

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 18 — January 17, 2014

# News Leader

**FOURTH TIME THE CHARM?**

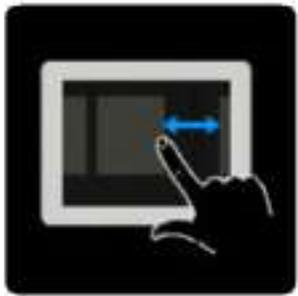
**A HALF MEASURE**

**A ROUND OF QUESTIONS**

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**Old school journalism. 21st century delivery.**

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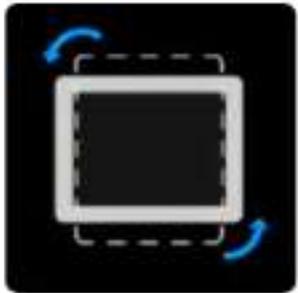
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

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# *Welcome*

Before we were even halfway through our final production day this week, Production Manager Cleve Posey sent me an email referencing the old Fred Sanford “distress call”: “Elizabeth, this is the big one!”

I knew we would have a lot of stories this week, but let us just say I had no idea on Monday what the final count would be. Among our offerings are Copy Editor Vicki Chatley’s account of the remarks former President George W. Bush made at the Ringling Town Hall session on Tuesday (she was there); one of Fran Palmeri’s glorious nature features; Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel’s exclusive look at a Baltimore Orioles mini camp in Sarasota; and a delightful commentary by Harriet Cuthbert on preparing for a big trip.

On the County Commission beat, Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker took the impact fees and Teamsters contract assignments, while County Editor Roger Drouin handled the latest debate over the old Sarasota Police Department site and more talk of extending the Legacy Trail. That left me with Warm Mineral Springs and Bob’s Boathouse.

Then there is all the city and Siesta news. City Editor Stan Zimmerman pounded out stories about a new drive for a strong elected mayor, a change in plan for police disciplinary procedures and a petition to demolish a historic downtown structure, among other topics. On Siesta, the news of a state roundabout proposal has raised lots of questions, and that is just a taste of the Siesta news. There also has been more discussion of the Lido Renourishment Project.

By all means, take your time going through this issue.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher





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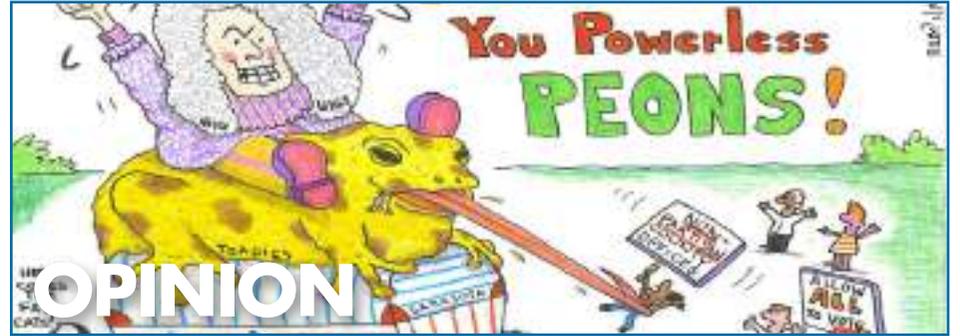
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Front cover: *Bright and Breezy* - Rachel Brown Hackney  
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Tonya Herschberger & Linda Keefe

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# FOURTH TIME THE CHARM?



*A new drive is afoot to change the City of Sarasota charter. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **A NEW CITY CHARTER PROPOSAL CALLS FOR THE 'STRONGEST MAYOR YET'**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

Alarm bells are going off all over town. Another new “boss mayor” plan is afoot. This time it is not the proposal of a simple amendment to the city charter. This time the effort involves an entirely new city charter.

Three times in the past 20 years, proponents of a strong elected mayor have put the question up for popular vote. And each time the result was not even close. City voters preferred the current city-manager form of government to an executive mayor plan by overwhelming majorities, often with a two-to-one margin.

City voters do not have to look far to

find a strong-mayor form of city government. Bradenton’s government is dominated by its mayor. In the past quarter-century, only two men have held the job in that community — Wayne Poston and Bill Evers.

### **THE BASICS**

On the first page of the *Revised City Charter, City of Sarasota 2014-15* is the name of its author. Robert J. Martineau, Esq., is identified as a “Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus of Law, University of Cincinnati.” The *Sarasota*

“*I think there’s a need for it. The city is in a state of paralysis with a lack of leadership.*”

Michael Barfield  
Paralegal  
Sarasota



*Herald-Tribune* identifies him as a Nokomis resident.

The new charter, which is 22 pages long, would create a five-member City Commission, with each person elected from a district. Only the mayor would be elected citywide. While the mayor would have no vote, the mayor would have veto power over ordinances, resolutions and appropriations. To override a mayoral

veto, a supermajority of four commissioner votes would be required.

The mayor also would be paid four times the salary of a city commissioner, but “not less than \$100,000.”

The proposed charter is explicit about who would hold the reins of power. It says, “Except as provided in the Charter, the Council or a

#### **Section 4.01. - Mayor.**

*(a) The Mayor shall exercise the executive powers of the City which shall include but not be limited to;*

*(1) Organize, assign duties, and supervise the City departments including appointing, supervising, disciplining, and removing a City officer or employee in accordance with this Charter;*

*(2) Enforce this Charter, City ordinances, and applicable county, state, and federal laws;*

*(3) recommend to the Council measures for the improvement of the City and its government;*

*(4) Appoint or remove a City administrator, attorney, clerk, member of a City board, commission, or other entity created by the Council, or head of a department. An appointment or removal under this subsection requires Council approval except that the Mayor may remove a department head without Council approval.*

*(5) submit an annual budget and capital program to the Council;*

*(6) Veto an ordinance, resolution, or an appropriation within five (5) days of adoption, except an ordinance:*

*(i) Defined by a Florida statute as an emergency ordinance;*

*(ii) Adopted as a result of a quasi-judicial proceeding mandated by law; or*

*(iii) Required by law or this Charter to be subject to a referendum*

*(7) Attend and participate in the discussion at a Council meeting, but with no power to vote;*

*(8) report as needed, but at least annually the end of each fiscal year, to the Council and the public on the financial and administrative condition and needs of the City; and*

Council member may not interfere with the Mayor's executive authority under this Charter including the appointment or removal of an administrative officer or employee or with the performance of an officer's or employee's administrative duties. The Council or a member may direct a recommendation or criticism concerning the administration of the city only to the Mayor."

The new charter would also shift the city's election dates to the state and national election cycle of August primaries and November general elections by the year 2020. Currently, the city conducts its primary in March and its general election in May. Further, under the proposed charter, the city would revert to state campaign finance rules.

One former city commissioner who campaigned against the strong-mayor referendums in the past told *The Sarasota News Leader*, "This is the strongest mayor yet."

## THE PERSONALITIES

Martineau is not alone in the quest for a new city charter. He is backed by a number of individuals who have supported prior efforts to create an executive mayor with broad powers. Several sources indicate County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, neighborhood leader Linda Holland and Sunshine Law litigant Michael Barfield are involved.

Barfield said he did not support prior attempts to create an elected executive mayor. "But now I think there's a need for it," he told the *News Leader*. "The city is in a state of paralysis with a lack of leadership."



*Shannon Snyder was elected mayor by his fellow city commissioners in May 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

He confirmed that two meetings have been held at The HuB building on Fruitville Road, one on Jan. 7 and another on Jan. 13. Barfield says he is withholding judgment until he sees the final version of the proposed charter. "The draft I saw had the city auditor and clerk appointed by the mayor with the advice and consent of the [city] council," he said. "One of my concerns is making sure the auditor and clerk retains independence for auditing purposes and access to public records."

In order to appear on the ballot, any proposal must be approved as an ordinance by the City Commission and set for election, or 10 percent of the registered voters of the city must sign a petition within a 180-day period to support the measure. With 32,937 registered voters in the City of Sarasota, that means about 3,300 of their signatures would be required on a petition to put the revised city charter proposal up for referendum. 

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# A HALF MEASURE



*Lifeguards are among the county's Teamsters members. File photo*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION MAKES A COUNTEROFFER IN A YEARS-OLD PAY DISPUTE WITH THE TEAMSTERS

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

Amid tales of hardship and stress caused by staffers going more than four years with frozen wages, the Sarasota County Commission this Wednesday, Jan. 15, made 400 unionized employees an offer that includes some of the pay raises the union has sought during more than two years of negotiations. Whether the union will OK the plan, though, remains unclear.

The members of Local 173 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters have been working

without a collective bargaining agreement since September 2011. Disputes between the union — which represents park employees, truck technicians, lifeguards and more — and the county have dragged on and on, with more than 30 bargaining sessions already in the books.

“*They might be satisfied with this — a true 3 percent raise. They still didn't get nearly what they lost, but it's a step in the right direction.*”

Mike McElmury  
Teamsters International Representative

What's the holdup? Money.

The union workers have had their wages frozen since October 2009, and they have pushed the county to

authorize a \$1,500 lump sum payment, along with partially retroactive 3 percent wage increases for fiscal years 2013 and 2014. Last August, Special Magistrate Stanley Sargent sided with the union in the pay dispute, recommending that the county adopt those monetary stipulations. But Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer rejected that plan, just two days after taking over from former Administrator Randy Reid. Harmer's decision led directly to this week's attempt to resolve the issue in public, with the commission directly involved.

Elliot Zahalsky, the attorney representing the Teamsters, laid out the justifications for its proposal, pointing out that the average wage of the union workers — \$17 — leaves an average employee with a family of four just barely

over the federal poverty level. The median family income in Sarasota County is \$57,000, he pointed out. For the Teamsters, that figure is \$37,000.

And while wages have stayed stagnant, employees' costs have increased. In recent years, health insurance premiums have risen, and the state Legislature has moved to require public employees to contribute to their pensions. All that comes on top of the typical cost-of-living increases we all face. Overall, "employees have lost at least 16.9 percent of their income's buying power" since having their wages frozen, Zahalsky testified.

Susan Blake's husband has worked for the county for 29 years. According to Blake, the last time her husband got a raise, gas prices averaged \$1.47 a gallon. The U.S. Energy



*Parks and Recreation Department employees assist with events at Benderson Park, most of which are on the weekends. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

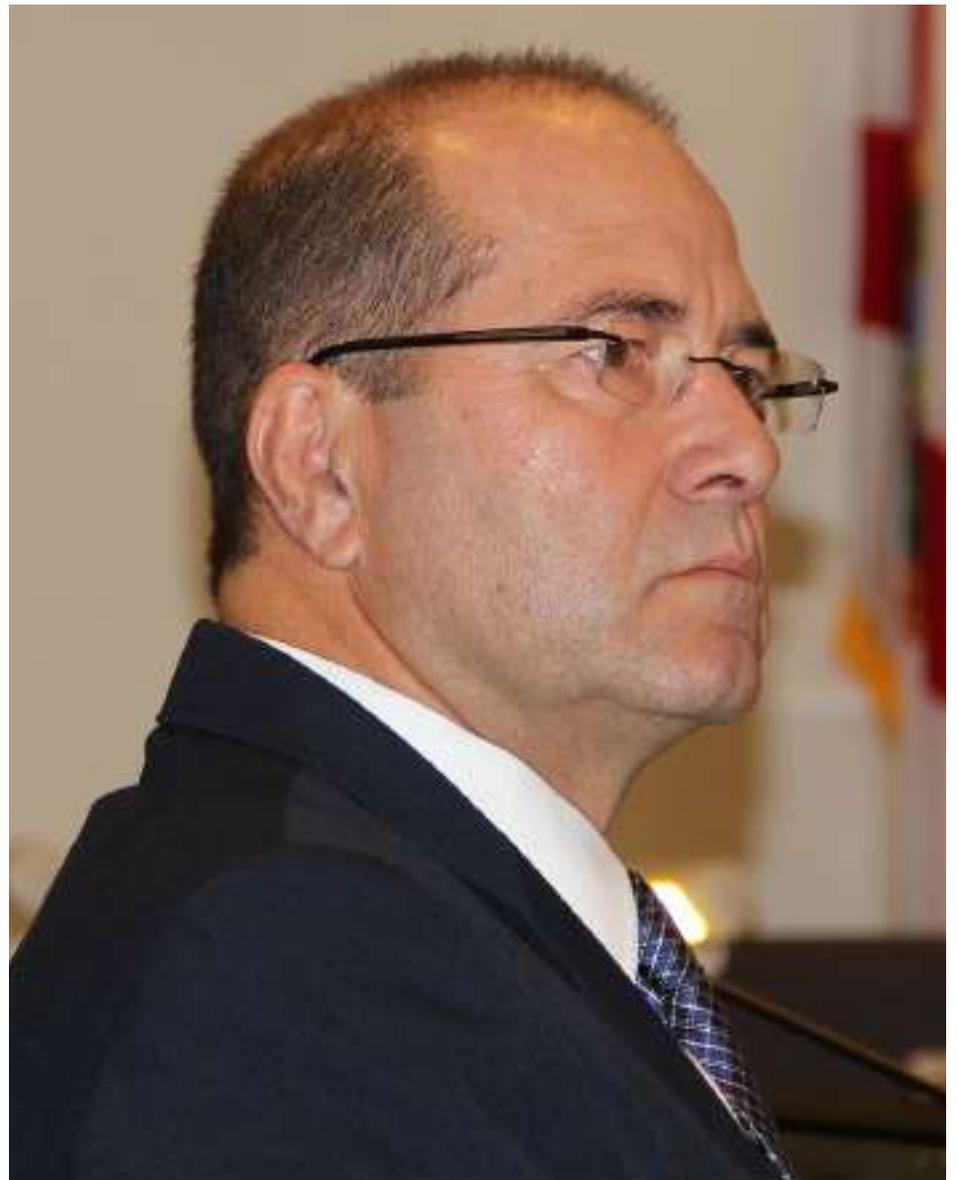
Information Administration now puts that number at \$3.33. “We’ve had no increase in the amount of income to our family,” Blake told the commission.

Altogether, about a dozen employees testified Wednesday. Several talked about how the wage freeze has damaged morale, which is “in the dirt,” one worker said. “There is no morale,” another argued, disputing the claim that firing Reid has improved employees’ outlook. One parks employee said that while pay has stayed flat, he is being asked to come to work on Saturdays and to cut hours during the week, meaning he’s on the job six days a week.

The county’s counter-offer to the union included a \$1,000 lump sum, plus a 3 percent merit pay raise for fiscal year 2014 only. Zahalsky pushed back on the merit pay idea, arguing that because supervisors grade employees on a bell curve, many would be left out.

Commissioner Nora Patterson acknowledged that point, moving to amend the county’s proposal to make it an across-the-board 3 percent raise, backdated to Oct. 1 of last year, the first day of the current fiscal year. Commissioner Joe Barbetta seconded that proposal, which eventually passed 4-1.

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, who spoke personally about growing up in a blue-collar household, was the lone board member to vote against the counter-offer. “It’s not lost upon me the hard work that the county workers do,” she said, later adding, “I appreciate the work that’s done, I appreciate what you go through and I appreciate the fact that you’re here today to participate.”



*Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer rejected a union pay plan offered in October. File photo*

With the commission’s vote, County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh’s office will now draft a contract laying out the details and present it to the union. Teamsters International Representative Mike McElmury tells *The Sarasota News Leader* he’s not sure how the proposal will be received.

“They might be satisfied with this — a true 3 percent raise,” he says. “They still didn’t get nearly what they lost, but it’s a step in the right direction.”

But there are no guarantees that this dispute, which has now dragged on for more than two years, is anywhere close to finished. As McElmury put it, “At the end of the day it’s up to the members.” 



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# A ROUND OF QUESTIONS

*St. Boniface Episcopal Church (red pointer in photo) sits north of the intersection of Beach Road and Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key. Image from Google Maps*

## A STATE PROPOSAL FOR A ROUNDABOUT AT BEACH ROAD/MIDNIGHT PASS ROAD ON SIESTA KEY RAISES COUNTY COMMISSION CONCERNS

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

While a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) spokesman says a plan to construct a roundabout at the intersection of Beach Road and Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key is “pretty set in stone,” county commissioners have raised questions about the project, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

“Nothing’s set in stone if there’s a big uprising about it,” Commissioner Nora Patterson said in an interview on Jan. 10.

Commissioner Christine Robinson, who travels that route often, added that her fear is clogged traffic in both directions — along Beach Road toward Siesta Village and on Midnight Pass Road up to the Stickney Point Road intersection — if the roundabout is put in place.

“I’d like to see how that [roundabout] really would work to solve a pedestrian problem.”

Nora Patterson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

“During season, it is not uncommon for traffic to be backed up,” Robinson pointed out, but at least drivers who want to turn south at the Beach

Road intersection with Midnight Pass road can take advantage of the traffic signal to do so. If motorists have to negotiate a roundabout, with heavy traffic feeding into it from both directions, Robinson is asking how a person who wants to head toward the southern part of the island will be able to do so “without something there saying, ‘Your turn?’”

Robin Stublen, communications specialist for FDOT’s Public Information Office, told the *News Leader* on Jan. 10 that he understood the roundabout had been the focus of presentations to the County Commission because FDOT’s *Tentative Work Program Report* for July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2019 includes preliminary engineering and design funding for the project in the amount of \$302,807 for the 2014-15 fiscal year. Construction is scheduled in the 2016-17 fiscal year at a cost of

\$852,249, he added, although it could be the latter part of that fiscal year when the work begins.

However, Robinson said the only discussion that has been held about the project has been among the members of the [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (MPO), which deals with transportation issues for the two counties. Patterson and Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta also are on the MPO board. “We never talked about it at a commission meeting,” Robinson pointed out to the *News Leader*.

## WHOSE IDEA IS THIS?

On Dec. 16, Robinson emailed James K. Harriott Jr., the county’s chief engineer, to ask him to put together “a comprehensive package” on the proposal. “This also will likely



*The Florida Department of Transportation constructed six new pedestrian crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road in the fall of 2012. File photo*

require a Commission discussion as well, but the background material will be an important start,” she wrote.

Because of the holidays, Harriott informed Robinson on Jan. 2 that it was taking a while to get a response from the state agency. On Jan. 9, he finally had more details for her.

On Jan. 8, Harriott wrote Robinson in an email, he spoke with L.K. Nandam, FDOT District 1 traffic operations manager, whose office is in Sarasota. “[Nandam] indicated the proposed roundabout identified in the DRAFT work program is a safety project ...”

Harriott continued, “During the public meetings held with the community to discuss the crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road, several residents indicated problems and difficulties with crossing Midnight Pass Road at the Beach Road intersection. FDOT reviewed the intersection and determined that a roundabout at the intersection may improve traffic flow and pedestrian crossing conditions. Based on that

review the project was proposed for the work program. If the work program is adopted, the FDOT process will start with additional analysis and some conceptual designs to prepare for additional public meetings and discussion specific to the project.”

Harriott was referring to a public session held in December 2011 and subsequent surveys sent out by FDOT regarding complaints primarily from condominium residents about the difficulty of crossing Midnight Pass Road during the height of season because of the heavy traffic flow. As a result, FDOT constructed six new crosswalks along Midnight Pass Road — between Beach and Stickney Point roads — in the fall of 2012 at a cost of approximately \$198,000.

During the 2013 season, the new crosswalks won praise from visitors and residents; nonetheless, a few residents remarked to the *News Leader* that traffic tended to back up on the road when crossings were especially frequent.

**FPN: 4344911                      Project: SR 758**

**AT BEACH ROAD ROUNDABOUT**

**Desc: ROUNDABOUT**

**Project Length: 0.379                      Begin Mile Post: 1.048                      End Mile Post: 1.427**

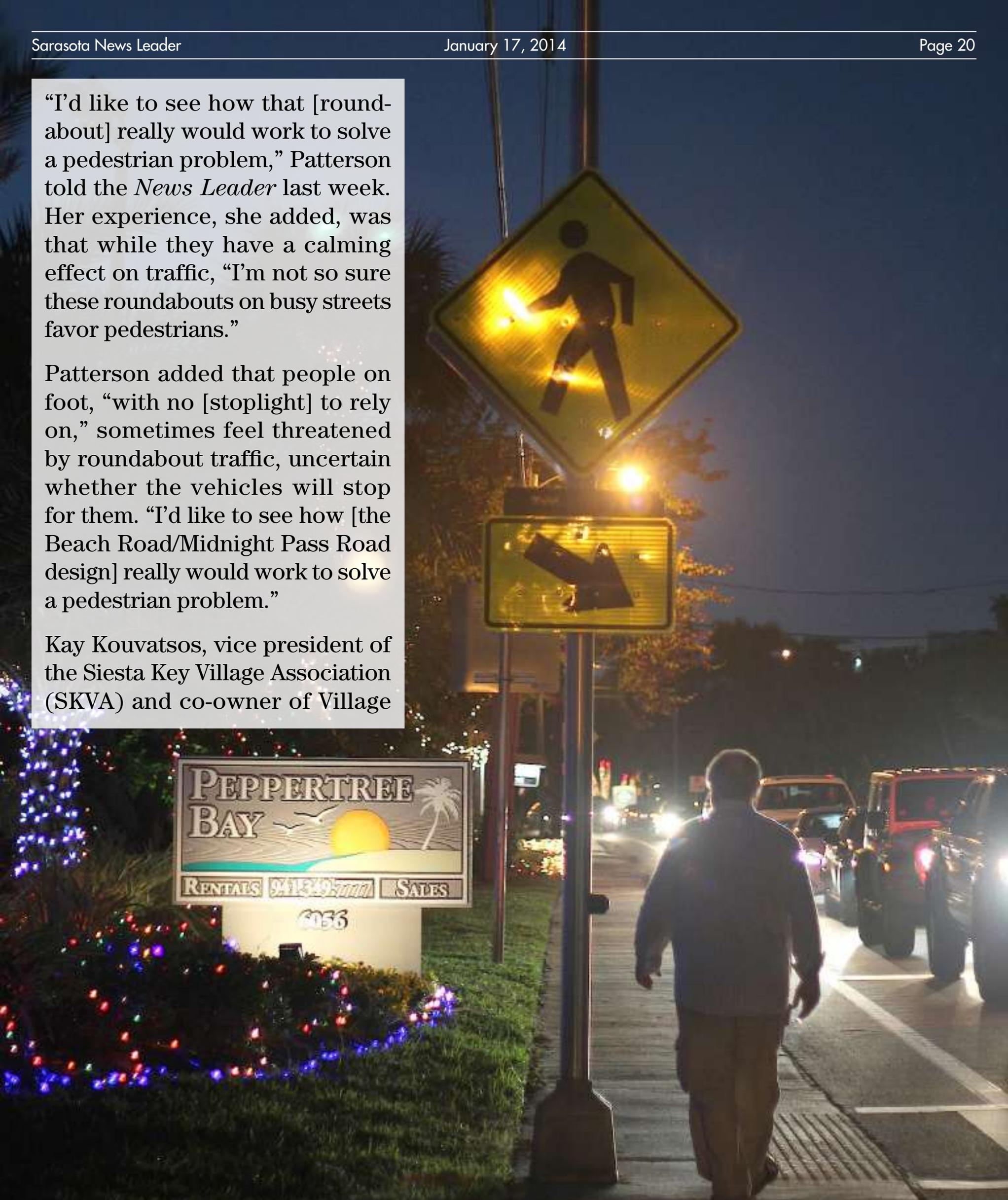
Phase	Fund	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
PE	HSP	\$292,807				
PE	SA	\$10,000				
CST	DDR			\$39,800		
CST	HSP			\$801,539		
CST	SA			\$10,910		
<b>Project Total:</b>		\$302,807		\$852,249		

*A segment of the Florida Department of Transportation Tentative Work Program Report for July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2019 provides details about funding for the roundabout proposed on Siesta Key. Image courtesy FDOT*

“I’d like to see how that [roundabout] really would work to solve a pedestrian problem,” Patterson told the *News Leader* last week. Her experience, she added, was that while they have a calming effect on traffic, “I’m not so sure these roundabouts on busy streets favor pedestrians.”

Patterson added that people on foot, “with no [stoplight] to rely on,” sometimes feel threatened by roundabout traffic, uncertain whether the vehicles will stop for them. “I’d like to see how [the Beach Road/Midnight Pass Road design] really would work to solve a pedestrian problem.”

Kay Kouvatsos, vice president of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) and co-owner of Village



*A pedestrian who wishes to use one of the new crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road pushes a button to flash 'wig-wag' lights to alert drivers to stop. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Café in Siesta Village, shared Patterson's concerns.

Although she was speaking from a personal standpoint only, Kouvatsos told the *News Leader*, "I don't think that's going to help crossing at all. ... I don't think there's a thing wrong with that intersection."

She had heard nothing about the project until the *News Leader* contacted her on Jan. 13, though she said she would make sure the plan is brought up at the SKVA's next regular meeting, on Feb. 4.

The *News Leader* was unable to reach SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie.

As with the Midnight Pass crosswalk project, Patterson said she felt the appropriate next steps for the proposal would be for the MPO members to suggest FDOT "get some public

input" and provide details about how it plans to handle right of way issues at the intersection. The primary question the agency needs to answer, she added, is "Just how exactly is [the roundabout] going to work?"

Robinson concurred. "Maybe my fears can be calmed by getting the details," she added.

In concluding his Jan. 9 email to Robinson, Harriott wrote, "Mr. Nandam and I agreed that in the future, FDOT will notify County staff that the State is adding a project (specifically safety projects) to the work program so that County staff can provide a little background before the DRAFT work program is published. ... Although it may not change FDOT's direction to add these types of projects to the work program, advance notification will allow us to provide the Board and community more background information." 



*The most recent roundabout to open in the city of Sarasota is at Pineapple Avenue and Ringling Boulevard. It was completed in late spring of 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

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# NUN RAISING HELL ON ST. ARMANDS

*A woman working on St. Armands to raise charitable contributions to help Haiti has outraged business owners. Photo courtesy St. Armands Circle Association*

## BUSINESS OWNERS OBJECT TO A WOMAN SEEKING CHARITABLE DONATIONS ON THE CIRCLE

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

St. Armands Circle merchants are fuming about a woman dressed as a nun raising money for people in Haiti amongst the *hoi polloi* shoppers.

Diana Corrigan, executive director of the St. Armands Circle Association, told the board members of the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID) Tuesday morning, Jan. 14, “A lady has set up shop, going up to tourists aggressively.” Corrigan added, “She has a sign saying, ‘Help sick

and hungry children.’ Merchants put up anything outside, and they get hit up by Code Enforcement.”

Corrigan came to the meeting believing the woman dressed in a nun’s summer habit had a permit from the city to solicit money. Last month, as usual during the holiday season, Salvation Army bell-ringers were active on the Circle, soliciting funds for the hungry and needy.

“I understand ringing bells for the Salvation

“*This is going to proliferate if we don't fight it.*”

Marty Rappaport  
Chairman  
St. Armands Business Improvement District



Army,” she said. “I was told by the police [the nun] had a permit. Next thing, she’s got a card table and a cooler and hand-painted signs, handing out paper and asking for money.”

Sarasota Police Deputy Chief Steve Moyer, who was at the BID meeting, responded, “This is the first I’ve heard of it.”

Tim Litchet, director of neighborhood and development services for the City of Sarasota, was called into the meeting. The Code Enforcement Department is under his jurisdiction.

“A nun came in and asked for a letter and we refused,” he told the BID board. “It’s my understanding no permit has been issued, and I’m not sure we could issue any,” he said. “The nun approached [City Engineer] Alex DavisShaw for a right of way use permit. Alex didn’t know what the use would be.”

“I don’t know what I would cite her for,” added Litchet of the nun. “This looks like a potential

First Amendment [freedom of speech] issue. She has asked for permits, but I don’t think she’s entitled to any.”

Moyer listened to the discussion and then said, “I don’t see any violation.”

Neither opinion was well received by Corrigan or the BID’s chairman, Marty Rappaport. “I think it’s time for Sarasota to stand up and fight against the abuse of the Sunshine Law and the First Amendment. We’re just opening this up, but it has to be addressed. This is going to proliferate if we don’t fight it.”

The BID represents commercial property owners on and around St. Armands Circle. Last year, board members had to turn over their personal computers after a Sunshine Law complaint was filed about their use of personal email for BID business.

Litchet said the police and the city’s purchasing director should raise the issue of the nun’s solicitations with the city attorney. “This is a First Amendment issue, not a Sunshine issue,” he added.

“This is squatter’s rights,” said Corrigan. “This is not good for the district.” 



*St. Armands is known for its upscale shops and restaurants. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



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# TAKING A STAND

“*I think we need to take a stand and ... oppose this dredging.*”

Peter van Roekens  
Secretary  
Siesta Key Association

”

*The view across Big Pass to Lido Key is a popular one at the county right of way on Ocean Boulevard near Siesta Village. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **THE SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION BOARD UNANIMOUSLY AGREES TO STATE ITS OPPOSITION TO ANY DREDGING OF BIG SARASOTA PASS OR ITS CHANNEL BASED ON CURRENT DATA**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

It took about 30 minutes of discussion and one amendment to a motion, but the Siesta Key Association last week formally stated opposition to any U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' effort to dredge the shoal or channel in Big Sarasota Pass — based on the documentation currently available — in an effort to renourish Lido Beach.

The unanimous action was the first the board had taken on the project since Aug. 1, when it also voted unanimously to pay up to \$2,000 for an independent review of the Corps' latest modeling after the work is completed.

The action last week did not address a related Corps proposal to construct three groins on the southern end of Lido Key to help stabilize the renourished beach and prevent sand from continuing to drift toward Big Pass — and Siesta Key — at the same volume observed over the years. Studies have shown the natural downdrift of sand flows from north to south on Florida's west coast.

Although a number of audience members — and several SKA board members — voiced agreement with a motion by Secretary Peter van Roekens to oppose the dredging of Big



An aerial view shows Big Pass between Siesta (to the south) and Lido keys. Image from Google Maps

“*I do not want to paint us into an organizational corner where we have no more value for the expertise that we bring to this and people stop talking to us. Right now, people are talking to us.*”

Catherine Luckner  
President  
Siesta Key Association

Pass, President Catherine Luckner urged caution. Vice President Michael Shay supported her.

“I am concerned about closing the discussion,” Luckner said. “I don’t think there’s an urgency to [take a stand] today, because I don’t think [the Corps is] going to get any permits for at least a couple of years.”

Van Roekens countered, “But I think we need to state our opposition. We need to lead on this position.”

“I do not want to paint us into an organizational corner where we have no more value for the expertise that we bring to this and people stop talking to us,” Luckner responded. “Right now, people are talking to us.”

After Luckner proposed an amendment saying the organization’s position was based on current information, the motion passed unanimously.

The Lido project is a joint one of the Corps and the City of Sarasota. City Engineer Alexandra DavisShaw has pointed out that state officials consider Lido a critically eroded beach. The Corps would pay about 62.4 percent of the cost, with the rest of the funds coming from a state grant and Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenue.



*President Catherine Luckner addresses the Siesta Key Association meeting audience on Dec. 5. File photo*

## STARTING THE DIALOGUE

During his report at the Jan. 9 SKA meeting, van Roekens related that the Boaters’ Coalition had held a second discussion at the Sarasota Yacht Club the previous Saturday on the proposed \$22 million renourishment project. (The Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations held a similar discussion on Jan. 13. See the related article in this issue.)

On Dec. 7, the Corps presented its plan to Coalition members during a meeting at the Yacht Club.

“The bottom line,” van Roekens said, “is the sailors ... are very worried about any dredging in Big Pass.” He added that if the Corps is allowed to proceed with its plan, and Big Pass suffers as New Pass has after dredging

for renourishment projects, “that would be disastrous.”

During the August SKA meeting, van Roekens pointed out the New Pass channel was “severely damaged.”

Over a period of close to two years, van Roekens has reminded SKA members that Big Pass never has been dredged.

In elaborating on his concerns on Jan. 9, van Roekens explained that the Corps’ maps of Big Pass contain errors, including a notation that the minimum depth is greater than 19 feet along Siesta Key. “Anybody who’s been out there knows there’s not 19 feet,” he added, drawing some laughter from the approximately 30 people in the audience.

“I think we need to take a stand and ... oppose this dredging,” he continued. He then made the motion that the SKA state “its grave concern” in opposition to any attempt to dredge Big Pass.

SKA Director Deet Jonker seconded it.

Luckner immediately reminded her colleagues about the Aug. 1 action, when they had agreed to wait until after the Corps made all its reports available to the public before it took a stand. The SKA also has sought a County Commission review of the project and a formal public meeting process, she noted.

However, “I’m not saying that what you’re proposing, Peter, is that we can’t say we have grave concerns,” Luckner continued. “I think that’s probably a pretty true statement.”

Still, Luckner said, she did not want to “cut off conversation.”



*Mark Smith addresses the Siesta Key Association board on Jan. 9. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Van Roekens explained that the Corps already had delayed the release of its reports from fall to late February or early March. “They don’t have their act together,” he added.

The Corps proposes dredging 1.1 million cubic yards of sand from the ebb shoal of Big Pass to undertake the first renourishment of Lido Beach over the 50-year life of the current proposal, van Roekens continued. (Corps Project Manager Milan A. Mora suggested to members of the Sarasota County Coastal Advisory Committee on Sept. 18 that sand could be taken from New Pass as well as Big Pass, in alternating projects every five years, in the effort to maintain sufficient sand on Lido.)

Referring to Big Pass, van Roekens said, “That’s a gigantic hole, and what happens when that hole is dug? They don’t know. ...

There's nobody who could possibly say there's no risk to Siesta from this."

## BOARD AND AUDIENCE SUPPORT

"I think we should be concerned about dredging the shoal," SKA Director Ron Flynn responded.

"This is a demonstration of how the SKA is representing residents of Siesta Key," Director Beverly Arias told her colleagues, noting "our concern about the value of [the public beach] to all of us as residents and property owners."

Dr. Allan Worms, a wildlife biologist who volunteers each year to help protect nesting endangered snowy plovers on Siesta Key, voiced his support from the audience. "Peter, I completely agree as an individual as well as someone who understands Siesta Key biology. ... Peter, thank you very much for your insight and your work. Don't give up on this."

Architect Mark Smith, a past president of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) and past chairman of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, pointed out that private property owners have been assessed to help pay for the 2007 renourishment of Turtle Beach. "I see nowhere where the Lido property owners that desperately need the sand ... [are] paying for it. Our tax money is being used to jeopardize our island."

When a Corps team presented the proposal to the SKA on Dec. 5, a couple of people made a similar point. City Engineer Davis Shaw responded that public access points are available along Lido. To qualify for the state grant to help pay for the project, she added, the city had to demonstrate that fact.



*Peter van Roekens expresses concerns about the Lido Renourishment Project to the City and County commissions in October. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Smith also agreed with van Roekens in skepticism about the validity of the modeling the Corps representatives have promised to release. "Trust us, we're the government's should not be our battle cry here," Smith said. "The fact that they have dilly-dallied with these reports ... is a sure sign that [the documents are] suspect."

"Who are these people on Lido Beach that we have to risk our nature here?" audience member Katherine Zimmerman asked.

"I think that it would be safe to say that all of us don't want any harm to this environment," Luckner responded, "[but] I think we need to get our fellow citizens behind this, too."

Jonker said he felt that passing van Roekens' motion "will keep this in the forefront of the

public's eye" and in front of the county commissioners. Regarding the latter, he added, "They can't ignore what we say."

The County Commission has scheduled a March 19 discussion on the project.

Luckner argued that SKA board members have worked hard to assure representatives of the Lido Key Residents Association that the Siesta group is "not fighting them about the sand."

The SKA's position from August is noted on its website, Luckner said. "There's not an imminent danger tomorrow," because the Corps has not applied yet for the necessary permits for the project. "We can't just say, 'No,'" she added, because that would be a change of direction.

"We're not changing direction," van Roekens told her, "and I don't agree that there isn't an imminent danger." Once the Corps applies for the permits, he continued, "it is very much more difficult for us or anyone else" to prevent the state from issuing them.

Zimmerman asked, "Why simply can you not say, 'We are against it, period'? Don't keep playing the offensive. Be defensive. ... Just put a foot down and say, 'Hey, it's our key; we do not want it.'"

Finally, a member of the audience proposed that the board oppose the project "based on the data we have so far."

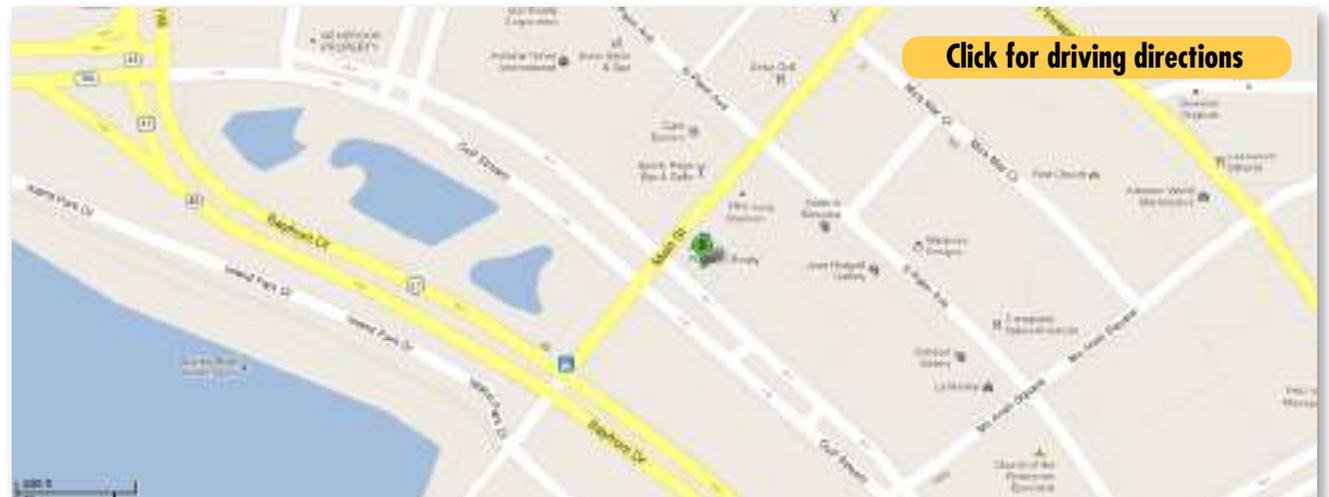
"I could live with that," SKA Vice President Shay replied.

Luckner then made the motion for that amendment, and the votes followed quickly. 

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## INSIGHTS INTO THE REAL '43'

*President Bush speaks to the news media in the Oval Office in 2001. Image via Flickr*

### **FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH REVEALS WARM ASPECTS OF HIS PERSONALITY TO A SARASOTA AUDIENCE AND REFLECTS ON LIFE AS THE MOST POWERFUL ELECTED LEADER IN THE WORLD**

**By Vicki Chatley**  
*Contributing Writer*

We thought we knew him, but did we?

Each of us likely formed our own opinion of George W. Bush, the 43rd President of the United States, during his years in office. Since then the former president has maintained a low profile. Thus his scheduled appearance as the first speaker in the Ringling College Library Association's Town Hall 2014 lecture series was especially tantalizing. Would we see the same George Bush who faced the challenges of 9/11 and financial crises, or would we see an altered George Bush now that he is no longer the leader of the most powerful nation in the world?

On Tuesday, Jan. 14, I was part of the audience in the sold-out Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota for Bush's speech. Note-taking, along with photography and recording, were prohibited, so there will be no quotes — just the impressions of this writer.

In the years since leaving the White House Bush appears to have become an elder statesman offering insights, as only an ex-president can, into the intimate workings of government and foreign relations. He also seems to have a strong interest in history, even choosing a desk with an historical background for his personal use in the Oval Office. He said it

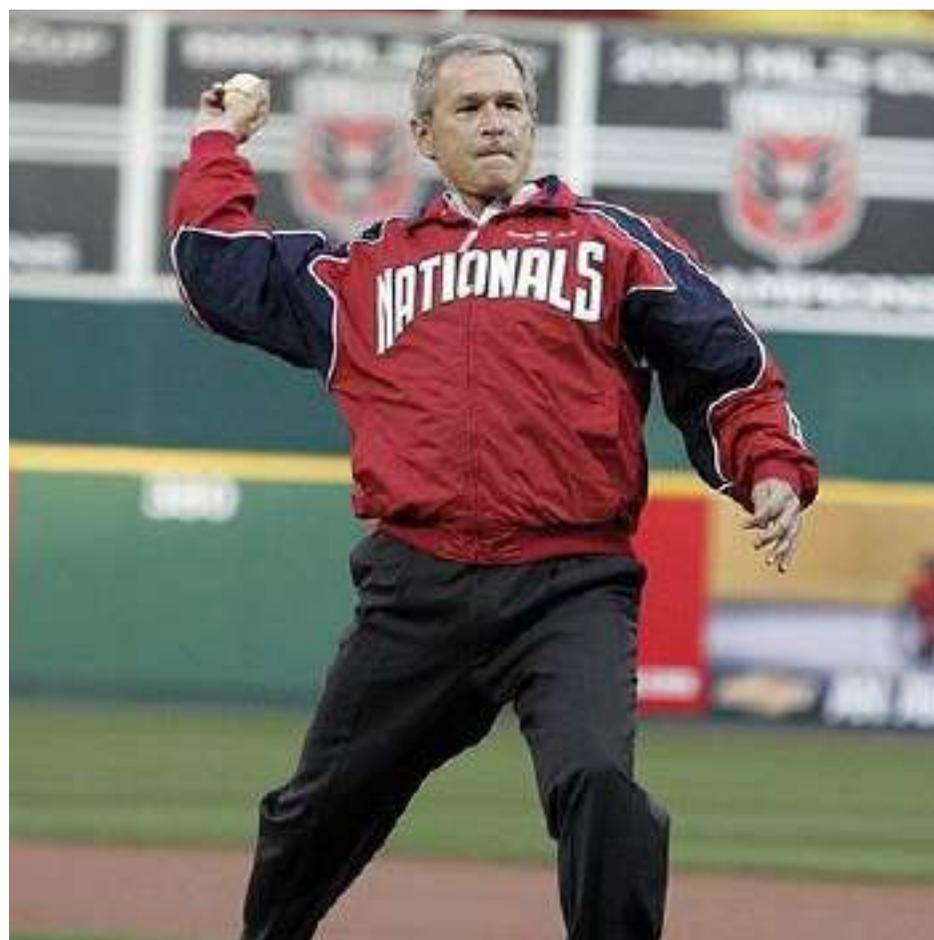
is the same desk that was used by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy.

He lauded Abraham Lincoln for welcoming a defeated South into the Union at the close of the Civil War without exacting retribution and seemed to suggest that approach as a model for dealing with vanquished enemies, i.e. help them recover and form democratic governments. He pointed out that Japan, once an enemy of the United States, has become its ally through use of that approach. He also suggested the U.S. might have become a continent of separate nations, similar to Europe, if not for Lincoln's action.

Among other observations, Bush seems to have great respect and admiration for the men and women who serve in the military. He also seems to believe leaders should listen to their advisors, but the advisors should not be sycophants. He stated a role of the president is to make decisions; and that in doing so, it is important to know what you don't know. Before exiting the stage Bush said he is optimistic about the future.

I found his comments to be intelligent and thoughtful. Several times he stressed that freedom is essential for everyone, that each person must be free to, for example, choose his/her own religion — or no religion at all.

It was interesting when he noted that 9/11, an event with which Bush shall always be identified, is just something that happened in the past to today's youngsters. It does not carry for them the emotional reaction it does for those of us who were adults at the time. It is like Pearl Harbor to an earlier generation.



*Then-President George Bush throws out the first pitch at a Washington Nationals game in April 2005. Photo by Paul Moore via Wikimedia Commons*

Recitation of another incident reinforced the “fish bowl” environment the presidency brings, along with the speed by which news travels. While watching a National Football League (NFL) game, then-President Bush choked on a piece of food. After being attended by the 24/7 White House medical staff, the decision was made to notify the media in the interest of “full disclosure.” Almost immediately a crawl at the bottom of television screens reported the incident.

But what struck me most of all was that the George W. Bush who spoke on Tuesday displayed a keen sense of humor, something I never saw during his presidential years. Equally obvious was pride in his west Texas roots and in his family. Typical of any grandfather, he finds first grandchild, Mila, to be the best baby ever. He has retained relationships

with Midland, TX, friends, whom he invited to the White House.

He seems to be more of a humanitarian than he previous indicated. He cited as an accomplishment of his presidency persuading Congress to spend millions of dollars to combat the AIDS epidemic in Africa and utilizing religious groups to deliver that aid to those who needed it. He indicated those who receive much have the responsibility to give generously, and I believe he viewed his years in elective office, including being governor of Texas, as service to the people of this country.

Bush did note that the presidency confers a certain isolation on its occupant. His comments portrayed a private personality that differs from the persona that attended his presidential years.

My overall impression is that George W. Bush's comfort zone is found on a ranch in Texas.

During the question-and-answer session, Bush was asked about his parents, former President George and Barbara Bush. He said the 41st president is in good spirits, although unable to walk, which is difficult for a lifelong athlete to accept. He described his mother, now home from the hospital after a bout with flu, as "feisty."

This writer had the extreme privilege and pleasure of meeting the elder Bushes in the mid-1990s when I was invited to a reception they hosted in Philadelphia at a charity where I was then serving as secretary of the board of directors. Trust me when I tell you I do not travel in such lofty political circles. So naturally I agonized for weeks about what to wear, finally settling on a plain black skirt and

black-and-white checked blouse. When I saw the former First Lady was similarly attired, I was sure I had committed a serious *faux pas* and wanted to melt into the floor. But Barbara Bush, in a cheery voice, immediately said, "Oh, look at us. We're dressed alike!" She may be feisty, but to me she is a most gracious, immediately likeable lady.

When a former president visits, enhanced security measures are expected, and patrons had been advised to arrive early on Tuesday. There was a line at the entrance, but it moved quickly through the airport-type screening — "baggage" check and metal detector, without the necessity to remove shoes. Sarasota County Sheriff's Office vehicles and personnel were visible. As promised, the doors to the Van Wezel closed promptly at 10:15 a.m. after which no one was admitted into the auditorium.

As always, Town Hall patrons were treated to an animated short created by a Ringling College student. The program noted the especially entertaining film titled *Dead to Rights* was created by Mark Neil, a computer animation major in the class of 2013. It would be wonderful if the college presented a collection of the work of these talented students for the public's enjoyment.

Morgan Davidson, '14, an illustration major, presented a portrait of George W. Bush to the former president. It perfectly captured his Texas roots. She said she chose that pose from several photographs because it featured a genuine smile. She also commented that she cleaned him up a little and gave him better clothes than the mud-splattered dirty garments he was wearing in the photo. 



# THE DIPLOMATIC APPROACH

*The former site of the Sarasota Police Department sits north of the new police headquarters in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **SOME COUNTY COMMISSIONERS THINK AN AGREEMENT IS STILL POSSIBLE IN A DISPUTE OVER THE OLD SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT SITE**

**By Roger Drouin**

*County Editor*

Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta was not happy when he heard city commissioners' reaction Jan. 13 to the county's request to convey to it the former Sarasota Police Department site on Ringling Boulevard.

"They actually laughed at us," Barbetta said during the Tuesday, Jan. 14, County Commission meeting.

As county officials see it, that property belongs to the county. In 2003, the city agreed to deed the land to

the county in exchange for the county's vow to keep several of its primary governmental functions in downtown Sarasota.

But on Jan. 13, Sarasota Mayor Shannon Snyder was not keen on the idea of turning over a key piece of downtown property. By

“*Let's keep the lawyer talk out of it up until this point ... I believe they are going to do the right thing.*”

Charles Hines  
Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission

consensus, the City Commission agreed with City Attorney Bob Fournier, who advised that the city is under no legal obligation to deed the property to the county. Snyder asked

the commissioners: “Does anybody want to sign off on that property? Raise your hand.”

The question was met only with laughter.

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh said his interpretation of the 2003 agreement — in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) — differs from Fournier’s. The county has carried out its part of the bargain by keeping its administration building downtown, so the city should carry out its share of the agreement, DeMarsh pointed out.

“It’s a little troubling to think the other party doesn’t think it is enforceable,” DeMarsh said Tuesday in reference to the MOU.



*Charles Hines is the new chairman of the County Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*The Judge Lynn N. Silvertooth Judicial Center, to the west of the old Police Department site, will need to be expanded in the future, county leaders say. File photo*

“More communication between the [county] administration and the city manager is needed to get this back on track,” DeMarsh added.

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson urged her colleagues to take a measured approach with the city. She said she was told city commissioners want reassurance that the county will not just take over the property with plans to try to sell it in a few years.

“I talked to one of the city commissioners. I think if we let them know the purpose, that we want to get that property for future planning of county services, that may come close to solving the issue,” Robinson pointed out.

Chairman Charles Hines said he agreed with DeMarsh’s legal opinion and Barbetta’s frustration, but he believed the county should follow the more measured approach — for now — and let the city commissioners know the county’s plans for the parcel.

“Let’s keep the lawyer talk out of it up until this point,” Hines told his fellow board members. “I don’t believe there is a condition [in the MOU] that we have to tell them what we plan to use it for. But there is no need to get into a debate. I believe they are going to do the right thing.”

Barbetta noted it has already been 11 years since the MOU was crafted, and, thus far, the city has not conveyed the deed to the county.

Commissioner Carolyn Mason said she agreed with the “diplomatic approach,” too, adding that perhaps part of the confusion stems from the fact that the MOU was signed in 2003.

“There is no historical knowledge of this on their commission,” Mason added.



*Tom Barwin is manager of the City of Sarasota.  
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Several years after the MOU was drawn up, the city and county legal staffs worked on the issue, but the deed for the old police department site was never turned over, DeMarsh explained, partly because of changes in both city and county administrative staffs.

Barbetta said he recalls former Mayor Lou Ann Palmer addressing the issue five or six years ago. “I remember her saying, ‘We owe it to the county.’”

## **BACK TO 2003**

The MOU was drawn up in 2003 after then-County Administrator Jim Ley delivered an ultimatum to the City of Sarasota. Faced with the prospect of losing Sarasota County’s

central operations, the Sarasota city commissioners capitulated.

In exchange for the county promising to keep its court and administrative functions in downtown Sarasota, the city agreed to several concessions — including handing over the piece of downtown land that stood under the Police Department.

On July 15, 2003, the MOU was signed by then-Mayor Palmer and then County Commission Chairwoman Shannon Staub. “The county agrees to satisfy its facilities master plan for Court and Administration needs within the downtown judicial complex area, and the City agrees to provide the county with the police facility site ready to build,” the document says.

But the agreement was never finalized; and a formal interlocal agreement was never signed.

## COUNTY DIRECTION

The county commissioners on Jan. 14 directed Hines to write a letter to the City Commission, letting it know what uses the county has in mind for the property. Those could include an expansion of the judicial and law enforcement facilities on Ringling Boulevard.

Robinson said the letter should make it “crystal clear” what the county wants to do with the property. “We would like it because we are trying to plan for county services on the Ringling corridor.”

Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer has already spoken with City Manager Tom Barwin about the matter, he said, and he plans to keep those conversations going. “Mr. Barwin did indicate the city is not opposed to delivering the deed, but before that, [staff members] want to have a conversation on what is planned on that property.” 

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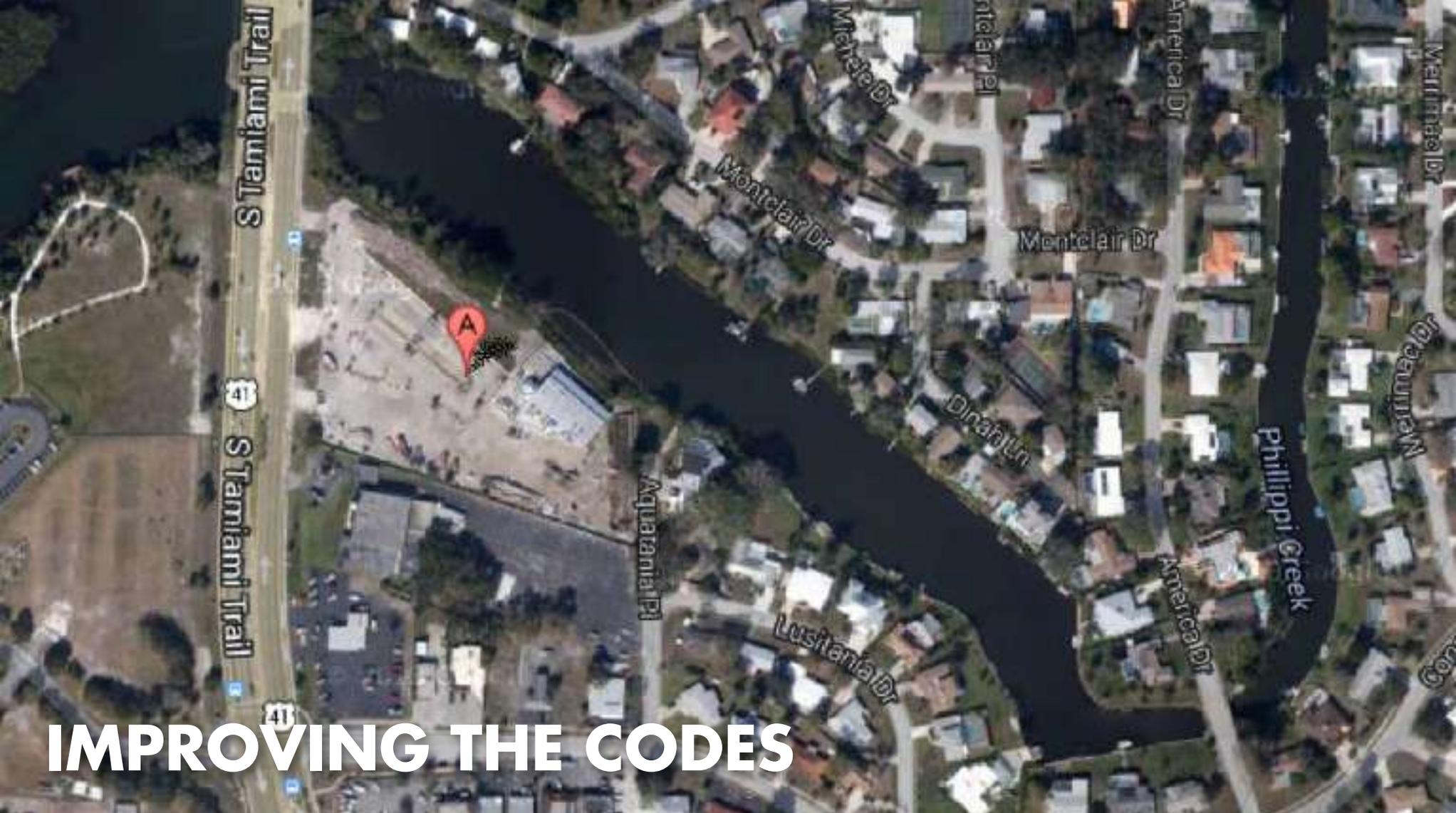
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# IMPROVING THE CODES

An aerial view shows Bob's Boathouse (marked with the red flag) at the rear of property on the South Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

## COUNTY STAFF IS WORKING ON REVISIONS TO REGULATIONS TO DEAL WITH CONTINUING CONCERNS OVER BOB'S BOATHOUSE AND TO PREVENT A SIMILAR SITUATION IN THE FUTURE

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Sarasota County staff will be tackling ongoing complaints involving Bob's Boathouse in two diverse ways, the county commissioners decided on Jan. 14 — through a revision of the county's building code and through exploration of changes in the county's Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance.

During the County Commission's regular meeting in Venice

this week, Tom Polk, director of the county's Planning and Development Services Department, told the board he has been

*I feel we can't stop the [Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO)] process for this one error. There's a lot of upcoming TCO considerations I think that this board would not want us to stop.*

Tom Polk  
Director  
Planning and Development Services  
Sarasota County

reviewing the process for issuing Temporary Certificates of Occupancy (TCOs) in the wake of ongoing complaints about Bob's Boathouse, which opened in early November at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Among the changes he is

considering, he said, are having the county's Land Development Services Office manager review issues relative to zoning regulations and site development compliance while the county's Building Official would remain focused on requirements germane to the Florida Building Code and the Fire Code. Both employees would report their findings to Polk, who, if satisfied with the information, could issue a Certificate of Compliance allowing a new business to open.

A Jan. 15 memo from Polk to Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer explaining the proposal adds that if the Building Official determined a new facility is at the stage where it can provide "effective and reasonable protection for public safety, health, and general welfare," but it does not yet meet all

the Florida Building Code requirements, the Building Official could issue a TCO.

If all the work covered by the building permit is complete and the Building Official has issued a CO, but zoning and site development activities are incomplete, the memo says, the director of the Planning and Development Services Department could issue a Conditional Certificate of Compliance to allow the new business to open on a temporary basis until the other work is finished. However, Polk told the commissioners, "If there are any outstanding issues — and they are extensive issues — we may even require bonding" or some other type of cash surety to make certain the items are addressed in a timely fashion.

During the board's Dec. 10 meeting, commissioners expressed outrage that Bob's



*A section of the parking area is shown at Bob's Boathouse, with the restaurant's deck at the far left. File photo*

**Bob's Boathouse TCO Punch List  
as of 12/31/13**

**Public Utility Department:**

1. Bent door on telemetry control panel needs to be replaced.
2. Fence needs to be installed at the Lift station.
3. Crushed concrete to be installed with weed barrier in lift station area.
4. Abandon the existing water service on back side of lift station.
5. Intrusion switch in telemetry control panel is faulty and needs to be replaced.
6. Record drawing mylars and disk with AutoCAD files are required.
7. Six (6) Utility Easements required (*Master Utility Plan, as given by Cavoli Engineering, showing easements on the site is attached*):
  - 1) Permanent Exclusive Lift Station Easement;
  - 2) Public Utility Easement;
  - 3) Utility Ingress/Egress Easement;
  - 4) Temporary Public Utility Easement;
  - 5) Temporary Public Utility Easement; and
  - 6) Public Utility Easement.
8. Turnover documents including warranties required. This is for the pumps and control panel form Barney's Pumps (Hydromatic).

**Natural Resources:**

1. Install all watercourse buffer plantings consistent with the approved watercourse buffer planting plan dated August 10, 2010 (*see attached plan and drawing*).
2. Complete the removal of all nuisance and invasive vegetation on the property.
3. Install all tree plantings consistent with Section 54-589 of the Sarasota County Trees Ordinance (Chapter 54, Article XVIII of the Sarasota County Code of Ordinances), which requires a minimum of 1 tree to be planted for each 2,000 square feet of property. A planting plan shall be submitted to Natural Resources for review prior to commencing planting.

Boathouse was given a TCO last year even though its owners had failed to pay \$77,063.44 in required water and sewer capacity fees. Polk admitted the action was a staff member's mistake, because county regulations already in place prevent the issuance of a TCO if all fees have not been paid.

In related action on Jan. 14, Commissioner Nora Patterson won unanimous approval from her colleagues on a motion asking staff to

work with the Office of the County Attorney to determine whether modifications to the Noise Ordinance could address loud music complaints at operations such as Bob's Boathouse. At the suggestion of a homeowner who lives near the restaurant, Patterson proposed that Bob's Boathouse and similar businesses be made to adhere to the same sound regulations required of industrial establishments. In the latter cases, she pointed out, county Code Enforcement officers and Sarasota County Sheriff's Office deputies can measure sound from the site where a complaint is received. The current ordinance provides for measurements involving commercial establishments to be taken at the emitting site, she noted.

## THE BUILDING CODE DISCUSSION

During his appearance before the commission, Polk explained that after the owners of Bob's Boathouse paid the outstanding water and sewer capacity fees, county staff on Dec. 31 extended the business' TCO for another 30 days, with the possibility of yet another 30-day extension.

A Dec. 31 letter from Gregory Yantorno, the county's Building Official, to D.E. Murphy Constructors Inc. of Sarasota — the contractor of record for Bob's Boathouse — says the TCO automatically will expire on Jan. 30 “without further action.” It adds, “Please note

that County staff will evaluate to determine whether substantial progress and good faith efforts have been made to accomplish the outstanding items listed on the punch list, attached hereto.”

“*Obviously, what we have in this particular situation isn't working.*”

Charles Hines  
Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission

The letter also says, “Failure to demonstrate substantial progress and good faith efforts will result in the denial of any future request for a TCO extension.”

Among the punch list items are the following:

- Conveyance to the county of six utility easements, including those for a sewer lift station and public utilities.
- Installation of “all watercourse buffer plantings consistent with the approved [county plan] dated August 10, 2010 ...”
- Removal of all nuisance and invasive vegetation on the property.
- Installation of a fence at the lift station site.
- Installation of “16, 3-inch caliper trees to compensate for native trees that were removed without a Tree Permit. To clarify, these 16 trees to be planted are in addition to the trees required [by the county's Trees Ordinance].”

Polk also reported that Code Enforcement officers have “been out there repeatedly

at different points and times,” along with Sheriff’s deputies.

Staff is monitoring progress on the punch list items, Polk added.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta then raised a point about the application in current use for any business seeking a county TCO. According to a discussion he had with Assistant County Attorney David Pearce, Barbetta said, the County Attorney’s Office “has claimed no knowledge of this document, so I’m just confused as to who prepared it. ... I definitely want an answer as to whether this is a legal document or not.”

He added that his fear is “we’re going to end up buying some litigation ...”

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh replied that his office did not provide the TCO application, “to my knowledge.”

“I’ve got real problems with that,” Barbetta responded. “I’ve got real problems with what’s going on with this whole thing.”

“I hear you loud and clear,” Commissioner Carolyn Mason told Barbetta, “but, for me,

and, I think, for the neighbors around Bob’s Boathouse ... the issue as I see it has to do with Certificate of Occupancy (CO) versus non-CO issues versus quality-of-life issues that may arise as a result of the particular business that is involved.”

She added, “That has to be resolved and connected to us as the policymakers [and] to the greater community as well.”

Commissioner Patterson pointed out, “If in the past we have allowed some TCOs to drag on further than they should, hopefully, that’s not the rule. At some point, all these issues need to be tied up, and it shouldn’t be a year from now; it should be pretty quick.”

Polk told the board that over the past three years, 66 TCOs were given to businesses “while the final site issues were being completed.” He added, “For the most part, I think we’ve had a lot of successes.”

When Barbetta asked for clarification about whether county staff still is using the TCO application he referenced earlier, Polk confirmed that. “This is an application that is utilized no different than a rezoning

Generating Land Use Category	Time	Sound Level Limit (dBA)	dBC
Residential	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	65**	75**
	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	55**	65**
Commercial/Business	7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.	75	85
	11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	70*	80*
Governmental/OPI	7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.	65	75
	10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	60	70
Intensive Commercial/Industrial	All times	75	85

\* These levels may be raised 5 decibels provided the sound source is in a completely enclosed building.

\*\* When a residential zone is a receiving property from an industrial use, these decibel levels shall be met.

*The county’s Sound and Air Pollution Ordinance includes a chart with permissible noise levels according to land use category. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

application,” Polk responded. “We do wish to get this codified, and we hope to do this in a short time. I feel we can’t stop the TCO process for this one error. There’s a lot of upcoming TCO considerations I think that this board would not want us to stop.”

DeMarsh told the commissioners, “Our legal advice would be that you have, over the course of many years, a procedure that has been used by your Building Official. ... We think that you should ultimately amend the codes to incorporate more standards with respect to TCOs. But in the interim, it would be our view that applying past practice consistently into the future is what you would do.”

After Barbetta pointed out that the application refers to the discretion of the Building Official to grant TCOs, Patterson said, “But ‘discretion’ means there is discretion,” and when county staff encounters a situation in which a business has difficulty complying with regulations, “‘discretion’ means it doesn’t drag on forever.”

Polk said he believes area developers need to be involved in the process of changing the building code. He planned his first meeting with such a group that day, he added, “to start the conversation.”

## PROPOSED Certificate of Compliance Flow Chart



**Note:** The above proposed flow chart is subject to change to maximize effectiveness and efficiency, and to ensure compliance with all existing adopted laws, policies, rule and regulations.

*A memo from Planning and Development Services Director Tom Polk shows part of the proposed changes involving issuance of Certificates of Occupancy. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Staff also is researching practices in other jurisdictions, he noted. For example, Alachua County has a maximum period during which a business can operate with a TCO. He added that he and his staff probably should consider a similar measure for Sarasota County.

“Work on it,” Patterson told him.

## THE NOISE SIDE OF THE MATTER

Regarding her Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance motion, Patterson credited the suggestion to Jim McWhorter, president of the River Forest Civic Association. McWhorter noted in an email to Patterson that the River Forest subdivision begins 1,100 feet north of Bob’s Boathouse.

“You’d have to be able to walk on water in order to take an accurate reflection of the noise at the emitting site [Bob’s Boathouse], which is what our ordinance requires,” she told her colleagues.

Phillippi Creek is adjacent to the restaurant, with homes across the body of water.

When calls come in about music being too loud at Bob’s Boathouse, she continued, measurements are taken at Tamaimi Trail, “which is a long way away” from the establishment.

After McWhorter researched the county’s Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance, she said, he told her that if commercial operations such as Bob’s Boathouse could be treated like industrial firms, that might resolve the concerns of neighbors.

The ordinance was written as it is, she explained, because in a situation like those on Siesta Key, when complaints come in, a Code Enforcement officer measuring sound



*Tom Polk addresses the County Commission.  
File photo*

from the caller’s residence is generally unable to determine the source, because a number of restaurants and bars are in close proximity to each other.

“Obviously, what we have in this particular situation isn’t working,” Chairman Charles Hines said. Patterson’s proposal is “worth exploring,” he added.

Then her motion passed unanimously.

In response to questions from Polk, Patterson clarified that the proposed changes should come back to the board for a review and authorization to advertise. When he asked if the board preferred only one public hearing on the matter, she replied, “Yes.” 



# BARGAIN FEVER

*Road impact fees should stay low, the majority of the County Commission agreed this week. Photo by Christopher Sessums, via Flickr*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION MOVES TO MAKE DISCOUNTED ROAD IMPACT FEES PERMANENT

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

The Sarasota County Commission this week took steps to permanently lock in steeply discounted road impact fee rates, originally reduced in 2011 to provide a short-term shot in the arm to the then-floundering construction industry.

In 2007, the commission voted to reduce impact fees — which are billed to developers to cover the increased demand that new construction places on public roads — to 68 percent of the full rate established one year earlier. In 2011, the board cut them even further, to 50 percent of that diminished rate. Last January, the commissioners moved to maintain those rates for another two years, a plan supported by the Gulf Coast Builders Exchange, an influential trade group for local

construction interests. Then, last summer, the commission indicated to staff it wanted to see those low numbers become permanent.

That history was laid out for the commission Tuesday, Jan. 14, by Interim County Transportation Director Jonathan Paul, who asked the board to allow staff to advertise proposed changes to the road impact fee ordinance. His presentation included a spreadsheet with examples of impact fees for various types of construction. For a new 1,500-square-foot home, for example, the full 2007 fee was \$7,623; the reduced 2007 rate was \$5,171. The 2011 changes then cut that number to \$2,585. That figure, if eventually locked in, will shift only with inflation, as determined by the Florida Department of Transportation.

Attachment A				2007	2007	2011	2013	2013
				Calculated	Adopted	Adopted	Calculated	Adopted
Land Use Code	Category	Land Use	Development Unit	100%	68% of 2007 Full Rate	Full 2007 Rate Reduced 68% , then reduced 50%	100%	
210/220	Residential	Single Family or Multi-Family Unit:						
210/220	Residential	Less than 500 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$3,762	\$2,552	\$1,276	\$2,434	\$1,276
210/220	Residential	500 – 749 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$5,040	\$3,419	\$1,709	\$3,263	\$1,709
210/220	Residential	750 – 999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$5,881	\$3,989	\$1,994	\$3,808	\$1,994
210/220	Residential	1,000 – 1,249 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$6,512	\$4,417	\$2,208	\$4,216	\$2,208
210/220	Residential	1,250 – 1,499 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$7,016	\$4,759	\$2,379	\$4,541	\$2,379
210/220	Residential	1,500 – 1,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$7,623	\$5,171	\$2,585	\$4,935	\$2,585
210/220	Residential	2,000 – 2,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$8,512	\$5,774	\$2,887	\$5,512	\$2,887
210/220	Residential	3,000 – 3,999 sq. ft. Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$9,365	\$6,352	\$3,176	\$6,061	\$3,176
210/220	Residential	4,000 sq. ft. or more Living Area	1 Dwelling Unit	\$9,984	\$6,772	\$3,386	\$6,464	\$3,386
240	Residential	Mobile Home/RV Park	1 space	\$4,207	\$2,854	\$1,427	\$2,719	\$1,427
253	Residential	Adult Cong. Living Facility	1 Dwelling Unit	\$1,698	\$1,152	\$576	\$1,101	\$576
130	Industrial	Industrial Park	1,000 sq. ft.	\$5,857	\$3,973	\$1,986	\$3,719	\$1,986
140	Industrial	Manufacturing	1,000 sq. ft.	\$3,215	\$2,181	\$1,090	\$2,081	\$1,090
150	Industrial	Light Industrial & Warehousing	1,000 sq. ft.	\$4,175	\$2,832	\$1,416	\$1,940	\$1,416
151	Industrial	Mini-Warehouse	1,000 sq. ft.	\$1,520	\$1,031	\$515	\$946	\$515
310/320	Commercial (Lodging)	Hotel/Motel	1 room	\$3,025	\$2,052	\$1,026	\$1,931	\$1,026
420	Commercial (Recreational)	Marina	1 berth	\$1,437	\$975	\$487	\$894	\$487
430	Commercial (Recreational)	Golf Course (open to public)	1 acre	\$2,449	\$1,661	\$830	\$1,523	\$830
443	Commercial (Recreational)	Movie Theater	1,000 sq. ft.	\$16,687	\$11,319	\$5,659	\$12,962	\$5,659
495	Commercial (Recreational)	Recreational/Community Center	1,000 sq. ft.	\$11,115	\$7,539	\$3,769	\$8,947	\$3,769
520	Commercial (Institutional)	Elementary School	1,000 sq. ft.	\$6,758	\$4,584	\$2,292	\$3,995	\$2,292
530	Commercial (Institutional)	High School	1,000 sq. ft.	\$6,012	\$4,078	\$2,039	\$3,337	\$2,039
560	Commercial (Institutional)	House of Worship	1,000 sq. ft.	\$5,536	\$3,755	\$1,877	\$3,104	\$1,877
565	Commercial (Institutional)	Day Care Center	1,000 sq. ft.	\$11,663	\$7,911	\$3,955	\$6,053	\$3,955
610	Commercial (Medical)	Hospital	1,000 sq. ft.	\$14,199	\$9,631	\$4,815	\$4,995	\$4,815
620	Commercial (Medical)	Nursing Home	1,000 sq. ft.	\$4,925	\$3,341	\$1,670	\$2,871	\$1,670
710	Commercial (Office)	Office, General and Medical	1,000 sq. ft.	\$8,857	\$6,008	\$3,004	\$5,768	\$3,004
812	Commercial (Retail)	Building Mat./Hardware/Nursery	1,000 sq. ft.	\$19,497	\$13,225	\$6,612	\$12,669	\$6,612
820	Commercial (Retail)	Shopping Center/General Retail	1,000 sq. ft.	\$16,687	\$11,319	\$5,659	\$10,780	\$5,659
841	Commercial (Retail)	Auto Sales/Repair	1,000 sq. ft.	\$7,917	\$5,370	\$2,685	\$4,984	\$2,685
851	Commercial (Retail)	Convenience Store	1,000 sq. ft.	\$31,862	\$21,612	\$10,806	\$20,701	\$10,806
890	Commercial (Retail)	Furniture Store	1,000 sq. ft.	\$2,187	\$1,483	\$741	\$1,420	\$741
912	Commercial (Financial)	Bank/Drive-Through	1,000 sq. ft.	\$17,961	\$12,183	\$6,091	\$7,013	\$6,091
931	Commercial (Service)	Restaurant, Sit-Down	1,000 sq. ft.	\$18,449	\$12,514	\$6,257	\$11,985	\$6,257
934	Commercial (Service)	Restaurant, Fast Food	1,000 sq. ft.	\$40,164	\$27,243	\$13,621	\$26,093	\$13,621
946	Commercial (Service)	Gasoline Station	1 fuel position	\$5,774	\$3,917	\$1,958	\$3,751	\$1,958



Commissioner Nora Patterson was the only board member to object to the plan. Last year she voted against extending the discounted rates. The problem with short-term fee reductions, she pointed out then, was that no one ever wants the rates to go back to normal.

Patterson argued Tuesday that road impact fees have never covered 100 percent of the actual cost to the county. Despite a “mini-construction boom” forecast for this year, she argued, the county is going to “get even further behind in meeting our road obligations.” She was the only commissioner to vote against advertising the proposed amendments.

Attorney Dan Lobeck, a fierce critic of the commission’s development policies, argued in an e-blast that the commission should have listened to public input before advertising the reduced rates. “With construction now approaching boom levels and your road program severely underfunded, it is irresponsible to continue your slashing of road impact fees,” he wrote. “It would be stark testimony to the undue influence of developers over this County Commission, a betrayal of the taxpayers as well as all who will be caught in the traffic gridlock you will induce by starving the road program.”

In addition to cementing the low rates, the changes would establish a new appeals process if an applicant believes he or she is being overcharged. Those complaints would be heard first by an impact fee administrator. “The goal is to work out these issues before it comes before the County Commission,” Paul told the board Tuesday.

With the commission’s seal of approval, the amendment will come back to the board for a public hearing on Feb. 12. 

# A NEW POLICE TOOL



“ *I want it sooner rather than later.* ”

Bernadette DiPino  
Police Chief  
City of Sarasota

”

*Police Chief Bernadette DiPino accepted congratulations from City Manager Tom Barwin after she was sworn into office in January 2013. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

# THE SARASOTA POLICE CHIEF IS PROPOSING A NEW METHOD TO HANDLE DISCIPLINARY MATTERS INVOLVING OFFICERS AND PURSUING A DIFFERENT PATH ON RECRUITMENT

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

One of the first acts of Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino when she took office a year ago was disbanding a disciplinary board. “One officer would get a one-day suspension for something, and another would be suspended for three days for the same thing,” she said. “It wasn’t fair.”

She abolished what some perceived as a “good-ol’-boy board,” and took over the job herself. Now she wants to ditch the disciplinary duty and handle the process with a matrix. The city’s Human Resources Department is reviewing the proposal now, she said. And she already has received the preliminary approval of her boss, City Manager (and former Detroit police officer) Tom Barwin.

“The year of 2014 will be the year of processes for the Sarasota Police Department,” DiPino told the Independent Police Advisory Panel on Friday, Jan. 10.

The matrix, she said, “takes any potential violation a police officer could commit and mandates an appropriate penalty. It makes it clear for the police officers. It puts a process in place.”

Another citizen advisory panel has been reviewing city police complaints and disciplinary action for the past three years. It is called the Police Complaints Committee, and every month it examines old Internal Affairs cases. Over time, the members have developed an appreciation of how the SPD disciplines its officers.

William Fuller is chairman of the Complaints Panel. “We’ve been impressed with the way internal investigations are handled, and very infrequently do we have questions,” he said. “We’ve been looking at things submitted as complaints that did not go through internal investigations, but rather were worked out by other means.”

Staff liaison for both police panels is Peter Graham, a technical advisor for the City of Sarasota. He pointed out that he and the groups have found it difficult to “fill in the matrix. There’s such a wide disparity of view on what’s appropriate action to take.”

DiPino said of the new process, “I want it sooner rather than later.”



*Mikel Holloway served as police chief before DiPino was hired. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## CHANGES ON THE INTAKE SIDE

DiPino is also making changes on the recruitment side of her department. Instead of waiting for an opening and then advertising to fill it, she wants to build a list of qualified candidates to which she can refer when positions become available.

“It usually takes six to 10 people to get one good individual,” she told the panel. “We need active recruitment with an open process.”

She noted an unusual aspect about Florida police departments. “Florida is a unique state because you can go through the [police] academy without being sponsored by a specific department,” she said.

DiPino added that the Sarasota Police Department recently had taken landmark action in putting up the funds for a candidate to attend the academy. “We paid the tuition, salary and benefits for that time period in the academy,” she said. “We just graduated an individual — for the first time. We did not do that in the past.”

Normally, candidates must find the time and money to attend the academy on their own. “We want to attract and hire a diverse police force,” she said. “At the end of this year, we will need five or more officers. And more next year. We need a succession plan.”

## CHANGES ON THE INSIDE

Another change comes to the Independent Police Advisory Panel itself at its next meeting. Chairman Elmer Berkel is stepping down after the first three years of the board’s existence. “I announced I will not continue beyond the end of my three-year term,” he said. “I’m turning 80 and we need some younger blood in here.”



*The Sarasota Police Department towers over neighboring buildings on Adams Lane in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Berkel is a former city commissioner and mayor who has remained active in Sarasota affairs long after he left his office in City Hall. He also sits on the Parks, Recreation and Environmental Protection Board.

One of his final acts on the Independent Police Advisory Panel has been shepherding through a revision of its enabling ordinance. The changes will give the board wider latitude regarding subjects it can investigate and areas where it can recommend changes. The group serves in an advisory capacity to the police chief, city manager and City Commission. 



## STIRRING UP CONCERNS

*Area residents listen to Jono Miller summarize a presentation the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers offered last year about the Lido Beach Renourishment Project. Photo by Roger Drouin*

### **THE PROPOSED GROINS AND BIG PASS DREDGING ELEMENTS OF THE LIDO BEACH RENOURISHMENT PROJECT HAVE LED TO WORRIES ABOUT POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND, ESPECIALLY, SIESTA KEY'S SHORELINE**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

Jono Miller is concerned about a proposed \$22 million Lido Key renourishment project — and he is not the only one.

Miller, a conservationist and New College lecturer, spoke at the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) monthly meeting on Monday, Jan. 13. He focused on the unknown impacts the project could have on the marine

environment, wildlife and Siesta Key's shoreline.

The Lido undertaking, billed as an erosion-prevention project, would pump 1.2 million cubic yards of sand onto Lido Beach, with that material having been removed from the Big Pass ebb shoal; the pass never has been dredged. The project would also install three permanent groins on the

“ *There are a lot of people who should have been involved in this process, and for the most part they have not.* ”

Jono Miller  
New College Faculty Member

south end of Lido Key to keep the new sand in place. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposes to refill the beach about every five years over a 50-year period.

Miller specifically questioned the need for permanent groins and the removal of sand from Big Pass.

He had a message for the Army Corps, which would fund up to 65 percent of the cost and has been planning the project along with the City of Sarasota: Add a moderate amount of sand — about half a million cubic yards, equal to previous renourishments — on Lido Key to address isolated erosion, but do *not*

dredge the Big Pass shoal and keep the groins off Lido.

“That seemed to work,” when it was done in the past, Miller said of using the smaller amount of sand on Lido. “It didn’t involve a ‘superdune,’ and it didn’t involve groins, and it didn’t involve dredging a hole in Big Pass.”

“*It will make more problems.*”

Calvin LeBuffe  
CONA Meeting Attendee

Although the more complex project the Corps unveiled in September has been in the works since 1999, Miller pointed out that

the process has been marked by lack of a clear public involvement, and there has been no avenue for seeking input from local boaters and residents who might be impacted.



Jono Miller discusses natural erosion and accretion trends on Lido Key. Photo by Roger Drouin

“There are a lot of people who should have been involved in this process, and for the most part they have not,” Miller said.

In September and October, the Corps of Engineers made two presentations before elected officials, conveying the total project as a take-it-or-leave it package.

“To show up with a plan and say, ‘If you don’t do it, you won’t get anything,’ that’s not the kind of government I want,” Miller told the audience.

## ‘NOT AN EASY RIDE’

Residents also voiced their concerns at the CONA meeting.

“It doesn’t work,” Sarasota County resident Calvin LeBuffe told *The Sarasota News Leader* before Monday’s program began. “It will make more problems.”

LeBuffe is so worried about the dredging of Big Pass that he said he planned to travel to Tallahassee this week to present his case against the project to Florida Department of



*Erosion on Lido Beach has resulted in waves lapping closer to many of the structures at high tide. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*

Environmental Protection (FDEP) officials. DEP will have to issue permits for the work, if the Corps is to proceed as it plans.

LeBuffe foresees problems such as erosion on Siesta and a vortex in Big Pass that could be hazardous to boaters, but he also voiced concern that the project is “already in the works.”

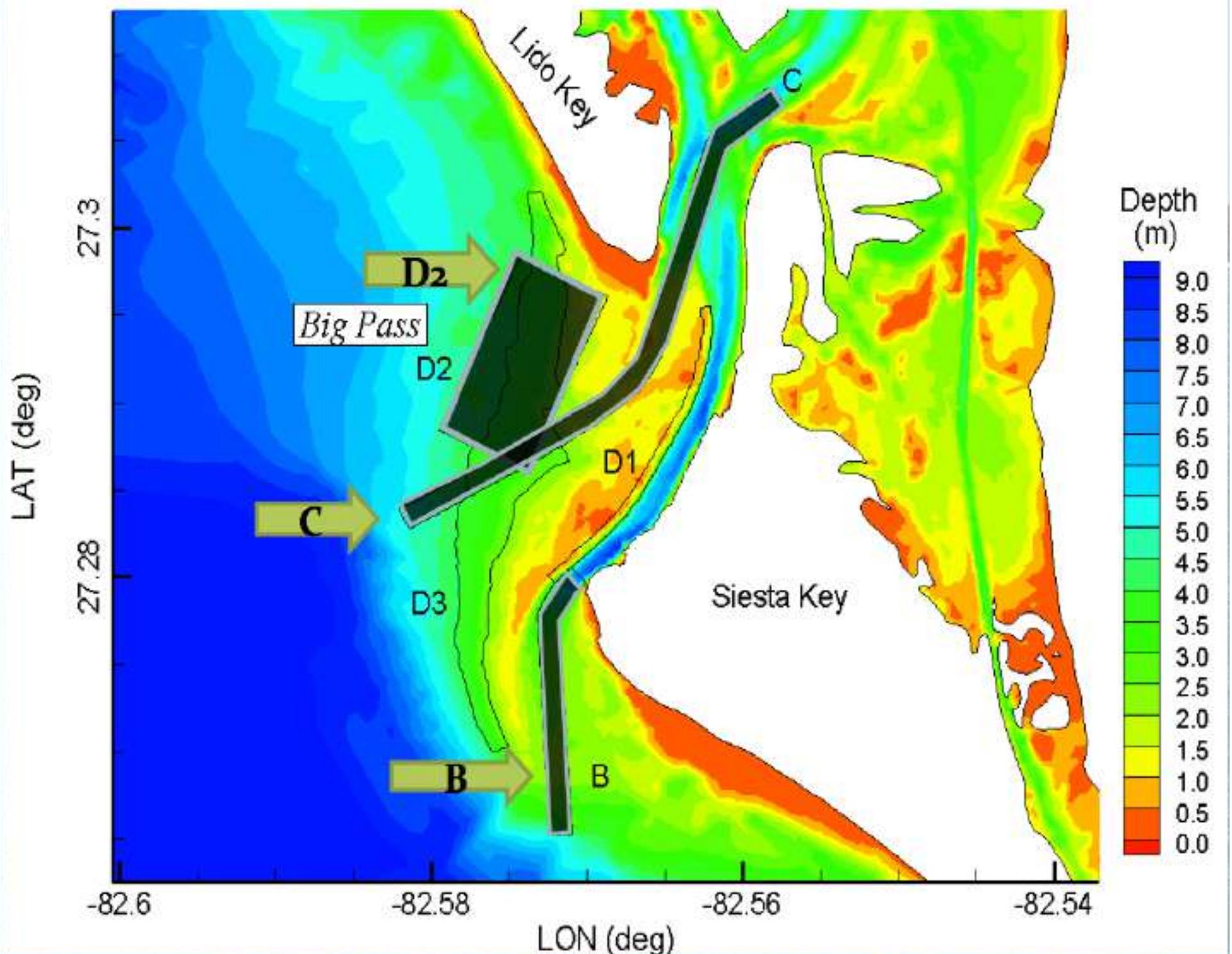
Miller emphasized that residents should work to raise the profile of the discussions and keep asking questions, but that should not be a problem.

“I think [Corps representatives] got the clear message it is not going to be an easy ride for them,” said Lourdes Ramirez, president of the neighborhood coalition, who lives on Siesta Key.

On Dec. 5, the Siesta Key Association (SKA) hosted Corps engineers for a presentation of the project. (See a related story in this issue.)

## ASKING QUESTIONS

Miller noted that Big Pass has become an important environment for spotted eagle rays,



*An Army Corps of Engineers graphic shows the areas deemed the best sand sources for the Lido Beach Renourishment Project. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

as Mote Marine Laboratory researchers have shown.

The rays use the Big Pass shoal to escape predators such as sharks and to give birth to young, Miller said. The impact on the rays and other wildlife, and the marine habitat itself, after dredging is unknown.

“We’re trying to ask questions now before it gets any further,” Miller pointed out.

Dredging in Big Pass could limit the ability of sand to flow south towards Siesta, and it could even limit the potential for new formations to take shape naturally.

Another big concern Miller noted was what happens if something goes wrong, if the Corps moves ahead with the entire project.

Miller mentioned Hurricane Katrina and how the Corps was granted immunity after the



**LIDO KEY GROIN FIELD WITH ECL**

*An Army Corps of Engineers illustration shows the planned locations of three groins on the southern end of Lido Key. File photo*

storm hit New Orleans in 2005, so the agency could not be sued over any of the damages resulting from the failure of its levees to protect property. "If something does go wrong, we may have difficulty seeking money from them," Miller said.

## A WHOLE SYSTEM

Miller is calling for a strategy that takes into account Sarasota County's shoreline, and not just certain areas of beach.

That plan should focus on how to address high storm tides that could impact other areas.

"We need a strategy for the whole system that includes St. Armands," Miller said.

As for Lido Key, erosion appears primarily to be a problem on a 4,000-foot stretch of the beach, particularly where two hotels appear to jet out toward the waterline; yet, the \$22 million project takes some drastic steps to protect an isolated stretch, Miller said. The simpler approach of continuing to renourish areas of the beach that experience erosion, he argued, has been "proven to work."

The Corps' proposed new Lido project, however, appears to be moving ahead.

Federal officials will continue to hold workshops to talk to boaters and various

associations that have an interest in the plan, and the topic is slated to come up again at a County Commission meeting in March. At the Dec. 5 SKA meeting, Corps representatives told the approximately 100 people in the audience that they expected to release a report soon that would show the expected impacts on Siesta Key of the Lido Beach Renourishment Project. Additionally, Milan A. Mora, the project manager for the Corps, said agency representatives hoped to submit an application to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in late January or early February to obtain the necessary state permits for the work. According to SKA President Catherine Luckner this week, one reason the Corps has not proceeded with its application is the need for an Environmental Assessment (EA) that must find either no significant environmental impact or the need for a more complex study.

The project has other hurdles to overcome. Mora also has pointed out that he has no idea when Congress will make the federal money available for the work. Additionally, many Siesta residents concerned about the Corps' interest in Big Pass are demanding an independent peer review of the Corps' report and modeling when all the material is available. **SNL**



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# ONE MORE TIME



“ You can love us or hate us for it. ... We have tried to do what you want done, which is open up the Springs.

Linda Yates  
Commissioner  
City of North Port



*Swimmers enjoy the ambiance of Warm Mineral Springs just before it closed in June. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

## **NORTH PORT CITY COMMISSIONERS HOPE THEY CAN FIND A SHORT-TERM OPERATOR TO REOPEN WARM MINERAL SPRINGS IN APRIL WHILE THEY WORK ON A LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

The City of North Port and Sarasota County this week agreed on another attempt to hire a firm to manage the swimming area at Warm Mineral Springs, with hopes the resort can reopen by April.

In the meantime, North Port staff will continue work on a proposal for the long-term future of the popular 81-acre tourist destination.

North Port Commissioner Linda Yates on Jan. 13 suggested an early to mid-April opening would be possible. Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Director Carolyn Brown told the County Commission North Port staff

members had indicated to her they hoped the bid award will be on the city's March 24 agenda.

Brown confirmed for the county board that an entry admission would be charged; the city and county would pay for the short-term operator's services out of the resulting revenue.

In a 4-1 vote on Jan. 14, with Chairman Charles Hines in the minority, the County Commission remained firm on a Sept. 1 deadline for finalizing the long-term contract. The County Commission set that date last month while also agreeing to let the city pursue a short-term manager for the property.

During their first regular meeting since Dec. 9, the North Port board members also voted 4-1 this week, concurring with the County Commission's December action. Commissioner Cheryl Cook was in the minority.

However, comments by City Manager Jonathan Lewis generated considerable discussion at the County Commission dais a day later.

## THE CITY DISCUSSION

On Jan. 13, Lewis explained to his board that the draft of the Request for Bids for a short-term manager contained language indicating the contract could be extended beyond Sept. 1 if the firm and the two boards agreed to

such action. "That's normal course for us," he added of the insertion of the language.

Vice Mayor Rhonda DiFranco clarified for the audience that if the City Commission voted specifically to include the wording about the extension in the bid, the matter would have to go back to the County Commission for concurrence. Nonetheless, DiFranco said, if the two boards found themselves approaching Sept. 1 with indications the springs would have to close again unless an extension were approved, the two boards could work with the short-term operator on renewing the contract.

Mayor James Blucher did point out, "The county was very adamant about that date [of Sept. 1]," with no plans for allowing an extension.



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

DiFranco replied that it was likely the Springs would have to close again “because [the county commissioners are] being adamant about that [deadline].”

## **AT THE COUNTY BOARD DAIS**

When Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer brought up the matter to his board on Jan. 14, he mentioned the discussion about the extension language. Notification of the city’s action had come in an email from Assistant City Manager Daniel Schult, Harmer added.

Sent at 5:29 p.m. on Jan. 13 to Carolyn Brown, the county’s director of parks and recreation, Schult’s email said, “Commission approved the change with a termination date of Sept. 1, 2014 with the additional language of agreeing to an extension. Could you find out if this is going to be a game stopper with your



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



*Chairs awaited the numerous visitors at Warm Mineral Springs when it was open. Image courtesy City of North Port*

Commission. If not we can advertise this week.”

Brown told the County Commission, “We thought [the extension language] would be a good safety valve” in the event the long-term operational agreement for the resort was not finalized by Sept. 1.

“The facility would have to close again [otherwise],” she pointed out, as DiFranco had the previous day.

“Let’s avoid that,” County Commissioner Nora Patterson said.

However, County Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson reminded her colleagues, “[T]he purpose of adding the deadline language to [the December agreement] was to make sure that we had things done ... We need to work together to accomplish this, and extending [the short-term contract] just completely erases that deadline ...”

“If we don’t approve [the North Port language],” Chairman Hines replied, “then [the deal is] dead.”

The worst-case scenario, Robinson explained, would be if North Port’s board and staff took too long to complete the solicitation process for long-term operation of Warm Mineral



*Christine Robinson is vice chairwoman of the County Commission. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Springs and then the city board agreed with the short-term manager to let the latter stay in place longer. “We are in this position then that we say, ‘No, because you’re not moving fast enough,’” Robinson added.

“Suppose you have a very short extension period,” Patterson replied. “I don’t want [the Springs] all of a sudden closed again Sept. 1, and you don’t, either.”

“Then we should just turn this into a Dec. 31 deadline,” Robinson told Patterson. “It has the same effect.”

Robinson added, “It’s time to get this done. We [bought] this property four days before I took office,” which was in December 2010. “It’s time we put some deadline on ourselves and *get this done.*”

“*We [bought] this property four days before I took office [in December 2010]. It’s time we put some deadline on ourselves and get this done.*”

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission



Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out that the best-case short-term scenario would be for a firm to open the Springs for about four-and-a-half months, based on the anticipated time frame for finalizing a contract.

Still, he cast doubt on whether any firm would be interested in the contract, not only because of the short duration of it but also because of what he cited as conflicting language in the draft Request for Bids. “I can tell you right away you’re not going to get any bids on this. If you do, [the firms have] got to be crazy.”

“I agree,” Patterson said. “Why would anyone want to do this for five months at all. I mean, this is worse than the mowing contracts.”

That comment drew some wry chuckles, as the County Commission over the past two years has dealt with a number of failed contracts for mowing services, with representatives of firms indicating to staff they had underestimated their expenses in crafting low bids.

After Robinson reiterated her call for the county board to remain firm on the Sept. 1 deadline, Hines pointed out, “I would hate not to have it understood that we could potentially extend [the contract] for another 30 to 60 days to keep [Warm Mineral Springs] open.”

“I think we should take [the North Port language] as is, with the three-month possibility

[of an extension] and everything,” Patterson said.

After Robinson reminded Patterson that the length of the extension was not specified, Patterson joined Robinson, Barbetta and Commissioner Carolyn Mason in voting for Robinson’s motion to reject any bid language referring to the possibility of a contract extension.

## BACK IN NORTH PORT

A day earlier in North Port, when Vice Mayor DiFranco made the motion to accept the county’s December recommendations for the short-term solicitation process, she told her colleagues, “It is imperative that we move this thing forward and protect the city from any more negative conjectures.”

“We should open the springs by Sept. 1,” City Commissioner Tom Jones said in seconding that motion.

“I’m fine with that [Sept. 1] deadline,” Commissioner Yates agreed.

After the vote without any mention of a possible contract renewal for the short-term operator, Yates pointed out, “Had we done anything else tonight, there would have been a huge delay.” She told the audience, “You can love us or hate us for it. ... We have tried to do what you want done, which is open up the Springs.” 

**The Sarasota News Leader**  
**No-Nonsense Reporting**



# A LONGER LEGACY TRAIL

*A Legacy Trail bridge over U.S. 41 near Venice was opened in the fall of 2011. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **EFFORTS ARE UNDER WAY TO EXPAND THE POPULAR BIKING ROUTE TO BOTH THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

An expansion of the Legacy Trail southward could soon be under way.

This week, the North Port City Commission moved ahead with the plan, and the project also won a nod from the County Commission.

Following the North Port City Commission's unanimous decision at its meeting on Jan. 13 to determine the cost of land acquisition for a preserved greenway and "ribbon trail"

expansion of the multi-use trail into North Port, the County Commission voted Tuesday, Jan. 14, to seek county funds to contribute to the project.

County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson brought up the North Port vote, asking whether her colleagues would support directing county staff to research whether county funds could be found to

“*It's kind of exciting to see that people want to expand north and expand southeast.*”

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission



help pay for the Legacy Trail expansion. The County Commission vote was unanimous, a positive sign for bikers, walkers and joggers who use the popular trail.

Any county funding would likely go towards construction of a bridge over the Myakkahatchee Creek. That east/west pathway would connect to the Venice portion of the Legacy Trail.

North Port has set aside \$434,419 in its current fiscal year for the purchase of property along the Myakkahatchee Creek, which it also would use to protect a city water supply, help deal with flooding issues and preserve a natural park-like setting.

A fundraising effort led by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation could pave the way for another extension — to the north.

“It’s kind of exciting to see that people want to expand north and expand southeast,” Robinson said.

County Commission Chairman Charles Hines added that it was nice to see North Port has set aside funding. He said he believed the county should seek ways it could contribute to the engineering for the Myakkahatchee bridge.

“Let’s move this forward as quickly as possible,” Hines told his colleagues.

The 10-mile long Legacy Trail currently runs from Venice to just south of the city of Sarasota. An effort already has begun to extend the multi-use trail northward from its termination south of Clark Road into downtown Sarasota. The extra 8-mile stretch



*A sign welcomes users to the Legacy Trail.  
Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

could take years to construct because of the expense.

That initiative did receive a boost last summer, however. In August, the County Commission authorized its Public Works Department to spend \$75,000 on an initial study that will cost \$150,000. The county said it would look to Legacy Trail supporters for the additional funds.

Then this week, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation posted information on its website about [the plan to raise money](#) for half the expense of the feasibility study for the extension north. After just the first day of fundraising, 5 percent of the \$75,000 goal had been achieved. 



## ON THE DEMOLITION LIST

*Look carefully the next time you are on the 1000 block of Second Street, because you will not see this 1924 building much longer. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### **THE CITY'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD GRANTS PROPERTY OWNERS' PETITION TO TEAR DOWN A SECOND STREET BUILDING**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The Sarasota City Historic Preservation Board belied its name on Tuesday, Jan. 14, when its members agreed unanimously to allow demolition of a two-story structure built in 1924, which is on the city's list of historically designated buildings. The destruction ostensibly will make way for a new hotel on U.S. 41.

Alex and Marlene Lancaster asked the board for a Certificate

of Appropriateness to tear down their structure at 1225-1231 Second Street, just east of the Tamiami Trail and a block west of the downtown Selby Library.

The property was under contract to an adjacent landowner who wants to build a new hotel. Preliminary plans were submitted to the city last July for a high-rise building on

“ *It's a little like losing a child.* ”

Marlene Lancaster  
Property Owner

the site. In early September, the Lancasters inked a deal to sell their two adjacent lots. That would have given the JEBCO Ventures firm of Atlanta and Sarasota a five-lot footprint (roughly 500 feet by 525 feet) for the proposed hotel.

When JEBCO representatives learned it could take as long as a year to win city permission to tear down the old two-story structure, they backed off. “If we get approval from you, perhaps the [sales] contract will be revitalized,” said Alex Lancaster. “With the rents we get and the taxes on it, it is not economical to keep tenants there. The taxes are driving us away from keeping it like it is.”

The Lancasters have a long history of buying dilapidated old buildings and restoring them. Many of the structures were placed on the local historic register. The building on Second Street was the focal point of their

third attempt at saving an old structure. They rehabilitated it in 1984.

“Your plans seem to be contingent on other plans by JEBCO,” said board member Robert Dylan. “If we approve it today, and then JEBCO changes their minds?”

“If it [the deal] doesn’t go, then we wait a year,” replied Alex Lancaster. “You can only hold it up a year,” he added of the demolition, “and then [the building] comes down. That assumes I don’t appeal to the City Commission. [Jim Bridges, CEO of JEBCO] opted out because of the possibility of a one-year delay.”

Part of the original contract called for the Lancasters to move the two-story building to a complex they own on the north side of Fruitville Road, just west of U.S. 301. But that idea first proved very expensive — with a \$200,000 estimate — and then not feasible.



*An aerial map shows the location of the structure on Second Street, with Fruitville Road to the north and Tamiami Trail on the west. Image from Google Maps*

“The state [Department of Transportation] will only close a state road for six hours,” said Lancaster. “We’d have to move all the light poles and traffic lights along Fruitville [to permit passage of the building on the road], and that’s just impossible.”

He also looked into moving it further east on Second Street but could not find any property available.

“We’ve taken a lot of pride in taking care of the building,” he told the board. A newer one-story structure stands adjacent to it. Lancaster said the latter can and will be moved. “We’ll either go with small condos with retail underneath or revitalize the contract with JEBCO,” he added. “Things are happening to the east of us, too. Maybe somebody wants to join our two [lots].”

The zoning on the first block of Second Street is Downtown Core, with 50 units allowed per acre and 10 stories of height permissible.

“I understand you’re sitting on a piece of property that is valuable according to its zoning,” said board member Richard Allen. “I’ve lived here a long time and seen a lot of stuff come down. This is a nice, little building, but it’s not great architecture. I see it as a standalone problem for you folks.”

Allen’s implication of inevitability was shared by other board members. “I appreciate all the effort you’ve made across the city to preserve historic structures,” said Sherry Svekis. “I fully understand the economics of this property and the changes downtown along U.S. 41. This is the inevitable decision for it.”

Chairman David Gurley added, “We don’t want to put people in the penalty box for buying a



*The site of the Lubé shop on North Tamiami Trail was part of the planned footprint for the new JEBCO hotel in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

piece of property in 1984 and bringing it back for 30 years by saying, ‘You’ve done such a good job, you should keep it for another 30 years.’”

Svekis moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness that will allow demolition of the structure. At least three of the seven members of the Historic Preservation Board said they came to the issue critical of the request, but after the hearing the discussion, they believed demolition was the best answer. The motion passed unanimously.

The city’s historic preservation specialist, Cliff Smith, noted it is the first time in his seven-year tenure with the city that the board has agreed to demolish a structure on the city’s list of historic buildings.

Marlene Lancaster said immediately after the vote, “It’s a little like losing a child.”



# THE END OF THE BEGINNING

*The original goal of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency was to remove blight from that part of the city. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **THE COMMITTEE STUDYING THE FUTURE OF THE DOWNTOWN SARASOTA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA) AGREES ON A 30-YEAR EXTENSION AND SAYS THE NEWTOWN CRA SHOULD HAVE EQUAL FUNDING SUPPORT FROM THE CITY AND COUNTY**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The heavy lifting is done. The suggestions for the future of Sarasota's Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) are finished. Now the study committee that worked on that issue is turning its attention to convincing a pair of elected local government boards to accept their recommendations.

It may be an easy "sell" to the Sarasota City Commission, which is getting more than \$4

million in county tax dollars annually to spend downtown as it sees fit. Sarasota County commissioners would like to have those dollars, now and in the future, too. This is a big issue — perhaps the biggest of 2014 — because we are talking about 30 years and more than half a billion dollars overall.

“ *The downtown plan hasn't been updated in 15 years.* ”

Andy Dorr  
Chairman  
Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment  
Agency Extension Study Committee

Up to now the members of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Area

Extension Study Committee have wrestled with the mechanics of the CRA's future — how the money should be spent; who should make the decisions; what the boundaries should be. Now the question is will the city and county commissions buy the answers?

## ENTICEMENTS OFFERED

The CRA is a method of shifting property tax revenue from general fund budgets into specified areas. The city and county agreed in 1986 to freeze their property tax income from a specific area of downtown Sarasota. Any increase in tax revenue in subsequent years — mostly through property assessment inflation — would accrue to the CRA and not city and county general funds.

In today's rough numbers, the county share is about \$4 million, while the city's is about \$3.5 million. The money is plowed back into the defined area for improvements. What constitutes an "improvement" is subject to wide interpretation.

If the property values in the CRA continue to climb at 5 percent per year, as they have done over the past 28 years, the combined city-county contribution for the next 30 years will exceed \$500 million. So the stakes are high.

The city has used the CRA money to pay for certain operations that normally would have to be covered out of its general fund, a fact the county finds troublesome. To cool the county's ire, the study committee suggested the county be allowed to "skim" from the CRA



*The CRA Extension Study Committee members discuss matters in November. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

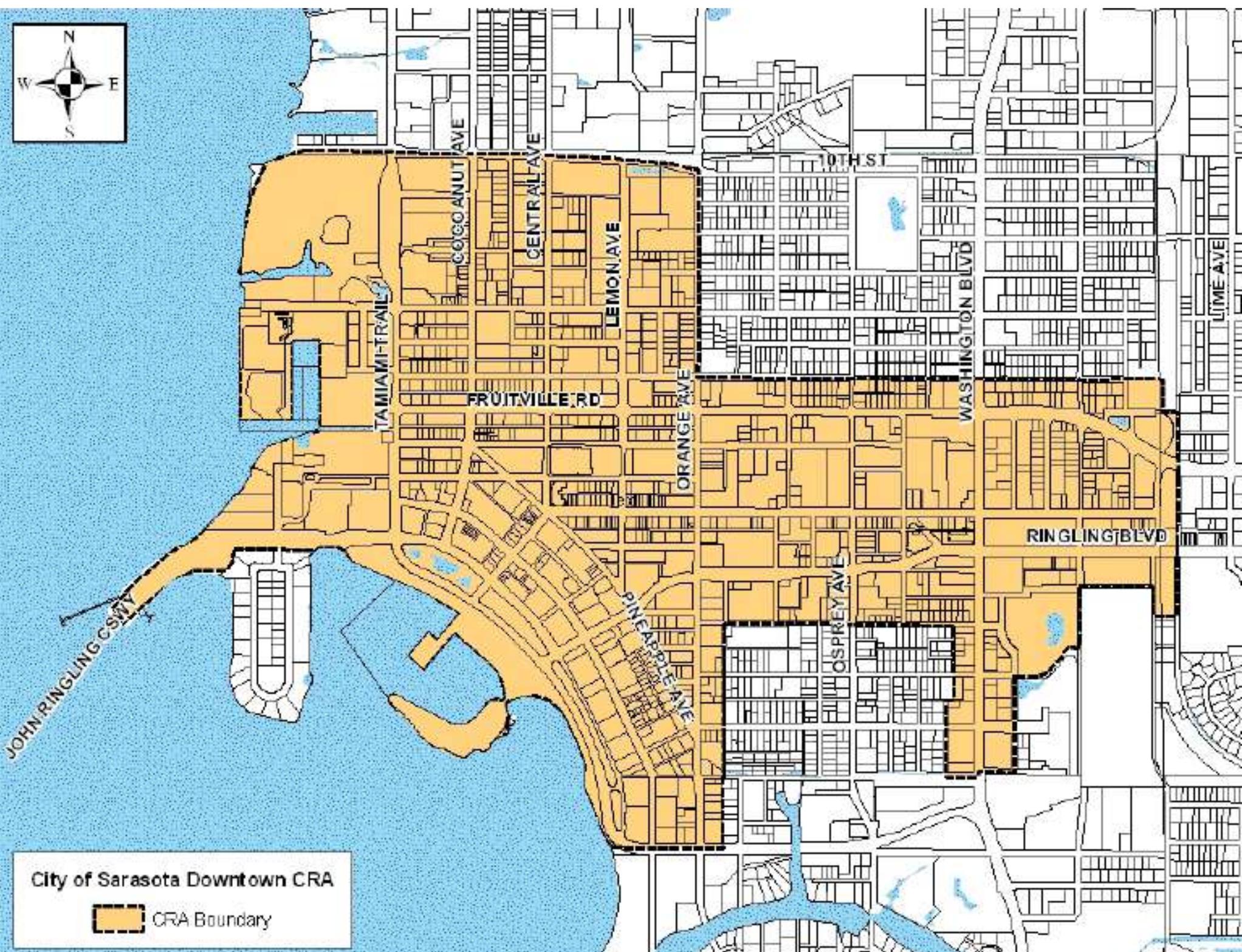
fund as well — how much, the committee does not say, only that the new CRA governing board will set a figure.

This “skim” could be an important “sales point” for the County Commission, which has already allocated the funds that have been going to the CRA to its future budgets, in preparation for the 2016 expiration of the Sarasota Downtown CRA.

The county also has been fighting off efforts by other entities — including the Cities of Venice and North Port — which want to jump

on the CRA bandwagon. Reducing or eliminating the CRA budget in Sarasota makes the scheme less attractive to the central and south county cities. Additionally, the unincorporated but semi-urban areas of the county — Nokomis and Osprey, in particular — have tangible infrastructure desires (such as a library) that could be funded by a “skim” of the CRA funds.

Because CRA funding is bondable, presumably the “skim” could be a valid source for bond financing. But what level of “skim” would



*A map shows the boundaries of the Downtown Sarasota CRA. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

be required to persuade five county commissioners to keep the Downtown Sarasota CRA alive for another 30 years?

The number of years could be a point of discussion, too, as it is important for bonding purposes. A 10-year extension of the CRA would be too short a period to support general obligation bonds.

## EQUITY IN NUMBERS

In 2006, the City of Sarasota, by resolution, found the need to expand the CRA to include a northern section of the community called Newtown. The following year, the Sarasota County Commission allowed the CRA to carry out its activities in that new area, but it did not agree to participate in the property tax revenue split for that purpose. The city could contribute, but the county would not.

“I was told the reason the County Commission didn’t want to put their money in this new district [was] they didn’t want to feel obligated to do [a CRA] in North Port and Venice. If we commit to leaving our increment in Newtown, we’re on the hook for Venice and North Port,” said study committee member Bill Russell.

While the study committee was sensitive to allowing both governments to “skim” from the CRA for their general funds, some members this week were adamant about the county playing fair and contributing to Newtown.

“They should support the CRA across the board and not pick and chose who to give to and who not to give to,” said member Chris Gallagher. “If we start wrestling with the split back to the city and county, it is hard to do that without a county contribution to the Newtown CRA. We either have to say, ‘Leave it the way it is,’ or adjust the percentages.”



*Andy Dorr is chairman of the CRA Extension Study Committee. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Chairman Andy Dorr went even further. “It is important the county send a message it fully supports the city’s CRA and not pick and choose. The county’s gone on record it won’t contribute there, and they need to correct their error. They need to be part of the solution and make a further contribution,” he said.

Newtown’s part of the CRA is practically microscopic. While downtown’s “base year” is 1986, Newtown’s “base year” is 2007; the following year, property values began to collapse. Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown reminded the study committee the Newtown CRA now generates about \$20,000 per year. “That’s how dire it is for Newtown,” he said.

Right now money is being siphoned off the downtown CRA account to fund projects (and staff salaries) in Newtown. Even Newtown’s

biggest supporter — committee member Fredd “Glossie” Atkins — urged the study committee to leave well enough alone. “I don’t believe the county is going to give it up. So I’d urge strong support for the downtown CRA that can participate with Newtown.”

Atkins is a five-time city commissioner from District One, which includes Newtown.

Atkins’ opinion was supported by member Joel Freedman. “The county is not going to change its mind on Newtown. Venice is watching.”

However, the study committee voted 5-2 for “equal treatment” of Newtown.

## WHO NEEDS A PLAN?

As the study committee broke for the holidays, its members told city staffers to prepare its final report. At the Jan. 14 meeting, all 85 pages of a PowerPoint presentation were distributed. If each slide requires 30 seconds to deliver and register with viewers, the presentation will take almost 45 eye-glazing minutes from start to finish.

Furthermore, the document necessary to make anything happen is missing. Nowhere in the report is a sample or proposed interlocal agreement to be found. Nor is there an “executive summary” so vital to busy (or distracted or lazy) elected officials. In other words, there are no “action items.” And that fact did not go unnoticed.

“We’ve left several things unanswered,” said Gallagher. “We’re sending off a set of recommendations they can accept or reject or do something halfway,” he added. “They’ll then have to decide what ends up in the interlocal agreement.”

At the end of the meeting, Russell tried to sum up the group’s work. “What’s the big headline? It’s, ‘Yes, but ...’ New governance; reset Newtown; fund Newtown. Yes for 30 years, but the big item is a change of governance.”

The group is recommending replacing the current Sarasota City Commission as the governing board of the CRA with an oversight committee comprising two city commissioners, two county commissioners and three citizens appointed by the City Commission.

If the package clears the City and County commissions, and a new governing board is appointed, only then can the real work begin. Chairman Dorr said, “We need a broad CRA plan that meets statutes and strategic area plans with specific objectives for each district. The CRA would then fund the plans and update the plans on a fairly regular basis. The downtown plan hasn’t been updated in 15 years.”

The tentative time for presentation of the findings to a joint meeting of the City and County commissions is the afternoon of April Fool’s Day. 



## A SAFETY INITIATIVE

*Sarasota County Sheriff's deputies explain traffic regulations to a group of Amish women in Pinecraft. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office*

### **REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SARASOTA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE WORK WITH AMISH AND MENNONITE VISITORS TO EXPLAIN TRAFFIC RULES**

#### *Staff Reports*

If passersby noticed an unusually strong Sarasota County Sheriff's Office presence in Pinecraft on Jan. 15, the reason was not a crime wave but an effort to educate Amish and Mennonite visitors about the traffic regulations with which all residents and tourists must abide in the name of safety.

Sgt. Darrell Seckendorf, a commander in the Special Operations Division of the Sheriff's Office's Traffic/Motor Unit, explained that the primary focus was violations involving crosswalks. Officers were in the community for four hours, he said.

In September 2012, Teresa Mast, the business relations coordinator in the county's Office

of Business and Economic Development, explained to the County Commission that the population of Pinecraft, which was established about 50 years ago, increases approximately 60 percent during high season. Amish and Mennonite visitors make the community their winter home, just as other tourists come to Sarasota County for the warmer weather.

However, Pinecraft is in the heart of urban Sarasota, along a portion of Bahia Vista Street that is bisected by Beneva Road, Mast pointed out.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office already had been working closely with county staff on safety issues in the community prior to her presentation, she told the commissioners.



*A deputy checks a pedestrian crosswalk sign in Pinecraft. Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office*

“A lot of folks come from different parts of the country and don’t necessarily understand all the rules and regulations of the road and the bicycle use and all that,” Mast said. Because of that population’s culture and its choices, she added, “Pinecraft is a walking and biking community.”

On Jan. 16, the Sheriff’s Office provided *The Sarasota News Leader* with a breakdown of its initiative the previous day. Officers gave verbal warnings to pedestrians and to people violating traffic laws through the use of golf carts, Seckendorf explained. In every other case, citations were issued, he added.

The following is the list of activity from the event:

- Speeding citations: 15.
- Pedestrian contacts: 17.
- Seat belt violations: 7.
- No insurance: 1.
- Expired tag: 1.
- Illegal window tint: 1.
- Driving with a suspended license: 2.
- Golf cart violations: 3.

Seckendorf added that officers also noted some engineering issues; they are forwarding that information to county staff. If those issues can be addressed, he pointed out, that may increase the use of the crosswalk lights, particularly by bicyclists. 



An officer talks with a resident about the educational effort. Photo courtesy Sheriff’s Office



*All couples are welcome to participate in the traditional wedding vow renewal event on Siesta Public Beach on Valentine's Day. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## **SAY I DO AGAIN EVENT SET FOR VALENTINE'S DAY ON SIESTA**

The Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department's popular *Say I Do Again* wedding vow renewal event will return to Siesta Beach on Friday, Feb. 14, at 6 p.m., the county has announced.

Every year on Valentine's Day, hundreds of people renew their commitments to each other in a gathering "on the powdery soft white sand of Siesta Beach," a county news release says.

Registration may be completed online at [parksonline.scgov.net](http://parksonline.scgov.net) or by calling 861-9930. Registration ends on Monday, Feb. 10. No on-site registration will be provided, the release adds. The cost is \$5 per couple.

"It's one of our most popular events that draws hundreds of couples from all over the area and, of course, one of the highlights is the announcement of the couple that has been

married the longest," said Jonathan Poyner, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation program coordinator, in the release. "It's the perfect way to spend Valentine's Day, sharing a gorgeous sunset on America's best beach with the person most special in your life."

The vow renewal ceremony will be officiated by Magistrate Ed Wilson beginning promptly at 6 p.m. Couples arriving early will be treated to music beginning at 4:45 p.m., the release notes. The event sponsor, [LivetheLife.org](http://LivetheLife.org), will provide giveaways, the release continues.

Following the ceremony, each couple will receive a commemorative certificate and be invited to enjoy wedding-themed refreshments.

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

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES TO CLOSE FOR KING DAY

Most Sarasota County Government offices, including the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, will be closed Monday, Jan. 20, for the national observance celebrating the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., the county has announced.

Additionally, all City of Sarasota administrative offices will be closed, according to a city news release. As a result, the regular City Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 2:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. in the Commission Chambers in City Hall, located at 1565 First St. in downtown Sarasota.

All Sarasota County libraries will be closed, as will all Sarasota County recreation centers with the exception of the following, a county news release says:

- Arlington Park Recreation Center, open from noon to 5 p.m.
- Payne Park Tennis Center, open from 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) will be on a normal bus schedule on Jan. 20, but the customer service stations at SCAT Administration and the downtown transfer station will be closed that day, the release notes.

The collection schedule for solid waste, yard waste and recyclables will not be affected in the city or county by the holiday, according to the news releases from both local governments. The county landfill at 4000 Knights



*Government offices will be closed on Jan. 20 to honor the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Trail Road in Nokomis will be open, but the administrative office will be closed.

The gun range at Knight Trail Park will be closed.

Sarasota County's chemical collection centers at 8750 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota and 250 S. Jackson Road in Venice will be closed, too; however, the Citizens Convenience Center at 4010 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis, will be open.

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

## REGISTRATION UNDER WAY FOR GULF COAST SENIOR GAMES

Registration for the 25th Annual Gulf Coast Senior Games will continue through Friday, Jan. 31, Sarasota County is reminding the public.

The games will take place Feb. 18-23 at venues throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties, which partner yearly to host the event, a news release says.

The games are designed to promote and maintain health and wellness and to enhance the quality of life for the counties' residents who are over 50 years old, said Scott Jalwan, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department event coordinator, in the release.

Among the competition offered at this year's Senior Games will be archery, basketball shooting, bocce, bowling, cribbage, cycling, golf, horseshoes, pickleball, racquetball, a 5-kilometer road race, shuffleboard, swimming, table tennis, tennis and track and field. For a complete listing of events and times, visit [www.scgov.net/parksandrecreation](http://www.scgov.net/parksandrecreation).

To become a Gulf Coast Senior Games competitor, register online at [www.mymanatee.org/parks](http://www.mymanatee.org/parks) or fill out and send in the official entry form to Gulf Coast Senior Games, 5502 33rd Ave. Drive West, Bradenton, FL 34209. Registration booklets are available at any Sarasota County recreation center or library, the release notes.

The \$12 entry fee entitles each participant to a T-shirt. An additional fee of \$3 per event is required to compete, the release adds. Some events such as archery, bowling, golf, swimming and tennis necessitate payment of a facility fee as well.

The Gulf Coast Senior Games is a local qualifier for the 2014 Florida Senior Games State Championships, which will be held in Lee County Dec. 6-14, 2014.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 and ask about the Gulf Coast Senior Games.



*Table tennis is just one of the many events of the Gulf Coast Senior Games that are scheduled for Feb. 18-23. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## AREA HIGH SCHOOLS TO HOLD STUDENT-PARENT INFORMATION NIGHTS

From mid-January to late April, Sarasota County public high schools will hold student-parent information nights, also known as SPIN nights, for current eighth-grade students and their families, the school district has announced.

“The events are designed to help families learn what area high schools have to offer in terms of magnet programs, special interest academies, career and technical education, and extracurricular activities such as athletics, clubs and service organizations,” a district news release explains.

Although schedules vary for each event, families are encouraged to arrive in time for a welcome and overview presentation, the release points out. “Students may need to meet specific requirements for some schools and magnet programs, and admission may depend on whether space is available for students who wish to attend a school other than their geographically designated high school,” it adds.

Parents or students who have specific questions may contact a school directly; contact information for all high schools is at [www.SarasotaCountySchools.net/schools.aspx](http://www.SarasotaCountySchools.net/schools.aspx).

The upcoming SPIN night dates and times are as follows:

- Thursday, Jan. 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.: Booker High Visual & Performing Arts/Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) information.

- Tuesday, Jan. 28, 6 to 8 p.m.: Venice High student-parent information night.
- Thursday, Jan. 30, 6:30 to 8 p.m.: Booker High Law Academy/Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) information.
- Monday, Feb. 3, 6:30 to 8 p.m.: North Port High general student-parent information night.
- Tuesday, Feb. 4, 7 to 8 p.m.: Venice High International Baccalaureate (IB) information for current ninth-graders only. (The Venice High IB program will begin in the fall of 2014.)
- Thursday, Feb. 6, 7 to 8 p.m.: Venice High IB information for current eighth-graders only.
- Wednesday, Feb. 19, 6 to 8 p.m.: Riverview High IB information and tour.
- Tuesday, April 1, 6:30 to 8 p.m.: Booker High general student-parent information night.
- Thursday, April 17, 6 to 8 p.m.: Riverview High general student-parent information night.
- Wednesday, April 23, 6 to 7:30 p.m.: Suncoast Polytechnical High general student-parent information night.
- Tuesday, April 29, 6:30 to 8 p.m.: Sarasota High general student-parent information night.

Press Releases & News Tips

[News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:News@SarasotaNewsLeader.com)

## JACARANDA LIBRARY TO HOLD 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Members of the Sarasota County Commission will be joining representatives of Friends of the Jacaranda Public Library and library staff in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Frances T. Bourne Jacaranda Library, the county has announced.

The yearlong celebration will kick off with a reception on Friday, Jan. 24, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., a news release says. The event will feature guest speakers starting at 6 p.m. The celebration will continue on Saturday, Jan. 25, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with activities for the entire family, the release notes. All the festivities will be held at Frances T. Bourne Jacaranda Library, located at 4143 Woodmere Park Blvd. in Venice. Each event will be free and open to the public.

Featured speakers on Jan. 24 will be Charles Hines, the Sarasota County Commission chairman; state Sen. Nancy Detert of Venice; Andrea Taylor, the library manager; and Scott Dowdy, president of the Friends of the Library, the release adds.

On Jan. 25, the library will host a Wii tournament and offer face painting for teens, as well as a bounce house, games and art activities for children.

“The library has been serving Venice residents since its construction in 1994,” the release explains. “In the late 1980s, Sarasota County Library Advisory Board members and Venice residents recognized the need for expanded library services there, and with funding from



*The Frances T. Bourne Jacaranda Library is located at 4143 Woodmere Park Blvd. in Venice. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

a voter-approved, one-cent surtax for new capital improvement projects, Frances T. Bourne spearheaded the project,” the release continues.

Bourne, “a lifelong literacy and education champion” who helped incorporate the Friends organization in 1992, was a leader on the organization’s original board of directors, the release adds. She “shared her knowledge and passion to ensure the success of the library,” the release says.

The library’s grand opening was held Jan. 15, 1994. “On Dec. 10, 1995, the Sarasota County Commission renamed the library the Frances T. Bourne Jacaranda Library in honor of the woman who worked to create it,” the release notes. “The Friends of the Library continues that legacy of service as the primary sponsor of the 20th anniversary celebration.”

To learn more about the library or the 20th anniversary celebration, visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net) or contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000.

## BUTTERFLY CLUB WELCOMES THE PUBLIC TO ITS NEXT MEETING

From 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Jan. 23, the Sarasota County Butterfly Club will host guest speaker Bill Dunson on the topic, *Backyard Wildlife Gardening on Manasota Key*.

Dunson is a naturalist, biologist and professor, a news release says.

Members of the public are welcome to attend.

The meeting will be held at the Sarasota Garden Club, located at 1131 Boulevard of the Arts in Sarasota. Admission is free for members; non-members are asked to pay \$5 at the door.

For more information, call 955-0875.



## COUNTY TO OFFER NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT ORIENTATION WORKSHOPS

The Sarasota County Neighborhood Services Office has announced the locations and dates for the next round of Grant Orientation Workshops. Attendance at the workshops is a requirement to be eligible to receive a neighborhood improvement grant, a county news release notes.

In 2003, the Sarasota County Commission authorized the creation of the Neighborhood Grant Program for neighborhoods “that wish to improve safety, preserve character and value, enhance physical and environmental health, promote healthy lifestyles and build leadership,” the release adds. The projects must provide a public benefit and be supported by the community to be given consideration, the release notes. “Projects such as the removal of exotic plants, landscape beautification, restoration of a historical monument, creating a neighborhood gathering place, water quality improvements and pond restoration are examples of those eligible for the grant funding,” the release says.

Grant applications are due no later than 5 p.m. on Monday, April 28, at the Neighborhood Services Office, located on the fifth floor or the County Administration Center at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota.

No later than Friday, March 28, people must provide notification of their intent to submit an application, the release points out. That notification may be provided by letter or by email.

Applicants must attend a Grant Orientation Workshop before they can apply for funding through the Neighborhood Grant Program, the release adds. Space is limited, and

reservations are required. Each two-hour workshop is free. Applicants need to attend only one session, the release notes.

To make a reservation, send an email to [kclayton@scgov.net](mailto:kclayton@scgov.net) or call 861-5000. The reservation should include the applicant’s name and phone number and the location, date and time of the workshop. “Workshop dates, times and locations are subject to change,” the release says.

Workshops will be held at the following locations:

- Fruitville Library, 100 Coburn Road, Sarasota — Saturday, Feb. 1, noon to 2 p.m.; Monday, March 17, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- Selby Library, 1331 First St., Sarasota — Tuesday, Feb. 25, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- Venice Library, 300 S Nokomis Ave., Venice — Tuesday, Jan. 21, 1 to 3 p.m.; Thursday, Jan. 23, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- North Port Library, 13800 S. Tamiami Trail, North Port — Tuesday, Feb. 4, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday, Feb. 12, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Elsie Quirk Library, 100 W. Dearborn St., Englewood — Wednesday, Jan. 29, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Feb. 22, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

If a neighborhood association would like to host a grant workshop in its community, representatives may email that request to [kclayton@scgov.net](mailto:kclayton@scgov.net).

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

## POLICE COLLECTING DONATIONS FOR *TEENS FOR JEANS* CAMPAIGN

For the second year in a row, the Sarasota Police Department is collecting jeans for the *Teens for Jeans* campaign, the department has announced.

The campaign is being promoted by Aeropostale stores and [DoSomething.org](http://DoSomething.org), a news release says. The Police Department lobby has a yellow bin available for donations of new or gently used jeans, the release adds.

“More than 1.5 million teenagers and children are homeless in the United States,” the release notes. “*Teens for Jeans* is a campaign that helps those children and teens needing it the most,” the release continues.

“When children run away or are taken to a shelter for immediate assistance, it’s often without any personal belongings,” said Capt. Corinne Stannish of the Police Department’s Bureau of Support Services, who is heading up the campaign. “They’re sent to school with borrowed items and feel like they stick out. Children that are able to have a pair of jeans to wear to school, it helps them fit in and it doesn’t make them feel like attention is being immediately drawn to them by what they are wearing.”



*The drop-off bin for the Teens for Jeans program is in the lobby of the Sarasota Police Department on Adams Lane in downtown Sarasota. Contributed photo*

Donations may be dropped off at any time until Friday, Feb. 14, at the Police Department headquarters, which is located at 2099 Adams Lane in Sarasota. For more information about the program, visit [www.dosomething.org/teensforjeans](http://www.dosomething.org/teensforjeans).

## CORRECTION

The Jan. 10 article titled *Atwell maligned* incorrectly stated that the City of Sarasota admitted no guilt in the settlement of a lawsuit filed last fall by Citizens for Sunshine, a Sarasota organization, regarding a downtown meeting on homelessness attended by two city commissioners, Suzanne Atwell and Susan Chapman. The settlement stipulation states the following:

“The City admits that the City’s failure to provide notice of the October 13, 2013 9:00 a.m.

meeting at the Tsunami restaurant and to take minutes was a violation of the Sunshine Law because it was known to the City that two or more City Commissioners would be present; and because the City accepted the invitation to the meeting intending ‘to build a coalition to support our homeless efforts’ and to build support for a subject that was reasonably foreseeable to come before the City Commission for future action.”

## USF SARASOTA-MANATEE CHANCELLOR TO RETIRE

Arthur M. Guilford, 68, regional chancellor of the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, has announced he will officially retire at the end of January 2015.

Citing the traditional hiring cycle for higher education administrators as June to August of each year, Guilford said in a news release, "It will be helpful for me to step down from my current position at the end of July 2014. During the remaining six months, I will be available for special projects and to help facilitate an easy transition for the new regional chancellor. If they need me, I will be here."

A national search will be conducted for a new regional chancellor, the release adds. Sophia Wisniewska, regional chancellor of USF St. Petersburg, has agreed to chair the search committee.

A native Floridian, Guilford began his career at USF Tampa in 1975 as an assistant professor of communication sciences and disorders, the release explains. He later served as chairman of the department for 15 years. He became associate dean of faculty and program development for USF Tampa's College of Arts and Sciences in 2004, overseeing tenure, honors and awards for more than 650 faculty members, the release continues. In 2006, Guilford was appointed by USF President Judy Genshaft to lead the search for a new regional chancellor of USF Sarasota-Manatee. "After meeting with several qualified candidates, the faculty ... collectively petitioned for Guilford to be interviewed for the position and he was appointed regional chancellor in 2007."

The release notes, "Among his many visionary accomplishments [at the University of



*Arthur M. Guilford/Contributed photo*

South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM)] are attainment of separate accreditation for USFSM; the creation of a learning center in North Port; development of a robust general education program and recruitment of the institution's first freshman class into a four-year program; launching of the College of Hospitality & Technology Leadership's Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch"; and the establishment of a unique partnership with Mote Marine that helps students on the path to a biology degree. All are emblematic

of the university's response to emerging community needs, the release continues.

Since 2007, the number of degrees awarded by USFSM has increased by 18 percent, the release notes.

USF President Judy Genshaft said in the release, "The University of South Florida

System is deeply appreciative of Arthur Guilford's leadership at USF Sarasota-Manatee. He has been a valued part of USF for almost four decades and a highly respected leader of a great team for the past seven years. I know that the entire Sarasota-Manatee community joins me in wishing him and his wife, Lynn, every happiness in retirement."

---

## HEALTHY START COALITION NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has announced the hiring of its new executive director, Shon Ewens.

The Healthy Start Coalition provides professional services for pregnant women, infants and new families in Sarasota County to prevent low birth weight, prematurity and other possible poor health and developmental outcomes, a news release explains.

Ewens comes to the Coalition after almost three years as executive director of the Literacy Council of Sarasota, the release adds. In addition to her work with that organization, she has "12 years of extensive managerial and executive level administrative experience working for YMCAs in Tampa, Sarasota and Birmingham, AL," the release notes.

Additionally, the Coalition staff, board, service providers, community partners and clients have extended their "heartfelt gratitude" to Jennifer Highland, who served as executive director for 13 years, the release continues. In her last week with the organization, she shared with them the Florida Department of Health's 2012 Maternal Child Health Analysis Report, "which showed Sarasota reporting better than expected outcomes in infant mortality, low



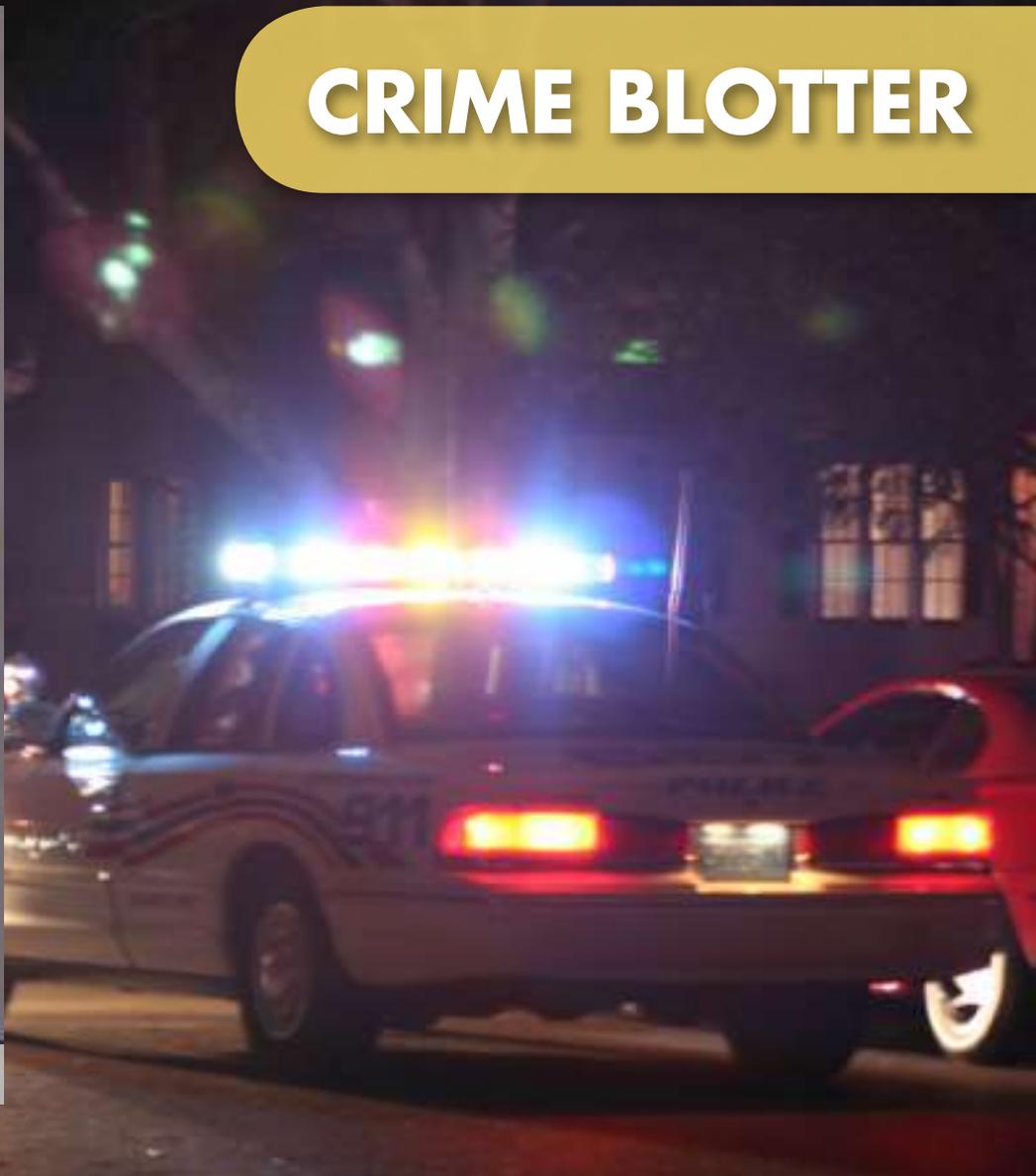
*Shon Ewens/Contributed photo*

birth weight and teen pregnancy — concrete evidence of her strong tenure here and the hard work of the people she brought together on her Healthy Start Team," the release adds.

For more information about The Healthy Start Coalition call 373-7070 or email Ewens at [shon.ewens@healthystartsarasota.org](mailto:shon.ewens@healthystartsarasota.org). 



Jadavion Shird/Contributed photo



## SECOND SUSPECT ARRESTED IN BUSINESS BURGLARY CASE

Detectives with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office have arrested the second suspect in an armed burglary case involving a business on Lockwood Ridge Road in Sarasota, the office announced on Jan. 10.

Jadavion Shird, 21, of 3217 Newtown Blvd. in Sarasota, has been charged with Armed Burglary, a news release says.

The Sheriff's Office reported last week that the owner of SRQ Fishing Oasis/Amendment II Armory, located at 3512 Lockwood Ridge Road in Sarasota, called 911 just before 9:30 p.m. on Jan. 6 when she saw two men breaking into the store on her remote surveillance system. After deputies arrived on scene and secured the business, they reviewed the footage, which showed one of the suspects carrying a small revolver, a news release pointed out.

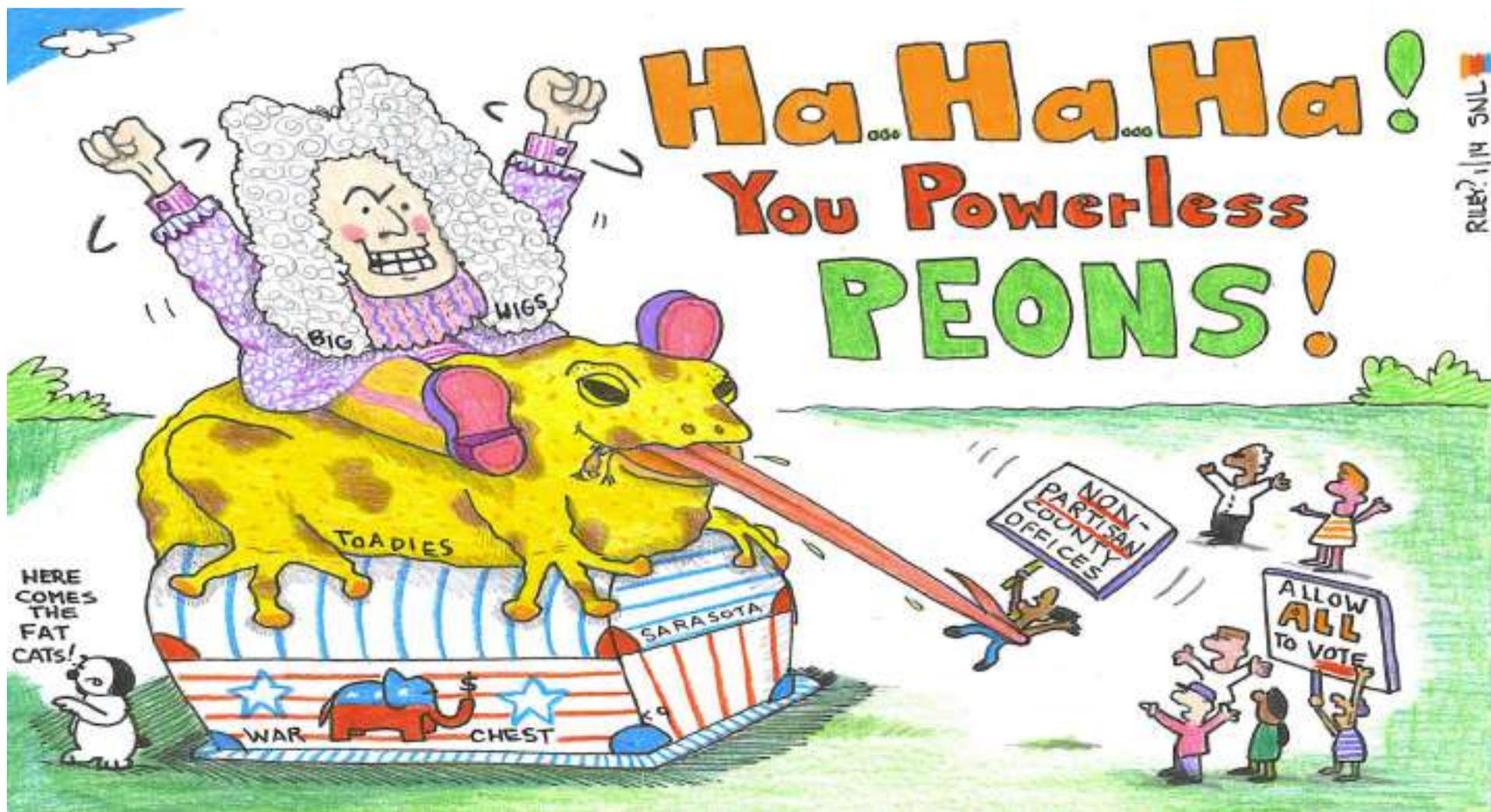
A man wearing identical clothing to that seen in the video was located a short distance away. The suspect, Ryan Pete, 33, of 3209 Joe Louis Drive, Sarasota — who has a history of drug and weapons charges — also was charged with Armed Burglary.

According to the report, deputies recovered a black hooded sweatshirt and a pair of red gloves at 3201 Ridge Ave. while searching for the suspects.

Upon viewing the surveillance footage on Jan. 8, another detective was able to identify the second suspect as Shird, who was wearing red gloves when the video showed him entering the business, the report adds.

Judge Frederick P. Mercurio of the 12th Judicial Circuit Court ordered Shird held without bond because the offense is punishable by life imprisonment, the report says. 

# OPINION



## THE GREATEST POLITICAL THREAT TO SARASOTA COUNTY

### EDITORIAL

The recent announcement — boast might be a more apt term — by the Republican Party of Sarasota that it would present its annual “Statesman of the Year” award to Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, was only the latest confirmation that the local party is firmly in the control of far-right ideologues. Of course, past “honorees” Donald Trump and Sean Hannity already had mostly cemented our belief in that.

That the Republican Party in our county is dominated by its right wing should not be a major concern to the rest of us, except that it has engineered a virtual stranglehold on all public offices in the county, ensuring that no candidate for any of those offices can gain election without passing the “purity” tests demanded by this radical element.

The Republican Party of Sarasota essentially serves two masters. First are wealthy land developers, who want the “freedom” to pave over most of the county’s earth without all of those pesky regulations that require greenspace, traffic planning, clean (and adequate) water and environmental integrity. All of that regulatory meddling gets in the way of corporate profits, which displeases the bigwigs and rouses them to seek more malleable sycophants to serve in elected offices in the upcoming election (aided, ironically, by term limits, which sweep out any too-independent officials after only a couple of terms).

Second is the “mouth-breather” wing of the party — that demented amalgamation of gun nuts, conspiracy theorists, xenophobes, racists (including the “Take back our country”

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crowd), misogynists and “better dead than red” zealots who make up the vocal lunatic fringe of the local Republican Party. Their influence is almost as significant as that of the developers, given their ability to organize the fearful and get them to the polls to vote for the radicals of their choice.

When the cosmic forces align the interests of the moneyed bigwigs and the lunatic fringe, no rational candidate has any hope of winning a Republican primary. Some successful candidates might seem rational, but they scrupulously serve their masters while in office. The

cost to good government and the citizens of Sarasota County is incalculable.

A ray of sunshine briefly shone through this miasmic fog last spring, when it was announced in May that a new PAC, Open Our Elections, had been formed to begin gathering signatures of county voters for an initiative to amend the county charter and make all county elected positions nonpartisan.

The plan was simple: Voters would cast ballots on amending the county’s charter to allow all county offices — county commissioners, tax collector, supervisor of elections, property appraiser, clerk of court and sheriff — to become nonpartisan. Any registered voter could file for an open office, and voters would not see a little “R” or “D” next to that person’s name to indicate party affiliation.

More important, there would be no party primaries. All voters would be allowed to vote in a first primary election that would determine a winner if one person received a majority of votes. If not, the top two vote-getters would proceed to a second, runoff election.

The plan has been adopted in five other charter counties in Florida, including three of the state’s most populous ones: Leon, Miami-Dade, Orange, Volusia and Columbia.

*“The nonpartisan plan has been adopted in five other charter counties in Florida, including three of the state’s most populous ones: Leon, Miami-Dade, Orange, Volusia and Columbia.”*

So why are voters not poised to decide on this change to the Sarasota County charter? Because organizers have been ... well, dis-

organized. Matters have been complicated by their mistaken effort to get permission from the Florida Board of Elections, a body controlled by Republicans with the sole purpose of ensuring that most candidates elected are Republicans. Predictably, the state elections office told the organizers that state law would not allow them to hold such a referendum.

Never mind that five other charter counties already have done so, and any effort by the state to invalidate Sarasota County’s initiative would run into heated opposition from those five counties.

In addition, Robert Butterworth, state attorney general in 2000, assured Lee County that charter counties have every right to shift some or all of their county offices to nonpartisan:

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*“The Lee County Charter may be amended to provide for the nonpartisan election of county commission members. ...*

*This office and the courts have considered the issue of non-partisan elections on several occasions. In Attorney General’s Opinion 79-106 the question was whether a special act could be passed providing for the non-partisan election of county officers or county commissioners. In the response to this inquiry it was noted that Article III, section 11(a)(1), of the Florida Constitution provides that “[t]here shall be no special law or general law of local application pertaining to . . . [the] election, jurisdiction or duties of officers, **except officers of municipalities, chartered counties, special districts or local governmental agencies.**” [emphasis applied]*

However, for some unknown reason, the PAC that wanted to open our elections has been hamstrung by uncertainty and bad advice. The net effect is that, after many months, nothing has been done to put this vital initiative before the voters.

Ideally, signatures should have been gathered and certified so the matter could have been voted on March 25, when county voters will decide on the continuation of a special tax for the school district. That roughly two-thirds of voters overwhelmingly support this extra tax every four years is a clear indication that the county is not in the thrall of special interests or right-wing crazies. On the contrary, thoughtful and responsible people are casting their ballots for the benefit of the county and

its citizens. Logic would dictate that those same people would also look favorably upon a proposal to strip hyper-partisan control from vital county elective offices.

Alas, it was not to be. The groups which were organizing for this change have already conceded that it likely will not be on the ballot in 2014, meaning yet another slate of candidates satisfactory only to developers and radical rightists probably will be those elected to important county offices this year, including two new county commissioners.

With all of the concerns voiced in the past year over proposed changes to the county’s 2050 Plan, protection of environmentally sensitive lands, ensuring developers pay for the infrastructure costs of new developments and preserving the optimal quality of life for Sarasota County residents, the single issue of much greater concern was the transformation of county offices to nonpartisan.

Without thoughtful, public-spirited citizens standing for office, able to win election without pandering to the moneyed interests of developers or the demented demands of the Radical Right, the county is doomed to elect yet more sycophants in the pockets of the wealthy land developers or, worse, beholden to a radical, inhumane right-wing agenda.

It is time for the great rational majority of voters in Sarasota County to rise up and make known their desire for free and fair elections in our county. It is time to organize a petition campaign to place a charter amendment on the ballot to end the oligarchy we have struggled with for so long. 

# OPINION

## TRAVEL FRENZY PRECEDES A LONG-AWAITED ADVENTURE



By Harriet Cuthbert  
*Contributing Writer*

### COMMENTARY

My next big trip is not for at least six more weeks; yet, I feel as though I should be packing now and leaving for the airport tomorrow.

I can think of a few reasons why I am already in panic mode:

- I booked this vacation about six months ago — too long ago for me to prepare for it at the time.
- My itinerary is very exotic and adventurous. I am going to Ecuador and the Amazon for nine days, in March, and I am nervous.

Yes, I am going with a tour group (through Gate 1 Travel), and even though this company is very well established and has an excellent reputation, I am still wondering what could go wrong and ruin my vacation — maybe I will forget to take something very important.

This is why I now have three separate lists to obsess over, with three different headings to “comfort” me. Dividing items up by subject seems to help a little. (As I threw the insect repellent and Imodium on the floor of my closet in a “travel” pile, I started feeling much better.) No inoculations are required for our destinations, but the travel company’s material “suggests” a yellow fever vaccination before I go boating down the Amazon and hiking through the rain forest.

Even though Ecuador is a very small country, its climate varies widely in indirect proportion to its size. What you experience depends on where you are at a given time. We will be starting in Quito, the capital, and wending our way eastward until we reach the Amazon. I absolutely refuse to check more than one bag when I fly, but now I have to pack for three different temperature zones. Is it time to throw the rain poncho on the closet floor,



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*The Sarasota News Leader* welcomes letters to the editor from its readers. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and include the name, street address and telephone number of the writer. Letters should be emailed to

[Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com), with “Letter to the Editor” in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to edit any letters submitted for length, grammar, spelling, etc. All letters submitted become the property of *The Sarasota News Leader*.

# OPINION

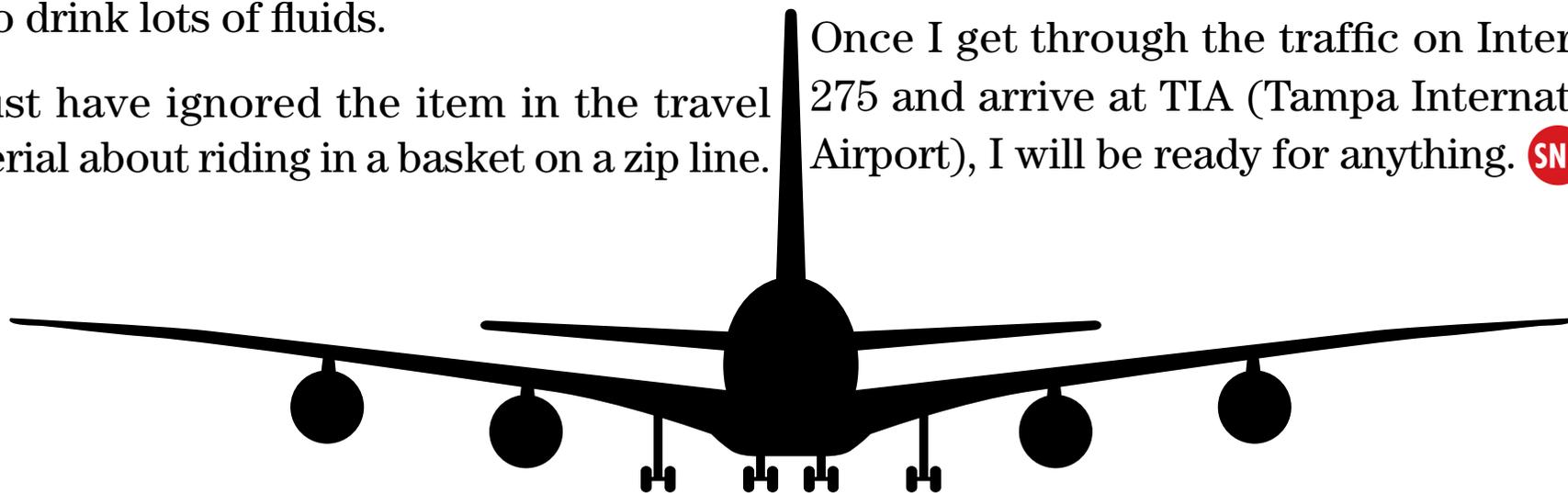
too? And what about “Middle Earth,” the equatorial line separating the Northern and Southern hemispheres? Will my northern foot be colder than my southern foot? Do I need to take more socks? And why do they keep emphasizing the high altitude of Quito, as if we could do something to change it? I promise to drink lots of fluids.

I must have ignored the item in the travel material about riding in a basket on a zip line.

Do they not know I have severe acrophobia? At least when we travel by canoe along the Amazon, the boat will have a motor, so I will not have to bring my own paddle.

I absolutely cannot wait to take this trip. As always, life is an adventure; I enjoy the ride.

Once I get through the traffic on Interstate 275 and arrive at TIA (Tampa International Airport), I will be ready for anything. 



## QUICK TIP



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# Sarasota Leisure

**BARTRAM'S GHOST**

**HONORING VETERANS AND HELPING CHILDREN**

**WORKING TO LOOK GOOD**

**Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast**

*Inside*

# BARTRAM'S GHOST



## THE MAGIC OF AN 18TH CENTURY NATURALIST'S EXPERIENCES REMAINS EVEN NOW IN THE FLORIDA LANDSCAPE

Story and Photos

By Fran Palmeri

*Contributing Writer*

On a bone-chilling day in January, I stop by Alpine Groves Park on the St. Johns River in Switzerland, FL. Off Route 13, it is part of the 200-mile long Bartram Trail that runs from the Carolinas to Florida.

North Florida is William Bartram country, but today, probably the only aspect the Philadelphia naturalist would recognize is the river he called the San Juan. Still, I am

thinking that sailing by here in his little boat in the 1770s, he would have seen huge live oaks and magnolias similar to those that grace this small park.

For years, I have been on William Bartram's trail. But actually, like some delightful ghost, he has been following me. He is at my elbow at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park showing off the Alachua Savanna. At Blue Spring

*(Above) Little River Springs flows through a quiet wooded setting.*

we marvel at “watery kingdoms.” There he is under a live oak at Wormsloe Plantation near Savannah, writing in his journal.

In 1765, at age 26, William got his feet wet exploring Florida with his father, John, a renowned Philadelphia nurseryman and founder of Bartram’s Garden. As botanist for King George III, John assessed natural resources in the American colonies and collected plants to send to England. William sketched animals and plants, many of them new to American colonists. On the banks of the Altamaha River in Georgia, they found a small tree they later named *Franklinia altamaha* after family friend Benjamin Franklin. Soon after, it disappeared from the wild. The one John planted in his garden spawned all the *Franklinias* in existence today, including

one I planted years ago in Annapolis to honor the Bartrams.

Early on, William Bartram showed a talent for drawing and was offered a job in Franklin’s print shop, but John insisted his son go into business. Several ventures ended in failure. Then in 1772, an English physician and avid gardener, John Fothergill, offered William a stipend to collect plants for him from the southern colonies.

William was thrilled to be out doing what he loved best. Friends, family members and Native Americans provided shelter and provisions, but much of the time William was on his own. His world was uncharted. He got around by boat, on horseback or on foot, but there was no Weather Channel to warn him of



*Ixia* blooms brightly.



*Tickseed abounds.*



*A Great Egret has caught a tasty treat.*



*A limpkin appears to be chuckling.*

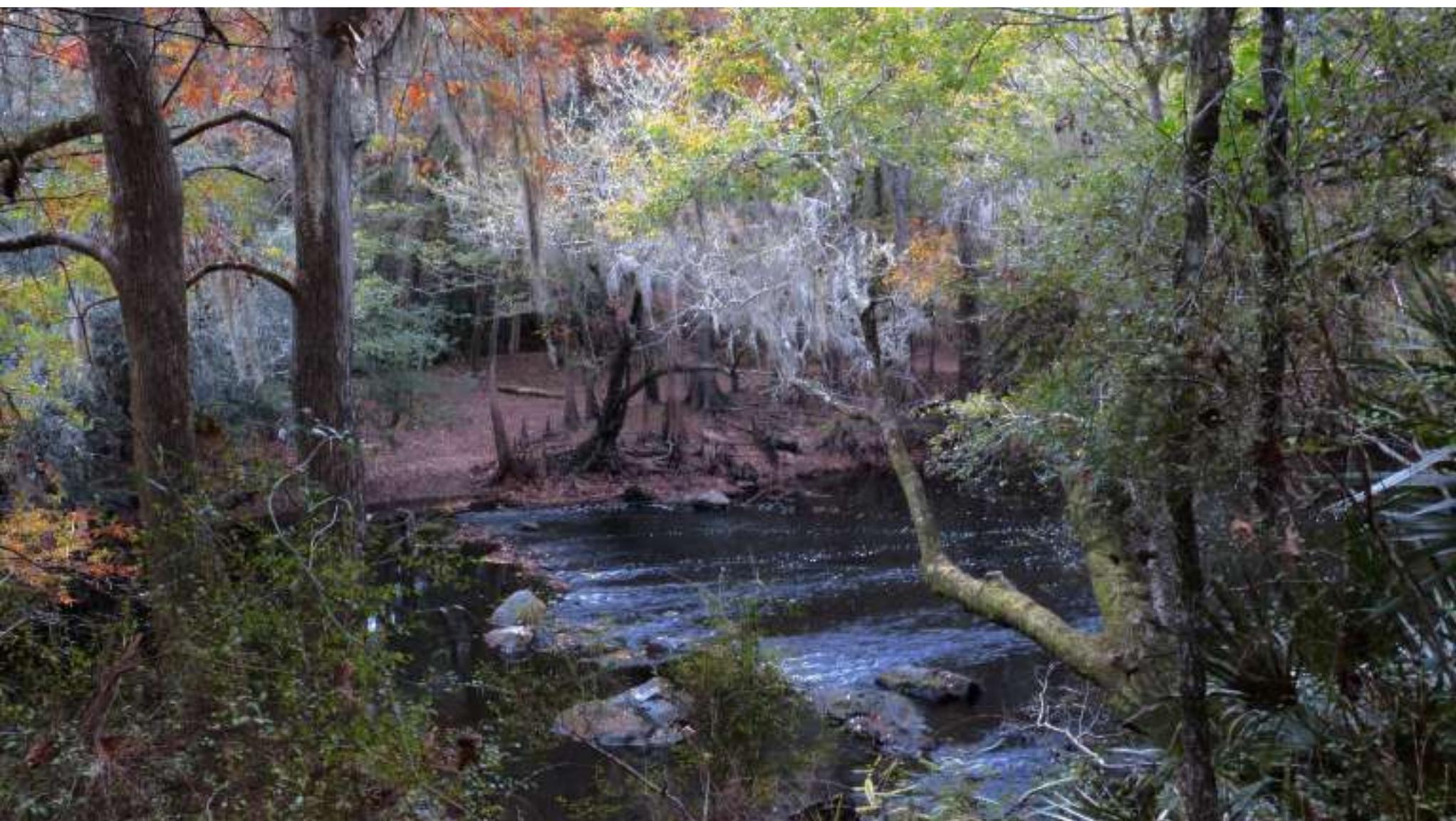
approaching “tempests.” Once he amazed his host when he arrived at Berresford, a plantation on Lake George, just after a hurricane had passed through.

Plants were his first love. He collected hundreds of different species, noted them in his journal and made drawings that he sent off to his benefactor. Many of these plants can still be found today. Around here climbing aster appears in late summer on shrubs along the banks of the Myakka River.

Passionflower vine blooms in spring at Sleeping Turtles Preserve. Saw palmetto grows just about everywhere. Dr. Mark Deyrup, an entomologist at the Archbold Biological Research Station, calls it the “most amazing plant in Florida” because it attracts more than 300 species of insects.



*A zebra longwing relishes the nectar of beggar ticks.*



*The Santa Fe River charms a visitor with the beauty of its surroundings. All photos by Fran Palmeri*



*A Gulf Fritillary drinks its fill from a passionflower.*



*Saw palmetto shares a pine flatwoods vista.*



*An eastern diamondback rattlesnake would startle the average person on a trail.*

The rare celestial lily was “lost” for 150 years after Bartram discovered it in northeast Florida. Last May, I was fortunate to find some in bloom along a road in St. John’s County.

William drew animals from life. The Florida scrub jay launching herself from a scrub oak at Oscar Scherer State Park, a dancing sandhill crane and the limpkin he calls the “crying bird” — which I see in the retention pond at Southgate Mall — all bring him to mind. His wonderful drawing of a gopher tortoise inspires me as I try to capture its reptilian magnificence.

When first I ran into an eastern diamondback rattlesnake, the largest venomous snake in North America, the word Bartram used to describe it — “magnanimous” — came to mind. How I hoped he was right as I stood shaking in my shoes, photographing it.

Alligators loomed large in the Bartram saga. One night a horde pursued him into an inlet

off the St. Johns River (now called Idlewilde Dock). “I was attacked on all sides, several endeavoring to overset the canoe,” he wrote. His account of them “belching water and smoke” would be ridiculed. No creatures could be that big, that fearsome, that numerous. But those were the days before alligator belts, handbags and shoes drove these creatures to the brink of extinction. Later, respected naturalists — including Florida’s Archie Carr — vindicated him.

Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1777, William wrote “*Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida.*” Published in 1791, the book is still in print. It includes some of his remarkable drawings, most of which are in the British Museum. His lyrical descriptions of the New World inspired British poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the latter of whom, in *Kubla Khan*, evoked Bartram’s descriptions of Florida’s springs.



*A bison dozes amid Alachua Savanna.*

Ever since then, Bartram has been “accompanying” travelers on their own odysseys, real and fictional. John Muir brought along a copy of *Travels* on his thousand-mile walk through the South. *Cold Mountain’s* W.P. Inman carried it with him on his perilous journey back home. My copy languished on a bookshelf until I saw a quote from it at Paynes Prairie. Now I read it to revive my spirits when I see Florida disappearing beneath my feet.

John Bartram is celebrated in the City of Brotherly Love, but William has captured Florida’s heart. Jacksonville has Bartram High School, a Bartram library and a development called Bartram Park. A modest soul, he would be embarrassed by the adulation.

Bartram’s Florida is a mere ghost of itself. Most places he visited have been eclipsed by development; landmarks such as Spalding’s Lower Store remain in name only. But Paynes Prairie is restoring the Alachua Prairie back to the way it was in William’s day, using *Travels* as a guideline. Once again bison graze on the prairie.

Over the years, William Bartram has been the lodestar in my walks around Florida. The wilderness he explored may be gone, but the magic of his experience remains. He crops up at every bend of the trail in a wildflower, tree or bird. Sometimes I will glance over my shoulder to see a shadowy figure hurrying to his next appointment with nature. 



*A Florida scrub jay gives a visitor a quizzical look.*

# HONORING VETERANS AND HELPING CHILDREN



*All photos by Norman Schimmel*

## **WITH A FOCUS ON VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL — AND GREAT WEATHER — THE 2014 THUNDER BY THE BAY MAY HAVE BROKEN RECORDS**

*Staff Reports*

In joining forces this year with the [Legacy of Valor campaign](#), the 16th Annual Thunder by the Bay, organized by [Suncoast Charities for Children](#), may well have been one of the biggest yet, Lucy Nicandri, vice president of marketing and special events for Suncoast Charities, told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week.

It will be about two weeks before data is available regarding the event's economic impact on the county and its contributions to the charity are available, Nicandri said on Jan. 14, but preliminary indications “look really, really good.”

The involvement of Paul Teutul Sr., founder of Orange County Choppers — and himself

a veteran — “was huge,” Nicandri pointed out. The internationally known custom bike builder donated his time for the event, she added.

On Sunday, the Legacy of Valor Ride to Sarasota National Cemetery had more than 700 participants — double the typical number for the traditional ride, she continued.

Indoor events on Thursday and Friday nights also had higher attendance than usual, she noted.

“The whole element of saluting veterans and active military was a nice touch,” Nicandri said of the 2014 event. 



*Paul Teutul Sr., founder of Orange County Choppers, volunteered to come to the event and donated his time, organizers say.*











## WORKING TO LOOK GOOD

### A BALTIMORE ORIOLES MINI CAMP GIVES PLAYERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE THEMSELVES TEAM-WORTHY

*Staff Reports*

Baltimore Orioles Manager Buck Showalter and his coaching staff spent three days in Sarasota this week, conducting a mini camp.

Players interested in trying out for the team — including some released by other Major League Baseball operations — were among the approximately 40 participants.



*Sarasota News Leader* Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel visited Ed Smith Stadium on Wednesday, Jan. 15, to capture some of that day's activities.

The Orioles begin their Spring Training schedule on Friday, Feb. 28, against the Tampa Bay Rays in Port Charlotte. Their first home game in Sarasota will be March 1 against the Toronto Blue Jays. 

*(Above) Manager Buck Showalter (left) watches action on the field. All photos by Norman Schimmel*







# Siesta Seen

**TROLLEY SERVICE IS ON SCHEDULE TO START IN JULY; 'NO PARKING' SIGNS SHORTLY WILL BE COMING TO AVENIDA DE MAYO; COUNTY STAFF IS STILL AT WORK ON A NORTH SHELL ROAD PARKING PLAN; AND NUMEROUS BIKE THEFTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED**



**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

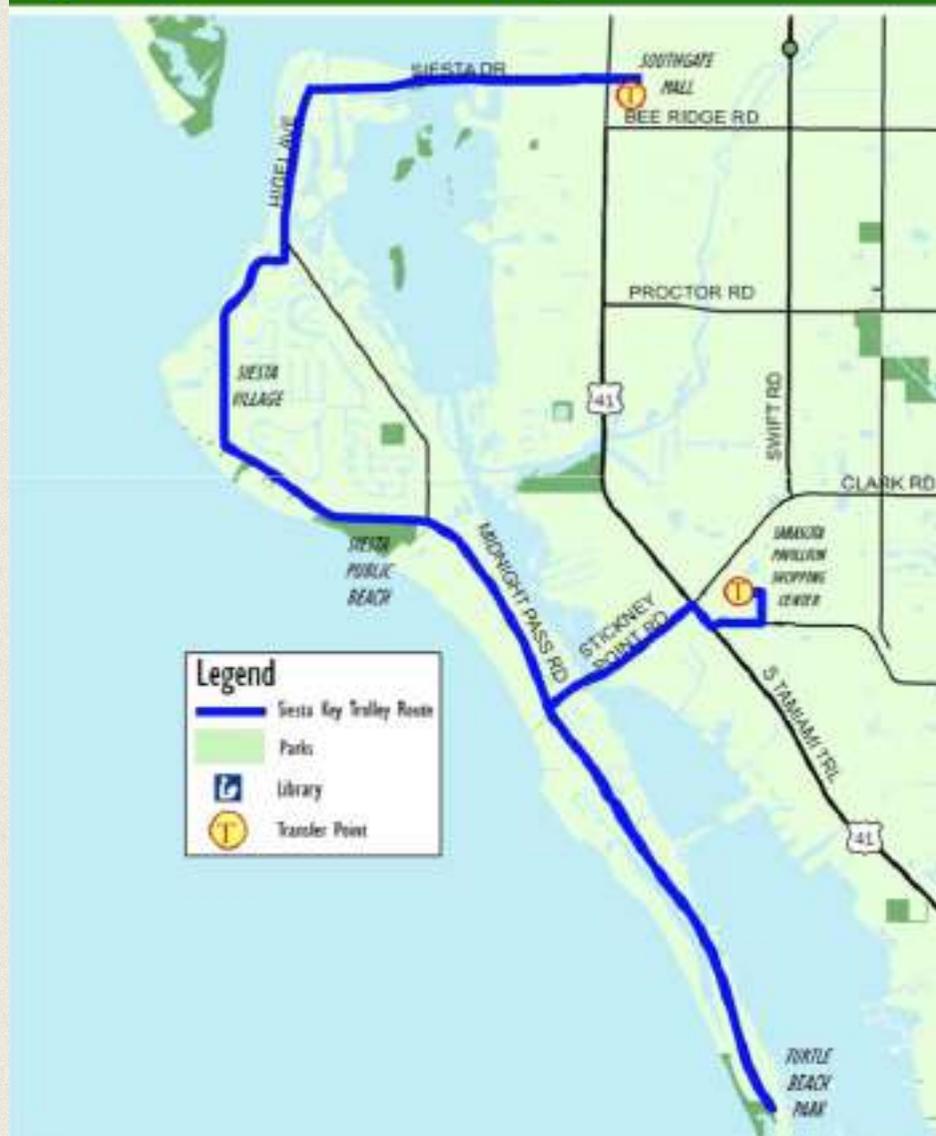
Sarasota County Area Transit's senior planner confirmed late last week that plans remain on track for the Siesta trolley service to begin in July.

Sarah Blanchard reiterated that state grant money will be available that month to fund the service, which will offer stops every 20 to 30 minutes during peak periods. Further, the transportation will be provided seven days a week.

The state funds total \$1,087,500, according to a report provided the County Commission in August.

Although Blanchard cautioned no final decision has been made about how the buses will look — they will not be actual trolleys — they will circulate from Westfield Southgate Mall at the intersection of Siesta Drive and U.S. 41 through Siesta Village, with stops at the public beach and in Gulf Gate. Staff is continuing to work on a Turtle Beach route, which probably would run approximately every hour, she added.

## Siesta Key Trolley Route Map (deferred to 2016)



*Although the heading says 2016, plans remain in effect for Siesta trolley service to start in July. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

# Siesta Seen

Referencing the August County Commission discussion, Blanchard said of Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) staff, “We heard it loud and clear” that the board wants to make the Siesta service a priority over a proposed new route serving University Parkway.

SCAT will be advertising the expanded Siesta service in advance of its start, she pointed out. “We have a marketing campaign planned.”

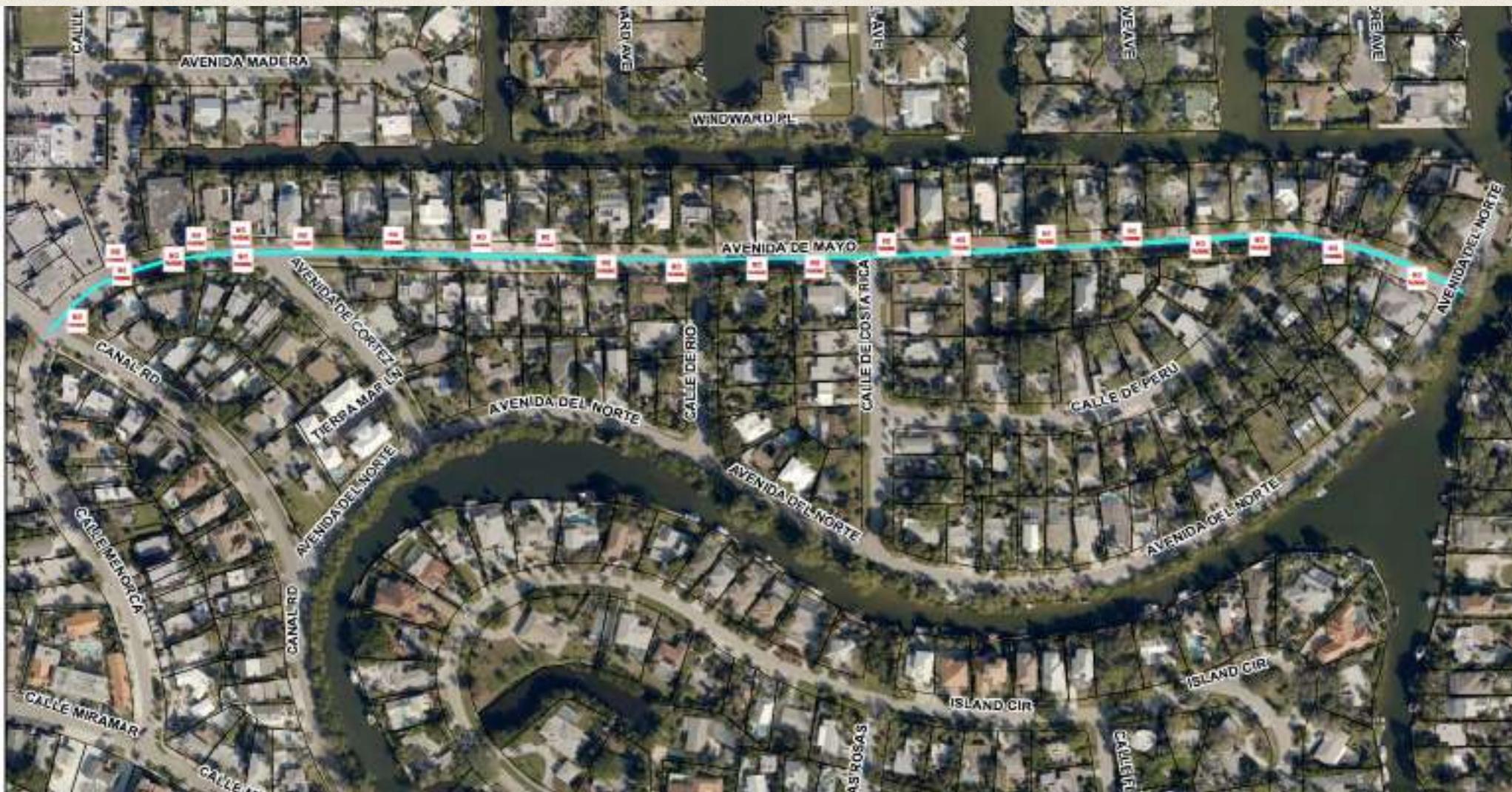
Many times in years past, Siesta business owners have referenced the popularity of trolley service on Anna Maria Island in seeking a similar system for Siesta, especially as a means of dealing with the never-ending parking woes during high season. Blanchard noted of the Anna Maria service, “People really use it.” Even though it is free and the new Siesta

bus route will not be, she said, she is optimistic public support will be strong for an easy, alternate means of reaching Siesta.

## AVENIDA DE MAYO

Although the County Commission voted on Oct. 23 to approve “No Parking” zones on segments of Avenida de Mayo, a formal resolution was necessary before staff could begin that work. The resolution won unanimous approval on the board’s Jan. 14 consent agenda, so the signs should go up in about 30 days, county spokesman Curt Preisser told me this week.

Avenida de Mayo resident Marlene Merkle began her quest in November 2012 to seek county action to prevent overflow parking



An aerial map shows the location of Avenida de Mayo on Siesta Key. Image courtesy Sarasota County

# Siesta Seen

from Siesta Village from blocking residential traffic on the street. Because one entrance/exit for the Village's municipal parking lot is on Avenida de Mayo, Merkle has pointed out that when the lot fills up, people have been inclined to leave vehicles on her street.

In late May 2013, the County Commission split on a response to the situation, finally agreeing on a motion to ask staff and the Sheriff's Office to work with local residents to try to resolve the issues.

Subsequently, thanks to some behind-the-scenes work by officers of the Siesta Key Association (SKA), Fire Chief Mike Tobias issued a memo to the County Commission underscoring the danger of the parking situation. It might be impossible for an emergency vehicle to traverse the road, he pointed out, when vehicles are parked on both sides, as the remaining traffic lane would be too narrow.

Acting in response to Tobias' memo, the board in October approved the motion to prohibit parking on both sides of Avenida de Mayo from Canal Road to Avenida de Cortez and to establish staggered "No Parking" zones from Avenida de Cortez to Avenida del Norte in 500-foot sections.

SKA Vice President Michael Shay had alerted organization members to the consent agenda item scheduled for this week. "Hopefully, after the 14th, we'll see some movement on this," he said.

## NORTH SHELL ROAD UPDATE

In yet further County Commission action this week, Commissioner Nora Patterson on Jan. 14 asked Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer, "What's happened on North Shell Road?"



*Foliage along the north side of North Shell Road has provided a buffer for private property owners. File photo*

# *Siesta Seen*

She was referring to several discussions last year regarding a county staff proposal to create a number of public parking spaces on county right of way along the road, so people could visit Beach Access 1 without intruding on private land.

On Jan. 15, Harmer provided to the board an answer in the form of a memo from Chief County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr.

Harriott wrote that the Transportation Department had completed a survey to determine the right of way limits along the road. The right of way boundary on the north side is approximately 40 feet from the centerline of the roadway, he added, and numerous trees and vegetation within the right of way “provide a buffer for property owners.”

The pavement must have a width of at least 20 feet on each side of the centerline to permit vehicle access, he continued. However, the pavement on the western side is wider.

On Jan. 15, staff from the county’s Field Services and Transportation departments were scheduled to remove sand from the road “to determine the actual width and limits of pavement available today for emergency vehicles to safely turn around,” Harriott continued.

In the meantime, an initial design of 18 public parking spaces has been completed. A public meeting was held on Dec. 5 to discuss those details with residents of the road, he added.



*A Sarasota County ordinance prohibits standing in a parking space at the beach or otherwise trying to save the space for a motorist. File photo*

Representatives from the Parks and Recreation, Fire, Transportation and Neighborhood Services departments were present for that session, he noted, which resulted “in a large community turnout.”

On Dec. 11, he continued, representatives from Parks and Recreation, Fire, Transportation and Neighborhood Services met with residents on-site to discuss alternatives to the design.

“Based on the comments and input from the residents and other County departments the plan has been revised and now includes 11 parking spaces (down from the original concept of 18 spaces),” he wrote.

On Jan. 10, staff met to review options and prepare for another meeting with the residents. Because of multiple concerns raised

# Siesta Seen

over public safety and crime, he pointed out, a Sheriff's Office supervisor was invited and briefed as well.

The residents requested four additions to the project, Harriott explained:

- Addition of a mid-block crosswalk without a traffic signal on Higel Avenue, a state-maintained road.
- Addition of parking on Point of Rocks Road for use by people wishing to use the beach at North Shell Road.
- Construction of walls along the North Shell Road right of way.
- Installation of curbing instead of the erection of a post-and-rope barrier.

All those requests "are outside the scope and budget of the project," Harriott noted.

On Jan. 21, he added, staff will meet again with residents on North Shell Road "to propose an alternative design with the 11 parking spaces. The proposal is within the original anticipated cost of \$25,000."

Harriott wrote that a final report would be ready for the County Commission by Feb. 28.

## BEWARE OF BIKE THIEVES

During the SKA's regular meeting on Jan. 9, Sarasota County Sheriff's Deputy Jason Mruczek reported that "a lot of bike thefts" have taken place "over the last month or so," mostly at condominium complexes along Midnight Pass Road.



*Deputy Jason Mruczek gives a report to the Siesta Key Association on Jan. 9. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Both personal bicycles and rental models have been stolen, he said. The perpetrators have been taking the locks as well.

Although no suspects had been identified so far, he continued, many of the missing vehicles have serial numbers, which will be helpful to detectives in returning recovered bikes to their rightful owners.

Anyone interested in having a serial number added to a bicycle or other personal items may contact the Crime Prevention office at 861-5200, he said.

## THE BUSY BEACH

During his report, Deputy Mruczek also pointed out that the parking lot at Siesta Public Beach had been filling up fast during recent weekends, with some arguments erupting over spaces.

# Siesta Seen

As a result of the new county ordinance that went into effect last year, a person may be fined \$100 for trying to save a space in the lot, he noted. "I think that's curtailed [the number of altercations] a little bit."

The ordinance, which was approved in March 2013, prohibits "The blocking of or obstructing access to or from vacant designated parking spaces except when moving a motor vehicle into and out of such designated parking space or when conducted by or with the permission of County officials."

## CONDO COUNCIL AWARDS

The Siesta Key Condominium Council will hold its next meeting on Jan. 21 at 3:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall of Siesta Key Chapel, located at 4615 Gleason Ave.

Members and guests are welcome to arrive at 3 p.m. to enjoy refreshments and socializing.

The two featured items on the agenda are a report from Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta, and the presentation of the council's 2013 Christmas Lighting Contest Awards.

Topics Patterson is scheduled to address follow:

- The proposed dredging of Big Pass for the Lido Beach Nourishment Project.
- The Siesta Key Flood Control Project.
- The Siesta Public Beach improvements.
- The Benderson Park rowing facilities and upcoming events.



*Winners of the Siesta Key Condominium Council Lighting Contest will be honored at the organization's Jan. 21 meeting. Excelsior on the bayside, won an honorable mention, having been praised for its lighted arches. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*A bundled-up beach walker braves the north wind on the morning of Jan. 7. Siesta and Sarasota are bracing for more chilly weather over the next several days. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

## BREAKING GROUND AT THE BEACH

Speaking of those beach improvements: The groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 22, at 11 a.m.

The \$21.5-million renovation of the park facilities will take place over the next two years, county staff has explained, with four phases of work planned. Among the new features will be a multipurpose overlook/shelter facility on the west side of the park for events such as weddings, the restoration of the historic pavilion, expanded parking, improved traffic circulation and a 15-foot-wide pedestrian esplanade running the length of the park, a county news release notes.

## STORMWATER PROJECT UPDATE

This week and next week at the site of the Beach Road Drainage Project, next to Siesta Public Beach, plans call for the contractor to continue coordination with the Siesta Beach Improvement project regarding fill being placed appropriately for the parking areas and the new maintenance facility that will be constructed, Isaac R. Brownman, capital projects director in the county's Public Works Department, reported to the County Commission.

Additionally, work is proceeding on the general site grading and landscape berm, he wrote in an email, and the pumping of groundwater offshore is continuing.

Brownman also pointed out that a change order is being negotiated with the contractor

to provide no extra time for this work, "since it appears [it] can be performed concurrent with other site work items."

Finally, Brownman noted, the 60-inch storm drainpipe is approximately 90 percent complete. However, the existing lift station on Beach Road will be left in service for the time being to handle "any rainfall events that will occur before the [new stormwater retention] pond is ready." 



**Sarasota County**  
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**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED**

**SIESTA BEACH PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**  
**GROUND BREAKING**

**WEDNESDAY,**  
**JAN. 22, 2014 ~ 11 A.M.**  
948 BEACH ROAD  
SIESTA KEY, FL 34242

siestabeachinfo.com

For more information, contact Sarasota County  
at 941.861.5000 or [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net)

Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities. View the complete policy at <https://www.scgov.net/ADA/Pages/default.aspx>.

*Sarasota County has extended an invitation to the public for the Jan. 22 groundbreaking for the improvements at Siesta Public Beach. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

# A&E BRIEFS



*Ginnungagap #2 by Hans Van de Bovenkamp. Contributed image*

## SEASON OF SCULPTURE ANNOUNCES NEW SMALL WORKS EXHIBITION

Season of Sculpture will present the *Season VII: Shared Ground Small Works Exhibition* from Jan. 22 through May 30 at the Sarasota Herald-Tribune building in downtown Sarasota, the organization has announced.

The show will feature 17 smaller-scale works by seven of the eight artists whose monumental sculptures are on exhibit along Sarasota's Bayfront Drive, a news release says. Those artists are Hans Van de Bovenkamp, Robert Chambers, Rick Herzog, Linda Howard, Jun Kaneko, Jae-Hyo Lee and Boaz Vaadia. Chambers' *Elipsota* is a permanent art installation commissioned by the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, the release notes.

"This exhibition provides the public an opportunity to experience these artists' smaller works and maquettes [models] in a more intimate and indoor setting, that of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune's handsome and spacious glass-walled lobby gallery," the release adds. Among the works will be wall hanging, pedestal and freestanding sculptures.

The show is curated by Fayanne Hayes and Andrew Maass, the release adds.

By special invitation of the Season of Sculpture Board of Directors, with sponsorship by the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, two works by area artists David Peterson and Jerry Soble also will be on display.

The show will open from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 22. Members of the public will be welcome.

The Sarasota Herald-Tribune building is located at 1741 Main St. in Sarasota. The show may be seen from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday after Jan. 22.



6121-111



*Untitled Head by Jun Kaneko. Contributed image*

## ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK TO PLAY THE VAN WEZEL

Internationally known performer Engelbert Humperdinck will appear at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall on Sunday, Jan. 19, at 8 p.m., the Van Wezel has announced.

During his 40-year career, Humperdinck has sold more than 150 million records, a news release points out, and he “remains a constant force in the music industry.”

The release continues, “[R]omance serves as the core of Engelbert Humperdinck’s music,” with his number one hits including *Release Me*, *The Last Waltz*, *After the Lovin*, and *A Man Without Love*.

In 1967, Humperdinck’s version of [Release Me](#), “recorded in his well-known suave ballad style,” made the Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic and was No. 1 in Great Britain, taking away that slot from [The Beatles](#), the release

adds. The song spent 56 weeks in the Top 50 in a single chart run. *Release Me* was believed to have sold 85,000 copies a day at the height of its popularity, and it is one of the best known of his songs, the release continues.

Moreover, he has completed tracks with Elton John, Willie Nelson, Smokey Robinson, Neil Sedaka, Dionne Warwick, Kenny Rogers, Beverly Knight and Gene Simmons, among others. Additionally, Humperdinck has earned such accolades as four Grammy nominations, a Golden Globe for Entertainer of the Year (1988), 63 gold and 24 platinum records and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the release notes.

Tickets are priced from \$35 to \$80. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [www.VanWezel.org](http://www.VanWezel.org).



Engelbert Humperdinck will take the Van Wezel stage on Jan. 19. Contributed photo by Sotres

## WORLD-CLASS ORGANISTS TO PERFORM AT GRACE CHURCH

The Manasota Theatre Organ Society (MTOS) is bringing three world-class organists to Sarasota to perform on the historic Wurlitzer theater pipe organ it owns and maintains in Grace Church, the Society has announced.

The fully restored instrument has four keyboards and 32 sets of pipes — for a total of more than 2,000 — ranging from pencil-size to 16 feet in length, a news release notes.

“One of America’s busiest young theater organists, Mark Herman, will offer his unique blend of sensitivity and sophistication” on Jan 19; “prominent silent film scorer Clark Wilson” will accompany the 1927 silent film comedy *Girl Shy*, starring Harold Lloyd, on Feb. 16; and “celebrated theater organist

Jelani Eddington will entertain with popular songs and his signature orchestral transcriptions on March 16,” the release adds.

Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$18 at the door. The church is located at 8000 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota. The concerts will begin at 2 p.m.; the doors will open at 1:15 p.m. For more information and to purchase tickets, call 379-6301.

“When people hear ‘organ music,’ they think heavy, somber, stuff,” says John Fischer, president and concert chairman of the Manasota Theatre Organ Society, in the release. “But they couldn’t be more wrong. These performers are not just carrying on a rich American tradition, they’re known for their great



Clark Wilson/Contributed photo

showmanship and thoroughly entertaining performances. We're talking fun with a capital F here!"

Herman has garnered both audience and critical acclaim for his interpretations of popular classics and his technical skills and musicianship, the release continues. In 2012, the American Theatre Organ Society named him the Organist of the Year; he is the youngest person ever to receive that honor, the release notes.

In February, Wilson will perform his original score to *Girl Shy*, a romantic comedy. "Wilson is one of the leading scorers of silent photoplays in America today, composing exclusively for the organ to create historically accurate

musical accompaniments for works from the heyday of silent film," the release points out. Film critic Leonard Maltin has lauded Wilson as a "master of silent film and showman of the first order," the release adds.

On March 19, Eddington "will create a multi-textured tapestry of sound," the release says. Eddington has been a headliner at numerous national and regional conventions of the American Theatre Organ Society, and he has toured across America and other parts of the world, the release notes. In 2007, he accompanied the classic film, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, on Finland's largest pipe organ as part of an international organ festival. "Eddington has also produced more than 30 theater organ albums on some of the best-known and most



Hark Herman/Contributed photo

dynamic instruments in the country, including two on the instrument he will play here in Sarasota,” the release adds.

According to Fischer, the organ at Grace Church originally was installed in the Florida Theatre in Jacksonville in 1927. An MTOS member discovered it in a Miami warehouse in 1996.

“That’s when we knew we had a rescue operation on our hands,” says Fischer. The restored instrument debuted in 2001; today, it is heard weekly, as part of worship services, and monthly, as it is utilized for meetings and concerts presented by the Manasota Theatre Organ Society, the release points out.



## PARENT ART SHOW ON VIEW AT MITZI VOELKER GALLERY IN VENICE

Artwork by Roger Parent, a past president of the Florida Suncoast Watercolor Society, will be on display at Venice Theatre's Mitzi Voelker Gallery through Feb. 7, the theatre has announced.

Parent has won awards in regional exhibitions "for his skillful use of vibrant color" and lively energetic brushwork," a news release says. He is a participating member of the Florida Watercolor Society and was accepted in its juried exhibitions in 2012 and 2013.

Parent "finds that people are a remarkable subject for painting, especially in portraits or when they are in candid gestures," the release adds. "The urban landscape is especially inspiring to him," it notes, because of

the variety of shapes and colors and the play of light and shadow.

The paintings in this show include sketches in watercolor and pastel, including award-winning watercolors of San Miguel de Allende, "where he has spent considerable time since retiring," the release adds. His home is in Sarasota.

He has served as a juror and taught a workshop series of six sessions on color and design for artists at the Venice Art Center, the release notes. He also provides coaching and individual instruction to artists at all levels of experience.

Venice Theatre is located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. on the island in Venice. Visit [venicestage.com](http://venicestage.com).



*Roger Parent shows visitors one of his untitled works. Contributed photo*



*Templo de Las Monjas Church is by Roger Parent. Contributed image*

## FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH TO PRESENT *MUSICAL JOURNEYS*

Faith Lutheran Church recently launched *Musical Journeys*, a concert series showcasing music, cuisine and a travelogue that explores different regions of the world, the church has announced.

On Jan. 19, the program theme will be *The Holy Land*, with Michael Stuart on organ and Joseph Holt on piano, a news release says. On Feb. 16, violinist Daniel Jordan, cellist Christopher Schnell and pianist Holt “will take guests on a *European River Cruise*,” the release adds. On March 30, castanet concert artist Carmen de Vicente and pianist Holt will “spice it up with a *Musical March down the Iberian Peninsula*,” the release notes.

Each event also will feature a post-concert reception with cuisine inspired by the region at the focus of that program, as well as a travelogue during the concert provided by Randell Johnson of Randell’s Travels.

Each concert will start at 4 p.m. Tickets, which are \$20, are available at the office of Faith Lutheran Church, located at 7750 Beneva Road in Sarasota; by calling 924-4664; or by visiting [www.faithsarasota.com](http://www.faithsarasota.com).

“So often great music is presented out of context,” says Holt, music director at Faith Lutheran Church and artistic director of Gloria Musicae, in the release. “But artistic creation always springs from a time, a place and a culture. This series puts it all together with an exploration of the food, folkways and philosophy that inspired the music. It truly is a journey of the mind and senses.”

On Jan. 19, Stuart, the organist-in-residence at the Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota, and Holt will perform sacred music for organ and



Carmen DeVicente/Contributed photo



Dan Jordan/Contributed photo

piano accompanied by video and photos from Israel and Jordan. The post-concert feast will feature Middle Eastern fare, including hummus, falafel, baba ganoush “and other spicy and sweet delights,” the release points out.

On Feb. 16, Jordan, Schnell and Holt “will present such selections as Brahms’ *G Major Violin and Piano Sonata*, Schubert’s *Notturmo for Piano Trio* and Strauss waltzes, the release continues. Jordan is concertmaster for the Sarasota Orchestra; Schnell is assistant principal cellist with the Sarasota Orchestra.

The post-concert reception will feature “such tasty European fare as sausages, croissant sandwiches, pâtés and tortes,” the release adds.

On March 30, the post-concert fare will be authentic Spanish and Portuguese tapas, the release notes.



Joseph Holt/Contributed photo

## BOOKSTORE1 TO HOST POETRY LOCAL MIC AND A BOOK SIGNING

Bookstore1Sarasota has announced that it will host its next Poetry Local Mic on Sunday, Jan. 19, at 2 p.m. at the store, located at 1359 Main St. in downtown Sarasota.

“Join local poets Linda Albert and Gabrielle Lennon for a delightful afternoon of reading and discussion,” a news release says.

On Jan. 23 at 6 p.m., Patricia Averbach will discuss and sign her novel, *Painting Bridges*, the release continues.

“*Painting Bridges* presents a sensitive and accurate depiction of the 1970s, when late

identification of deafness was the norm, resulting in limited language and speech development,” the release notes. “Amplification equipment was rudimentary and bulky, and deaf educators were at war with one another in pursuit of parents’ hearts and minds.”

Purchase of the book at Bookstore1 is required for signing, the release adds.

More event information is available at [www.bookstore1sarasota.com](http://www.bookstore1sarasota.com) or by calling 365-7900.



[facebook.com/SarasotaNewsLeader](http://facebook.com/SarasotaNewsLeader)

## 2013 TONY AWARD-WINNER TO OPEN AT ASOLO REP JAN. 22

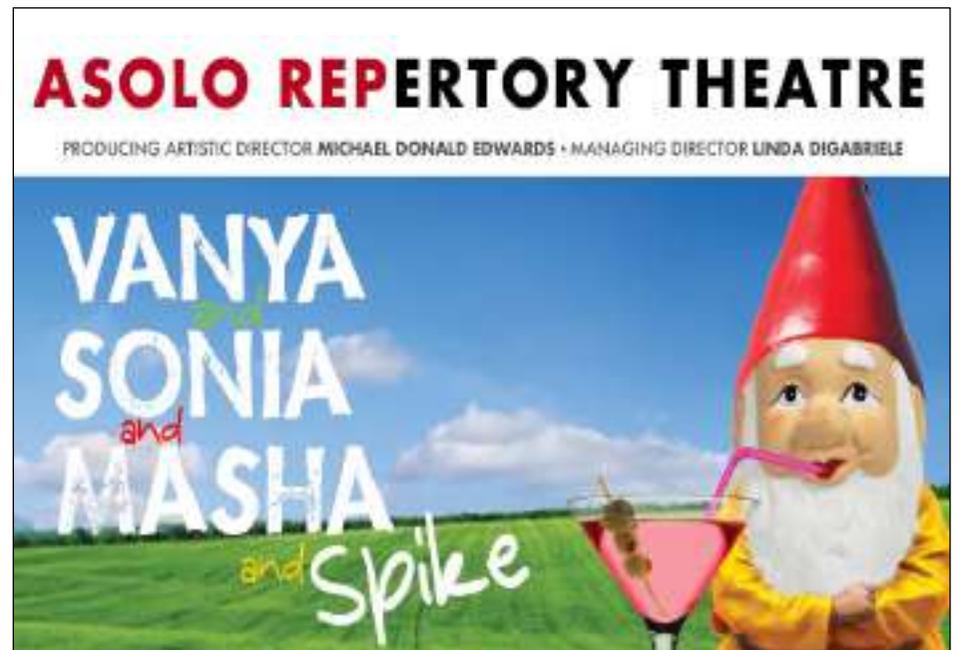
*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, “the hysterically twisted, Chekhov-inspired 2013 Tony Award winner for Best Play,” will continue Asolo Repertory Theatre’s 2013-14 season with previews Jan. 22-23 and opening night on Jan. 24, the theatre has announced.

The show will run through April 13.

“Named after Chekhov characters by their theater-loving, professor parents,” middle-aged siblings Vanya and Sonia still live in their parents’ upscale farmhouse in Bucks County, PA, a news release explains. “When their world-traveling movie-star sister, Masha, makes a surprise visit with her sexy, 20-something ‘boy toy’ Spike, chaos rapidly ensues,” the release adds. “The weekend reunion is compounded by sibling rivalry, envy and jealousy. While the family’s prophetic cleaning lady, Cassandra, warns of the foreboding events to come, this tornado of mayhem and fun simply cannot be stopped,” the release says.

“The play is packed with subtle and not-so-subtle Chekhovian references, but audience members by no means need to be avid Chekhov enthusiasts to enjoy this fun-filled play,” the release continues. “Most references are explained by the characters themselves or the moment is funny on its own.”

“Chris Durang’s new play is quite simply one of the happiest theatre experiences I’ve ever had,” Michael Donald Edwards, producing artistic director of the Asolo Rep, says in the release.



*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike will open at the Asolo Rep on Jan. 22. Contributed image*

“Durang, who is well known for his absurdly comical plays, is one of the funniest dramatists writing today,” the release adds. His other works include *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*, *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* and *Miss Witherspoon*. He has received numerous Obie Awards as well as a Tony Award nomination for Best Book of a Musical for *A History of the American Film*.

*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* will continue the second season of Asolo Rep’s five-year American Character Project “and its focus on the truly extraordinary American Family,” the release notes.

Tickets start at \$21. To purchase them, call 351-8000, go to [www.asolorep.org](http://www.asolorep.org) or visit the Asolo Repertory Theatre box office, located in the lobby of the theatre. Asolo Repertory Theatre is located at 5555 North Tamiami Trail in the Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts.

### FOR ADVERTISING INFO

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## ASSOCIATION TO PRESENT THE KALICHSTEIN-LAREDO-ROBINSON TRIO

The Sarasota Concert Association (SCA) will continue its 2014 season with the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio and guest violist Nokuthula Ngwenyama on Monday, Jan. 27, at 8 p.m. at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, located at 777 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

After 35 years of critically acclaimed success, the trio members continue “to dazzle audiences with exhilarating performances that have made them superstars of the chamber music world,” a news release says. “Sparks will fly in this one-night concert when they join forces with viola virtuoso Nokuthula Ngwenyama,” it adds. The evening’s program

will feature works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Dvorak.

Individual tickets are \$40, \$50, \$60 and \$70. Tickets and information for this program and others in the Great Performers Series are available by calling 955-0040 or visiting [www.scasarasota.org](http://www.scasarasota.org).

Thirty-six years after their 1977 debut at the White House, pianist Joseph Kalichstein, violinist Jamie Laredo and cellist Sharon Robinson still bring “technical mastery, expressive depth and magnetism to the concert stage,” the release notes. As one of the



*The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio/Contributed photo*

few long-lived ensembles with all of its original members, the trio “balances the careers of three internationally acclaimed soloists” while they appear together at the world’s major concert halls, commission new works and maintain an active recording agenda, the release says.

The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio has garnered a steady stream of awards and honors throughout its long career, the release continues. Musical America named the group the 2002 Ensemble of the Year, and the 2003-04 season was its first as Chamber Ensemble in Residence at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. It was awarded the Samuel Sanders Collaborative Artists Award by the Foundation for Recorded Music in 2002 and in 2011, the release notes.

Born in California of Zimbabwean-Japanese parents, violist Ngwenyama came to international attention when she won the coveted Primrose International Viola Competition, which she now presides over as director, the release points out. Recently featured as a *Face to Watch* by the Los Angeles Times, “Ngwenyama continues to garner great attention and critical acclaim as an orchestral soloist, recitalist and chamber musician,” the release says.

The next concert in the Great Performers Series will be on Feb. 5 with the East Coast Chamber Orchestra (ECCO). “ECCO’s fresh interpretations of new and old works coupled with passionate and joyous playing have earned this conductor-less ensemble critical acclaim and an enthusiastic following worldwide,” the release points out.



*Nokuthula Ngwenyama/Contributed photo*

## DAVE BENNETT QUARTET PERFORMANCE SET FOR JAN. 26



Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota will present the Dave Bennett Quartet, with Bennett on clarinet, Tad Weed on piano, Don Mopsick on bass and Dick Maley on drums on Jan. 26 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, located at 709 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

The group will perform such popular compositions as *Moonglow*, *Stompin' at the Savoy* and *Just a Closer Walk with Thee*, a news release notes.

Tickets are \$40 and \$45. They may be purchased online at [www.artistseriesconcerts.org](http://www.artistseriesconcerts.org) or by calling 360-7399. Student rush tickets, priced at \$5, will be available 30 minutes before the performance. For group discount tickets or for more information about this show or the Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota's 2013-2014 season, visit [www.artistseriesconcerts.org](http://www.artistseriesconcerts.org) or call 306-1202.

Bennett "doesn't fit the mold of most contemporary jazz clarinetists," the release explains. "For starters, you don't find many jazz clarinet players who name Alice Cooper, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Chris Isaak among their influences. You won't find many musicians under 30 who are equally conversant with the music of Benny Goodman and Roy Orbison," the release says. "In fact, you may not find even one other clarinet virtuoso who occasionally breaks from his swing era repertoire to sing rockabilly hits while accompanying himself at the piano," it notes, adding that Bennett "can play a mean barrelhouse boogie-woogie."

"Add in the talents of Tad Weed, Don Mopsick and Dick Maley and you understand why the Dave Bennett Quartet has a zealous bevy of fans of all ages," the release continues. 



*The public is invited to the Freethinkers' Briefing on Jan. 24 at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Fruitville Road. File photo*

## **RABBI CHALOM TO PRESENT PROGRAM AT FREETHINKERS' BRIEFING**

*Secular Spirituality: Oxymoron or Emotional Meaning?* will be the topic of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota's next Freethinkers' Briefing from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 24, the organization has announced.

The church is located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota. Admission is free.

The guest speaker will be Rabbi Adam Chalom, a news release says. Among the questions that will be discussed are the following: What is the balance between a secular lifestyle and spiritual or emotional fulfillment? Where do Humanists find what Humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow called "Peak Experiences"? Is spirituality an inappropriate concept for Humanists or is it a basic human need that we must find a way to meet?

"Chalom, a lifelong Humanist and Humanistic Jew, is one of the leading voices in Humanistic Judaism," the release points out. He is the

dean for North America of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism and rabbi of the Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation in suburban Chicago, the release adds. He also serves on the Advisory Council of The Humanist Institute, and he participated in the 2012 Symposium of the Institute for Humanist Studies.

Chalom recently edited "Sherwin Wine's posthumous magnum opus," *A Provocative People: A Secular History of the Jews*, the release notes.

For more information, call David Ryan at 365-4027 or send an email to [d2mryan@verizon.net](mailto:d2mryan@verizon.net).

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota is a welcoming congregation serving Sarasota and Manatee counties, the release adds. More information may be found at [www.uusarasota.org](http://www.uusarasota.org) or by emailing [engage@uusarasota.org](mailto:engage@uusarasota.org).

## SHABBAT ALIVE! TO FEATURE MUSIC OF DEBBIE FRIEDMAN

“The music of Debbie Friedman — the groundbreaking singer/songwriter who passed away three years ago this month” — will be featured at the all-musical *Shabbat Alive!* worship service on Friday, Jan. 24, at 7:30 p.m. at Temple Emanu-El, the Temple has announced.

“Held quarterly at Temple Emanu-El, *Shabbat Alive!* services comprise contemporary, innovative arrangements of traditional prayers performed by a full band of professional and volunteer musicians” — including new vocalist Hannah Beatt, 13, a veteran of local theater

productions who also performed in *Shrek: The Musical* on Broadway, a news release says.

Friedman has been credited “with reinvigorating prayer services throughout the Jewish world with her accessible, inspiring works,” the release adds.

The *Shabbat Alive!* service is free and open to all members of the community. Temple Emanu-El is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota. For more information, call 371-2788. 



(Top row, from left) Sam Silverberg, Stuart Miller, Paul Greene, Deborah Cameron, Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, (middle row, from left) Kathy Rance, Rochelle Seldin, Dawn Dill, Rachel Nelson-Assi, (bottom row, from left) Dan Cartlidge, Hannah Beatt, Cynthia Roberts-Greene and Joe Bruno will lead the all-musical *Shabbat Alive!* service featuring the compositions of Debbie Friedman at Temple Emanu-El on Jan. 24. Contributed photo



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**17+**  
JANUARY

### **FSU/Asolo Conservatory presents *Loot***

Through Jan. 19; times vary; Jane B. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$27 to 29. Information: 351-8000 or [AsoloRep.org](http://AsoloRep.org).

**17+**  
JANUARY

### **FST presents *Monty Python's Spamalot***

Through Jan. 25; times vary; Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$18 to 49. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**17+**  
JANUARY

### **Dabbert Gallery presents *10th Anniversary Exhibition***

Through Feb. 1; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**17+**  
JANUARY

### **Allyn Gallup presents *Nature and Irony***

Through Feb. 1; times vary; Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art Gallery, 1288 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 366-2454 or [AllynGallup.com](http://AllynGallup.com).

**17+**  
JANUARY

### **Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents *The Whipping Man***

Through Feb. 2; times vary; 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or [wbtsrq.org](http://wbtsrq.org).

**24**  
JANUARY

### **Jazz Club of Sarasota presents the Jerry Eckert Jazz Trio**

Jan. 24, 2 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Church, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. Admission: \$7 for members/\$12 for non-members. Information: 366-1552 or [JazzClubSarasota.org](http://JazzClubSarasota.org).

**26**  
JANUARY

### **ASCS presents The Dave Bennett Quartet**

Jan. 26, 2:30 & 7:30 p.m., Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, 709 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$40 to 45. Information: 306-1202 or [ArtistSeriesConcerts.org](http://ArtistSeriesConcerts.org).

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**

**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

Phone: 941.555.1111

Date: 12/15/2020

# SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



## DREAMS OF BEING ON A NEW TEAM

*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.*