 1800s costume to reflect the setting of much of the novel, an intergenerational tale of a family that migrates from Georgia to Florida and experiences the struggles and upheaval that have dominated Florida history. A media producer by trade, Rick has also put together an “eye candy” video component that features his father telling stories.

One of Rick’s goals is to expose *A Land Remembered* fans to his father’s other books. Patrick in fact had a long career before penning *A Land Remembered* in his 50s. He finished *The River Is Home*, his first book, while in his 20s, and he published it with industry giant Little, Brown.

But Rick understands the appeal of *A Land Remembered*: its accessible style, its action-packed plot, its vision of a wild, long-lost Florida most contemporary residents can’t even fathom. Rick marvels at the courage of those who moved into the state in the 1800s. “To think about people doing that, and the mosquitoes and alligators and snakes,” he says. “It is astounding that people had the ability to make a home then, but they did.”

Through his talks, Rick hopes to keep the book alive in the public mind. In the short term, at least, the intense interest isn’t fading. Rick already has even more dates lined up in Florida next February. “The reputation of this book is a strange phenomenon,” he says.

Rick Smith speaks at 10 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 17, at the Venice Community Center, 326 Nokomis Ave. S., Venice; and at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 18, at Sudakoff Center, New College of Florida, 5845 Gen. Dougher Place, Sarasota. Both events are free. For more information, call 861-5000 or visit onebooksarasota.com. 

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A BIG DAY

THE SARASOTA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT MARKS ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY WITH FIRE PREVENTION WEEK OPEN HOUSE

Staff Reports

The Sarasota County Fire Department marked 25 years of service to the community as it held its annual Fire Prevention Week Open House on Saturday, Oct. 5, at Fire Station No. 5, located at 400 N. Beneva Road in Sarasota.

This year's theme, *Prevent Kitchen Fires*, was chosen by the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) because two of every five home fires begin in the kitchen when cooking activities are under way, a news release notes.





The Sarasota County Fire Department's World Trade Center Memorial was part of the 9/11 exhibit.

The Sarasota County Fire Department was officially established on Oct. 1, 1988, when the Sarasota County Commission approved Ordinance 88-56, the release says. Prior to that, the county Fire Department had 10 fire-rescue stations with paid employees to provide services to residents. It also had just four EMS-only stations and two volunteer stations. The EMS-only stations served residents in Nokomis, the City of Venice, South Venice and the Englewood area.

In 1996, the release continues, the City of Sarasota Fire Department officially became part of the Sarasota County Fire Department. The new department operated with 409 paid personnel and about 100 volunteers staffing



Fire Chief Mike Tobias makes remarks to the audience in an area normally used for training.









Volunteers stand ready to serve attendees complimentary snacks.

19 employee stations and two volunteer stations. Today, the department has 28 fire stations “staffed by 499 dedicated first responders,” the news release points out.

Admission to the Sarasota County Fire Department Open House was free, with complimentary refreshments available.

Numerous activities were offered for children, and a 9/11 memorial was available for everyone to see, reminding participants of the ultimate sacrifice first responders have made to save others.

Sarasota News Leader Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel offers his visual reflections on the Open House. 



Demonstrations of firefighter skills were among the numerous activities during the event.





I like to take my time.

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

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

You have a whole week.

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Siesta Seen

COUNTY STAFF HOPES THE SIESTA STORMWATER DRAINAGE PROJECT WILL GET UNDER WAY AGAIN THIS WEEK; SKA DRAWS PLENTY OF INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP VOLUNTEERS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

If the weather cooperates, the contractor for the stormwater project adjacent to Siesta Public Beach should be able to start pumping water off the site by late this week or early next week, the Sarasota County engineer in charge of the project told members of the Siesta Key Association (SKA) on Oct. 3.

Alex Boudreau also clarified one point about the nature of the project that was the focus of some debate last week: It will not alleviate flooding on Beach Road.

Brad Gaubatz, the project manager assigned to the improvements at Siesta Beach Park,



Sarasota County Project Manager Alex Boudreau explains aspects of the stormwater project to Siesta Key Association members on Oct. 3. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

sent me an email on Oct. 4 saying he was incorrect in telling members of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) on Oct. 1 that the completion of the work would lead to less water standing on Beach Road during torrential downpours. “The Beach Road Drainage project is not a flood control project, but a water quality project,” he wrote in the email.

As of Oct. 4, the stormwater work had been on hold for three weeks, Boudreau told SKA members at their monthly meeting. “There’s no place to put this water [standing on the site] until we can get the turbidity out of it and the bacteria out of it,” he added.

A series of ponds have been constructed, he pointed out, so the contractor — Forsberg Construction Inc. of Punta Gorda — can pump the water from one to the next. That will allow the sediment to settle out and enable the ultraviolet light from the sun to lower the unhealthy levels of bacteria before the water can be directed into the Gulf of Mexico through the new 3,000-foot pipeline that is part of the project, he added.

Any bacteria of a harmful nature that might be left in the water would be diffused once it combined with saltwater in the gulf, Boudreau said.



*Heavy equipment sits idle under cloudy skies at the stormwater site next to the Siesta Fire Station.
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Siesta Seen

This plan also seems to be the cheapest remedy for the situation, Boudreau indicated, as well as the most effective one.

“Dewatering to this extent was not in the original contract,” he pointed out to the approximately 20 people present for the SKA meeting. However, Boudreau noted, no one had anticipated how rainy September would be.

Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who was a guest at the meeting, added that in one 24-hour period, 3 inches of rain fell. According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data

recorded at Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, 6.9 inches of rain fell from Sept. 23 through the late afternoon of Sept. 25.

Patterson told me after the meeting she was not sure whether measures taken at the site in response to the heavy rainfall would end up making the project more expensive. The contract the County Commission awarded Forsberg on April 23 was for \$4,550,683.28 — about three times the \$1.5 million estimate the consulting firms that designed it had figured on before the project went out for bid.

Patterson was hopeful no additional county funds would be required.



Smaller ponds constructed to allow the dewatering of the stormwater retention pond are brimming with rainwater on Oct. 3. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

During his presentation, Boudreau pointed out that the “main purpose of this project” is to clean the stormwater that drains onto the site from about 40 acres upstream. “We can clear out the contaminants in that water before they go into our [gulf] and before they shut down the No. 1 beach in America,” he added.

The new stormwater retention pond on the site, which will be about 1 acre in size, will be about 15 feet deep, he said. It was designed to handle a 25-year storm event.

Any overflow of water from the pond will go to a pump house, where it will be treated

with ultraviolet light, he continued. Then it will be directed into that 3,000-foot pipeline and through a diffuser before it flows into the gulf.

When the contractor is ready to connect the diffuser with the pipeline, he continued, a barge will bring the equipment offshore, and two or three divers will handle the work.

Water standing in the pond routinely will filter naturally into the ground, he noted.

While construction of the stormwater pond has been at a standstill, Boudreau pointed out, work has been going on behind the scenes to



The Gulf & Bay Club condominiums loom in the background of the stormwater project site. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

order the pumps and UV lighting equipment, and the diffuser is being assembled on property Forsberg owns offsite.

In response to a question about the 14-inch PVC pipeline that extends into the Gulf of Mexico, Boudreau explained that 1,000 feet of it is underground while the remaining two-thirds is offshore. Getting the pipeline installed, he said, “actually went very, very smoothly. ... It went off without a hitch.”

That part of the project was innovative, according to staff memos sent to the County Commission over the past year. That part of

the project’s expense was the most underestimated of all the facets of the work.

When SKA Vice President Michael Shay asked whether the pumps on site would automatically begin working if the stormwater pond begins to overflow, Boudreau replied that the project had been designed that way.

In response to a question about whether a backup generator would be installed on the site for use when the power went off and the pumps needed to run, Boudreau said such an element was not part of the plan.



A roseate spoonbill and ducks share one of the stormwater site ponds on Oct. 3. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

However, in a follow-up email to Shay, he reported, “The system is to be equipped with an auxiliary/emergency power connection to enable the use of a portable generator, if needed.”

During the discussion, SKA Director Deet Jonker indicated a back-up system “seems to make perfect sense ... since we get a lot of electricity outages on the key.”

In response to another question raised at the meeting, Boudreau also noted in his email to Shay, “The new stormwater system is designed to adequately treat stormwater without the need for artificial aeration. Aerators can always be installed later, if needed.”

When discussion zeroed in on whether the project would help eliminate flooding on Beach Road during periods of heavy rain or storm surge events, Patterson explained the history of the initiative. Several years ago, she said, the county Health Department, which operates under the aegis of the state Health Department, began more stringent testing of the water quality in the Gulf of Mexico. High levels of fecal coliform bacteria, emanating from wildlife such as seagulls and raccoons, led to several instances of “no swimming” advisories at Siesta Public Beach, she said.

“We get a beach closure; then, you have signs up and down the beach saying, ‘Health Department warns, Don’t Swim; Swim at Your Peril’ ... It is the *worst* possible message you could give to your visitors, to your residents.”

The project was conceived to minimize those “No Swimming” advisories, she pointed out. While she originally thought it would be “a boon to drainage” issues on Beach Road, she added, that would have proven to be a much more expensive undertaking.

Before those pollution incidents in the Gulf of Mexico became a problem, Jonker concurred, “There was talk” that the stormwater project would improve the drainage.

“It is what it is,” Patterson said. “It apparently would cost a great deal more” if the project dealt with that, the flooding, as well, she reiterated.

“I actually think [the pollution issue] is more urgent than occasionally having a flooded Beach Road,” she added, noting that the road is close to the gulf on an island with a high water table.

“I would say you are absolutely right,” Jonker told her. Nonetheless, he pointed out, segments of Beach Road were closed almost daily in September because of all the rain “and that was not a 20-year or a 100-year storm.”

Patterson replied, “My computer was full of messages about flooded roads all over Sarasota County for three weeks. To say [the county has] the financial means to go out and fix all that is just unrealistic.”

In response to a question about whether a fence would surround the new stormwater pond to discourage people from swimming in it, Boudreau said no fencing is planned. “Why

Siesta Seen

would we put up barriers and barricades, more things to maintain?" However, he added that he expected signs would be erected to make it clear swimming in that body of water would not be permitted.

COASTAL CLEANUP

With SKA President Catherine Luckner out of town on vacation, Shay conducted the meeting in her stead. He drew some chuckles with his electric-green T-shirt, but it actually figured into his report on the International Coastal Cleanup, with which SKA members assisted on Sept. 28.

About 33 people joined the SKA effort to pick up trash between Beach Access 3 and Point of Rocks, Shay explained. Most of them came out that Saturday, but some came back on Sunday to assist, he added. The volunteers received T-shirts just like his.

"The beach is amazingly clean" from the public park area to Point of Rocks, Shay added. The most prevalent items the volunteers found, he said, were cigarette butts and plastic straws.

Since a 12th Judicial Circuit Court judge in Sarasota ruled in December 2012 that local



Even on the first day of October, Siesta Beach had plenty of visitors. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

governments have no legal authority from the state to outlaw smoking on property they own, deputies no longer have been able to enforce an anti-smoking ordinance the county approved in 2007 for the beaches and county parks.

From the historic beach pavilion north to Beach Access 3, Shay noted, volunteers found lots of water and beer bottles and cans.

During their cleanup, he said, the volunteers were delighted to see schools of stingrays in the gulf. Last year, he added, mating manatees were a big attraction.

NEW GREEN PARTNERS ON SIESTA

In its most recent welcome to new members in its Green Business Partnership, Sarasota County has recognized a few Siesta Key businesses: CaliFlorida Surf and Skate Shop, The Lobster Pot and Sub Zero Ice Cream & Frozen Yogurt in the Village, along with the Stickney Point Road location of Earth Origins Market.

“The new members joined a community that has pledged to be green in their business practices and programs and foster a healthy environment for employees and the community at large,” said Tom Franklin, Sarasota County Green Business Partnership (GBP) program coordinator, in a recent county news release. “Core components of the partnership certification include waste reduction, increased recycling and energy and water conservation.”

Businesses and organizations easily can implement a number of practices that will have a positive impact on the environment, Danielle Troiano, GBP community outreach specialist, added in the news release. “Turning off lights and equipment when they’re not in use is a simple but effective environmentally conscious practice.”

Among other green practices are using motion sensors for lighting and digitally programmable air-conditioning thermostats, as well as reusing cups and mugs instead of single-use bottles, the release notes.

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Couple at Noodle Shop by Amy D'Apice. Contributed photo

THE BURMA PROJECT TO BE FEATURED AT ART CENTER SARASOTA

Art Center Sarasota will present *The Burma Project*, a multimedia presentation about art, culture and travel with artist and writer Amy D'Apice, on Monday, Oct. 21, from 6 to 8 p.m., the gallery has announced.

D'Apice has been an instructor of media arts and animation at the Seattle Art Institute for the past 13 years, a news release says. In her presentation at Art Center Sarasota, she will share her recent experience in Myanmar, "a country largely hidden from the eyes of the world," the release adds. D'Apice has been living and working in Thailand, the release notes.

"To begin to understand and relate to the people and places in [the] fascinating, rich, and often misunderstood culture [of Myanmar], D'Apice made it her mission to create one drawing per day for 27 days," the release continues. In addition to the presentation, D'Apice will conduct a three-day drawing workshop, combining traditional and contemporary techniques "to get students of all levels sketching out in the world," the release says.

"Her beautiful renderings of life in Myanmar are simple, yet lively, and will inspire the

students in her workshop to create quick sketches for their own travel diaries,” Lisa Berger, Art Center Sarasota’s executive director, notes in the release.

Art Center Sarasota is located at 707 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Tickets at the door will be \$10 for ACS members and \$12 for non-members. In addition to the presentation, D’Apice will offer a three-day gesture drawing workshop, Oct. 22 to 24, from 1 to 4 p.m. each day. Students of all levels will be accepted, the release notes. The workshop fee is \$150 for ACS members and \$180 for non-members. To register for the workshop or for more information, call 365-2032 or visit www.artsarasota.org/workshops.



Amy D’Apice/Contributed photo

BOOKER MIDDLE SCHOOL TO SHOWCASE ARTISTIC TALENTS OF STUDENTS

The students at Booker Middle School in Sarasota will showcase their many artistic talents during the month of October.

The public is welcome at the following events, most of which have a \$3 admission charge, the school has announced.

- 7 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 15:

The Fall Band Concert will feature all the school’s bands, including Beginners Band, Concert Band, Wind Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble. Eighty students will perform in the cafeteria. Admission is \$3.

“In this concert, the students will demonstrate their musical knowledge, techniques and styles,” said Band Director Greg Nielsen in a news release.

- 7 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 17:

Fifty students in the Booker Middle School Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Chorus

will perform in the cafeteria to show what they have learned so far this school year and preview upcoming programs. Special guests will be the Booker High School VPA Chorus. Admission is \$3.

- 7 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 22:

Eighty-six students in the Booker Middle School orchestras and guitar classes will perform their first concert of the school year in the cafeteria. The program will feature a variety of music by the Chamber Orchestra, Concert Orchestra, Beginning Orchestra, First Period Guitar and Second Period Guitar students.

“The students are eager to show off their musical prowess!” said Orchestra Conductor Carlos Silva in the release. Admission is \$3.

Booker Middle is located at 2250 Myrtle St. in Sarasota.

FST REVEALS NEW VENTURE: *OLDER THAN DIRT*

Florida Studio Theatre has announced the kickoff event for a venture focused on aging, *Older than Dirt, A Conversation for the Ages*.

A town hall panel discussion will be held in the Keating Theatre at FST on Oct. 14 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. to identify specific issues of aging and decide on the appropriate community members to interview in the creation of a play that will explore “what aging is really all about — from cradle to Botox,” a news release says. Culled from real-life interviews, the play will tell the people’s stories in their own words, the release adds. “This will be a play for the community, by the community.”

Admission to the town hall event is free, but an RSVP is requested by phone at 366-9000 or by visiting the box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota.

FST has commissioned playwright KJ Sanchez and her Washington, D.C.-based theatre company, American Records, to collaborate with

Artistic Director Richard Hopkins in producing *Older than Dirt*, the release continues. The town hall panel discussion will include representatives from organizations such as Embracing Our Differences, the Senior Friendship Centers and the Institute for the Ages. Hopkins will serve as the moderator, the release notes.

“*Older than Dirt* has been on my back burner for over a decade,” Hopkins says in the release. “Sarasota is the perfect place to explore the dramatic and comedic possibilities of aging: from ecstasy to agony,” the release adds.

A study by the Institute for the Ages shows that Sarasota’s senior demographic (32 percent of its population is over 65) will be matched in most developed cities around the world by 2050, the release notes. “Sarasota is the perfect place to gather information from a booming, but under-represented, population to show people who they will become and what the make-up of the country might be in 25 years,” the release continues.



Florida Studio Theatre is located on Palm Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

AN EVENING OF SWINGING BIG BAND JAZZ SET FOR OCT. 25

The Jazz Club of Sarasota will present the Sarasota Jazz Project in concert with guest vocalists June Garber and Joe Ephraim on Friday, Oct. 25, at 7:30 p.m. at Holly Hall in the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Tickets are \$20 for Jazz Club members and \$25 for non-members.

“With her sizzling voice and megawatt smile, June Garber has lit up concert halls, theaters and jazz festivals throughout the course of her rich and lauded stage career,” a news release says. A native of South Africa, Garber moved to Toronto, Canada, in 1976, where she embarked on a career that included theater, singing, television and film, the release notes. She also formed her own eight-piece band,



Joe Ephraim/Contributed photo



The Sarasota Jazz Project will perform during an Evening of Swinging Big Band Jazz on Oct. 25. Contributed photo

which toured the U.S. and Canada. After a 15-year hiatus, the release continues, “Garber returned to performing in 2004, this time with an emphasis on jazz.

Fellow Canadian crooner Ori Dagen has hailed Garber for her ability to perform with “a smile that can melt melancholy and a sincerity that makes every lyric sparkle,” the release adds. Her CD, *Here’s to You*, was one the Top 5 Jazz picks on CBC and was named one of the Top 15 Jazz Albums for Canadian airplay. In 2012, Garber moved to Sarasota.

“Another relative newcomer to the area, singer and vocal stylist Joseph Ephraim has toured extensively throughout the U.S.,” the release continues, “performing alongside such notable comedians as Henny Youngman, Don Adams and Andy Kaufman.” After years of nationwide touring, he makes his home in Plant City. “With his confidence and infectious style, Ephraim has quickly become a favorite of area jazz enthusiasts,” the release notes.

“Founded in 2010, the 17-piece Sarasota Jazz Project features some of the area’s best musicians, including professionals who have performed with top bands and jazz musicians around the world,” the release says. “These talented all-stars play both standards and original compositions, creatively arranged in a uniquely contemporary big band style.

“What makes the Sarasota Jazz Project unique is how we play standard tunes with a modern jazz flair,” says George McLean, the group’s manager and vice president of the Jazz Club of Sarasota, in the release.

“While perpetuating the beloved big band sound of such luminaries as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Benny Goodman and Glen Miller,



June Garber/Contributed photo

the Sarasota Jazz Project also emphasizes the work of such great modern composers and arrangers as Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Quincy Jones and Gil Evans,” the release continues.

For information and tickets, call 366-1552 or visit www.jazzclubsarasota.org.

HERMITAGE ANNOUNCES ARTIST SERIES AT THE RINGLING

The Hermitage Artist Retreat has announced the lineup of artists who will be presenting their community programs this year at The Ringling as part of the Hermitage's *Art of Our Time* initiative. "This is the third year the artist retreat and museum have partnered to bring these renowned artists in front of the public to talk about their work," a news release says. The programs take place in the Historic Asolo Theater, located at 5401 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota, on Thursday evenings at 7 p.m. The cost is \$5. Reservations may be made by calling 360-7399.

This year's dates and lineup follow:

- Oct. 24: *Song and Story of Annie Morrison*. Winner of the Theatre World Award, a Drama-Logue Award and the United Solo Festival Best Actress Award, Sarasota's

own Annie Morrison has performed on Broadway and in theaters across the United States, the release notes. She will tell the stories and perform excerpts from her own one-woman shows. For more information about Morrison, visit www.annmorrison.net

- Nov. 14: *A Glorious Cacophony of Classical, Rock and Experimental Music on Violin, Voice and Percussion*. "Carla Kihlstedt and Matthias Bossi solder together the archaic and avant-garde," the release notes. "Classically trained, Kihlstedt sings and plays violin, sometimes at the same time. A composer, instrumentalist, actor and raconteur, Matthias adds an evocative sound to the amalgamation of punk/indie, classic and rock-u-drama." For more details, visit www.MathiasBossi.com, www.carlakihlstedt.com and www.rabbitrabbitradio.com.



Carla Kihlstedt and Matthias Bossi will perform on Nov. 14. Contributed photo by Elizabeth Friari



Lera Auerbach/Contributed photo

- Dec. 12: *The Borderless Music of Composer Lera Auerbach*. Russian-born composer and virtuoso pianist Auerbach will show film excerpts and speak about her recent work, the release continues. Among the film clips will be pieces from Auerbach's ballets, operas and orchestral and choral pieces performed by the Stanislavsky Theater Moscow, San Francisco Ballet, Finnish National Ballet, Dresden Staatskapelle, Nederlands Danse Theater and the Estonian Radio Philharmonic. For more information, visit [www. LeraAuerbach.com](http://www.LeraAuerbach.com).
- Feb. 13: *Inside the Artist Mind of Fay Ku*. "Ku's works on paper are narrative, figurative and psychological," the release notes. She has had solo exhibits at the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut and The Contemporary Museum in Honolulu, HI, as well as at many galleries. Her artwork also has appeared in the *New York Times* magazine, the release adds. For details on her work, visit www.fayku.com.
- March 13: *Bill Morrison's Unbearably Beautiful Decomposition of Film*. *Variety Magazine* has called Morrison "one of the

most adventurous American filmmakers," the release points out. Over the past 20 years, he "has built a filmography of more than 30 projects that have been presented in theaters, museums, galleries and concert halls worldwide," it notes. "His work often makes use of rare archival footage in which forgotten film imagery is reframed as part of our collective mythology," the release says. For more information, visit www.bill-morrisonfilm.com.

"Once again, the Hermitage will host some of the best artists working today," said Bruce E. Rodgers, Hermitage executive director, in the release. "Partnering with the museum as a part of their Art of Our Time initiative is another affirmation of the quality of these artists and the work they are creating. We look forward to another great series of events."

For more information about The Hermitage Artist Retreat or any of its programs, call 475-2098 or visit the website at www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org.



Ann Morrison/Contributed photo

SANCTUARY CONCERTS SEASON TO OPEN WITH BRYN AND LISCHETTI

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota will open its 2013-2014 Sanctuary Concerts season with *The Great American Songbook*, “a program of masterpieces from the golden age of American song, as interpreted by pianist Don Bryn and tenor Robert Lischetti,” the church has announced.

The concert will be conducted on Sunday, Oct. 27, at 4 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota. The program will feature works by George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and others, including *I’ve Got You Under My Skin*, *The Nearness of You*, *Foolish Heart*, *Misty* and *All The Things You Are*, a news release says.

Tickets are \$15. The performances “give audiences an opportunity to experience concert music in an old European style, performed in a church sanctuary, followed by a complimentary reception with the artists in the courtyard,” the release notes.

Described by critics as a “resonant bel canto tenor” with a voice “that can move and conquer the hearts of his audiences,” Lischetti learned his craft during the years he spent performing in the great concert halls of Europe,” the release says. “He began his operatic career as an apprentice artist with the Lake George Opera and performed leading roles with Tri-Cities Opera in Binghamton, NY, it adds. Later he was engaged with the Syracuse Opera, the Virginia Opera and other regional opera companies throughout the U.S.



Don Bryn and Robert Lischetti will perform on Oct. 27 at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Sarasota. Contributed photo

Lischetti also spent 10 years singing as a guest artist in opera houses throughout Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the release adds. "Locally, he has sung with the Sarasota Opera, the Venice Symphony [and] the Southwest Florida Symphony in Fort Myers," it continues. Lischetti serves as music director for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota.

Bryn, a pianist, composer and arranger, moved to Sarasota from Hawaii after 15 years of touring the world, the release says. He performed with and conducted shows for such musicians and singers as Burt Bacharach, Lorna Luft, Nestor Torres, John Raitt, Jim Neighbors and Charro, the release points out. Bryn also performed with the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, and he "gave a very special performance for the Pittsburgh Symphony," playing the piano in full costume as Mozart, the release points out.

Bryn plays classical and jazz piano up and down the east coast of Florida, works with State College of Florida and the Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training and teaches privately, the release adds.

The Sanctuary Concert series will continue with *Intimate Fantasies: The Works of Chopin and Liszt*, performed by pianist Eleonora Lvov (Jan. 19, 4 p.m.); *The New Orleans Sound*, featuring New Orleans-style Dixieland, blues and jazz (Feb. 16, 4 p.m.); and an *Early St. Patrick's Day*, featuring folk songs, sea chanties and jigs of the Irish with Paul Duffy and his trio of musicians (March 9, 4 p.m.).

For more information, call 371-4974 or visit www.uusarasota.org/concerts. 



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Temple Emanu-El's Shabbat Alive! leaders are (back row, from left) Rabbi Brenner Glickman, Sam Silverberg, Deborah Cameron, Dawn Dill, (front row, from left) Dan Cartlidge, Stuart Miller, Cynthia Roberts-Greene and Joe Bruno. Contributed photo

SHABBAT ALIVE! RETURNS TO TEMPLE EMANU-EL OCT. 11

Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, will host the fall installment of its popular *Shabbat Alive!* worship service on Friday, Oct. 11, at 7:30 p.m.

Entering its fifth year, Temple Emanu-El's *Shabbat Alive!* services are all-musical celebrations of Shabbat, "featuring arrangements of the traditional prayers that range from serene and contemplative to stirring and inspiring to wild and exultant," a news release says.

"A full band of professional and volunteer musicians and vocalists join Rabbi Brenner Glickman on the pulpit to bring this worship experience to life," the release adds. Among the composers whose works will be performed are Debbie Friedman, Cantor Lisa Levine, Louis Lewandowski, Rick Recht and Craig Taubman.

For more information, call 371-2788.

REDEEMER'S OCTOBER EVENSONG INFUSED WITH FRENCH HORN

On Sunday, Oct. 20, at 5:15 p.m., the Church of the Redeemer, located at 222 S. Palm Ave., invites members of the community to Solemn Evensong complemented by the sounds of the French horn played by Joe Assi, co-principal horn for the Sarasota Orchestra.

Ann Stephenson-Moe, Redeemer's organist and choirmaster, will perform on the church's massive Nichols & Simpson organ, and Redeemer's choir will sing, a news release says. The anthem will be James Mulholland's *If Love Should Count Me Worthy*, and the Service will be Herbert Howells' *Service in b.*

Evensong performances are always complimentary and open to the public, the release adds. A reception in Gillespie Hall will follow the performance.

Assi, a New Jersey native, has performed with the Sarasota Orchestra since 2008. He earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music before beginning a Master of Music program at The Juilliard School in Manhattan, the release notes. In 2012, Assi, who is of Lebanese and Irish-American descent, performed with the Palestine National Orchestra in Jordan.

For more information, visit redeemersarasota.org or call 955-4263.



Joe Assi will accompany the Solemn Evensong at the Church of the Redeemer on Oct. 20. Photo courtesy of sarasotaorchestra.org.

BECOMING HUMAN: AN EVOLUTIONARY STORY TO BE TOPIC OF TALK

At 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 18, the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) will present guest speaker Jeff Rodgers, director of education at the South Florida Museum in Bradenton, on the topic, *Becoming Human: An Evolutionary Story*, the Congregation has announced.

During his remarks, Rodgers will address how *homo sapiens* come to be and ask, “Are we the result of a process leading from slime to consciousness?” a news release says.

When he was working across disciplines at the American Museum of Natural History in

New York City, “Rodgers began to see commonalities and connections that were part of a ‘larger science story,’” the release adds. “Well-known for making science understandable for non-scientific minds, he teaches at numerous local adult education facilities,” the release notes.

The program is free for CHJ members. For non-members, the suggested donation is \$5.

CHJ meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota.

For more information call 929-7771 or visit www.chj-Sarasota.org. 

“Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship.” — *Buddha*

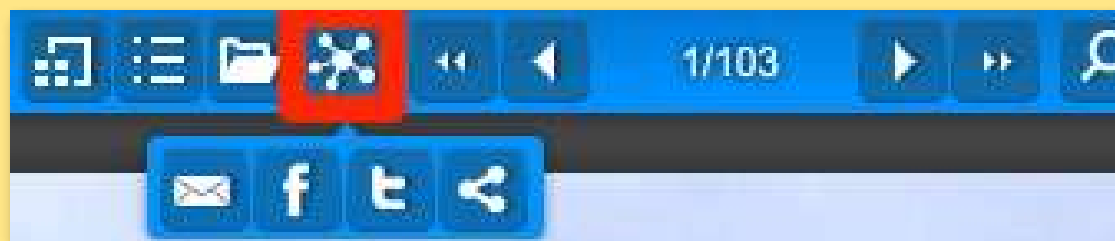
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

11
OCTOBER

Jazz Club of Sarasota presents *Jazz at Two*,

featuring the Ken Loomer Quartet

Oct. 11, 2 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$7 (\$12 for non-members). Information: 366-1552 or JazzClubSarasota.org.

11+
OCTOBER

Dabbert Gallery presents *Season of Color*

Oct. 11 to Nov. 29, 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com.

17
OCTOBER

***Because of You*, a Sarasota in Defense of Animals benefit**

Oct. 17, 6:30 to 10:30 p.m., Daiquiri Deck, 5254 Ocean Blvd., Siesta Key, with hors d'oeuvres, family-style dinner, entertainment, open bar and live and silent auctions. Tickets: \$100 per person. For info, call Russell Matthes at 915-0302 or visit www.sdasarasota.com.

18
OCTOBER

Jazz Club of Sarasota presents *Jazz at Two*,

featuring the Haferhouse Jazz Quartet

Oct. 18, 2 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$7 (\$12 for non-members). Information: 366-1552 or JazzClubSarasota.org.

18
OCTOBER

WSLR presents Eric Andersen in concert

Oct. 18, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Admission: \$20 advance or \$25 at the door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

25
OCTOBER

Planned Parenthood's Safe Sex Halloween Bash

Oct. 25, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., Michael's on East, 1212 S. East Ave., Sarasota. Admission: \$85 advance; \$100 at the door. Information and tickets: SafeSexHalloweenBash.com.

26
OCTOBER

Herrmann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions Halloween Show

Oct. 26: Gates open at 5 p.m.; show starts at 6 p.m.

Kids' costumes welcome; candy stations provided.

Admission: \$10. Information: 322-1501 or HLipizzans.com.

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

FOR CARVING AND COOKING

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.