

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 11 — November 29, 2013

News Leader

The Progressive Voice Of Southwest Florida

**TURNER WINS HIS SUNSHINE SUIT
THE POLITICAL WILL
A MEANS TO MORE MONEY**

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SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

The Progressive Voice of Southwest Florida

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Welcome

By the time I begin to compose this letter most weeks, I am just thankful I have finished writing all my stories. This time, my emphasis deservedly needs to be on other, far more important reasons for gratitude.

And it is very easy to come up with a quick list, when I look at all we have managed to accomplish with the *News Leader*. Above all every week, I am extraordinarily thankful for the individuals with whom I work. You will not find a more industrious group anywhere else. And while they are my colleagues, they also are people with whom I truly enjoy spending time.

I should emphasize that I am not just talking about our core staff but our contributors as well. You cannot help but recognize their bylines: Harriet Cuthbert, Fran Palmeri and Elinor Rogosin. In fact, Elinor has a review this week of the latest Sarasota Ballet performances, and Fran already has sent in an article for next week. Harriet always has ideas “cooking.” They are every bit as important in the creation of the *News Leader* as Cooper, Stan and Roger.

While I have been better lately, I think, about giving credit to Production Manager Cleve Posey and Copy Editor Vicki Chatley, I do not mention John Riley often enough. The *News Leader* seems to be one of a dwindling number of publications that still has its own political cartoonist on staff, and he is brilliant.

Finally, and most important, I am thankful for all of you, our readers. Without your support, there would be no *News Leader*.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher



TURNER WINS HIS SUNSHINE SUIT



THE POLITICAL WILL



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Front cover: *A City Awakens* - Norman Schimmel

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The City Commission sits in session earlier this year. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CHAPMAN GOES ON THE ATTACK IN HER LEGAL CASE INVOLVING THE STATE'S OPEN MEETINGS LAW

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

Late last week, after *The Sarasota News Leader's* deadline, Sarasota City Commissioner Susan Chapman switched attorneys in her defense against a lawsuit filed by the group Citizens for Sunshine, which claimed she broke the state's open meetings law in October.

Chapman's new attorney, Bill Fuller, wasted no time filing a motion to dismiss the suit, as well as a counterclaim against Citizens for Sunshine.

Citizens for Sunshine attorney Andrea Mogensen filed the suit Oct. 18 following an Oct. 10 breakfast meeting attended by Chapman, City Manager Tom Barwin, City

Commissioner Suzanne Atwell, two police officers and downtown merchants. The topic was homelessness.

Fuller's motion to dismiss says, "There is no allegation that defendant Susan Chapman discussed anything with defendant Suzanne Atwell at the meeting described in the complaint."

Chapman adamantly refuses to admit she broke the Florida Sunshine Laws. City Attorney Bob Fournier signed a settlement agreement on Nov. 14, admitting "the city's failure to provide notice ... and to take minutes was a violation of the Sunshine Law"

Atwell signed her settlement with Mogensen on Nov. 7. In a press release the next day, Atwell said, "I am firmly convinced that I did not violate the sunshine law" Atwell's legal fees were covered by the city, but starting next week, Chapman's may not be.

At the City Commission meeting on Nov. 18, Fournier asked the board members how to handle Chapman's fees after the city and Atwell had settled. He was told to keep paying them until the next meeting, on Dec. 2, when the issue would come up again for discussion.

Meanwhile, the Office of the City Auditor and Clerk is giving notice to a variety of meetings that may include two or more city commissioners, no matter what the agenda topics or settings are. For example, a Chamber of

Commerce meeting has been noticed, as has the upcoming Tiger Bay Club gathering.

The *News Leader* quoted Chapman at the Nov. 18 City Commission meeting saying she never received the same settlement offer that Atwell had from Citizens for Sunshine. Mogensen disputed that statement in an email to the *News Leader*. "This is flatly untrue," Mogensen wrote. "On Nov. 1, 2013 I *extended the very same offer to both Atwell and Chapman*" (emphasis in the original). (See the guest column in today's issue.)

Both women rejected the Nov. 1 offer. Atwell received a different offer to settle on Nov. 7. That offer was not furnished to Chapman until after Chapman made her statement during the Nov. 18 City Commission meeting, Chapman



City Commissioner Susan Chapman listens to a speaker at a joint city/county meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

says. Chapman received the revised settlement offer the next day, she added, 12 days after the settlement offer was sent to Atwell.

TURNER PERSEVERES TO WIN

Another Sunshine suit has been settled. Former City Commissioner Terry Turner became embroiled in a public records request by Mogensen's paralegal, Michael Barfield.

Barfield sued the Sarasota Downtown Improvement District (DID) after the *News Leader* reported that two of its members admitted to using their private computers for email about city matters. Acting as his own attorney in the initial complaint, Barfield demanded production of the documents by filing suit on Sept. 12, 2012. He amended the complaint in December, demanding documents from Turner about a public referendum Turner was supporting.

The city eventually settled the DID lawsuit and paid Barfield \$8,437.50. The city also admitted that two DID members "did not produce public records in their possession in an immediate, timely fashion."


Turner, however, did not settle; he was successful in having his case separated from the DID's because the DID members' records were clearly public while he believed his were private. On July 15 this year, Special Magistrate Deborah Bailey agreed with Turner and dismissed the suit. "Nowhere in the complaint does Barfield allege that the emails sought from Turner were made or received in connection with the official business of the City Commission," she wrote.



Then City Commissioner Terry Turner participates in the Convocation of Governments session in January. File Photo

Barfield appealed her decision to the 12th Judicial Circuit Court. On Nov. 12 a judge upheld Bailey's ruling and ordered "all parties to abide by the magistrate's findings."

The case is somewhat similar to Chapman's. A board and individual members were sued. The city and individuals agreed they violated the Sunshine Law and the city paid the plaintiff's attorney's fees. But one party, not believing he broke the law, maintained his defense to eventually win in court on principle. Then he won on appeal.

Still, it is likely Turner's legal fees exceeded the \$8,437.50 the city paid to Barfield to settle its part of the suit. 

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THE POLITICAL WILL

The County Commission Chambers is nearly full in downtown Sarasota as Robert Marbut speaks to the City and County commissions. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE SARASOTA CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MOVE AHEAD WITH IMPLEMENTING CONSULTANT ROBERT MARBUT'S 12 STRATEGIC STEPS — INCLUDING PLANNING FOR A 24/7 PERMANENT SHELTER IN SARASOTA

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Before a series of votes Monday afternoon, Nov. 25, homelessness consultant Robert Marbut had a cautionary note for the Sarasota City and County commissioners.

If local leaders do nothing, the homeless population in Sarasota will increase 25 percent over the next few years, Marbut said. Based on the rising number of homeless veterans and domestic battery cases, more people are finding

themselves without a place to live or the means to afford one.

“I would encourage you to take action and start working on this,” Marbut told the commissions during a joint session in the Sarasota

County Commission Chambers, the second of two local government presentations that day.

They listened.

After hearing Marbut discuss his 12-point

“If the expert is sure our organization is the one to run it, we will make it happen.”

Tom Knight
Sheriff
Sarasota County





Robert Marbut explains his proposals to the City and County commissions on Nov. 25. Photo by Norman Schimmel

strategy and listening to residents offer public comments — most in support of Marbut's plan — both boards took action.

In a series of votes, the City Commission and County Commission approved motions to begin implementing Marbut's recommendations. They also voted to do the following: extend Marbut's contract to keep him working as a consultant in Sarasota County; and begin drafting a uniform code of ordinances on crimes such as panhandling and camping on private property.

In a 4-1 vote, the City Commission agreed to move ahead with due diligence on three possible sites for a permanent shelter — a list that was narrowed down from Marbut's top four suggestions.

However, the actions did not come without some dissent. Sarasota Vice Mayor Willie Shaw called for a motion to postpone any decision on a shelter until a public hearing could be held in District 1, where three of the four suggested sites are located. That motion was voted down 3-2; City Commissioner Susan Chapman sided with Shaw.

Shaw also cast the lone "No" vote on the motions to move forward with investigating the three possible shelter sites and to extend Marbut's contract.

The shelter location has proved controversial. Shaw has objected recently to a facility in his district, District 1, which encompasses north Sarasota and much of the Rosemary District. He says the area is already saddled with many of the county's social services. Shelter advocates, on the other hand, have said that is exactly where a permanent facility should go.

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta was one of the driving forces to keep plans for a shelter in motion Monday.

“This is going to take some political will, but we need to keep it going,” Barbetta said.

Marbut addressed the question of shelter locations early in the afternoon meeting with the boards. (He met earlier in the day in Venice with the County Commission and the North Port and Venice city boards.)

“You need to put the emergency room where the problems are,” Marbut told the City and County commissions, repeating a statement he has made over the past few weeks.

He also said the homeless center should be “come as you are,” similar to a dozen such

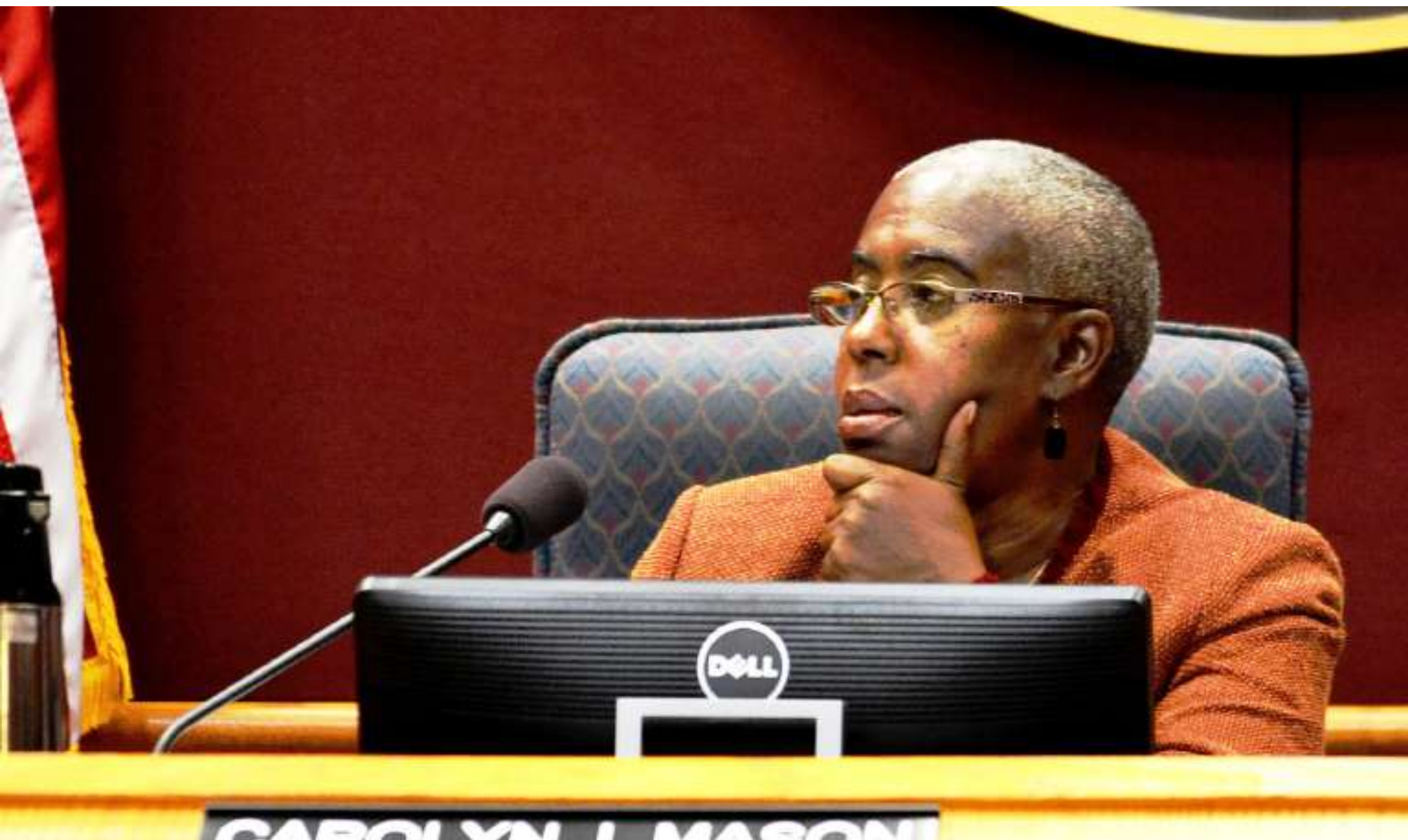
facilities across the country. “Eleven of those 12 are located in the central business district,” Marbut added.

He further stressed that although anyone should be able to come into the shelter, alcohol and drugs would not be allowed on the Sarasota campus.

AFTER THE VOTES

Marbut told *The Sarasota News Leader* he was not expecting the City and County commission votes Monday afternoon.

“I was surprised and thrilled we moved that far yesterday,” he said in an interview Tuesday. “I was expecting maybe a broad approval in concept, or a conversation to have another conversation.”



County Commission Chairwoman Carolyn Mason listens to the presentation. Photo by Norman Schimmel

"I think we will do some real good here," he added.

He scheduled the interview before another meeting with local leaders to come up with a concrete plan for carrying out his 12 strategic recommendations.

NOT JUST A BOX

The working name for the new shelter is "Sarasota Safe Harbor," after Pinellas Safe Harbor, a facility that has inspired advocates for a Sarasota center.

For the Sarasota facility to function well, including meeting its goal of graduating homeless people from the street to homes, it needs to include services such as job training and mental health counseling, and it must be clean and safe, Marbut told the boards on Monday.

It would house about 225 people, he added.

Another important element is that it have sufficient buffering between it and surrounding residences and businesses, Marbut said.

Regardless of functions or site plans, Marbut pointed out that the shelter would not be a solution in itself.

"If the community looks at this [center] as just a box, it doesn't make sense," Marbut told the *News Leader* Tuesday.

"This is going to take some political will, but we need to keep it going."

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

Community residents have to stop enabling homelessness, and that means stopping street feeding and giving money to panhandlers. "The community is part of this," Marbut said.

In addition, law enforcement officers, social service workers and existing service providers and foundations have to collaborate to get people into the facility.



(From left) County Commissioner Charles Hines, City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell, County Commissioner Nora Patterson, City Commissioner Susan Chapman and Sheriff Tom Knight consider the proposals. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Funding for the shelter could come from public and private funds.

Marbut's plan includes a master case management system to keep track of homeless individuals and families and to assist with providing them services.

Groups called "homeless outreach teams," made up of social service workers and law enforcement officers, will go out and encourage homeless people to go to the shelter or a portal for homeless families.

'WE WILL MAKE IT HAPPEN'

Marbut recommends Sarasota Sheriff Tom Knight run the shelter.

"This would be similar to Pinellas," Marbut said, acknowledging that Pinellas Safe Harbor

is run more efficiently than other homeless centers because the county sheriff manages it.

After the meeting Monday, Knight told the *News Leader* he was open to the concept of operating a 24-hour/seven-days-a-week, permanent shelter in Sarasota.

Initially, he was skeptical, he said. "When it was first mentioned, I thought, 'That is not our role.' But our role changes all the time," Knight added.

He supports Marbut's recommendations, he said.

"If the expert is sure our organization is the one to run it, we will make it happen," Knight told the *News Leader*.



City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo (right) considers the points consultant Robert Marbut is making during the presentation. Photo by Norman Schimmel



City Commissioner Willie Shaw again argued against a shelter in north Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Marbut's suggestion of a unified system of countywide ordinances to deal with issues revolving around homelessness is another big step in the right direction, Knight noted. Those laws would be similar to countywide ordinances regulating pain clinics and precious metals.

Situations involving the city's and county's separate panhandling ordinances made it clear earlier this year how a patchwork system can create problems, Knight noted, referring to a court case that went against the City of Sarasota — necessitating quick County Commission action to change county regulations.

Bill Spitler, director of planning and research for the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office and a member of the Gulf Coast Community

Foundation's homeless children and families committee, said Monday's votes set the path for a new, better way of addressing homelessness in Sarasota County.

"What happened in there was huge," Spitler told the *News Leader* outside the County Commission Chambers Monday.

"I have been here 30-plus years, and the recommendations by Dr. Marbut will be one of the biggest turning points in Sarasota County," Spitler added.

The complex and difficult problems associated with homelessness have not been handled well locally, Spitler noted. Monday's commission motions combined for "landmark" action that will help make the community a "better place and safer place for everyone," Spitler said.



Mayor Shannon Snyder listens to the discussion. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Michael Barfield, vice president of the American Civil Liberties Union in Florida — and a critic of the city's handling of homelessness — also spoke during the public comments portion of the meeting, adding his support for Marbut's 12 strategic steps.

"It's time to get together and solve something that everyone agrees has been a problem," Barfield said. "I'm glad we've made progress."

THE BIG PUSH

Marbut's top four shelter sites were 1003 N. Washington Blvd., north of Gillespie Park; 1121 Lewis Ave., near 12th Street and Tuttle Avenue, close to 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 and Webber Street, as well as Southside Elementary School.

The city and county commissioners directed staff to look into three of the sites, excluding the vacant North Washington Boulevard parcel because of its steep price of \$750,000.

Sarasota Mayor Shannon Snyder is a proponent of Marbut's plan for a shelter. "This was a big win for Sarasota taxpayers," Snyder said after the votes, noting that shelters cost a fifth of the expense of a night in jail for a homeless person. Statistics have shown that, on average, about 20 percent of the county's jail population is homeless individuals. Shelters also promote movement from a life on the street to a job and a home, Snyder added.

"It's a big win all the way around," Snyder told the *News Leader*.

When Vice Mayor Shaw suggested postponement of action until a public hearing could be held in north Sarasota "to allow the most affected to have a hearing," Barbetta responded that the commissioners were only directing county staff to conduct due diligence on three of the sites, not choosing a location.


"There will be plenty of time for public input," Barbetta said. "Right now we are just trying to keep the train moving."

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo added that "Yes" votes were an important step for the elected officials to take. "This is an endorsement of the concept, which is to say we haven't been doing this right and there is a better way."

County Commissioner Nora Patterson suggested starting with due diligence on the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. site, which is owned by the city. It was also the location Marbut indicated as most viable for a shelter because of its proximity to other resources for the homeless.

"To me it's most logical to start with that," Patterson said.

At some point, she added, it might be good for the boards to see aerial maps showing how close businesses and residences are to each of the three sites.

City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell pointed to the value of the overall plan as a comprehensive approach that includes master case management and a treatment team. "I'm excited," Atwell said. 

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A MEANS TO MORE MONEY

The inaugural Sarasota-Bradenton Head Regatta at Benderson Park drew hundreds of people. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION THAT MANAGES BENDERSON PARK EVENTS SAYS A FOUNDATION WILL BE ESTABLISHED TO RAISE MONEY FOR NECESSARY ROWING FACILITIES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

A new nonprofit fundraising organization has to be created to raise the capital for the structures needed to host the 2017 World Rowing Championships at Nathan Benderson Park, the manager of events at the venue told the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council (TDC) last week.

Paul Blackketter, president of the Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates (SANCA), said during the TDC's regular meeting on Nov. 21, "We soon realized we needed to create a separate fundraising foundation solely to focus ... on capital improvements. It will not be under Sunshine," he

“ We soon realized we needed to create a separate fundraising foundation solely to focus ... on capital improvements. It will not be under Sunshine. ”

Paul Blackketter
President
Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates

added, referring to the state's open meeting laws.

SANCA has to operate according to the Sunshine laws, Blackketter pointed out.

Additionally, SANCA should have its business plan delivered to the Sarasota County Commission by Feb. 15, Blackketter said.

In early November, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh told *The Sarasota News Leader* that negotiations had been going on for about six months to complete the contract between SANCA and the county. DeMarsh said the process was put on hold while both entities worked to finalize the details of SANCA's bid for the World Rowing Championships, which the park won in September.

Commissioner Nora Patterson — who chairs the TDC — reminded Blackketter during the advisory board's meeting last week that the TDC would not meet again before Feb. 15. Unless it held a session in January, she added, the members would not have the opportunity to comment on the business plan before it goes to the County Commission. "So you need to coordinate that in some way, so this board can see [it]," Patterson told Blackketter.

"I'll be working with Virginia," he responded, referring to Virginia Haley, president of the county's tourism office, Visit Sarasota County. "Yes, I understand," he added.

Moreover, Patterson pointed out that Blackketter had referenced SANCA's next big step as the "refinement" of its business plan.



Teams row against the clock during the Head Regatta on Nov. 16. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“We haven’t really seen [the plan],” she told him again.

“Yes,” he replied, adding that SANCA has learned how to manage events at the park.

MORE DETAILS

In January, Blackketter told the TDC that SANCA needed only about \$5 million to build the structures it absolutely has to have to host the World Rowing Championships. At that time, SANCA had received \$5 million from the Florida Legislature, and Sarasota County had invested about \$20 million in the venue. This year, the Legislature gave SANCA another \$5 million.

Part of the holdup in completing the business plan, county officials told the *News Leader* early this month, was the effort to block a “clawback” provision that came with the latest state funds, meaning SANCA would have to return that \$5 million if it did not meet certain economic development benchmarks. No clawback language was included with the 2012 state bequest. “[T]he thought process is that since this is ongoing funding, we would prefer that that clause not be in future agreements,” county Parks and Recreation Director Carolyn Brown said.

Among the facilities Blackketter listed in January as “musts,” and their estimated expenses, were the following:



*Crew teams and family members gather by stacks of rowing vessels for the Head Regatta on Nov. 16.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

- Regatta Island water and sewer and electrical systems: \$800,000.
 - Finishing towers with timing mechanisms: Three are needed at a cost of \$40,000 each.
 - A starting line tower and timing huts: \$80,000.
 - A three-story tower at the finish line that would contain timing equipment and provide space for the referees and the news media: A basic structure would be \$800,000. However, Blackketter said, the goal was to expand the initial facility to make it capable of multiple uses. The expanded version would cost up to \$2 million.
 - A starting line platform with all the necessary precision timing apparatuses: \$375,000.
- For its next big project, Blackketter told the TDC on Nov. 21, SANCA needs to complete plans for the boathouse.
- That facility, he told the TDC members earlier this year, would be designed to host all sorts of events that would generate revenue for Benderson Park, which is owned by the county.



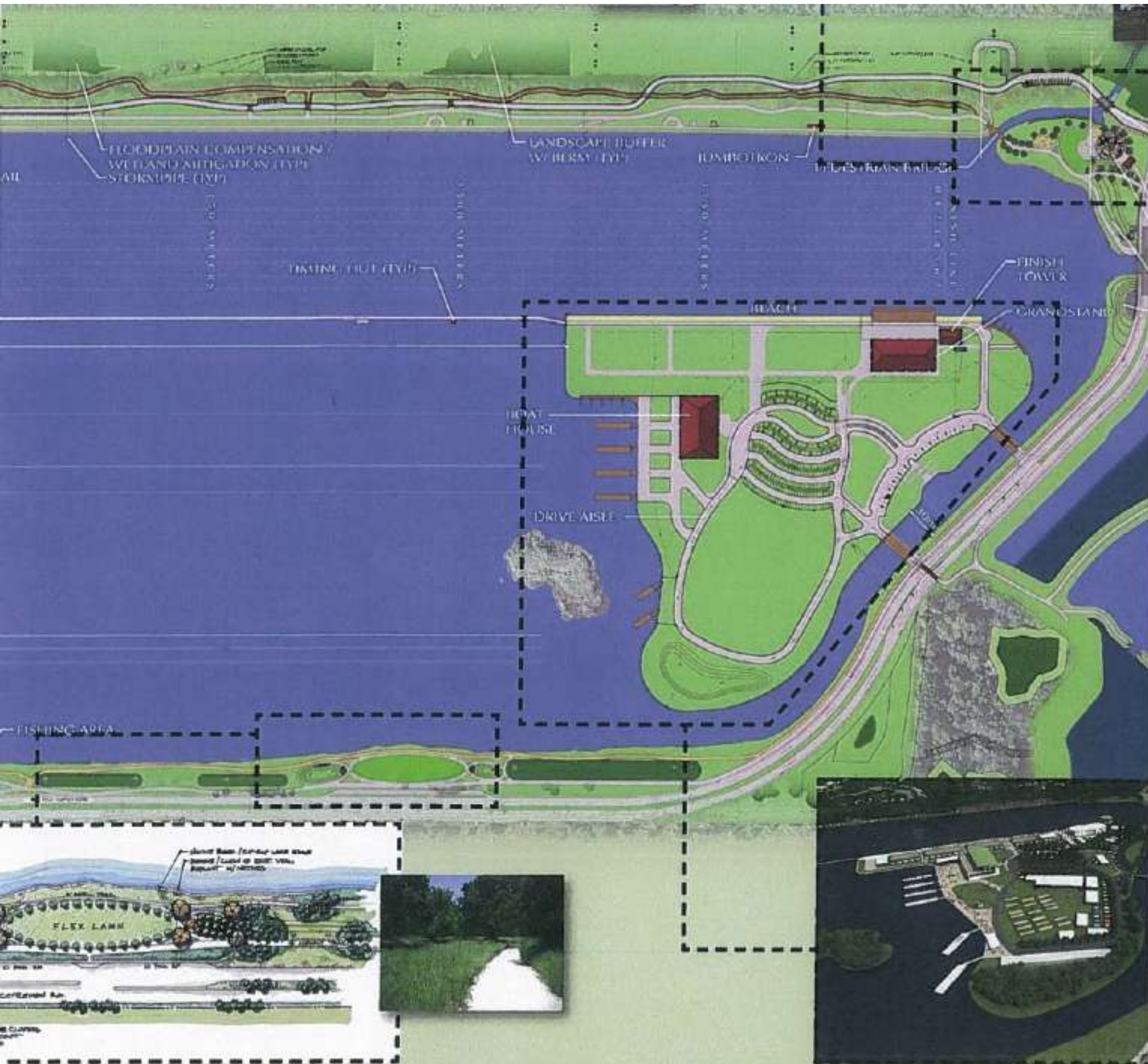
A current aerial view shows the layout of Benderson Park. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Blacketter noted, “You see a lot of wish I ‘coulda/shoulda’ when you go and tour boathouses around the United States and the world.”

The goal, he pointed out to the TDC, is to build a structure like no other in the country. Only

European venues have such boathouses, he added.

As part of his Nov. 21 update to the TDC, Blacketter pointed out that he had just returned from New York City, where he attended the [Golden Oars Awards Dinner](#). The



A schematic shows the configuration of Regatta Island and Benderson Lake. Image courtesy Sarasota County



Paul Blacketter (left) and Commissioner Joe Barbetta celebrate in September after Benderson Park won the bid for the 2017 World Rowing Championships. Photo by Norman Schimmel

event included “all the who’s who of rowing” in the United States.

He added, “They actually got up and celebrated Sarasota-Bradenton for winning the World Rowing Championships ... We’re on the map, and we’re getting a lot of phone calls.”

VENUE NOTES

Last year, Benderson Park hosted 10 rowing events, Blackketter said. This year, it has scheduled 21.

In 2012, 13 college rowing teams trained at the park, Blackketter noted. “We expect that to grow up to 20 to 30 percent every year.”

People from all over the world are contacting him about training options at the park in advance of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, he added.

As for construction: Blackketter pointed out that all the dredging has been completed to make the racing lanes the 3.5-meter depth required by FISA, *Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d’Aviron* — the International Federation of Rowing Associations.

The material removed from the lake during that process was used to construct the 32-acre Regatta Island, he noted, which is in its second year of hosting events. “The island is perfect in size and function and how it operates,” Blackketter said. “And we’re getting great reviews.”

On Nov. 16, the island had more than 1,500 people in stands to watch the inaugural Sarasota-Bradenton Head Regatta, he told the TDC members. Benderson Park is the only rowing venue in the nation, he continued, that makes it possible for visitors to follow

an entire 5,000-meter “head” race. “It was a huge success,” he added.

Asked to explain what a “head” race is, Blackketter said it is a timed event, like a 5K race. Once vessels pass the starting line, the clock begins ticking, he pointed out. Head races are held in the fall, he said, while 2,000-meter sprints are scheduled in the spring.

“We only take on events that we can handle and do right and we can afford,” he noted.

Blackketter further explained that the [wave attenuator system](#) installed at the park is the world’s largest. “It works exceptionally well.” In fact, South Korea’s system was three times more expensive, he noted, “and not as good as ours.”

Additionally, Blackketter said efforts continue to promote the park as a “green” facility, with emphasis on people being able to walk, bike and even rollerblade to it. “We want to promote the bicycle” as the main means of transportation to the venue, he added, though accommodations will still be made for motor vehicles.

Finally, Blackketter told the TDC members that Benderson Development — for which he formerly was executive director of planning — has donated a triple-wide construction trailer for use as an event headquarters and SANCA office on Regatta Island. Although he is one of two SANCA employees now, he added, once the County Commission has signed off on the business plan and the new fundraising foundation has been established, more people will be hired.

Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker contributed to this report. 

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HOW DID WE GET HERE?

*The Sarasota 2050 Plan was designed to create walkable communities in the county, east of Interstate-75.
File photo*

THE SARASOTA NEWS LEADER RECONSTRUCTS, VIA EMAIL, WHAT LED TO THE COUNTY'S MUCH-CRITICIZED CONTRACT WITH LAFFER ASSOCIATES

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

How exactly did Sarasota County come to sign a \$90,000 consulting contract calling on Tennessee's Laffer Associates to provide a right-wing history of smart growth that was fiercely assailed by county commission critics and commissioners alike? That's what County Commissioner Christine Robinson wanted to find out.

Robinson made a public records request for hundreds of emails between the county and Laffer and discussed her first review of them during the Tuesday, Nov. 19, board meeting. While she acknowledged that the request to insert language about a history of smart growth and New Urbanism came from Laffer,

“*[Donna Arduin] wants us to know she has only a BA in economics so does not want the mantle of economist but her partners would be certainly recognized as leading economist. ... Her firm and Laffer is clearly supply side and oriented free market economics, frequent speaker for chambers.*”

Randall Reid
Former County Administrator
Sarasota County
In an Email to County Planning Staff
And Assistant County Administrator
Mark Cunningham

not the county, she told her fellow commissioners that the section was included with the explicit knowledge of former County Administrator Randy Reid. “It wasn’t like it was slid in there,” she said.

The Sarasota News Leader requested copies of the same emails Robinson looked at, in an effort to piece together the process that led to the county’s much-criticized contract. So, without further ado, here’s a timeline (heavily “sic”-worthy throughout) on how things went down.



June 28: Reid emails the commissioners and circulates a memo detailing his proposal for how to proceed with a review of fiscal neutrality in the county’s Sarasota 2050 land-use plan. Fiscal neutrality — the principle that a new neighborhood generate enough county revenue to compensate for any increased demand for county services — has been one of the chief targets of criticism by developers frustrated with 2050’s detailed regulations, and it has become a major hotspot in the battle over the county’s decision to revisit the plan.

Mentioning a meeting held with Tim Chapin, the chairman of Florida State University’s Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Reid writes that staff is developing a request to have Chapin review fiscal neutrality and to bring in a peer review team made up of “expert practitioners.” The team “would focus on land use planning and infrastructure analysis, economic analysis, and monitoring and timing issues to assure the fiscal neutrality concept as eventually redefined is adhered to successfully by conclusion of the specific 2050 project,” Reid adds.



July 1: Schroeder-Manatee Ranch Vice President of Planning Todd Pokrywa emails commissioners expressing concern about bringing in Chapin and his team. “I suggest that the approach to resolving this issue can be much more simplified (and involve a more practical rather than academic approach) as it is not a difficult concept to correct in terms of its definition and implementation,” he writes.

The peer review team “should be approached from a more practical perspective so that it includes other large landowners/developers,



The County Commission sits in session in 2012 with then Administrator Randall Reid (far right). Photo by Norman Schimmel

perhaps the Association of Florida Community Developers, economic/financial consultants that work with private landowners and public entities, and lenders that can best represent solutions to the real-world impediments and barriers caused by the current fiscal neutrality framework,” Pokrywa adds.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta asks Reid for more detail about the makeup of the peer review team. The administrator responds by naming, among others, Donna Arduin, who has agreed to participate. Arduin is a Tallahassee-based economist with close ties to Gov. Rick Scott. She has also consulted with Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio.

“I questioned the FSU folks as to the ‘number crunching’ experience of their academic team and as to the lack of a pure ‘economist’ with credentials,” Reid responds to Barbetta. “The peer review process was suggested as a key element to assure non academic feedback and produce a better product.”



July 2: “I do not believe that the recommendation, as outlined in your memo, should be approved by Commissioners,” Pokrywa writes to Reid. He argues that county staff should be able to “address the identified obstacles presented by the periodic and arbitrary looks at fiscal neutrality.” If not, he says, no large-scale developers will be able to secure funding. “We have clearly stated what we believe the problem and solution should be.”

Reid writes to Pokrywa that he is making the latter’s concerns known to Chapin, but he defends his approach. “The peer review process we suggest provides opportunities for

those with expertise to consider and comment on how to assure fiscal viability and continued financing in this environment,” he writes.

Chapin then chimes in, introducing himself and his team to Pokrywa. “As an outsider looking in, what I see is a well-intentioned policy that no stakeholders are happy with; one that yields many questions and few answers



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Todd Pokrywa, vice president of planning for Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, expressed opposition to county commissioners regarding a proposal for a Florida State University team to review the fiscal neutrality aspect of the county's 2050 Plan. Image from www.smrranch.com

for the various actors,” he writes. “We have been tasked with bringing new ideas to light and making recommendations that benefit all stakeholders, with the ultimate goal of generating development that keeps Sarasota County economically attractive and vibrant, promotes the wise use of limited public resources, and respects the beautiful natural setting that is found in this most special place.”



July 9: The County Commission meets and votes to reject Reid’s proposal to bring in Chapin to review fiscal neutrality. “I don’t want an academic,” Barbetta says. “I don’t want a team of people coming in here who don’t know anything about 2050.” He suggests three potential economists as alternatives: University of Florida economist David Denslow; the director of the University of Central Florida’s Institute for Economic Competitiveness, Sean Snaith; and Arduin.



July 11: Reid emails county Planners Allen Parsons and Tom Polk and Assistant County Attorney Mark Cunningham to let them know he has spoken to Arduin. “She wants us to know she has only a BA in economics so does not want the mantle of economist but her partners would be certainly recognized as leading economist,” he writes. “The contract would be with the firm (nashville) but she would see herself as our project manager. She would like to be assured we would provide substantial local planning assistance in understanding laws currently in affect. Her firm and Laffer is clearly supply side and oriented free market economics, frequent speaker for chambers.”



Former County Administrator Randall Reid reviews agenda material. File photo

“Both Denslow and Sean” — who later drop out of consideration for the project — “have less political involvement,” he writes.



July 19: Cunningham emails Arduin with a draft version of the county’s scope of services. The draft asks for Laffer to review and analyze the feasibility of fiscal neutrality, as well as rules for the timing of reports. There is no mention of a request for a big-picture analysis of smart growth or New Urbanism. The term “supply-side” does not appear.



July 20: Arduin responds to Cunningham: “We are working on a scope that is economics focused.”



July 22: Arduin emails Cunningham with Laffer’s proposed scope of services. It calls for Laffer to provide “a literature review on

the costs and benefits of New Urbanism/Smart Growth development,” “a supply-side overview on the costs and benefits of New Urbanism/Smart Growth development” and “a supply-side perspective on the proper development policy for the County.” She holds a conference call with Reid and staff to discuss the proposal.



Aug. 2: Parsons emails Cunningham with an edited version of Laffer’s proposal. A county staffer has specifically asked for the portion calling for “a literature review on the costs and benefits of New Urbanism/Smart Growth development” to be replaced with wording calling for Laffer to “review and provide an assessment of the overall feasibility of Fiscal Neutrality as a concept.”



Aug. 8: After an Aug. 6 conference call, Arduin emails a second version of the proposed scope of services, incorporating the suggested staff edits but also including an outline of the report Laffer will deliver, including a “review of the history of New Urbanism/Smart Growth development” — the part of the report that will later generate the most criticism and controversy.



Aug. 13: Reid forwards an email blast from attorney Dan Lobeck — a fierce critic of the county’s decision to rewrite 2050 — to Chapin. Lobeck’s email labels Arduin a “pro-developer political consultant.” All Reid writes to Chapin is: “Follow up to polarization on 2050 Commission directive.”



Donna Arduin speaks to an audience. Photo by Don Irvine Photos via Flickr

In another forward, Reid shares with Parsons an email from an assistant county administrative officer from Monterey County, CA. The California official thanks Reid for agreeing to provide more information about Sarasota County’s fiscal neutrality rules. “Ironically Monterey County CA wants to consider adopting our fiscal neutrality policies,” Reid writes to Parsons.



Aug. 26: Reid emails the commissioners with a copy of the final contract with Laffer. That version calls 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.”



Sept. 9: Parsons writes to Arduin, once all the ink is dry on the contract: “You can now begin the work.” 

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OPTING FOR A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Benderson Development proposes a business park for light manufacturing, warehouses, distribution, research and development on the site. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION SPLITS ON A DECISION TO ALLOW BENDERSON DEVELOPMENT TO CREATE A LIGHT INDUSTRIAL/WAREHOUSE PROJECT ON 42 ACRES OFF FRUITVILLE ROAD

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Sarasota County will enter into negotiations to sell Benderson Development 42 acres of land off Fruitville Road where the company wants to create what Vice President Larry Fineberg calls “basically a product that doesn’t exist in Sarasota County right now” — an attractive center for industrial light manufacturing.

That was the 3-2 decision of the County Commission during a

special meeting on Nov. 26 in Sarasota, when the board spent almost an hour and 40 minutes exploring in more depth two proposals the county had received for the parcel.

“*I was interested in a stable economic driver ... The track record that Benderson has had brings a lot of relief to me as far as their ability to attract quality tenants ...*”

Christine Robinson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Vice Chairman Charles Hines and Commissioner Nora Patterson were in the minority. Hines voiced concern that the project could be competition for facilities that already exist in the county, while



Sarasota Audubon President Jeanne Dubi expresses concerns about the potential project impacts on the Celery Fields. Photo by Rachel Hackney

for a lease price of \$1 per year for 50 years with the option of two 25-year extensions.

Benderson Development offered \$2.5 million in cash for the property, but Fineberg pointed out the firm had not had a clear understanding from county staff about stormwater and floodplain issues that would increase the value of the 42 acres. According to county staff, the appraised value of the property ranges between \$4.1 million and \$4.6 million, with the difference linked to an assessment of the stormwater factors.

After the split vote, Robinson proposed a list of issues to be considered by staff in negotiations with Benderson over final details of the proposal and price. That motion passed unanimously.

Among her points was a request that Benderson employees work with members of Sarasota Audubon regarding concerns the organization has about the [Celery Fields](#), a

major birding destination in Sarasota County. The Celery Fields is adjacent to the 42-acre site. Robinson specifically cited buffering to limit noise and lighting problems for birds in the Celery Fields.

Because of the site's location and importance to the Fruitville Initiative, Robinson further requested that staff work with Benderson about the design of the buildings "and come up with some language to depict what is envisioned ... in light of the conversation that we have had today from the dais."

Although Fineberg emphasized that landscaping — especially the use of ponds — would make the project look less like the typical industrial site, Patterson told him the schematic the firm provided the board prior to the Nov. 6 discussion "looks like a bunch of Army barracks."

Given the information Benderson received from the county during the Invitation to



Benderson Development Vice President Larry Fineberg listens to a question from Vice Chairman Charles Hines. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Negotiate process for the property, Fineberg told her, “We just wanted to give you a very conceptual layout ...”

Finally, Robinson emphasized that tenants undertaking research and development would be preferred for the site — “light, clean manufacturing.”

Barbetta said he generally was supportive of her list, but “I do have a problem when we get into design, when you start second-guessing architects.”

He added, “I think it’s better coming from the applicant.”

“And [my suggestion] is attempting to clarify [the look of the facilities] for the Fruitville community,” Robinson responded. “I believe we’re on the same page.”

BENDERSON DETAILS

During about 33 minutes of discussion with the board, Fineberg compared the 200,000-square-foot proposed facility with one Benderson built near the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, at 15th Street East in Manatee County. “It’s been a great product,” he said. “It’s maintained impeccably.”

He added of the Fruitville proposal, “You couldn’t find a more ideal project to have in [a Major Employment Center, or MEC] type zone.”

“I envisioned that property for years as a catalyst that would facilitate the development of the property [along Fruitville Road],” Patterson told him, “because everybody would want to be near it. You might actually be the big bear that nobody can compete with



Benderson Vice President Larry Fineberg takes a question about his firm’s proposal as Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer (center) and Lin Kurant in the county’s Real Estate Services office listen. Photo by Rachel Hackney

as opposed to the catalyst that draws people to that site.”

One project considered in the past for that location, she added, was a new facility for [The Jackson Laboratory](#), but the county ultimately could not ante up a large enough incentive to lure the firm.

“The first thing we all need to understand is it is very, very difficult to attract a user and say, ‘Hey, come to our community, and a year from now, we’ll have a facility ready for you,’” Fineberg responded.

Tenants like Jackson Laboratory, he added, “come around once every several years. We take a shot at [them], and we haven’t had a lot of success. ... What we do propose is to provide facilities. ... To me, that’s a tremendous positive.”

If an area lacks the types of facilities firms need when they are seeking new locations, he stressed, the firms have to look elsewhere.

“We want something meaningful in there,” Robinson told Fineberg. “How can you make sure that that’s what we’re going to get there?”

The character of the structures is important, he replied. Firms involved in research and development and engineering, he added, are the prospective tenants Benderson would be seeking.

When Hines asked how the project would compare to the [Interstate Business Center](#) at Jacaranda Boulevard and Interstate-75 in Venice, Fineberg said the Benderson proposal featured larger buildings with a “park-like setting.”



Commissioner Christine Robinson prepares for the start of the meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

GOODSPORTS' PLAN

Anthony Homer, vice president of development for Goodsports, explained to the commissioners that the firm’s founder and CEO, Jerald Good, relocated the headquarters from Indiana to Sarasota several years ago after falling in love with the community.

The firm has 39 years of development and management experience, Homer added.

Given the growth of sports tourism, he continued, Goodsports’ proposal for the Fruitville property would be obvious on the weekends, when all sorts of amateur events would take place on the site. The goal, he said, was to create “a network of consistent bricks and mortar” for such events around the country.

The firm recently signed a \$9.5 million development agreement with the City of Wichita, KS, for a similar project, Homer pointed out. Another is in the works in Ohio, he added. “We would love to have a project in our own backyard.”

AFTER THE VOTE

Within moments of the commission's final vote on negotiations with Benderson, Fineberg approached Sarasota Audubon President Jeanne Dubi and the chapter's conservation chairman, Wade Matthews, to ask about setting up a time to talk with them about the concerns they voiced during the "Open to the Public" segment at the outset of the meeting.

"We'll satisfy you," Fineberg said.


During her remarks, Dubi told the board, "We've always been committed to the Celery Fields being an area of passive recreation. Sarasota Audubon is investing a tremendous amount of money and time in that to build a nature center."

By the time that project is completed — about a year from now, she added — the organization will have spent \$1 million.

During his comments, Matthews said Sarasota Audubon found Goodsports' proposal more disruptive to the Celery Fields. However, he questioned the appropriateness of industrial facilities "for that ... entrance to the community" on Fruitville Road.

He suggested the county put out another Invitation to Negotiate for the 42 acres.

After the board vote, Dubi told Fineberg she was especially concerned about buffering between the Benderson facility and the Celery Fields.

In an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader*, Matthews said he is hopeful Audubon leaders will be able to work out the issues. "It's doable, environmentally, with this," he said of the Benderson project. 

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LAYING OUT PRIORITIES

DID board members and city staffers listen to moderator Roger Barry as they formulate their ideas for the near future of their organization. The ideas were written on sheets for later voting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS CONSIDER THE AREA'S FUTURE, WITH EXPANSION GETTING THE TOP RANKING AMONG PROPOSALS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Sarasota's Downtown Improvement District (DID) board held a planning workshop Tuesday, Nov. 26, to see what members and the public want in the near future. The DID this year has about \$132,000 in its budget, including a carry-over from previous years. Next year, the group will have about \$82,000 in uncommitted funds.

The district taxes commercial property owners an extra 1 mill to fund its operations.

The tax raised \$344,501 for the current fiscal year.

However, the DID must pay back a \$1.6 million loan over the next 15 years. The money

was borrowed at favorable rates from the city's self-insurance fund; it was used for — among other tasks — the just-completed \$1.4 million streetscape project along Main Street. Among other financial

“You guys really dropped the ball on the State Street garage. A big project right in the middle of the district and you didn't do a damn thing. You really need to participate in what's happening in the city.”

Paul Thorpe
Advocate for Downtown Sarasota

obligations for the organization are maintenance expenses, salaries and covering the cost of city staff time.

Although lack of sufficient remaining funding prevents another similar streetscape project within the defined downtown core, board members and the public still had strong ideas Nov. 26 about what to do with the group's unencumbered funds for this year.

The workshop was guided by Roger Barry, professor emeritus in urban planning at the University of Cincinnati. He helped establish the DID's strategic plan soon after it was formed five years ago.

DID RANKS ITS DREAMS

For people who have had a role in strategic or budgetary planning, this was a familiar exercise. In round-robin fashion, participants suggested projects or other uses for the money. At the end, they were issued small "dots" to place by their favored suggestions.

The big winner was expanding the DID's funding base. Two options were presented: broaden the geographical base of the organization or request money from the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).



*Main Street improvements were under way in front of the Gator Club and Parkers Books in July.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

However, DID Manager John Moran cautioned members that the CRA could go away in about two years, so depending on it for future funding could be iffy. While a study committee looking at the CRA's funding future recently voted to recommend giving the agency another 30 years, the final decision rests with the City and County commissions.

As for expanding the DID's area, one suggestion was to push it west to encompass Marina Jack and the Ritz-Carlton and Hyatt hotels.

The second topic for the DID's money was less controversial — put it into a contingency fund. That idea had resonance with four of the five board members, including the newly appointed Ron Soto. He replaces William Pettey, who was term-limited.

How much to put into the contingency was not as clear, with some members suggesting

a specific number and others recommending a fraction of the unspent amount.

Tied in ranking with the vote to put the money into contingency was another category — “security” — which is another word for “protecting” businesses and patrons from the downtown's homeless people or vagrants.

“Why don't waitresses use the parking garage? Because they get off late; they're carrying cash; they are dressed in black; and have no idea what's waiting for them in the garage,” said Soto. “That's why they park in the customers' spaces on the street.”

In other words, the security issue involves more than downtown residents, merchants and tourists. Even people who work downtown have to be conscious of their personal safety.



Once the ideas were done, the DID board members could vote — or even haggle — among themselves to set funding priorities for the year: (from left) Ron Soto, Tom Mannausa, Ernie Ritz, Dr. Mark Kauffman and John Moran. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

DID board members previously talked about joining forces with downtown merchants and condominium complex associations to raise \$100,000 to hire a couple of off-duty Sarasota Police officers to patrol downtown and enhance security. Downtown Development Director Ron Gollub said he would take on that task.

The fourth priority by ranking was encouraging the public to come downtown. “We need to promote it so people can see what we’ve done,” said DID Chairman Ernie Ritz.

But not everybody agreed with that idea.

“I’m a strong advocate of infrastructure as opposed to advertising,” said board member Dr. Mark Kauffman. “Advertising should be province of the [commercial] tenants. If we

don’t do capital improvements, nobody will do it.”

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

A host of other ideas were proposed. Gollub recommended bringing Five Point Park to life, restoring the benches and starting some event programming.

Board member Tom Mannausa suggested replacing the sidewalks in the 1400 block of Main Street. “From the former Patrick’s Restaurant to the Gator Club, on both sides,” he said. “Those are old and tired and can’t be cleaned anymore. They should be replaced.”

Board member Eileen Hampshire suggested flower baskets on light poles, as well as a comfort station for dogs. “We have a tremendous



An aerial map shows the boundaries of the Downtown Improvement District in Sarasota. Image courtesy City of Sarasota


number of dogs downtown,” she said. “In Europe, they have dog stations with a watering point [that] are surrounded by an iron rail with a sand floor. Doggy bags are available; there’s a receptacle — you push a button and [the waste is] gone,” she pointed out.

Soto returned to the security issue. “We need to promote downtown, and it must be safer,” he said. “From my shop to Patrick’s [one-half block], I have at least three people begging me for money or cigarettes.”

Hampshire kicked a political live wire by recommending the city bring back a few parking meters. “If we put in just 10 parking stations on Palm [Avenue] and lower Main Street, we could use the money for security in the [Palm Avenue] garage,” she said. “If people are

driving around trying to find parking, would they pay a dollar? I think so.”

Paul Thorpe long ago earned the moniker “Mr. Downtown” for his decades of tireless work in the promotion and handling of events to draw people to the city’s heart. He urged the DID board to become more heavily involved in policy formation. “You guys really dropped the ball on the State Street garage,” he pointed out, referring to the City Commission’s protracted discussions and ultimate decision about the design of a facility it had agreed to build as part of the [Pineapple Square](#) plan for downtown.

“A big project right in the middle of the district and you didn’t do a damn thing,” Thorpe added. “You really need to participate in what’s happening in the city.” 

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Volunteers sort the food that has been donated.

WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE ORIOLES, THE MAYORS FEED THE HUNGRY PROGRAM BEATS ITS 2012 MARK IN THE TONS OF FOOD COLLECTED DURING ITS ANNUAL PRE-THANKSGIVING INITIATIVE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Three days before Thanksgiving, the vice chairman of the [Mayors' Feed the Hungry Program](#) was filled with gratitude for the generosity of people in Sarasota and Manatee counties. This year a community food drive brought in 50 tons, seven more than the organization collected in 2012, Scott Biehl told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

"It was a huge increase," Biehl pointed out.

This year, 265 locations participated in the collection of non-perishable items, he noted, also an increase. Additionally, some

companies matched employee donations, Biehl said, and student groups even took part by going door-to-door in neighborhoods to ask for contributions.

About 200 volunteers gathered at Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota on Nov. 22 to sort all the items for distribution to about 20 food pantries — all 501(c)(3) organizations — located from Palmetto to North Port, Biehl said. Along with the food, the program welcomed the 2,300 frozen turkeys donated to it, Biehl added. Further, public support has enabled

the organization to distribute to the food pantries \$10 Publix gift cards worth a total of \$130,000, he pointed out.

David Rovine, vice president of the Orioles in Sarasota, told the *News Leader* the team was “thrilled to help.”

In early November, the Orioles began running a notice about the food drive all day on its billboard outside Ed Smith Stadium at the intersection of 12th Street and Tuttle Avenue in Sarasota. The Orioles also put information on their website to let people know how they



A banner encourages the public to donate to the program.



The sign at Ed Smith Stadium lets passersby know about the event.



Volunteers unload boxes of food.



Repackaged boxes await delivery.

could support the initiative, Rovine said on Nov. 25.

“This is a no-brainer as far as we are concerned,” Rovine told the *News Leader*. “It is very, very important to make sure people don’t go hungry.”

As a result of public generosity, Biehl said, 145 boxes of food were delivered to each of the nonprofit food pantries participating in the Mayors Feed the Hungry Program, along with frozen turkeys and the gift cards.

Biehl also expressed gratitude to Sean Murphy, co-owner of the Eat Here restaurants, who opened a rooftop dining area at his downtown Sarasota location on Nov. 22. All the money patrons paid for their skyline dinners that day went to the Mayors program, too, Biehl explained. A number of former mayors and current Bradenton Mayor Wayne Poston were

present for that event, Biehl said. “It was just another blessing on top of the food drive.”

The Mayors’ Feed the Hungry Program is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization that has helped more than 390,000 hungry persons in Sarasota and Manatee counties since 1987, according to a news release issued at the outset of the food drive.

The program is endorsed by the mayors of Sarasota, Bradenton, Palmetto, Venice and Longboat Key, as well as the chairs of the North Port City Council and the Sarasota and Manatee County Commissions.

Biehl also pointed out that the organization comprises volunteers only; it has no paid staff.

More information may be found at www.mayorsfeedthehungry.org.

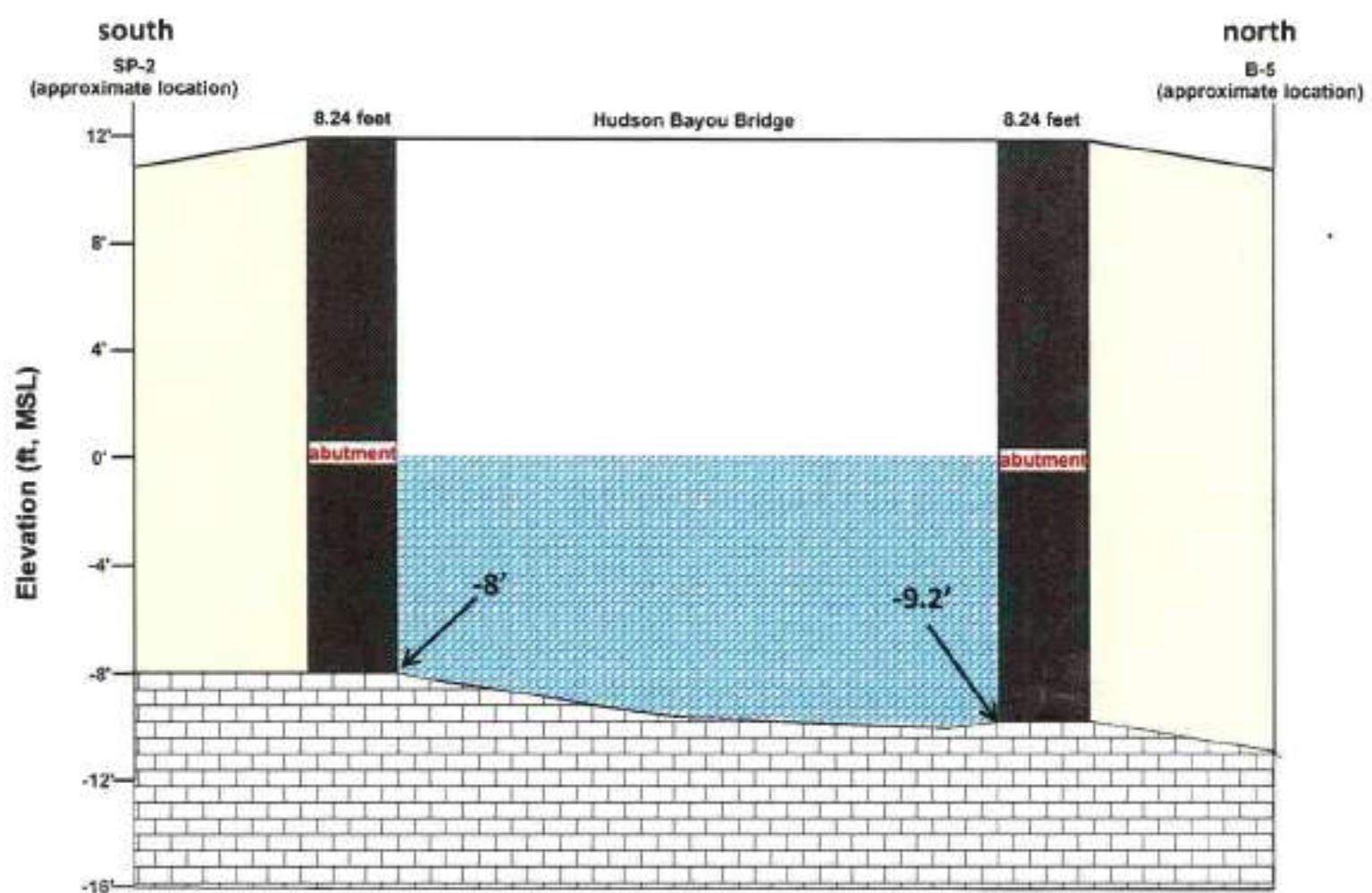
All photos are by Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel. 

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A GREATER TUNNEL DEPTH, PERHAPS

This cross section of Hudson Bayou at the Osprey Avenue bridge shows the abutments reach bedrock limestone. The earlier microtunneling operated barely below the limestone, and it could have emerged into the silt on the north side before boring into the abutment. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE ABOUT THE BEST WAY TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED RESULTS FOR THE CITY'S TROUBLED NEW LIFT STATION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

A series of scientific tests indicate a micro-tunnel under Hudson Bayou needs to be eight feet deeper than originally thought, meaning the lift station on the northern shore in Luke Wood Park in Sarasota may need to be eight feet deeper, too.

The details were revealed at a biweekly status meeting among the project manager, city utility officials and a consultant. The proposal for sinking the project deeper

into the ground came after an examination by Sandy Nettles, a geotechnical engineer and president of N.S. Nettles and Associates of Palm Harbor.

The new lift station team is trying to pick up after the project failed last year, resulting in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit. Earlier this month, another geophysical engineer suggested the previous attempt failed because of inadequate

“It appears the drill would have been in the silt and sediment layer. It would have hit the bridge abutment where the rock slopes down on the north side.”

Robert Garland
Project Manager
McKim & Creed

lubrication of the “cutting head” of a micro-tunneling rig.

Further research now indicates the failure was propitious because the previous team was about to drill into the north abutment of the Osprey Avenue bridge across the bayou. “We’re recommending the crown of the pipe be at negative-16 feet. The previous design was negative-8.5 feet. It would [have] hit the bridge abutment and gone above the bedrock in some places,” explained Nettles.

“It appears the drill would have been in the silt and sediment layer,” noted Robert Garland, Southeast regional manager of McKim & Creed. The engineering company is handling the work now. “It would have hit the bridge abutment where the rock slopes down on the north side.”

NEXT STEPS

Most of the drilling, seismology and electrical resistance testing is complete, so the engineers have a much better idea than their predecessors regarding what lies under the surface — and what lies ahead for the project.

Tom Cross is the project manager for the lift station part of the project. The station is composed of four separate buildings in the park. Two of them contain submersible electric pumps that will propel sewage from the southern third of the city to the 12th Street treatment plant. The raw material has been planned to arrive at the lift station purely by gravity.

“The gravity pipe needs to be lowered six to eight feet,” said Cross. “The submersible




Sandy Nettles is a geophysical engineer who can ‘see’ underground. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

room needs to be lowered the same amount, and the pumps will need to be reevaluated for the additional lift [the eight feet] they'll have to pump."

But there is an alternative to lowering the stations and pipe. "A syphon design means no change in the depth of the wet wells," pointed out City Utilities Director Mitt Tidwell. "There are pros and cons to that."

The choice between the gravity and syphon designs will be ironed out at the next update meeting, on Dec. 9. The gravity system is a "straight pipe" installed with microtunneling, while the syphon is a "curved pipe" like a horseshoe, Tidwell said.

Nine days after that next update session, the engineers plan to hold their second meeting with neighbors and other citizens. It is scheduled for Dec. 18 at the Waldemere Fire Station at 6 p.m.

So far no costs have been discussed in this first phase of reassembling the project. On Jan. 6, the Sarasota City Commission will receive the information accumulated from the first phase of work and then discuss the second phase, which will include an estimate of fees and other expenses to move forward. 



In early October, pipes and other construction material awaited the resumption of work on Lift Station 87 in Luke Wood park near downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

HURRICANE SEASON 2013

THE ATLANTIC SEASON PROVES EXTRAORDINARILY UNEVENTFUL WHILE THE WESTERN PACIFIC SEES TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Editor's note: City Editor Stan Zimmerman has provided his annual rundown on the hurricane season, starting with the earliest forecast, issued back in the spring.

27 March 2013: The first predictions are pending. Colorado State University gurus William M. Gray and Philip J. Klotzbach say, "I expect we're going to come out with a busy forecast for this year."

10 April: Gray and Klotzbach predict 18 named storms, with nine of them hurricanes and four, major storms. They offer a 72 percent chance that a major hurricane will make

landfall in the U.S. The usual odds are 52 percent.

And they predict chances of 47 and 48 percent, respectively, that one will land on the Gulf Coast and one on the Florida peninsula.

A warmer Atlantic and the lack of an El Niño are the reasons.

23 May: The Climate Prediction Center offers a 70 percent chance of 13 to 20 named storms this year, of which seven to 11 could become hurricanes. Of those, three to six could be major hurricanes (Categories 3, 4 or 5).

The normal run would be 12 named storms, with six of them hurricanes and three major storms. The Climate Prediction Center is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The center notes that an El Niño is not expected to develop (and thus suppress hurricane development), but tropical Atlantic and Caribbean temperatures are above average, and there is a strong West African monsoon (that gets the little buggers going) — all very much in synch with the Gray and Klotzbach forecast six weeks earlier.

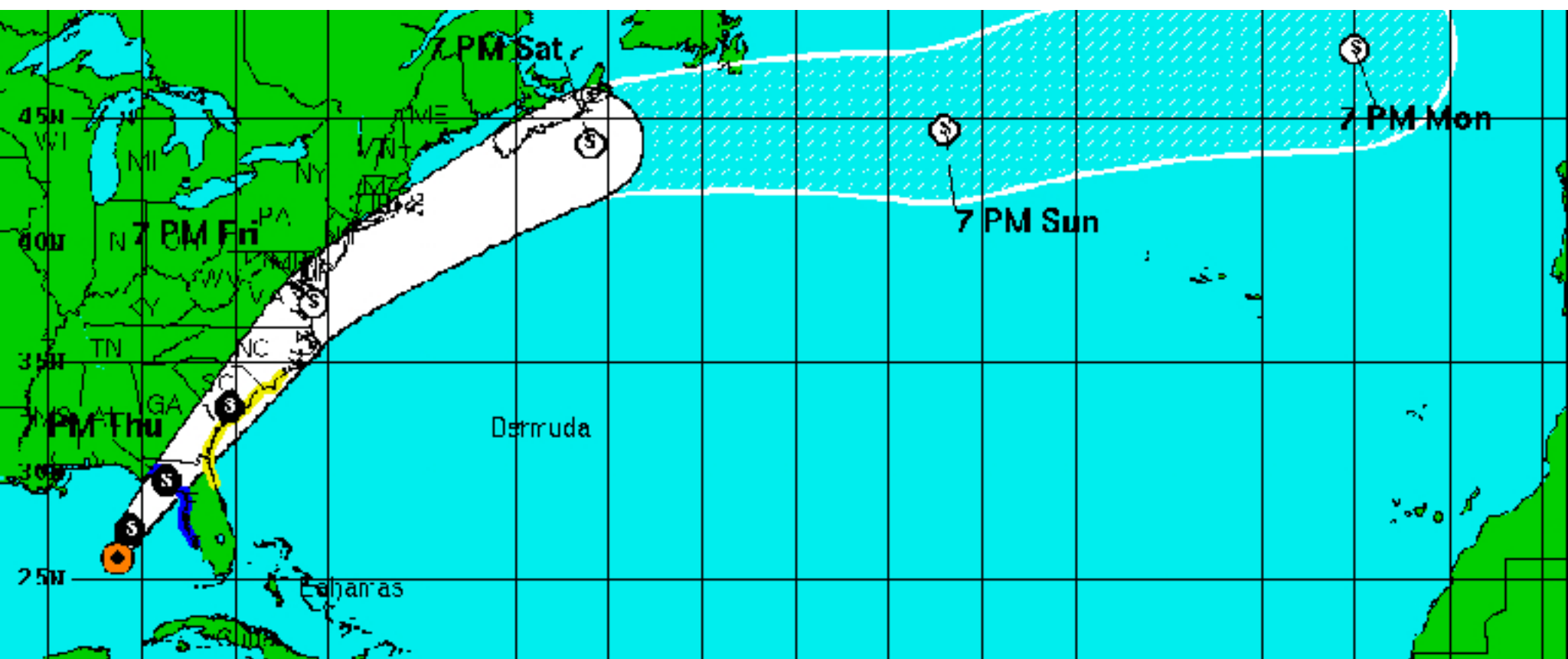
2 June (Sunday): Well it is Day Two of the official hurricane season and already there is a heads up. There is a band of disturbed weather over the Yucatan expected to pull out into the Gulf of Mexico and head east. Then it will have about 48 hours to get developed before coming ashore between Tampa and Cedar Key, says Rob Lightbown with Crown Weather Services.

The National Hurricane Center says only that the band has a 20 percent chance of becoming a tropical cyclone in the next 48 hours. Lightbown is predicting heavy rain — 10 inches — as the band crosses the Florida “finish line” this coming weekend. And there are two tropical waves already on the African railroad. The season is starting.

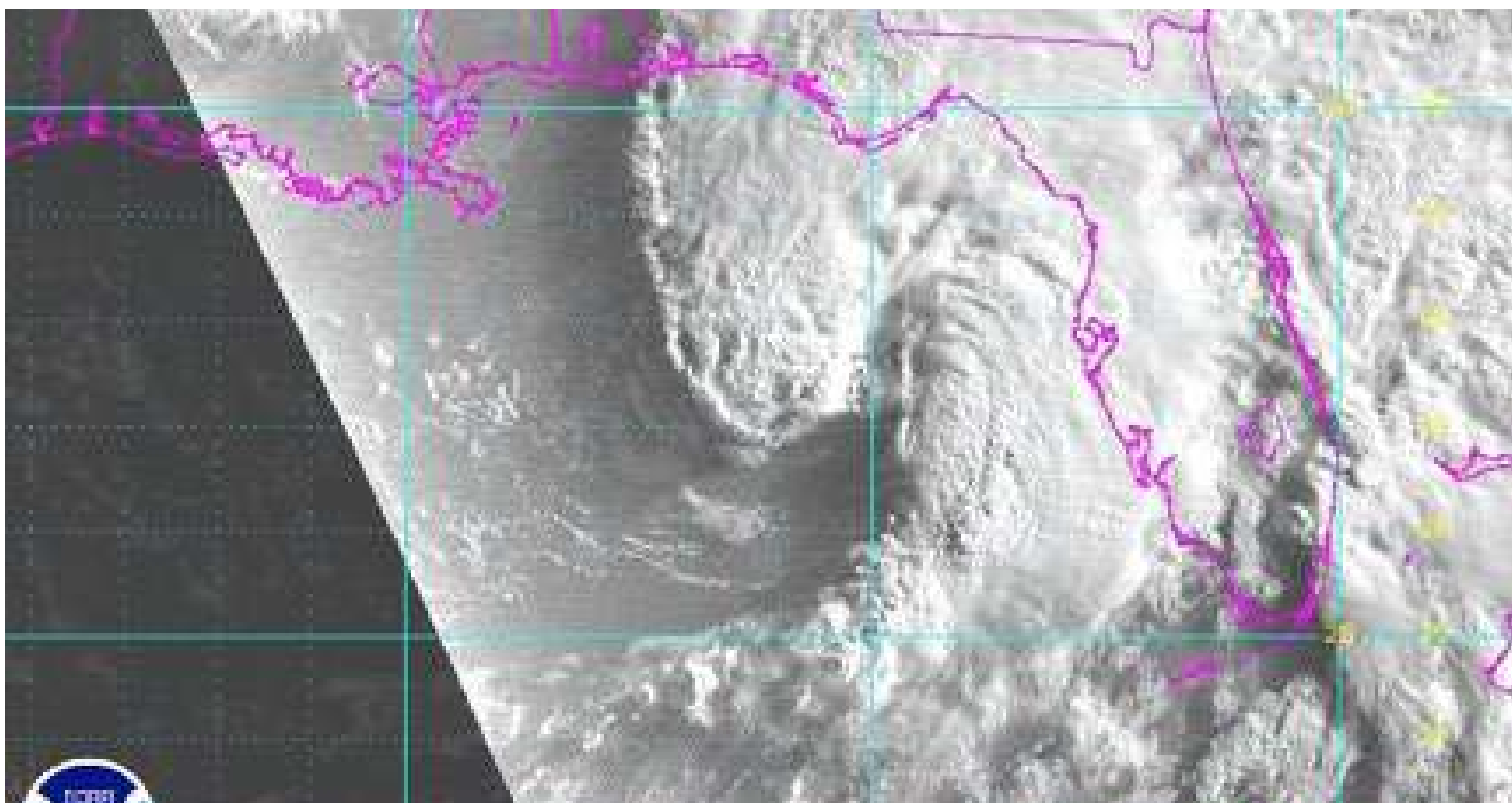
3 June (Monday): Our little friend is now up to a 30 percent-er; motion is generally northward. Meanwhile, it is soaking the Yucatan, west and central Cuba and Orlando south to the Keys.

This is a good warm-up, I hope, to get folks aware it is now Hurricane Season.

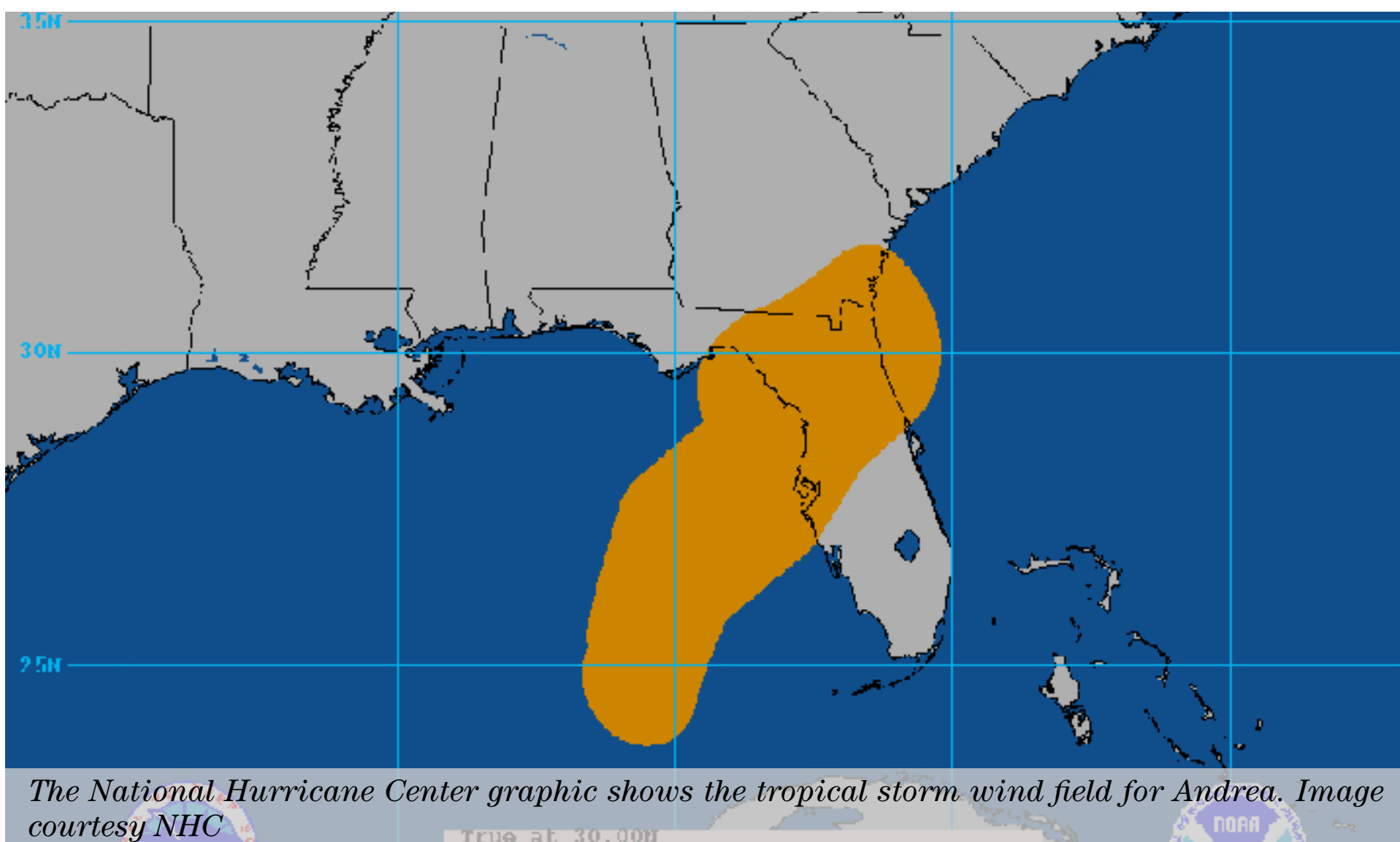
5 June (Wednesday), 9 a.m.: Our friend is now up to a 50 percent chance of becoming the first named storm of the year, and it is expected to bring 3 to 5 inches of rain. A small craft advisory is posted for offshore waters



The National Hurricane Center advisory shows the expected path of Tropical Storm Andrea. Image courtesy NHC



A satellite image shows Tropical Storm Andrea's position over the Gulf of Mexico and Florida. Image courtesy NOAA



The National Hurricane Center graphic shows the tropical storm wind field for Andrea. Image courtesy NHC

this morning. The storm is asymmetrical, with dry air all over its western “hemi-circle,” and all the rain and “thunderstuff” on the eastern half. It has been cloudy-cloudy-cloudy for the past several days but not breezy.

6 p.m.: The NHC declares our little friend Tropical Storm Andrea and puts us under a tropical storm warning. Sustained winds are 40 mph, and central pressure is 29.59 inches. The center of the storm is expected to cross the Big Bend area north of Cedar Key tomorrow night.

And NHC expects Andrea to stay a tropical storm while it moves inland from Florida through Georgia and into South Carolina and then North Carolina before going extra-tropical. Maximum winds are predicted at 34 knots from Key West to Tampa, with a possible 50 mph level at Cedar Key upon landfall. A hurricane hunter aircraft found a center of circulation on the western edge of the huge rainfall mass, so this is the real deal. Some storm surge is expected along the west coast because of the circulation of the landfalling storm.

Offshore sea condition predictions for tomorrow call for 9- to 11-foot seas and southeast winds at 30 to 40 knots.



June 6 (Thursday and D-Day +69 years), 8 a.m.: Andrea remains on the same track, with tornadoes and heavy rains expected to be the worst of it. Wind gusts up to 50 mph are predicted.

However, dry air to the west of the storm has prevented circulation from completing the loop. A satellite view shows the storm trying to close up its “eye,” but dry air just will not let it.

Rob Lightbown has an eerie prediction based on Andrea. “One final thought and observation of past storms in history: In many past years, I have noticed that where June storms tend to make landfall and track are visited later in the season by a much stronger storm. Take for instance 1995: Hurricane Allison made landfall along the Florida Panhandle in June. Later in the season, Hurricane Opal made landfall in almost the same exact location and was obviously a much stronger storm. So, I have some serious concerns now for a stronger storm to impact an area from Apalachicola to Tampa, including the Big Bend area of Florida, later on this Hurricane season.” [Note on 24 Nov.: Lightbown’s prediction of a repeat landfall did not happen.]

6 p.m.: Andrea made landfall about 5:40 p.m. with sustained winds of 65 mph, damn close to hurricane status. Central pressure is a respectable 29.32.



7 June (Friday), 10 a.m.: It is sunny to partly cloudy and a bit on the humid side. The birds are singing and it is as though Andrea never was here.

Andrea is a phenomenon that blew up quickly, almost to ‘cane strength in just a couple of days. Rain has been sporadic here, heavy at times, then nada for hours. Sarasota seems to spend most of its time “inter-band” with no rain and fluky winds from nothing to tropical storm level in moments. It will all be over by tomorrow as the storm moves up the Southeast coast of the U.S., heading for the Chesapeake Bay and then Ireland.



17 June, noon: Ten days later, from the same general area that produced Andrea, we have — ta dah! — Tropical Depression Two. Sustained winds are 35 mph, and it appears to be a Central American rainmaker.

We will keep track all by ourselves, because Rob Lightbown has erected a \$10 per month paywall at his site. Alas, he is taking his insights private.

18 June (Tuesday) 6 p.m.: Still TD2; still on track. Pressure is 29.74 and top winds are 30 mph — a lively little corner of the Caribbean to start us off this year.

19 June (Wednesday) 6 p.m.: The storm is now tropical, called “Barry.” Pressure is down a few hundredths of an inch to 29.68, and

sustained winds now are 45 mph, out some 70 miles.

The cloud cover over Florida is totally land-based.

7 July (Sunday) 2 p.m.: Today is the first day in at least a week with a precipitation chance lower than 30 percent. It has been stop-and-go rain-rain-rain — some heavy, most light, but producing persistent occasional street flooding, all thanks to a huge system sweeping up from Cuba (which really got plastered with rain). The monthly record for rain has been broken, and we never saw more than a brief 30 knots of breeze.

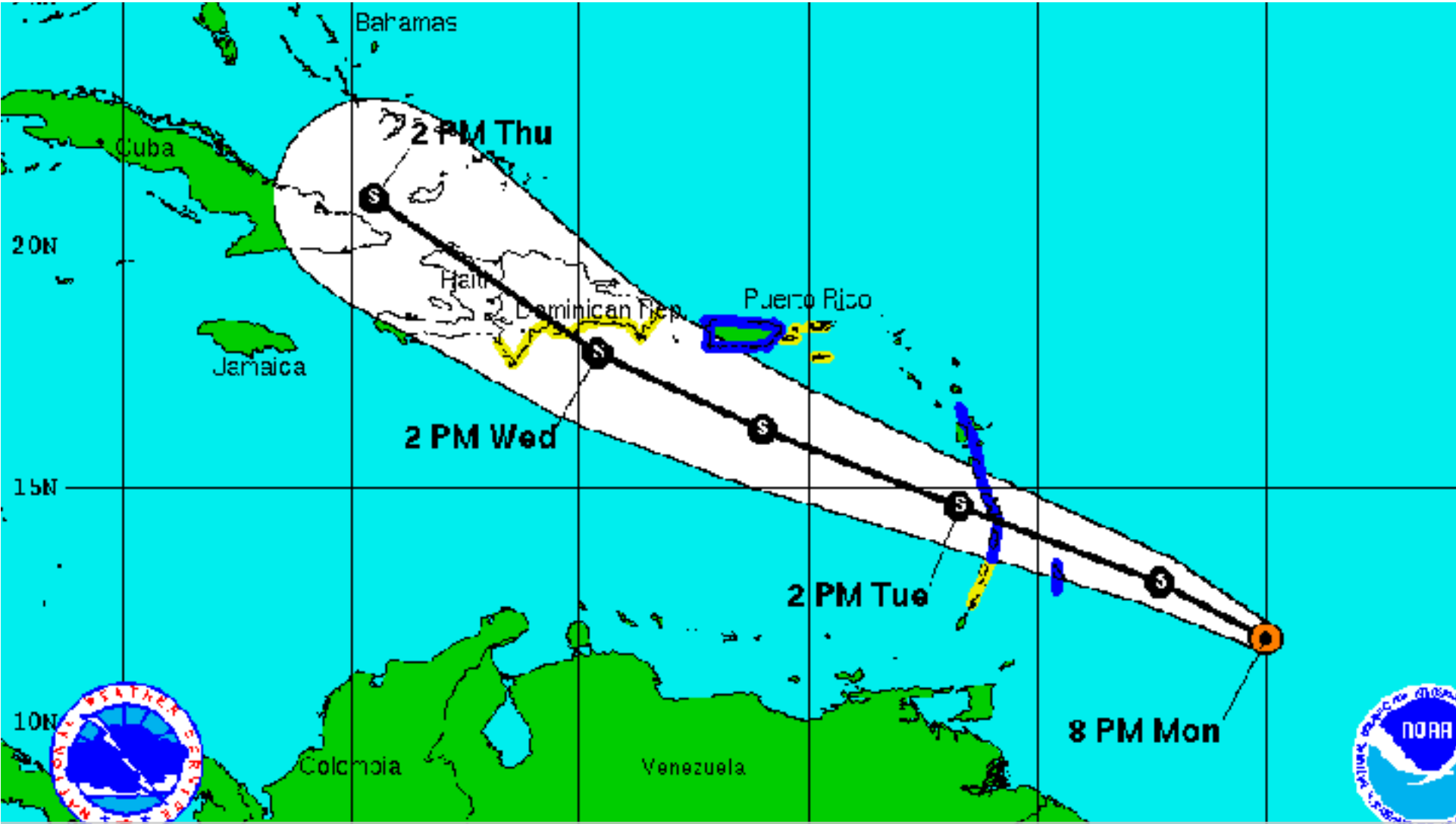
However, that might change. The year’s first “pipeline storm” is brewing in the mid-Atlantic, about 1,000 miles east of the Windward Islands. Closed circulation is forming, and



A graphic shows the expected path of Tropical Depression Two. Image courtesy NHC



A satellite image shows the predicted formation of Tropical Storm Barry. Image courtesy NHC



A graphic shows the expected path of Tropical Storm Chantal in early July. Image courtesy NHC

NOAA gives it a 60 percent chance of becoming a tropical, named entity.

And if that is not enough, our sailboat stalled in mid-channel when we were coming in this morning, so we had to do the “emergency dance” to get the boat tied off in a prudent manner. And if that still was not enough, we came home to find the air conditioning not working. Call it a lovely day so far.



8 July (Monday), 6 p.m.: The storm is called “Chantal,” a charming name for a piece of weather not predicted to get to hurricane intensity. It has a classic track, though.

So by this weekend, Chantal should be exerting some influence on Florida’s weather. We are just on the cusp of “the cone.” My wife and I will not be here, though. We will be driving back to Washington, D.C., from Newport, RI, following our son’s commissioning as an ensign in the United States Navy.



24 July (Wednesday) 9 a.m.: I do not think it was the remains of Chantal, but the drive back to D.C. from Rhode Island was a watery hell for about four hours. Anyway, we have the first “pipeline” storm of the year forming west of Africa; no name yet, just “Tropical Depression Four.”

The NHC says it is expected to become a tropical storm later today. Already, it has 30 knot winds and a central pressure of 29.77. The forecast track puts it in the mid-Atlantic by the weekend. It has a long way to go over damn warm water.

11 a.m.: Yup, now we have Tropical Storm Dorian with a track a little north of TS Chantal’s. It is expected to remain a tropical storm at least through Saturday.



27 July, 11 a.m.: Dorian is still with us, and it is still a tropical storm. Winds are 40 mph and pressure is 29.85. It has been through a rough patch but it is now expected to skirt the northern shores of Puerto Rico and Hispaniola, though as a tropical depression. No watches or warnings have been issued.

11 p.m.: Dorian is down to a tropical wave at this hour: no cone; no forecast track; a weather nada. Pressure is 29.85, a regular low pressure system. Maximum winds are 40 mph. It looks like it will be “Adios, Dorian.”



30 July, 5 p.m.: The remains of Dorian, basically a tropical wave, are north of Hispaniola, kicking up a few thunderstorms. NHC gives a “zero percent” chance of its strengthening in the next 48 hours.



2 Aug., 11 a.m.: Dorian just will not give up.

This is the first time in 30 years the NHC has changed how it handles a particular type of “tropical weather outlook” forecast. It formerly was a three-day forecast, but starting yesterday and in use today, it is a five-day deal. And our luck puts us right in the crosshairs.



3 Aug., 10 a.m.: Damn Dorian has upgraded himself back to a “tropical depression” with 35 mph winds and a central pressure of 29.91. Never a real impressive sort, Doran does get points for persistence.

By now Dorian has carried his name across the central Atlantic, from July 23 all the way to sit close offshore of West Palm Beach on Aug. 2 to its expiration finally today. That makes it a two-week tropical system, maintaining its organization either as a tropical depression or storm.



15 Aug., 9 a.m.: Our second African “pipeline” makes an appearance. TS Erin shows up south of the Cape Verde Islands with 40 mph winds and a central pressure of 29.71. It is expected to run the normal course across the central Atlantic and into the Antilles.

Meanwhile, there is an area of interest southeast of the Yucatan, with a 60 percent chance of growing into a tropical storm over the next five days. That one is predicted to turn north and then west into the northern Gulf Coast, so it bears watching, too.



27 Aug., 6 p.m.: The Yucatan continues to be a hotbed this year, as Tropical Storm Fernand whipped into existence southeast of Veracruz, Mexico, on Aug. 25 and coming ashore on Aug. 26. The storm quickly weakened after winds topped out at 50 mph.

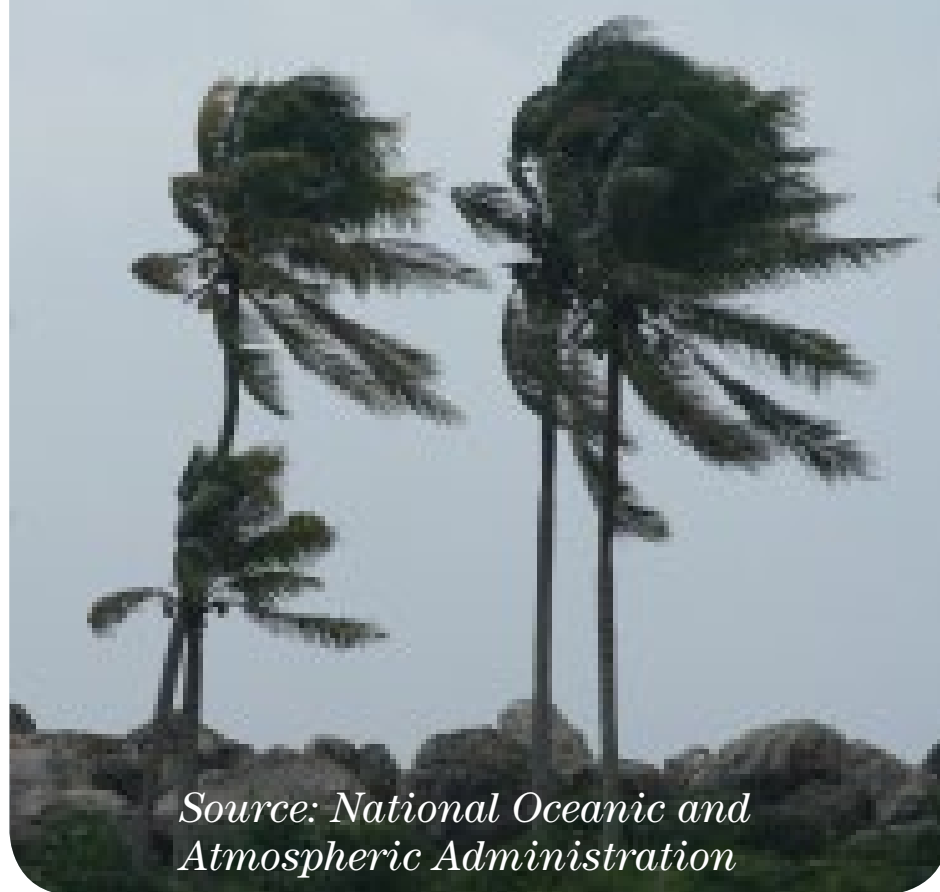


6 Sept., 6 p.m.: At this instant a *real* afternoon thunderstorm is about ready to pull its pin and explode all around us. This summer, for the first time since the late 1970s, we have experienced a few historic “It’s 4:15 p.m., so it is going to start raining now” afternoon thunderstorms.

This is the absolute peak of hurricane season. And while there are four “areas of interest” in

QUICK FACTS

- Hurricane season in the Atlantic begins June 1st and ends November 30th. The Eastern Pacific hurricane season begins May 15th and also ends November 30th.
- The 2013 hurricane season is on track to become the least active hurricane season in the satellite era since 1983.
- Hurricanes and typhoons are tropical cyclones
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration defines a tropical cyclone as “... a rotating, organized system of clouds and thunderstorms that originates over tropical or subtropical waters and has a closed low-level circulation. Tropical cyclones rotate counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere.



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

yellow and one red circle denoting Tropical Depression Eight moving ashore in eastern Mexico, things are actually quiet for now — as they say in the movies: “Too quiet.” Where is all the heat going? Are the tropics supposed to just get hotter and hotter and monopolize all the moisture? The global purpose of hurricanes is to remove heat and moisture, restoring some semblance of balance to the climate.

It has been a wet summer for Sarasota, perhaps the wettest in a couple of decades, as things became a bit more tropical instead of savannah-like. Even the normally bald spots are green.



9 Sept., 10 a.m.: Tropical Storm Humberto has formed just west of the African coastline, and it continues to strengthen. Right now its central pressure is 29.68 inches with its maximum winds “only” 40 mph.

The forecast says Humberto has all the makings of a major storm. But changing weather patterns to the northeast are expected to pull the storm off the normal “pipeline track” and send it north into much cooler waters. So we will see what happens.

Meanwhile, the tropical depression that passed between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic on Sept. 6 (a one-day wonder called Gabrielle) has rejuvenated itself and is on the verge of becoming a tropical storm. It is tracking due north about 1,000 miles east of the continental U.S.



10 Sept., 9:30 a.m.: This is getting crazy. The season is half over, and not a single hurricane has formed. We may get the first one

tomorrow, as Humberto travels west of the Cape Verdes Islands headed north (!?) into colder waters.

At the same time, under the “How weird is this?” category, Tropical Storm Gabrielle has reformed east of the Bahamas and is headed north to nowhere except colder sea temps. And yet another tropical wave is crossing the Yucatan, bringing more rain to that drenched peninsula.

Is it really a hurricane season without hurricanes? If Humberto does become No. 1 this year, it will be the latest formation in about a century. I am sure the climate-change deniers will leap on that fact.



11 Sept., noon: Humberto becomes the first hurricane of the 2013 season, and it misses by only hours the record of being the latest hurricane ever to form. Hurricane Gustav in 2002 retains that record.

However, Humberto is staying on the African side of the Atlantic, and it is predicted to stay there and turn north instead of heading west.



13 Sept., 6 p.m.: Humberto’s wind speed has dropped below the 75 mph threshold, and it is no longer considered a hurricane. It remains devoted to heading north into the eastern Atlantic.

Meanwhile, the Yucatan-crosser became a depression before turning into Tropical Storm Ingrid and putting the Mexican mainland in a “tropical vice,” with Hurricane Manuel sitting on the western shore.



14 Sept., 6 p.m.: Ingrid is now the second hurricane of the Atlantic season, with 85 mph sustained winds. While it had the necessary wind speed, the storm looks nothing like a traditional hurricane in satellite photos. But it is dropping heavy rain on northeastern Mexico.



16 Sept., 4 p.m.: Ingrid comes ashore in northeast Mexico as a tropical storm and rapidly weakens back into a tropical depression: another two-day hurricane.



1 Oct., 8 a.m.: Yes, the peak of the season has come and gone and still no real activity. Humberto briefly became a hurricane in the mid-Atlantic, turning north and then northeast to nowhere. The season's first hurricane was

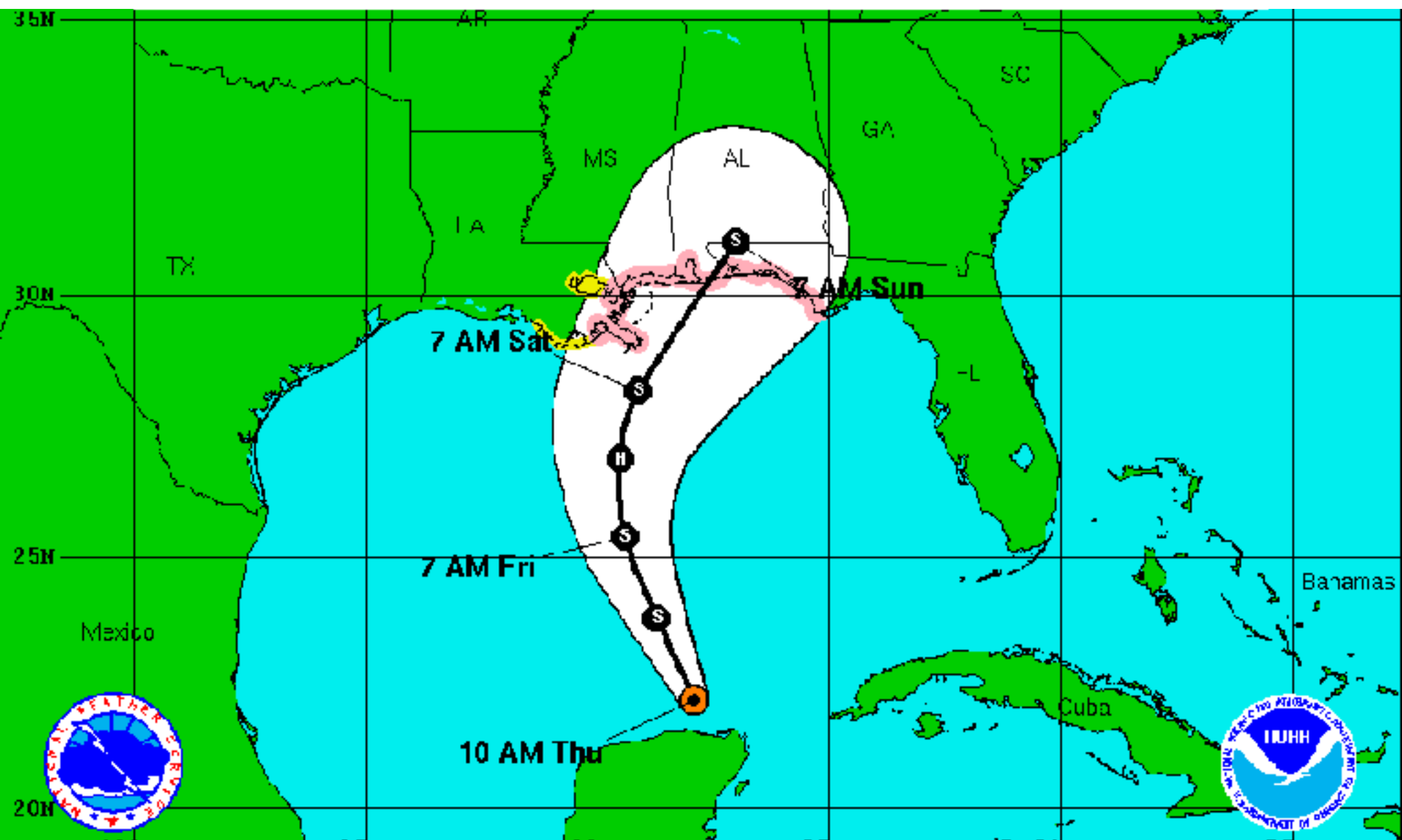
a two-day wonder. Thousands of miles away, Ingrid also spent two days as a hurricane.

A tropical storm named Jerry has formed, again in the mid-Atlantic and on much the same track as Humberto and Gabrielle. And there is an area of "disturbed weather" that could develop into something later this week. It is now southwest of Jamaica and heading northwest, away from us.



3 Oct., 5 p.m.: Jerry is going down and going nowhere. But that "disturbed weather" patch has turned into Tropical Storm Karen, now just off the northern Yucatan coast.

Winds are 65 mph, and the storm is expected to go to hurricane strength tomorrow but sag back down to tropical storm level by landfall,



A graphic shows the projected path of Tropical Storm Karen in early October. Image courtesy NHC

probably along the Mississippi coast. It will be another rainmaker.

Here we are, out of the wind prediction areas with no severe rainfall predicted for Sarasota. But the Florida Panhandle looks to be in for a drenching.



5 Oct., 7 p.m.: TS Karen is barely that now. It never achieved hurricane strength; instead, it has become a 40 mph storm and is expected to weaken further. The “cone” shows a hard turn to the east, with the storm holding just south of the Panhandle as it peters out. No big rain event is forecast anymore.

So far, this has been a one-hurricane year, and a year when tropical systems form and then die. Some graduate student will put together a thesis from the lack of “hurricane days” in 2013 compared to prior years.



6 Oct., 11 a.m.: This year the escalator always seems to be heading down. Karen three days ago was predicted to be at near hurricane force as it came ashore somewhere between New Orleans and Mobile, AL, carrying a ton of rain.

This morning the NHC reports Karen has dissipated, with maximum winds of 30 mph and a central pressure of 29.80 inches. The pressure at this moment at the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport is 29.89 inches, and our winds are so light we have cancelled a morning sail in hopes the breeze will pick up this afternoon.

In other words, Karen did not even make it to shore before it was torn apart despite warm waters and other encouraging factors.



13 Oct., 9 p.m.: The busted pipeline: Over the past several days, an area of suspicious



The path of Typhoon Haiyan in the Western Pacific in Nov. 2013

weather formed off the coast of Africa in the usual place. Soon it went “orange” for more intensity and then “red” for greater certainty of formation, as the NHC gauged its danger. But then it went back to “orange” and then “yellow.” Now it is marked as “disorganized showers.” Ditto Karen?

This is going to be a crow-eating year for the long-range predictors. The science of meteorology is complex beyond imagination. What coulda-shoulda been a gangbuster year for hurricanes was instead just a bust. One so far has formed — just one.

Imagine sitting in your ivory tower and predicting a hurricane season with just one hurricane. Your grant funders would laugh you out of the park. But so far, that is what we have seen. And the clock is ticking down.



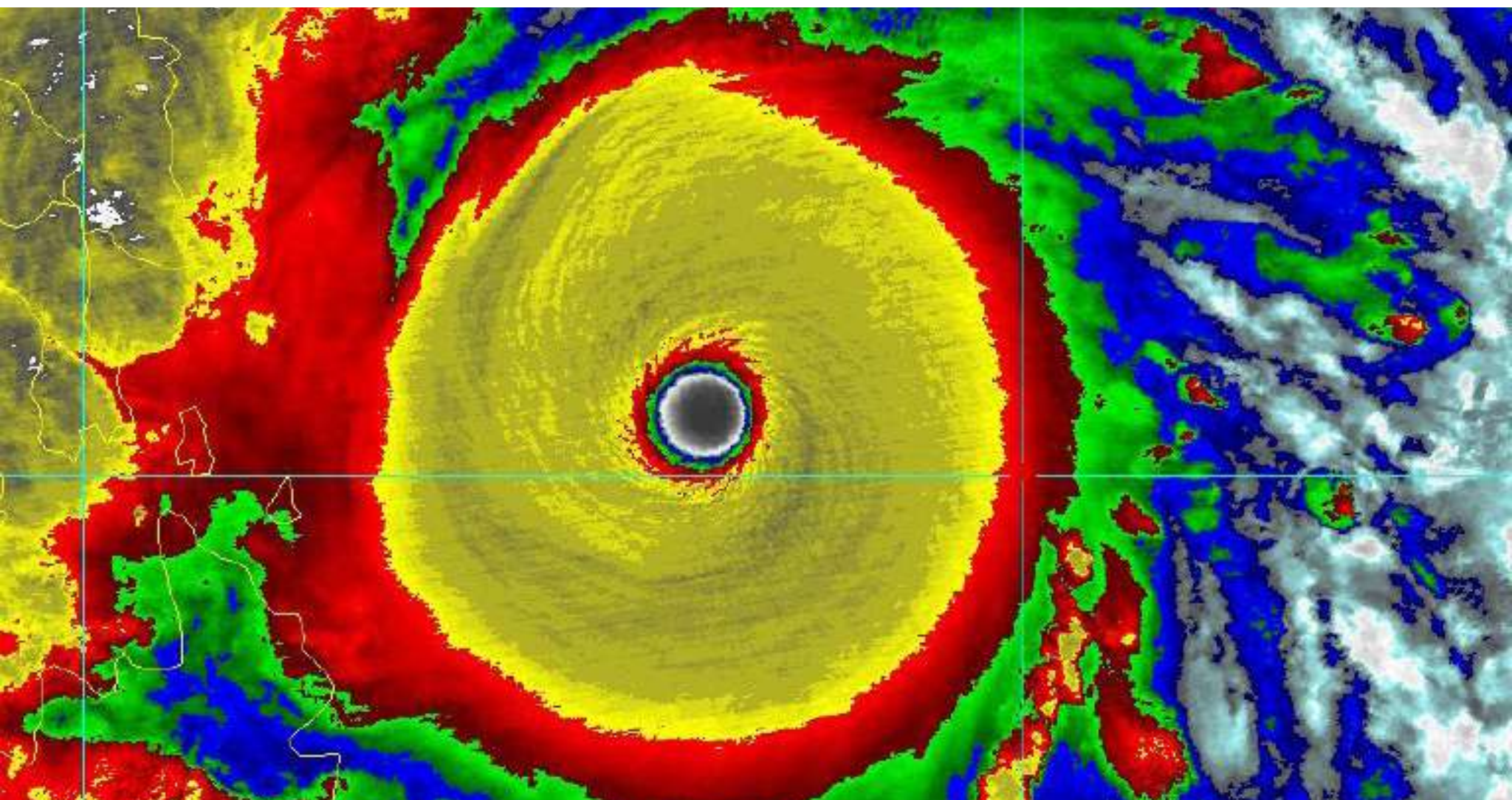
22 Oct., 9 a.m.: Its name is Lorenzo, a bare-bones tropical storm with 40 mph winds and a central pressure of 29.77 inches. It is in the mid-Atlantic and trending north and east away from everything. Nothing is in its favor; sea surface temps are decreasing and wind shear is expected to blow the storm apart in four or fewer days.



24 Oct., 9 p.m.: Lorenzo is history, off the record books. As the cops say, “Gone on arrival.”



7 Nov., 5 p.m.: For this news flash, we sweep you from the not-so-stormy Atlantic to the not-so-pacific western Pacific Ocean. The fourth-strongest storm in recorded history is now hammering the eastern archipelagos of



A graphic shows Typhoon Haiyan as it strikes the Philippines. Image courtesy Colorado State University

the Philippines. It is called Typhoon Haiyan (or Super Typhoon Yolanda, in the Philippines), and it is pushing *sustained winds* of 195 mph. Gusts are up to 235 mph, according to the Joint Typhoon Warning Center. Central barometric pressure is estimated at 898 millibars, only the second storm in the past 22 years with pressure to fall that low.

This is off-scale. The Dvorak metric used for satellite imagery peaks at 8.0. This afternoon scientists estimated Haiyan was at 8.1.

Storm surge on the eastern shoreline could push 10 feet, with 40-foot waves on top — yes, 190 mph sustained winds and a 50-foot wall of water at the shoreline, right now, this instant, halfway around the globe. While the storm is the fourth strongest in history, it takes top spot for wind intensity at landfall. The previous peak was Hurricane Camille in 1969, which landed in Mississippi with 190 mph winds.

The eye is tiny, increasing its circulation (and wind speed) like an ice skater pulling in her arms during a spin.

Meanwhile, we are having a quiet year. It has been active in the so-called “Pacific” ocean. Both ocean basins were quiet until mid-September. So far 30 named storms have formed in the western Pacific, and five have become “super typhoons.” On average, about 27 storms would get a name in one year.

Unlike the Atlantic and eastern Pacific, the western Pacific has no “typhoon season”; the storms can form any time of year.

9 Nov. 3 p.m.: The Philippines’ storm, Yolanda, has blown through, leaving an estimated 1,200 dead in its wake. A million people were displaced and took shelter. Winds at the 4:40 a.m. local-time landfall were measured at 145 mph, with gusts to 170 mph.



11 Nov., 9 a.m.: The human cost of Yolanda is now estimated at 10,000 dead. One town of 220,000 is utterly shattered. The Philippines’ top disaster official estimated a storm surge of 10 to 13 feet flooded the town, propelled by 140 mph sustained winds.

“It was a tsunami-like storm surge; it is the worst time,” said Eduardo de Rosario, the executive director of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, in an interview after touring the damage at Tacloban.

Of particular concern are the missing. There is speculation people were sucked out to sea by the receding surge.



18 Nov., 10 p.m.: Back in the Atlantic, we have the 13th named storm of the season, Melissa. A tropical storm in mid-ocean, it carries 29.09 inches of central pressure and sustained winds of 60 mph.

It has been brewing for the past several days, and it is sufficiently large to raise the surf from Bermuda to Puerto Rico. Looking at the projected track, this is clearly the “humanitarian storm,” avoiding any spot of land, no matter how small.

With the season coming to an end in less than two weeks, it looks like Melissa will close the



books on a mild Atlantic hurricane season: 13 named storms and a single two-day hurricane.



21 Nov., 6 p.m.: Melissa continues northeast, bringing gale-force winds to the Azores tonight. Central pressure is actually hurricane-caliber at 28.94 inches, and sustained winds are 65 mph. By tomorrow, the storm is expected to lose its tropical characteristics and close out the season ... we hope.

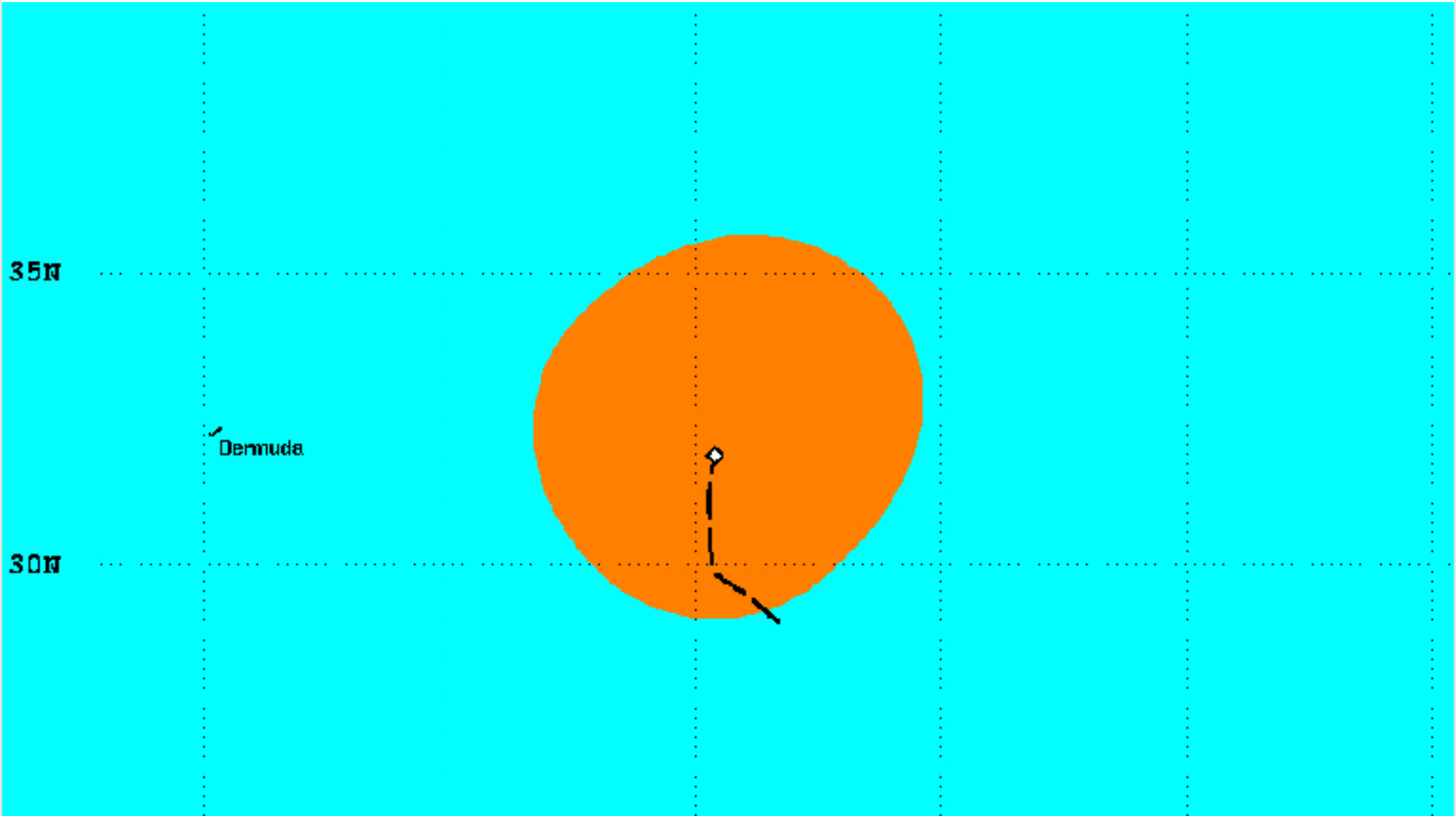


24 Nov., 1 p.m.: Only the very first tropical storm of the year — Andrea — made landfall in the United States. As a tropical depression, Dorian brushed Florida’s east coast but then peeled away following the Gulf Stream waters. Tropical Storm Karen looked like a threat, but it evaporated as it neared Louisiana.

And for everybody, this was the hurricane season without hurricane threats. Only Humberto and Ingrid prevented this from being the “hurricane season without any.”

So it has been a near record year in both ocean basins: for the Atlantic, one of the least active and destructive hurricane seasons in decades; for the western Pacific, just the opposite, with five “super typhoons” and the terrible toll of Yolanda in the Philippines.

So now it is time to recycle your hurricane supplies. The All Faiths Food Bank will appreciate any canned goods you would like to donate. And your trees and shrubs will enjoy that bottled water in the dry season before it is time to fill the jugs to prepare for hurricane season 2014. 



25A graphic shows the tropical storm wind field for Melissa in mid-November. Image courtesy NHC

DEADLINE ANNOUNCED FOR DISCOUNT ON PROPERTY TAXES

Because Nov. 30 — legally the last day to pay property taxes with a 4-percent discount — falls on a Saturday, Sarasota County Tax Collector Barbara Ford-Coates is urging taxpayers to plan ahead.

According to Ford-Coates in a news release, “Florida law extends the discount for customers who pay in person on Dec. 2.” To assist customers on that day, drive-through service will be available from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition to paying in person, customers also can receive the 4 percent discount by doing one of the following:

- Making certain the payment is postmarked by Saturday, Nov. 30.
- Paying online at www.SarasotaTaxCollector.com by 11:59 p.m. EST Nov. 30.
- Placing a payment in the drop-box by 5 p.m. EST on Monday, Dec. 2. The drop-box locations are in downtown Sarasota at the southeast corner of Washington Boulevard and Ringling Boulevard, at the Terrace Building; 8484 S. Tamiami Trail, across from Palmer Ranch Plaza (on the south side of the building in the drive-through lane); and at the R.L. Anderson Administration Center, 4000 S. Tamiami Trail in Venice, to the right of the main entrance, opposite the fountain.

COUNTY TO PROCEED WITH SPORTS COMPLEX SITE PURCHASE

Having cleared up the potential for problems in ridding itself of unwanted fences on adjacent parcels, the Sarasota County Commission voted unanimously on Nov. 26 to proceed with a deal to purchase 115 acres of Newtown land for a North County Sports Complex.

The vote authorized Chairwoman Carolyn Mason to execute a letter notifying Aqua Holdings Inc. of the board's decision to exercise its option to purchase the site.

During their Nov. 19 regular meeting, commissioners acknowledged concerns that the county could be entangling itself in a legal quagmire if the fence issue were not resolved before it moved ahead with the purchase.

During their special meeting on Nov. 26, Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer notified them that he had received a letter

from Aqua Holdings the previous day saying it had won agreement of the property owners to take down the fences.

The Nov. 25 Aqua letter says, "These encroachments will be removed prior to the asset pre-closing scheduled for December 11, 2013 either by Aqua or by the property owner."

"See how easy it was," Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out, drawing laughter from his fellow commissioners. "All we had to do was tell them what we wanted *before* the closing."

The 115-acre parcel is on the northwest quadrant of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way and Tuttle Avenue. The purchase price and closing costs total \$2,236,500, according to a memo provided to the board. The actual expense for the parcel is \$2 million.

Rachel Brown Hackney



Fences encroaching on the site of the planned new North County Sports Complex will be removed before the county closes on the property. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

PUBLIC ASKED TO TAKE SURVEY ON DOWNTOWN BUSINESS CLIMATE

The City of Sarasota is seeking the public's help to shape the downtown Sarasota business climate.

"How do we improve upon downtown Sarasota's business environment? What are the goods and services needed to enable downtown to compete in the regional marketplace?" a city news release asks. "The recently adopted 2014-2016 City of Sarasota Strategic Plan placed identifying an 'optimal balance of types of businesses' for downtown as one its goals," the release adds.

The Downtown Sarasota Community Survey will be online from Monday, Dec. 2, through Friday, Dec. 6. This is part of a larger market study being conducted by city staff for downtown, St. Armands Circle and the Rosemary

District, the release points out. "An outside consultant will soon be hired to complete the study and to make recommendations about the types of businesses to grow and other businesses to recruit into the community," the release adds. Understanding the shopping habits and preferences of members of the community is an important first step in downtown planning, "especially as regional competition continues to grow," the release notes.

To participate in the survey, simply log onto www.surveymonkey.com/s/DowntownSarasota.

Responses will remain anonymous, the release says. Results will be made available in the consultant's report.



*The public is being encouraged to take a survey about the business climate in downtown Sarasota.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

SARASOTA SALVATION ARMY TO HOLD KETTLE KICKOFF EVENT DEC. 5

The Salvation Army of Sarasota will hold its first ever Kettle Kickoff event on Thursday, Dec. 5, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Mercedes Benz in Sarasota, sponsored by Mercedes Benz, Boar's Head Provisions Co. Inc., Grapevine Communications Advertising Agency and the Downtown Sarasota Alliance.

With the theme, *The Sound of Hope*, sponsors, donors and volunteers of the organization are encouraged to support the Salvation Army's 22-day holiday fund drive, running from Nov. 29 through Dec. 24, a news release says. Funds collected during the drive are distributed throughout the community to benefit those in need.

At *The Sound of Hope* event, the Salvation Army will be presented with a Smart Car design-wrapped as one of the organization's recognizable red kettles, and a "Sprinter" designed to resemble a sleigh, both courtesy of Mercedes Benz, the release adds. For six weeks, the Salvation Army will use the cars to promote its fundraising efforts throughout the area via social media.

"The overall goal of *The Sound of Hope* event is to attract more volunteers and sponsors to help support the Salvation Army and its work to provide positive contributions" for the community, the release continues. Anyone registered to volunteer for a full day (four shifts) as a bell-ringer is invited to attend.

A familiar sight during the holiday season, the Salvation Army's customary red kettles and bell-ringing volunteers will be stationed outside 25 Sarasota-area shopping malls, discount stores and grocery stores, the release



The Salvation Army is seeking volunteers to help with its annual holiday season campaign. Image from blog.salvationarmyusa.org/tag/rock-the-red-kettle/

adds. Volunteers can sign up for a date and time convenient to their schedule and choose from four two-hour shifts that need to be filled daily, the release notes. "Local companies can sponsor kettles and provide volunteers to cover a full day of shifts at their site of choice."

"It's the generous support from volunteers that makes it possible for us to provide physical, financial, personal and spiritual help year after year," said Salvation Army Maj. Ethan Frizzell in the release. "Thanks to the additional push from our sponsors, we will be able to extend our reach even further to improve and enhance the community we serve."

For more information about sponsorship opportunities or to volunteer to help with this holiday season's fundraising efforts, call 364-8845, Ext. 222, or email SarasotaVolunteerInfo@uss.salvationarmy.org.

PINE VIEW SCHOOL SETS WORLD RECORD FOR FAST SANDWICH-MAKING

Pine View School will be officially awarded the Guinness World Record for the most sandwiches made within an hour, the Sarasota County School District has announced.

On May 30, a community service club known as Pine View Interact coordinated the preparation of 5,721 sandwiches in 60 minutes by about 600 students, adhering to strict Guinness World Record rules, a news release says. The previous record was 2,706 sandwiches in one hour, achieved just nine days earlier by Eckrich Bacon Lovers Deli Meats in New York City. The new record set by Pine View students could not be declared official until evidence of the attempt was reviewed by Guinness, the release adds.

Critical to the verification were video documentation of each minute of the hour and the notes of the 10 Sarasota people who served as judges and timekeepers. Each of the 5,721 sandwiches had to be counted by two judges, according to Guinness rules, the release notes. The judges included Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight; County Commissioner Christine Robinson; School Board Chairwoman Jane Goodwin; Wendy Deming, chief of staff of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation; and Beverly Girard, director of Nutrition and Food Services for the Sarasota County Schools.

The Rotary of Sarasota Sunrise-sponsored Interact Club decided to break the record to fulfill its mission to serve the local community as well as the global community, the release explains. All the sandwiches made were donated to five local charities: Salvation Army centers in Sarasota and Venice, Harvest Tabernacle, Church of the Palms and Resurrection House.

Donations raised above the cost of supplies were donated to Interact's global project, Life for a Child, the release continues. The project provides insulin supplies to children with Type I diabetes in Haiti. In the 2012-13 school year, Interact donated \$7,000 to this cause, the release adds.

Jeremy Kemp, project leader for the Pine View sandwich-making event and current University of Virginia student, said in the release, "We were on pins and needles for three months as Guinness reviewed video documentation and the log books recorded by the officials. I can't thank our sponsors and judges enough for the resources they donated, including their valuable time. This world record would not have been possible without their support."

Pine View School is located at 1 Python Path in Osprey.

CITY FINANCE DEPARTMENT WINS PRESTIGIOUS HONOR

The same week the City of Sarasota learned its general obligation bonds and non-ad valorem obligations ratings were affirmed, the Finance Department also was honored with a prestigious professional award, the city has announced.

First, Moody's affirmed the Aa2 rating on the city's general obligation bonds as well as the Aa3 rating on the city's non-ad valorem obligations, a news release says. Among the reasons Moody's provided for the affirmations were the following, the release notes:

- The city's "relatively strong financial position is expected to remain healthy."
- "Management's awareness of pension liability and meaningful efforts to address it."
- The city's strong reserve levels have "allowed significant financial flexibility."
- The city's "aggressive responses" during the economic downturn (including workforce reductions and program cuts).

"The affirmation of the city's bond rating reflects the city's commitment to fiscal sustainability and the willingness of the [City] Commission to address the tough fiscal issues head-on during one of the most challenging economic periods in recent memory," said Finance Director John Lege in the release.

Additionally, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada honored the Finance Department with the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the department's 2012 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the release points out.

"The award is the highest form of recognition within governmental accounting and financial reporting," said City Manager Tom Barwin in the release. "This is the 32nd consecutive year the City of Sarasota has been honored with this award, which speaks highly to our legacy of high quality fiscal management and talented dedicated staff," he added.

Nearly 17,000 government finance professionals are served by the Government Finance Officers Association.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP SET FOR DEC. 18

Sarasota County has announced that its 2013 Sustainable Communities Workshop will take place on Wednesday, Dec. 18, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Girl Scouts of Gulfcoast Florida Event and Conference Center, located at 4780 Cattlemen Road in Sarasota.

The workshop is open to professional planners, builders and developers, engineers, architects and landscape architects, small business owners and government representatives, as well as residents, homeowners, neighborhood associations and community advocates, a news release points out.

Registration is \$30 for professionals and the general public (\$20 for students); it includes a continental breakfast, lunch and refreshments during an afternoon break.

"This popular interactive workshop draws leaders from industry, government and university programs" to share their expertise and strategies for achieving a more sustainable future through job creation and community building programs and innovation, the release continues. "From alternative transportation and ecotourism to the future of the built environment, the workshop will highlight national trends as well as local successes."

Of particular note this year is the workshop's focus on green business practices and building resilience in local food supplies, the release says.

Keynote speaker Carol Peppe Hewitt will discuss *Financing our Foodshed: Rethinking How We Pay for our Food*. Hewitt is an author, business owner, social entrepreneur and a pioneer in the Slow Money movement, the

release notes. "Since founding Slow Money NC in 2010, she has catalyzed more than 90 low-interest loans to nearly 50 small farmers and local food businesses in North Carolina, with a goal of building resilience in local food sheds," the release adds.

Her book, *Financing Our Foodshed: Growing Local Food With Slow Money*, "tells the compelling, real-life stories of 22 Slow Money entrepreneurs who grow, process, distribute and sell local food, as well as the generous people in their communities who became their lenders," the release continues.

A second speaker, Trish Riley, will discuss *Greening Your Business: Working Together Toward a Sustainable Future*. Riley is an award-winning journalist and author whose books include *The Complete Idiot's Guides to Green Living and Greening Your Business* and *The Explorer's Guide to South Florida, Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Miami and the Keys*, the release notes.

Riley publishes www.GoGreenNation.org, an environmental news site and resource to help build sustainable communities. She founded the Gainesville Chapter of Green Drinks as well as Cinema Verde, an environmental film and arts festival in Gainesville.

Sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities are available, the release notes. The deadline for sponsorship and exhibitor applications is Dec. 2.

To learn more about becoming a sponsor or exhibitor and to view the applications, visit www.scgov.net/SustainableCommunities/Pages/2013Applications.aspx.

To learn more about the event and to register, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000, or visit www.scgov.net/SustainableCommunities.



Trish Riley/Contributed photo



Carol Hewit/Contributed photo

GARBAGE COLLECTION CHANGES ANNOUNCED FOR HOLIDAY WEEK

No garbage pickup will be provided in the city of Sarasota on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28, the city has announced.

The Thursday garbage, recycling and yard waste collection will occur one day later, on Friday, Nov. 29, a city news release says. Regularly scheduled Friday collections will occur on Saturday, Nov. 30.

City of Sarasota administration offices will be closed Thursday and Friday in observance of Thanksgiving, the release adds. All offices will reopen on Monday, Dec. 2.

Bobby Jones Golf Club, located at 1000 Circus Blvd., will host the [Fifth Annual Turkey Shoot](#) starting at 8:30 a.m. on Thanksgiving, the release notes.

The [Robert L. Taylor Community Complex](#), located at 1845 34th St., will be closed Thanksgiving Day only. The [Lido Pool](#), at 400 Benjamin Franklin Drive, will be open Thanksgiving Day from 10 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

For more information regarding trash collection, call the City of Sarasota Solid Waste Division at 365-7651. Anyone with questions regarding recycling, yard waste or bulk waste should contact Waste Management at 497-8088.

Sarasota County government offices, including libraries, the History Center and recreation centers, also will be closed Thursday, Nov. 28, and Friday, Nov. 29, for the Thanksgiving holiday. Some county services will be available



Sarasota city government offices will be closed on Thanksgiving and on Nov. 29. Photo by Norman Schimmel

on Friday, Nov. 29, however, a county news release says.

Libraries will be open Saturday, Nov. 30, and other county offices will reopen on Monday, Dec. 2.

The Payne Park Tennis Center will be open Friday, Nov. 29, from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.


No Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) bus service will be provided on Thanksgiving Day, but full service will resume on Friday, Nov. 29.

Residents who live in unincorporated areas of the county will not have yard waste, recyclables or garbage collection on Thanksgiving Day, the release notes. For residents whose regular collection day is Thursday, yard waste, recyclables and garbage will be collected on Friday, Nov. 29. For those whose regular

collection day is Friday, the materials will be picked up on Saturday, Nov. 30. Because collection times vary, residents should place refuse materials at the curb by 6 a.m. the day of collection, the release adds.

Sarasota County's chemical collection centers at 8750 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota and 250 S. Jackson Road in Venice will be closed Thursday and Friday, Nov. 28-29. The Citizens Convenience Center at 4010 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis will be closed Thursday, Nov. 28, but it will be open Friday, Nov. 29, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. All three centers will be open Saturday, Nov. 30.

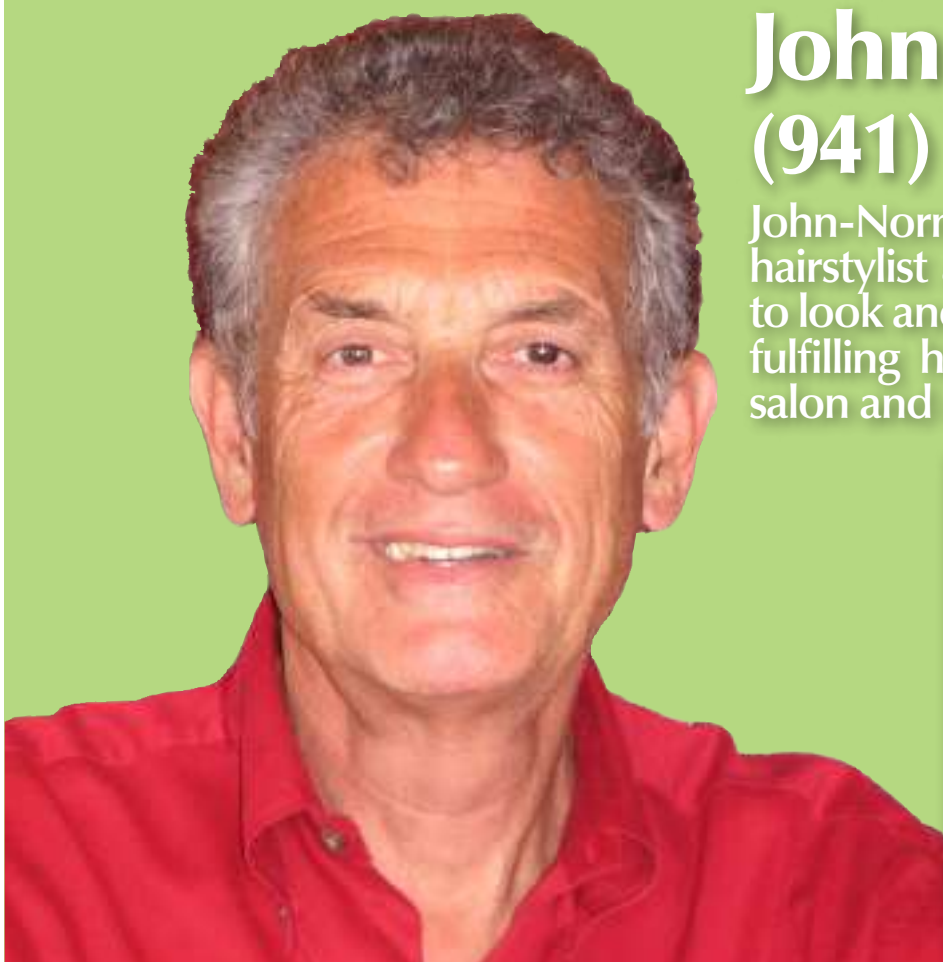
The landfill at 4000 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis will be closed on Thanksgiving, but it will reopen on Friday. The landfill administration offices will be closed Nov. 28 and 29.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000. 

SARASOTA'S HAIR COLOR SPECIALIST

John-Norman Tuck
(941) 928-1203

John-Norman Tuck is Sarasota and Bradenton's premier hairstylist and hair color artist. Getting his customer's hair to look and feel it's best is his passion. John-Norman started fulfilling his customers' hair dreams in his Pasadena, CA salon and now has brought his talents to Sarasota.



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Sarasota resident Donna Chen was struck in a sharp curve on Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key. File photo

TALMAN ACCEPTS SECOND OFFER OF PLEA DEAL IN CHEN CASE

The driver of the vehicle who was drunk when he struck and killed a Siesta Key runner in January 2012 accepted a plea deal from the State Attorney's Office on Nov. 25 and was sentenced to 15 years in prison, with four years set as a mandatory minimum by 12th Judicial Circuit Court Judge Frederick P. Mercurio, court records show.

On Sept. 3, Blake C. Talman, 24, was scheduled to accept a 15-year plea deal, but that morning, his public defender, Patricia Edwards, notified the Office of the State Attorney that he had decided to go forward with a trial. *The Sarasota News Leader* was unable to reach Edwards or Assistant State Attorney Amanda Gambert to learn any reason for Talman's decision to take the deal this week.

After Talman rejected the state's offer in September, his trial was set for the week of Nov. 12 or Nov. 18, Gambert told the *News Leader*.

Talman was arrested on the afternoon of Jan. 7, 2012, on multiple charges after striking and killing Donna Chen, 53, of Sarasota, who was running with her dog on the sidewalk in what Siesta Key residents have long described as a dangerous curve near St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church on Midnight Pass Road.

Talman pleaded guilty on Nov. 25 to one count of Driving Under the Influence (Manslaughter); one count of Driving Under the Influence (Serious Bodily Injury); three

counts of Driving Under the Influence (Property Damage-Misdemeanor); and one count of Leaving the Scene of an Accident with Property Damage (Misdemeanor).

According to court records, the maximum penalty that could have been imposed on him if he had been convicted of the crimes was 23 years and 60 days in jail.

Talman also was ordered to surrender his driver's license for the remainder of his life, attend and complete DUI School and perform 50 hours of community service. He has 30 days from the time of his release to enroll in DUI School, and he must complete it on his first attempt, the plea deal notes.

Talman was fleeing from another vehicle crash when he failed to follow the Midnight Pass Road curve; instead, he collided with Chen and then landscaping, a street sign, several wooden poles near the church and a telephone pole, according to the Florida Highway Patrol report.

Chen died at the scene. Both Talman and his passenger, David J. Brewer, then 24, of Sarasota, were injured.

Earlier the same day, deputies at Siesta Public Beach spoke with Talman and Brewer on three separate occasions after witnesses reported the two young men were consuming liquor and bothering beach-goers. However, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office says Talman and Brewer did nothing for which officers could arrest them. The last time deputies observed them, according to the Sheriff's Office report, both men were headed toward the beach.

Talman will be given credit for all the jail time he has served, the plea deal says. After his



Blake Talman/Image from the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office

arrest, he was not released on bond until June 20, 2012.

Court records show Talman had been arrested numerous times before the incident on Siesta Key, including charges for possession of marijuana, possession of alcohol by a person under the age of 21, driving with a suspended license and having no valid driver's license.

On Nov. 13, he was arrested again at 1:26 p.m. by the Sarasota Police Department on a charge of Battery: Touch or Strike (Domestic). The name of the complainant was kept confidential, according to the report.

Officers took Talman into custody at his residence, 2123 Bay St. in Sarasota, the report says. He is scheduled to be arraigned on that charge on Dec. 3.

Rachel Brown Hackney

HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY TIPS OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC

As holiday sales get into full swing, Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight is reminding the public “to shop smart and stay safe,” a news release says.

Patrols are increased in high-traffic retail areas this time of year, but shoppers are encouraged to keep the following tips in mind when heading out to hit the stores, the release points out:

- Avoid shopping alone, particularly at night.
- Park your vehicle in a well-lighted area and remove valuables from sight.
- Know your surroundings, and keep an eye on the people around you.
- Carry a purse close to the body and do not reveal large amounts of cash.
- If using a shopping cart, do not leave purses unsecured, and keep them closed.
- Approach your vehicle with keys already in hand.
- Do not carry too many packages at one time.
- Place all packages out of sight when you get to your vehicle.
- Do not place a purse on top of the vehicle or in the trunk when loading purchases.
- Keep vehicle doors locked and windows shut.
- Be suspicious of anyone approaching you to pass out leaflets or ask for donations.
- If you see anything suspicious or if something just does not feel right, leave the area immediately and contact store security or law enforcement officers.



To make sure people get home safely with holiday gifts, the Sheriff's Office has provided shopping tips. Photo by Evalowyn via Wikimedia Commons

40 ARRESTED DURING LATEST CRACKDOWN ON RETAIL THEFT

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office made 40 arrests with a total of 22 felony charges and 44 misdemeanor counts during its third operation in five months to crack down on retail theft, "particularly as the holiday shopping season begins," the office has announced.

Operation Booster Buster III focused on retail corridors in Sarasota and Venice over a

period of three days, a news release says. The offenders have a combined 344 prior felony charges and 343 prior misdemeanor charges, the release notes.

Five of the 40 people arrested are locally identified as Prolific Offenders, and one of the defendants was arrested two days in a row, first for Petit Theft and then for an attempted



Erik Daniels
DOB 7 /11/1989
3722 Kingswood Drive Sarasota
Arrest_Date 11/18/2013
Charge_1 Larceny
Charge_2
Charge_3

Criminal History

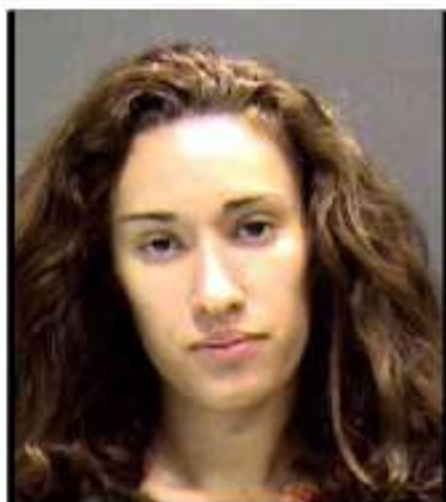
Felony Charges	<u>0</u>
Felony Convictions	<u>0</u>
Misd Charges	<u>1</u>
Misd Convictions	<u>0</u>
Incarcerations	<u>0</u>



Matthew Durkin
DOB 8 /25/1990
2750 Hatton Street Sarasota
Arrest_Date 11/18/2013
Charge_1 Larceny
Charge_2 VOP
Charge_3 VOP

Criminal History

Felony Charges	<u>5</u>
Felony Convictions	<u>0</u>
Misd Charges	<u>3</u>
Misd Convictions	<u>0</u>
Incarcerations	<u>0</u>



Jessica Gutierrez
DOB 9 /8 /1992
5517 Bahia Vista Street Sarasota
Arrest_Date 11/18/2013
Charge_1 Larceny
Charge_2
Charge_3

Criminal History

Felony Charges	<u>0</u>
Felony Convictions	<u>0</u>
Misd Charges	<u>4</u>
Misd Convictions	<u>0</u>
Incarcerations	<u>0</u>

A Sheriff's Office poster shows some of the individuals arrested during Operation Booster Buster III. Contributed photo

vehicle burglary in a store parking lot, the release adds. Another person charged in this operation was arrested in the first Booster Buster crackdown, the release points out.

“Forty arrests in just three days exemplifies the fact that retail theft is a monumental problem in Sarasota County,” said Sheriff Knight in the release. “Nearly all of the people arrested have criminal histories but are just released to commit more crime. We will continue our crackdown to assist these businesses and reduce shoplifting in this community.”

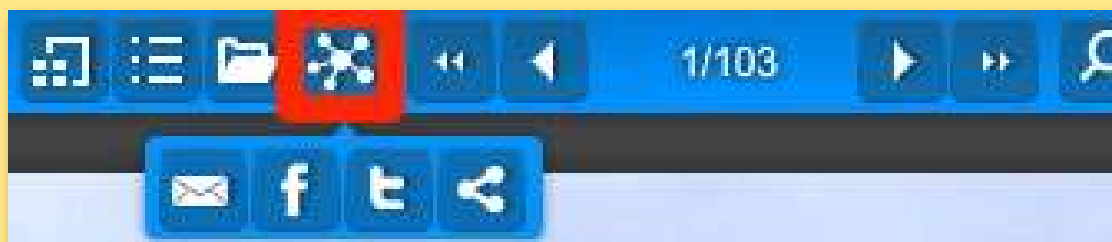
The Sheriff’s Office “formed a unique public-private partnership with major local retailers for the first operation in July, which has continued with efforts to enhance theft detection methods and expanded

opportunities to collaborate on reducing retail theft,” the release notes.

“Much of our field intelligence pointed to a specific location near one of the targeted shopping centers where some of our prolific offenders frequently congregated,” Knight continued in the release. “Crime analysts realized some of these offenders felt the pressure we were exerting on other crimes and turned to retail theft and return fraud instead.”

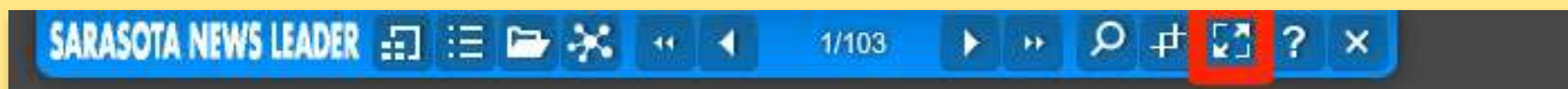
Operation Booster Buster utilized the Tactical, Crime Analysis and Traffic units, in addition to Patrol, Criminal Investigations and Corrections personnel, the release says. To date, the three retail theft operations have resulted in 131 arrests. Additional suspects have been identified in the most recent operation, the release adds; charges are pending. **SNL**

QUICK TIP



Share stories by clicking the  icon in the menubar and choosing to share via e-mail, post to Facebook or Twitter, or many other sharing options.

QUICK TIP



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

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SHARING A SPECIAL HOLIDAY ... BY SHARING

EDITORIAL

It has been 150 years since Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November as a day he commended to the American people for “Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.”

Whether the first observance was by the Pilgrims at Plymouth, MA, really is of little importance. What has engraved this occasion in the national consciousness over the last four centuries is a tacit recognition that, collectively, we have it pretty good here in the United States, and we should look beyond ourselves to give credit for the beneficence Lincoln knew we enjoyed.

Certainly, he realized then that the nation struggled in the midst of a violent Civil War.

While the tide of the war might have turned in his favor only weeks earlier at Gettysburg, it would be many long months before the war would end and the divided country could begin to heal.

Yet, he called upon the people to recognize that, in the midst of tragedy and travail, the blessings of life still are easily seen, and gratitude for those blessings is a proper response.

Now our country is in the midst of another struggle. Certainly not a bloody one like that fought in the 1860s, but still a struggle that divides us.

For more than three decades, the wealthiest Americans have had more and more to be “thankful” for each year. Their share of the national income and the nation’s wealth has

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grown to the greatest proportion since the late 1920s ... just before the collapse of our financial markets and the beginning of the Great Depression.

At the same time, the nation's middle class — that great cohort of prosperity that rose up after World War II — teeters on the edge of oblivion. The ranks of the poor have swelled to the point that more than a third of Americans cannot provide completely for themselves.

Lincoln called for a Thanksgiving Day because he knew that war and bloodshed were not attributable to our Creator. The blame for all wars rests solely on the shoulders of the imperfect creation that is mankind. Lincoln understood that acknowledging the blessings that existed in people's lives, and their giving thanks for those blessings, was an essential step in coping with the war. More important, it also was an acknowledgement that the world was meant to be a better place ... and would be again soon.


To heed Lincoln's call in this modern era is to accept that Thanksgiving is a day to recognize and celebrate all that exists in the world to sustain our lives. It is a day to recognize and celebrate the generous spirit of those who give of themselves to help others, not just on holidays but throughout the year. It is a day when we must do more than just acknowledge, "There but for the grace of God go I."

It is an opportunity for each of us to extend that grace to those around us. A kind word, a helping hand, a warm meal to a shut-in, groceries for a hungry family, proper clothes to warm cold skin, shelter from the harsh elements ... there is so much that can be done. There is so much that *must* be done.

“Lincoln called upon the people to recognize that, in the midst of tragedy and travail, the blessings of life still are easily seen, and gratitude for those blessings is a proper response.”

It is impossible to be thankful for our blessings when we ignore the struggles of others. In seeking to alleviate their suffering, we lift up all of humanity. For the greatest praise we can render to a beneficent Creator is emulation.

Philanthropist W. Clement Stone once observed, "If you are really thankful, what do you do? You share."

Thanksgiving is not just about giving thanks. It also is about thankful giving. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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ATTORNEY IN SUNSHINE LAWSUIT DISPUTES CHAPMAN STATEMENTS TO THE CITY COMMISSION



By Andrea Mogensen
Guest Columnist

GUEST COLUMN

The recent *Sarasota News Leader* article dealing with the pending Government in the Sunshine lawsuit against the City of Sarasota contained some factual errors (*Divide to conquer*, Nov. 22).

No doubt, the errors were due to representations made at the City Commission meeting last Monday by Commissioner Susan Chapman, so I do not attribute it to any negligence on the part of the *News Leader*. I just want to set the record straight.

First, the article states that Chapman was not offered the same deal that Commissioner Suzanne Atwell was offered. This is flatly untrue. On Nov. 1, I *extended the very same offer to both Atwell and Chapman* to pay \$500 to a charity of her choice in exchange for being dropped from the lawsuit. That email was conveyed from me to the city attorney and to counsel for both Chapman and Atwell (📎 [See Exhibit 1](#)). As reported, Atwell took that deal just a few days later.

I would point out that, following the remarks of Chapman last Monday, in which she erroneously stated that the same deal had not been offered to her, I again sent correspondence to

Chapman's attorney, Richard Harrison, attaching the correspondence referenced above and indicating that the offer was still on the table until 5 p.m. on Nov. 22. Harrison responded that he was no longer representing Chapman and would not respond to the "renewed" settlement offer (📎 [See Exhibit 2](#)). Clearly, Harrison already was aware of the earlier settlement offer, extended to both Atwell and Chapman, dated Nov. 1.

Second, the article states, "Chapman then received an emergency injunction and was served with a set of 'interrogatories.' That was followed with a request to set a schedule for depositions in the case. Atwell instead received an offer to settle the case, which she accepted."

Attached as 📎 [Exhibit 3](#) is the current docket in this case. *No motion for emergency injunction has ever been filed or served in this case.* That representation is simply a fiction. Additionally, the request to schedule depositions in the case occurred on Nov. 13 (📎 [See Exhibit 4](#)) — nearly two weeks after the same settlement offer had been made to both Atwell and Chapman — because there had been no response or effort by Harrison


OPINION

to respond to the settlement offer made on Nov. 1. Therefore, I assumed it was rejected, and I wanted to make efforts to get this case moving forward.

Finally, the set of interrogatories mentioned in the article were served on Chapman's attorney on Oct. 29. *They were also served on Atwell's attorney that same date, along with a request for admissions.* Those discovery efforts followed various pleadings and motions filed by Atwell's attorney on that same date, but *before* the settlement offer extended to both Atwell and Chapman on Nov. 1. Thus, the same discovery efforts were made to both Atwell and Chapman on the very same date.

In light of the above, the title, content and tenor of the article is misleading. The article implies that the plaintiff named the two commissioners individually and then purposely discriminated in the discovery efforts and settlement offers made to those two individuals. The title suggests this was done to "divide and conquer" as a result of different actions taken with respect to each individual defendant.

As one can certainly see from the foregoing, and the related exhibits, that simply is not true. The only actual difference between Chapman and Atwell is in the way that *they* chose individually to respond to this issue.

Editor's note: The writer is the attorney for Citizens for Sunshine, which is the plaintiff in the lawsuit referenced. 

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Sarasota Leisure

THE SUMPTUOUS AND THE WHIMSICAL
SIESTA SEEN
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

Inside

THE SUMPTUOUS AND THE WHIMSICAL



The dancers begin Balanchine's Serenade. Photo by Frank Atura

HULLAND AND BROWN STAND OUT IN SARASOTA BALLET'S SECOND PERFORMANCE OF THE SEASON

By Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer

With ballets by George Balanchine and Sir Frederick Ashton on the same program together, with the added presence of The Sarasota Orchestra under the baton of Ormsby Wilkins, the Sarasota Ballet had a winning combination in its second set of performances this season.

This is the year of Ashton, with a retrospective of his work scheduled for the end of the season, but *Illuminations*, a work he choreographed for the New York City Ballet Company, was the exotic production of the evening; while Balanchine's *Serenade* enchanted and *Who Cares*, to the music of George Gershwin, delighted everyone with its toe-tapping beats.

Seventeen girls in pale blue bodices and billowing white skirts filled the stage. They were posed in diagonal lines, each with one arm raised and the other pulled back, as if in a gesture that said, "Stop for a moment," and I did — for this was the famous opening moment of *Serenade*, one of my favorite ballets. Set to the rapturous melodies of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*, it has both the simplicity of spirit and the complex choreography that define a Balanchine ballet, even though it was his first important ballet after he came to the United States in the 1930s.

Choreographing for his students, Balanchine would incorporate into a ballet whatever



Danielle Brown and Ricardo Rhodes are the Waltz Couple in Serenade. Photo by Frank Atura

was happening at the time: A girl fell; another arrived late, etc. Therefore, the overall pattern of this ballet winds and unwinds throughout the musical accompaniment as the girls rush onto the stage, leave and reappear — as if floating through space. In a few words, Balanchine's magic is underscored in his understanding of the spirit of the music, and his choreography is always deeply connected to whatever music he has chosen as a springboard for his vision.

In the challenging waltz movement, the first of four in *Serenade*, Danielle Brown was more lyrical than usual. Melding quick footwork with the daunting technical challenges while maintaining a fluidity of movement in the torso is the basis of the Balanchine style, and both Brown and her partner, Ricardo

Rhodes — careful and elegant as the shadow figure — tackled their difficult roles with authority. Amy Wood and Jamie Carter as the Dark Angels were both musical and fast; while Kate Honea whirled off the quick turns as the Russian girl.

There are moments in the ballet when Balanchine appears to be having fun — inserting the traveling arabesques from the ballet *Giselle* as well as a reference to Orpheus searching in the underworld. But it is the breathtaking last image of Brown, hair flowing, head and body arching backwards with her arms outstretched at her sides as she stands on the hands of four men and slowly travels off into the wings — followed by the corps, heads slightly tilted up to the heavens, arms reaching skyward to the unknown



Elegant movements are integral to Serenade. Photo by Frank Atura

— that seals the dream poetry of this stunning ballet.

Sir Frederick Ashton set *Illuminations*, his exploration of the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud — the “bad boy” of French verse — to Benjamin Britten’s beautiful score, *Les Illuminations Opus 18*. As the tortured poet, Ricardo Graziano was convincingly anguished over profane and sacred love, interpreted by two women and a large cast outfitted in colorful costumes designed by Cecil Beaton.

Ashton tended to create ballets with characters and narration, and this ballet followed that pattern. Ellen Overstreet was a believable temptress as Profane Love, while Amy Wood was chaste as Sacred Love.

Of course, these tensions still exist, especially in the context of drug addiction, though at first I questioned the idea of a conflict between sacred and profane love as having

relevance in today’s environment. The ballet is obviously a dream, and my impression of the crowded, pageant atmosphere of it was that it was the poet’s (Graziano) hallucination. Honestly, though, it was not until the final moments that Graziano’s emotional anguish became real, and that might have been due to the power of the music.

Balanchine’s nod to George Gershwin in *Who Cares*, set against the outline of Manhattan’s skyscrapers, reflects urbanity and jazz rhythms. Both the dancers and the audience were smiling. The 15 songs in the ballet are short stories of love found, lost and discovered once again. Though the mood shifts from delight — as in the opening ensemble performing to *Strike Up the Band* — to the sensuous longing of *Somebody Loves Me*, the dancing is always joyous. As in any Balanchine ballet, clear musical phrasing is all-important, whether it is a little unexpected jump, a quick




Elaborate costumes are featured in *Illuminations* by Sir Frederick Ashton. Photo by Frank Atura

slide between steps or a leap that is so right it appears the music is taking flight. Everyone in the performance danced with their hearts on fire, but, as always, there were highlights in a ballet with so many dancers and so many segments.

In *Biden's My Time*, Alex Harrison, Daniel Rodriguez, Jamie Carter, Ricki Bertoni and David Tlaiye brought brio and energy to the variation, proving that the male contingent of Sarasota Ballet is getting stronger. Ryoko Sadoshima was a dainty partner for Harrison, who danced with surprising speed; Bertoni and Emily Dixon combined for ease as a couple, as did Dagny Hanrahan and Tlaiye in *Lady Be Good*. However, the performances of both Danielle Brown, who appeared more

at ease with the jazzy rhythms of *Stairway to Paradise*, and Victoria Hulland were unforgettable.

In *The Man I Love*, with Ricardo Graziano as the lover, Hulland disappeared into the music, her whole body melting into the emotion of the dance; the song is all about meeting and loving and leaving. Graziano, who dances with a graceful ease and nonchalance, was a wonderful partner, making each of Hulland's lifts like a sigh of happiness. In her solo, *Fascinating Rhythm*, Hulland charmed the audience with a glint of sauciness in her dancing.

I've Got Rhythm brought the entire cast back on stage for a rousing finale, with audience members convinced that they, too, were ready to dance. 



Ricardo Graziano is *The Poet* and Ellen Overstreet is *Profane Love* in *Illuminations*. Photo by Frank Atura



Siesta Seen

A DISPUTE OVER A BEACH PATH SEEMS TO BE RESOLVED; A COUNTY VARIANCE PETITION IS PROCEEDING; THE SIESTA CHAMBER BIDS ADIEU TO ITS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; AND CHAMBER AWARD NOMINEES ARE SOUGHT



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The accretion of sand on Siesta Public Beach has led to what Sarasota County's environmental supervisor calls "a rather unique situation" regarding one path to the beach.

Last week, Howard Berna, a staff member in the county's Natural Resources Department,

met with representatives of the [Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast](#) to iron out a recent complaint regarding clearing of a path through the Foundation's 11,687-square-foot property, which has been a popular nesting place for the endangered Snowy Plovers that call Siesta home.



*As temperatures were dropping up North, the Siesta Public Beach remained balmy in early November.
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Siesta Seen

Berna told me on Nov. 22 that staff had investigated the complaint about work Sarasota Audubon volunteers had observed on the path.

A volunteer reported that someone was “actually digging up the natural sod” beside that path on the Gulf side of 644 Beach Road. “To my way of thinking it was a site location violation *and* a physical violation of the naturally vegetated dune surface,” the volunteer wrote — and the underscores are his emphasis.

In response, Matt Osterhoudt, the resource protection manager in the Natural Resources Department, wrote to Assistant County

Administrator Lee Ann Lowery and his department boss, Amy Meese, on Nov. 1:

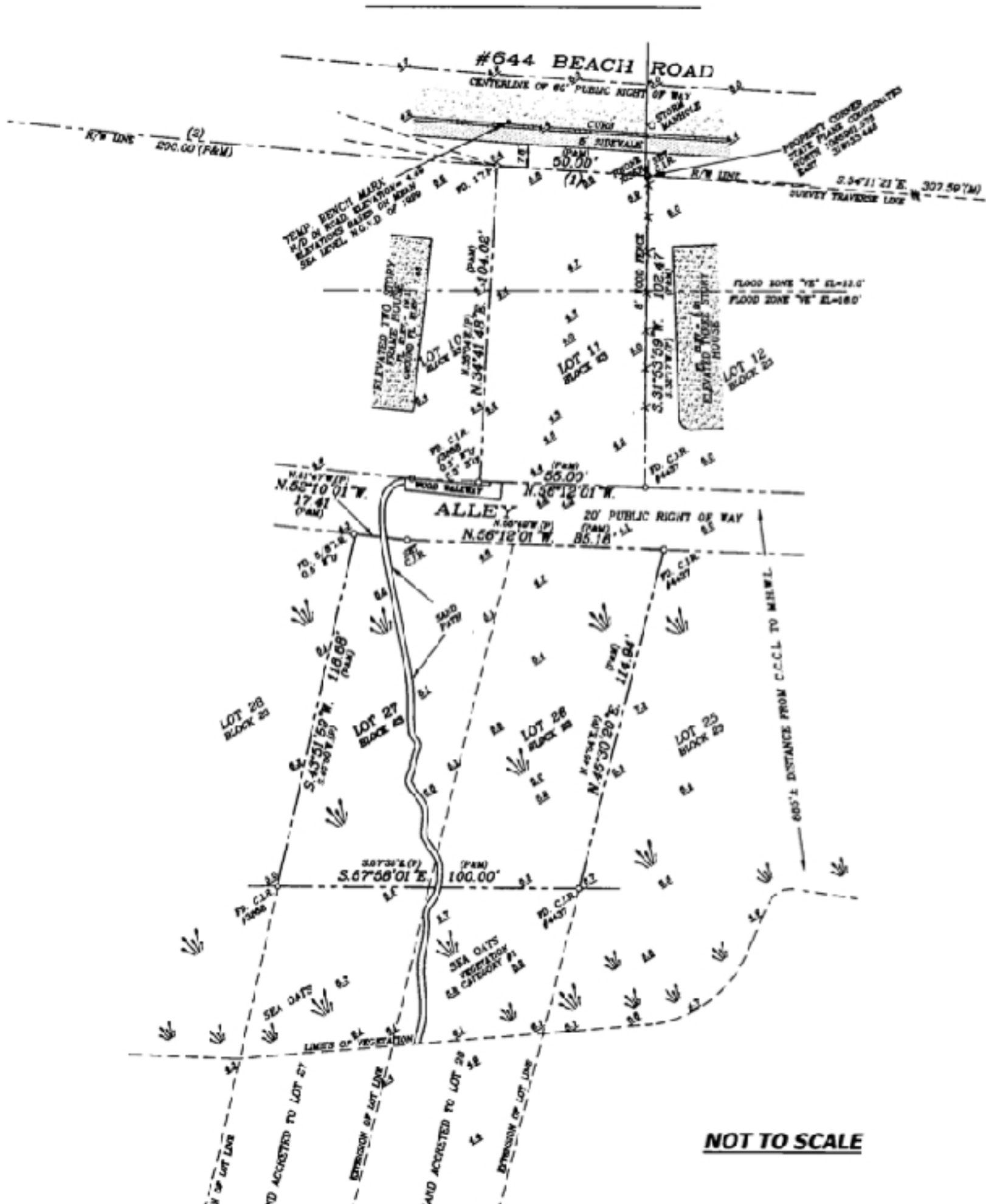
“Natural Resources staff conducted a site inspection earlier today and documented unauthorized clearing activity within a dune for a path. We informed the person conducting the work to cease as there are some regulatory issues with the Coastal Setback ordinance to address. There are two property owners that are involved. We have been in contact with both owners and we will continue working to resolve the compliance matter.”

Berna explained to me that when the Arbisser family sold the property at 644 Beach Road to



The property owned by the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast has been popular with nesting Snowy Plovers in years past. File photo

Siesta Seen



A drawing shows the footpath that the Arbisser family was allowed to maintain when it sold a Siesta Key parcel to the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. Image courtesy Sarasota County Property Appraiser's Office

Siesta Seen

the foundation in December 2007, the deed reserved the right for the family to maintain the path to the beach. The deed calls for “a perpetual, appurtenant, exclusive [10-foot-wide] recreational easement over, across and through said Property for ingress and egress to the beach and Gulf of Mexico.”

However, as the beach has grown, this footpath and others “have meandered and haven’t necessarily followed the property line,” Berna added. “People walk on the path of least resistance,” he said. If a low spot tends to hold water, for example, people will walk around it to the point that they end up creating another section of path.

“Technically, the work [the Arbissers] were doing was allowable,” Berna noted. Yet, it appeared in this case that workers hired by the family were creating a second path, he said, so the county asked the workers to stop.

The Foundation staff has talked with the Arbissers, he continued. The result is that the Arbissers will abandon and restore the old footpath and create a new one, Berna said.

THE NEW VARIANCE PETITION

While I had Berna on the phone last week, I took the opportunity to ask him about the status of the latest petition to build a house at 162 Beach Road, which I [reported on](#) in early October. On July 10, the owners — Ronald and Sonia Allen — filed a new petition with the county for a Coastal Setback Variance for a three-story structure. They had revised their design since the County Commission on Jan.

9 turned down their request to build a residence on the lot.

Commissioners denied the request after reviewing evidence about the property having been under the Gulf of Mexico in years past.

Berna told me on Nov. 22 that the Allens had provided more information about the latest request, at staff’s request. Further details have been sought regarding the plan for dune enhancement if the County Commission approves the project, Berna said.

“I’m not asking for any changes to the plan,” Berna added. However, he does not have a date yet for when the County Commission will hear the petition.

THE LIDO PROJECT

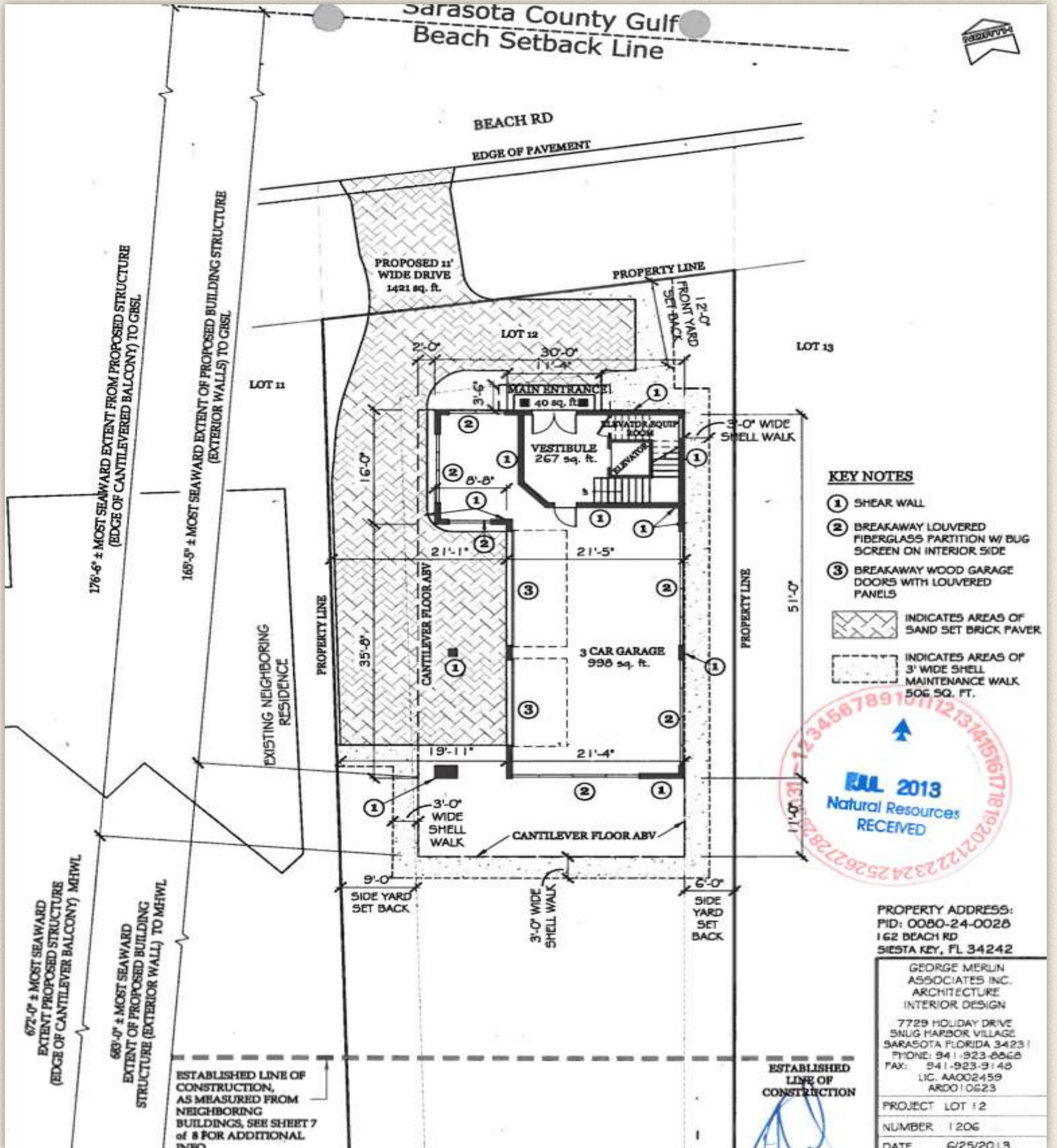
The Siesta Key Association is putting out the word that the public is welcome to come to the Dec. 5 SKA meeting, when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will present details of its proposal for renourishing Lido Beach, including the dredging of Big Pass and the erection of three groins on the south end of Lido Key.

The session will be conducted from 5 to 7 p.m. in the [St. Boniface Episcopal Church](#) Community Room, located at 5615 Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key.

Questions from the public will be welcome.

The \$22.7-million project has been controversial among some Siesta Key residents and area boaters, because the Army Corps has identified Big Pass as the source of sand for the

Siesta Seen



Revised drawings were submitted in July for a house at 162 Beach Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

initial renourishment of Lido Beach under the proposal. Big Pass never has been dredged. Further, worries have arisen that the planned groins will interrupt the natural downdrift of sand that has benefited Siesta Public Beach.

The City of Sarasota has been working with the Corps on the project. Additionally, Visit Sarasota County has offered information showing tourism linked to Lido Beach has an annual economic impact on the county of approximately \$155.6 million.

BIDDING ADIEU TO KEVIN

Members of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce gathered late last week to bid goodbye to Executive Director Kevin Cooper, who has taken a job with the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce.

Cooper offered his notice on Oct. 28, though he agreed to stay through the fourth annual Siesta Key Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition, held Nov. 15-18.

Cooper will start Monday, Dec. 2, as vice president for public policy for the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, and he will oversee the organization's [Sarasota Tomorrow](#) initiative, said Brittany Lamont, the Chamber's communications manager.

Cooper told me he is very excited about the new opportunity to serve the community.

In a message to members, Chamber Chairwoman Maria Bankemper wrote, "Kevin has been a great asset to the Chamber over the last 4 years, starting as the Membership



Kevin Cooper has left his position as executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce. File photo

Director and moving into his current position as Executive Director. Kevin has helped us not only retain our membership and increase our stability but has brought a momentum and energy to our Chamber as well. I truly do wish him all of the best and I know that we will likely cross paths in the future."

On a personal note, I would like to add that it was a great pleasure for me to work with Kevin. Not only could I count on him to be very informative when I asked questions, but he also has an excellent personality for working with the public.

Bankemper added in her note that a Search Committee has been formed to find his replacement.

Siesta Seen

STORMWATER PROJECT UPDATE

Those who have been keeping an eye on the stormwater project next to Siesta Key Public Beach — the initiative formally identified as the Beach Road Drainage Project — have

seen equipment digging pretty steadily over the past couple of weeks.

Isaac Brownman, director of capital projects in the county's Public Works Department, notified the county commissioners that the



Digging has been under way for the past several weeks at the stormwater site next to the public beach on Siesta Key. File photo

Siesta Seen

contractor this week is expected to continue digging the “Rim Ditch” — which he calls “a sump” necessary to remove groundwater — around the site of the planned 1-acre stormwater pond.

He continued, “It is anticipated that by the end of the week, an agreement will be in place allowing the Beach Road Drainage contractor to perform some site work for the Siesta Beach [improvements] project; allowing the latter to start on site work and achieve an overall cost savings for the County.”

Additionally, Brownman wrote, “Staff has received an updated work schedule from the contractor with an anticipated Substantial Completion date of March 9 and a Final Acceptance date of April 8, 2014. At this time we do not expect that the delays we have had to date will significantly impact the Beach project.”

He added, “There continue to be coordination meetings with staff and the contractors on both the drainage project and the Siesta Beach project; it is anticipated that with both projects now overlapping with time lines/schedules, some economy of scales will be realized.”

BUSINESSES OF THE YEAR

The Siesta Key Chamber has announced it is accepting nominations for the 2013 Business of the Year Awards.

“Every year the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce recognizes two outstanding member businesses and one member businessperson for his or her personal achievements and contributions,” a news release says. “Additionally, the Shining Star Award is presented to an exceptional employee nominated by their employer, or an employer nominated by one or more of their employees.”

Completed nomination forms must be received no later than 5 p.m. Dec. 20. The release says, “You can download a nomination form by clicking [here](#), or pick one up in person by visiting the Chamber office.”

The Chamber headquarters is located in Davidson Plaza on Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village.

The awards will be presented at the Chamber’s Annual Meeting and Business Awards Luncheon on Tuesday, Jan. 28, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Nominees will be evaluated based on the following criteria, the news release says:

- Demonstration of excellence in business or profession.
- Demonstration of Chamber involvement.
- Demonstration of community service.

Anyone with questions regarding the awards may email nominations@siestakeychamber.com. 

Tom Stephens' landscapes are featured in Tropical Splendor. Contributed photo

TROPICAL SPLENDOR IN FULL BLOOM AT SELBY GARDENS

Selby Gardens has no shortage of beautiful vistas and unique plants, so it is no surprise that artists are inspired to depict the Gardens' beauty in their work. Tropical Splendor, a new art exhibit in the Museum of Botany and the Arts, will demonstrate two artists' fascination with Selby Gardens and its plants, the Gardens has announced.

Tropical Splendor features "stunning garden paintings" by Anna Mason of the United Kingdom and Sarasota artist Tom Stephens, a news release says. The paintings portray macro and micro views of tropical locales and plants, with an emphasis on texture and

color. Stephens' work showcases Selby's landscapes, while Mason focuses on distinctive tropical plants from Selby's collections, the release adds.

The exhibit will be open daily from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. through Feb. 27, and after hours during the Gardens' holiday show, *Lights in Bloom*, which will be presented Dec. 20-23 and 26-30. Entry is included in the price of admission to the Gardens.

For more information about *Tropical Splendor* and Selby Gardens, visit www.selby.org or call 366-5731.



SULLIVAN AND WEBER TO PERFORM IN COLORED LIGHTS

Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota will present KT Sullivan and Jon Weber performing *Colored Lights*, Sullivan's "effervescent autobiography told through songs and hilarious anecdotes," Saturday, Dec. 7, at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 8, at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at the Historic Asolo Theater, the organization has announced.

The theater is located at 5401 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota. Tickets are \$25 to \$45; they may be purchased online at www.artistseriesconcerts.org or by calling the box office at 360-7399. Discounted student tickets are available at the box office one hour before the performance; call the box office for prices and more information.

"KT Sullivan turns her experiences on and off Broadway into an upbeat and dynamic performance of wit, style and musical dexterity," says John Fischer, executive director of Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota, in a news release. According to Fischer, Sullivan "makes great use of her signature comedic style and rich soprano voice as she recalls the ups and downs of her time on and off Broadway with a solid show that includes tender love songs and comic material from nearly 100 years of stage gems."

Colored Lights also celebrates Sullivan's passion for classic material, "with one remarkable segment of the show covering 29 songs published in 1929, the release notes. Sullivan is an annual headliner at the Oak Room in New York's Algonquin Hotel, the release points out. She has won the Manhattan Association of Cabaret & Clubs' Outstanding Female Vocalist Award — presented by Liza Minnelli — and the top award from the Mabel Mercer



KT Sullivan/Contributed photo

Foundation for her achievements. In April 2012, Sullivan became the artistic director of the Mabel Mercer Foundation.

Weber, host of National Public Radio's *Piano Jazz Rising Stars*, "is counted among the most brilliant minds in jazz today," the release continues. The New York-based, Wisconsin/Chicago-raised Weber "is a virtuosic piano player who can be heard regularly in the most renowned clubs and rooms in Manhattan and at festivals around the world," it adds. "His

brilliantly crafted spontaneous orchestrations easily place him in the rarefied company of today's elite jazz musicians. "CNN, CNBC, Black Entertainment TV, Bravo/Arts, National Public Radio, and Voice of America have profiled Weber's unique musical depth and vast knowledge of his craft, the release notes.

For more information about this show or the Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota's 2013-2014 season, visit www.artistseriesconcerts.org or call 306-1202.

GREEN'S ARTWORK TO BE EXHIBITED AT WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

The bright colors and bold designs of artist Peg Green will be on display at The Women's Resource Center from Dec. 5 through Jan. 30 in a show titled *Spirits of Life: Portraits from the Art of Living*, the center has announced.

An opening reception will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. at the center, located at 340 S. Tuttle Ave. in Sarasota, a news release says. The public is invited; refreshments will be served.

The show may be seen most weekdays after 10:30 a.m.

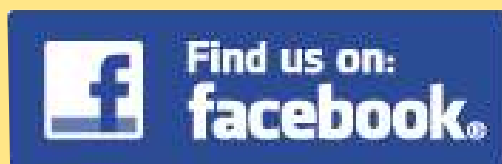
Green's art is a suite of visual stories and portraits that express her "powerful immersion in the act of living," the release adds. "Her subjects range from the playful aspects of life to the more serious — depictions of gratitude, protective ferocity, life-giving energy and deep questions about personal values — even love."

"Using nature and personal experience as her primary sources of inspiration, she also

draws on archetypes and symbols from cultures around the world, as well as feminist and shamanic sources," the release continues. "Her current work is strongly influenced by her recent three-year study of intuitive painting, following the teachings of Michele Cassou."

Green studied her craft at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cuyahoga Community College, the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, VA, the Hudson River Valley Art Studio in Greenville, NY, and at Milford Art Studio in Kejimikujik, Nova Scotia. Her work has been exhibited at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Reston, VA; the Invitational Quilt Show in Manassas, VA; the Franklin Park Arts Center in Purcellville, VA; and All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in Colorado Springs, CO, the release adds.

For more information, call The Women's Resource Center at 941-366-1700.



facebook.com/SarasotaNewsLeader



Secret Life of Plants will be on exhibit at The Women's Resource Center. Contributed photo

FUZIÓN DANCE ARTISTS TO PRESENT VOICES OF FUZIÓN: MÉLANGE

Sarasota's cutting-edge contemporary dance company, Fuzión Dance Artists, will present *Voices of Fuzión: Mélange* Dec. 7 and 8 in the Jane B. Cook Theater at the FSU Center for the Performing Arts, located at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the company has announced.

The program will feature works by company members, "highlighting both seasoned and emerging choreographers who have not yet

had a platform to create unique works of their own, whose 'voices' are still emerging," a news release says.

"We are thrilled to expand our season with another theater production in December, adding artistic richness to our annual concert in March and taking our community collaborations to the next level," says Artistic Director Leymis Bolaños Wilmott in the release.



Erin Fletcher (left) and Ariel Hart. Contributed photo by Daniel Perales



Molly Nichols and Rolando Cabrera. Contributed photo by Daniel Perales

The performances will be at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 7, and at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 8. Tickets are \$28, or \$10 for students. They may be purchased online at fuziondance.org or by calling 359-0099, Ext. 101.

“The word ‘fusión’ means a mixture, which, in our case, reflects both the individual dancers and the styles of dance that we present,” explains Bolaños Wilmott in the release. “What makes our company so eclectic is the individual voices of the artists. In this program we will explore what inspires those individual dancers; we will witness their strengths, passions and varying styles.”

The choreographers are Fuzión Dance Artists company members Molly Nichols, Erin Fletcher, Rolando Cabrera and Xiao-xuan Yang Dancigers.

“My piece, *Toll*, is inspired by the strength and serenity of the women in the work,” says Nichols, who has been with the company for two years and is a graduate of the University of Florida’s dance program. “*Toll* brings a sense of time and arrival and with that the end of striving, all within travel sequences and group phrasing. I am honored to continue such a sacred movement work and to share it with new audiences,” she adds.

Taiwanese-born Yang Dancigers is excited about recreating her work, *Faces*, for a group of seven women, including her, the release continues. “The concept of the three-section work is a procession of past selves creating a ritual,” notes Yang Dancigers, who joined the company in the fall of 2012. “I will use reverse

movements to represent the past, as well as isolation movements and floor work.”

Fletcher’s piece, titled *Sigue Para Lante*, “explores the randomness and symbolic thoughts of a dreamer visited by past love experiences taking place in a dreamscape,” the release continues.

The work choreographed by Cabrera, titled *Three Accents*, is an expansion of his piece *Accents* from Fuzión’s August *In the Round* performance. “In it, he explores the styles of animation and break-dancing,” while giving audience members “an opening to create their own stories based on what they see,” the release adds.

Also on the December program is a new piece featuring company members and dancers from Sarasota’s Parkinson Place, who will come together in a work choreographed by Bolaños Wilmott. This piece features original music by two of Fuzión’s favorite composers, Scott Blum and Francis Schwartz, the release notes. It was commissioned by the Parkinson Research Foundation.

“I continue to be drawn to creating work that is physically integrated, such as last season’s *Propel*, for a dancer in a wheelchair and company members,” says Bolaños Wilmott in the release. “Not only will this new piece be an artistic milestone, but I hope that it will also bring awareness of the disease to our audience, and demonstrate what people with mixed abilities can accomplish artistically, whether it is dance, music or art.”

Bolaños Wilmott leads the Dance for Parkinson’s program at Parkinson Place for individuals with Parkinson’s disease.

MARVELOUS WONDERETTES BRING BACK MUSIC OF THE '50S AND '60S

The smash off-Broadway hit *The Marvelous Wonderettes* will open on Venice Theatre's Pinkerton stage Friday, Dec. 6, and runs through Sunday, Dec. 22, the theater has announced. Evening performances of this fun-filled jukebox musical will be offered Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. Sunday matinees will be at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$25 to \$28 for adults and \$10 to \$15 for students. They may be purchased online at www.venicestage.com, by phone at 488-1115 or in person at the box office, located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. on the island in Venice.

Venice Theatre's production is musically directed by the award-winning Michelle Kasanofsky, a news release notes. New York-based director and performer Dennis Clark has returned to the area to stage the show. (Local audiences might remember Clark from starring roles in *Singin' in the Rain* and *The Full Monty*. He also directed and choreographed

Venice Theatre's recent production of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, the release adds.)

Clark and Kasanofsky have chosen four Venice Theatre veterans (Andrea Keddell, Noelia Altamirano, Laurie Colton and Liz Pascoe) to play the "Wonderettes." The cast will take audiences back to the 1958 Springfield High School prom during Act I and the 10-year class reunion in Act II, the release notes. As the audience members learn about the girls' lives and loves, they will be treated to classic songs of the '50s and '60s, such as *Lollipop*, *Dream Lover*, *Stupid Cupid*, *Lipstick on Your Collar*, *Hold Me*, *Thrill Me*, *Kiss Me*, *It's My Party*.

The Associated Press wrote, "[T]he fun never stops" during this "must-take musical trip down memory lane," the release points out. The *Los Angeles Times* called *The Marvelous Wonderettes*, "deliciously enjoyable — wildly entertaining froth."



(From left) Noelia Altamirano, Andrea Keddell, Liz Pascoe and Laurie Colton are the Marvelous Wonderettes. Contributed photo

HOLIDAY ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW RETURNING TO ENGLEWOOD

Last year, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation hosted its first Arts and Crafts Show at the Englewood Sports Complex, and “the response was overwhelming,” with residents and visitors purchasing unique gifts including jewelry, artwork and clothing, a county news release says.

“Last year’s inaugural event was a huge success,” said Wendy Aldridge, program coordinator with Sarasota County Parks and Recreation in the release. “We heard from

both customers and vendors that they wanted to see us do it again, so we are looking forward to another very successful event.”

The Arts and Crafts Show will be held on Saturday, Dec. 7, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Englewood Sports Complex, located at 1300 South River Road in Englewood. Admission and parking are free.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.



The Englewood Sports Complex will host the Holiday Arts and Crafts Show on Dec. 7. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

THE MOODY BLUES COMING BACK TO THE VAN WEZEL IN MARCH

The Moody Blues, still rocking in 2013 with original members Justin Hayward, John Lodge and Graeme Edge, have released 24 albums in a career spanning nearly five decades. On March 24, they will return to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota to perform many of their hits.

The group has sold more than 70 million albums, a news release notes, earning 18 platinum discs “and all manner of awards,” including the *Golden Ticket* for selling the most tickets at Madison Square Garden.

The Moody Blues’ classic album, *Days of Future Passed* (featuring the signature song *Nights in White Satin*), “heralded the era of the concept album and detailed sleeve artwork that would epitomize the Progressive Rock movement that followed,” the release notes.

“Formed in 1964 in Birmingham, England, The Moody Blues came from the same gene pool that would give the world Traffic, the Move, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Slade,” the release continues. The band’s original line-up of Denny Laine, Graeme Edge, Clint Warwick, Ray Thomas and Mike Pinder scored a global No. 1 hit with *Go Now*, but unable to follow up this success, Warwick and Laine left the group, to be replaced by John Lodge and Justin Hayward, respectively, in 1966, the release says.


“For the next few months, the band crafted a new set of original compositions that would change their fortunes,” the release adds.

“Drastically re-thinking their musical approach,” it notes, the band members



The Moody Blues will take the Van Wezel stage on March 24. Contributed photo by Mark Owens

“began to compose new material ... Eager to recoup some of the money [it] had invested in the band, Decca asked The Moody Blues to record a rock version of Dvorak’s *New World Symphony*” to demonstrate a new stereo system it was launching. Instead, The Moody Blues, along with producer Tony Clarke, used the orchestral settings for a suite of the group’s own songs, which resulted in *Days of Future Passed*. This proved a turning point for the band members, the release continues. They soon “became acknowledged masters of lushly orchestrated psychedelic rock and trailblazers in the use of the mellotron, which they used both live and in the studio to mimic the sounds of a full orchestra.”

Tickets are priced from \$35 to \$85. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org. 



Lord and Lady Carey participated in events at the Kanuga Conference Centre in North Carolina in September. Contributed photo

LORD CAREY OF CLIFTON TO PREACH AT REDEEMER

The Church of the Redeemer “will joyfully welcome the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey of Clifton, and his wife, Lady Carey, to the parish on Dec. 5,” the church has announced in a news release.

During his six-day visit with Redeemer, Carey will preach on Sunday, Dec. 8, during the 9 and 11 a.m. Masses, the release says. He will also preach on Monday, Dec. 9, at 6 p.m., during the Ordination to the Sacred Order of Priests of Charleston David Wilson, Jason Andrew Murbarger, and David Stuart Bumsted, the release notes.

In 1991, Carey became the 103rd Archbishop of Canterbury, serving 70 million Anglicans around the world. He retired in 2002 and was made a life peer as Lord Carey of Clifton, the release continues. He is currently the

chancellor of the University of Gloucestershire and president of the London School of Theology. He also serves on the Foundation Board of the World Economic Forum and is a co-chairman of the Council of 100.

“It is a great honor that Lord Carey, a world-renowned and respected theologian and speaker, will be preaching at Redeemer; it is especially distinguishing that he will also preach for the ordination,” said the Very Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson, rector, in the release. “Our parish is thrilled to have Lord and Lady Carey as our guests.”

“During their stay in Sarasota, Lord and Lady Carey will participate extensively in the life of the parish, including attending several luncheons and gatherings,” the release notes. On Saturday, Dec. 7, the couple will be the

guests of honor for a parish event: *Experience Nashotah: Tea and Conversation with Lord and Lady Carey*. “Designed to highlight Redeemer’s renewed energy and work at Nashotah House, inspire donors, foster alumni participation and encourage theological study,” the event will be attended by Nashotah House alumni, donors and current and prospective students, as well as a number of trustees, the release says. Lord and Lady Carey will be introduced by the Right Rev. Edward L. Salmon Jr., dean and president of Nashotah House, and the Right Rev. Dabney

Smith, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida.

During the tea, “Lord Carey will discuss the future of theological education and Nashotah’s unique role as a center for lay and priestly formation, highlighting its Benedictine ethos and strategic role in revitalizing the American Church,” the release adds.

The Church of the Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. For more information, visit www.redeemersarasota.org or call 955-4263. To learn more about Lord Carey, visit www.glcarey.co.uk.

GREEN TORAH BEGINS DEC. 3 AT TEMPLE EMANU-EL

Green Torah: Spirituality and Jewish Ecology is the title of a new adult education series at Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

Taught by Rabbi Brenner Glickman, the class will be held on Tuesdays, Dec. 3, 10 and 17, at 10:30 a.m., a news release notes.

Comprising an examination of sacred Jewish texts and their implications for modern life,

Green Torah will explore how Judaism’s ancient sages found divinity in the natural world and viewed caring for the environment as a religious imperative,” the release explains. “Ways to put this imperative into practice today will also be discussed.”

For more information or to register for *Green Torah*, call 351-8766.

ADVENT LESSONS AND CAROLS PROGRAM PLANNED AT REDEEMER

Advent Lessons and Carols, a festive celebration in preparation of the birth of Christ, will be offered as a gift to the community at the Church of the Redeemer, located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, on Sunday, Dec. 1, at 5:15 p.m., the church has announced.

A light reception will follow in Gillespie Hall. No tickets or reservations are required for this free event.

Presenting *Advent Lessons and Carols* is an ancient Anglican tradition in which the

congregation actively joins in the reading of Scripture aloud, recounting history “from the Fall of Man, through the prophets, to the Annunciation of the Savior’s birth to Mary,” a news release says. Throughout the service, the Redeemer choirs will lead the congregation in the singing of well-loved Advent carols, under the direction of organist-choirmaster Ann Stephenson-Moe.

For more information on the event or parking information, call the parish office at 955-4263 or visit www.redeemersarasota.org.



The Church of the Redeemer is located in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

TEMPLE EMANU-EL KIDS PREPARE FOR HANUKKAH

This month brings the earliest Hanukkah season ever — the first day of Hanukkah actually coincides with Thanksgiving Day — and the youth of Temple Emanu-El have been preparing for both events, a Temple news release says.

Young Jewish and interfaith families gathered at Temple Emanu-El on Saturday morning, Nov. 16, for a special Tot Shabbat program devoted to getting into the Hanukkah spirit. Children played dreidel; painted coin purses and filled them with *gelt*, or chocolate coins; sampled the traditional Hanukkah dessert *sufganiyot*, or jelly doughnuts; and sang Hanukkah songs and heard the Hanukkah story with Rabbi Brenner Glickman, the

release adds. The morning event was chaired by Liana Sheintal Bryant and Alicia Zoller.

Temple Emanu-El Religious School students joined in the Hanukkah activities the following day. After visiting the synagogue's Judaica shop to purchase small gifts for family members and friends, students created Hanukkah cards and glitter-encrusted Hanukkah decorations for senior Jewish residents of Sarasota-Manatee, the release continues. The students' Hanukkah greetings will be distributed in partnership with Jewish Family and Children's Service.

For more information about Hanukkah celebrations at Temple Emanu-El, call 371-2788. 



Temple Emanu-El Religious School students Danielle Rudd, Jayme Rudd, Jordan Cohen, and Caterina Cappelli display Hanukkah greetings created for seniors served by Jewish Family & Children's Service. Contributed photo



SNL

Temple Emanu-El Preschool student Simone Velez donned a Pilgrim hat to play dreidel. Contributed photo



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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.

29+**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 wbtsrq.org.

29+**NOVEMBER*****Above the planet through a microscope* by Carla Poindexter**

Through Dec. 28; times vary. Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art Gallery, 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 366-2454 or AllynGallup.com.

29+**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.

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.

02**DECEMBER*****A Feast of Carols*, presented by Gloria Musicae**

Dec. 2, 7 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 104 S. Pineapple St., featuring selections by Bach, Benjamin Britten and Conrad Susa. Tickets: \$35 (10 percent discount for online sales). Visit GloriaMusicae.org, call 953-3368 or visit the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall box office, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader
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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.