

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 20 — January 31, 2014

News Leader

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GETTING IT DONE

BACKING OFF A BIT

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A.K.A. HELP

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Welcome

An update on the fiscal neutrality review of the 2050 Plan, action on the homelessness front, news from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the Lido Renourishment Project and conviviality and controversy on Siesta Key — yes, it has been another busy week.

Add to that mix an interview with the artist behind the riveting exhibit *Kin Killin' Kin* at the North Sarasota Library and a wonderful recounting of the Ringling Town Hall Lecture Series program, and I feel we have another very well-rounded issue for the week.

Although the County Commission sessions were shorter Tuesday and Wednesday, they still managed to cover a lot of ground. For example: County Editor Roger Drouin was prescient in his Jan. 24 profile of Tom Harmer, with the County Commission this week asking Harmer to stay on as administrator without the “interim” part of the title.

I also highly commend to you City Editor Stan Zimmerman’s analysis of community action over the past year in regard to the homelessness issues. It is a superb companion to Roger’s article on the same topic.

And this is one of those periods when Siesta news just keeps popping up all over the place — so much so, I could not manage to cover it all this week.

Finally, I wanted to take this opportunity to offer special thanks for Copy Editor Vicki Chatley. Not only does she save me from all sorts of ghastly mistakes in my stories, but she also is an excellent writer, as you will see again in *From behind the camera*.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher



NEEDS WORK



GETTING IT DONE



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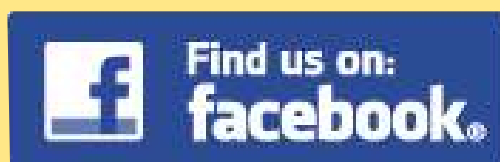
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NEEDS WORK

Much of Fruitville Road east of Interstate 75 is pastoral, with cows and horses common sights. File photo

CONSULTANT'S PRESENTATION ON FISCAL NEUTRALITY PUSHED BACK AS FIRM FINALIZES DRAFT NO. 3 ON THE 2050 PLAN

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

A planned presentation by the Tennessee consultants hired to evaluate Sarasota County's fiscal neutrality policy for new developments has been pushed back to mid-February, a move that allows the firm time to revise the second draft of its \$90,000 report, the first draft of which was derided as an "ideological rant" and "beyond" what the county wanted, by county commissioners and critics alike.

Laffer Associates' analysis of fiscal neutrality, commissioned as part of the county's

broad review of its 2050 land-use policies, has been hotly contested since the firm's first draft was submitted last November. Fiscal neutrality is the principle that a new development generate enough revenue through fees, taxes, etc., to cover any new burden on county resources — a requirement developers say hampers their ability to obtain loans for new projects.

“Those arguing that growth does not pay for itself typically have another dog in the fight.”

Second Draft
Laffer Associates' Report on Fiscal Neutrality



Laffer's suggestion in its first draft was to eliminate fiscal neutrality completely, along with all zoning rules and the county's

urban service boundary, and to move away from promoting so-called “smart growth,” a concept that encourages the construction of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods instead of suburban sprawl. Those proposals were greeted with a rapid backlash, as well as sharp criticism of the county’s decision to hire a firm with close ties to hard-right politics.

Founder Arthur Laffer promotes himself as “the father of supply-side economics” because of his time in the Reagan administration, while partner Donna Arduin has been close to Gov. Rick Scott since advising him during his first run for office.

Structurally, at least, the second draft of Laffer’s report, delivered Dec. 20, is much different. While the original document began with perhaps its most controversial portion



Donna Arduin is the consultant the county hired to review the fiscal neutrality aspects of the 2050 Plan. Photo via Flickr

Sarasota 2050 Policy - Revisited

The New Urbanism tenet seeks to...

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

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

and would not be classified as continued urban sprawl.

Sarasota County

A county chart lists facets of the New Urbanism tenet that are part of the 2050 Plan. Image courtesy Sarasota County

— a long attack on smart growth — the second version instead immediately launches into the specifics of Sarasota County’s policies. (The smart growth history is tacked on as an appendix.)

The new report makes the case that growth, rather than burdening government resources, actually has a “positive fiscal impact,” which the author says calls into question Sarasota County’s impact fee structure, as well as the very necessity of a fiscal neutrality policy. The author also attacks those who believe otherwise. “Those arguing that growth does not pay for itself typically have another dog in the fight,” the report reads. “Whether their goals are related to environmental protections,

increased size and scope of government, increased need for planning consultants, or simply a desire to maintain the status quo, the arguments can almost always be traced back to self-interest.”

“Zoning restrictions and County power to deny development proposals should be removed to the greatest extent possible under state law,” the report concludes. “County-wide regulation should be limited to those dealing with water supply, environmental preservation, health and safety.” All density rules, as well as the urban service boundary, should be undone.

And fiscal neutrality “should be removed in its entirety.” But the author acknowledges that

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Our firm operates under the leadership of acclaimed economist Wayne Winegarden; former California, Florida, New York, and Michigan Budget Director Donna Arduin; and the visionary “Father of Supply-Side Economics,” Arthur Laffer.

may not be feasible. “We also do understand the realm of politics and that not all [policy] changes that should be made actually can be,” the report reads. “We understand that the fiscal neutrality provision, amongst many other features of the comprehensive plan, is here to stay. So, the question is how to implement this policy in ways that are least restrictive to economic growth and overall prosperity in the County.” The author then makes several recommendations on how to adjust the details of fiscal neutrality.

“It’s just more of the same thing,” says attorney Dan Lobeck, who has been a frequent and harsh critic of the commission’s decision to rewrite 2050. He calls the report “garbage.”


“Trusting Donna Arduin to come up with a plan on growth management is like trusting the Grand Dragon of the [Ku Klux] Klan to come up with a plan on civil rights,” he says. “She continues to recommend eliminating fiscal neutrality entirely, as well as removing as many zoning restrictions and regulations as possible.” According to Lobeck, the purpose of the report is clear: “to guarantee that no developer ever pays anything.”

County staff members reviewed draft No. 2 and sent back comments and suggestions on Jan. 10, hoping to see their questions addressed before the Laffer team presented its findings to the County Commission on Jan. 29. But that appearance date was pushed back to Feb. 19, to give Laffer “adequate time” to address staff comments, in the words of County Administrator Tom Harmer.

In a letter to Laffer’s Ford Scudder, Sarasota County Long Range Planning Division

Manager Allen Parsons asked for a number of clarifications to be made in the final draft. “Outside of an overall recommendation to eliminate the Fiscal Neutrality requirement, there do not appear to be specific policies or implementing regulations recommended for changes,” Parsons wrote. “Within the context of the county’s intent to maintain this overarching Fiscal Neutrality requirement, the only changes recommended by your Fiscal Neutrality Analysis are associated with the clear definition of appropriate Costs and Revenues. ... If there are other specific policies or regulatory changes proposed, please be sure to indicate those within the report.”

First National Bank of the Gulf Coast Executive Vice President Jody Hudgins also weighed in as part of the county’s team of peer reviewers. He wrote that the new draft is much more “usable” than the first, but he also criticized some of its claims, such as the one that Sarasota has “some of the highest and most volatile housing prices in the state.” Hudgins noted that that statement has “no factual basis.” But Hudgins did praise several sections of the report, such as one that argues that all revenue sources, “direct and indirect alike,” should be calculated when analyzing fiscal neutrality; and one that calls for local rules to be brought into line with new state laws.

In an email to Harmer, Parsons indicated that a third draft is due from Laffer this week. “Staff will then review this updated draft and ensure that a finalized copy is included for the Board’s review, as well,” he wrote last week. 

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GETTING IT DONE

Clearwater's homeless facility, Pinellas Safe Harbor, has been seen as a model for a shelter in Sarasota County. Photo courtesy Pinellas Safe Harbor

SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MAKE IT CLEAR THEY WANT TO MOVE FORWARD WITH PLANS FOR A HOMELESS SHELTER

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

On three fronts, the Sarasota County commissioners Tuesday, Jan. 28, emphasized they want to keep moving forward with plans to address homelessness — including construction of a shelter in Sarasota.

First, the board approved an ordinance

giving the county flexibility to use \$2.6 million for a homeless facility and related support services. That money was put into a fund in 2007 that was earmarked for affordable housing projects in the county.

The change creates the potential for the county to underwrite

“ *Is there a perfect place to put it? No, there never is. And no one wants to spend the money. But it has to get done.* ”

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

some of the expenses of a permanent community homeless shelter in the city, which was the top recommendation of consultant Robert Marbut. As Marbut expected, the shelter has become the most controversial facet of his report to the community last November.

In their second action, the commissioners directed staff to work on renewing Marbut's contract, which is set to expire on Feb. 28, so he can continue addressing the shelter plan as well as his other recommendations to resolve homelessness issues in the county.

"The sense of urgency needs to be extremely high on this," said Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, who noted she would like the county to collaborate with the municipalities on renewing Marbut's contract.



Commissioner Joe Barbetta prepares to offer a comment during the Jan. 28 meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel



The parcel at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. in north Sarasota is one of consultant Robert Marbut's preferred sites for a homeless shelter. Image from Google Maps

These actions Tuesday signaled a strong desire by the County Commission to make Marbut's shelter recommendation a reality.

In addition, Commissioner Joe Barbetta rebuked two city commissioners who have voiced concerns about the city's share of the cost for a shelter.

"You can see an apparent plan of action to sabotage this process," Barbetta told his colleagues. "I'm not afraid to say this, because I saw the meeting. It is really sad they are going to hold this program up."

Barbetta was referring to the Jan. 21 City Commission meeting, when Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and Commissioner Susan Chapman expressed dismay regarding the city's share of the shelter expenses. Both commissioners have previously said they do not want a countywide shelter established in the city, that they would prefer to see it built elsewhere in the county.

"We need to keep this thing on track. Do our job," Barbetta said Tuesday. "Hopefully, the City Commission will do its part."

Barbetta was not the only county commissioner to respond to opposition from the city. Chairman Charles Hines and Commissioner Carolyn Mason agreed that this is not the time to back away from plans for a shelter.

Although it might not be the most popular idea and funding will be an issue, Hines said such a facility is a necessity.

"Is there a perfect place to put it? No, there never is," Hines said in an interview with *The Sarasota News Leader* during a break in the meeting. "And no one wants to spend the money. But it has to get done."



County Commission Chairman Charles Hines listens to a speaker on Jan. 28. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Mason told her colleagues she wants the board to send the message that it wishes to forge ahead with discussions.

"We do owe it to our constituents, which do include the homeless population," Mason said. "For any entity to get cold feet at this point would do a huge disservice to the community at this point."

County and city staff members are working with Marbut to evaluate three top sites for a possible "come-as-you-are" shelter, similar to one in Pinellas County called Pinellas Safe Harbor.

These sites, all in the city of Sarasota, are 1121 Lewis Ave., 1330 N. Osprey Ave. and 1800 N. East Ave. Once all the parcels have been evaluated, local government employees and Marbut will work on the cost estimate for

a structure at each location, Wayne Applebee, the county's homelessness coordinator, told the commissioners.

SETTING A PRIORITY

In their first related item of business Tuesday, the commissioners unanimously approved the ordinance renaming the Community Housing Fund the Housing and Community Development Fund.

The new ordinance "places a priority on homelessness and job program efforts," allowing Community Housing Trust funds to be used for construction of a homeless facility — such as a shelter or transitional housing — and support services. It also grants the county the flexibility to use the funds for job creation.

County leaders emphasized the revised ordinance would not reassign money set aside for affordable housing.

Robinson also suggested the \$2.6 million be made available for services or buildings that could help people at risk of becoming homeless. The board approved that change as an amendment; however, Commissioner Nora Patterson said she was concerned there was not enough money to widen the county's mission, to help people at risk of becoming homeless as well as those who already have no place to live.

Patterson added that the funds should be funneled directly into efforts to address homelessness, including construction of a shelter and adjunct facilities near a shelter.

"We're trying to make a relatively small amount of money go a very long way," Patterson pointed out.



Wayne Applebee is the county employee charged with carrying out consultant Robert Marbut's recommendations. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A NEED

In his interview with the *News Leader*, Hines said the need for a permanent shelter has been made evident.

He pointed to the fact that both the city and county agreed to bring in Marbut — a nationally known consultant — and give him sufficient time to draft recommendations. Marbut came to Sarasota and saw a problem — one that will not go away if nothing is done, Hines said.

Thus far, momentum has been building for a shelter.

Area businesses continue to struggle with the homeless population in downtown Sarasota, and some residents have even told the city commissioners the presence of panhandlers is frightening at times. In addition, county

and city commissioners have traveled to Clearwater to tour Pinellas Safe Harbor, and county staff members have visited similar sites across the country.

Hines said, "You never plan to have a homeless shelter. But we need it."

That is why the County Commission voted to allow the community housing funds to be used for such a facility and related services, Hines added.


Like Barbetta, Hines is worried plans will become mired in debate, with the two city commissioners publicly taking a stand against the concept of a city shelter.

"Dr. Marbut said the worst thing is to do nothing and debate this," Hines pointed out.

"I can see if [Shaw and Chapman] want to make the case that a come-as-you-are shelter is not the right option right now," Hines said. "If they want to make that case, fine. I'm not seeing that. What we're seeing is more ... emotion than rational basis."

Although not every homeless person in the community would be expected to utilize a shelter, Hines added that putting such a facility in place is an important step in getting people off the streets.

"If not, either they live in the woods or are put in jail, and neither of those work for the community or the homeless," Hines pointed out.

As for those who might refuse to stay in a shelter but who still would want to avail themselves of its services, he continued, "This isn't the community where they need to be." 

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A map of the Big Sarasota Pass area, showing the water body between Siesta Key and Lido keys. The map includes labels for various roads like S Tamiami Trail, Bee Ridge Rd, and Proctor Rd, as well as parks like Bay Island Park and Glebe Park. A red pin labeled 'A' is placed on the western side of the pass, near the intersection of Ocean Blvd and Beach Rd.

BACKING OFF A BIT

Big Sarasota Pass is the body of water between Siesta and Lido keys. Image from Google Maps

THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS IS LOOKING NOW AT THE PROSPECT OF TAKING SAND FROM BOTH BIG PASS AND NEW PASS IN THE FIRST LIDO BEACH RENOURISHMENT UNDER A 50-YEAR PLAN

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Because of concerns raised about the impact the proposed dredging of Big Sarasota Pass might have on Siesta Key, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is looking at potentially taking some sand from New Pass as well as Big Pass in the first renourishment of Lido Beach under the 50-year plan it is working on with the City of Sarasota, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

Laird Wreford,
Sarasota County's

coastal resources manager, pointed out to the *News Leader* on Jan. 28 that Corps engineers originally had broached the idea of alternating the dredging of Big Pass and New Pass for every five-year renourishment over the life of the Lido project. The new consideration, he said, "is somewhat of a hybrid of that."

Corps engineers will be determining what will make the best sense for both sand systems, Wreford

“ [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers representatives] really are trying their best now. They have heard the community loud and clear.

Laird Wreford
Coastal Resources Manager
Sarasota County



added. Perhaps 200,000 cubic yards of sand from New Pass could be used to supplement the sand removed from Big Pass for the first renourishment, if the Corps receives approval from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and funding to undertake the project.

Milan A. Mora, the Corps' manager for the Lido renourishment plan, has said the project would need 1.1 million to 1.2 million cubic yards of sand for that first renourishment.

Referring to Corps representatives, Wreford added, "They really are trying their best now. They have heard the community loud and clear."

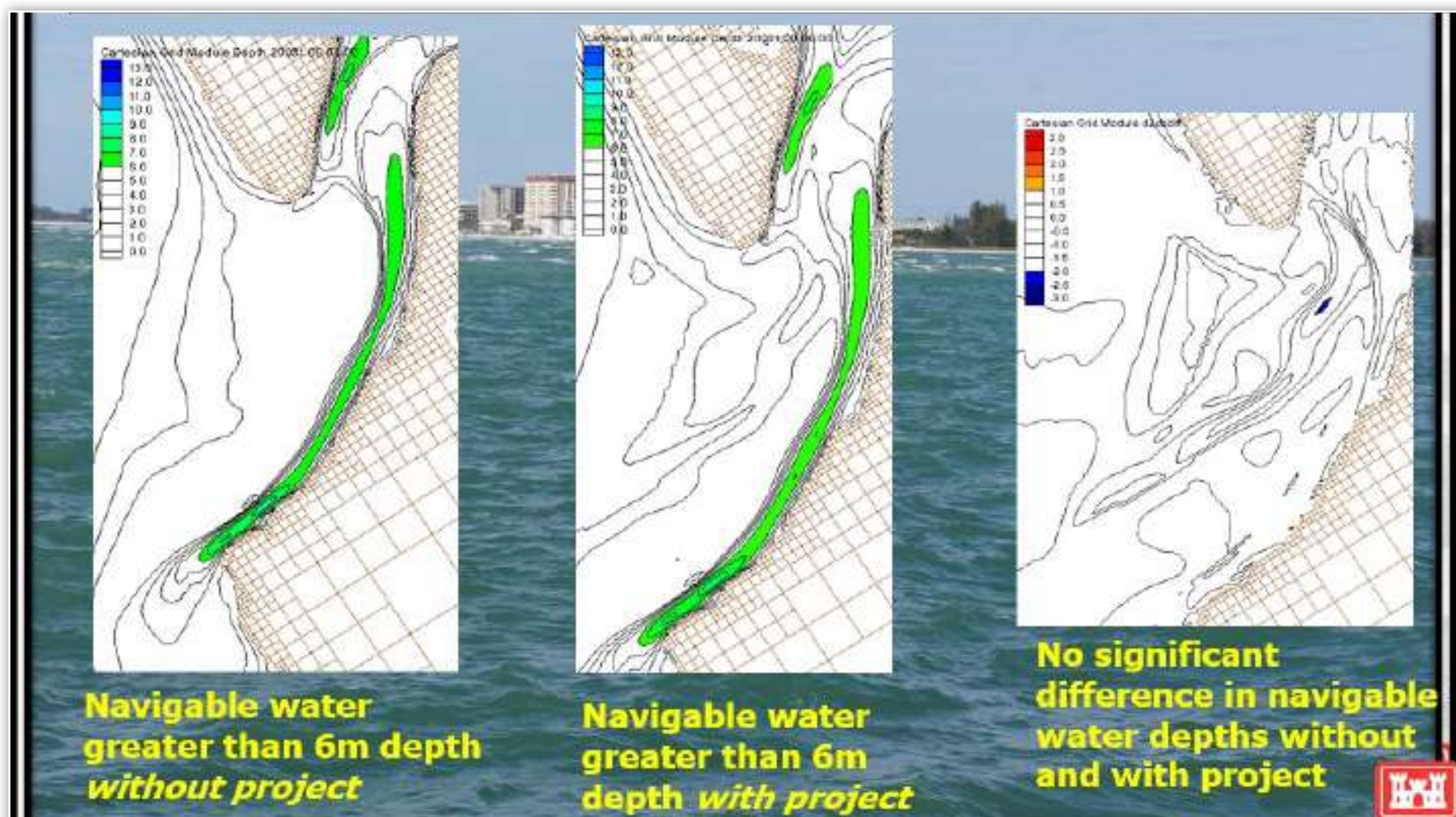
On Jan. 9, the Siesta Key Association unanimously approved a resolution opposing the dredging of Big Pass or its channel, based on

current information. On Jan. 16, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors took similar action, then-Chairwoman Maria Bankemper notified the *News Leader* this week.

The latter resolution says the Chamber board "is in opposition of the Army Corps of Engineers proposed plan to dredge Big Pass and mine sand from the shoal north of Siesta Key in order to replenish Lido Key sand."

The Siesta Chamber has more than 500 members representing businesses such as accommodations, restaurants, retailers, services and nonprofits on the island and the mainland, a press release notes.

Bankemper is general manager and co-owner of the Best Western Plus-Siesta Key at 6600 S. Tamiami Trail. In late December, Bankemper



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' preliminary projections show no significant change to Big Pass from dredging its ebb shoal. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

told the *News Leader* she and her co-owners had decided to retain a Tampa attorney to advise them on how they should respond as Corps project details continued to unfold.

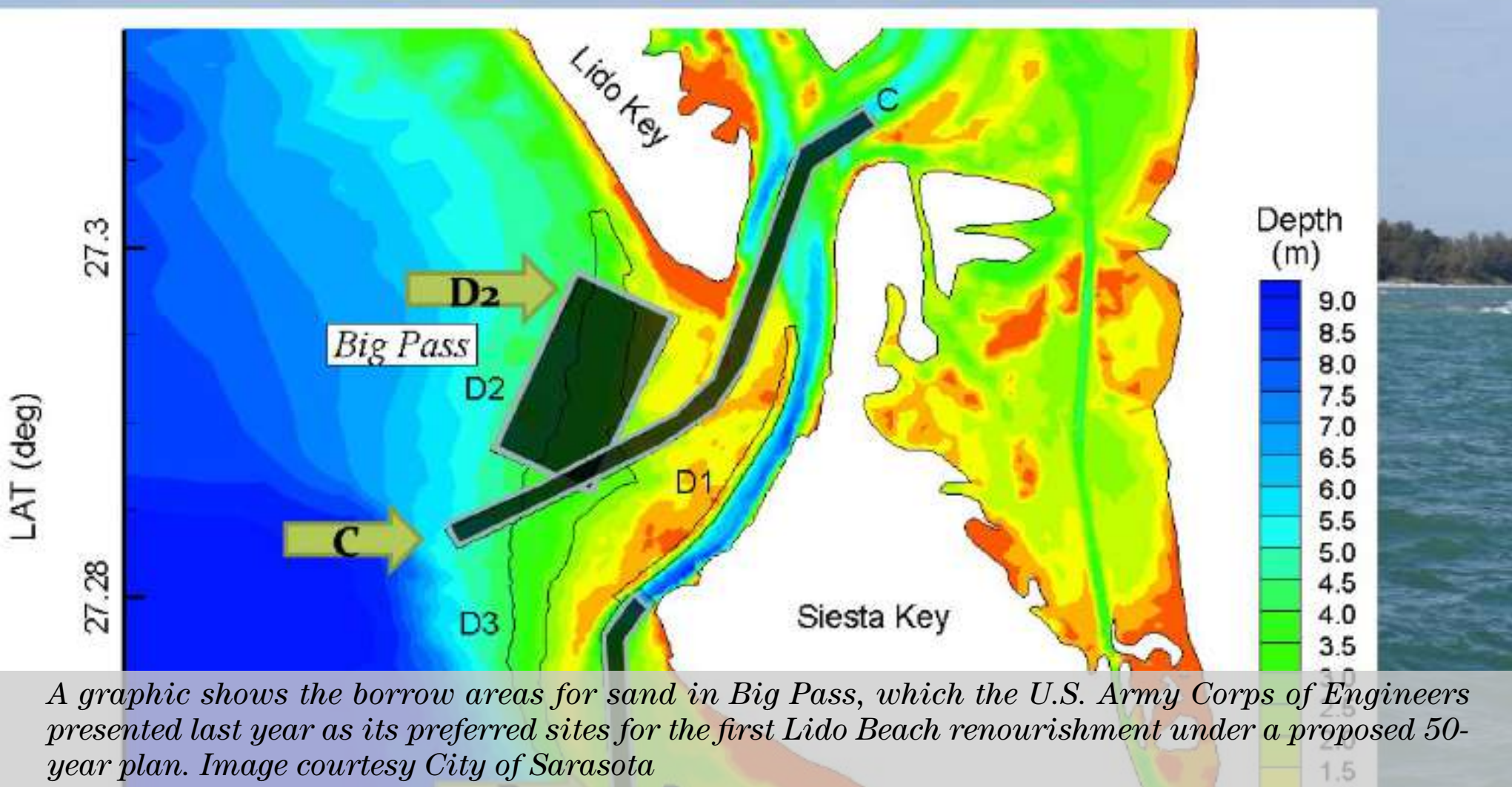
“Nobody’s suing anybody,” she emphasized at the time, adding that the Best Western is the only branded hotel in the vicinity of Siesta Key, “and it’s our livelihood here.”

In a Jan. 20 email to the county commissioners, Bankemper’s father, Mike Lepore, wrote, “Best Western Plus Siesta Key Hotel determined that the proposed 50 year Army Corps project would likely damage Siesta Beach and/or Siesta Key in general and that, of course, would be damaging to the hotel’s business and its property. Accordingly we have engaged a well known Tampa Law Firm



Milan A. Mora of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers addresses the Sarasota County Coastal Advisory Committee in September 2013. File photo

SOURCE – BSP BORROW AREAS



A graphic shows the borrow areas for sand in Big Pass, which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented last year as its preferred sites for the first Lido Beach renourishment under a proposed 50-year plan. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

... familiar with this issue [and able to] help us avoid a possible disaster”

On Jan. 27, Cheryl Gaddie, president of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA), told the *News Leader*, “I fully expect that [SKVA members are] going to want to follow the decisions of the SKA and the [Siesta Chamber].” A discussion will be on the SKVA’s monthly meeting agenda for Feb. 4, she added. “I want them to speak for themselves,” Gaddie said of her members.

Regarding another aspect of the project, Wreford pointed out this week that the Corps could not remove from the project the three groins it has proposed for construction on the south end of Lido Key to help keep the new sand in place on the beach. Because of federal guidelines, he said, if the Corps eliminated the groins, the Corps would have to undertake a complete reworking of its feasibility study.

Mora has said in public presentations that such a necessity would set back the project 10 to 15 years.

COUNTY COMMISSION DISCUSSION

In related news, Wreford told the *News Leader* on Jan. 27 that while the County Commission has scheduled its own discussion of the Lido Renourishment Project for March 18, he had learned from the Corps that the modeling and impacts analysis report community leaders have been awaiting on the project might not be ready until late February. He planned to confer with county administrative staff, he said, to determine whether the topic should be placed on a later agenda.



New College of Florida faculty member Jono Miller addresses the City and County commissions in October 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Susan Jackson, a spokesperson for the Corps in its Jacksonville office — where Lido Renourishment Project manager Milan Mora is based — told the *News Leader* on Jan. 27 that the material was on schedule to be released in mid to late February. “It is in peer review,” she added, explaining that subject matter experts in other Corps districts are reviewing the modeling and reports.

LOCAL PEER REVIEW

During the Jan. 21 meeting of the Siesta Key Condominium Council meeting, Commissioner Nora Patterson called for a peer review of the Corps’ plans “by some people who don’t have their wallets in this game ...”


Responding to that, Lepore of the Best Western Plus added in a Jan. 24 email to Patterson his suggestion that Jono Miller, a member of the New College of Florida faculty be asked to undertake that peer review.

During a Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) presentation on Jan. 13, Miller “was extremely convincing that any dredging of Big Pass

(which has never been dredged) will result in loss of both the dredged channel as well as the current natural channel since a channel needs the outflow from [Sarasota] Bay to maintain it,” Lepore pointed out in a Jan. 20 email he sent to all the commissioners. He added that Miller “possesses significant credentials in the field of barrier islands and inlets and has studied ours for many years.”

Lepore also noted Miller’s documentation that Siesta Beach/Crescent Beach is the only non-eroded beach in three counties, so “gambling with the natural process of shoals” could lead to problems for Siesta Beach.

Lepore did not dispute the need to stabilize Lido Beach, however. “Everyone knows and agrees that Lido Beach needs re-nourishment, which it has received many times, and will likely in the future as well,” he added. Nonetheless, he agreed with Miller’s recommendation that just the critically eroded area in front of several condominium complexes and hotels be renourished.

Lepore also warned that if the Corps project is allowed to proceed, a lawsuit almost surely can be expected “while Lido languishes.” 

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A SHOCKING ESTIMATE AND AN EVALUATION



An architect's rendering shows the State Street parking garage and retail structure. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

THE POTENTIAL \$11.4 MILLION COST OF THE STATE STREET GARAGE PROJECT AND HOW TO ASSESS THE CITY MANAGER'S JOB PERFORMANCE WILL BE ON THE CITY COMMISSION'S FEB. 3 AGENDA

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota City Commissioners may swoon into “sticker shock” Monday, Feb. 3, when the new cost estimate for the State Street parking garage is announced.

It is \$11.4 million, or \$7.3 million more than city staff originally budgeted for it in 2009. The new figure is roughly triple the original estimate.

A staff memo cites several reasons for the price jump: “Site constraints ... an added fifth parking deck ... the addition of firewalls ... escalation of construction costs ... an upgrade of streetscape standards ... [and] the use of a quality architectural facade” were mentioned.

The \$11.4 million tab “is conservative in nature, does not reflect possible value engineering, and does not reflect possible savings from competitive contractor bids,” the memo says. In other words, the actual price might be cheaper.

The city is under a contractual obligation with the developers of [Pineapple Square](#) to finish the parking structure, which plans show will contain 399 spaces. The site is narrow, which will confine parking to one side of the building. The ground floor will be designated for commercial purposes.

The City Commission has dithered for years over the design of the building, which, under the terms of the Pineapple Square contract, must be open for use in 2015. The commission selected a so-called “Pad Lite” design late last year. Monday is the first time the board members together will see an architectural rendering of what the actual design may look like.

The proposal calls for a private developer to build a minimum of four and a maximum of five stories above the ground-level retail space on Lemon Avenue. The space could be used for condominiums or rental property.

By city standards, the project is on the fastest track possible. Engineering plans will be presented next month, and final plans are to come to the commission in April, with construction to begin in May. “Substantial completion” is slated to occur in February 2015, with final inspections and a certificate of occupancy “by the end of May 2015,” the memo says.

Funding will come from the sale of the first-floor retail space, and the “Pad Lite” site,

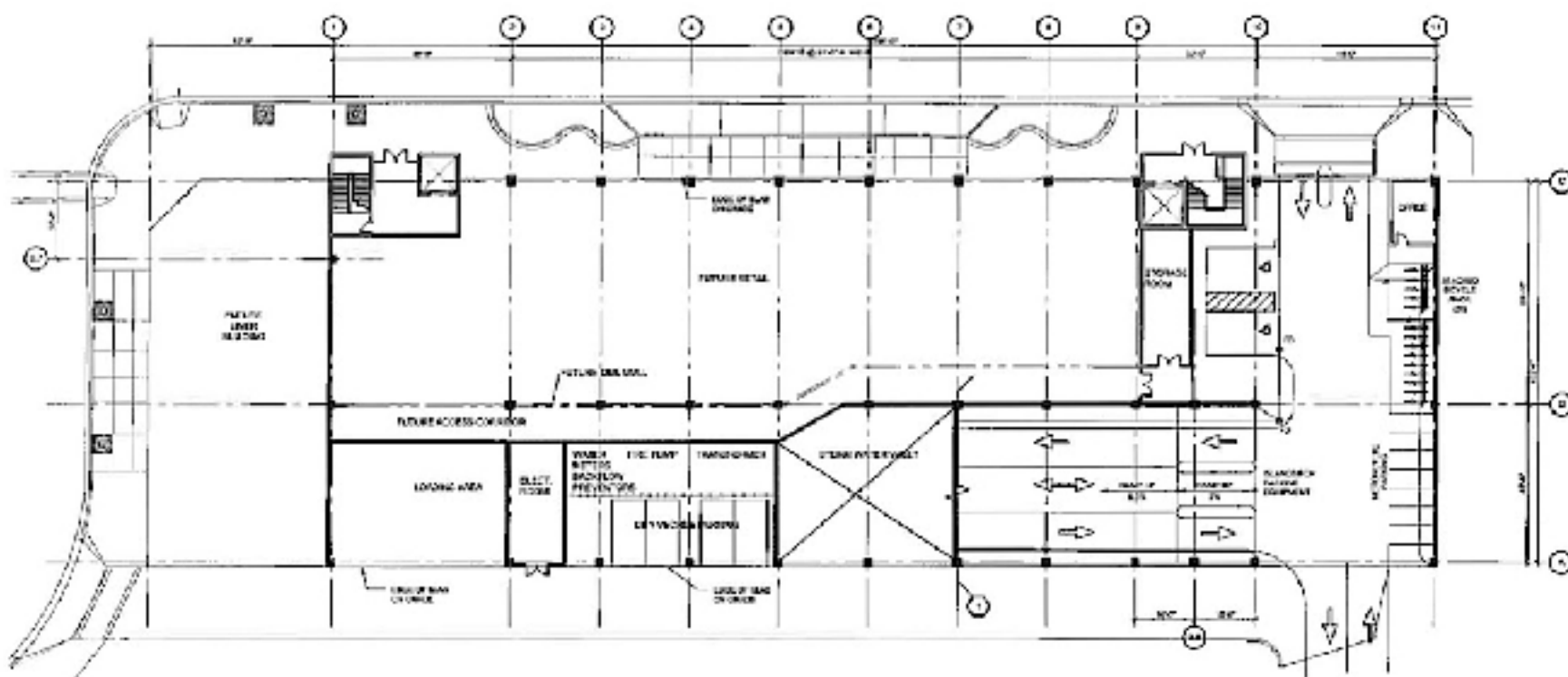
plus “inter-fund transfers” and “additional Community Redevelopment Agency funding.”

BARWIN'S EVALUATION

The City Commission's evaluation of charter officials is an annual event. But when Tom Barwin was hired in September 2012, he placed in his contract several unusual terms. Knowing the city periodically held a referendum to abolish his office, he presciently added language in case that happened before Sept. 1, 2015. And he added a clause that changed the annual review procedure.

Now it is time for the evaluation, and the city is putting the final touches on the new way the commissioners will rate their professional manager. It calls for hiring a facilitator to lead a “constructive, team building exercise per the city manager’s contract,” notes a memo from Director of Human Resources Stacie Mason.

She proposes hiring Larry Ross, a business professor at Florida Southern University who has facilitated the evaluation of the Lakeland



A drawing shows the ground level plans for the State Street parking garage structure. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

city manager for the past 10 years and handled similar work for Polk County for five years, according to information Mason provided the commission.

Ross would first ask Barwin for a self-assessment and then “establish the appropriate performance management dimensions from his perspective.” Ross would then create an instruction packet, review form and assessment form for each of the five city commissioners to complete. Next, Ross would conduct one-on-one interviews with the commissioners to review the “performance management dimensions.”

Ross then would go back to Barwin and review the findings before making a presentation at a public meeting.

As usual, any adjustment to the city manager’s salary will follow the evaluation.

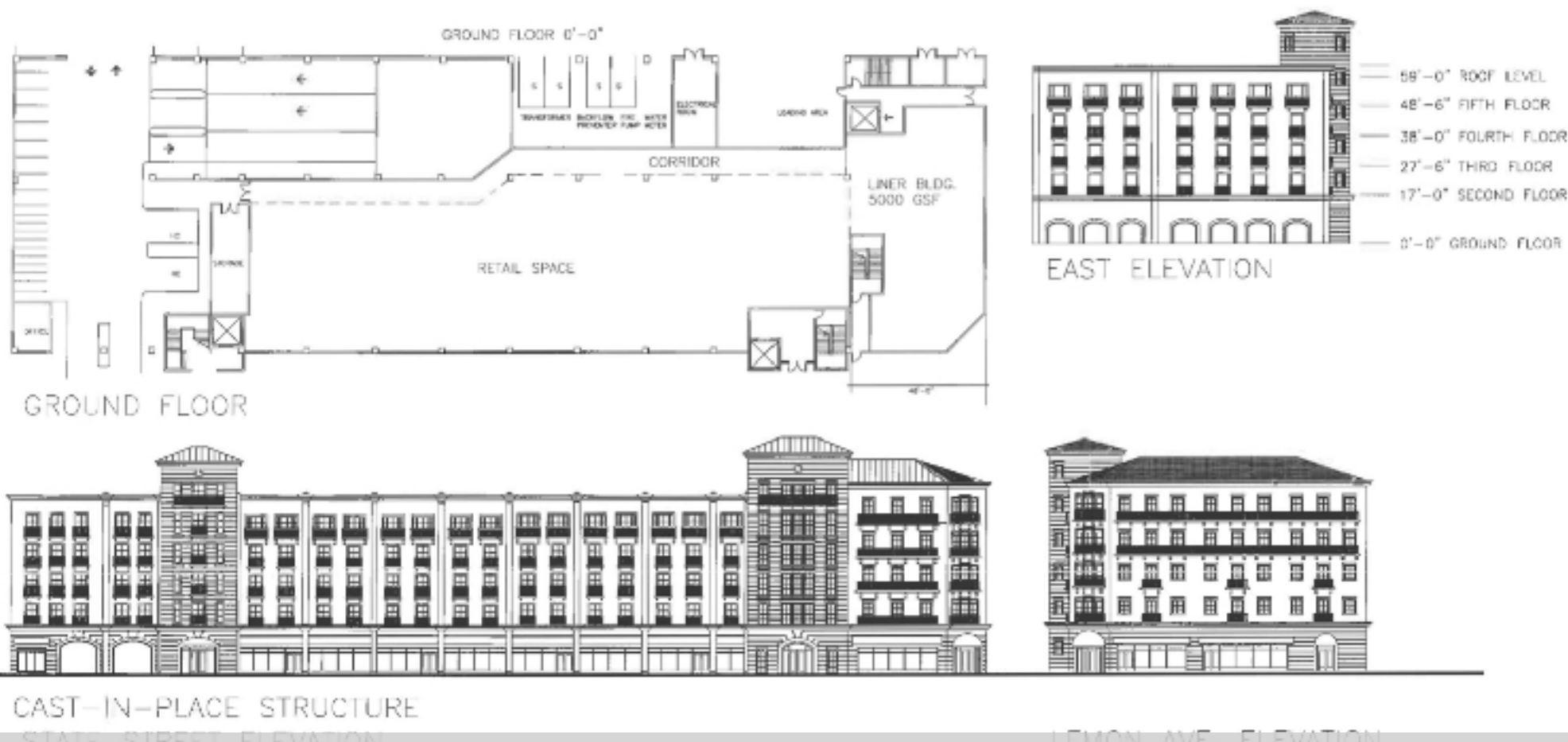
Ross will charge \$3,500 to conduct the review, which would be undertaken in February. On

Monday, the commissioners will be asked if they approve of this process.

PAYNE PARK ORGANIZED SPORTS

Saturdays could become very busy in Payne Park if the commissioners green-light a proposal by the [Suncoast Sports Club Inc.](#) to sponsor youth activities there. Under new business in the evening session, the organization’s vice president, Stephen Weeks, will propose lacrosse, flag football and soccer programs for youngsters of various ages. The Parks Recreation and Environmental Protection Advisory Board in November made a unanimous recommendation that the City Commission approve the proposal.

Weeks proposes using three areas of the park, two on the south side and one west of the Skate Park, for the activities. The organization is a registered nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service.




A drawing shows elevations for the various levels of the State Street building. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

Suncoast Sports Club operates in county parks to introduce young children to sports. Its mission statement says, "Our philosophy is simple. Create a positive sports environment where all children have the opportunity to learn a sport just for fun." Parents cannot just drop off their children; they must stay for the specific events.

"Suncoast Sports Club would like to bring sports programs to children in the neighborhoods around downtown," the company's proposal says. "Once each week on Saturdays we would like to utilize some of the open spaces at Payne Park for sports such as soccer, flag football, disc golf, track and field, and for exercise programs," it adds.

LATEST LIFT STATION BILL

Only one question remained after a presentation two weeks ago on the future of Lift Station 87 in Luke Wood Park. You may recall the original engineering consultant and construction manager walked off the job after their failure to install pipe under Hudson Bayou. The city hired another consulting engineering firm — McKim & Creed — for \$1.1 million to figure out what went wrong and develop preliminary designs to continue the work. The McKim & Creed presentation indicated the city would need to pay \$7 million more to finish the project.

On the consent agenda Monday, the company is up for a Phase Two contract for detailed design, permitting and construction management. The cost: \$3.4 million. 



The City Commission Monday will discuss the upcoming evaluation process for City Manager Tom Barwin. Photo by Norman Schimmel



Payne Park could become the site of more youth athletic programs. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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Tom Harmer (right) tells the County Commission he would like to accept the offer to remove ‘interim’ from his title. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WITH A UNANIMOUS VOTE, TOM HARMER IS OFFERED THE TOP COUNTY MANAGEMENT POSITION – AND HE HOPES SARASOTA COUNTY IS HIS LAST STOP

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The Sarasota County commissioners voted unanimously Tuesday, Jan. 28, to remove the “interim” from Tom Harmer’s title, making him the county’s permanent CEO in charge of 2,100 employees, 22 departments and day-to-day operations.

They agreed Harmer has been doing a good job as the interim administrator, a sentiment consistent with praise the board has offered over the past three months.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out that the county’s daily operations have been running smoothly since late October, when past Chairwoman Carolyn Mason called Harmer and asked him to step into the position on an interim basis. She placed the call shortly after the board fired Administrator Randall Reid.

“*I just want to add that unsolicited input from members of the public is positive about your job performance, Mr. Harmer. I’m a happy camper.*”

Carolyn Mason
Commissioner
Sarasota County



“It doesn’t appear we’ve missed a beat,” said Barbetta, one of three commissioners

who had voiced increasing displeasure with Reid before the 4-1 vote on Oct. 23 to terminate Reid's contract. "In fact, it appears things have actually accelerated and gone extremely well."

Barbetta made the motion to name Harmer administrator.

Harmer, who said he would accept the position, will work with the county attorney to draft up a long-term contract. The County Commission then will vote on the agreement.

"As the board is aware, I didn't seek this position," Harmer told the commissioners. "My interest in the position has grown over the past three months."

Harmer said in an interview with local news media after the County Commission's decision this week that he "was very happy being the deputy county administrator." But Harmer, 55, explained that his interest in the possibility of becoming the permanent administrator grew as he met with residents at community events, collaborated with county staff in each department and worked closely with the commissioners — who have the authority to hire and fire the county administrator.

"It's important coming into this position that someone has the full support of the board," Harmer added.



Tom Harmer has a big smile on his face after the County Commission makes its offer to hire him on a permanent basis. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Asked during the media interview if Sarasota County would be his last stop, Harmer replied, "I hope so."

A PRIORITY LIST

Harmer's priority list includes preparing for upcoming workshops for the Fiscal Year 2015 budget and strategically planning for future spending plans.

A big challenge will be managing the county as the economy improves, Harmer pointed out.

"One of the most crucial things is how carefully we manage the county as it looks at growth," Harmer said. "It's challenging to manage city and county governments when there is a downturn, but it can be just as challenging to manage coming out of that downturn."

During the projected economic upturn, Harmer added, the county will have to address the need for heightened levels of

service before increased revenue from new development and tax value growth becomes available.

When asked by *The Sarasota News Leader* whether the county might expand its workforce in the near future, Harmer said it is hard to tell now, but he plans to evaluate the organizational structure, including the number of full-time positions, during the budget process.

Harmer also wants to place an emphasis on customer service and improve the way the 22 departments interact with each other.

As deputy administrator, Harmer was not involved with discussions about controversial proposed changes to the [2050 Plan](#). Therefore, Harmer has a bit of a "learning curve" on that topic — a planning issue to which some of Reid's community supporters point as the primary reason for the decline in commission support for Reid. The former administrator had suggested the county



Commissioner Carolyn Mason reviews agenda material on Jan. 28. Photo by Norman Schimmel

hire an independent consultant from the University of South Florida to analyze the fiscal neutrality element of Sarasota 2050, for example. (See the related story in this issue.)

Harmer said the County Commission has made pretty clear its desire to continue work on the proposed changes to the 2050 Plan, including its determination to focus on “incremental policy” discussions.

‘... A HAPPY CAMPER’

Before the board members cast their 5-0 vote on Tuesday, Commissioner Carolyn Mason concurred with Barbetta’s accolades.

“I just want to add that unsolicited input from members of the public is positive about your job performance, Mr. Harmer,” Mason said. “I’m a happy camper.”

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson added that Harmer has done a good job of listening to the board and responding to its questions. Robinson also said she has heard reports

from county staffers that they are receiving clear and concise directions from their boss.

Robinson further noted she was happy to see Harmer attending community meetings in South County. “The small things make all the difference and you understand that,” she said.

A Philadelphia native, Harmer moved to Florida when he was 12.

He has 26 years of experience in local government, including almost eight years as city manager of Titusville, where he also was executive director of the Community Development Agency. Additionally, he has served as fire chief and emergency manager in Titusville. Prior to that, Harmer was deputy fire chief in Tallahassee and a firefighter/EMT for three years in Davie, according to his resume.

Barbetta said Harmer has “been involved in the community in a total process in a total way.” Barbetta also thanked Harmer’s wife, Dee Dee, for “allowing us to have you here as often as we do.” 



Tom Harmer listens to a speaker’s comments during the Jan. 28 board meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel



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ANALYSIS: THE RUSH FOR SHELTER



Valerie Guillory's 'Sanctuary' at 10th Street and U.S. 41 in Sarasota may be the city's fastest-growing neighborhood. Its residents on Jan. 28 were counted during the national homeless census initiative. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

MANY QUESTIONS STILL NEED TO BE ANSWERED AS THE CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS PURSUE SOLUTIONS FOR HELPING THE HOMELESS

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

It has been a year since the city and county commissioners sat down to talk about homelessness and vagrancy in downtown Sarasota. Expert Robert Marbut signed a consultant's contract offered by the local governments and produced a report in that period of time. A number of meetings have been held. And, just like last year, the annual homeless census is being tallied.

But if you are homeless, the difference between 2013 and 2014 is zilch.

The foot-dragging has been breathtaking. At the joint City-County commissions meeting on Feb. 5, 2013, then-County Chairwoman

Carolyn Mason foreshadowed the next 12 months. The city's new manager, Tom Barwin, was pressing for action. "It didn't get like this overnight, Mr. Barwin," said Mason. "And we can't fix it overnight."

358 NIGHTS LATER

The only different feature on the landscape is Valerie Guillory, who came to town in a Winnebago, cut a deal with the owner of property on the north side of the railroad track at 10th Street in Sarasota and said she was opening a tent city for the homeless.

Residents of the Gillespie Park neighborhood went into a panic, which they quickly

transmitted to City Hall. Guillory called her operation a “sanctuary” in the practice of freedom of religion. The endeavor was a Code Enforcement officer’s nightmare.

Nonetheless, Guillory is still there, and if you are homeless, she will find a place for you.

Tuesday, Jan. 28, was the day of the nationwide homeless census. Volunteers were at Guillory’s Sanctuary, filling out the forms. More than 100 people came by, enticed perhaps by free clothing and food, medical and dental screenings, personal hygiene kits and more — with the activities all organized by

“*I can see an apparent plan of action to sabotage this process.*”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

Guillory and a volunteer cadre, including homeless helpers.

At that joint city/county meeting a year ago, another county commissioner proved

prophetic, too. “There’s obviously some gaps in service,” said Commissioner Joe Barbetta, but rather than “government jumping in and trying to solve the problem” on its own, Barbetta talked of the need for private ventures. Indeed, along came that solitary woman in a Winnebago, and a year later, 100 are being fed and clothed and counted without a government dollar in sight.



The County Commission Chambers in downtown Sarasota was nearly full for consultant Robert Marbut’s presentation on Nov. 25, 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Meanwhile, government is still “trying to solve the problem” — perhaps because it is not listening. When consultant Robert Marbut delivered his report to another joint city-county commission meeting on Nov. 25, City Commissioner Willie Shaw called for a motion to postpone any decision on a new shelter until a public hearing could be held. His motion failed, 3-2, with Shaw and Commissioner Susan Chapman in the minority.

It was not until Jan. 21 — the day after the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance — that Shaw would strike a conversation with his own commission about the operation of a homeless shelter. By then work was already under way to consider three separate sites for the proposed shelter — two within the city and one just across the city-county line.



Majs. Ethan and Sue Frizzell were welcomed to the Sarasota Salvation Army headquarters last year. Photo courtesy Salvation Army



Homeless consultant Robert Marbut was hired by the City and County of Sarasota last year to offer suggestions for helping the community's homeless. Photo by Roger Drouin

“The burden is unfairly falling on the city’s shoulders,” said Shaw. “There needs to be better equity and planning. Is the county expecting the city to fund the operations of this new homeless center?”

Chapman was equally concerned. “What we have to know, and what we really haven’t talked about, we’re undertaking this huge endeavor and haven’t talked about ‘Does it really work?’” she pointed out. “We have to raise these questions before we finish consideration of this plan.”

‘SABOTAGE’ CHARGED

A week later, County Commissioner Barbetta responded to the need for more information. “It’s most unfortunate what took place with two of the [city] commissioners. I can see an apparent plan of action to sabotage this process,” he said during his board’s regular meeting on Jan. 28. “I’m not afraid to say this, because I saw the [city] meeting. It is really sad they are going to hold this program up.”

Barbetta was not alone. Commission Chairman Charles Hines told *Sarasota News Leader* County Editor Roger Drouin, “Dr. Marbut said the worst thing is to do nothing and debate this.” Hines added, “Is there a perfect place to put [the shelter]? No, there never is. And no one wants to spend the money. But it has to get done.”

That day, the County Commission voted to reallocate the \$2.5 million remaining from the North Port escheated land sales for the proposed shelter and related homeless services. The money previously was set aside just for affordable housing.

Yet, affordable housing is exactly where another study says the money is most needed.



Valerie Guillory continues to provide for the homeless at her facility near Gillespie Park in Sarasota. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

On the afternoon of Jan. 23, a team consisting of two Harvard graduates, two Harvard students working on their master’s degrees and six New College of Florida students reported its findings on how to develop transitional housing for the homeless and vagrants who have found jobs and need real shelter.

The team was put together with grant money given to The Salvation Army in Sarasota, which has been looking for ways to relieve the overcrowding of its facilities. The research found that 96.6 percent of subsidized apartments in town are occupied. More than half of the county’s renters are paying more than half of their paychecks for shelter. The study was commissioned by Maj. Ethan Frizzell, the local Salvation Army’s new commander. He and his wife arrived in Sarasota last June.

Another report yet to be delivered on shelters for the homeless and vagrants is expected out


of a fact-finding, cross-country tour undertaken two weeks ago by a Sarasota County Sheriff's Office deputy, a city police lieutenant and Wayne Applebee, the man designated as the county's director of homeless services. They were accompanied by a *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* reporter, but neither the officials nor the newspaper has offered details yet on what "facts" were found.

Meanwhile, two cities where Marbut left his fingerprints on homelessness are reporting less than satisfactory results. The [Tampa Bay Times](#) carried an article almost a year ago (Feb, 24, 2013) saying the homeless are returning to downtown St. Petersburg. A Marbut-affiliated homeless center called Pinellas Safe Harbor was supposed to keep them out of that downtown area. Additionally, a San Antonio, TX, newspaper has reported that calls for police assistance jumped 42

percent in the neighborhood adjacent to a Marbut-inspired shelter in that city.

Who should be believed in this multi-million-dollar gamble? City commissioners who are asking for facts? A fact-finding group with unreleased findings? Newspaper reports of problems near Marbut-inspired shelters? A study group saying affordable housing is the missing link in the road back to normalcy? County commissioners crying "sabotage"?

"Before we spend a lot of money, we should have some confidence it will work," said Chapman at the Jan. 21 City Commission meeting. City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell replied, "Let's look at the solutions before we create problems."

In the meantime, if you are homeless in Sarasota, there is always the Sanctuary, where Guillory is doing something — without a plan or a government dollar in sight. 



Sarasota Vice Mayor Willie Shaw listens to the Marbut presentation on Nov. 25, 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel

CONTINUING A DOWNWARD TREND



“ *They are probably the best law enforcement workforce I've ever been around in my 20 years [in the profession].* ”

Tom Knight
Sheriff
Sarasota County

*A member of the Sheriff's Office's Mounted Patrol takes radar speed readings in Pinecraft on Jan. 16.
Photo courtesy Sheriff's Office*

STATISTICS SHOW A 35-PERCENT REDUCTION IN CRIME SINCE TOM KNIGHT TOOK OFFICE AS SARASOTA COUNTY SHERIFF IN 2009

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

With crime in unincorporated Sarasota County having fallen 35 percent since he took office in 2009, Sheriff Tom Knight and his administrative staff remain focused on hiring and retaining the best possible employees, the sheriff told the Sarasota County Commission during a recent presentation.

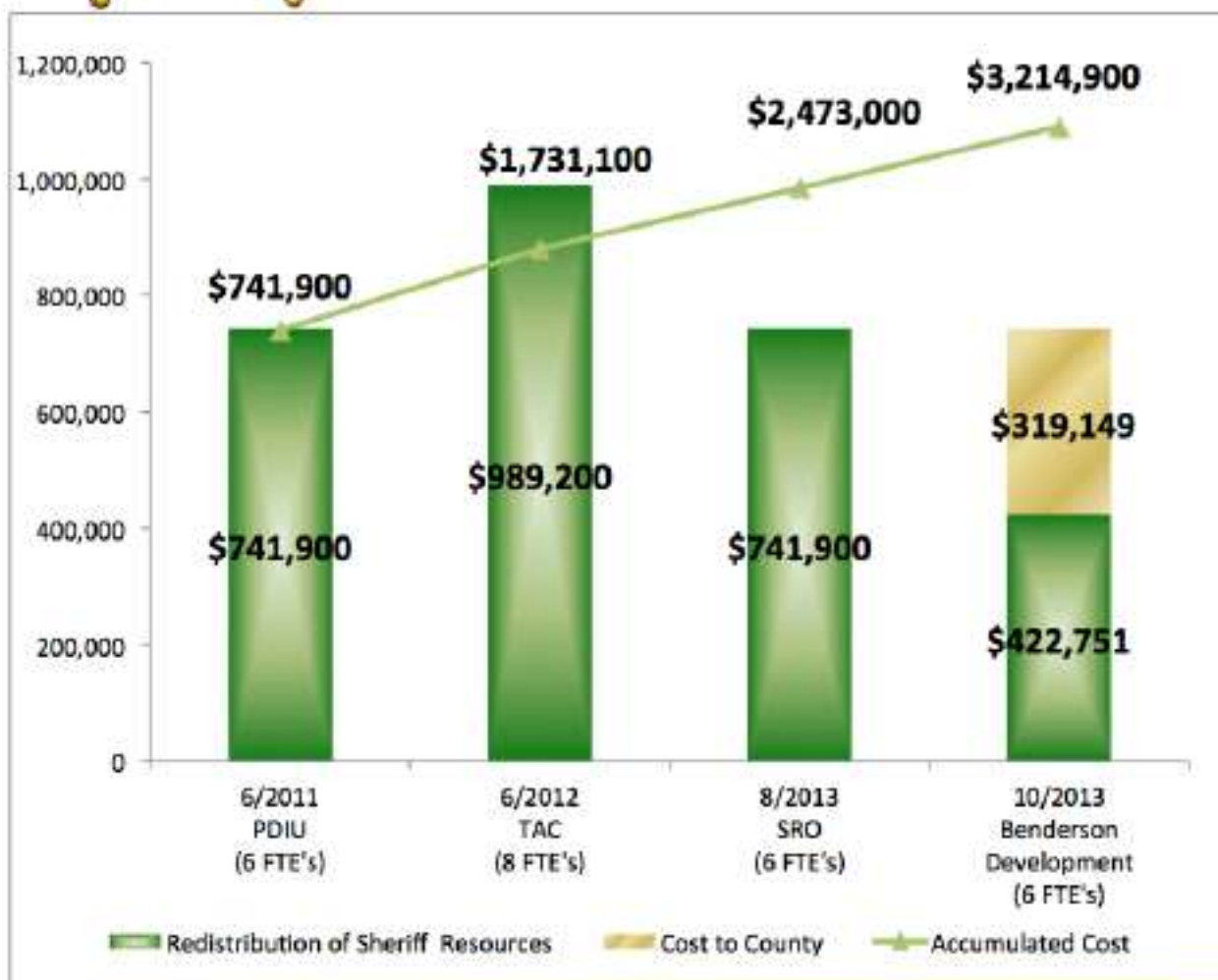
The Jan. 14 discussion came just before the Sheriff's Office released its year-end report for 2013, which showed a 15.86-percent drop

in violent crime, an 11.16-percent decrease in major crimes known as Part 1 Offenses in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Index and a drop of more than 8 percent in total offenses, compared to 2012 figures. (See the accompanying chart.)

Since early 2009, Part 1 Offenses are down 34 percent and total crime is down 28 percent, a Sheriff's Office news release pointed out.



Reallocation of Resources



The Sheriff's Office responds to the changes by reviewing existing resources and reallocating to areas with the greatest need.

26 deputies have been reassigned since 2011.

The initial cost of adding 26 new deputies would be \$3,214,900.

The actual cost to the County was \$319,149.

A chart shows how the Sheriff's Office has reallocated resources to save money. Image courtesy Sheriff's Office

I N D E X O F F E N S E S	OFFENSES	This Month	Month Last Year	Percent Change	This Year To Date	Last Year To Date	Percent Change
	Murder & Non-Neg. Manslaughter	0	0	0.00%	2	9	-77.78%
	Forceful Sex Offenses						
	Forceful Rape	2	0	N/A	25	27	-7.41%
	Forceful Sodomy	0	0	0.00%	2	11	-81.82%
	Forceful Fondling	1	0	N/A	12	17	-29.41%
	Robbery	5	9	-44.44%	92	137	-32.85%
	Aggravated Assault	23	43	-46.51%	355	379	-6.33%
	Total Violent Crimes	31	52	-40.38%	488	580	-15.86%
	Burglary	91	121	-24.79%	1,360	1,622	-16.15%
	Larceny	387	414	-6.52%	4,293	4,685	-8.37%
	Motor Vehicle Theft	11	21	-47.62%	203	254	-20.08%
	Total Nonviolent Crimes	489	556	-12.05%	5,856	6,561	-10.75%
	TOTAL INDEX OFFENSES	520	608	-14.47%	6,344	7,141	-11.16%
P A R T I I	Negligent Manslaughter	0	0	0.00%	2	0	N/A
	Kidnapping	2	1	100.00%	13	18	-27.78%
	Arson	0	0	0.00%	3	4	-25.00%
	Simple Assault	134	152	-11.84%	1,773	1,810	-2.04%
	Bribery	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%
	Embezzlement	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0.00%
	Fraud	24	32	-25.00%	562	484	16.12%
	Total Part II Offenses	160	185	-13.51%	2,353	2,316	1.60%
TOTAL FOR SARASOTA COUNTY		680	793	-14.25%	8,697	9,457	-8.04%
Definitions are available for the above categories, upon request. The above listed crimes have been determined by using primary and secondary UCR codes.							
CALLS FOR SERVICE							
TOTAL CALLS FOR SERVICE		7,363	7,414	-0.69%	87,838	90,121	-2.53%
ARRESTS							
DUI ARRESTS		53	48	10.42%	653	804	-18.78%
TOTAL ARRESTS		769	751	2.40%	9,822	10,034	-2.11%
The Total Arrests have been provided by the Booking Section. If there are any questions in regards to these figures, please contact that Section.							
TRAFFIC CITATIONS							
TRAFFIC CITATIONS		N/A	2,755	-100.00%	N/A	38,699	-100.00%
Traffic Citations include civil and criminal traffic citations issued. Totals have been provided by the Sarasota County Clerk's Office.							
*Citation information is unavailable at this time, due to implementation of a new software system.							
WARRANTS							
Felony Warrants Received		225	205	9.76%	3,043	2,911	4.53%
Misdemeanor Warrants Received		195	106	83.96%	2,125	1,771	19.99%
Traffic Warrants Received		108	118	-8.47%	1,605	1,594	0.69%
Juvenile Warrants Received		9	7	28.57%	149	163	-8.59%
Out of County Warrants Received		0	2	-100.00%	1	10	-90.00%
Total Warrants Received		537	438	22.60%	6,923	6,449	7.35%
Felony Warrants Executed		209	223	-6.28%	2,991	2,992	-0.03%
Misdemeanor Warrants Executed		176	126	39.68%	1,884	1,766	6.68%
Traffic Warrants Executed		105	101	3.96%	1,232	1,326	-7.09%
Juvenile Warrants Executed		10	6	66.67%	131	137	-4.38%
Returned/Recalled/Purged		68	84	-19.05%	1,424	2,117	-32.74%
Out of County Warrants Executed		0	2	-100.00%	5	15	-66.67%
Total Warrants Cleared		568	542	4.80%	7,667	8,353	-8.21%
Warrants on File at close of Month		13,252	13,737	-3.53%	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Warrants Totals have been provided by the Warrants Section. If there are any questions in regards to these figures, please contact that Section.							

Crime Analysis Unit

January 8, 2014

A chart compares Sarasota County Sheriff's Office crime statistics for December 2012 and December 2013 as well as totals for the two years. Image courtesy Sheriff's Office

In 2013, calls for service fell 2.53 percent, to 87,838, and the total number of arrests was down 2.11 percent, to 9,822, the report says.

The Sheriff's Office continues to show the highest decrease in crime reduction of the 33 Florida counties with populations of 100,000 or more, Knight told the commissioners during their Jan. 14 regular meeting in Venice.

Referring to his approximately 1,000 employees, Knight added, "They are probably the best law enforcement workforce I've ever been around in my 20 years [in the profession]."

"We're starting to get a reputation as the place to go" for people interested in law enforcement careers, Maj. Kurt Hoffman, head of the Administrative Division and general counsel for the Sheriff's Office, pointed out. That is attributable not just to salaries and benefits, Hoffman added, but also to equipment and training. Applications are coming in from students at the law enforcement academies in Manatee, Lee, Volusia and Osceola counties, he noted.

Between mid-November 2013 and mid-February of this year, Hoffman continued, the



The October opening of The Mall at University Town Center is expected to lead to a doubling in calls for Sheriff's Office service in the University Parkway area, Sheriff Tom Knight says. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office will have interviewed as potential hires 30 people already certified as Florida law enforcement officers. Many of them have military experience, too, he said.

Generally, a higher percentage of the Sheriff's Office's employees have college degrees, he continued.

Additionally, thanks to the workforce study Carl Hawkins undertook at Knight's request in 2013, Hoffman pointed out, Knight and his staff also understand that the "Millennials" — people coming of employment age in this century — "are a different group to work with. They appreciate that we have leadership mentoring," as well as a succession plan.

(Hawkins retired after 35 years with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Knight explained to the County Commission last summer, when Hawkins presented findings of his study. Hawkins is an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Criminology at the University of South Florida.)

Hoffman noted that because of the extensive process a person goes through to be hired by the Sheriff's Office, retention is a primary concern, "and we believe we've done a pretty good job of that."

Moreover, Hoffman said, "This agency is all about accountability, all the way up to the top ..."

Complaints under review by the Internal Affairs division were "at an all-time low for 2013," he pointed out. "We've retained the people that we feel do a good job for the Sheriff's Office and the community."

Since 2008, he continued, the office also has increased the diversity of its personnel, adding more African-American and Hispanic staff. The numbers are not as high as he would like for them to be, he said, but "both categories are climbing each year, and we're proud of that."

Hoffman also noted that the last promotional process in the Sheriff's Office involved the largest number of people in almost 10 years, and the group was diverse.

At Knight's behest, Hoffman explained, the office undertakes a biennial salary and benefits survey of its sworn and civilian personnel as well as an internal review of pay grades, assignments and responsibilities. Part of the latter process includes a determination of individuals' abilities to handle more or less work than their current roles call for and whether they are capable of moving to other positions in the office.

"Lastly," Hoffman said, "our liability is decreasing," a fact he attributed to "an awful lot of training."

CHANGES IN DEMAND

Expanding on some of Hoffman's comments, Lisa Kiesel, chief financial officer for the Sheriff's Office, explained to the commissioners that Knight and his staff work to reallocate resources as needed, instead of having to come to the board time and again to address emerging needs. For example, she said, in 2011, to handle the increase in prescription drug crimes, six deputies were shifted to the Pharmaceutical Diversion Unit. If the office had had to hire six new deputies, she pointed out, the cost would have been \$741,000.

When the Sheriff's Office asked the County Commission for six new deputies for the current fiscal year — to respond to the anticipated increase in demand in the University Parkway area — it sought only \$319,149 and absorbed the remaining \$422,751 of the expense, Kiesel noted. In fact, she continued, the office has managed reassignments of personnel over the past two-and-a-half years to avoid an extra hiring expense of about \$2.8 million.

When Commissioner Nora Patterson asked whether the six new deputies also would be handling calls related to the rowing events at Nathan Benderson Park, Knight replied that they would not.

Hoffman told the board that Maj. Kevin Kenney supervised staff research at commercial establishments in the Orlando area to determine how many new employees the office would need to handle calls after [The Mall at University Town Center](#) opens off University Parkway in October.

Knight added that the projection is for the number of calls to double. "We're going to get busy up there," he said, noting that he and his staff were awaiting the finalization of the business plan for the rowing venue to determine

how much events will have an impact on his personnel. (See the related story in this issue.)

After Patterson pointed out that events do not occur every day at Benderson Park, Knight told her, "That's a great comment, because ... we don't want to over-staff and ask you for more [deputies] than we need."

He also has not authorized the purchase of any new equipment yet for use at the park, he added. "We're kind of in a wait-and-see [mode] before we start spending money."

At the conclusion of the presentation, Commissioner Carolyn Mason told Knight, "Thank you for this. It is a great opportunity for relationship-building, and I think that is important as we go forward, as important for us as it is for you and the community we all serve."

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson pointed out that the relatively few questions board members had for the sheriff and his administrative staff "is probably a reflection of the open line of communications that we have with your office." She added that Knight is quick to respond to phone calls and emails from commissioners. 

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LET THE PUBLIC BE HEARD

One of the new crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road is near the entrance to the Gulf & Bay Club (marked by the red flag), just east of the Midnight Pass Road intersection with Beach Road. Image from Google Maps

THE COUNTY COMMISSION WILL ASK THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS ON A PROPOSED SIESTA KEY ROUNDABOUT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The vote was unanimous on Jan. 28 when Commissioner Nora Patterson put forth a motion asking that County Commission Chairman Charles Hines write a letter to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requesting “public participation and education” regarding the agency’s plan to construct a roundabout at the intersection of Midnight Pass Road and Beach Road near Siesta Public Beach.

“I’ve had a fair amount of negative feedback on that [plan],” Patterson told her colleagues during their regular meeting in Sarasota. “I think it deserves a public discussion.”

“I don’t know how I feel about [the proposed Siesta Key roundabout]. It’s kind of hard to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ and I think the public is owed a conversation and education on that, and the opportunity to object.”

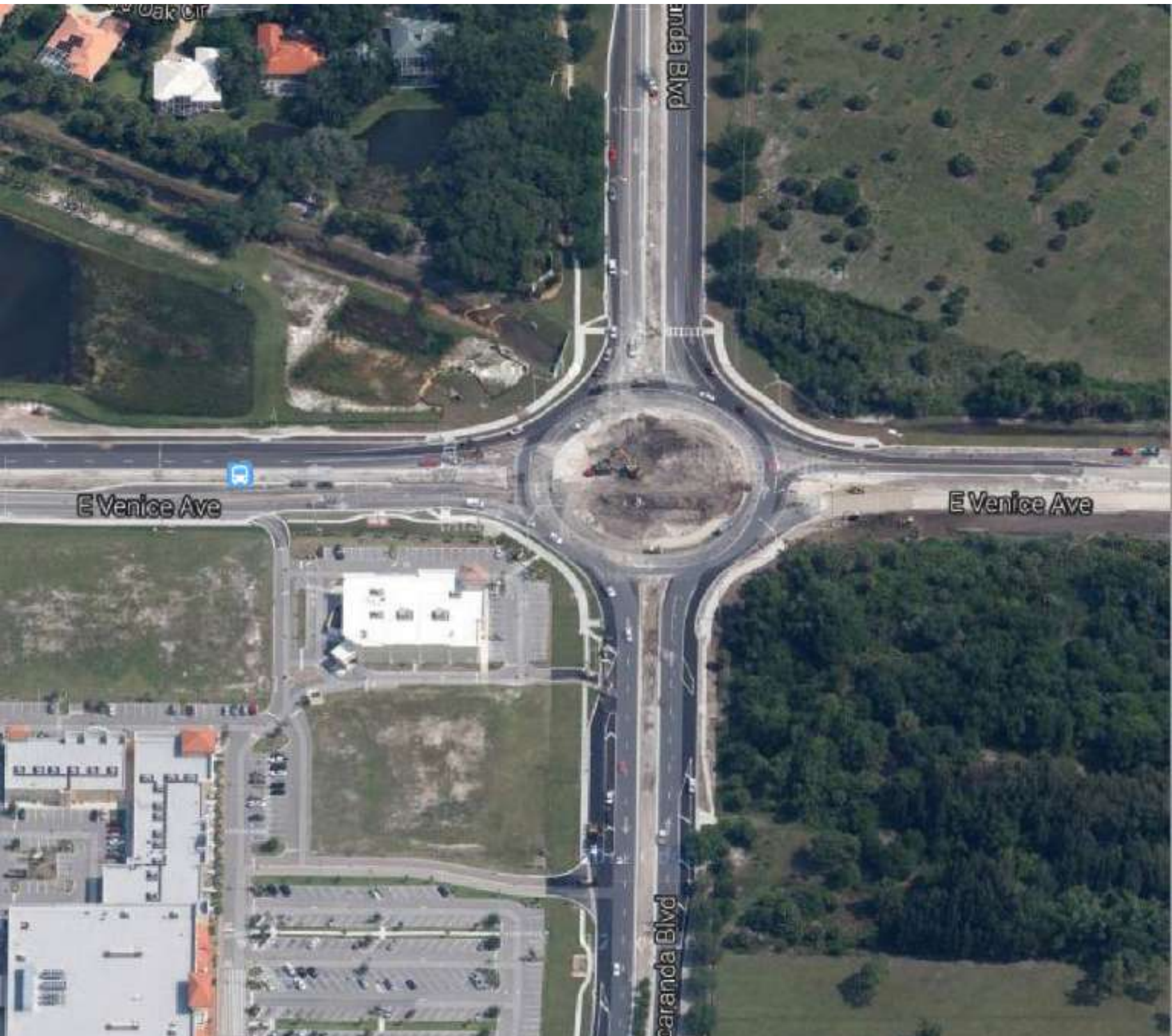
Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

When she talked with FDOT District One Secretary Billy Hattaway about the matter during the [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (MPO) meeting the prior day, she said, he explained to her that the

roundabout could be constructed with four lanes of traffic, to facilitate vehicle movement. Still, she continued, “I don’t know how I feel about it. It’s kind of hard to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ and I think the public is owed a conversation and education on that, and the opportunity to object.”

Patterson also noted that, based on the Jan. 27 MPO discussions, FDOT staff does not feel obliged to take the MPO members’ advice regarding safety projects, such as the roundabout proposal.

“I actually never thought [FDOT was] bound on anything,” but its position on a plan seems



Sarasota County completed a roundabout at Jacaranda Boulevard and East Venice Avenue in 2011. Image from Google Maps



'Wig-wag' lights alternate in flashing at the FDOT crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road to alert drivers to pedestrians. File photo

firmer when a safety consideration is involved, she added.

Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, who seconded Patterson's Jan. 28 motion, made it plain she is "not anti roundabout." In fact, Robinson pointed out, "I love the roundabout near my house at Jacaranda [Boulevard in Venice]. I go through it just about daily." (The Venice project was completed in 2011.)

Regarding the Siesta proposal, Robinson continued, "I have severe doubts as to its working when traffic stops, and traffic stops there a *lot*," especially in February, March and April.

Robinson added that it often takes her 30 to 45 minutes to get off the island when she starts to leave the key about 3:30 p.m. on weekdays. (She has children at The Out-of-Door Academy.)

"[The roundabout will] be horrible during season, in my opinion," she told her colleagues, "[though] I'm hoping I'm wrong."

"I wouldn't rebut you," Patterson responded, "because I just don't know."

One question that has continued to bother her, Patterson noted, is the FDOT assertion that the roundabout is needed to make it safer and easier for pedestrians to cross at the Beach Road/Midnight Pass Road intersection, which is near Siesta Public Beach.

"When there's not a huge traffic jam," Patterson said, "apparently, people go [through that intersection] pretty fast" when they make a right-hand turn onto the segment of Midnight

Pass Road that leads to the northern part of the island.

However, she indicated it had been pointed out to her that when FDOT installed the six new pedestrian crossings on Midnight Pass Road in the fall of 2012, one of them was built close to that intersection. That is another reason traffic tends to back up there, especially during high season.

(A crosswalk is located near the entrance to the Gulf & Bay Club, at 5730 Midnight Pass Road, and the Wells Fargo Bank, at 5810 Midnight Pass Road. It is a short distance east of the intersection.)

Nonetheless, Patterson said, "It seems like there would be safer and cheaper solutions [than the roundabout]."

"Like the flashing lights" at those new Midnight Pass Road crosswalks, Robinson pointed out, referring to the "wig-wag" lights people activate when they want to walk from one side of that stretch of road to the other.

Patterson suggested that the presentation of aerial views of the intersection during an FDOT public meeting, as well as illustrations of the potential roundabout design, might alleviate Siesta residents' concerns.

After she finished her comments, Patterson drew a few chuckles when she asked Hines whether the board had voted on her motion. It had not at that point, he replied, adding, however, that he had written down her intentions. "I got my note: 'Write a letter.'"

Then when Hines called for the vote, no one dissented. 



BUSTED PLUMBING AND OTHER ISSUES

About 70 people showed up in the Bobby Jones Golf Course clubhouse this week for a public meeting about a master plan for the facility. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

CITY-OWNED GOLF COURSE NEEDS A TURF-LIFT, SAYS SUPPORT GROUP

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Shawn Pierson has a dream for the Bobby Jones Golf Course. He wants to return it to its initial configuration, while modernizing the course's tees and creating a new clubhouse at a different site.

He shared his dream with about 70 other golfers at the current clubhouse on Tuesday evening, Jan. 28, at a city-sponsored public meeting on the creation of a master plan for the municipal facility. Pierson is a founder of the Friends

of Bobby Jones Golf Club, a nonprofit group formed last year that supports the 291-acre, city-owned facility. For a comparison, the course and buildings together are eight times the size of downtown's Payne Park.

“*What should we do with it? Should it benefit just golfers or the entire city? Visitors? Folks from Manatee and Sarasota counties? The neighbors across the street?*”

Shawn Pierson
Founder
Friends of Bobby Jones Golf Club

The Bobby Jones course was created in 1925 by a famous course architect named Donald Ross. The club's name-sake is arguably the greatest golfer of the 20th century; he was a winter resident of Sarasota at the time it

opened. And, yes, Bobby Jones did play on the Ross-designed course, along with many of the sport's early notables.

"All of the first, second and some of the third class of inductees to the Golf Hall of Fame played here," Pierson told the crowd. "What should we do with it? Should it benefit just golfers or the entire city? Visitors? Folks from Manatee and Sarasota counties? The neighbors across the street?"

CLIMBING THE LADDER

Pierson is a member of the city's Parks, Recreation and Environmental Protection

Advisory board, nicknamed the PREP board. It was reorganized a few years ago when the Sarasota City Commission abolished a number of advisory groups and amalgamated others. The Bobby Jones advisory board was boiled down to one member serving on the PREP board. Today that representative is Shawn Pierson.

After hearing Pierson's dream, the PREP board recommended he make his pitch to the City Commission. It in turn recommended a public meeting of golfers, neighbors and any other interested parties to talk about a master plan for the Bobby Jones Golf Club.



Bobby Jones was unquestionably the greatest amateur golfer in American history, regularly trouncing the professionals in tournaments. Here he is in a photo taken at his namesake course in Sarasota. Photo taken by Stan Zimmerman of an old photo

At one point, an old city dump stood in the northeast corner of what is now the course. And the natural drainage was rearranged when the state and county widened Fruitville Road, which runs along the course's southern boundary. So all is not as it was in 1925.

The club is composed of three courses and a small training/warm-up area. It offers the American, the British and the Executive courses. The British Course co-opted some of the original Ross design, and then the current clubhouse was built atop the old first tee of the Ross course. The Executive Course is a shorter affair in terms of playing time and distance — not quite a par three design but close.

Doug Jeffcoat, the city's public works director, opened and closed the meeting on Jan. 28.

At one point, he asked for a show of hands. "How many like the American Course?" A few hands were raised. "The British Course?" Most hands went up. The Gillespie [executive] Course?" Very few hands went into the air.

Pierson has four separate initiatives for the course that he thinks will revitalize flagging interest in the facility. He names them after a few of the great golfers of the past and present. The Bobby Jones initiative would be a branding exercise, plus an exploration of ideas for a new clubhouse. The Donald Ross initiative would attempt to restore the initial design: "Let's put the Ross course back together again," Pierson said.

The Paul Azinger initiative is named after the city's most famous local golfer, a Sarasota



FRIENDS *of* BOBBY JONES GOLF CLUB

ive

The Donald Ross Initiative
The Value of History

The Gillespie Initiative
Grow the Game

The Paul
Up to the

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Members of the nonprofit Friends of Bobby Jones Golf Club hope to see improvements made at the city-owned course. Image from friendsofbobbyjonesgolfclub.org.

High School grad and winner of major professional championships. It would provide graduated tees, lengthening all the holes for the strongest players but replacing the old “ladies’ tees” and “senior tees” with starting points to make the distances more attractive to mixed-gender and mixed-age foursomes.

The last initiative is named for John Gillespie, first mayor of the town and arguably the Scot who created the state’s first golf course. It would be for the instruction of all ages — at all skill levels — in the art and science of golfing.

BUT THE REALITY IS ...

“It would be nice to have a long-term view, but I think this place needs a short-term plan,” said meeting attendee Barry Gordon following Pierson’s pitch. “The bathroom has been out of order for some time.”

While the unisex, handicap-accessible bathroom in the clubhouse works, the men’s and women’s facilities are in a portable trailer outside.

“My main criticism is the condition, including the bathrooms. And the cost,” said Mike Mitovski. “The main reason I’ve stayed with Bobby Jones is the personnel. The pro shop has improved, and the restaurant has improved greatly.”

“I’ve watched this course evolve over the past 45 years,” added Dan Smith. “The biggest impact was in the 1980s, when Fruitville Road was widened and Bobby Jones was forced to retain its [storm] water. I would suggest a little capital money to deal with drainage. It

would go a long way to get the turf back to what it was 25 years ago.”

One woman said she was “amazed” at the cost to use the facility. She noted she had paid \$23 the day before to play nine holes. “At that time of day, I can get 18 holes at The Meadows,” she said. “This is still a city course.”

Jeffcoat responded that the course is operated as an enterprise fund, but all the money it generates goes back into the city’s general fund for redistribution. “From the capital standpoint, the only capital dollars [for course improvements such as a clubhouse] that were voted on were a part of the sales tax surcharge. It’s the only source,” he said. “No Visit Sarasota [i.e. tourist bed tax] money; no property taxes.”

“Why would we hold a big event that makes a lot of money if the profit goes into the general fund?” asked one member of the audience. Jeffcoat responded, “These are policy decisions at the commission level. I can’t say what’s right or wrong.”

Another man suggested corporate sponsorships, and Pierson said the “Friends” group is researching that. “We’re looking at a couple of models to put before the City Commission,” he added. “Maybe we can consider a revenue bond for part of this, the clubhouse or the Ross or Azinger or Gillespie courses. And there is a county fund for sports tourism. If we can convince the county that Bobby Jones is a regional draw, we can apply for that money.”

For a more complete picture of Pierson’s four initiatives, visit the website friendsofbobby-jonesgolfclub.org. 

EMERGING INTO THE REAL WORLD



Critics argue that the Downtown Sarasota Redevelopment Agency has rid the city of blight and slums and does not need to be extended. Photo by Norman Schimmel

MANY FACTORS WILL COME INTO PLAY AS THE DECISION IS MADE ON WHETHER TO EXTEND THE DOWNTOWN SARASOTA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The work of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Extension Study Committee is over. Now comes the selling of its product.

The reality hit home at the committee members' last formal meeting — held on Wednesday evening, Jan. 29 — as they reviewed the final draft of their report. It is written as a 125-slide PowerPoint presentation, but another PowerPoint show will be prepared

for the joint Sarasota City-County commission meeting tentatively scheduled for April Fool's Day.

One of the projections in the final report indicates — if the plan is approved — that more than \$400 million in county tax revenue will be shifted to downtown Sarasota activities. Selling that to the county commissioners could be an uphill battle.

Extending the life of the CRA will require a

“The two most important decisions: Extend the CRA? And for how long? All the rest can be negotiated.”

Marlon Brown
Deputy City Manager
City of Sarasota



formal interlocal agreement signed by both commissions. At stake — depending on whose projections are used — is about half a billion dollars in total city and county property tax revenue. But who might be in a position to sign that document is as imponderable as the document itself.

A lot of political water will flow under the bridge before the current CRA expires in 2016.

WHO WILL DECIDE?

Who will vote on the interlocal agreement depends on when that vote is held. For example, two county commissioners face term limits and will come off the board in November. So if the issue comes up before then, Commissioners Nora Patterson and Joe Barbetta will cast their votes.

From prior statements, that is a wash. Patterson has spoken on several occasions against the CRA extension, while Barbetta has been in favor of it. A year ago at a joint City-County commission meeting, Patterson said, “I’m as committed to the downtown as anybody at this table. I live in the city, I love the city. But I think extending this is not a good idea.”

Barbetta added at the same meeting, “It’s been successful. We all win if we reinvest in our community. From my perspective, I’m for extending it.” He, like Patterson, is a city resident.

At present, two Republican candidates are vying for the nomination to replace Patterson. Alan Maio and Lourdes Ramirez are running for that District Four seat. For District Two, the candidates are Paul Caragiulo and Pete



Two new county commissioners could decide the fate of the CRA. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Theisen — both Republicans and city residents. That is the race to replace Barbetta.

Meanwhile, city elections are coming up in the spring of 2015. Caragiulo's seat will be open whether he wins or loses at the county level because of the "resign to run" rule. Vice Mayor Willie Shaw is likely to run for re-election; Mayor Shannon Snyder has made no indication either way.

The CRA benefits the city in many ways — subsidizing the Police Department with \$1 million per year to keep downtown safe, for example. So it is difficult to see a city commissioner or candidate spurning the county contribution (now \$4 million per year).

However, since the signatures on the interlocal agreement could be substantially different from those of today's city and county commissioners, the sales job for continuing the

CRA another 30 years will depend, in part, on who is being sold.

LINKAGE, ANYONE?

The temptation to "log-roll" the CRA extension will be almost irresistible. While common in Congress and the Florida Legislature, the practice of swapping votes ("I'll vote for your bill if you'll vote for mine") is rarer at the local level because such deals are often made out of the public eye. While the Legislature and Congress have private cloakrooms, city and county commissions do not, and the latter must comply with open government regulations. Florida's Government in the Sunshine laws, however, do not ban members of different boards from talking to each other, so a city commissioner and a county commissioner can cut a deal, as long as they do not extend their deal to other members of their respective boards. When there is a will, a way will be found.



The City Commission has been the governing body of the CRA. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The stakes are high for the city, with that half-billion-dollar pot of gold for downtown investment. But the county commissioners may set a high price for their approval. While the battle lines are not clear yet, a joint city-county venture to create a homeless shelter in Shaw's north Sarasota district is facing resistance from Shaw and City Commissioner Susan Chapman. Would they be willing to drop their resistance to the shelter in return for county approval of a CRA extension? A smaller matter regarding the future of the old downtown police department site on Ringling Boulevard — over which the two local government boards have been wrangling — could be another log that could be rolled for CRA approval.

The county commissioners could modify the recommendations of the extension study committee, changing the extension to 20 years instead of 30, for example; or they could demand more control of the proposed new CRA governing board. They also might want to retain a share of their annual CRA contribution instead of turning it all over to the city. If so, perhaps they might need to add a “sweetener” to get City Commission approval.

As the extension committee's work drew to a close, a few members began to look beyond their final report. “It will be a tall order to get both commissions to vote on a series of items,” said member Michael Beaumier. “As I look at it, they will read our report and decide if there is a basis to continue the discussion to continue the CRA — with this panel or another group or staff to develop the framework for an interlocal agreement both commissions can accept.”



Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown has been the city liaison to the Downtown CRA Extension Study Committee. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown summed it up: “The two most important decisions: Extend the CRA? And for how long? All the rest can be negotiated.”

CRA IN A NUTSHELL

A Community Redevelopment Area (or, sometimes, Agency) is a tax revenue-splitting scheme to benefit a specifically designated zone. A city or county or both can decide to freeze their property tax revenue “take” for a specific year. As property values rise over time, the extra tax revenue coming in above the “base year” accrues to the designated zone.

In the case of the Downtown Sarasota CRA, that “zone” runs from 10th Street south along the bayfront to Mound Street, and then it skirts around Laurel Park to encompass the


lower Main Street area up to Fourth Street. There it joins Orange Avenue and swings back to 10th Street.

The interlocal agreement to create the CRA was signed in 1986, which is the base year for the tax-increment financing scheme. The CRA was planned to be in effect for 30 years, until 2016. Through September 2012, it had raised \$76 million. Seventy percent of that went to “bricks and mortar” projects; 8 percent went for administration, and 15 percent was spent on “enhanced services,” including landscaping and highway maintenance, police services and transfers to the more recent CRA established in north Sarasota.

While the core reason to establish a CRA was to fight “slum and blight,” state law actually allows spending the money on a wide variety of measures. Those include crime prevention,

historic preservation, business recruitment, parks and recreation enhancement and economic development.

The current CRA is governed by the Sarasota City Commission. The committee studying extending the current CRA recommends it go on for another 30 years, keeping the 1986 base tax value year but changing the governance to a seven-member board composed of two city commissioners, two county commissioners and three citizens appointed by the City Commission.

Assuming no change in the tax rate and 5-percent annual growth in taxable value in the downtown CRA, a 30-year extension would contribute \$351 million in county taxes. When the city portion is added, the CRA between 2016 and 2046 could be worth more than half a billion dollars. 

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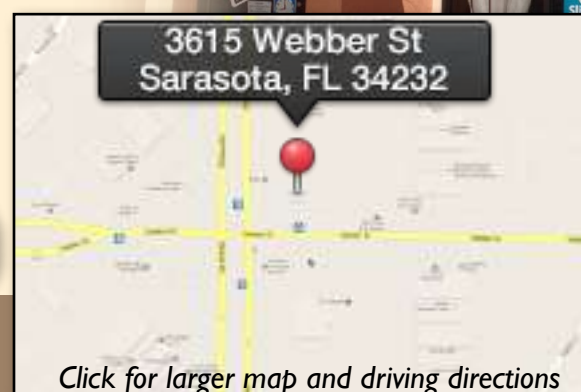
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GIDGET'S RENTAL PLANS A GO

Construction continued on the Gidget's Coastal Provisions building in Siesta Village on Jan. 7. File photo

THE COUNTY COMMISSION CLEARS THE WAY FOR THREE TRANSIENT UNITS ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF A NEW SIESTA VILLAGE RETAIL SHOP

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

In slightly less time than the 20 minutes allotted just to the petitioner in a special exception case, the Sarasota County Commission this week unanimously cleared the way for three transient apartments to be created above the new Gidget's Coastal Provisions retail shop on Ocean Boulevard in Siesta Village.

The units will be rented for no less than 30 days at a time.

After the county invested public money in landscaping and sidewalk

improvements to Siesta Village in 2008, Commissioner Nora Patterson told her colleagues during their Jan. 28 meeting, she had hoped property owners would be encouraged to pursue structural upgrades. "This is pretty much the first," she pointed out, "so I'm actually quite happy with it."

“ *We think highly of this project and would like you to support it.*

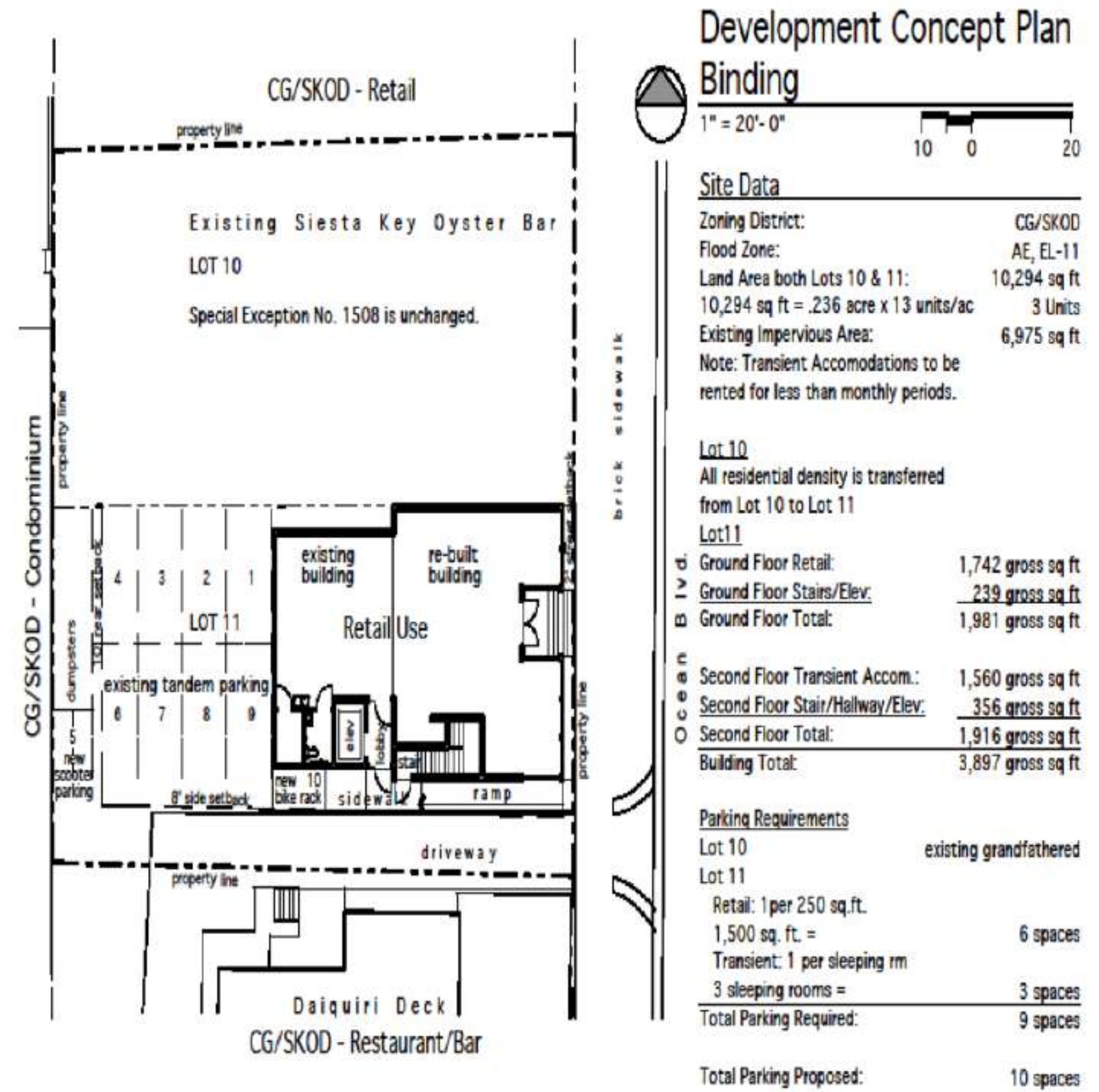
Peter van Roekens
Terrace East
Homeowners Board

”

Gidget's Coastal Provisions, which will be owned and operated by Brian and Trudy Wigelsworth, will feature [Margaritaville Apparel](#) and upscale gifts, Brian told *The*

Sarasota News Leader last year. The property, owned jointly by Jim Sypret and Jim Lancer, used to be the home of Napoli’s Restaurant. Napoli’s has relocated to the shopping center at the intersection of Ocean Boulevard and Avenida Messina.

The transient units were proposed to create more income than the lease of the retail business would bring in, Siesta architect Mark Smith — acting on behalf of Sypret and Lancer — explained to the Sarasota County Planning Commission on Dec. 19. The



The development concept plan for Gidget’s Coastal Provisions and three transient units on the second floor shows the parking plan. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Planning Commission approved the special exception request with a 7-0 vote.

Mark Loveridge, a planner in the county's Planning and Development Services Department, told the County Commission this week that the site is zoned Commercial General under the guidelines of the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD). Its neighbors are a mix of retail operations, office space and multi-family residences, he added.

"The actual regulations of SKOD say no upper-story residential for Siesta Key," Patterson noted. "I guess transient units are not classified as residential?"

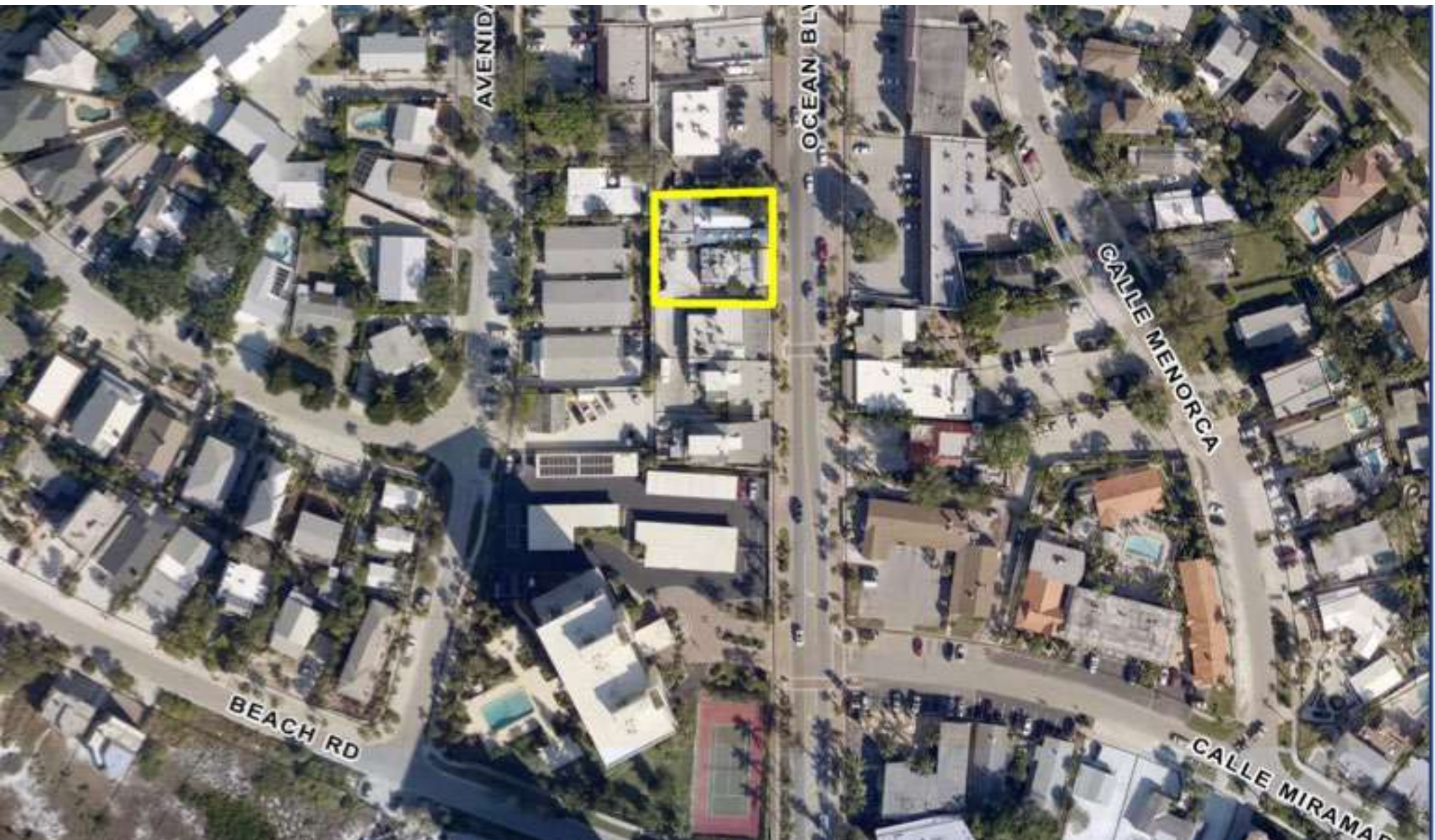
"That's correct," Loveridge responded. The transient use falls under the Commercial

category in CG zoning, he noted, but a special exception is required.

He also pointed out that the use "allows density by right."

When Patterson then asked for clarification that the square footage available is sufficient to support three transient units, even if they were to be built on the ground floor, Loveridge said, "That's correct."

With lower intensity of use involved with a retail establishment than with a restaurant, Patterson continued, it could be argued that the intensity of the total use of the new property would be still be lower, even with the rental units. However, she asked, what would happen if the property owners decided at a



An aerial view of the property where Gidget's Coastal Provisions is going up in Siesta Village (in yellow) shows the Terrace East condominium complex across from Calle Miramar. Image courtesy Sarasota County

later date to get rid of the retail operation and put in another restaurant or bar?

If the County Commission approved the special exception petition, Loveridge said, the owners would find it a difficult undertaking to convert the structure back to a restaurant at some future time, thanks to the parking regulations implemented several years ago in Siesta Village. “[The owners] would never get enough parking to have a restaurant,” he added.

Architect Smith explained that if Syprett and Lancer decided at some point to lease the space to a new restaurant the same size as Napoli’s, that establishment would have to have 23 parking spaces. “Napoli’s [was] there, I think, since the key was the key,” he added. It had eight parking spaces in the back, and it functioned under the grandfathered-in guidelines implemented when the new parking ordinance went into effect about five years ago.

Given the footprint of the new building, Smith continued, six parking spaces are required for the retail space, plus one space per each transient unit. Because one space is allotted in the parking design for a scooter and plans call for a bike rack as well, he pointed out, the parking plan will provide 10 spaces.

“In all honesty and sincerity, the case of the property going from a restaurant/bar use to a higher-end retail tenant — the property owners and the rest of the Village believe it’s a real positive asset to Siesta Key and to the Village,” Smith said, “and we’re all excited about it.”



Commissioner Nora Patterson listens to comments during the Jan. 28 meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

When Patterson then asked Smith, as she had Loveridge, whether the transient units used up all the density allowed for the site, Smith told her that was correct.

“So they couldn’t come in with another three or four [units] on top [of those]?” Patterson questioned him.

“That’s not possible,” Smith replied.

In regard to the site plan, Patterson also asked how the tandem parking works. How do people get out of those spaces “other than backing out onto Ocean [Boulevard]?”

Loveridge explained that the county Zoning Department staff and its administrator examined the parking plan for Gidget’s and deemed it acceptable. “That is a grandfather condition,

and it was determined that that would be allowed as part of this request.”

When Patterson asked her question again of Smith, he replied, “The way they’ve always done it, ma’am, I guess: cooperation and a neighborhood full of love,” drawing laughter from some of the board members.

OTHER SITE DETAILS

As he had explained to the Planning Commission on Dec. 19, Smith told the County Commission that the new structure has been made floodproof without its having to be elevated “on stilts.”

The foundation is a 32-inch concrete slab, he added, and flood panels will go up on the exterior where doors and other openings are.

He told the Planning Commission the combination of that slab and the flood panels should enable the ground floor to resist the hydrostatic pressure of a storm event. “It’s really neat technology,” Smith said at that Dec. 19 meeting.

Because of the design, the first floor is only 30 inches higher than the level of the sidewalk, Smith continued.

Noting that representatives of Benderson Development were present for the agenda item just prior to the transient units public hearing, Smith said he was disappointed they had left. He had hoped they would listen to him talk about his belief that older structures in the Village can be improved without having to be elevated to meet Federal Emergency Management Act regulations for construction in floodplains, he said.

Benderson owns the shopping center across from Gidget’s, Smith noted.

AS FOR THE NOISE ...

“We do get a few noise complaints on occasion on Siesta Key in the Village,” Smith told the commissioners. If landlords have tenants above the businesses, he added, “There’s a better chance of self-policing.”

Planning Commission members thought other Siesta Village landlords should consider adopting Symprett’s and Lancer’s model, he said. “We’ll see how that goes.”


Only one speaker appeared before the County Commission during the public hearing. Peter van Roekens, representing the Terrace East condominium complex homeowners board, said, “It gives me great pleasure, actually, to come and speak in favor of a development.”

The Terrace East board members “really think this is a great idea,” he added, noting any time a bar can be replaced with a retail business in the Village, “I think that’s wonderful.”

Van Roekens continued, “The noise is a problem [in the Village], and I think this wall has helped.”

Terrace East is south of the Gidget’s/Siesta Key Oyster Bar site.

“In any event,” van Roekens said, “we think highly of this project and would like you to support it.”

With no other speakers, Chairman Charles Hines closed the public hearing. Patterson made the motion to approve the special exception, with Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson seconding it. 

Thunder by the Bay had about 90,000 attendees this year, organizers say. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THUNDER BY THE BAY OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT UP

The 2014 Thunder by the Bay, a fundraiser for [Suncoast Charities for Children](#), increased its overall economic impact on Sarasota County by 8.7 percent from the previous year, Lucy Nicandri, vice president of Suncoast Charities, reported this week.

The direct and indirect economic impact totaled \$7.4 million, she told *The Sarasota News Leader* in a Jan. 28 email, and the event resulted in 5,400 room nights in area lodgings.

“Fully 95.0% of the out-of-county attendees of Thunder by the Bay either came to Sarasota because of the event or said it was important in bringing them to the area,” notes the report Suncoast Charities commissioned from [Research Data Services Inc.](#) of Tampa.

Although final budget numbers are still being calculated, Nicandri added, conservative projections show an increase of more than \$100,000 in net revenue for Suncoast Charities for Children.

According to a breakdown of the statistics that Nicandri provided the *News Leader*, of

the estimated 90,000 people who attended 2014 Thunder by the Bay events, 43.5 percent live in Sarasota County year-round or seasonally. Among the non-resident attendees, 11.8 percent were overnight visitors.

Of the out-of-county participants, 76.4 percent were from other parts of Florida.

Not surprisingly, 72.5 percent of the non-residents who traveled to Sarasota for Thunder by the Bay came by motorcycle, the statistics show.

The average age of attendees was 51.9 years, and the median reported household income was \$108,200, the report says. Additionally, 66.1 percent of the participants were male.

The findings were based on 314 face-to-face interviews conducted with randomly selected visitors, the report adds.

When Nicandri emailed a similar report to the County Commission on Jan. 28, Commissioner Joe Barbetta commended her as well as her board, staff and volunteers for “another great job!”

Rachel Brown Hackney

NEW COLLEGE MOVES UP TO NO. 2 ON PRINCETON REVIEW LIST

New College of Florida has been ranked the No. 2 *Best Value Public College in America* for 2014 by The Princeton Review, “one of America’s best-known education services companies,” the college has announced.

The list was published this week by *USA Today*.

New College moved up one place in the rankings, from the No. 3 position last year, a news release points out.

The appearance continues New College’s six-year run of placing among Princeton Review’s top three public schools offering “exceptional academics at an affordable price,” the release adds. New College was ranked No. 2 in 2011 and 2009 and No. 3 in 2013, 2012 and 2010.

The school is one of only three U.S. public colleges that have made Princeton Review’s Top 10 list all six years, the release notes.

“We’re pleased that Princeton Review recognizes that year after year, New College has provided an education of the highest quality, at a cost that is significantly lower than that of almost all of the country’s leading colleges and universities,” said Dr. Donal O’Shea, president of New College, in the release.

The Princeton Review’s 2013 list features 75 public and 75 private colleges, and it ranks the Top 10 in each category for their “stellar academics and financial aid.”

“They’re exceptional schools, academically, that are giving out generous financial aid and



New College has moved up on the annual Princeton Review List of ‘Best Value Public Colleges.’ Photo courtesy New College

keeping their sticker prices low,” said Robert Franek, senior vice president and publisher of Princeton Review and lead author of *The Best Value Colleges*, the release continues.

New College of Florida is the state of Florida’s honors college for the liberal arts and sciences. With a student population of slightly more than 800, it “emphasizes individualized learning for students from 38 states and 20 foreign countries,” the release adds. It is consistently ranked among the top liberal arts colleges in the nation for both academics and value by *U.S. News & World Report*, [Forbes.com](#), *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance* and other media outlets.

Among the college’s notable achievements are the following, the release points out:

- It produces more Fulbright Scholarship recipients per capita than almost all other U.S. colleges and universities, with 56 in the past decade and 33 in the past five years.
- Nearly 20 percent of its graduates are in the STEM fields of science, technology, math and engineering, one of the highest percentages in the nation.

- About 30 percent of the students receive Pell Grants, which support low-income families, also one of the highest percentages in the country.
- More than half of all New College’s students graduate with no debt.

The Princeton Review used institutional data and student surveys from fall 2012 to fall 2013 to assess about 650 colleges nationwide, the release explains. It examines 30 criteria, including academic performance, costs and financial aid. For the 2012-2013 academic year, New College’s in-state tuition and fees were \$6,783.

The Princeton Review also considers the percentage of students who take out loans and the average debt those students have at graduation, the release says. It then selects 75 public and 75 private colleges as the best values, ranks the top 10 schools in each category, and then lists the rest in alphabetical order.

The Princeton Review’s *Best Value* schools rankings are available on its website, at princetonreview.com/best-value-colleges.aspx.

BROOKSIDE MIDDLE TO HOST IB INFORMATION EVENT NEXT WEEK

Brookside Middle School will host an opportunity next week for students and parents to learn about offerings for its International Baccalaureate (IB) program, the Sarasota County Schools has announced.

IB Discovery Night is set for 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 4. The event will be an open house “welcoming current students and their families, as well as those interested in attending Brookside next year,” a news release says.

Brookside alumni also are welcome to attend. Displays across campus will showcase the many courses, organizations and activities available to students. Parents of current students may pick up report cards, and the book fair will be open, the release notes.

“As the International Baccalaureate middle school for Sarasota County, Brookside invites every child to find a home in its school family,” said Principal Kristine Lawrence in the release.

“At Brookside, instruction is tailored to students’ levels. Offerings include gifted programs, accelerated classes, enrichment classes and classes for high school credit, including Algebra I, Geometry, Speech I, Spanish I, Chinese I and, next year, French I,” the release continues.

“TechActive Classrooms of Tomorrow provide hands-on activities for science and math students to experience technology and interactive devices such as temperature sensors, digital microscopes, motion sensors, pH

sensors, advanced calculators and data loggers,” which allow the students to collect the data and then download it to the main computer, the release says. “A pilot Social Studies TechActive Classroom of Tomorrow will open at Brookside in the spring.”

More information is available at SarasotaCountySchools.net/schools/Brookside.

Brookside Middle School is located at 3636 S. Shade Ave. in Sarasota.

BAY GUARDIAN VOLUNTEERS COMPLETE PROJECT AT ARLINGTON PARK

A group of 53 Bay Guardian volunteers with the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) removed 1,227 pounds of the invasive air potato vine and seeds from Arlington Park on Jan. 25, SBEP has announced.

The biggest air potato seed unearthed weighed 1.3 pounds, a news release says.

Volunteers earned prizes for the smallest and weirdest-looking air potatoes and the largest number collected by an individual, the release adds. SBEP provided a picnic lunch following the morning project.

“The Bay Guardians are the largest and most active volunteer program in the region focused on Sarasota Bay,” the release notes. The award-winning initiative is managed by SBEP in partnership with Around the Bend Nature Tours. Each new volunteer receives a blue T-shirt featuring the Bay Guardians logo, the release notes.

Every outing features environmental education and a picnic lunch. Local school, Scout and church groups interested in volunteering should contact Sara Kane at sara@sarasotabay.org.



Bay Guardian volunteers removed more than half a ton of air potato vines and seeds from Arlington Park in Sarasota. Contributed photo

ARLINGTON PARK POOL TO CLOSE FOR SIX MONTHS FOR RENOVATIONS

The Arlington Park Pool, located at 2650 Waldemere St. in Sarasota, will close Monday, Feb. 10, for about six months for renovations, Sarasota County has announced.

The renovations, which are being funded and directed by the City of Sarasota, will involve different aspects of the facility, a news release says. The project will focus on the pump room operations, with the filters, pumps and heaters to be replaced with more modern equipment, it adds.

The indoor gymnasium, workout room and the outdoor basketball, tennis and racquetball courts will remain open during the renovations.

This park is owned by the City of Sarasota and operated by Sarasota County Parks and Recreation.

For more information, visit www.scgov.net, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 or contact the City of Sarasota at 365-2200.



The Arlington Park pool is located on Waldemere Street in Sarasota. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

ROBERT L. TAYLOR COMPLEX TO HOST ITS FIRST FITNESS CHALLENGE

To promote healthful living, the Robert L. Taylor Community Complex (RLTCC) will present its first fitness challenge, *Lose Big, Win Bigger*, starting Monday, Feb. 3, the City of Sarasota has announced.

During the challenge, “RLTCC will also host a series of diverse and interactive events that will provide valuable incentives and ongoing support for the participants,” a news release says. The challenge will encompass healthful eating and cooking demonstrations, tips on strategies for successful weight loss, and documentaries and informative seminars by the Community Healthy Action Team (CHAT) that will focus on gardening and creating nutritious meals, the release notes. “The fitness challenge is a friendly area competition designed to help community members get into shape and improve their overall health,” said Jerry Fogle, RLTCC manager, in the release. “It’s a great way to kick off the New Year and,

hopefully, encourage a life-long commitment toward fitness.”

Lose Big, Win Bigger will run for eight weeks. On Feb. 3 and Tuesday, Feb. 4, weigh-ins will be its first activity, the release points out. Weigh-outs will be conducted on Monday, March 31, and Tuesday, April 1. The winners will be announced at a ceremony on Wednesday, April 2, with participants having an opportunity to win such prizes as a flat-screen LED TV, a tablet and a Blu-ray DVD player.

The entry fee will be \$30, which includes a two-month Full Access Pass at RLTCC, three free fitness classes per week (yoga, Zumba and The Blend Zone) and a *Lose Big, Win Bigger* T-shirt, the release continues.

To enter the competition, a person must register at the front desk of the complex, pay the fee and weigh in with a staff member, it notes. Registration is already open to the public.



The Robert L. Taylor Community Complex is located in north Sarasota. Photo by Rachel Hackney

PICKLEBALL WORKSHOP FOR BEGINNERS PLANNED IN ENGLEWOOD

Sarasota County's Parks and Recreation Department will host its second annual Pickleball Workshop for Beginners at the Englewood Sports Complex, located at 1300 S. River Road in Englewood, on Wednesday, Feb. 5, from 10 to 11:30 a.m., the county has announced.

"The workshop will introduce this fun, easy-to-learn game that is taking Southwest Florida by storm, and provide the history of the game

and rules with playtime inside the gymnasium," said Wendy Aldridge, Englewood Sports Complex program coordinator, in the release.

Loaner paddles will be available, the release notes. This free event is part of Englewood's 12th Annual Lemon Bay Fest.

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



A pickleball game is under way at the Englewood Sports Complex. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

RUSSELL AND FOX PRESENTED BLUE DOLPHIN AWARDS

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) presented Blue Dolphin Awards to Sean Russell and Lee Fox on Jan. 28 during a reception hosted by the SBEP Citizens Advisory Committee. “The annual Blue Dolphin Awards acknowledge local champions of Sarasota Bay,” a news release points out.

Russell, who attends the University of Florida, “has helped raise awareness about preventing marine debris and supporting ocean conservation through the Stow It Don’t Throw It Project,” a nonprofit organization he established, the release continues. He also provides leadership in organizing the annual Youth

Ocean Conservation Summit held at Mote Marine Laboratory, the release adds.

Fox has been a caregiver for sick and injured birds for more than 25 years, the release says. After helping launch [Save Our Seabirds](#) in Sarasota, she has continued her work at a facility in Wimauma.

The other 2013 Blue Dolphin Award winners were Don and Denise Elliott of Anna Maria Island, the release adds. The couple was acknowledged for creating a bay-friendly demonstration garden at Sunbow Bay Condo Development. SBEP provided Bay Partner Grants to support the multi-year project.



Sara Kane (left) presents a Blue Dolphin Award to Lee Fox. Contributed photo

NEW COLLEGE TO HOLD ITS THIRD ANNUAL FUN & FITNESS EXPO

The third annual Fun & Fitness Expo at New College of Florida “shows that there’s more to healthy living than annual checkups,” the college has announced.

The Feb. 6 event, which is open to the public, will feature community groups and businesses demonstrating aspects of a positive lifestyle, including acupuncture, massage, yoga and devices for “green” living, a news release explains.

“The hope is to promote lasting and meaningful connections within the community, as reflected in the mission of New College,” said Erin Robinson, associate director of the Counseling and Wellness Center at New College and an organizer of the expo, in the release.

Among the activities will be rock wall climbing, henna painting and the chance to interact with animals from the Humane Society of Sarasota County, Cat Depot, Sarasota County Animal Rescue and Big Cat Habitat, the release notes. New College bands and members of the college’s dance and athletic clubs also will perform.

Manatee Technical Institute students again will provide free haircuts and manicures, the release continues. Additionally, attendees will be able to donate blood and be tested for potential bone marrow matches for cancer patients.

During the event, organizers will give away prizes including local gym memberships, a scuba lesson and a hotel stay, the release adds.



New College of Florida will host its third Fun & Fitness Expo on Feb. 6. Photo courtesy New College

“The Fun and Fitness Expo brings together students from New College, [the University of South Florida] Sarasota-Manatee and the surrounding Sarasota and Bradenton communities to engage with aspects of health and wellness that go beyond the conventional experiences of a health fair,” Robinson said in the release.

The Fun & Fitness Expo will be held from 1 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 6, outside the Counseling and Wellness Center (across from Jane Bancroft Cook Library) on the bayfront campus of New College of Florida. For more information, contact the Counseling and Wellness Center at 487-4254.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POSITIVE AGING SET FOR NEXT MONTH

[The Institute for the Ages](#), co-host of the Seventh Annual International Conference on Positive Aging next month in Sarasota, has announced that more than a third of the speakers who will be making presentations come from the Tampa Bay area.

The event will be held at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota Feb. 9-12.

More than 350 attendees are expected for this interactive conference, with approximately 75 speakers visiting from other countries, a news release notes. Click here for a [conference schedule](#).

Among the keynote speakers will be Marc Freedman, founder and CEO of [Encore.org](#), whose topic will be *The Generativity Revolution: A New Movement of Americans in the Second Half of Life*. Freedman has established himself as “a leading voice in

discussions nationwide about the changing face of retirement,” *The New York Times* has written, by founding a nonprofit organization that promotes post-retirement — “encore” — careers and by establishing himself as a leading author on retirement issues, the news release says. He was named to *AARP Magazine*’s list of the 50 Most Influential People Over 50 for 2013, and he has been honored with the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford University.

Ina Jaffe, national desk correspondent at National Public Radio and an aging issues expert, will present the dinner keynote address, the release adds. Jaffe has been honored with an award from the Society of Professional Journalists and a Gracie Award from the Alliance for Women in Media.

Click here for complete [list of keynote speakers](#). 

*A Second Chance
on My Smile.*



I am so incredibly pleased, with my beautiful smile
and my comfortable and natural bite. - Barbara Lee

For a complimentary consultation call 941.923.5406 | Christine Koval, D.M.D. | www.askdrkoval.com

CRIME BLOTTER



An aerial view shows the intersection of Palmadelia Avenue and 24th Street in north Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

OFFICERS SEIZE DRUGS, LOADED GUN AND BULLETS DURING TRAFFIC STOP

A 21-year-old Bradenton man was charged with two felony counts — Carrying a Concealed Weapon and Possession of Rock Cocaine — and a misdemeanor count of Possession of Marijuana Less than 20 Grams after Sarasota Police officers allegedly found the drugs and weapon in his vehicle during a traffic stop, the department has reported.

At 3:15 a.m. on Jan. 21, patrol officers directed Tarvin Martin of 2108 14th Ave. East in Bradenton to pull over at the intersection of 24th Street and Palmadelia Avenue in Sarasota after they saw his Toyota had illegal window tinting, a report says. When officers approached the car, Martin quickly exited it and tried to walk away, the report adds. After officers told Martin to return to the car, they smelled “an obvious odor of marijuana being emitted from the vehicle,” the report continues.



Tarvin Martin/Contributed photo

At that point, according to the report, Martin told the officers he pulled the vehicle over at their direction because “he didn’t want to go back to jail.”

Upon searching the Toyota, one officer found a loaded Star .45-caliber handgun under the driver’s seat, the report says. It had one round

in the chamber and five in the magazine, the report notes. Several other bullets were discovered in a sock, which was in the side pocket of the front passenger door.

Additionally, Martin had “a large amount of cash in his front left pocket,” the report notes.


POLICE DEPARTMENT TO HOST THIRD TWEET FROM THE BEAT

The Sarasota Police Department will take the public on another virtual ride-along on Friday, Jan. 31, the department has announced.

It will host its third Tweet from the Beat from 6:30 p.m. Friday until 3 a.m. Saturday, a news release says. Anyone who already has a Twitter account may follow the Sarasota Police Department at the handle [@SarasotaPD](#). Anyone who is not on Twitter may go to [twitter.com](#) and sign up, the release points out, adding that the process is easy.

“Throughout the night, Officer Jon Vanik and other officers will share what they see and do

through texts, videos and photos in tweets from the beat” through the Partnership Policing Communications Department coordinator, the release adds. People following [@SarasotaPD](#) will be able to ask questions and interact with those officers.

“Our Tweet from the Beat program has been a success with people and law enforcement from here in Sarasota and all over the country as they interact with our officers,” said Capt. Pat Robinson of the Bureau of Patrol Operations in the release. 

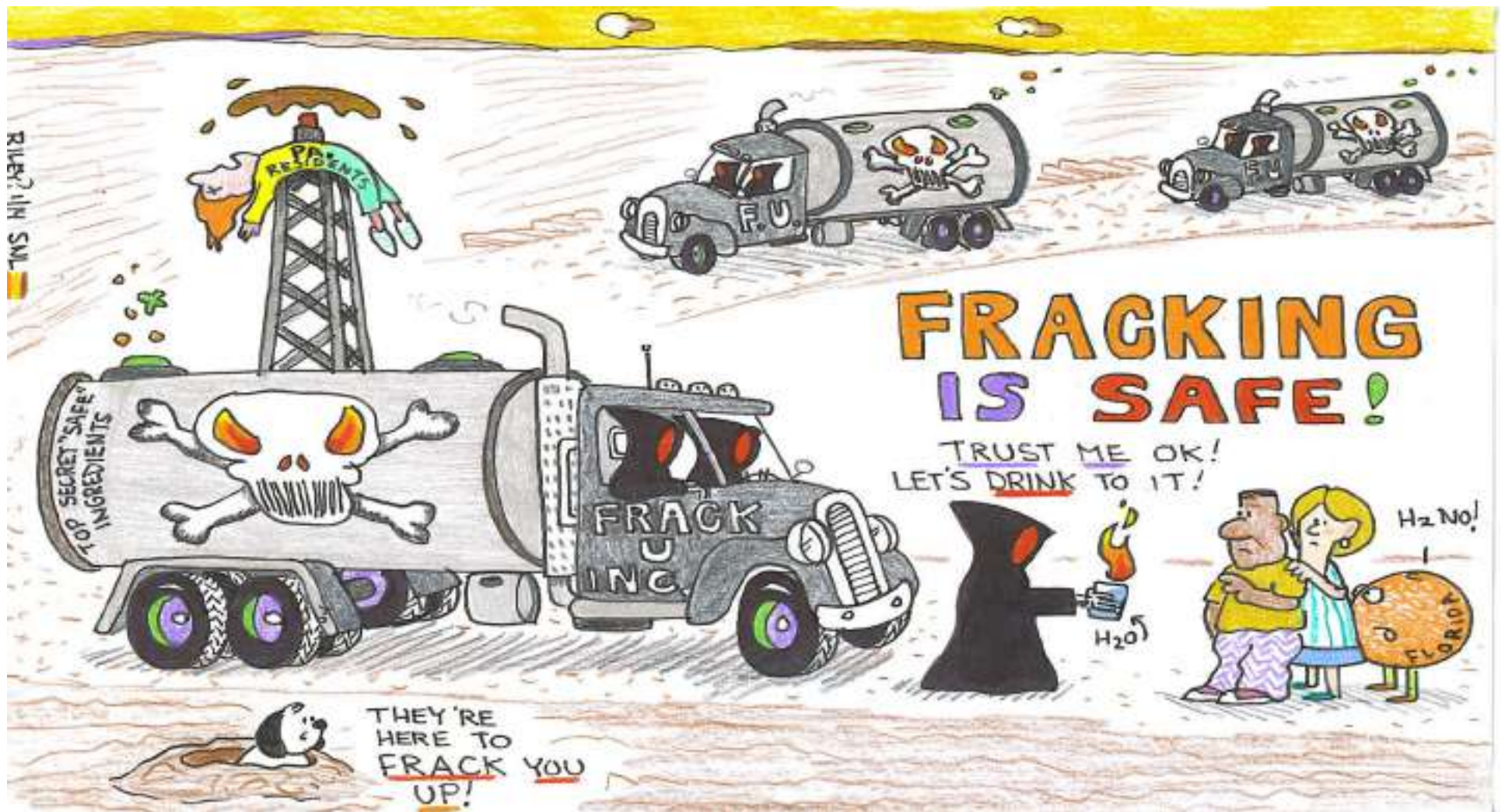
Tweet

from the BEAT

@SarasotaPD



OPINION



AN ENVIRONMENTAL APOCALYPSE: FRACKING IN FLORIDA

EDITORIAL

When the first Europeans arrived in Florida 500 years ago, they found, at least from an environmental perspective, a virtual paradise.

The land supported a diverse array of flora and fauna, nurtured by numerous natural springs. Those springs were fed by underground aquifers that had filtered the water for 100,000 years to pristine purity.

In the intervening centuries, the impact of settlers on that ecosystem has been dramatic ... especially in the last century.

In fact, a significant part of Florida's history now consists of an accounting of the environmental depredation inflicted by those who brought "progress" to our state.

In south Florida, the damming up of the Everglades by the construction of the Tamiami Trail in the 1920s disrupted the natural flow of the "River of Grass" from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay. With millions of sticks of dynamite, construction crews created the Tamiami Canal in the limestone shelf, providing the fill material to build the adjacent road.

Of course, the marketing of the Sunshine State to the masses in the cold north, either as a winter retreat or a permanent home, swelled the population of our state. The home building boom that accommodated all of these new residents placed a tremendous strain on the ecosystem.

The many pure springs, for example, are endangered today, infiltrated by a combination of agricultural and residential fertilizer runoff, improperly treated sewage and industrial waste.

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But all of the environmental damage inflicted on our state in its past will pale in comparison to the befoulment that will ensue if the oil and gas drilling technique of hydraulic fracturing — known most commonly as “fracking” — is allowed in Florida.

On the East Coast, Pennsylvania was the first state to be considered for large-scale retrieval of natural gas trapped in the Marcellus Shale formation. Fracking is the technique employed to drill into that shale formation and break it up by the injection of a toxic brew of chemicals and brine under high pressure, which releases the natural gas trapped in the shale.

Before the oil and gas industry undertook extensive exploratory drilling into these shale formations, it had the Bush Administration, with the aid of long-time oilman Dick Cheney, carve out exemptions for the industry in several key environmental regulations, principally an exemption from the Clean Water Act for the process fluids it pumps into the ground to fracture the shale formations.

In other words, the very laws that are meant to protect the environment and the people who depend on that environment do not apply to the oil and gas industry with regard to fracking.

In Pennsylvania, many residents embraced the oil and gas industry with open arms, seeing the large sums of money being offered as

an economic boon for depressed areas of the state.

Later, however, when drinking wells became polluted, spigots spouted copious methane gas that could ignite into an open flame, wildlife and livestock started dying off and residents became subject to a host of mysteri-

ous physical ailments, the money residents had received seemed less significant.

Unfortunately, the industry had carefully insulated itself, first by procuring the national regulatory exemptions from the Bush Administration

and, second, by overwhelming the limited environmental capabilities of state regulators by swamping them with faux data supporting the safety of fracking.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been working for several years to produce a comprehensive assessment of the safety (or lack thereof) of fracking. That report is expected sometime this year. However, anecdotal evidence already is widespread in those areas where fracking has been carried out, illustrating the harmful effects of the process.

Moreover, the oil and gas industry has learned from its earlier experiences with sick and angry residents. It has adopted a much more aggressive strategy, using its economic might to silence any detractors in an effort to stifle dissent. In fact, the industry was one of the first to implement a harsh legal strategy

All of the environmental damage inflicted on our state in its past will pale in comparison to the befoulment that will ensue if the oil and gas drilling technique of hydraulic fracturing — known most commonly as “fracking” — is allowed in Florida.

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known as the “SLAPP suit” — a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation. When opponents with limited means find themselves the defendants in these predatory legal actions, brought by corporations with very deep pockets, the results are fairly predictable ... and dissent virtually evaporates.

Against this horrific backdrop, our Legislature is straining to do the oil and gas industry’s bidding by passing legislation to allow fracking in the Sunshine State. Specifically, two bills working their way through committees in the Legislature would give the oil and gas industry some protection from scrutiny over its practices: House Bill 71 and House Bill 157.

HB 71 ostensibly sets up procedures for the “disclosure” of the substances used in fracking fluid. However, the bill provides for that reporting to be to a private, Web-based service, FracFocus.org, which is owned and operated by the oil and gas industry, through the aegis of a stooge organization carrying the misnomer Groundwater Protection Council (GPC). The GPC is not a government agency working to protect residents from environmental disaster; it is a private industry entity seeking to insulate that industry from the repercussions of irresponsible acts that harm the environment.

Even worse, HB 157 provides numerous exemptions to the oil and gas industry, allowing it to withhold the disclosure of any chemicals used in its fracking fluids that are considered a “trade secret.” This is the same strategy that has hamstrung efforts in Pennsylvania and other states to determine the extent to which those chemicals have



harm the groundwater supplies in the areas where fracking has been pursued.

The industry has learned that a friendly, Republican-dominated legislature can codify industry nondisclosure in obsequiously misleading legislation. That is what is happening in Florida at present.

Everyone, from the President of the United States on down, is excited about how natural gas can be a much cleaner energy source than other forms of fossil fuels. And there is much excitement about the extensive natural gas reserves that exist in our country, which offer us the prospect of energy independence, a strategic goal for more than four decades.

However, the dark secret is that the extraction of that natural gas via fracking will, in too many instances, leave the landscape ruined, with polluted groundwater and a barren landscape.

Florida may indeed have untold riches in oil and natural gas thousands of feet below its surface. But using fracking to get to those resources will destroy everything about the state that makes it such a paradise. In fact, it will reduce the state to an uninhabitable

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wasteland, with once pristine aquifers brimful of toxic chemicals that snuff out all life as we now know it.

We urge our readers to educate themselves on the harmful effects of fracking and how it can negatively impact our state. Start by viewing the excellent documentary *Gasland*, which can be found through the link at the end of this editorial. There also is a sequel — *Gasland Two* — available through video stores or online sources.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

READER OFFERS A *THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS* ANALOGY

To the Editor:

I was intrigued with the letter from Pete Theisen (Jan. 24) insisting that the “lunatic fringe” dominating the Republican Party in Sarasota is not its “right wing,” but its “left wing” — equating its “mon-eyed bigwigs” seeking “handouts” and “subsidies” with mothers on welfare, and finally asserting that “Welfare is left, not right.”

Then read the materials available through ProgressFlorida.org, FL.Audobon.org, Florida.SierraClub.org and others.

Next, let your legislators know they must not allow fracking in our state.

Otherwise, what was once a pristine paradise only 500 years ago will become a devastated monument to the depredation of corporate avarice and governmental disinterest.

[View Gasland on Youtube.](#) 

It was mindful of the exchange between Alice and Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*:

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

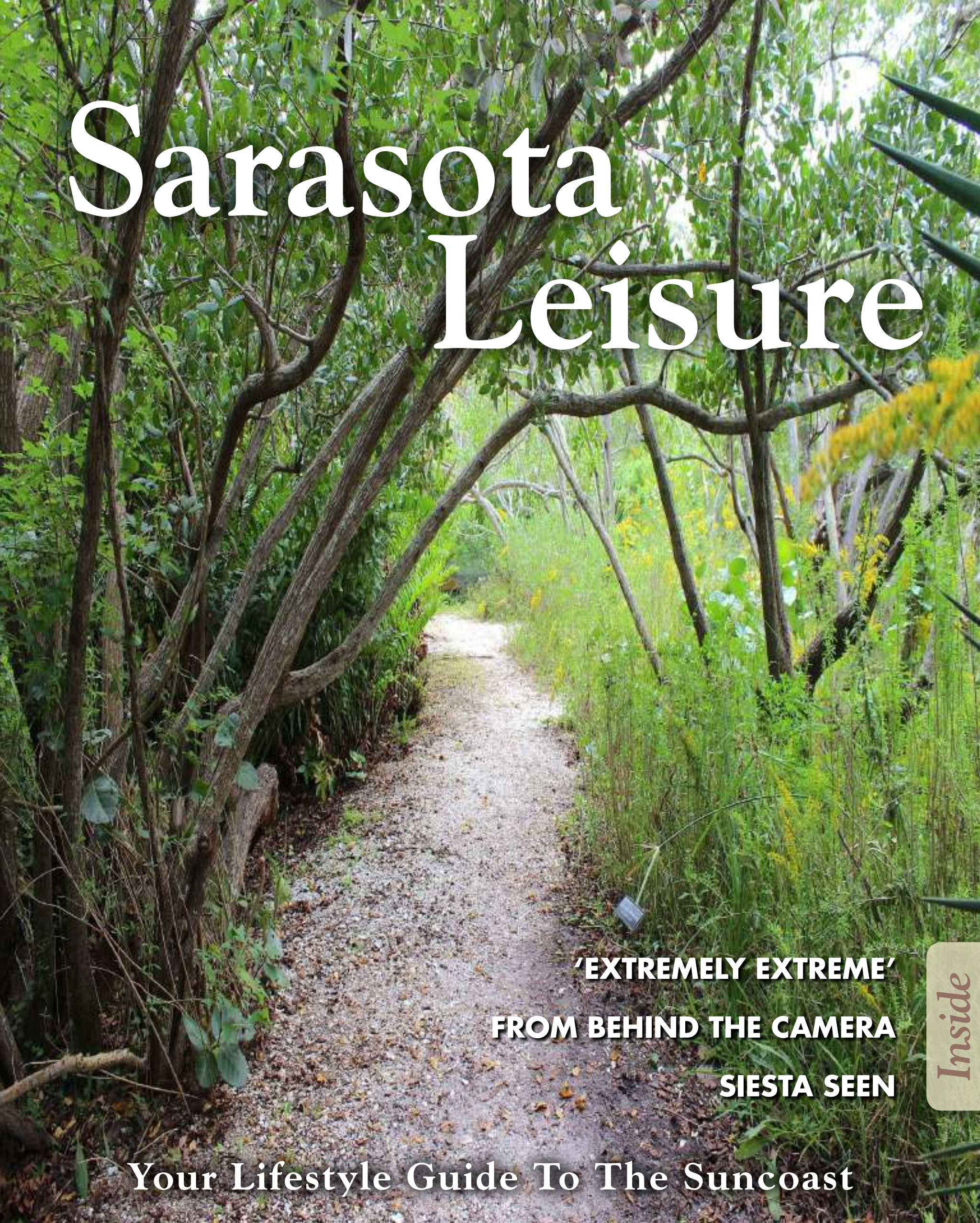
*Bernard P. Friel
Siesta Key*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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



Sarasota Leisure

'EXTREMELY EXTREME'
FROM BEHIND THE CAMERA
SIESTA SEEN

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

Inside



'EXTREMELY EXTREME'

Defenders of the Corner by James Pate. All images courtesy Danae DeShazer, Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County

ARTIST JAMES PATE AIMS TO PROVOKE WITH KKK-THEMED EXHIBITION AT NORTH SARASOTA LIBRARY

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

James Pate kept hearing one common phrase: “The black community has put the Ku Klux Klan out of business.” The implication? That black-on-black violence has reached epidemic levels, comparable to the violent savagery of the KKK and the Jim Crow era.

“We’re always saying that,” says Pate, seated in a small North Sarasota Library conference room, just an

hour before the library kicks off a month-long display showcasing reproductions of his charcoal drawings and paintings. Those works make very literal that phrase about the KKK, depicting young black males dressed in the white robes of the Klan, brandishing pistols and Uzis,

often juxtaposed with background renderings of heroic moments from black American history,

“*I need to do it for my own blues.*”

James Pate
Artist



such as the lunch counter sit-ins of the civil rights era.

The traveling show — dubbed *KKK: Kin Killin' Kin* — is stark and provocative, just what Pate, of Dayton, OH, wants it to be. He calls the images a “tantrum” he’s throwing, driven by the heartache black violence causes him. “It just burned away at me,” he says, “and it made me feel like I was responsible in a lot of ways.” As an artist, Pate felt he needed to lend his talent to the cause of nonviolence. “There’s got to be something I can do,” he adds, describing how he felt when he began the *KKK* series in 2000.

Pate’s main goal with the show is to inspire conversation and dialogue about violence in the African-American community, and to even encourage civic leaders and the young to work toward solutions. He compares dialogue to the artistic process: Fresh ideas hit him as he’s doing the work, just as new ideas can crop up when people take the time to think through a problem together. “You make discoveries,” he says.

In addition to the exhibition at the library, Pate this week visited with students at Booker High School and participated in a Q&A with young folks, talking up his message and discussing his process. While Pate’s



R.I.P. African Americans by James Pate.

work has been greeted with shock, he says kids “instantly get it” and want to know more about the pieces’ symbolism and his artistic process. “They just dive into it,” he adds.

The connection to Sarasota came about when North Port Economic Development Director Allan Lane saw *KKK* in another city and suggested that Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason check it out. She immediately reached out to Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight, who quickly offered to pay to bring the exhibit — and Pate — here.

Mason, Knight, County Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Christine Robinson, Sarasota

Mayor Shannon Snyder and a host of arts and library leaders all attended a reception for Pate Tuesday evening, Jan. 28. Mason hosted the Q&A portion of the event, opening with a poem she wrote last summer. She called violence a “cancer.” “It has the ability to destroy what all of us and those before us worked so hard to create, this community called Sarasota,” she told the audience.

Mason tells *The Sarasota News Leader* she thinks artwork is an effective way to reach young people. She calls Pate’s work “so powerful.” She says the phrase about the KKK that so inspired Pate was not something she heard growing up in this area. “The Klan for



Your History II by James Pate.


us was a reality,” she says, “so, no, we don’t talk much about that. But I get it. I totally get it.”

In addition to the images, the show includes a tall portion of chain-link fence. Attendees are encouraged to write down their responses on white cards stacked nearby and then zip-tie them to the fence. “The images depict the social suicide that young people are committing today,” reads one of the first cards posted. Participants are also encouraged to discuss the pieces on social media with the hashtag “KinKillinKinSRQ.”

Pate says he’s been pleased to see the conversations he hoped to inspire taking place, but even if no one wanted to exhibit his work or invite him to speak, he’d be doing what he’s doing anyway: making his art. “I need to do

it for my own blues,” he adds. Pate’s work has become a hot commodity. Clark Atlanta University recently mounted a collection of Pate’s originals, and the display of reproductions at the North Sarasota Library is booked through 2015.

Even after more than a decade of work, Pate doesn’t consider *KKK* a finished collection. He’s constantly adding new images, and doesn’t see himself stopping till black-on-black violence recedes: “I’ll continue to do them as long as it’s an epidemic.”

KKK: Kin Killin’ Kin is on display at the North Sarasota Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd., Sarasota, through Feb. 22. The library is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. 



James Pate with the key to the City of Sarasota, presented to him at the North Sarasota Library on Tuesday.



FROM BEHIND THE CAMERA

Platon (left) awaits the unveiling of his portrait by Ringling College of Art and Design student Victor Maury. All photos by Vicki Chatley

A PHOTOGRAPHER OFFERS IMPRESSIONS OF THE FAMOUS AND ORDINARY SUBJECTS HE PORTRAYS ON FILM

By Vicki Chatley
Contributing Writer

The audience members may not have known what to expect when they arrived at the Platon lecture in Sarasota on Tuesday, Jan. 27, but the comments afterward were a clear indication they had been captivated by the presentation.

Platon, a native of London, appeared at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall as the second speaker in the Ringling College Library Association's 2014 lecture series. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts in graphic design from St. Martin's School of Art and a master's degree in photography and fine art from the Royal College of Art, he worked for *British Vogue*. He came to the United States to work

for the late John F. Kennedy Jr.'s political magazine, *George*.

Though noted for his more than 20 *Time* magazine covers (including an award-winning photo of Russian Premier Vladimir Putin as the Person of the Year) and portraits for such other publications as *Rolling Stone*, *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair* and *Esquire*, he is equally gifted as a storyteller.

Some of the stories are photographic essays, among them a pictorial of the Civil Rights movement exhibited at the New York Historical Society. Platon's interest in the worldwide fight for equality and justice led

to projects depicting human rights defenders in Burma and the leaders of the Egyptian revolution.

The life of a photojournalist is not without danger. Platon recounted how he persuaded *Time magazine* to send him to Myanmar (formerly Burma) to photograph [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) days after her release from house prison. Immediately after taking her picture, he was pursued by a growing convoy of vehicles containing opposition secret police officers known for their brutality. He managed to escape by a taxi, which took him to the

airport and a flight to safety. The taxi driver supported Aung San Suu Kyi.

As a series of slides appeared on a screen that served as a backdrop for Platon on the stage, he related the story of each photo. Some were in black and white, others in color. According to Platon, “Black and white describes texture,” while the color spectrum is important to capture feeling. It helps create the “whole language that makes you feel what you feel when you look at a picture.” The film choice — he states he may be the last photographer using film — is dictated by the subject.



Platon says you can tell a lot about a person by a handshake.

His goal is to strip away the façade, what Platon calls “branding,” to reach the true character of the person; however, “sometimes the mask tells you more about the truth than the truth does.” Whether or not you agree with his characterizations of the people he has captured on film, it is interesting to examine the subjects from a different viewpoint.

The first picture showed a 30-year-old homeless woman in Russia who told Platon, “I wish you happiness. If I’m kind to somebody, somebody will be kind to me.”

Often his commentary dealt with social conditions.

While he has worked with world leaders and entertainment figures, he said his “most

important photos were of ordinary people.” He also professed “a deep lack of trust in authority.” He believes “We’re all important ... Someone isn’t more than us; they just have a different job.”

The stories behind the portraits were often humorous, sometimes educational, but always entertaining. Platon told the audience, “I’m not a photographer. I’m a storyteller.” He recalled the intense security surrounding Putin when he photographed him at Putin’s dacha in Russia — and that to find a source of power for his equipment, he almost unplugged the “red phone.” The security personnel prevented that mistake.

In a different vein, he noted the guitar Willie Nelson was hugging in his portrait was placed



Platon takes a closer look at himself through the eyes of Victor Maury.

there to keep the entertainer from falling off the stool on which he was perched. Platon indicated the country music singer-songwriter might have been stoned.

The son of an architect, Platon called himself a Modernist. He is also extremely dyslexic and unable to do many of the things others easily accomplish. For him, “Less is more ... simpler is better.” Photography became the vehicle that enabled him to find his place in the world.

In addition to his other works, Platon has published two books, *Platon's Republic*, in 2004, and *Power*, a collection of portraits of more than 100 world leaders, in 2011. His works are also on display at the [Florida Museum of Photographic Arts](#) in Tampa.

PAINTING THE PORTRAITIST

At the end of every Ringling Town Hall Series program, the speaker is presented with a portrait or other form of likeness crafted by a student at the Ringling College of Art and Design.


Platon was obviously very pleased with the portrait painted by Victor Maury, Class of 2015, who is majoring in illustration. He praised the work and asked Maury what process he had

used. While Maury said he “likes the feel and texture of oil,” time constraints led him to choose a digital painting on canvas.

The College requests portfolios from students interested in doing the portraits, Maury explained. From that group six or seven are chosen, to whom background information on each of the speakers is given. The students then indicate the individuals they would like to paint. Maury noted that usually there is an interest in all the speakers.

The assignments are given out in December, along with several photographs of the person each student is to portray. Maury said he combined the examples he received to produce a painting that was “informed by the photos,” but not a copy.

He is a fantasy artist who does freelance work designing book covers and card games. It is something he enjoys and may continue after graduation, he added.

Maury was born in Toulouse, France, where he lived for seven years. Home is now Austin, TX. In addition to art, he enjoys travel, hiking, tabletop gaming and, perhaps typical of a college student, napping — while dreaming of the imaginary people and places he creates. 

QUICK TIP



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

ESSENTIAL TOOLS



Long-handled hedge shears are highly recommended. Photo by Rick Wielgorecki

LONG-HANDLED HEDGE SHEARS CAN SERVE A HOME GARDENER — AND PLANTS — QUITE WELL

By Rick Wielgorecki
Contributing Writer

This month's column continues the focus on tools I deem essential for the properly equipped gardener. My second-favorite tool, ranked right behind my hand pruners, is the long-handled hedge shears.

Many landscape maintenance professionals do not even possess this tool. It is possible

to maintain hedges with power equipment if the blades are kept sharp and a light hand is employed. Unfortunately, the generally accepted *modus operandi* is to fire up a gas- or electric-powered machine and lunge into the hedges — ripping, tearing and shredding foliage with apparent impunity.



Poinsettias can thrive and bloom outdoors with the proper care. Photo by Rick Wielgorecki

This strategy will suffice for a time in most cases. After many years of this type of treatment, however, the shrubs will go into a decline. If the “technician” is heavy-handed, the bushes will begin to appear skeletonized, with just a thin transparent foliar layer revealing bare twigs underneath. New growth will start to look withered. Additionally, in their weakened state, the cultivars are subject to attack by disease and insects.

For the average homeowner there is a better way. A pair of quality hedge shears is enough to maintain those hedges on a landscape of average size. Cutting with blades that have been honed sharp by a couple of swipes with a file will leave clean cuts that will energize a plant and promote a healthy compact habit of regrowth.

My pair of shears includes a small slotted pruning notch at the base of the blades, so I can cut slightly larger sprouts. The long handles enable me — or any other user — to reach all areas of any hedge of normal proportion to a human, and the shears afford good leverage.

The company that makes my shears and many other professional-grade garden implements is located in California and is easy to access on the Internet. It also supplies spare parts when I need them. While I replace my shears

every few years because of the volume of work I do, one pair should last the average homeowner a lifetime.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Many people buy or receive poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherimma*) to decorate their homes and gardens during the holidays. The plants’ bracts come in a multitude of solid and polychromatic combinations. Generally, as poinsettias lose their fresh appearance, they are discarded.

Years ago, many gardeners kept, planted and cultivated them in select special locations in the landscape.

If you would like to give them a try, poinsettias should be introduced gradually to exterior light in March and then eventually planted in sunny locations. The sites should be free of artificial light at night, since the plants’ blooming is dependent upon autumn’s diminishing light.

They may be pruned during the growing season if they get leggy. With a modicum of watering, fertilization and vigilance against pests (especially hornworms), they will prosper and provide joy during successive seasons of cheer.

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

Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

- Lifesaving cancer screenings
- Parent & teen education
- Annual GYN exams
- Birth control



Siesta Seen

COMMISSIONER HOPES TO PRESERVE A PEDESTRIAN EASEMENT ON SHELL ROAD; PUBLIC PARKING PLANS PROCEED FOR NORTH SHELL ROAD; THE CHAMBER PRESENTS ITS ANNUAL AWARDS; AND THE HYATT SIESTA KEY EARNS STATE RECOGNITION



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The County Commission has scheduled a public hearing on the afternoon of Feb. 12 to consider petitions from Donald and Susan Stelfox and Ronald and Phyllis McSwain,

asking the county to vacate its interest in two sections of right of way on Shell Road.

However, before that hearing takes place, Commissioner Nora Patterson — who lives



An aerial photo shows the county right of way Shell Road property owners are asking the county to vacate. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

on the key — has asked staff to take a second look at whether the county still has any rights to a 5-foot pedestrian easement to the Gulf of Mexico in that same area.

During the board's Jan. 14 regular meeting, Patterson pulled from the consent agenda the item calling for the scheduling of the public hearing.

"Shell Road has kind of a sour history as far as public access to the water," she pointed out. Around 1970, two segments of road ran perpendicular to the Gulf of Mexico, she noted; they joined to create a loop, which separated the homes from the water. The public used to

drive along that stretch, she said, "which was gorgeous." However, "it was not county-supervised or maintained."

Eventually, homeowners began building pools and adding landscaping to portions of the roads. At one point, in a dispute with the county, property owners even barricaded a section of the road to keep out the public. The county lost a lawsuit over that whole issue, Patterson explained.

Now all that remains are the two perpendicular road segments, and the southernmost road has no access to the water, she added.



An aerial photo shows the proximity of property owned by Donald and Susan Stelfox to the county right of way on Shell Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County

Siesta Seen

When she first was elected to the County Commission in 1998, she continued, she asked staff to research whether “anything was salvageable on Shell Road” in terms of public property. The staff response was “very little.”

The backup agenda material for the Jan. 14 item “shows that to be the case,” she noted. Still, she said, “I would like staff to take a real second careful look.”

The petitions to be heard during the Feb. 12 public hearing call for the county to “vacate, abandon, discontinue, and close the County’s interest in a portion of an improved, 50-foot-wide platted, public right-of-way known as South Shell Road (platted as Cedar Street) ... and a portion of an unimproved 40-foot-wide, platted, public right-of-way known as Shell Road (platted as Gulf Avenue),” according to a Jan. 14 memo to the County Commission from Chief County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. and Lin Kurant, the county’s real estate services manager.

The couples asking for the vacation of county rights of way will get more property, Patterson pointed out. “Traditionally, we don’t ask for anything for [such action], although we would have to pay plenty if we were going to acquire [such property]. This is such a large tract of land — so very valuable — I would like the board to consider vacating it,” she continued, “but say we want the 5-foot easement.”

According to the Sarasota County Property Assessor’s records, the McSwain’s parcel on Shell Road had a taxable value of \$2,587,400

last year, while the taxable value for the Stelfox land and structures was \$2,581,800.

Diane Kennedy, a title agent in the Real Property Division of the county’s Public Works Department, told the board members on Jan. 14 that staff had found “no indications in the title work that there is a 5-foot pedestrian easement.” However, she added, staff would collaborate with the agent for the petitioners “and have him research, and we perhaps will go back and look,” to make sure no one had missed anything in the records.

Patterson then made a motion to direct staff to undertake another examination of documents to ascertain whether a pedestrian easement along Shell Road still exists.

“And that means going all the way back to the water,” she added.

The motion passed unanimously.

ISSUES ON NORTH SHELL ROAD

Not far from Shell Road, North Shell Road remains in the spotlight as county staff tries to determine the best way to create parking spaces for members of the public drawn to Beach Access 1, which is at the end of that road.

In a Jan. 25 email to the county commissioners, Jim Harriott, the county’s chief engineer, reminded them, “At times, staff has observed as many as 30 or 40 vehicles parking along the right-of-way, parking in ‘No Parking’ areas, and partially blocking access to residences and emergency vehicles.”

Siesta Seen

He added that staff has had several meetings with homeowners along the road, the most recent one having taken place on Jan. 21. As a result, he continued, “staff is preparing three plans to present to the Board. The original staff plan provides 17 to 20 spaces (depending on whether or not a sidewalk is moved). The plan preferred by the residents provides 11 spaces. A plan developed late last week, that hopefully reaches a compromise, provides 14 to 15 spaces.”

He noted that the residents have not yet seen the latter proposal.

“All plans cost approximately \$25,000 or less, as directed by the Board,” he wrote. “Our next step is to prepare for Board discussion in the near future to discuss the plans and funding options.”

CHAMBER AWARDS

The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce presented its annual awards during a luncheon held Tuesday at Ruth’s Chris Steak House on South Tamiami Trail.

The following were honored for their work in 2013:

- Volunteer of the year: Ronda Wiggins.
- Shining Star: Lisa and Denny Peterson of Jonny’s Free Beach Rides.
- Community Partner of the Year: Gold Coast Eagle Distributing.
- Business Person of the Year: Aledia Tush, co-owner of CB’s Saltwater Outfitters.
- Small Business of the Year: Smith Architects, whose principal is Mark Smith.



North Shell Road residents have complained about the public parking on private property to reach Beach Access 1 at the end of the road. File photo

Siesta Seen

- Large Business of the Year: Village Café.

The 2014 Chamber Executive Board is composed of Chairwoman Alana Tomasso, Incoming Chairwoman Aledia Tush, Treasurer Bob Stein, Secretary Kay Kouvatsos and Immediate Past Chairwoman Maria Bankemper.

The new board members are Bill Abel of Abel's Ice Cream, Shawna Frank of the Palm Bay Club, Keith Martin of Badger Bob's Air Conditioning and Appliances and Brad Stewart of Captain Curt's Crab and Oyster Bar.

Chastanna Neiman, events and office manager for the Siesta Chamber, said 77 people attended the event, not counting Chamber staff.

A HIGH HONOR

Edward Braunlich, manager of the Hyatt Siesta Key Beach on Crescent Beach, received a most welcome letter from Gov. Rick Scott early this month.

Scott wrote, "I would like to congratulate [the Hyatt] ... for being one of only 9 food service establishments in the Sunshine State recognized during the most recent inspections by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation for having no safety or sanitation violations within the past year. I applaud you and your employees for demonstrating such a high level of attention to detail and commitment to excellence."



Village Café was honored as the 2013 Large Business of the Year during the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting this week. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

Braunlich emailed Commissioner Patterson on Jan. 15 to let her know the good news. “Nice,” she responded. “Perhaps we could get you a letter of congrats also from the [commission].”

PUTTING UP ROWERS

During the Jan. 21 Siesta Key Condominium Council meeting, member Al Holpp announced that Benderson Development had contacted the organization to ask whether it would like to work with the firm “to tell the world what available rental units we might have out here” for use by people coming to the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

That event at Nathan Benderson Park is expected to draw between 40,000 and 50,000 visitors, Holpp explained. “We’d like some of

these folks to stay and look at our beautiful area.”

The Council soon will be sending a survey to the island’s condominium complexes, he added, to ask how many units would be available for rent during the fall of 2017 and what the rental policies would be. Referring to the latter, he quipped, “I know [those] are a moving target, probably, between now and 2017.”

At any rate, Holpp encouraged anyone who might be interested in renting units to let the Council know.

Commissioner Patterson, who was the guest speaker at the Condo Council meeting, said she expected rental units “would be snapped up” all over the county when Benderson Park hosts the 2017 event.



The Hyatt Siesta Key Beach stands in the background as beach-goers enjoy Crescent Beach on an August morning. Photo by Rachel Hackney


STORMWATER PROJECT UPDATE

The latest news about the Beach Road Drainage Project on Siesta Key — the stormwater undertaking to the east of the public beach — lists the following pursuits for the contractor this week and next week, according to Isaac R. Brownman, director of capital projects in the county's Public Works Department:

- Coordination with the Siesta Beach Park improvements project regarding fill being stockpiled for parking areas and the new maintenance facility being constructed.
- Completion of excavation for the new stormwater pond to the final depth and configuration.
- Completing the installation of the pump station.
- Finishing the installation of the 60-inch pipe and removal of the existing lift station from service.
- Continuing work on general site grading and the landscape berm.
- Continued pumping of groundwater offshore.

Brownman added that 40 loads of unexpected buried construction debris have been removed from the site “using current contract funds.” He noted, “Based on test holes dug, an additional 130 loads of buried construction debris appears to still need to be removed. Change Order No. 1 has been negotiated with the contractor for the cost to remove and dispose of the additional debris.” He added that no extra contract time will be required for this work.

The change order and funding mechanism are scheduled to be on the consent agenda for the Feb. 11 County Commission meeting. His staff also plans to meet one-on-one with board members prior to the meeting to answer any questions they might have about the project, Brownman wrote in his email.

“The Beach Road Drainage Improvement project continues to have a Substantial Completion date of March 14 and a Final Acceptance date of April 13,” Brownman also pointed out. 



Work on the pump station at the stormwater project site next to the public beach was well under way early this month. Photo by Rachel Hackney



The Hermitage Artist Retreat is on Manasota Key Road in Englewood. Contributed photo

U.S. POET LAUREATE TO READ FROM HER WORK AT THE HERMITAGE

The Hermitage Artist Retreat invites the public to a free community program on Friday, Jan. 31, on its beachfront campus in Englewood, which will feature a 5:15 p.m. beach reading by U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey.

The event will include performances by two Massachusetts Institute of Technology musicians, Evan Ziporyn and Christine Southworth. Trethewey also will talk about being the nation's Poet Laureate, a news release notes.

Tours of the historic Hermitage House will begin at 4:30 p.m. The artist retreat is located at 6660 Manasota Key Road in Englewood.

Ziporyn will play clarinet and electronics during the program, the release adds, while Southworth will play bagpipes before and

after the reading. Visitors need only bring their beach chairs and any refreshments they wish to enjoy during this afternoon performance, the release points out.

“How often do you get to meet and hear one of the most highly acclaimed American poets read their work as well as experience phenomenal musicians on a beach?” asked Hermitage Executive Director Bruce E. Rodgers in the release. “Having this talented group together and sharing them all at once with our community is very exciting. We are really looking forward to the program.”

Trethewey, who is the 19th Poet Laureate of the United States, is the author of four collections of poetry, *Domestic Work* (2000),

Bellocq's Ophelia (2002), *Native Guard* (2006) — for which she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize — and, most recently, *Thrall* (2012). Her nonfiction book, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, appeared in 2010, the release continues.

She is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Beinecke Library at Yale and the Bunting Fellowship Program of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard, the release points out. At Emory University, she is the Robert W. Woodruff Professor of English and Creative Writing. Moreover, the release points out, Trethewey is the first recipient of the Hermitage's Georgia Court Poetry Life Residency.

Ziporyn and Southworth “almost defy description,” the release continues. “With a drive to combine art and science, each has a separate career that successfully achieves this benchmark through different experiences and instruments,” the release notes. “Southworth describes her compositions as born from a cross-pollination of sonic ideas,” it adds. Her music “employs sounds from man and nature, from Van de Graaff generators to honeybees, Balinese gamelan to seismic data from volcanoes.”

Ziporyn describes his music as at the crossroads between genres and cultures, East and West, the release adds. He studied at Eastman, Yale and the University of California at Berkeley. In 1987, he performed a clarinet solo at the First Bang on a Can (BOAC) Marathon in New York. His involvement with BOAC continued for 25 years, the release notes. In 1992 he co-founded the Bang on



Natasha Trethewey/Contributed photo

a Can All-Stars (Musical America's 2005 Ensemble of the Year), with whom he toured the globe and premiered more than 100 commissioned works.

His compositions have been commissioned by Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road, Kronos Quartet, American Composers Orchestra, Maya Beiser, So Percussion, Wu Man and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, with whom he recorded his most recent CD, *Big Grenadilla/Mumbai*, the release says.

KILTIE BAND TO SOUND THE TRUMPETS IN ANNUAL SOUSA CONCERT

The Riverview High School Kiltie Band will perform the music of John Philip Sousa during the annual Sousa Concert at 7 p.m., Friday, Jan. 31, the school has announced.

The 90-minute show will take place at the Riverview Performing Arts Center, with the Kilties in full Scottish dress, a news release notes.

Considered by many to be America's most beloved bandmaster, John Philip Sousa wrote music that has endured as crowd-pleasing compositions for generations, the release adds. The Kilties will perform his marches *King Cotton*, *High School Cadets* and *Nobles*

of the Mystic Shrine, among other works, the release adds.

"Everyone loves the stirring and very American sounds of Sousa, and this concert always draws a crowd," said Mark Spreen, RHS music director and Kiltie Band conductor, in the release.

A \$5 donation will be collected at the door. Reserved seating for larger groups may be arranged by contacting Miriam Thompson at 539-5383 or miriamdenver@netscape.net.

The Riverview Performing Arts Center is located at Riverview High School, 1 Ram Way, between U.S. 41 and Swift Road, just off Proctor Road in Sarasota.



Riverview High School Music Director Mark Spreen conducts the Kiltie Band during the annual Sousa Concert in February 2013. Contributed photo

COMPLEXIONS TO PRESENT CONTEMPORARY DANCE PROGRAM

Complexions, the creation of former Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theatre stars Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, will perform at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall on Feb. 4 at 8 p.m., the hall has announced.

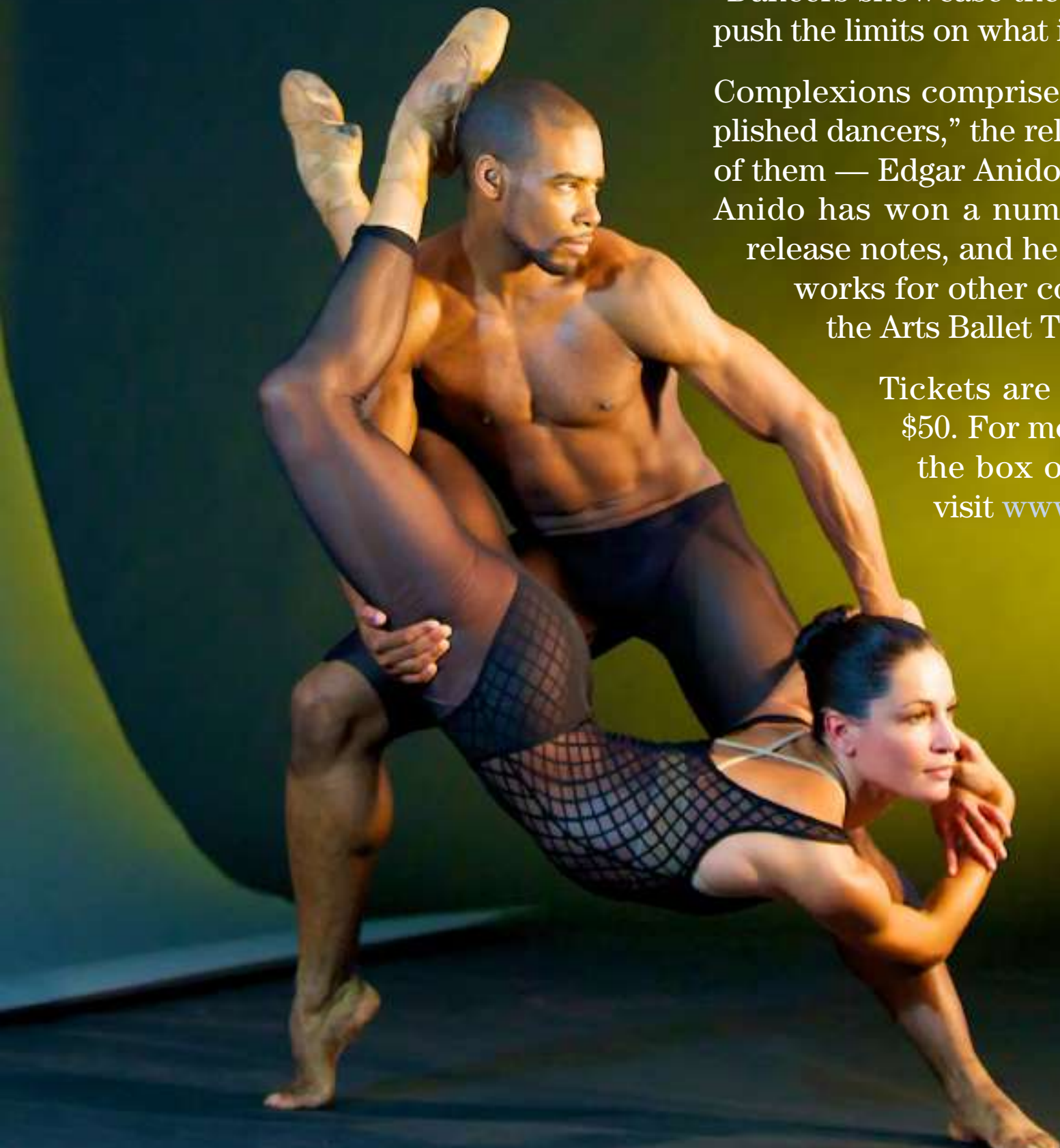
Complexions "presents a revolutionary mix of style, method and culture, which has birthed a reinvention of dance," a news release

explains. The company has received numerous awards, including *New York Times* Critics Choice honors. "The explosive out-of-the box choreography has captivated audiences all over the world," the release adds.

The artistic and aesthetic appeals of multicultural dance forms are the foundation of Complexions' identity, the release continues. "Dancers showcase the body's abilities and push the limits on what it can do," it says.

Complexions comprises 14 "highly accomplished dancers," the release continues. One of them — Edgar Anido — lives in Orlando. Anido has won a number of awards, the release notes, and he has created several works for other companies, including the Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida.

Tickets are priced from \$35 to \$50. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit www.VanWezel.org.



Complexions dancers will bring their contemporary style of program to Sarasota on Feb. 4. Contributed photo by Jae Man Joo

STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA PRESENTING KATZMAN PHOTO EXHIBIT

State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) Fine Art Gallery is featuring the exhibit *This Miserable Kingdom* — Steven Katzman's photographic survey documenting the people of the Pojoaque Pueblo in New Mexico.

The show will run Jan. 31 through April 2, with an opening reception set for Friday, Jan. 31, from 6 to 8 p.m. The reception will begin with an artist's talk, followed by a Q&A with the audience, a news release says. The special guest speaker will be Jacob Viarrial, a Pojoaque leader who served as Katzman's guide on the reservation.

The Fine Art Gallery is located at 5840 26th St. West in Bradenton.

Katzman, who lives in Sarasota, "is a self-taught photographer whose longtime interest in political science has influenced his photographic journey," the release adds. "Most of his photographs exemplify the late 20th century post-modernist notion that art should be political in nature," it continues. "Katzman's artistic expressions inspire his viewers to contemplate each photograph to arrive at its ultimate message."



Goat Herd by Steven Katzman. Contributed image

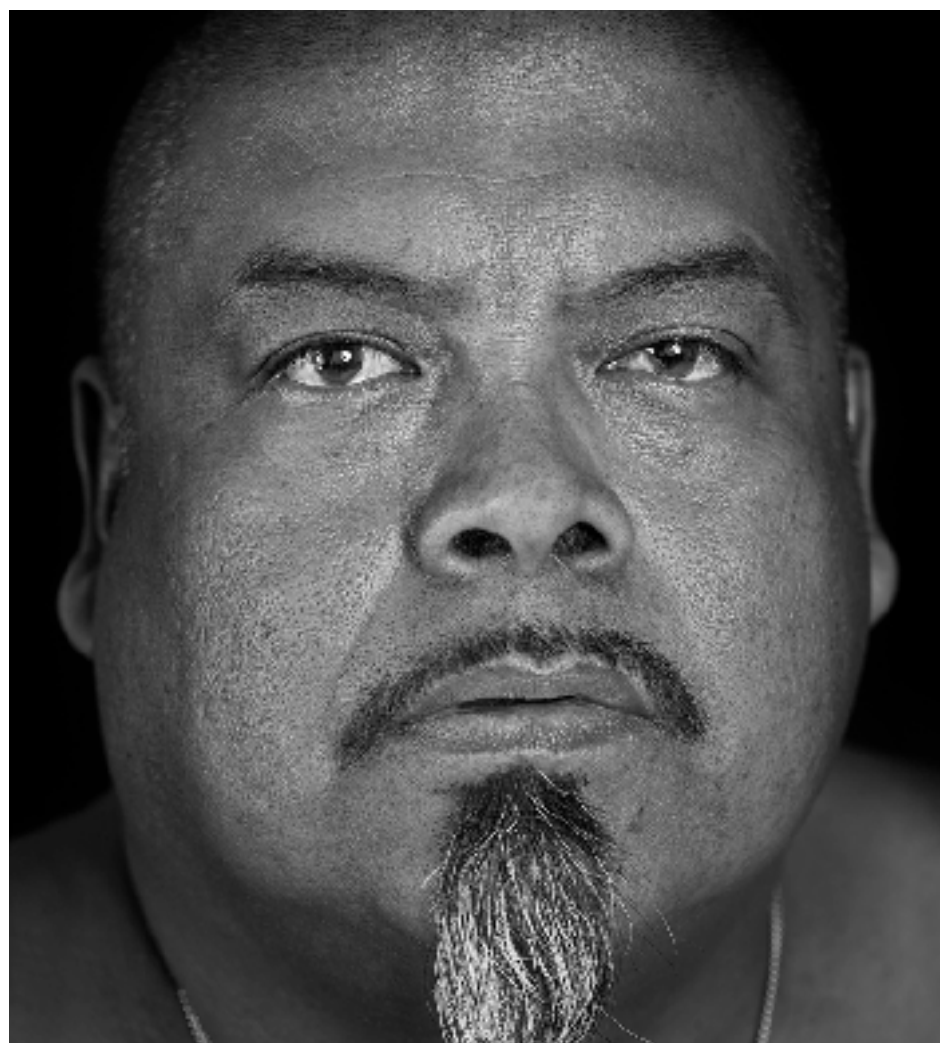


Pheobe and Dara by Steven Katzman. Contributed image

“I am one of the few white men who have been allowed to document life on the Pojoaque reservation since Edward S. Curtis spent time there in 1905,” says Katzman in the release, explaining that his project was approved by the Pojoaque Tribal Council. “I believe the exhibit will compel the viewer to question the human condition. Where are we going — as individuals and as a nation? This question is often lost in the cultural abyss of our ‘miserable kingdom,’ polluted by the onslaught of racism, sexism, bigotry, and indifference,” he notes in the release.

“For more information about the artist, visit www.stevenkatzmanphotography.com.

Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. The gallery will be closed March 2-9 for spring break.



Jacob Viarrial by Steven Katzman. Contributed image

VENICE THEATRE BRINGING BACK 2011 PRODUCTION OF *RADIO GALS*

Venice Theatre’s next musical cabaret, *Radio Gals*, will open on the Pinkerton Stage on Friday, Feb. 7, and continue through Sunday, March 2, the theatre has announced.

Performances of this musical comedy by Mark Hardwick and Michael Craver will be at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. Tickets range from \$10 to \$15 for students and \$25 to \$28 for adults; they can be purchased online at www.venicestage.com or by calling the box office at 488-1115. Discounts are available for groups of 20 or more.

“Taking place in the 1920s (before the crash), *Radio Gals* tells the story of Hazel Hunt (played by Dawn Carpenter), a retired music

teacher who receives a radio transmitter as a retirement gift,” a news release explains. Hunt begins transmitting a few airwaves of her own from her small town in Arkansas. Then she is joined by her all-girl orchestra, The Hazelnuts. They “gleefully host the radio show and fight pesky FCC regulations to keep it on the air,” the release continues.

Radio Gals is back by popular demand after a successful run at Venice Theatre in the fall of 2011, the release says. *The New York Times* called the original production a “lively, cheery, nostalgia-dipped musical,” the release points out.

The theatre’s producing director, Allan Kollar, has brought back the creative team from

2011, the release notes. Michelle Kasanofsky will provide musical direction, and Becky Holahan will be the choreographer. The 2011 cast members of *Radio Gals* will reprise their roles as well. The “gals” — Kim Kollar, Bobbi Eschenbach, Rebecca Phippard and Dawn Carpenter — will be joined once again by David Brown as the lone male in the cast. He will play the government inspector sent to investigate the radio station, the release says.

The cast will be backed up by a full on-stage band led by Kasanofsky (Miss Mable) on piano and Cathy Baudrit-Noeth (Miss Azilee) on bass, flute and sax. Priscilla Boyd will be the percussionist, and Michelle Neal will play a variety of instruments, from oboe to ukulele, the release points out.

The theatre is located at 140 W. Tampa Avenue on the island in Venice.



Radio Gals features the talents of (in the foreground) Bobbi Eschenbach, Dawn Carpenter, Kim Kollar, Rebecca Phippard; David Brown, (and in the background) Cathy Baudrit-Noeth, Michelle Neal and Michelle Kasanofsky. Contributed photo

COKE TO DEBUT WORK IN WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER SHOW

Joanna Coke will debut her new artwork in a show titled *Color and Texture: Sunflowers and Abstracts*, opening Feb. 6 with a reception from 5 to 7 p.m. at The Women's Resource Center of Sarasota, located at 340 S. Tuttle Ave. in Sarasota.

The show will feature "sunflowers infused with vibrant color" as well as highly textured mixed-media works, a news release says.

The public is welcome to attend the reception; refreshments will be served.

The show will run through March 26. It will be open most weekdays from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 366-1700.

Coke "combines brilliant color and strong textures, rendered with layers of mixed media, to create depth and intensity in her work," the release explains. "In her sunflower paintings, she approaches each flower as a unique portrait. Starting with thin watercolor washes that produce soft transparent backgrounds, she then applies thick acrylic paints and delicate flowers in gold acrylic inks," it continues. "The effect is complex, vibrant and intense."

In her abstracts, Coke's approach "is to create a feeling of deep inner space," the release says. She starts by using highly textured surfaces and then adds acrylics and substances such as pumice, granular beads and crackle. "The result is the creation of a dream-state atmosphere with touches of realism," the release notes.

Coke received an Associate of Arts degree from Harvard University, a Bachelor of Arts in



Free Style Sister is a mixed-media work by Joanna Coke. Contributed image

fine art and art education from the University of South Florida at Tampa and a Master of Fine Arts from Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, the release adds. She studied art and painting in Paris, Venice, Rome and Florence and, in 2009, was invited to participate in a joint Russian-American program that emphasized art and educational exchanges in Russia, where she exhibited and taught art.

In 2012, she coordinated and taught art workshops in Santa Fe, NM, and St. Augustine, the release says.

To view her portfolio, visit www.joannacoke.com.

LIGHT CHASERS TO PRESENT THIRD ANNUAL SHOW AT THE HUB

The Light Chasers, representing more than 400 members of the Plein Air Painters of the Sun Coast, will open its third annual Paint Out and Show at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 31, at The HuB, located at 1680 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

The exhibit will run until Feb. 7. Admission to the gala opening on Jan. 31 is free, a news release notes. Raffle tickets will be available for a painting by nationally known artist Hodges Soileau, who will draw the winning ticket during the event, the release adds.

For more information about Soileau, visit hodgessoileau.com.

Among the featured artists will be Morgan Samuel Price, Bill Farnsworth, Joseph Melancon, Joe Palmerio, Mary Ericson and Katie Dobson Cundiff. Check out their websites to get a feel for their work, the release says: dobsonart.com, morgansamuelprice.com, www.josephmelancon.com, www.billfarnsworth.com and www.palmerioart.com.



Rollin' Stone Cappa Belle by Katie Dobson Cundiff. Image from dobsonart.com

SOUTHGATE TO HOST BMW OF SARASOTA CHILLOUNGE NIGHT

Westfield Southgate will host Sarasota's seventh Annual BMW of Sarasota Chillounge Night on March 8, the shopping mall has announced.

This event will transform the parking lot into a private, upscale nightclub experience featuring the following, a news release says: live music by SoulRcoaster, DJs, a dance floor, a fashion show with a 40-foot runway, new reserved seating options, fine dining and beverage service, a fireworks display, a samba parade, a VIP lounge catered by Ziti and complimentary valet parking.

The event will be located in the northwest corner of Westfield Southgate's parking lot, which is located at the intersection of U.S. 41 and Siesta Drive. Hundreds of chic daybeds, cabanas and other outdoor furnishings will occupy approximately 30,000 square feet of area "to create a cozy, comfortable setting" for an evening of food, drinks and entertainment," the release notes. Chillounge Night will begin at 7 p.m. and conclude at midnight.

The event is the creation of Rainer Scheer, a Sarasota resident and former gallery owner, the release points out. Since the first Chillounge Night was held in Sarasota in 2008, the club-like concept has expanded to additional Florida cities: Tampa, Orlando, St. Petersburg, Delray Beach and Fort Myers.

The event on March 8 will be the 28th Chillounge Night production, the release adds.

"We create a beautiful atmosphere and provide an experience that combines music, fashion, dance and great food, all within an

chillounge night

the ultimate outdoor lounge party

NEXT CHILLOUNGE NIGHT - SARASOTA, FL

NEW VENUE AT WESTFIELD SOUTHGATE!
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FULL 2014 CHILLOUNGE EVENT SCHEDULE

7th Annual Chillounge Night in Sarasota, FL / March 8, 2014

5th Annual Chillounge Night in Tampa, FL / April 5, 2014

4th Annual Chillounge Night in Orlando, FL / TBD

Inaugural Chillounge Night in Naples, FL / TBD

7th Annual Chillounge Night in St. Petersburg, FL / November 22, 2014

FOLLOW CHILLOUNGE NIGHT ON FACEBOOK!

St. Petersburg Chillounge Night

Chillounge Night St. Pete 2013

elegant setting that offers a perfect place to have fun, meet people and chill," said Scheer in the release.

Admission will be \$30 per person at the door. Attendees must be 21 or older. Advance tickets are on sale for \$25 at www.chilloungenight.com. A limited number of VIP tickets, which include complimentary food, beverages and gift bags for women, also are on sale for \$90 each. The event's VIP Lounge will be in an exclusive roped-off section of the parking lot.

"We are very excited to partner with Rainer Scheer's Chillounge Night," Sam Davidson, Westfield's district marketing director, said in the release. "Chillounge Night is a staple event throughout Florida and it's an honor to be the host venue in Sarasota."

VENTURAS TO PERFORM IN FEB. 9 JOY OF JAZZ CONCERT

The Jazz Club of Sarasota's 2014 Joy of Jazz concert series will continue "with the high-energy sounds of local favorites" The Venturas on Feb. 9 at 2 p.m., in Centennial Park in downtown Venice, the club has announced.

The concert is free but donations will be accepted in support of the Jazz Club's scholarship fund, a news release says.

Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets. For more information, call 366-1552 or visit www.jazzclubsarasota.org.

The Venturas was formed in 2000 by John Paul "J.P." Coley and Greg Poulos, who have been performing together since 1996, the release says. Named for the instrumental rock band The Ventures, "the first incarnation of The

Venturas played a novel mix of jazz, blues and surf music," the release points out. The band added vocalist Ally Couch and keyboardist Eddie Tobin in 2004. Since then, it "has honed a strikingly vast and diverse repertoire," covering favorite tunes from the 1930s right on up to the present, the release continues.

The Venturas features Couch on vocals, Coley on bass and vocals, Poulos on guitar and vocals, Tobin on keyboards and vocals and Tracey Alexander on drums. The group's Joy of Jazz program will feature an assortment of standards and jump blues hits, the release adds.

The Joy of Jazz series will conclude on March 9 with Tom Ellison and Hip Pocket, the release says.



The Venturas will be featured in a Feb. 9 jazz concert in Venice. Photo contributed by the group

CURTIS ON TOUR PROGRAM COMING TO FIRST CHURCH ON FEB. 11

Curtis on Tour, representing the Curtis Institute of Music, will bring members of its acclaimed Curtis Opera Theatre to First Church of Sarasota on Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m., the church has announced.

The group will be under the artistic direction of Mikael Eliassen, a news release says.

“Come one, come all for your opportunity to hear four new rising stars as they sing opera, art songs and a taste of Broadway,” with Eliassen as collaborative pianist, the release adds. Curtis students “graduate and proceed

to the great opera houses and professional training programs throughout the world,” the release notes.

Curtis on Tour makes regular visits to Sarasota, the release points out. This concert marks its sixth year in a row in the city.

The requested ticket donation is \$10. Tickets are available at First United Methodist Church, located at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in downtown Sarasota, by calling 955-0935 or by visiting www.firstsrq.com/music/fine-arts-series.



Members of the Curtis Opera Theatre will perform in Sarasota on Feb. 11. Contributed image courtesy Curtis Institute of Music

SARASOTA OPERA'S WINTER FESTIVAL SEASON TO OPEN ON FEB. 8

Following the critical success of last fall's production of *Die Fledermaus*, Sarasota Opera will open its 2014 Winter Festival Season on Saturday, Feb. 8, "marking the company's 55th consecutive season of bringing grand opera to the Florida gulf coast," the Opera has announced.

The season will include the return of some of Sarasota Opera's most acclaimed productions, as well as the Sarasota Opera premiere of Verdi's *Jérusalem* — part of the ongoing Verdi Cycle, a news release points out.

"This will be a season of celebration," says Executive Director Richard Russell in the release. "Not only will Sarasota Opera be marking the company's 55th consecutive

season, we will continue our commemoration of the anniversaries of the birth of three of opera's most significant composers through our programming: Wagner, Britten and, of course, Verdi."

The Winter Festival Season will open with a new production of *Il Trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi, thanks to the vision of Scenic Designer Michael Schweikardt (*Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *Vanessa*). "Not seen in Sarasota since 1993 (Sarasota Opera performed the French version, *Le Trouvère*, in 2002), *Il Trovatore* tells the story of a troubadour's quest for love, a soldier's lust and a mother's undying thirst for vengeance," the release explains.



An 1847 press illustration engraved by Henry Valentin features the final scene of Act 3 of *Jérusalem*. The opera will make its Sarasota debut in March. Image from Wikimedia Commons

Soprano Reyna Carguill, who starred in Sarasota Opera productions as Elisabeth de Valois in Verdi's *Don Carlos* and Lucrezia in *I due Foscari*, will return as Leonora.

Three rising stars of the opera world will make their Sarasota Opera debut in this production, the release adds: baritone David Pershall, who joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera this past season, singing the part of Count di Luna; mezzo-soprano Margaret Mezzacappa, Grand Prize winner at the 2012 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, as the vengeful Azucena; and tenor Kirk Dougherty, reprising the role of troubadour Manrico, a role which has won him acclaim.

The opera will have 10 performances from Feb. 8 to March 22.

The other productions will be as follows:

- *The Barber of Seville* by Gioachino Rossini, opening Feb. 15 in a revival of the company's 2008 production, featuring baritone Marco Nisticò (*Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*); tenor Hak Soo Kim (*A King for a Day*, *Rigoletto*) as Count Almaviva; and, in her Sarasota Opera debut, mezzo-soprano Chrystal E. Williams as Rosina. It will run through March 21.
- *The Flying Dutchman* by Richard Wagner, opening March 1 with the return of three



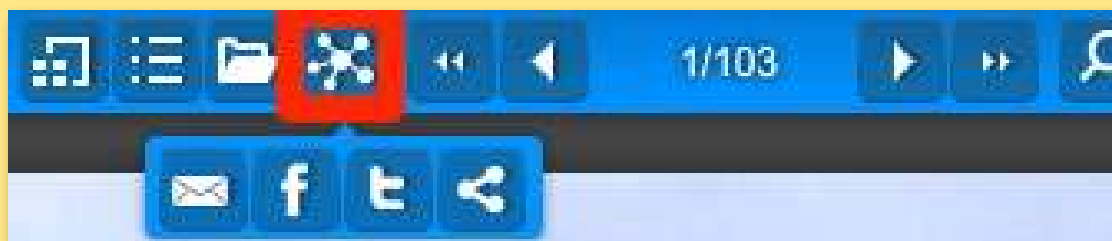
The Sarasota Opera presented *Die Fledermaus* last year. Contributed photo by Rod Millington

noted Wagnerians to the Sarasota Opera stage: bass Kevin Short (*A King for a Day*, *I Lombardi*); tenor Michael Hendrick (*Of Mice and Men*, *May Night*); and a former Sarasota Opera apprentice and studio artist, soprano Dara Hobbs. Performances will continue through March 23.

- *Jérusalem* by Giuseppe Verdi, opening March 8 with bass Young Bok Kim (*Turandot*, *Rigoletto*) as Roger; soprano Danielle Walker (*Un giorno di regno*, *Carmen*) as Hélène; bass Jeffrey Beruan (*Madama Butterfly*, *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*) as the Papal Legate; and baritone Matthew Hanscom (*Of Mice and Men*, *Turandot*) as the Count of Toulouse.

The opera will run through March 22. 

QUICK TIP



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Chazzan Cliff Abramson of Temple Sinai (center) accepts the Belin Outreach and Membership Award from Rabbi Rick Jacobs (left), president of the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ), and Stephen Sacks (right), chairman of the URJ Board of Trustees. Contributed photo

TEMPLE SINAI RECEIVES AWARD AT URJ BIENNIAL

At the recent Biennial Conference of the Union of Reform Judaism, held in San Diego, CA, Temple Sinai was presented with the Belin Outreach and Membership Award for its Gift Member program.

There are 900 Reform Jewish congregations that are members of this organization, which is the largest Jewish movement in North America, a news release points out. There were eight winners and nine honorable mentions from the myriad entries, which

“demonstrated a high level of creativity, originality and excellence,” the release adds.

Each winner receives \$1,000, funded through the generosity of David Belin, the first chairman of the URJ-CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis) Joint Commission on Outreach and Membership.

This award recognizes congregations that have created “relationship-based membership models and innovative ways to engage and retain members,” the release explains.

The Gift Membership Program at Temple Sinai is an initiative in which congregants invite and become the hosts of families with school-age children, new to the temple, who receive one-year gift memberships, it continues. "During this time special social and educational events for gift members and their hosts take place," it says. In addition, as part of this program, every Jewish family with a child enrolled in the temple's Gan preschool (new or existing members), receives complimentary temple membership.

Chazzan Cliff Abramson attended the conference and accepted the Belin Outreach and Membership award for Temple Sinai, the release adds. In addition, Chazzan's original arrangement of *Modeh Ani* was published in Transcontinental Publisher's *Shabbat Anthology, VII*, which was released at the Biennial, the release notes. "Sarasota is fortunate to have a congregation of this caliber in [its] midst," the release says.



Chazzan Cliff Abramson delights children with magic at a picnic for new Temple Sinai members and their host families. Contributed photo

ENID BLOCH TO DISCUSS *LESSONS FROM THE MOSQUE*

On Feb. 1 and 2, Enid Bloch, founder and editor of the online magazine [Jewish Muslim Friendship in Western New York](#), will present lectures in Sarasota on the theme *Lessons from the Mosque: What a Jewish Woman Learned from Muslim Friends*.

The Feb. 1 lecture will be part of a Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) service at 10:30 a.m. at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota, CHJ has announced.

For more information, visit www.chj-sarasota.org or call 929-7771. The program is free for CHJ members; for non-members, the cost is \$5.

The following day, Feb. 2, at 2 p.m., the Women's Interfaith Network of Sarasota/Bradenton/Venice will present the same program at the Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

That event is also open to the public, with a donation of \$3 requested at the door. For more information, visit www.womensinterfaithnetwork.org (WIN) or call 377-1003.

Over the past four years, Bloch "has been deeply involved in efforts to foster trust and understanding between the Jewish and Muslim communities in western New York," a news release explains. That time frame includes "a period of severe crisis," when a prominent leader of the Muslim community was falsely accused of harboring "pro-terrorist" sentiments, the release adds. "The dignified way



Enid Bloch/Contributed photo

the Muslim community responded contains lessons for us all," the release notes.

Bloch "has an entirely different view of Islam [than] the frightening stereotypes which fill American media," the release says.

Bloch is a frequent speaker at interfaith events and a photographer for Kulanu, an organization dedicated to supporting isolated emerging Jewish communities around the globe, the release continues. She also is a board member of HEAL, an organization that helps recent African refugees, and she teaches at universities and colleges, the release notes.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL TO SPONSOR *SEX AND THE BIBLE*

Sex and the Bible is the provocative topic of a new adult education series at Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota. Classes will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays in February, beginning Feb. 4, the Temple has announced.

Facilitated by guest instructor Dr. Rachel Dulin, *Sex and the Bible* will focus on the sexual behaviors mentioned in biblical laws and narratives “and explore how these passages advance the Bible’s theological and political

messages,” a news release explains. Texts to be studied include the laws of Leviticus Chapter 18, the story of Adam and Eve, the Song of Songs and the story of Tamar, the release adds.

Sex and the Bible is sponsored by Temple Emanu-El’s Adult Education Committee. The class is open to the community, with a \$36 donation requested for guests. To register or to obtain more information, email beth-anny2@comcast.net.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL PLANS *INTERGENERATIONAL SHABBAT*

Temple Emanu-El warmly invites members of the community to *Intergenerational Shabbat* on Friday, Feb. 7, at 6 p.m.

The Temple is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.


“For millennia, Shabbat has been an opportunity for all generations to come together in celebration and worship; but modern life — with extended families living in different cities and the difficulty of forging bonds between young children and older adults — presents many obstacles to this traditional observance,” a news release points out. Temple Emanu-El’s *Intergenerational Shabbat* encourages every generation to celebrate Shabbat together with a festive meal and lively worship service appropriate for all ages.

The evening will begin with a 6 p.m. Shabbat dinner of chicken, potatoes and vegetables, with an option of kid-friendly popcorn

chicken for children. Following at 7 p.m. will be Temple Emanu-El’s Family Shabbat Service, which will feature prayers led by religious school students, a story and the opportunity for children to ascend the pulpit as the Torah is taken from the Holy Ark and to parade with the scrolls throughout the sanctuary, the release continues. All are welcome.

The cost for dinner at *Intergenerational Shabbat* is \$15 per adult and \$8 per child ages 7 to 13. There is no charge for children 6 and under. Paid reservations may be mailed to Temple Emanu-El, Attention: Intergenerational Shabbat, 151 McIntosh Road, Sarasota, Florida 34232.

The Family Shabbat Service is free, with no reservations required.

Intergenerational Shabbat is sponsored by Temple Emanu-El’s Intergenerational Committee. For more information, call 751-4457. 



Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman joined Annette and Dr. Howard Fuchs — and their baby grandson, Cameron — at Temple Emanu-El's Intergenerational Shabbat last fall. Contributed photo



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

31+
JANUARY

FST presents *Thurgood*

Through March 8; times vary; Keating Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$36 to 39. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org.

31+
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.

31+
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 wbttstrq.org.

01+
FEBRUARY

Dabbert Gallery presents *Nouveaux Two Déjà Vu*

Feb. 1 to March 3; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com.

05
FEBRUARY

Screening of rare cartoon films from the '30s, '40s and '50s

Feb. 5, 8 to 10 p.m., [Vatican City Vinyl](http://VaticanCityVinyl), 404 S. Washington Blvd., Sarasota. Complimentary soft drinks and popcorn. Tickets: \$3 in advance; \$5 at the door.

18+
FEBRUARY

FSU/Asolo Conservatory presents *How I Learned To Drive*

Feb. 18 to March 9; times vary; Jane B. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$27 to 29. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org.

19
FEBRUARY

Sarasota Concert Association presents the St. Petersburg Philharmonic with conductor Nikolai Alexeev

Feb. 19, 8 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$45 to 75. Information: 955-0040 or SCASarasota.org.

YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST

QUIET BERTHS BY THE BAY

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader
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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



Each week, Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel searches Sarasota County for iconic shots that underscore why the community is a favorite with residents and tourists alike.