

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 6 — October 25, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher

Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Cooper@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Stan@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Roger Drouin

County Editor

Roger@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Norman Schimmel

Staff Photographer

NSchimmel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Fran Palmeri

Contributing Writer

FPalmeri@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Harriet Cuthbert

Contributing Writer

HCuthbert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer

ERogosin@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

John Riley

Editorial Cartoonist

Riley@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Vicki Chatley

Copy Editor

Vicki@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Letters To the Editor

Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cleve Posey

Production Manager / Graphic Designer

Cleve@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Robert S. Hackney

Opinion Editor / General Manager

Robert@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Advertising Sales

Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Subscription Services

Subs@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Press Releases & News Tips

News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com





Welcome

One night this week, I awoke from the strangest dream. The details flew away within moments, but my lasting impression was of a strange brew that mixed Sarasota County Commission discussions with the battles depicted in the second book of the *Game of Thrones* series.

I am not sure what Roger Drouin dreamed after sitting through the Oct. 23 County Commission meeting, but I know he saw more than enough drama to fuel some creative chaos. Even though rumors had swirled for weeks that County Administrator Randy Reid would be fired, it was one of those incidents whose full impact cannot be absorbed at once.

While our other stories in this issue may not seem as intense as that one, many also deal with subject matter of considerable gravitas — from the controversy over the proposed renourishment of Lido Beach (with a never-been-done-before dredging of Big Pass factored in) to the good news about the Affordable Care Act to the lingering question about whether a long-term management plan ever can be developed for Warm Mineral Springs. Cooper Levey-Baker also has an excellent update on how Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida is adapting to the changes the Affordable Care Act is bringing to the world of women's healthcare.

Thank goodness, after all those serious topics, we have another one of Rick Wielgorecki's wonderful gardening columns and a delightful article about the botanical art exhibit at the South Florida Museum. The latter came courtesy of our "resident" naturalist Fran Palmeri and her friend, artist Barbara Dondero.

This week, indeed, you have no dearth of news to "explore."

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher



CAST ASIDE

COUNTY
ADMINISTRATOR

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CAST ASIDE



The County Commission is expected to have a discussion on Nov. 5 about the process for hiring a new administrator. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FIRE RANDALL REID WITHOUT CAUSE AND NAME TOM HARMER THE INTERIM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The county commissioners on Wednesday, Oct. 23, voted County Administrator Randall Reid out of the post he held for less than two years.

The 4-1 decision to oust Reid came despite the pleas of half a dozen residents who spoke in support of him, praising his integrity and accomplishments during his short tenure in the midst of challenging times for the county.

After the vote, Reid stood up and quietly left the dais. Deputy Administrator Tom Harmer — whom Reid hired last year — will serve as interim CEO for the county.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason and Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson voted to fire Reid. In evaluations made public last Tuesday, Oct. 15, the three commissioners gave Reid a below-average

rating for his overall job performance from April to September of this year.

Reid — who was county manager in Alachua County for 12 years and a past president of the Florida City and County Management Association — struck discord over the past months in his Sarasota job.

The County Commission was split, with Mason, Barbetta and Robinson voicing increasing

displeasure with Reid — particularly for his lack of communication finesse, including his inability to warn the commissioners of big problems before the topics appeared in

news accounts. Fiascos such as the series of failed mowing contracts since February 2012 topped Barbetta's list of examples of Reid's poor job performance.

“One thing after another, it seems like I am constantly worried what is the next fire.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Commissioner Christine Robinson explains her below average evaluation of Reid. Photo by Roger Drouin

“I still feel at this point Mr. Reid is not a good fit for Sarasota county administrator,” said Mason, who made the motion to fire him.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Nora Patterson and Vice Chairman Charles Hines supported the administrator for hiring quality staff members to fill vacancies, tackling problems left in the aftermath of former Administrator Jim Ley’s resignation and working to bring the World Rowing Championship to Sarasota in 2017.

“I’m sad,” Patterson told reporters after Wednesday’s meeting concluded. She cast the sole vote against terminating Reid without cause. But Patterson said the county needed to move forward.

Hines — who gave the administrator satisfactory/above average marks on his evaluation — cast the fourth vote to fire Reid. But he said he did so to avoid three weeks of doubt about Reid’s future. Under the provisions of the county’s charter, it takes three commission

votes at two official meetings three weeks apart to fire a county administrator, or four commission votes at one meeting.

“This is a human being,” Hines said before the vote. “He moved his family here. I believe he is a good person. He has worked hard.”

Even though at least two commissioners gave Reid low marks for communication in January, the evaluations released last week showed a downward slide for the county’s CEO.

After the vote, Robinson told *The Sarasota News Leader* that she had two meetings with Reid before completing her latest evaluation to go over several issues she perceived as ongoing problems. “I wanted him to take responsibility and make plans to get things on track,” Robinson said.

But the meetings ended badly, Robinson continued, noting that her concerns were not addressed.



Randall Reid listens as Commissioner Christine Robinson explains her evaluation. Photo by Roger Drouin

Barbetta said he was frustrated when Reid wanted to hire an independent consultant from the University of South Florida (USF) to appraise changes to the county's [2050 Plan](#) and the way the administrator applied the county's public records policy.

Barbetta referenced several instances when he felt Reid was not doing his job properly — from the mowing fiasco to the resignation of Suzanne Gable. Gable left her post in the Office of Financial Planning during the summer after staff discovered she did not have a valid CPA license. Yet, commissioners voiced frustration that Reid did not mention the CPA factor when he first informed the board members about her resignation.

“One thing after another, it seems like I am constantly worried what is the next fire,”



Sarasota County Administrator Randall Reid poses just days after starting his new job in January 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Commissioner Charles Hines supported Reid as administrator. ‘This is a human being,’ Hines said. ‘He moved his family here. I believe he is a good person. He has worked hard.’ Photo by Roger Drouin

Barbetta said before the Oct. 23 vote. "I have some concerns here and don't know where to go next."

"The time has passed [for Reid] to be that great administrator we hoped for," Barbetta added.

The commissioners will likely discuss the next steps for finding a permanent replacement for Reid when they hold their next regular meeting on Nov. 5.

NOT BENDING THE RULES

Although Reid's standing had slipped as far as three commissioners were concerned, some residents stood by his side, and he had the support of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA).

The handful of residents who spoke at Wednesday's meeting praised Reid during the public comments segment.

CONA Vice President Cathy Antunes said Reid is recognized nationally as a leader in ethics in public administration. The County Commission, Antunes added, has applied "shifting standards" to Reid.

"Problems with Mr. Ley's administration were discussed for several years; yet, nothing was done," Antunes continued. "I don't understand how those standards are reconciled with Mr. Reid's performance."

Antunes also found fault with Barbetta's insistence that Reid had acted inappropriately by trying to hire the USF consultant to analyze possible changes to the county's 2050 Plan.

"Barbetta's comment is mystifying," Antunes told the *News Leader*. "An independent,

academic analysis was entirely appropriate. [Reid] represented the community's interests, and perhaps that wasn't welcome."

Antunes believes the firing will send a message to future candidates for the administrator's position. "Who would want to uproot their life and come here to work for this board?" she asked the commissioners.

Antunes further suggested that some commissioners had behaved unprofessionally in their interactions with Reid at the dais during public meetings: "It has been badgering, petulant and disrespectful conversation at times."

Lourdes Ramirez, president of CONA, lauded Reid for overcoming a wide array of challenges after he moved to Sarasota County.

"We know you have many qualities. Among them is integrity. We know your goal is to make Sarasota a great place to live, work and play," Ramirez said. "It is amazing you accomplished so much. Frankly, we cannot imagine replacing you."

One of those accomplishments was hiring key new staff members, she added, as also indicated by several commissioners in their most recent evaluations.

Further, Ramirez addressed Reid's lack of support from development interests, which some of his supporters feel was one of the root causes for his ouster.

"The development community wasn't happy with Randall Reid," Ramirez told the *News Leader* after Wednesday's vote. "They wanted him to bend the rules for 2050, and he said, 'No.'"

Ramirez also told the *News Leader* word had spread among community leaders that development groups were prodding the commission to fire Reid.

“I knew for two weeks the development community was pushing for this, and Mason would make the motion,” Ramirez said.

Sarasota County resident Michael Figgins had a more pointed message — saying the three commissioners who had been voicing displeasure with Reid were in the pockets of developers.

Figgins also had this message for Reid earlier in the meeting: “I think you are a pretty

honest guy. If they vote to fire you today, it is because you have too much integrity.”

As for Reid’s successor: Ramirez said she has heard rumors that included former administrators and some candidates who were passed over by the County Commission two years ago when Reid won the job. “All of them stand out” for past controversies or scandals during previous posts, Ramirez pointed out.

Antunes also told the commissioners she planned to request all public records to or from county commissioners to current or former county staff about the possible replacement of Reid.



Then County Administrator Randall Reid (left) and Steve Botelho, the county’s chief financial planning officer, participate in a budget workshop. File photo

Millie Small, who also supported Reid, used her time at the podium during the public comments portion of the meeting to ask the commissioners how they would have dealt with the issues Reid inherited when he took over as the county's top staffer. "Do you really remember the mess Mr. Reid walked into?"

Small suggested the commissioners shake hands with Reid and try to focus on working with him.

"I hope you are thinking of the larger issues you will face if you decide to fire Mr. Reid," she added.

Kafi Benz of CONA said the problems highlighted in evaluations are "rather shallow" compared to his achievements.

A SPLIT COMMISSION

The commissioners who gave Reid low marks on his evaluation vastly disagreed with residents such as Benz.

In their evaluations, Robinson wrote, for example, that Reid was not taking responsibility for problems that came up, and Mason concluded he undermined the trust of the commissioners.

Specific examples of faltering projects were cited as well, such as Barbetta's frustration with what he called a delay of key economic initiatives, including the [Fruitville Initiative](#) and Robinson's concern about the lack of a county plan to cure the county's projected deficit. Mason said Reid did not



(From left) Ed Gable, head of the county's General Services Office; Glenn Zimmerman, the IT chief; and then Deputy County Administrator Tom Harmer. Photo by Rachel Hackney

always fully understand the worries raised by commissioners.

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

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

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

Robinson noted that she was frustrated that the county's public records policy was not being enforced uniformly — even though a



Lourdes Ramirez addresses the County Commission in early October. Photo by Rachel Hackney

clear policy had been in place for a number of years.

On Wednesday, the county's public records policy came up again when Barbetta said Reid should have charged people uniformly for public records.

Patterson disputed Barbetta's claims, saying that the county's policy stated only that the county *may* charge for certain public records that are requested.

In his defense, Patterson also noted Reid's hiring of several employees to replace those who left during the time of turmoil following Ley's May 2011 resignation.

"When Mr. Reid showed up, you could walk around the second floor where administrative staff was, and it was empty," Patterson said. "That area is full of good people now that the public has said they can trust and appreciate. They are people I can talk to."

Patterson added that Sarasota County is a demanding community and the commission is a demanding commission, but Reid was doing well when it came to making sure the county provided important assistance for its residents.

"Delivery of services is the most important job, and by and large people think, as reflected in our [annual county] survey, we are doing a decent job on that," Patterson pointed out.

"I think Mr. Reid has a very, very tough job, and I think overall he balances it well," Patterson said. "Is he perfect? No. Am I perfect? No. But I would like to see him stay with us and try to work on some issues commissioners have identified."

THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATOR

The county's interim administrator was chosen by Reid in July 2012 to fill the post of deputy county administrator.


Tom Harmer has 26 years of experience in local government, including almost eight years as city manager of Titusville, where he also was executive director of the Community Development Agency. Additionally, he has served as fire chief and emergency manager in Titusville.

Prior to that, Harmer was deputy fire chief in Tallahassee.

Before coming to Sarasota County, Harmer had most recently been senior vice president of the Pizzuti Companies in Orlando, "a high-quality company developing industrial and commercial projects in the Southeast," according to a July 2012 county news release.

"Harmer assisted and facilitated projects and public-private partnerships to promote economic development, including new industrial facilities and infrastructure adjacent to Kennedy Space Center," the news release stated.

At the time of Harmer's hire, Reid wrote, "I have both personal and professional knowledge of Mr. Harmer since I hired him in Titusville as my Fire Chief in the [mid-1990s]. He has maintained his zeal for public service, even while employed in the private sector, and I have watched his career develop as a professional manager."

Reid added that he was pleased Harmer was willing to return to public service in Sarasota County, "where he will learn the nuances of county government as a member of ... our team." 

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PROBING A PARCEL'S POTENTIAL

The County Commission has agreed to begin negotiations with a development group that wants to put a hotel on the site of a surface parking lot in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS DIRECT STAFF TO NEGOTIATE WITH A DEVELOPER PROPOSING A 150-ROOM KIMPTON HOTEL ON COUNTY-OWNED LAND AT U.S. 301 AND MAIN STREET IN SARASOTA

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Developer Rod Connelly is proposing to construct a nine- to 10-story, 150-room hotel with a 6,000-square-foot conference center on a county-owned parcel that serves as a parking lot at the northeast corner of U.S. 301 and Main Street in downtown Sarasota.

The County Commission on Wednesday, Oct. 23, chose Connelly's proposal out of two submittals for the parcel.

The second one, submitted by developer Wayne Ruben's WMR Consulting, proposed a 10,000-square-foot headquarters for a national financial institution and 2,500 square feet of adjacent commercial space.

“*This property is not on the tax rolls right now. It needs to get on the tax rolls.*”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

The commissioners directed staff to negotiate with Connelly and his development venture, SHD Partners LLC. Vice Chairman Charles Hines said he preferred the hotel plan. “I think that is

the best use for that property for the long term,” Hines pointed out. “What we need in my opinion is another hotel that can keep downtown going in its revitalization.”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta has long supported development of the property that serves as a county parking lot, primarily for people with business in the adjacent courthouses.

“This property is not on the tax rolls right now,” Barbetta noted. “It needs to get on the tax rolls.”

But a gulf appears to exist between what commissioners are expecting as a sale price for the property at 20 N. Washington Boulevard and what Connelly is offering.

The main reason for the difference is the developer valued the land at \$2,044,200, while the county-hired appraiser valued it at \$4 million.

Wednesday’s vote allows the county to “sit down and negotiate with them and see if we can strike a deal with them,” Hines said of the principals in SHD Partners.



The county parcel at 20 N. Washington Blvd. has a view of the Synovus Bank building at the southwest corner of Main Street and Washington Boulevard. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Commissioner Nora Patterson noted that the level of productivity achieved in the coming talks would determine whether the hotel proposal moves forward.

“I am very interested in where negotiations go on this, and if they go well, my interest is getting more hotels in Sarasota County and downtown,” Patterson said.

Connelly’s Civix LLC proposes to build a 150-room Kimpton hotel with the 6,000-square foot conference area and a 120-seat restaurant and bar.

Under the initial proposal, Civix would transfer to the county a separate parcel, located at 2051 Main St., to replace the parking spaces that will be displaced by the hotel project. In addition to offering that separate lot, Civix would pay the county \$662,567, due at closing.

Civix’s development venture, SHD Partners LLC, would design and construct the hotel.

Civix has built Midnight Cove I & II on Siesta Key, the Center Pointe Office Building on Main Street and MedEplex in Haines City. The firm has teamed with developer HKS



An illustration shows the conceptual plan for the Kimpton Hotel and conference center at 20 N. Washington Blvd. in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Holdings LLC and investment banker First Pathway Partner LLC for the project. The CD Smith Construction firm, based in Wisconsin, would be the general contractor.

Patterson did voice concern that Civix's proposal would result in the demolition of a Sarasota School of Architecture building, located at 2051 Main St.

According to the Sarasota Architectural Foundation, the structure, which houses the Lawyers Professional Building, was designed in 1961 by architect Frank Folsom Smith, an original member of the Sarasota School of

Architecture. It is one of the few Sarasota School buildings remaining in the city. The building is listed in the Florida Master Site File, which is a statewide database of potentially significant historic resources. According to the Sarasota Architectural Foundation's website, Realtor Michael Saunders, owner of the building, offered to donate it to anyone interested in moving it.

If the structure is not relocated, it will be demolished to make way for a parking lot — provided the commissioners OK the hotel project. **SNL**



An aerial map shows the pieces of property that would be swapped to provide parking downtown if a hotel is built at 20 N. Washington Blvd. Image courtesy Sarasota County

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PRESSING ON

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius addresses a group. Photo by United States Mission Geneva, via Flickr

DESPITE HEALTHCARE.GOV PROBLEMS, AGENCIES FIGHT TO HELP LOCALS ACCESS HEALTHCARE

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Endless wait times and garbled back-end data — such have been the main features of [HealthCare.gov](#) so far for users in Florida. That hasn't stopped local ObamaCare navigators and counselors from hitting the pavement and touting the importance of signing up for health insurance to those lacking access to healthcare.

Since the end of the federal government shutdown last week, the national news media has focused relentlessly on the failures of HealthCare.

gov, the site set up by the Obama administration for users in states that declined to set up their own health insurance marketplaces. Florida is one such state; in addition to declining billions in federal aid, its Legislature has so far declined to create a state insurance exchange.

“*People are starting to get a little anxious to enroll, and they want to go ahead and move forward with it.*”

Linda Stone
CEO
Community Health Center of North Port

Not only have Florida users experienced difficulty logging in and exploring plans, but [according to The Washington Post](#), the data transmitted from HealthCare.gov

to insurance companies has been scrambled. That means even those who think they have purchased insurance through the site may experience problems when the plans actually come online Jan. 1. *The Onion*, as it often does, summed it up well this week with a graphic [showing](#) “people in HealthCare.gov stock photos now visibly panicking.”

I myself set up an account weeks ago, but have since been unable to explore specific plans due to online glitches.

“The website’s still not working well,” acknowledges Becky Litwiler, recently certified as a Sarasota-area ObamaCare navigator. But despite setbacks, she’s continuing to hand out paper applications and sitting down with clients to explain exactly what the Patient

Protection and Affordable Care Act means for them.

Litwiler works with Sarasota’s Comprehensive Care Center, a nonprofit that provides medical, dental and case management services for HIV-positive residents in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and DeSoto counties. The organization has a “working relationship” with the Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida, which is helping implement a \$4.2 million federal grant given to the University of South Florida, and in turn working with organizations such as the Comprehensive Care Center, to identify and assist those who need help signing up for health insurance.

According to Litwiler, traffic so far has been “slow,” but she thinks that’s mainly because media coverage has focused on how the



President Barack Obama reviews notes before a speech. Photo by Pete Souza, via Flickr

website isn't working. The calls she's getting range from those involving people who know the ins and outs of the Affordable Care Act and just need help applying for insurance to those who know very little about the law, except that they need to sign up for insurance of some kind for 2014.

"Several" have come to Litwiler after trying, and failing, to use HealthCare.gov. "If the website had been working, they probably would already have it done," she says. She plans to broaden her outreach efforts and thinks that as more people find success with the website, the number of clients she's able to assist will grow.

"The website is doing a lot better — we're able to get people a lot further," says Shawnta Zackery, a certified application counselor

working with the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, which won a \$171,544 federal grant to help folks enroll. "We're educating and informing and we're hitting our goals."

But Zackery says the folks the department has reached have "largely" been 40 or older. "We definitely want to help younger individuals and their families," she adds.

The local health department is hosting a number of daily and weekly events at locations all around the county. A calendar posted at sarasotahealthinsurancemarketplace.com shows the breadth of the Health Department's reach. Counselors are stationed at libraries, the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex, Goodwill, the Glasser Schoenbaum Human Services Center and more, helping folks find insurance.



The effort continues locally to inform people about the benefits of signing up for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act. Photo from the National Cancer Institute via Wikimedia Commons

Linda Stone, the CEO of the Community Health Center of North Port, says it's important to understand that not all signups are going through HealthCare.gov. There's the 1-800 hotline, for instance, and you can even mail in your application. One of the roles counselors such as Zackery play is helping folks identify those alternative ways of applying.

Stone says the local office is participating in regular calls with the federal government about best practices in the field and how improvements to the main website are coming along. "There's a lot of technical assistance coming in from the federal government," she says. The White House announced a "tech surge" this week to correct problems with HealthCare.gov.


But will Floridians have the patience to allow the site to work? Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear, a Democrat, this week **touted** the success of ObamaCare in his state to CNN. The Kentucky-created insurance marketplace is signing up 1,000 new users a day, he said, calling the state's program the "gold standard" of ObamaCare sites. His advice to other states and the media? "Take a deep breath."

"This system is going to work," he said. "Whether it's a week from now, a month from

now, two months from now, they'll get it up and they'll get it working. People will be signing up."

Litwiler says once the website starts functioning more efficiently, she expects her office will be much busier. But website or not, she's pressing on. "I'm here," she says, "so I can talk to people about it and try to guide them."

"One hundred and fifty-nine days are left to enroll," says Stone. (Not that anyone's counting.) "People are starting to get a little anxious to enroll, and they want to go ahead and move forward with it." But her organization's mission remains unchanged since the launch of HealthCare.gov: "It's our goal to get as many people signed up for health insurance as possible."

The South West Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice will hold a forum on ObamaCare moderated by WMNF's Rob Lorei at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 28, at Florida Studio Theatre's John C. Court Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets are \$20 or \$35 for two. RSVP by calling 586-6839 or by emailing swfcpj@live.com. 

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STATUS UPDATE

Fifty Planned Parenthood supporters handed out hundreds of condoms in June at the St. Petersburg Pride Parade, the largest in Florida. Image courtesy of Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida

A Q&A WITH PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF SOUTHWEST AND CENTRAL FLORIDA PRESIDENT AND CEO BARBARA ZDRAVECKY

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

In 2016, Planned Parenthoods around the country will celebrate a century of providing low-cost healthcare to American women, but for the organization's Southwest and Central Florida chapter, another major milestone is looming just next spring: two decades of leadership by President and CEO Barbara Zdravecky.

The local chapter, which serves women in 15 Florida counties — from Inverness in the north to Fort Myers in the south — sees 30,000 women at seven care centers each year, providing annual Well Woman Exams, cancer screenings, reproductive care and

more. And despite a number of recent high-profile attacks on the organization — the most famous being Susan G. Komen for the Cure's decision to eliminate Planned Parenthood grants — the local chapter is thriving. According to the organization's 990 IRS forms, revenue grew to \$9.4 million in 2011 from \$7 million in 2008, and contributions and grants grew from \$1.4 million in 2009 to \$2.5 million in 2011.

But as Zdravecky told The Sarasota News Leader in a recent interview, the picture isn't entirely rosy. "We're in transition," she said, more than once.

The Sarasota News Leader: Very broadly, where is the organization now?

Barbara Zdravecky: The organization is undergoing tremendous change. We have a great opportunity with the Affordable Care Act to be basically where the action is in healthcare reform in America. Planned Parenthood has been very active in supporting the creation and the acceptance by Congress of the Affordable Care Act.

It's really mission critical for us to have women's preventive services covered, and they did so with the creation of the Affordable Care Act. Planned Parenthoods were named as essential community healthcare providers, which means we have to be part of the exchanges that have been created. For the mission of Planned Parenthood, having access to contraception without co-pays — basic reproductive

healthcare prevention, pap smears, mammograms — is also very critical for the success of having a healthy population in America.

The reverse side of that is the margin issue for us. By having some of those products available, the actual reimbursements that we will receive through those contracts is going to be less than what we'd normally get. Mission and margin are what most not-for-profits look at all the time — how you balance it. So we've had to go through a complete upheaval of our business operations to mirror ourselves as a healthcare provider that accepts third-party insurance, including Medicare. We went from a cash-only business to a medical reimbursement system similar to other physicians. In order to do that, we've had to expend a lot of money and resources.



Planned Parenthood supporters rally outside the Texas Statehouse in Austin, the scene of numerous fights over women's healthcare in recent years. Photo by scATX via Flickr

News Leader: I'm really struck by the patchwork effects of the Affordable Care Act so far, depending on how state legislatures have responded to it.

Zdravecky: Hawaii has offered healthcare to its citizens for years. Massachusetts, of course, was the model. That was Gov. [Mitt] Romney's program. We know that it works. It's unfortunate that the opposition has created so much tension around this as a political football instead of seeing it as the best thing for your constituents and your community.



News Leader: You mentioned the transition Planned Parenthood is going through. Are people aware of that?

Zdravecky: This is all happening so fast, so I'm trying to get the word out to let folks know that we are converting, that we are changing, that we are responding and educating and supporting the Affordable Care Act. And we need support in order to continue that work, as we do the transition to provide that primary care and to help fill the gap in as we go through this transition. Because going from a cash-only business to a business that has accounts receivable and whatnot? Very, very different kind of business. It's challenging.



News Leader: When did you start this change?

Zdravecky: We raised \$900,000 last year to do the new practice management system and the [electronic health record] program, so it's not like we just started a couple of weeks ago. But the actual transition, having our teams



Barbara Zdravecky/Photo courtesy of Caitlyn Miller

on the ground, talking to people about the enrollment dates, how to get in, what it really means — there's so much confusion about what it means — has been really important as well. Bringing in new staff, training the staff on all the things I talked about, has been a tremendous effort as well as a tremendous expense. We are in transition, and so it takes a lot of money to push your business forward while you're looking at the mission of Planned Parenthood.



News Leader: I don't know if it's social media, but I see a lot more public support for the organization.

Zdravecky: I think that's true. The Komen Foundation launched that. There was the big outrage about them defunding Planned Parenthood, the whole denigration of women in the presidential election right after, with so

many of the candidates being so anti-women in their philosophy, particularly regarding reproductive healthcare, the great pushback on contraception coverage for women in insurance plans. We call it the “war on women.” There are a lot of things going on that have been really detrimental to women’s health.

Planned Parenthood nationally is suing the State of Texas for all these gross discriminations, and Florida’s very similar to Texas in a lot of ways. Gov. [Rick] Scott always compares himself to Gov. [Rick] Perry. That’s a pretty scary comparison. And so we’re watching very closely what happens in our legislative session. We’re monitoring what’s happening in the committees, so we can keep track of Florida, and, hopefully, we’re not going to go the way of Texas.



News Leader: This year, it didn’t seem like there was any major legislative action in Florida.

Zdravecky: During the presidential election, we had a ballot initiative. [The proposed state amendment would have eliminated constitutional privacy protections in Florida.] We were able to raise in the state \$4.2 million, and we defeated it soundly. And I think that particular victory sent a message to Tallahassee that we had both people power and support and finances to wage a battle like that.

We have a very great friend with Sen. Nancy Detert [of Venice]. She’s in Republican leadership and she’s a strong supporter of women’s issues, and I depend on her to monitor things. She’s been a great supporter over the years.



News Leader: We talked about increasing popular support. Do you see that locally on the ground?

Zdravecky: How many people do we have in our network? 90,000? Just here in southwest and central Florida, which is a heck of a lot of people that we can call upon and [reach] through emails and say, “We need your support.” People who have actively signed up. They have signed cards and said, “We want to be involved,” and, “We want to be active.” It’s a great opportunity, and a lot of young people are involved.

Young people have been awakened to the fact that what’s happening in their legislatures and in [Washington,] D.C. is not really what they expected to be facing at this point in the year 2013.



News Leader: They seem like they’re exhausted by these social battles that have dominated the older generation.

Zdravecky: It’s not that they don’t care about them. They expect them to be resolved. The whole issue with marriage equality — the younger generation is much more tolerant. They believe in individual rights and don’t want to be telling anybody else what to do, including people’s options for reproductive healthcare.

It's tough. The naysayers are holding on by their teeth. It's the last gasp of the older white male politician who is frightened. They're frightened that they're losing their power; they're losing control. They're holding onto their power over women; they're trying to hold off on allowing America to become more of a land of immigrants, the browning of America. I think they're very frightened.




News Leader: Can you explain the Protest a Picketer campaign?

Zdravecky: The Catholic Church, under the Bishop [Frank] Dewane, has had calls within the church to have the church members sign up for shifts, and they bring them in and they walk around the building and they say the rosary and they confront patients as they're

coming in. We have a lot of people who are incensed by the fact that they're here, and so people pledge money [against] the protests that are going on, which doesn't make the protestors very happy.

We're over \$4,000 — it might be closer to \$5,000 actually — for people who are incensed about what's happening. And the whole issue with the Pope, who has become a softer-spoken leader of the Catholic Church: I think our bishop here is still holding onto the traditional stance on social issues. Again, that's changing, too. I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful for a kinder, gentler Catholic Church. I'm hopeful for a kinder, gentler Florida.

Planned Parenthood's annual Safe Sex Halloween Bash starts at 9 p.m. Friday, Oct. 25, at Michael's on East, 1212 S. East Ave., Sarasota. Tickets are \$100. 



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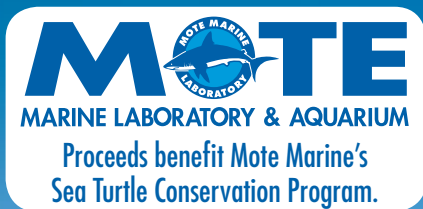


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TAKING SHAPE

This photo shows one stretch of Lido Key plagued by frequent erosion. The building's pool deck is exposed to the water. Image courtesy of the City of Sarasota

AS LIDO BEACH'S RENOURISHMENT PROJECT TAKES SHAPE, SO DOES DEBATE. THE PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO SLOW EROSION, BUT SOME RESIDENTS QUESTION TWO KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Wave action and storms erode more than 100,000 cubic yards of beach sand — about 20 feet of shore — from Lido Key on average every year.

When storms such as Tropical Storm Debby whirl through the Gulf of Mexico, the erosion is worse. On one stretch of beach where the most frequent erosion occurs — along the southern end of the key — a condominium complex's

pool deck juts into the water during high tide, and some condo units are exposed to waves during rough weather.

A \$22 million project to add 1.1 million cubic yards of sand and three groins to Lido Key is designed to slow erosion and keep sand on the beach.

“This is a project to mitigate damage to the beach from tropical storms or whatever else Mother Nature throws at us.”

Milan Mora
Project Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville

The project has been in the works since 1999, and it is the only one of its kind currently planned in the

Lido Key, Sarasota, FL 34236, USA

Image © 2013 TerraMetrics
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
© 2013 Google

Sand used during the city's effort to renourish Lido Key in the past has accrued on the Big Pass ebb shoals. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

state. It would initially add up to 300 feet to the width of the beach in some places. Every five years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would oversee renourishment, pumping more sand onto the beach to retain a designed berm.

“This is a project to mitigate damage to the beach from tropical storms or whatever else Mother Nature throws at us,” U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Milan Mora told media at a meeting Tuesday morning at Sarasota City Hall.

Jim LaGrone, project engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, used this analogy: The 1.1 million cubic yards of sand will act as a layer of fat. Without this extra sand, waves will eat away at natural dunes and the shoreline, eventually threatening condos and hotels on the key.

However, as the Lido beach plan has been taking shape, some Siesta Key residents and boaters have been questioning two major elements of the project. Both the placement of three rock groins on South Lido Beach and the proposed use of Big Pass as a site to dredge sand that will be used for the project are proving controversial.

Engineers with the Corps say both elements are essential to retaining a buffer on Lido’s shoreline.

The groins placed on the southern end of Lido Beach will reduce how quickly beach sand erodes by 35 to 40 percent, Mora told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

The Corps has concluded that Big Pass is the best source for dredged sand that will be



A slide from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Lido renourishment presentation shows details about the project. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

pumped onto Lido Beach; insufficient sand has been found at offshore sites.

The agency's modeling system identified three separate dredge sites in the pass where sand could be taken with little impact on Siesta Key to the south, Mora said.

The overall project was authorized by Congress in 1999, Mora added. It was found economically feasible and environmentally sound by the Corps in 2004.

During a series of public meetings, the project as planned was presented to the local community in 2003 and 2004, Mora continued.

The next step in the process is a permitting phase. "We are trying to position the project so we have permits for Fiscal Year 2015 or fiscal year 2016," Mora said.

BIG PASS CONCERNS

During a joint meeting on Oct. 22 of the Sarasota County and City commissions, some residents took to the microphone during the Public Comments segment to voice their concerns about the Corps' plan.

Siesta resident Peter van Roekens was among those to address the issue of dredging Big Pass.

"Individual consultants all had reasons why it didn't make sense [years ago to dredge the pass]. Now there is another proposal to dredge," van Roekens said. "We absolutely need a peer review of this project. That would be my recommendation."

Jono Miller, a Sarasota conservationist who ran for the County Commission in 2008, said federal and local engineers cannot guarantee



Dr. David Munro speaks to the City and County commissions on Oct. 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the dredging will have no negative impact on Siesta Key.

Miller also told city and county commissioners that the local governments of Longboat Key, Venice and others need to be invited to take part in a coordinated strategy for the area's beaches — instead of just spending millions on one particular beach.

"There should be a coherent, coordinated strategy for our beaches," Miller pointed out.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson — a Siesta resident — asked Army Corps officials about a 2005 county study that was peer-reviewed by three independent consultants. That study recommended the removal of sand from Big Pass, but it did not suggest a specific source — a square in the middle of the pass — that is one of three "borrow" sites in the current Corps project.

Patterson wanted to know why federal officials were now recommending the three

dredge sites that were different from those in the 2005 study.

“I guess I am looking for some more defense of that proposal,” Patterson said.

Federal engineers concluded that the dredging of the three sites would not adversely impact navigation in the channel and that, overall, there would be no significant impact to Siesta, Mora told her.

Dredging in the pass would, however, result in a minor “two-tenths of a foot” wave increase towards the very northern end of Siesta bordering the channel. “It is very minimal impact,” Mora added.

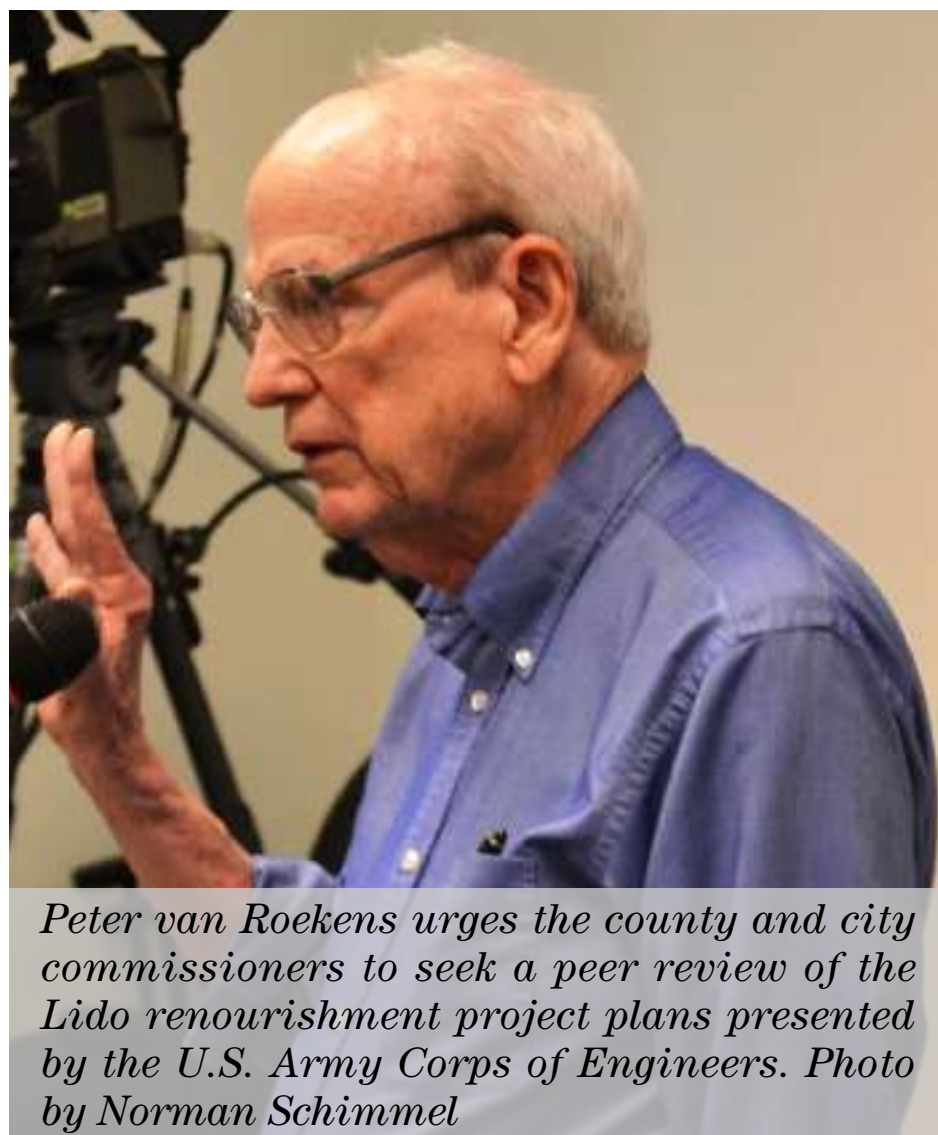
The federal agency might hear from some of the residents living along Beach Road on Siesta Key, Patterson responded. “That is an area that has suffered a lot of wave action,” she added. “People living there wouldn’t be thrilled to hear about a minimal increase.”

ANCHORING THE SAND

To keep the new sand on Lido Beach for up to five years until another maintenance renourishment would pump more sand, the Army Corps of Engineers is proposing to place three rock groins on the southern end of the key.

But Mora explained to the *News Leader* that while the structures would anchor the sand that is pumped onto the beach, they would not intercept the sediment flow that is a natural part of the system of coastal currents on the west coast of Florida. “The groins are designed to work with the renourishment project,” Mora said.

Yet, referencing studies done in the past, Siesta residents also have questioned whether the



Peter van Roekens urges the county and city commissioners to seek a peer review of the Lido renourishment project plans presented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Corps’ modeling has been adequate in regard to the groins. Nationally known experts such as Orrin H. Pilkey — James B. Duke professor emeritus at Duke University’s Nicholas School of the Environment — have argued structures such as groins end up producing more negative impacts than positive ones.

Mora said that during the Corps’ planning, engineers addressed two questions: How will the groins impact Big Pass, and how will they impact Siesta?

“What will be the effect on Siesta Key? None,” Mora maintained, “because the groins are designed to anchor the renourishment, not to stop the current [moving] to the ebb shoal.”

Mora told the *News Leader* the project promotes a cyclical movement of beach sand. Sand dredged from Big Pass and added to Lido will eventually drift back south into the pass.

As for the cost: The federal government will fund 62 percent of the project, while the remainder of the expense will be split between a state grant and Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenue set aside for renourishment projects.

THE SAND CHALLENGE

“This is the jewel of Sarasota and Sarasota County, as well,” City Engineer Alex DavisShaw told the city and county commissioners before Mora made his presentation to them on Oct. 22, “and it is critically eroded.”

The \$22 million project aims to protect infrastructure and public safety and, as a side benefit, it would buffer tourism. An impact study undertaken for Visit Sarasota County

shows tourism on Lido Key brings \$155 million every year into the county.

But the challenge for the renourishment project was finding a sand source.

Egmont Key, one of the initial sites reviewed, proved to be too far away, making it costly for dredges to transport sand, Mora said. Sand located nine miles off Longboat Key was off the table because of more restrictive guidelines protecting coral reefs.

The sand offshore also was not the correct consistency and color, which had the potential to impact sea turtle nesting outcomes.

“Putting sand that is not the right consistency on the beach can change the temperature [of the beach],” Mora explained. “Just a few

OVERVIEW – PROJECT SCOPE



1971



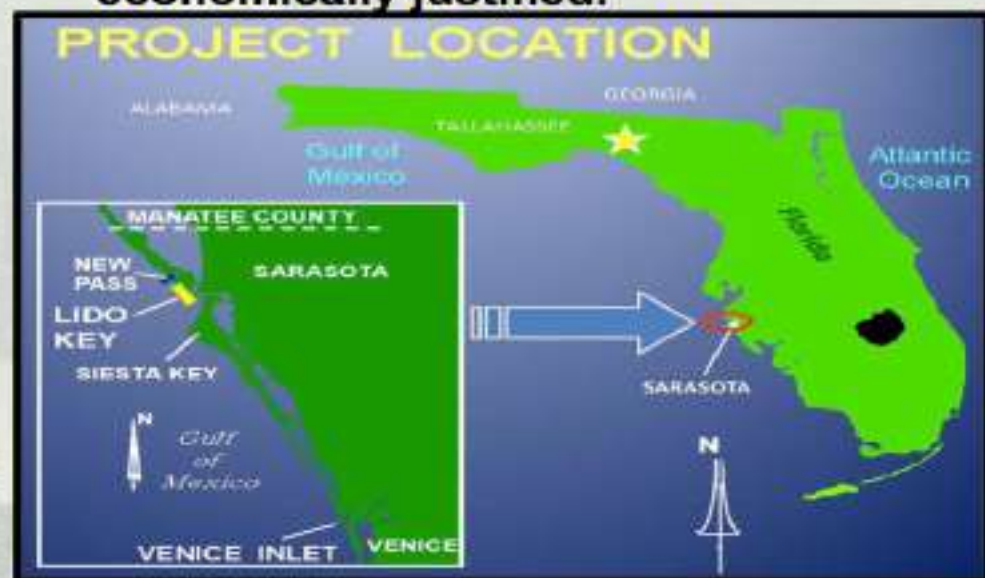
1986



2006

■ Authorized WRDA 1999

- Authority was contingent on a feasibility assessment of the project.
- 2002 Feasibility Study with Environmental Assessment (amended April 2004) determined that project was technically sound, environmentally acceptable and economically justified.




A slide from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presentation to the City and County commissions shows historical views of Lido Beach and history of the renourishment projects. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

degrees, and the sea turtles will lay all eggs [of the same sex].”

Faced with a shortage of options, engineers with the Corps of Engineers looked to Big Pass as a likely solution.

Federal engineers then spent 18 months studying models to determine whether dredging in the pass would impact the downdrift beaches on Siesta. They started with the earlier study that was peer-reviewed by independent consultants, analyzing different options. “The modeling builds on the original model in 2005,” Mora told the *News Leader*.

The model’s final conclusion was minimal impacts to the northern tip of Siesta and no negative impact to Siesta’s beaches on the western shore of the island.

There is one point Mora wanted to emphasize for residents on Siesta worried about dredging impacts: Although the initial Lido project will use sand from Big Pass, future renourishments would likely use sand taken from New Pass. According to an interlocal agreement, the Town of Longboat Key and the City of Sarasota already use sand from that pass, but they do so in alternating dredges. The next “batch” of sand from New Pass goes to Longboat. 



(From left) City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, City Manager Tom Barwin, County Administrator Randall Reid and City Engineer Alex DavisShaw listen as Laird Wreford, the county’s coastal resources manager, introduces a presentation of the Lido renourishment project. Photo by Norman Schimmel



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FOCUS ON THE LONG TERM

Swimmers enjoy the warm water at Warm Mineral Springs. Photo by Rachel Levey-Baker

THE COUNTY COMMISSION SEEKS A NEW SOLICITATION FOR THE SHORT-TERM OPERATION OF WARM MINERAL SPRINGS AND A 90-DAY TURNAROUND ON THE SCOPE OF WORK FOR THE RESORT'S LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

For close to an hour, they vented; and then they voted.

The Sarasota County Commission unanimously agreed on Oct. 22 to concur with the North Port City Commission's rejection of the bid awarded in September for the short-term operation of Warm Mineral Springs.

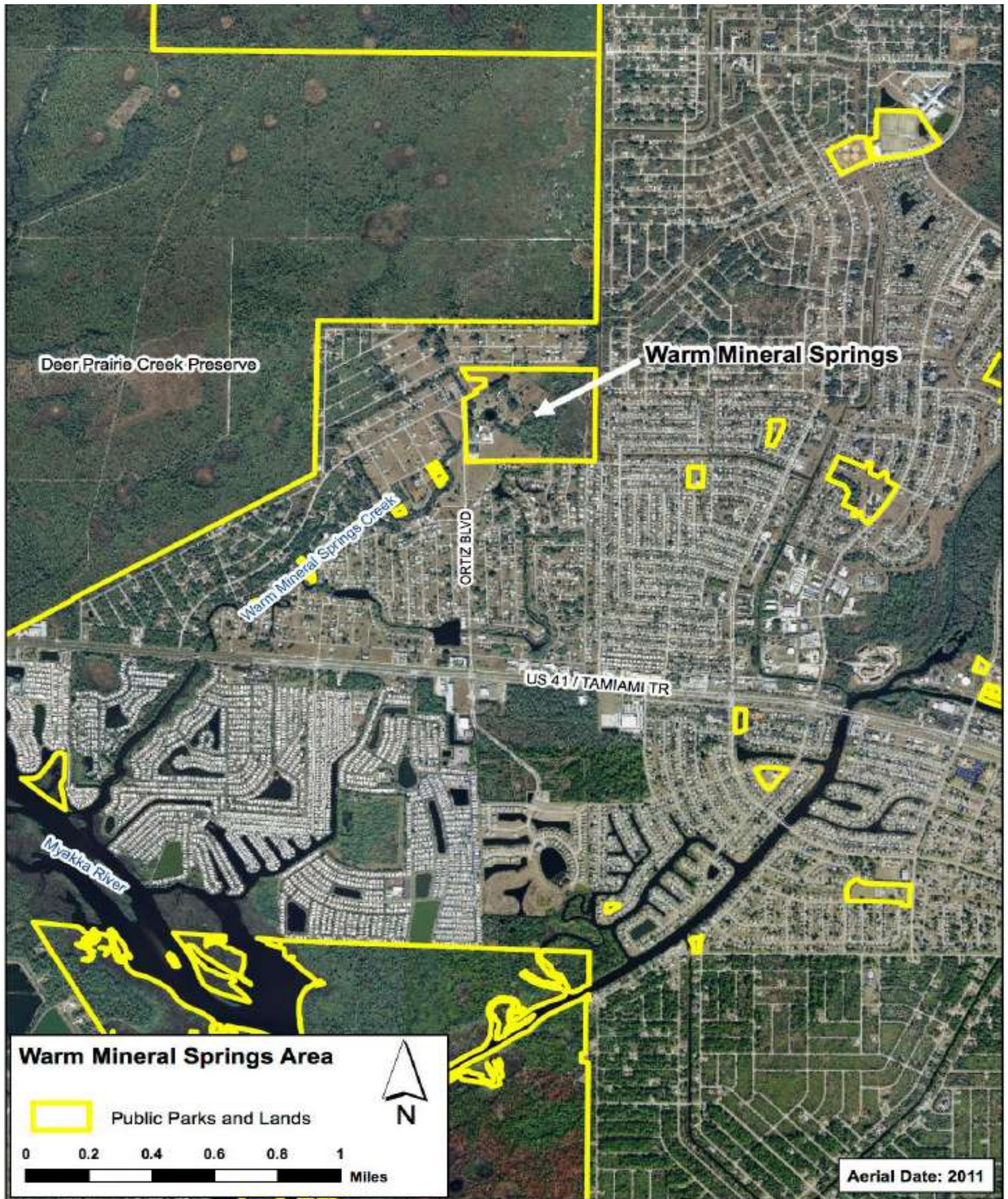
But that was just the first part of what the board members agreed to convey in a letter to the North Port Commission. Working from a draft provided by Commissioner Christine

“ I don't believe that once we put public employees there, we will ever get them out again. ”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Robinson, they also decided that the two boards — joint owners of the 81-acre resort in North Port — should pursue another solicitation process for a short-term operation.



An aerial map shows the location of Warm Mineral Springs. Image courtesy Sarasota County

They also asked that the North Port City Commission provide them a scope of services for long-term management of Warm Mineral Springs within 90 days of the date of their letter. Chairwoman Carolyn Mason signed the letter on Oct. 23.

Moreover, they agreed unanimously with a motion by Commissioner Joe Barbetta that the City of North Port's new solicitation for a short-term operator could be an Invitation to Negotiate (ITN), a Request for Proposals (RFP) or any other legally authorized competitive process. That was incorporated into the letter.

If the City Commission pursued only another request for bids, as it did during the summer, the county commissioners said they feared a protracted shutdown of the resort, which has been closed since June 30 when the lease with Cypress Lending Inc. ended.

They also heard from North Port City Attorney Rob Robinson that if the recommended winner of the recent bid process — WMS Sarasota Management LLC — chooses to submit another proposal without a change in its corporate makeup, it will not be considered for a new bid award.

“We can't do anything ... until potentially there is a new election in the City of North Port that changes that [board makeup]. But that's up to the citizens of North Port to make that decision. They may agree with those three people to say, 'We want it to be a park.'”

Charles Hines
Vice Chairman
Sarasota County Commission



A welcome sign greeted visitors to the North Port resort. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons

Robinson made it clear that, under North Port's procurement guidelines, WMS Sarasota Management would not be deemed a responsible bidder because it failed to execute the contract the City and County commissions awarded it in September and it never provided the required bond as stipulated in that contract.

He agreed that an ITN process would be “a way to deal with that issue.”

In an email exchange last week with North Port City Manager Jonathan Lewis, Alexander Berkovich — the personal attorney for WMS Sarasota Management principal Dr. Grigory Pogrebinsky — sought an extension of the period of the short-term contract from 12 months to 24, writing, “[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.”

PREVENTING A 'PERMANENT PARK'

On Oct. 22, county commissioners voiced frustrations about the continued closure of Warm Mineral Springs, just as their City of North Port counterparts had during their Oct. 14 meeting. However, a motion by Commissioner Nora Patterson that called for the county administrator and city manager to work together quickly to put together a plan to open the swimming area for just six months failed on a 2-3 vote.

Only Vice Chairman Charles Hines supported Patterson on that motion. It included a directive that the administrator and manager and their staffs put together an ITN solicitation process "as rapidly as possible" for the long-term operation of the resort, with a call for the two boards to be able to choose the winning proposal from a short list comprised from responding firms.

Hines said he did not want to continue to deny the public access to the resort for an unknown period of time. "It's not right," he added. "It's not helping anybody ..."

Patterson suggested the city and/or the county could hire lifeguards and open just the swimming area — as North Port Mayor Linda Yates proposed last week.

"I don't believe that once we put public employees there, we will ever get them out again," County Commissioner Robinson said.

Patterson protested that those employees would be working under contract — that they would not be regular city or county employees, but Robinson asked, "Who would they report to?"



Assistant North Port City Manager Danny Schult/Photo courtesy of City of North Port

When Patterson replied that they would report to either the county administrator or the city manager, Robinson told her, "Therefore, they are an employee of the city or the county."

Patterson responded that she wanted to see the Springs open during season.

"I want that in the worst way," Robinson said. "However, I do not believe it should be operated permanently as a public park." If only the swimming area opened for a period of time, Robinson pointed out, "There will be no motivation for the North Port Commission to ever do anything differently."

"I also don't want to operate it as a public park," Patterson told Robinson.

“I don’t see how we can allow this to go unopened through a season,” Hines said of the resort. “It is unfair to North Port and the people that come here to go to the Springs.”

Hines and Barbetta both made points about the fact that the majority of the North Port Commission has a desire for no development at Warm Mineral Springs.

“They want a park with a swimming hole,” Barbetta said of Mayor Linda Yates and Commissioners Cheryl Cook and Rhonda DiFranco. “That’s all they want. That’s all they ever wanted. ... It’s most unfortunate that [Warm Mineral Springs] is closed, [but] it’s on the backs of the three commissioners in North Port who changed all the circumstances of a 10-0 vote in July of 2012.”

Barbetta was referencing the unanimous votes of the County Commission and the North Port Commission in a joint meeting more than a year ago, when the boards agreed to pursue an Invitation to Negotiate that they hoped would result in a number of proposals for developing the resort. The city and county bought the property together in December 2010 for \$5.5 million. After Cook and DiFranco were elected to the North Port Commission in November 2012, they joined Yates in opposing development of the site.

THE FRUSTRATIONS

Hines and Barbetta also were most vocal on Oct. 22 in their reservations about whether the two boards ever would be able to reach agreement on the long-term operation of Warm Mineral Springs.



Commissioner Christine Robinson drafted the County Commission’s latest response to the North Port Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“We can try again and we can spend hours and hours and hours and days and thousands of dollars in staff time and still not get anywhere,” Hines pointed out.

Referring to Yates, Cook and DiFranco, Barbetta said, “They’ve forgotten that [Warm Mineral Springs] is a \$5.5 million asset owned by 390,000 people [the county population].”

Hines added that he feared the boards would end up back in mediation, as they had in April after months of dispute. “It’s the same three people that are controlling it; the minority’s controlling the majority here,” he concurred with Barbetta about the three North Port board members.

Hines continued, “We can’t do anything about that until potentially there is a new election in the City of North Port that changes that [board makeup]. But that’s up to the citizens of North Port to make that decision. They may agree with those three people to say, ‘We want it to be a park.’”

Patterson was the one who finally made the motion to send the letter Robinson proposed. “And, boy, we’d better rattle the bushes, because we didn’t get a lot of participation previously” with the bid process during the summer.

Only one other firm put in a bid on the short-term operation. County Parks and Recreation Department Director Carolyn Brown told the board Tuesday that she had confirmed that company no longer was interested.

Earlier in the discussion, Barbetta pointed out, “We’re asking somebody to come into an

operation that has a lot of defects right now, and we haven’t corrected all those defects.”


In an Oct. 9 email to North Port Manager Lewis, Pogrebinsky referenced a [facilities assessment issued by the engineering firm Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc.](#) of Sarasota that detailed numerous problems at Warm Mineral Springs.

Barbetta indicated that if the boards had agreed at the outset to utilize an ITN process for the short-term management, the Springs might be open already.

“We’ve got an operator ready and willing to perform,” Barbetta said. “We’re only apart by a few items. And now we’re going to walk away and start over and wait another 60, 90 to 120 days” before the resort can reopen.

In addressing the County Commission, Assistant North Port City Manager Daniel Schult pointed out that the interlocal agreement the two boards agreed to in June called for North Port to handle the solicitation for bids. Therefore, city administrative staff had felt it would be inappropriate to change the terms of that process when Pogrebinsky sought to do so.

County Commissioner Robinson reminded Barbetta that when the interlocal agreement was executed, the feeling was that a bid process would be the fastest way to get Warm Mineral Springs back open.

Nonetheless, she told Barbetta, “I agree with you, actually. This needs to be a negotiation. This is not a one-size-fits-all piece of property.” 

This may take a while.

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SOFTWARE PITCH REBUFFED

The City Commission listens to a presentation. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION PRESSES FOR 'COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES' WITH OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AS IT QUESTIONS A POLICE DEPARTMENT REQUEST

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

It looked like an expensive but routine piece of business on the City Commission agenda Monday afternoon, Oct. 21. It sought approval of an \$850,000 software license with New World Systems Corp. of Troy, MI.

But at the insistence of Mayor Shannon Snyder, it was pulled from the consent agenda and put under "New Business" as the last item of discussion that evening. When it came up, Snyder

asked city Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker, "Are you aware Collier County is suing the company you've chosen for \$1.7 million for non-compliance? Ms. Tucker, did you do any background checks?"

“Are you aware Collier County is suing the company you've chosen for \$1.7 million for non-compliance?”

Shannon Snyder
Mayor
City of Sarasota

Snyder then asked why the city was not proposing a system that would work regionally. "We are heading toward a two-county area with 1 million people," said Snyder. "Eight hundred fifty

thousand dollars is a lot of money. It should be about one-third if we cooperated with other venues. Why didn't we ask?"

Snyder pushed further. "Can your officers go into the [Sarasota County] sheriff's system and see all the warrants that were issued today? There's a reason there are more unserved warrants in north Sarasota. We don't know about burglaries that are three blocks away in the county," he said. "We've got to go with our hat in our hand to two chiefs and one sheriff in Manatee County to get information. If we don't get this changed, we're never going to be sharing information."

Snyder can hardly be accused of being anti-cop. He is a retired sheriff's deputy.

Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, who received the local police union endorsement three years ago and is now running for the County Commission, offered more criticism. "This is silo thinking. Time and again we're looking for ways to synergize and collaborate. It seems like a very significant investment."

Sarasota Police Capt. Corrine Stannish tried to defend the proposed contract. "What we have now is garbage in, garbage out. What I've been told is, this is great software," she said.

Stannish runs the Bureau of Support Services in the department.

But Snyder was unfazed. "If we don't get this changed, we're never going to be sharing information."

The lawsuit Snyder mentioned was filed originally in April 2012 in Collier County Circuit Court. In September, the Collier County



The Sarasota Police Department is in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Sheriff's Office changed the venue to Florida's Middle District Court in the federal system. The *Naples Daily News* reported on Sept. 30, 2012, that the suit alleged New World Systems "failed to install a new records management, jail management and computer-aided dispatch system by its contractually obligated deadline."

The Collier Sheriff's Office is seeking the return of \$1.78 million already spent on the project and damages of \$15,000. The case went to mediation on Jan. 30 of this year.

Snyder wants Sarasota city police to have access to all the information in the local criminal justice system, regardless of source. "The [Sarasota] sheriff's system has the ability to look at the suspect's picture, his tattoos, his prior arrests — everything. That is available to every deputy. The system we're creating won't even be able to work the warrants," Snyder pointed out.

This was not the first time Snyder grilled Sarasota police officers over their plans. During a budget hearing in July, Adam Richter, the Police Department's information technology manager, admitted police on patrol "get a limited data set, a parsed-down version."

"Can our officers on the street look up records?" asked Snyder then. "They have a limited ability," said Richter.

"Shouldn't there be a full integration of these two systems?" asked Caragiulo. Police Chief Bernadette DiPino said, "Yes."

DiPino was asking for a \$1.25 million increase in her budget. The \$850,000 contract with New World Systems represented almost two-thirds of that.



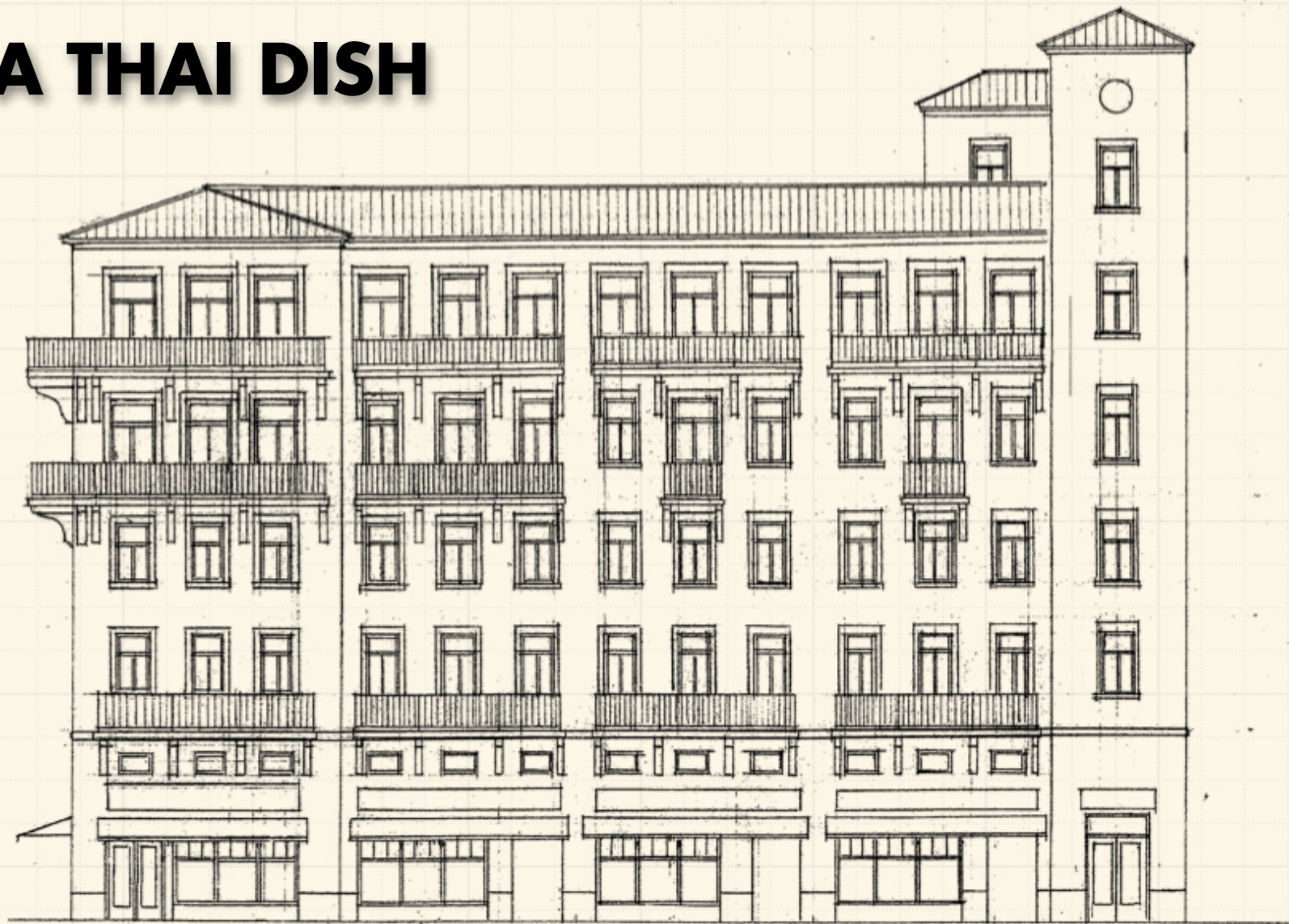
*Bernadette DiPino is the Sarasota police chief.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

"We don't have systems that interface. We need more cooperation, back and forth. We can no longer be parochial about this," said Snyder at the budget hearing in July. "We're all going to have to get on the same page."

On Monday, Caragiulo moved that the Police Department "explore collaborative opportunities with law enforcement agencies in our area to create the best system we can have." Commissioner Suzanne Atwell seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

As for the contract with New World Systems, Tucker says her staff is gathering more information, as the commission requested. She expects the issue to come back to the board in two weeks. 

NOT A THAI DISH



An illustration shows the conceptual design for the State Street garage in downtown Sarasota. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

THE CITY COMMISSION SETTLES ON A 'PAD LITE' OPTION FOR THE STATE STREET GARAGE DESIGN

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota city commissioners sat down Monday, Oct. 21, to try once again to decide on a final plan for the State Street parking garage. The Friday before the meeting, a new, fifth alternative appeared. And that is the one they picked.

The two private contractors hired to create an Urban Design Studio to rewrite the city's zoning code have been receiving other assignments from city staff. One was to create

conceptual drawings of floor plans and street views for alternative garage designs.

Week after week, the commission skirted a final decision on the look of the structure. Meanwhile, the city's contractual deadline of February 15, 2015, to finish and open the

structure kept moving closer and closer. Did the commissioners want a simple no-frills parking garage with a first floor of retail? Did they want to make the building taller and add condominiums? Did

“It's important to live up to our contractual obligations. We'll come in close, maybe four or five months late.”

Shannon Snyder
Mayor
City of Sarasota



they want to camouflage the parking spaces on the upper stories? How much parking did they want to include? And how could all this be put together?

The city hired Realtor Ian Black to try to market a public-private partnership. He returned with a likely partner, but the deal fell apart after the selection was challenged on Sunshine laws grounds.

On Monday, the commissioners received a new option from the Urban Design Studio team. It was dubbed “Pad Lite,” and by a 4-1 vote, they took it. But will it stick? Mayor Shannon Snyder has called a special meeting for Friday, Oct. 25, to talk more about the State Street garage.

‘HONCHO’ UNHAPPY

The city is required to provide 300 parking spaces as part of a complex land development deal with Pineapple Square. Developer John Simon is feeling a bit betrayed.

“We came here in 2005 and went through two-and-a-half years of approvals,” said Simon. “We have gone through four or five different city councils, and every one has come back and said they wanted changes.”

Simon’s group owns a significant fraction of downtown, including property on Main Street and Lemon Avenue. “Every building we are occupying was empty and dilapidated,” he pointed out to the commission. “We had the



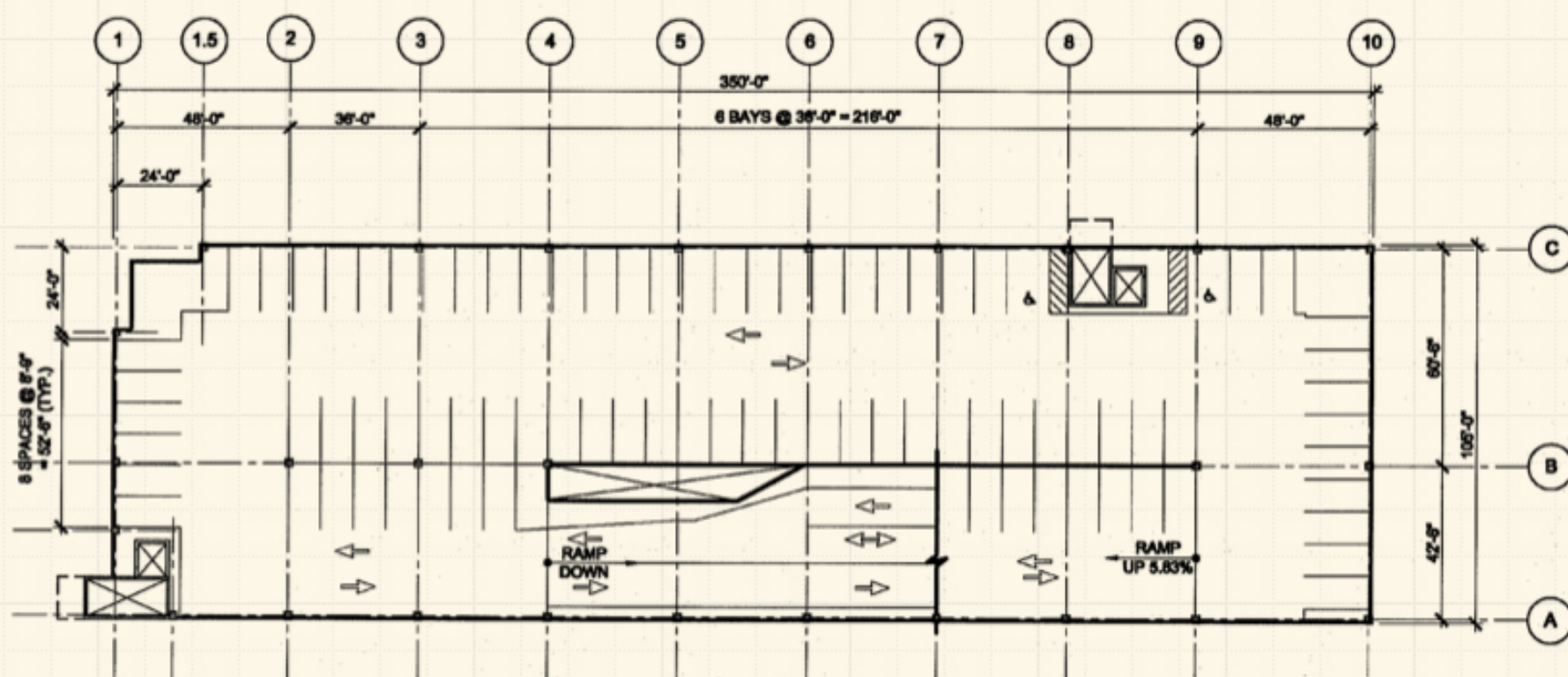
The State Street garage site is an open surface lot in use now in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

right to build 10 stories along Main Street, but we maintained downtown's scale and brought in high-end retailers," he said. "What we've done on Lemon Avenue has been a catalyst."

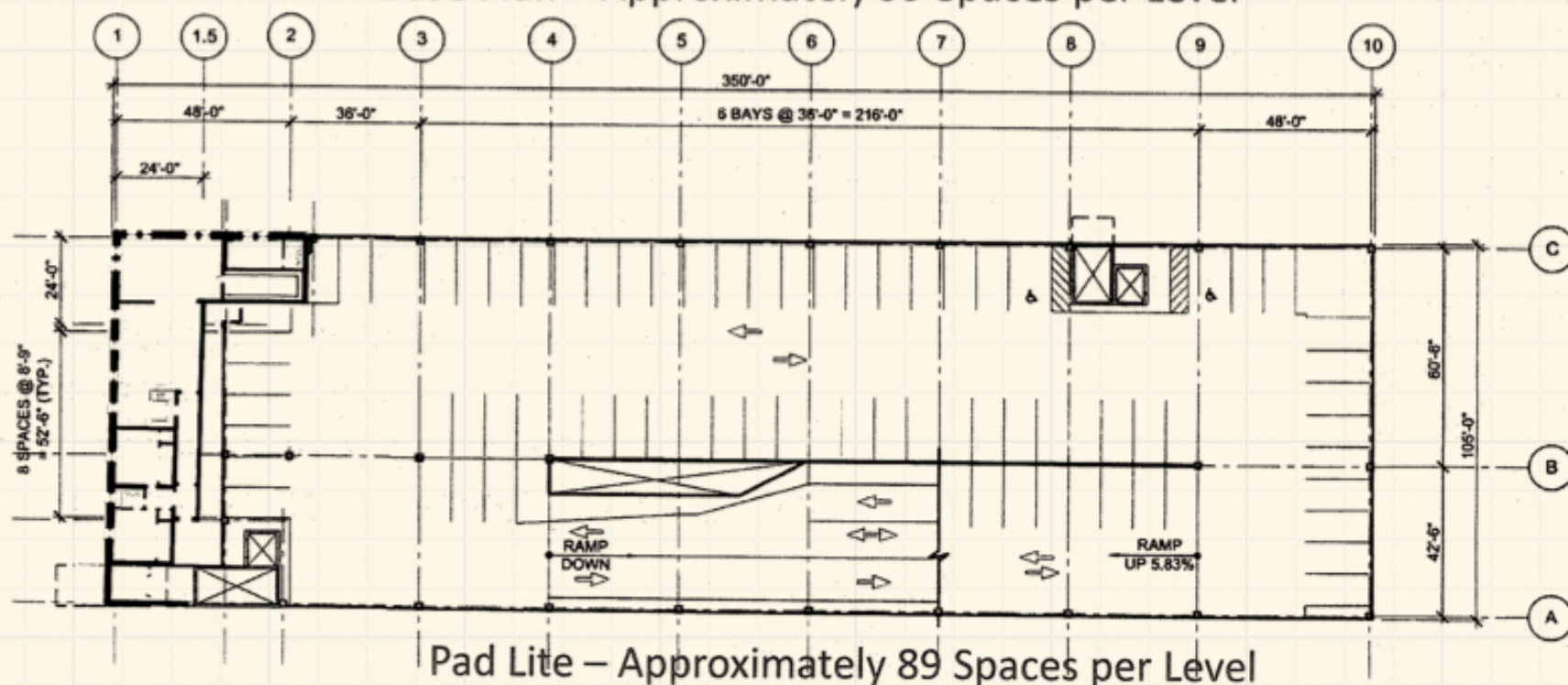
Looming in Simon's mind is the opening in one year of a major shopping center off University Parkway and Interstate 75, University Town Center. The Benderson Development Co. project will be a regional complex the firm hopes to see attract customers from a wide area.

"The last thing you worry about when you go to a mall is parking," said Simon. "But it's the first thing when you go downtown."

He is concerned the Benderson mall will be open a full year before the city can open a parking garage on State Street. "I gave them four years, but it was all pie in the sky to [the commissioners]. I don't believe any of their [construction] timelines," Simon told *The Sarasota News Leader*.



Base Plan – Approximately 99 Spaces per Level



Pad Lite – Approximately 89 Spaces per Level

An engineer's drawing shows how parking spaces could be allocated to the garage levels. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

He also wonders how the city will replace the current 139 parking spaces on the surface lot at State Street once construction begins. “Where will these be replaced during construction?” he asked.

Simon predicts the Southgate Mall at U.S. 41 and Siesta Drive “will implode” under the pressure of the Benderson complex. “It will lose its department stores,” he said. And he is concerned that without easy parking downtown, the multi-million-dollar investment by Pineapple Square is in jeopardy. Of the city commissioners, he added, “They don’t understand the real world.”

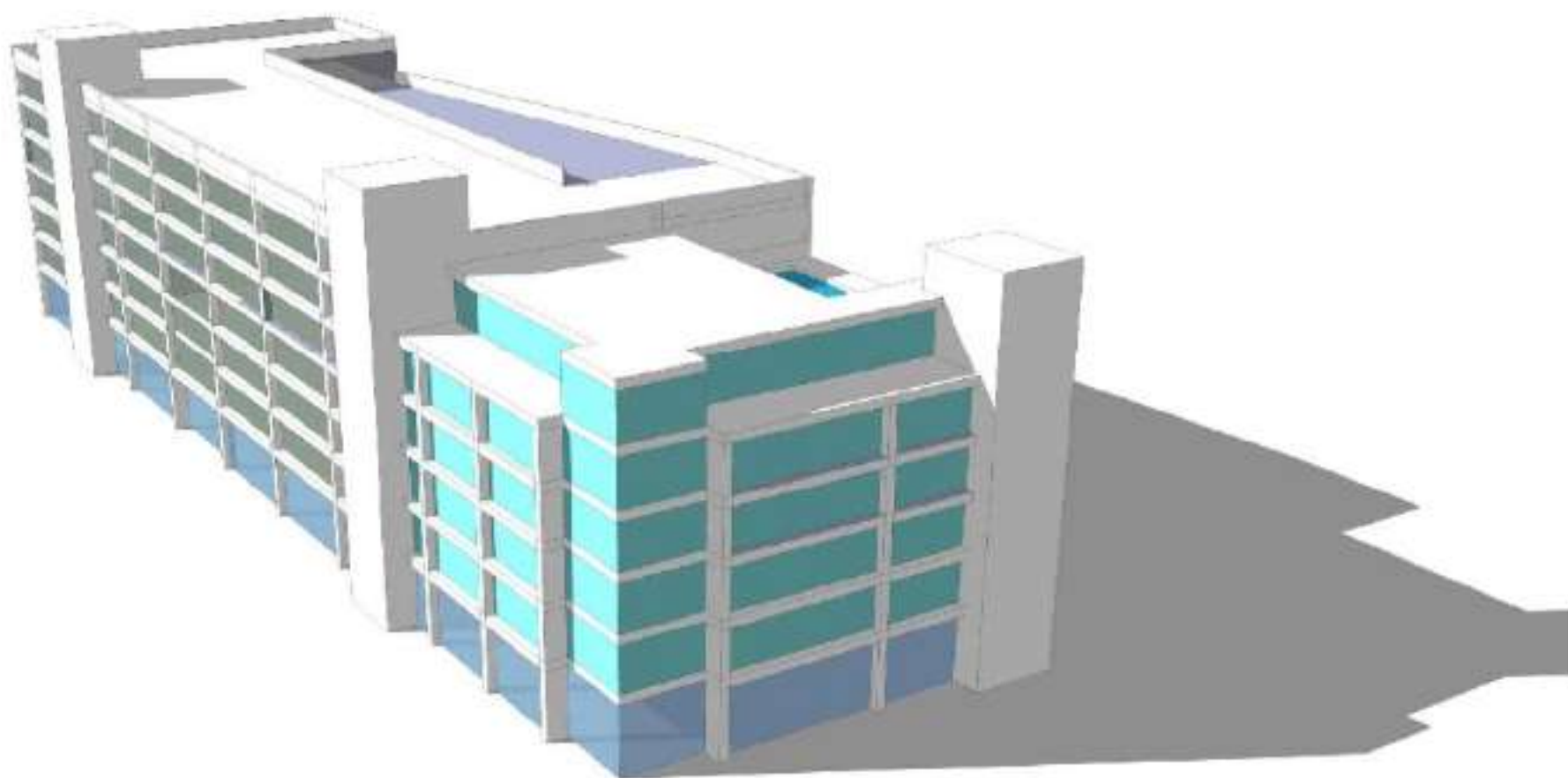
At one time, the City Commission agreed to sell the State Street garage property to Pineapple Square, and it offered development incentives. However, the deal now keeps ownership of the property in city hands (e.g., no property tax receipts).

‘PAD LITE’ IS ...?

The plan the commissioners selected divides the narrow lot in two parts. The portion next to Lemon Avenue could be developed separately. It would be only 25 to 30 feet deep, with retail on the first floor and six dwelling units on the upper levels. The city would create a “pad” with appropriate plumbing and electrical “stub-ups.” A developer would simply tie into the utility connections.

The much larger, remaining parcel would be home to a six-story building with four levels of parking (345 spaces) and 16,000 square feet of retail space occupying the bottom floor. Because of the height of the bottom floor, that level counts as two stories under the zoning and building codes.

With this option, the city could move ahead quickly to get the parking structure built.



An Aug. 29 presentation to the City Commission incorporated ‘Option C,’ which was referred to at the time as the ‘Pad Site’ alternative. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

Development of the “pad” could wait or be done at the same time as the parking structure. The “build time” — from decision through permitting to the end of construction — was estimated at 18 to 19 months. Permitting would require some “adjustments and encroachment agreements,” according to staff.

The “pad lite” plan is a scaled-down version of one of the four original conceptions simply called “the pad.” It envisioned a 10-story building, with six or seven levels of parking. It, too, separated the development of the parking structure from the “pad site.” It would have had a minimum of 430 parking spaces if six levels were built.

Commissioner Suzanne Atwell was staunchly in favor of the original “pad,” but she was outvoted 4-1 Monday in favor of “pad lite.”

TAKING OBLIGATIONS SERIOUSLY

City Attorney Bob Fournier weighed in after the testimony concluded: “I hope you appreciate my concern the city take its contractual concerns seriously. I hope someone can enter into an agreement with the city with the knowledge the city will fulfill its obligations,” he said. “Under the circumstances, I’m not certain there are legally sufficient reasons to take more time.”

The city’s Realtor, Ian Black, was less enthusiastic about “pad lite.” He told the commission, “As your broker, it is a severe under-utilization of one of our last vacant spaces downtown. Construction and staging are difficult, especially building only six [residential] units. I think it’s a misplaced use in this area.”




City Attorney Bob Fournier listens to comments during a joint City/County commission meeting on Oct. 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Black suggested he be given a little time to test the market’s waters with the concept. Would anybody want to build a five-story building downtown with only six narrow residences?

“At the end of the day, it just doesn’t seem right — the pad lite — in that location,” he pointed out.

“It was presented on Friday,” noted Black during the Monday evening commission meeting. “Will these be sold separately? Who will build them? We would need some study to determine viability.”

Commissioner Susan Chapman then said, “We need to make a decision.” She moved to accept the “pad lite” design, and Commissioner Paul Caragiulo seconded it; the motion passed 4-1, with Atwell in the minority.

Snyder addressed Simon in the audience: “You’ve done a wonderful job. It’s important to live up to our contractual obligations. We’ll come in close, maybe four or five months late.” 



UNLIKELY CHAMPION RETURNS

(From left) County Commissioner Nora Patterson, City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell, County Commissioner Christine Robinson, City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, City Manager Tom Barwin and County Administrator Randall Reid participate in the joint meeting on Oct. 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY EXTENSION STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PONDER THE PRESERVATION OF THE NEWTOWN CRA AS WELL AS THE ONE FOR DOWNTOWN

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The City and County of Sarasota in mid-January will receive a recommendation on what to do with the Community Redevelopment Agency downtown and in Newtown. The CRA Extension Study Committee — working under a new chairman and with a new member — is building its proposal on a set of options.

In the end, the members will present their findings to both commissions with the hope that the two bodies will draft a new interlocal agreement.

While no votes have been taken on the various options, consensus continues that the two CRAs should be retained, but modifications are possible and desirable.

The committee made an interim report to a joint Sarasota City-County Commission meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 23, and met in regular session the following evening.

After new Chairman Andy Dorr called the meeting to order, he introduced the group's newest member — Fredd Atkins.

“*They've got us in the palm of their hands.*”

Fredd Atkins
Member
CRA Extension Study Committee



SAVING NEWTOWN

While the Community Redevelopment Agency for downtown Sarasota has produced millions of dollars in revenue, the CRA for Newtown has produced zilch. Its budget is funded by skimming money from the downtown operation. Thus far, it has received \$4.5 million.

That circumstance is due entirely to the date of creation of the Newtown CRA in 2007 — the peak of property values city- and state-wide. A Community Redevelopment Agency works on tax-increment financing, the difference between property tax revenue collected within a defined area during a base year and the tax revenue collected later.

Property values have declined since the Newtown CRA was formed, so the “tax



Assistant City Manager Marlon Brown sits in on the CRA meetings. Photo by Norman Schimmel



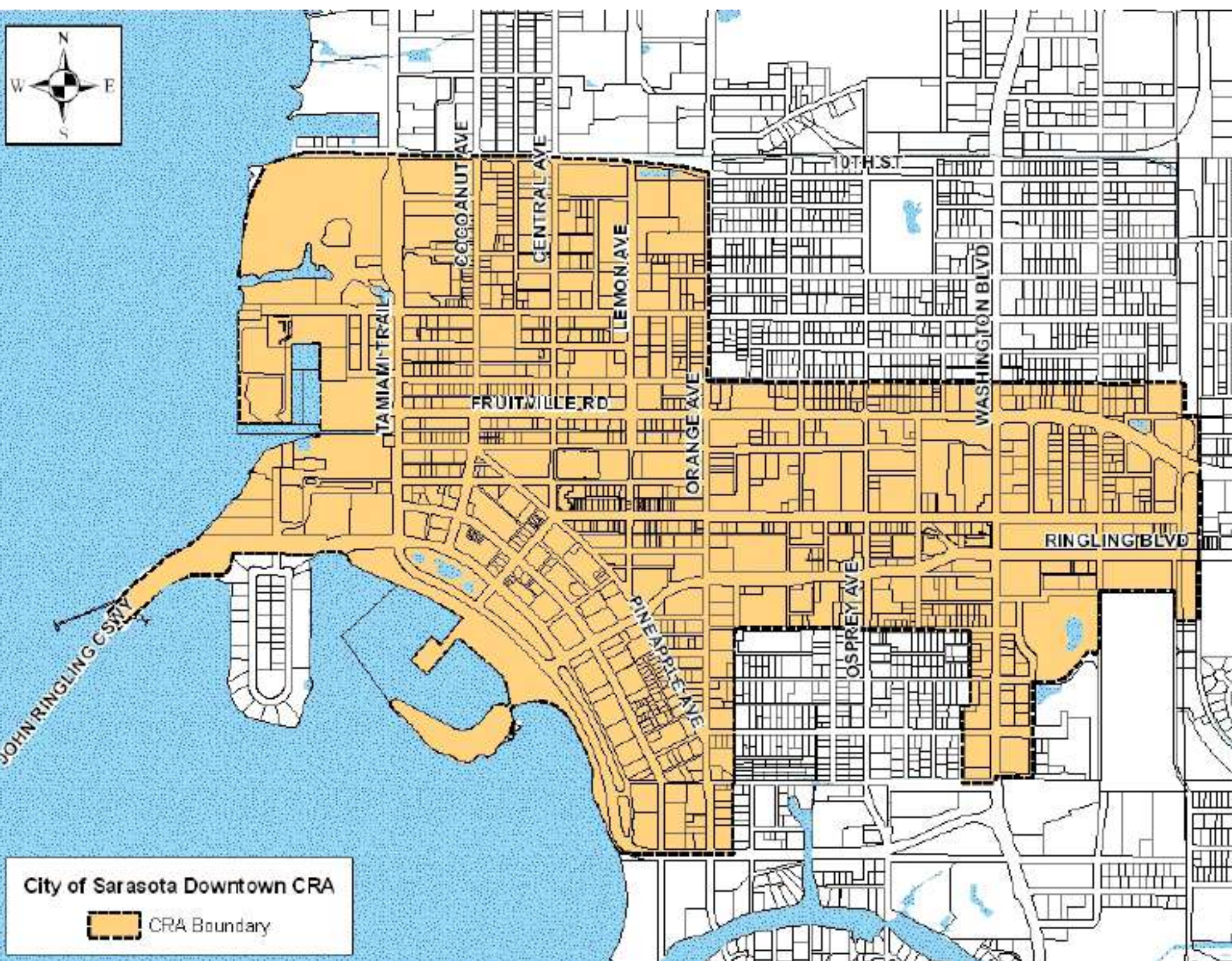
Community Redevelopment Agency Extension Study Committee Chairman Andy Dorr addresses the City and County commissions on Oct. 22. Photo by Norman Schimmel

increment” is negative. Since its inception, the Newtown CRA has needed a subsidy from the Downtown CRA for administration and any projects it wants to pursue.

But even if the “tax increment” becomes positive, that CRA still would work at a disadvantage compared to the one downtown because the Sarasota County Commission refused to participate in the Newtown CRA. The county does participate in the downtown CRA, and this year the county’s share of the “tax increment” financing for that CRA is \$3.5 million.

But the downtown CRA is set to expire in 2016, eliminating the possibility for any further subsidy to the Newtown organization. Thus, the futures of both CRAs are linked, one of a host of issues confronting the extension study committee.

Fredd Atkins is an outsized figure in Sarasota, both physically and culturally. He was the first African-American elected to the City Commission and the city’s first African-American mayor. After serving five terms on the commission, he declined to run for



A map shows the area of the downtown Sarasota CRA. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

reelection with the line, “Don’t make me come back.” But Wednesday, he was back.

GETTING A ‘RESET’

It appears the city could change the “base year” for the Newtown CRA, with or without the county’s permission. It cannot reset the base year backwards, but could reset it to the current or even future year. This would avoid a long climb of property values back to pre-crash levels. But the city unilaterally could not ensure county participation.

“How do we present this better to the county than last time? It was a tough time just getting them to allow it,” said Atkins, who was on the City Commission when the Newtown CRA was created. “Are they willing to give something? Are they willing to support a CRA in north Sarasota?”

When he presented the committee’s interim report the day before to the joint city-county meeting, Dorr specifically touched on those issues along with the need to update the two CRA plans. “In Newtown, the CRA was established at the heart of the Great Recession. Property values dropped dramatically. There is no contribution from that total area. Should we reset that to current levels?” he asked the county commissioners.

The county board’s only response to the entire presentation came from Commissioner Nora Patterson. “I recall the County Commission did not adopt a new [tax-increment financing] area for Newtown. We made it possible to transfer money from the downtown CRA,” she said.

Patterson is a former city commissioner; she sat on the County Commission when the Newtown CRA was established.

Dorr said money was being transferred every year because no tax increment existed. That was the extent of the dialogue. It should be said the county commissioners had other, weightier matters on their minds. The following day they fired their administrator, Randall Reid.

“If we can’t work out a way to extend the downtown CRA, there’s not much hope for the Newtown CRA,” said Atkins during the committee meeting. “As long as Nora Patterson is there, you don’t have three votes to extend,” he added. The two have sparred politically for decades.

Patterson is term-limited, so she cannot run for a fifth time. She will be replaced in November 2014. Yet, the CRA Extension Study Committee is scheduled to make its report in January 2014.

THE DELICATE DANCE

The committee on Wednesday looked extensively at how to reset the Newtown base year. Did the city have the authority to act unilaterally, as it has in the past when it decided downtown CRA monies could replace general fund monies to pay for landscaping and police officer salaries?

Committee member Mark Huey said, “We don’t want to sink the whole ship over one year or another. There’s not that much money involved. If the [Sarasota] City Commission were to vote to reset [the base year], wouldn’t it send a positive message? Our mission is a

bigger one than resetting [the base year in] Newtown.”

Member Ernie DuBose made a motion to reset the Newtown CRA base year, but he asked, “Will this recommendation jeopardize our main task?”


The motion was eventually tabled for consideration at the next meeting. In the meantime, Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown — who attends the committee’s meetings — will convey the idea to City Hall.

“Let the idea come out of staff,” said committee member Chris Gallagher.

The committee went on to other topics. What are the allowable uses of the CRA money? Should the city be able to use the dollars in lieu of general fund money? Should

administrative expenses be capped at some percentage of the total? Should fractions be set for public-private partnerships, beautification, infrastructure improvements and other uses allowed by state law?

Mark Cunningham, an assistant county administrator, also monitors the meetings. “It is not realistic to figure out what the needs are 10, 20, 30 years out. You can amend your plan based on the needs at a specific time. Things change,” he pointed out. Perhaps he was reflecting on that after watching his boss, Randall Reid, get sacked earlier that day.

“They’ve got us in the palm of their hands,” said Atkins. “We’ll go through this process and then wait to see what the county wants to do. OK. So let’s help the County Commission make up [its] mind.” 

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The new Sarasota County Emergency Operations/911 Center will be located at 6050 Porter Way in Sarasota. It will replace the existing facility, which is located in the Sarasota County Administration Center at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County

WORK IS SET TO BEGIN ON THE NEW COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER AND SIESTA PUBLIC BEACH IMPROVEMENTS – BUT NOT WITHOUT A COUNTY COMMISSIONER’S LAST-DITCH EFFORT TO CONTROL SOME OF THE LATTER’S EXPENSES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

They were separate votes on two signature projects for Sarasota County. One, necessitating no extra money, won unanimous approval. The other ended in a split vote, with one county commissioner on the losing side arguing the board should not waste an opportunity to save money.

Ultimately, the prevailing votes approved a guaranteed maximum

price (GMP) for the construction of both the new Emergency Operations/911 Center (EOC) and the improvements at Siesta Key Public Beach.

“We already voted on this, and I don’t want to micromanage this anymore. This [project has] been delayed for way too long.”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

In the latter case, Chairwoman Carolyn Mason and Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Charles Hines reaffirmed the board’s Aug. 28 decision to allow the construction manager to

overall construction budget. Instead, he said, the requested \$119,020 was to cover additional work by the architect, Architectural Design Group. After further research and an examination of best practices in eight surrounding counties, Tobias said, staff and the project consultants had concluded the new

EOC needed to be about 39,000 square feet instead of 20,000.

Even though she noted she had received the answer the previous day in a discussion with staff, Robinson asked Tobias to explain to the public whether the contract amendment

Phase III (Nov 01, 2014 – July 01, 2015)

- Having additional parking spaces in phases I and II, there will ample spaces to make up for the ones lost when phase III begins.
- Emphasis will be to regrade and repave the phase III parking lot to maximize parking as soon as possible.
- With the completion of the East Concessions and Restroom Building, we will demo the existing east restrooms and close the West concessions and restroom along with the historic pavilion.
- The work associated with the improvements for the public safety resources, west concessions and restroom along with the historic pavilion will complete with the end of construction activities in phase IV.
- Due to the work associated with the amenities around the historic pavilion, additional temporary facilities will be brought on line for the lifeguard and Sheriff offices along with portable restroom facilities. Our intent is to ensure that siesta beach improvements project minimizes the public impact and maximizes the use of existing amenities.



would add to the Emergency Operations Center's GMP of \$15,314,000.

He made it clear that the extra design funds for the architectural firm would be absorbed in the total budget.

Then the commissioners approved the GMP on a unanimous vote.

A memo to the board with background information on the project says construction is to get under way in November and

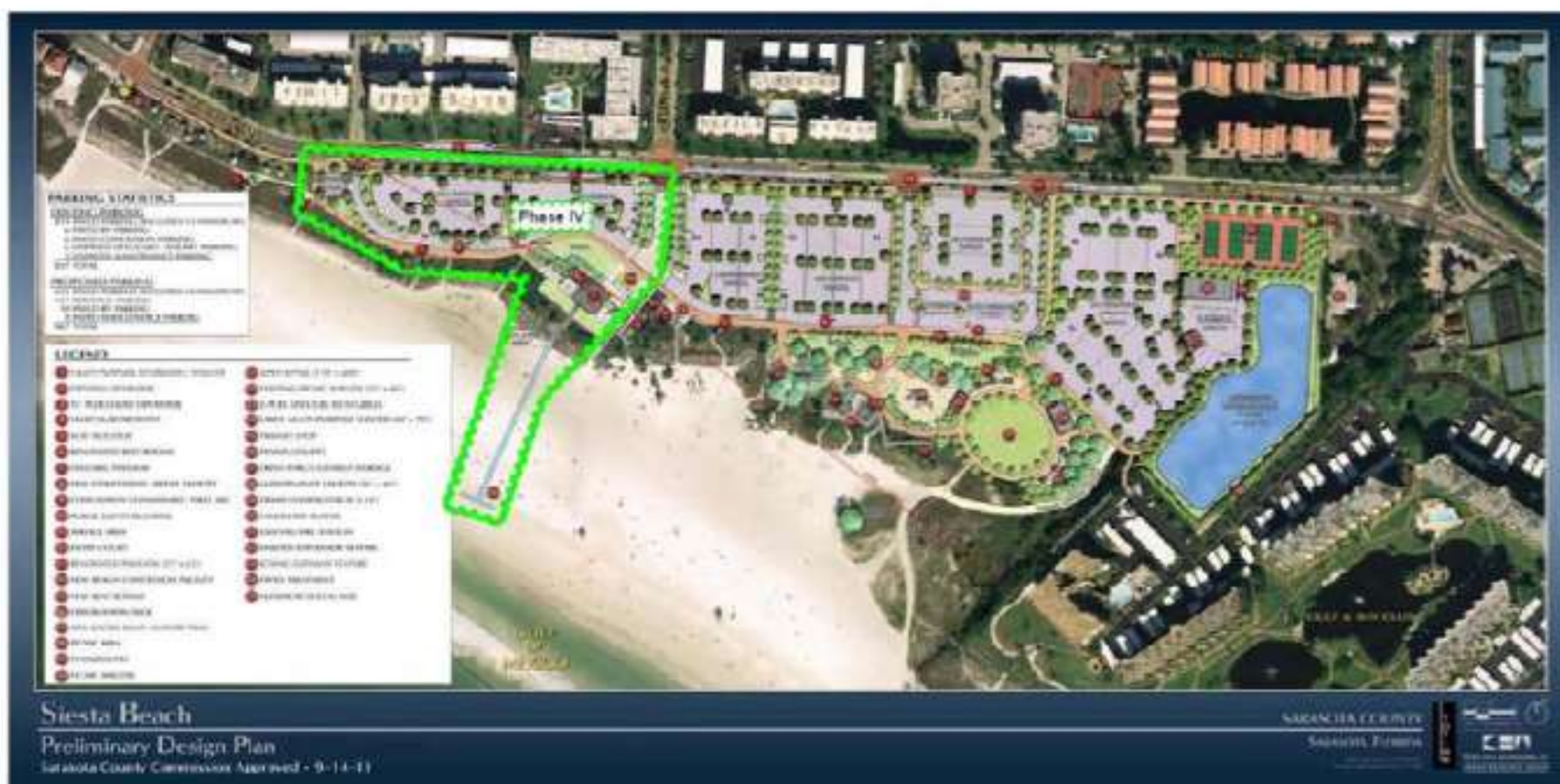
be substantially completed in January 2015, "with post construction activities finishing by March 2015 prior to the 2015 hurricane season."

THE PARK PLAN

A longer discussion ensued before the vote came on the Siesta Beach project GMP. The contract amendment the board approved on Oct. 22 with Jon F. Swift Inc. stipulates that the construction cost will not exceed \$17,459,051.

Phase IV (July 15, 2015 – Nov 01, 2015)

- It is the intent to construct the main driveway as soon as possible in phase IV so that there will be three drives for the public parking in phase I, II and III. The west drive will be used for construction traffic.
- The work associated with the improvements for the public safety resources building, west concessions and restroom along with the historic pavilion improvements will complete with the end of construction activities in phase IV.
- Final phase of parking improvements for the project.



Patterson told her colleagues that one of the primary points of their agreement to pursue the construction all at once — instead of spreading it out over 10 or more years, as the original plan proposed — was to save money. Referring to the Aug. 28 County Commission meeting, she added that she would prefer to have the project manager come back to the board to seek approval for each of the eight ranked items before work proceeded on any except the first two: the replacement of the existing portion of dune walkovers, with an estimated cost of \$214,500.00; and the West Pavilion, at an anticipated expense of \$241,697.50.

“It still sticks in my craw that we’re spending the money for pavers ... in the entirety of what’s a much broader and nicer sidewalk with a fancy name,” Patterson noted of the design for the 15-foot-wide esplanade that will allow people to move from one end of the park to the other without having to walk through the parking lots.

When Patterson asked the project manager, Brad Gaubatz, whether he could come back to the board for the go-ahead on any ranked items if it appeared savings would permit their inclusion, Gaubatz replied, “It’s not an impediment to us.”

However, he said, “We may be asking the board to allow us to come on a moment’s notice. ... If that’s the board’s desire, we would be happy to manage the project that way.”

When Patterson then asked whether the bidding for specific parts of the project was going



The historic Siesta Beach pavilion will be renovated as part of the improvements. File photo

to be completed within a tight time frame instead of spread over the two years of work, Gaubatz told her that, generally, the bidding by subcontractors would be handled “all at once.” Nonetheless, he pointed out, it was the construction manager’s prerogative to handle that in the manner he felt best.

Ross Russo, vice president of Jon F. Swift Inc. of Sarasota, is the construction manager.

That was when Barbetta lodged his protest. “As far as I’m concerned, the [Aug. 28] vote stands,” he said.

“That’s just where I am on this,” Hines added. “We’re not going to all agree on whether the umbrellas should be blue or green,” he pointed out as an example. “We’re getting down to the point of constantly holding [the construction manager] up.”


Hines told his colleagues he was at Siesta Public Beach over the weekend. “It’s in great need of updating and improvement, so I’d like to see [the work] get started.”

“I’ll not be supporting [the motion], then,” Patterson said, though she added her intent was not to hold up the project.

Hines made the motion to approve the GMP. Barbetta seconded it.

A memo provided to the board indicates the improvements will begin in November on the eastern end of the site, moving west over about 24 months. The memo adds that

permitting is under way and is not expected to delay the process.

Additionally — although Gaubatz raised the concern at the Oct. 1 Siesta Key Village Association meeting — the fact that the Beach Road Drainage Project has fallen behind schedule should not hamper the start of the park improvements, the memo points out. (See the related information in *Siesta Seen* in this issue.) The design consultant and Russo, along with county staff, are working with the contractor on the drainage project to allow the beach park improvements to get under way in November as planned, the memo notes. The two projects are to run concurrently until the drainage project is finished, the memo notes. 



Historic Pavilion, West Concession and Public Safety Building

An artist's rendering provided by Sweet Sparkman Architects in Sarasota shows how the renovated historic pavilion will appear. Image courtesy Sarasota County



The Baltimore Orioles' first night game in Sarasota in 2014 will be on March 8 against a split Boston Red Sox squad. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE ORIOLES' SARASOTA HOME WILL GET NEW LIGHTS BEFORE SPRING TRAINING STARTS, BUT THE COUNTY COMMISSION WANTS A THOROUGH REVIEW OF FACILITY REVENUE AND EXPENSES OVER THE NEXT 26 YEARS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Ed Smith Stadium will get new lights before the Baltimore Orioles begin their Spring Training games in Sarasota on March 1, the County Commission agreed unanimously this week.

The first night game will be against a split Boston Red Sox squad on March 8.

However, commissioners also made it plain they want to review the overall plan for revenue generation

and stadium expenses over the remaining 26 years of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) the county signed with the Orioles in 2009 to bring the team to town.

Data shows the fund for maintenance and repairs should have about \$9 million by the end of the MOU term — not including interest payments — and \$4,204,322 in anticipated expenses, based on a preliminary facilities assessment of the stadium and the

“*I didn't expect this big expensive bill for the new lights.*”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

Buck O'Neil Complex at Twin Lakes Park in Sarasota, Pat Calhoon, the county's manager of sports development and athletics, told the commissioners during their regular meeting on Oct. 23.

The expense budgeted for the new lighting is \$1,241,112, though Calhoon said it appeared the project should come in under that. Part of the money — \$250,000 — is coming in the form of advances on the 2014 payments from the county and the Orioles into the Capital Repair and Improvements Fund (CAPX) for the stadium. Both entities put in \$125,000 per year, Calhoon noted.

(That fee will rise to \$175,000 for both the county and the team starting in 2016, Calhoon said.)

Commissioner Joe Barbetta — a strong supporter of sports endeavors in the community — stressed to Calhoon that the CAPX financial report should be available in 30 days. "It's not an unreasonable request," Barbetta added.

Calhoon's primary purpose in appearing before the board again this week was to secure approval for the lighting replacement project. Reiterating comments he made in a brief report on Oct. 8, Calhoon said, "We are moving on a fast track to do this before Spring Training [starts]."

Bids are to be opened on Oct. 28, he continued, with plans to award the contract on Nov. 12. Because of the long lead time necessary to purchase certain pieces of equipment — a transformer and switchgear — staff already



The 'chandelier' in Ed Smith Stadium is a focal point at the main entrance. Photo by Norman Schimmel

had put “on the street” specifications, so costs could be determined. Preliminary information showed the expense of the transformer would be \$23,000, instead of \$50,000, Calhoon noted.

An Oct. 23 memo to the County Commission from Calhoon, county Parks and Recreation Director Carolyn Brown and Ed Gable, director of the county’s General Services Office, notes the anticipated project budget of \$700,000 was off by \$541,112 principally because of the unexpected necessity of replacing the underground wiring between the utility poles on the grounds, along with the requirement for the transformer, which will “reduce the energy supplied at the primary feed from [Florida Power & Light Co.]”

The memo also points out that the lighting project will provide “significant operational savings by utilizing an existing ‘sports lighting meter’ maintained by the City of Sarasota on the site, thus eliminating the monthly demand charge for use ...”

That monthly charge is about \$6,000, the memo adds, plus a fee of almost 50 cents a minute when the lights are on.

A couple of other minor matters also need to be addressed at the stadium before the first home game, Calhoon pointed out. A walkway to a handicap-access ramp “has sunk for whatever reason,” Calhoon explained. That was discovered after the construction warranty had expired. Additionally, new caulking is necessary, because “folks are getting wet



Images of famous Baltimore Orioles adorn one wall at the team’s operations center at Twin Lakes Park in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

at some places under the stadium” when it rains, he added.

The expense for those repairs should be about \$21,000, he said.

Referencing the preliminary facilities assessment that has been prepared by TLC Engineering for Architecture — the Orlando firm the county hired to undertake the study — the lighting system replacement is the top priority, Calhoon pointed out.

County staff will be meeting with representatives of the Orioles within the next week to finalize that report, he added.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

After Calhoon completed his presentation, Commissioner Christine Robinson pointed out that she had requested a complete history of the CAPX fund. However, the back-up agenda

material provided to the board contained only a review of the Tourist Development Tax revenue allocated to the stadium’s renovation and maintenance. Referring to the latter, Robinson said, “Picking through it was a little difficult.”

“My concern, especially in the out years [is that] the income is really exceeding the original expectations,” Commissioner Nora Patterson said, “and I’m optimistic enough to think that that will continue.”

She added, “It’s really not reasonable to expect that those monies — absent an extension of the contract with the Orioles — will be used a piece at a time basically to rebuild the stadium again over the 30-year period [of the MOU].”

Patterson pointed out that she was interested in the prospect of the county using some of that extra revenue for other purposes.



Pat Calhoon provides details about the Ed Smith lighting project during the Oct. 23 County Commission meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

She also told Calhoon, “I didn’t expect this big expensive bill for the new lights,” with the county taking full financial responsibility for the project.

Calhoon replied that staff, working with the Orioles, agreed at one point to defer a decision on replacing the lights, with the expectation that the project could be delayed. Nonetheless, he said, “I can tell you that I had challenges with those lights for a number of years leading up to the transfer to the Orioles.”

The team began Spring Training in Sarasota in 2010.


However, Calhoon said, “I feel very, very good with the results of the [preliminary] condition assessment [of the Orioles’ Sarasota facilities]. It identified a lot of things that needed to be considered,” including the air conditioning system, the roof and the seats.

He added, “We need to budget on a yearly basis moving forward, so we’re not hit with these big-ticket items at one time ...”

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh explained that under the terms of the MOU, the County Commission should work through five-year capital plans for the facilities and an annual budget.

Robinson told Calhoon she also would like to see the facilities assessment.

“We will give you the entire report as soon as it’s final,” he responded.

At the end of the discussion, Vice Chairman Charles Hines made the motion to approve the funding Calhoon requested — “to let there be lights at Ed Smith Stadium,” as Hines put it, drawing laughter. 

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SOME HELP AT LAST



An aerial map shows the location of the Siesta Village municipal parking lot between Avenida de Mayo and Avenida Madera outlined in yellow. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

AVENIDA DE MAYO WILL SEE NO-PARKING ZONES ESTABLISHED TO MAKE SURE THE STREET IS ACCESSIBLE TO EMERGENCY VEHICLES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Almost exactly 11 months after she sought county help to alleviate what she and her neighbors believed to be a hazardous situation on her Siesta Key street, Avenida de Mayo resident Marlene Merkle was very happy on Oct. 23.

The Sarasota County Commission voted unanimously on a motion by Commissioner Nora Patterson to direct staff to prohibit parking on both sides of the street from Canal Road to Avenida de

Cortez and to provide for staggered no-parking zones from Avenida de Cortez to Avenida Del Norte in 500-foot sections.

The action came after an assessment by Fire Chief Mike Tobias and his staff that overflow

parking on the street from Siesta Village's municipal lot and business areas could prevent emergency vehicles' passage.

On Aug. 28, the commission responded to an Aug. 16 memo from Tobias pointing

We are just very lucky that, up until this point, we haven't had an emergency [on Avenida de Mayo] during high season. It could have been very, very severe.

Michael Shay
Vice President
Siesta Key Association

out that the National Fire Protection Code requires roads to have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet.

Referencing his memo, Patterson said on Oct. 23 that she spoke with Tobias, and he had explained it was inadvisable to allow vehicles to park across from each other on Avenida de Mayo. "It is a particularly narrow road, apparently, even for Siesta Key," she added.

"That's fantastic!" Merkle told *The Sarasota News Leader* shortly after she learned of the board's vote during its regular meeting in Sarasota on Oct. 23. She pointed out that the least safe area of Avenida de Mayo has been the section between its intersection with Canal Road and the intersection with Avenida de Cortez. Vehicles on the street have hampered drivers' views as they exit the municipal

parking lot onto Avenida de Mayo and the line of sight of residents trying to back out of driveways.

"It's been a long haul, but I've just been so grateful [for help]," especially from the Siesta Key Association (SKA), Merkle said.

However, both SKA President Catherine Luckner and Vice President Michael Shay told the *News Leader* they were disappointed Patterson had rejected their request for the county to put up signs warning drivers that violators would be subject to towing.

Patterson had discussed the matter with Luckner on Oct. 21 in conjunction with a meeting of the Presidents Council on Siesta Key, Patterson told her colleagues during the board meeting. The Presidents Council is



When the municipal lot fills up in Siesta Village, people have been turning out onto Avenida de Mayo to find spaces. File photo



A photo shows cars double-parked near the intersection of Canal Road and Avenida de Mayo. Image courtesy Sarasota County



A photo taken by Marlene Merkle shows cars parked on the grass right of way on Avenida de Mayo in March. Image courtesy Sarasota County

composed of representatives from a number of island organizations, including the Siesta Key Village Association, the Condominium Council and the Chamber of Commerce.

Patterson pointed out of Luckner, “She didn’t have a lot of confidence that the no-parking [measure] would be enforced.”

However, Patterson continued, “I don’t want [towing] to happen on Siesta Key unless our backs are just to the wall. We’ve had towing wars already on Siesta Key. They’re very bad for the businesses [and for tourism]. If you

park on a street and get towed away, you’re probably never coming back. It’s a major expense and a real hassle.”

In the interview with the *News Leader*, Luckner said that while towing was a major point of contention on the island in 2006 and 2007, a state law passed in 2007 prevents “frivolous towing” from private property. According to her reading of that law, she said, only a sheriff’s deputy would be able to call for a tow truck to remove a vehicle parked illegally on Avenida de Mayo if towing enforcement signs were erected; a resident would not be able to take such action.

Further, Luckner said, the maximum towing fine that could be levied would be \$125.

She and Shay both told the *News Leader* they were aware of numerous occasions when visitors had not been deterred by the prospect of a \$25 parking fine on the island. Yet, with the

County Commission’s action on Oct. 23, such a fine would be the only result for a driver who parked in a prohibited area on Avenida de Mayo.

“We’ve had a ‘gazillion’ cases here on the key” of people readily accepting the prospect of the fine if that meant they could find somewhere to park, Shay pointed out, even if it was not a legal space.

Further, he said, “We are just very lucky that, up until this point, we haven’t had an emergency [on Avenida de Mayo] during high season. It could have been very, very severe.”

I don’t want [towing] to happen on Siesta Key unless our backs are just to the wall. We’ve had towing wars already on Siesta Key. They’re very bad for the businesses [and for tourism].

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

He told the *News Leader*, “The perfect scenario would have been to have tow-away signs so we’d have some bite” to the board action.”

Still, he said, “We got something, so I am pleased with that.”

Patterson expressed confidence that “deputies will not ignore the situation” on Avenida de Mayo once the no-parking signs are erected.

Moreover, she told her colleagues, the signs are not an expensive measure. “I think it’s a decent compromise,” she added.

A LINGERING CONCERN

Patterson did note an email Shay sent her prior to the commission meeting, which referenced another concern. It said, “While the analyses of the situation seem to favor ‘staggered’ parking in [500-foot] sections from



Siesta Key Association Vice President addressed the County Commission in May. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Avenida de Cortez to Avenida del Norte, let's keep in mind that where parking would be allowed on the north side of the street, those cars would be parked squarely on the asphalt roadway, which, as we all know, is no more than [21 feet] wide on that street."

He added, "If allowed parking were limited to the south side of the street in the [right of way] up against the sidewalk, the asphalt roadway would be kept clear in its entire length."

Patterson told her fellow board members, "Most people take care of their lawns on Siesta Key ... and they regard that [right of way] as part of their property and aren't going to take kindly to people being told, 'Don't park on the pavement.'"

As far as he was concerned, Shay said in the interview with the *News Leader*, the decision to continue to allow parking on the north side of the road — in the street itself — is not a safe situation.

Nonetheless, he said he was pleased the commissioners took more definitive action. "They have come around in the last couple of months and I am appreciative of that. ... The key is going to be to keep an eye [on what transpires with the new measures]. ... Time will tell."

AS FOR THE ADVISORY BOARD ...

The only question Patterson had before the vote was from Vice Chairman Charles Hines, who wanted to be certain the board was not circumventing a public process with her proposed action.

Commissioner Christine Robinson told him the matter did not need to go back to the

county's Traffic Advisory Council (TAC), which heard Merkle's original plea for help when it met in March. "Those aren't public hearings," Robinson added of the TAC sessions.

Additionally, Patterson pointed out, the TAC is an advisory board. The County Commission can accept its recommendations, reject them or modify them. "This is just a belated modification," she added of her Oct. 23 motion.

Only four TAC members were present for the March 11 TAC meeting, and the vote was 2-2 on Merkle's request at the time to ban parking on the south side of Avenida de Mayo.

On May 21, the County Commission split 3-2 on the issue, with Hines and Commissioner Joe Barbetta in the minority.

In advance of the commission meeting, the SKA had recommended the board approve the implementation of parking permits for residents on the south side of Avenida de Mayo, a parking prohibition on the north side of the street and the erection of "Tow Away Zone" signs.

The commission vote included the stipulation that county transportation planning staff work with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and the county's EMS and Fire Department personnel on a recommendation to address residents' concerns about the parking, which Merkle explained in public comments had worsened in recent years.

Merkle has lived on Avenida de Mayo for more than 25 years.

"Sometimes those [local government] wheels turn slowly," Merkle told the *News Leader*. "You just have to have a little bit of patience." 



The Robert Taylor Community Complex is located at 1845 34th Street in Sarasota. File photo

‘TRUNK-OR-TREAT’ PLANNED AT ROBERT TAYLOR COMPLEX

Treat-or-tricking will take on a ghoulishly modern-day twist with “Trunk-or-Treat” in the parking lot at the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex (RLTCC) on Halloween, Oct. 31, the City of Sarasota has announced.

Vehicle trunks will be popped open and decorated at the complex, located at 1845 34th St. in Sarasota, with a prize going to the best effort, a news release says. “Children are invited to trick-or-treat at this safe and ‘spooktacular’ event” from 6 to 7:30 p.m., the release adds.

A costume contest, games and free food also will be featured during the family-friendly festivities, the release points out.

Vehicles must be registered for “Trunk-or-Treat” by Friday, Oct. 25. Interested persons should stop at the front desk at RLTCC for registration information.

RLTCC is hosting “Trunk-or-Treat” in partnership with the Brotherhood of Men, the release says. Other sponsors are the Sarasota Police Department, the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, RLTCC Hard:Noc Teens, Girl Scout Troop 269, We R 4 Kids, Amaryllis Park Neighborhood Association, Chris Bane and Steve Gilberts.

For more information about the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex, visit www.SarasotaGov.com/RLTaylor.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAKE BACK DAY SET FOR SATURDAY, OCT. 26

The Sarasota Police Department will be one of many local law enforcement agencies taking part in the Drug Enforcement Administration's Seventh Annual Prescription Drug Take Back, the department has announced.

The event, which will be held on Saturday, Oct. 26, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m., offers opportunities for people to remove potentially dangerous prescription drugs from their homes, a news release says. People may voluntarily turn in to law enforcement officers expired, unwanted or unused prescription drugs and other medications; those drugs will be destroyed, the release notes, and no questions will be asked. "Medicines kept in home cabinets are highly susceptible to misuse and theft," the release points out. "Unfortunately, most people who abuse prescriptions get them from friends and family. Flushing medications down the toilet or throwing them in a trash can even ... cause health hazards to humans and animals," it adds.

Collection locations will be set up throughout Sarasota County. Two drop-off sites will be provided by the Sarasota Police Department and another two by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, the news release says. Other locations will be offered by the New College Police Department, the North Port Police Department and the Venice Police Department.

New College Campus Police will be collecting unwanted, unused or expired prescription drugs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., a college news



Prescription Drug Take Back Day
Saturday, October 26, 2013
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Participating Sarasota County Law Enforcement Locations:

- Sarasota Police Department, 2099 Adams Lane, Sarasota
- Sarasota Police Department Substation, 701 North Osprey, Sarasota
- Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, 2071 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota
- Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, 4531 State Road 776, Venice
- New College Police Department, 501 College Drive, Sarasota
- Venice Police Department, 1350 Ridgewood Avenue, Venice
- North Port Police Department, 4980 City Hall Blvd., North Port

All locations except New College P.D. have permanent drop boxes

Please do your part for a Safe Community and Clean Environment!

Dispose of your expired and unused prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.
Liquids and needles are not accepted

- Medicines kept in home cabinets are highly susceptible to misuse and theft
- Most people who abuse prescriptions get them from family and friends
- Flushing medications down the toilet or throwing them in the trash poses potential safety and health hazards to humans and animals



release points out. The campus police station is at 501 College Drive, one block north of University Parkway on U.S. Route 41. Visitors should park in the Heiser Natural Sciences Center lot across from the station.

For more information about the New College collection effort, contact the campus police at 487-4210. For more information on Take Back Day, visit http://www.dea diversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html

Further details are offered on the accompanying poster.

Press Releases & News Tips

News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

SARASOTA COUNTY SCHOOLS TO HOLD JOB FAIR FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

The Sarasota County School District will hold a job fair for prospective substitute teachers from 1 to 4 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 25, at the North Port High School Career Center, the district has announced.

Human Resources specialists for the district will be present to assist with the application process and answer any questions, a news release says.

“Because the need for substitutes is greater at some schools, the district has removed the qualification for substitutes at those schools to have Florida teaching certificates,” the release points out. “Applicants who are interested in working at these schools must have a bachelor’s degree and be willing to submit to a background check and drug test, as all district applicants must do.”

If applicants are accepted, they will be added to the substitute pool for the designated schools, the release continues. After two years, they will be able to teach as a substitute at any school of their choice in the district, it adds.

As always, those accepted as substitutes who already have Florida teaching certificates will be able to substitute at any district school, the release points out.

The pay for a substitute teacher with a bachelor’s degree is \$115 per day; substitutes with master’s or higher degrees receive \$124 per day.

If a substitute begins with just a bachelor’s degree and later attains her teaching certificate, she will be able to work as a substitute teacher at any school in the district, the release explains.

The designated schools for substitute teachers with bachelor’s degrees but no Florida teaching certificate are as follows:

- North Port schools — Atwater Elementary, Glenallen Elementary, Lamarque Elementary, Heron Creek Middle, Woodland Middle and North Port High.
- Venice schools — Venice Middle/Oak Park South.
- Sarasota schools — Emma E. Booker Elementary, Fruitville Elementary, Tuttle Elementary, Booker Middle and Oak Park.

North Port High School is located at 6400 W. Price Blvd.

If applicants cannot attend the job fair, the release adds, they may apply at www.SarasotaCountySchools.net (click on the Human Resources link on the left of the homepage) or at the Human Resources Department at The Landings on U.S. 41/South Tamiami Trail, just south of Proctor Road in Sarasota.

Prospective applicants with questions may call the Human Resources Department at 927-9000, Ext. 31200.



SARASOTA COUNTY LIBRARIES ANNOUNCE 2014 ONE BOOK

Sarasota County Library System's One Book One Community program and its community partners have selected a tale of sport that spotlights Florida's history for the next One Book, the county has announced.

The 2014 One Book, *Muck City: Winning and Losing in Football's Forgotten Town*, by Bryan Mealer, was revealed at two public events last week, a news release notes.

"Since this year is the program's 10th anniversary, we wanted to feature a book, which like the original Sarasota One Book, related to Florida's history," said Barb McDonald, outreach coordinator, in the release.

This nonfiction selection is about high school football, the sugar cane migrant worker history of Belle Glade "and the inspirational stories of young men who make it out of the muck to become recognized football stars," the news release explains.

One Book is planning supporting events in early 2014, including a visit by the author, the release adds.

For more information about the upcoming events and how to participate in them, visit www.onebooksarasota.com or call 861-5000.



Bryan Mealer is the author of the 2014 One Book, *Muck City*. Contributed photo by Ann Marie Healy

BENDERSON PARK WINS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) has honored Sarasota County with a Silver Excellence in Economic Development Award for Nathan Benderson Park in the category of public-private partnerships for communities with populations of 200,000 to 500,000, the county has announced.

“Receiving this award means that our economic development efforts in Sarasota County are relevant,” said Jeff Maultsby, director of Sarasota County business and economic development, in a news release.

Maultsby and Paul Blackketter, president and chief operating officer of the SunCoast Aquatic Nature Center Association, accepted the award at a ceremony on Oct. 8, during the IEDC annual conference in Philadelphia.

The council’s Excellence in Economic Development Awards “recognize the world’s best economic development programs and partnerships, marketing materials, and the

year’s most influential leaders,” according to an IEDC spokesperson. “The awards honor organizations and individuals for their efforts in creating positive change in urban, suburban and rural communities,” the release adds.

“It was definitely a team effort to complete our application for Nathan Benderson Park. The process, which took a few weeks, involved collaboration among several county departments,” said Maultsby in the release. “It was truly an honor for our hard work and dedication to be recognized at this high of a level on an international platform.”

“The Excellence in Economic Development Award recognizes Sarasota County as being one of the leading organizations in the industry for innovation, creativity and successful strategies,” added Paul Krutko, the IEDC chairman, in the release. “This organization uses creative solutions and inventive ideas and offers other regions a wonderful example to learn and benefit from.”



Work continues at Nathan Benderson Park to prepare it for world-class rowing events. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Nathan Benderson Park is located at the southwest quadrant of the Interstate 75 and University Parkway intersection. It is adjacent to the University Town Center project owned by Benderson Development.

In the early 1990s, Sarasota County purchased the property, which was then an unimproved borrow-pit lake used by local fishermen.

Today, the park is continuing a transformation into a 600-acre regional facility that

will feature a world-class rowing venue, the release points out. The park will host the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

The completion of the park project, tentatively scheduled for December 2014, will include a 2,000-meter sprint course and a 30-acre regatta center, the release adds. Through a variety of public and private partnerships, the facility is being developed at a cost of \$24.5 million, mostly from county Tourist Development Tax revenue, the release points out.

SOUTH VENICE COMMUNITY CLEANUP SCHEDULED FOR OCT. 26

Sarasota County's Planning and Development Services and Code Enforcement offices will hold their annual free community cleanup for South Venice area residents on Saturday, Oct. 26, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., the county has announced.

Dumpsters will be provided at two locations for people to dispose of discarded household items, yard waste, tree trimmings, junk and other refuse, a news release says.

The dumpsters will be located at the South Venice Community Center, located at 720

Alligator Drive; the South Venice Ferry Landing in the 2000 block of Lemon Bay Drive; and on Seaboard Avenue near Orange Street.

Hazardous materials such as paint, oil, aerosol cans, auto parts, electronics, televisions and computers will not be accepted at any of the locations, the release notes. Such materials may be taken to the county facility at 8750 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota Wednesday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the release adds.

FEDERATION AWARDS GRANT TO CHESD FOOD PROGRAM

The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee (JFSM) recently granted \$13,000 to the Chesed Food Program of the Chabad of Venice and North Port, the Federation has announced. The Chesed program provides groceries, meals, emergency food vouchers, clothing, shelter and other supportive services to individuals and families in south Sarasota, Venice, North Port and Englewood, a news release says.

The grant was made possible through the support of the Mehler-Lublin Family Fund for Social Service Relief, a fund of The Jewish

Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, and other board-restricted funds, the release notes.

"South Sarasota County has a large immigrant population from the former Soviet Union, Ukraine, and South America," says Martin Haberer, associate executive director of The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, in the release. "This population, in particular, needs assistance with food, clothing, rent, utilities and other basic necessities. We're pleased to help the Chesed Food Program provide these much-needed services."

STUDENTS INVITED TO FLOCK TO FIRST CELERY FIELDS BIRD-A-THON

On Nov. 9, the first Celery Fields Bird-A-Thon will be held at the Celery Fields, a 440-acre county park and bird preserve located just east of Interstate 75 between Fruitville Road and Palmer Boulevard, the county has announced.

“A Bird-A-Thon is a fun way for students to learn about birds and their habitat in a short amount of time,” said Jeanne Dubi, president of the Sarasota Audubon Society, in a news release. “With the fantastic variety of birds that call the Celery Fields home, this is a great place to hold our first Bird-A-Thon.”

“Participants will be assigned to teams with local Audubon bird experts who will help team members identify the different bird

species,” the release explains. The team that identifies the most species will win a prize. There will also be raffle prizes, and each of the first 100 participants will receive a free T-shirt, the release notes.

Participants are encouraged to bring binoculars; Sarasota Audubon will supply binoculars for sharing with teammates, the release says. Water will be provided as well.

“The Celery Fields Bird-A-Thon will give students a taste of the kinds of things we do in the Celery Fields Explorer’s Program for students K-12,” said Karen Fraley, founder of Around the Bend Nature Tours, in the release. Around the Bend and Sarasota Audubon are partners in the Celery Fields Explorers



The wetlands at the Celery Fields draw a wide range of birds, both ‘locals’ and those migrating. File photo

educational program, funded in part by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

Sarasota Audubon recently announced a \$50,000 Matching Challenge for the Gift of Nature Campaign for a Visitor and Nature Center at the Celery Fields, the release points out. Through November, all contributions will be doubled with matching funds, until the \$50,000 mark is reached, the

release notes. Contributions may be made at www.sarasotaaudubon.org.

The Celery Fields Bird-A-Thon will take place from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Nov. 9. Participants are requested to “flock” to Center Road off Palmer Boulevard, behind “The Hill.” In advance, they are asked to email their names, their grades and the names of their schools to info@sarasotaaudubon.org. Call Jeanne Dubi at 724-1709 for more information.

PREREGISTRATION UNDER WAY FOR SANDY CLAWS BEACH RUN

Preregistration has begun for the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department’s 37th annual Sandy Claws Beach Run, scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 14, at Siesta Public Beach, located at 948 Beach Road on Siesta Key, the county has announced.

Preregistration for the 5K race is \$25; it is \$18 for the one-mile fun run. Preregistration ends Nov. 29.

Race-day registration is \$30 for the 5K race and \$20 for the fun run. Race-day registration

begins at 7 a.m., a news release notes. The fun run begins at 8 a.m., with the 5K race starting at 8:20 a.m.

“The event, sanctioned and co-sponsored by the Manasota Track Club, will use [MyLaps bib timing](#),” the release adds.

Those interested in participating may complete and return a registration form available at any county recreation center, library or government building, the release continues.

CORRECTIONS

Two errors were included in the early version of the *News Leader*’s Oct. 18 edition. First, in *City Commission preview*, the original article said no firms had been interested in making an offer on the State Street garage project. Realtor Ian Black wrote to point out, “I received 5 offers, as a result of my marketing efforts and eventually presented a Memorandum of Understanding that I had negotiated with Jebco Ventures Inc. to provide a mixed use component for the State [Street] Garage.” He made that presentation to the City Commission, sitting as the Community

Redevelopment Agency, on Aug. 29. The commission, however, received advice from City Attorney Bob Fournier to turn down the proposal because of concerns about Sunshine Law violations during the selection process. (See the related story in this issue.)

Second, the headline for a *Crime Blotter* article indicated Sarasota Sheriff’s Office personnel had dismantled a grow house operation in North Port. The house was in Sarasota, as the story explained.

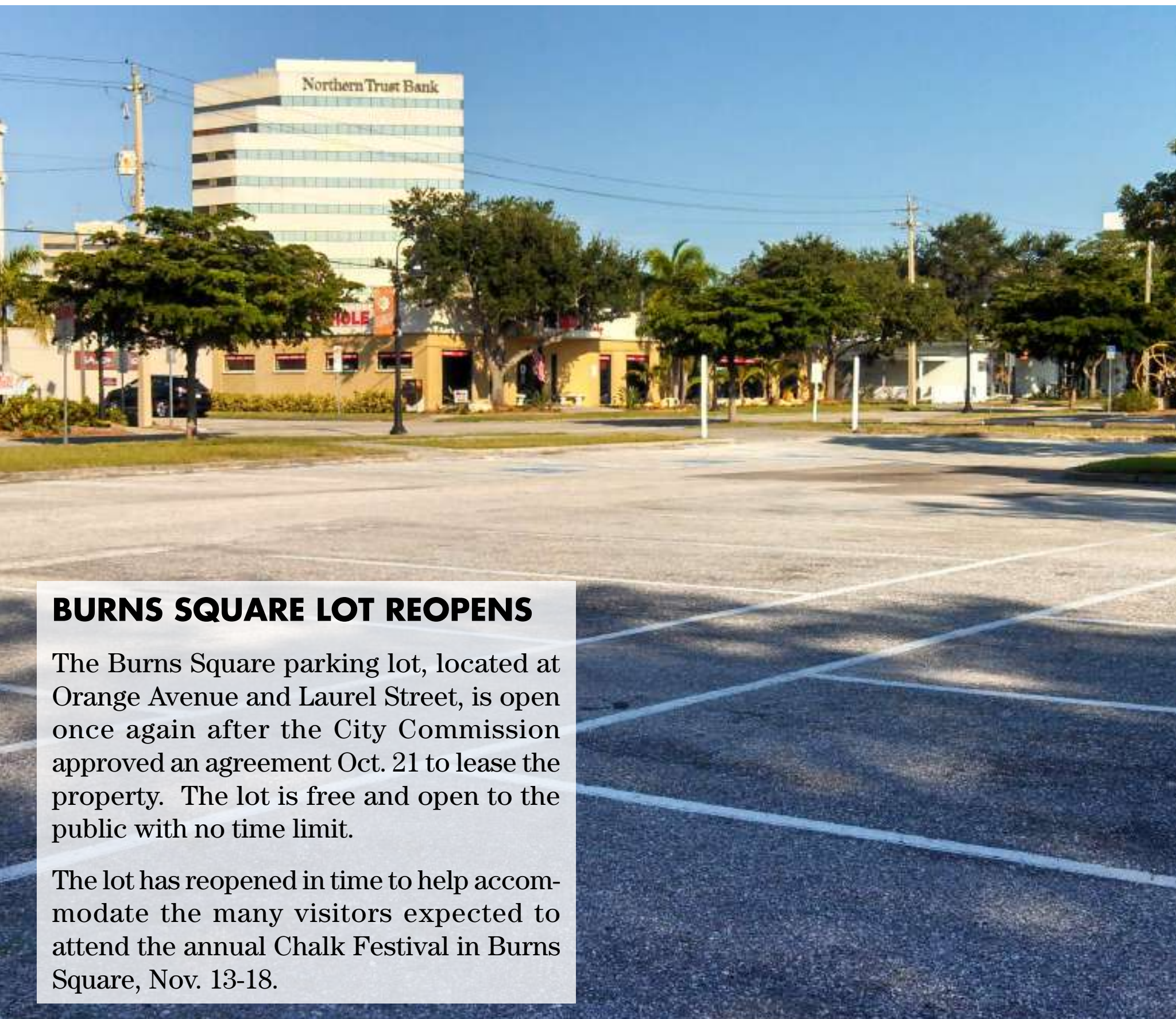
“All preregistered participants will receive the highly sought-after Sandy Claws Beach Run long-sleeve T-shirt,” said Diana Finnegan of Sarasota County Parks and Recreation in the news release. “Race-day registrants will receive a T-shirt while supplies last.”

Awards will be presented to first- through sixth-place finishers in each age group. First- through third-place finishers will receive

trophies and fourth- through sixth-place finishers will receive ribbons, the release notes.

“All registered 5K participants will be entered into a raffle drawing for great prizes,” said Finnegan.

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



BURNS SQUARE LOT REOPENS

The Burns Square parking lot, located at Orange Avenue and Laurel Street, is open once again after the City Commission approved an agreement Oct. 21 to lease the property. The lot is free and open to the public with no time limit.

The lot has reopened in time to help accommodate the many visitors expected to attend the annual Chalk Festival in Burns Square, Nov. 13-18.

ORIOLES ANNOUNCE 2014 SPRING TRAINING SCHEDULE

The Baltimore Orioles have announced their 2014 Grapefruit League schedule will open on Friday, Feb. 28, with a 1:05 p.m. game in Port Charlotte against the Tampa Bay Rays.

The Orioles' home opener will be Saturday, March 1, at 1:05 p.m. against the Toronto Blue Jays, a news release says.

The 2014 season will mark the fifth consecutive year for the Orioles in Sarasota and their fourth in the renovated Ed Smith Stadium, the release adds.

Baltimore will face eight different opponents during its 15-game home Grapefruit League campaign, the release continues. The O's will host the Boston Red Sox and Tampa Bay Rays three times each and the Minnesota Twins,

Pittsburgh Pirates and Philadelphia Phillies twice each. The Orioles will square off with the Atlanta Braves, New York Yankees and Toronto Blue Jays once each at Ed Smith Stadium, the release notes.

The Orioles will play 15 games on the road.

Fans interested in season plans or group tickets, or those wishing to receive additional Spring Training ticket information, may call the Orioles office in Sarasota at 893-6300.

Single game tickets for all 15 of the Orioles' Grapefruit League Games at Ed Smith Stadium will go on sale Jan. 25, the release adds.

The team's last home game will be at 7:05 p.m. on Thursday, March 27, against the Rays. 



Orioles star Adam Jones bats against the Detroit Tigers in 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Operation StopWatch

Total Number Persons Arrested - 17

Total Number Charges Filed - 22

Prior History



Frankie Munoz

DOB 2/27/1963

Address 101 North Portia Street Nokomis

Arrest_Date 9/2/2013

Charge_1 Aggravated Battery

Charge_2

Charge_3

Felony Arrests 2

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Arrests 6

Misd Convictions 2

Incarcerations 0

Prior History



Jason McArthur

DOB 12/12/1978

Address Unknown Sarasota

Arrest_Date 9/2/2013

Charge_1 Trespassing

Charge_2

Charge_3

Felony Arrests 5

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Arrests 28

Misd Convictions 8

Incarcerations 2

Prior History



Zachary Siglin

DOB 12/20/1987

Address 2327 Vitiano Court Venice

Arrest_Date 9/3/2013

Charge_1 Narcotic Possession

Charge_2

Charge_3

Felony Arrests 1

Felony Convictions 0

Misd Arrests 0

Misd Convictions 0

Incarcerations 0

OPERATION STOP WATCH NETS 17 ARRESTS AND 22 CRIMINAL CHARGES

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has announced that 17 arrests were made during Operation Stop Watch, a patrol-based project targeting criminal behavior in Laurel and Nokomis.

The Sheriff and his staff determined the two-week effort in early September proved effective, a news release says.

During the operation, the arrests involved 22 criminal charges, the release notes. "The arrested subjects had 541 prior felony and misdemeanor charges combined," it adds. "More important than the physical arrests was the 68 percent drop in total Part 1 crimes," comparing statistics for the two-week period before Operation Stop Watch began to those for the same amount of time afterward.

Part 1 crimes are the more serious ones, such as aggravated assault, robbery and burglary.

The operation included making contacts with prolific offenders and those on probation "to ensure they knew there was an increased law enforcement presence," the release points out. Support from personnel in the Crime Analysis and Tactical units as well as the Intelligence Division allowed Patrol Division personnel to develop daily action plans for the specific areas, the release says.

"Our Intelligence 2 Action philosophy identified subjects responsible for many of the crimes in the target area," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "By increasing our presence, we were able to become familiar with these individuals and their associates and ultimately disrupt and displace illegal activity."

One example involved suspect Ryan Lawrence, who was arrested for Vehicle Burglary on Sept. 3 and released on bond three days later, the release notes. As a result of "the constant flow of actionable intelligence, deputies were

able to quickly identify him as the primary suspect in several residential burglaries that occurred over the next few days," the release points out. "Because of the rapid deployment of resources he was located and re-arrested Sept. 12 for Residential Burglary and False Imprisonment."

Other phases of the operation included gathering information through field interviews with 130 subjects, documenting suspected drug houses and monitoring them with visible and covert surveillance, and conducting random checks with personnel from Probation and Parole, the release adds.

Knight continued, "We stand with the hard-working citizens who refuse to tolerate illegal drug sales and other crimes in their community and remain committed to maintaining the ground that has been gained during this operation."



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

Call: (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

Click: SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

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

All submitted tips are secure and anonymous

11-TIME CONVICTED FELON ARRESTED AGAIN IN SARASOTA

A Sarasota man with 11 prior felony convictions was found to have a loaded pistol in his possession when he was arrested on Oct. 17 for a parole violation, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

Quinton Davis, 26, of 5325 Desoto Place, Sarasota, was charged with Carrying a Concealed Weapon: Firearm, Possession of Weapon by Convicted Florida Felon and Possession of Ammo by Convicted Felon, according to the report.

When officers arrested him about 11 p.m. at his home, the report says, officers found Davis had a loaded .40-caliber Glock in his waistband; it was loaded with eight rounds, including one in the chamber. Officers also found a black ski mask lying on the ground next to where Davis had been standing outside the residence, the report notes.

When a pair of officers arrived at the scene, the report explains, one watched the front of the house while the other went to the rear.



Quinton Davis/Contributed photo

The officer watching the front door saw a man believed to be Davis come out of the house and begin walking to a vehicle in the driveway. That officer was able to tackle Davis to the ground, the report says.

Davis is on probation for the sale of cocaine, the report notes.

COUNTY JAIL EARNS HIGH MARKS DURING ANNUAL INSPECTION


Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that the Sarasota County Jail earned high marks on Oct. 18 during its annual Florida Model Jail Standards Inspection.

The Florida Model Jail Standards are minimum standards jails must meet “to ensure the constitutional rights of those incarcerated are upheld,” a news release says.

Ten certified jail inspectors from four different counties “combed through all aspects of the facility, including housing, food services, booking and medical services,” the release

adds. “At the conclusion of the inspection, Supervisor Mark Stroop from Osceola County said, ‘I commend all of the staff at the Sarasota County Jail for their commitment and professionalism,’” the release adds.

Maj. Jim Lilly, commander of courts and corrections services for the Sheriff’s Office, said in the release, “We recognize that it’s all about the people who work here 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They are what make the jail run more efficiently.”

In addition to this voluntary annual review, the Sarasota County Jail is inspected every three years by the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission, the release points out. Medical services are accredited by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. 



The Sarasota County Jail is located on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney

OPINION



POPE FRANCIS ACCORDING TO BISHOP DEWANE

EDITORIAL

The election in March of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, as the 266th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church created great interest in the world, both within and without the Church. The new Pope Francis was known as a humble man who eschewed the traditional trappings of episcopal office.

That was affirmed, to the chagrin and even shock of Vatican traditionalists, once he became Pope. He refused to live in the lavish apartment in the papal palace, choosing instead to occupy a few rooms in a nearby guesthouse. He even has chosen to forego most of the vestments worn by a pontiff, keeping to a simple white cassock.

What has thrilled liberal Roman Catholics and others in the world — while vexing Church conservatives — have been his much more inclusive pronouncements since taking office.

At his first Maundy Thursday service during Holy Week before Easter, Pope Francis washed the feet of 12 juvenile offenders in a Roman detention facility. Two of those were females and two were Muslims. The reaction from conservatives was greatest for his inclusion of young women in what had traditionally been a male-only rite.

Since then he has made many statements in interviews that have reinforced his expectation that the Roman Catholic Church needs to focus more on its mission as an instrument

OPINION

of mercy, bringing hope to the oppressed and needy of the world.

In July, he stated that gays and lesbians should not be marginalized, but rather integrated into the Church community.

Then, in a series of interviews he held in September with an Italian Jesuit journal, he pointed out that the Church had become “obsessed” with issues such as abortion and homosexuality.

“It is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time. ... The dogmatic and moral teachings of the church are not all equivalent,” the Pope said in that interview, as published by an

American Jesuit magazine. “The church’s pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently.”

The Pope did not void teachings of the Church that forbade abortion or contraception, nor did he dismiss proscriptions against homosexuality. But he did diminish the importance of those teachings against the principal ministry of bringing comfort to the afflicted. That, for many Church conservatives, was the final straw.

Conservative bishops, including Bishop Frank Dewane of the Diocese of Venice, have gone to great lengths to “explain” what

the Pope really meant. The Pope, they have said, was simply creating a broader context for Church teachings. He still remained very much opposed to abortion and homosexuality, they insisted.

Bishop Dewane reiterated his belief that Pope Francis stood steadfast in his opposition to abortion, as a principal focus of the Church, as Dewane recently led anti-abortion demonstrators outside the Planned Parenthood clinic in Sarasota.

Those who must practice family planning or have an abortion or who have a same-sex partner, or even those who have divorced and remarried, can expect to remain second-class citizens in the Roman Catholic Church of Bishop Dewane.

The bishop’s feeling was that the pontiff was simply trying to put priorities back in place for the Church. And for Dewane, the priority clearly was ending abortion.


If Bishop Dewane had made his clarifying remarks about the Pope’s recent statements in front of a soup kitchen or homeless shelter, or at a juvenile detention facility, or an orphanage that his diocese was establishing to shelter abandoned and unwanted children, or even at the recent Sarasota Pride Festival to recognize his agreement with the Pope that the LGBT community must be included in the church — rather than in front of a clinic where women were exercising their constitutional right to receive proper health care — well, that would have been the proverbial spoonful of sugar that made his “parsing” of Pope Francis’ statements more palatable.

OPINION

As it was, his statements indicated he is giving no ground in his war against those he believes are moral failures. Those who must practice family planning or have an abortion or who have a same-sex partner, or even those who have divorced and remarried, can expect to remain second-class citizens in the Roman Catholic Church of Bishop Dewane.

Pope Francis has indicated by his statements that his view of the Church is quite different, that all must be welcomed to find relief from the strife with which each contends, regardless of individual avoidance of Church teachings.

And that sounds much more like the commandments of the person on whom the Church is founded, who told us to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, love our enemies, resist retaliation when injured by another, visit those who are sick or in prison, welcome strangers into our midst and, most important, to not judge others.

For all of Bishop Dewane's attempts to recast the Pope's statements in harsher, dogmatic terms, the world has heard the new pontiff ... and, for the first time in many years, is filled with hope. 



SLIGHTLY HACKNEYED

WILL 2014 BE THE 'YEAR OF THE DEMOCRATS?'

By Robert Hackney

Opinion Editor

COMMENTARY

The so-called Republican Revolution of 1994, boosted by Newt Gingrich's "Contract With America," gave that party control of the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time since the Eisenhower Administration. More important, it fueled Republican gains in state legislatures around the country.

Many state GOP officials were unprepared. In legislative districts that historically had voted

Democratic, no serious Republican ever filed to run. The usual "village idiots" were the only ones to plunk down the cash for the filing fee, and state party officials historically turned a blind eye, grateful at least to have names on the ballot.

But in 1994, having that coveted "Republican" after a name on the ballot turned into the electoral equivalent of hitting the lottery. Quite a number of village idiots found themselves serving in their state legislatures ... with predictable results.

OPINION

In 2010, the so-called Tea Party Revolution produced similar results, except that the village idiots were not elected by accident. Instead, hidebound ideologues offered themselves for elective office based on their mantra of “taking back the country” — now realized as code for taking back their “white” country from a black president.

Regardless, the results were the same as in 1994. Many marginally qualified — and some wholly unqualified — candidates found themselves not only in state legislatures, but also in the United States Congress. If the 1994 sweep was the legislative equivalent of hitting the lottery, then 2010 was the equivalent of winning the Powerball ... with, once again, tragically predictable results.

Now, three years later, Americans are fed up with those village idiots and their unsurprising ineptitude at governing. So polls are starting to show that a groundswell of change is in the offing for 2014.

According to a recent ABC News/Washington Post poll, 55 percent of voters oppose the Tea Party, compared to only 36 percent who still support it. And more than three times as many voters “strongly oppose” the Tea Party as “strongly support” it.

Even more interesting was the response when asked if they would vote to reelect their

current representatives or “look around” for other candidates. Two thirds of respondents said they planned to “look around.” Fewer than one in four expected to vote for the incumbents.

“According to a recent ABC News/Washington Post poll, 55 percent of voters oppose the Tea Party, compared to only 36 percent who still support it. And more than three times as many voters “strongly oppose” the Tea Party as “strongly support” it.”

Despite some imprudent decisions in his career, no one has ever denied that Newt Gingrich is a very bright man. He perfectly surveyed the Zeitgeist in 1994, leveraging it into his new job as speaker of the House of

Representatives and Republican control of Congress. Do the Democrats have someone similarly prescient to seize the moment for them 20 years later?

It is a critical and pivotal opportunity for the Democrats to regain both houses of Congress for the final two years of President Obama’s administration, accomplishing many of the important legislative goals that have languished since 2010.

Immigration reform, clarifying the limitations of corporations with regard to campaign financing, restating the necessity for federal oversight of voter rights, fine-tuning the Affordable Care Act and, most important, getting the nation’s economy back to full employment ... all are within reach if this political moment is seized.

The question is, “Who will be the Democrats’ ‘Newt Gingrich’?”

OPINION

QUELLE SURPRISE

The Koch brothers' private jet developed engine failure and crashed. The brothers found themselves in front of the Pearly Gates, where they were met by Saint Peter.

Saint Peter stroked his beard and told them, "We don't get many billionaires here. I'll need to consult the policy manual." And away he went.

Returning a while later, he informed them that the policy dictated that they must spend one day in Hell and one day in Heaven, at which time they could select where they would like to spend eternity. He led them to the elevator, ushered them inside and reached in to press the button marked "Hell."

Down, down, down the elevator went. The brothers grew increasingly nervous with that descent, fearful of what horrors might await them. But the doors opened eventually, revealing a beautiful vista.

There was an immaculate golf course with verdant fairways and greens, and many golfers working their way around the holes. Up on a hill was a stately clubhouse, and gathered on the terrace were dozens of men and women in formal wear and evening gowns, enjoying a reception.

The devil showed up to escort the brothers to the clubhouse, pointing out the beautiful mansions that lined the fairways, the nearby yacht basin and the Olympic-size swimming pool.

As they arrived at the reception, the brothers were delighted to discover that many of their friends and acquaintances were in attendance. Upon seeing the brothers appear, all came over to greet them with a warm welcome.

"This is wonderful!" exclaimed David Koch.

"It certainly is," responded his brother, Charles. "I had no idea Hell was such a beautiful place or that so many of our friends would be here."

All too soon, their day in Hell came to an end and the devil escorted them back to the elevator.

"Can't we just stay here?" Charles pleaded.

"You must spend one day in both places," the devil responded. "Only then can you choose."

So they entered the elevator and Satan reached in to press the "Heaven" button.

Up, up, up went the elevator, until the doors opened onto the serene landscape of Heaven, where Saint Peter was waiting for them.

The next day, the brothers enjoyed the tranquil environs of Heaven ... and they were bored silly.

"We have nothing against harp playing or cloud floating," David explained to Saint Peter. "But we haven't seen anyone we know."

"It was just more fun in Hell," added Charles.

So Saint Peter led them back to the elevator, where they once again began their descent.

OPINION

They eagerly anticipated their return to the festive place they had departed only a day earlier.


Yet, when the elevator doors opened, they were met by a fiery blast. Before them was a landscape of horror and desolation, as lost souls endured awful torments. Flames scorched the bare skin of their friends, while demons poked people with pitchforks.

The devil stepped up to welcome them back to Hell, but the brothers drew back in fear.

“What happened here?” Charles demanded. “Where are the beautiful golf course, the stately clubhouse and the elegantly attired guests?”

“Oh, that,” purred the devil. “What you saw then was what we call the ‘campaign.’ Now that you have cast your vote, this is what you really get.”

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Winston Churchill said, “To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.” Certainly, the Tea Party Republicans in Congress recently have proved the veracity of that statement. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Sarasota News Leader welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and in-

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

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” — *Maya Angelou*

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A MODERN-DAY MASTER

The South Florida Museum is located in Bradenton. Photo by Ebyabe via Wikimedia Commons

SOUTH FLORIDA MUSEUM OFFERS A 'VISUAL BANQUET' IN AN EXHIBIT OF WORKS INSPIRED BY THE BARTRAMS, INCLUDING PAINTINGS BY OLIVIA BRAIDA

By Barbara Dondero

Special to the News Leader

Would studying a cacao plant bring you closer to the Divine? By taking giddy delight in sea grape leaves, are you aware of the mystery in *all* of creation?

If you think “yes” or even “maybe,” you are in for a visual banquet when you visit the current show at the South Florida Museum in Bradenton. *Following in the Bartrams' Footsteps* features 43 contemporary artworks

celebrating the legacy of John and William Bartram. Father and son, they were America's foremost 18th century naturalists, collecting seeds and plants from the New World.

Thanks to John's friendship with Benjamin Franklin, American plants were popularized in Britain and Europe. Today Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia is the oldest surviving botanical garden in North America.



John Bartram by Howard Pyle. Contributed photo

In one sampling from the exhibit, the notes accompanying Sarasota artist Carol Gorin's painting, *Spanish Moss on Laurel Oak Branch*, quote William Bartram from his classic book, *Travels*: "a singular and surprising vegetable production." John Bartram noted that "[Spanish moss] makes a fine appearance in windy weather."

This juried museum show, with works by members of the American Society of Botanical Artists, exemplifies botanical portraiture at its best.

Two special exhibitions on the second floor of the museum continue the celebration of nature. Julia Rega, who studied as a teenager at the Academy of Botanical Art in Sarasota, shows remarkable technical sensitivity toward her subject matter. Her young art life was inspired by her immersion in the traditional techniques taught at the Academy.

Rega's teacher and the founder of the Academy, Olivia Marie Braida-Chuisano, is featured in the intimate Rincon Gallery. A quote from Albert Einstein is at the gallery entrance: "Look deeply into nature and then you will understand everything better."

Braida's five-step painting process is described in the video next to her large-scale watercolor painting, *Luminous Rain*. The painting of the chandelier tree, a rainforest shrub, represents the three stages of its life: from bud to bloom to decline.

I ran into Rick and Sharon Farmer, neighbors of Braida, at the opening reception of the show. They enthusiastically told me of the afternoon when four live specimens for the rainforest painting arrived at Braida's home. That enabled her to begin her months-long



Spanish Moss on Laurel Oak Branch by Carol Gorin. Contributed photo

process: *Step One*: Photograph the specimens for reference. *Step Two*: Arrange the compositional elements with preliminary sketches. *Step Three*: Prepare a graphite tonal drawing. *Step Four*: Complete a colored pencil study. Then — when satisfied — *Step Five*: Begin the watercolor painting.

Two of her other large paintings, *Sea Grape* and *Hat Palm* —commissioned by the Punta Cana Ecological Foundation in the Dominican Republic — were painted from life. They seduce you into believing that you are in a tropical setting.

Chocolate Makes Me Happy, a watercolor on cold press (rough textured paper) shows how chocolate is made from dried cocoa beans of



William Bartram is shown in an image from Popular Science Monthly via Wikimedia Commons

the cacao tree. The trees grow along mountain roads in the Dominican Republic. From Braida's notes we learn that the Olmec people in Mexico cultivated the cacao as early as 1500 B.C.

We are treated to more chocolate with her cacao plant drawing, *Disney at Selby*, which began her studies of chocolate. Look for the artist's finished painting of a cacao hybrid tree in the museum's lobby.

Do not miss the page from the artist's notebook, *Field Study of Vireo*, a graphite and colored pencil study detailing how this clever tiny bird builds its intricate nest in a red mangrove tree. *Black Whiskered Vireo* and *Sweet Arrowwood* is on hot press (smooth) paper. It is fun to compare this with paintings — such as *Red Ginger* — done on cold press paper.



Sea Grape by Olivia Braida. Contributed photo



Cacao Tree by Olivia Braida. Contributed photo

Braida's finished work shows complete mastery of flower painting in different media, with attention to every detail. She imbues each subject with refinement and elegance, which suggest a French influence. "Yes," she explains, "My watercolor techniques are inspired by Gerard van Spaendonk [1746-1822] and the French Court tradition, with layering of glazes and washes of transparent watercolors."

I asked her how she keeps her paintings fresh. "It's a meditative process," she said. "A prayer process. It enables me to stay focused. That's the total joy for me. "

That reminded me of a quote from Robert Henri's classic book *The Art Spirit*. "Technique

becomes a tool," he wrote, "not an objective. Something happens between us and the flowers in a garden ... a communication ... a rhythm understood ... a song running through it all. It's a state to be in and a state to paint in. Everything," he concluded, "depends *on the attitude of the artist toward his subject*. It's the one great essential."

For Braida, the process of joyful meditation is the *one great essential*.

Come see and enjoy, for yourself.

A TALE OF TWO BARTRAMS

Florida was far from becoming a state when William Bartram first traveled here in the 1760s with his father, John, the Philadelphia nurseryman and soon-to-be king's botanist. George III Instructed John to identify natural resources and collect plants for the realm.



Olivia Braida in her studio. Contributed photo

During a time of worldwide exploration, the New World was regarded as an especially rich area of natural wonders.

William returned to Florida in the mid-1770s under the sponsorship of his British patron, Lord John Fothergill, an avid gardener and collector. William drew from life the plants and animals he encountered, recorded daily events in a journal and sent plants across the Atlantic to Fothergill, a feat in those days of sailing ships.

When he returned home, he converted the journal into *Travels*, the story of his four-year odyssey on the southeastern coastal plain. Published in 1791 and still in print, the book inspired English poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Hundreds of years later, both men still inspire us. In North Florida, William is commemorated in places such as The Bartram Trail, Bartram High School in Jacksonville and Bartram Park.

Bartram's Garden, a thriving tribute to the industriousness of John and his sons, is a National Historic Landmark of Philadelphia. Both John and William continue to be the subjects of books, papers — and this South Florida Museum exhibit.

Fran Palmeri

The Botanical Art exhibit continues through Dec. 29 at the South Florida Museum, 201 S. Tenth Street West, Bradenton. For more information, call 941-746-4131 or visit www.southfloridamuseum.org. 

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FENCES AND NEIGHBORS

THE OPTIONS — AND HUES — ARE WIDELY VARIED AS ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNERS SEEK SOME MEASURE OF PRIVACY

By Rick Wielgorecki
Contributing Writer

Robert Frost wrote the famous poem *Mending Wall* about two property owners who shared a border. It relates their mutual desire to have a physical barrier to define the line between their farms, so they could maintain a comfortable separation from each other.

Most people who live in suburban environments also often seek to build barriers for the same reason. A wall provides a property

owner with a visual barrier and a noise dampener as well as a property marker.

There are many different media that may be used besides the cumbersome stones depicted in the poem. Some of the options that present-day landscapers have at their disposal are brick, block and stucco, plastic, wood and even modular Styrofoam that can be finished to resemble masonry.



Landscaping can create an informal border between lots. Photo by Rick Wielgorecki

As a lover of plants, I have always thought that a living wall was a nice organic alternative to a “hardscape” barrier. A single hedge plant can be chosen to create a formal hedge, or a variety of plants may be used to establish a more informal boundary (see the accompanying photos).

However, establishing a living wall means the property owner has to maintain the shrubbery. Trimming, pruning, fertilization, pest control and disease prevention must be employed at intervals to keep the plants looking good. Choosing low-maintenance cultivars can minimize the effort.

Another option is to combine any of the above elements. A hard cold wall or unadorned fence can be softened, and color added, by planting in front of it. A solid barrier enhanced in such a way provides insurance against the whims of nature. If winter brings a hard freeze, lush green tropical plants might turn brown or even be ravaged down to the ground. Drought, disease or insect infestation might similarly render components of a living wall unattractive.

The protagonist in the Frost poem says at one point, “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.” I share this sentiment. In erecting a



A fence and new trimmings provide a greater sense of privacy. Photo by Rick Wielgorecki

barrier, one may be happy to be preserving one's privacy but sad to be shutting out something. I love my neighbors, but I treasure my solitude. Therefore, in my own yard, I have employed both an informal shrubbery barrier and a wooden fence (which I may eventually enhance with plantings).

On one side of my lot, the hibiscus grouping lifts my spirits with a floral palette that includes some of my favorite colors: red, white, orange, pink and yellow. Additionally, the tangerine tree treats to the tangy taste of my favorite citrus fruit during the holiday season, and the camphor tree has a fragrant leaf and evergreen foliage that complete my organic "fence."

On my opposite border, I recently installed a wooden fence that has several attractive

attributes. First, it is made of an organic material. As the years go by, its rich brown hue will fade to a silver-gray shade similar to the look of lichen. And I'm likin' that. Because it has an open pattern called "horizontal shadowbox," the fence allows the sun to create an entertaining play of light in the yard as the sun progresses across the sky during the day.

On the practical side, the fence provides complete privacy. Finally, its need for maintenance is practically non-existent.

So choose whatever medium you like to look at and enjoy!

Rick Wielgorecki may be contacted at 362-0600 or wielgo@hotmail.com. 



A Ross viburnum hedge is yet another type of attractive barrier between homeowners. Photo by Rick Wielgorecki



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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THE SABAL DRIVE HOUSE ISSUES STILL ARE UNRESOLVED; THE STORMWATER PROJECT DEWATERING EFFORT IS MOVING AHEAD; AND THE COUNTY COMMISSION WANTS A PLAN OF ACTION REGARDING HIGH-WATER SIGNS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

More than a month after Sarasota County's Planning and Development Services Department issued permits for demolition of illegal structures at a Sabal Drive house on Siesta Key, the work still had not begun as of Oct. 18.

Regular readers will recall that Sarasota County filed a [legal complaint](#) this summer against the owners of the house at 6537 Sabal Drive, off Old Stickney Point Road, because the enclosure of the ground floor not only violates Federal Emergency Management



As of Oct. 18, the house at 6537 Sabal Drive remained intact — and in violation of county and federal building codes. File photo

Siesta Seen

Agency flood-control regulations but also the county's building code.

The house appeared to be occupied by renters on Oct. 18 when one of my *Sarasota News Leader* colleagues drove by to check out the situation. Let us just say none of the vehicles in the driveway appeared to be a work truck, and no demolition efforts were visible.

The county permits to tear out the offending additions to the home — which was advertised regularly on the [Vacation Rentals By Owner website](#) — have been paid for and picked up, according to the Planning and Development Services website. However, I

was unable to reach the contractor this week — Sarasota Construction and Remodeling Co. of Bradenton, owned by Spiro Paizes — to find out when the work will begin.

On Sept. 12, Paizes told me he expected to start the demolition in a week or two. Subsequently, Siesta — and the whole county — suffered through a deluge of rainfall. Nonetheless, drier weather has prevailed over the past couple of weeks.

According to the Planning and Development Services website, no start date was listed for either of two permits. One is for the removal of “interior partitions of lower level,” the



The Gulf & Bay Club condominiums rise behind the site of the Siesta stormwater project. File photo

Siesta Seen

installation of a door and closing in a window. That permit was issued on Oct. 2, the document shows, with a total fee of \$2,077.58.

The demolition permit for the structures that do not comply with federal and county building codes was also issued on Oct. 2. The total for that one was \$634.06.

In the meantime, I learned from the Sarasota County Attorney's Office that a hearing for a temporary injunction against the owners had been delayed from Oct. 21 to Dec. 18. That decision was made, Assistant County Attorney David M. Pearce said through an assistant, to allow the owners time to make the necessary changes to the property and bring it into compliance.

The county has been dealing with the violations at the house since November 2012, when a member of a Minnesota family visiting Siesta Key notified county staff of her concern that the first level of the house was a firetrap. Subsequent inspections of the two-story residence by Code Enforcement and Fire Department staff led to citations and later a Special Magistrate's imposition of daily fees for the non-compliant structures.

Pearce told me in September that the issue of liens on the property would be worked out after county staff determined that all the illegal structural issues had been resolved.

STORMWATER PROJECT UPDATE

More county email flew back and forth last week regarding the status of the Beach Road

Drainage Project — aka the Siesta stormwater project.

On Oct. 15, Isaac Brownman, director of capital projects in the Public Works Department, notified the commissioners that staff had obtained the electrical load information Florida Power & Light needed to ascertain what type of service to provide at the site so electric pumps can be used to begin dewatering the area of the new 1-acre stormwater pond. With the execution of Interim Field Change Agreement No. 3, Brownman continued, "pumps, hoses and fittings will be ordered and installed."

He also pointed out, "Discussions and coordination with the Siesta Beach project are ongoing."

As Project Manager Brad Gaubatz explained to members of the Siesta Key Village Association during an Oct. 1 presentation, the start of the beach project could be put off because of the ongoing delays with the stormwater work, which is adjacent to the public beach park. The stormwater project was supposed to have been completed in November.

Additionally, Brownman noted in his email chain, "It is anticipated that once dewatering operations start, the zone of impact (draw-down of the groundwater) may extend to adjacent properties and cause their ponds and lakes to lose volume. This is a normal and temporary result of dewatering for construction."

He also is expecting some nearby residents will complain about the noise, because the

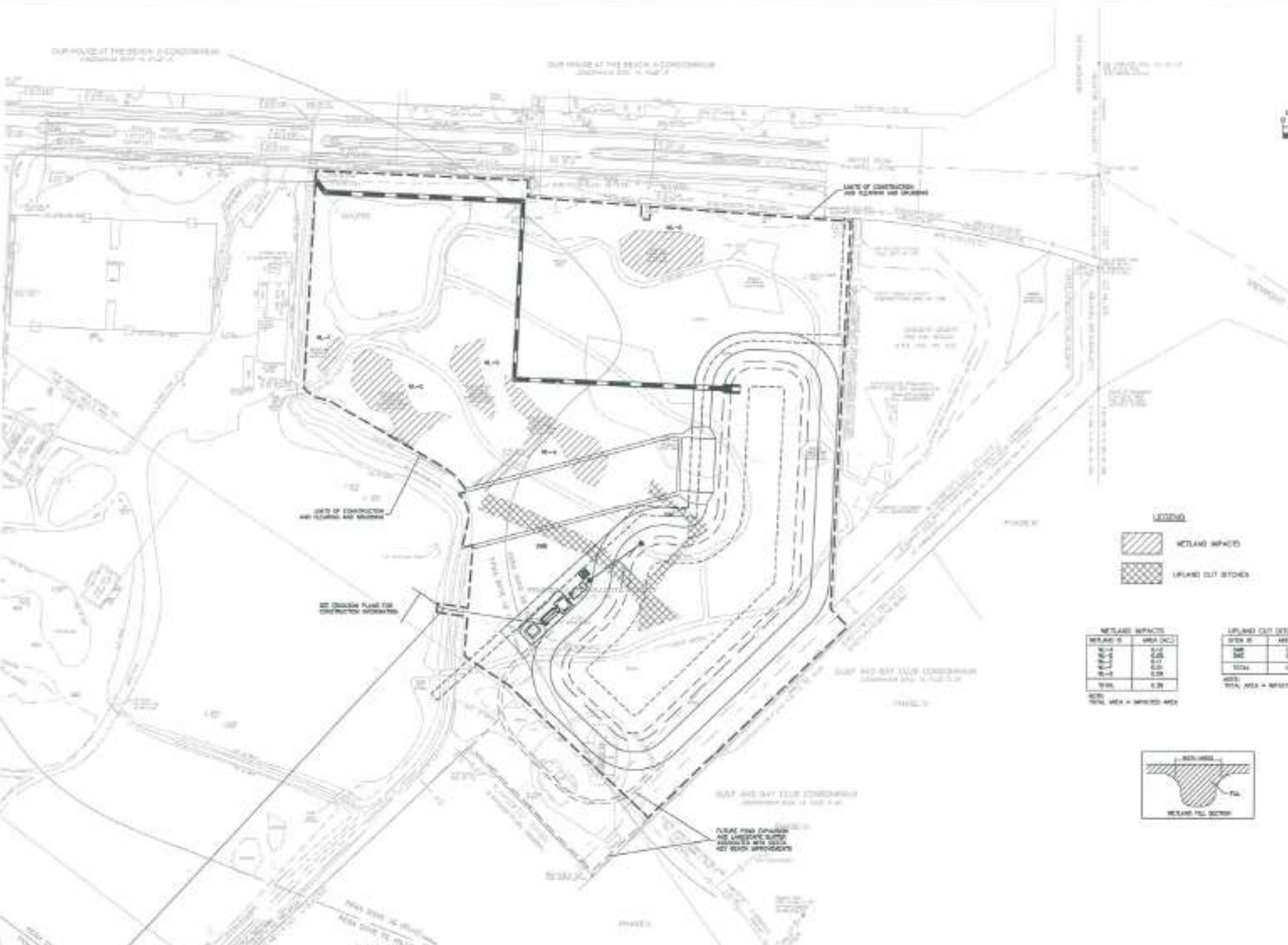
Siesta Seen

pumps will need to run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until the dewatering is completed. Staff will do what it can to attenuate the noise, he wrote.

Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives on Siesta — wrote back, “Since it has now stopped raining is all this really necessary?”

Brownman responded, “The nature of the project is such that due to the depth the pond

has to be dug to [15 feet], the contractor will continuously encounter a lot of tidally influenced groundwater that will need to [be] removed [— plus any residual from rainfall events —] to be able to excavate to the bottom depth with least amount of interruption from groundwater and runoff. The first effort will be the most substantial, to remove the surface water contained on the site.”



A Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc. drawing shows the site of the new stormwater pond on property next to Siesta Public Beach. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

He continued, "We believe the 24/7 pumping is necessary to maintain the integrity of work completed each day; this also allows the contractor to get to work right away each day and get done as quickly as possible while maintaining a reasonable completion schedule. ... We will monitor and look for efficiencies in pumping where possible, but want [to] keep the contractor moving as quickly as possible."

When Patterson then asked about the expense, Brownman replied, "The cost to dewater into [an] existing ditch was accounted for in the existing project bid, but did not include the size and number of pumps necessary to push the water through the pipe into the Gulf, nor the rearrangement of the settlement ponds. This is a more elaborate system to get it off the site entirely through the pipe. The pipe is 3,000 feet long and it takes [substantially] more horsepower to dewater."

Project Manager Alex Boudreau has explained that the best option for removing the water from the site is to allow sediment to settle into the other ponds created near the area of the new stormwater pond, then pumping the cleaner water through that new pipeline into the Gulf of Mexico.

FLOOD WARNINGS

During the Oct. 8 meeting of the County Commission, Patterson used her report time to ask for staff help with signs warning about deep water on roads that tend to flood.

Patterson pegged her request to a letter the board had received from a couple of tourists

whose car engine was ruined by flooding on Beach Road during the "monsoons" in September. However, Commissioner Christine Robinson asked that staff address the issue countywide.

Flooded roads are a matter "certainly not peculiar to us," Patterson pointed out. Still, the tourists who wrote about their car noted that no signs were up to indicate motorists should avoid the area of Beach Road where their vehicle suffered damage.

Patterson asked County Administrator Randall Reid to talk with staff about whether it would be practical to keep signs handy to deploy on roads that typically flood "in extreme weather conditions."

Sgt. Scott Osborne, leader of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Community Policing Station on Siesta Key, told me on Oct. 21 that the county already has signs stored at the public beach to warn about high water on Beach Road. Whenever flooding occurs near the beach entrances, Osborne said, deputies make an effort to put out those signs.

After Patterson finished her comments during the board meeting, Robinson asked her, "Are you proposing this only for Beach Road, because there were roads all over the county" that were flooded during the September rainstorms.

She saw people stranded in cars in Englewood, she pointed out. Vice Chairman Charles Hines added that motorists also had problems in downtown Sarasota.

Siesta Seen

“You’re not going to be able to keep up with [putting out the signs] in a storm event like we had, I think,” Patterson told Robinson. However, Patterson noted, “Beach Road tends to flood in circumstances far milder than that.”

Reid suggested he could work with staff to develop a “Top 10” list of roads that flood often, along with some type of plan for keeping

signs close by for deployment as needed. He concurred that the issue is countywide one.

“I’m not looking to create this massive program,” Patterson said.

Still, Patterson made a formal motion to refer the issue to Reid, so he could work with staff to develop a proposal about how to best to respond.

Robinson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.



The County Commission has asked that staff devise a plan for using high-water signs to alert drivers on roads that tend to flood readily. Image by Marvin Nauman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency via Wikimedia Commons

Siesta Seen

WHAT NEXT?

When I called Sgt. Osborne to ask about the high water signs, he told me about a highly unusual incident that occurred on Siesta Beach on Friday, Oct. 18.

When a woman alerted him to a dead white tail doe on the sand near Access 5, he at first was skeptical, he said — wondering whether she might have spent a bit too much time in

the sun. Then he went down to that part of the beach to investigate and saw the deer himself.

“I have no idea where it came from,” Osborne added, and no idea what killed it. Judging by the carcass, he pointed out, the deer had not been dead long.

He asked county maintenance personnel to retrieve the body and dispose of it, he said. **SNL**



*People are not the only ones who have been enjoying the quieter days on Siesta Public Beach this fall.
Photo by Rachel Hackney*



Kelly and Kimi Barnett won plaudits for their costumes during the 2012 Safe Sex Halloween Bash. File photo

‘UNDEAD DISCO’ SAFE SEX HALLOWEEN BASH SET FOR OCT. 25

On Friday, Oct. 25, Michael’s on East will be transformed into “Studio 13: The Undead Disco” for Planned Parenthood’s fifth annual Safe Sex Halloween Bash, the organization’s “popular fund- and friend-raiser,” Planned Parenthood has announced.

“The event will not only feature an open bar, tantalizing nighttime nibbles and the hot beats of DJ Imminent,” but there will also be a plethora of surprise entertainment, chances to win groovy prizes, ’70s swagger and “the hottest zombies in town!” a news release says.

All attendees will take home one of the legendary “shag-bags,” too. And “don’t be a

closet disco queen,” the release adds, because a serious costume contest will be part of the festivities as well.

Tickets are \$100 at the door.

The event will begin at 9 p.m. and last until 1 a.m. Michael’s on East is located at 1212 S. East Ave. in Sarasota.

SAFE SEX HALLOWEEN BASH



THE
UNDEAD
DISCO

PRIMA DONNETTES OPENING THE CABARET SEASON AT FST

Kicking off the Cabaret season at Florida Studio Theatre is *The Prima Donnettes*, developed by FST Artistic Director Richard Hopkins and Jim Prosser, the theatre has announced.

It opened in FST's John C. Court Cabaret on Oct. 23 and will continue through Feb. 1.

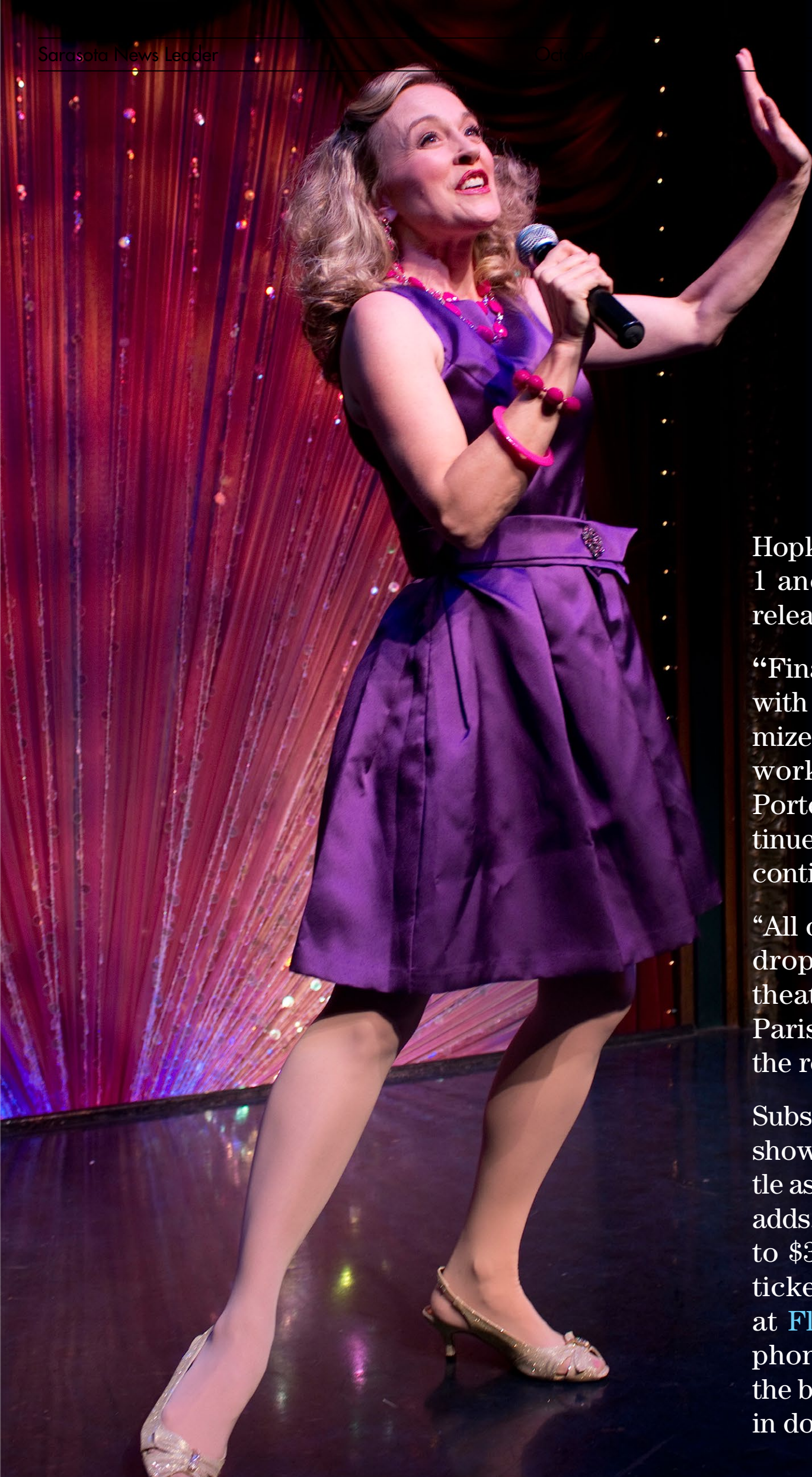
Hopkins says in a news release, "This year's Cabaret season provides a gracious spread of style and substance, in other words, variety."

The Prima Donnettes is "a fun, loving nod to the strides women have made in the past decades, from silly, sexy girl groups of the '50s to the hard-hitting, tell-it-like-it-is styles of the '60s and beyond," he adds.

That show will be followed "with a form we have perfected called Guitar Theatre, this year featuring the songs of great American songwriters such as John Denver, Simon & Garfunkel, Harry Chapin and Paul Simon under the title *Poems, Prayers and Promises*,"



The Prima Donnettes — (from left) Jannie Jones, Susan Haefner, Erin McGrath and Liz Power — will be performing at Florida Studio Theatre through Feb. 1. Photo by Maria Lyle.



Hopkins notes. It will open on Jan. 1 and run through April 12, the release says.

“Finally, we will close the season with the class and style that epitomizes Cabaret as we reinvent the works of the one and only Cole Porter in *Too Darn Hot*,” he continues. It will open on Feb. 19 and continue through June 7.

“All of this is set against the backdrop of our turn-of-the-century theatres designed in the original Parisian Motif,” he points out in the release.

Subscriptions for all three Cabaret shows may be purchased for as little as \$35 and up to \$49, the release adds. Single tickets range from \$18 to \$36. Subscriptions and single tickets may be purchased online at FloridaStudioTheatre.org, by phone at 366-9000 or by visiting the box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

ORIOLES ANNOUNCE ARTS IN THE BALLPARK SERIES

The Baltimore Orioles have announced they will host *Arts in the Ballpark*, a series of arts and entertainment events for the public, beginning this fall at Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota.

With free and low-cost offerings such as family-friendly concerts, hands-on activities and even a holiday ice show, “the series will appeal to a wide range of tastes and interests,” a news release says.

“The Orioles are excited to present the *Arts in the Ballpark* series to the Sarasota community as part of our Orioles in Sarasota 365 initiative,” said David Rovine, vice president of Orioles-Sarasota, in the release. “Hosting major public events in addition to baseball at Ed Smith Stadium has been the Orioles’ goal since the stadium renovation was completed in 2012. Our community partners in this endeavor have embraced that vision and



Ed Smith Stadium will be home not just to Baltimore Orioles Spring Training games over the next months but also to community arts events. Photo by Norman Schimmel

applied their creativity to shaping affordable family events the public will love.”

Fans are encouraged to visit www.orioles.com/Sarasota to view the complete schedule and to check back regularly, as additional events are expected to be added, the release points out. The schedule so far includes the following:

- *Play Arts!* — Oct. 26, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.: A family day of free activities to celebrate expanded arts education in the Sarasota County Schools. The event is being held in partnership with the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Any Given Child Sarasota, the Sarasota County Schools and The Kennedy Center.

The event also will mark the culmination of Any Given Child Month, as proclaimed Oct. 1 by the Sarasota City Commission, a school district news release says.

Play Arts! will feature art projects for school-age children and performances by students in the Sarasota County public schools. Displays and activities will be held in the concourse. Performances will take place in the concourse and on the main field. Arts organizations and teaching artists from throughout Southwest Florida “will engage families in a wide range of creative endeavors, from storytelling to interactive fun with music and the visual arts,” the district news release notes.

- *Ice on the Diamond – A Holiday Celebration*, Dec. 20, 7 p.m.: This professional ice-dancing show will be presented on a specially engineered ice rink on the stadium’s main field.

- *All-American Family Day & Concert* — April 6: The day will begin with a ceremony honoring veterans; then, attendees will enjoy hands-on activities for the whole family. An exhibition softball game will take place on the Ed Smith Stadium main field, featuring local veterans squaring off against Sarasota celebrities. Families can cap off the day with a free concert by a nationally known musical group.

Part of The Patterson Foundation’s Legacy of Valor campaign honoring veterans and their families, the event will be held in partnership with Booker High School, Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida, Goodwill Manasota and Sarasota Military Academy.

- Sarasota Orchestra’s *Spirit of America*, May 10, 7 p.m.: The Sarasota Orchestra will close its 65th season with a celebratory outdoor *Pops* concert featuring Molly Cherryholmes, a Grammy-nominated violinist, vocalist and songwriter.

Ed Smith Stadium is located at 2700 12th St. (the corner of Tuttle Avenue and 12th Street) in Sarasota. Free parking for the events will be available in the East Lot.

Take Your Time You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night

ANNUAL FLOATING HISTORY LESSON SETS SAIL ON NOV. 3

The Historical Society of Sarasota County (HSOSC) will host its 22nd Historical Cruise and Tour of Sarasota Bay on the LeBarge tour boat on Sunday, Nov. 3, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the organization has announced.

The cruise will feature narration by popular local historian John McCarthy. Guests can expect a complimentary continental breakfast and a cash bar at noon, a news release says.

“This specialty cruise tour has been a favorite with residents and tourists alike who want to learn more about the bygone people and places that have impacted the development of Sarasota County,” the release notes. “Guests cruise along the shoreline of Sarasota Bay and enjoy the sunshine and refreshments

while John McCarthy paints a picture of the formative years in Sarasota’s growth.”

Tickets are \$40 per person. A VIP pass, which is \$50, entitles the holder to early boarding and a complimentary beverage from the bar (limited to beer, wine and soda). Reservations are required, the release adds.

Historical Cruise guests should be at the LeBarge slip, south of Marina Jack in Sarasota’s Bayfront Park, by 10:15 a.m., rain or shine, the release notes.

Proceeds benefit preservation projects and community outreach programs at the Historical Society of Sarasota County.

For more information, contact Linda Garcia at the HSOSC, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at 364-9076 or email hsosc@yahoo.com.



The LeBarge sets out on a bay cruise. Photo by Norman Schimmel

JEWISH FEDERATION TO PRESENT POET PHILIP TERMAN ON NOV. 7

The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee will present award-winning poet Philip Terman on Nov. 7 at 7 p.m. at the Federation's facility, located at 580 McIntosh Road in Sarasota. Terman will read from his 2011 book of poetry, *The Torah Garden*, "which investigates the meaning of being a Jew in America," a news release says. "The poet takes us on a powerful journey through the heart of America. Personal and family history, prayer, religious exploration and political invective all flourish in his lush garden of imagination," the release adds.

Tickets are \$5.

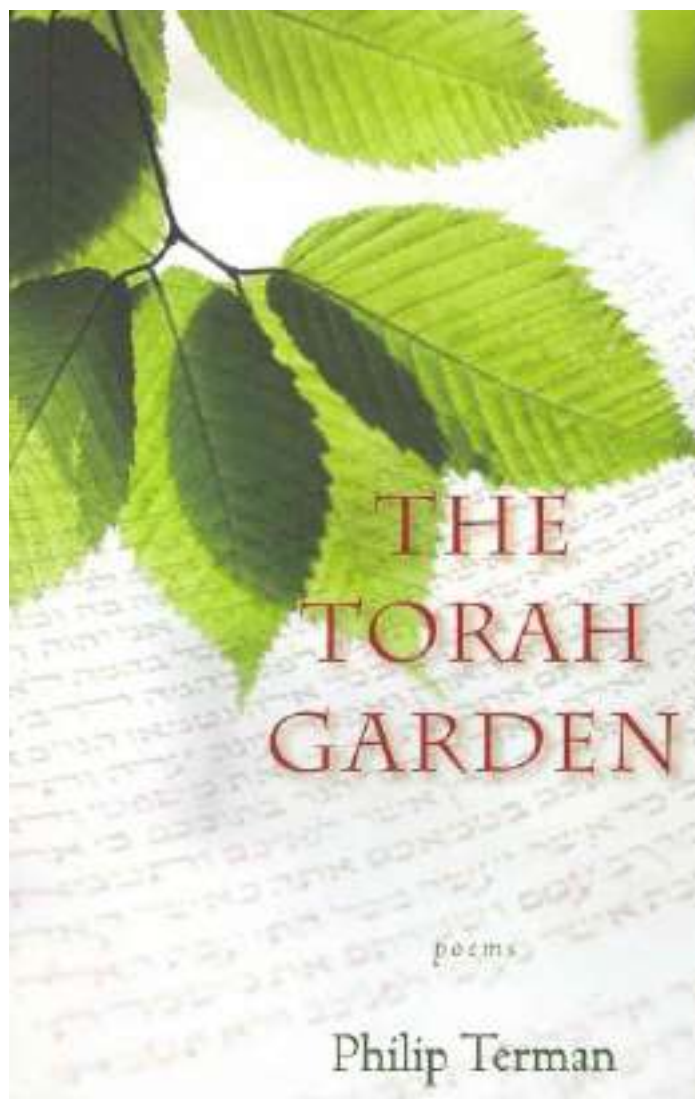
Born in Cleveland, OH, Terman earned his doctorate from Ohio State University; he is a professor at Clarion University in Pennsylvania, where he teaches creative writing, American literature, Jewish literature, Kafka and modern Jewish literature, the release continues. He is a contributing editor of the journal *Chautauqua* and co-director and founder of the annual Chautauqua Writers' Festival.

Terman's other books are *Rabbis of the Air* (2007), *Book of the Unbroken Days* (2005) and *The Houses of Sages* (1998). His poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies, the release notes. One poem, *A Response to Jehuda Halevi*, was selected for the Pennsylvania Center for the Book's 2009 Public Poetry Project, the release adds.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call 371-4546, Ext. 107. For more information about The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, visit www.jfedsrq.org.



Philip Terman/Contributed photo



The Torah Garden/Contributed photo

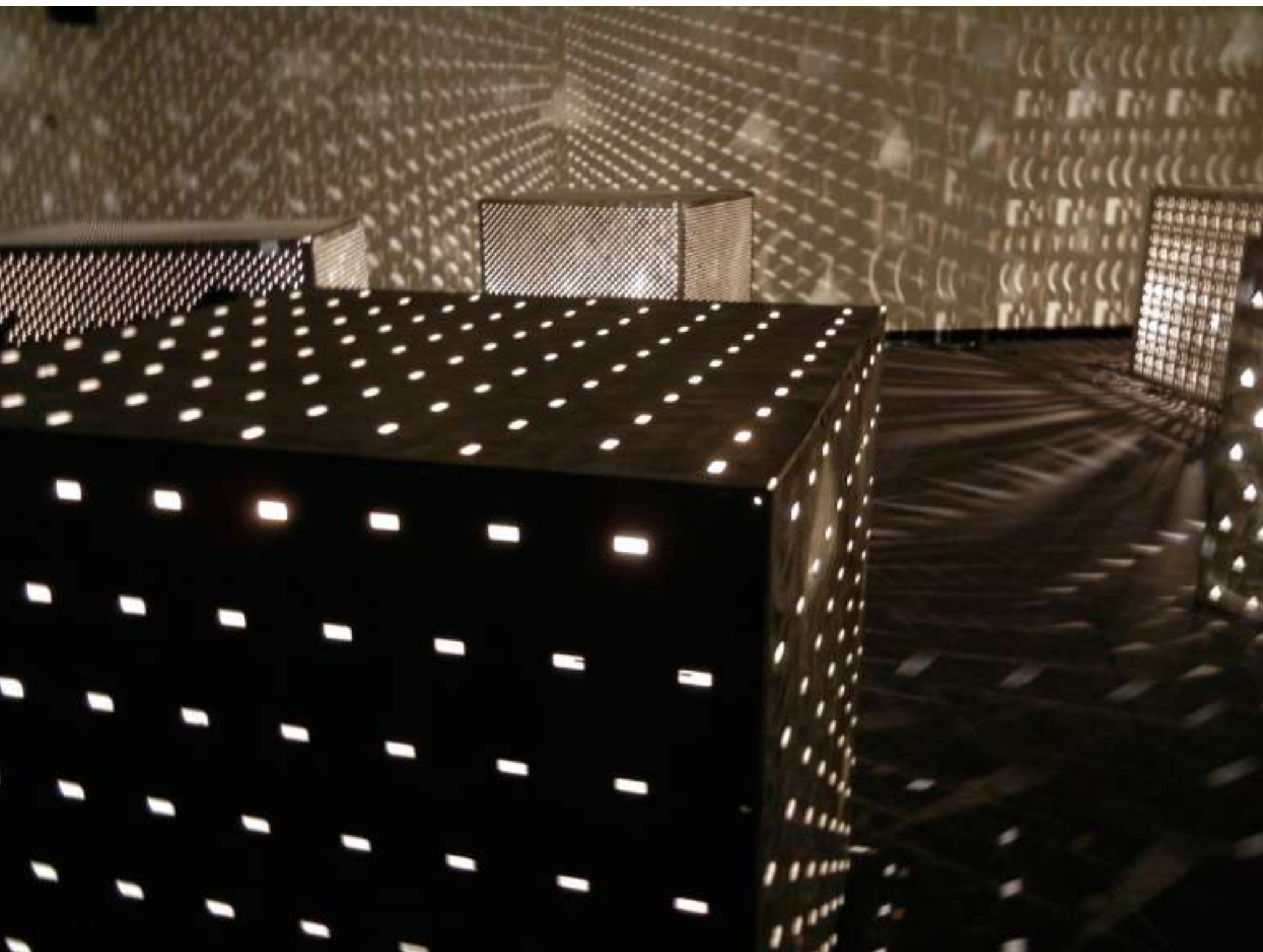
ART CENTER SARASOTA LAUNCHES SEASON WITH SOUND AND LIGHT

Art Center Sarasota will launch its new season on Nov. 7 with two site-specific installations created by Craig Colorusso, a musician and artist “who explores the intersection of sound, light and space,” the gallery has announced.

Colorusso’s *CUBEMUSIC* consists of six 4-foot metal cubes that emanate light and music, while his *Sun Boxes* — solar-powered sound installations — will be placed at sites around Sarasota between Nov. 4 and 7 and Jan. 1 and 3, with times and locations to be announced, a news release explains.

A reception with the artist will be held on Nov. 7 from 5 to 7 p.m., the release notes. The exhibition will continue through Jan. 3.

“Craig Colorusso’s interactive installations of sound and light as an art medium are helping to further expand what we perceive as art,” says Lisa Berger, executive director of Art Center Sarasota, in the release. “We’re pleased to be able to open our season with this unique experience never before presented in Sarasota.”



CUBEMUSIC by Craig Colorusso. Contributed photo

Born in 1970, Colorusso grew up with the punk rock movement of the 1980s and soon began writing and performing music of his own, the release continues. “In the 1990s, he toured with bands and launched his own record company. During this time, he continuously expanded his musical ability, but also questioned the nature of traditional musical performance itself,” the release adds.

“Eventually, Colorusso made the leap from ‘performing musician’ to ‘installation artist,’” it continues. “At first, he created light sculpture to accompany his compositions. Ultimately, light and music became one. The artist created a series of sound installations that broke down barriers between performer and audience.”

Art Center Sarasota will be showcasing two of these pieces.

Berger points out in the release, “In effect, Colorusso’s installation will turn Art Center Sarasota into a vast magic lantern. But it’s a magic lantern with a beat. Each cube also emits a different four-note chord in an ever-shifting volume. All six cubes playing together weave a tapestry of sound, evoking at times an organ, at other times a choir.”

The release adds, “If Colorusso’s *CUBEMUSIC* transforms interior space, the artist’s *Sun Boxes* will do the same for the great outdoors. Essentially, this installation turns sunshine into music; the box on each speaker plays a digitally recorded guitar chord when its



Sun Boxes by Craig Colorusso. Contributed photo

solar panel is exposed to daylight. To create Sarasota's solar symphony, the artist will place 20 solar-powered speaker boxes in sites around town, inviting viewers to experience an ever-changing environment of space, sound and light."


Berger explains in the release that Art Center Sarasota is partnering with the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County to make the exhibit happen.

Colorusso's *Sun Boxes* will tour Sarasota on two different occasions, the release continues. The first will occur Nov. 4-7, with appearances at the Palm Avenue garage accompanied by a performance by Fuzion Dance Artists, as well as stops in public beaches and parks. The second tour will take place Jan. 1-3, with stops at other parks and beaches, the release

notes. The artist will be present during each installation to discuss his work. A full schedule of tours will be announced later, the release adds.

Three other art shows will run concurrently with *CUBEMUSIC*, the release points out:

- *Pulp Culture* will showcase the many ways paper can be used to create art.
- *Miniatures* will be a juried exhibition of works smaller than 12 inches by 12 inches.
- Art Center Sarasota's *Instructor's Exhibit* will feature works by the gallery's class and workshop instructors.

Art Center Sarasota is located at 707 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. For more information, call 365-2032 or visit artsarasota.org. 



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Alexandra Jefferson, with parents Chris and Tammy, decorated a nature crown at Temple Emanu-El's first Tot Shabbat of the year, held Oct. 12 at Crowley Nature Center. Contributed photo


TEMPLE EMANU-EL KIDS CELEBRATE SPECIAL SHABBAT

Dozens of children, parents, and grandparents celebrated Shabbat and the blessings of nature on Oct. 12, as Temple Emanu-El kicked off its first Tot Shabbat of the season at Crowley Nature Center.

Designed for Jewish and interfaith families with youngsters through age 6, "Temple Emanu-El's monthly Tot Shabbat programs provide meaningful, fun and age-appropriate Shabbat experiences for young children," a news release says. "In the beautiful setting of Crowley, participants enjoyed a family hike; collecting leaves, sticks and other natural

treasures; and using their finds to decorate crowns," the release continues. Attendees also feasted on a bagel breakfast and participated in age-appropriate Shabbat blessings, songs, movement and a story with Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman.

The event was chaired by Liana Sheintal Bryant and co-sponsored by Temple Emanu-El and the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, the release adds.

Tot Shabbat programs will continue monthly. They are free and open to the community. For more information, call 379-1997. 



Woody Bryant proudly wears the nature crown he created. Contributed photo



Miriam, Hannah and Larissa Lippe enjoy some mommy-daughter time at Temple Emanu-El's first Tot Shabbat of the year. Contributed photo



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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 in advance; \$100 at the door. Information and tickets: SafeSexHalloweenBash.com.

25+
OCTOBER

Dabbert Gallery presents *Season of Color*

Oct. 25 to Nov. 29, 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.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.

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.

30
OCTOBER

HSSC presents the 16th annual *Howl-o-ween* pet costume contest

Oct. 30, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Phillippi Farmhouse Market, 5500 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Admission: \$10 donation. Information: 955-4131 or www.hssc.org.

31
OCTOBER

Safe Treats in Siesta Village

Oct. 31, 3 to 6 p.m., at participating businesses on Ocean Boulevard. Youngsters are invited to stop in for treats at shops and restaurants flying orange and black balloons. The event is sponsored by the [Siesta Key Village Association](http://SiestaKeyVillageAssociation.com).

31
OCTOBER

WSLR presents Halloween with Hymn for Her

Oct. 31, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$5 in advance; \$7 at the door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.



PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader

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**SCHIMMEL
SIGHTINGS**

**WHO SAYS YOU
HAVE TO BE SCARY???**

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.