

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 5 — October 18, 2013

# News Leader

*The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida*



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A 'VICIOUS' DISPUTE  
EMPLOYEES AT RISK**

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# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

*The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida*

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# Welcome

Sometimes it is not the events that just happened but those coming up that spark the most interest in a community. That is assuredly the case this week, thanks to the wildfire spread of comments about the latest set of County Commission evaluations of County Administrator Randall Reid.

County Editor Roger Drouin pored through both sets of evaluations the commissioners have completed this year — and the county charter — to set the stage for the Oct. 23 board meeting. That is the day we expect to get a much clearer picture of Reid's future in this community.

City Editor Stan Zimmerman long has been providing previews of upcoming City Commission meetings, an effort for which he deserves far more commendation than he receives. Good government demands public participation. If you know an item that is important to you is coming up on a meeting agenda, you can plan accordingly.

Not only has Stan previewed the Oct. 21 City Commission meeting in this issue, but he also has offered a snapshot of issues on the agenda for the joint City/County commissions meeting on Oct. 22.

Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker this week tackled a slightly different but very compelling local government topic. His report on ethics allegations lodged against a county commissioner is not your typical “he said/he said” article.

Fortunately, as an “antidote” to all that hard news, contributor Harriet Cuthbert has served up a splendid review of a flamenco performance during the Ringling International Arts Festival. You will feel as though you were there when you read her descriptions.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*  
Editor and Publisher





## UNCERTAIN FUTURE



## EMPLOYEES AT RISK



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# UNCERTAIN FUTURE



*County Administrator Randall Reid and the commissioners prepare for the start of a meeting in Venice. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR RANDALL REID WILL FACE A BIG TEST NEXT WEEK AS THE COMMISSIONERS DISCUSS HIS LATEST EVALUATION — WITH THREE HAVING EXPRESSED SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS

By Roger Drouin  
*County Editor*

With three county commissioners questioning County Administrator Randall Reid's job performance, Reid finds himself in a precipitous position heading into the Wednesday, Oct. 23, County Commission meeting.

In evaluations made public this week, Chairwoman Carolyn Mason and Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson gave the county's CEO a below-average rating for his overall job performance from April to September of this year.

An item about the evaluations is on the agenda for Wednesday's meeting.

"Mr. Reid should have an opportunity to review all five evaluations, and we should have a healthy discussion about it," said

Barbetta, who gave Reid an overall "below average/satisfactory" rating.

"In fairness to Mr. Reid, he is entitled to review [the evaluations] and see what approach he wants to take," Barbetta told The Sarasota News Leader — "whether he wants to address all of the issues."

The three commissioners who gave Reid those below average marks noted problems ranging from low employee morale to miscommunication with the board on key developments or issues.

*"I have concerns that [Randall Reid is] no longer a good fit for Sarasota County Government."*

Carolyn Mason  
Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission

Reid took over as administrator in late January 2012 in the wake of a scandal in the county's Procurement Department. Former County Administrator Jim Ley resigned in





*County Administrator Randall Reid looks over agenda material at a meeting. File photo*

May 2011 after the improper purchasing procedures became public.

Mason, Barbetta and Robinson listed perceived problems that would make it difficult for any local govern-

ment administrator to work with elected officials. In their evaluations, Robinson wrote that Reid was not taking appropriate responsibility for problems, and Mason concluded he had undermined the trust of commissioners.

Board members also cited specific examples of faltering projects. Among those, Barbetta wrote of his frustration with delays in key economic efforts, including the [Fruitville Initiative](#), while Robinson expressed concern

*I believe there are some longstanding concerns especially about communication, and that was expressed at the last evaluation.*

Christine Robinson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

about the lack of a plan to deal with continued deficit spending — a point she made numerous times during budget workshops this year. She has voiced her opposition to continued use of the county's

economic uncertainty fund to balance the budget, with projections showing that pot of money will run dry as early as the 2016 fiscal year.

Mason wrote that Reid does not always fully understand concerns the board members raise.

The commissioners were split on their perspective of how well Reid was doing overall, with two giving him at least a "satisfactory"



Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson review budget material. File photo



rating. Commissioners Nora Patterson and Charles Hines characterized Reid's performance as "above average" and "satisfactory/above average," respectively.

"When I interact with the new staff that Mr. Reid has brought on to fill several top level vacancies that he inherited when he took over from [Interim County Administrator Terry] Lewis, I am impressed with the quality of Mr. Reid's choices and recruitment," Patterson wrote in her review.

But the combined evaluation results cast an uncertain light on Reid's future with the county. It takes three commission votes at two official meetings, a minimum of three weeks apart, to fire the county administrator, or four commission votes at one meeting, according to the county's charter.

## THE PROBLEMS

At various points in their evaluations, Mason, Barbetta and Robinson referenced the same examples when citing displeasure with Reid's job performance over the past six months.

Barbetta and Robinson wrote that they felt county staff members did not communicate with commissioners because they were afraid of being reprimanded.

Problems with the county's adherence to its public records policy was another issue.

Mason wrote that "the board experienced some difficulty with [Reid] during the public records request discussion due to a lack of clarity on implementing county policy, i.e., how/when we charge for such requests."

She was alluding to almost 45 minutes of discussion on Aug. 28, when commissioners



*Commissioner Carolyn Mason ponders a matter during a budget workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

asked for details about why a member of the public was not charged for either the length of time it took staff to compile the records the person wanted or for the hours a county employee stayed with the person during the review of those files.

Robinson wrote that she was frustrated that the county's public records policy was not being enforced uniformly — even though a clear policy had been in place for a number of years.

Mason, Robinson and Barbetta all also mentioned the mishandling of information about the July resignation of former Strategic and Financial Planning Director Suzanne Gable. Gable resigned after Financial Planning Office staff discovered she did not have a valid CPA license; yet, those commissioners pointed out, Reid did not mention the CPA license



## County Administrator Performance Evaluation

**Evaluation Period: April 2013 to September 2013**

### Performance Levels:

Unsatisfactory (U) - Does not meet expectations.

Below Average (D) - Below expectations.

Satisfactory (C) - Meets performance expectations.

Above Average (B) - Generally exceeds expectations.

Excellent (A) - Almost always exceeds expectations and performs at a very high standard.

Not observed (N/O) - Insufficient information to evaluate.

<b>I. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS:</b>							
<b>1. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS AND STATUS</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N/O</b>	
a. Knowledgeable of current developments affecting the management field and affecting county governments.				X			
b. Respected in management profession.				X			
c. Has capacity for and encourages innovation.			X				
d. Anticipates problems and develops effective approaches for solving them.	X						
e. Willing to try new ideas proposed by Board members or staff.			X				
f. Interacts with BCC in a direct and straight forward manner.	X						
<b>2. RELATIONS WITH CHAIR/BOARD</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N/O</b>	
a. Carries out directives of the Board as a whole rather than those of any one Board member.			X				
b. Assists the Board in resolving problems at the administrative level to avoid unnecessary Board action.	X						
c. Assists the Board in establishing policy, while acknowledging the ultimate authority of the Board.	X						
d. Responds to requests for information or assistance by the Board.			X				
e. Informs the Board of administrative developments.	X						
f. Accepts directions/instructions in a positive manner.	X						
<b>3. POLICY EXECUTION</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N/O</b>	

*The first page of Commissioner Christine Robinson's evaluation of County Administrator Randall Reid shows a number of 'Unsatisfactory' marks. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



issue when he alerted them to her decision to leave her job.

The circumstances surrounding Gable's resignation "have seriously undermined and eroded the trust I had in you as the County Administrator, to the point that I have concerns that you are no longer a good fit for Sarasota County Government," Mason wrote.

## A DOWNWARD SLIDE

At the end of Barbetta's initial evaluation of Reid — in January — the commissioner concluded, "Overall things are improving."

Still, in their earlier evaluations of Reid, both Mason and Robinson expressed concerns about inadequate communication from Reid on key issues. In Mason's January evaluation, she noted she had learned about a Sarasota County Area Transit bus accident involving a cyclist by watching a local news program, for one example.

Much of the criticism in the latest round of evaluations, however, was new, and marks were significantly lower.

Mason's overall evaluation of Reid in January was "satisfactory." She awarded him 22 B's

### County Administrator Performance Evaluation

#### Comments

In my first evaluation I ended my written comments acknowledging that you were building a good foundation at Sarasota county Government and I encouraged you not to allow any part of that foundation to be undermined. Those comments were due to several miscommunications by you to the BOCC. To date, I have seen some improvement in your communications with the hiring of a new communications director and the subsequent reorganization that has occurred in that area.

Sometimes it has appeared that you did not always fully understand a concern/concerns raised by the BOC (i.e., employee medical insurance discussion). The board experienced some difficulty with you during the public records request discussion due to a lack of clarity on implementing county policy, i.e., how/when we charge for such records.

However, the July, 2013 circumstances surrounding the resignation of a high level employee have seriously undermined and eroded the trust I had in you as the County Administrator, to the point that I have concerns that you are no longer a good fit for Sarasota County Government.

Carolyn J. Mason

— the highest mark she gave him — in 41 categories, along with 19 C's.

The rating standards are A for Excellent, B for Above Average, C for Satisfactory, D for Below Average and U for Unsatisfactory.

During this latest round of evaluations, Mason's highest mark was again a B, but Reid earned only four of them. She gave him 25 C's and 12 D's.

Mason wrote on the latest form: "In my first evaluation I ended my written comments acknowledging that you were building a good foundation at Sarasota County Government, and I encouraged you not to allow any part of that foundation to be undermined. Those comments were due to several miscommunications by you to the [County Commission]."

Robinson's marks for Reid were also higher in January, when she gave Reid an overall above-average rating.

"I believe there are some longstanding concerns especially about communication, and that was expressed at the last evaluation," Robinson said in an interview with the *News Leader* this week.

Robinson added that some of the issues she spoke with Reid about earlier this year have not been addressed.

"I did have several concerns in January, which I voiced privately to the county administrator," Robinson said. "But I did not put them in my evaluation [in January]. Those areas have not improved."

## AN ALLY

At Wednesday's meeting, Reid could have two allies in Patterson and Hines, who gave him higher marks than he received from their colleagues.

In her evaluation, Patterson drew attention to the list of achievements Reid had submitted to the board: "These achievements must be taken into account when evaluating Mr. Reid, who obviously can take some credit for the performance and dedication of the staff who have been hands on in realizing these goals."

Patterson noted "a lot of positive things" that have happened in the past year.

Reid's list — sent as part of his self-evaluation — included the following projects: the successful effort to win the bid for the 2017 World Rowing Championships; focusing on the coordinated development of Nathan Benderson Park and the adjacent University Town Center Mall; \$45 million in completed capital projects; and an adopted 2014 budget with no millage rate increase. Among other achievements to which he pointed were efforts under way to address the homelessness issue countywide and a review of the Utilities Department to address continuing problems.

Reid also listed four steps he has taken recently to improve communication, including striving to let the commissioners know when employees are contacted by the media or when a major accident happens involving county employees or equipment.

Patterson wrote that Reid was not the sole source to blame for communication breakdowns, noting "sometimes uncivil commission discussions."

"There may be faults on both sides of the issue," Patterson wrote.

The challenge ahead for Reid will be to work on his relationship with the three other commissioners.

"Mr. Reid needs to help cure these problems, whether the fault lies in his court or not," Patterson wrote. 



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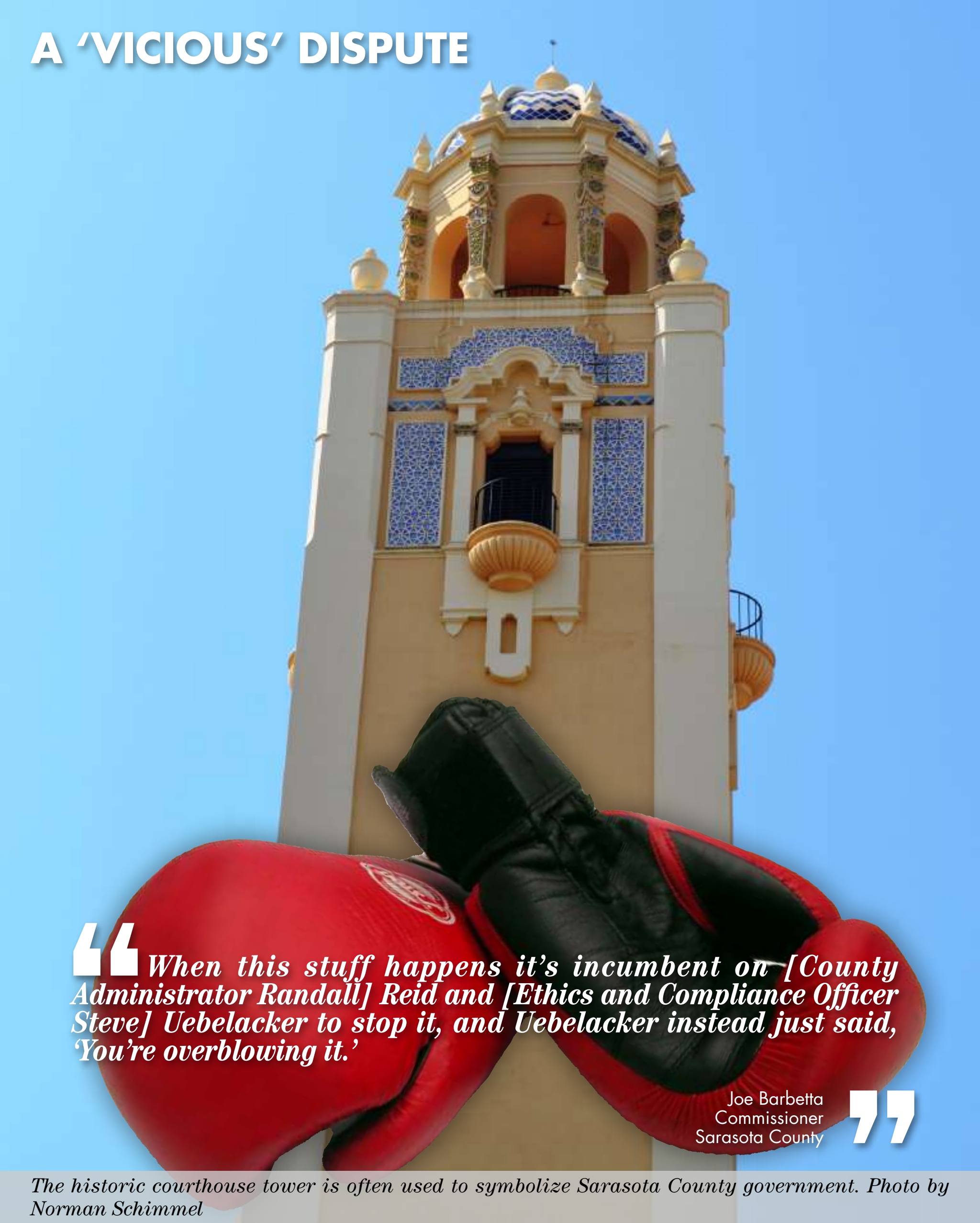
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# A 'VICIOUS' DISPUTE



“When this stuff happens it’s incumbent on [County Administrator Randall] Reid and [Ethics and Compliance Officer Steve] Uebelacker to stop it, and Uebelacker instead just said, ‘You’re overblowing it.’

Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

”

*The historic courthouse tower is often used to symbolize Sarasota County government. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## BRUTAL WORDS EXCHANGED IN FIGHT OVER COUNTY COMMISSION ETHICS ALLEGATIONS

By Cooper Levey-Baker

*Associate Editor*

“Retaliation,” “intimidation,” “reckless allegations,” “unethical behavior” — just some of the barbed words being thrown around in a very public dispute involving Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, Ethics and Compliance Officer Steve Uebelacker and the county’s long-contested mowing contracts.

The argument, which burst into view late last week through the county’s public email server, began when an unknown county employee alerted Uebelacker to two points the employee thought might suggest Barbetta had behaved unethically. One: That Barbetta

is “close personal friends” with Cynthia Peterson, who is spearheading a Center for Architecture Sarasota partnership with the county that involves taking over a county-owned building for just \$1 per year. And two: That Barbetta had been spotted “on a boat” with the heads of two county mowing vendors, Storm Tech’s Tom Giddens and Rick Richards Inc.’s Rick Richards. (The quotes above come from an Oct. 9 email sent by Uebelacker to Barbetta.)

Barbetta has repeatedly championed the Center for Architecture project, which will



*A series of failed county mowing contracts led to overgrown right of ways and medians in the summer of 2012. File photo*



allow University of Florida graduate students to study architecture at a 1960 Sarasota School of Architecture building located on Orange Avenue. Press releases and news reports have quoted Barbetta

calling the program a “tremendous milestone for Sarasota,” “a great connection with the University of Florida,” and “big for the community.”

When Uebelacker later met with Barbetta to discuss the employee’s claims, Barbetta “volunteered” that he is indeed “very good friends” with Peterson and her husband, architect Guy Peterson, according to Uebelacker’s Oct. 9 email. But Barbetta tells *The Sarasota News Leader* it’s “shocking” that someone would suggest he might profit from the arrangement.

“*Most problems and issues are uncovered when people come forward, and people are only going to do that when they feel comfortable.*”

Steve Uebelacker  
Ethics and Compliance Officer  
Sarasota County

The Center for Architecture is taking over a county print shop and restoring it at no cost to the taxpayers, he points out.

Cynthia Peterson later emailed Uebelacker, requesting a meet-

ing, at which Uebelacker told her he had no intention of pursuing the matter. “I thought the issue was over,” he wrote to Barbetta. (Peterson did not respond to a *News Leader* message.)

The second allegation is the thornier one. Tom Giddens and his wife, Toni, have long protested the validity of the county’s mowing contracts, and in a 5,000-word email sent this August, Tom charged that county employees had steered bids to favored companies and retaliated against Storm Tech for speaking out.



*A South Orange Avenue building designed in the style of the Sarasota School of Architecture will be the future home of a University of Florida graduate architecture program. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Barbetta cited the email during a subsequent County Commission meeting, saying he would not vote to proceed with any mowing contracts till the allegations had been fully addressed. “The same people are here that put us in this position,” he said, “and, unfortunately, because of our charter, I can’t do anything about it.” Only the county administrator may “dismiss” employees, per the charter.

Toni Giddens tells the *News Leader* the alleged boat get-together “absolutely never happened.” Tom met with Barbetta once in 2012, Toni says, and she later met with each commissioner individually, but that has been the extent of their personal contact with the board. She says she was “astounded” when she first read the public emails.

Richards, who has complained about mowing contracts as well, also denies the boat incident happened and says retaliation against him and Storm Tech is the only plausible motive for the accusations. “Why else would you throw the three of us in a boat together? That’s a no-brainer,” he tells the *News Leader*.

Giddens agrees. “We have nothing in common except the mowing contracts,” she says. “It’s almost intimidation.”

Barbetta calls the suggestion of impropriety “vicious.” “I don’t understand how someone could make that statement,” he says. But it was Uebelacker’s handling of the situation that really irked Barbetta.

Uebelacker eventually brought up the allegations in a one-on-one meeting with Barbetta. According to an email sent by Barbetta on Oct. 9, that conversation began with Uebelacker telling him, “I’m here to talk to



*Commissioner Joe Barbetta watches a presentation during a budget workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

you about two ethics complaints that have been lodged against you,” and it quickly turned into a “heated discussion.” He wrote that Uebelacker had promised to speak with the employee who had made the allegation to ask for proof, something Uebelacker strenuously denied.

Barbetta also wrote that Uebelacker told him that if the employee had indeed invented the charges, Uebelacker would notify County Administrator Randy Reid “and there would be consequences for the employees who lied.” Barbetta says he believes the employee should be fired.

Uebelacker declined to provide the name of the employee, writing that to do so would violate the promise of confidentiality made to whistleblowers. “You have previously and routinely publicly called for the termination

of county employees and insisted that the employees that provided the information to me should be fired,” Uebelacker wrote to Barbetta. “I do not believe that it would be good practice to discuss the names of the individuals with anyone, as there is clearly a fear of retaliation within this organization.”

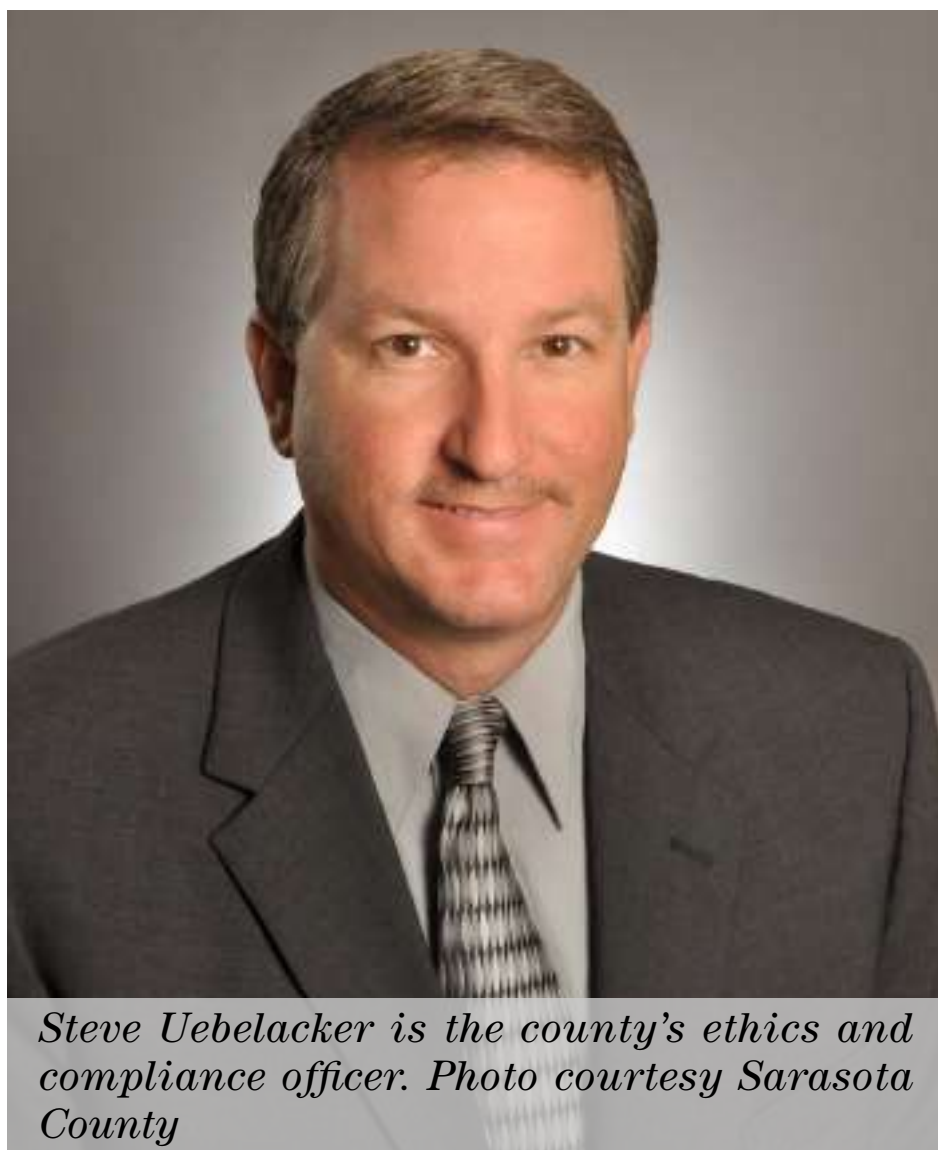
The ethics portion of the county website specifically promises that employees “shall not be subject to retaliation for reports made in good faith alleging fraud, waste, abuse, or misconduct.” It’s that “good faith” section Barbetta questions.

“Using your theory, you’re saying that there are no consequences for reckless accusations by County employees?!!” Barbetta shot back in his email to Uebelacker. “That’s ludicrous.”

Uebelacker did not respond directly to requests for comment, but county spokesperson Jamie Carson tells the *News Leader* he stands by the content of his emails. She says Uebelacker’s meeting with Barbetta was not part of any formal ethics investigation, but “an informal heads-up, as a courtesy.”

“At no time during that process did he think that that information warranted an investigation or formal inquiry,” Carson says. In his email Uebelacker acknowledged that even if the allegations were true, they would not qualify as ethics violations. But Carson says Uebelacker believed it was important, even if the allegations were false, that Barbetta be made aware of “perceptions” in the community.

“Most problems and issues are uncovered when people come forward, and people are only going to do that when they feel comfortable,” Uebelacker said in a statement provided



*Steve Uebelacker is the county's ethics and compliance officer. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

by Carson. “My job is to make people feel safe. It would be unfortunate if this current situation negatively impacts that atmosphere. It’s imperative to me that employees know they can come to me in confidence.”

Richards says Uebelacker should have either investigated the matter further or just let it drop. Even if the allegations are unfounded, he says, there’s now a “stigma” attached to him, Storm Tech and Barbetta.

“When this stuff happens it’s incumbent on Reid and Uebelacker to stop it,” Barbetta says, “and Uebelacker instead just said, ‘You’re overblowing it.’”

In his email, Barbetta wrote that “several people in the community” told him Uebelacker was mentioning the incident in public. That didn’t sit well with him, he says. “That’s when I went nuts about it.” 



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# EMPLOYEES AT RISK



## **SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IS WORKING ON WAYS TO KEEP HEALTH INSURANCE COSTS FROM RISING A PROJECTED 60 PERCENT OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

With the Sarasota County Schools' health insurance costs predicted to rise 60 percent over the next couple of years, Superintendent Lori White has asked the district's chief financial officer, its wellness coordinator and other staff members to work as a task force to find ways to improve employee health, the School Board members learned during their Oct. 15 workshop.

Suzanne DuBose, the district's wellness coordinator, said during the annual update on her area of responsibility that the group held its first meeting last week. One big goal is to find funding for employee incentives to encourage them to take better care of themselves, DuBose pointed out.

The district is quickly approaching the level at which 70 percent of its employees will be



classified as overweight, she noted. According to the September economic report prepared by Sarasota County finance staff, the school system has more than 5,500 employees.

“The numbers keep going up,” DuBose said in regard to overweight staff.

However, two School Board members voiced concerns about how intrusive they should be in the lives of employees.

“I’m really struggling with the role of this district with regard to the behaviors of adults,”

Carol Todd said. “I’m well aware of our insurance costs,” she added, “but I think it’s a larger [philosophical] discussion ... I think I’m hearing more than what I feel comfortable with in our role, because we are a [kindergarten through 12th grade] school district.”

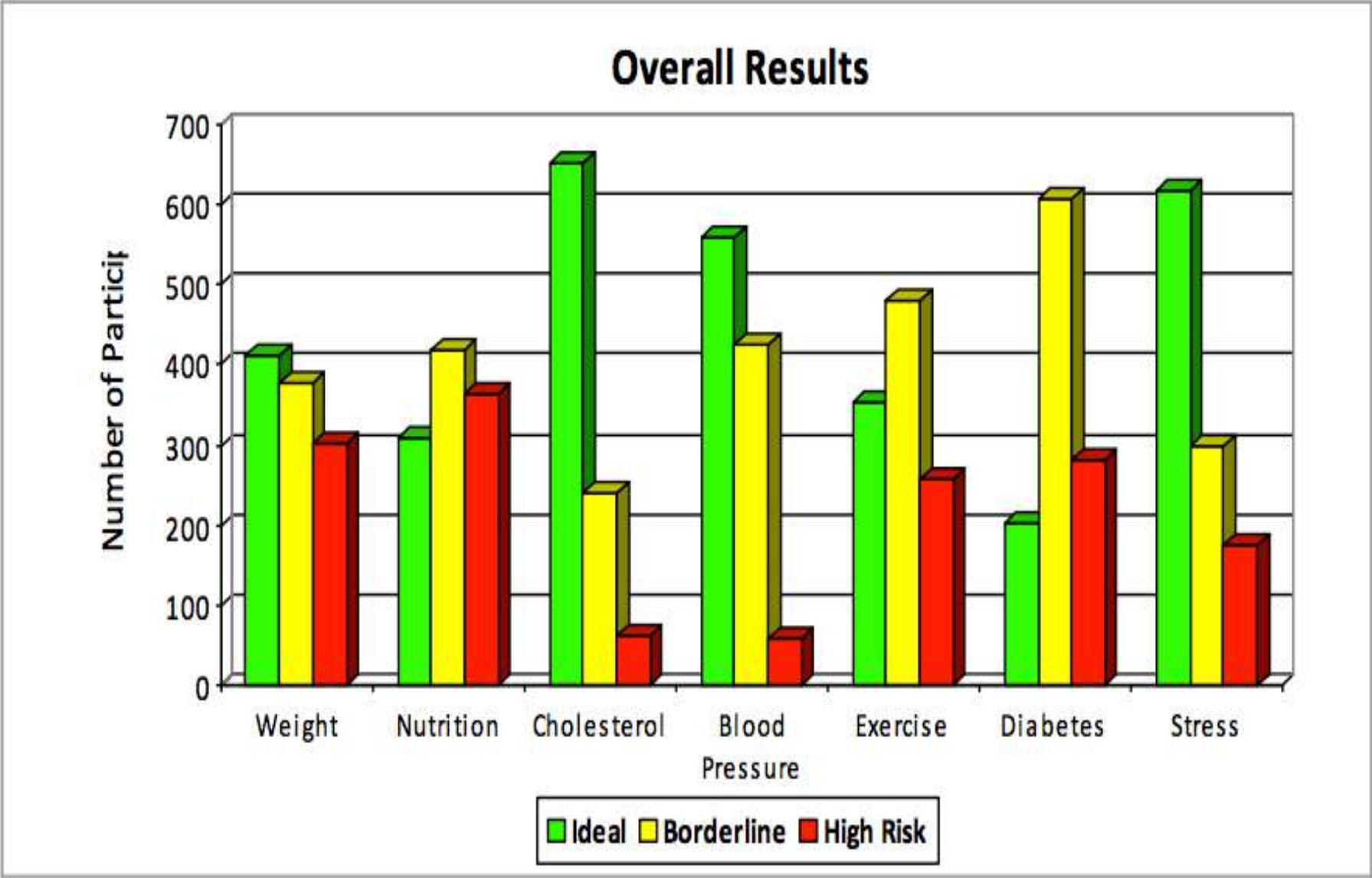
“I agree with you,” Chairwoman Jane Goodwin said. “There is a fine line as to what we can do or say.”

White responded that the district could not afford to continue to do nothing about



*Wellness Coordinator Suzanne DuBose talks with School Board members on Oct. 15. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Overall Wellness



Risk Areas

The top four at-risk areas (high risk and borderline) for Sarasota County Schools are as follows:

Risk Area	Number	Percentage	Responses
Diabetes	888	81.5	1090
Nutrition	782	71.7	1090
Exercise	738	67.7	1090
Weight	677	62.1	1090



employees' health concerns. "We have to act in a way that will help us change that bottom line," she added, referring to insurance costs. "We do care about the health of our staff and their productivity ... But we also care about how much we're devoting to healthcare benefits, because that takes money away from the classroom."

## DISTRICT SUCCESSES

During her presentation, DuBose did note positive news for the district's wellness program during the previous school year. One thousand ninety staff members underwent a health risk appraisal, up from 546 in the 2011-12 school year, she said. "That's actually very good," she pointed out, based on general statistics for such participation.

Noting that diabetes "is a high cost driver," she added that about 23 percent of the district's 600 diabetic employees engaged in a program to help them deal with that condition.

The goal was to increase that participation 10 percent over the previous year's rate, she pointed out.

When Goodwin asked for clarification that the district has 600 people who have been

***We do care about the health of our staff and their productivity ... But we also care about how much we're devoting to healthcare benefits, because that takes money away from the classroom.***

Lori White  
Superintendent  
Sarasota County Schools



*Superintendent Lori White listens to remarks during the Oct. 15 workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

diagnosed with diabetes, DuBose responded, "That's the latest number."

The program for which those employees are eligible is run by Florida Blue, she added; it is not run by the district, and, therefore, she has no access to the names of those employees.

"The most we can do is market and communicate the program," DuBose told the School Board.

During staff meetings, she added, she offers encouragement for participation.

Additionally, DuBose said, she has been working over the past several weeks with representatives of Florida Blue and the South County YMCA with the hope that pre-diabetic district employees can participate in a program the Y offers to help them reduce their risk level.

Those school staff members with two or more risk factors for diabetes — such as being overweight and handling a lot of stress — would be eligible for that program, she explained. She will meet again with the Florida Blue and Y representatives during the first week of November to “see about bringing that to our staff.”

DuBose also pointed out that preventive health exams are free as long as staff employees go to providers in their insurance plan network.

Therefore, she also is encouraging employees to take advantage of that opportunity.

## ROLE OF THE BOARD

Because of her concern about being too intrusive in employee affairs, Goodwin said she would prefer seeing the district reach the point of being able to open its own healthcare clinic, noting the Charlotte County Schools have taken that approach.

### BMI (Body Mass Index)

11

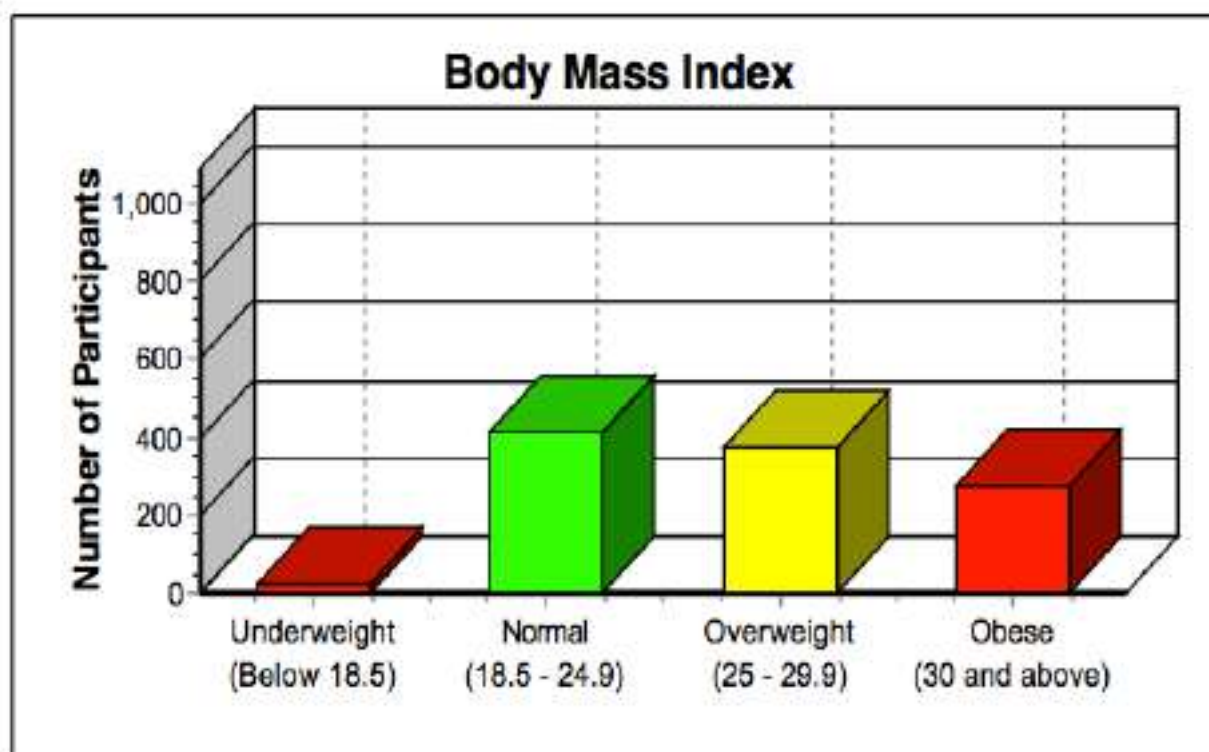
Body Mass Index is a tool used for indicating weight status in adults. It is a measure of weight for height. According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, for adults over 20 years old, BMI falls into one of these categories:

Below 18.5 = Underweight  
18.5 - 24.9 = Normal  
25.0 - 29.9 = Overweight  
30 and above = Obese

Of the Sarasota County Schools participants, 653 participants (60.1%) are considered to be overweight or obese (376 are overweight and 277 are obese). The prevalence of overweight individuals is 346 per 1,000 employees. The prevalence of obese individuals is 255 per 1,000 employees. The CDC shows that 34% of adults in the U.S. over the age of 20 are obese, and another 34% are overweight.

Total Responses: 1,086

Underweight	20	1.8%
Normal	413	38.0%
Overweight	376	34.6%
Obese	277	25.5%



*A graph in the Florida Blue summary of a Sarasota County School District employee health assessment provides details about the findings regarding body mass index for the 1,090 participants. Image courtesy Sarasota County Schools*



Exams and medication are “easily available to [staff members] and their families” through a clinic, Goodwin pointed out. “I think [that idea] has more merit.”

Todd referenced a remark board member Shirley Brown has made in the past: “All of our campuses are smoke-free environments. That’s setting a model for our students. And I feel comfortable being the ‘food police’ and saying, ‘You know what? We don’t need 12-inch cookies [made available to students]; a 2-inch cookie is fine.’ But that’s about our children.”

Todd added, “I just don’t know where the line is for being the ‘health police’ for the adults.”

Brown noted that the City and County of Sarasota offer incentives to employees for participation in wellness activities. “You can get your co-pay or your [health insurance cost] down to zero” by participating in them, she added. “Maybe that is a different way of getting around [Todd’s and Goodwin’s concerns].”

DuBose said the task force members are looking at “carrots versus sticks. Value-based incentives seem to be a good thing.”

She added that eight risks or behaviors are responsible for 15 chronic health conditions, driving 80 percent of healthcare costs. By targeting one, two or three of those behaviors, she continued, “you can save ... \$700 an employee per year, just by keeping them on track” with wellness efforts.

DuBose reiterated that making people aware of factors that contribute to poor health and letting them know about opportunities they can take advantage of to improve their well



*School Board member Shirley Brown makes a point during a July meeting. File photo*


being are major factors in a successful program. “Awareness is huge.”

“You have to live in a cave not to know some of these things,” Todd said, such as the risk factors for diabetes.

However, board member Caroline Zucker pointed out that some people grow up in cultures that do not emphasize the value of regular physicals and healthful eating.

White said she favored an incentive approach in helping employees. “I am not one for the stick approach.”

People often need to be nudged to do what is best for them, White added. “We’re talking really minimal,” she said, such as just encouraging people to have regular checkups.

She told the board, “If we can just take those mini steps, I think that might make the difference ... to that person that’s aware but has not yet found the incentive to take action.” 

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## ‘DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN’

*In late June, swimmers enjoyed the ambiance of Warm Mineral Springs. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### THE NORTH PORT COMMISSION ASKS THAT ITS CITY MANAGER, THE COUNTY MANAGER AND THEIR STAFFS COME UP WITH OPTIONS FOR A SHORT-TERM REOPENING OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

On a 3-1 vote, the North Port City Commission on Monday, Oct. 14, voted to direct City Manager Jonathan Lewis and his staff to work with Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid and his staff to come up with options for reopening Warm Mineral Springs for swimming only.

While they pursue those discussions, the motion stipulated, staffs of both local

governments also can work on a long-range plan for management of the 81-acre resort that has been closed since June 30.

“*It’s just going to be déjà vu, a perpetual problem to get a third-party to come in and lease this property ... We’re just going to be spinning our wheels over and over and over again.*”

Linda Yates  
Mayor  
City of North Port



Commissioner Tom Jones cast the “No” vote, saying he felt the action was premature. It followed a unanimous vote to rescind the award of a bid to WMS Sarasota Management LLC for the short-term operation of the springs.



Commissioner Cheryl Cook was suffering ill health and unable to stay for the Warm Mineral Springs discussion, which was added to the Oct. 14 regular meeting agenda at Lewis' request.

The board also voted 3-1 — with Jones dissenting — not to award the contract to the other company that submitted a bid during the summer, Cambridgeshire Investment LLC, based in Port Charlotte.

In yet another motion, the board voted 3-1 — with Mayor Linda Yates in the minority — to allow Lewis and Reid the option of pursuing another short-term management bid process.

"I can't support that," Yates said, "because of the time frames ..." She pointed out that it probably would take at least another 90 days for the two local government boards to agree to a new contract award.

***I'm really against that process, but I'll be flexible.***

James Blucher  
Vice Mayor  
City of North Port

Moreover, Yates told her colleagues, "It's just going to be *déjà vu*, a perpetual problem to get a third-party to come in and lease this property ... We're just going to be

spinning our wheels over and over and over again."

According to email Reid sent to the county commissioners on the morning of Oct. 15, he plans to bring up the North Port actions during



Members of the North Port City Commission are (from left) Rhonda DiFranco, Vice Mayor James Blucher, Mayor Linda Yates, Cheryl Cook and Tom Jones. Photo courtesy City of North Port



his report when the County Commission meets on Oct. 22 in Sarasota.

On Oct. 14, Lewis initiated about an hour of discussion — including public comments from three speakers — because, as he put it, “At some point in the process we had to ... come to the conclusion of whether [WMS Sarasota Management’s principals] were going to sign the contract or not.”

During a unanimous vote on Sept. 10, the County Commission concurred with a 3-1 decision of the North Port board a day earlier to award a 12-month contract to WMS Sarasota Management to operate Warm Mineral Springs while the boards tried to iron



*Before Warm Mineral Springs closed at the end of June, visitors were greeted by this welcome sign. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons*



*Jonathan Lewis is the North Port city manager. Photo courtesy City of North Port*

out differences on the long-term future of the resort. Cook cast the “No” vote on her board.

Conflicting views of the resort’s future began to brew after Cook and Rhonda DiFranco were elected to the North Port Commission in November 2012. They sided with Yates in wanting to keep the springs in a natural state, while the previous North Port Commission had voted with the County Commission in July 2012 to seek an Invitation to Negotiate for potential development proposals for the property. The two boards bought Warm Mineral Springs for \$5.5 million in December 2010.

The disagreement ultimately led to a facilitated meeting of the commissions in April, under the guidelines of a state statute regarding conflict resolution. In June, the boards finally approved a new interlocal agreement that spelled out the process for hiring a short-term manager while efforts continued to resolve the long-range vision.

However, after the bid award went to WMS Sarasota Management, the firm began to balk at health and safety as well as structural problems its attorney said needed to be resolved at the resort before it took over. The firm also sought an extended lease.

## THE PROBLEMS

Lewis told his board on Oct. 14, “I think staff did a very good job of working with this ...” However, as late as that morning, he continued, he had talked with the personal attorney for Dr. Grigory Pogrebinsky — one of the principals of WMS Sarasota Management — to reiterate the points staff already had made: The bid terms were non-negotiable.

The attorney — Alexander Berkovich of Brooklyn, NY — most recently had asked an extension of the lease period from 12 months to 24. Berkovich wrote, “[M]y client does not see a realistic opportunity for at least recouping in 12 months substantial costs (including marketing and 24% revenue fee to the City and the County) of the operation that would start from the standstill position since the Springs’ facilities are empty and the Springs has been closed for months.”

“I still maintain it would be inappropriate to change the terms of a bid document,” Lewis said during the commission meeting, even though “I fully believe what Mr. Berkovich said. I don’t have any reason to doubt his statement.”

Lewis also advised the commissioners of his “blanket statement” for their discussion: Because of the terms of the interlocal agreement, the County Commission would have to



*Randall Reid is the county administrator.  
File photo*

concur with the City Commission’s actions, or another stalemate would ensue.

Yates also questioned Lewis about the fact that WMS Sarasota Management had not provided the bond as required under the bid terms.

The bond would be due 10 days after the execution of the contract, which has not occurred, Lewis pointed out. Nonetheless, he concurred that WMS Sarasota Management had indicated some disagreement with the stipulations for the bond laid out by the County Attorney’s Office, which were seen as extra security for the two local government boards. “You wanted that protection,” Lewis added.

## THE NEXT STEP

In making the first motion that afternoon — to negate the bid award — Vice Mayor James Blucher told his colleagues, “I don’t think we have any choice. We’ve given them every



3. **Short Term Operation.** The Parties agree to advertise a competitive solicitation in satisfaction of the applicable Florida Statutes, including Section 125.35, Florida Statutes for the operation of Warm Mineral Springs defined in Exhibit A. The Parties agree to use their best efforts to achieve the selection as soon as possible to avoid the closure of the Warm Mineral Springs. In the event the competitive solicitation process is not complete by July 1, 2013, the parties agree to either operate the Springs jointly or allow the City to contract with a third party to operate Warm Mineral Springs until the competitive solicitation is complete and a fully executed License Agreement is in place. The Parties further agree:

- a. The City will assume all solicitation process responsibilities for obtaining an interim operator for Warm Mineral Springs, including conducting background checks and reference interviews for all responsive proposers.
- b. The County hereby agrees to take all necessary action to waive the application of its procurement code.
- c. All solicitation documents, membership of committees or teams related to the solicitation process, contract development and approval/rejection, and all other actions or decisions made to implement this agreement shall be subject to equal participation and mutual approval of the City and the County.
- d. Notwithstanding the City assuming primary responsibility in the solicitation process for the interim operation of Warm Mineral Springs, both parties acknowledge that each will be able to provide equal input and will be responsible for any liability resulting from their respective actions.
- e. The City will provide all proposals received in response to the City solicitation process to the County for evaluation of the proposals.
- f. The City and the County will each independently evaluate the responsive proposals.
- g. Provided that the City and County each choose the same responsive proposer, then the City and County agree to enter into an agreement with the selected proposer. Each board shall retain final authority over approval of the final agreement.

opportunity. [Pogrebinsky] wants to negotiate something that's non-negotiable, in my opinion."

The primary reason he originally wanted the city and county to stay focused on a long-term agreement, he said, was to avoid just the type of back-and-forth action necessary to get a short-term operator in place, he noted — "if we haven't already chased those large investors away" with the conflicts.

"As much as it pains me," Jones agreed, "we have to start again."

Yates said she was "greatly surprised and disappointed ... over the situation [because] everything has been so public with regard to every issue, really, that's been brought up."

After that unanimous vote, Yates gave the gavel to Blucher. "We've got to keep the long-term planning going," she pointed out. "We are right now in limbo."

That was when she proposed Lewis, Reid and their staffs work together. "Put aside the business part of [the resort]," she added, "[and let] the public have the therapeutic aspect of the spring itself. It's costing us \$16,000 a month to keep [Warm Mineral Springs] closed."

"I would support that as long as we make it clear that we want to continue the discussions of the long-term [plans]," DiFranco told the board.

Jones argued that it "would be premature" to take that approach when the boards could pursue another short-term management firm.

However, Lewis said, "I think you're giving us a little bit more flexibility with this particular

idea than what we have been given in the past. We have good, high-quality staff in our Parks and Recreation Division. I think they have some ideas they would like to explore."

"You're not going to charge \$20 for the swimming," Blucher cautioned Yates, referring to the daily cost of a pass for a visitor. County residents would pay \$15 per day.

Yates was adamant that she did not want to see the restaurant or spa or any other facility on the grounds reopened until the city and county had settled on a long-term management plan.


Having some income, she replied, "[is] better than zero."

She added that with the resort under local government operation, "We can make that transition very smooth" to a long-term operator.

"Well said," DiFranco told her.

"I'm really against that process," Blucher said of limiting the opening to swimmers only, "but I'll be flexible."

He told his colleagues he felt that when they saw the costs involved, they would realize that was not a good option.

In June, county Parks and Recreation Director Carolyn Brown told the County Commission that just to keep the swimming area open — with lifeguard and janitorial services provided — would necessitate 16 employees working seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. That expense would be about \$17,000 per week, she added. 





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## POINT PERSON

*Before working for Sarasota County, Wayne Applebee led the effort to fund, plan and build a regional jail in Maine. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **IF HOMELESSNESS CONSULTANT ROBERT MARBUT'S STRATEGIC PLAN INCLUDES A PERMANENT SHELTER, WAYNE APPLEBEE WILL BE THE MAN CHARGED WITH SEEING IT BUILT**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

Starting next month, Wayne Applebee could face some steep challenges.

If City and County of Sarasota consultant Robert Marbut's strategic plan calls for a permanent shelter for the homeless, and community leaders agree, Applebee will be the point person in making sure that goal is achieved.

Applebee has been tapped to put Marbut's proposal into action after the consultant leaves Sarasota.

**“We need to let [homelessness consultant Robert Marbut] do his work, uninterrupted. Let him deliver his report, and then we should be asking all the questions that we have to ask as a community. Then let's work together to solve this issue as best as we can.”**

Wayne Applebee  
Human Services Policy Coordinator  
Sarasota County

Applebee's resume shows 25 years of experience in law enforcement and criminal justice and human services planning. But it is his specific experience several years ago in Maine that has probably best prepared him



for the possibility of overseeing the creation of a homeless shelter in Sarasota County.

In 2005, as chief sheriff's deputy in Wiscasset, ME, Applebee was chosen to lead the effort to fund, plan and construct the new Two Bridges Regional Jail. The \$24.6-million center became the first of its kind in New England, merging two old facilities into one high-tech jail focusing on programs designed to stem recidivism.

The project came with its share of obstacles, ranging from legislative hurdles to funding. "Both counties [involved] had to pass a referendum or the project was dead," Applebee said in an interview this week with *The Sarasota News Leader*. Applebee was at the center of the action, working "very long hours."

Over the past five years, Applebee has been the criminal justice policy and human services coordinator for Sarasota County, working on complex issues such as child welfare, inmate mentoring and homeless prevention. Assistant County Administrator Lee Ann Lowery recently gave him the two-year assignment to put Marbut's strategic plan into action.

That proposal is expected to include a permanent shelter. In a September interview with the *News Leader*, Marbut called such a facility a "transformational center."

Marbut is scheduled to present his plan to elected officials and members of the community on Nov. 25. Applebee will take over his new role sometime the same month.



*A homeless person sleeps in Five Points Park in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## FIRST OF ITS KIND

In 2005 in Wiscasset, ME, Applebee acted as a negotiator between two county commissions during discussions on jail financing and governance. During the transition to the new Two Bridges Regional Jail, he was directly involved in the hiring and training of 68 employees and the development of more than 350 policies, procedures and moving plans.

As part of that process, Applebee implemented the closing of the two old jails and the opening of the new state-of-the-art facility.

In addition to presenting the plans to groups and convincing voters to approve separate referenda in the two counties to fund the project, Applebee was charged with finalizing a list of recommended sites for the facility.

“That was no easy task,” he told the *News Leader*.

The new center is run by the Two Bridges Jail Authority, a body similar to the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport Authority, Applebee explained.

Applebee also rallied for a legislative change that allowed the nascent regional authority to operate the jail. Previously, only sheriff’s offices had run correctional facilities in Maine.

When the regional jail opened, it had state-of-the-art equipment, Applebee said. For example, correctional officers had to learn to use handheld computers instead of manual logs.

If Sarasota city and county officials move forward on the establishment of a homeless



*The Pinellas Safe Harbor homeless facility in Clearwater has been considered a model for a potential Sarasota center. Image courtesy Pinellas Safe Harbor*



facility, Applebee could see a repeat of many of the challenges he encountered in Maine.

Funding will become a big issue, for example. “Resources are not endless,” Applebee said.

Even though the City Commission and County Commission each have pledged \$500,000 to the project, it is likely more will be needed, especially for continuing operations.

A transformational center for the homeless should provide a “continuum of care,” Applebee pointed out.

The ultimate goal, he said, is moving people to affordable housing and jobs.

But for the time being, Applebee is urging patience until Marbut releases his report on Nov. 25. “We need to let him do his work, uninterrupted,” Applebee said. “Let him deliver his report, and then we should be asking all the questions that we have to ask as a community. Then let’s work together to solve this issue as best as we can.”

## ‘ON THE PULSE’

Two years after the Two Bridges Regional Jail opened, Applebee moved to Sarasota, joining Sarasota County government as the criminal justice policy coordinator.

In that role, acting also as the county’s criminal justice planner, he has tried to identify ways to keep inmates from re-entering the jail system — from family reunification efforts to inmate mentoring and a work crew program. His goal has been to “divert folks from filling up the jails when they can appropriately be managed in society.”

Applebee also ensured the county won federal dollars for local criminal justice programs.




*A man holds a sign, asking motorists for help, as he stands alongside Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

In his current position as human services policy coordinator for the county, Applebee works on such issues as behavioral health, child welfare, aging, homeless prevention and poverty as well as criminal justice systems matters. His resume says his role is to “conduct policy analysis leading to identification of deficiencies in the human services system and develop, coordinate and implement improvements.”

Throughout his tenure in Sarasota County, Applebee has worked closely with judges, law enforcement officials and county commissioners.

“He has his finger on the pulse of what is going on in the community,” said Curt Preisser, public information officer for Sarasota County.

“Marbut has said we need to have someone who is going to wake up in the morning and be focused on homelessness,” Preisser added. County officials concluded Applebee was the man for the job. 



# This may take a while.

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## MAKING THEIR CASE

*State Rep. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, speaks at Thursday's legislative breakfast. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker*

### LAWMAKERS URGED TO SUPPORT HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS IN 2014

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

Stefan Campagna's portion of the agenda was described as the story of a "personal journey," but the young attorney emphasized that "personal" does not mean "individual."

Arrested at age 16, Campagna was originally charged with 27 felonies. "I don't think I need to convey the gravity of that," he told attendees of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County's Legislative Breakfast of Champions on Oct.

17. But teen court turned Campagna's life around, helping him complete 150 hours of community service and graduate from high school, college and, eventually, law school.

**“We’ve had a really, really good run in being able to get the funds to be able to provide the services that you guys, as the unsung heroes of our community, advocate.”**

Doug Holder  
Member  
Florida House of Representatives

“Without certain community agencies and support, my story would not even have occurred,” he said. “I have nothing but thanks for you.”

Campagna's tale demonstrated the positive impact of

the county's various health and human services agencies, a message the breakfast's organizers hope resonates in Tallahassee during next spring's legislative session. State Reps. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, and Doug Holder, R-Venice, were both on hand for the event, while staffers for both Rep. Ray Pilon, R-Sarasota, and Sen. Nancy Detert, R-Venice, also showed up.

Members of the Community Alliance, a coalition of local health nonprofits, gathered last month to compile their list of the most important issues they want state lawmakers to address in 2014, breaking the items down into categories such as homelessness, behavioral health and more. Thursday, they presented those priorities directly to legislators.

The event was a blizzard of alarming statistics. Florida's homeless rate is 45 percent higher than the national rate. State funding for home and community-based elderly services has declined 20 percent since 2006 while the number of those on a waiting list for such services has increased 25 percent. Sarasota Memorial Hospital could lose out on \$200 million over the next decade if the Legislature continues to refuse to expand Medicaid through ObamaCare.

Kathryn Shea, the chairwoman of the Alliance's legislative advocacy committee, highlighted the importance of Medicaid expansion, pointing out that the issue is a major priority for several Alliance organizations. And while the state has projected a \$845 million budget



*State Rep. Doug Holder, R-Venice, addresses the Legislature in Tallahassee. Photo courtesy [myfloridahouse.gov](http://myfloridahouse.gov)*




surplus, that doesn't mean it's time to put money in reserves and cut taxes, she argued. Gov. Rick Scott, for example, has proposed cutting taxes and fees by \$500 million. The Legislature should instead concentrate on reversing "horrendous" budget cuts inflicted on agencies around the state, Shea argued. "If they're not thriving, we're not driving economic development," she said. "There's an absolute correlation there."

Ruth Brandwein, the legislative chairwoman of the Florida chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, echoed that in making the case for Medicaid expansion. The measure would give 35,000 county residents access to health care, she said, and it would generate 120,000 new jobs around the state, including 10,000 in the Sarasota area.

"It's both the morally and fiscally responsible thing to do," she argued, "and I hope that it will pass this year."

Both Holder and Steube praised the Community Alliance's process and credited members for acting as a resource during this year's legislative session. Steube emphasized his role on the Florida House's Appropriations Committee, encouraging nonprofit leaders to meet with him in person before the end of the year.

This year's partnership was "really successful," Holder said. "We've had a really, really good run in being able to get the funds to be able to provide the services that you guys, as the unsung heroes of our community, advocate." 



*State Sen. Nancy Detert of Venice is the dean of the Sarasota County legislative delegation. Photo courtesy [myfloridahouse.gov](http://myfloridahouse.gov)*





# HVAC SYSTEMS AND SCHOOL SAFETY

*Al Weidner (far left) and Scott Lempe (next to Weidner) address the School Board during an Oct. 15 workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS SAY KEEPING THEIR FACILITIES IN TOP SHAPE REMAINS THEIR HIGHEST PRIORITY WITH THEIR CAPITAL BUDGET, BUT SCHOOL SECURITY IS HIGH ON THE LIST**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

While they voiced support for doubling the yearly allocation to safety and security measures, the majority of the Sarasota County School Board members this week said their top priority in capital budget preparation remains “asset preservation.”

The latter includes a new HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system for Pine View School in Osprey.

During an Oct. 15 workshop, Scott Lempe, the school district’s chief operating officer, provided the board an overview of the district’s capital improvement plan (CIP) for Fiscal Years 2014-18. He pointed out that while district staff puts together a list of priorities for

a five-year cycle, the board traditionally plans only one year of specific funding allocations.

Lempe said he would come back before the

“Our buildings have never been in better shape.”

Shirley Brown  
Member  
Sarasota County School Board





board sometime during the winter to offer a more detailed proposal for the CIP, based on the guidance they provided him and other staff members on Oct. 15.

Among those, Lempe noted, would be a doubling of the \$1 million the district has been spending on safety and security measures, based on needs presented by Darrell Reyka, who is in charge of school safety and security and emergency management issues for the Sarasota County Schools.

Nonetheless, in a brief recap of speakers' presentations to the board, Lempe pointed out, "Asset preservation remains at the top of our list."

When Lempe asked the board members their priorities for the FY 2014 Capital Improvement Plan, Chairwoman Jane Goodwin and board

member Caroline Zucker concurred with him that "asset preservation" was their top choice, though Zucker also characterized the Pine View equipment problems as a school safety issue.

Goodwin said safety and security issues were her No. 2 priority.

Board member Shirley Brown commended Lempe and the staff for their work, saying, "I think you guys have done a great job all along. I'll follow your direction."

Board member Frank Kovach told Lempe, "I would like to see us do everything we can on the safety and security side of it."

Kovach added, "I think that we stack up extremely well" in the condition of buildings, compared to other districts across the state.



*School Board member Carol Todd (in foreground) prepares for the start of the Oct. 15 workshop. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

However, he said, “Given the world that we live in now,” more money should be spent to protect students and staff.

Board member Carol Todd pointed out that while Lempe had asked for generalities in ranking priorities, she could not help but offer specifics. To that end, she continued, Gocio Elementary in northern Sarasota County is “a school that has a sea of portables [and even] new boardwalks for the portables.”

She will have been on the board for 15 years come November, she added, and the need to build a new classroom wing at Gocio has remained an unfunded priority. “I think 29 portables for a decade and a half is too many.”

Nonetheless, Lempe told her he probably would recommend the replacement of portables at Fruitville Elementary ahead of the project at Gocio, because Fruitville’s program for autistic students utilizes portables. The factors that remained to be weighed in the

latter scenario, he explained, were whether a new classroom wing should be designed just for the autistic students and needs directly related to their curriculum, such as space for work on dexterity skills.

Referring to Gocio and Fruitville, Todd replied, “I see them as equal.”

While Pine View also has 38 portables, she added, it is a school of choice, and Gocio is a [Title I](#) school.

As of Oct. 14, Gocio’s total enrollment was 700 — six more than the district’s projection for the current school year.

Fruitville has 19 portables. As of Oct. 14, its enrollment was 773 — eight higher than projected.

Even though enrollment is capped at Pine View, demand remains high, Superintendent Lori White pointed out.

## Controlled Access



## Unrestricted Access



*Photos compare a school with restricted visitor access to one with uncontrolled access. Images courtesy Sarasota County Schools*



“It’s the size of a small college campus,” Todd added, noting that at some point, the district might be forced to build another school of choice for gifted students.

“We are managing it,” Zucker said of the Pine View student count.

The main concern at Pine View, White said, is the need for the new HVAC system. She did not want any of the district’s students or staff to have to contend with the failure of that type of equipment, she pointed out. “That needs to be addressed” at Pine View.

“That makes me very nervous,” Zucker added of that situation. If her choice was between asset preservation and a new classroom wing, she continued, “I will choose asset preservation and especially safety and security, which is what I think is happening at Pine View right now.”

## BETTER FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

During his presentation to the board at the outset of the discussion, Deputy Chief Financial Officer Al Weidner explained that with property values up and state sales tax revenue having increased 6 percent in the county during the past fiscal year, the capital budget is in good shape. Additionally, he noted, in the 2014-15 fiscal year, the district will pay off one of its Certificates of Participation, which it has used to finance major construction projects. That one paid for the rebuilding of Phillippi Shores, Venice and Wilkinson elementary schools, he said.

That will free up about \$6 million, Weidner pointed out.

His projections showed the district would receive about \$86.2 million in revenue for capital projects in the 2014-15 fiscal year and

### Unrestricted Service Gate Entry



### Open Access to Campus



*Some Sarasota County school campuses still do not have security gates at all access points. Images courtesy Sarasota County Schools*

as much as \$95.8 million in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

“With our facilities being in as excellent shape as they are,” he said, “this is going to be a ... good position to be in.”

“I know when I sat in with the new teachers this year,” Brown added, “they were commenting on how great our facilities look. ... Our buildings have never been in better shape.”

“So all in all we’re managing our money very, very well,” Zucker pointed out. “Through the recession, through the hard times that we’ve had, we’ve done a really good job managing our money. Is that a fair assumption?” she asked Weidner.

“Yes,” he responded.

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

During his presentation to the board, Reyka focused on four aspects of campus safety that are the district’s top priorities: security

cameras, two-way radios for campus use, access control systems within schools and fencing.

The latter two need the most attention in terms of capital budget planning, Reyka told the board.

While each school requires visitors to check in at a central location, he told the board, electronic locking systems are not in place on every campus to prevent unauthorized entry beyond that point.

Goodwin confirmed that: “You can go anywhere you want to” at some schools.

About 10 schools have that type of situation, Reyka told the board.

Moreover, some campuses have 4-foot fences around them, which was the norm 10 to 12 years ago, Reyka noted. Those need to be replaced with 6-foot fences, he said. His recommendation, he continued, was to accelerate

### Perimeter Fencing



### No Single Point of Entry





the replacement of the shorter fences and put in electronic locking systems at those school without them. That way, no one can walk into student areas from the central access point unless a staff member authorizes that entry, he said.

“It’s incredibly cumbersome and problematic because of the types of schools that were previously built,” Todd added of the situation.

“Very problematic,” Reyka concurred.


A couple of weeks ago, Todd said, as part of her work, she visited other Florida schools for the purpose of observing classes. At one school, she said, she was given complete access to the campus just by showing her university ID. “I was shocked,” she told her colleagues.

Yet another situation that needs attention, Reyka explained, is the lack of electronic gates in service areas. Some schools have gates that must be locked after an employee has opened them and driven onto part of the campus. That creates the potential for the employee to forget to lock the gate.

Regarding cameras, he pointed out that the district has built up an inventory of about 3,500 digital cameras that are on a regular replacement cycle. “We take it real seriously,” he said of making sure the equipment is in good condition, adding that each camera is checked on a daily basis.

When Goodwin asked how many are replaced each year, he told her the number was less than 200. “There’s really not a lot that goes wrong with them.”

Lightning strikes and pressure-washing are the two primary sources of damage to them, he added.

The district also has about 800 UHF radios that staff utilizes on a daily basis, he noted, as well as 350 800MHz radios on its school buses and in many support vehicles. Those can communicate with the county’s 911 call center and with the Emergency Management Division staff for the county. All of those already are compliant with a new national standard called “P25,” he noted — the type of system the County Commission has been discussing purchasing to replace its outdated emergency communications radios. 

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# NO 'DIVERGING DIAMOND,' PLEASE

*An illustration shows how a diverging diamond interchange could be created at Interstate 75 and University Parkway. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## **SARASOTA COUNTY'S INTERIM TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DIRECTOR HOPES TO TALK STATE OFFICIALS OUT OF A COMPLEX INTERCHANGE PROPOSAL FOR I-75 AND UNIVERSITY PARKWAY**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Improved connectivity can be created without a radically new interchange design at University Parkway and more lanes on Fruitville Road: That is the argument Sarasota County staff members plan to make when they meet at the end of this month with the District One secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

During an Oct. 9 discussion of a revised road proposal for the [Schroeder-Manatee Ranch \(SMR\) Villages of Lakewood Ranch South](#), Jonathan B. Paul, the county's interim transportation planning director, said he hopes to convince FDOT officials that a new overpass

across Interstate 75 and Cattlemen Road would be preferable to the "diverging diamond" interchange plan FDOT is espousing for I-75 and University Parkway.

During an April 16 presentation to both the Sarasota and Manatee county commissions, FDOT consultants discussed the interchange proposal. A memo from Sarasota County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. to the board explained that it would encompass two special-use lanes that would run both northbound and southbound, along with three general-use lanes in each direction, a 64-foot-wide median and auxiliary lanes in both directions.



“The basic concept of the diverging diamond interchange is to switch the eastbound and westbound lanes so that turns on and off the ramps become right turns, thereby saving signal green time and increasing capacity through the signals at the interchange,” Harriott added.

During the Oct. 9 County Commission meeting, Paul said discussions already are under way with FDOT regarding the future alignment of Fruitville Road and Lakewood Ranch Boulevard to handle the expected heavier volume of traffic when the county’s [Fruitville Initiative](#) and the new University Town Center mall are complete. Future events at Nathan Benderson Park — including the 2017 World Rowing Championships — also will lead to higher traffic counts in that area, he noted.

Development at Lakewood Ranch, including the corporate park, figures into the mix as well, Paul explained. Instead of continually widening the lanes of I-75, he added, “Why not consider an additional overpass?”

That would be preferable to a piecemeal approach, he pointed out, with new intersection projects followed by road widening work. “It makes more sense from a regional transportation perspective.”

SMR was willing to work with the county on the long-range planning process, he continued, adding that Benderson Development Co. consultants and those handling the Fruitville Initiative also are collaborating with county staff on its proposals.



*Traffic maneuvers through a diverging diamond interchange at Interstate 44 and Route 13 in Springfield, MO, in 2011. Photo by Brandonrush via Wikimedia Commons*



## COSTS AND OTHER FACTORS

Based on his work with a private client in Gainesville, Paul said, he anticipated the four-lane overpass of I-75 and Cattlemen Road would cost between \$11 million and \$13 million — \$15 at most. In comparison, FDOT has suggested Sarasota County's expense would be \$25 million to upgrade roads necessary to handle the diverging diamond design.

When Commissioner Nora Patterson asked how the new overpass would tie back into existing highway infrastructure, Paul replied that a determination remains to be made about how best to handle that.

"If we're going to have to pony up some money," Paul told the board, "I'd much rather us explore an opportunity to add connectivity



*Jonathan Paul addresses the County Commission on Oct. 9. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*Construction continues on University Town Center off University Parkway. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



to our transportation network via a new overpass as opposed to converting University Parkway into a freeway.”

Further, during his meeting late this month with FDOT District One Secretary Billy Hattaway, Paul noted, he hoped to make the case “to not eight-lane or 10-lane [Fruitville

Road] but to look at something different and unique that establishes a walkable environment” as envisioned in the county’s comprehensive plan.

Requesting that meeting with the Fruitville Initiative as a focus, he pointed out, “gets us a seat with the district secretary” and makes

## East-West Overpass Project

EAST - WEST CONNECTOR

LAKEWOOD RANCH BLVD  
WENDELL KENT RD

LAKEWOOD RANCH BLVD

EMEN RD

*Sarasota County transportation planning staff will pitch to state transportation officials on a proposed east-west overpass of Interstate 75 and Cattlemen Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

it possible for staff to bring up the new overpass proposal, too.

Commissioner Christine Robinson told Paul that during a recent meeting of the [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization](#), almost all the county representatives voiced concern about the diverging diamond proposal, and “in no uncertain terms, [FDOT officials] told us, ‘We’re going forward; we don’t really care.’”

As FDOT pushes forward with its proposal, Paul said, staff would provide regular updates to the County Commission.

“I don’t think they’re pushing,” Robinson replied. “They’re driving a Mack truck.”

“They have no funding for it,” Paul told her. One revenue source FDOT is considering is making part of I-75 a toll road, he added.

It is up to Sarasota and Manatee counties to tell FDOT, “We don’t want our community looking like [what the department envisions],” Paul continued.

“Jonathan, it is refreshing to hear your concern about the University Parkway interchange,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta said. “But I can tell you right now, [based on the discussion at the last MPO meeting], the train’s left the station.”

Barbetta added that the diverging diamond proposal was especially troubling to him because the closest one is in Atlanta.

“It’s a dream for them,” he said of FDOT engineers. “But the answers [they provided during presentations] didn’t make you feel confident about it,” he pointed out. “We’re the guinea pig. If we’re not going to do this, we better stop it right away.”

Patterson agreed with Barbetta: “I also get the impression this will be a very difficult project to stop.”

According to Hattaway, Patterson said, traffic backs up routinely at the University Parkway interchange off I-75, “and that’s without the development that’s coming.”


“Your experience in Gainesville is very good,” Vice Chairman Charles Hines told Paul, given the fact that 90,000 to 100,000 people come into that city almost every other Saturday during the fall for University of Florida football games.

Once Benderson Park begins hosting major national and international rowing events, Hines continued, one highway accident could create significant problems in that area because of the existing configuration of the roads. “We have to have multiple options for people.”

Hines added, “Our board and staff really need to let DOT know our feelings.”

When Paul then suggested he could plan a formal discussion about the subject for the next set of commission meetings, so the board could draft a letter to FDOT, Robinson made that a motion. Barbetta seconded it.

The motion passed unanimously.

The County Commission will meet on Oct. 22 and 23 at the Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota. *The Sarasota News Leader* was unable to ascertain for certain, prior to deadline, whether an agenda item had been scheduled for one of those days. 



# CITY COMMISSION PREVIEW



*The City Commission will have to decide on the future of the former home of the G.WIZ museum in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **THE FUTURE OF THE G.WIZ BUILDING, THE STATE STREET GARAGE DESIGN AND A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT SHUFFLE ARE ON THE OCT. 21 AGENDA**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The Sarasota city commissioners should not be up late Monday, Oct. 21. But their heads might hurt from the decisions they will be asked to make. New software, money shuffling and homework for the following day's meeting with the County Commission will occupy their thoughts in the afternoon and evening. But their major decisions Monday will concern two buildings.

### **BUILDINGS OLD**

The departure of the Gulfcoast Wonder and Imagination Zone (G.WIZ) from the site of

the city's former bayfront library is a piece of old business that remains a headache. While the building's architecture is striking, so is its operating cost. Electricity alone averages \$4,500 per month. And the structure needs repairs — including another round of roof work — estimated to cost a minimum of \$150,000.

The 33,000-square-foot building sits on 16 acres along the bayfront. The property was conveyed by the State of Florida to Sarasota on the condition it never be sold or leased for any private use or purpose.



With G.WIZ gone, the building stands vacant and leaking. The city has turned the electricity back on, so it again is air conditioned. But what should the city do with it? That will be the question on Monday, as staff seeks commission guidance.

“The city has been approached by many interested parties to lease the building,” said city Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker in a memo. “[S]taff needs to discuss guidelines for the future use of the leasehold.”

The city’s Cultural District Master Plan offers several options, including making the property the site of a contemporary art museum; a modern art museum; an expanded Art Center Sarasota; an expanded Sarasota County History Center; a maritime museum; a film

center; or maritime, educational or cultural institution.

Not only the next use but also lease terms and rent structures need to be part of the new solicitation for proposals, Tucker said.

## BUILDINGS NEW

Considering the long stall on similar issues with the State Street parking garage project, Tucker could be in for a long wait on G.WIZ. The commission has dithered for at least four months on what it wants to see built at a city-owned parking lot on State Street.

The city is under contract with Pineapple Square to provide a 300-space parking garage by February 2015. The city would like some form of retail activity on the first floor of the



*Pineapple Square developers say the city must adhere to an agreement for a 300-space garage downtown.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*



structure, with parking above. The long and narrow surface lot at the site contains 139 parking spaces.

The city hired Realtor Ian Black to see if there was interest in expanding the project skyward, perhaps with offices or condominiums on higher floors. Black did receive five offers and eventually had a deal ready with Jebco Ventures Inc. for a mixed-use project. But with no final design decision, it went nowhere. The zoning allows 10 stories.

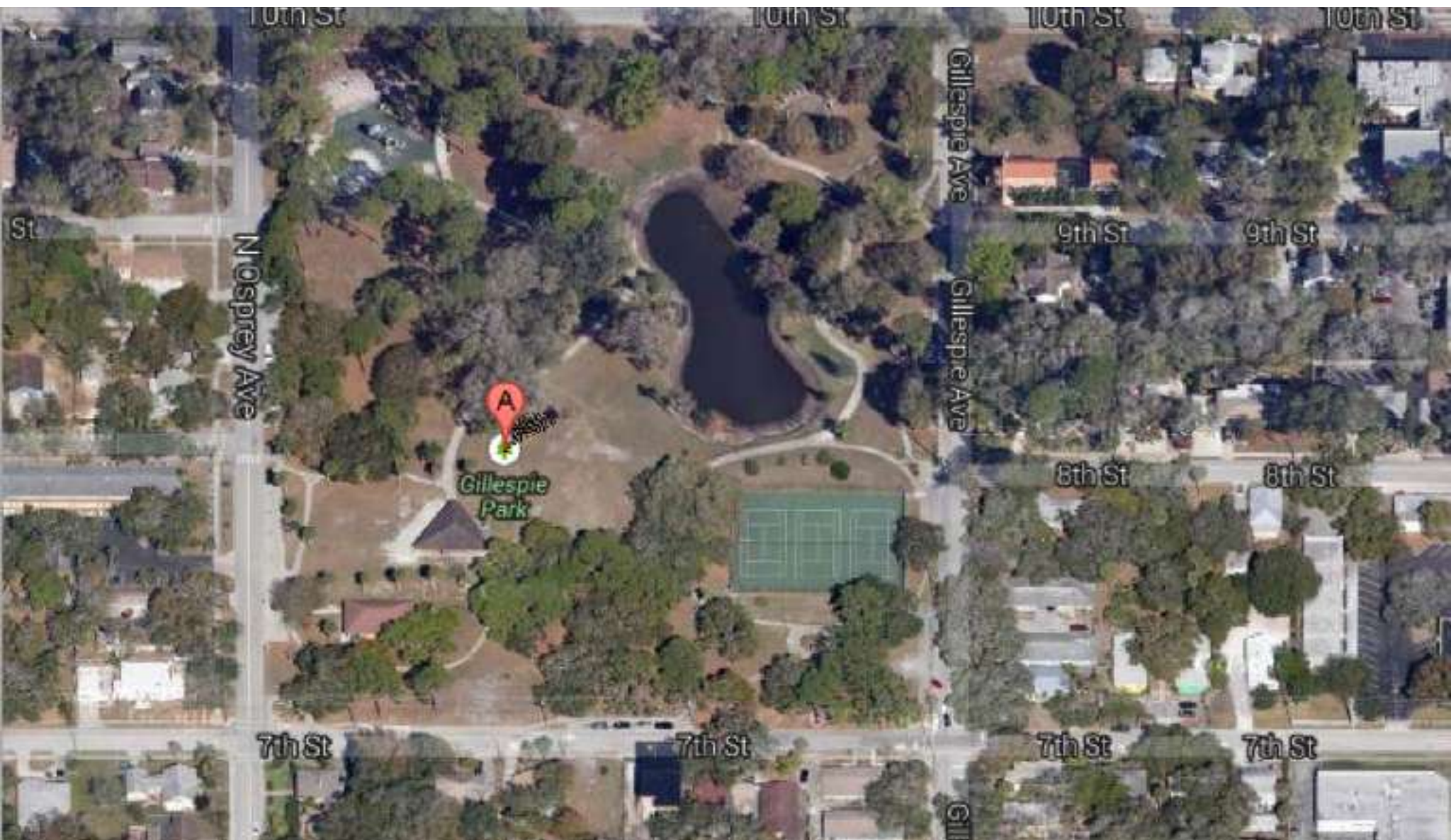
For months, the commission has deferred making a decision, with Mayor Shannon Snyder saying he did not think the deadline was firm. But Pineapple Square's attorney sent a letter to Snyder, the commission and City Manager Tom Barwin saying the deadline was real.

Monday, the commissioners will get a briefing from their city attorney and review four conceptual designs that range in height from five to 10 stories, with parking from 300 to 500 spaces. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking.

## NEW SOFTWARE

By now it is common knowledge that the installation of new software, while necessary, can be a painful and unexpectedly expensive experience. On the commission's consent agenda in the afternoon is consideration of two new software packages. One is for the Police Department; the other is for social service agencies helping the homeless.

The police want to spend \$850,000 for "integrated records management and mobile computing software." It is needed



*The City Commission on Monday will consider a proposal to purchase new playground equipment for Gillespie Park. Image from Google Maps*



to coordinate with the county-operated Consolidated Communication Center. The police say the system is in use by agencies throughout the country.

The system to be replaced was set up in 1988, and it is not compatible with the new county equipment. Once the software is up and running, the annual expense for the license will run \$79,000.

At the other end of the spectrum, the city will be authorizing a new software system to track the services provided to the homeless. The federal government requires that any agency receiving federal money for the homeless be linked into the Homeless Management Information Services (HMIS) database.

The HMIS gives an identifying number to each person whose name is entered into it, allowing the software to track the services the person receives. However, the success of that tracking depends on all agencies using the system. In Sarasota County, less than half of the social service agencies are tied into HMIS.

Sarasota would provide \$25,000 to the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness, part of a \$175,000 annual cost, to use the software. The balance of the funding is to come from Manatee County, various federal grants and service providers.

The Partnership is required to hold at least 24 training sessions on the software, so nonprofits can join the network and learn how to use

## Sarasota 2050 Policy - Revisited

### ***The New Urbanism tenet seeks to...***

**...implement an improved form of development that is :**

- **Compact**
- **Walk-able**
- **Connected**
- **Varied in housing**
- **Mixed Use**

**and would not be classified as continued urban sprawl.**





the database. Otherwise, the federal funding will disappear.

## MONEY SHUFFLE

Almost every city agenda has at least one item moving funds from one account to another to keep the books straight. On Monday, the city will be asked to move (or lose) \$408,000 in Community Development Block Grant money.

The sum was to be used for a new athletic field west of the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex in north Sarasota. However, the ground was found to be environmentally contaminated.

So the city will be asked to spread the money around. Staff suggests \$200,000 be spent for new playground equipment in Gillespie Park. Neighbors say the current equipment is broken and unsafe.

More than \$100,000 would be spent on drainage improvements to Goodrich Avenue, and \$108,000 would be devoted to “street improvements to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and adjacent streets.”

## PONDERING 2050

The commissioners always hope for an early end to the evening session. But their final item could go until dawn and beyond, depending on how deeply they want to understand Sarasota County’s [2050 Plan](#).


A day after their regular meeting, Oct. 22, the city commissioners will sit down at 2 p.m. with the county commissioners for a joint meeting. (See the related story in this issue.) On the agenda is 2050. The city has twice asked the county to send a planner to brief the commissioners on it. The county has refused.

So on Monday evening, a senior city planner will attempt to lead the city commissioners through years of history and thousands of pages of red tape in the search for understanding.

Not only is the current plan complex, but county commissioners want to revise it. They have had strong pressure from developers — and campaign contributors — to amend the plan to make it less stringent.

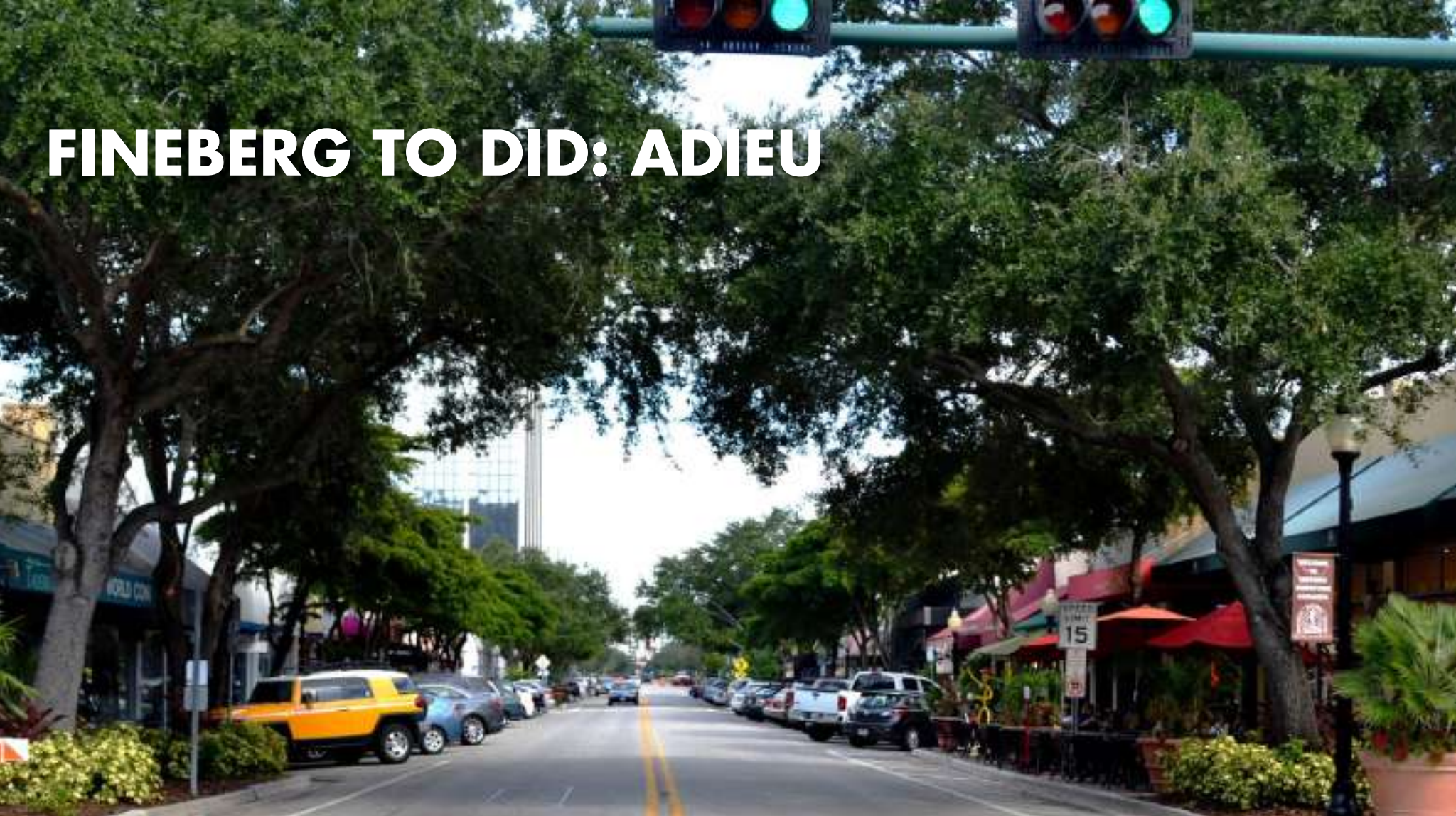
The city commissioners will have the opportunity to read 174 pages of backup material full of strikeouts and additions. For example, the old plan called for creation of “villages” with distinct centers of commerce surrounded by neighborhoods. Developers do not like that model. It can be argued that they would prefer a strip mall on the edge of a suburb. What follows is an example of the tweaking that has been proposed:

Eliminate this sentence: “A village center shall be separated from the edge of the developed area by at least one neighborhood and by no less than 1,000 feet from the edge of the developed area.” Replace it with this: “A village center is intended to serve the daily and weekly retail, office, civic and government use and services needs of village residents, and shall be located and designed so as to be easily accessible by all village residents.”

While the city commissioners will never vote on the 2050 Plan, it could have a dramatic impact on the city’s future. If developers are allowed to return to their suburban-sprawl-over-cow-pastures model, with strip malls dotting major roadways, the city would lack any economic impetus for infill and urban improvement. 



# FINEBERG TO DID: ADIEU



*The Ellis building looms in the background as drivers head east on Main Street at Lemon Avenue.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## MEMBERS OF THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT ARE WORKING TO HOLD ONTO A BUILDING THAT REPRESENTS ONE OF THEIR LARGEST SOURCES OF REVENUE

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

The owners of one of the largest buildings — and hence one of the biggest sources of tax revenue — in the Downtown Improvement District (DID) want out.

The high-rise building on the northeast corner of Main Street and Orange Avenue (formerly the main Sarasota home of Bank of America) is owned by Benderson Development Co.

Larry Fineberg, who manages the building

for Benderson, sent an email on Oct. 14 to DID Operations Manager John Moran. “As the past five years have shown, the needs of the area east of Orange are different than the areas west of Orange, and the DID should recognize that it’s not fair

“ *This is a unique situation. To my knowledge, no property owner within a special district of the city has ever requested removal from the district.*

Mike Connolly  
Deputy City Attorney

that we are included solely as a funding source. If the DID will not initiate the request for the creation of the ordinance [to remove the building from the



district], we will take the actions ourselves. Thanks,” wrote Fineberg.

While the email talks about “the past five years,” it was Oct. 1 when Fineberg came to the DID board and asked for a last-minute \$8,500 change in plans regarding new landscaping around the building. He was told he had been furnished with the landscaping plan in June, and it would take time to get a change order for the project.

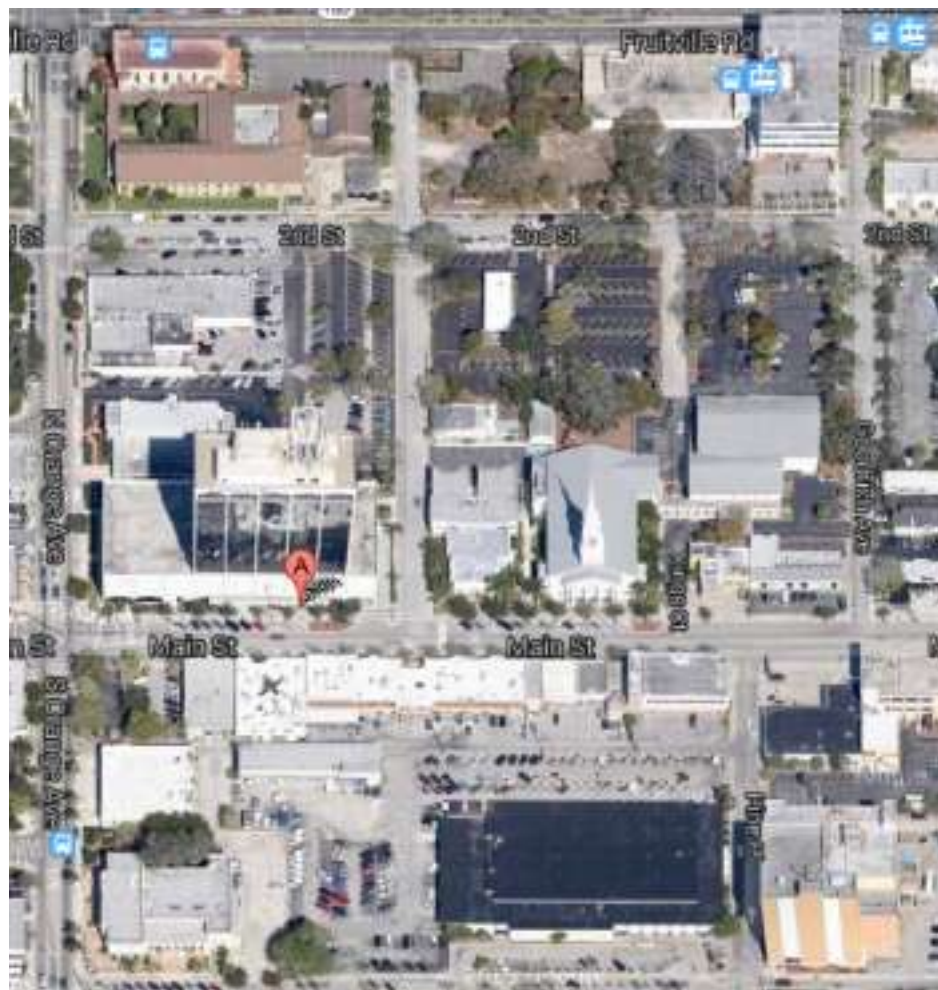
Chief City Planner Steve Stancel said during that meeting, “If Larry fronts the money, the commission could refund it at a later date.” Fineberg replied, “I don’t trust the commission.”

After this exchange, Fineberg said he had another meeting to attend and stormed out of the room.

Benderson pays \$15,435.40 every year to the DID as its portion of the district’s property surtax. Fineberg served on the DID board as a founding member.

After the Oct. 1 discussion, Fineberg sent Moran an email that afternoon saying, “[T]his will formalize our conversation whereby Sarasota Ellis Associates, LLC as owner of properties located at 1605 Main Street and 1670 Second Street request that these properties be removed from the Downtown Improvement District.”

Moran forwarded Fineberg’s email to the City Attorney’s Office. A week later, Deputy City Attorney Mike Connolly responded, “This is a unique situation. To my knowledge, no property owner within a special district of the city has ever requested removal from the district.”



*A Benderson Development Co. subsidiary owns the building at 1605 Main St. Image from Google Maps*

He said it would take an ordinance to amend the district’s boundaries to exclude the Benderson subsidiary’s property, called Sarasota Ellis Associates LLC.

The item came up as the last thing on the DID’s Oct. 15 agenda, when members were furnished with copies of the email exchanges among Fineberg, Moran and Connolly.

After the meeting, DID member Dr. Mark Kauffman called his former colleague Fineberg to work out a *quid pro quo*. The details could be ironed out at a meeting scheduled for Friday, Oct. 18, with Stancel, Moran and Fineberg.

In effect, it is the deal Stancel outlined on Oct. 1. Benderson would pay \$5,700 for the change to the landscaping (basically for a concrete pour instead of new plantings).



Next year when work begins on the roundabout at Orange and Main, Benderson would receive some compensation in return for the payment. No details were offered.

If an agreement is reached, Feinberg would withdraw his request to pull the high-rise building from the DID.

## OUTSIDE DINING AND DRINKING

The DID also heard an appeal this week by the manager of the Gator Bar, located at Lemon Avenue and Main Street, to change the city's sidewalk dining ordinance. Right now establishments can serve alcohol at a sidewalk table only if they offer food.

The Gator — one of the city's oldest bars — would like to serve just alcohol.

The manager of Parker's Books next door also would like a sidewalk table or two, for people to play chess or backgammon.

To make those actions legal, a change of the sidewalk dining ordinance would be necessary, said City Engineer Alex DavisShaw. "If we open it up to a bookstore, what other uses will come out of the woodwork for a permit?" asked DID member Kauffman.

The request will be discussed further at the board's next meeting. 



*Construction of widened sidewalks and bulb-outs was under way in front of the Gator Club in downtown Sarasota in July. Photo by Norman Schimmel*





# A FACEOFF OF BOARDS

*Among other topics, the city and county commissioners on Oct. 22 will share their thoughts about a trip to observe best practices in the city of Nashville, TN. Photo by kaldari via Wikimedia Commons*

## THE SARASOTA CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS WILL MEET ON OCT. 22 TO TALK ABOUT THE LIDO BEACH RENOURISHMENT AND THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Sports and politics have a lot in common. Sometimes there is a script, akin to a down-pat stump speech or a well-practiced pass play in football. But sometimes the action can get heated and chaotic, and it always takes place live, in real time.

One of the more interesting “matches” is coming up Tuesday afternoon, Oct. 22, when a local “rivalry” resumes between the City and County commissions of Sarasota. Two members of the latter board — County Commissioners Carolyn Mason and Nora Patterson — are former city commissioners.

And City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo is running for a County Commission seat.

How they iron out their differences will be a good test of their basic political skills — because despite their differences, they need each other badly.

### BEACH RENOURISHMENT

The city has a well-advanced plan to use “county” sand to repair the erosion and storm damage on city-owned Lido Beach. And this is not a one-time deal. The city has worked on a plan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



for a half-century proposal to use soft white sand from Big Pass.

On the west coast of Florida, a current called the littoral drift pushes sand ever southward, day after day. It is the reason all passes “hook” to the south as the steady current exerts its pressure. Occasionally, the passes are dredged to maintain navigation.

However, the county residents who live on Siesta Key know Big Pass is totally natural. It has never been dredged. Its ebbs and flows have not been massaged by the machines of man. While the Army Corps swears taking sand from the northern side of the ebb shoal will not make one grain’s difference at the county’s most famous and popular Siesta Beach, residents are extremely wary. And they vote.

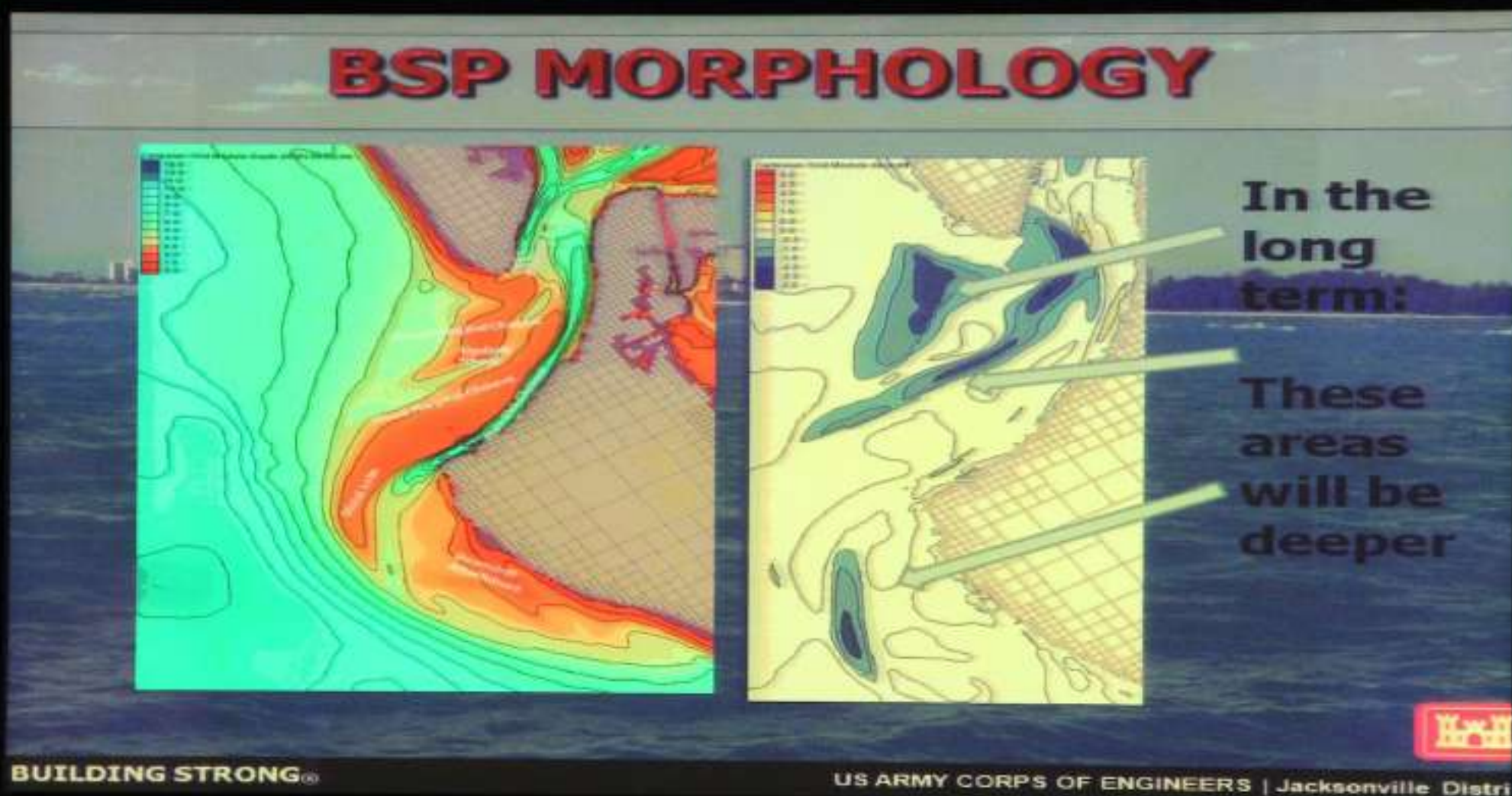
A significant part of the funding for the Lido Beach renourishment will come from a

revenue pot accumulated through the county-administered Tourist Development Tax. The city annually provides a least one-quarter of the total tax revenue. One stated purpose of the tax is to pay for beach repair and renourishment, an increasingly expensive proposition.

Nothing could better demonstrate how the city and county can cooperate, using the tourist tax revenue to keep the city’s beach attractive and thus continue to attract more visitors to the area. But will the county blithely give away that Siesta-bound sand?

## THE QUARTER-BILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION

Next up on the afternoon agenda is an update from a committee looking at the possible extension of the city’s downtown Community Redevelopment Agency, or CRA. It is a



*Boaters and Siesta Key residents are worried about the effects on Big Pass — and Siesta itself — if the pass is dredged. File photo*



financial device to fight slum and blight. In 1986, those terms could have described much of downtown. Today, few would describe the downtown area in such a manner. The CRA will expire in 2016.

If the financial scheme is extended another 30 years, it could result in the shift of possibly \$250 million from the city and county budgets. A little more than half of that amount would come from Sarasota County coffers over the three decades, and it would contribute to what many now call the economic heart of the county.

But other parts of the county are looking for help, too. Some would like their own CRA. But when the extension committee members started thinking of creating a model CRA ordinance, the County Commission fell into an uproar. One commissioner called for the committee chairman to resign, so he did.

The new chairman does not use the word “model” anymore, and he will be briefing the two commissions on where his committee is headed at this point.

To say the results are of interest to city commissioners is a great understatement.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This agenda item specifically says “efforts by the City of Sarasota,” but city commissioners might want to ask some questions about the county’s efforts in light of recent revelations about significant economic development grants that figuratively turned to dust.

City property owners pay county taxes; therefore, improving city property values is in both commissions’ interest. Earlier this year, the County Commission demanded some changes in city zoning, especially along the North Tamiami Trail.

The county commissioners wanted those changes to increase density to support a bus rapid transit system they were proposing. The city polished off a three-year effort to establish an “overlay district” in the area, but it did not increase the density. Thereafter, the county dropped its plans for a bus rapid transit system. Were the two actions related?



*The County Commission sits in session in March. File photo*



The Tuesday agenda could be called a stealthy one, as it did not show up by *The Sarasota News Leader's* deadline on the usual city or county website pages for future agendas. Thus, there is no “backup” material for any of the items; neither reporters nor citizens can tell exactly what is up for discussion.

We know at one point the agenda included a discussion about homelessness, but that “hot potato” has been dropped.

## THE OL' 2050 PLAN

Critics say the County Commission is knuckling under to developer (and campaign contributor) demands to loosen up the planning and zoning rules east of the interstate. After years of haggling in the past, the 2050 Plan abolished the old pasture-to-suburb model of development.

In its place, the 2050 Plan called for creation of communities instead of more tract housing. But the plan is up for significant revision. When the city commissioners asked for a briefing on the proposal to amend the 2050


Plan, they were repeatedly rebuffed by their county colleagues.

The day before the joint meeting, the city commissioners will receive a briefing from a city planner about the county proposals — with 176 pages of documents for them to read. The city has a dog in this fight, because if development returns to the cheaper pastureland-to-Levittown model, redevelopment and infill initiatives in the city limits could be starved for capital.

## JUNKET DEBRIEF

The final agenda item is a “presentation on the takeaways from the City-to-City Nashville visit.” Will the boards compare new tattoos? Share memories of the Grand Ole Opry?

No, this was a serious visit, with a number of governmental and non-governmental visitors looking at best practices and good ideas. We will see and hear what they learned.

The Oct. 22 meeting will begin at 2 p.m. in the county's Think Tank on the third floor of the Administration Center on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota. 



*The City Commission conducts a meeting in September. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



# PREP WORK CONTINUES



*The work site for new Lift Station 87 was mostly bare on Oct. 4. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **BORINGS ARE BEING TAKEN IN THE EFFORT TO MAKE SURE THE REVIVED LIFT STATION 87 PROJECT SUCCEEDS**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Exploratory drilling is under way in the Avondale neighborhood of Sarasota to find out what is underground that stopped a previous attempt to build a “micro-tunnel” under Hudson Bayou.

The city has spent \$8 million so far on its Lift Station 87 project. The previous contractor figuratively threw up his hands and walked off the job. The heart of the plan is the creation of this structure to move about one-third of the city’s total

sewage towards the treatment plant on 12th Street.

The new contractor, McKim & Creed, is taking a two-fold approach to discovering what went wrong the first time. It is conducting geological tests and working up a series of technical memos with city staff to form the

basis of the revived project. The aim is to tunnel underground instead of digging up huge swaths of territory to put in gigantic pipes.

“*We’ve saturated the city with requests for information.*”

Robert Garland  
Project Manager  
McKim & Creed





“We’ve saturated the city with requests for information,” said Robert Garland, project manager for the contractor.

Work began Oct. 7 and continued this week. A subcontractor — Staheli Trenchless Consultants — is supervising the borings necessary to study the underground geology.

Staheli Engineering Geologist Laura Wetter said going back to 2009, 36 borings had been taken in the area. “Of all [of them], it was only the last set that was done that’s appropriate,” she added. “[The] others don’t have all the information we’d look for to design a micro-tunnel project.”

The new borings will continue into next week. None is planned in the bayou itself. She noted

the use of ground-penetrating radar is stymied by the saltwater in the bayou. “We might look at seismic refraction,” she said. That is a sonar-like system that injects sound waves into the ground and then evaluates the echo.

Borings are planned at the corner of Mound Street (U.S. 41) and Osprey Avenue as well as in Luke Wood Park. “And last, we are looking at two borings closer to Lift Station 897 in case we need to deepen the gravity sewer,” Wetter pointed out.

Before they drill, the workers are using a hand auger to penetrate down 4 feet, just in case there are utility pipes or lines that are not on the drawings at City Hall. The land under the city of Sarasota is riddled with water and gas



*Some pipes are stacked at the lift station site off Mound Street, across from Sarasota Ford. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



lines, electric and cable lines and other buried utilities.


One fact of note emerged during a Monday, Oct. 14, public meeting about the project. A key specification relative to the design and construction of the lift station is its capacity. The facility will be in operation for decades, and it must be able to accommodate future growth. Garland said he had checked with the city planning staff, and no growth is projected for the south side of town in the coming decades.

*The Sarasota News Leader* subsequently checked with David Smith, the “keeper” of the city’s comprehensive plan. He agreed with Garland, saying the future land use category remains primarily single-family housing in the area that will be served by the new lift station. “It’s built out,” he said. Any condominium

complex or other higher-density development would require a change in the plan.

The design of the new lift station has built-in excess capacity already, because when the city experiences heavy rainfalls, the storm-water infiltrates the city’s old sewer pipes and adds to the flow.

A week of rainstorms in late September dumped millions of gallons of water into the sewer system via infiltration. The city’s Utilities Department has an ongoing sewer pipe upgrade project, replacing the old pipes with new ones.

The city is building the new lift station because the old one fails spectacularly. It has dumped sewage into Hudson Bayou and then into the bay. The city is under a state order to stop that dumping. 

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*Bee Ridge Park will host a fall festival on Oct. 19. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## **COMMUNITY INVITED TO GRAND OPENING OF BEE RIDGE GARDEN**

The public is invited to a fall festival celebrating the grand opening of Sarasota County's newest community garden, Sarasota County has announced.

The festival will be held at Bee Ridge Park, located at 4430 S. Lockwood Ridge Road, on Saturday, Oct. 19, from 10 a.m. to noon. The free, family-friendly event will feature such activities as carnival games, face painting, a karate demonstration and a composting workshop taught by experts from Sarasota County Extension, a news release says.

The plans for the community garden, which is located near the intersection of Lockwood Ridge and Wilkinson roads, began in early 2012 when neighborhood members came together to design the garden and apply for grant funding for necessary supplies, Stacy Spriggs, community and school gardens coordinator for Sarasota County Extension, explained in the news release.

"This grassroots project took a little over a year to implement as volunteers obtained donations and constructed the various



features of the garden,” Spriggs pointed out. “It took a lot of dedication and hard work for the group involved with the project to reach their goal. Twenty-five members are now actively planting their plots and enjoying the fruits of their labor.”

She added, “The community garden features individual raised-bed garden plots where members can tend vegetables alongside their neighbors. During the summer, there will be bright sunflowers stretched skyward along the garden’s border, greeting passersby.”

Community gardens have been sprouting up in Sarasota since 1995 and are thriving thanks to the hard work of dedicated participants, Spriggs continued. Many of them have received support through the Sarasota County Neighborhood Grants program, the release notes. “Sarasota County Extension provides administrative support and educational assistance, teaching gardeners how to grow vegetables, manage pests and even prepare harvests,” it adds.

For more information and locations of community parks, call 861-9900 or visit <http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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## **SARASOTA COUNTY SET TO BEGIN EXTENDED MOWING CYCLES**

Sarasota County has adjusted its schedule of mowing cycles for specific areas of county-owned roadways, medians and other properties as of Oct. 1, the county has announced.

The County Commission recently approved the adjusted mowing schedule in an effort to reduce expenditures.

“We examined our mowing schedules during peak and off-peak growing seasons, locations of our service areas, common management practices of other communities and overall expenditures when developing the proposed plan that the County Commission approved in September,” said Spencer Anderson, director of the county’s Field Services Department, in a news release. “The more heavily traveled urban rights of way will see the most attention, while the less traveled rights of way will see an extended mowing schedule during off-peak growing seasons. The extended schedule is anticipated to result in minimal changes to the appearance of all county-maintained rights of way.”

“Adjusting the mowing schedules is expected to save about \$550,000 each year and allow county staff and mowing contractors to better manage highly visible areas,” the release adds.

Urban Maintenance Zones will see three mowing cycles per month in June, July, August, September and October; two cycles per month in November, March, April and May; and one cycle per month in December, January and February, the release adds. Such areas are generally those considered to be longer county roads and adjacent stormwater facilities, with wide rights of way, that serve as north-south and east-west connectors.

Residential Maintenance Zones will see one mowing cycle per month in May, June, July and August, but only one cycle every two months in September, October, November, December, January, February, March and April, the release continues. Those areas generally include undeveloped county-owned residential lots, shorter road sections and



stormwater facilities typically located within residential single-family-home neighborhoods, the release notes.

Rural Maintenance Zones will see two mowing cycles per month in June, July, August and September; one cycle per month in April and May; and one cycle every two months in October, November, December, January

February and March, the release says. Those areas are generally considered to be the longer roads and adjacent stormwater facilities, with wide rights of way, that serve eastern portions of Sarasota County.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000, or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net).



*A Mega Mowers employee trims county right of way, a service that will be offered less often in coming months. File photo*



## U.S. 301 LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS UNDER WAY IN CITY

Landscape enhancements are under way along U.S. 301 stretching from Mound Street to Myrtle Street, the City of Sarasota has announced.

A portion of Mound Street, north of the U.S. 301 split, also will be landscaped, a news release says.

The improvements will include new trees, ground cover and shrubbery, the release adds. Irrigation systems also will be installed and brick pavers will be placed along select medians, the release notes.

Periodic lane closures will be necessary during the project, which is scheduled to be completed in December, the release continues.

Designated trees will be transplanted. Additionally, “trees identified by a certified arborist as diseased or unhealthy will be mitigated,” the release says.

The \$842,000 project is being funded through the Local Option Sales Tax II, which was approved by voters throughout Sarasota County in 1997, the release points out.



*An aerial map shows U.S. 301's split at Mound Street just south of downtown Sarasota. Image from Google Maps*



## **SCHOOL BOARD APPROVES 3.25-PERCENT RAISE FOR TEACHERS, STAFF**

During its regular meeting on Oct. 15, the School Board of Sarasota County approved contracts with the Sarasota Classified/Teachers Association that includes a 3.25-percent salary increase for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

The contracts and raises, which were ratified by instructional employees and classified (support) staff, are retroactive to the start of the district's fiscal year on July 1, a district news release says. Ninety-seven percent of the approximately 3,100 employees who voted approved ratification of the contracts, the release notes. "As it traditionally does, the School Board extended the raise to school-based and district administrators. It is the first across-the-board increase in the salary schedules for district employees in five years," the release adds.

The increase will be funded primarily by \$6.3 million from the state, which the Florida Legislature mandated for that specific purpose, the release points out. "The School Board will add \$1.5 million to that amount to allow all employees to receive a 3.25-percent raise."

In the event the Legislature does not continue the special salary appropriation, the salary schedules will be reduced by 3.25 percent in the future, the release says.

The parties also agreed to restore the amount of life insurance for employees to \$50,000. It had been reduced to \$25,000.

The increase was negotiated with a new insurance provider at no additional cost to the School Board, the release notes.

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## **BOOTS TOP BADGES IN ANNUAL COUNTY BLOOD DRIVE**

Crews from the Sarasota County Fire Department and municipal fire departments around the county have won this year's annual Boots and Badges Blood Drive to aid Shriner's Hospital.

The winning team claims the Boots and Badges trophy until the following year, along with "bragging rights and the heartfelt thanks from the thousands of people needing blood," a county news release says. This year, the winning team also received 20 tickets to a Tampa Bay Rays baseball game. The Boots donated

those tickets to Sarasota Sahib Shrine for its raffle to benefit the Shriner's Children Burn Unit, the release adds.

The Shriner's Children Hospital burn unit in Galveston, TX, received \$290 from the proceeds of the tickets.

"The Boots and Badges Drive not only generated good will and much needed blood for the community, but also provided additional assistance by the donation of these tickets," said Capt. Susan Pearson of the Sarasota County Fire Department in the release.

# **Take Your Time You Have All Week**

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## GET YOUR TECH QUESTIONS ANSWERED AT TECHNOLOGY BREAKFAST

David Steinbach of Vertex Inc. and Ari Weinstein of I-net Consulting will be the guest speakers for a *Technology Breakfast* at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 20, at Temple Emanu-El in Sarasota, the Temple Emanu-El Brotherhood has announced.

All members of the community are welcome.

Steinbach and Weinstein will discuss “technology that we use every day,” a news release says, including the following topics:

- What is the Cloud?
- How to use and understand storage devices.
- How computers have changed in the past 10 years.
- The differences among Windows XP, 7 and 8.
- Mac versus IBM.

The \$5 admission fee includes a bagel breakfast. Temple Emanu-El is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

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## GRANT OFFERS CITY OF NORTH PORT HOMEOWNERS ASSISTANCE

Sarasota County has received a Disaster Recovery Grant in the amount of \$156,000 to aid eligible City of North Port homeowners with the installation of hurricane shutters or impact windows, the county has announced.

The Sarasota County Office of Housing and Community Development will administer the program of monetary assistance for homeowners, a news release says. Registration, which is under way, will continue Oct. 19.

To register, a homeowner must complete a form and place it in a receptacle located at one of the following addresses:

- North Port City Hall, 4970 City Hall Blvd.
- North Port Social Services, 6919 Outreach Way.
- North Port Senior Center, 4940 Pan American Blvd.

“Homeowners over the age of 62 and homeowners with disabilities will have priority in the program,” said Donald Hadsell, director of housing and community development, in the release. “Registration does not guarantee participation in the program.”

A homeowner must use the funds to either cover all of his house’s windows with

hurricane shutters or impact-resistant windows, the release points out. The maximum assistance is \$10,000. If the cost for the installation exceeds that amount, the release continues, a homeowner in the program may be eligible for a zero percent interest-deferred mortgage with Sarasota County.

Grant program eligibility requirements follow:

- The home must be located in the City of North Port.
- If the home is located in a flood zone, the homeowner must have flood insurance for the property.
- Homes must be single-family, owner-occupied residences with a maximum value of \$136,000 as determined by a Sarasota County property appraiser.
- Total household income must be at or below 50 percent of median income adjusted by household size. For a one-person household, that is \$21,000; for two people, \$24,000; for three people, \$27,000; and for four people, \$29,950.

For more information about the program, call 951-3640.



## ALLEY BECOMES TEST CASE FOR LOW-IMPACT STORMWATER PROJECT

With city officials' eye on sustainability and low impact development, an alley in downtown Sarasota has become "a test case for an innovative way to improve stormwater quality," the City of Sarasota has announced.

A new stormwater filtration system was installed underground when scheduled improvements were made to the alley behind Main Street from Lemon Avenue to Central Avenue, a news release says.

"Urban stormwater runoff is the third largest water pollution source," explained Alison Albee, City of Sarasota environmental specialist, in the release. "That runoff is untreated and includes grease, oil, chemicals, debris and nutrients. And, it flows untreated into our

waterways and ultimately into Sarasota Bay. The goal of this pilot filtration system is to clean that runoff before it reaches the storm drain."

The system is designed to capture the first one-half inch of rainfall, and the pollutants, which wash down the alley. The runoff will go through a 4-foot by 40-foot area of permeable block pavers (PaveDrain®) and then filter through a system of rocks and sand, the release explains. The water will flow through a perforated pipe encased with a filter sock before being deposited as filtered water into the storm drain, the release notes.

"Many pollutants, including oil and grease, spill into alleys from businesses and flow into



*A crew works on a pilot project for an innovative stormwater program in downtown Sarasota. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*



storm drains untreated,” the release continues. “It is hoped this pilot program will reduce many of those pollutants.”

City staff also met with nearby business owners and explained how their disposal of materials can impact the community’s stormwater system, the release notes.

“This demonstration project is the latest example of our community’s leadership and commitment to restoring the Sarasota Bay

estuary to its pristine condition,” said City Manager Tom Barwin in the release.

Titan Block, the distributor of PaveDrain® in Florida, donated the paver blocks for the pilot program, the release adds.

Over the next year, tests will be conducted to determine the efficacy of the program. Already, representatives of other jurisdictions “have expressed an interest in visiting the alley and learning more about the stormwater filtration system,” the release concludes.



*Permeable pavers cover a rock and sand filtration system. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*



## PUBLIC INVITED TO VIEW EXTRAORDINARY HOLOCAUST FILMS

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) in Sarasota welcomes the public to its second, four-part series, *Extraordinary Holocaust Films*.

The series will begin on Oct. 28 and continue on Mondays through Nov. 25. Post-film discussion will be facilitated by Irene Mirkovic, Florida Holocaust Museum docent and Lifelong Learning Academy instructor for Holocaust Film Studies, a news release says.

The films will be presented as follows:

- Oct. 28: *O Porraimos*, about Europe's Gypsies in the Holocaust (documentary, 2001; 57 minutes). *O Porraimos* is the first American-made film to blend post-war interviews of Roma survivors with actual photographs and films taken during the Holocaust era by the German Reich Department of Racial Hygiene.
- Nov. 4: *Korczak* (docudrama, 1990; 1 hour and 58 minutes). This Polish-made film, directed by Andrzej Wajda and Agnieszka Holland, tells the real story of Janusz



*Physician Janusz Korczak's orphanage is still in operation in Poland. Photo by Simon Cygielski for Wikimedia Commons*



Korczak, an author, physician and orphanage director, who refused to abandon his charges and did not flinch in the face of the Nazi menace.

- Nov. 18: *The Music Box* (narrative, 1989; 2 hours and 5 minutes). This American movie was directed by celebrated filmmaker Costa-Gavras, famous for his political suspense releases. It tells the story of a Chicago attorney who agrees to defend her Hungarian-immigrant father against indictments for war crimes he committed 50 years earlier.
- Nov. 25: *Hiding and Seeking* (documentary, 2004; 1 hour and 25 minutes). This American production is a shining example of post-Holocaust faith and tolerance, relating the true story of a Jewish father who takes his two adult sons back to Poland to try to find the Christian family who hid their grandfather from the Nazis during the Holocaust. He also wants to make good on a promise made by the grandfather to his saviors 50 years earlier.

All films will be shown on Mondays at 1:30 p.m. at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota.

The films are free to CHJ members; admission for non-members will be \$5 for individual films or \$15 for all four, the release says. Light refreshments will be served.

For more information, call 929-7771 or visit [www.chj-sarasota.org](http://www.chj-sarasota.org).

Please note there will be no film presentation on Monday, Nov. 11, because of the Veterans Day holiday.



Irene Mirkovic/Contributed photo

## CLARIFICATION

The early version of the *Transit Talks* article in the Oct. 11 issue did not include the information that the joint meeting of the Sarasota and Manatee county commissions, which was scheduled for Oct. 15, was cancelled.



## WALGREENS STORES RAISE \$10,000 FOR SUNCOAST CHARITIES

Walgreens District 53 recently announced it had raised \$10,772 for Suncoast Charities for Children through donation “scannables” at cashier checkout stations.

Combined with other in-store fundraising promotional efforts held in support of the 29th Annual Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival in June and July, the total presented to the charity was \$32,000, a news release notes.

“We are proud to support Suncoast Charities for Children,” said District Manager Mark Burdzinski in the release. “The Super Boat Grand Prix Festival is one of the biggest festivals for our community and enables our

employees to be directly involved with so many of the events.”

The top three store managers who sold donation “scannables” at checkouts were Sandra Carver, Leo Hoover and Laura Walker, the release adds.

Suncoast Charities for Children supports children, teens and adults with special needs, as well as their families, in the Sarasota, Venice and North Port communities, the release points out.

The 30th Annual Suncoast Super Boat Grand Prix Festival is scheduled for June 28 to July 6, 2014. For details visit [suncoastoffshore.org](http://suncoastoffshore.org).



*(From left) Brittany Parker, Lucy Nicandri, Leo Hoover, Laura Walker and Mark Burdzinski gather for the Walgreens presentation. Contributed photo by James Corwin Johnson*



## 22 GRADUATE FROM CITIZENS LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office graduated 22 people from the 40th class of the Citizens Law Enforcement Academy (CLEA) during a ceremony on the night of Oct. 10, the office has announced.

CLEA, which is held one night a week for 11 weeks, gives citizens an inside look at Sheriff's Office operations, a news release explains. The course includes sessions on jail operations, courthouse security, criminal investigations and the SWAT and Forensics units. There are demonstrations by K9 and

Mounted Patrol officers and activities such as how to conduct felony traffic stops, training in firearms and a ride-along with a deputy on patrol, the release adds.

The Sheriff's Office has conducted CLEA twice a year for the past 20 years, with some 800 citizens graduating. The next class, scheduled for spring 2014, is full, but applications are being accepted for the fall session, which will begin in August. Visit [www.SarasotaSheriff.org](http://www.SarasotaSheriff.org). Under the Crime Prevention tab, click "Get Involved."



*The members of the 40th Citizens Law Enforcement Academy celebrate their graduation with representatives of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office. Contributed photo*



## SWAT CHALLENGE RAISES \$25,000 FOR FLORIDA SHERIFFS YOUTH RANCH


Thanks to outstanding community support, Sheriff Tom Knight's fourth annual Corporate SWAT Challenge raised \$25,000 for the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranch, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has announced.

On Saturday, Oct. 12, 10 teams from area businesses spent the day at Knight Trail Park in Nokomis competing in five tactical events of skill, endurance and strategy, a news release explains. "The Corporate SWAT Challenge was designed so participants would have fun in a challenging but team-building atmosphere while raising money for a great cause."

Sarasota Dental Group took first place for the second year in a row, followed by Constant Motions Protection & Fitness in second place and Honest Air of Venice in third, the release notes. The other competing teams

were the Daiquiri Deck, Mosaic, Suncoast Motorsports, BMW of Sarasota, Macy's, First Step of Sarasota and SNN Local News.

The event was sponsored by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation and Macy's, with additional support from Sarasota Trophy, Publix Supermarkets, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Mi Pueblo, Caragiulos, Nancy's Bar-B-Q, Owen's Fish Camp, New Balance, Fleet Feet Sarasota, Molly's Boutique, Beads and Dangles, Trader Joe's, Chick-fil-A, Sarasota Memorial Hospital, Jackson & Associates, Flat Branch Associates and Ellijay Associates, the release adds.

Since its inception in 2010, Sheriff Tom Knight's Corporate SWAT Challenge has provided \$100,000 to the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranch. For information on the ranch's programs, visit [www.youthranches.org](http://www.youthranches.org). 



*Sheriff Tom Knight presents a check to Craig Morrison of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches. Contributed photo*





*Marijuana plants grow in a house in North Port. Photo courtesy Sarasota County Sheriff's Office*

## MAN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH GROW HOUSE IN SARASOTA

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has dismantled a grow house operation in Sarasota and arrested the man responsible for it, the office announced on Oct. 17.

After detectives with the Special Investigations Section obtained a search warrant for the house at 4548 Gallup Ave., they found a grow operation in two rooms, a news release says. "They seized 31 marijuana plants that weighed nearly 38 pounds," it adds.

The grow house operator, Yunesquis Gomez Torres, 32, of 3527 Gladstone St., Sarasota,



*Deputies seized 31 marijuana plants that were growing in the house at 4548 Gallup Ave. in North Port. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office*



drove into the neighborhood but fled the scene when he spotted the law enforcement activity, the release continues. When deputies tried to pull him over, at one point, Torres swerved to try to hit a deputy's vehicle, the release adds. Torres was stopped and taken into custody on Cattlemen Road just south of Bee Ridge Road.

Torres is charged with Trafficking in Cannabis, Cultivation of Cannabis and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. He is also charged with Reckless Fleeing to Elude and Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer.



*Yunesquis Gomez Torres/Contributed photo*

## **SEX OFFENDER WHO FLED OREGON ARRESTED IN SARASOTA**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a convicted sex offender "who absconded from Oregon more than 16 years ago and moved around the country before settling in Florida, never registering in any state," the office has reported.

Deputy Judy Williams responded to an alarm call on Oct. 15 on Lords Avenue in Sarasota, a news release says. There she found Sam Brice Brock, 64, who had been living at the address and caring for the resident's children, the release adds.

"Call it a gut feeling, but Williams requested a warrant check, which came back negative," the release continues. However, further research showed he was a Sexual Offender. "It was determined that Brock, who has many aliases, was convicted in 1995 of Sexual Abuse and being a Felon in Possession of a Weapon and sentenced to 26 months in prison," the release notes. After his release in 1997 Brock was ordered not to have contact with minors. He left Oregon that year, the release adds.

Brock is being held in the Sarasota County Jail without bond, charged with Failing to Register as a Sexual Offender. Oregon officials are determining whether to extradite him to face charges in that state, the release says.



*Sammy Brock/Contributed photo*



## MAN CHARGED IN BURGLARY AS A RESULT OF THE PUBLIC'S HELP

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested Jeffrey Paul Irwin, 49, of Lafayette, AL, after a member of the public saw a press release seeking help in identifying a person who allegedly used a stolen credit card at a Nokomis store, the office has reported.

The Sheriff's Office had released video surveillance photos of a man making purchases at the CVS located at 1111 N. Tamiami Trail in Nokomis on Sept. 19, the same night the credit card was reported to have been stolen, the report says.

A resident at 128 Bayview Drive in Nokomis alerted the Sheriff's Office that someone had

entered her garage through an unlocked side door and stolen her purse from the front seat of a vehicle in the garage, according to the report. The purse contained multiple credit cards, the report adds.

Bank records showed the victim's VISA debit card was used to purchase two cartons of cigarettes and a soft drink at the CVS in Nokomis just after 11:30 p.m. on Sept. 19, the report adds.

Irwin was charged with Fraudulent Use of Credit Card and placed under \$1,500 bond after he was arrested on Oct. 11 in downtown Sarasota, the report says.



*The public assisted the Sheriff's Office in identifying Jeffrey Irwin as the suspect in this surveillance photo. Contributed image*



*Jeffrey Irwin/Contributed photo*



## SHOOTING AND HOME INVASION UNDER INVESTIGATION

Tomas Marley Joseph, 30, has been charged with Home Invasion Robbery with a Firearm, Aggravated Battery with a Deadly Weapon, Possession of a Weapon by a Convicted Felon and Possession of Ammunition by a Convicted Felon “after rushing into a home armed with a handgun in each hand and demanding money from the residents” early on the morning of Oct. 12, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

The incident occurred at approximately 12:40 a.m. Saturday at 1231 38th St., Sarasota, according to a news release. “The victims had just returned home when they heard a noise outside,” it says. Officers were told the suspect rushed up to the door and then came inside, pointing two weapons at the victims. When he demanded money, the release continues, one victim gave Joseph his wallet. Then Joseph hit that victim in the face with one handgun, knocking the victim to the ground, the release adds.

The suspect fired two rounds out the open door, one from each handgun, and then fled, the report says.

Officers spotted Joseph walking in the 3200 block of Lemon Avenue in Sarasota about 1:45 a.m. on Oct. 13, the report notes. He was wearing dark clothing, and he matched the description of the suspect provided by the victims in the home invasion armed robbery, the report adds.

Joseph fled from the officers, but when they caught him, he was in possession of two handguns, the release notes.



*Tomas Joseph/Contributed photo*



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## CONVICTED LOCAL SEX OFFENDER ARRESTED IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Fugitive Apprehension Unit, working in conjunction with the U.S. Marshals Service Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, has captured Brian Lacy, the convicted sex offender who fled the area last week after learning he was facing new charges, the Sheriff's Office has announced.

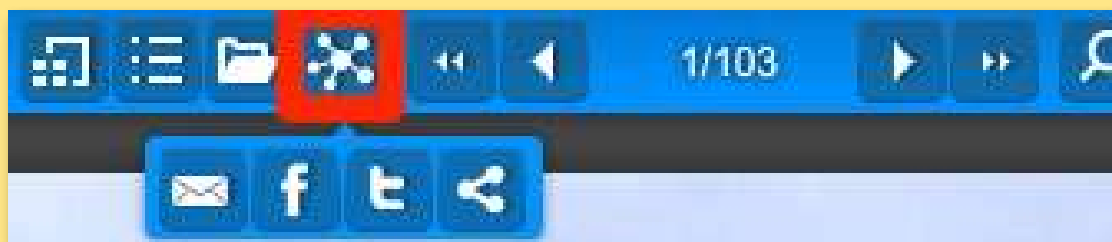
Deputies tracked 32-year-old Lacy to Hillsborough County on the night of Oct. 15 and took him into custody in a vehicle on Gulf Stream Circle in Brandon around 9 p.m., a news release says.

Lacy, who has been convicted of similar crimes twice before, is charged with Lewd or Lascivious Battery on a 14-year-old girl and Failing to Register his Address. He is being held without bond in the Sarasota County Jail. 



Brian Lacy/Contributed photo

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# OPINION



## ‘DOUBLE DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE’ — PART TWO

### EDITORIAL

Voting for one’s elected representatives often is a game of regrets. One tries to listen attentively to each candidate’s pitch and make a reasonably informed decision. Sadly, after the election comes reality ... the candidate is not who he or she seemed. And the constituents are left to suffer the consequences of their poor choices.

Certainly there is plenty of regret to go around in the City of North Port, where the few voters who bothered to vote in the last municipal election cast their ballots for two candidates — Cheryl Cook and Rhonda DiFranco — who, along with Mayor Linda Yates, have formed a tragic coalition of recalcitrant know-nothings on the City Commission that has brought North Port to a virtual standstill.

For the rest of Sarasota County, North Port’s regrettable misjudgments might be of little concern. Unfortunately, the residents of the county are inextricably linked to those of North Port by their joint ownership of Warm Mineral Springs.

In fairness to the Sarasota County commissioners, they surely could have had no idea that, after concluding an agreement with North Port to jointly purchase Warm Mineral Springs, their “partners” later would turn into the proverbial albatross around the county commissioners’ necks.

First it was the abject obstinacy of the North Port Commission’s “unholy trinity” that stymied efforts to select a new long-term operator for Warm Mineral Springs, to replace



# OPINION

Cypress Lending when its contract expired in June 2013.

For six months, the North Port Commission — almost always by the same 3-2 majority — harried and hindered the process of selecting a new contractor, first by declaring it wanted to sell its half of the springs, then by offering to buy the county's share. During this civic soap opera, the North Port Commission would not consider any candidates for a long-term operator.

Finally, with mediation undertaken and some semblance of reason restored to the North Port Commission, an agreement was finalized on how to proceed: A short-term operator would be contracted to manage the springs for a year, while a more in-depth search continued for a long-term operator.

At the outset of the saga, Dr. Grigory Pogrebinsky — a local physician who wanted to create a medical spa at the springs that would attract an international clientele — expressed interest in long-term management of the facility. Much of the North Port Commission majority's objections to such a proposal was the desire to prevent such development.

Yet, after all the wrangling between commissions was at an end and bids entertained for the short-term contract, the successful

bidder was WMS Sarasota Management, a new company with Pogrebinsky as one of the principals. The selected operator also indicated it planned to seek the long-term management contract.

Problems arose after county and North Port staff members examined the facilities and discovered just how rundown most of the buildings and equipment were in the wake of Cypress Lending's departure.

*In fairness to the Sarasota County commissioners, they surely could have had no idea that, after concluding an agreement with North Port to jointly purchase Warm Mineral Springs, their “partners” later would turn into the proverbial albatross around the county commissioners’ necks.*

W M S Sarasota Management balked at signing the short-term contract unless some of the more obvious necessary repairs were undertaken by the owners. The company also asked that

the short-term agreement be extended to two years, so it would have time to recoup the expense of leasehold improvements it made.

Certainly, asking to change the terms of an agreement after a competitive bidding process closes creates difficulties for all parties. But the normal response should be to negotiate a mutually agreeable revision, based on the special circumstances brought on by the springs' woeful state of disrepair.

For the scorched-earth majority on the North Port Commission, however, such rationality just would not do. Led by Mayor Yates, the



# OPINION

entire commission voted to rescind the contract offered to WMS Sarasota Management. By a 3-1 vote, the commission also rejected extending the contract to the other bidder, Cambridgeshire Investment LLC of Port Charlotte.

Then, in another 3-1 vote, the commission voted to direct city and county staff to work on a plan to reopen only part of the springs without a private operator. Such a plan already had been considered and rejected by the county as unworkable, even in the short-term.


At least, in a final vote, the commission voted 3-1 to allow the North Port city manager and Sarasota County administrator to, at their option, pursue another bidding process for a short-term operator. However, in the best of circumstances, that will lead to months of additional delays in reopening the springs.

Blame for WMS Sarasota Management's cold feet rests with both commissions, since any prudent person should have realized that no one in his right mind would undertake the management of such a derelict facility with only a year to sort things out. The "take it or leave it" ultimatum delivered to the bidder was virtually guaranteed to come back to haunt the commissions, as it now has.

Still, it has been almost a year since the North Port Commission, led by its trio of obstructionists, hijacked the reasonable consideration of

the future of Warm Mineral Springs. And after all of these months, the county and North Port are no closer to securing proper management of the facility than they were last December.

The blame for this sorry state of affairs rests most squarely on the shoulders of the North Port Commission, especially Yates and Commissioners Cook and DiFranco. Their oafish bumbling has cost the taxpayers of Sarasota County dearly.

The voters of North Port might regret their poor choices in their last municipal election, but it is the taxpayers of Sarasota County who are footing the bill. 



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



# OPINION



## SLIGHTLY HACKNEYED

### ONLY THE WACKY STILL APPROVE OF CONGRESS

By Robert Hackney

*Opinion Editor*

#### COMMENTARY

My late Uncle Bill (my late father's brother) was truly a newspaperman's newspaperman. After graduating with an AB in Journalism from the University of North Carolina, he held a number of posts in the fourth estate, including sports editor and Sunday editor for the High Point, NC *Enterprise*. He eventually returned to his hometown and took a position in the family business, but the proverbial printer's ink beneath his fingernails proved too irresistible. He moved his family to Florida and returned to publishing a newspaper ... first in Winter Park, and then to Arcadia, where he owned and published *The Arcadian*.

He had a weekly column called "Slightly Hackneyed" (cleverly playing on the alternative meaning of that word, which is "to make commonplace by too frequent use"), wherein he had all manner of great stories, jokes, general observations and other *bons mots*. The 29th of this month marks the 43rd anniversary of his passing, so — to honor him and the

great standard he set for future generations of Hackney journalists — I am titling this occasional column, "Slightly Hackneyed." I hope you enjoy it. And now, without further ado, my first submission:

The revelation last week that, according to an Associated Press/GfK poll the approval rating for Congress had plummeted to only 5 percent, really should not have surprised most of us, disgusted as we are by the dysfunction in that body.

But to put into perspective just how terrible that low approval rating really is, let us consider how it compares with the percentage of Americans who, by virtue of their beliefs, might arguably be less than completely in control of their mental faculties.

Earlier this year, Public Policy Polling did a comprehensive survey of conspiracy theory beliefs held by certain Americans, including the percentages who held what diplomatically would be termed "unconventional" beliefs:



# OPINION

- 13 percent of Americans believe that President Barack Obama is the Anti-Christ. That means that 8 percent of Americans who believe our president is the spawn of Beelzebub also disapprove of Congress.
- 6 percent believe that Osama bin Laden still is alive.
- 14 percent believe that the introduction of crack cocaine into the inner cities of America in the 1980s was carried out by the CIA.
- 11 percent believe the US government knew of the planned attacks on 9/11 and allowed them to happen.
- 15 percent believe that the government and/or the media add secret mind-controlling signals to television broadcasts.
- 4 percent believe that reptilian humanoids from another planetary system have taken over the bodies of various world leaders, including George W. Bush and Queen Elizabeth II, in order to gain control of the planet.
- 20 percent believe there is a causal link between childhood vaccines and autism.
- 28 percent believe that Saddam Hussein was behind the attacks on 9/11.
- 7 percent believe the moon landings were a hoax.
- 21 percent believe that a UFO crashed in Roswell, NM in 1947, and that the government covered up that fact.

*13 percent of Americans believe that President Barack Obama is the Anti-Christ. That means that 8% of Americans who believe our president is the spawn of Beelzebub also disapprove of Congress.*

- 28 percent believe that there is a secret cabal of powerful leaders with a globalist agenda, conspiring to establish authoritarian world rule through a “New World Order.”
- 37 percent believe that climate change, also known as global warming, is a hoax.
- 14 percent believe that Bigfoot is real.
- 5 percent believe that Paul McCartney died in a car crash in 1966, so that the person acting in his stead for the past 47 years is an imposter.

Since a reasonable person would consider these beliefs to be somewhat wacky, it would appear that only the *hard-core* wacky—those believing that the president is the Anti-Christ, that Bigfoot is real, that aliens have taken over the bodies of world leaders, that TV signals are a mind-control mechanism, that the moon landings were faked, and Paul McCartney has been dead for nearly a half century — still approve of the job Congress is doing.

I hope the folks on Capitol Hill will be guided by this sobering realization. 



# Sarasota Leisure

**FANTASTICO FLAMENCO**

**SIESTA SEEN**

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

*Inside*

**Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast**



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# FANTASTICO FLAMENCO

*Rocio Molina has a worldwide following. Image from The Ringling*

## A RENOWNED DANCER THRILLS HER AUDIENCE AT THE RINGLING INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

**By Harriet Cuthbert**

*Contributing Writer*

We stood in the lobby of the Asolo Theatre, waiting to be admitted into the Mertz Theatre to see Rocio Molina, the world-famous flamenco dancer, who hails from Malaga, Spain.

As I made my way to my seat in the second row, I took a moment to observe my surroundings. The magnificent Mertz, with its old-world décor; opaque, tulip-shaped glass lamps; and burgundy velvet valances setting apart the loges seemed like the perfect setting for what we were about to see.

Onstage was a woman dressed all in black, with her back to the audience. She was “performing” a type of ritual to the background sounds of atonal music. She almost could

have been praying. Those of us in the sold-out audience were in our seats, awaiting our star performer.

And then it began. The woman I had been staring at with broad curiosity for the past 15 minutes suddenly turned around and became ... Rocio Molina. Her body seemed perfectly made for dancing: slender arms, long waist, beautiful back — and her excellent posture gave her a very proud bearing. She began her routine slowly, as her three male partners started to move forward. One sat down and began to play the guitar while the other two clapped in rhythm to her dancing, almost like stereo speakers designed to enhance her movements.



It was an exquisite beginning to what proved to be *fantastico* flamenco.

Rocio choreographs all her dances; she says each tells a story. In this case, the wine glass she held became an integral character in many of the dances.

The next routine began with Eduardo Trassiera, her guitarist, playing softly while the two other men, Jose Carmona and Jose Ramos, increased the intensity of their clapping as Rocio danced around them — faster and faster, louder and louder, building to a fiery



*Rocio Molina performs at the Flamenco Festival, Barcelona, May 21, 2010. Image courtesy of YouTube.com*



*The Mertz Theatre was the setting for the Molina performance last week. Image courtesy of the Asolo Repertory Theatre*



and passionate crescendo. Rocio appeared impossibly flexible and demonstrated impeccable timing. Their performance ended in perfect sync, followed by silence.

Carmona then sang a traditional flamenco lament in full volume, expressing all his emotions to the accompaniment of Trassiera's flamenco guitar. Even though I did not understand a word, I felt all the raw emotion Carmona expressed through his voice.

Rocio appeared again, this time in a light and airy white dress with beautiful red roses on the skirt. She presented another magnificent dance and connected again with her partners. Sitting down in front, so close to the stage, was definitely an advantage for me. I could feel every step she took as her green shoes pounded the wooden floor at seemingly superhuman speed. Rocio's clapping hands told their own story.

And I honestly never saw her perspire.


The audience members, transfixed and almost breathless, were unsure whether to applaud at the end of each routine. But they wanted

Rocio to know how much they appreciated her genius level of performance, so many times they did applaud.

Again, the guitarist played a stunning solo. The music always seemed very melancholy, evoking lost loves and other sadness.

Rocio reappeared, this time in a somber black dress. She faced her two partners, and as they played a phenomenal drum song, she danced to them, increasing her speed as their volume rose while she circled the wine glass on the floor. She finished with a roaring smash, breaking the glass into smithereens. This time the audience members did not hold back in their show of enthusiasm.

As I watched the final dance, I could not believe this magical performance had lasted almost an hour and a half, because the time went by so fast. As noted previously, even though I did not understand the language, I was totally transported to Spain and the passion of the *fantastico* flamenco.

Rocio Molina and her partners gave us their all, and they truly deserved the six-minute standing ovation the audience gave them. 

2013  
RINGLING  
INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS FESTIVAL

ROCÍO  
MOLINA

OCTOBER 10

*Danzaora y Vinática*



*Rocio Molina was one of the headliners for the 2013 Ringling International Arts Festival. Image from The Ringling*





# 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 IS EVALUATING EXPENSES OF ALTERNATIVES FOR DEWATERING THE STORMWATER SITE; AVENIDA DE MAYO'S PARKING SITUATION WILL BE BACK BEFORE THE COUNTY COMMISSION THIS MONTH**



**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Pumping still has not begun in the effort to dewater the site of the stormwater project next to Siesta Public Beach, Project Manager Alex Boudreau told me on Monday, Oct. 14.

The main reason? Financial, he said. Staff is having a hard time trying to figure the most cost-effective means of getting the water off

the site so construction of the new 1-acre stormwater pond can begin, he pointed out.

Regular readers will recall that the project has been stalled for more than a month because of heavy rainfall on Siesta, especially in September. A series of smaller ponds was built on the site to allow the contractor,



*Cloudy skies remained the rule over the Siesta stormwater site on Oct. 3. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# Siesta Seen

Forsberg Construction Inc. of Punta Gorda, to pump the water from one to the next. However, Boudreau said this week, staff had learned that it would cost \$170,000 to use a diesel pump for that process for three months. “We don’t have enough money in the contract to do that,” Boudreau pointed out.

Even Forsberg’s estimate for one month of pumping exceeded the amount in the project’s contingency fund, he added.

Then staff looked into whether electric pumps could be used, he told me. Florida Power & Light representatives said they could erect a temporary pole to provide power on the site for electric pumps, Boudreau said. That would cost about \$200 to \$300. However, because the electricity usage would be limited, pumps with a capacity of about 20 horsepower would have to be utilized.

When I spoke with him Monday, Boudreau was waiting to hear back from Forsberg about the electric pump option.

He also pointed out that those pumps are not common. Therefore, it could be costly to locate and bring them in for the effort — another factor to consider in the cost analysis. “We’re trying to think outside the box,” he pointed out, in the effort to control the additional expense.

Boudreau is well aware of the consternation of county commissioners when they voted in April to award the contract to Forsberg. Although the project estimate was about \$1.5 million, Forsberg’s bid — the lowest the



*Sarasota County Project Manager Alex Boudreau was a guest at the Oct. 3 Siesta Key Association meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

county Procurement Department received — was \$4,550,683.28. The difference primarily was attributed to a much higher expense for the pipeline into the gulf.

“It’s got that cloud over it,” Boudreau noted of the project as a result of the cost factor. “If we don’t have to spend [money in the contingency fund], we won’t spend it,” he said.

One way or the other, he added, he hoped the pumping would begin no later than Oct. 21.

During a presentation to members of the Siesta Key Association on Oct. 3, Boudreau explained that the pumping would allow sediment to settle out of the water and enable the ultraviolet light from the sun to lower the unhealthy levels of bacteria before the water could be directed into the Gulf of Mexico through the new 3,000-foot pipeline that is part of the project.



# Siesta Seen

During an Oct. 9 email to the County Commission, Isaac Brownman, capital projects director in the county's Public Works Department, wrote that Forsberg had started the site work necessary to reconfigure the settlement ponds. Additionally, Brownman noted, a permit had been obtained from the Southwest Florida Water Management District for the dewatering once it could get under way.

Boudreau pointed out to me that while he truly enjoys working with construction projects, "Very seldom do we get beautiful days and dry dirt" to enable them to proceed without problems. This project, especially, he

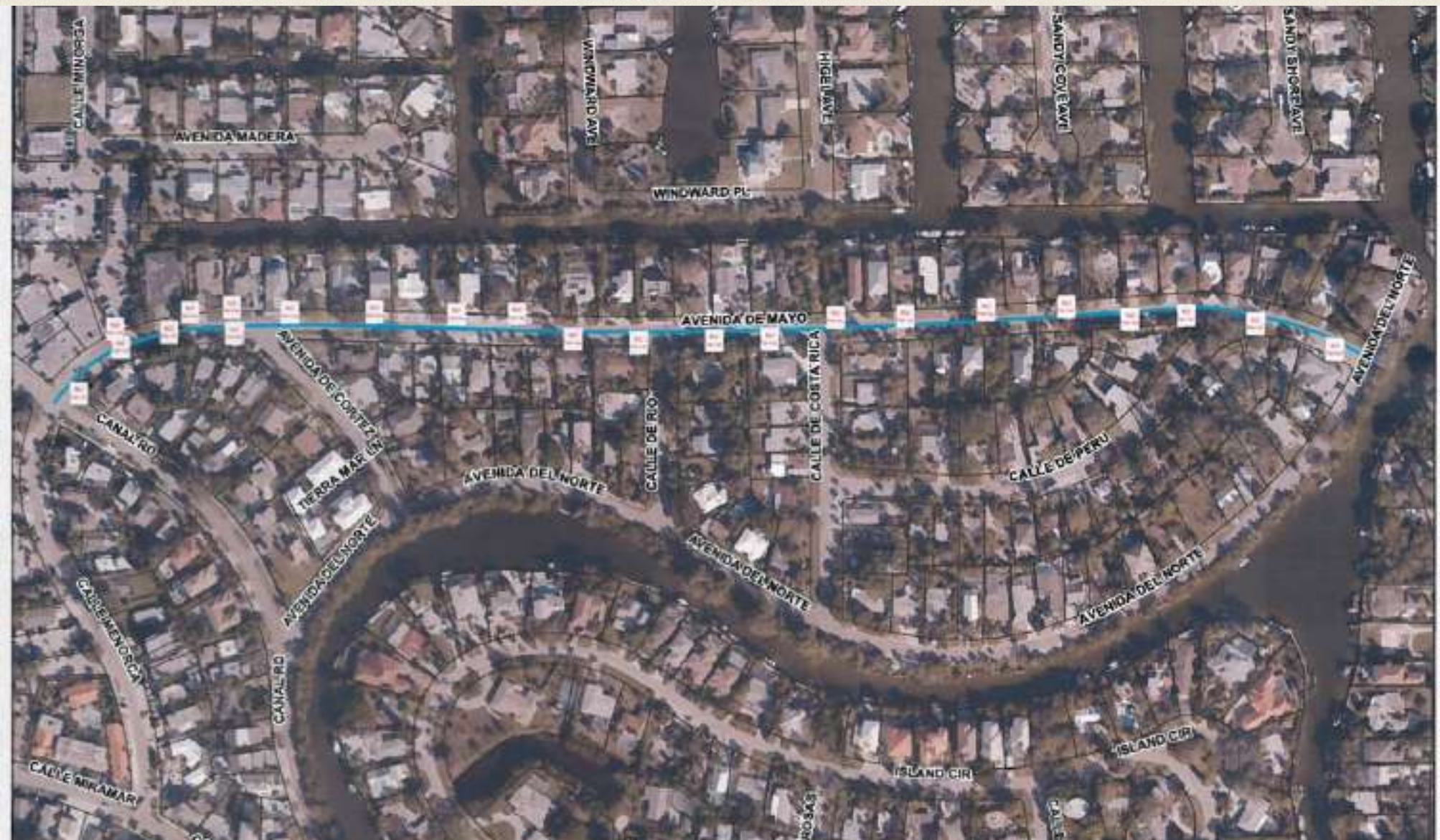
added, has been characterized by "so many unknowns."

"I want to get it done," he said.

## AND IN A DIFFERENT AREA OF SIESTA ...

Yet another ongoing county project on Siesta Key regards the regulation of parking along Avenida de Mayo, near Siesta Village.

On Aug. 28, Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta Key — [won consensus from her fellow board members](#) to have county transportation staff work with Fire Chief Mike Tobias and his employees to figure



A graphic shows Avenida de Mayo, which runs between Canal Road and Avenida del Norte on Siesta Key. Image courtesy Sarasota County



# *Siesta Seen*

out where parking spaces could be striped and signage erected to make certain overflow Village parking on the street would not prevent the passage of emergency vehicles.

The County Commission voted 3-2 on May 21 to turn down a petition by residents to ban parking on at least one side of the street. Instead, the board asked that staff work with Tobias' office and the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office on a recommendation regarding routine parking violations that might hamper responses to emergencies.

In an Oct. 7 memo to the County Commission, county Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. responded to Patterson's Aug. 28 request by asking for formal board direction to establish staggered no-parking zones along Avenida de Mayo "to prohibit parking on both sides of the street from Canal Road to Avenida de Cortez and from Avenida de Cortez to Avenida Del Norte in 500-foot sections.

When I contacted her on Oct. 11, Patterson said she planned to bring up the matter at the commission's next regular meeting, which will be on Oct. 22 in Sarasota.

"I was hoping [staff] would just do it," Patterson said of the striping. However, it is clear she will have to seek her board's approval for the expense of the work, she added. "It shouldn't be much."

Patterson said she had not received any emails or phone calls about the road situation since she last brought up the matter in August. That was no surprise, she pointed

out, because September is one of the lightest times of the year for tourism on the island.

## **HELP FOR CONSTITUENTS**

Commissioner Patterson found an easier resolution last week for a complaint regarding use of a vacant lot on Beach Road.

A Calle Del Otono resident emailed Patterson on Oct. 9 to relate that the vacant lot at 645 Beach Road seemed to have been used earlier in the year for employee parking and storage of equipment by all of the contractors with projects in the immediate area. The writer added that her single-family home abutted the lot, "so I complained to the county about permitting issues. The bottom line was, the contractors emptied the lot, no longer parked there, and a NO TRESPASSING sign was placed on a chain link fence. I recently return from up north only to find the lot now being used as a parking lot for all of the additional and ongoing construction companies."

The woman added that she had learned from Code Enforcement staff that because no permit application was in the works for future use of the property, the decision was made to allow parking to alleviate the perpetual problem with a shortage of spaces in the area.

"Needless to say, the lot is a true eyesore," the writer continued, adding that she would appreciate any help Patterson could provide.

After Patterson forwarded the email to administrative staff, Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham asked Tom Polk, director





*A group finds shade in the morning shadow cast by the red lifeguard stand before the Siesta lifeguards arrive. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# ***Siesta Seen***

of the Planning and Development Services office, to look into the matter.

On the afternoon of Oct. 10, Polk responded to the resident who had contacted Patterson, copying the commissioners and zoning staff on his answer:

“Sarasota County Zoning and Code Enforcement staffs had further discussion on this matter and were able to contact the General Contractor, Dan Gerdes, whose employees are parking their vehicles on the residential lot behind the complainant. Mr.

Gerdes has agreed to voluntarily comply by having his employees remove their vehicles and cease the parking/storage thereof. Code Enforcement staff will continue to monitor the situation.”

## **NEW TV STAR**

No doubt some visitors to Siesta Public Beach on Oct. 10 wondered what was going on with the film crew.

Deputy Jason Strom will be featured in an upcoming Travel Channel show “about things



*An aerial view shows the vacant lot at 645 Beach Road. Image from Google Maps*



# Siesta Seen

that show up out of nowhere,” as Sheriff Tom Knight put it on the office’s [Facebook page](#) last week. “Any guesses?” Knight added.

It turns out that Sgt. Scott Osborne, leader of the office’s Community Policing Station on Siesta Key, spilled the beans a few months ago. Strom is the person who handled the case of the 8-foot-tall “Legoman” that appeared on the beach early on the morning of Oct. 25, 2011.

As it turned out, the 100-pound fiberglass creation was a publicity stunt related to the Sarasota Chalk Festival. It was linked to Dutch artist Leon Keer, whose team created an image in Burns Court depicting the



*Dutch artist Leon Keer’s ‘Legomen’ army appeared during the 2011 Chalk Festival in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Deputy Jason Strom is the center of attention for a Travel Channel film crew on Siesta Public Beach on Oct. 10. Photo courtesy of the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office*



# Siesta Seen

Terracotta Army, a collection of sculptures representing the armies of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, in the 3rd century. In Keer's version, each of the images bore a distinct resemblance to Legoman.

Last I heard, Legoman was somewhere in California. A few months after he "arrived" on the beach, the Sheriff's Office released him into the "custody" of Denise Kowal, the founder and organizer of the Chalk Festival.

His final appearance on Siesta Key, to my knowledge, was outside the Community Center at St. Boniface Episcopal Church in March 2012, when Dr. Stephen Leatherman — Dr. Beach — was the guest speaker for the annual meeting of the Siesta Key Association.


According to the Sheriff's Office last week, the Travel Channel has not released a schedule for its segment with Strom.

## GET YOUR SANDFEST TICKETS

The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce is reminding the public that its 23rd Annual SandFest is set for Friday, Nov. 1, from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Siesta Beach Pavilion at the public beach.

With the theme "Gilligan's Island," the event will feature music, dancing, a cash bar, a silent auction and raffles. Tickets for members are \$25; for guests, \$30. Tables for 10 may be

reserved at a cost of \$250.

SandFest is a major fundraiser for the Chamber's annual July Fourth fireworks spectacular, but it also is traditionally a lot of fun. Click [here](#) for a ticket order form, then return it to the Chamber by mail at 5114 Ocean Blvd. Sarasota, FL 34242; by email to [chastanna@siesta-keychamber.com](mailto:chastanna@siesta-keychamber.com); or by phone at 349-3800. 



*SandFest is set for Nov. 1. Image courtesy Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce*





*The photo of this young bull against a distressed steel barn door was taken by Stewart in a suburb of San Jose, Costa Rica. It is printed on canvas on four panels. Contributed image*

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AS ART? EXHIBIT TO OPEN OCT. 26 AT ART UPTOWN**

The fine art photography of Tampa photographer Richard Stewart will be featured in a month-long exhibit titled *Photography as Art?* at Art Uptown, located at 1367 Main St. in Sarasota.

The exhibit will open on Saturday, Oct. 26, and run through Nov. 30, the gallery has announced. An artist's reception for the public and friends of the gallery will be held on Friday, Nov. 8, from 6 to 9 p.m.

The exhibit will include recent photographs from Mexico, Costa Rica and Italy, plus others dating to 1968, when he lived in Turkey and

traveled throughout Europe, a news release says. Stewart is best known locally for *Girl With Wine*, a black and white photo he took 44 years ago of a young woman drinking wine from a bottle atop an ancient Roman amphitheater in southern Turkey, the release points out.

Also in the show will be a large, four-panel photograph on canvas of *Young Toro*, along with another of a workboat on Claude Monet's lily pond in Giverny, France — "one of the most successful works of the photographer, who has been an artist member of Art Uptown for more than five years," the release adds.





*Stewart took this photograph of a young woman letting her hair down in 1968 in southern Turkey. Contributed image*



A professional photographer for more than 30 years, Stewart received his Bachelor of Arts degree in communications from the University of California at Berkeley. He also works as an independent business writer and PR/marketing consultant with offices and a studio in Tampa. All of his photographs are offered in limited editions, the release notes.

“Well experienced in traditional photography and darkroom processing and printing, he has embraced digital technology in recent years,” the release continues. “He feels that digital photography and printmaking offer greater creative control than film and darkroom processing, without the strong darkroom

chemicals going down the drain into the environment.”

Stewart regularly exhibits his photographs in juried art shows throughout Florida as well as at Art Uptown. The works of the gallery’s 27 other member artists will also be on display during Stewart’s featured exhibit.

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

For more information, call 955-5409 or visit [www.artuptown.com](http://www.artuptown.com).



*Workboat on Monet's Lily Pond was taken on the painter's lily pond in Giverny, France. Contributed image*



## FSU/ASOLO CONSERVATORY TO PRESENT *THE SCHOOL FOR LIES*

The Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training will present the regional premiere of *The School for Lies*, “David Ives’ freewheeling adaptation of Moliere’s *The Misanthrope*,” from Oct. 29 to Nov. 17 in the Cook Theatre at the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, located at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the Conservatory has announced.

“Moliere’s *The Misanthrope* is a brilliant comedy of manners that concerns a bitter social critic who falls in love with the one woman who exemplifies everything he despises in modern life,” a news release says. According to Greg Leaming, director of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory and of this production, “the source material brims with love, sex, hypocrisy and verbal fencing matches,” the release adds.

“David Ives took Moliere’s basic plot and characters as his starting point. But, like a skilled jazz musician, he bends the notes,” Leaming notes in the release. “Yes, Ives’ reinvented

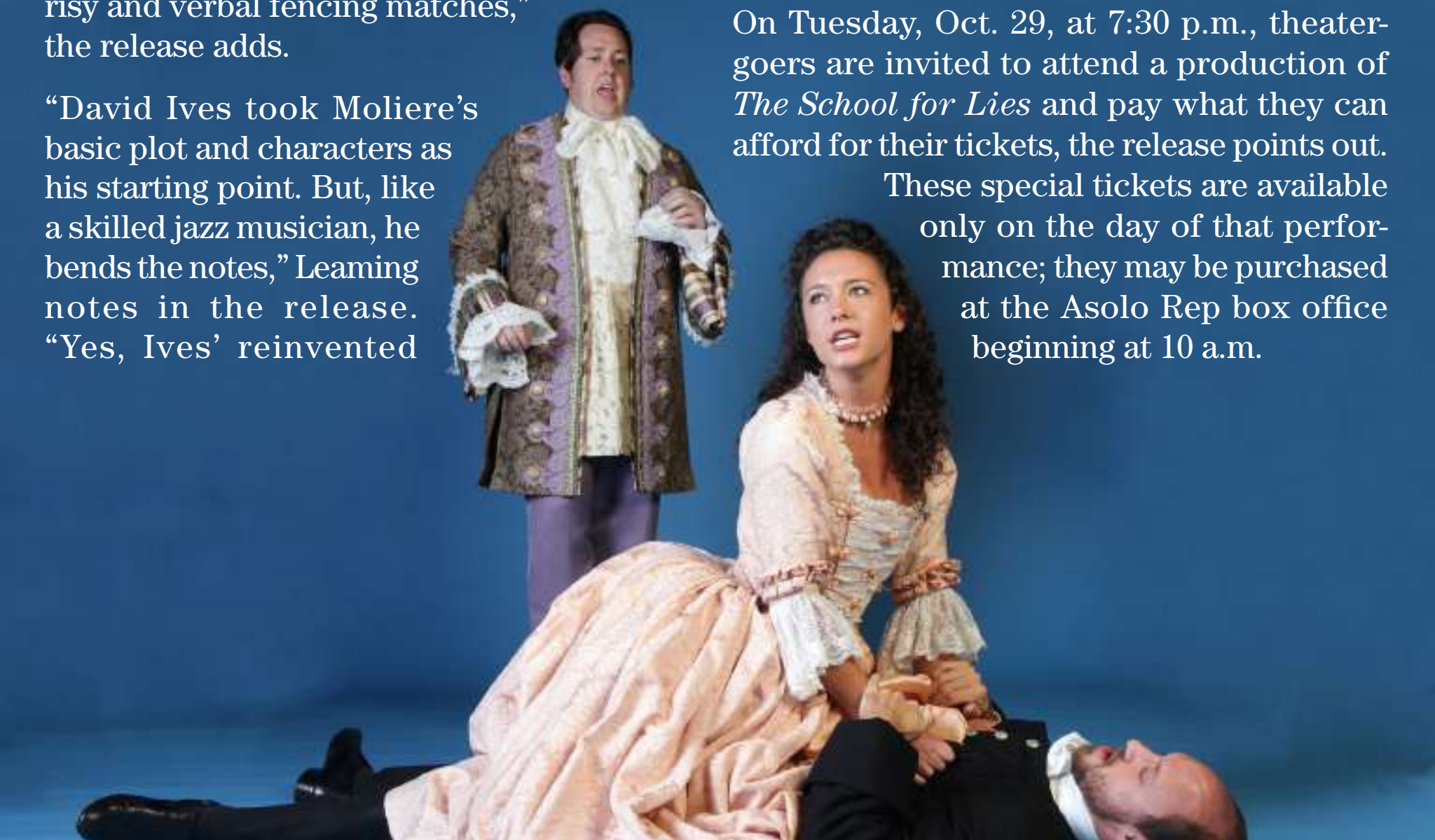
characters speak in rhyming couplets, but their language is stuffed with contemporary street slang and delivered in the rat-a-tat staccato of screwball comedy.”

He continues, “Beneath the verbal gymnastics, this is a beautiful character study of people caught in a culture that values surface over substance. It was true in 1666, and it is certainly true today! It’s perfect material for our second-year Conservatory students to sink their teeth into.”

Tickets are \$29 for evening shows and \$28 for matinees. Students receive 50 percent off with advance ticket purchase at the Asolo Rep box office at the FSU Center for Performing Arts or by phone at 351-8000.

On Tuesday, Oct. 29, at 7:30 p.m., theatergoers are invited to attend a production of *The School for Lies* and pay what they can afford for their tickets, the release points out.

These special tickets are available only on the day of that performance; they may be purchased at the Asolo Rep box office beginning at 10 a.m.



(From left) Brian Owen, Andrea Adnoff and Matthew Olsen will star in *The School for Lies*. Contributed photo by Frank Atura



## BOOKSTORE1 SARASOTA IN DOWNTOWN SARASOTA HAS ANNOUNCED TWO UPCOMING BOOK SIGNINGS

On Thursday, Oct. 24, at 5:30 p.m., Florida Studio Theatre's Kate Alexander and Ringling College of Art and Design's Karen Sullivan will celebrate the Sarasota launch of the second edition of their popular college text, *Ideas for the Animated Short: Finding and Building Stories*.

Then, on Monday, Oct. 28, Kathryn Livingston will sign *Lilly: Palm Beach, Tropical Glamour, and the Birth of a Fashion Legend*, a news release says.

"Livingston, former staff writer at *Harper's Bazaar* and editor at *Town & Country*, has

written the first biography of Lilly Pulitzer, the fashion icon who was born into a legendary family surrounded by wealth and privilege," the release adds.

Lilly Pulitzer's colorful shift dresses have defined high-society casual chic since the 1960s, the release adds.

Books must be purchased at Bookstore1 to be eligible for signing, the release notes.

Bookstore1Sarasota is located at 1359 Main St. For more information, visit [www.bookstore1sarasota.com](http://www.bookstore1sarasota.com) or call 365-7900.



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## ARTIST SERIES CONCERTS OF SARASOTA PRESENTS ITS 18TH SEASON

Classical, pops and cabaret concerts, chamber soirées, a *Lunch, Look and Listen* series and two special performances are all part of the Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota's 2013-14 season. Among the performers will be "the acclaimed Rastrelli Cello Quartet, superstar pianist Joyce Yang, renowned pianist Alexander Schimpf [and] the riveting

cabaret singer Jennifer Sheehan," a news release says.

Most of the Artist Series presentations take place at the Historic Asolo Theater in Sarasota, the release notes. The latest season includes nearly 50 performances in a wide variety of productions. "The unifying factor? Strong support for innovative, emerging artists who appeal to the next generation of audiences," the release points out.

Among the rising young stars this season is Joyce Yang, who has been called one of the "gifted young pianists of her generation." Yang will perform in January with violinist



*The Rastrelli Cello Quartet will perform works by Saint Saëns and Tchaikovsky, Dave Brubeck, Hoagy Carmichael, Antônio Carlos Jobim, Astor Piazzolla and Leroy Anderson Nov. 16 and 17, 7:30 p.m. Contributed photo*





*Sassy, an award-winning barbershop quartet will perform songs of romance and relationships on Feb. 20, at 11 a.m. during a luncheon at Michael's On East, 1212 East Ave. South in Sarasota. Contributed photo*



*The [Tempest Trio](#) will perform works by Beethoven, Bernstein and Dvorak March 1 and 2 at the Historic Asolo Theater. Contributed photo*



Augustin Hadelich, “who has confirmed his place in the top echelon of young violinists,” the release says.

The Ritz Chamber Players, appearing in February, has been hailed by *The Baltimore Sun* as “one of the most interesting and dynamic ensembles to emerge in recent years.”

Additionally, Alexander Schimpf, winner of the Mixon First Prize, the Audience Prize at the 2011 Cleveland International Piano Competition and the Vienna Beethoven Piano

Competition, has been lauded as a “future hero” of classical music with “all the earmarks of becoming a major force in the decades to come,” the release notes.

“We’re very excited about our 2013-14 season,” says John Fischer, executive director of The Artist Series, in the release. “Offering inspired performances by outstanding artists is a given. But we go beyond that by selecting preeminent performers, both emerging and renowned, who will appeal to younger audiences, as well as to seasoned concert-goers.”

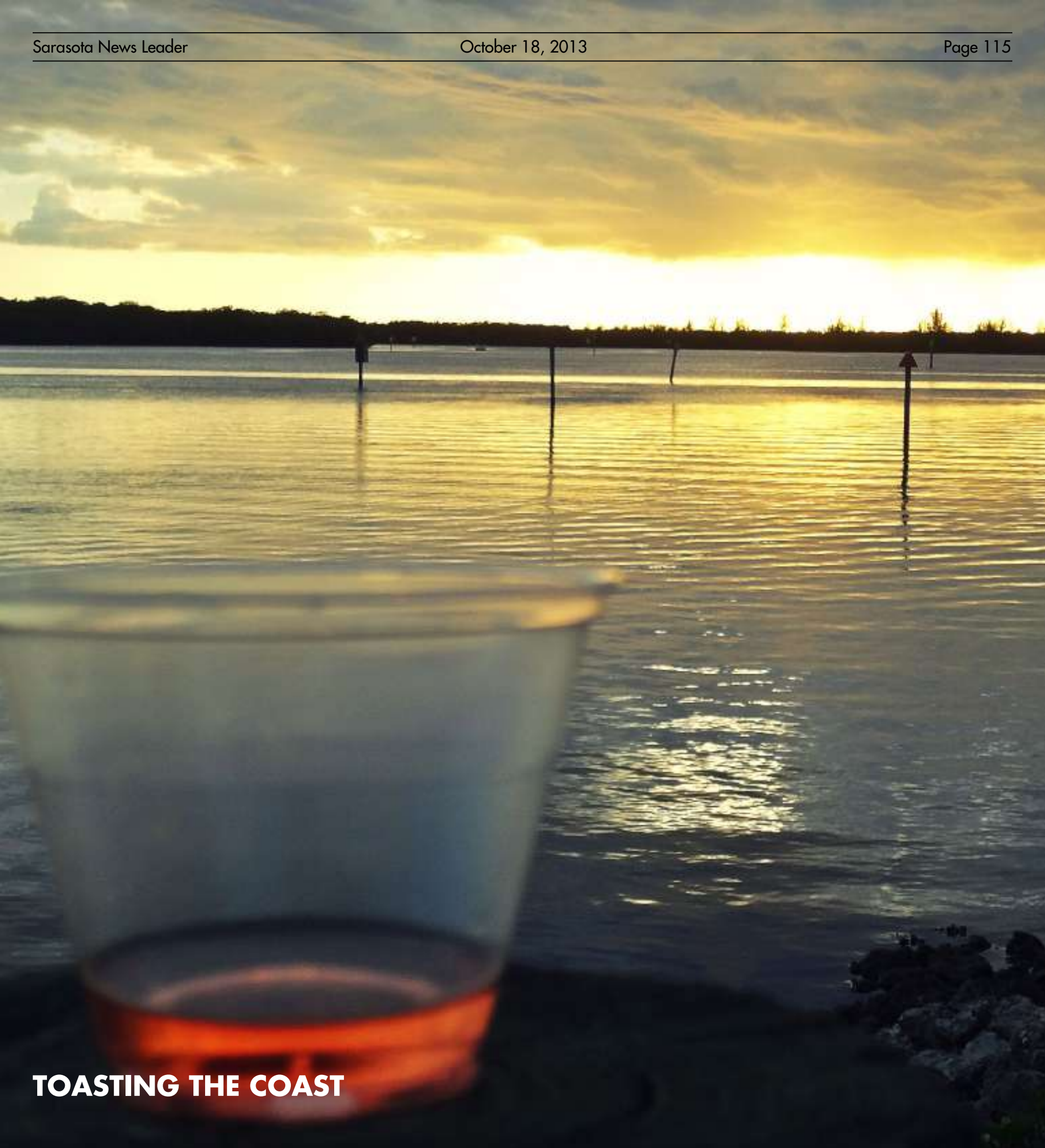
The 2013-2014 season includes six concerts in the Classical Recital Series, four in the Pop Series and two special concerts, the release continues. Three *Lunch, Look and Listen* events are also scheduled. For more information, visit [www.artistseriesconcerts.org](http://www.artistseriesconcerts.org) or call 306-1202.

The Historic Asolo Theater is located at 5401 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota.



Augustin Hadelich, on violin, and Joyce Yang (above), on piano, will perform works by Schumann, Rachmaninoff, Janacek and Previn Jan. 11 and 12.





## TOASTING THE COAST

*Kathleen Pacheco of Sarasota has won the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) Toast the Coast Photo Contest with an image of a sunset at Stump Pass in Englewood, the SBEP has announced. "The recent contest helped acknowledge National Estuaries Day," which was Sept. 28, a news release notes. She won four tickets for a boat tour of Sarasota Bay with the [Sarasota Bay Explorers](#). An artist who enjoys painting and charcoal drawing, Pacheco is a graduate of The Art Institute of Chicago. Contributed image*





*Celebrated songwriter and performer Beth Schafer will perform in concert at Temple Sinai on Oct. 27. Contributed photo*

## **BETH SCHAFER TO PERFORM IN CONCERT AT TEMPLE SINAI**

Celebrated songwriter and performer Beth Schafer will appear in concert at Temple Sinai on Saturday, Oct. 27, at 5 p.m., the Temple has announced.

The two-hour program will include a *Seudah Shlishit* (“third Shabbat meal”) nosh, the concert and *Havdalah* (the symbolic ending to Shabbat), a news release says.

Schafer “has blazed a trail in contemporary Jewish music” for more than 14 years “by blending her masterful songwriting with a sensitivity to Jewish liturgy and contemporary spirituality,” the release adds. She regularly is a featured performer before audiences of thousands at Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) biennial conventions and at Camps Kutz and Coleman, the release points out.



Additionally, she has served on the faculty at the URJ Scheidt Leadership Seminars for temple presidents and as guest artist at congregations across the country. Schafer and her band have performed at music festivals, at halftime during an Orlando Magic game and on stage for Barack Obama during his campaign in 2008.

Her seven CDs of original music “reflect the heart and soul” she puts into her live performances, the release continues.

Rabbi Geoff Huntting says he is looking forward to welcoming Schafer back to Temple Sinai.

“Beth is a real musical talent and inspirational leader,” he adds in the release. “She develops a

wonderful rapport with her audience and has remarkable ability for getting to the essence of Jewish life.”

“Beth Schafer is awesome!” says seasoned **Coleman** camper Marisa Freedman in the release. “Everyone loves her music, and she’s lots of fun.”

Thanks to generous underwriting from the Temple, children under 18 will be admitted free, the news release points out. Adult tickets, which are \$5, may be purchased in advance or at the door. Temple Sinai is located at 4631 S. Lockwood Ridge Road in Sarasota.

For more information, contact Sue Huntting at 924-1802.

## TEMPLE EMANU-EL CARES HEALTH EVENT SET FOR OCT. 20

On Sunday, Oct. 20, from 12:30 to 2 p.m., Temple Emanu-El will host a health and wellness gathering called *Temple Emanu-El Cares*, the Temple has announced.

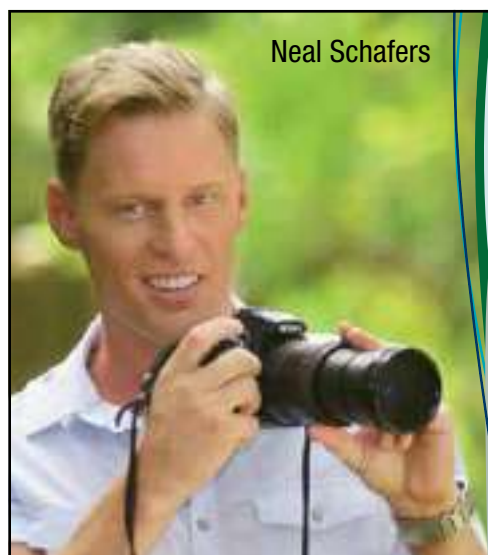
The event will feature presentations by many local organizations providing physical, mental and emotional health services, as well as groups serving the elderly and those in need, a news release says. Confirmed presenters include representatives from Jewish Family and Children’s Services, ITN Sarasota, Meals on Wheels Sarasota, The Center for Building

Hope, Elder Care Life Planning Law Firm, Senior Friendship Centers, Arts for Health Sarasota-Manatee and The Sarasota YMCA, the release adds.

A light lunch and refreshments will be served.

*Temple Emanu-El Cares* is coordinated by the synagogue’s Caring Committee. It is free and open to all members of the community. For more information, call 224-2650.

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



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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**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](http://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; \$25 at the door. Information: 894-6469 or [WSLR.org](http://WSLR.org).

**18+**  
OCTOBER

**Dabbert Gallery presents *Season of Color***

Oct. 18 to Nov. 29, 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**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](http://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](http://HLipizzans.com).

**29+**  
OCTOBER

**FSU/Asolo Conservatory presents *The School for Lies***

Oct. 29 to Nov. 17; times vary. FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Admission: \$27-29. Information: 351-8000 or [AsoloRep.org](http://AsoloRep.org).



**'YOU TALKIN' TO ME?'**

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**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**  
Issue 04/2018/24 Expires 10/15/2020

## **SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS**



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