

THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 25 — March 7, 2014

News Leader



**LET IT BE
RAISING MORE CONCERNS
A STRONG RESPONSE**

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Welcome

Last week, as I was reflecting on potential content for this issue, it appeared the City Commission meeting would be the only significant source. Oh, how wrong was I proven to be.

Not only did Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker produce engaging stories outside the local government realm — including one about the president of a nonprofit called Strong Towns — but County Editor Roger Drouin and I also found plenty of news in the County Commission sessions.

By no means, though, do I want to discount the hours City Editor Stan Zimmerman spent on his beat this week, covering myriad topics. I am sure he was grateful when his last story reached my desk.

And if you are wondering about our cover: I had an incredibly rewarding experience over the weekend. In the chilly, early-morning hours of March 1, I joined a video production team just off the Siesta Key shore. The producer will not release the result of the crew's labor of love for several more days, but I highly encourage you to read my story about how a dedicated group of individuals is pleading with the City of Sarasota and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to "let Big Pass be."

On our feature side, A&E Writer Elinor Rogosin offers another astute review of Sarasota Ballet performances.

Finally, I urge you to peruse our *News Briefs*. No doubt, it is a big chore for Production Manager Cleve Posey to lay out that section each week, thanks to its length and breadth of topic. And that is all the more reason you really should check it out!

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher



LET IT BE



RAISING MORE CONCERNS



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LET IT BE



“

*There is still a chance that they will see.
There will be an answer, let it be
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John Lennon
Paul McCartney

”

*A camera carried by a drone films Maria Lane singing Let It Be on the shoal in Big Pass on March 1.
All photos by Rachel Hackney*

A MARCH 1 VIDEO PRODUCTION IN BIG PASS IS THE LATEST GAMBIT IN THE FIGHT TO STOP THE PROPOSED DREDGING OF THE SHOAL TO RENOURISH LIDO BEACH

Story and Photos

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

On a picture-perfect day in Big Sarasota Pass, a pretty young woman seated at an organ on the shoal sang one of the last great Lennon-McCartney anthems as waves lapped at her feet.

A growing band of environmental preservationists are pointing to the title of the song that wafted over the water — and embracing

its lyrics — as they fight to “let Big Pass be.” In about two weeks, a video showcasing the beauty of the waterway will be released in an effort to win even more converts to their cause. They do not want to see Big Pass dredged to renourish Lido Beach.

Last week, *The Sarasota News Leader* reported [yet another delay](#) in the U.S. Army



Maria Lane and Jimmy Scott enjoy the boat ride out to the sandbar.



Mike Hagan is at the helm of the boat, Sarah Fulton is at the bow, and John Lichtenstein holds one end of the towrope with Rich Schineller clasping the other end as he keeps the organ steady on the paddleboards.



Gary McDermott chats with Rich Schineller as they prepare for the next step of getting the organ on the sandbar.

Corps of Engineers' timeline for releasing its models and reports on the expected impact of dredging parts of Big Pass to provide sand for a 1.6-mile stretch of Lido Beach as part of a 50-year project to stabilize that shore in the city of Sarasota.

Five Siesta Key organizations — from the residential to the business spectrum — already have voiced grave concerns about the impact on the pass and Siesta Key's beaches if the Corps can win approval from the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation — and funding from Congress — to undertake the project.

SPARKING AN IDEA

Rich Schineller, a Siesta resident and ardent opponent of the dredging proposal, recently was listening to a recording of *Let it Be* by his niece, Maria Lane Sulimirski, 22 — who

sings professionally as Maria Lane — when he conceived of a decidedly creative way to draw attention to the Big Pass preservation effort, he told *The Sarasota News Leader*. “I thought about how apropos [the song] was to what we want [for the Pass].”

As the owner of his own firm, Perception Management, Schineller works to help companies and organizations develop brand values and strengths for marketing purposes. This time, his “client” would be Big Pass. Producing a video about the waterway that could go viral would build more pressure to keep the dredges away, he reasoned.

Schineller began marshaling resources and a production crew to make the idea a reality. First, local resident Jim Robison was happy to donate a non-working Hammond organ that could be towed out to the shoal for the shoot. Friends signed on to help with the technical



Rich Schineller wades out to the shoal as Maria Lane waits by the piano stool and Jimmy Scott (second from right) and John Lichtenstein lift the organ from the paddleboards.

aspects and the logistics. Finally, Schineller announced the undertaking would commence on March 1, with a very low tide predicted at 7:04 a.m. as a result of the new moon.

Robison pulled about 220 pounds of electronics — plus the motor and the compressor — out of the organ to lighten it. About the only part of the instrument that remained functional, Schineller told the *News Leader*, was the key response. Then Robison stuffed the organ with foam in the event it ended up in the pass. At least the organ would float, he figured, instead of becoming pollution.

Lane, a recent Columbia University graduate who works as a professional singer and voice coach, flew down from New York City. Schineller lined up Ryan Perrone to fly a drone over the pass to capture aerial images of Lane. Jimmy Scott Jr. would serve as director of photography, manning a handheld camera and operating the drone.

Sarah Fulton would be the production assistant; Mike Hagan and Gary McDermott would captain the camera boats; John Lichtenstein, a firefighter and artist, would handle the set design and serve as safety officer; Angelique Crete Willette Hair and Makeup would create Lane's look; and Diane Sulimirski — Rich's sister and Maria's mother — would take stills on location.

Just after 7 a.m., McDermott's boat launched from the north Siesta shore with most of the crew and Lane, headed toward the shoal. Moments later, Hagan began towing Schineller and the organ in the same direction; the organ was strapped to two paddleboards bound together.

Seabirds sunning themselves on the shoal scattered as the party approached. Once McDermott had his boat in place, Hagan pulled up alongside so Lane could literally climb aboard the organ and let Schineller and



Maria Lane sits at the organ on the shoal as Rich Schineller, John Lichtenstein, Jimmy Scott and Sarah Fulton work on the production.



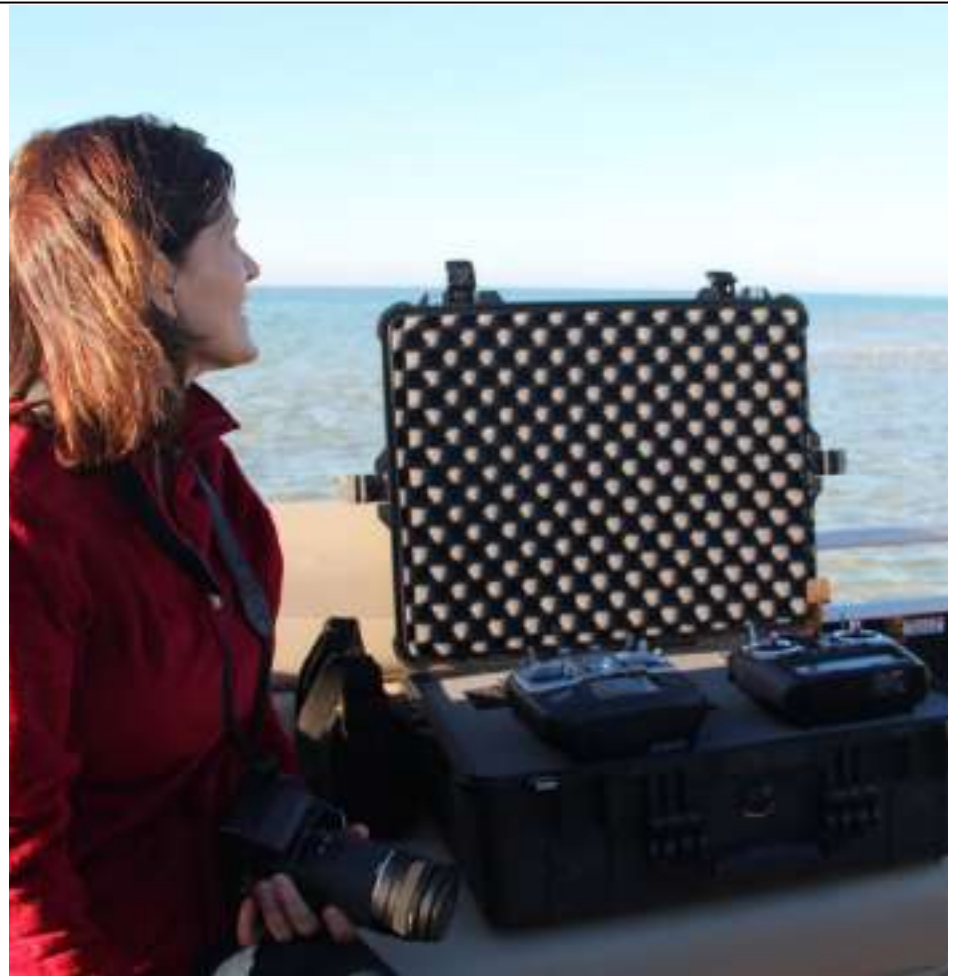
Rich Schineller holds the shooting slate for Big Pass Piano.

other members of the crew push her out to the sandbar.

After the crew positioned the organ on the shoal, the filming began. With the sun rising over the pass, the temperature finally began to climb from its “50-ish” mark. (It was 47 degrees at 6:53 a.m. at Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport, weather records show.)

As Schineller, Scott, Fulton and Lichtenstein worked with Lane on the sandbar, Diane Sulimirski talked of her daughter and brother from her seat on McDermott’s boat. Lane has been singing “since she was born,” Sulimirski said with a laugh, and “Rich has always been very close to her.”

Perrone was keeping an eye on the drone equipment and enjoying the weather in spite



Diane Sulimirski keeps an eye on Maria Lane on the shoal; next to her is part of the equipment for the drone.



Jimmy Scott (left) and Ryan Perrone plan how they will undertake the shooting with a camera attached to the drone.

of the chill. He bought the drone only about two months ago, he explained. His brother had told Schineller about him, Perrone said. “I’m more than happy [to help]. Rich is a good guy.”

“Richard is a genius,” Sulimirski added.

“No’ is never an answer” when someone asks Schineller for help, Fulton pointed out.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

In an email to supporters early this week, Schineller lauded his team. “[C]ast and crew were top-notch — the imagery driven by Director of Photography Jimmy Scott is going to be eye-catching and Maria jammed like the star she is, braving cold water and ongoing repetitions to make sure we got the best.”

“Wonderful, wonderful people,” Schineller told the *News Leader* on March 4.

Schineller expects to have the video ready for its premiere in about two weeks. The Best Western Plus-Siesta Key has been a big supporter, he noted.

The hotel’s co-owner, Maria Bankemper, was chairwoman of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce in January when its board backed a resolution calling for no dredging in the pass.

Other backers have chosen to remain out of the spotlight, the *News Leader* has learned.

Schineller’s own passion for the project was as clear as water in the pass as he talked this week about his determination to see Big Pass remain untouched.

He pointed to the link between Siesta Public Beach’s No. 1 ranking by Dr. Stephen Leatherman ([Dr. Beach](#)) and the natural



The slate laying out the production details rests on a seat in Gary McDermott's boat.

north-to-south downdrift of sand on Florida’s west coast, which has resulted in accretion of the shoal and the beach. “Why risk ruining something that’s already working well?”

The prospect of repeated dredging of Big Pass — the plan the Army Corps of Engineers has touted to keep Lido Beach in good shape after the initial renourishment — alarms him even more. Schineller likens that to offshore oil drilling situations in which the rigs never disappear, leaving the water forever muddied.

“Lido Beach definitely needs sand,” he pointed out. “The issue is mankind’s insanity in thinking we can control the ocean.”

For more information about Maria Lane, visit marialanemusic.com. 

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RAISING MORE CONCERNS

Lt. Kevin Stiff (left) and Capt. Pat Robinson testified about the proposed shelter for homeless and vagrants in north Sarasota. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

THE SARASOTA HOMELESS SHELTER PLAN STRIKES SPARKS AGAIN DURING A CITY COMMISSION MEETING

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The neighbors do not want a shelter for the homeless and vagrants. Two sites remain under consideration: one across the street from the City of Sarasota sewer treatment plant on Osprey Avenue; the other, at the north end of East Avenue. Neighbors around each parcel are leery, to say the least.

Residents who live near the Osprey Avenue site came down en masse on Monday, March 3, to express their concerns to the City Commission, which

was meeting in the County Commission chambers while its audio-visual equipment was undergoing an upgrade in the city chambers.

For months, Vice Mayor Willie Shaw had been trying to force a place on the agenda for residents to have a say in the site selection process. He also asked Sarasota Police Lt.

Kevin Stiff to speak to the commission. Stiff has visited several other shelters built on the model proposed by a consultant working for the city and county.

“*If everybody in the area is vociferously against it, he’s wasting his time.*”

Dr. Mark Kauffman
Board Member
Downtown Improvement District

Meanwhile, the president of the neighborhood association in the vicinity of the proposed shelter site on East Avenue quietly weighed in on the whole topic during the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations meeting on Saturday, March 1. Joseph Bessard with Park East said, “Hopefully, the shelter would be built east of I-75 and have a feature for post-homelessness. After that, they could look for jobs and housing. Chances are they won’t jump right into the middle class.”

The East Avenue site is privately owned, so it would have to be purchased by the city and/or the county and rezoned. The Osprey Avenue site is city-owned, but it might not be available for at least a year because of continued well construction. The parcel will become home to the city’s deep-well injection facility

for excess treated wastewater and brine from the reverse-osmosis plant.

A memo from Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown noted the area will be needed for staging the deep-well injection pipes. “This could take a year to finish, and delay the establishment of a shelter,” Brown wrote.

Prior city comments about problems with the site prompted accusations of “sabotage” from County Commissioner Joe Barbetta last month.

START PREPARING IMMEDIATELY

Kevin Stiff is no stranger to vagrants and the homeless, as he has been a cop for the past 24 years. He was asked to go on an excursion to look at seven shelters in the Southwest,



The flag pinpoints the location of Sarasota Military Academy on North Orange Avenue in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

all visits planned by Robert Marbut, the consultant hired by the city and county to make recommendations on handling homelessness in Sarasota County. Stiff's task was to look for impacts the Police Department should prepare for once a shelter opens in Sarasota.

"The neighborhood around the shelter has to have a voice about how the city treats complaints," Stiff told the City Commission. "A homeless coordination center should be assembled to meet the landlords in the area. Monthly meetings would be useful. This relationship should be established as soon as a site is located."

Stiff admitted upfront that his observations were limited to what he observed at a shelter in San Antonio, TX. "We spent only a few hours at the other facilities," he said. In San Antonio, he was able to knock on neighborhood doors and chat with pedestrians and the clients, as well as with workers at a fast food franchise in the vicinity of the facility. "I spoke with 17 people," he told the commission. "Thirteen of them were negative."

He continued, "I stayed at a downtown hotel. I walked five blocks and saw 15 homeless. I judged they were homeless because they were carrying their belongings with them. I spoke with an employee in the McDonald's. He said, 'It's really bad in this area and getting worse.'"

The San Antonio shelter offers two levels of "hospitality." One is a large courtyard, often housing and feeding 400 to 500 people per night. "Until you knock on the door for services, you sleep outside," said Stiff. "I talked to the manager of the courtyard, named Allen, and he said not many come from the courtyard into the center, maybe 15 to 20 percent."



Vice Mayor Willie Shaw awaits the start of the March 3 meeting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

Social services are available only "inside the door." Other potential clients use the courtyard for shelter and sustenance; they do not receive any other assistance. Meanwhile, outside the shelter, the San Antonio police have increased patrols, but the department did not increase overall staffing.

Stiff was joined by Capt. Pat Robinson in his appearance before the commission. Robinson explained that the Sarasota department is forming "homeless outreach teams" to stay in contact with vagrants and the homeless on a daily basis. "Marbut said if we do nothing, we can see a 10 to 15 percent rise in the homeless due to returning veterans," noted Robinson. "We are concerned the opening of a shelter in north Sarasota might very well increase the number of chronically transient individuals on the street. They'll use the come-as-you-are portion [of the new center] and leave the other one" — the latter being the Salvation Army facility.

Robinson added that if police in North Port or Venice transport an individual to the north Sarasota shelter, “[The person will] just be dropped off in our jurisdiction. Then [he will] walk out onto our streets.”

OBSERVATIONS NEAR AND FAR

“Does it make sense to transport transients to the city that are now in a central part of the county?” asked resident Lynn Robbins. “How can other cities be asked to share this cost? We’ve asked for the budget. How can we approve a project without even knowing the cost?”

Robbins was one of 13 people who shared their thoughts and concerns with the City Commission Monday. Several work at the Pines of Sarasota, an assisted living and

nursing facility on Orange Avenue. They expressed concern for the homeless and vagrants, but they also voiced concern for their own safety and the safety of the people at a nearby day-care center. The Osprey site would be one block from the Pines. (See the related story in this issue.)

“For the safety and security of my 400-plus staff members, the majority of them females, the vulnerability of our youngsters, the defenseless seniors and their loved ones, I ask you to consider them,” said John Overton, the Pines’ president and chief executive officer.

The mother of two cadets at Sarasota Military Academy told the board, “The chronically homeless in Sarasota are not invisible to me. I do not think the concentration of addicted and mentally unhealthy people is an asset to



Pines of Sarasota (marked with the flag) is also located on North Orange Avenue in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

this area. The number of homeless increases every year, but the number of shelters does not, so these shelters will spill out into the community.”

The Military Academy also is located on Orange Avenue near the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. site.

Michael Barfield, vice president of the Florida chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, noted city police gave out 107 citations for out-of-door lodging in the first six weeks of the new year. “There are a lot of things to be excited and positive about here,” he said. “I believe a shelter will go a long way to cleaning up a community.”

He lives in Sarasota.

Diana Hamilton pointed out that all of Sarasota effectively is a homeless shelter now. “There are homeless camps all over the city; they are everywhere in our city,” she said. “Moving forward proactively is our only choice here.”

She lives in Laurel Park.

THE ‘REALPOLITIK’

Eileen Normile paid her own site visit to Pinellas Safe Harbor in Clearwater, another Marbut-designed shelter. “The annual budget is \$1.6 million per year, [mostly] paid by the county. The cities of Clearwater and St. Petersburg add \$100,000 each,” she told the Sarasota City Commission.

That shelter is about a 20-minute drive from downtown St. Petersburg, and it offers no



Homeless people gather on Central Avenue in Sarasota in early 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel

return trips to its clients. “I asked why there was no transportation,” Normile continued, “and a sergeant said, ‘We are not going to give the homeless back to the cities.’”

The Pinellas facility can house about 500 people, and Normile said it serves about 400 meals per night — but only about 200 lunches, meaning during the day, about half the population is not at the facility.

“During our visit, there were clearly less than 100 shelter residents, so 300 were somewhere else,” she added.

Her observations were indirectly supported at a meeting the following morning. Ernie Ritz, chairman of the Downtown Improvement District in Sarasota, said during a discussion about vagrancy and homelessness, “This is a life choice. I hire guys from [Labor Finders](#) all the time; they live in camps and the woods. They are perfectly happy. They get paid every day. They want to live like that. They don’t want any help. We’re not going to solve this.”

DID board member Dr. Mark Kauffman responded, “If it’s somewhere in the county, [the shelter] will affect the city differently than if we put it in the city. It appears the

commissioners fighting the location of this have a very valid reason.”

“I don’t see why we can’t take a vote to say if we want this in the city,” added Ritz.

“Us and the [Downtown Sarasota Association] and the Downtown Condo Association,” replied Kauffman.

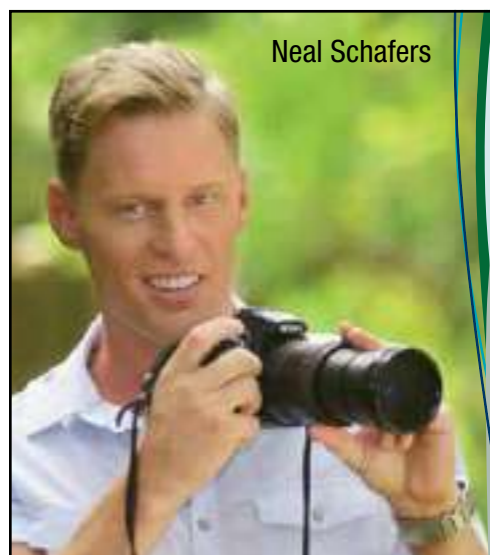
DID Operations Manager John Moran suggested the organization “wait for Marbut to finish his job. Making an uninformed opinion could be what we’re doing.”

Kauffman responded, “If everybody in the area is vociferously against it, he’s wasting his time.”

Following the evening testimony before the City Commission, only the two commissioners who consistently have voted against putting the shelter in the city offered comments on the topic. “I continue to say this is too much of a burden to bear,” Commissioner Susan Chapman said.

Vice Mayor Shaw added, “Some are saying this will be done in 2014. We need further exploration.”

The other three commissioners, who support a shelter in the city, remained silent. 



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A STRONG RESPONSE

Gatherings of homeless people at Pineapple Park in downtown Sarasota have prompted complaints to city officials. Photo by Roger Drouin

REACTING TO CITY COMMISSION CRITICISM ON THE HOMELESS SHELTER ISSUE, COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CAUTION AGAINST MISINFORMATION, SAYING MORE DETAILS ABOUT A PLAN WILL FOLLOW THE COMPLETION OF STUDIES ON TWO SITES

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

Division over homelessness issues at the City and County commission daises continued to brew this week, with county leaders unanimously renewing their support for a shelter that would be operated by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

Across downtown Sarasota from the County Administration Center, two city commissioners on that divided board, along with residents, have kept up a barrage of

questions about plans to build a facility in the city.

On Tuesday, March 4, during an update on the efforts to address homelessness in the community, county commissioners expressed frustration about what they characterized as

“misinformation” and “gossip” being spread by city commissioners and members of the public opposed to the shelter.

County Vice Chairwoman Christine

“We want the dialogue, want the factual information out there, but let's get the facts first.”

Wayne Applebee
Homelessness Coordinator
Sarasota County



Robinson and county staff members leading the planning effort say answers on many points will come as the county wraps up due diligence and environmental studies involving the two sites still under review from the list proposed last fall by homelessness consultant Robert Marbut.

Robinson pointed to some of the latest misinformation “that came out last [Monday] night” during the regular City Commission meeting, referencing statements offered during one of the public comments segments.

“It was said that none of the municipalities in Pinellas County contribute to Safe Harbor,” she told her colleagues, referring to a Clearwater shelter. “That is just not true,”

she added. “Each municipality has contributed from the beginning.”

Robinson noted no opportunity was provided to publicly correct misstatements offered during the city meeting.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said that if unconfirmed and inaccurate information is being communicated, then county staff should check with Marbut — who remains under contract with the city and county — and compile a fact sheet for distribution to the public, highlighting information not only about a proposed shelter in Sarasota but also about similar projects built elsewhere.

Patterson later told *The Sarasota News Leader* she believes city commissioners are



- Legend**
- ▲ (red) = soil boring and groundwater monitor well
- General Scope:**
- 5 soil borings to water table (approx 8' bls)
 - Screening at two-foot intervals to water table
 - Collection of soil samples all five of the borings at two intervals (for a total of 10 samples for analysis)
 - Installation of 5 temp wells to 12 to 15 feet below land surface.
- Analysis Methods (both soil and gw)**
- BTEX/MTBE via Method 8260
 - Low level PAH's via Method 8270B
 - 8 RCRA Metals (6010/7471)
 - Organochlorine Pesticides
- Notes:**
- Dashed Yellow Lines = Approximate site boundaries are depicted for reference only (not a map of survey)
 - Proposed easements not included in study area (shaded yellow)
 - Boring locations/well placements subject to change based on field observations during assessment activities.

A graphic offers details about studies already completed on the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. site, which is one of two being considered for a Sarasota homeless shelter. Image courtesy Sarasota County

being bombarded by city residents who are anxious about the possibility of a facility for the homeless being constructed near their homes or businesses.

“[Marbut] issued his report and it’s like it’s being ignored,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta noted on March 4.

On Nov. 25, 2013, during a meeting in the County Commission Chambers with a full audience, Marbut presented his recommendations, which were accepted by both the Sarasota City and County commissions; they heard him together.

RESPONDING TO THE CITY

One major point that surfaced during a Sarasota Police Department report during the City Commission meeting Monday does not align with what Patterson saw firsthand when she toured Pinellas Safe Harbor.

Sarasota Police representatives on March 3 discussed with the City Commission the need for additional patrol officers to make sure everything is safe around the perimeter of a homeless shelter wherever it is built. (See the related story in this issue.)



Pinellas Safe Harbor in Clearwater has been called a model for a homeless shelter in Sarasota. Photo courtesy Pinellas Safe Harbor

But judging from the “snapshot” she brought home from her trip to Pinellas County, Patterson said on March 4, the Safe Harbor facility is well run, clean and orderly, and people she saw around it were respectful. Patterson added that although some residents socialized in a courtyard, she spotted no congregation of homeless people on the perimeter of the shelter.

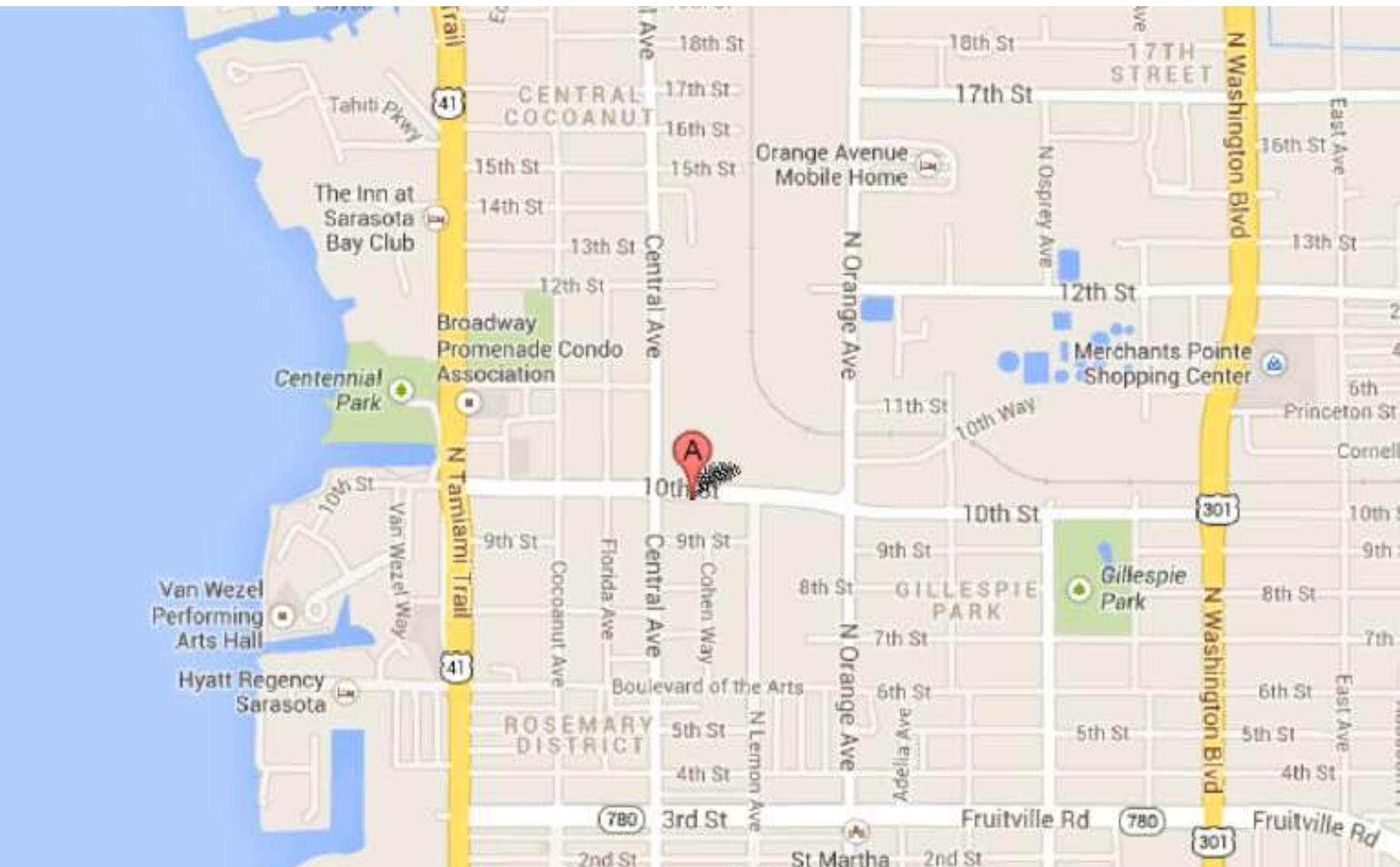
“They didn’t have a bunch of homeless people hanging around outside,” Patterson pointed out.

“It was said that none of the municipalities in Pinellas County contribute to Safe Harbor. That is just not true.”

Christine Robinson
Vice Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission

After Tuesday’s meeting, Wayne Applebee, the county’s homelessness coordinator, told the *News Leader* he believes the Sheriff’s Office, which is expected to manage the Sarasota shelter, and the Police Department, which will be responsible for patrolling the perimeter, will come up with a collaborative approach. But it is too early to work out a specific plan, he added, because a site has not been chosen or an architectural design approved.

Applebee noted that at Pinellas Safe Harbor, additional officers have not been needed to patrol the site and adjacent neighborhood.



A map shows the location of the Salvation Army facility on 10th Street in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

“The reality is there were no new additional police officers” assigned for that purpose, Applebee told the county commissioners. There was a redistricting of the patrol zones around Safe Harbor, which created a smaller patrol zone, and the creation of a homelessness coordination team to handle the situation, Applebee explained.

Some of the topics discussed at the City Commission dais recently have led to more confusion than clarification because due diligence for the two proposed homeless shelter sites is still under way, Applebee said.

“We want the dialogue, want the factual information out there, but let’s get the facts first,” he told the *News Leader*.

A BETTER CHOICE

A shelter plan is important in Sarasota County because continuing to allow large groups of homeless people to gather in parks and on streets downtown is the worst option for all involved, community leaders say. “There is no supervision,” Patterson noted. “[In a shelter], they will have warm food, books, TV in the afternoon and people working with them to solve problems ... The shelter is a better choice than having homeless people hanging out at a fountain.”

The Sarasota concept envisions a well-run shelter that will enable the city and county to bring order to the homelessness situation. Law enforcement can “take people to jail, or take them to a better place,” Patterson said.

DUE DILIGENCE

Public concerns need to be addressed, Robinson told her colleagues. She wants to schedule a board discussion on the shelter,



Wayne Applebee is the homelessness coordinator for Sarasota County. Photo by Norman Schimmel

she added, but that discussion should be “fact-based, not fear-based.”

Underscoring Applebee’s comments, Robinson pointed out that a lot of details will be clearer after the due diligence and environmental site analyses have been completed. County staff and the engineering firm Cardno ENTRIX Inc. are conducting environmental tests and calculating construction estimates and timetables for the two possible shelter sites: 1330 N. Osprey Ave. and 1800 N. East Ave.

Among the results of that work will be the estimated cost of a shelter at each location and indications about possible ways the Sheriff’s Office and Police Department can coordinate efforts, Robinson added.

Meanwhile, the county is moving ahead with steps to make sure \$805,000 in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money is available for construction

of a facility. The City of Sarasota also has \$289,000 available in its CDBG program that could be used for the project.

Under U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines, if the city and county are to keep the funding available for the plan, they must get a certified appraisal of the site at 1800 N. East Ave., according to a staff memo provided to the County Commission. The expense of the appraisal is estimated at \$3,500. No such action is necessary for the parcel at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. because it is city-owned.

GROWING CONCERN

Amid the concerns raised about a shelter on the city-owned site on Osprey Avenue, the operators of the [Pines of Sarasota](#) assisted living and nursing home — a neighbor of that location — worry about the facility's impact on their operation and those of other nearby institutions, such as a preschool and Sarasota Military Academy.

Commissioner Carolyn Mason told her colleagues Tuesday that she had spoken with John Overton, president and CEO of the Pines of Sarasota, adding that the board and staff of the nonprofit want to work with the county and city.


"They have concerns, but they want their organization to be part of the solution and not part of the problem," Mason added.

But Overton told the *News Leader* he does not think the Osprey Avenue site should be the main option for addressing the homeless problem.

He is afraid that if a shelter is built there, it will lead to 12th Street becoming a thoroughfare for homeless people, as the latter walk from the come-as-you-are public shelter to the Salvation Army facility at 1400 10th St. All it will take is one negative incident to create the perception that the area is unsafe, Overton pointed out.

"My view simply is that we're concerned about the fact that we have 400 employees and are concerned about their safety and security, as well as the vulnerable senior population we serve," Overton added in an interview Tuesday afternoon.

Sarasota Military Academy on Orange Avenue and a preschool in the area would also be impacted, Overton said, although the extent of the effects cannot be predicted at this time.

"We are asking them to look at other sites," Overton continued, referring to city and county leaders. "Why does north Sarasota handle the brunt of the homeless situation?" 

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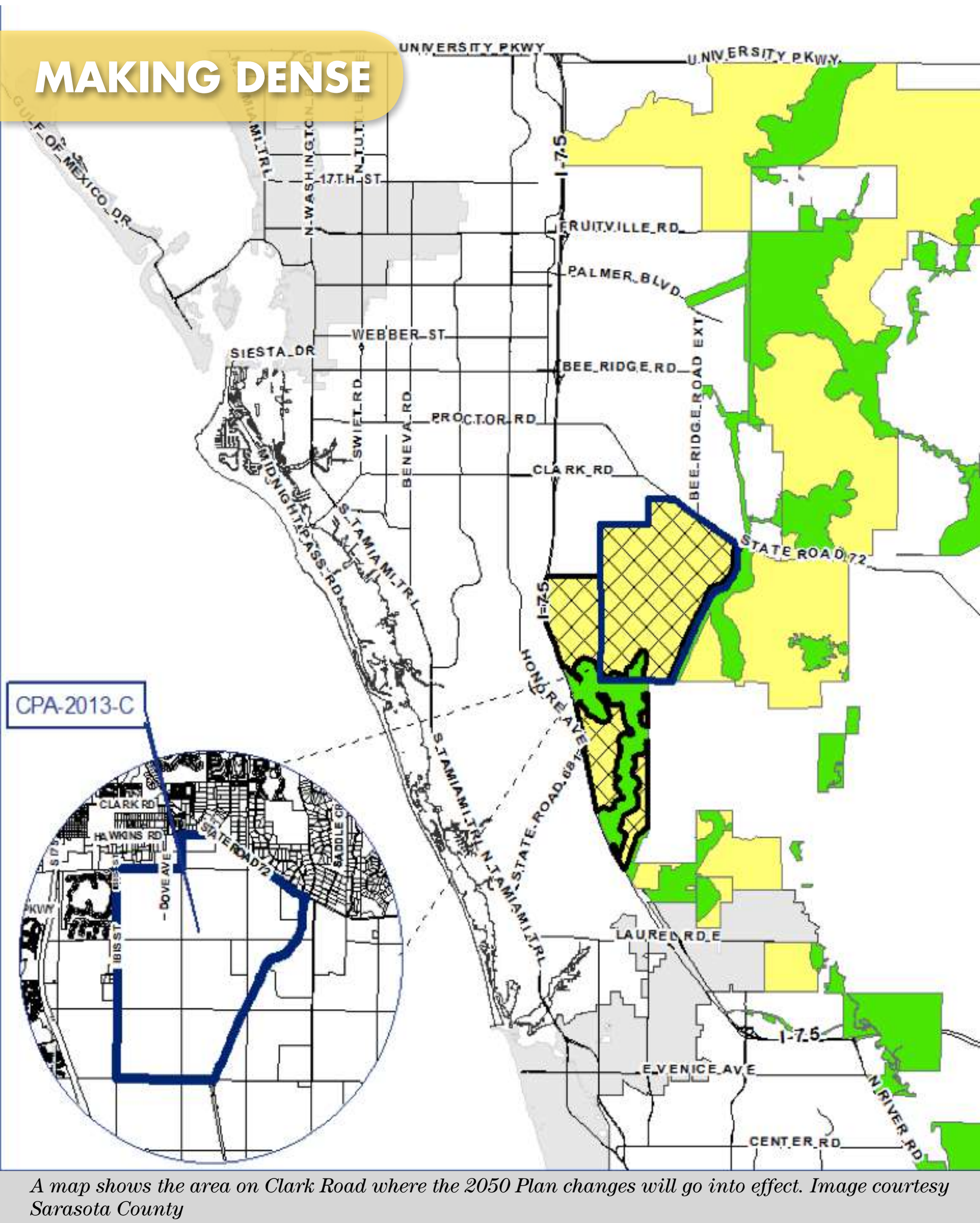
CPA-2013-C

A map shows the area on Clark Road where the 2050 Plan changes will go into effect. Image courtesy Sarasota County

MAKING DENSE

CPA-2013-C

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CPA-2013-C

A map shows the area on Clark Road where the 2050 Plan changes will go into effect. Image courtesy Sarasota County

THE COUNTY COMMISSION OKS BIG CHANGES TO SARASOTA 2050 FOR ALMOST 5,000 CLARK ROAD ACRES

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Meetings on how to alter Sarasota County's 2050 land-use plan are generally heated affairs, with shots fired from commission critics who say board members are doing the bidding of developers and from commissioners who say opponents represent a small fraction of county residents. The Wednesday, March 5, meeting on a series of 2050 alterations that will affect 4,672 acres along Clark Road was nothing like that. It barely lasted a half-hour.

The new changes to 2050 include reducing the amount of open space that will be preserved on the property — from 50 percent to 33 percent — and allowing the neighborhood's commercial buildings to be located outside the development rather than inside it. Requiring commercial businesses to be located in the center of a new village was added to 2050 as a way to incentivize the instruction of walkable, mixed-use communities.

The changes will also dramatically increase the density allowed on the land, opening it to the possibility of 9,334 units, "or approximately 5,500 to 6,300 more units than otherwise would be allowed under 2050 development incentives," per a staff report on the issue.

The alterations come on top of whatever other changes to 2050 the county eventually approves. County staff is in the midst of reviewing large swaths of the plan, which developers say contains too many onerous regulations and is stifling new growth.

"2050 doesn't work for us as it was meant to," Jim Turner told the commission. Turner is a partner with LT Ranch, which, along with 3H


Ranch, owns the large majority of the acreage in question. The "improved pasture" that occupies most of the land is "environmentally benign," Turner said, meaning that preserving it as open space would do little to positively impact the environment. He also mentioned the expense — \$79 million, he said — of purchasing development rights to make a village work under the original 2050 rules.

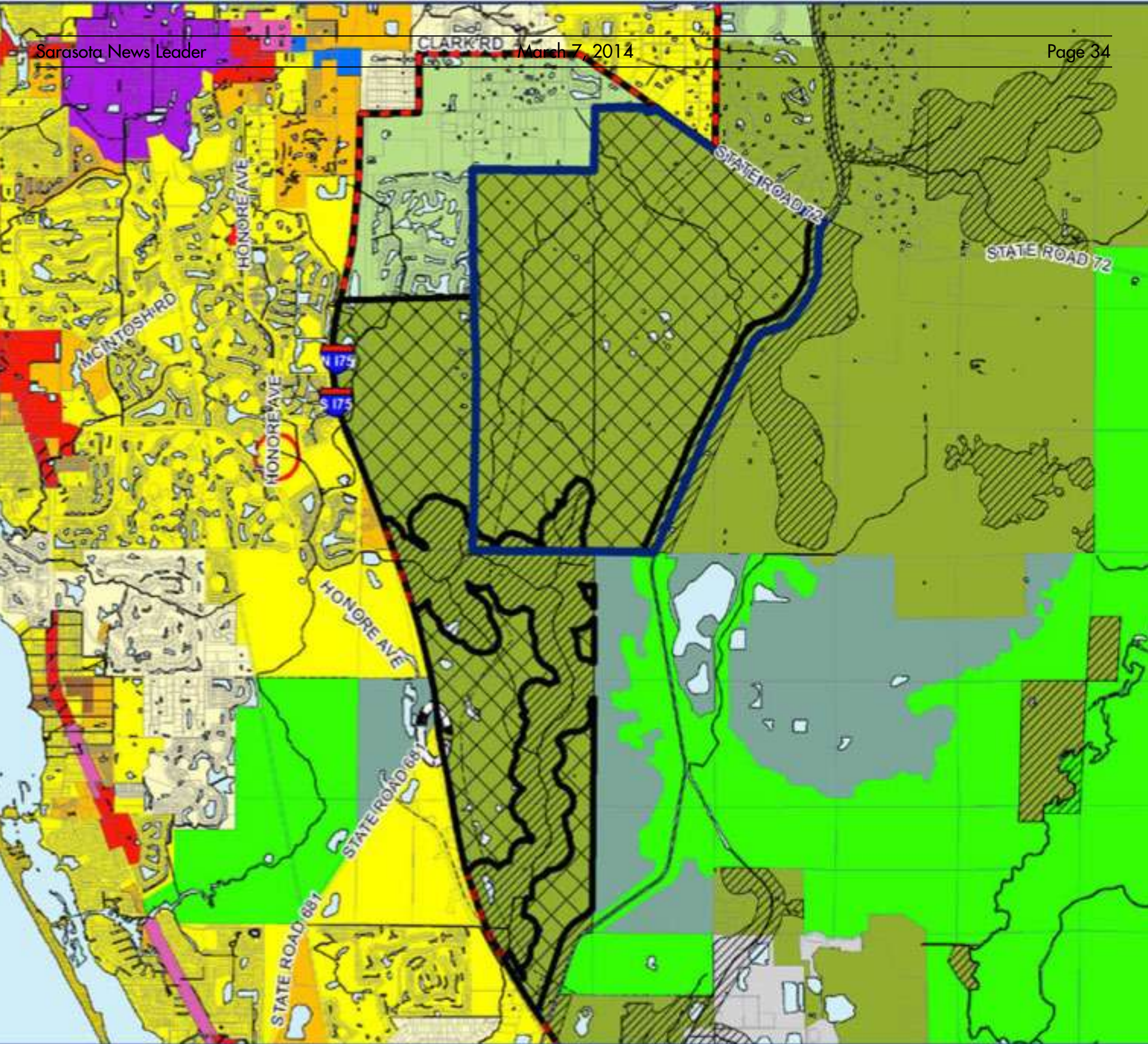
Robert Koski, a neighboring property owner, criticized the changes, arguing that when he moved to the area he imagined that only five- or 10-acre ranchettes would be built nearby.

"That's a very, very large number of parcels and the reduction of open space to 33 percent, I think, seriously affects everything around the area," he said. "And between the effects on traffic and the effects on density and the effects on wildlife, I don't think that's a good idea."

Commissioner Nora Patterson was the lone dissenting voice on the board.

"Open space in the plan was intended to include pasture land and not just environmentally sensitive land," she said. "It was intended to preserve some agriculture, actually." Patterson is the only current commissioner to have voted for the 2050 Plan when it was adopted in 2002. Among board members, she has been the most consistently skeptical of the decision to revise 2050.

"I feel like this is a really serious departure from the intent of 2050," Patterson said right before casting her "No" vote. The motion to approve the changes passed 4-1. 



A graphic presented to the County Commission in November 2013 shows future land use designations for the areas surrounding the Clark Road development site. Image courtesy Sarasota County



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ACTION THROUGH INACTION

A substantial crowd came to hear a pitch to revive consideration of a master cultural park plan for the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall parking lot and adjacent city-owned property. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

THE CITY COMMISSION STOPS PAYING LEGAL FEES FOR SUSAN CHAPMAN IN HER SUNSHINE LAWSUIT AS IT AWAITS AN UPDATE ON THE CASE IN A FEW WEEKS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota City Commission faced the future like a nervous maiden on Monday, March 3, finding comfort in the bridal rhyme “Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and a silver sixpence in her shoe.”

The silver was the relief that comes from a clean audit of city finances. When Mayor Shannon Snyder complained about not getting a full presentation, he was told there was nothing to

present. The auditors could not find a single real nit to pick. However, the old, new, borrowed and blue were far more nettlesome.

The “old” was a 2007 plan for the 42 acres around the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. The city and a variety of private institutions want to ramp it back up as the economy improves. Supporters briefed the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations earlier on this. (See the related story in this issue.) Ultimately,



This is a cottage industry to bully people and make money.

Kelly Kirschner
Former Mayor
City of Sarasota



the commission postponed any action for six months.

The “new” was appointment of leaders for the Independent Police Advisory Panel (Eileen Normile) and the Police Complaint Committee (Bill Fuller). Normile replaces former Mayor Elmer Berkel, and Fuller was reappointed, both actions by unanimous consent. The functions and duties of the panel were expanded by ordinance through a narrower, 3-2 vote, with Snyder and Commissioner Paul Caragiulo again in the minority. The panels have been an experiment in civilian oversight of the Police Department.

Commissioners listened but took no action on borrowed trouble. When then-Mayor Suzanne Atwell last year said she was afraid to walk downtown because of homelessness and vagrancy, she touched a nerve with downtowners who demanded action. After

a flurry of fruitless police “Whac-A-Mole” actions, the city and county decided to hire a consultant, who then recommended a shelter in the northern part of the city. At Monday’s meeting, there was much smoke and some heat but very little light at the end of the evening. (Coverage of that is also elsewhere in this issue.)

SOMETHING BLUE

What could have been characterized as the sad part of the evening was the very last agenda item, as three commissioners proverbially pushed one of their own out into the cold and possible bankruptcy by knuckling under to what has been called a bureaucratic bully.

In October, a group called Citizens for Sunshine filed suit against the city and two commissioners for violating the state’s public



A number of people stayed to the bitter 11 p.m. end of the City Commission meeting to testify in support of Susan Chapman and to hear the commission deny payment of any further legal fees for her defense. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

meeting laws. The organization charged that Chapman and Atwell met with a group that included city staffers, police officers and downtown merchants to talk about homelessness and vagrancy. There was no prior official notice, and no official notes or minutes were taken. The group's attorney, Andrea Mogensen of Sarasota, alleged the two commissioners talked about the issue and, therefore, violated the state's Sunshine Laws.

The city and Atwell folded within three weeks, and the city paid Citizens for Sunshine's legal bills of \$18,000 as called for in state statutes. The city admitted to a small infraction, and Atwell admitted nothing but paid \$500 to a charity as demanded in the settlement. Chapman, however, refused to surrender. In early December, the commission grumbled but voted to pay for Chapman's defense for 90 days. The period expired on March 3.

Chapman's lawyers say no evidence has turned up to show that the two women spoke about the issue of homelessness at the meeting. "Citizens for Sunshine has not come up with one witness that either Commissioner Chapman or Commissioner Atwell said anything except pleasantries to each other," said Attorney Bill Fuller. "It is our position there is an ulterior motive for the lawsuit. It is to coerce Commissioner Chapman to vote in favor of the 12th Street homeless shelter."

One of the two remaining sites under review for a city homeless shelter is located at 1330 N. Osprey Ave., near the Salvation Army facility on 10th Street.

Fuller cited the sworn testimony of Mike LeShea, a friend of Anthony Lorenzo, chairman of Citizens for Sunshine. "The president of Citizens for Sunshine told [LeShea] the



Mayor Shannon Snyder prepares for the start of the March 3 meeting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

lawsuit would go away if the shelter was approved,” added Fuller. “Can you put a price on coercing a city commissioner?”

‘A COTTAGE INDUSTRY’

The lawsuit attempts to expand the scope of the Sunshine Laws, banning two or more members of the same commission or advisory board from attending a meeting of constituents. Since the suit was filed, the city has been posting notices for a large number of citizens meetings where two or more commissioners might appear. Staff even “noticed” the Veterans Day Parade because commissioners traditionally walk Main Street together.

A number of people signed up to speak on the issue Monday. Most were current or past civic leaders. Gretchen Serrie, former chairwoman of the city’s Charter Review Committee, told the commissioners, “Please give [Chapman] the support she deserves. This is politically motivated.”

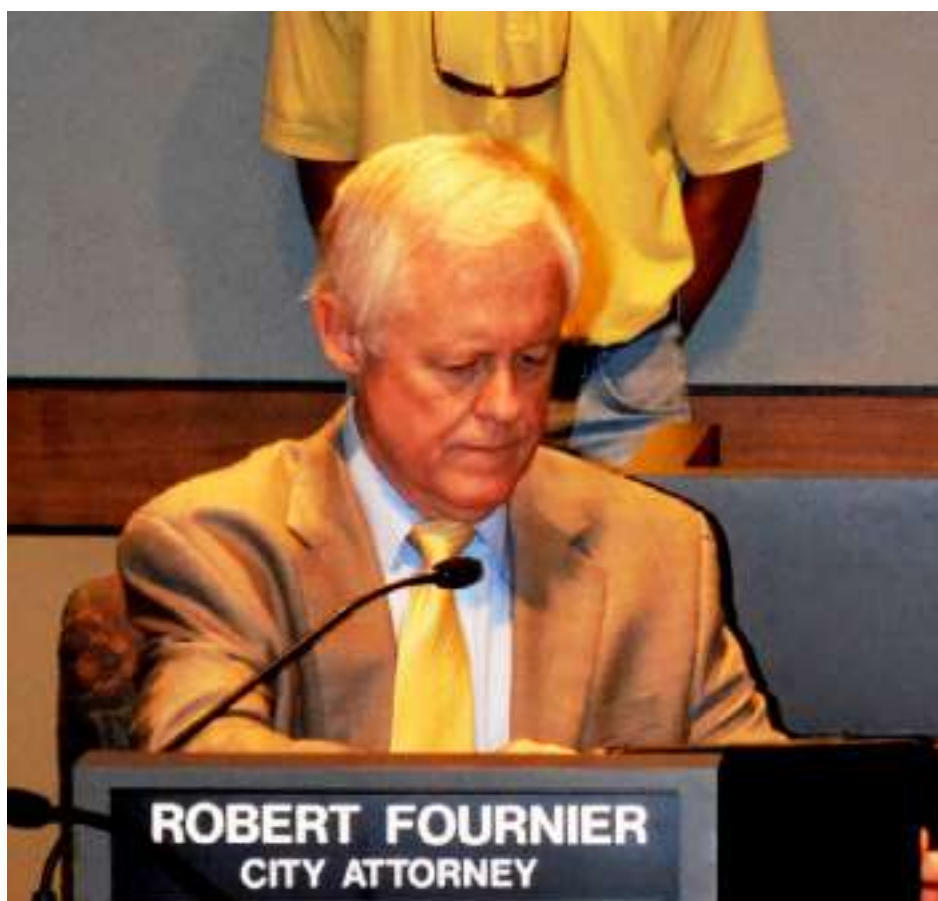
Patricia Varley lives in the Gardens of Ringling Park. “[Chapman] has the right to listen to constituents. [Chapman and Atwell] were there to listen. When we vote for someone, we hope they will listen to us, to hear our needs,” Varley said.

Lynn Robbins, a long-time Sarasota Realtor, told the board, “Two days after I testified in defense of Ms. Chapman, I received a request from a friend of Mr. [Michael] Barfield asking for my emails while I was on the [Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board]. I referred it to the city clerk, who printed them. They’ve never been picked up.” Michael Barfield works for Mogensen’s law firm.

Former Mayor Kelly Kirschner testified as well. “You have a preponderance of evidence



Suzanne Atwell settled the Sunshine lawsuit filed against her over a city meeting on homelessness. Photo by Norman Schimmel



City Attorney Robert Fournier will have more information about Commissioner Susan Chapman’s Sunshine lawsuit when the City Commission meets again in a few weeks, he says. Photo by Norman Schimmel

there was no violation," he said. "This is not an issue of financial responsibility. You need to go after this and stop this. It is a cottage industry to bully people and make money."

DEAFENING SILENCE

After the public comments concluded, Vice Mayor Willie Shaw made a motion to extend the payment of Chapman's attorney's fees for another 60 days. The motion failed to attract a second and therefore died.

City Attorney Bob Fournier quickly intervened to fill the void. When a motion fails for lack of a second, it is normally followed by another motion. In this case, the expected action was a call to deny any further payment.

Instead, Fournier offered to return in two weeks with an update on the case. "Let me

talk with her counsel," he said, "rather than denying [the continued payment] this evening." Shaw turned that into a motion, which Atwell seconded.

Commissioner Caragiulo noted, "So we're not extending the payment."

Chapman replied, "We have offered mediation. We've offered to dismiss if they dismiss [the lawsuit]. They've either refused or we've heard nothing." She concluded, "We were met with obstruction at every turn."

Caragiulo phrased his earlier comment a different way. "No authorization for further payment." The motion passed 4-0. Because Chapman has a financial interest in the outcome, she is banned from voting on the matter. **SNL**

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PANHANDLING VOTE POSTPONED

A man standing alongside Bee Ridge Road in April 2013 sought help from motorists. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY AND CITY COMMISSIONS' CONTINUING DISAGREEMENT ON HOW TO REGULATE ROADSIDE SOLICITATION LEADS TO DELAYED COUNTY ACTION

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

As another aspect of addressing homelessness issues, the Sarasota County commissioners on Wednesday, March 5, held a public hearing on a law that would ban roadside panhandling in unincorporated areas of the county.

The new ordinance would replace a temporary, emergency measure now in place. "The goal of the ordinance is public safety," said John Mast, the county's manager of Land Development Services.

Two significant issues, however, came up during the discussion, and action ultimately was delayed.

First, the commissioners grappled with how to ban panhandling while attempting to address the concern public speakers raised about the law's limiting the ability of charities, such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), to seek contributions during roadside fundraising events.

In addition, the commissioners wanted to adopt a unified ordinance that would be more easily enforced countywide.

"I don't think there are hard feelings. They just disagree."

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



On that point, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson won approval for a

motion calling for county staff to try once more to work with the City of Sarasota and other municipalities on a standard regulation.

Discussions between county and City of Sarasota attorneys thus far have failed to result in agreement on such an approach.

Further, at the commissioners' request, over the next few weeks, representatives of the Americans for Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will be invited to provide comments on a provision of the ordinance that would allow groups and individuals to seek solicitations if they meet specific guidelines. One possible option, based on an Alachua County ordinance, is to set aside several days a year when roadside donations can be sought.

The county board wants to hear whether the ACLU feels such a provision could be perceived as favoring one group or viewpoint over those of other organizations or individuals.

A PLEA

Firefighters, parents and patients diagnosed with a neuromuscular disease pleaded with the county commissioners on March 5 to let them continue to hold fundraisers such as the "Fill the Boot" campaign, which helps fund a clinic and an MDA summer camp for children suffering from neuromuscular disease.

Firefighters stand in roadways to accept donations, which go to the local MDA chapter.

- **New language to include definitions of medians, road surfaces, and sidewalks.**



The proposed new county solicitation ordinance would offer clear definitions of areas where people might panhandle. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“MDA provides ... hope for me and many others,” said Tonya Smith, who has been diagnosed with a neuromuscular disease.

“We have been doing this as an organization for 60 years,” Venice Firefighter Tony Fitzgerald told the commission.

According to a representative from the local MDA chapter, the nonprofit has taken in \$25,000 less since the county’s temporary solicitation ordinance was enacted because the law bans roadside solicitations. Enacting a permanent prohibition, MDA supporters say, would have an even more negative impact on the charity’s ability to raise money.

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh and Assistant County Attorney Dave Pearce, however, argued against an exemption that could be perceived as favoring certain types of organizations over others. That is because the courts and the ACLU keep a close lookout for any local ordinances that might be seen as impeding free speech, the attorneys pointed out.

Pearce noted a federal court case during which a judge ruled that local governments could not enact laws that are not considered “content neutral.” In other words, local governments cannot ban some forms, or viewpoints, of speech while allowing others.

- Collier County, Lee County, and the City of Clearwater have a permitting process for charitable organizations.
- City of Tampa allows solicitation on Sunday’s only, no restriction for type of solicitation.
- Alachua County allows solicitation on Labor Day weekend only, no restriction for type of solicitation.



“I wanted to stay away from any kind of exemption that would create a content bias,” Pearce told the commissioners.

NO COLLABORATION

The City of Sarasota already has its own panhandling ordinance in place.

Although Sarasota County attorneys have met with city staff to see if the two governments could work together on a unified ordinance, those discussions have made little progress.

The city’s ordinance is stricter, regulating “attempted panhandling.”

“[City officials] believe attempted solicitation should be regulated,” Pearce said. “We don’t agree.”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta said he was shocked when the city attorney told the city commissioners to move ahead with their ordinance instead of adopting the county’s version.

“They think it’s OK to go after attempted panhandling. I think they are going to get sued,” Barbetta said.

Robinson argued for another attempt at collaboration.

She feels the city staff should have been involved early on in the discussion of the county law and asked to help draft the county ordinance.


“Sending [the ordinance] to them to review is different than asking them to participate in the process,” Robinson said. “I don’t feel like we are being a good partner with them.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson agreed with Robinson that a unified ordinance would be better, but Patterson added that it appears the city does not want that approach.

“It’s a whole heck of a lot easier to have one ordinance and not have to figure out where [the] city line starts and county ordinance starts. That’s unfortunate,” Patterson said.

“I don’t think there are hard feelings. They just disagree,” she added.

Patterson also noted that the County Commission had to be careful with its solicitation ordinance. “This is a litigious county; we have been sued for things other counties have not.”

DeMarsh supported the sentiment: “There is a reason why your attorneys are conservative on this,” he told the commissioners. “The city was challenged on this very thing.” 

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MEETING DEMAND



Construction continues on the Mall at University Town Center, which is set to open in October. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY WILL ADD A NEW UNIVERSITY PARKWAY BUS ROUTE, BUT SEVERAL FACETS OF TRANSIT SERVICE WILL CHANGE TO FUND IT

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

A new Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) Route 30 will meet demand on the northern edge of Sarasota County, providing public transportation to the Mall at University Town Center, which is scheduled to open in October, and Nathan Benderson Rowing Park.

Approved by the County Commission in a 4-1 vote on Wednesday, March 5, the route will run along University Parkway from the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport to the State College of Florida. (See the

accompanying map.) It will also make a stop in Lakewood Ranch.

The annual operating cost of \$714,000 will be split for the first 18 months by a \$529,000 Federal Transit Administration grant and \$529,000 in a required county match.

To cover the county's share without dipping further into the county's coffers, SCAT will decrease other services. Those range from eliminating routes to increasing headway for others. (Headway



The University route is needed. It is a no-brainer with what is going on there.

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission



is the amount of time passengers wait for a bus to appear on a specific route.)

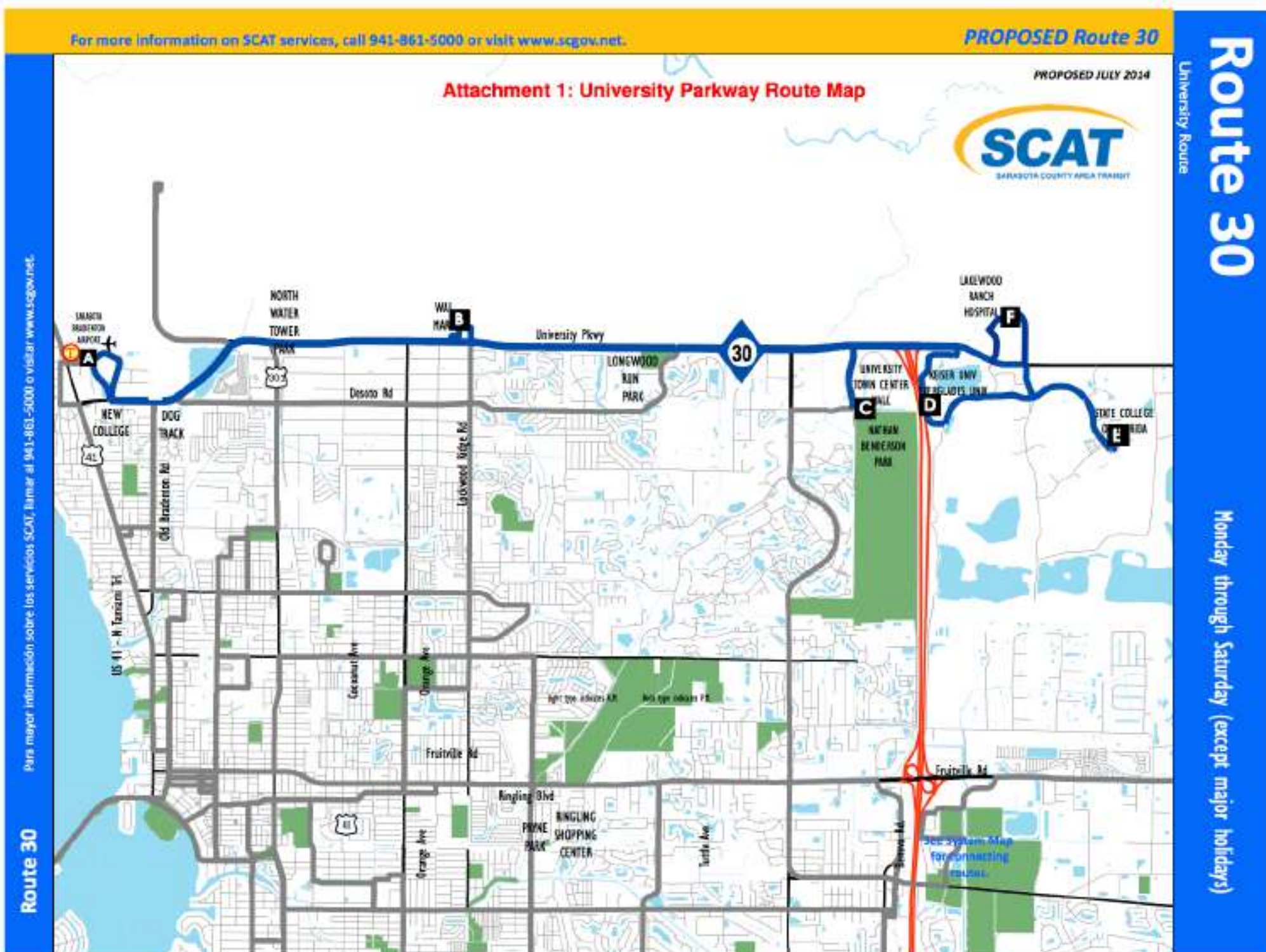
Glama Carter, director of SCAT, told the commissioners the changes were needed to ensure the new route was “budget neutral.”

After the first 18 months, the county will have to fully fund the \$714,000 annual operating expense if Route 30 is to be maintained.

A new \$446,773 bus for the route will be paid for through sales tax revenue, Carter explained. It will be delivered in May or June.

An existing SCAT Express bus will be moved over to Route 30 to join the new one.

When Carter first proposed the University Parkway service to the County Commission in August 2013, the board decided to put the plan on hold because of insufficient money to support it. However, the County Commission directed SCAT officials to seek funding opportunities such as federal grants. Subsequently, SCAT achieved success in applying for Federal Transit Authority funding.



A map shows the new Sarasota County Area Transit route that will serve University Parkway. Image courtesy Sarasota County

A 'NO-BRAINER'

Commissioners on Wednesday asked why Manatee County was not participating in funding the new line, since it will run along the border of the two counties.

"This one should be supported by both [Manatee and Sarasota] counties," Commissioner Nora Patterson pointed out.

Carter reported that she did reach out to Manatee County officials and that funding the route was not a priority for them.

"The University route is needed," said Chairman Charles Hines. "It is a no-brainer with what is going on there."

But Sarasota County should not be the only local government footing the bill, Hines added. Manatee County residents will benefit from this addition; therefore, they should help cover the cost, he said. "A large portion of the users will be from Manatee, and Sarasota County will be subsidizing that route," Hines noted.

He asked county staff to continue to explore the possibility of a combined funding effort with Manatee.

Patterson pointed out that, in the past, the Manatee County Commission had expressed a willingness to help pay for a University Parkway route.

THE TRADEOFF

Commissioner Joe Barbetta called the decision to approve the new route a "tough one" because other services have to be cut. "But we need the new route," he added.



The Mall at University Town Center will be across the street from another shopping complex and just down the road from Nathan Benderson Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Although she felt some "heartache" in agreeing to the cuts, Patterson added, the reality is that routes with lower ridership had to be eliminated if the commissioners were going to add new SCAT service. "If we are going to privatize, trust me that is what would happen," Patterson noted.


Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson — who cast the lone "No" vote — found fault with the plan to cut 90X routes, which provide service to North Port, Venice and Sarasota. She said she felt those routes, which were added recently, were not adequately advertised to residents; thus, they were not highly utilized. She did not want to see them eliminated before they had a chance to build ridership.

Robinson represents South County interests on the board.

According to paperwork from Carter, the following changes will be made:

- Cutting five Express bus trips on Route 90X (North Port-Venice-Sarasota) and one non-productive evening trip from Route 100X (North Port-Sarasota). Other trips to Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport will be extended.
- Reducing frequency on Route 40 (Webber Street in Sarasota). It will operate every 45 minutes instead of every 30 minutes.
- Eliminating Route 71 (Booker High School). SCAT will allow Route 7 (Newtown to Northeast Plaza) to serve the Booker High School area.
- Removing SCAT service after 10 p.m. on all routes seven days a week. This will allow cost savings and the reallocation of resources to Route 30. However, this will impact about 50 customers.

- Eliminating the 5:30 a.m. Sunday round trip to Longboat Key. This service will continue to be available Monday through Saturday when other SCAT buses are operating. While an estimated four riders use that early Sunday service to and from Longboat Key, they can use a bus that leaves the downtown Sarasota transfer station 35 minutes later, at 6:05 a.m.
- Extending the current Route 215 on Sunday (Cocoanut to University) to Lakewood Ranch Hospital and connecting the Mall at University Town Center with businesses and services in Lakewood Ranch.

Commissioner Carolyn Mason said it is important to immediately get word out to riders about the changes. “These adjustments will obviously have some impact on some riders. I think it is really important that, as soon as possible, we get information out to the ridership so they will know and ... minimize the angst.” 



As Benderson Park hosts more and more events leading up to the 2017 World Rowing Championships, organizers say more demand will be seen for public transportation to the venue. Photo by Rachel Hackney

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Q&A: CHUCK MAROHN



Image from the Strong Towns website

THE STRONG TOWNS PRESIDENT VISITING SARASOTA SAYS TRADITIONAL SUBURBAN GROWTH FUNCTIONS LIKE A PONZI SCHEME

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

Is Sarasota a strong town? We'll find out soon, when Chuck Marohn visits Sarasota to discuss the research Strong Towns, his Minnesota nonprofit, has done on how development decisions impact cities' financial solvency. A civil engineer and city planner, Marohn will speak at the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations' annual dinner on March 18 and then host a free Q&A the following morning. The Sarasota News Leader couldn't resist the urge to pick Marohn's brain.

The Sarasota News Leader: How did Strong Towns get started?

Chuck Marohn: I worked for many years doing civil engineering and planning and started a blog in 2008, and on that blog over time I was talking about these things that came down to the Strong Towns principles. My friends encouraged me to start a nonprofit. They said, "Just keep writing and we'll fill out the paperwork."



SNL: Did the 2008 crash have an impact on your decision to begin blogging?

CM: That was a big part of it, actually. Two thousand eight was the election year and it was the time things really started to melt down and implode. A lot of it was for my own mental health. The early blog days were my personal therapy session. When you write, it helps you sort out your thoughts.



SNL: Strong Towns describes our suburban growth pattern as a “Ponzi scheme.” How so?

CM: The way we finance growth — from strictly a local government standpoint — the transactions come at a very low cost. When the federal government comes in with a grant or the state comes in with subsidies, as a local government we don’t pay a whole lot for that. But all of a sudden now we get all this growth, all this tax revenue. Everything looks good.

But we take on the long-term liability of maintaining all this stuff. We agree we’ll fix the pipes and the roads, and that obligation doesn’t come due for a generation. We get the near-term illusion of wealth, and those costs are going to come decades in the future. Then we go out and get more growth, because growth creates more instant wealth and makes us in a monetary sense better off. Without the malicious intent, it has the same function as a Ponzi scheme.



SNL: Sarasota seems to have a lot of decaying strip malls.

CM: It’s incredibly common. The post-World War II pattern of development has a very predictable curve to it. You have rapid growth; then, you have this period of stagnation and then just rapid decline and it goes into complete disuse. We see this again and again and again. We are living with, burdened with, that declining period of stuff that happened a generation ago.

Florida is particularly nasty in a lot of ways. It’s so random. Around the Orlando area, you’ll be driving and there’s an abandoned strip mall next to a brand new mall. The pattern is so random it’s hard to see how you stitch those gaps together.



SNL: You say “age diversity” is an important factor in building a strong town. We certainly lack that. How does a community increase that?

CM: What tends to happen is you have distorted feedback loops. If you have a population that tends to be elderly, they tend not to favor investments that attract young families. If you don’t have kids in schools, you’re not as hypersensitive about the condition of schools. If you’ve got a college town, they tend to be less interested in things that help senior citizens lead productive lives. In Sarasota, you guys are kind of swamped by

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snowbirds and a certain demographic mix that tends to be a little more transient. That has certain advantages, and it also has some disadvantages. So consciously try to push back against those disadvantages.



SNL: It feels like the recession has only deepened this urge to grow and grow because development creates economic activity.

CM: When somebody needs to eat, they're less likely to want to engage in a theoretical conversation about making this place stronger. The problem that we face, and Florida faces this acutely, is development is not very productive. We need to find a way to break out of this.




SNL: Have other cities been able to overcome some of those deep divisions over growth?

CM: When I'm in Sarasota, I'm going to go across to Martin County, to Stuart. They have a pretty innovative group there that is working on this return-on-investment problem: "How do we improve the productivity of our community?" That's a huge paradigm shift.

Detroit is a huge case study. There are no rules and people have to figure things out. And you've got places like Memphis that are having these discussions. We're doing a boot camp in April to help city leaders reorient the public-private relationship and help them become more risk-tolerant. That's been a success story, too.

The problem is local governments are still embedded in the World War II military hierarchical model. Businesses adopted that model after World War II, but the private sector has figured out that you're much more productive having a minimal amount of top-down teams. Governments don't operate that way, and they're having a real hard time making that transition. There shouldn't be competing divisions walled off from each other. That is the structural challenge that local governments face all across the country.

Chuck Marohn will speak at the annual dinner of the Council of Neighborhood Associations at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 18, at The Francis, 1289 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets are \$50. At 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 19, Marohn will host a free Q&A at the City of Sarasota Commission Chambers, 1565 First St., Sarasota. 



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DEBATE CLASS



Domenichino's 1626 work, [The Rebuke of Adam and Eve](#), hangs in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. Image from Wikimedia Commons

SHOULD TAXPAYER DOLLARS BE GOING TO SCHOOLS THAT DO NOT TEACH EVOLUTION? ONE ACTIVIST SAYS NO

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

Should taxpayer dollars be going to schools that teach creationism instead of evolution? That's the provocative question science education activist Zack Kopplin has asked in [interviews with Bill Moyers](#), Bill Maher and others, and on [a website](#) that shows his research into state programs that fund creationist schools. Appearing on that website: Bradenton's [Family Life Community School](#).

Kopplin is a Louisiana native who, in 2010, as a high school senior, began organizing an effort to repeal the Pelican State's Science Education Act, which allows public school

science teachers to introduce critiques of evolution and climate change into the classroom. "Everyone who looked at this law knew it was just a back door to sneak creationism into public school science classes," Kopplin told Moyers last year.

Kopplin's mission to reverse the Louisiana Science Education Act, although still ongoing, has broadened into a wide critique of channels by which public education funds are being directed toward schools that question the validity of evolution. Kopplin eventually started a website, Say No to Creationist

Vouchers, and began compiling a database of creationism-teaching schools that have accepted public money. In Florida, Kopplin found 164 schools that fit the bill, all of whom, according to Kopplin, have participated in the state's McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program.

One of the schools Kopplin found was Family Life. The K-8 school's website [lists its curricula grade by grade](#). Kopplin zeroed in on the school's use of textbooks by A Beka Book (*Excellence in Education From a Christian Perspective*), Apologia (created "to help families learn, live, and defend the Christian faith"), Bob Jones ("Christ-centered resources for education, edification, & evangelism") and others.

According to the Family Life site, Apologia provides the school's seventh- and eighth-grade science textbooks. Apologia's website [describes the series](#): "ideal for those who love science and those who aren't so sure, our Jr. and Sr. High science texts make comprehension easy, education solid, and God's work in Creation clear."

Florida Department of Education Press Secretary Cheryl Etters tells *The Sarasota News Leader* that seven McKay students are currently enrolled at the school and that the school has received slightly more than \$141,000 in state funds since 2008. The McKay program is a school choice initiative launched in 1999 that allows students with special needs to enroll in private rather than public schools. According to Etters, private schools

Click to watch the video



Zack Kopplin on Keeping Creationism out of Public Classrooms. Video courtesy of [Vimeo.com](#)

must meet certain state standards to participate in the program. Family Life is listed on the Department of Education website as a “participating” institution. (The school did not respond to multiple *News Leader* phone calls or an email.)

Sarasota Christian School also made Kopplin’s list, but seemingly because of an acronym error. [According to its website](#), the school has a program dubbed ACE (Accelerated College Education). In education circles, ACE also stands for [Accelerated Christian Education](#).


Kopplin tells the *News Leader* his research is likely just “the tip of the iceberg.” The schools he found are only the ones who made their curriculum affiliations apparent. “They put that right on their website,” Kopplin says. “There are a lot of schools that don’t have a website or they don’t put their curriculum on their website.”

Jim Wise, a member of the board of the Sarasota-Manatee chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, tells the *News Leader* he thinks the state funding may be unconstitutional at both the state and federal levels. But he’s not surprised. The

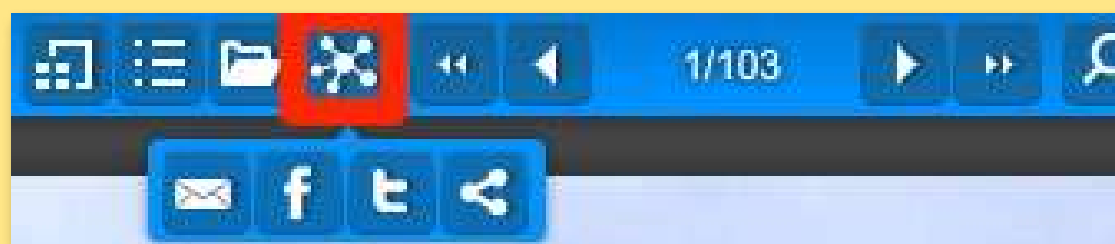
approach to evolution even in public schools leaves much to be desired, he says. If science teachers cover evolution, they often teach it as controversial, which, among scientists, it isn’t. And then there are those who don’t cover it at all.

“I knew public school teachers that didn’t teach evolution,” he adds. “In many cases, it was because of their not wanting to have to deal with pressure from parents and school board members who are fundamentalists.” Despite being concerned that there’s little oversight on the issue, Wise feels the topic of evolution is being “well-handled” overall in Sarasota County schools.

Kopplin says that since posting his research, little action has been taken. But that doesn’t mean people want creationism taught in public schools. In Louisiana, such measures are “popular in the Legislature,” he adds. “They’re not popular in the state.”

Kopplin insists his fight isn’t against the school choice movement or private schools that teach what they think is best. It’s about public science education dollars going to schools that don’t teach science. “It’s just bad to teach creationism,” he says. 

QUICK TIP



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Plans in 2007 called for a cultural district to be located between the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and North Tamiami Trail. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A NEW DENSITY PLAN FOR THE ROSEMARY DISTRICT WINS PRELIMINARY CITY OK, BUT THE CULTURAL DISTRICT DISCUSSION IS ON HOLD

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

The City of Sarasota's Development Review Committee signed off this week on a city comprehensive plan change to allow triple-density development in some areas of the Rosemary District north of downtown.

The committee is composed of senior city department leaders who expedite permitting and other paperwork associated with land development.

The 47-acre tract is zoned "Downtown Edge," which allows 25 units per acre. A developer who wants to build affordable rental units is asking to bump the density up to 75 units per acre through use of an "overlay district."

The "overlay" would keep the total number of units in the 47 acres constant at 1,175, but it would allow triple density until all 1,175 were "used up." Thus, there is an advantage to being among the first to request the additional units.

Dr. Mark Kauffman's Rosemary Square project could also benefit from the triple-density deal. He told *The Sarasota News Leader* he would probably rethink his plans to take advantage of the opportunity. However, it will take awhile for the change to become reality. The Planning Board and City Commission must hold public hearings and approve the overlay scheme.

Then the comprehensive plan change must be reviewed in Tallahassee by a variety of state departments, which now have only 30 days to complete what was designed as thorough oversight of such modifications. This shorter timeline followed Gov. Rick Scott's abolition of the Department of Community Affairs.

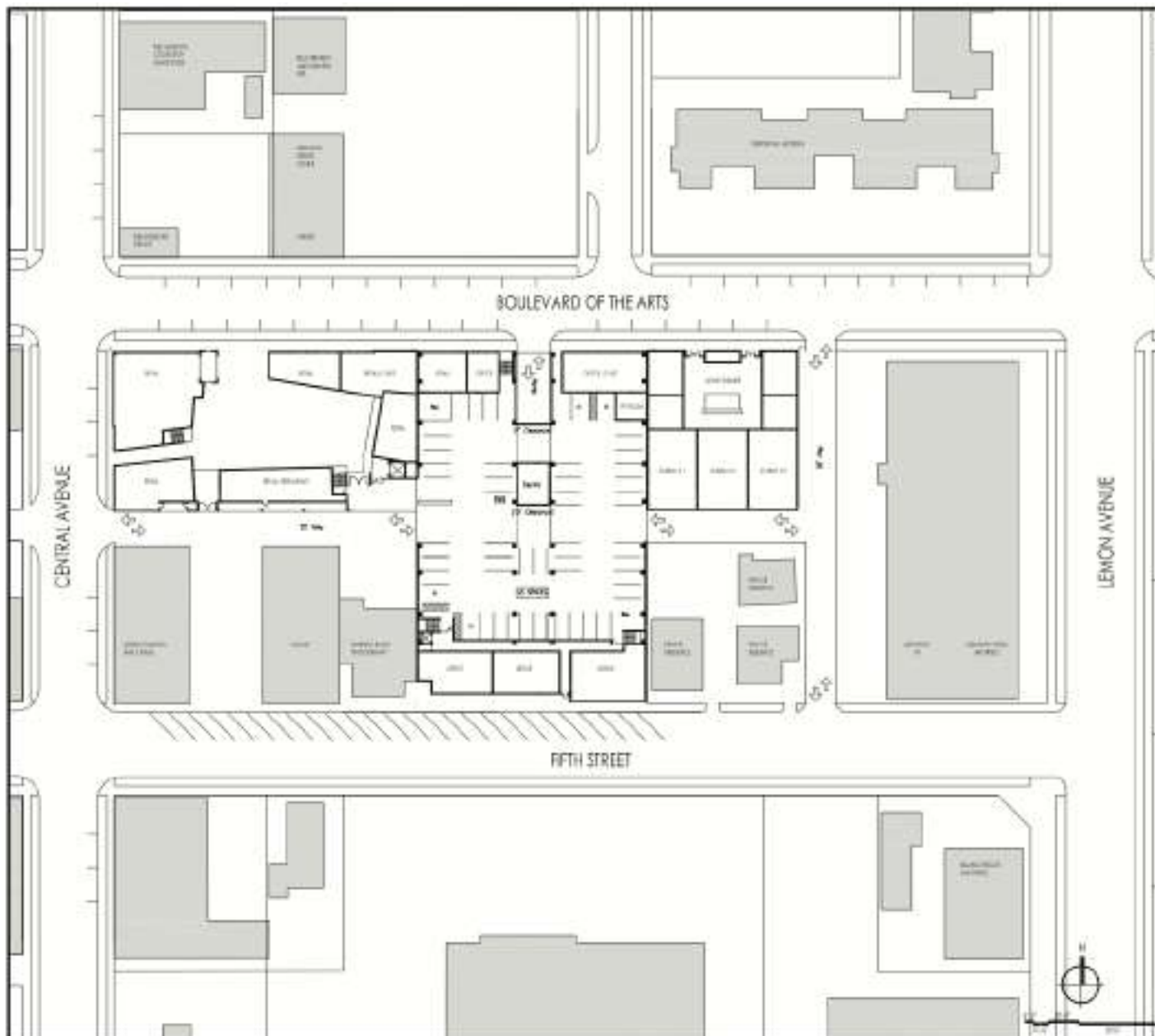
A timetable shows the triple-density overlay could come back from Tallahassee in October for final city approval. If there is no appeal of the change, it could become effective before the end of the year.

This will be the second time the city has used the new Tallahassee approval process. The first involved a change to the Future Land Use Map around Ed Smith Stadium last year.

CULTURAL DISTRICT PUT ON HOLD

The Sarasota City Commission on March 3 ordered staff to "take no action" for the next four months on planning to create a cultural district in the 42 acres surrounding the Van Wezel Performing Arts Center. A 2007 plan for development there was shelved when the economy floundered.

With the recent economic upturn, the plan was taken off the shelf by Visit Sarasota County and shown to various cultural and business groups, which endorsed its revitalization. On Saturday, March 1, the Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations heard a presentation on that revival and also voted in support of it.




ROSEMARY SQUARE
TYPICAL LOWER LEVEL
CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The developers of the Rosemary Square project might try to take advantage of a triple-density option for that area if state and city officials give it final approval. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

The City Commission's reluctance was based on a pending sale of the Quay property, west of where Fruitville Road terminates at U.S. 41 near the bayfront. In addition, the assemblage of property known formerly as the Proscenium on the southeast corner of U.S. 41 and Fruitville is also available for development. With those two large parcels in play, commissioners did not want the city to start planning or hiring consultants until the future of the adjoining properties was more settled.

Michael Klauber, the incoming chairman of Visit Sarasota County, told the CCNA, "I don't think we'll ever see an opportunity like this again in our lifetime. Without it, we will falter. If we don't support the arts in the city core, we could lose them."

Commissioner Paul Caragiulo asked, "Where's the potential funding?" The answer came two days earlier at the CCNA meeting, when Andy Dorr said an extension of the life of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency is a source of "possible funding for cultural infrastructure."

The commission on March 3 also voted to include the former G.WIZ science museum in the cultural district, with the same four-month ban on any negotiations involving the property. The city was about to issue an Invitation to Negotiate with vendors about possible future uses of the former G.WIZ building, but that is now on hold, too. 



The City Commission has put plans for a new tenant of the G.WIZ building on hold while it awaits action on nearby property. Photo by Norman Schimmel



YOUR THOUGHTS, PLEASE

A man on a standup paddleboard cruises beyond swimmers at Crescent Beach. File photo

THE COUNTY COMMISSION WANTS MORE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION — AND MORE DETAILS FROM STAFF — ABOUT A PROPOSAL TO ALLOW PADDLEBOARD RENTALS AT SIESTA PUBLIC BEACH

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Provide more public participation in the process and more details about how it would work: That was the combined request the Sarasota County Commission made to staff, by consensus, on March 5 after the board heard a presentation on a request for paddleboard rentals at the Siesta Public Beach concession.

Rob Alfieri, who owns SUP Sarasota, took the opportunity during the public comments portion of the board's

afternoon session Wednesday to plead for approval of a six-month pilot program. He pointed out that he had been working on the proposal for the past 18 months with Warren LaBonte, who holds the Siesta Public Beach concession contract with the county, and county staff.

I think it's a good amenity to have. We can control it ... but I don't think we have all the logistics figured out yet.

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

After the trial period, Alfieri said, the commission could extend the program, issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to seek other concepts for

paddleboard rentals at the beach or say, “We don’t like a lot of people out on the water having a great time. It’s no good; let’s can it.”

Alfieri acknowledged the concern of Sarasota County lifeguards about paddleboarders in the swim zone at the beach. Being a former lifeguard himself, he added — “in my younger and better fit days” — he supports that view. He told the board he does not want to see paddleboarders in the designated swimming area at the beach, which is marked by buoys. However, he pointed out, he felt it was possible to make room for the paddleboarders in a separate area.

PROS AND CONS

Carolyn Brown, director of the county’s Parks and Recreation Department, explained

during her presentation that while the sport “is gaining a lot of popularity here and around the world,” the current concession contract between the county and LaBonte does not allow him to rent either motorized or non-motorized vessels. Alfieri and Brown had proposed allowing people to rent paddleboards either at the concession or at Beach Access 11, the westernmost area of the public beach, Brown noted.

The present swim zone extends from Beach Access 11 to the Gulf & Bay Condominium Complex property line on the eastern side of the park, a memo from Brown, Fire Chief Mike Tobias and Scott Montgomery, lifeguard operations manager, explains.

If the rental transactions took place at the concession, Brown told the commissioners,



A graphic shows the area at Beach Access 11 on Siesta Key (in yellow), where paddleboard rentals could be allowed. Image courtesy Sarasota County



Youth maneuver paddleboards around sailboats off Ken Thompson Parkway in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

patrons would be told to take the equipment down to Beach Access 11 and launch from there.

Lifeguards already instruct anyone who brings a standup paddleboard or other type of watercraft to the beach to launch “at the very outer edge of the swim zone,” the memo notes.

Section 130 of the county code prohibits air sports, watercraft, surfing and sailboarding within a swimming or bathing area “clearly marked by duly authorized buoys or other distinguishing devices” or within 500 feet of any public beach on the Gulf of Mexico, the memo also points out.

An alternative, Brown explained, would be to reduce the designated swim area, which is about 2,400 feet in length, to allow space for paddleboarders. The memo suggests carving out 130 feet for paddleboarders.

The county’s lifeguards are not in favor of amending the county ordinance that governs activities at the beach to allow paddleboarders in the swim zone, the memo explains. One major concern is that a paddleboarder could strike and injure a swimmer.

A second person who addressed the commission during the public comments portion of the meeting, Laurel Kaiser, pointed out that a paddleboard has a leash 10 to 12 feet long that attaches to one of the user’s feet; the boards themselves are 8 or 9 feet long. Therefore, if a user falls off the board, she said, swimmers within a 20-foot radius could be vulnerable to strikes.

Regarding use of Beach Access 11, Commissioner Nora Patterson asked, “I’m assuming paddleboarders would have to go straight out perpendicular to the beach” until they get beyond the swim zone.

“That is correct,” Montgomery told her.

“Now how in the world are you going to enforce that?” she responded.

The area could be cordoned off, Montgomery told her. “We would have to work with the vendor on specific rules of the road, or rules of the water, for lack of a better term.”

Montgomery added that a number of years ago, when jet ski rentals were allowed on Lido Beach, the vendor told customers they had to stay clear of the buoys marking the swim zone or they would lose their deposits.



Paddleboarders enjoy a sunny sojourn on the Atlantic Ocean at Cocoa Beach. Photo by Rusty Clark via Flickr and Wikimedia Commons

"I had constant complaints [about that rental business]," Patterson replied, noting she served on the City Commission after the jet ski usage was allowed.

Then Patterson asked whether it would be necessary to reduce the Siesta swim zone by the full, suggested 130 feet for paddleboarders. Perhaps 30 feet would be sufficient, she suggested.

"We can further evaluate that," Brown told her.

"That's a *lot* to take up a whole beach access for one sport, essentially," Patterson added.

When Chairman Charles Hines asked how many boards would be allowed for rental at the concession — "Ten? Twenty? A hundred?" — Brown told him that that would be one element for negotiation in an RFP.

Hines pointed out that while he had heard concerns voiced about hundreds of paddleboarders taking advantage of the rentals, the reality is that anyone staying in a hotel or condo can walk to the beach with a board and use it as long as the person stays out of the swim zone.

Commissioner Joe Barbetta concurred. Alfieri's proposal, he noted, was to provide another amenity at the concession, which is located near the Siesta Public Beach pavilion.

When Barbetta questioned why LaBonte could not be allowed to rent paddleboards, Brown explained that she had checked with the Office of the County Attorney and the Procurement Department staff. Their response, she said, was that the concession contract would have to be put out for bid again if it were amended.

Lifeguard Operations staff are not in favor of amending the County ordinances and adding this activity to the designated swim area of Siesta Public Beach for the following reasons:

- Lifeguards monitoring the number of bathers and SUP customers in the same area of the swim zone will have added stress due to the increased lifeguard surveillance of this area.
- The SUP customer paddling in the swim zone may not see swimmers while paddling the SUP and possibly strike an unsuspecting swimmer.
- The customer may not have proper skills for using an SUP and may fall off, causing the SUP to strike an unsuspecting swimmer.
- The change would conflict with the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) standards to separate incompatible activities in the designated swim area in order to provide maximum public safety. Also, the USLA states that lifeguards assigned to water surveillance have the primary responsibility of observing and managing persons in the water, as well as to provide assistance to persons in the water, and shall not be assigned to any other duties other than public safety.
- These kinds of activities are typically allowed only at "swim at your own risk" beaches. In Sarasota County, there are 8 such beaches along with beach access locations.
- There are concerns that allowing SUPs in the swim zone at Siesta Beach would also result in further requests for kayaks, other non-motorized activities or motorized vessels in this area as well as at other guarded beaches.

A section of a staff memo to the County Commission explains lifeguards' opposition to allowing paddleboarders in the designated swim zone at Siesta Public Beach. Image courtesy Sarasota County

After County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh affirmed that, Barbetta replied, “Well, that ties our hands; that doesn’t make a lot of sense.”

PUBLIC VIEWS WANTED

Following some discussion of the legalities regarding the concession contract, Patterson announced, “If I were to go for this, it would be after some delay, because this has come up pretty fast.”

The public needs to be allowed to address it, she said.

Referencing a comment Brown had mentioned earlier, Patterson reminded her colleagues that the Siesta Key Association had emailed all of them a letter stating opposition to the use of paddleboards in the swim zone.

Sent at 9 a.m. on March 4, the email says, “We’ve had a close and very positive working relationship with Parks and Recreation County Staff and EMT Lifeguards [and] Sheriff’s Deputies who provide service to our Siesta Beach Park. We’ve not had the opportunity to discuss this issue fully with them and feel this issue has merit for public input. We do have substantive concerns ... Our request is for no action by the BCC ... until we have an opportunity for discussion with County Staff and public input on this matter.”

Patterson added that even with direction to stay out of the swim zone, she suspected paddleboarders would stray into it, just as users of those jet skis on Lido did.

Hines agreed that one option was to explore the matter further. “I think it’s a good amenity to have,” he added. “We can control it ... but I don’t think we have all the logistics figured out yet.”


“I would like to see how it can be worked through as well,” Commissioner Carolyn Mason said. “I would like to see it vetted a little more with the Siesta Key folks.”

“I understand vetting it with the Siesta Key folks,” Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson responded, “but I don’t think they’re the only stakeholders in this.”

She added that she felt county staff should contact the Sports Commission at Visit Sarasota County (VSC) — the county’s tourism office. VSC President Virginia Haley and the Sports Commission staff could check into best practices on paddleboarding use at other beaches. “I know this is offered in a *lot* of places in the state of Florida,” Robinson said. “There seems to be harmony in other places on this. I’m not for it or against it at this point.”

Patterson suggested staff also work through the Siesta Key Condominium Council, which represents residents of about half the condominium complexes on Siesta Key, to learn how its members view the paddleboarding proposal.

Further, Patterson pointed out that it was not clear from the staff memo whether the county’s lifeguards would approve use of paddleboards at Siesta Public Beach if the commission did not make any changes to the swim zone rules.

After Hines made sure he had consensus for staff to explore the issue further, Barbetta said he wanted to stress to the public “that people can walk down with a paddleboard any time they want on the beach, just they can’t go in the swim zone area. ... We can’t prohibit it. What we’re trying to do is maybe control it a little better. That’s all.” 



SARASOTA SHUTTLE TALK CONTINUES

The six-passenger Green Hopper low-speed electric vehicle was tried a couple of years ago as a downtown circulator. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT HEARS DETAILS OF COSTS FOR YET ANOTHER MASS TRANSIT PROPOSAL

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Mass transit is always a thorny problem. The “transit” part must be realistic. Unless it is the last bus home, people do not want to wait very long. And the “mass” part is needed, because if only one person rides, the cost per passenger-mile is astronomical.

For some time, the board members of the Downtown Improvement District (DID) in Sarasota have considered the prospect of a “downtown circulator” to move visitors from their hotels to the

restaurants and retail shops downtown. But costs were problematic.

A bus disguised as a trolley was tried, but people did not want to wait half an hour for a ride. The people behind an entrepreneurial service — the Green Hopper — tried using six-person golf cars, with drivers living on tips. But breakdowns of the equipment were troublesome.

Now DID Operations Manager John Moran is looking at another system, using a more

“*The cost is getting within the realm of possibility.*”

John Moran
Operations Manager
Downtown Improvement District

robust electric vehicle called the Largo Limo, which is produced in Pinellas County. The company is recommending a very small public-private partnership. It was attractive enough for Moran to run the numbers.

“I projected start-up costs and operating costs offset by income,” Moran told the DID board on Tuesday, March 4. “The cost is getting within the realm of possibility.”

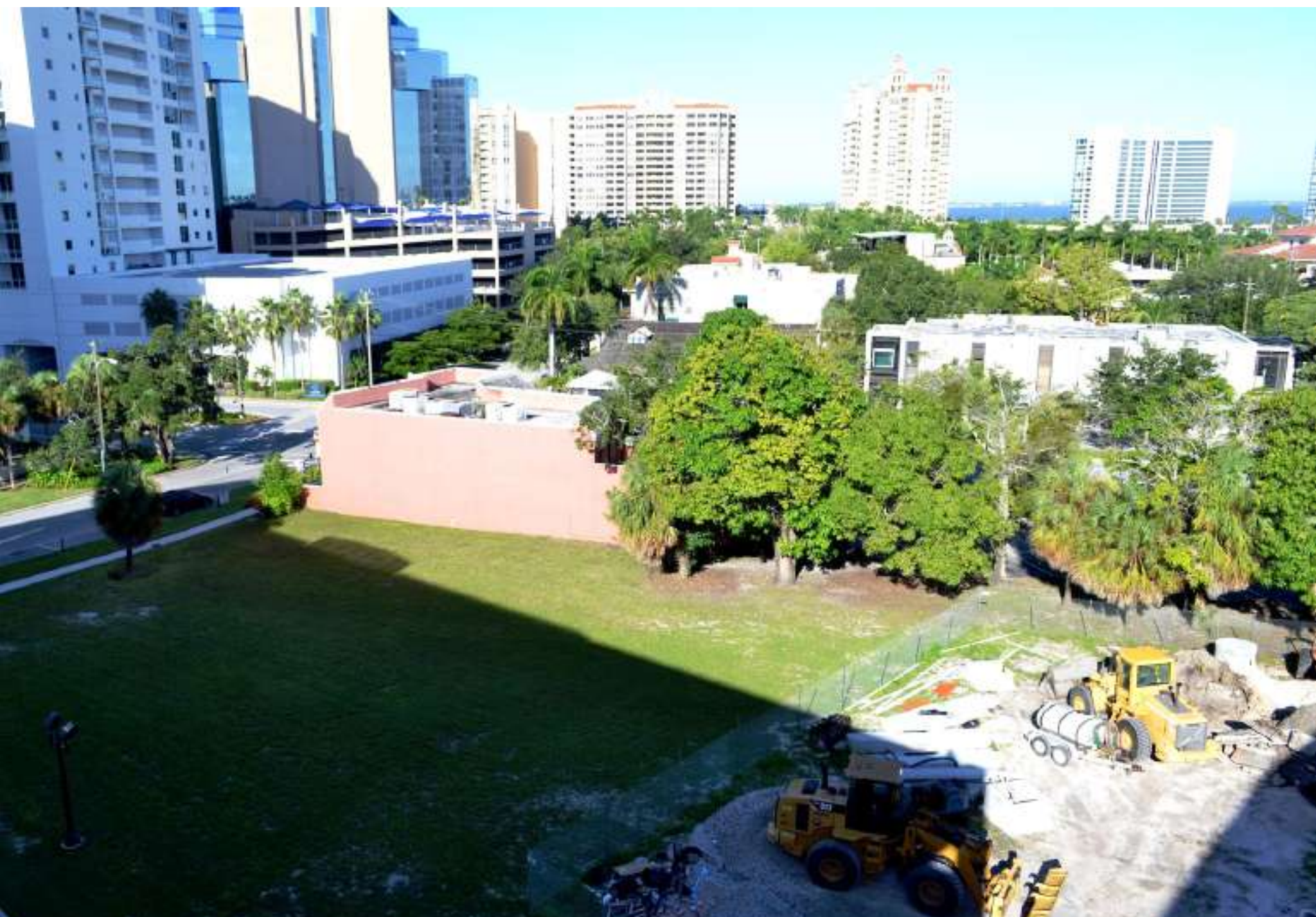
THE PLAN

Moran suggests eight of the Largo Limos would be sufficient to move people to and from downtown hotels. The vehicles would require a secure facility for recharging, and

uniforms for the drivers would be needed (Florida casual, of course: monogrammed T-shirts and hats). Add some office equipment and the cost to prepare the legal documentation, and he estimates it would require about \$21,200 in “startup capital funding.”

The eight vehicles themselves could be leased for \$46,087 under a five-year contract. Insurance, maintenance and repairs would push the hardware side of the equation to \$85,837.

The administrative expense would run approximately \$113,000 — for a manager



One of the new hotels planned in downtown Sarasota — Hotel Sarasota — will go up next to the Palm Avenue parking garage. Photo by Norman Schimmel

(\$50,000 with no benefits), an assistant manager (\$25,000 with no benefits) and other overhead, including \$15,000 for advertising.

Combining the hardware and administrative costs produces a \$198,837 annual operating expense. Add the one-time capital costs for chargers, security and those T-shirts, and Moran estimates the downtown shuttle could be operational for roughly \$220,000.

Moran proposed an unusual business model for the service. Drivers could rent their vehicles for \$250 per month, and the drivers would depend on tips. He said representatives of the Largo company knew of operations using retirees who paid \$500 per month, and they had been in business for years.


Using Moran's estimates of eight vehicles at \$250 per month, the raw income would be \$24,000, or about 12 percent of the annual operating costs. "At some point you can decide how serious you want to be and how much you might want to contribute," he told the DID board.

Moran suggested the operator would be a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation not directly

tied to the DID but receiving "facilitation" from the city. That might include a secure space in the Palm Avenue parking structure for overnight recharging. City of Sarasota Parking Director Mark Lyons has been helping Moran with the calculations.

THE NEED

At least four, and perhaps as many as six, new hotels are planned for downtown to join the three already in operation. "The [Ritz-Carlton] has expressed support," said Moran. "And we're getting interest from the east end [of Main Street]. I think economic development could occur if there is a connection between the east and west ends."

For now, it is a pie-in-the-sky matter for the DID. After bonding out and then completing a major downtown sidewalk and landscape rehabilitation last year, it has far less operating capital. Its annual income after reserves is expected to be less than \$70,000, which will have to cover everything it does. Later this year, the organization will explore the idea of expanding its boundaries. The group levies a property tax on downtown landowners, and it has independent bonding authority. 



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DIFFERENT TAKES

The Big Pass channel is calm as the sun rises on March 1. Photo by Rachel Hackney

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ENGAGE IN AN IMPROMPTU DEBATE OF SIESTA KEY ORGANIZATIONS' POSITIONS ON THE LIDO BEACH RENOURISHMENT PROJECT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The topic at hand on March 5 was whether to allow a paddleboarding concession at Siesta Public Beach, but a comment by Sarasota County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson sparked a flash of debate on another matter: the proposed renourishment of Lido Beach.

“We’ve got to start getting more information before we take these positions,” Robinson

said, referring to email the board had received from the Siesta Key Association (SKA) in opposition to paddleboarding at Siesta Public Beach before county staff even explained the proposal to the commission that day.

“*People are telling me things that are going to be in that [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers] modeling report based upon guessing right now. It’s a matter of jumping to conclusions*”

Christine Robinson
Vice Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission

Organizations, including the SKA, already have taken stands on the Lido project, Robinson pointed out, even though more information is to be released about that plan this spring.

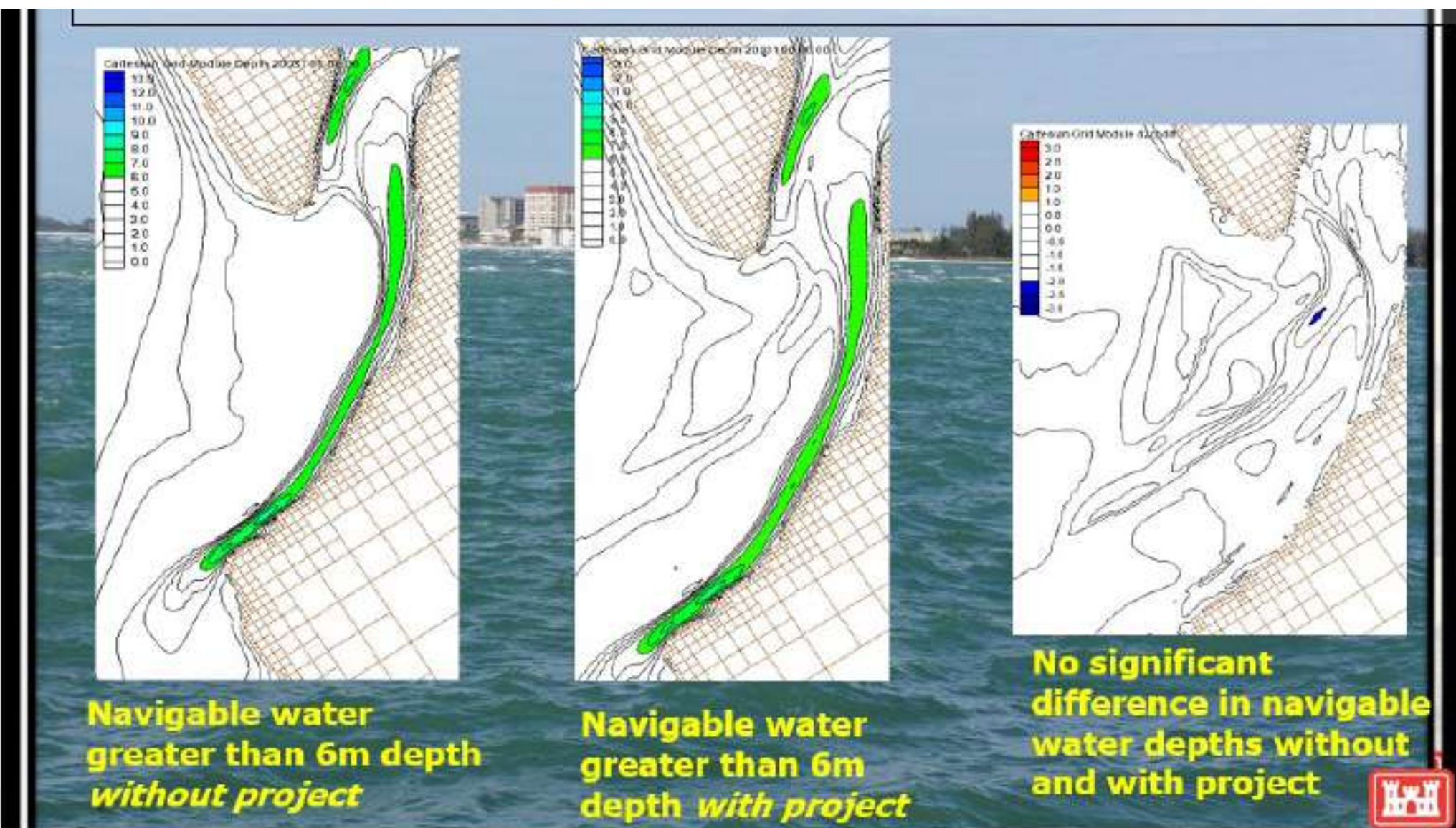
Robinson asked Commissioner Nora Patterson, who attends most SKA meetings, to encourage the organization's board to look more deeply into subjects before announcing a position on them.

After the paddleboarding discussion wound down, Patterson acknowledged she was going "slightly off topic." Then she told her colleagues that SKA members had had the opportunity to hear three presentations on the proposed City of Sarasota/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to renourish Lido Beach by dredging Big Sarasota Pass before taking a stand on that proposal. One of the Corps' programs took place in front of an SKA audience in December, Patterson continued. "I realize there's a second report coming out," Patterson added, "but it's not like [SKA

members] started their conversation in a vacuum."

As *The Sarasota News Leader* reported last week, the Corps has delayed until late April the release of promised models and a full report on the expected impacts of the dredging on the pass and on Siesta beaches.

On Jan. 9, at their first meeting after the December Corps presentation, the SKA board unanimously approved a resolution opposing any plan to dredge Big Pass or its shoal, based on the information available. The Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, the Siesta Key Village Association, Siesta Key Condominium Council and the Bay Island-Siesta Association have approved almost identical resolutions since then.



A graphic that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented to local government leaders and the public last fall shows the Corps' expectation that the dredging of Big Pass will have no significant impact on the waterway. Image courtesy City of Sarasota



A 1995 aerial view shows shoaling in Big Sarasota Pass. Image courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

“They didn’t wait for an independent report or anything,” Commissioner Joe Barbetta said of Siesta groups.

The Corps’ manager for the Lido Renourishment Project told members of the public the Corps recommends the dredging of Big Pass, Patterson persisted, and he “did that in more than one venue.”

Project Manager Milan A. Mora also made a presentation in September 2013 to the county’s Coastal Advisory Committee, followed by a PowerPoint program on Oct. 22, 2013 to a joint City-County commission meeting.

“People are going to react to something as important as that as soon as they’re given a formal presentation,” Patterson continued. “I guess I don’t feel like they can be criticized.”

Robinson responded that her intent in making her comment was “until you’re fully informed on the issue — and people are not fully informed on this issue quite yet” — they should hold off on taking a stand.

“This goes to both sides,” Robinson pointed out, adding, “People are telling me things that are going to be in that [Corps] modeling



Condominium complexes on Lido Key stand to the south of Big Pass. Photo by Rachel Hackney

report based upon guessing right now. It's a matter of jumping to conclusions"

Barbetta referenced the Siesta Chamber vote. "I was shocked at that one."

Chairman Charles Hines then interrupted, telling his colleagues they needed to turn their focus back to their March 5 agenda.

DAYS EARLIER

During the Siesta Key Association's annual meeting on March 1, retiring Director Peter van Roekens made his final report to members as the organization's representative responsible for keeping up-to-date on the Lido Renourishment Project.

"I'm so proud of SKA for leading the way in opposing the dredge," he said.

Following in the path of the island organizations, he continued, the Boaters' Coalition unanimously had come out in opposition to the dredging proposal as well. More than 120 members of that community group have signed petitions to try to stop the Corps' plan, he added.


Corps Project Manager Mora had been scheduled to speak during a March 6 Sarasota Tiger Bay Club program focusing on the Lido plan,

van Roekens continued, but van Roekens had learned the Corps had "backed out, leaving the City of Sarasota to defend their position."

Van Roekens also noted that Mora originally said the models and reports about the impacts on Big Pass and Siesta beaches would be made available to the public last fall. That timeline has been pushed back three times, he said, with the latest schedule calling for the materials to be released in late April.

"This certainly doesn't give me confidence that they have their act together," he added. "Surely, there's an answer" to renourishing the most critically eroded section of Lido Beach without dredging Big Pass or erecting groins on South Lido Key, he added.

The groins are another facet of the project; they have been designed to keep much of the sand in place on Lido between subsequent renourishments, which are scheduled to take place every five years after the initial 1.1 million cubic yards of sand is added to the beach, Mora has explained.

Last summer, van Roekens continued, he told City Engineer Alex DavisShaw and Sarasota County Coastal Resources Manager Laird Wreford, "These groins on South Lido are not like parking meters that can be taken out." 

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LOVE FOR SARASOTA AND HER ISLANDS



(From left) The full board of Siesta Key Association directors for the new year are Joe Volpe, Michael Shay, Catherine Luckner, Troy Roberts, Bob Stein, Paul Wilkinson, Beverly Arias, Helen Clifford and Joyce Kouba. Not pictured is Deet Jonker. Photo by Rachel Hackney

COMMISSIONER NORA PATTERSON USES HER LAST ADDRESS AT A SIESTA KEY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING TO PLEAD FOR CAUTION IN FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

It was expected to be her final formal address to Siesta Key Association (SKA) members as their representative on the Sarasota County Commission. Instead of using the March 1 opportunity to focus attention on a particular issue directly affecting the island she also calls home, though, Commissioner Nora Patterson was passionate in pleading for continued careful development in Sarasota County.

Noting that votes the board had taken 20 and 30 years ago have had more recent negative impacts, Patterson told the approximately 130 people attending the organization's annual meeting, "I don't want to leave that kind of

I do worry [about] the tenets of the [2050] Plan, which are the preservation of open space, the maintenance of rural areas and rural neighborhoods [along with] the ability to develop property in a walkable, enjoyable way that will not financially burden those of us that have lived here for years ... The basic tenets of the plan do need to be preserved, in my opinion.

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County

legacy with the decisions we are making today. ... In my opinion, we have to continue to be a very attractive place, a place with good jobs but physically well planned and well maintained.”

Patterson will step down from the board in November after four terms. Though a 2012 Florida Supreme Court ruling on a term limits case necessitated her retirement, she had told the news media beforehand that she was ready to leave in 2014. Prior to her first election to the County Commission, she served two terms on the Sarasota City Commission.

Patterson reminded the March 1 audience that during the SKA's 2013 annual meeting, she had pleaded, “Please, let's not kill the golden goose.” This time, she wanted to add, “Let's not injure the beauty of Sarasota

because we're so enthusiastic coming out of the recession. Please, let's not weaken further [the] past efforts to plan for our future, just for immediate profit. Let's see that we don't let slip from our hands the very things that cause us to move here and to love Sarasota and her islands.”

Then Patterson identified the focal point of those comments: the revision of the county's [2050 Plan](#).

It was intended to serve as a roadmap for 50 years of planning regarding lands “previously eligible only for rural development,” she explained.

Although “the 2050 Plan can certainly stand changes [because] it's complex, it's tough to read,” she said, “major, major changes will



*(From left) The new Siesta Key Association directors are Troy Roberts, Bob Stein and Paul Wilkinson.
Photo by Rachel Hackney*



Commissioner Nora Patterson offers her remarks on a range of county issues. Photo by Rachel Hackney

destroy the compromise” achieved in its crafting. It was designed to ensure major new developments in those rural areas would be undertaken under “very specific guidelines.”

She added, “The intent was to preserve agriculture and to preserve rural neighborhoods, to preserve environmentally important lands and open space.” The 2050 Plan also required new developments outside the county’s urban service boundary to pay for themselves, she pointed out.

Although developers have complained that flaws in the plan have resulted in a lack of development outside that boundary over the past 10 years, Patterson continued, she could show them a map of the county and point out “large developments that were approved at the same time as the 2050 Plan” that also

have not come to fruition. “I would suggest the 2050 Plan is not the impediment,” she said. “The difficulty of getting financing and the crash in the real estate market have a lot more to do with it.”

She told the audience, “I do worry [about] the tenets of the plan, which are the preservation of open space, the maintenance of rural areas and rural neighborhoods [along with] the ability to develop property in a walkable, enjoyable way that will not financially burden those of us that have lived here for years ... The basic tenets of the plan do need to be preserved, in my opinion.”

Although her primary focus was on the 2050 Plan, Patterson touched on a number of other topics during her remarks. Among them:



Sheriff Tom Knight admires the Siesta Key Association T-shirt he received from outgoing SKA President Catherine Luckner during the March 1 annual meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

- Although county property values rose slightly over 4 percent in 2013, they dropped 40 percent during the Great Recession. She gave considerable credit to former County Administrator Jim Ley for pushing the commission to put aside money during the height of the boom, which enabled the county to weather the downturn as well as it did.
- The county's unemployment rate hit the 13.3 percent mark for a couple of months during the recession. "That's just staggering," Patterson pointed out. Now the rate is just under 7 percent — "higher than we'd like, but still a turnaround."
- Although the \$21.5 million total expense for the improvements at Siesta Public Beach is "more than I would have liked ... [the results] will be gorgeous."
- Turtle Beach will see about \$750,000 in improvements, including gazebos and new picnic areas and kayak launches.
- The renourishment of Turtle Beach could get under way this fall, after turtle nesting season ends. The county is awaiting the necessary permits from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- The trolley service to Siesta Key is still on schedule to begin this year, "so not everybody has to bring a car to our congested island." Nonetheless, Patterson said, because that project is being funded for three years by the state and the county



New Siesta Key Association President Michael Shay takes a turn at the podium. Photo by Rachel Hackney

together, “I can assure you that if you don’t use [the trolley], it won’t continue. ... We have to show support.”

- The aged Siesta Key sewer plant has to be decommissioned in 2016, by state order. To provide sewer service to the island, the county will be “building a huge force main along Lockwood Ridge [Road] to take effluent to the [county’s] Bee Ridge [Road] plant.” The boring will go under the Intercoastal Waterway and Phillippi Estate Park.
- The \$12 million extension of Honore Avenue to Pinebrook Road is scheduled for completion by the fall of 2015. “I didn’t think that would get finished in my lifetime,” Patterson added, noting this new north/south connector “will be a huge convenience.”

Patterson told the audience that she and her husband, John, came to Siesta for the first time in 1970. They were both 27. “You can do the math,” she joked before adding, “I know that you contribute your efforts to keep [the island] a wonderful place to live.”

Patterson also noted of her four terms on the County Commission, “It has really been an interesting opportunity, sometimes contentious, but mostly interesting and extremely rewarding.”

As she wrapped up her address, she said, “It has been a *huge* privilege [to serve the public]. ... I’ll leave the commission in November with no regrets.”

The audience gave her a standing ovation.



Outgoing SKA President Catherine Luckner presents a gift to retiring Director Ron Flynn. Photo by Rachel Hackney

IN OTHER BUSINESS ...

During the meeting, SKA Director Joyce Kouba announced the new officers and full board for 2014-15. Michael Shay was elected president, while outgoing President Catherine Luckner will be second vice president. New Director Bob Stein will serve as first vice president, Kouba will be secretary and Helen Clifford will continue as treasurer.

The other new directors are Paul Wilkinson and Troy Roberts. Other returning directors are Beverly Arias, Deet Jonker and Joe Volpe.


Two board members retired: Peter van Roekens and Ron Flynn.

Van Roekens was on the board for 12 years. "This is a man I'm not sure ever sleeps," Luckner said of him. Speaking to van Roekens, she added, "I honestly don't know how we're going to fill your big shoes."

Regarding Flynn, Luckner noted he is "one of those quiet forces behind the scenes ... an

incredibly talented, brilliant man" who has worked on technical issues for the board and the county, including matters related to the coming replacement of the county's emergency communications system.

Luckner presented Flynn and van Roekens gifts from the board. She also recognized Jeanne Dubi, president of Sarasota Audubon, Sheriff Tom Knight and Sheriff's Sgt. Scott Osborne for contributions to the Siesta Key community. Luckner gave SKA T-shirts to Dubi and Knight.

In reflections on her term as president, Luckner pointed out that most of the directors are working people who handle their SKA responsibilities as volunteers. "It really is a labor of love and it's a labor of ethics and it's a labor of care," she added. Nonetheless, much of that work is directed by the island residents, who raise issues that need to be addressed, she pointed out. "This is a partnership." 



Siesta Key Association Directors Helen Clifford and Peter van Roekens prepared for the start of the regular meeting in November 2013. Van Roekens just retired from the board. Photo by Rachel Hackney

CALLS TO KEEP 'EM IN LINE



Bicycles and three-wheel vehicles stand outside Robin Hood Rentals on a cloudy morning on Siesta Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney

SIESTA KEY VILLAGE ASSOCIATION LEADERS SAY BUSINESS OWNERS SEEKING A CHANGE IN THE OUTDOOR DISPLAY ORDINANCE NEED TO PROVE THEIR DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

Even before criticism about the current state of outdoor displays in Siesta Village was aired at a March 4 meeting, a leader of a committee working to revise the county ordinance governing those displays was preparing an email blast to his fellow business owners to urge their adherence to the proposed changes.

“I know what’s happening,” Mark Toomey, owner of [Robin Hood Rentals](#), told *The Sarasota News Leader* about 30 minutes after the issue sparked sharp remarks during

the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) monthly meeting on March 4.

He was referring to what SKVA members earlier characterized as a flouting of the proposed revisions to the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD) ordinance. The SKOD has banned outdoor merchandise displays on Siesta Key. Following a county Code Enforcement crack-down on such displays that began last spring, business owners new to the Village who were cited said the prohibition diminished their sales significantly. Since then, various



Racks of clothing stand outside Siesta Key Outfitters (far left) and Le Grand Bisou Caribbean Boutique (right) on the evening of Feb. 6. Photo by Rachel Hackney

merchants and rental firm operators have been working with SKVA board members, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce and the Siesta Key Association (SKA) in an effort to reach a compromise that would allow some displays without creating what SKVA members have referred to as a “flea market” atmosphere in Siesta Village.

His email blast, Toomey told the *News Leader*, would urge business owners to do exactly what SKVA members advocated that morning: “pull back to the parameters [of the draft ordinance] that we’ve sent to the county.” He added, “Hopefully, there won’t be any issues.”

During the SKVA meeting, architect Mark Smith, a past SKVA president, said of business owners, “They really should be adhering to what’s being proposed, so that folks out here



Mark Toomey is one of the leaders of a group of business owners seeking a change in county regulations to allow some outdoor displays in Siesta Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Robin Hood Rentals owner Mark Toomey tells the News Leader he has been careful to keep his outdoor display items within the confines of space proposed in a new outdoor display measure for Siesta Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney

can see what we're talking about. Instead, they have a blatant disregard for the ordinance, almost in your face with their displays."

Smith has been the primary person working on the revised ordinance since a first draft prepared last summer by then-Siesta Key Chamber Executive Director Kevin Cooper was rejected as too lenient.

During the Feb. 4 SKVA meeting, Smith said the revised SKOD ordinance he had drafted would limit the outdoor display space to 240 square feet, and a business owner would have to submit a site plan to the county showing how the display space would be utilized. Anyone submitting an application to the county for outdoor displays would have to pay \$25. If a shop were found to be out of compliance with its site plan, its permit could be revoked.

PROCESS AND CONTROVERSY

SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos noted on March 4 that the latest revision "is written very well," though it needs some tweaks. The proposed changes allow for "nothing on the walls, nothing hanging from the windows, none of the flea market stuff," she said.

SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie explained that she had met with County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key. While Patterson "wasn't excited about [allowing] outdoor display," Gaddie continued, Gaddie nonetheless had delivered a draft to Donna Thompson, the county's assistant zoning

administrator, who then provided it to the Office of the County Attorney. After review, the county attorney said he felt the document

met the necessary standards to be presented to the County Commission, which will have final say over what happens in the SKOD.

Gaddie added that further tweaks were needed before the

draft could be placed for discussion on a County Commission agenda.

Then SKA President Michael Shay said of his organization's board members, "We're not ready yet to make a decision [on the modification] until we see the final draft, since changes are constantly being made."

Shay was the person several months ago who sought and received public confirmation from Code Enforcement Officer John Lally that Lally had been instructed by his superiors not to cite anyone for displays violating the SKOD ordinance until the effort to revise the ordinance was completed, one way or the other.

Shay asked during the March 4 meeting, "How will a new or adjusted ordinance be different from what [is visible in the Village now]?"

"That's an excellent point," Smith replied. "It would be much better for the cause if the [advocates of the changes] show the public and ourselves how they're going to abide by the rules being proposed."

Gaddie said she had spoken with Toomey the previous afternoon "and expressed our concerns."

It would be much better for the cause if the [advocates of the changes] show the public and ourselves how they're going to abide by the rules being proposed.

Mark Smith
Board Member
Siesta Key Village Association

“I do have a strong opposition to how they are handling it,” past SKVA President Russell Matthes concurred with Smith. Referring to the business owners supporting the changes, he continued, “They’re not even here to represent themselves. ... They put all the work back on us, specifically you,” he said, referring to Smith. “They’re going to be doing this thing all the way through season because they’re getting the advantage of displays as much as they can without enforcement.”

SKVA Vice President Kouvatsos told the approximately 20 members present that she had suggested to Gaddie that Gaddie give the committee members one week to get all the businesses in adherence to the proposed new guidelines or the SKVA and other island organizations would withdraw their support of the initiative. “Make it happen, or we’re done, and [the SKOD as written is] going to be enforced.”

Gaddie supported Kouvatsos’ suggestion. She would make that clear to Toomey and Rick Lizotte, owner of [Comfort Shoes in Siesta Village](#), another member of the committee, she added.

(Other members of the committee are John Davidson, owner of Davidson Drugs and numerous parcels in Siesta Village; Lori Eible, owner of Foxy Lady; and Aledia Tush, co-owner of CB’s Saltwater Outfitters.)

“It’s really up to them ... to drive it through [the county Zoning Administration Office], through the county attorneys and get it on the [County Commission] agenda,” Matthes pointed out of the business owners.

“It’s already in process,” Smith said. “It’ll be put on the [County Commission] agenda at

some point in time,” he added. “They’re going to have to show up and plead their case. ... This could just die in process.”

Shay pointed out, “They have no incentive to follow through. I’m not trying to be difficult,” he said, “[but] there is no enforcement. ... It’s just in your face and they’re doing what they want to do.”

BACK ON THE BUSINESS SIDE


During the interview with the *News Leader* about 30 minutes later, Toomey explained he was unable to make it to the SKVA meeting because of the number of visitors in the Village. As he spoke, he was watching new customers walk into his shop on Ocean Boulevard.

Toomey added that a committee survey of retail business owners on the island showed 85 percent of them support the proposed changes in the SKOD.

Having the ability to utilize outdoor displays, he continued, is “key to surviving down here. But we don’t want to take away from the atmosphere of the Village.”

He was quick to note he is keeping all of his outside display of rental equipment in an area that meets the specifications of the proposed revision.

He also lauded Smith for all the work on the draft document. “Mark Smith has been fantastic,” Toomey added. “The guy has been absolutely brilliant.”

Asked whether he felt he and the other committee members could muster a strong show of support for Smith’s work in an appearance before the County Commission, Toomey said, “I hope so.” 

COUNTY TO INTRODUCE ELECTRONIC VOTING CHECK-IN SYSTEM

Sarasota County voters who choose to cast their votes at one of four early voting locations for the March 25 elections will be checking in electronically, according to Supervisor of Elections (SOE) Kathy Dent, a news release says.

The elections office plans to introduce electronic poll books (EPBs) during early voting, which will be under way March 10-22, and in all precincts countywide later in the fall, Dent notes in the release.

“The new system is designed to improve accuracy and efficiency, ease congestion at check-in stations and take the guesswork out of ballot allocation for poll workers and voters,” Dent explained in the release. “Poll workers will be able to authenticate each voter at any early voting location or precinct in real time,” she added in the release.

The new poll books are mini iPads, which will be preloaded with the names, addresses and party affiliations of all the more than

273,000 Sarasota County voters, the release points out. "Each EPB will be able to access the voter's record by reading his or her driver license or Florida ID card number," it adds. EPBs are also able to communicate with each other, so when a voter signs in and casts a ballot at a polling location, the information will be transmitted to all devices in all polling locations in real time. "This feature will reduce the need for provisional voting by making it possible for a registered voter who moves from one Florida county to another to vote a regular ballot," the release notes. "With the current paper registration system, a voter who moves to Sarasota from another Florida county and changes his address at the polling location is required to vote a provisional ballot," it explains.

Voters may expect the following check-in procedures with the new system, the release says:

- A poll worker inspector will ask for a picture/signature ID from the voter. If the voter has a Florida driver's license or state-issued

ID card, the poll worker will position the ID so the EPB can read the ID number and find the voter record.

- Once the voter's record has been located, the voter will verify the information and sign in the signature field on the EPB.
- If the voter presents a form of identification other than a state-issued ID or presents no ID, the poll worker will manually enter the voter's information to locate him or her in the voter database. Voters who do not present a photo/signature ID will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot.

In addition to improving overall polling site efficiency, Dent said in the release, the new system will improve post-election data management and eventually save the county the expenses associated with the traditional paper poll book system.

The four early voting sites designated for the March elections include the three SOE offices in Sarasota, Venice and North Port, as well as the Longboat Key Town Hall.

LIPIZZANS TO PERFORM MILITARY TRIBUTE DURING MYAKKA BENEFIT

Herrmann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions will perform the annual benefit for the Myakka City 1914 School House at 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 9, at the Herrmann ranch, located at 32755 Singletary Road in Myakka City.

The event, sponsored by the Myakka City Historical Society, will feature a new tribute to U.S. military personnel, a news release says. The rescue of the Lipizzans by Gen. George S. Patton and members of the Third Army during World War II long has been a

featured element of the training shows at the ranch during season.

The grounds will be open from 2 to 5 p.m. The requested donation is \$12 for adults and \$6 for children, the release adds.

Children's games and concessions will be part of the activities. Attendees are welcome to bring their own lawn chairs, but grandstand seating also will be provided.

For more information, call 322-1304 or 322-1035.



Gabriella Herrmann performs the courbette during a training show of the Herrmann's Royal Lipizzan Stallions. Photo by Rachel Hackney

GILLESPIE PARK PLAYGROUND CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS

Crews began dismantling the Gillespie Park playground on March 5 to make way for new playground equipment, the City of Sarasota announced.

A new tot lot, as well as a playground for school-age children, will be installed within the next two to three weeks, a city news release says.

The playground equipment is 15 to 20 years old and is due for replacement, the release adds. “The current rubberized play surface

also will be replaced with fiber mulch, which will blend in with the natural park setting,” it notes.

The project will cost approximately \$90,000.

Demolition of the playground is expected to be finished within a few days, followed by the installation of the new equipment, the release says.

Gillespie Park is located within the Gillespie neighborhood off Osprey Avenue, between Seventh and 10th streets.



New playground equipment will be installed in Gillespie Park. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota

PHILLIPPI FARMHOUSE MARKET TO HOST ANNUAL CHILDREN'S DAY

Phillippi Farmhouse Market will hold its third annual Children's Day at the Market from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, March 12, organizers have announced.

Although activities will be geared to children, parents will find plenty to enjoy as well, a news release says. For example, "Krisztina's Games will once again thrill and challenge kids of all ages," the release notes.

Puppet shows will be offered at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., and a free guided tour of the historic Edson Keith Mansion, located in the park, will be conducted at 10 a.m., the release says.

Plenty of artists and craftsmen will also be on hand, as well as local authors, including many children's books authors, the release adds.

"Bring your well-behaved dog on a leash and plan to spend several hours perusing the locally grown produce, seafood, herbs, plants and topiaries," the release continues. Ted Stevens will provide music, and the parking is always free, the release points out.

"The Humane Society of Sarasota County will have adorable cats and dogs available for adoption," the release notes, and Art Center Sarasota "will offer a chance for your wee artists to test their talents on arts and crafts of their own making."

Phillippi Estate Park is located at 5500 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. For more information, call 861-5000 farmhousemarket.org.

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03-05-14



**MARCH'S MARVELOUS
PRODUCE BOUNTY**

The Phillippi Farmhouse Market will have special children's activities on March 12. Image from farmhousemarket.org

DOCUMENTARY EXPLORES LEGACY OF HOLIDAY'S *STRANGE FRUIT*

On Sunday, March 16, at 2 p.m., the Women's Interfaith Network will host a showing of the documentary *Strange Fruit*, which focuses on the song of the same name made famous by Billie Holiday.

The program will be held at the Universalist Unitarian Church, located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

A news release notes that the public thought Holiday wrote *Strange Fruit*, which was recorded by dozens of top artists. It was considered the first social protest song.

Strange Fruit is an award-winning documentary exploring the history and legacy of the Holiday classic, the release adds. "For all

audiences, this reflection on a unique song brilliantly captures the relationship between social art and our real lives and history," the *Library Journal* wrote.

The documentary, which features old news clips and interviews, "offers an astonishing revelation mid-film," the release continues.

Following the showing, an African American woman born and reared in Sarasota "will speak about Sarasota then and now," the release notes.

The program is open to the public. Admission is \$3.

For more information, call 377-1003.



Billie Holiday in a portrait by Carl van Vechten via Wikimedia Commons

PROGRAM TO FOCUS ON SARASOTA AS A BASEBALL TOWN

Baseball fever has gripped the Sarasota area for years, beginning around 1923 and continuing through the Red Sox era — which started in 1933 and went on for 25 years — and the current affiliation with the Baltimore Orioles, a Historical Society of Sarasota County news release points out.

Baseball has helped to shape Sarasota's identity as a Spring training tourist destination, the release continues, and it "has had a significant impact" on growth, politics, real estate and the culture of both the city and county.

Come and learn how and why Sarasota became linked with professional baseball when three baseball experts gather for a *Conversation at The Crocker* program on Tuesday, March 11, at 7 p.m. at the Crocker Memorial Church, the release adds.

The church is located at 1260 12th St. in Sarasota's Pioneer Park. The title of the

program will be *Batter Up*, featuring journalist and baseball fan Charlie Huisking; *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* sports writer Doug Fernandes; and author and baseball historian Ray Sinibaldi, the release says. This event is free to Historical Society members and \$10 for guests. "Everyone is encouraged to wear a baseball-theme shirt or team logo cap," the release adds. "Bring your own memories of baseball in Sarasota and share photos. There will be baseball snacks for all," it notes.

Proceeds from the *Conversations* help to maintain the Bidwell-Wood House (1882, Sarasota's oldest private residence) and the Crocker Memorial Church (1901), the release points out.

For additional information, contact Linda Garcia, site manager, at 364-9076 or visit the website at HSOSC.com.



The latest Major League Baseball team to call Sarasota Home is the Baltimore Orioles. Photo by Norman Schimmel

INFORMATIONAL BEACH WALK TO FOCUS ON BEACH NESTING BIRDS

It's tricky being a snowy plover on Siesta Key, Sarasota Audubon members point out. From March through August, the birds have to build their nests, lay eggs and raise their young during the same period when thousands of people walk the beach, children chase balls in games of catch and July Fourth festivities take place, for just a few examples, a news release points out.

On Saturday, March 15, at 8 a.m. at the Siesta Key Public Beach pavilion (on the north end of the park), Sarasota Audubon Society President Jeanne Dubi will lead an informational beach walk about the birds. Audubon members Bob Luckner, the program coordinator, and Allen Worms, a wildlife biologist, will also be on hand to answer questions, the release continues.

"It's absolutely clear that the more beach stewards we have, the better the chance of ... our snowy plover chicks successfully fledging to adulthood," said Dubi in the release. "Our program trains 20 to 30 beach stewards each year to monitor nests and be 'chick checkers.'"

Beach stewards may also serve as Beach Nesting Bird Ambassadors, the release points out — people who educate the public on the beach about the birds and their habitat. Other beach nesting species that join the plovers on Siesta are the least tern, black skimmer, American oystercatcher and Wilson plover, the release notes. Beach stewards self-schedule themselves using a Google Calendar set up by Audubon, the release notes. They are asked to spend some time each week on



A snowy plover chick is well camouflaged on the sand of Siesta Public Beach. Contributed photo by Rick Greenspun courtesy of Sarasota Audubon

Siesta Key, Lido Key or Longboat Key. ID tags and information brochures are provided along with training, the release says.

For those unfamiliar with the aforementioned birds, Audubon offers three suggestions everyone can follow to protect the adults and chicks:

- Keep a distance of 30 to 50 feet from nesting areas (dunes and buffered zones).
- Do not chase, or let children chase, any beach birds, especially when the birds are feeding.
- Look out for chicks, particularly snowy plover chicks, which are about the size of a human thumb. The chicks “run all over the beach looking for food within a few hours of hatching,” the release points out.

- Leave dogs at home. Last year, Sarasota County sheriff’s deputies also joined in the monitoring efforts to remind the public that dogs are not allowed on the beach, per county ordinance.

The Beach Nesting Bird Project, begun in 2006, has support from numerous partners, including the Siesta Key Association, Sarasota County, the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, Florida Audubon and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the release adds.

To learn more about the program or to donate to it, visit sarasotaaudubon.org. To attend the informational beach walk and/or sign up as a volunteer, send an email to sksnpl@gmail.com.

COUNTY WORKING WITH NONPROFIT TO RESTOCK LOCAL FOOD BANKS

Sarasota County leaders are working with the nonprofit Society of St. Andrew to help restock local food banks with fresh locally grown oranges, the county has announced.

The *Gleaning America’s Fields* event will begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday, March 15, at the Sarasota County Solid Waste Administration building, located at 4000 Knights Trail Road in Nokomis, a news release explains. From there, participants will be shuttled to the county-owned citrus grove.

“Last year was the first time we had an opportunity to harvest the oranges,” said Brian Usher of Sarasota County Utilities in the release. “More than 1.4 million pounds of oranges were picked and donated to food banks.”

Usher added in the release, “We are seeking volunteers of all ages to come out for a few

hours on a Saturday and help us give back to the community.”

“Gleaning is a traditional practice of gathering crops that would otherwise be left in the fields to rot, or be plowed under after harvest,” the release points out. The Society of St. Andrew started the Gleaning Network in 1988; the practice is pursued each year in states across the country. “Since 1995, when the Society of St. Andrew opened a Florida office, more than 31 million pounds of fresh produce have reached food banks in local communities,” the release says.

To volunteer, contact Kate Lantz at 410-212-9825 or katie.ssa.gleaning@gmail.com.

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

NEURO CHALLENGE TO BRING CAUSE 4 FASHION TO MICHAEL'S ON EAST

A night of high fashion in Sarasota has been planned to raise much-needed funds for Parkinson disease programs and research on the Suncoast: Sarasota-based Neuro Challenge Foundation will host the fifth annual Cause 4 Fashion gala at Michael's on East on Thursday, March 20, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., the Foundation has announced.

All of the models in the show will be Parkinson patients or their caregivers, family members or friends, a news release points out. Proceeds will benefit Parkinson's disease programs and research in both Sarasota and Manatee counties, the release adds.

An estimated 15,000 people are coping with Parkinson's disease in the two-county area, the release notes. "Neuro Challenge Foundation is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of people with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers through service, education and research," the release continues. "Neuro Challenge offers one-on-one advice with skilled professionals, workshops, seminars and the largest and most respected annual Parkinson's Disease Symposium in Florida, co-sponsored by the Sarasota Memorial Health Care System," the release adds.

The Cause 4 Fashion event will feature spring lines from Influence, Peace of Cloth, Jackie



Z, Elietts on Palm, J. McLaughlin and Martin Freeman, with hair and makeup by Yellow Strawberry, the release says. The event is being chaired by Richard and JJ Williams.

Tickets, which are \$150, may be purchased by calling Neuro Challenge at 926-6413 or visiting neurochallenge.org.

A cocktail hour and shopping opportunity will precede "a five star meal and best-of-boutiques fashion show," the release continues. This year's "bucket list" live auction during the show will include a private dinner and wine tasting with Michael Klauber, a Kentucky Derby experience with VIP party and grandstand seating, trips to Alaska and the Isle of Capri, and a *James Bond Secret Hideaway* tour through Switzerland, Monte Carlo and Venice.

The Sarasota News Leader

No-Nonsense Reporting

SHERIFF'S OFFICE DONATES FORFEITURE FUNDS TO UNIDOSNOW

On Feb. 27, Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight presented a check for \$10,000 to UnidosNow, a Sarasota nonprofit group that works to elevate the Latino community through education, integration and civic engagement, the office announced.

"The money will support the UnidosNow Youth Collaborative for College Preparation (YCCP), an intense mentoring and leadership training program for high school students over the summer and fall of 2014," a news release says. "YCCP provides a bridge to college for students who would otherwise not be able to attend due to a lack of resources or tools to

navigate the path to higher education," the release adds. "UnidosNow also demands that parents become involved within the community, making volunteerism a cornerstone of YCCP."

"It is a privilege to use money seized from criminals to support an organization that provides positive, character building programs for young people," said Knight in the release. "UnidosNow combines civic participation with college readiness, which prepares students for a successful future and directly impacts this community as a whole."



Sheriff Tom Knight (right) makes the presentation to Frankie Soriano (left) and Cathaleen Kaiyoorawongs of UnidosNow. Contributed photo

SHERIFF PROMOTES 10 EMPLOYEES TO FILL VACANCIES

On Feb. 27, Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight promoted 10 employees to new ranks to fill vacancies in the Law Enforcement and Courts/Corrections divisions, the office announced.

Promoted to the rank of major were Capt. Jeff Bell, who becomes the Courts/Corrections Division commander, and Capt. Paul Richard, who becomes the Law Enforcement Division commander, a news release says.

Promoted to the rank of captain were Lt. Charlie Thorpe, Investigative Bureau commander, and Lt. Kevin McElyea, who is assigned to the Court Services Bureau, the release adds.

Promoted to the rank of lieutenant were Sgts. Ryan Brown, Chris Montalbano and Joe Giasone, whose assignments are being

determined, the release notes. Promoted to the rank of sergeant were Deputies Eric Wegenast, Jason Mruczek and Paul Cernansky, all assigned to the Patrol Bureau.

“These promotions are the result of succession planning, training and mentoring that began in 2010,” said Knight in the release. “Each one of these people has done a lot of work in anticipation of retirements that are now taking place. Who they are as people, as well as the quality of the work they do, qualifies them to assume the duties of the longtime employees who preceded them.”

The formal promotional process was established during Knight’s first term in office “to ensure its objectivity,” the release points out. It is outlined in his Management Review and two subsequent strategic plans, the release notes.



(From left) Sgt. Jason Mruczek, Lt. Chris Montalbano, Lt. Joe Giasone, Capt. Charlie Thorpe, Maj. Jeff Bell, Maj. Paul Richard, Capt. Kevin McElyea, Lt. Ryan Brown, Sgt. Eric Wegenast and Sheriff Tom Knight. Contributed photo

PARKINSON TO BE GUEST SPEAKER AT LITERACY COUNCIL EVENT

J. Robert Parkinson of Siesta Key will be the guest speaker for *Literacy Matters*, the annual luncheon fundraiser of The Literacy Council of Sarasota, on March 28 at Michael's on East, the Council has announced.


The event will begin at 11:30 a.m.

Hayley Wielgus, ABC7 news anchor, will be the mistress of ceremonies, a news release says.

Parkinson has been a writer, executive coach and educator throughout his professional career, the release continues. He has worked in academia, business and government. "His keen and often humorous insights into everyday communication have convinced and challenged audiences to rethink how they construct and exchange their messages," the release points out.

Proceeds from the program will benefit the adult literacy programs of The Literacy Council, the release notes.

Tickets are \$75 per person. Sponsorship levels range from \$150 to \$5,000.

For more information or tickets, visit sarasotaliteracy.org or call 955-0421. 



J. Robert Parkinson/Contributed photo

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The Silvertooth Judicial Center is on Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. File photo

WARNING ISSUED BY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ABOUT JURY DUTY SCAM

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has joined the Sarasota County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller in warning the public about what is known as "the jury duty scam."

Sarasota County residents have reported receiving phone calls from people claiming to be court employees or with the "warrant department" and that arrest warrants had been issued because the recipients of the calls failed to report to jury duty, a news release explains. "The scammer will then ask for payment to clear up the matter, typically in the form of a 'green dot' credit card," the release continues.

"Once the victim obtains the card and loads the required funds onto it, the scammer asks for the card number and the access code on the back," the release adds. With the transaction complete, the scammer disconnects the phone number from which he called, to avoid detection.

It is important for all members of the public to know that law enforcement and court employees **never** make requests for payment over the telephone and **never** request personal financial information, the release emphasizes. "A similar warning was issued in December, so please share this information once again with friends, family, neighbors and organizations to which you belong," the release asks.

"The callers are criminals and the only way to stop them is to be empowered to just hang up," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "Write down what was said, think about it and contact the agency or office the caller claimed to represent to make them aware of the call. Do not fall victim to their pressure."

Variations of the jury duty scam and potential identity theft have been reported since 2005 in multiple states, including Florida, a news release from the Clerk's Office points out.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE MAKES EIGHT DUI ARRESTS DURING SATURATION PATROLS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office's February saturation patrols resulted in eight DUI arrests and 118 citations for other traffic offenses, the office has announced.

These numbers do not include DUI arrests made during the month outside that specific initiative, a news release points out.

The office conducts the monthly saturation patrols "to remove dangerous, uninsured or impaired drivers from local roadways to keep motorists safe," the release notes.

"Because of our commitment to keep the public aware of these ongoing education and enforcement efforts, results are provided at the end of each month and dates for the next

month's activity are announced," the release adds. Saturation patrols are conducted instead of what is referred to as a "DUI checkpoint," it continues; they include a number of Patrol and Traffic division deputies working targeted zones at the same time to monitor driving activity. "Because of their design, saturation patrols are mobile and take place in different areas of the county," the release notes.

This month, saturation patrols will be conducted on March 8, 17, 22 and 29, the release adds. Patrols were also conducted on March 1.

This is an initiative in partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the release explains; it is supported through a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation.

POLICE TRYING NEW APPROACH TO CURB PROSTITUTION

The Sarasota Police Department has started a new program in an attempt to curtail the solicitation of prostitution on the streets of the City of Sarasota, the department has announced. Beginning March 4, prostitution advisory letters were sent to registered vehicle owners (business and residential) whose vehicles might have been observed at a location where complaints of suspected criminal activity have originated, a news release says.

The letter tells the registered owner, "Your vehicle was observed on (this date) at an area within the city limits of Sarasota known for prostitution related crimes. The driver or occupant of your vehicle engaged in conversation with either: (1) a known prostitute (an individual who has been previously convicted of a violation of Florida States 796.07) or (2) an undercover law enforcement officer posing as a prostitute."

This is "an advisory letter and not an accusatory letter," the news release points out,

adding that it "is for informational purposes and no criminal charges are pending against anyone involved."

Each registered vehicle owner who receives such a letter is given a case number generated while an officer was documenting the incident, along with contact information for Sgt. Demetri Konstantopoulos with the Sarasota Police Department Street Crimes Unit, the release adds.

"It's another tool for us to put in our toolbox for the fight against prostitution," Chief Bernadette DiPino says in the release. "The Sarasota Police Department is taking a 'No Tolerance' stance on prostitution. The City of Sarasota is [a] beautiful place and community members are working to revitalize the North [Tamiami] Trail. We're trying to change [the] reputation of the North Trail, and in order to do that, we're going to take drastic measures to deter prostitution in the city."



Bernadette A. DiPino
Chief of Police

SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT
2099 Adams Lane • Sarasota, FL 34237
Post Office Box 3528 • Sarasota, FL 34230

Phone: (941) 954-7001
Fax: (941) 954-7034

March 4, 2014

Greetings Registered Vehicle Owner,

This letter is being sent to you because on your vehicle was identified as a vehicle that may have been involved in criminal activity. Your vehicle was observed at an area within the city limits of Sarasota known for prostitution related crimes. The driver or occupant of your vehicle engaged in conversation with either: (1) a known prostitute (an individual who has been previously convicted of a violation of Florida Statutes §796.07), or (2) an undercover law enforcement officer posing as a prostitute.

The Sarasota Police Department has a "NO TOLERANCE" policy regarding any prostitution related crimes within the City of Sarasota. Vehicle owners may suffer consequences if their vehicles are used in violation of Florida's criminal statutes, including substantial fines under Sarasota City Code §33-271 or forfeiture of the vehicle under Florida's Contraband Forfeiture Act.

Prostitution is not a victimless crime. Quality of life issues are high priorities in our community and prostitution leads to many other crimes including drug violations, nuisance crimes, theft, battery and sexual assaults. We care about the health and well being of all of our citizens.

Those who personally engage in prostitution related activities within the City of Sarasota subject themselves to arrest and criminal prosecution. Arrest reports, booking information, and booking photos are public records and are routinely released to newspapers and other media outlets and published on social media services.

This letter is advisory and for informational purposes only. There are no criminal charges pending, nor will the Sarasota Police Department be taking further action in relation to your vehicle at this time.

Any questions or comments relating to this matter can be directed to Street Crimes Unit Sergeant Demetri Konstantopoulos, who may be contacted at 941-954-7083. SPD Case # was generated documenting this incident.

Be safe,

Bernadette A. DiPino
Chief of Police

SARASOTA MAN CHARGED WITH DRUG TRAFFICKING

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a man for drug trafficking and other charges following an undercover investigation, the office has announced.

Special Investigations Section detectives and members of the SWAT team executed a search warrant at 2382 Spring Oaks Court in Sarasota on Feb. 28, a news release says. Quintavious Johnson, 29, was taken into custody without incident, the release adds. During a search of his home, "detectives found marijuana,

cocaine, heroin and a significant amount of cash," the release continues.

Johnson was charged with Trafficking in Heroin, two counts of Sale of Heroin within 1,000 Feet of a School, Possession of Cocaine with the Intent to Distribute, Possession of Cannabis and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia.

He also was charged with three additional counts of Sale of Heroin Within 1,000 Feet of a School on a prior arrest warrant. 



(Inset) Quintavious Johnson. Cash and drugs seized during the arrest of a man on drug trafficking charges are spread out on display in the Sheriff's Office. Contributed photos

OPINION



HALF A CHOICE IS NO CHOICE AT ALL

EDITORIAL

Feb. 26 marked the unofficial launch of the biennial campaign for prospective Sarasota County commissioners. And if most of the announced candidates are any indication, this election could be given the appellation “Hobson’s Choice 2014.”

We previously have used this forum to bemoan the paucity of qualified civic-minded citizens offering themselves to the people as candidates for elected office, running out of a sense of duty and altruistic concern for their fellow citizens.

Instead, it seems too many run for office to accomplish some sort of hidden agenda or, worse, to accomplish the hidden agenda of some moneyed special interest that is trying to get the candidate elected.

Half of the four announced candidates arguably could fall into the latter group. In fact, given their backgrounds and that of their principal advocates, it is difficult to imagine two finer prospective county commissioners ... if you are a land developer.

A third candidate is what might charitably be termed an “unknown quantity,” having as a principal qualification an almost unmatched persistence in running for public office, and losing. Apparently, he believes that if he runs often enough, eventually voters will give in and elect him to something.

Only one of the four announced candidates appears to be relatively free of the influence of special interests. Given Lourdes Ramirez’ vocal opposition to County Commission efforts to gut the long-term 2050 Plan, it is difficult to believe that the developers who

OPINION

would be delighted to have Alan Maio and Paul Caragiulo serving on the commission would be as thrilled with her.

But there are almost 400,000 people in Sarasota County, and they really deserve more of a choice when it comes to electing two out of five county commissioners for four-year terms. It really does not seem fair that half of the announced candidates already are so closely identified with the limited concerns of the development community, and a third is a virtual enigma.

In the 15 weeks remaining before filing ends for these two commission seats, we can only hope that other public-spirited citizens realize the great need for qualified, thoughtful candidates and decide to offer themselves to the voters by qualifying to run.

Currently, only Republicans have stated their intentions to enter the race. Yet, Republicans are a minority in Sarasota County, making up only 43 percent of registered voters. Why is it that Democrats and Independents rarely, if ever, run for these offices?

Perhaps it is the cost, since the deep-pocketed special interests that want friendly commissioners can afford to finance high-dollar campaigns if there is significant opposition.

Perhaps it also is due to the alarming national trend of Koch brothers-backed organizations attempting to do at the local level what they have done at the state and national levels,

using extensive third-party media advertising to bludgeon and besmirch opposing candidates, convincing voters that those candidates are somehow villains and not the public-spirited citizens they likely are.

Perhaps, then, the battle already is lost. If no one of good character and noble intentions has the courage to run for these offices because of the slings and arrows of a toxic campaign, then those who represent a few

rather than the many will succeed in making our government a virtual oligarchy.

The taxpayers will suffer, as they shoulder a more and more disproportionate share of the cost of public services, as developers get waivers and exemptions to avoid paying their fair share of the expenses of creating their new communities.

The environment will suffer as “greenspace” becomes another term for “golf course,” and wildlife habitat essentially disappears.

Tourism will suffer, as visitors to our state decline to put up with the traffic and other problems brought about by unchecked urban sprawl.

It does not have to be that way. Only a handful of the more than 386,000 residents in the county are needed to change this situation from farce to fair — only a few men and women of goodwill and selfless concern for the welfare of all Sarasotans.

In the 15 weeks remaining before filing ends for these two commission seats, we can only hope that other public-spirited citizens realize the great need for qualified, thoughtful candidates, and decide to offer themselves to the voters by qualifying to run.

OPINION

It was Joseph-Marie, the Count of Maistre, who observed more than two centuries ago that people get the leaders they deserve. If no one of virtue and conscience cares to hold office, and voters acquiesce to subterfuge

and electoral sleight-of-hand, the results are sadly predictable.

Let us hope in 2014 that is not the case in Sarasota County. 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ARTICLE INCORRECTLY ATTRIBUTED ACTIONS TO 'REPUBLICAN' MACHINE

To the Editor:

In the Feb. 28 article *On your mark, get set ...*, the reporter incorrectly used the phrase "Republican" machine when writing about my statement regarding my being a target of the local "political" machine. There is a big difference between the two.

The reporter was referring to comments I made at the Village Walk Republican Club meeting in response to an attendee's question regarding an incident that made the news media last year. Before the meeting, the woman asked about a local political player who stole my identity to make illegal political contributions in my name. It is true that he was a Republican and his attempt was to discredit me among fellow Republicans. The fact is he did not do it to advance a Republican agenda or for any Republican cause. The

Republican Party was not involved or aware of his actions.

The fact is there are local influential people who use politics as an end to their greedy means. They want to control the political scene to advance their personal agenda. I am known as someone who will not bend to their wishes, and for this reason, they tried to derail my political plans. In this crime, the Republican Party also became the victim.

Since the news broke last week, I've had to explain to people that the local "political" machine is not a "Republican" machine. As members of a community, we should condemn the actions of this political machine but make sure we don't mischaracterize an innocent group in the process.

*Lourdes Ramirez
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

WOWING THE AUDIENCE

SIESTA SEEN

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

Inside



WOWING THE AUDIENCE

PHOTO BY FRANK ATURA

Sarasota Ballet performs Rodeo in December 2011. Contributed photo by Frank Atura

A BALLERINA STEALS THE SHOW IN RODEO AND A PRINCIPAL COMPANY MEMBER CONTINUES TO IMPRESS WITH HIS CHOREOGRAPHY AS WELL AS HIS DANCING

By Elinor Rogosin
A&E Writer

Elizabeth Sykes stole my heart with her poignant, pert portrayal of the Cowgirl infatuated with the handsome Head Wrangler (Ricardo Graziano) in Sarasota Ballet's Feb. 28 performance of *Rodeo*, Agnes DeMille's theatrical tale of love among the cowboys.

Sykes' winsome portrayal of an awkward girl infused the trite role with tender charm. I had no idea she was such a strong actress, but she absorbed the role — which traced a young girl's journey from conformity to acceptance — with a soubrette's delicacy, her facial expressions mirroring every slight hope and disappointment. At the same time,

she sashayed around the stage like a graceful imp.

Along the way, one cowboy, Logan Learned, had sympathy for her plight, and though he jumped with his usual spectacular brio, I did not think he projected the down-to-earth hardness of a cowboy; but his tap dancing impressed the Cowgirl character enough to win her heart.

The rest of the company, the women dressed appropriately in period long dresses and the men in jeans, filled in the background dancing, carrying the story forward. There was even



Elizabeth Sykes. Photo courtesy Sarasota Ballet

an impromptu square dance, complete with Daniel Rodriguez as the caller, performed in front of the curtain to camouflage a change of scenery and avoid a pause in the story while adding an extra slice of Americana.

Though I find *Rodeo* dated, there is a charming light-heartedness to this ballet about a young girl learning what she needs to do in order to find love. It was created during a period in American ballet when choreographers, such as DeMille, wanted to create American stories with plots based in the real world as opposed to the mythic worlds of the 19th century ballets such as *Giselle* and *Swan Lake*. And of course the lively music, hinting at old folk melodies and mimicking the rhythm of horses galloping on the range, was composed by another American, Aaron Copland. But

in my opinion, the music needed to be performed by a live orchestra for the audience to fully appreciate its timeless power.

There were only hints of love in *Before Night Falls*, company principal Ricardo Graziano's newest ballet, even though the work is structured with seven couples. It is a cold, arid geometric exploration of lifts with little emotion; but the choreography is clean and uncluttered and the lifts, fascinating and ingenious. The women — Victoria Hulland, Kristianne Kleine, Kate Honea, Danielle Brown, Elizabeth Sykes, Ryoko Sadoshima and Anais Blake — were supported by an equal number of male dancers who admirably lifted their partners overhead, underneath, around their bodies, up in the air, over their shoulders ...like leaves twining around a vine.



(From left) Ricardo Rhodes, Victoria Hulland and Ricardo Graziano perform in *Monotones II*. Contributed photo by Frank Atura

These extraordinary inventive lifts were slow and acrobatic, requiring enormous control, daring and flexibility from the women and strength and timing from their partners. It is obvious that Graziano has control of the spatial patterns in the way the dancers enter and leave the stage, and though he does vary the dynamics, he shows a cool hand, not needing to fill every second with motion.

Visually, the stage was bare except for the overhead globes of lights that resembled groups of stars; and the costumes were simple, with both the women and men in blue outfits. All the dancers were barelegged, and I wondered if this deliberate choice was a way of making the audience aware of the muscles in the dancers' legs as an added comment on

the choreography; I know I was fascinated, but that may just be I.

Graziano's choice of music — a clanging propulsive score by Olafur Arnalds, a young contemporary composer — annoyed some audience members who thought that ballet music should be more traditional. But Arnalds' music worked with the overall detached mood of *Before Night Falls*, providing a floor of sound and rhythm.

Yes, there were seconds of suggested contact and emotion: a hand given and taken, a pause, and, in the third duet between Kate Honea and David Tlaiye, the suggestion of love offered and rejected as Honea fell to the floor and her partner walked off in the wings. Then, as a



(From left) Rita Duclos, Alex Harrison and Ryoko Sadoshima perform *Monotones I* in February 2012. Contributed photo by Frank Atura

surprise, at the last moment, Danielle Brown and Ricardo Rhodes returned center stage, and emotion seeped into their connection. They stood quietly, facing one another, as if whatever tension between them had been resolved. As she gently laid her face against his shoulder, he held her tightly in a strong embrace while the overhead twinkling lights slowly descended from high above the stage. Perhaps the lack of emotion throughout the ballet until this embrace added to its power.

No question, Graziano is young and talented, and in choreographing this spare terse ballet without softening its edges, he showed that he is not afraid to continue following his creative star wherever it leads.

Sir Frederick Ashton has said that he had always wanted to use Erik Satie's music for a ballet, but not until the moon landings in the 1960s did he find a way. *Monotones I and II* are the result. I discovered these meditative, poetic ballets that unfold like a dreamscape in a performance by the Joffrey Company many years ago, and they have been lodged in my memory ever since.


In Sarasota Ballet's *Monotones I*, three dancers — Ryoko Sadoshima, Alex Harrison and Samantha Benoit, wearing shimmering unitards and small beanie hats — responded to the eerie wispy melody of the Satie score in slow sculptural movements. The girls were exquisite in the controlled balances that kept them, for one example, as still as a sculptured form and, again, as the trio walked hand and hand, their arms circling around and out as if scooping up the music.

The contrast between the controlled *arabesques* and the pulse of the rippling music

created a feeling that these dancers existed in another galaxy where time and space melted into one another.

While *Monotones II*, which is more acrobatic, opened with a boneless Victoria Hulland and two men (Ricardo Graziano and Ricardo Rhodes) who played with her as if she were a tumbling doll. They turned her upside down on one strong toe, her other leg shooting straight up to her ear. In another instant, they locked hands and walked together sideways in silhouette as if walking through space or caught on a frieze from an Egyptian tomb. That sense of unlocked time flowed throughout the two pieces, as the choreography reflected the beautiful simple melodies and rhythm of the mystical Satie score. The actual steps could be classroom exercises — here a slow *glissade*, there an *arabesque* — but performed in unison as the dancers wound in and out of a variety of patterns across the stage, the steps became a way for the dancers to converse with the music and the audience.

Together, the two ballets were a challenge for the dancers' technique and for their ability to hold slow sustained balances without showing the effort needed not to quiver or move that is essential for establishing the simple beauty of these special rare ballets that reveal Sir Frederick Ashton's versatility as a choreographer.

Sarasota Ballet Director Iain Webb has said he is interested in preserving the past and investing in the future of ballet, and this program certainly reflects that focus. However, with the [Ashton Festival](#) on the horizon and with an Ashton ballet on every program, I have to wonder about next year's performances. 



THE 'NO RIGHT ON RED' SITUATION AT THE STICKNEY POINT ROAD INTERSECTION CONTINUES TO CAUSE CONSTERNATION; A NEW SLATE OF OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS HAS BEEN PROPOSED FOR THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATION; AND THE SIESTA CHAMBER FINALLY HAS A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The [no right on red traffic issue](#) at the intersection of Stickney Point Road and Midnight Pass Road continues to vex county leaders and Siesta Key residents, as evidenced this week by discussions of the County Commission and the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA).

During the County Commission meeting in Venice on March 4, Commissioner Nora Patterson told her colleagues, "I'd really like our staff to get involved with [the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)] on this. ... It is going to create more of a problem."



The new east concession is under construction at Siesta Public Beach as part of the \$21.5 million improvements. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Pile-driving equipment was creating mini quakes at Siesta Public Beach on March 4, even as visitors were flocking to the shore. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Last week, Lauren Hatchell, a public information officer for FDOT, explained to me that the prohibition on right turns on red at that intersection — which has been in effect only about three weeks — had prompted so many complaints that department engineers already were taking another look at the situation to determine what the next step should be.

FDOT made the change after hearing complaints from pedestrians who reported nearly being run over by vehicles whose drivers had looked left before making the right turn on red but who never looked to the right, and therefore did not see people crossing the road until it was almost too late.

Patterson said during the board meeting that “a lot of upset people” had contacted her about the vehicle backups occurring since the right-on-red prohibition went into effect. For that matter, she said, on Saturday night, March 1, traffic on Beach Road was bumper-to-bumper. “The traffic was stopped.”

Anne Johnson, who represents Fresh. PR & Marketing Inc. at the SKVA meetings, told that group just hours earlier on March 4, “As I sat in that traffic yesterday [on the Stickney Point Road bridge], I was thinking that DOT runs the bridge openings. I would think they’d get complaints from those bridge [tenders]. How do you ever —”



Work proceeded this week on the new Sarasota County maintenance facility in the area between the site of the new stormwater pond and the public beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

“Open the bridge,” SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos finished Johnson’s sentence.

The traffic on the bridge “is nonstop at 9 o’clock in the morning,” Johnson added.

A person who works at the boatyard off Stickney Point Road emailed the county commissioners on Feb. 26 to ask about the FDOT change. He also pointed out the backup every day on the bridge. “US 41 will need a traffic officer on Easter weekend [because] traffic is backed up so far from the island,” the man pointed out, if the situation is not improved by then.

Patterson told her fellow commissioners she understood FDOT staff was looking into whether the timing of the signals could be adjusted to ameliorate the situation at the Stickney Point Road intersection, but given what she had observed on Beach Road, “If you lengthen the light cycle in one direction, you are going to create havoc in the other.”

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson concurred with Patterson about the gravity of the problem. However, Robinson pointed out that she had observed a related issue: “Folks just don’t walk in the crosswalks.”

She added, “It’s amazing to me, driving up and down the road. They’ll be 50 feet away and not walk in the crosswalk,” especially in the vicinity of the Stickney Point Road intersection. “I don’t think there’s anything we’re going to be able to do to stop that.”

Robinson noted that FDOT in 2012 put in the six new crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road between the Stickney Point Road and Beach Road intersections “to create a safe lane of travel for the pedestrians.” Perhaps this issue offers an opportunity for public education through the Siesta Key Condominium Council — the avenue for discussions before that 2012 project was pursued — about the need for people to use the crosswalks, she continued.

Patterson thought that was a valid suggestion.

“Unless we as citizens start doing what we’re supposed to do — both drivers and pedestrians — we’re not going to be able to cure everything on that road,” Robinson pointed out.

Then Patterson added with a chuckle, “It’s interesting that FDOT’s objection to [installing] crosswalks [in some locations] has been people don’t pay any attention [to them]”

Robinson responded that the new crosswalks on Midnight Pass Road have been “very effective ... for stopping cars when they’re used.”

Just hours earlier, during the SKVA monthly meeting, past president Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck, raised the issue of the new situation at the Stickney Point Road intersection after Sarasota Sheriff’s Deputy Chris McGregor provided his report.

“I know you’re not FDOT, but what can you tell me?” Matthes asked McGregor.

“I don’t want to go there,” McGregor replied with a laugh. Then he added, “We’re getting calls at [U.S.] 41 and Stickney.”

Siesta Seen

McGregor told the approximately 20 people at the meeting, “We haven’t had any significant accidents [at that intersection]. We haven’t had any significant complaints,” he added, so he was uncertain why FDOT took the step to implement the “No Right on Red” rule.

Chastanna Nieman, events and office manager for the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, said, “The Chamber has been getting a lot of phone calls. We’re usually the complaint center.”

McGregor also pointed out that while deputies do see people jaywalking often in the Stickney Point Road intersection area, they are reluctant to write citations in those situations.

Condominium complexes line that stretch of Midnight Pass Road, and many of the people staying in those condos during season are visitors.

PROPOSED NEW SKVA BOARD MEMBERS

During the March 4 SKVA meeting, the slate of proposed officers and board members for the 2014-15 year was presented. Voting will take place at the May meeting, and names may be added to the slate, Anne Johnson pointed out.

The proposed officers are Wendall Jacobson of Beach Bazaar, president; Mark Smith of Smith Architects, vice president; Helene Hyland of Coldwell Banker Residential Realty, secretary; and Roz Hyman of Siesta Center, treasurer.

The others already proposed to make up the rest of the board are Russell Matthes of the Daiquiri Deck, Cheryl Gaddie of CG Interior Design, Kay Kouvatsos of Village Café, Dave Magee of The UPS Store, Jeff Madden of Beach Bites, Glen Cappetta of Sun



(From left) Helene Hyland, Kay Kouvatsos, Russell Matthes and Cheryl Gaddie participate in the March 4 Siesta Key Village Association meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Ride Pedicab, Brian Wigelsworth of Gidget's Coastal Provisions and Ed McConnell of Siesta Village Outfitters.

The members on March 4 also approved a motion by Kouvatsos to reduce the total number of board members — including the officers — from 14 to 12.

Annual membership fees are due to the SKVA at the end of March. The fee is \$50, which entitles an individual or business to participate in all Village events as well as to be included in listings, logos, coupons and articles on the SKVA [website](#).

A LOVELY NEW LOOK

Cheryl Gaddie, the SKVA president, welcomed her fellow members of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce to a business card exchange on Feb. 20 at her new location, Suite 203 at 5011 Ocean Blvd.

For me, that address is particularly familiar, as it is right next door to the office suite the *Pelican Press* called home in Siesta Village for a number of years.

Gaddie previously shared office space with Mark Smith of Smith Architects.



Cheryl Gaddie, owner of CG Interior Design, has transformed Suite 203 at 5011 Ocean Blvd. into her new office and showcase. Photo by Rachel Hackney



Furnishings on display in CG Interior Design's new 'home' can easily catch the eyes of people climbing up to the second floor of 5011 Ocean Blvd. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Until I visited CG Interior Design on March 4, I had not been in that Ocean Boulevard building since the summer of 2011. To say Gaddie's design of her new space is a vast improvement upon what I recall of the suite is a vast understatement.

NEW CHAMBER EXECUTIVE

The Board of Directors of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce last week announced the appointment of Debra Lynn-Schmitz as the new executive director, effective March 1.

She replaces Kevin Cooper, who took a position with the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce last fall.

Having grown up in Columbus, OH, Lynn-Schmitz and her family frequently visited Siesta Key and the surrounding area, a news release says. After attending the University of Akron and receiving her degree in business organization communication, she continued her education at the University of Phoenix, receiving her master's degree in organizational management. She was with the Greater Medina Chamber of Commerce for 27 years, the past 19 as the executive director/CEO, the release adds.

Lynn-Schmitz received a warm welcome during the March 4 SKVA meeting.


GREAT AMERICAN CLEANUP

New SKA President Michael Shay reminded the attendees at the organization's annual breakfast meeting on March 1 that he is organizing volunteers for the Great American



Debra Lynn-Schmitz is the new executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce. Contributed photo

Cleanup on March 22. Keep Sarasota County Beautiful (KSCB) is organizing the county initiative for this Keep America Beautiful event, he pointed out.

Already, he said, he has about 60 people signed up to clean Siesta's beaches. More volunteers always are welcome, he added. Anyone interested in participating may email info@siestakeyassociation.com or call the organization at 364-4880. 



The Yale University Glee Club will present a program at Church of the Redeemer on March 9. Contributed photo

YALE GLEE CHORUS TO PERFORM *WHIM 'N' RHYTHM* IN SARASOTA

The Yale Glee Club will present *Whim 'n' Rhythm*, “a lively concert,” at the Church of the Redeemer on Sunday, March 9, at 7:30 p.m., the church has announced.

Hailed by *The New York Times* as “one of the best collegiate singing ensembles, and one of the most adventurous,” the 80-voice chorus of women and men will perform under the direction of conductor Jeffrey Douma, a news release says.

The concert will feature works by Brahms, Victoria and Tavener, as well as new works by Timothy Laciano, Yale Class of 2015. Among other pieces will be selections by Winslow &

Morrison, folk songs, spirituals and classics from the Yale Glee Club repertoire.

“One of the most traveled collegiate choruses in the world, the Yale Glee Club was founded in 1863,” the release points out. The group, which has performed across the United States, began touring internationally in 1928, the release adds. During its 2012-13 season, the chorus traveled to mainland China and Hong Kong.

The suggested ticket donation is \$10 at the door. The Church of the Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. For more information, visit redeemersarasota.org or call 955-4263.

VENICE AREA QUILTERS GUILD TO HOLD 15TH BIENNIAL SHOW

The Venice Area Quilters Guild will hold its 15th biennial quilt show, *Quilting by the Gulf XV — A Festival of Quilts*, on March 8 and 9, the organization has announced.

The show will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 8, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 9, at the Venice Community Center, located at 326 S. Nokomis Ave. in Venice, a news release says.

The show will feature more than 200 quilts of all styles, “a giant boutique with handmade



Venice Area Quilters' Guild
Venice, Florida

gift items, a gorgeous raffle quilt, daily silent auctions of small quilts to benefit the South County Food Pantry and much more,” the release adds.

Admission is \$7 for one day or \$12 for both days. For more information, visit vaqg.org.

JOAN RIVERS TO APPEAR AT THE VAN WEZEL THIS MONTH

Joan Rivers, “the entertainment legend of unparalleled accomplishment,” will take the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall stage on March 15, the Sarasota arts venue has announced.

An “Emmy Award-winning television talk show host, Tony Award-nominated actress, best-selling author, playwright, screenwriter, film director, columnist, lecturer, syndicated radio host, jewelry designer, cosmetic company entrepreneur and red carpet fashion laureate,” Rivers has a comic style that “relies heavily on her ability to poke fun at herself and other Hollywood celebrities,” a news release points out.

Widely known for her “fashion policing” of celebrities’ award show red carpet appearances and her trademark question “*Can we talk?*,” Rivers “is a force of nature,” the release continues. She often talks about things many would think but never dare to say aloud, the release adds.

Her career, which spans more than four decades in the entertainment industry,



Joan Rivers will bring her comic observations to the Van Wezel on March 15. Contributed photo by Charles William Bush

skyrocketed in 1968 when she appeared on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, the release points out.

Tickets are \$40 to \$60. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit VanWezel.org.

JOY OF JAZZ SERIES TO CONCLUDE WITH ELLISON AND HIP POCKET

The Jazz Club of Sarasota's 2014 Joy of Jazz concert series will conclude with Tom Ellison and Hip Pocket on March 9 at 2 p.m. in Centennial Park in downtown Venice, the club has announced.

The concert will be free, but donations will be accepted in support of the Jazz Club's scholarship fund, a news release points out. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets. For more information, call 366-1552 or visit jazzclubsarasota.org.

Ellison took up the saxophone at age 7, the release says, and by the time he was 12, he had already played his first professional gig, performing with his father's band. "That

concert sparked Ellison's lifelong passion for live performance and marked the beginning of an illustrious musical career that has included performing with such greats as Tony Bennett, Johnny Mathis, Henry Mancini, Woody Herman, Aretha Franklin, the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, the Four Tops and the Temptations," the release continues.

Ellison stayed busy in the Rochester, NY, music scene before he moved to Venice in 2010, the release notes. In Venice, "he quickly joined the Suncoast's flourishing jazz circuit," the release adds. He is a member of several regional ensembles, including the Naples Jazz Orchestra, the Ken Loomer Big Band and the Sarasota Jazz Project Big Band.



Tom Ellison/Contributed photo

PEKING ACROBATS TO TUMBLE ONTO THE VAN WEZEL STAGE

The Peking Acrobats give audiences around the world the opportunity to experience a rich and ancient folk art tradition, the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall notes in a news release. “China’s most gifted tumblers, contortionists, jugglers, cyclists and gymnasts” will perform at the Van Wezel on March 12, the release adds.

“The Peking Acrobats have redefined audience perceptions of Chinese acrobatics, through their tremendous skill and their daring, gravity-defying stunts,” the release continues. “The Peking Acrobats regularly passed from the seemingly impossible to

the virtually unbelievable,” *The Los Angeles Times* said in a review.

The Peking Acrobats have received considerable media attention, the release points out, having been featured in numerous television shows and even in the Steven Soderbergh/George Clooney movie *Ocean’s 11*.

The group’s performance at the Van Wezel will be accompanied by live musicians playing traditional Chinese instruments, the release adds.

Tickets are \$25 to \$45. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit VanWezel.org.



The Peking Acrobats will appear in Sarasota on March 12. Contributed photo by Tom Hinckley of Studio 1501 Photography

AWARD-WINNING ACTOR GUERRERO TO STAR IN VENICE PRODUCTION

Venice Theatre's next Stage II production will be *Underneath the Lintel*, Glen Berger's "absorbing one-man show," as *The New York Times* put it, the theatre has announced.

Underneath the Lintel will open Thursday, March 13, in the Pinkerton Theatre and run through Sunday, March 30. Performances are at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and at 2 p.m. on Sundays, a news release says. Tickets are \$25 to \$28 for adults and \$10 to \$15 for students; they are on sale at the theatre's box office, online at venicestage.com or by phone at 488-1115.

"*Underneath the Lintel* is an adventure story about a Dutch librarian on a quest to find the person who returned a book that was 113 years overdue," the release explains. His search takes him around Europe and through centuries, and it involves many clues, ending in Christian medieval folklore, the release adds. Peter Ivanov will direct Jeremy Guerrero in the solo role, "a part that earned T. Ryder Smith a Drama Desk Award nomination as Outstanding Solo Performer and later brought popular *West Wing* actor Richard Schiff back to his stage roots when he took over the role in the West End production," the release points out.

Guerrero is no stranger to one-man shows, having garnered awards for his performance in *I Am My Own Wife*, also at Venice Theatre, the release says.

Critical response to the play when it opened in New York in 2001 (after a short preview in Los Angeles) was positive, the release adds. Anita Gates of *The New York Times* called *Underneath the Lintel* "disarmingly



Jeremy Guerrero will be the librarian in Venice Theatre's *Underneath the Lintel*. Contributed photo by Renee McVety.

entertaining" and Frank Rizzo of *Variety* praised Berger's play as "powerfully human and ultimately sublime." Both reviewers compared the story to *The Da Vinci Code*, with Rizzo commenting that *Underneath the Lintel* is a "riveting production ... that makes *The Da Vinci Code* seem like a game of hide-and-seek," the release notes.

Venice Theatre is located at 140 W. Tampa Ave. Box office hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and one hour before all performances.

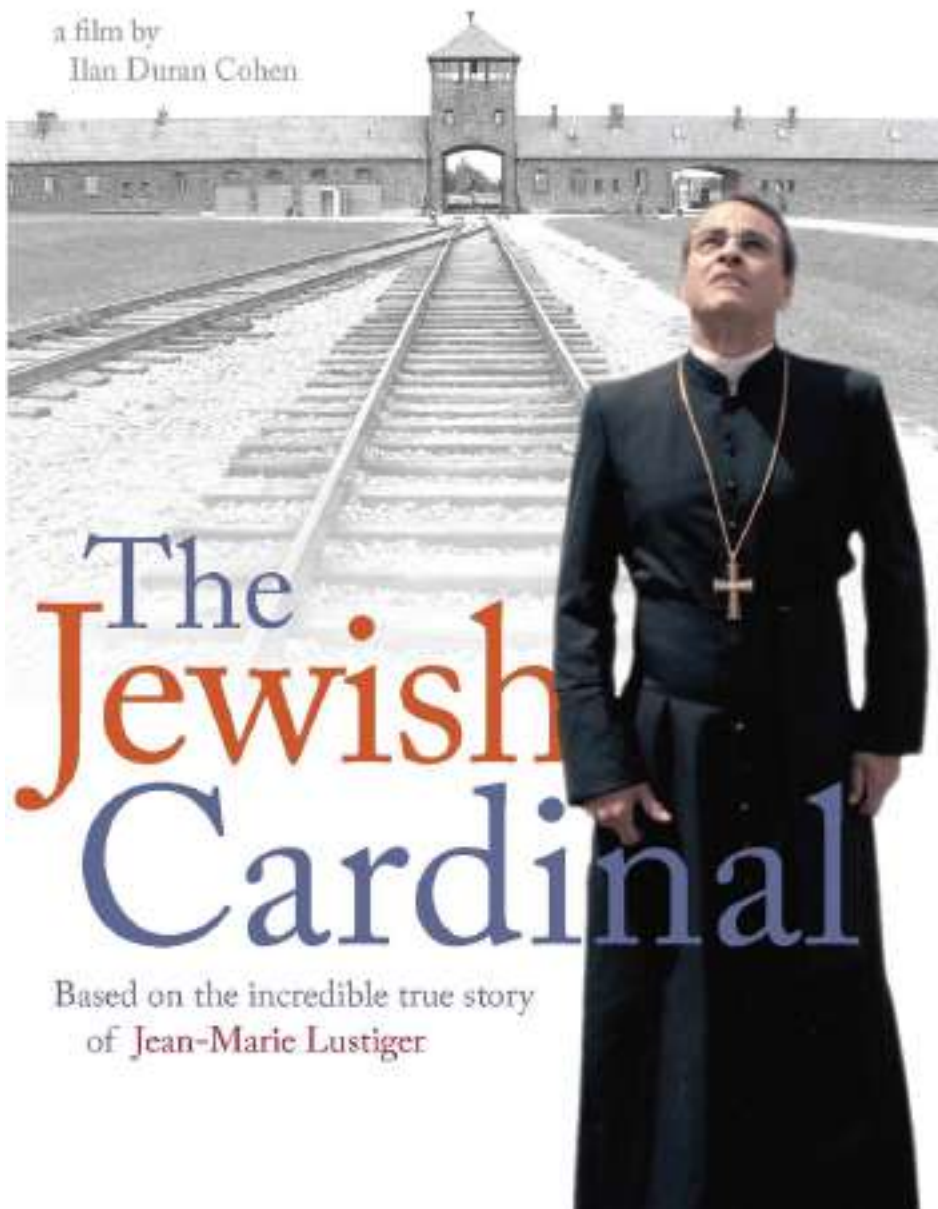
FEDERATION TO PRESENT FIFTH ANNUAL JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee has selected six award-winning films for its 2014 Jewish Film Festival, the Federation has announce.

The festival will be held March 16-21 at various venues in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Most showings will be followed by a discussion with the audience, a news release notes. Tickets are \$10 per film. A six-film festival pass is \$54, and a \$72 patron pass offers reserved seating at all six films. Tickets can be purchased online at jfedsrq.org/events.aspx or by calling 552-6304.

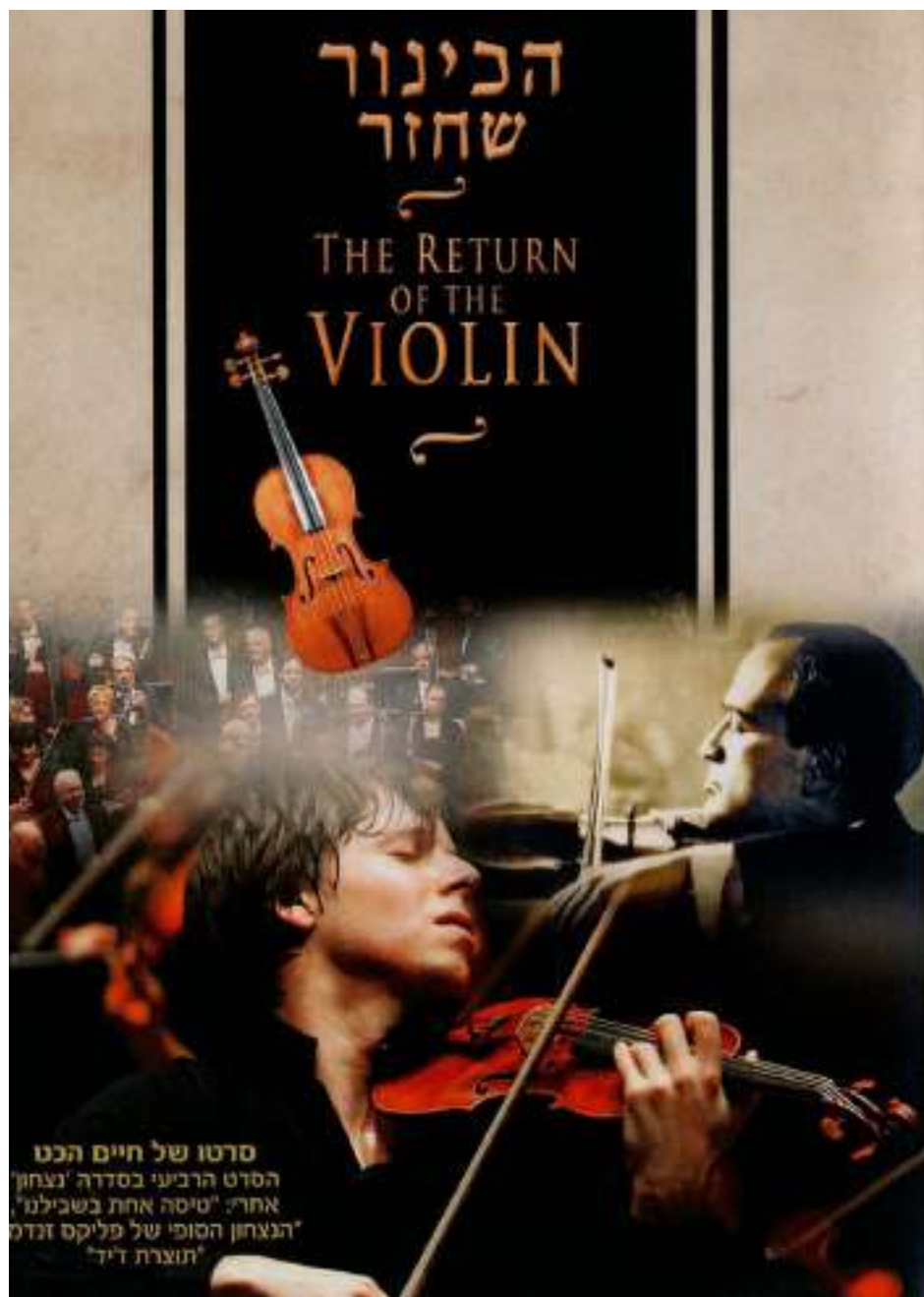


a film by
Ilan Duran Cohen



Based on the incredible true story
of Jean-Marie Lustiger

The Jewish Cardinal will be shown during the Jewish Film Festival. Contributed image



The Return of the Violin is another selection for the Jewish Film Festival. Contributed image

The films were selected by Roz Goldberg, chairwoman of the Jewish Film Festival, and her committee members: Karen Bernstein, Marsha Eisenberg, Barbara Jacob, Helene Morgenstern, Susan Newmark, Lois Stulberg, Evans Tilles and Janet Tolbert, the release adds. Goldberg says in the release that audiences “can expect to experience an outstanding roster of new award-winning films that span almost 80 years in time and culture — from Europe and Tel Aviv in the 1930s to France in the 1940s to Rome in the 1990s to contemporary settings in Israel — and in outer space. It’s going to be a whirlwind journey!”

BOOKSTORE1 TO PRESENT *THRILLING, CHILLING AFTERNOON WITH SWAIN*

A Thrilling, Chilling Afternoon with James Swain will be held on Wednesday, March 19, at noon in Florida Studio Theatre's Court Cabaret, Bookstore1Sarasota has announced.

The FST venue is located at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

The luncheon event will feature best-selling author Swain, who has written 16 thrillers, a news release says. His novels have been translated into 10 foreign languages and some have been chosen Mystery of the Year by Publishers Weekly and Kirkus Reviews, the release notes.

Swain has received three Barry Award nominations — a Florida honor for fiction — as well as the prestigious Prix Calibre .38 for Best American Crime Writing, the release continues.

Swain is more than an author, the release points out. He also is a magician and a mind reader. “Yes, you read that correctly: a mind reader,” the release adds.

Tickets, which are \$25, include lunch. Order tickets at the Florida Studio Theatre box office or by calling 366-9000.

In other Bookstore1 news, T.D. Allman, author of *Finding Florida* and *Miami: City of the Future*, will be at the store on Saturday, March 8, at 6 p.m.

A freelance journalist best known for his exposés of the CIA's “secret war” in Laos and for his later interviews with world figures as foreign correspondent for Vanity Fair, Allman “offers a comprehensive look at the history of [Florida] from its discovery, exploration and settlement through its becoming a state” to



James Swain/Contributed photo

notable events in the early 21st century, the release continues.

Poetry LocalMic will be held on Sunday, March 9, at 2 p.m. at the shop, the release says. “This month we feature three local poets: Lucia Blinn, Marcia Reass and Linda Parks,” the release notes. All will read from their own works, and audience discussion will follow.

Then at 7 p.m. on March 10, Robert Edsel, author of *Monuments Men*, will appear in a program at Riverview High School Auditorium, the release notes. The school is located at 1 Ram Way in Sarasota.

The program will be presented by the Jewish Federation and The Ringling. To make a reservation for it, call Len Steinberg at 552-6301.

Bookstore1Sarasota is located at 1359 Main St. in Sarasota. More event information is available at bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900.

SARASOTA SINGLES SOCIETY TO MARK MARDI GRAS ON MARCH 12

The local social group Sarasota Singles Society will mark Mardi Gras in Sarasota at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 12, at the Sarasota Yacht Club, the group has announced.

The club is located at 1100 John Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota.

“You will lose yourself to the entire party spirit as we parade throughout the club, led by our musicians,” said Sherry Janes, founder of the club, in a news release. “Imagine you are on Bourbon Street as you arrive in your colorful carnival-type attire,” she added in the release.

Tickets are \$68 per person, including dinner, tax and gratuity, the release continues. While membership is not required, an additional fee of \$20 is required from each guest, the release adds. Reservations are due by Friday, March

7, and they may be made online at sarasotasinglessociety.com or by phone at 504-4064.

The event will be “a decadent New Orleans-style party with musicians, dancing and a New Orleans-style dinner buffet including jambalaya, blackened redfish and more,” the release continues. A Mardi Gras masquerade costume contest with prizes will round out the night; attendees are encouraged to wear masks or colorful attire.

Membership in the Sarasota Singles Society is available for \$129 for six months, the release notes. It includes amenities, travel opportunities and several events each month. A poolside party and kayak trip are being organized for group members during April, as well as an excursion to Key West in May, the release adds.



The Sarasota Singles Society welcomes interested persons to attend its Mardi Gras event on March 12. Contributed photo

ARTIST SERIES CONCERTS TO PRESENT *YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU*

Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota will present critically acclaimed vocalist Jennifer Sheehan and pianist James Followell in the program *You Made Me Love You*, celebrating 100 years of the Great American Songbook, the organization has announced.

Shows will be held Saturday, March 15, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 16, at 2 and 7:30 p.m. at the Historic Asolo Theater, located at 5401 Bay Shore Road in Sarasota, a news release says. The program will include songs by Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim, Henry Mancini, Barry Manilow and Johnny Mercer. Tickets, which are \$25 to \$45, may be purchased at artistseriesconcerts.org or by calling 360-7399.

“Sheehan has become one of the most sought-after new voices in the concert and cabaret world,” the release points out. “Critically acclaimed for her refreshing vocal style and riveting stage presence, Sheehan has performed in esteemed venues and programs across the country,” including Carnegie Hall, where she was the guest of Michael Feinstein; the Savannah Music Festival; the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center; the Juilliard in Aiken Festival; and Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Followell has worked as a music director, accompanist and arranger with many Broadway and cabaret luminaries, the release notes. He was musical director for the Off Broadway production of Jerry Herman’s *Showtune* and featured pianist/vocalist in *The*



Jennifer Sheehan/Contributed photo

Best of Times at the Vaudeville Theatre in London’s West End, the release continues. He also served as music director/pianist for the Off Broadway hit *Forever Plaid*, and he was the conductor/pianist for the international tour of *Little Shop of Horrors*, the release says.

RE-ENERGIZED SILVER FOXES TO RETURN WITH ALL NEW SHOW

Venice Theatre's senior theatre performance troupe, The Silver Foxes, will take to the MainStage March 19 through March 23 for its annual March performances, the theatre has announced.

Breaking from the tradition of a variety show format, the troupe will perform a full-length original musical under the direction of Brad Wages, a news release points out. The show will be a musical comedy called *It's a Country Thang, Ya'll!* It "might remind audiences of a cross between *Green Acres* (city meets country) and the old Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland movies (let's put on a show in the barn)," the release adds. Performances will be Wednesday through Saturday at 8 p.m. and at 2 p.m. on Sunday. Reserved seat tickets

are \$24; they may be purchased online at venicestage.com or by calling the box office at 488-1115.

The Silver Foxes are professionally directed volunteer performers who have been entertaining around the area for 22 years, the release points out. "Bringing song, dance and laughter to community centers, religious groups and clubs throughout Sarasota County," the troupe reaches nearly 5,000 audience members each season, the release says. The annual MainStage show helps raise money for Venice Theatre's education and outreach programs. This year's production is the group's most ambitious ever, the release adds.



The Silver Foxes — actors, singers and dancers — pose after a 2013 MainStage performance. Contributed photo

SHAMROCK ANNOUNCES ITS ANNUAL ST. PATRICK'S DAY EVENT

Downtown Sarasota pub The Shamrock will host its sixth annual St. Patrick's Day Block Party from 2 p.m. to midnight on Monday, March 17, in the pub and under a tent at 2257 Ringling Blvd., the establishment has announced.

Proceeds will again benefit the Sarasota Family YMCA Youth Shelter, a news release notes. The event is free and open to the public. Doors will open at 9 a.m.

The all-day party will include live music, live art, food trucks, face painting "and lots of Irish and craft beers," the release adds. Last year, the Shamrock raised more than \$7,000 for the YMCA shelter, "which provides safe care for youths ages 10 to 18 who have run away or are experiencing family conflict," the release points out.

"We're so thrilled to once again support the Y Youth Shelter while at the same time throwing the best St. Pat's party around," said Shamrock owner Derek Anderson in the release.

The headliner for the main stage will be Have Gun Will Travel, the Bradenton-based folk/pop/rock band whose music has been featured on national television and radio, the release continues. The rest of the lineup features Andy Thomas, Ship of Fools, Passerine, City of Sarasota Pipe Band, Sons of Hippies, Hail Dale, Big Blu House and RAEF with a DJ and light show between acts after dark. The




The Shamrock pub will host its sixth annual St. Patrick's Day Block Party on Monday, March 17, in downtown Sarasota. Image from shamrocksarasota.com

music will start inside the bar at 2 p.m. and move outside at 4 p.m.

"The entertainment schedule is a combination of traditional Irish music fused with local contemporary indie acts — everything from hip-hop to folk to indie rock," said Anderson in the release.

At 6 p.m., the Shamrock's annual limerick contest finalists will take the stage for a chance to win a trip to Chicago for a tour of the new Lagunitas Brewery plus the "Beer Circus" grand opening, the release adds.

The pub will also be open before and after the block party, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 a.m., the release notes.

For more information, visit shamrocksarasota.com. 

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CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER TO KICK OFF LENTEN ORGAN RECITALS

The Church of the Redeemer, located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, will present a half-hour Lenten organ recital on Wednesday, March 12, the church has announced.

The program will feature Richard Benedum, director of music at Christ Church of Bradenton, a news release says.

The recital will begin at 12:10 p.m. and end at 12:40 p.m., the release notes. It is free and open to the public.

For more information, call 955-4263 or visit redeemersarasota.org.

LUNCH WITH THE RABBI TO BE HELD MARCH 11 AND 12

One of Temple Emanu-El's most popular monthly programs, *Lunch with the Rabbi*, will have a special installment for the Jews of Lakewood Ranch and Bradenton on Tuesday, March 11, at noon at Lakewood Ranch Town Hall, located at 8175 Lakewood Ranch Blvd., the Temple has announced.

"An hour-long program of friendly socializing and stimulating conversation with Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, *Lunch with the Rabbi* offers the opportunity for both casual mingling and serious discussion about current

events and topics of Jewish interest," a news release says. Attendees are asked to bring brown-bag lunches; homemade dessert will be provided.

An additional *Lunch with the Rabbi* will be held Wednesday, March 12, at noon at Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

Members of the community are warmly invited to both events, with no reservations required.

For more information, call 371-2788.



Rabbi Brenner Glickman and Harry Lifsec enjoyed an earlier installment of Lunch with the Rabbi at Lakewood Ranch Town Hall. Contributed photo

REDEEMER CELEBRATES STEPHENSON-MOE'S 40 YEARS

The Church of the Redeemer in downtown Sarasota hosted a reception on Saturday night, Feb. 22, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of organist/choirmaster Ann Stephenson-Moe's working at the church, Redeemer announced.

More than 200 people associated with the church and the community attended the event, a news release says.

Stephenson-Moe leads Redeemer's music programs and several choirs, the release points out. Each year, she also "orchestrates a dynamic Great Music Series that brings world-class musicians and concerts to Sarasota," the

release continues. Additionally, she serves as organist and music director at Temple Beth Israel on Longboat Key.

Along with her late husband, Daniel, Stephenson-Moe co-founded Key Chorale, Sarasota's symphonic chorus, the release notes. She also co-founded, and performed as associate conductor and keyboardist for, Gloria Musicae.

The Church of the Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. For more information, visit redeemersarasota.org or call 955-4263.



(From left) The Rev. Richard Marsden; the Very Rev. Fredrick Robinson, rector; the Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald (retired); the Rev. David Bumsted; and the Rev. Charleston Wilson marked organist/choirmaster Ann Stephenson-Moe's 40 years at the Church of the Redeemer with a grand reception for the parish and community on Feb. 22. Contributed photo

TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM SCHOOLS KICKS OFF SCIENCE CURRICULUM

Temple Beth Sholom Schools (TBSS) in Sarasota kicked off its science curriculum for the second- and third-grade classes with a learning expedition to the Celery Fields on Feb. 11, the Temple says in a news release.

Through TBSS' project-based learning program, the excursion enabled the students to enjoy a hands-on science lesson as they learned first-hand about vertebrate research they were studying at the school.

"When we approach a new unit in science, it is important to look at the overall standards and decide how we can best combine direct instruction with hands-on experiences," said

Barbara O'Brien, a science teacher in the second and third grades at TBSS in the release. "We always want to be a part of what is going on in our community, and we want to help our students learn about their direct involvement in positively affecting their environments while making sure the students are receiving the important scientific knowledge that each unit is based upon."

Jacob, a second-grader and — he says — future dentist, was quick to share his newfound knowledge of invertebrates and vertebrates. "Today we've seen about 10 birds," he is quoted in the news release. "This is way more



Second- and third-grade students at Temple Beth Sholom Schools enjoy a science excursion. Contributed photo

fun than sitting in class and looking at them in a book.”

Jacob pointed out in the release, “Invertebrates don’t have a spine, and vertebrates do. We have been having a lot of fun, and we write down the birds we’ve seen on the sheets we got for the tour.”

Each student was given a pair of binoculars, a clipboard and a pencil, along with a detailed bird-watching guide, to track and record what he or she saw, so the students could discuss the results later in class.

“The kids at TBS Schools are so enthusiastic and involved in their learning,” noted Mary Foster, a guide from Around the Bend Nature Tours, in the release.

The tours are provided through the Sarasota Audubon Society Celery Fields Education Program.

“We’ve never had a school come out with a prepared bird list before, and they are all so interested in what we have to say, and that’s very refreshing,” Foster added in the release.

“These students came here with knowledge and were ready to put what they learned into practice. They were so excited to use the binoculars, and we really weren’t expecting such great questions!”

Temple Beth Sholom Schools, the only private Jewish school in Sarasota and Manatee counties, has classes from preschool through eighth grade. It is open to all children and families, regardless of faith or religious or ethnic background, the release points out. “With a mission to impact the world through academic excellence, global citizenship and compassionate action, students are taught through Project-Based Learning (PBL) with a focus on teaching for understanding,” the release explains.

TBS Schools is accredited by the Florida Kindergarten Council along with the Florida Council of Independent Schools.

For more information about TBS Schools, go to tbsschools.org.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL TO PRESENT *HOLLYWOOD AND HITLER*

By popular demand, Dr. Bob Toplin, the author of *Reel History* and an expert on cinema and culture, will return to Temple Emanu-El on Sunday, March 9, at 2 p.m., the Temple has announced.

Speaking on the topic *Hollywood and Hitler*, “Toplin will examine the role of American motion pictures in responding to anti-Semitism and the Nazi threat,” a news release notes.

The Temple is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

Members of the community are welcome to attend this “stimulating afternoon [program],” which will include a PowerPoint presentation and film clips, the release adds. There will be a charge of \$5, payable at the door.

For more information, contact Temple Emanu-El Adult Education Committee Chairwoman Beth Ann Salzman at beth-anny2@comcast.net.

TEMPLE SINAI TO HOST CANTORIAL CONCERT WITH ABRAMSON

Everyone is welcome to attend an eclectic Cantorial Concert at Temple Sinai on Sunday, March 23, at 3:30 p.m., the Temple has announced.

Chazzan Cliff Abramson, the area's first ordained cantor, will present a program of liturgical music, operatic arias and songs in several languages including Italian and Ladino, a news release says. "The sanctuary will be filled with pianists, vocalists, cellists, violinists, clarinetists and mandolin players to create musical fare for all to enjoy," the release adds.

Chazzan earned his first graduate degree in theatre from New York University in 1985, and he has performed on stage, film and television, the release notes. In addition to Jewish music, he has also trained in classical music as a tenor and classical guitarist, the release adds.

Joining Chazzan will be local notable musicians David Lieberman on clarinet, The Sarasota Mandolin Ensemble, Christine Bruno and Lurray Myers on piano and Dr. Michal Gordon on cello, the release continues. Among the vocalists will be Bob Liscotti, tenor; Carole Fetterman, soprano; Amy Connours, mezzo; and The Sinai Singers.


"Stay for dinner," the release says. The meal and concert are \$30 per person, while the



*Chazzan Cliff Abramson of Temple Sinai.
Contributed photo by Lynn Elkes*

concert only is \$15. Register online at templesinai-sarasota.org or call 924-1802 for advance reservations.

The concert price at the door will be \$20, the release notes.

Temple Sinai, located at 4631 S. Lockwood Ridge Road, "warmly welcomes guests," the release adds. Enter the site off Proctor Road between Beneva and Swift roads. 

Press Releases & News Tips
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

07+ MARCH	FST presents <i>Thurgood</i> Through March 8; times vary; Keating Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$36 to 39. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
07+ MARCH	FSU/Asolo Conservatory presents <i>How I Learned To Drive</i> Through March 9; times vary; Jane B. Cook Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$27 to 29. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
07+ MARCH	Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents <i>Harry and Lena</i> Through March 23; times vary; 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbtsrq.org .
07+ MARCH	Dabbert Gallery presents James Griffin's <i>Sunlight Seduction</i> Through March 31; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.com .
14 MARCH	WSLR presents 'Spider' John Koerner March 14, 8 p.m., Fogartyville Community Media & Arts Center, 525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota. Tickets: \$12 in advance/\$15 at the door. Information: 894-6469 or WSLR.org .
16 MARCH	Manasota Theatre Organ Society presents Jelani Eddington March 16, 2:30 p.m., Grace Church, 8000 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota. Tickets: \$15 in advance/\$18 at the door. Information: 776-3668.
16 MARCH	Sarasota Pops presents <i>Music of 007 and Other Movies</i> March 16, 3 p.m., Riverview Performing Arts Center, 1 Ram Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$5 to \$25. Information: 926-7677 or SarasotaPops.org .

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



NO GUTTER BALLS HERE

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.