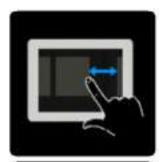
Vol. 2, No. 10 — November 22, 2013

THE SARASOTA News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida



GETTO KIOWUS



swipe:

flip pages left or right



Single Tap:

show/hide on-screen controls



Double Tap:

zoom-in or zoom-out on a single page



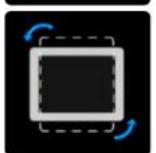
Pinch: (Not supported on some Android devices)

Zoom-in or zoom-out on a single

page

Toolbar Options

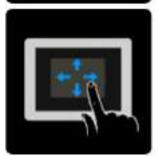
- Text Mode
- Search by keywords
- Open/close the mini carousel of pages
- ∀iew the table of contents
- View the archives of this publication
- Email the current page to a friend
 - Social bookmark the current page



Rotate: (Not supported on some

Android devices)

View different layouts for landscape/portrait



Move:

When zoomed-in, move around the page A.K.A.
HELP

SARASOIA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher
Rachel@SarasotaNewsLeader.com

Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Éditor
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





"The Sarasota News Leader" and "The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida" are registered trademarks of New Sheriff Publishing, Inc., which publishes The Sarasota News Leader. Copyright © 2013 Sarasota News Leader. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher. Member - National Digital Press Association • Post Office Box 5099 • Sarasota, FL 34277 • 941-227-1080



Welcome

If it seems as though we have a wealth of stories this week about addressing homelessness in Sarasota, it was not planned that way. I daresay no one knew consultant Robert Marbut would release a draft of his recommendations for the community just one day before our publication deadline.

Along with tackling the report itself, County Editor Roger Drouin covered Marbut's Nov. 15 presentation to a local chapter of the League of Women Voters, City Editor Stan Zimmerman attended a regular focus group meeting this week on homelessness issues, and I covered a County Commission discussion on a funding source for community action. While some publications might have pulled one or all of those other stories after Marbut's draft appeared, I felt it important to include them. Few topics over

recent years have garnered as much public attention as homelessness, and the more you know about the many facets of the issue, the better able you are to develop an opinion on how it should be handled.

This was a very big week for Sarasota County's 2050 Plan, too, but Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker has done a masterful job of gathering the material into one article that easily will let you know the most important facets of what transpired.

Thankfully, after all the hard news, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel — with a little help — spent a lot of time at both the Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition and the Chalk Festival. Production Manager Cleve Posey has incorporated those photos into lovely looks at the work of the tremendously talented artists.

By all means, do take your time with this issue.

Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor and Publisher



CONTENTS





Click Any Headline To Go Directly To That Article

NEWS & COMMENTARY

DIVIDE TO CONQUER Former city mayors voice support for Chapman in the latest Sunshine suit — <i>Stan Zimmerman</i>	9
MARBUT'S PLAN The homeless consultant suggests four preferred sites in the city of Sarasota for a permanent homeless shelter, though the locations are likely to spur a heated City Commission discussion — Roger Drouin	13
A SECOND TRY AT A FIRST DRAFT Despite sharp criticism of a consultant's fiscal neutrality report, Sarasota County moves ahead with its contract — Cooper Levey-Baker	21
ZONING AND PARKING A plan to triple the density for development in the Rosemary District will proceed, but the question of paid garage parking remains open — Stan Zimmerman	26
MARCH 25 IT IS In spite of objections to the timing, the County Commission votes 4-1 to approve another spring School Board referendum on a special 1 mill tax — Rachel Brown Hackney	30
HIGH HOPES Several of the affected property owners say they are relieved the Fruitville Initiative is moving forward after a three-year delay — Roger Drouin	36
BIG WEEK FOR SARASOTA 2050 County Commission gives the OK to numerous Sarasota 2050 revisions — Cooper Levey-Baker	40
A ROUGH OUTLINE The Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency Study Committee votes unanimously to recommend a 30-year extension of the district and to keep 1986 as the base tax value year — Stan Zimmerman	44



PHOTO CREDITS

Front cover: Where were you when you heard? - Norman Schimmel Sarasota Leisure: A Tranquil Sail - Norman Schimmel

CONTENTS





Click Any Headline To Go Directly To That Article

FINALIZING HIS REPORT Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut has a list of four possible locations for a permanent homeless shelter in Sarasota County, a recommendation that will be part of the plan he presents Nov. 25 — Roger Drouin	49
ANOTHER AVENUE FOR HELP The County Commission will hold a public hearing on changes to ordinances that could create more funding flexibility to address homelessness strategies — Rachel Brown Hackney	54
HABITS AND HOUSING A community focus group talks of breaking residents from acts of 'help' that do not really assist the homeless as well as the need for affordable residences — Stan Zimmerman	58
PARK PLAN PROCEEDS The County Commission approves purchase of 115 acres, with a contingency — Roger Drouin	60
COMMENTS AND CONTROVERSY A County Commission exchange with a public speaker leads to harsh words — Rachel Brown Hackney	63
NEWS BRIEFS	70
CRIME BLOTTER	80
OPINION	
EDITORIAL County Domestic Partnership Registry a good first step	85
SLIGHTLY HACKNEYED A tragic anniversary	87
COMMENTARY Let's play — Harriet Cuthbert	89

FOR ADVERTISING INFO

CONTENTS





Click Any Headline To Go Directly To That Article

SARASOTA LEISURE

Dozens of performers celebrate the latest Noise Ordinance compilation all day Saturday — Cooper Levey-Baker	92
MASTER PIECES From whimsy to current topics — and even a tribute to one of their own — the 2013 Crystal Classic sculptors' entries wowed the crowds — Rachel Brown Hackney	95
PATRIOTIC FERVOR The 2013 Chalk Festival features multi-hued tributes to the nation's heroes — Staff Reports	108
SIESTA SEEN Shay wins the top Keep Sarasota County Beautiful volunteer award; efforts continue to start a Village recycling initiative; and the key's holiday season kickoff is on the horizon — Rachel Brown Hackney	118
A&E BRIEFS	125
RELIGION BRIEFS	132
COMMUNITY CALENDAR	135
SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS	136



For Advertising Info Sales@SarasotaNewsLeader.com (941) 227-1080



Tonya Herschberger & Linda Keefe

A smile happens instantly, its memory lasts a lifetime.



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

Tonya was the nurse who prepped Linda for surgery after she was hit by a drunk driver while walking with her husband and their dog. In spite of her pain and the anxiety that precedes any surgical procedure, Linda gazed up at the nurse and immediately felt at ease. "You have a beautiful smile," she said. That's when Tonya shared with Linda the person responsible for her beautiful smile, Dr. Christine Koval.

For over 25 years, Dr. Koval has been one of the area's most trusted experts in creating beautiful, natural smiles using the latest advances in restorative, cosmetic, laser and general dentistry. Most new patients come to her based on referrals from people who just can't stop smiling.

Linda turned to Dr. Koval to repair her smile and jaw which was so misaligned she couldn't chew her food properly. "Tonya's comforting smile and advice gave me hope and direction," she says. "I'm so grateful to her, and of course to Dr. Koval. Now I have a smile that I love to share with everyone I meet."

For a complimentary consultation call 941.923.5406 or for a more extensive smile gallery viewing visit askdrkoval.com

ENHANCE YOUR SMILE. ENHANCE YOUR LIFE.



Then City Commission candidate Susan Chapman speaks at a campaign rally in April with former Mayor Mollie Cardamone standing next to her. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

FORMER CITY MAYORS VOICE SUPPORT FOR CHAPMAN IN THE LATEST SUNSHINE SUIT

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

A tactic used by the plaintiffs in the latest Sunshine lawsuit against the Sarasota City Commission appears to be working. When Citizens for Sunshine filed its complaint, it sued not only the City Commission as a body

but also two commissioners individually.

Commissioners Suzanne Atwell and Susan Chapman were named personally as defendants. They both received the same notification letter, and Chapman told the City Commission on Nov. 18 that "both letters were rejected."

Chapman then received an emergency injunction and was served with a set of "interrogatories." That was followed with a

We elect you to conduct the business of the city. One of your obligations to us is to protect each other. You must provide legal coverage for each other.

Mollie Cardamone Former Mayor City of Sarasota request to set a schedule for depositions in the case.

Atwell instead received an offer to settle the case, which she accepted. In other words, while lawyers for Citizens for Sunshine pursued their case against Chapman, they quietly settled with Atwell and the city.

"The offer that Commissioner Atwell took has never been offered to me," said Chapman. Her line has been consistent throughout the case. "I strongly disagree with any assumption I violated the Sunshine Law," she told her fellow commissioners at the Monday meeting.

The agenda item prompting her comment was what to do about her legal fees. City Attorney Bob Fournier told the commission, "Under state law, if Ms. Chapman prevails, you must pay the fees. If she settles without admission of a violation, you have to pay. Under other circumstances, I believe the city charter fully authorizes you to pay the fees, or within your discretionary authority, not to pay."

The floor was then opened for public comments on the issue. Fourteen people stepped up to the microphone, including three former mayors. They all expressed concern both about the way the city had caved in to Citizens for Sunshine and the future implications.

Retired Judge Frank Brenner was blunt. "If the bully succeeds today, he'll try again tomorrow. A time comes when enough is enough," Brenner said.

County Commissioner Nora Patterson — a former Sarasota mayor — reminded the City Commission she had been in the same position and was treated much differently in a Citizens for Sunshine suit over baseball. "This same issue came before the county. Commissioners [Shannon] Staub, [Joe] Barbetta and myself were sued personally along with the county. I elected to be covered by the County Attorney's Office. Staub and Barbetta took private attorneys. Both fees were covered without a question.

"How difficult is it to do your job? How many hours? How much stress? Would other quality candidates be willing to serve if they were placed in great financial jeopardy?" asked Patterson.

"You may be the next to be targeted," said another former mayor, Mollie Cardamone.



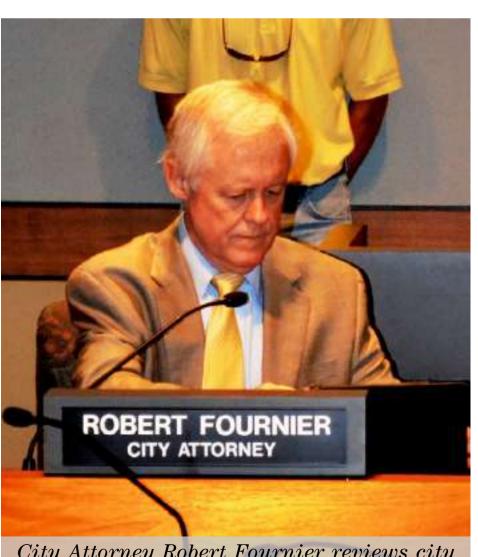
The City Commission listens to a presentation. Photo by Norman Schimmel

"We elect you to conduct the business of the city. One of your obligations to us is to protect each other. You must provide legal coverage for each other."

Gretchen Serrie, a longtime neighborhood activist, said the Citizens for Sunshine suit is part of a larger problem. "There seems to be a proliferation of Sunshine cases in Florida. It's become a legal 'gotcha' industry," she added.

"Has this spate of ambulance-chasing Sunshine suits led to a more transparent, responsive government? In fact, it's been the reverse," pointed out former Mayor Kelly Kirschner. "It's time to stand up to the schoolyard bully."

The litany continued, with city advisory board members and neighborhood leaders urging the city commissioners to defend Chapman and not divide themselves.



City Attorney Robert Fournier reviews city documents. Photo by Norman Schimmel



City Commissioner Susan Chapman's legal fee matter remains unsettled. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

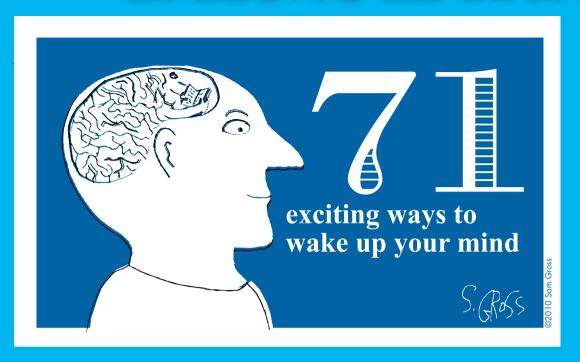
Mayor Shannon Snyder has been urging a settlement to the suit to keep legal costs down. He moved to cover Chapman's legal fees through the end of the month. "It gives her two weeks to decide how she wants to proceed with her problem, her situation," he said.

Fournier told the board, "This is sort of a temporary solution. And we'll have to have the same discussion again."

The commissioners voted 3-1 to approve the motion, with Chapman abstaining because she has a financial stake in the decision. The only one against the temporary pay plan was Vice Mayor Willie Shaw.

In the meantime, City Manager Tom Barwin will look into the city's errors and omissions insurance policy to determine if it can or will pay for Chapman's defense. "It is coverage we have bought and paid for," he said. SNL

REGISTER NOW FOR PSA'S RENOWNED LIFELONG LEARNING COURSES



Winter Term begins
January 13th
at 4 convenient
Sarasota/Manatee
locations

Join us for PSA's final FREE Public Lecture



Betsy Hudson Traba:
"Is that your REAL job? The Multi-faceted,
VERY Busy Lives of Orchestra Musicians."

Tuesday Dec. 3rd @ 2:30 p.m. at Plymouth Harbor, 700 John Ringling Blvd.

For detailed lecture and course information visit: www.PSAsrq.org or Call (941) 374-0561



Pierian Spring Academy

adventures in lifelong learning



A man standing alongside Bee Ridge Road seeks help from motorists. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE HOMELESS CONSULTANT SUGGESTS FOUR PREFERRED SITES IN THE CITY OF SARASOTA FOR A PERMANENT HOMELESS SHELTER, THOUGH THE LOCATIONS ARE LIKELY TO SPUR A HEATED CITY COMMISSION DISCUSSION

By Roger Drouin

 $County\ Editor$

Robert Marbut's 55-page draft report outlines a comprehensive approach to homelessness in a community that has been grappling with a growing homeless population.

Marbut, who was hired by the city and county

to come up with a plan to address homelessness, will present his report to the county and city commissioners Monday, Nov. 25.

The draft of the report, released Wednesday,

The main goal is to pick the site that is in the best overall interest of Sarasota and one that promotes the operational success of Sarasota Safe Harbor.

Robert Marbut Homelessness Consultant

lists 12 major recommendations. The plan includes a master case management system to keep track of homeless individuals and families and to try to provide them services. Marbut also recommends Emergency Intake Portals for homeless families with children

in North County and South County. His biggest recommendation — and the one that will likely prove most controversial — is for a permanent homeless shelter in the city of

Sarasota that includes services from medical help to job training.

In his report, Marbut suggested his four optimal sites for the homeless shelter, which he has called a "transformational center" and "stabilization unit." This facility would also be the location for the master case managers who would try to assist homeless men and women.

Marbut suggests naming the shelter "Sarasota Safe Harbor" after Pinellas Safe Harbor, which has served as inspiration for those backing shelter plans in Sarasota County. The facility should be run by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, he writes.

Pinellas Safe Harbor and Prospects Courtyard in San Antonio, TX, are Marbut's models for a Sarasota center. He also lists other potential names for it, from "Sarasota Safe Beginnings" to "Bridges to Home."

ONE CITY COMMISSIONER DISAPPOINTED

All four of Marbut's top suggested sites for the facility are in the city limits. Three are in the City Commission's District 1, which encompasses parts of downtown north of Fruitville Road as well as north Sarasota.

Marbut evaluated 65 sites before coming up with four optimal locations that are either for sale or publically owned; he lists six additional "possibly viable" sites.

The top four locations are 1003 N. Washington Blvd., north of Gillespie Park; 1121 Lewis



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

Ave., near 12th Street and Tuttle Avenue, near Ed Smith Stadium; 1330 N. Osprey Ave. (and/or 1530 N. Osprey Ave.), near the Sarasota Police Department; and 1800 East Ave., near Osprey Avenue, Webber Street and Southside Elementary School.

The parcel at 1003 N. Washington Blvd. has garnered its share of recent public attention, as it was donated to Vallerie Guillory, executive director of the nonprofit Trinity Without Borders. Guillory uses it as a temporary outdoor shelter site.

City Commissioner Willie Shaw has objected to a homeless facility in his district, District 1, which encompasses most of the current social services provided for the homeless. Shaw told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week he was disappointed with Marbut's recommendations.

Another city commissioner, Susan Chapman, voted against setting aside \$500,000 in city funding for a shelter.

Although it is not Marbut's top choice, he wrote the following about the parcel at 1330 N. Osprey Ave.: "Of all the possibilities in the County, this is the best overall location." It is close to the county jail, as well as the Police Department, the offices of the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Glasser/Shoenbaum Human Services Center and several businesses.



The parcel at 1003 N. Washington Blvd. in Sarasota is Robert Marbut's top choice for a shelter location. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Marbut also noted of it, "[G]reat existing buffers exist, and plenty of space to add more buffering."

In his recent presentation at a League of Women Voters meeting, Marbut said it is essential to locate the center near existing social services offices and facilities, such as those of The Salvation Army and others in the Rosemary District. He added that proximity to the county courthouse and jail was desirable, too. He mentioned the parcel at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. (See the related story in this issue.)

In his report, Marbut anticipated some political debate over his recommendations. The first step in his plan is to "Get started and

do not get bogged down in politics," Marbut wrote. "Simply just start!!"

He also anticipated the shelter would be the most controversial element of his plan. "The main goal is to pick the site that is in the best overall interest of Sarasota and one that promotes the operational success of Sarasota Safe Harbor," Marbut wrote. "The hope is the site selection will not get bogged down by NIMBYism nor political rivalries," referring to the "not in my backyard" school of thought.

HOMELESS OUTREACH TEAMS

Once the family portals and the shelter are almost ready to open, "homeless outreach teams" (HOTs) should then be activated 2-4



Robert Marbut and County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason chatted after Marbut spoke at a Tiger Bay Club meeting this week. Photo by Norman Schimmel

4 - Establish a Men's and Women's Public Safety Triage and Stabilization Unit

Establish a 24/7/168/365 Men's and Women's Public Safety Triage and Stabilization Unit which would be a "come-as-you-are" emergency shelter. The Sarasota Sheriff's Office should be asked to be the lead coordinating agency. This would become the main intake portal for adult homeless men and women. All adult services county-wide should "spoke off" of this main hub. Once operational, all county-wide street feeding programs, food pantry programs and day-time service centers for adult homeless men and women need to be relocated within the Public Safety Triage and Stabilization Unit ("Sarasota Safe Harbor"). This should also be the location of the Master Case Managers for adult homeless men and women.

- National best practices indicate that communities need to have at least one 24/7 "come-as-you-are" emergency shelter (sometimes referred to as a low-demand-shelter). Yet, Sarasota County does not have a true come-as-you-are 24/7 facility.
- This public safety triage and stabilization unit would be modeled after Pinellas Safe Harbor and Prospects Courtyard (San Antonio), and to a lesser extent CASS (Phoenix), Star of Hope (Houston), St. Patrick Center (St. Louis) and The Bridge (Dallas).
- Because so many operational folks within Sarasota have been to Pinellas Safe Harbor (PSH)
 and understand the basic concepts of PSH, a suggested operational name for this facility is
 Sarasota Safe Harbor (SSH). The following is a list of other suggested possible names:
 - + Bridges to a New Beginning
 - + Bridges to Healing
 - + Bridges to Home
 - + Bridges to Life
 - + First Choice
 - + First Day
 - + First Help
 - + First Place
 - + Prospects Courtyard
 - + Safe Beginnings or Sarasota Safe Beginnings
 - + Starting Place or Starting Point
 - + Safe Start or Sarasota Safe Start
- The Sarasota Sheriff's Office should be asked to be the lead agency.

1121 Lewis Avenue

- Near service core
- Near Jail
- Existing buffers on all sides
- Good site access
- Excellent ingress and egress
- Two existing structures with 26,000 usable sf
- 1.47 acres
- Zoning: IGD (Industrial General District)
- Future Land Use: Urban Edge from PIC (Production Intensive Commercial) on 9/16/2013
- Water: 8" line in N. Jefferson
- Sewer: line in N. Jefferson
- Evacuation Zone: None
- Flood Zone: X (minimal flooding)
- Interior demolition would have to occur (one budget estimate received was for \$36,000)
- Would have to add some modulated structures (very tight foot print)
- List price is \$550,000
- Totally air conditioned/insulated
- Has been on market for a long time / on 3rd broker

1330 North Osprey Avenue and/or 1530 North Osprey Avenue

- Adjacent to service core
- Near Jail
- Great existing buffers exist, and plenty of space to add more buffering
- Great Site access
- Great ingress and egress
- Land layout is excellent
- 2.14 and 4.5 acres
- Zoning: G / IGD (Industrial General District)
- Future Land Use: PIC (Production Intensive Commercial)
- Water: 8" line in N. Osprey
- Sewer: line in N. Osprey
- Evacuation Zone: None (Zone "E" touches the south western corner of the parcel)
- Flood Zone: X (minimal flooding)
- Modulated system could work (\$650,000 to \$985,000)
- 1330 property owned by the City of Sarasota
- 1530 property owned by UPS (we would not need the UPS property to have site work)
- This is an ideal location
- Least expensive land option evaluated
- Of all the possibilities in the County, this is the best overall viable location

weeks before the opening of these new facilities," Marbut recommends in the report. These teams would include law enforcement officers and social service workers; their job would be to persuade homeless people to enter either the family portal or the shelter for men and women.

"Street outreach teams will be critical to the success of the overall system," Marbut wrote. "The best HOTs pair a social service worker with a police officer. Additionally, every LEO [law enforcement official] in the County should go through an appropriate level of homeless engagement and sensitivity training."

Wayne Applebee is the county employee who will be charged with implementing Marbut's plan after the consultant leaves. If community leaders agree on a shelter, Applebee will work to make sure that goal is achieved. The *News Leader* was unable to reach Applebee before deadline to seek his comments on the draft report.

A 24/7 SHELTER

Although Marbut suggests the Sheriff's Office should run the new shelter, the County and City commissions would formally have to request that the office be the lead agency at Sarasota Safe Harbor.

A range of services should be included within the Sarasota Safe Harbor, Marbut suggests. With some full-time and others part-time, they would include engagement through the Homeless Outreach Teams; medical and pharmacy services; mental health and addictive disorders and substance abuse services; job placement services, including job skills training; hygiene services, including haircuts (to be presentable for job interviews); overnight sleeping quarters; and a commercial kitchen.

The shelter would also include veterans' services, a clothing closet, a donation center, administrative services, security and volunteer coordination. Meals should be coordinated with delivery and prep from non-profits and church groups, he recommends.

Marbut notes that Sarasota Safe Harbor must be a "good neighbor":

"A robust "buffer" around the Sarasota Safe Harbor needs to be developed. A physical fencing barrier needs to line Sarasota Safe Harbor. If possible, foliage or other screening should be integrated within the fencing system to create a visually aesthetic barrier. Additionally, the structures within Sarasota Safe Harbor need to be laid out in such away as to create positive ergonomic flow and defensible space."

Marbut suggests another important factor that could alleviate the concerns of some residents near the eventual site for a shelter — if city and county officials agree to build one:

"For safety reasons, the queuing for intake must occur inside of Sarasota Safe Harbor and not on the street."

City Editor Stan Zimmerman contributed to this report. SNL







(941) 322-1501

32755 Singletary Road • Myakka City, Florida 34251 www.hlipizzans.com ABOUT SERVICES COMMENTARY PARTNERS PRESS CONTACT

SUBSCRIPTION PRODUCTS

CUSTOM REPORTS

We provide economic studies and policy advice to governors, legislators, think tanks, and corporate clients across the nation on public policy, regulatory, and tax issues, and create proprietary models to improve corporate clients' business models.

A SECOND TRY AT A FIRST DRAFT

The Arduin Laffer & Moore website explains the services the firm provides. Image from www. arduinlaffermoore.com/services/

DESPITE SHARP CRITICISM OF A CONSULTANT'S FISCAL NEUTRALITY REPORT, SARASOTA COUNTY MOVES AHEAD WITH ITS CONTRACT

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission this week roundly dismissed the first draft of an analysis of portions of the county's Sarasota 2050 Plan, while at the same time absolving Laffer Associates, the consulting firm that prepared it, of blame, and recommitting to its contract with the company.

The county signed the deal with Laffer,

the Tennesseebased firm, in early September, agreeing to pay \$90,000 for a review of Sarasota 2050's fiscal neutrality requirements. Fiscal neutrality is the principle that a new development generates enough county revenue in the form of impact fees and taxes that it compensates for any increase in demand for public services.

Laffer delivered the first draft of its report two weeks ago, and it has been the subject of blistering criticism from all sides. The draft calls

> for the total elimination of fiscal neutrality, all zoning rules and the county's Urban Service Boundary, among other things,

and draws on the

They did what they were asked to do.

Charles Hines Vice Chairman Sarasota County Commission

work of writers associated with right-wing organizations such as the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation to label the entire

smart growth movement "authoritarian" and "elitist."

Laffer was founded by Arthur Laffer, a former Reagan Administration official known as "the father of supply-side economics," according to the website of a

If the board doesn't want to scrap it

Nora Patterson Commissioner Sarasota County

Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies David Brain labeled Laffer Associates' report an "ideological rant." He's hardly alone in blasting it; even the County Commission was dis-

pleased. Barbetta

New College of Florida

said portions of the Tallahassee firm he runs with Donna Arduin, report were of "grave concern" to him, while

by County Commissioner Joe Barbetta. Arduin

has close ties to Gov. Rick Scott.

and wants it fixed, it seems logical you would go to an organization or an individual that is at least neutral on those issues.

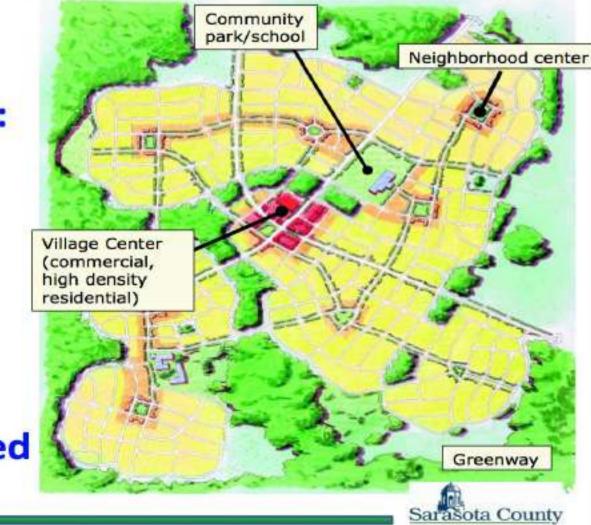
one of three names suggested for the project Commissioner Christine Robinson said she

Sarasota 2050 Policy - Revisited

The New Urbanism tenet seeks to

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

- **≻**Compact
- **➢Walk-able**
- **≻**Connected
- ➤ Varied in housing
- **➢Mixed Use** and would not be classified as continued urban sprawl.



was "very upset" at the use of taxpayer money to pay for the report.

But the consensus was that Laffer was not to blame. The firm's contract with the county called for Laffer to "review the history of New Urbanism/Smart Growth development" and to "place the Florida state regulations, as well as the Sarasota 2050 Policy, into proper context."

"They did what they were asked to do," Commission Vice Chairman Charles Hines said of Laffer. Chairwoman Carolyn Mason agreed: "It's not this firm's fault." Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer said the request for the history of smart growth was added at the request of Laffer, but that "staff is responsible for managing the contract and finalizing the scope of work."

Harmer spoke with Laffer representatives Wednesday morning, Nov. 20, after hearing the board's criticisms Tuesday. He later told the commissioners the document the county received should be considered an "initial preliminary draft," and that the firm is willing to rework it and come back with a second first draft. Under the revamped arrangement,



Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer listens to discussion in a workshop. File photo

Laffer is due to be paid half its \$90,000 fee upon delivery of that version, and it will present its final draft in January instead of December, as originally planned. Staff members had been preparing a response to the draft to be sent back to Laffer this week, but Harmer said he instructed them to put that work on hold.

But even if its mission is restricted to reviewing just fiscal neutrality, can Laffer really be trusted to do so objectively? That's what Commissioner Nora Patterson asked. She is the lone board member to support bringing in an academic team, instead of Laffer to study the fiscal neutrality element.

It was no secret that Laffer had a supply-side point-of-view, she pointed out to her colleagues this week. "You got your answer, from their particular perspective, what one should do with fiscal neutrality, which is scrap it,"



Donna Arduin was hired to examine the county's 2050 Plan. Photo courtesy Virginia Institute for Public Policy



Arthur Laffer is a nationally known economist.
Photo courtesy The Laffer Center

she pointed out. "If the board doesn't want to scrap it and wants it fixed, it seems logical you would go to an organization or an individual that is at least neutral on those issues."

Harmer said Laffer representatives told him they originally intended to provide a more "macro-level review" of county policy, but that they could indeed still objectively analyze fiscal neutrality. Without taking a vote, the commission approved the adjustments to the report timeline that Harmer presented.

Patterson said the first draft perhaps gives the commission "more insight" into Laffer's thinking. "Her opinion of fiscal neutrality is pretty clearly expressed," Patterson noted of the report's author. "Whether she's right or not, she says it doesn't work. She says it's irrelevant and get rid of it. I'm not casting any blame on her. She says what she thinks."



Open: Mon-Sat 11:30am to 9:00pm

RAR-B-Q

Catering Across The Suncoast Since 2005

Pulled Pork | Ribs | Chicken | Beef Brisket Sides Made Fresh From Scratch Big salad | Chilled Salmon

Beer & Wine | Homemade Desserts | Kid Friendly

301 S Pineapple Ave · Sarasota, FL



941-366-2271 (BBQ1) • nancysbarbq.com



Louies Modern is on the ground floor of the Palm Avenue parking garage. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A PLAN TO TRIPLE THE DENSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE ROSEMARY DISTRICT WILL PROCEED, BUT THE QUESTION OF PAID GARAGE PARKING REMAINS OPEN

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

The Sarasota City Commission tackled two issues in radically different fashion during the Monday, Nov. 18, meeting — one involving zoning; the other, when to start charging drivers to park in city garages.

Attorney Bill Merrill asked for a speedy change to the city's comprehensive plan to increase density in the Rosemary District.

He was standing by with charts and photos, as was land-use consultant Joel Freedman. But neither had the chance to say a word. The item was on the consent agenda, and nobody pulled it for discussion. It passed by a 5-0 vote without a whisper of comment.

This allows Merrill to work with staff to triple the current 25-units-per-acre density in the Rosemary District, just across Fruitville Road from downtown. A staff report says that would "allow for the development of smaller, market rate housing units."

Merrill's plan calls for creation of a "Rosemary Residential Overlay District." His client is Rosalyne Holdings. He says the firm "has a short timeline for developing this project, and would like to have the comprehensive plan and zoning text amendments in place by next summer," according to a staff memo.

Unless Rosalyne backs off, we will be hearing more about this item in the next several months. The desired zoning would be the most intense in city history.

STUCK ON PARKING

Parking is a live wire for city commissioners. It seems every time they touch it, somebody gets shocked. At Monday's meeting, the "shockee" was Parking Director Mark Lyons.

The owner of Louies Modern restaurant on the first floor of the relatively new Palm Avenue parking garage asked the city to postpone the date when it would start charging people to park in the garage until after the end of the tourist season.

The city has been running a half-million-dollar deficit in its Parking Department budget since the city commissioners uninstalled their newly installed parking meters after a few downtown merchants showed up at a commission meeting with paper bags over their heads.



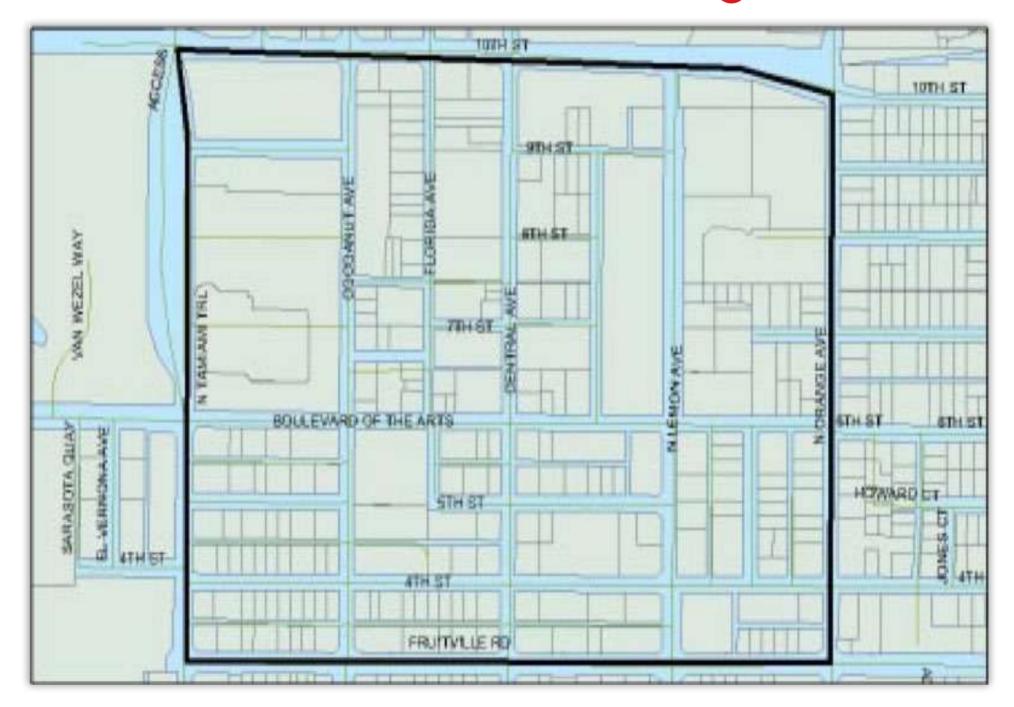
The Palm Avenue garage is one of several parking facilities in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

To increase revenue, the City Commission then decided to keep parking on the streets free but to charge for use of the city's garages. That is exactly the opposite of what the Parking Advisory Committee suggested.

When Commissioner Susan Chapman made a motion Monday to continue the current plan to start paid parking in the garages in early January, it was voted down 2-3. Voting against it were Mayor Shannon Snyder and Commissioners Paul Caragiulo and Suzanne Atwell.

However, no motion was made to keep the use of the parking garages free until the end of season. When asked later if such parking would be free or not in early January, Lyons could only say he did not know. Did the failure to support the status quo mean the old decision was vacated? Did the failure to create a replacement policy mean the status quo still applies? Was it a decision or a non-decision or an anti-decision?

City Manager Tom Barwin later reminded the commission the Parking Division is an "enterprise fund," meaning it is supposed to break even or even make money. If an enterprise fund consistently loses half a million dollars or more each year, auditors and bond rating specialists will start to ask questions with fiscal consequences.



A map shows the boundaries of the Rosemary District. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



Some things are just hard to resist. Like *The Sarasota News Leader*. It's a feast of in-depth local news, delightful and entertaining features, and a community calendar that highlights the best upcoming events in the area.

The first impulse is just to gobble it all up

The first impulse is just to gobble it all up.

But it's better to take it slow and relish every news "morsel." There's no rush.

You have a whole week.

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



Sarasota County School Board members say the revenue produced by the special 1 mill tax is critical to maintaining high-quality staff and programs. Image from morguefile.com

IN SPITE OF OBJECTIONS TO THE TIMING, THE COUNTY COMMISSION VOTES 4-1 TO APPROVE ANOTHER SPRING SCHOOL BOARD REFERENDUM ON A SPECIAL 1 MILL TAX

By Rachel Brown Hackney Editor

With Commissioner Joe Barbetta in the minority on Nov. 20, the Sarasota County Commission voted 4-1 to approve a resolution setting March 25 as the date for the fourth

Sarasota County School Board referendum on a special 1 mill tax.

Reiterating a point he had made in previous discussions of the issue, Barbetta said, "It's all about \$500,000 and voter turnout."

The negative impact on educational programs and retaining quality staff would be significant and would far outweigh any negative consequence of a March election.

Lori White Superintendent Sarasota County Schools

He pointed out that the School Board should have the referendum in conjunction with a November general election, when voter turnout typically is higher. "They could plan for

> that," he said of the School Board members. "They've had years to plan for it."

> Although he contended \$500,000 would be the School Board's expense for the referendum, Sarasota County Supervisor of

Elections Kathy Dent reconfirmed for *The Sarasota News Leader* on Nov. 20 that the cost would be between \$400,000 and \$425,000 — the figure she initially provided the *News Leader* in September.

Although Commissioner Nora Patterson agreed "with everything Commissioner Barbetta said" about changing the date of the vote, she told her colleagues she would go along with the School Board's request. "I still have some trouble voting against something if I know it will cause a great deal of problem for our school system."

Commissioner Christine Robinson made the motion to approve the spring special referendum. She also agreed with Barbetta, she added. However, she pointed out, "[The School Board is] a separately elected body. It's their separate budget. The folks that are to hold them accountable are the folks in the public."

School Board members told the *News Leader* again on Nov. 20 that they literally could not afford to lose the approximately \$40 million out of their budget for their next fiscal year if they had to switch the referendum to November. Under state law, the School Board budget has to be completed in July.

"If we had [the referendum] in November [2014], it would be too late for our budget," Vice Chairman Frank Kovach said.

"We get into a real squishy situation," Chairwoman Jane Goodwin told the *News Leader*. If the School Board were to move the date to November in the future, she added, it



The School Board meets with Deputy Chief Financial Officer Al Weidner (far left) and Chief Operating Officer Scott Lempe (next to Weidner). File photo

would have to ask for the special 1 mill funding for two years or six years, neither of which option might be welcome to voters who have been supporting the tax.

In a Nov. 13 letter to Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer, Superintendent Lori White referenced the two-year alternative Goodwin mentioned. "There is a concern that the citizens will perceive a bid for an early extension of the four-year additional millage as a move simply designed to give the [School] Board an option to go back to the voters the following year if approval is not achieved."

THE LAW AND THE STATISTICS

Under Florida law, the County Commission has to call for the School Board referendum to be on the ballot. When the issue first arose at the commission's regular meeting on Sept. 24, Barbetta asked County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh to research the matter to determine whether the county board could set a different date than the School Board sought.

In an Oct. 2 memo to the commission, Deputy County Attorney Kathleen F. Schneider wrote that Florida Statute 1011.71(9) provides that the School Board is authorized to "direct" the county to call for the election and that the School Board is required to provide the wording of the measure and ballot title. However, Schneider wrote, "[T]he statute does not provide that the School Board direct the County Commission as to the date of the special election."



Superintendent Lori White and Chai<mark>rw</mark>oman Jane Goodwin prepare for a School Board workshop to begin. File photo



Office of the Superintendent 1960 Landings Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34231 941-927-9000 • fax 941-927-2539

Web site: www.SarasotaCountySchools.net

November 13, 2013

Thomas A. Harmer, ICMA-CM Interim County Administrator 1660 Ringling Boulevard Sarasota, FL 34236

Re: Request for Special Election for Extension of the Additional 1-mill Ad Valorem

Dear Mr. Harmer:

It has come to my attention that at a recent County Commission meeting, several Commissioners expressed questions and concerns regarding the School Board's submission of the resolution providing for a voter referendum to extend our current additional one mill of funding. It is clear from the conversation that some of the Commissioners are misinformed about the budgeting process for public school districts as determined by state statute.

Our fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. State statute, commonly known as TRIM or Truth in Millage, requires that we properly adopt our millage rate for a designated fiscal year in July for notices to be mailed to taxpayers in August. We are prohibited from advertising any additional millage that has not been approved by the public through a referendum. Even if additional millage were to be approved after the fiscal year had started, it could **not** be collected or applied until it had been properly advertised for the following fiscal year.

The voters' approval of the additional one mill in 2010 expires on June 30, 2014. Therefore, any extension of the additional mill must occur prior to the time millage rates are established for the 2014-15 fiscal year. The postponement of the referendum until November 2014 would not allow for any additional funding for the entire 2014-2015 fiscal year, even assuming the voters approved it at that time. This would cause the School Board, and the students of our county, to experience a loss of \$40 million for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. This is the equivalent of 500 positions. The negative impact on educational programs and retaining quality staff would be significant and would far outweigh any negative consequence of a March election.

The Commissioner's conversation also seemed to indicate a perception that a November date would allow for more residents to vote on the issue. Although data sources on this issue are limited, our research indicates that there are either the same or a greater number of seasonal residents in March when compared to November.

The Board has considered the option of setting the date in November during an even (general election) year prior to the year the referendum expires to reduce the cost of a special election. However, this would leave only two years between renewal referendums.

During the Nov. 20 meeting, Patterson asked whether the County Commission could change the date.

"I don't know what the reaction of the School Board would be," DeMarsh told her. What he could say, he added, was that under state law, the County Commission "can determine the date of the election."

"Obviously," Patterson replied, "we would get into some form of argument" if the commission approved a different date.

In her letter to Harmer, Superintendent White wrote that she had learned of commissioners' concerns about the scheduling of the referendum. "It is clear from the conversation that some of the Commissioners are misinformed about the budgeting process for public school districts as determined by state statute," she added.

"Our fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30," White continued. The state's Truth in Millage statute "requires that we properly adopt our millage rate for a designated fiscal year in July for notices to be mailed to taxpayers in August. We are prohibited from advertising any additional millage that has not been approved by the public through a referendum. Even if additional millage were to be approved after the fiscal year had started it could **not** be collected or applied until it had been properly advertised for the following fiscal year."

White also pointed out that the revenue brought in annually by the special 1 mill tax "is the equivalent of 500 positions." She added, "The negative impact on educational programs and retaining quality staff would be



Commissioner Joe Barbetta makes a point during a budget workshop. File photo

significant and would far outweigh any negative consequence of a March election."

During his Nov. 20 comments, Barbetta pointed out that White also indicated in her letter "that she doesn't see any substantial difference in the voter turnout between March and November. ... I find that a little disingenuous."

Barbetta then cited statistics he had obtained from the Supervisor of Elections Office to show much higher turnout statistics for November elections compared to those in March. "The facts are the facts," Barbetta added. "I'm all for the referendum for the monies for education. I don't have a problem with that at all because we need quality education. But this is an issue of taxpayers/residents being involved in voting."

Referring to a shift to a November referendum date, Patterson said of the School Board members, "They haven't done the planning in the past. I think that they should," she

added, noting that regardless of the scheduling of the vote, they should "be able to have enough money in reserve to ... make up that difference should they encounter a prob-

lem with the voters, which could happen anyway."

When Chairwoman Carolyn Mason finally called for a vote, a pause ensued. "Commissioners?" she asked again.

[The School Board is] a separately elected body. It's their separate budget. The folks that are to hold them accountable are the folks in the public.

Christine Robinson Commissioner Sarasota County



"Is this the last moment that we can actually do this?" Patterson asked DeMarsh.

"It's an election that's already being planned for by the Supervisor of Elections," he replied. "I can't specifically address the last potential date."

After Robinson made the motion to approve the March 25 referendum, Vice Chairman Charles Hines agreed with her point about elected board members' authority. "I believe it's their decision," he said of the School Board members, "but I agree with Commissioner Barbetta with the planning part of [the date]."

"Actually, we've held a couple of elections in March, too," Patterson pointed out. Those were for the penny sales tax for capital projects, she added. "And we stopped doing that when it became so expensive. ... I think it's really time for the School Board to start taking that into consideration."

Hines noted that Art Hardy, the School Board's attorney, was in the audience for the commission meeting. "I am sure he will take back this discussion as to our concerns," Hines added.

SCHOOL BOARD REACTION

School Board Vice Chairman Kovach said he planned to initiate a new discussion among

his colleagues about moving the referendum to November. "I would certainly be in favor of that."

However, School Board member Caroline Zucker pointed out that the

board members had had difficulty determining how they could achieve a smooth transition to a fall general election.

Her primary concern was losing the tax revenue. "We would have to cut programs, cut teachers," she noted.

Legislative action might be necessary for the School Board to change the referendum timing, Kovach added.

He did appreciate Robinson's and Hines' remarks about the School Board's authority, he said. Referring to a situation in which one elected board might vote to deny a request of another elected board, he added, "I find that a little distasteful."

"I don't want to make a mountain out of a molehill," Goodwin told the *News Leader*. "We appreciate [the county commissioners'] good thoughts and their consideration. ... At a later date, perhaps," she added, the School Board could work out a way to move the date of the referendum.



Land to the east of Coburn Road falls within the boundaries of the proposed Fruitville Initiative. All photos by Roger Drouin

SEVERAL OF THE AFFECTED PROPERTY OWNERS SAY THEY ARE RELIEVED THE FRUITVILLE INITIATIVE IS MOVING FORWARD AFTER A THREE-YEAR DELAY

By Roger Drouin

County Editor

Developer Wayne Ruben expects the Fruitville Road area east of Interstate 75 to bloom once the county sets into motion a long-planned and ambitious Fruitville Initiative that would rezone more than 300 acres.

Ruben, who owns property in that area, envisions a commercial hub. "An important part of this process is to promote economic development and create jobs, so our children have jobs and don't have to

create that and fill a void." Ruben's vision became more plausible Tuesday, Nov. 19, as the Sarasota County

commissioners approved the boundaries for

leave the area," Ruben said. "We hope we can

An important part of this process is to promote economic development and create jobs, so our children have jobs and don't have to leave the area. We hope we can create that and fill a void.

> Wayne Ruben Developer

The vote is the latest phase in the Initiative, the county's master plan outlining a mixeduse "gateway village"

the Fruitville Initiative

Special Planning Area,

which includes rezon-

ing the approximately

300 acres.

east of I-75.

The next phase includes a meeting with Florida Department of Transportation officials that county Planner Beth Rozansky calls one of the "key milestones" in the effort.

The Fruitville Initiative area encompasses several vacant properties east of I-75. Among the owners are the county, which has a public library and 42 of the acres; Fox Creek Holdings; Glenn D. and Margaret E. Walters; Luella M. and Bryan E. Crofut; Sarasota Business Plaza, owned by Ruben; and Thomas F. Kelly.

Several of the private property owners who attended the County Commission meeting Tuesday told *The Sarasota News Leader* they

were relieved the plan was moving forward after a three-year delay.

David Walters said all of the owners have been approached by prospective buyers recently, but they have not been able to negotiate potential deals because the Fruitville Initiative has been in limbo.

"The exciting part of this is all these properties will come together within a master plan," noted Walters, whose family has owned property in the area for about 30 years.

Shelly Crofut said her family has been willing to wait more than five years for the Fruitville Initiative to come to fruition because the





Red lines denote the boundaries of the Fruitville Initiative study area. Image courtesy Sarasota County

new plan offers a cohesive vision for the area — thus creating the economic opportunity Ruben envisions.

She added that the vote Tuesday was a big step forward. "We're waiting for the next step," Crofut told the *News Leader* after the board made its decision.

TWO COORDINATED EFFORTS

As directed by the County Commission, county planners are trying to expedite the final phases of the Fruitville Initiative, said Interim County Administrator Thomas Harmer.

The project area should be coming into shape, as the county moves forward with another project. Next week, the County Commission is slated to select one of two proposals from developers wanting to build on the county-owned 42 acres at Fruitville Road and Colburn Road.

At a Nov. 26 workshop, the County Commission will hear more details of the proposals from Benderson Development Co. and Goodsports Enterprises Global LLC.

If the commissioners choose to move ahead with one of the projects, county planners will work with the developer to ensure the plans are coordinated with the Fruitville Initiative process.

"We will then work with a consultant to mirror that [42 acres] into the Fruitville Initiative process," Harmer told the commissioners.

County planners are working to ensure they "connect the time frames of these two projects," Rozansky said.

A NEW CHAPTER

The Tuesday vote to approve the boundary was unanimous.

"We've been working on this for five and a half years," said Commissioner Joe Barbetta, who noted that the 300 acres comprise a rare block of undeveloped land in a visible area, clearing the way for a large opportunity.

"Hopefully we will have quality development and an economic generator," Barbetta said.

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason thanked the property owners for their persistence and for waiting on the county to move ahead with plans.

"This is how you get something accomplished — continually working together," Mason said.

Commissioner Christine Robinson embraced Barbetta's optimism.

"I think this is the moment here where we start a new chapter for this Initiative," Robinson said. "It has been rough going up to this point. This is finally the moment I feel where we are pushing through."

"I can't wait to see what exciting things come out of this," Robinson added.

The commissioner said she was hopeful Fruitville's Special Planning Area becomes as successful as another one in the county, in Nokomis. "I can't help but think of Nokomis when they designated their special planning area," Robinson said just before voting to approve the planning area boundaries. SNL



The countryside well east of Sarasota on Fruitville Road has a number of pastoral scenes. Photo by Rachel Hackney

COUNTY COMMISSION GIVES THE OK TO NUMEROUS SARASOTA 2050 REVISIONS

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Changes to the county's Sarasota 2050 policy took a big step toward becoming reality this week, as the County Commission approved a series of zoning edits, moved forward on comprehensive plan changes and gave the thumbs-up to a privately initiated request to rewrite the rules for a parcel along

anywhere.

Clark Road.

Sarasota 2050 has been a topic of fierce debate since the county began exploring the possibility of altering it in 2011. Commissioners say the land-use plan's detailed regulations are stifling development, while 2050 defenders charge that the board is gutting the plan in an effort to please politically powerful builders. Approved approximately a decade ago, 2050 was intended to encourage the construction of walkable, mixed-use communities in areas that were previously

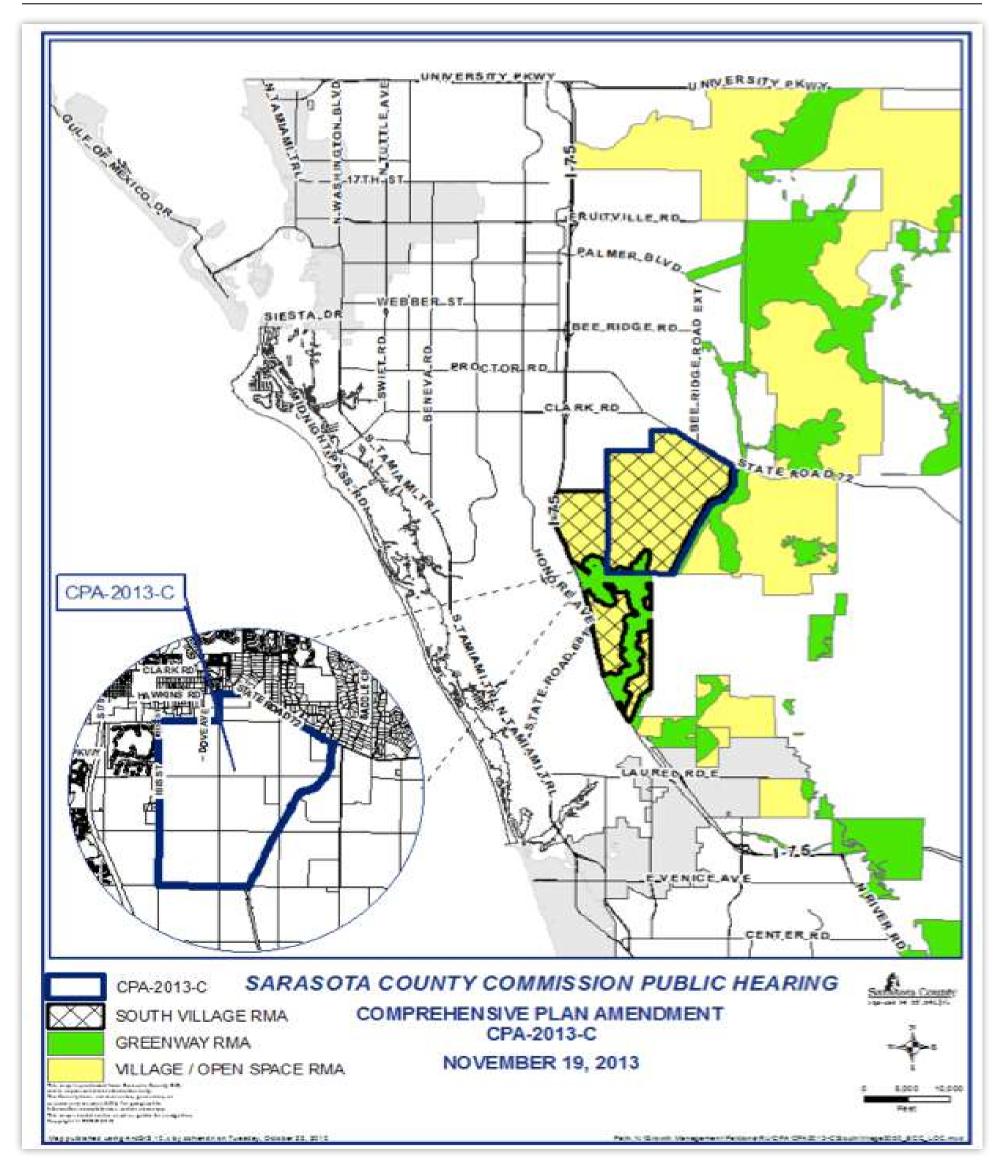
off-limits for dense new neighborhoods, largely east of Interstate 75.

Jim Turner Attorney Williams Parker Harrison Dietz & Getzen

property, I really wonder if it can be done

If a village can't be done on this

On Wednesday, Nov. 20, the commission approved a series of zoning changes



A graphic shows the location of the Clark Road project planned under the aegis of Sarasota 2050. Image courtesy Sarasota County

presented by staff as part of its long-term review of 2050 — among them a reduction in the number of housing types required to be built in neighborhoods and the elimination of a requirement that a new neighborhood's commercial sector be located inside the community. The change in rules opens the doors for developers to build fewer housing types within a new community, and to place commercial properties closer to arterial roads.

Alongtime critic of the decision to rewrite 2050, Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations President Lourdes Ramirez said allowing developers to move the commercial center outward will degrade walkability, a key component of 2050's New Urbanist principles. Commissioners disagreed, pointing to the failure of commercial village centers in planned communities, such as Disney's Celebration here in Florida, as evidence that the New Urbanist layout simply doesn't work.

Commissioner Nora Patterson voted to approve the zoning changes, but she said she wanted to make sure that the language doesn't allow commercial centers to become mere strip malls. Everyone, it seems, wants to avoid creating more Bee Ridge Roads. "I'd love to see language that pushes it in the direction of integrating other than at the front," she added, saying staff should be "beefing up" its language to make sure that happens.

Working into the evening, the commission also approved a timetable for 2050 changes in the county's comprehensive plan, scheduling a series of public meetings on the topic and sending them on to the Planning Commission.

But that's not all. In earlier action, the County Commission approved changes to 2050 affecting 4,638 acres along Clark Road east of the interstate, opening the possibility of 9,334 — rather than 934 — units there.

That proposal, brought by representatives of LT Ranch and 3 H Ranch, called for a change in how density rules are calculated, a reduction in the amount of open space required to

SARASOTA 2050 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AREA (RMA) POLICY REVISITED STAFF REPORT

- d. Village Center Requirements.
 - 4. Village Center: Land Use Mix Requirements. The following table summarizes the mix requirements for a Village Center, as percentages of land area.

Mix: Developed Land	Village Center	
	min (%)	max (%)
Residential	25 <u>15</u>	50 <u>65</u>
Commercial/Retail/Office	20 <u>25</u>	40 75
Office	10	20
Public/Civic	10- <u>5</u>	N/A
Public Space	5	N/A

be set aside and the elimination of the rule that commercial space be centrally located, among other items. County staff largely supported the applicants' requests, with the exception of the density edits. But even in that instance, county Long-Range Planning Manager Allen Parsons said staff's objection was not about the eventual number of units that could be built on the Clark Road properties, but with the formula used to generate that number.

Critics of the proposal argued the changes will lead to suburban sprawl, exactly what 2050 was created to prevent. Ramirez testified that the revision a "makes a mockery of Sarasota 2050," while Sarasota Audubon Society Conservation Chairman Wade Matthews argued that any concessions granted to the LT and 3H developers would automatically be demanded by any other property owners.

Plus, it makes no sense to tweak the plan for this particular piece of land while the county is in the thick of its much broader 2050 review, he said.

But the commission gave the go-ahead, voting 4-1 to approve the changes, with Patterson alone in opposition. Commissioner Christine Robinson said the comprehensive plan is "meant to live and breathe" and that the county needs to be able to make adjustments to it over time. Sounding a common note, Commissioner Charles Hines said 2050 sounds great in theory, but when applied to real-world situations such as the Clark Road properties, it's not "viable."

"If a village can't be done on this property," Williams Parker Harrison Dietz & Getzen attorney Jim Turner said, "I really wonder if it can be done anywhere."





The CRA Extension Study Committee members work at their Nov. 20 meeting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

THE DOWNTOWN SARASOTA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY STUDY COMMITTEE VOTES UNANIMOUSLY TO RECOMMEND A 30-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE DISTRICT AND TO KEEP 1986 AS THE BASE TAX VALUE YEAR

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

It was decision time. For months, the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Area Extension Study Committee has met to ponder, in a systematic manner, the future of a property tax scheme worth perhaps a quarter of a billion dollars into the future. But

Wednesday evening, Nov. 20, was time for judgment.

Way back in 1986, the City and County of Sarasota cut a deal to use a new scheme to put downtown back on its feet. Stores were closing, and malls were said to be stealing the heart of many town centers. The scheme was called TIF — tax-increment financing.

The scheme set the property tax revenue

How can you expect a local elected official to be anything less than political?

Fredd Atkins Former Mayor City of Sarasota level. Any difference in income after that date
— for both city and county property tax collections — would accrue to something called a Community

benchmark at the 1986

Redevelopment Agency. As property values rose, so did the difference in revenue values until the CRA annually apportioned \$6 million or more. But the deal was good for 30 years only.

As the 2016 deadline approached, both the City and County commissions assembled a committee to make recommendations about the future of the CRA and its increasingly valuable TIF scheme.

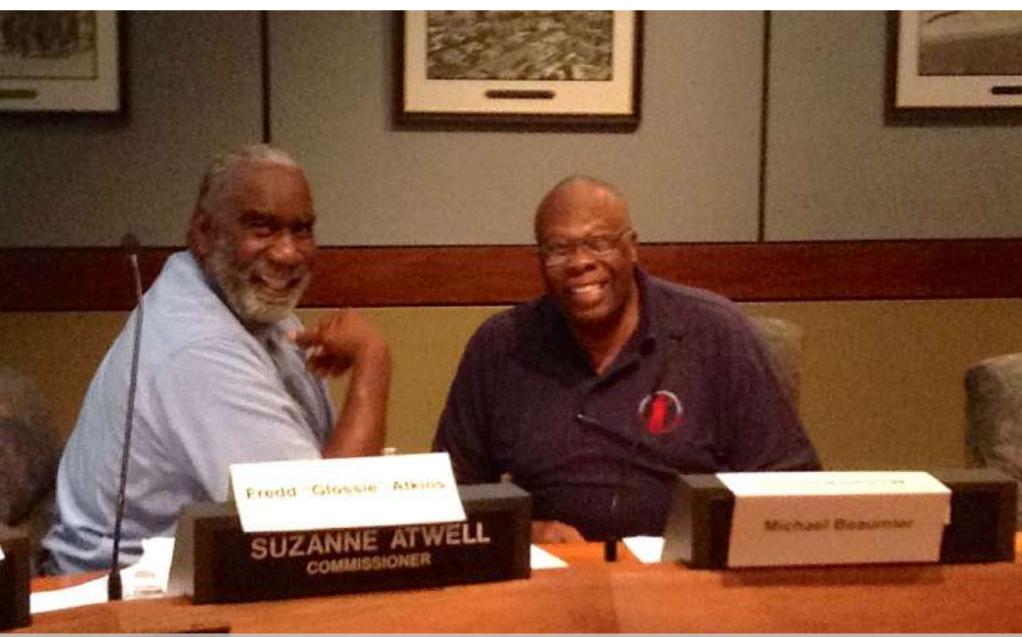
The recommendations will go to both commissions in January. After their deliberation, a new interlocal agreement may be crafted to memorialize the terms of the eventual understanding. However, it is possible the CRA could be allowed to expire if the city or county cannot come to terms.

THE GOVERNANCE QUESTION

In their two-hour meeting on Nov. 20, the committee members made six decisions. Three were unanimous, and three were split.

Today, the CRA is ruled by five Sarasota city commissioners sitting as the CRA governing board. By a 7-1 vote, the CRA Extension Study Committee members recommended a change in that, but the complexion of that change took almost an hour to devise.

The 7-1 vote said the governing board should be a mixture of city and county commissioners and common citizens. Only Chairman Andy Dorr said the City Commission alone should remain in charge.



Former Mayor Fredd Atkins (left) and Vice Mayor Willie Shaw chat after the meeting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

Deciding the how many city and county commissioners, and who would appoint the citizen members proved difficult. While there was general agreement the new governing board should consist of seven members, how would those be parsed? One for each commission and five citizens? Or the other extreme, three from each commission and a lone citizen?

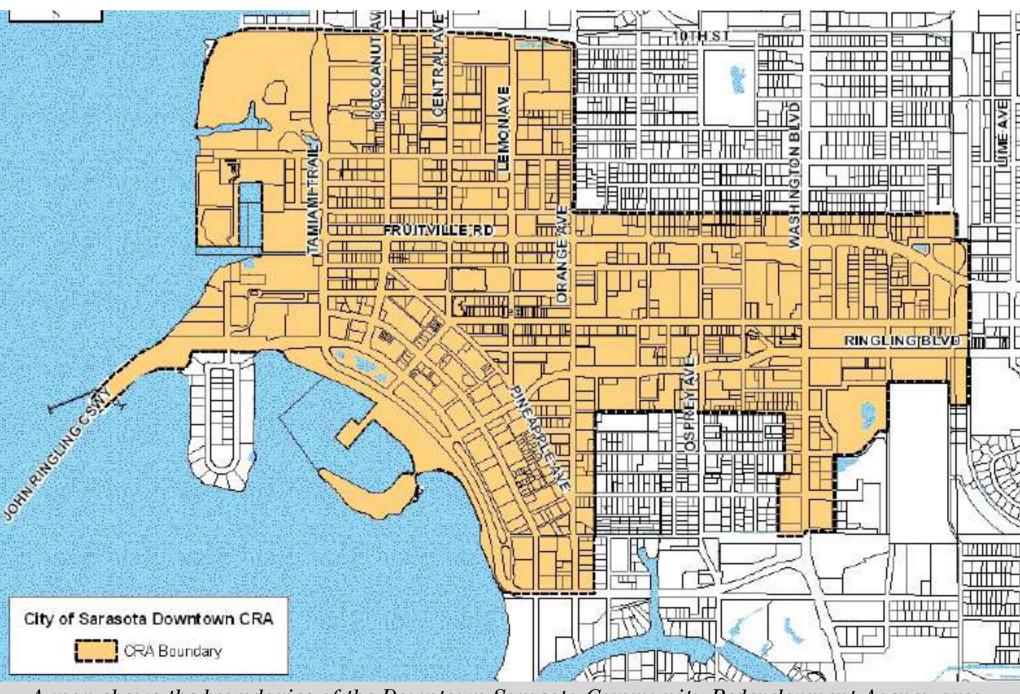
"I don't see how you're going to take politics out of it by adding one or two or three commissioners. How can you expect a local elected official to be anything less than political?" asked Fredd Atkins. He is the most political member of the board, a five-term city commissioner with multiple turns as Sarasota

mayor. In fact he is the only member of the committee who has won elected office.

"If we're trying to do redevelopment without it being political, I do not think we can hit that mark," added Atkins. "Don't masquerade this as being apolitical. That isn't going to happen."

Each suggestion of board composition scheme was dissected. "Could the five citizens have a different agenda and form a supermajority and public officials not be able to block it or stop it?" asked member Ernie DuBose.

A proposal to compose a governing board of two county commissioners, two city



A map shows the boundaries of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency area. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



The CRA was established to rid downtown Sarasota of blight. Photo by Norman Schimmel

commissioners and three citizens was approved 5-3. With that vote, the role of the City Commission in CRA governance went from total (5-0) to 2-5.

"Why does the city have to surrender everything to the county? Who is so sick of the city that they want us to surrender everything?" asked Atkins. "If I was a city commissioner, I wouldn't even consider this mess."

It is possible Atkins' outburst resulted in the modified, subsequent vote to allow the city to appoint all three citizen members of the governing board. By the slimmest margin of the evening, that suggestion passed 4-3. Committee member Bill Russell was attending by telephone, but the line was dead for this and later votes.

DOWNHILL FROM THERE

It was as if the committee had been toiling uphill for 90 minutes. Only one of seven different categories needing decisions had been tackled. But the remainder of the meeting was a sleigh ride downhill.

The next category was "Boundaries." During previous meetings, a variety of other areas were proposed where the CRA/TIF scheme could apply — the Rosemary District, the North Tamiami Trail, the Cultural District and the gap between downtown and Newtown.

By 6-0 vote, with one abstention, the committee members said this issue required significantly more analysis. Any new CRA area requires a study to determine the degree of "slum and blight." Should a new area deserve its own CRA or join an existing one?

Member Casey Coburn moved that "the city and county should undertake to modify the boundaries of the CRA or create multiple CRA districts for areas of the city and possibly the county."

DuBose abstained, asking if this motion ran afoul of County Commission sensitivities about the committee's earlier recommendation of the creation of new CRAs. The previous chairman, David Merrill, was asked to resign when he proposed new CRAs. "Are we threatening losing the possibility of getting this thing extended by going somewhere we were told not to go?" asked DuBose.

Some retroactive gloss was laid on the motion, and the committee moved on. The clock was ticking to adjournment.

Atkins then made the critical motion: "There should be a reset of the CRA for another 30 years." Noting his colleagues were ready to vote and move on, committee member Chris Gallagher said, "I don't want to blow past this moment without a commentary from us. The simple logic is, if the tool is working, why not use it for an extended time?"

The 30-year extension passed unanimously, 7-0.

Member Michael Beaumier then moved to reset the Newtown CRA's base year for tax calculations to 2013, even though the City Commission already has this initiative in motion. But his motion also called for no reset of the downtown's 1986 base year, maintaining the TIF "money-machine" that Chairman Dorr says should produce \$250,000,000 in the next 30 years, all to be spent downtown. Beaumier's motion passed unanimously as well.



Dr. Robert Marbut addresses the audience at the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County on Nov. 15. Photo by Roger Drouin

HOMELESSNESS CONSULTANT ROBERT MARBUT HAS A LIST OF FOUR POSSIBLE LOCATIONS FOR A PERMANENT HOMELESS SHELTER IN SARASOTA COUNTY, A RECOMMENDATION THAT WILL BE PART OF THE PLAN HE PRESENTS NOV. 25

By Roger Drouin

County Editor

If Sarasota builds a homeless facility, about 85 to 91 percent of the area's homeless population will go into the new shelter — which would also serve as a hub for social services ranging from substance abuse and mental health counseling to job training — homeless consultant Dr. Robert Marbut told the League of Women

Voters of Sarasota County at a luncheon Friday, Nov. 15.

Of that group, an estimated 51 percent will graduate from one or

more of the programs and move from living on the street to living in a home.

That is the ultimate goal, said Marbut, who is wrapping up the last of his community meetings and preparing to make presentations of his final report to local elected officials Nov.

25. Marbut has been working on the report since August.

One of the audience members at the League of Women

How you run the building is almost as important as where.

Dr. Robert Marbut Homelessness Consultant Voters luncheon asked Marbut, an expert who has tackled homelessness for three decades, about a key aspect of his anticipated report: Has he found a site for a permanent homeless shelter?

Marbut replied that he has looked at 65 places, and he has narrowed his list down to four or five suitable sites for a potential Sarasota shelter.

In his answer to the next question, he touched on a controversial aspect of the plan to open a center in Sarasota. Marbut calls the facilities "transformational centers." Pinellas Safe Harbor in Clearwater, which he helped open, is a model local government officials have discussed during recent City and County commission meetings.

Both the city and county have set aside \$500,000 towards the construction of a shelter.

Talk about the location for such a Sarasota facility, however, has been a contentious one among city commissioners. The vote to set aside city funding for a shelter was a 3-2 decision. Vice Mayor Willie Shaw has objected to



Wayne Applebee takes the microphone at the League of Women Voters luncheon on Nov. 15. Photo by Roger Drouin

a facility in his district, which encompasses north Sarasota and much of the Rosemary District; that is the area where current social services for the homeless are located.

Commissioner Susan Chapman also voted against the funding. "It looks like a foregone conclusion," Chapman said Sept. 2 about a shelter in the city. "Why should the city bear the burdens for the region's chronic homelessness?"

Marbut's draft report recommends a facility in the city limits. He lists four top sites. He told the audience Friday, "Do you want to put an ER (emergency room) where no one lives? This is an ER for homeless people. You put the ER where the homeless people live."

Marbut also said it is essential to locate the center close to existing social services and facilities, such as those provided by The Salvation Army and in the Rosemary District



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

— as well as the county courthouse and jail, which are located downtown. That would be critical, he pointed out, especially if Sarasota opts for a smaller — and thus less expensive — facility that does not house as many service providers on the campus.

REPORT PRESENTATIONS

A permanent shelter site is expected to be part of Marbut's plan to address homelessness, a problem the consultant says will continue to swell as many are still unemployed in the fallout of the economic recession and the number of veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder increases. Nationally, one-third of the people living on the street are combat veterans, Marbut told the League audience.

In October, a Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness survey found that 1,460 homeless adults live in Sarasota County.

The consultant will present his report on Monday, Nov. 25, at two local government meetings:

- 9 to 11 a.m.: Sarasota County Commission joint meeting with North Port and Venice commissioners at the Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Ave., Venice.
- 2 to 4 p.m.: County Commission joint meeting with the Sarasota City Commission at the County Commission Chambers, 1660 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota.



Homeless people gather outside Selby Library in downtown Sarasota in April. Photo by Norman Schimmel

HOW YOU RUN THE BUILDING ...

Marbut believes opposition to a facility could be alleviated once people learn how the centers he previously helped open are operated.

"How you run the building is almost as important as where," Marbut told League of Women Voters members. The facilities he has helped plan are designed to keep people inside, instead of fostering gatherings on the grounds.

Marbut offered an example from San Antonio, TX, where he lives. Before a shelter was constructed in that city of 1.3 million people, the homeless population took over three downtown parks and there was "pee and poo all over the ground."

"You couldn't even go to the Alamo at night," Marbut pointed out.

Yet, there was still strong opposition to opening a homeless facility. At one public meeting, Marbut offered to take a handful of the most outspoken opponents of the plan on a "field trip" to see another shelter he had helped establish.

"All of them spoke in support after seeing our facility," Marbut said.

Changes are possible, Marbut told the audience Friday, and one overall result is a reduction in expenses. It costs about \$20 a night to house a person in a shelter compared to approximately \$120 to keep such a person in jail overnight.

Since Marbut helped open the center in San Antonio, the city's streets and parks have been clean, he said. Pinellas County saw a 91-percent reduction in its homeless population after the opening of Pinellas Safe Harbor.

Marbut did acknowledge, however, that Sarasota's center would probably look much different than the \$125-million facility in San Antonio.

At the luncheon, Marbut also took the opportunity to introduce Wayne Applebee, the county's point person for homelessness issues, who will be charged with implementing Marbut's plan after the consultant leaves. If Marbut recommends a permanent shelter for the homeless within Sarasota County and community leaders agree to build it, Applebee will be the manager working to make sure the goal is achieved.

Applebee concurred with Marbut's comments Friday: "We only have limited money in this bucket. Our goal is to get them used efficiently and effectively."

City Editor Stan Zimmerman contributed to this report (SNL)



dental associates

A smile happens instantly, its memory lasts a lifetime.

"After a terrible accident I required surgery. Tonya shared with me that Dr. Koval was responsible for her beautiful smile. She gave me hope and direction. I'm so grateful to Dr, Koval. Now I have a smile that I love to share with everyone."

ANOTHER AVENUE FOR HELP



The King Stone Townhome affordable housing complex was dedicated in Sarasota in January. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY COMMISSION WILL HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING ON CHANGES TO ORDINANCES THAT COULD CREATE MORE FUNDING FLEXIBILITY TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS STRATEGIES

By Rachel Brown Hackney Editor

With homelessness expert Dr. Robert Marbut already having provided them a draft of his recommendations for the community, the Sarasota County commissioners on Nov. 20 voted unanimously to advertise a public hearing on two amended ordinances to allow

affordable housing funds to be used for purposes such as job training, which could be associated with a new shelter. (See the related stories in this issue.) The public hearing tentatively has been scheduled for Jan. 28, Leigh Sprimont with the Commission Services office told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

A Nov. 20 memo to the board from county

I'm not sure we've got capital dollars to get anything started right now.

Nora Patterson Commissioner Sarasota County Planning and Development Services staff pointed out, "On previous occasions the Board of County Commissioners has expressed a desire to use the Community Housing Fund to support economic development initiatives." The proposed amendment to that ordinance, the memo continues, "will expand the program to include community and economic development functions."

Since the Community Housing Fund was created in 2007, the memo notes, \$12,181,871 has been allocated from it for affordable housing, while \$8,776,000 has gone to economic development efforts.

A balance of \$2,556,460 remains, the memo says.

At present, as specified in Ordinance No. 2004-103, money reserved from the sale of escheated lots is to be used "for the purposes of infill development and affordable housing," the memo adds. The ordinance refers to such property as "[a]ny lots escheated by law for the non-payment of taxes, which are not dedicated by [the County Commission] for other purposes or are not to be conveyed to the recorded fee simple owner of the lot ..."

Ordinance No. 2007-016 established the Community Housing and Community Development Fund Program. The amendment

would rename the initiative the Housing and Community Development Fund Program and say it is "to promote community and economic development, including the development of quality affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, and local jobs."

Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations, criticized the board during public comments on Nov. 20 for "thinking about raiding the affordable housing fund." Therefore, Commissioner Christine Robinson asked county Planner Mary Beth Humphreys for clarification of the amended language in the escheated lot ordinance. "Is the proposed [change] in any way taking these funds away from housing completely and assigning them to economic development?"

"No, ma'am," Humphreys responded. The board could use the money in whatever way it chose if the amended ordinance were approved, Humphreys added.

"Which is not the way it is currently?" Robinson asked.

"Correct," Humphreys replied.



REFINING THE LANGUAGE

However, Commissioner Nora Patterson told her colleagues, "I have a little bit of a problem with this, only because of a lack of money in general. ... It seems to me [the Community Housing Fund is] about the only source we have [for affordable residences] ... With the [Marbut] initiative on the homeless, [that fund is] a possible source of [money] to try to do something. It's going to be rough to reach into reserves to do it, and I'm not sure there is commission support or public support to try to raise taxes to try to follow the recommendations that will be given."

Then Patterson asked Humphreys for clarification. "Would affordable housing include something like helping with a homeless shelter?"

"That's exactly what the amendments are going to allow," Humphreys told her.

In response to another question from Patterson, Humphreys pointed out that the current language in the escheated lots ordinance does not make it clear the funds can be used for a homeless shelter. Therefore, the planning staff worked with the Office of the County Attorney, Humphreys said, to make certain the revised ordinance would permit such action.

So I'm trying to find a way to keep the door open enough to allow us to use this [fund balance] creatively.

Christine Robinson Commissioner Sarasota County



Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson considers staff comments at a meeting. File photo

Robinson told Patterson, "My first knee-jerk tendency is to agree with you ..." Nonetheless, Robinson continued, she tried to figure out a better way to reword the ordinance to make certain money in the escheated lot fund also could be used to plug a funding hole for a purpose related to the shelter's services, such as job training.

"There is no other encompassing word like 'economic development," Robinson pointed out.

"So I'm trying to find a way to keep the door open enough to allow us to use this [fund balance] creatively," Robinson added, which she felt community members would support.

Patterson said she concurred with Robinson's comments, "though I'm not sure we've got capital dollars to get anything started right now."

Patterson added, "There's no way \$2 million is going to embrace a job program for the homeless ..."

Patterson continued to press for new wording in the amendment to make the board's intent clearer.

Vice Chairman Charles Hines suggested the commission go ahead and approve the advertisement of the public hearing. "I don't think we need to have the debate today [on the exact language]," he told his colleagues.

At that point, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh explained the current ordinance does not make it clear the funds can be used for economic development. "I think that language needs to find its way into the amendment," he added. "I think it would be advisable to have an ordinance that's consistent with past board policy."

Still, if the amendment to the ordinance were advertised as written, DeMarsh continued, the language could be tweaked during the public hearing process.

Robinson suggested modifying the wording to include "placing a priority on homelessness and job program efforts ..."

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason agreed with the proposal.

Then Patterson moved to change the proposed amended ordinance on escheated lots — No. 2004-103 — to reflect Robinson's suggestion. Mason seconded the motion.

When Patterson asked DeMarsh whether the language in the other proposed amended ordinance, No. 2007-016, should be modified as well, DeMarsh said that was not necessary.



County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh answers a board question. File photo

One section of that revised ordinance prepared by staff already says "Funding or construction of emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and appropriate services for people who are homeless" are among the eligible activities and projects of the program.

Patterson amended her motion to reflect the escheated lot ordinance only. Mason agreed to the change.

Then the board unanimously approved the advertisement of that amended ordinance.

Next, Robinson made the motion to approve the amended language staff had proposed for Ordinance No. 2007-016. With no further discussion, that motion also won unanimous support.



Maj. Ethan and Sue Frizzell are welcomed to Sarasota during a Salvation Army Advisory Board meeting. Image courtesy of The Salvation Army of Sarasota Facebook page

A COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP TALKS OF BREAKING RESIDENTS FROM ACTS OF 'HELP' THAT DO NOT REALLY ASSIST THE HOMELESS AS WELL AS THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE RESIDENCES

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

As homelessness consultant Dr. Robert Marbut was putting the finishing touches on his draft report, a long-standing community focus group on homelessness began pulling

the threads together to push it forward.

Even without knowing the specifics of the report, the members of the Focus Group on the Homeless sensed community habits were going to have to be broken.

Can you afford to live in this community? If you are a maid with three kids and a single mom, you need to ask if you can afford to live here.

Bryan Pope The Salvation Army Sarasota

The Sarasota Salvation Army's commander, Maj. Ethan Frizzell, said people should stop giving out stuff, for example. "Compassion drives by. Love walks in," he pointed out. "I'm

> tired of carrying stuff off the corner."

> His Salvation Army colleague Bryan Pope added, "Stop giving out dollars and doughnuts." This advice reinforces Marbut's contention that "enabling" homeless

people to survive on the street does nothing to help them get off the street.

The focus group is unique in that its monthly meetings are always attended by at least one person who describes himself as homeless. Often it is more than one. The remainder of the attendees are people who are actively involved in hands-on activities related to homelessness.

One theme running through the Nov. 19 meeting in a conference room at Sarasota City Hall was the cost of housing. Pope asked a blunt question of the group: "Can you afford to live in this community? If you are a maid with three kids and a single mom, you need to ask if you can afford to live here."

Several participants who knew the math said people holding poorly paid jobs often will spend half or even two-thirds of their income on housing in the city. And they are only one missed paycheck from being homeless.

"Any town with an economy of wealthy people, you'll find the people who work the service economy live 50, 60 miles away to work at \$9-per-hour jobs," noted Pope.

While there have been years of appeals for community leaders to build affordable housing in Sarasota, few units actually have been constructed. In the meantime, foreclosures have taken many residential properties off the market. Bankers like to say they are not in the property management business, and in reality, many of the foreclosed properties have seen only minimal maintenance or repairs.

Investors have swooped in with cash over the past 18 months to snap up foreclosed properties at depressed prices, undertaken quick fix-ups and put the houses on the rental market for a substantial return on their investments.



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

"You need a business plan that shows a return," said Pope, referring to affordable housing initiatives. "If you can't find a way to make a reasonable profit, the investor is not going to risk their money."

Marbut's plan calls for giving the homeless and vagrants the ability to move from a free shelter to transitional housing and then full independence. But that will require real bricks-and-mortar solutions.

"The Community Foundation [of Sarasota County] has donated \$250,000 to work with Resurrection House to put people up. But this is not a systems approach," added Frizzell. "It's helping one individual at a time."

Marbut's draft plan meshes somewhat with these observations from the front lines of homelessness providers. "Until we have housing for people when they come out of transitional housing, we are wasting our time," said one focus group participant. "We need somebody to come to the table and identify funding."

Editor's note: See the related stories in this issue. SNL



The land proposed for the North County Sports Complex is located at the northwest corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Tuttle Avenue. The county is moving ahead with the \$2 million deal. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES PURCHASE OF 115 ACRES, WITH A CONTINGENCY

By Roger Drouin

County Editor

A deal to purchase 115 acres of Newtown land for a North County Sports Complex hit a small roadblock — or a fence, to be accurate — on Nov. 19.

The commissioners held a lengthy discussion during their regular meeting Tuesday after learning that several adjacent property owners had illegally put up fences encroaching on the par-

cel owned by Dolomite Utilities Corp.

They said they had hoped that day to finalize a deal to purchase the former wastewater treatment plant site for \$2 million. The plan is to develop the 115 acres into a long discussed North County Sports Complex that would become the third largest recreational facility in the county.

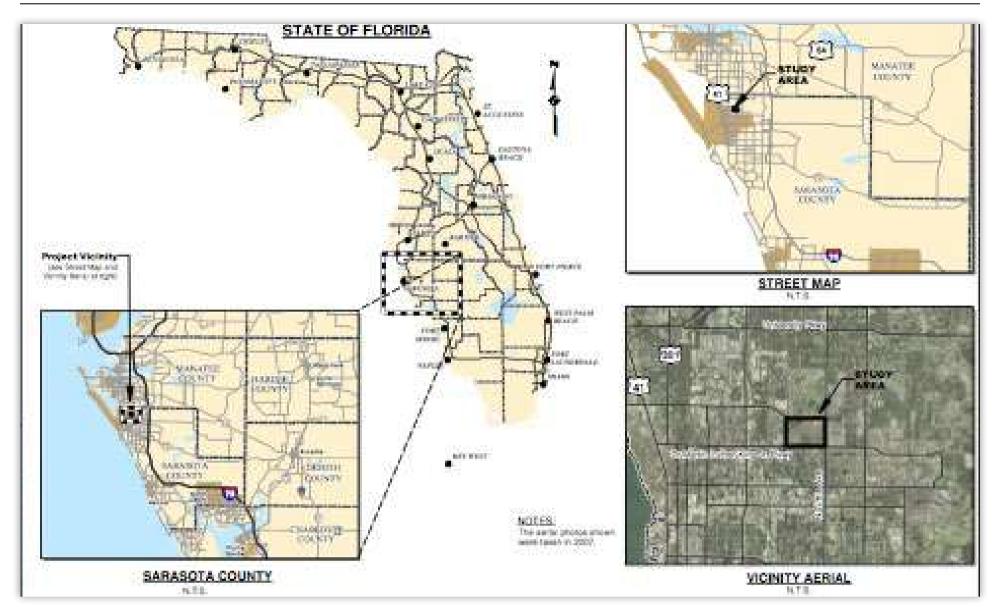
They finally voted unanimously to move forward with the purchase — with a contingency: Dolomite Corp. must handle the

removal of the "makeshift" fences or cover the cost of the county's doing so after the deal is closed.

Along the perimeter of the Dolomite

I don't want to buy a lawsuit here.

Charles Hines Vice Chairman County Commission





Maps show an aerial view of Kensington Park and detail about its location in Sarasota County. Image courtesy Sarasota County

property, the fences block off several strips of land, ranging in depth from 3 to 16 feet. According to county staff, about 1,500 to 1,600 feet of fencing has to be removed.

The Dolomite parcel is located at the north-west corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Tuttle Avenue.

Commission Vice Chairman Charles Hines voiced concern after hearing about the encroachments. The fences do not significantly devalue the property, Hines said. However, they could be the crux of a complicated situation if county staff had to figure out how to get the four owners to take down the fences if those owners were not agreeable to the prospect of such action.

"I don't want to buy a lawsuit here," Hines added.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta agreed, questioning how the hiccup had shown up this far along in work on an agreement that has to be approved by next week.

Although Barbetta has expressed reservations about the purchase of the Dolomite utility system, he has voiced support of the parcel purchase.

"I want to buy this property real bad, but we have to clear up this defect," Barbetta pointed out.

He was worried about the type of deed transaction that would hold the county responsible for clearing up the encroachments, he added.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said trying to get the owners to take down the fences could trigger "a political problem."

Chairwoman Carolyn Mason suggested county staff try working with the Newtown Estates Neighborhood Association president



Vice Chairman Charles Hines listens to a speaker during a regular meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

to arrange a meeting with the property owners adjacent to the 115 acres, in an attempt to get them to remove the fences. "I think that would work," Mason said.

John Jenkins, special counsel for the county, told the board the fences are a minor issue he believes staff can handle.

"My suggestion to you is to try to keep this in perspective," Jenkins said. "We have these encroachments, a couple of fences that run along four lots."

Jenkins recommended the county move ahead with the acquisition and direct its attorneys to work with Dolomite on an agreement for removing the fences — at Dolomite's cost.

"These are details we work with buyers and sellers on all the time," Jenkins pointed out. "That's what we do on your behalf. We will get this worked out."

Barbetta made the motion that the County Commission proceed with the acquisition of the 115 acres, contingent on Dolomite removing the fences, or setting aside funds for the county to do so. SNL



Lourdes Ramirez addresses the County Commission during an April meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A COUNTY COMMISSION EXCHANGE WITH A PUBLIC SPEAKER LEADS TO HARSH WORDS

By Rachel Brown Hackney Editor

Occasionally, when people address the Sarasota County Commission during the "Open to the Public" segments of meetings,

board members will ask questions to clarify points when they feel staff follow-up is needed.

An exchange during the morning "Open to the Public" segment of the commission's regular session on Nov. 20 in Sarasota led one speaker to file the organizations that work to protect free speech gs, and another person to chastise the board.

In the morning

a complaint that afternoon with two national

You are correct that the conversations are not always good with us, that we have people coming after us many times that are wrong. ... It's also our obligation to let folks know what the actual facts are.

Christine Robinson Commissioner Sarasota County In the morning session, Lourdes Ramirez, president of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA), stepped to the podium to voice displeasure with county economic development incentives, referencing an

article in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* about a business that had received such county assistance and had failed to fulfill its obligations.

(Ramirez is also a candidate for County Commission.)

She put the story in the context of action the County Commission was expected to take later in the day regarding a proposal to modify uses of a fund set aside for affordable housing. (See the related story in this issue.)

Then Ramirez mentioned a Charlotte County company that also had received a county economic incentive grant but "did not provide new jobs ..."

She added, "Your choices have not been good."

After Ramirez concluded her statement, Commissioner Christine Robinson asked the name of the Charlotte County company to which Ramirez had alluded. It was Enzymedica Inc., Ramirez responded.

Robinson said she believed the County Commission provided an economic incentive grant to the business for new job creation only.

"I want to see proof of that," Ramirez retorted.

"Have you checked the contract for that," Robinson asked, "or are you just saying that?"

Ramirez admitted she had not read the contract, adding, "The contract could be one thing. What is reality?"

"I will check for you," Robinson said.



Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson consider material during a budget workshop. File photo

BCC APPROVED 1/24/12

FINANCIAL INCENTIVE AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is entered into this 2 day of 2012, by and between Sarasota County Florida, a political subdivision of the State of Florida (the "County") whose mailing address is 1660 Ringling Boulevard, Sarasota, Florida 34236 and Enzymedica, Inc. ("Enzymedica"), a Florida for-profit corporation, whose mailing address is 752 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte, Florida 33953.

WITNESSETH

WHEREAS, Section 125.045, Florida Statutes, authorizes the governing body of a county to expend public funds to attract and retain business enterprises, including making grants to private enterprises for the expansion of businesses existing in the community or the attraction of new businesses to the community, and finds that the use of public funds toward the achievement of such economic development goals constitutes a public purpose; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners (the "Board") recognizes that it is a function of local government to promote economic development within its jurisdiction by providing financial incentives to encourage new businesses to relocate within its jurisdiction and existing businesses to expand or to provide other unique economic development opportunities that will benefit the entire community; and

WHEREAS, the Board has directed that certain revenues be set aside for use as economic development incentives to assist businesses in relocating to Sarasota County or expanding a business located in Sarasota County as well as to encourage other diverse economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Enzymedica manufactures and sells therapeutic enzyme supplements that address digestion, food allergies and intolerances, cardiovascular, immune function, inflammation, respiratory support, blood sugar balance, bone health, children's health, and energy issues; and.

WHEREAS, Enzymedica represents that it presently employs 47 full-time employees at its existing facility located in a neighboring county with an average annual wage of Forty-Six Thousand, Five Hundred Fifteen Dollars (\$46,515.00) and in order to meet existing demand and new growth plans, has determined that must move its operations to a larger facility; and

A short while later, Robinson told her colleagues, "I want to derail something before it gets off-track, if I may."

She had asked staff to research the Enzymedica matter, she continued. "I have the actual contract in front of me; you all have it," she added. That contract specifically stated the grant was for the creation of 47 fulltime positions that would be new in Sarasota County, Robinson explained.

The company was "busting at the seams"

in Charlotte County, she continued, so it was looking to move to another location in Florida, and it even researched a site in Wisconsin. she believed, when Sarasota County offered the incentive funds.

"So I want to make sure the conversations are based upon facts before we disparage a

local company," Robinson added.

"Thank you very much," Chairwoman Carolyn Mason responded.

the truth.

Then Commissioner Nora Patterson reminded her colleagues, "There was a period of time, when these incentives were first created, when we didn't do sufficient due diligence. ... But that is not the way it is today."

"That's a great point to make, Commissioner Patterson," Robinson told her. Robinson added that, in the beginning of 2012, she had

discussions with Chamber of Commerce members, realtors and the Argus Foundation to seek help in reforming the economic incentive grant program because of the weaknesses identified in it.

"Unfortunately, the discussion of how much [the program] improved doesn't make the newspapers," Robinson pointed out.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta expressed the view that when people make public comments during the board's meetings, they should "tell

the truth."

Vice

I am here to address the personal attack that was made this morning as well as the violation of free speech that I witnessed. It is disingenuous for this County Commission to call a citizen a liar, especially when it comes from a commission that doesn't know how to tell

Lourdes Ramirez President Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Ássociations

Charles Hines added that speakers should make it clear when they are voicing opinions instead of facts. He continued, "Part of the procedure of 'Open to the Public' is that you're committing to stand up there and follow the rules that are on the back of the speaker card."

Chairman

Hines was referring to the card each person is asked to fill out, supplying name, address and phone number as well as the topic the person wishes to discuss. The card also calls for the person to observe civil decorum and requests a signature.

"We're not just getting your name and address," Hines pointed out. "You're committing to follow those rules ..."

Hines added that, on occasion, "This commission takes an extra moment in time to explain the rules and the process ... so people don't just get up and make, as Commissioner Robinson used the term, 'hearsay' ..."

LATER IN THE DAY

Ramirez returned to the podium during the public comments portion of the afternoon session. She made a point of telling the board she had not signed a speaker's card "because it is not required for *open to the public*."

She continued, "I am here to address the personal attack that was made this morning as well as the violation of free speech that I witnessed. It is disingenuous for this County Commission to call a citizen a liar, especially when it comes from a commission that doesn't know how to tell the truth."



Vice Chairman Charles Hines studies a slide during a PowerPoint presentation. File photo

- 3: Opportunity to be Heard. Persons desiring to address the Board must first fill out a Request to Speak card and turn it in to the Clerk to the Board. County employees providing information on Consent or Discussion Section items as part of their official duties are not required to complete a Request to Speak card. Upon recognition and introduction by the Chair, the person may speak. Comments made during a public hearing must be under oath or affirmation and limited to the topic of the public hearing. Any topic may be addressed at Open to the Public. In compliance with Section 286.0114, Florida Statutes, to ensure that everyone has a fair opportunity to participate, the following policies are in effect:
- (a) After being recognized, the person shall:
 - step up to the speaker's rostrum and state his/her name;
 - limit comments to three minutes for Open to the Public and five minutes for public hearings (unless modified by consensus of the Board);
 - address all remarks to the Board as a body, and not a member thereof;
 - make comments and present documents to the Board and the Clerk to the Board;
 - · make comments concise and to the point;
 - submit into the record by providing to the Clerk to the Board any data or evidence for the Board to consider.
- (b) No person may speak more than once on the same subject at the same meeting unless granted permission by the Board.

Ramirez went on, "I notice that there's also been a pattern where commissioners grill citizens on their comments." She likened the situation to "intimidation tactics" she said board members had used on county employees.

"It does not matter whether you believe a statement a citizen makes is factual, since citizens like me believe what we're saying is factual," Ramirez added. "Just because you're government officials, that does not mean what you say is right and the public is automatically wrong. ... It is an attack on free speech when you try to control how a citizen makes his comments."

She also told the board that, according to the county charter, a person is required to sign the oath on the speaker's card only if the person is going to make remarks during a public hearing. "It says it right there on the front of the card," she pointed out.

Then she read one of the provisions on the card. "All public comments should avoid attacks, abusive language or redundancy." Ramirez asked, "Who defines that," noting that

if the board members do, "Are you restricting a person's free speech?"

She added that after the morning exchange with Robinson, she filed a complaint online. Ramirez told *The Sarasota News Leader* she called the First Amendment Foundation, but the person with whom she spoke recommended she contact the American Civil Liberties Union. She did so, she wrote in an email, but "there is no guarantee anything will be done."

Cathy Antunes, vice president of CONA, stood at the podium moments later. "As public officials," she told the commissioners, "it's unreasonable to expect that everybody is going to agree with you or be even nice to you. ... But that is part of the job. It's concerning to hear comments about disparaging the truthfulness of citizens. That's not the first time that's happened. It's very discouraging to hear comments suggesting that this commission has a role in controlling what is being said by the public ..."

Antunes added, "It seems to me that an atmosphere of intimidation is inconsistent with your role as public servants."



Cathy Antunes makes public comments at a County Commission meeting this fall. Photo by Norman Schimmel

BOARD REMARKS

After the public comments segment concluded, Robinson reiterated that, during the morning session, she felt it was important to investigate Ramirez's statement about Enzymedica. "It turned out what was said from the podium was not true. ... It is a responsibility that we do look into things. I don't regret the fact that I ask questions ... and it should be the role of the commission that when there are improprieties brought up," the board acts on them.

Robinson also addressed Antunes. "You are correct that the conversations are not always good with us, that we have people coming after us many times that are wrong. ... It's also our obligation to let folks know what the actual facts are."

Robinson further pointed out that she was the one — about a year and a half ago — who asked that public comments be allowed at the beginning of the board meetings, not just in the afternoon sessions, to allow more time for citizen participation.

Referring to the morning incident, Barbetta said, "I would encourage anybody who's here or listening to this ... just go back and look at the [video]. The tape speaks for itself. It was a civil discussion. It was a factual discussion."

Then Hines thanked Ramirez for pointing out the difference between general public comments and those offered during a public hearing. As for his comments that morning, he added that if a commissioner felt the facts were different from those a speaker provided, "and didn't say anything or investigate, then it almost would be tacit on our part to say that fact was accurate. ... I apologize if my statements were taken for anything other than that."

Manuel R. Chepote, LUTCF
Chepote Insurance Inc.
1300 Main Street • Sarasota, Florida
(941) 366-0100
Serving Sarasota & Manatee Counties

Auto • Home • Life
Renters • Motorcycles
Flood • Business • Annuities
Financial Services





agents.allstate.com/manuel-r-chepote-sarasota-fl.html



Valerie Wojciechowicz/Contributed photo

WORLD AIDS DAY TO BE OBSERVED BY COMMUNITY ON DEC. 1

The Gulf Coast Affirming Interfaith Network (GAIN) will sponsor the annual World AIDS Day service in Sarasota County at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 1, at the Church of the Trinity Metropolitan Community Church, located at 7225 Lockwood Ridge Road in Sarasota, GAIN has announced.

The featured speaker will be Valerie Wojciechowicz, creator of the Living Positive Workshops, who has been providing HIV/AIDS education to middle and high school students in Sarasota and Manatee counties for 11 years, a news release says. A guest speaker at national conferences and training sessions, she has been honored for her work by Women of Strength and Manatee Red Ribbon, the release notes, and she has been featured on National Public Radio. A graduate

of The White House Project, Wojciechowicz serves on the HIV/AIDS Advisory Board of the Florida Statewide Consumer Advisory Group and on the board of directors of Trinity Charities, the release adds.

The guest soloist for the event will be Susie Brenner, a Sarasota singer-songwriter. Her most recent CD, *And So It Goes*, is her sixth, the release continues. "She and her partner were the first to obtain their marriage license following the Iowa decision to legalize gay marriage" in 2009, the release notes.

Additionally, Diversity: The Voices of Sarasota will be offering musical selections, along with The Interfaith Chorus.

AIDS quilts will be on display and a social hour with refreshments will follow the service.

The World Aids Day service is free and open to the public.

GAIN is a diverse coalition of congregations and organizations that affirms "the inherent dignity and worth of all people," including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, the release points out.

World AIDS Day is held annually in early December; it is "an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died," the release says. World AIDS Day, established in 1988, was the first global health observance, the release notes.

An estimated 34 million people around the world have HIV, the release says. More than 25 million people died between 1981 and 2007 as a result of contracting the virus, "making [AIDS] one of the most destructive pandemics in history," the release concludes.



The White House 'wears' a red ribbon in recognition of World AIDS Day in 2007. Photo by dbking via Wikimedia Commons

THANKSGIVING BENEFIT PLANNED FOR THE HOMELESS

On Wednesday, Nov. 27, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Sarasota Ministerial Association will host a free Thanksgiving turkey luncheon and a comedy, *Thanksgiving at the Circus* by Kathryn Chesley, to benefit the homeless.

The play will feature Sarasota County Public Defender Larry Eger, County Commissioner Joe Barbetta and City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo as the clowns Zip, Zap and Zop, a news release notes. Others featured in the play will be Sarasota County Fire Chief Mike Tobias as Fred the Fire Eater, School Board Chairwoman Jane Goodwin, School Board member Caroline Zucker, Downtown Improvement District Chairman Ernie Ritz, Downtown Sarasota Association member John Harshman, County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason, NASCP President Trevor Harvey, Westcoast Black

Theatre Troupe CEO Christine Jennings, Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce President Steve Queior and past Sarasota Mayor Lou Ann Palmer, the release adds.

A freewill offering will be taken up to benefit The Salvation Army's Thanksgiving meal initiative. Homeless residents of Sarasota will be special guests, the release continues.

The event will be held in St. Martha's Catholic Church Circus Hall, located at 200 Orange Ave. (the intersection of Orange Avenue and Fruitville Road) in Sarasota. A large parking lot is on the north side of the building, the release notes.

No reservations are needed. For further information, call chaplain Tom Pfaff of the Sarasota Ministerial Association at 724-5018.



Everyone is Invited To

12th Annual



Wednesday

Free Luncheon Benefit with a Comedy Play
by Kathryn Chesley

SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY ASKS PUBLIC FOR SUPPORT

Sarasota Audubon is reaching out to the public for help in reaching its \$75,000 Matching Challenge goal for the Gift of Nature Campaign.

The chapter needs only a few thousand dollars more to reach its goal, a news release says, "but the Challenge closes at the end of the month. With only two weeks left, Sarasota Audubon is hoping county residents will want to get their dollars matched. Every dollar up to \$75,000 will be doubled," the release points out.

The purpose of the Matching Challenge is to help the organization move closer to its goal of building a Visitor and Nature Center at the Celery Fields, the release adds. "The environmental education center is envisioned to be a destination for eco-tourists and residents. It will complement the local Audubon chapter's existing programs at the Celery Fields, such as the popular Bird Naturalist program.

"Gifts of all sizes are welcome," said Jeanne Dubi, president of Sarasota Audubon, in the release.

To support the Gift of Nature Campaign, visit sarasotaaudubon.org and click on the donate button or call Jeanne Dubi at 724-1709.



An observation deck at the Celery Fields allows visitors to observe a wide variety of birds in the surrounding marsh. File photo

NEW BOATING SPEED ZONE APPROVED FOR MOORING FIELD

At the request of the Sarasota City Commission, the Sarasota County Commission on Tuesday, Nov. 19, unanimously approved the creation of a new slow speed zone for boats within the city's Bayfront Mooring Field.

According to the revised ordinance the commissioners voted on, "A minimum of four 'Slow Speed Minimum Wake' signs and/or buoys [will] be posted around the perimeter of the Bayfront Mooring Field to control traffic within the mooring field."

At staff's recommendation, the County Commission did not act on a city request for a second slow speed zone, in the channel alongside Golden Gate Point approaching Marina Jack. A staff memo explained that that zone did not appear to meet state criteria, "as there is no substantial competent evidence that a public safety issue exists."

The memo pointed out, "Unlike manatee protection speed zones that are set by state rule, boating safety speed zones are adopted at the local level and then considered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission [FWC]."

Laird Wreford, the county's coastal resources manager, told the County Commission that if it approved the amended ordinance, the document would be submitted to the FWC, which would review it for compliance with state criteria for speed zones. If the FWC finds it does, he continued, the zones can be posted and the speeds enforced by marine patrol agencies.

If the county receives state approval for the zones, the staff memo added, funding for the initial installation of the signs and their maintenance would be covered by funds from the West Coast Inland Navigation District.

Rachel Brown Hackney



The City of Sarasota's mooring field is south of O'Leary's Tiki Bar and Grill in Bayfront Park off U.S. 41 in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

SBEP BAY GUARDIANS WIN SEA PRESERVATION AWARD

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) Bay Guardians were honored last week with the annual Sea Preservation Award from Keep Sarasota County Beautiful, the SBEP has announced.

The award was presented at a dinner held Nov. 13 at the Venice Community Center. (See the related item in *Siesta Seen* this week.)

"The Bay Guardians is the area's largest and most active volunteer program focused on Sarasota Bay," a news release says. The program is managed by SBEP in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. In 2013, the Bay Guardians completed volunteer projects at Jiggs Landing and Perico Preserve in Manatee County and North Water Tower Park and Bay Walk Creek in Sarasota County, the release notes.

Upcoming 2014 Bay Guardian volunteer projects include an Air Potato Vine removal at Arlington Park on Jan. 25, a native planting along the Braden River at Jiggs Landing on Feb. 8, a rain garden planting project at New College of Florida on March 15 and a joint volunteer outing with Tampa Bay Estuary Program to plant native species at Perico Preserve on April 12. "All of the projects take place in the morning followed by a picnic lunch provided by SBEP," the release notes.

Each Bay Guardians family-friendly outing features environmental education, the release adds. Local school, Scout and church groups interested in volunteering may contact Stephanie Hames at info@sarasotabay.org.

ENROLLMENT UNDER WAY FOR SARASOTA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Open enrollment for Sarasota Virtual School began Nov. 19 for the second semester of the current 2013-14 school year, the Sarasota County Schools has announced. The period will close at 4 p.m., Friday, Dec. 13.

The semester will start Monday, Jan. 13, a news release says.

Sarasota Virtual School is a district public school that provides a full-time online learning option for students in grades K-12. "Students in kindergarten through fifth grade may enroll in the district's full-time virtual program regardless of where they were previously enrolled in school," the release adds. Students in grades 6-12 must have been enrolled full-time in a Florida public school (traditional, charter or alternative) in the previous year to be eligible for enrollment in Sarasota Virtual School.

Sarasota Virtual School is an interactive learning environment, created through technology, in which the student and teacher are separated by time, space or both, the release notes. "Students access lessons and assignments and receive assessments via the Internet. Using technology, teachers communicate with students and parents in many different ways. The school meets all Florida public school standards and requirements," the release points out. Students completing graduation requirements will be awarded high school diplomas.

The Sarasota County School District contracts with three outside virtual instruction providers approved by the School Board to serve Sarasota Virtual School. K12 Florida offers online learning services for students

in grades K-12; Florida Virtual School serves students in grades 9-12; and Edgenuity provides virtual instruction to students enrolled in grades 6-12.

Middle school students may choose either K12 Florida or Edgenuity, the release notes; high school students have the option of using any of the three virtual instruction providers to meet their specific needs.

The school uses a state-approved curriculum with instructional materials that may include textbooks and a variety of printed materials. Computers may be provided at no charge to eligible students who meet family income requirements, the release points out. "Instructors are certified highly qualified teachers, as defined by the federal No Child Left Behind law," it adds.

Sarasota Virtual School is graded, just as all schools in Florida receive a grade each year, the release says. Student attendance is monitored based on online activity, completion of material and successful assessment scores. Textbooks and traditional instructional materials are used, but much of the content is delivered via the providers' websites, www.k12.com/flvp (K12 Florida), www.flvsft.com (Florida Virtual School) and www.edgenuity.com (Edgenuity).

Parents of eligible students who are interested in this option must schedule an appointment with the Sarasota Virtual School administrator to discuss their student's needs, the release notes. The Sarasota Virtual School office may be reached at 927-9000, Ext. 32289, or via email at SVS@sarasota.k12.fl.us.

SARASOTA COUNTY AWARDED \$400,000 SAFE HAVENS GRANT

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has approved the Sarasota County Government application for funding the community Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program in the amount of \$400,000 over a three-year period, the county has announced.

"The Child Protection Center Inc., the 12th Judicial Circuit Court and the Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC) will join Sarasota County Government to form a community collaboration to keep children and adult victims safe through supervised visitations and exchanges with families who have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, child abuse and stalking," a news release says.

"This opportunity will allow us to view the problems through a diverse lens, address existing systems and improve responses while creating a partnership and coordination among community entities in order to ensure continuity of services to protect victims of domestic violence," said Doug Staley, executive director of the Child Protection Center, in the release.

"Sarasota County Government will serve as the coordinator for fiscal and programmatic aspects of the project, ensuring compliance with statutory and mandatory requirements," the release continues. Child Protection Center's Children and Families Supervised Visitation Program will handle the direct supervised visitation service and day-to-day operations.

The 12th Judicial Court will critically review, revise and establish "practices to protect the adult victims and children of domestic violence," the release adds. SPARCC will provide training designed to teach people how to handle domestic violence issues, sexual assault, child abuse, dating violence and stalking, the release points out. Additionally, "[a] victim advocate will give support to victims of domestic violence and provide referrals to other agencies."

"We are excited about the opportunity to utilize the Safe Havens model and formalize a clear community response to domestic violence," said Sheila Miller, program director for the Child Protection Center's Children and Family Supervised Visitation Program, in the release. "Sarasota County will have a collaborative force in fighting domestic violence, instead of four individual agencies striving to address a complex, community issue."

SPARCC CEO and President Olivia Thomas added in the release, "SPARCC is looking forward to working with our community partners to implement best practices in supervised visitation cases where the safety of primary and secondary victims of domestic violence is at the forefront."

SCHOOL BOARD RE-ELECTS JANE GOODWIN AS CHAIRWOMAN

The School Board of Sarasota County has re-elected Jane Goodwin as chairwoman for an additional one-year term, the school district has announced.

Goodwin has served as chairwoman since November 2012. Chairmanship of the board rotates each November among the five members, who have the option of re-electing a chair for another term, a news release notes.

Frank Kovach was elected vice chairman.

The decisions were made during the School Board's annual reorganization meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 19, held before the regular twice-monthly meeting.

School Board member Shirley Brown nominated Goodwin to serve a second term as chairwoman, noting that continuity of leadership will be beneficial as the special election for the renewal of the 1 mill school referendum approaches in March, the news release notes. (See the related story in this issue.)

"We are so fortunate to live in a county with excellent public schools," said Goodwin in the release. "It is my pleasure to serve as School Board chairwoman for an additional year."

Goodwin was elected to the School Board in August 2010 and began serving in November of that year. She began her professional career as a high school teacher, but she spent more than 20 years as a marketing representative for IBM, specializing in serving K-12 and postsecondary educational institutions, the release notes. After moving to Venice in 1998, she joined the Sarasota Family YMCA as the director of marketing and community relations. Goodwin was executive vice president of the Sarasota Home Builders Association in 2008-09, the release adds.

She was active in Citizens for Better Schools (CBS) in 2002 and 2006, when that organization spearheaded successful campaigns for referenda on the additional 1 mill property tax for schools, the release points out. She also chaired CBS in 2010, when 66 percent of voters casting ballots approved the continuation of the levy, the release says.

One of her two grandchildren attends Gulf Gate Elementary School; the other is at Sarasota Middle School, the release notes.

Kovach has been a School Board member since November 2000.



Jane Goodwin/Contributed photo



SARASOTA POLICE K9 TEAM WINS TOP HONORS DURING SEMINAR

The Sarasota Police Department K-9 Unit has announced that Officer Sean Gleason and his partner, Hixon, were voted Top K-9 Team for both the Explosives Division and Narcotics Division out of 100 teams from around the country during the 16th Annual Bomb and Drug Detection seminar in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The event was put on by Southern Coast K-9, a news release says. Gleason and three other Sarasota Police Department K-9 teams attended the seminar Nov. 1-14. The seminar included classroom instruction, field exercises and certifications for proper handling

of K9s, hands-on detection work, K9 first aid classes, and instruction in search patterns, record-keeping and practical scenarios, the release adds.

Officers and their K9 partners also attended field training exercises in storage units, warehouses, vehicles, boats, an airport and a hotel, the release notes.

Sgt. Mick McHale of the K-9 Unit said in the release, "I'm proud of Officer Gleason's dedication to the program and his contribution as a trainer to the unit. The award is something that is well earned and well deserved."



Officer Sean Gleason and Hixon celebrate their recognition during the 16th Annual Bomb and Drug Detection seminar in Daytona Beach. Contributed photo



Inset: David Lawrence/Contributed photo. Image courtey of morguefile.com

LOCAL PROLIFIC OFFENDERS SENTENCED IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT

U.S. District Judge Steven D. Merryday on Nov. 20 sentenced David P. Lawrence, 26, of Bradenton, to 11 years and eight months in federal prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has reported.

On Nov. 6, Lawrence's co-defendant, Mark Alan Finehout, 37, of Sarasota, was sentenced to 21 months in federal prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm, a news release says.

Lawrence and Finehout were indicted on June 12 of this year. Both pleaded guilty to the charges in August, the release adds.

According to court documents, on April 17, Lawrence and Finehout purchased a .40-caliber Taurus pistol from another man, the release continues. "During the transaction, Lawrence and Finehout took pictures of the Taurus pistol," along with a Norinco model SKS rifle that they were interested in purchasing, the release says.

A search warrant executed on Lawrence's cellphone recovered pictures of the Taurus pistol, the SKS rifle and text messages sent to an individual regarding the potential resale of both the pistol and the rifle, the release adds.

Lawrence and Finehout are previously convicted felons, the release notes, so federal law prohibits them from possessing a firearm or ammunition.

This case was jointly investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and the Manatee County Sheriff's Office, the release points out. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mark E. Bini.

It is another case under the aegis of the Department of Justice's *Project Safe Neighborhoods* program — a nationwide gun-violence reduction strategy, the release points out. Acting U.S. Attorney A. Lee Bentley III, along with ATF Special Agent in Charge Julie Leon, is coordinating the *Project Safe Neighborhoods* effort in the Middle District of Florida in cooperation with federal, state and local law enforcement officials, the release says.



OPERATION SAFE FAMILIES RESULTED IN 5,544 ARRESTS

The Florida Sheriffs Task Force (FSTF) has announced that 5,544 arrests were made during Operation Safe Families, the latest initiative aimed at protecting youth and families in Florida.

"The four-week-long operation targeted individuals with outstanding warrants for domestic violence and writs of bodily attachments for non-support, which are used to bring in individuals who have failed to pay child support," a news release says. The operation was conducted from Oct. 13 through Nov. 9.

"Domestic violence impacts the lives of countless families and innocent children," said FSTF Chairman and Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualteri in the release. "Besides the immediate physical pain and emotional trauma often caused by domestic violence, I am gravely concerned about this cyclical behavior that harms the growth and development of the next generation — our children," he added. "While the formal task force known as Operation Safe Families has ended, citizens should rest assured knowing that no matter what day it is, the sheriffs of Florida will continue working to combat domestic violence."

The start of Operation Safe Families coincided with the National Family Violence Apprehension Detail initiative, a one-day national effort to serve outstanding family violence warrants; it was coordinated by the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office in Oregon, the release explains. "Operation Safe Families targeted those who endangered the lives of their children and families here in Florida," the release adds.

The operation produced the following results:

• 2,587 arrests for domestic violence.

- 772 writs of bodily attachment for non-support served.
- 89 children taken into protective custody.

In the 2012 Uniform Crime Report, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) noted that 108,046 domestic violence offenses were reported to law enforcement agencies, and 202 individuals died as a result of domestic violence, the release continues. This represents approximately 20 percent of all homicides in Florida, the release points out.

"When the safety of Florida's citizens is threatened, our sheriffs have developed the resources to act swiftly and strategically to address the issue at hand," said Florida Sheriffs Association President and Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd in the release. "FSA is proud of Sheriff Gualteri and the great work by the Florida Sheriffs Task Force."

The Florida Sheriffs Task Force pools resources from the 67 sheriffs' offices to address specific areas of concern, the release adds.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE REMINDING MOTORISTS TO BUCKLE UP

With Thanksgiving right around the corner, people will soon flock to the roads to visit and celebrate with family and friends. The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is reminding all travelers, whether they are heading across the country or just across town, to ensure a safe arrival and a happy holiday by buckling up *Every Trip*, *Every Time*, a news release says.

To reinforce the law and encourage safe driving habits, deputies will participate in the Click It or Ticket campaign from Nov. 18 to Dec. 1, the release adds.

Such a simple step as wearing a seat belt can save a life, the release notes, "but too many lives are being lost because some have still not gotten the message."

"The risk of being involved in a serious or deadly car crash increases when the number of cars on the road increases, and the long Thanksgiving weekend is one of the busiest travel times of the year," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "So we want to remind everyone that your seat belts can save your life — and those you are traveling with."

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 249 passenger vehicle occupants were killed in motor vehicle crashes across the country during the 2011 Thanksgiving holiday. Fifty percent of those killed were not wearing seat belts, the release points out.



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)

Cick: SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

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

All submitted tips are secure and anonymous

TWO ARRESTED FOR FILMING SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITH A MINOR

arrested two men for having sex with a minor and creating videos and photos of the encounters, the office has announced.

The 16-year-old victim reported that the incidents took place between July and October, a news release says. Detectives executed a search warrant last month at the home of one of the suspects, Sean Smart, 37, of 1807 Marbeth St., Sarasota, and seized evidence in the case, the release adds. Smart fled the state, but a deputy with the Fugitive Apprehension Unit, working in conjunction with the U.S. Marshals Florida Regional Fugitive Task Force, developed information on Smart's location and the Southern Ohio Fugitive Apprehension Strike Team captured him Nov. 20 in Cincinnati, the

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has release continues. His arrest warrant orders him held without bond until he faces a judge in Sarasota County.

> Smart is charged with three counts of Unlawful Sexual Activity with Certain Minors; four counts of Sexual Performance by a Child, for directing sexual conduct of the victim; and 11 counts of Sexual Performance by a Child, for the pictures and videos.

> The second suspect, David Bell, 27, of 3365 Seventh St., Sarasota, was arrested Monday and charged with one count of Unlawful Sexual Activity with Certain Minors and one count of Directing or Promoting Sexual Performance by a Child. He is being held on \$350,000 bond. SNL



Sean Smart/Contributed photo

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

WE CARE.

DEEPLY. WITH RESPECT. WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

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

WE CARE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HELPING WOMEN, MEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

LEAD HEALTHY LIVES.

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

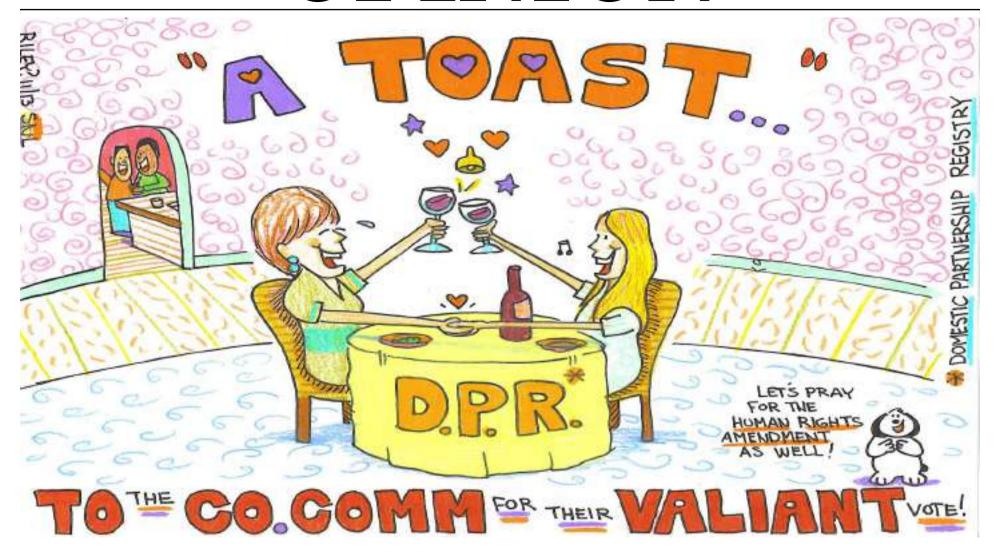
PLANNED PARENTHOOD. CARE. NO MATTER WHAT.



Planned Parenthood Of Southwest And Central Florida

941-953-4060 MyPlannedParenthood.org





COUNTY DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY A GOOD FIRST STEP

If one wanted to leave public service with a noble legacy that would endure long afterward, being an advocate for the equality and dignity of all citizens, regardless of station, surely would be at the top of the list.

The five Sarasota County commissioners took a firm step in that direction on Nov. 6, when they voted unanimously to establish a countywide Domestic Partnership Registry.

The registry, or DPR as it is most commonly known, will allow unmarried couples to visit one another in the hospital, be involved in healthcare decisions for each other and even make funeral or burial arrangements in the event of a partner's death.

Former Sarasota City Commissioner Ken Shelin has been an indefatigable advocate for the DPR, having successfully lobbied for passage of similar ordinances in the cities of Sarasota and Venice. But it was obvious to him that a countywide ordinance was necessary.

At first glance, it seems to be mostly a gay rights issue, since Florida passed a constitutional amendment that bans same-sex marriage. However, Sarasota County is home to a large population of senior citizens, and many older couples also choose to live in intimate, committed relationships without being married. Given the statistical probability of hospitalizations and even death among older couples, the DPR will be especially important to Sarasota's senior residents.

Still, at its heart, the DPR is about equality and dignity ... the right of couples who might not be married to participate more fully in

each other's lives in the most difficult of circumstances, and dignity in interacting with healthcare providers.

Shelin did not get everything he wanted. He had asked that the ordinance be open to even

part-time Sarasota residents, not just those who live here year-round. Given the large number of snowbirds who winter here and might experience a hospitalization or even death, this seemed a logical and fair request. He also

At its heart, the DPR is about equality and dignity ... the right of couples who might not be married to participate more fully in each other's lives in the most difficult of circumstances, and the dignity it affords each in interacting with healthcare providers.

asked that those in the registry be allowed to participate in parent-teacher conferences if a partner had school-age children. These are issues that can be discussed further by the commission and, we hope, added to the ordinance at a later time.

Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason was the principal catalyst for the countywide DPR. In fact, we believe the unanimous vote — following some skepticism on the part of a few commissioners in previous board discussions on the ordinance — is a testimony to the high regard in which she is held by her peers on the commission.

We hope that high regard continues as she next advocates for the passage of a countywide human rights ordinance. Mason has publicly stated her desire to pass such an ordinance to protect members of the LGBT community from discrimination in housing and employment.

State anti-discrimination laws do not afford such protection, so many cities and counties around the Sunshine State have adopted local ordinances to provide that security. As with the DPR, the cities of Sarasota and Venice already have such an ordinance.

> The commission has charged the county attorney with investigating the laws in other counties in Florida. He likely will give them his report early next year.

However, we urge the **County Commission**

to not just be a follower. Have the county attorney look outside the state, if necessary, to find the most protective anti-discrimination ordinances to use as a model for Sarasota.

We believe the county would be wise to distinguish itself as a leader in developing comprehensive protections for all of its citizens. Seeking to simply stay within the parameters of other Florida counties' actions will not do that.

No citizen of Sarasota County is more or less deserving of protection against the prejudices of others. For equality to exist, rights cannot be afforded to some but not to others.

The Domestic Partnership Registry was a good first step for the commission in fostering that equality. Passage of a human rights ordinance is the logical next step in creating the secure and inclusive community that all who live here deserve.

We hope it is done sooner rather than later. **SNL**



SLIGHTLY HACKNEYED

A TRAGIC ANNIVERSARY

COMMENTARY

Today marks the 50th anniversary

of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. It was made even more tragic as the opening salvo in a decade of senseless slayings, including those of his brother, Robert F. Kennedy, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. five years later.

President Kennedy's assassination left an indelible mark on all of us who were living at that time, but it has had almost as great an impact on those who were born afterward.

His death galvanized a generation in its commitment to service to the country and equality for all.

He skillfully confronted the aggression of the Soviet Union that precipitated the Cuban Missile Crisis, which took us to the brink of nuclear conflict. More important, his brief

a vision that largely came to fruition after his death: The passage of the Civil Rights Act; the Voting Rights Act; the opening of the Space Age and our Corps; and the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. His impact on the nation has extended decades beyond his life.

Our cover this week is a photo of an homage

quest to put a man on the moon; the Peace

Our cover this week is a photo of an homage to Kennedy and the anniversary of his death crafted by a street artist at the recently concluded Sarasota Chalk Festival.

EDITORIALS VERSUS COMMENTARIES

We occasionally are asked why commentaries include the identities of the authors, but editorials remain anonymous.

"Why isn't the writer of the editorial listed?" is the frequent question. And the answer is quite simple.

To paraphrase former presidential candidate Mitt Romney, "Newspapers are people, too."

In other words, editorials are not the opinion

of the writer or even of the editorial board. Editorials are the opinion of the publication. They really are not "unsigned" — the signature is in the banner at the top of the cover page.

President Kennedy's assassination left an indelible mark on all of us who were living at that time, but it has had almost as great an impact on those who were born afterward.

Commentaries, on the other hand, are the opinions only of the authors and might not reflect the opinion of the publication.

That, of course, includes the author of this humble column. If something written here is objectionable to you, the only person responsible is yours truly.

I also would be remiss if I did not point out that we scrupulously maintain a "firewall" between our news reporting and our *Opinion* section. In fact, we are committed to ensuring that one will never find even a hint of bias anywhere in our publication *except* in the opinion section, where it is appropriate. The public is not served when news is not accurately and impartially reported, and our mission is always to protect the integrity of that reporting.

'GIVE US A BREAK' DEPARTMENT:

If you hire the Ku Klux Klan to develop a racial desegregation plan, and it offers a report that

recommends apartheid, it is disingenuous to feign surprise.

And it adds fatuity to folly to then maintain that, despite the obvious prejudices, it still can render an impartial plan for desegregation if it is asked specifically to do so.

The County Commission's bungling of this Laffer Associates debacle, including its continued insistence that Donna Arduin and her cronies will provide any semblance of an impartial, defensible analysis of our 2050 Plan, insults the intelligence of every citizen of Sarasota County.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." – President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Inaugural Address, Jan. 20, 1961

"The glow of one warm thought is to me worth more than money." — *Thomas Jefferson*

FREE SUBSCRIPTION

Don't have your own subscription to The Sarasota News Leader?

Subscribe for FREE and receive a weekly notification when the latest issue is available online.



LET'S PLAY



By Harriet CuthbertContributing Writer

COMMENTARY

"Do you wanna play with us?"

Those six words, making up that simple sentence, evoke huge memories for me. And in composing a universally recognized question, they are both an equalizer and an ageless invitation. This is a very powerful sentence.

The last time I said it was not long ago at my local tennis court. We had three players and were looking for a fourth. I saw a man approaching the court next to ours, and since I thought he was alone and looking for a game, I invited him to "play" with us.

Childhood games that we make up as we go along always seem to allow for more players. As a youngster growing up in a large apartment complex, you never knew what the game of the day would be until you went over to the yard/playing area, saw something going on and responded to the question, "Do you wanna play with us?" The answer was always a resounding and unequivocal "YES!!" You were then part of the group, feeling that sense of belonging. You might have been competing with the others, but you were feeling absolutely comfortable.

Teenage years are mostly complicated and difficult, for both the parents and the teenagers. As teens, are we still feeling more like small children? Can we take on more adult

responsibilities? Will we always feel like outsiders, as we do then?

Once more, that same six-word sentence, offering a sense of belonging and comfort, comes up. We can join a team, be accepted and not feel so alone. We do not have to be limited to one sport, either, or one game. The possibilities are endless, and the warm welcome is extended for all of us.

Later in life, if we seek new companionship and are taking up new interests (Pickleball, anybody?), the idea that someone we have not met yet will invite us into a group of people, asking if we want to play with them, is a most wondrous and welcoming concept.

Let the games begin ... I am always ready to play. SNL



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Sarasota Leisure



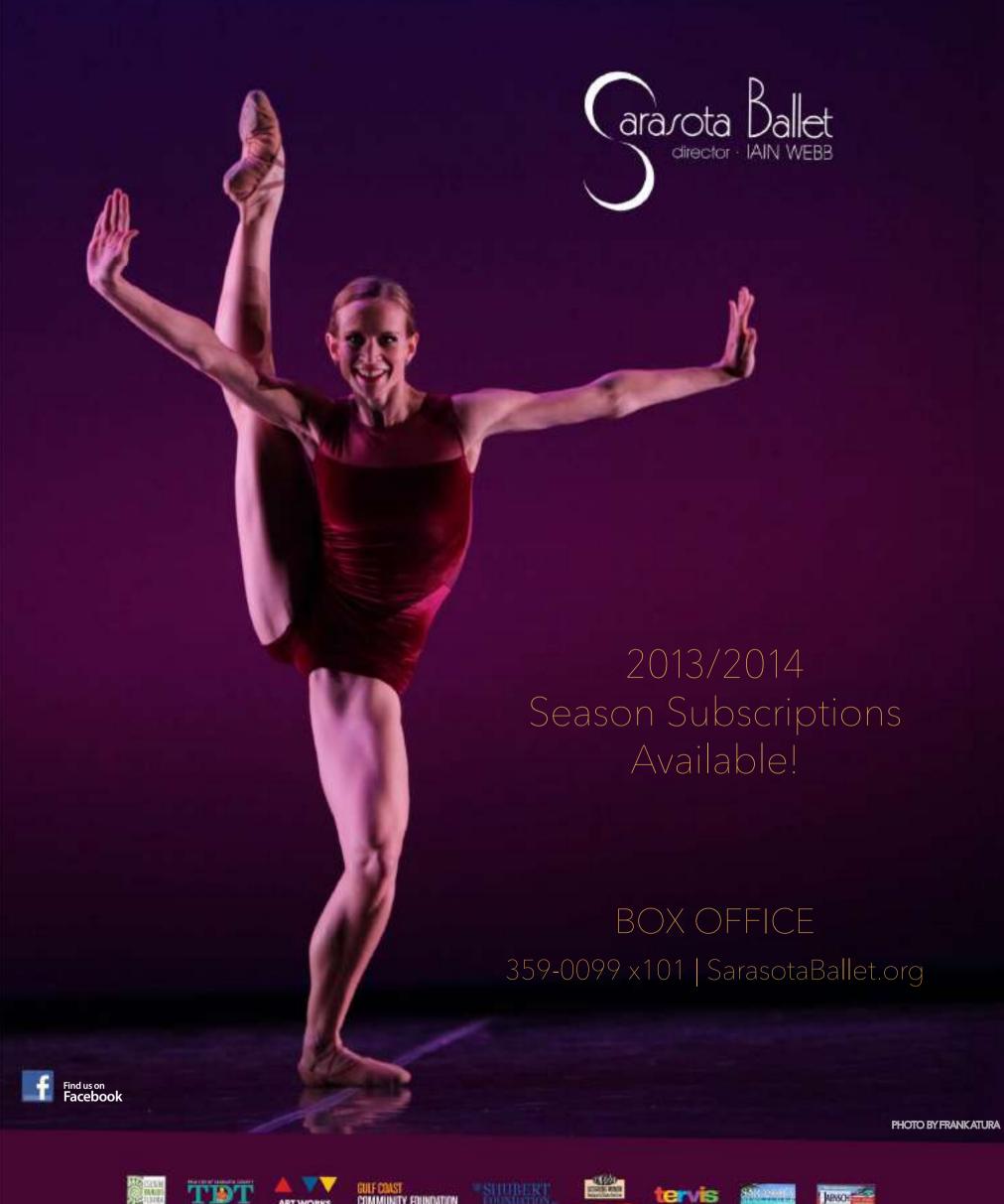


NOISE R US

MASTER PIECES

PATRIOTIC FERVOR

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast











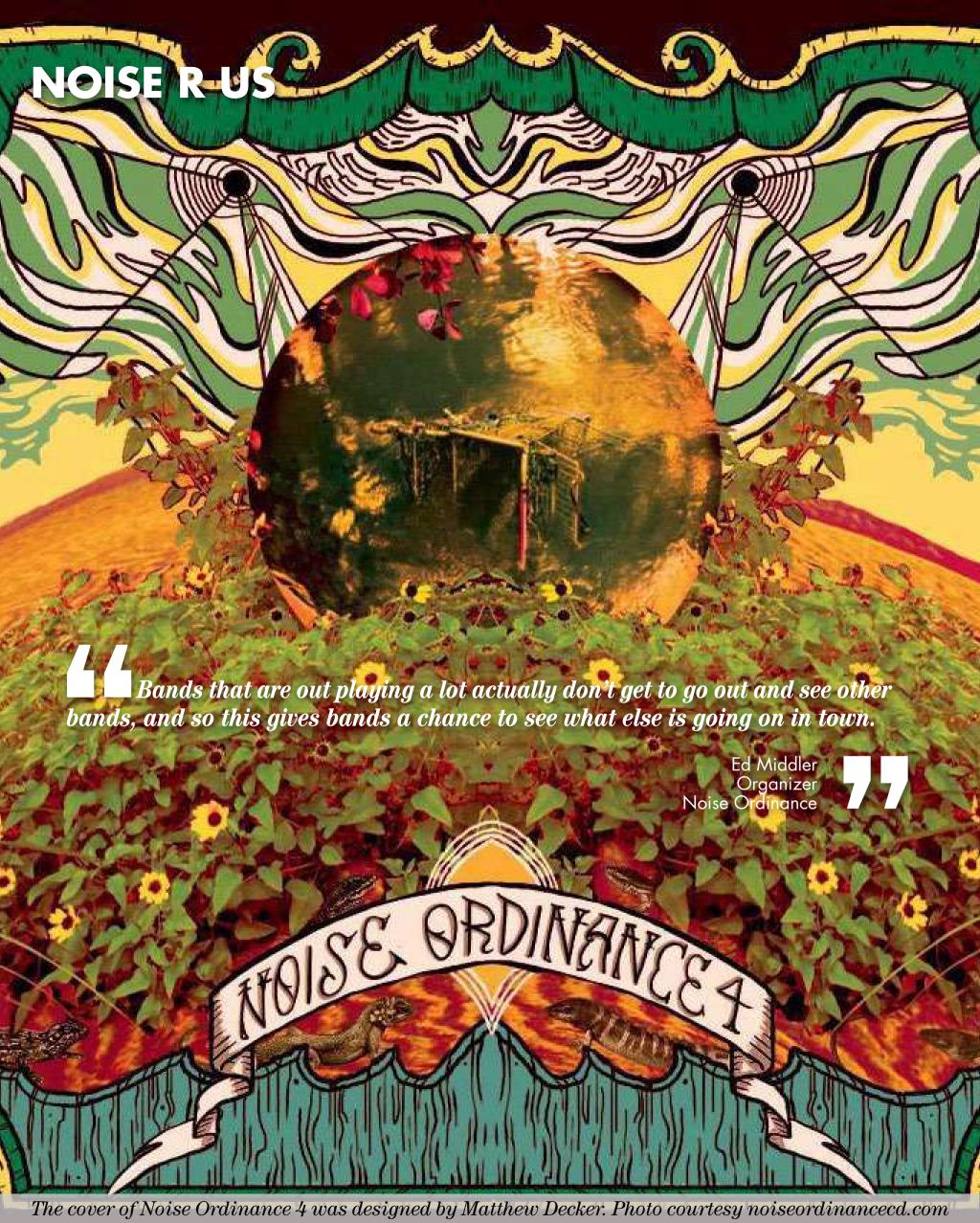












DOZENS OF PERFORMERS CELEBRATE THE LATEST NOISE ORDINANCE COMPILATION ALL DAY SATURDAY

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

It's become a tradition: A few dozen or so local bands come together in the backyard of the Cock & Bull, playing short sets on two stages, all in celebration of the release of the latest Noise Ordinance compilation. The organizers behind the event — Ed Middler, Claire Franklin and Kat Derr — have tweaked the process slightly over the years, but things this Saturday will largely be the same as those at the first event, held way, way back in 2010. Heck, why mess with a good thing?

Each year, Middler, Franklin and Derr put out a call for submissions from local bands and musicians, asking them to submit a well-recorded original track. They pick the best songs, but also look to see if the bands are active, playing shows and promoting themselves around town. The submissions are pared down to just under 40. *Noise Ordinance* No. 1 had 38 tracks; this year's double CD has 35.

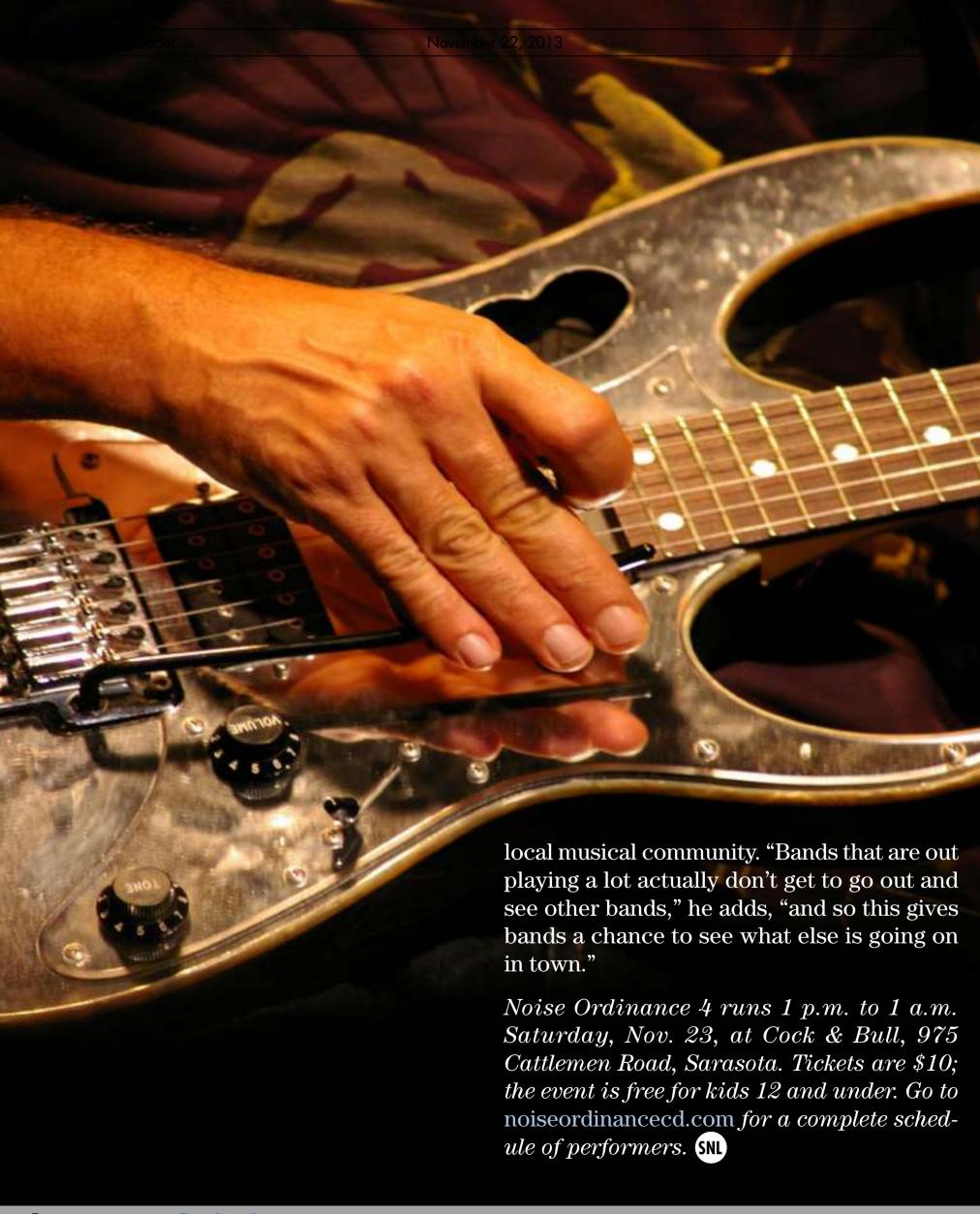
Music Scene, dedicated to covering and promoting area music — sees a big uptick in interest in *Noise Ordinance* from local media and bands alike. He's getting calls, emails and Facebook messages year-round from groups wanting to know what the plan is for the next *Noise Ordinance* and how they can participate. Young groups just forming are reaching out because they want to get involved to build buzz.

One of the best features of the event, and the CDs, for that matter? The impressive musical variety. Reggae bumps up against punk rock; folk collides with funk. When asked if this year's album has a particular flavor compared to those of years past, Middler says each one is a unique "potpourri."

"This year we've got a little more country than we did in the past," he says. "We do have a good amount of punk this year. The only genre that we lack is heavy metal, death metal." But overall, "it's just a good mix of all types of music."

Last year's event drew about 1,000 — Middler says he thinks this year should do just as well. The first 100 attendees this Saturday will receive a copy of the compilation when they pay their \$10 entry fee. Everyone else will need to pony up another \$5. Past versions have offered a wonderful and bewildering snapshot of the region's original pop music, and each new release can be listened to as a state of the scene address. Each of the performers gets 40 copies as part of the deal — they can sell those at their own shows, give them away, pass them along to radio stations, play Frisbee with them, whatever.

While *Noise Ordinance* organizers would, of course, love to grow the event so much that it exceeds the Cock & Bull's space, and Middler would like to include local artisans and crafters and food, Middler says the organization is largely content to keep doing what it's doing — supporting the creation of an authentic





Brainstorm won top honors in the 2013 Crystal Classic. Photo by Robert Hackney

FROM WHIMSY TO CURRENT TOPICS — AND EVEN A TRIBUTE TO ONE OF THEIR OWN — THE 2013 CRYSTAL CLASSIC SCULPTORS' ENTRIES WOWED THE CROWDS

By Rachel Brown Hackney Editor

"I like the coffee guy over here the best, I think." That comment was reiterated in various forms on Monday, Nov. 18, as visitors contemplated the entries in the 2013 Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition.

The "coffee guy" took top prize in the fourth annual event. Sculptors Karen Fralich and Dan Belcher — 2011 Crystal Classic winners — intrigued people with the chemical formula inscribed on one side of *Brainstorm: An Ode to Coffee*.

As Marcus Cicero of Tampa and Arjan Hudepol of The Netherlands eyed that formula, Cicero said, "I feel like I should know; it's probably something simple."

Thinking it just might be the chemistry for coffee, Cicero pulled out his smartphone. After a couple of minutes of tapping keys, he announced, "It is coffee. Thank you, Wikipedia."

In the meantime, other people paused at length to survey the sculpture, with one



Work is under way on Brainstorm on the first day of the 2013 Crystal Classic, Nov. 15. Photo by Norman Schimmel





Michela Ciopini and Jan Zelinka work on World Breathe on Nov. 15. Photo by Norman Schimmel

woman telling her companion, "See the wires sticking out [of the 'hair']" and another just murmuring, "That's so cool."

Judy Kophs and her husband, Stan, were among those taking it all in. They had come with a group of 165 residents of The Villages to see the results of the competition.

Monika Ince of New York and Maria McDonald of Houston — both snowbirds here for the season — relished the details in the various pieces. "It's really beautiful," McDonald said as they stood in front of the third-place winner, *The Amazin Sand Castle Machine!* by Matt Long and Andy Gertler, both of New York.

That sculpture was a tribute to sculptor Walter McDonald of South Padre Island, TX — "Amazin' Walter," as his fellow master sand sculptors call him. A note attached to the

platform in front of that piece says McDonald is "the oldest living sand sculptor in captivity ..."

McDonald was in charge of sand-sculpting demonstrations for the Crystal Classic this year.

The second-place award went to *World Breathe*, created by Michela Ciopini of Italy and Jan Zelinka of the Czech Republic.

"Looks like lungs," said a woman looking at that sculpture.

"Wow. WOW!" added another.

As Ince and McDonald made their way over to the entry by Craig Mutch and Bill Dow—
The Stray Bar—they again took their time as they studied all the features. "Look at the eyes of that dog," McDonald pointed to one feature and laughed. She chortled moments later as



The Amazin Sand Castle Machine! won third-place honors. Photo by Robert Hackney

'Amazin Walter' is in the driver's seat already on Nov. 15, headed to a third-place award. Photo by Norman Schimmel

she read the name of the establishment, with its dog patrons on all sides — including one drinking out of a toilet — and a cat popping out of the roof.

"Ohhh! 'Facebark'!" she added with yet another laugh as she read the name on the "tablet" one dog was reading.

At the last sculpture — with its Medusa-type head featuring National Security Agency wires instead of snakes, Claudia Finlan of Siesta Key noted the route of those wires, "in your eyes and in your ears."

The piece was by Sandis Kondrats of Latvia and Bert Adams of Washington state.

"This is our third [Crystal Classic]," Finlan told *The Sarasota News Leader*. Her husband, Dennis, added that he thought an earlier year's examples were better." One of his very favorite Crystal Classic sculptures, he said, was *Nightmares*, which took top honors in 2011.



Craig Mutch and Bill Dow's The Stray Bar won a lot of admirers, even if it did not garner any prizes from the judges. Photo by Robert Hackney



Craig Mutch and Bill Dow 'build' The Stray Bar. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Visitors were well advised to walk all the way around a sculpture, so as not to miss any details, including those of The Stray Bar. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Fans of the FX TV show of a similar name could not help but be drawn to Sons of Anarchy 10,000 BC by Ronald McDonald and Steve Topazio. Photo by Norman Schimmel



A master sand sculptor puts fine detail work into a sandcastle on Nov. 15. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Coincidentally, *Nightmares* was the co-creation of 2013 co-champion Karen Fralich.

Nonetheless, the Finlans were taking their time, too, to survey the sculpture in its entirety, making sure they had seen every carved word — from "SPAM" to "Big Data."

Cheryl Gaddie, president of the Siesta Key Village Association — and one of the organizers — told the *News Leader* on Nov. 18 that while the event had been as wonderful as ever, "The weather was tough Saturday, obviously."

Once the rain ceased, she added, the Crystal Classic enjoyed "a decent crowd." Sunday's attendance "was amazing," she pointed out. Still, she said, "We couldn't make up for Saturday."

In spite of the organizers' weather woes, the crowd Monday was an appreciative one. "It's wonderful, wonderful," Maria McDonald told the *News Leader*. "We don't have this beach in Texas."

Profits from the event will benefit Mote Marine Laboratory's sea turtle research and conservation programs. SNL



Brett Stocker and Fred Mallet offered visitors a view into a land of castles and dragons. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Master sculptor Sandis Kondrats crafts the NSA wires of his sculpture as the Crystal Classic gets under way on Nov. 15. Photo by Norman Schimmel



The completed version of the NSA/Big Data sculpture had its share of small details deserving study. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Sculptors are at work and the Vendors Village is busy on the opening day of the 2013 Crystal Classic. Photo by Norman Schimmel



The Margaritaville Apparel logo stands tall at the front of the sponsor logos. The firm provided \$20,000 to the event this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Overcast skies do not deter visitors from enjoying the bounty offered by the Vendors Village. Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens



Along with the sand sculpting, the Crystal Classic offered live entertainment. Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens



Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE 2013 CHALK FESTIVAL FEATURES MULTI-HUED TRIBUTES TO THE NATION'S HEROES

Staff Reports

Burns Square and its environs once again were the center of colorful collaboration as the 2013 Chalk Festival brought hundreds of artists — and tens of thousands of visitors — to downtown Sarasota Nov. 13-18.

The theme this year was *Legacy of Valor*, in partnership with the community campaign "to honor veterans, inspire patriotism and pass freedom on to others," as organizers put it.

Event founder Denise Kowal, a Burns Square businesswoman, says the festival's archives chairman, David Taylor, suggested the theme to her. Taylor is a Vietnam War veteran and a recipient of the Purple Heart.

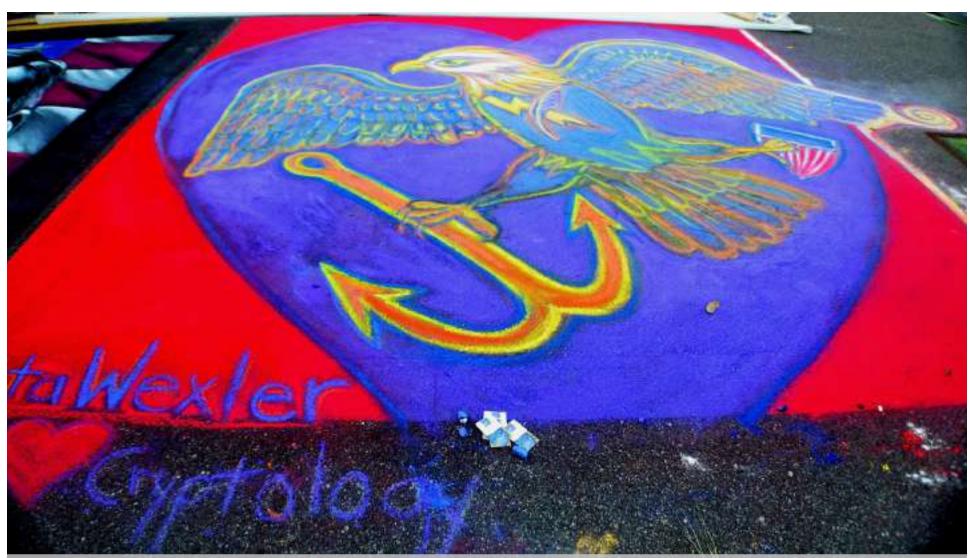
Classic American war images kept company with more modern variations on service to the United States and its citizens.



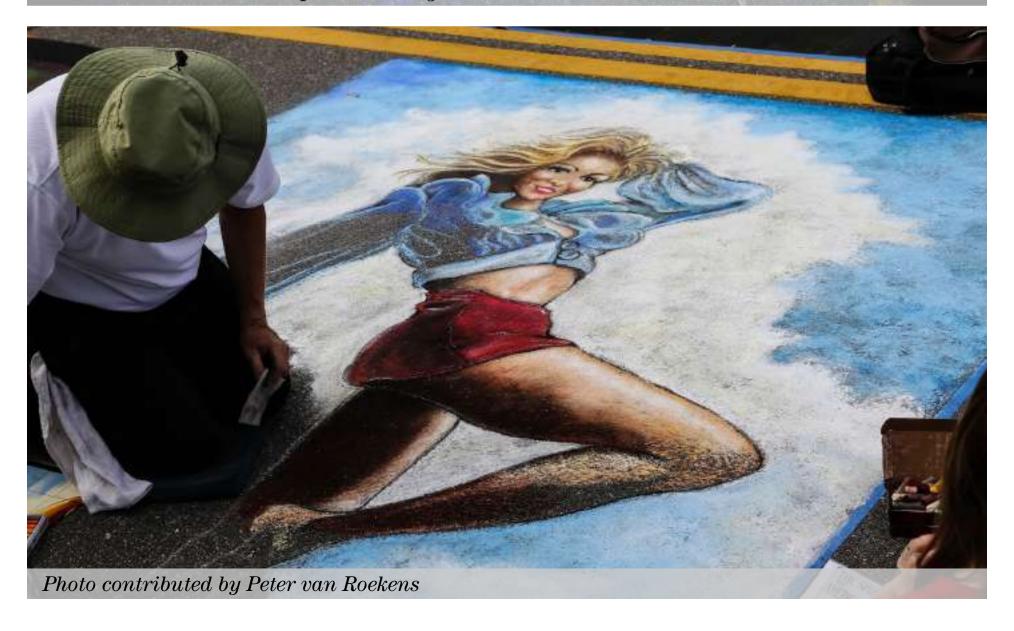
Photo by Norman Schimmel

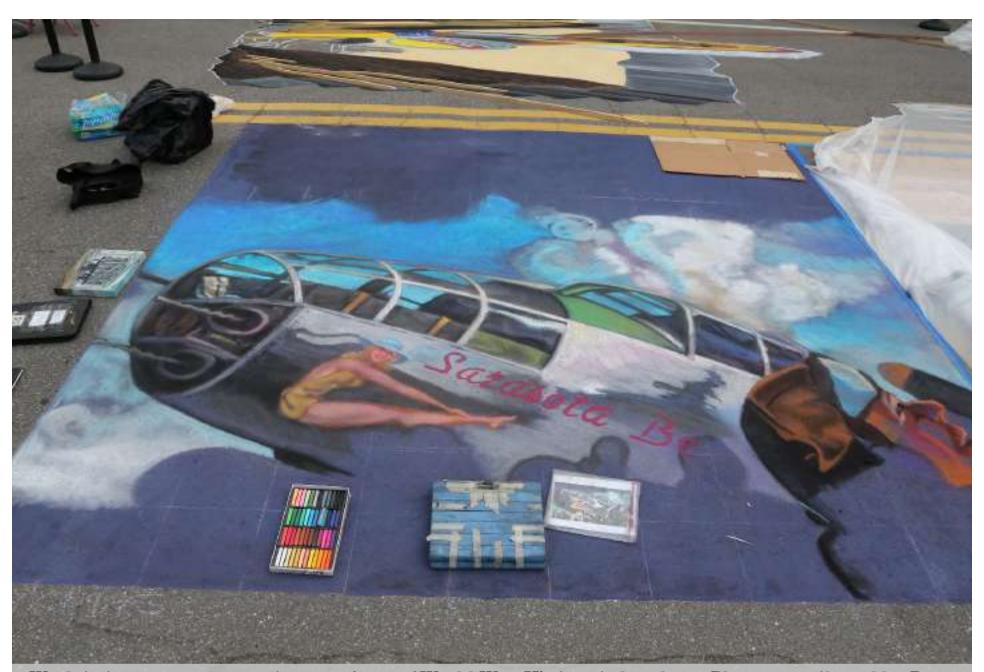






Anita Wexler's work is complete. Photo by Norman Schimmel





Work is in progress on an image of one of World War II's iconic bombers. Photo contributed by Peter van Roekens

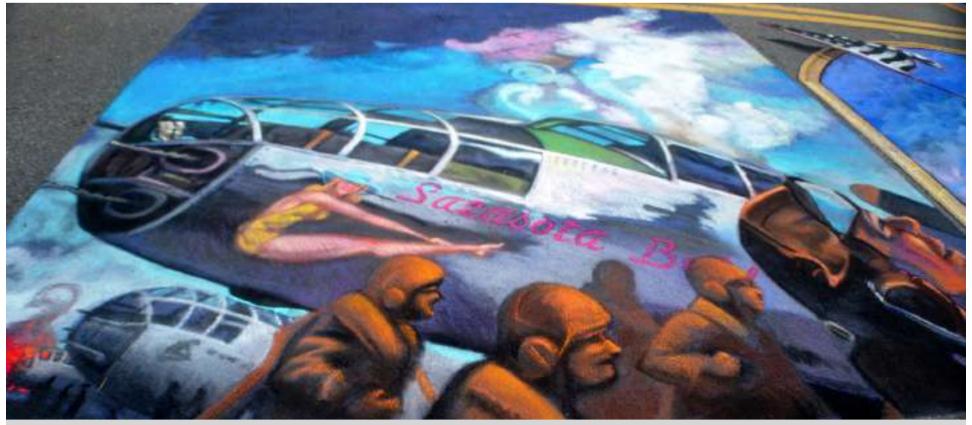


Photo contributed by Peter van Roekens





Photo by Norman Schimmel



Photo by Norman Schimmel





Photo by Norman Schimmel



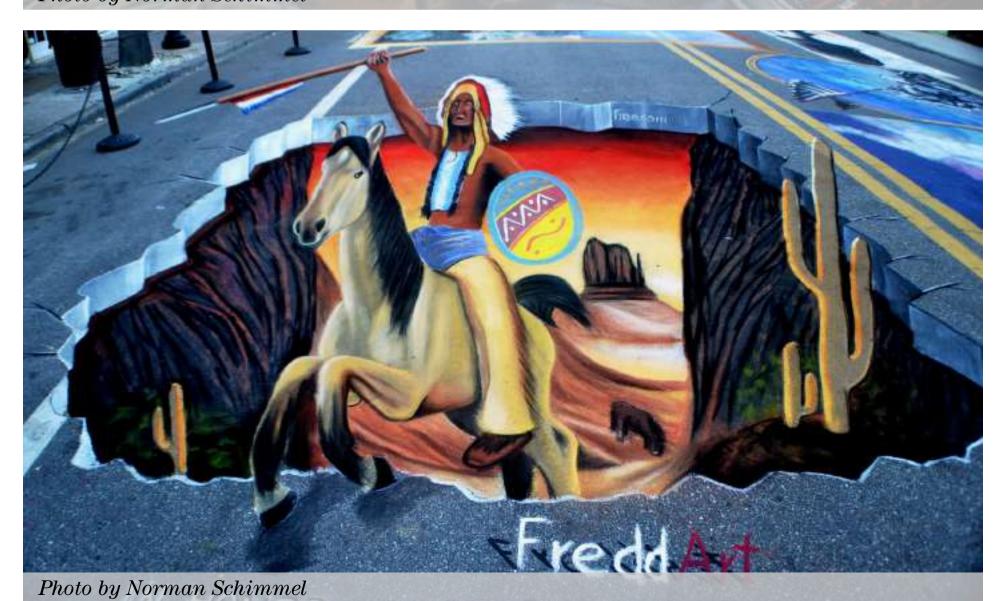




Photo by Norman Schimmel



SHAY WINS THE TOP KEEP SARASOTA COUNTY BEAUTIFUL VOLUNTEER AWARD; EFFORTS CONTINUE TO START A VILLAGE RECYCLING INITIATIVE; AND THE KEY'S HOLIDAY SEASON KICKOFF IS ON THE HORIZON



By Rachel Brown Hackney Editor

A hearty "Congratulations" goes out to Michael Shay, vice president of the Siesta Key Association (SKA), for being named Volunteer of the Year last week by Keep Sarasota County Beautiful (KSCB).

Anyone familiar with Shay's efforts to keep Siesta Key's gorgeous vistas clear of trash knows he is most deserving of the award. It was presented at the annual KSCB volunteer recognition program, held on Nov. 13 at the Venice Community Center.



Two children found a way to get extra enjoyment out of the fourth annual Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition. Photo contributed by Peter van Roekens

As part of his latest initiatives, Shay not only is organizing another Adopt-a-Road event on Nov. 23 — as reported in this space last week — he also remains at work on the effort to implement a recycling program in Siesta Village. He provided the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) an update on the latter at the group's Nov. 5 regular meeting.

Shay — who represents the SKA at the SKVA sessions — reported that he had contacted Waste Management and learned the firm does not provide recycling bins for curbside use. However, he said, the company will put another dumpster or carts in the municipal parking lot, which is located between Avenida Madera and Avenida de Mayo.

"They do not want to get involved in the curbside stuff," Shay added of Waste Management representatives.



Village Café will provide a free breakfast at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 23, for Adopt-A-Road volunteers. (Organizers suggest heavy tipping.) The trash cleanup effort will begin at 9 a.m. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Michael Shay of Siesta Key displays his Volunteer of the Year award from Keep Sarasota County Beautiful. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Based on a book Russell Matthes, past SKVA president, had given him, Shay continued, the recycling bins would be about \$200 each, if the organization wanted a design similar to that of Village garbage cans. The recycling bins could be blue, for example, to distinguish their use from the garbage cans, he noted.

For the next step in the process, Shay suggested he would contact Sarasota County staff and find out whether the county could help the Village obtain less expensive bins.

In response to questions from Matthes and SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie, Shay said, "My assumption is that Championship would be the one to empty [the recycling bins]," just as its workers put the Village garbage in the dumpster in the municipal lot.

Championship Landscape Maintenance Professionals of Fort Myers is the firm that has the contract for Village upkeep.

Another container might have to be placed in the municipal lot for the recyclables, Shay pointed out. The size would depend on the volume, he added, noting, "Your garbage volume is going to decrease" once recycling gets under way. "You're not increasing the stuff that's being collected. Now you're spreading it into two components."



A Keep Sarasota County Beautiful slide shows Siesta Key Association and Siesta Key Village Association volunteers during an Adopt-A-Road cleanup event. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Mark Smith, head of the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp., pointed out that, years ago — before the county began the Village beautification project — the county helped the SKVA buy extra garbage cans. He said he could contact county staff to determine whether the county would be willing to cover half the cost, perhaps, of recycling bins.

A determination would also have to be made about whether the dumpster in the municipal lot is big enough to accommodate both garbage and recyclables, Smith continued. Someone might need to be designated to bring carts with the collected recyclables to the dumpster site on garbage pick-up day, he said.

Shay had counted 12 locations where recyclable bins are most needed in the Village, Gaddie noted, based on the typical contents in the garbage cans in those spots.

However, Shay pointed out that fewer locations could be tried at first on a trial basis.

Matthes questioned whether 12 was a number big enough to garner county interest in offering funding assistance.

"Let me at least ask," Smith replied.

Perhaps grant money could be found to help pay for the project, Smith added.

"I was going to ask that question, too," Shay said.

Gaddie, Shay and Smith will continue work on the details, Gaddie told members attending the meeting. She hopes to have another report by the time the SKVA holds its Dec. 3 meeting.

LIGHT UP THE VILLAGE

Planning has continued for the traditional holiday kickoff in Siesta Village, Light Up the Village, which will be held from 6 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 30, right after Thanksgiving.

During the SKVA meeting this month, Gaddie encouraged people to sign up to participate in the parade, which will begin around 5:30 p.m. and proceed down Ocean Boulevard. "It's the biggest and best parade in the area," she proclaimed.

A *lot* of effort has gone into the parade since it began a few years ago. Last year, it featured about 25 floats.

Anyone seeking more details about participating in the parade may email Gaddie directly at cherylgaddie@gmail.com.

As the SKVA website points out, children can give Santa their wish lists, have their faces painted, visit with Santa's elves and be entertained by Clifford the Big Red Dog and Sunshine the Clown at Siesta Center during the event.

Santa's gift bags, provided by Beach Bazaar, will be given to the first 250 children who visit with Santa. The Jolly Old Elf is expected to arrive at Siesta Center at 6:15 p.m.

Businesses will offer refreshments, and live musical entertainment will be presented by the Pine View High School Jazz Band,

barbershop quartets, keyboard players and choirs. Ocean Boulevard will be lined with luminarias, and businesses will be bright and merry with holiday decorations.

Free trolley rides will be available from Siesta Key Public Beach to the Village from 5:30 to 10 p.m.

Details about sponsorships of the event also are available on the SKVA website.

THAT NEVER-ENDING PARKING DILEMMA

When members showed up for the SKA meeting on Nov. 7, more than a few were taken

aback to see just how full the parking lots were at St. Boniface Episcopal Church, where the organization's sessions are held. It turned out that the bishop of the diocese that includes St. Boniface was there to meet with parishioners.

Fortunately, SKA President Catherine Luckner and SKA Director Joe Volpe had scrambled and won the approval of the neighborhood across the street from the church to allow vehicle parking in open space near the road.

"We thought we had lots of people here for the cupcakes," Luckner joked when she opened the meeting, referring to the treats Joe and



More floats are welcome for the holiday parade that will be part of Light Up the Village on Nov. 30. Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens



Lana Volpe had brought to help celebrate SKA's 65th anniversary.

When Sarasota County Code Enforcement Officer John Lally stood before SKA members to make his report, the parking situation obviously was very much on his mind. "This looks like January, February, March on Siesta Key," he said, referring to the height of season.

It is evident, he continued, that the island still does not have sufficient parking for visitors and residents, especially during periods of high demand. He had no doubt, he added,

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.



that people will be charging visitors to park in their yards again once season begins in earnest, even though that is prohibited by law.

"We'll do our best to enforce what we can on it," Lally pointed out of Code Enforcement staff. "It's kind of a shame for our tourists to come here and can't find a parking spot. ... We spend millions of dollars to get our tourists here," he pointed out, but they have a lot of trouble finding parking spaces they can lawfully use.

While he spoke early this year of his own proposal for a Gulf-side structure housing a parking deck with a restaurant on top, he continued, he keeps hearing that is not a viable option. And even though the improvements planned at Siesta Public Beach include 130 new parking spaces, he said, "they really need about 450 new spots."

Just two days earlier, Sgt. Steve Leavitt of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office told SKVA members at their meeting how much busier the beach has been in recent weeks. Officers have seen quite a number of students from northern states who apparently had two weeks of fall break, he noted, for one example.

"I've seen a lot more activity here in the Village," he added, "and we're starting to see the snowbirds come back."

"It's cold up North already," Gaddie responded with a laugh. "It is getting cold up North," Leavitt concurred.

After Lally completed his report to SKA members (see more details in the Nov. 15 *Siesta Seen*), he bid them goodbye, saying, "I'll go give my parking space up to somebody."





Adelaide Boedecker will play the part of Alcina in performances of arias from Handel's opera of the same name. Contributed photo

SORCERY & ILLUSION TO BE OFFERED AT CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

Six nationally acclaimed singers "will take concert-goers on an enchanting, seductive, show-stopping tour of G.F. Handel's masterful opera, *Alcina*," Sunday, Nov. 24, at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of the Redeemer in downtown Sarasota, the church has announced.

"Powerhouse Metropolitan Opera singers Rebecca Price and Jason Stearns," along with established and up-and-coming singers Adelaide Boedecker, Adam Bielamowicz, Monica Pasquini and Reba Evans will perform select arias of the opera, with narration provided by June LeBell of Sarasota, a news release says. The singers will be accompanied by a full chamber orchestra led by Todd Craven, conductor of the First Brass ensemble, with Redeemer's choirmaster Ann Stephenson-Moe, playing harpsichord.

"Alcina is a beautiful and powerful sorceress," says Stephenson-Moe in the release. "Men swoon and fall in love with her, but when she tires of them, as she inevitably does, she uses sorcery to turn them into stones or trees. She must never fall in love. If she does, she loses her powers."

"Twists and turns of love, betrayal, desire and illusion compel the story," the release points out. "Alcina (Boedecker) is embroiled in a passionate love affair with Ruggiero (Price), but Ruggiero is affianced to Bradamante (Evans). With her tutor, Melisso (Stearns), along for the ride, Bradamante disguises herself as a young man named Ricciardo and travels to spy on her straying fiancé. Alcina's sister, Morgana (Pasquini), becomes besotted with Ricciardo/Bradamante, and her regular lover, Oronte (Bielamowicz), responds by

fueling jealous rage in Ruggiero. In the end, some relationships are torn apart [and] some prevail, as powers of sorcery and seduction fail and illusions are exposed for truths," the release notes.

Stearns has been a baritone soloist with the Metropolitan Opera since 2008. His performance as Iago in last summer's production of *Otello* at the opera festival in Utah was hailed by *The Salt Lake Tribune* for the singer's "burnished, resonant tones," and "thrilling top notes," the release continues.

Price is a cover singer with the Metropolitan Opera.

Pasquini is a coloratura soprano known for singing in *altissimo* soprano range, "and her voice soars a full octave above high C," the release adds. She performs with the Choreo Theatro Company in Brooklyn, NY.

Also from New York City, Evans recently performed as alto soloist in Vivaldi's *Gloria RV*

588 with the Metropolitan Greek Chorale, the release notes.

Bielamowicz will be making his Carnegie Hall debut this December. In 2011, he played Borsa in the Sarasota Opera's performance of *Rigoletto*.

Boedecker is a graduate student at the Eastman School of Music, pursuing a master of music in vocal performance and literature, the release continues. She was a Marcello Giordani Young Artist at the Crested Butte Music Festival in Crested Butte, CO, over the past summer.

Advance ticket purchase for this concert is highly recommended, the release points out. Tickets are \$20; they may be purchased online at www.redeemersarasota.org or through the parish office (955-4263) during regular business hours.

The Church of the Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

SWAYZE TO EXHIBIT WORK AT HERMITAGE ARTIST RETREAT

The Hermitage Artist Retreat has announced that Englewood artist Carroll Swayze will hold an open studio and exhibit of her work at the Hermitage, located at 6660 Manasota Key Road in Englewood, on Friday, Nov. 22, from 5 to 7:30 p.m.

The event is free and open to the public.

Swayze is not only a popular Englewood artist, but she is also a member of the family that occupied the property before it was purchased by Sarasota County, a news release notes.

Program Director Patricia Caswell explains in the release, "I knew the entire Swayze family and have many fond memories of life on Manasota Key in the 1970s and '80s. Knowing the property as I did, I knew it would be a great artist retreat. In the late 1990s, Sarasota arts patron Syd Adler partnered with me in my position as executive director of the Arts Council, and we enlisted the support of Manasota Key residents to restore the buildings. That was the start of making this wonderful dream come true."

Swayze has been an independent artist all of her life, the release adds. She is communications chairwoman for the National Association of Independent Artists and has maintained an Englewood studio for more than 35 years. She began working in oils, moved on to India inks, watercolors and, finally, acrylics, the release says. Soon after relocating permanently to Florida, Swayze bought an etching press and started working in intaglio etching hand-painted with acrylic washes, the release says. "Her artwork is highly regarded both locally and around the globe," the release points out. In October 2009, she was chosen as one of only 10 North American artists to participate in the first outdoor art festival in Japan, the Yokohama International Open Air Art Fair in Yokohama, it notes.

"Carroll Swayze has always been involved with, and given back to, her community," the release continues. She was on the steering The Hermitage Artists Retreat, in what was her mother's former beach house. She was also on the board of directors of the Englewood Art Center, which raised the money "to expand and build what has become one of the most vibrant community art centers in the area, now operated by the Ringling College of Art and Design," the release adds. "When not making art, Swayze teaches art to home-schooled children in three counties and as well as to adults."

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



Carroll Swayze will exhibit her work at the Hermitage on Nov. 22. Contributed photo

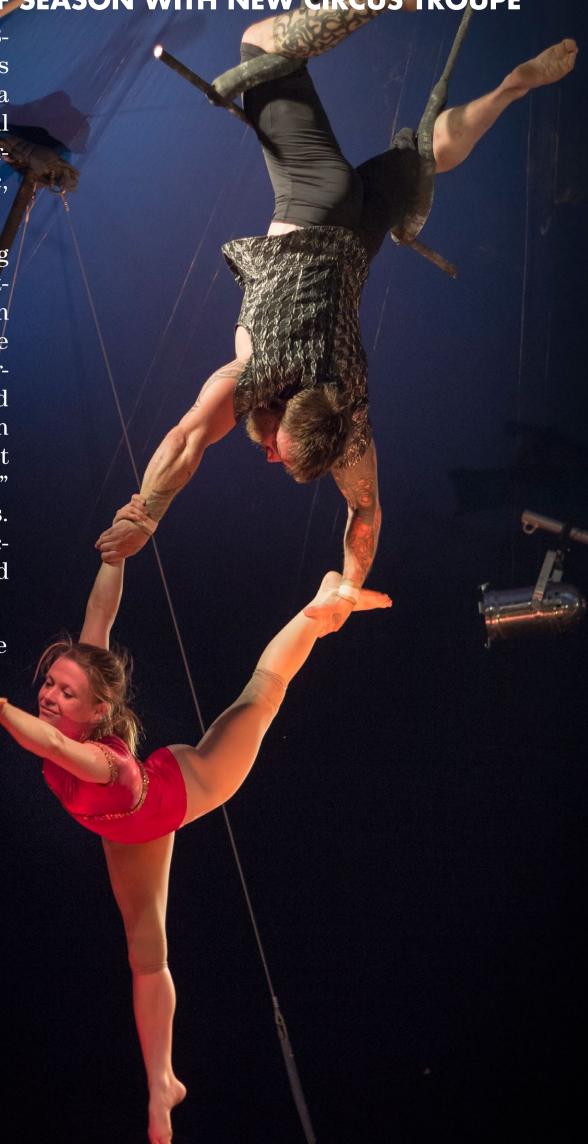
CIRCUS SARASOTA KICKS OFF SEASON WITH NEW CIRCUS TROUPE

Circus Sarasota is kicking off its 2013-14 season with an avant-garde circus troupe that is not only new to Sarasota but also making its debut on U.S. soil — Vague de Cirque, "a unique and interactive troupe" straight from Quebec, the organization has announced.

Vague de Cirque features "stunning acrobatics, aerobatics and circus artistry masterfully intertwined with both music and comedy," a news release says. This up-close-and-personal circus arts experience will be offered at Westfield Sarasota Square Mall "in a quaint, boutique-style circus tent complete with cabaret-style seating" just outside Costco, the release adds. Shows are scheduled for three consecutive weeks, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday through Dec. 1.

"We are dedicated to promoting the circus arts throughout our community, and Vague de Cirque is a real winner," said The Circus Arts Conservatory Co-Founder and CEO Pedro Reis in the release.





The Vague de Cirque shows, which are about two hours with intermission, are inspired by the European circuses of the 1940s and "are designed to mesmerize audiences with an unexpected, interactive storyline that intermittently crosses from reality into the magical world of circus artistry," the release continues. "The amazing performance includes eight of the world's finest acrobatic performers," who will entertain "with everything from hand vaulting and human towers to group juggling, Chinese pole, teeter board [and] Russian barre," the release points out.

All of the performers have spent a lifetime training in gymnastics or the circus arts, the release notes, and many have performed with world-renowned groups such as Cirque du Soleil.

Performances began Nov. 15 and will continue Nov. 22, 23, 24, 29 and 30 as well as Dec. 1.

Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$18 for children. They may be purchased by calling The Circus Arts Conservatory box office at 355-9805 or going online at www.CircusArts.org.



ORIOLES TO HOST ICE ON THE DIAMOND ON DEC. 20

In a first for Sarasota's Ed Smith Stadium, the Baltimore Orioles will present *Ice on the Diamond – A Holiday Celebration*, "a dazzling, holiday-themed show featuring world-class ice skaters on a specially engineered ice stage at the ballpark," the baseball organization has announced.

The show will be offered at 7 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 20, with the stadium decorated for the holidays, "creating a festive backdrop to this family-friendly event," a news release says. This event is part of the Orioles' *Arts in the Ballpark* initiative, a series of arts and entertainment activities for the public at Ed Smith Stadium designed to appeal to a wide range of tastes and interests, the release notes.

Tickets are on sale at the stadium box office, online at www.orioles.com/sarasota and by phone at 893-6300. Prices range from \$5 to \$30, with a limited number of Gold Circle seats for \$45, the release notes. Children age 2 and under, sitting on a parent's lap, will be admitted free.

The show's cast will include a world-class team of national and international skaters, the release points out. The soloists will be Michael Chack, a U.S. national Bronze medalist, and Erica Archambault, a U.S. junior national champion, the release continues. Triple Gold medalists Stephanie Kuban and John Hunt will be the lead pair. Actors Joe



World-class ice skaters will perform in Ice on the Diamond at Ed Smith Stadium. Contributed photo

Gnoffo and Casey Peterson — as "elves" — will narrate the show, the release says.

Jeb K. Rand, son of Sarasota residents Dr. Howard Rand and Nanci Rand, is the show's producer. A former nationally ranked pairs figure skater, he is president and executive producer of Las Vegas-based Rand Enterprises & Productions Inc. and has been involved in figure skating for more than 30 years, producing or directing dozens of ice shows around the world, the release adds.

The Ed Smith Stadium box office is located at 2700 12th St. in Sarasota. It is open Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Parking the night of the event will cost \$5 in the East and North lots, with a portion of proceeds supporting the Sarasota YMCA.

For additional information on this event or other upcoming *Arts in the Ballpark* activities, visit www.orioles.com/sarasota. SNL



The family-friendly Ice on the Diamond will include humor as well as ice dancing. Contributed photo



Temple Emanu-El leaders joined Rabbi Brenner Glickman in kindling the Temple's menorah at a previous Hanukkah Happening. Contributed photo

TEMPLE EMANU-EL TO HOST HANUKKAH HAPPENING

Members of the community are warmly invited to a joyous Hanukkah celebration as Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, hosts the annual *Hanukkah Happening* on Friday, Nov. 29, at 6 p.m.

"An exuberant and spirited evening for all ages, the *Hanukkah Happening* features a delicious dinner of homemade brisket and chicken with all the trimmings as well as the traditional *latkes* (fried potato pancakes); crafts and children's activities; a menorah-making contest with prizes for all entrants; and a visit from Hanukkah hero Judah Maccabee, who will retell the story of Hanukkah and distribute dreidels and chocolate gelt," a news

release says. The annual Hanukkah Family Service, which includes candle lighting, songs and a Hanukkah play, will follow at 7:30 p.m.

Reservations for the *Hanukkah Happening* are required. The cost is \$25 per adult and \$15 for children under 13. All proceeds benefit educational and scholarship programs at Temple Emanu-El Religious School. Checks made out to "Temple Emanu-El Religious School" and the names of attendees may be mailed to Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road, Sarasota, FL 34232.

For more information, call 371-2788.

Temple Emanu-El Religious School student Riley Silva showed off her winning menorah at a previous Hanukkah Happening. Contributed photo

BIKE RIDERS AMONG CONGREGATION'S SOCIAL GROUPS

One of several social groups for members of the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism is its Bike Riders. Over the past couple of years, the participants in that group "have covered the many beautiful planned bicycle paths devoted to riders" in the county, a Congregation news release says.

Most recently, they met at Blackburn Point Park and proceeded to ride along Casey Key. They enjoyed viewing the million-dollar houses, and then, at the Venice North Jetty, they "were surprised and thrilled to see a spectacular dolphin show," the release adds.

For more information about the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism go to chj-sarasota.org or call 929-7771.



(From left) Congregation for Humanistic Judaism members Carol Heckert, Len Rosen, Amy Eliezer, Ken Heckert, Sandy Siegel, Marty Hollander and Wolfe Zucker enjoy taking bike rides together in the community. Contributed photo



THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

22+
NOVEMBER

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents Purlie

Through Dec. 15; times vary. Theatre located at 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$28.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbttsrq.org.

22+
NOVEMBER

Dabbert Gallery presents Season of Color

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

22+
NOVEMBER

FST presents Monty Python's Spamalot

Through Jan. 5, times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Avenue. Tickets: \$18-49. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

27NOVEMBER

Thanksgiving benefit for the homeless

Nov. 27, 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., a free Thanksgiving luncheon plus a comedy, *Thanksgiving at the Circus*, featuring local government officials. Freewill offering to benefit The Salvation Army's Thanksgiving meals initiative. No reservations needed. Event hosted by the Sarasota Ministerial Association in St. Martha's Catholic Church Circus Hall, 200 Orange Ave., Sarasota. For info or to volunteer, call chaplain Tom Pfaff: 724-5018.

29 NOVEMBER

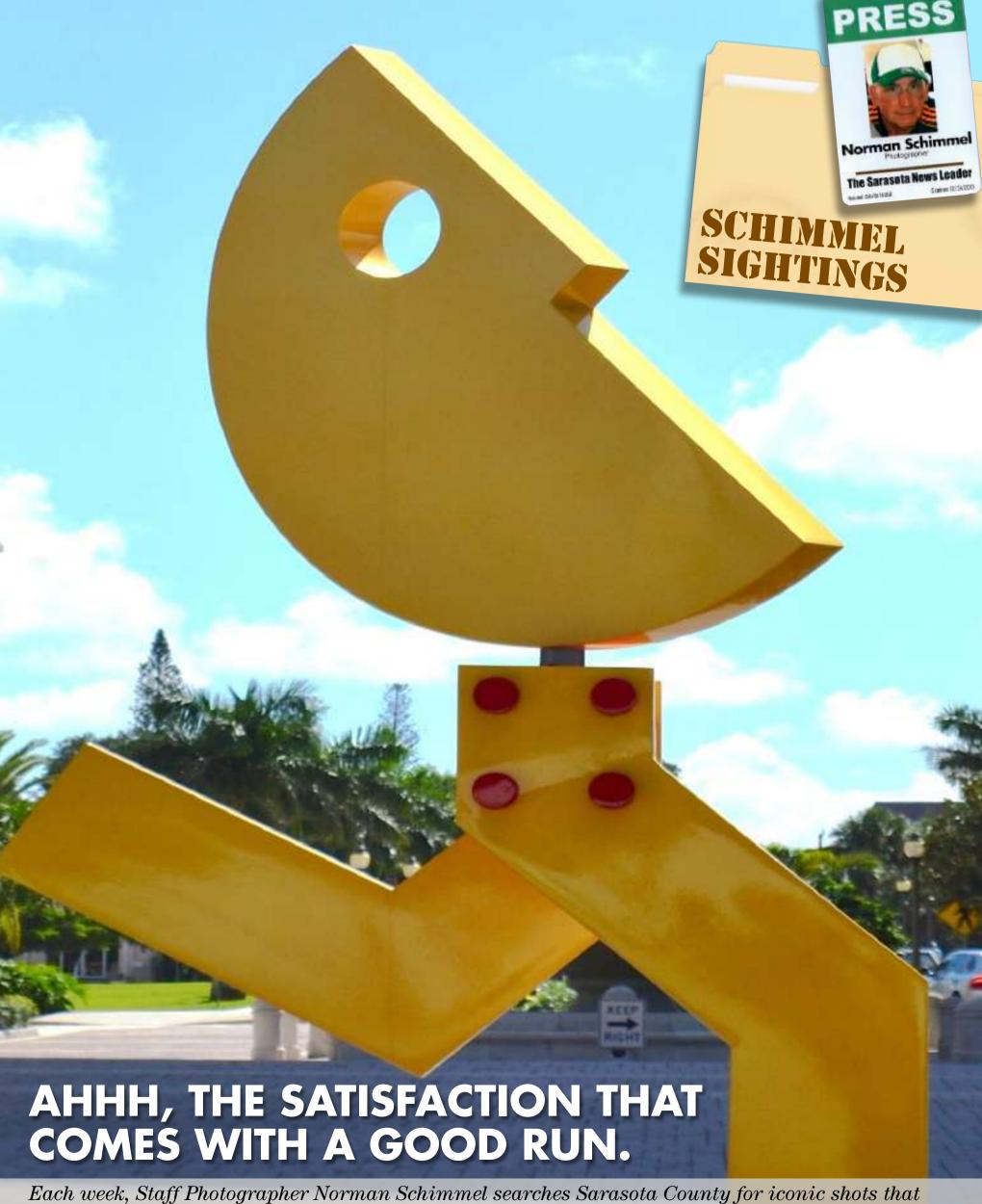
WSLR presents John McEuen in concert

Nov. 29, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$20 in advance; \$25 at door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org.

30 NOVEMBER

Light Up the Village

Nov. 30, 5:30 to 9 p.m., Siesta Village, Ocean Boulevard on Siesta Key, featuring a holiday parade, Santa Claus accepting children's Christmas wish lists, gift bags and live musical entertainment. For info, visit the Siesta Key Village Association website.



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.