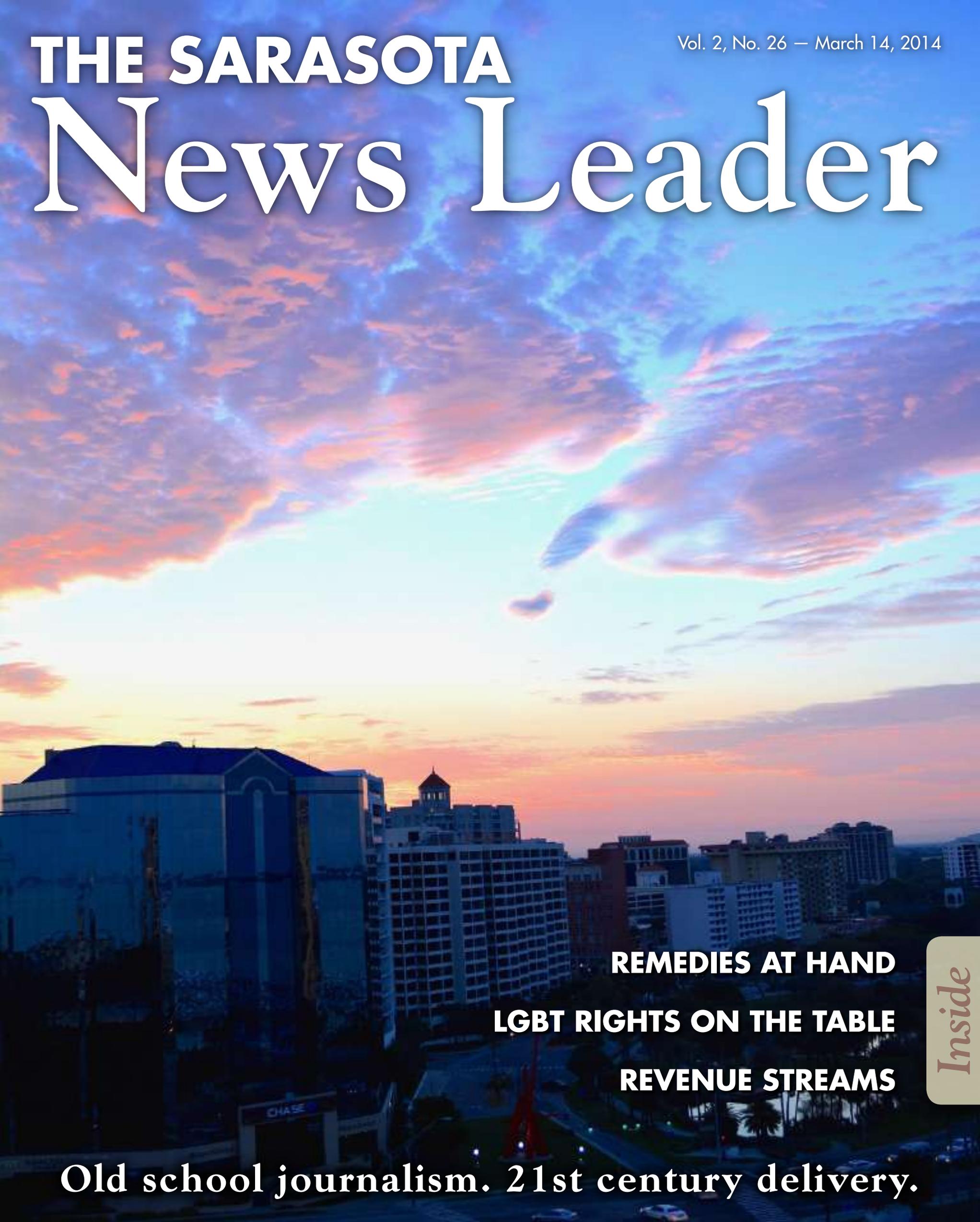


**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 26 — March 14, 2014

# News Leader



**REMEDIES AT HAND**

**LGBT RIGHTS ON THE TABLE**

**REVENUE STREAMS**

*Inside*

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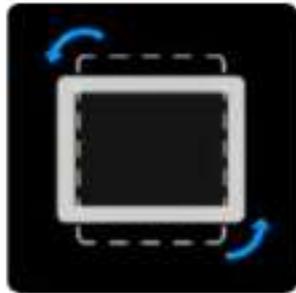
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# Welcome

Siesta Key and University Parkway traffic jams, a county human rights ordinance, a state amendment that would permanently dedicate a funding stream for land conservation, the city's nagging lift station problems, noise, parking: This issue features quite a mix of the old and the new — and new takes on the old.

Before I go any further, I want to point out a very helpful discovery we just made. *The News Leader* does, after all, have a search mechanism. When Production Manager Cleve Posey helped us settle on überflip to publish our weekly issues, we were pretty pleased with its capabilities. Let me just say we still are learning about those capabilities.

Cleve has created one of his handy tip “fillers” to show you exactly how the search mechanism works, so be sure to look for it.

Now, back to the contents.

I have to give special thanks to County Editor Roger Drouin this week for pursuing details on one story that already has appeared in other media and a second that deserves far more attention. In my former “life” at the Pelican Press, we almost went out of our way to avoid reporting on matters that other publications had addressed. Given the significant changes in newspapers over the past few years, my feeling now is that the more comprehensive we can make our coverage, the better for you. We also like to think we can offer new insights in the process.

Finally, I want to put in another plug for our *News Briefs*. Once again, it is bursting with a wide array of information.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher





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Front cover: *The Colors of Dawn* - Norman Schimmel  
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## REMEDIES AT HAND

*Just before 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 11, traffic is backed up on the Stickney Point Road bridge. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

### **STATE TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS ARE IMPLEMENTING CHANGES AT THE INTERSECTION OF STICKNEY POINT ROAD AND MIDNIGHT PASS ROAD TO ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC TIE-UPS RESULTING FROM A 'NO TURN ON RED' DIRECTIVE**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Relief is at hand for motorists who have suffered in long lines on Stickney Point Road since the Florida Department of Transportation erected a “No Turn on Red” sign at the Midnight Pass Road intersection on Siesta Key.

FDOT plans to install a “blank-out” sign that will prevent right turns onto Midnight Pass Road only when a pedestrian has pushed the button to use the crosswalk at that intersection, Lauren Hatchell, a public information officer for the agency, told *The Sarasota News Leader* on March 12.

Additionally, FDOT already has adjusted the signal timing at the intersection, Hatchell said.

It should not take long for the sign to be put in place, Hatchell added, though she was unable to ascertain an exact schedule. “We’re already communicating with [Sarasota County] and moving forward with that,” she said.

Other than the times when the new sign has been activated by someone pushing the crosswalk button, she pointed out, “a free flow of traffic” should be the norm again at that intersection.

In the meantime, she said, the signal timing adjustment should help.

“We realize this [situation] is important to everybody all the way around,” Hatchell told the *News Leader*.

The department erected the “No Turn on Red” sign several weeks ago in response to complaints from pedestrians who reported feeling endangered in the crosswalk. Subsequently, residents on the island have complained about the resulting traffic jams on Stickney Point Road and its drawbridge, with traffic backed up to U.S. 41 on numerous occasions.

“We’ve received so many phone calls and emails,” Hatchell said. “I think once people find out we are fully aware that this has caused

an impact and that was not the intent ... that will put a lot of people’s minds at ease.”

Contacted a short while later with the news of FDOT’s action, Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson told the *News Leader*, “That’s great. I’m glad to hear that,” adding that the timing of the “No Turn on Red” sign’s appearance “couldn’t have been any worse,” right at the height of season. “I’m afraid that it’s leaving tourists with a bad taste in their mouths. ... It just made it impossible for tourists to enjoy being [on Siesta]. They’re just spending a lot of time in their cars getting on and off the key.”

Even though the county commissioners had nothing to do with the sign going up, she pointed out, “We’ve fielded a lot of complaints.”



*The Florida Department of Transportation is preparing to install a new sign to alleviate traffic backups resulting from the ‘No Turn on Red’ sign it put up several weeks ago. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck in Siesta Village and a past president of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA), was also pleased to learn of FDOT's plans when the *News Leader* contacted him. "That makes sense," he said of the blank-out sign. "That might work."

Cheryl Gaddie, current SKVA president, concurred with Matthes. "That sounds absolutely logical."

Still, Matthes concurred with Robinson's concern about the timing of the intersection problem. "March is our busiest month, so [FDOT needs] to get [the sign] up now."

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, told the *News Leader* that FDOT District One Secretary Billy Hattaway already

had told her of the signal timing adjustment and plans for the blank-out sign. "I think that sounds innovative and a good thing," she said of the latter measure. "We'll see how it works."

However, Patterson continues to have reservations about the signal timing adjustment; she voiced them during the March 4 County Commission meeting.

"I've seen very bad traffic jams from Beach Road to Stickney Point," she told the *News Leader* on March 12, adding that she fears they will increase.

Hatchell could not help but wonder, she said, based on her own observations and anecdotal information, whether an increase in the number of tourists this season has been one reason the traffic jams have been worse at the

“*I think that sounds innovative and a good thing. We'll see how it works.*”

Nora Patterson  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

”



*Traffic is thick on the morning of March 11 at the intersection of Stickney Point Road and Midnight Pass Road. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Stickney Point Road intersection. (See the related story in this issue.)

Patterson told the *News Leader* she feels the number of visitors is a factor, and that is all the more reason she is worried about the change in the signal timing. “The more people you have [on the road], any little tweak can tip things over the edge.”

However, Siesta is not the only place where she has seen intersections “pretty much beyond our capacity,” she pointed out. On Sunday, she left the southern part of Lido Key about 6 p.m. and it took her until 7 p.m. to reach St. Armands Circle, she said. “That’s worse than anything we have on Siesta Key.”

## ADJUNCT CONCERNS

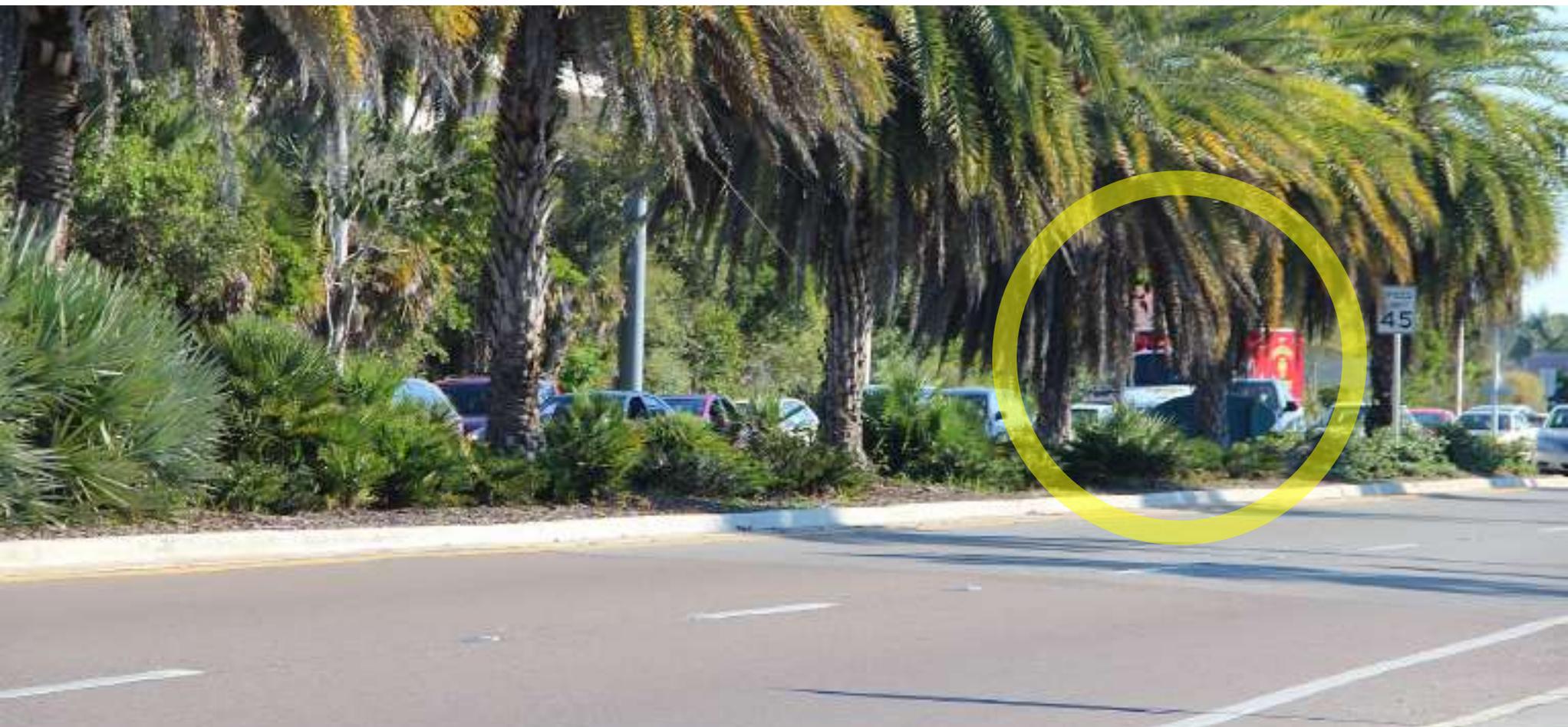
And while Robinson was happy to hear about FDOT’s plans, she reiterated to the *News Leader* on March 12 another concern she raised at the [March 4 County Commission meeting](#)

— the propensity for pedestrians to eschew crosswalks and jaywalk instead. She asked last week that county staff take the opportunity to hold public meetings to educate people about the need to use the crosswalks for safety purposes.

Shortly before she spoke with the *News Leader*, she pointed out, she was driving on Siesta Key when she saw a person jaywalk “not 10 feet away from [a crosswalk].”

Robinson added, “I think we need to still follow through with our public education efforts.”

And speaking of public meetings, Gaddie told the *News Leader* FDOT should hold sessions in advance of implementing a change such as the “No Turn on Red” sign at the Stickney Point Road intersection. It would be much better for everyone, she pointed out, if people knew what to expect — and could offer their thoughts on a proposal — instead of being surprised by action. “Let us know.” 



*A Sarasota County EMS unit threads its way through a clog of traffic on Stickney Point Road on March 11. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

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## LGBT RIGHTS ON THE TABLE

*Ken Shelin urged the County Commission in October 2013 to approve a Domestic Partnership Registry.  
File photo*

### **WILL SARASOTA COUNTY ACT ON AN ORDINANCE TO PROTECT GAYS AND LESBIANS FROM DISCRIMINATION?**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**  
*Associate Editor*

What is next for a proposal to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in Sarasota County? That is a looming question as the county's domestic partnership registration goes into effect.

Responding to pressure from local LGBT rights activist Julia Nowak, County Commissioner Carolyn Mason was the first board member to take action on Nowak's proposal for a countywide human rights ordinance. Last November, Mason brought up the concept and asked County Attorney Steve DeMarsh to examine the issue and deliver a report on how other cities and counties have dealt with the issue.

The commission now has that report. Dated March 3, it lays out the status of anti-LGBT

discrimination laws, noting that neither the federal nor state government offers statutory protection for gays and lesbians in employment and housing. "Local Human Rights Ordinances generally add protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation typically defined as an individual's actual or perceived homosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, gender identity, or expression," the report states.

In 2003, the City of Sarasota adopted an anti-discrimination ordinance that includes protection for gays and lesbians, the report notes. The city also created an all-volunteer seven-member Human Relations Board to handle complaints. If a complaint is deemed valid, the board can then grant the victim a "Notice of Right to Sue."

Since the city established its ordinance, 60 complaints have been filed, according to the report, and only two have proceeded to a hearing. The total cost to the city has been roughly \$158,000, not including staff time.

But the Sarasota model isn't the only one. Pinellas County has established an Office of Human Rights, with a director and 10 full-time staffers, to handle discrimination complaints. That office also conducts investigations and is empowered to enforce state and federal law. Orange County, meanwhile, offers similar protections as the City of Sarasota, but it requires that those discriminated against file suit.

So what will the commission now do with DeMarsh's report? That's an open question. Nowak tells *The Sarasota News Leader* that Mason indicated to her she would bring up the issue at a commission meeting soon, but the item hasn't been placed on any upcoming agendas and Mason did not respond to multiple *News Leader* voicemails.

As the debate over the human rights ordinance unfolds, the county this week officially launched another program that was pushed by LGBT activists: The county's domestic partnership registry went live Thursday morning.

The registry allows permanent county residents to file as domestic partners if they share a residence. The measure permits partners to act as healthcare surrogates, gives them visitation rights in healthcare facilities, lets them make funeral and burial decisions and more.

Couples hoping to register can either download the form from the website of the Sarasota County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller or just click [here](#). You can also grab physical copies at either of the Clerk's offices.



*Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason listens to discussion. File photo*

The registry has been a longtime priority of former City Commissioner Ken Shelin, who has worked his way around the region, promoting the registry concept city by city. Shelin tells the *News Leader* he's not sure the county registry will be popular, though. He notes that the commission chose to grant domestic partnership rights only to full-time county residents, cutting out snowbirds, and it doesn't allow partners to contribute to educational decisions for a minor.

"I think it has less appeal to a lot of people," Shelin says of the registry. As of press time (i.e. three hours after the office opened — not the widest sample), the Clerk's office had yet to record any registrations, but a representative there did say residents had called to ask about it.

At least the price is right, Shelin says. The cost to register with the county is \$20.50. In the City of Sarasota, it's \$30. 



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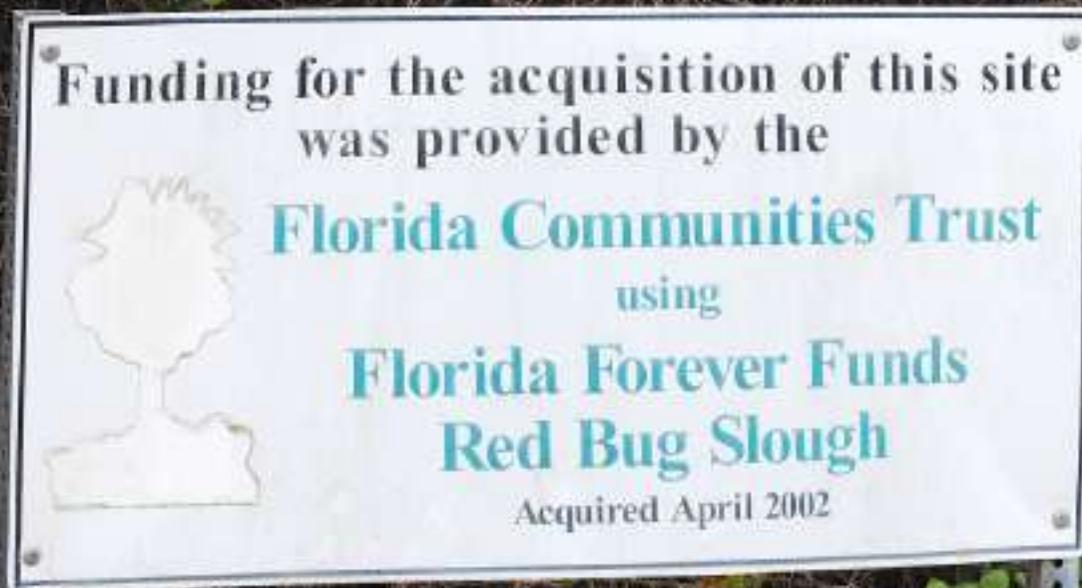
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## REVENUE STREAMS

*\$1.64 million in Florida Forever funding made possible the purchase of 71 acres for Sarasota's Red Bug Slough in 2002. During that year alone, \$70 million was distributed throughout the state for conservation efforts. Photo by Roger Drouin*

### **PROPONENTS SAY APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT 1 IN NOVEMBER WOULD MEAN MORE CONSERVATION EFFORTS ACROSS THE SUNSHINE STATE, BUT A COUNTY COMMISSIONER WORRIES ABOUT ITS IMPACT ON OTHER PROJECTS**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

A state constitutional amendment on the ballot in November would set aside an estimated \$5 billion over the next 10 years for water and land conservation and habitat restoration.

If approved, the Florida Water and Land Legacy initiative, Amendment 1, would mean a future with more parks, preserved natural spaces and water restoration projects across the Sunshine State, from Sarasota

Bay to the Everglades, said campaign director Will Abberger.

The measure would be funded by a third of the revenue from documentary stamp fees, or doc stamps. The latter are state taxes paid

when a home is sold or it changes ownership. Such a state funding stream has been directed to environmental preservation efforts for more than a decade, but with

“*It is not creating a new stream. It is taking money from where we need it.*”

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission



no safeguard from raids by legislators for other purposes.

Nearly a million state residents have signed a petition in support of making the new revenue stream mandatory for the specified purposes. The campaign was led by Florida's Water and Land Legacy — a coalition of the state's leading conservation organizations, including Florida Defenders of the Environment, The Trust for Public Land, Audubon Florida, Florida Wildlife Federation and the Sierra Club.

Groups such as Sarasota's League of Women Voters helped gather signatures.

But not everyone is sold on the concept of redirecting a specified portion of the doc stamp fee pool. One Sarasota County commissioner is questioning how that would impact other programs the revenue has assisted. The problem, contends commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, is that in

the midst of lean budget times, the conservation initiative would utilize a third of the doc stamp money, when legislators in Tallahassee have been able to divvy up those funds for transportation, affordable housing and economic development efforts, for example.

"I have no issue with the [conservation] cause; the issue is where the money is coming from," Robinson told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

She learned during a recent Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting about how the local share of state transportation funding could be impacted if Amendment 1 is passed, she said. Afterward,

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*The Trust for Public Land has compiled a list of states with dedicated funding sources for land conservation, past and present.*



*People enjoy the vistas from the trails in Red Bug Slough, located on Beneva Road in Sarasota. Photo by Roger Drouin*

she asked the county's legislative lobbyists to try to calculate other potential impacts.

Robinson pointed out that less transportation money from state doc stamp revenue could impede such planned local projects as roundabouts on U.S. 41 and roadway expansion. "It impacts a whole slew of ... [transportation] programs."

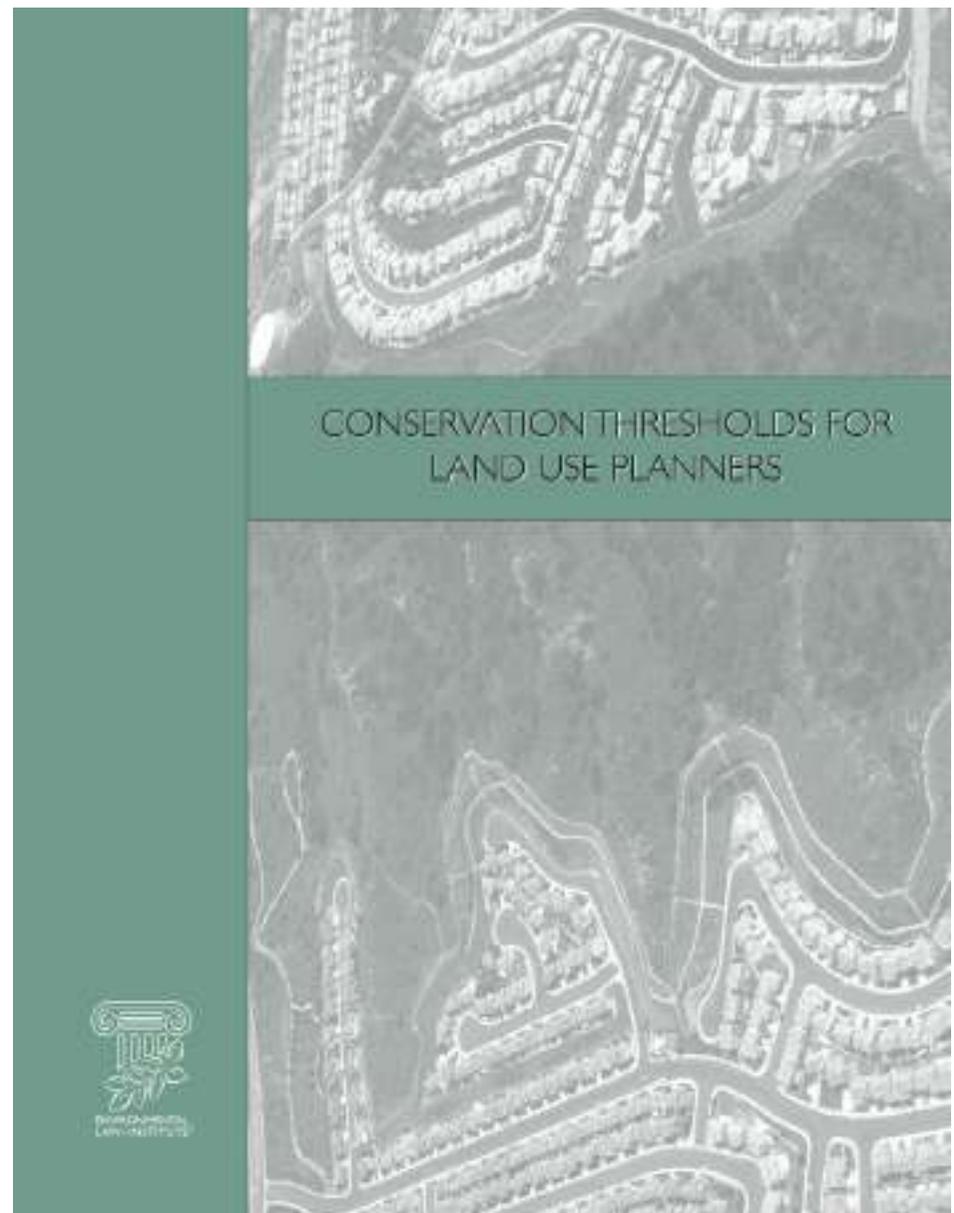
## RAIDED FUNDS

The Water and Land Legacy constitutional amendment drive needed more than 650,000 signatures — a threshold that was well surpassed — to get the measure on the Nov. 4 ballot. The amendment will need the approval of 60 percent of voters casting ballots state-wide if it is to pass. It would go into effect on July 1, 2015.

The Water and Land Legacy would fund a conservation effort more comprehensive than Florida Forever or Preservation 2000, the predecessor to Florida Forever.

Those two programs have paid for many local projects. The first purchase under Preservation 2000 involved a tract of land bordering [Oscar Scherer State Park](#) that was renamed in honor of former Sarasota County Commissioner Jon Thaxton. In another local example, \$1.64 million in Florida Forever funding made possible the purchase of 71 acres for [Red Bug Slough](#) in 2002. During the latter year alone, \$70 million was distributed throughout the state for conservation purchases.

That was several years before the Legislature slashed Florida Forever's fund by 97.5 percent, according to Florida's Water and Land Legacy.



*The front cover of Conservation Thresholds for Land Use Planners is a photo by Claire Dobert of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It shows encroachment on gnatcatcher habitat. The document is a publication of the Environmental Law Institute. Image courtesy Environmental Law Institute*

**“Amendment 1 is more than Florida Forever. Conserving lands is part of the program. But perhaps, more importantly, Amendment 1 will provide protection of water quality and [water] restoration projects such as the Everglades or Indian River lagoon or Sarasota Bay.**

Will Abberger  
Director  
Florida Water and Land Legacy Campaign

Prior to that state action, for two decades, roughly \$300 million was dedicated to conservation, including initiatives through Florida Forever and the Everglades Trust

Fund. The reasoning was that development and real estate investment and speculation — as reflected by the doc stamps — should pay for preserving natural spaces, Abberger said.

“Historically, even if you go back a few years, the amount of money taken from the doc stamp fund [for environmental conservation] was as high as 50 percent,” Abberger added. “So we think our [current] proposal to set aside 33 percent is very reasonable.”

In 1990, Thaxton was part of the original group that lobbied for Preservation 2000, the predecessor to Florida Forever.

“It is one of the most popular programs in Florida state government,” Thaxton told the *News Leader*. “The public loves it. However, the Legislature year after year has seen fit to raid those funds that were promised to the citizens to be used for land conservation.”

Amendment 1 “does nothing but fortify the original promise made to the voters and hold the Legislature accountable for what they said they would do,” Thaxton added.

Since 2009, legislators have left less and less of the Florida Forever money for conservation initiatives. A higher portion of the fees has been funneled into the state’s general fund, and Florida Forever has been reduced to an empty shell, conservationists say.

**“If you don’t want to spend this money on land conservation as it was promised, give it back to the taxpayers.”**

Jon Thaxton  
Former Commissioner  
Sarasota County

“Amendment 1 is more than Florida Forever,” noted Abberger, who is also head of The Trust for Public Land’s Conservation Finance Service. “Conserving lands is part of the program,” he added.

“But perhaps more importantly, Amendment 1 will provide protection of water quality and [water] restoration projects such as the Everglades or Indian River lagoon or Sarasota Bay.”

## A FRACTION

In the 2012-13 fiscal year, a significant amount of doc stamp revenue was earmarked for just about everything except conservation.

About \$159.2 million, roughly 10 percent of the amount of money collected, was allocated to the state transportation fund. Another \$85 million went to the state’s Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund, while \$203 million was diverted to various housing trusts.

But most of the revenue — 63 percent — was funneled into the state’s general fund, according to a breakdown of the doc stamp disbursements.

Over the past two years, some money was returned to the Florida Forever program to make up for what had been removed, but it was a fraction of the \$300 million previously set aside annually for conservation.

Lawmakers in 2013 put \$10 million in the program. In 2012, they established a plan to sell surplus land held by the Department of

Environmental Protection. That program, sold to the Legislature as possibly generating up to \$50 million, has fallen far short of expectations. A related legislative act in 2013 called for \$10 million in doc stamp revenue to be set aside from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund for [military base buffering](#).

Backers of Amendment 1 say it is the best way to ensure adequate funding is dedicated to restoring critical natural areas, such as the Everglades, and protecting Florida's waters and lands.

“We are talking less than 1 percent” of the state’s overall \$74 billion budget for land and water conservation, Abberger pointed out.

## LOCAL FISCAL IMPACTS?

Robinson said it is important that state and, ultimately, local transportation and affordable housing dollars are not decreased. She wants voters to know the amendment could result in trickle-down impacts to “programs very important to Sarasota County.”

Voters just might think twice about marking “Yes” on their ballots if it means “less funding for roads,” Robinson told the *News Leader*.

“It is not creating a new stream,” Robinson said of Amendment 1. “It is taking money from where we need it.”

**Documentary Stamp Tax Collections and Distributions  
December 2013 GR Adopted**

Statutory %s	\$ Caps	F.S.	Statutory % Distributions	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
			Total Documentary Stamp Tax Collections	1,261.8	1,843.4	1,888.0	2,099.3	2,246.1	2,365.8	2,473.8	2,549.9	2,622.0	2,687.1	2,766.3	2,861.8	2,972.9
6.00%		201.16	DOR Administrative Costs	7.7	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8
		201.16	Loss, General Revenue Service Charge	101.3	101.4	101.8	105.5	110.7	109.2	107.9	104.9	109.8	115.0	121.3	128.9	137.8
			Not Available for Distribution	1,154.3	1,501.7	1,736.4	1,894.3	2,066.6	2,166.5	2,266.1	2,335.7	2,402.4	2,462.3	2,535.2	2,623.1	2,725.3
83.31%		201.15(1)	Distribution for General Revenue and Debt Service	730.8	950.7	1,099.3	1,199.1	1,302.0	1,371.6	1,434.7	1,476.7	1,521.0	1,568.9	1,620.0	1,680.7	1,754.4
		201.15(1)(a)(i)	PRRMT Florida Forever/Everglades Restoration Debt Service	425.8	403.1	172.5	172.4	172.6	172.7	172.8	172.8	173.0	172.9	181.3	186.6	182.4
New % Share	\$ Caps		GR Share Available for Distribution After Debt Service	305.0	547.6	926.8	1,026.7	1,129.5	1,198.9	1,261.9	1,302.9	1,349.0	1,386.0	1,453.7	1,520.3	1,605.0
0.2300%	3.25	201.15(1)(c)	Dept. of Economic Opportunity Grants & Donations Trust Fund	0.7	1.3	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3
0.3000%		201.15(1)(c)	State Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund	0.8	50.0	65.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0
38.2000%	541.75	201.15(1)(x)	State Transportation Trust Fund	119.3	169.2	269.0	317.1	366.6	393.0	407.1	423.8	440.0	454.4	466.8	468.8	468.8
2.1200%	30.0	201.15(1)(c)	Ecosystem Management & Restoration Trust Fund	6.5	11.6	19.7	21.8	24.0	25.4	26.8	27.7	28.8	29.4	30.0	30.0	30.0
8.8000%	0.3	201.15(1)(x)	General Inspection Trust Fund, water management and restoration	0.00	0.110	0.180	0.213	0.230	0.240	0.250	0.260	0.270	0.280	0.290	0.300	0.300
40.67%	657.8	201.15(1)(x)	Total Distributions From GR Share After Debt Service	129.8	222.2	376.0	419.4	458.3	496.4	512.0	529.8	549.9	562.3	575.3	575.3	575.3
		201.15(1)(a)	General Revenue by Formula After Other Distributions	181.8	326.4	550.8	610.1	671.2	712.5	749.9	776.1	801.1	823.7	879.4	945.0	1,029.7
		201.15(1)(b)	Additional General Revenue due to Trust Fund Caps	19.8	47.5	86.0	112.3	139.1	157.9	174.5	198.4	197.4	207.4	219.3	233.5	150.1
		373.59(8)(a)(b)(c)	Transfer from Water Management Lands Trust Fund	8.8	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
			Total General Revenue	208.4	381.9	644.8	730.4	818.3	878.4	932.4	972.5	1,009.5	1,039.1	1,108.7	1,186.6	1,287.8
			Available for Other Distributions to Other Trust Funds	423.5	551.0	537.1	594.8	754.6	794.9	831.4	857.0	881.4	903.4	930.2	962.4	999.9
			10% Growth From Prior Year	9.9	34.7	23.5	15.8	16.3	11.3	10.0	7.0	6.7	6.9	7.3	8.8	10.2
7.58000%	84.0	201.15(2)	Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF)	78.8	81.2	80.4	75.8	70.8	70.4	70.4	70.1	70.1	70.1	70.2	70.3	70.4
1.84000%	28.0	201.15(3)	LATF - Coastal Lands Acquisition & Debt Service	11.4	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	
4.20000%	80.5	201.15(4)	Water Management Lands Trust Fund	48.4	62.0	81.6	81.2	81.2	81.0	80.9	80.8	80.8	80.8	80.9	80.9	
3.12702%	na	201.15(5)	Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Trust Fund	35.1	47.0	54.3	59.2	64.3	67.8	70.9	73.1	75.1	77.0	79.3	82.0	85.2
0.30240%	na	201.15(5)	State Game Trust Fund (from CARL) - Land Management	4.5	5.9	6.8	7.4	8.1	8.5	8.9	9.2	9.4	9.7	10.0	10.3	10.7
2.28000%	34.1	201.15(6)	Invasive Plant Control Trust Fund	28.3	34.2	34.8	34.5	34.5	34.4	34.3	34.3	34.3	34.2	34.3	34.3	34.3
0.60000%	9.3	201.15(7)	State Game Trust Fund - Lake Restoration 2020 Program	8.8	7.5	8.7	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.4
0.25000%	na	201.15(8)	Water Quality Assurance Trust Fund	2.9	3.9	4.3	4.7	5.1	5.4	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.2	6.3	6.5	6.8
0.25000%	na	201.15(8)	General Inspection Trust Fund	2.9	3.8	4.3	4.7	5.1	5.4	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.2	6.3	6.5	6.8
0.00000%	na	201.15(9)	State Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund	0.0	36.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0
3.76900%	na	201.15(9)(a)	State Housing Trust Fund	43.4	39.05	47.88	53.81	59.93	64.07	67.82	70.44	72.66	75.21	77.95	81.26	85.11
3.76900%	na	201.15(9)(b)	Local Government Housing Trust Fund	43.4	39.05	47.88	53.81	59.93	64.07	67.82	70.44	72.66	75.21	77.95	81.26	85.11
0.00000%	na	201.15(10)	State Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund	0.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0	40.0
1.08250%	na	201.15(10)(a)	State Housing Trust Fund	12.3	11.28	13.83	15.50	17.20	18.45	19.50	20.28	21.01	21.85	22.41	23.40	24.50
7.57750%	na	201.15(10)(b)	Local Government Housing Trust Fund	87.4	78.79	96.58	108.52	120.94	129.17	136.71	143.89	147.04	151.58	157.30	163.77	171.61
36.09%			Business Statutory % Distributions	493.8	603.3	601.1	582.8	616.0	637.0	658.0	679.8	694.0	709.0	710.0	726.0	749.6
			Effective %	36.0%	33.6%	31.7%	30.6%	29.9%	29.4%	29.0%	28.7%	28.5%	28.3%	28.0%	27.8%	27.5%

**Notes:**  
 Effective July 1, 2007, certain of the above trust funds have their distributions capped as indicated.  
 Effective July 1, 2006, when total collections increase from the prior year, distributions of capped funds are increased by 10% of the growth of total collections from the prior fiscal year, multiplied by the fund's applicable statutory percentage, except for the 201.15(2) cap, which receives no adjustment.

A chart shows documentary stamp tax collections and distributions as of December 2013. Image courtesy State of Florida

If the state wants to prioritize conservation, it should consider other funding options, Robinson added.

Sarasota County has preserved natural areas through its Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program, she pointed out, and the county commissioners can opt to purchase more with the remaining funds. "I'm comfortable ... with how much we own, and we are still able to acquire land," Robinson said.

During the Amendment 1 campaign, she added, she tried to figure out what the fiscal impact of the measure would be. She asked petition gatherers what programs would potentially be defunded to make up the shortage in the doc stamp revenue stream. "What would it be taking money from?" I asked that question. They didn't have the information at that point."

She emphasized, "When folks were signing the petition, they were not told what could be defunded to implement the amendment."

The funding stream, however, does not appear that murky, based on *News Leader* research.

The specific ballot language and online news reports about the constitutional amendment petition drive dating back to 2012 show the Water and Land Conservation program would be funded by a statutory allocation of ["no less than 33 percent" of net revenues from the doc stamp taxes](#).

Robinson argues, "It doesn't say [the conservation program] will take this money from transportation."

While the amendment is considered budget neutral, and it would not directly lead to the creation of new taxes, it could leave a hole in state funding, county staff says. According to Marsha Hosack, the county's

intergovernmental relations director, in a March 10 email to Robinson, "Most notably 38.2% of doc stamps are directed by statute to the State Transportation Trust Fund used for MPO local transportation project priorities, as well as 5.64% Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund, 2.12% Ecosystem Management and Restoration Trust Fund, among others that fund water quality and other environmental programs."

"Consequently," Hosack wrote, "if the constitutional amendment were to pass redirecting 33% of doc stamp revenues ... to the Land Acquisition Trust fund, the county could experience reductions in revenue opportunities available from current programs."

Thaxton counters that passage of the amendment would hold state officials to a promise made twice before, with the implementation of Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever.

"It will be a constitutional requirement that the 33 percent is set aside," Thaxton said. "Without the constitutional amendment, there is only a moral obligation, and that has not proved to be enough for legislators."

He finds fault in Robinson's reasoning that the amendment would steal from other programs.

"If you don't want to spend this money on land conservation as it was promised, give it back to the taxpayers," Thaxton added. "Don't tell the voters [you will] tax them for conservation and then use it for transportation."

Abberger contends that as the economy improves, additional doc stamp revenue from homes sales, combined with increased general fund revenue, could cover any shortages that Amendment 1 would leave in state and local budgets. Dedicating the extra revenue for the latter purposes, though, would be up to state legislators. 

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# A MATTER OF DEGREES

*Homes on Montclair Drive stand across Phillippi Creek from Bob's Boathouse. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **RESIDENTS NEAR BOB'S BOATHOUSE ASK FOR FURTHER TWEAKING OF THE BASS LEVELS AMONG PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNTY'S AIR AND SOUND POLLUTION ORDINANCE**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Just 5 fewer degrees of bass: That is the plea of neighbors of [Bob's Boathouse](#) regarding proposed changes to the Sarasota County Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance.

The suggested revisions will be considered during a March 19 public hearing in Sarasota at the County Administration Center, located at 1660 Ringling Blvd. The agenda item is scheduled for the morning session.

Jim McWhorter, president of the River Forest Civic Association, and two Montclair Drive residents appeared before the County Commission during the public comments portion of the March 4 board meeting to make their case for lowering the maximum bass level reading 5 more degrees for homes on the receiving end of noise. "This is the root cause of our ongoing nightmare," resident Michele Chapman explained.

“*On the documents that you are going to hand out, we need to make sure people realize the numbers could be lower.*”

Charles Hines  
Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission



TABLE I

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

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

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

TABLE II

<u><i>Receiving Land Use Category</i></u>	<u><i>Time</i></u>	<u><i>Sound Level Limit (dbA)</i></u>	<u><i>Sound Level Limit (dbC)</i></u>
<u>Residential</u>	<u>7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>70</u>
	<u>10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>60</u>
<u>Commercial/Business</u>	<u>7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>80</u>
	<u>10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>75</u>
<u>Governmental/OPI</u>	<u>7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>70</u>
	<u>10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>65</u>
<u>Intensive Commercial/Industrial</u>	<u>All times</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>80</u>

The tweak would put that level at 65 instead of 70 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

The residents also have requested that the other sound reading — the “dbA” number — be reduced from 65 to 60 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh advised the commissioners that they would be able to lower the levels further if they chose to do so following the March 19 hearing. He cautioned, however, that the public should be made aware the newer numbers could be considered that day. The board asked staff to be sure that was done.

One area business owner told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week he is concerned the county could be reaching for unconstitutional levels. Referring to the residents’ request for revising the bass figure, Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck in Siesta Village

and the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar restaurants on St. Armands Circle and in Venice, said on March 11, “If they make it too low, it will make [the ordinance] unenforceable.”

Matthes added, “It’s virtually impossible to make [the proposed revision] any stricter, in my opinion,” because of the difficulty of measuring bass levels amid ambient noise. He pointed out that a person’s voice in some settings could register in excess of the proposed maximum mark.

## THE PLEAS

During her March 4 remarks to the commissioners during their regular meeting in Venice, Chapman said that even 65 decibels of bass “is extremely intrusive.”

At an average of 68 decibels of bass, she continued, “We feel the vibrations inside our homes, even with all of our windows closed.



“We feel the vibrations inside our homes, even with all of our windows closed. By 70 [dbC] day or night, we are ready to sharpen our pitchforks and light the torches.”

Michele Chapman  
Resident  
Montclair Drive  
Sarasota

”

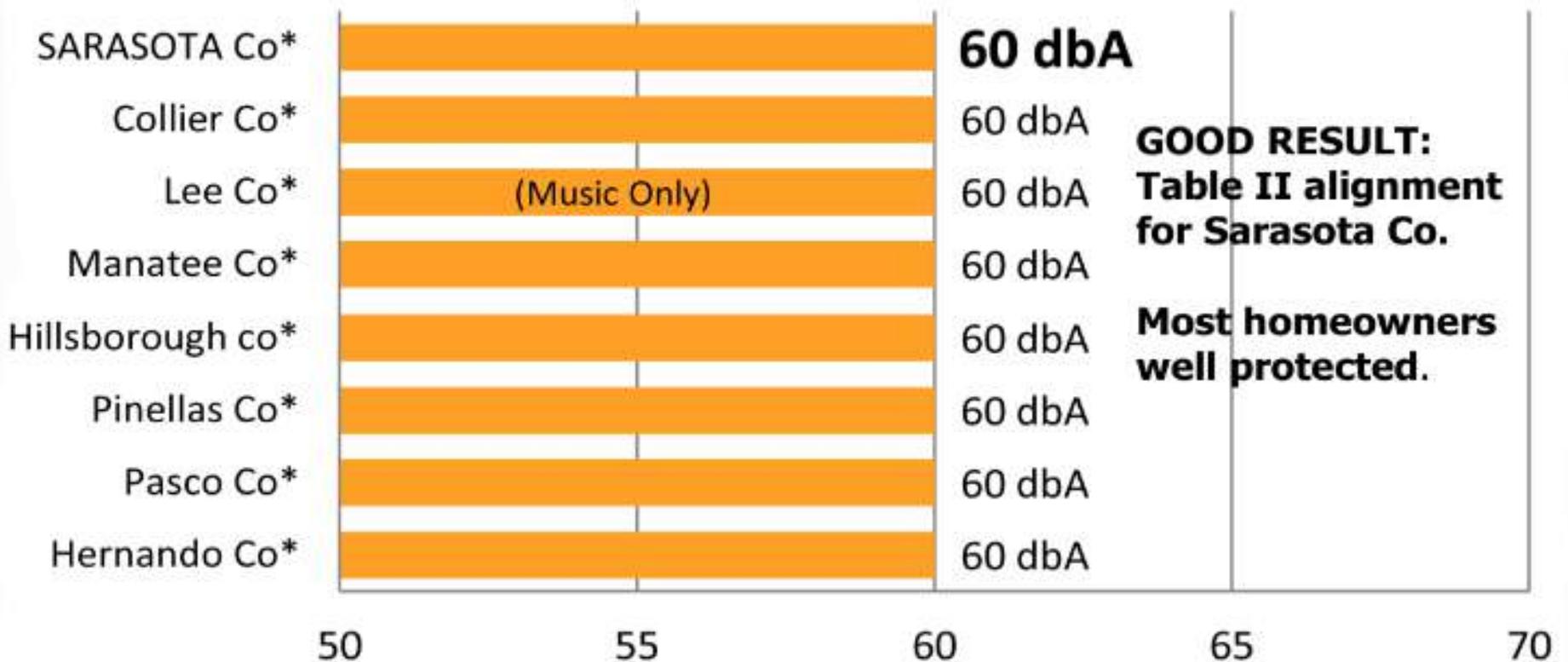
*Fencing at the rear of the Bob’s Boathouse site separates the business from a neighborhood. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### Requested Solutions for Outdoor Noise until 10PM:

1. Apply agreed Generating Land Use **Table I** to SK Village.
2. Redefine new **Table II** (below) for remainder of County.
3. Lower new **Table II** limits shown below to **60 dbA/65 dbC**.

<b>RECEIVING</b> Land Use Category	<i>Time</i>	<i>Sound Level Limit (dbA)</i>	<i>Sound Level Limit (dbC)</i>
<u>Residential</u>	<u>7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</u>	<del>65</del> <b>60</b> requested	<del>70</del> <b>65</b> requested
	<u>10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>60</u>
<u>Commercial/Business</u>	<u>7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>80</u>
	<u>10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>75</u>
<u>Governmental/OPI</u>	<u>7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>70</u>
	<u>10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>65</u>
<u>Intensive Commercial/Industrial</u>	<u>All times</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>80</u>

### New Table II Protection from Outdoor Noise until 10PM



\* Residential Receiving Limits

Note: Loudness Doubles Every 10 Decibels

### Decibel Limits (dbA) by County - FL West Coast

*The president of a neighborhood association near Bob's Boathouse has proposed further tweaks to the Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance. His research also compares Sarasota County noise limits to those in other Florida counties. Image courtesy Jim McWhorter*

By 70 [dbC] day or night, we are ready to sharpen our pitchforks and light the torches.”

Three days earlier, Chapman told the board, residents on Montclair Drive experienced readings higher than 83 dbC “consistently throughout the day. We were ready to explode.”

Bob’s Boathouse is located at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Neighbors have complained to the commissioners about loud music emanating from the business at night since it opened on that site in early November 2013.

Another Montclair Drive resident, Michelle Lee, explained to the board on March 4 that as a nurse with a Bachelor of Science degree, she is well aware of the physiological and mental symptoms people have been documented to suffer after prolonged exposure to “low-frequency intrusion,” or involuntary exposure to the bass levels of music. Among them are decreased concentration, elevated blood pressure, insomnia, headaches, exhaustion and digestive problems.

Jim McWhorter, president of the River Forest Civic Association, told the board, “The [revised] ordinance needs tweaks to get it right.”

While county staff’s proposed drop of dbC levels by 5 degrees for all generating land-use categories “is a good change,” he said, the dbC level for residences in the *Receiving Land Use Category* table should be lowered to 65 instead of remaining at 70 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Approving residents’ request to reduce the dbA level from 65 to 60 during those same hours, McWhorter said, “aligns Sarasota County with every other county on the Florida west coast,” and 95 percent of



*Jim McWhorter, president of the River Forest Civic Association, addresses the County Commission on Feb. 19. File photo*

county homeowners will enjoy better protection from loud noise.

“Can every other county be wrong about their codes?” he asked.

## THE DISCUSSION

During her board report that same day, Commissioner Nora Patterson reminded her colleagues that one primary reason for revising the ordinance is to enable law enforcement and county Code Enforcement personnel to measure noise levels from the receiving side after a complaint is lodged if responding officers find it difficult to measure the sound from the generating line.

That change was proposed because Bob’s Boathouse stands next to Phillippi Creek.

Further, Patterson noted, a change was proposed in the ordinance to allow commercial establishments such as Bob’s Boathouse

to be treated the same as industrial uses in terms of noise emissions. That was handled by adding a section to the ordinance that creates a *Commercial Intensive/Industrial Zone* designation for “commercial intensive or industrial uses.”

Regarding the public comments that morning, she continued, “I think people need to be made aware there is a proposal to lower [the noise levels] by 5 decibels. I’m not necessarily suggesting that we change the [proposed revisions]. I’m not sure how I feel about it.”

Still, Patterson continued, “I think Mr. McWhorter brought up some pretty valid points ...”

In response to questions from both Patterson and Chairman Charles Hines, County Attorney DeMarsh told the board he saw no legal limitation in the commission’s approving lower decibel levels in tables provided in the ordinance. The legal advertisement of the March 19 public hearing, he pointed out, does not spell out the proposed revisions. Instead, it directs interested persons to obtain a copy of them. “That is not a limitation on what the commission ultimately would do after a public hearing,” DeMarsh added.

However, he advised that the additional changes be noted during any community discussions of or communications about the ordinance in advance of the public hearing.

Donna Thompson, the county’s assistant zoning administrator, told the board she had been working with the county Communications Department staff on notices the board asked be sent to the county’s Chambers of Commerce and neighborhood associations about the

upcoming public hearing. “The notices haven’t gone out yet,” Thompson added, so the additional changes could be incorporated into that material.

“On the documents that you are going to hand out, we need to make sure people realize the numbers could be lower,” Hines told her, so they can address the suggestions during the public hearing if they wish to do so.

## **A BUSINESS VIEW**

During the March 4 meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA), Matthes discussed the changes proposed in the ordinance as of the Feb. 19 County Commission meeting.

He pointed out that the law was revised in 2004. The thinking at that time, he said, was that the maximum dbA sound level of 75 from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. at the generating line of a commercial or business property “would be sufficient enough not to [create] a receiving problem.”

In other words, he pointed out, if the sound were 75 dbA or lower at the generating line, it logically would have to be even lower at the line of the property receiving the sound, as that line would be some distance from the place where the sound originated.

The proposed revision also calls for lowering the dbC level for a commercial/business land use from 85 to 80 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., he noted.

Between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., the maximum dbC level would be lowered from 80 to 75, while the dbA level would remain 70.

“I don’t see a huge issue with it,” he said of the recommended revisions. “Overall, I don’t think it’s going to be a huge difference.”

During the March 11 interview with the *News Leader*, Matthes explained, “I’ve been dealing with [noise issues] since 1993.”

## A HEARING FOR BOB’S BOATHOUSE

In related news, Sarasota County spokesman Curt Preisser told the *News Leader* this week that a hearing before a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate has been set for March 21 to determine whether Bob’s Boathouse should be fined for failing to complete a “punch list” of items necessary for it to receive a Certificate of Occupancy from the county.

On Jan. 31, the county denied the business’ request to extend its Temporary Certificate of Occupancy. Instead, the county issued a Notice of Violation. At that time, county staff told representatives of Bob’s Boathouse they

had 20 days to finish the punch list work or the county would issue an Affidavit of Violation and take the business to court.

On Feb. 21, with punch list items still incomplete, the county issued the affidavit.

According to the Notice of Violation filed on Jan. 31, the Code Enforcement Special Magistrate can impose a penalty up to \$250 per day for any existing violation. Penalties of up to \$500 per day can be imposed for each repeat violation.

James Aker, the Sarasota attorney representing Bob’s Boathouse, told the *News Leader* in late February that more items had been completed on the punch list than the county indicated at that time. He welcomed the opportunity to defend the business during the hearing, he added. 

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# ABOUT THAT MONEY ...

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has numerous programs to assist people with housing. Image from HUD

## THE CITY COMMISSION WILL HAVE FIRST CRACK AT DECIDING HOW TO PROCEED IN THE WAKE OF FEDERAL CAUTION REGARDING AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

It will be up to the Sarasota City Commission first and then the County Commission to decide how to utilize funds both boards have set aside to help low-income homeowners.

Don Hadsell, director of the Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development, told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week that an official of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

finally had confirmed for him that if the city provided a loan through the Down Payment Assistance Program and the recipient defaulted on it, the city would be responsible for paying back the money to HUD from city funds.

**“Do we want to take on this financial liability/responsibility?”**

Don Hadsell  
 Director  
 Sarasota Office Of Housing and Community Development

”

Hadsell is working with Tim Litchet, the city’s director of neighborhood and development services, on an agenda item for the April 7 City Commission meeting.

The question for the board will be, “Do we want to take on this financial liability/responsibility?” Hadsell said.

If it does not, according to an email Tom Polk, the county’s director of planning and development services, sent to the county commissioners on March 11, the funds could be moved to the housing rehabilitation program account. Polk pointed out, “The rehabilitation funds [the county already has] are either committed to projects or are already spent.”

Altogether, at the start of the fiscal year, the county had \$2,000,863.38 in available **HOME Program** funds for projects, he noted. The

Down Payment Assistance Program is one facet of the HOME Program.

“I feel that I need to have a policy discussion with the City Commission,” Litchet told the *News Leader* on March 12.

After the City Commission decides how it wants to proceed, Polk added in his email, the matter will be before the County Commission for further discussion.

## FRUSTRATIONS

County commissioners **questioned Hadsell sharply** on Jan. 28 because the \$600,000 they approved transferring in July 2013 from the



*Don Hadsell speaks to the County Commission on Jan. 28. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

HOME Partnership account dedicated to housing rehabilitation into a fund to reestablish the Down Payment Assistance Program had not been spent. The City Commission set aside the same amount for the program on July 15, 2013.

Hadsell, who works for both local governments, explained to the County Commission that after HUD issued a new HOME Program rule that went into effect on Aug. 22, 2013, he had been trying to no avail to get clear guidelines about potential repayment of loans that went into default.

“Unless we get clarification from HUD that the rules will give some flexibility without the prospect of onerous repayment, I’m going to be back here not recommending that we go forward with the down payment assistance

but that we limit our liability any further and move those funds into a program that will be safer,” Hadsell told the county commissioners.

As a result of that discussion, the commission sent a letter to U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Longboat Key, asking for his help in pinning down a response from HUD. In a Feb. 11 letter to Bernard Fulton, who handles congressional relations for HUD, Buchanan wrote, “Sarasota County is asking HUD to accelerate the timeline for issuing additional guidelines and resources so the City of Sarasota, which administers the program on behalf of the County, can [continue] to assist county residents with the purchase and repair of their homes. Please give careful consideration to and if possible grant their request.”

At the beginning of the fiscal year, there were \$2,000,863.38 in available HOME funds for projects. These funds were allocated to the following activities:

	Budget 10/1/2013	Spent 10/1/2013 - 3/5/2014
HOME Funds		
Rehabilitation	\$742,774.54	\$531,551.01
Down Payment Assistance	\$600,000.00	\$0.00
Foster Care Youth Assistance	\$264,621.50	\$12,480.21
Tax Credit	\$50,000.00	\$0.00
Community Development Housing Organizations	\$343,467.34	\$149,947.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,000,863.38</b>	<b>\$693,978.62</b>

*A chart provided by the Sarasota County Planning and Development Services Department shows the HOME Program funds available for various federal projects in the county. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Hadsell told the *News Leader* on March 12 that he recently was able to talk with the person in charge of the HOME Program. She “has said what I am interpreting is correct,” Hadsell added.

Even though the Down Payment Assistance Program always had written requirements that local governments pay back federal money out of their own general funds when the loans went into default, he said, HUD in the past took “a more gentle position” on foreclosures, working with local governments when “things outside the communities’ control” resulted in the defaults.

Now HUD officials “are finding that they have less flexibility in that,” Hadsell added.

The change resulted from a series of *Washington Post* articles that cast the Down Payment Assistance Program in a bad light, capturing Congress’ attention, he explained.

The program rules always required that a person receiving a loan stay in the program for 10 years, Hadsell continued. If the person did not, the local government that provided the loan had to “recapture those [federal] dollars.”

Before the recession hit, Hadsell pointed out, such a situation was not a problem. The local government could foreclose on the house and sell it to pay back the funds. Now that property values are lower, he said, “There’s no way to recover those dollars.”

The change has been particularly difficult in cases involving military personnel, he



*The City Commission tentatively is set to hear a discussion about the Down Payment Assistance Program on April 7. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

continued. An enlisted person who could get assistance through the program might be deployed or transferred and default on the loan, and then the local government might be unable to sell the house.

## THE DECISION

Hadsell said it is “very apparent the County Commission would like to move forward expeditiously on this program, [but] I have kind of drug my feet on this.”

Until he was able to get a clear reading of the situation from HUD about the loan repayments, he added, “I didn’t want to pull the plug on the program.”

He added that he wanted both the city and county boards “to have all the facts.”

And even though the HUD official confirmed his interpretation of the situation, the communication was verbal. He has yet to receive the information in writing, he noted.

However, HUD has only six employees in the HOME division, he pointed out, and they also are responsible for work on the [National Housing Trust Fund](#), an affordable housing program created in response to the recession. “They’re overwhelmed,” he added.

Although the HUD official said “she felt terrible” about the stricter interpretation of the rules, Hadsell said, she told him she could do nothing about that.

Hadsell told the *News Leader* his goal in addressing the situation with both the City and County commissions is for “both sides to be happy” with whatever steps they take next. 

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# PARKING DOMINATES DISCUSSION

*The site of the State Street parking garage is a surface lot. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE PLANNING BOARD OKS ADJUSTMENTS TO THE STATE STREET GARAGE PLAN AS THE CITY RUSHES TO GET THE PROJECT DONE ON TIME

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The State Street Parking Garage and a new 18-unit condominium on southern Lido Key received the Sarasota Planning Board's blessings on Wednesday evening, March 12. Both were approved by 4-1 votes.

The garage needed several "adjustments" to avoid violations of the city's own building codes. One was the result of urban planner Andreas Duany's downtown master plan, which requires tall buildings

to "recess" their upper floors. That avoids the impression the building is looming over the street.

However, the State Street lot is narrow, and the required 12-foot recess would reduce the number of spaces in the garage by one-third.

**“ We could begin construction as soon as the end of May, and by July, start vertical construction. We hope to finish in mid-February of 2015.**

Steve Stancel  
Chief Planner  
City of Sarasota



“The site is 105 feet wide,” said Darrell McLain, architect of the garage. “We need 120 feet to create two full bays [of parking

on both sides of a central aisle]. So we're short 15 feet and have lost one full row. If there is 12-foot recess, we'd lose another row."

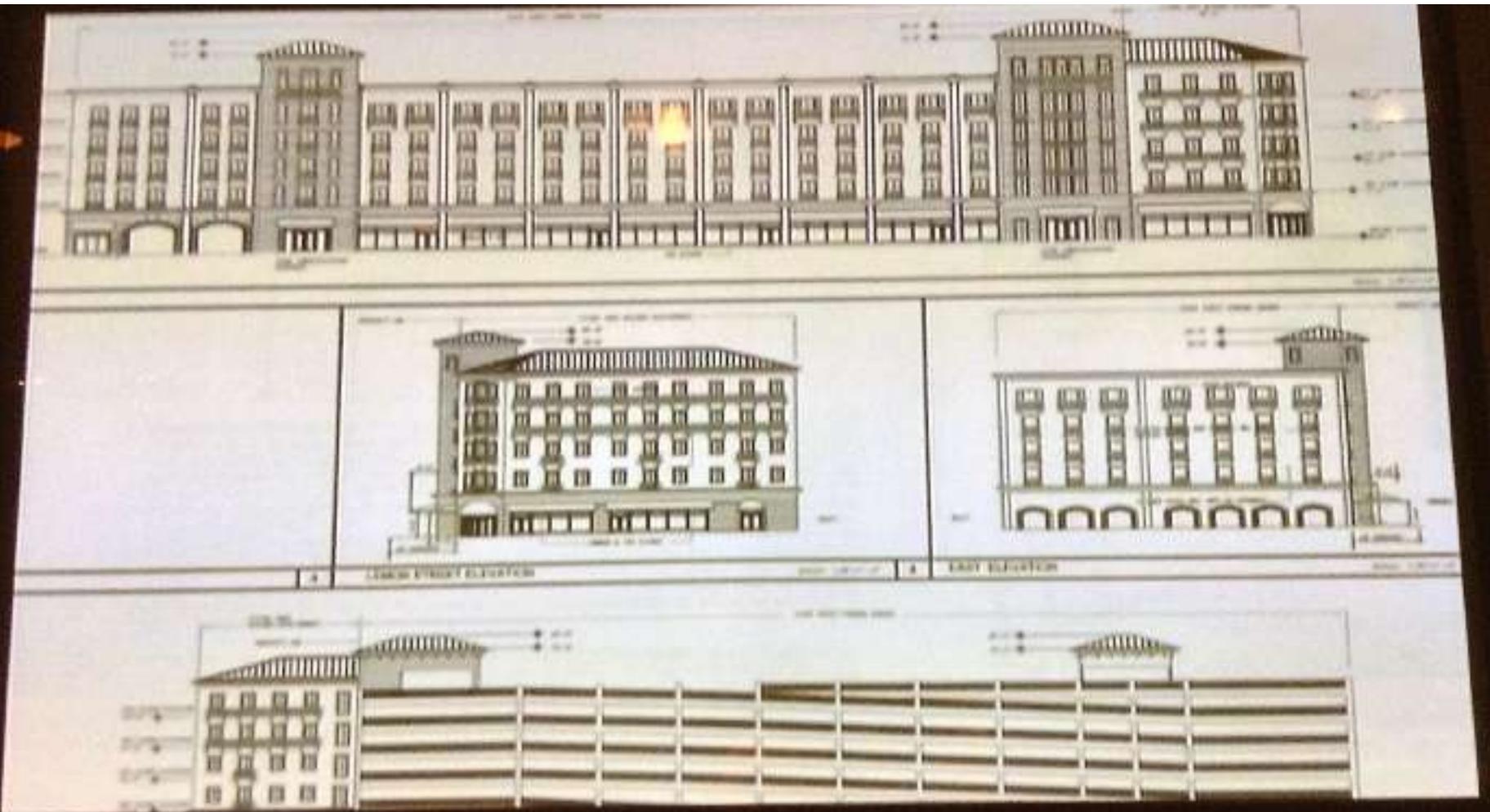
The city is hoping to find partners for the project. The first floor is designed for retail or restaurant use and will remain unfinished until sold. Then the new owner will build to suit its purpose. The west end of the property will be left utterly vacant, also for sale. The new owner of that portion could build up to five stories on the 45-foot-deep section. City leaders hope the sale of the two properties will defer the cost of the parking garage, which will have about twice the cost per space as the national average.

As part of a legal agreement with [Pineapple Square](#) to conduct major redevelopment downtown, the city is obligated to build a parking garage on the State Street site by early next year. After months of dithering by

the Sarasota City Commission over a final design for the exterior, the project now needs to rush through the development review process so construction can be started quickly.

Chief City Planner Steve Stancel told the Planning Board members that if they approved the "adjustments," the project would go to the City Commission for final approval on April 21. "We could begin construction as soon as the end of May, and by July, start vertical construction," added Stancel. "We hope to finish in mid-February of 2015." That would be within days of the deadline.

"We have painted ourselves in a corner," he said. "We never know what happens with the weather, or what we might find on the site. As it stands today, it looks like we can meet it [the deadline], if we keep our fingers crossed about the weather."



*The drawing at the top of the screen is the proposed parking garage as seen from State St. The image also demonstrates the higher resolution after installation of new television equipment in the city commission chambers. Photo of the on-screen image taken by Stan Zimmerman*

Even when finished, the new garage will not eliminate a shortage of parking downtown. The site is now used for surface parking with 139 spaces; the garage will have 399, for a net gain of 260 spaces. Stancel noted the city could add additional public parking in the City Hall lot, along Ringling Boulevard or on property now leased from real estate firm Michael Saunders & Co.'s office on Orange Avenue.

The city also has a deficit of parking at St. Armands Circle, where a new garage is under consideration. All parking in the city is free to the public (except for long-term leased spaces) but not free to the city. The administration, enforcement of time limits and maintenance are running \$500,000 in the red each year, with the deficit made up from the general fund. Commissioners fumbled with paid parking before jerking the meters after a few people protested by showing up at a meeting with paper bags over their heads.

The final vote to approve the “adjustments” was 4-1, with Planning Board Chairman Chris Gallagher in the minority.

## KAYAKER'S PARADISE

The Planning Board also approved an 18-unit condominium complex on a long-vacant lot on south Lido Key. As you leave Ted Sperling Park (aka South Lido Beach) on the southern tip of the island, the first right turn off Ben Franklin Drive is a one-block-long street named after President Taft. Decades ago, it held a hotel, but that was demolished. About 10 years ago, a 110-foot tall condominium complex called the Azure Tides was proposed and approved, but never built.

Patrick DiPinto with Seaward Development bought the land — one of the few open plots on the key — and has asked for approval to build three medium-rise buildings containing 18 units. The maximum height would be 35 feet.



*City Planner Steve Stancel, architect Darrell McLain and planning consultant Joel Freedman brief the Planning Board on the State Street garage proposal. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

The development would face south into the mangroves of Sperling Park, where kayakers from near and far enjoy the “tunnels” through the greenery. DiPinto’s plan includes built-in kayak storage for the owners.

City staff supported the plan but objected to three “curb cuts” for driveways to allow visitors and service vehicles to enter off Taft Drive. Doing away with the driveways would eliminate some parking, a proposal that, in turn, sparked a discussion Wednesday night about changing the no-parking status of Taft and even widening the street to allow parking on both sides of Taft.

In the end, the Planning Board approved the developer’s proposal with the curb cuts on a 4-1 vote (Jennifer Ahern-Koch in the minority). The motion had no recommendations to change the parking status along Taft.

## **NEW TV SYSTEM MAKES ITS DEBUT**

Wednesday night’s Sarasota Planning Board meeting was the inaugural test of the city’s new high-definition television makeover. More than \$200,000 in new equipment was installed over the past two weeks to replace old equipment, some impossible to repair. The timing was perfect, for immediately after the final broadcast with the old gear, a critical camera failed.

Any gear salvageable will go to the city’s second meeting room equipped for live and recorded TV production. After city staff numbers shrank over the past years, half of the first floor of the City Hall Annex was made camera- and microphone-capable.

The new hi-def signal is striking. Planning Board Member Jennifer Ahearn-Koch’s wild



*Master control for city television production lies behind the dais. The new gear takes about one-third less space than the equipment it replaces. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

blonde tresses were visible hair by hair, and documents captured with the overhead camera were clinically sharp.

Unfortunately, none of this improvement in screen resolution is noticeable outside the monitors in the City Commission Chambers. While the “feed” provided to the local cable signal provider is high-definition, the output from the cable company remains the same old low-resolution quality.

One change will be noticeable, though. The city commissioners now have buttons to push for their votes, allowing the final tallies to be shown on the screen.

There are still a few small details yet to be finished, but the hardware and software upgrade is more than 99 percent complete.

So why upgrade? The system was failing and low-resolution gear is no longer produced. Going high-definition was the only path available to keep the system working. 



# A PRIORITY

*Work continues apace on the Mall at University Town Center off University Parkway. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **A DIVERGING DIAMOND COULD BECOME THE CRITICAL PIECE IN SOLVING A TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PUZZLE IN THE GROWING AREA OF UNIVERSITY PARKWAY AND INTERSTATE 75**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

When an Interstate 75 crash sent chunks of concrete tumbling onto University Parkway in January, state Rep. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, was in his office, located south of University Parkway and east of the interstate.

He just happened to be meeting with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One Secretary Billy Hattaway, who oversees all state

road projects in the 12-county Southwest Florida region.

When Hattaway left the meeting, he had to wait in the traffic, witnessing firsthand the backup with which commuters and residents were contending as a result of the blocked section of University Parkway.

It was ironic the accident happened as Steube was talking with Hattaway about plans for

**“ We need to get these plans approved and get moving as soon as possible. I don’t think anyone will disagree with the fact that there is a need to do construction at that interchange. ”**

Greg Steube  
Member  
Florida House of Representatives

improvements to the nearby I-75 interchange and surrounding roadways. “It put an exclamation point on the need” for changes in the area, Steube told *The Sarasota News Leader*.

Several weeks later, Steube was able to organize a sit-down session in Tallahassee with Ananth Prasad, the head of FDOT, along with representatives from the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Sarasota and Manatee county officials to discuss the same topic. Representatives from developers Schroeder Manatee Ranch and Benderson were also present. That discussion

last week yielded a fast-track push for the interchange improvements.

State officials want to prioritize them and seek funds for a “diverging diamond” interchange to improve traffic flow at I-75 and University Parkway. It would be the first such design constructed in Florida. The layout would require the traffic on University Parkway to briefly switch sides. That would necessitate switching the two traffic lights to “two-phase” signals and remove the need for left-turn leads onto and off the interstate. The concept is said to reduce traffic delays.



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Welcome to the  
Sarasota/Manatee MPO

The next Sarasota/Manatee MPO Board meeting will be held on

The new interchange could become the critical piece in a transportation improvement puzzle for the growing area of University Parkway and I-75.

State officials want Sarasota and Manatee counties to approve formal resolutions supporting the unique diverging diamond design before FDOT proceeds with its plans. In Sarasota County, the commissioners could vote on such a resolution as early as one of the board's regular meetings on March 18 or March 19.

## THE OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

The onus is also on the two counties to take the lead on roadway improvements around the interchange, with the help of Schroeder Manatee Ranch Inc., the developer of Lakewood Ranch, and Benderson,

developer of the new Mall at University Town Center. Both companies are obligated to provide infrastructure improvements through development agreements as well as impact fee guidelines.

The March 6 discussion included a focus on the importance of the proposed Lakewood Ranch Boulevard and Lorraine Road extensions in Sarasota County, as well as a planned overpass connection between University Parkway and Fruitville Road, according to a March 6 update sent to the county commissioners and staff by Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer. He attended the Tallahassee meeting along with Commission Chairman Charles Hines.

Steube said his understanding is that the preliminary plan calls for Sarasota County



*The Florida Department of Transportation is proposing a diverging diamond interchange at University Parkway. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

and Schroeder Manatee to split the cost of the overpass.

That connector would become one of the alternative routes for residents and commuters heading into Lakewood Ranch. Those other roads are a necessity, as evidenced by the January crash that closed University Parkway, Steube pointed out.

## PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

The new interchange and expanded roadway projects would be designed to alleviate congestion, making it easier for motorists to reach the new Mall at University Town Center — scheduled to open Oct. 16 — existing retail shops and businesses and homes in Lakewood Ranch.

Steube said he has heard from constituents who do not want to move to Lakewood Ranch because of the traffic, and he has talked with business owners who say they might relocate from Lakewood Ranch because it is so difficult to drive in the area.

After the new mall opens, congestion is expected to intensify. “We need to get these plans approved and get moving as soon as possible,” Steube said. “I don’t think anyone will disagree with the fact that there is a need to do construction at that interchange.”

The next step is up to the Sarasota and Manatee county commissions.

“I think we have direction now,” Steube continued. “I am looking forward to receiving



*Traffic negotiates a diverging diamond interchange in Springfield, MO, in 2011. Photo by Brandonrush via Wikimedia Commons*

the executed resolutions. Once we receive [them], hopefully the [FDOT] secretary will find state funding.”

Construction could begin within a year if the county commissions approve resolutions soon. State and local officials would then have to work out a strategy for putting the work on pause while the 2017 World Rowing Championships are under way at Benderson Park. That event probably will take place in September or October, organizers have said, after the more intense heat of summer has diminished.

The diverging diamond will be the first big step in transportation improvements in the area, Sarasota County Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. told the *News Leader*.



*This diverging diamond design debuted in Springfield, MO, in 2009. Contributed photo*



*A third diverging diamond interchange was built in Missouri in 2010, this one in St. Louis. Contributed photo*

A series of roadway projects designed to give motorists options for navigating around the Lakewood Ranch/University Parkway area would come next.

It is important to add those proposed county projects to the regional transportation network to ensure their eligibility for state grants or other funding — a process that is already underway, Harriott said.

While having the diverging diamond already in place at the interchange would have done little to prevent lane closures after the January accident, a new overpass across the interstate would have provided an alternate east-west route, similar to Proctor Road or Palmer Boulevard to the south. An improved Lorraine Road would provide a north-south thoroughfare.

“There still would have been traffic problems,” Harriott pointed out. “That’s why we need the alternative routes and why we are trying to work on that roadway network east of the interstate.” 



Luke Wood Park near downtown Sarasota is the site of Lift Station 87. Image from Google Maps

## CITY STAFF FACES NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED WITH LIFT STATION 87

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

For the first time in public, sharp words were exchanged between city staffers and the engineering design team hired to fix the Lift Station 87 debacle. After a smooth Phase One (“What went so wrong?”), Phase Two hit some bumps at its first public meeting. At issue is a failing sewer system component handling about one-third of the city’s total load.

The city’s project manager, Steve Topovski, said, “We have confusion. What else is coming? When is it coming? I’m frustrated with the lack

of coordination. I can’t deal with what I don’t know.”

Robert Garland is the project manager for McKim & Creed, the engineering firm hired to pick up the pieces from a failed \$12.5 million undertaking to transfer the sewage from the south side of the city to the treatment plant on 12th Street. The city has already spent another \$1 million to determine what went wrong.

“*Is there any part of the structure that we are saving?*”

Mitt Tidwell  
Director of Utilities  
City of Sarasota



“Let me try to give you a little more heads

up,” Garland told Topovski. Turning to company staffers, Garland said, “Let’s get Steve the internal schedule, and we’ll keep you in the loop.”

The reason for Topovski’s irritation began to emerge as the session continued.

Public meetings on the project have been taking place to instill confidence in the public that the city, engineers and contractors know what they are doing. But to understand what follows, a little Plumbing 101 is required.

## **SURCHARGE AND THE WET WELL**

Plumbing rule No. 1: Water flows downhill. Gravity alone has the power to move water. Sewer systems use “gravity flow” to send their cargo to a low collection point called a “wet

well.” As pipes connect thousands of homes in south Sarasota, they go deeper and deeper until they empty into a concrete vault at Luke Wood Park, a stone’s throw from the confluence of U.S. 41 and U.S. 301.

But as the wet well fills up, and the inlet pipe is submerged, what happens then? It is a condition called “surcharge.” And any Florida sewer system has to cope with it, because this state gets hurricanes. Old pipes leak, and while all of Sarasota’s earliest pipes, from a century ago, have been replaced, some of the remaining ones are not that modern; they are still leaking stormwater into the sewer system.

If everybody flushed his or her toilet at the same time, the result still would not be as drastic as what happens during a hurricane. The latter situation was the topic of the Tuesday,



*Pipes are shown in an ALCOSAN wet well. Image by 90.5 WESA via Wikimedia Commons*

March 10, meeting on Lift Station 87. If conditions get to “surcharge,” what happens next?

As was determined in Phase One, the original — and failed — design ran too shallow — and not just a little bit. It was 8 feet too shallow. The entire design — some of it already built to the wrong specifications — needed rethinking. What can be saved, if anything?

## **SURCHARGE OR NOT?**

The wet well is already built. The inlet pipe is not, because a hole needs to be drilled under Hudson Bayou to make the connection. But now the hole must be 8 feet lower, meaning the “wet well” will have less volume before it fills over the top of the inlet pipe — surcharge. In hurricane conditions, surcharge

is inevitable. But now it looks like surcharge could be the normal condition.

That leads to an expensive question: Should the wet well go deeper? Blake Peters is McKim & Creed’s “task manager” for the gravity sewer portion of the project. If the wet well is left alone — hurricane or not — it will operate in a “surcharge condition,” he said.

Garland put the issue bluntly: “It is not industry standard to build a new lift station with surcharge conditions.”

“This is a brand new lift station that needs to operate perfectly,” said Topovski.

“We know we have to drop the floor [of the “wet well”]. But the question is, can you live with the surcharge at a peak hourly flow?”



*The lift station site had an abandoned appearance in October 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

asked Garland. “We’re trying to preserve the investment.”

All sewer lift stations have standby pumps driven by diesel engines, so if electrical power fails, the standby pumps will start working. But a deeper “wet well” and “surcharge” put greater demands on the back-up diesel-driven pumps.

“That’s the consequence of lowering the wet well,” said Mitt Tidwell, director of city utilities. “If ... we make a decision to lower the wet well and the standby pumps, is there any portion of the structure we’re saving?”

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE

If these were local kids digging holes and running pipes under the sand to understand Plumbing 101, the results would be educational for them. But a multinational firm called AECOM Technology Corp. — the original contractor on the Lift Station 87 project — failed the test and walked away from the disaster. Not only would its pipe under the bayou have been too shallow, it would have drilled through the base of the Osprey Avenue bridge.

According to Garland, there was one other failure. AECOM planned for the lift station to operate in a surcharge condition all the time. “We don’t think that’s ideal, but that’s how it was currently designed,” he said. “If the wet well is not lowered, the new inlet pipe will enter at about floor level.”

Garland and his firm are picking up the pieces, but not fast enough for Topovski. “I would have requested this information in advance of this meeting,” Topovski said.



*Robert Garland is the lift station project manager for the firm of McKim & Creed. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

“Do you have a recommendation?” asked Tidwell.

“You have an existing investment,” said Garland. “But the trade-offs are a surcharge condition, and submerged conditions have odor consequences upstream. For that reason, I would not recommend submerged conditions, but the current plan calls for submerged conditions.”

## STORM SURGE

The headaches only grew. Topovski asked, “What happens in extremely wet weather?” The answers were not comforting for the city’s project overseers or the neighbors. Tom Cross is the McKim & Creed task manager for that issue. “In a Category 5 storm, there will be a 35.4-foot storm surge” on top of the

underground structures. And they would collapse and fail. For Category 4, ditto; for Category 3, likewise. The predicted surges were smaller, but the ability of the structures to resist the overpressure of even brief submergence was compromised.

While most of the structures were expected to remain intact in a Category 2 storm, one of the four did not, according to testing. Unfortunately, it was the one vital to handling a hurricane — the standby diesel pump room.

“What is the cost to build a new standby pump room?” asked Tidwell. “We don’t want submerged conditions. We have to look at the options.”

“We’ll look at that,” replied Garland. “And the cost of a backup generator and the cost of

upgrading that one structure to Category 2 [standards].”

In other words, finding out what went wrong (Phase One) only led to, what do we need to fix it (Phase Two)?

Why is the city going through this? The current lift station, No. 7, has failed repeatedly and dumped thousands of gallons of sewage into Hudson Bayou and thence into the bay. It is still at work and could fail again, at any moment. The city is under a Florida Department of Environmental Protection consent order to fix the problem.

And how much is it going to cost? That number is still being figured, which only adds to the anxiety level of Topovski as the project manager. Meanwhile, the city has a lawsuit against AECOM, alleging incompetence. **SNL**

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# HERE, THERE — EVERYWHERE!



*A steady line of vehicles turns into the Siesta Public Beach parking lot on March 11. The lot was almost full by 10 a.m. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **ANECDOTALLY AND STATISTICALLY, TOURIST SEASON IS SHAPING UP TO BE ANOTHER RECORD-BREAKER**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**

*Editor*

“It’s going to be a record March; I can tell.”

That statement by Russell Matthes, co-owner of the Daiquiri Deck in Siesta Village and the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar restaurants in Venice and on St. Armands, sums up the observations of a number of business people *The Sarasota News Leader* contacted this week.

Matthes has a file in his office showing that about 875,000 students are going to be on spring break during a six-week period this year, and they are not the only ones heading south to Sarasota County.

At Ed Smith Stadium in Sarasota, where the Baltimore Orioles played their first game of Spring Training on March 1, per-game

attendance is up, David Rovine, vice president of the Orioles for Sarasota operations, told the *News Leader* on March 12. Already, the team has had two sold-out games, including one against the 2013 World Series champs, the Boston Red Sox.

“We’re very thrilled,” Rovine said.

Last year, the team set new Spring Training records for attendance in Sarasota and for the franchise, drawing 120,455 fans for their 17 home games.

Even with two fewer home games this year, Rovine is hopeful the franchise can beat that mark.

As for downtown Sarasota, Ron Soto, co-owner of Soto's Optical on Main Street and chairman of the Sarasota Downtown Merchants Association, told the *News Leader* season seemed to get under way a bit later, but "it came in with both barrels. ... Everybody's here."

Usually, he said, downtown businesses start seeing the increase in tourism and seasonal residents just before Christmas. This year, he continued, Jan. 15 seemed to be "when it really cranked in."

Soto said he has talked with proprietors along Main Street, on Palm Avenue and in other areas of the city. "Business is doing very, very well now."

Regarding his own company, he added, "My February was one of the best Februarys in years."

In Venice, John Ryan, president and CEO of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce, told the *News Leader* on March 12, "It's probably been as busy as I've ever seen it," and he has been in that community for 55 years. "It's been an incredible season."

National news media attention about Venice being named one of the top affordable retirement communities has

helped, he pointed out. "Without our having to do an excessive amount of marketing, a lot of people seem to know about us."

“Business is doing very, very well now.”

Ron Soto  
Chairman  
Sarasota Downtown Merchants Association



Baltimore Orioles catcher Matt Wieters bats against the Toronto Blue Jays during the Orioles' first home game this season at Ed Smith Stadium, held on March 1. Photo by Norman Schimmel

A real estate agent told Ryan the previous day that he “is slammed this year” and almost booked for next year, Ryan noted.

“Mother Nature works in our favor sometimes,” he added, noting the continuing spells with snow and exceedingly chilly temperatures in other parts of the country.

Matthes of the Daiquiri Decks also referenced the weather. As a volunteer at the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, he said, he has talked with a lot of people arriving earlier than usual for their annual visits to the island, and they are eager to find things to do.

Even a spokesman for the Amish and Mennonite community of Pinecraft told the County Commission on March 5, “We have bus after bus leaving [a stop at a community

church], going to Siesta Key with standing room only.”

Fred Hershberger was thanking the board for making the new Sarasota County Area Transit Route 33 available from Feb. 1 to May 2 for visitors and residents in Pinecraft, which, he noted, is “primarily a walking/biking community that depends on public transportation.” Route 33 stops in Siesta Village as well as at Siesta Public Beach.

To handle the extra crowds, the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has implemented its “spring break operation,” including putting more personnel on the beaches. (See the related story in this issue.) However, Deputy Chris McGregor told the *News Leader* on March 11 that people on Siesta Public Beach generally have been well behaved so far.



*Ed Smith Stadium is packed with fans for the Boston Red Sox game on March 8. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*People make their way toward the Siesta Public Beach pavilion early on the morning of March 11.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

Additionally, spring break weeks have been more staggered across the country this year, he noted, unlike 2013, when many schools were off at the same time.

And while this March has been a better beach month so far than March 2013 — when an arctic oscillation brought unusually cool temperatures to the area — Kay Rosaire, president and founder of [Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary](#), told the *News Leader* on March 12, “We’ve been having pretty good crowds, actually. ... I think [attendance is] up a little bit from last year.”

A greater number of people tend to come to Big Cat Habitat’s daily show if the weather is

not good at the beach, she pointed out. “We’re open rain or shine,” and the tent where the acts perform has heating as well as air conditioning to make sure guests are comfortable, she noted.

Referencing the traffic around the community, Rosaire added, “There’s a lot of people in town ... but it’s great having them here.”

## FIGURES TELL THE STORY

The latest “dashboard” numbers provided by the county’s tourism office, Visit Sarasota County, show the community is on track to have another record-breaking year.

### SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX

#### COLLECTIONS BY LOCATION

Collections through 2/28/2014

	CONSOLIDATED	LONGBOAT KEY	NORTH PORT	SARASOTA	SARASOTA COUNTY	SIESTA KEY	VENICE	TOTAL
October 2013	17,308.97	85,693.27	3,037.25	295,618.79	123,203.48	197,405.67	33,137.86	755,405.29
November 2013	22,434.20	91,971.41	3,131.14	307,802.69	141,100.89	207,485.31	40,485.68	814,411.32
December 2013	46,456.76	153,720.70	6,569.93	382,891.18	227,991.86	323,006.65	66,188.06	1,208,625.14
January 2014	141,844.36	184,012.07	6,986.32	420,930.89	351,930.61	503,000.58	215,669.87	1,824,376.70
February 2014								
March 2014								
April 2014								
May 2014								
June 2014								
July 2014								
August 2014								
September 2014								
Grand Totals	230,044.29	515,397.45	19,726.64	1,407,043.55	844,226.84	1,230,898.21	355,481.47	4,802,818.45
Percentage of Total (%)	5.00%	11.20%	0.43%	30.57%	18.34%	26.74%	7.72%	100.00%

Note: All figures are subject to change following audit and enforcement actions.

Sarasota County Tax Collector  
Barbara Ford-Coates

A chart shows the percentage of Tourist Development Tax that has been collected at various locations in Sarasota County since the start of the current fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office



*Visitors to Siesta Village from the Pinecraft community step off a bus at Davidson Plaza on March 11.  
Photo by Rachel Hackney*

In January — typically a much slower month than December, February and March, Matthes has pointed out — the number of visitors was up 7.3 percent from the same month in 2013.

Those 64,400 people spent \$79,836,000, an 8.9-percent increase over the January 2013 figure of \$71,365,000.

The room occupancy rate also was up 4.3 percent, to the 70.5 percent mark, and the average room rate had climbed from \$147.61 in January 2013 to \$157.17 in January this year, an uptick of 6.5 percent.

Tourism's total economic impact on the county for this January was put at \$151,512,800, compared to \$135,436,500 in January 2013, according to the statistics provided by Research Data Services Inc. of Tampa.

For the current fiscal year thus far — Oct. 1, 2013 through Jan. 31 — the total economic impact of tourism has been estimated at \$510,089,300, compared to \$460,361,400 for the same period in the last fiscal year.

In December, Virginia Haley, president of Visit Sarasota County, reported to the County Commission that “hotel occupancy was the best we have ever had [for that month] at

61.2%, breaking the record set in 2005 at 59% and the average daily rate in 2013 was \$155.83. Only in 2006 was the rate higher at \$167.”

She added, “Our big advertising and promotional push in the Chicago and Midwest markets helped to drive a 16.4% increase in visitors from that region coupled with growing, multiple soccer events at [IMG](#) and [Premiere Soccer](#).”

Haley concluded her email by writing, “In our 3 month barometer, looking at expected business, 86.2% of our properties report that business looks as good or better than our record-breaking season last year.”

The latest Tourist Development Tax (TDT) figures available from the Sarasota County Tax Collector's Office support Haley's view. Through January, that revenue is up \$485,951.54 compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year. December's number was slightly higher than January's — \$197,445.87 compared to \$191,257.68.

In terms of location reporting through January, the city of Sarasota edged out Siesta Key, having collected 30.57 percent of the revenue compared to 26.74 percent on Siesta Key. 

## Someone you know needs Planned Parenthood

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





## RAPPAPORT STEPS ASIDE

*Marty Rappaport sits at the head of the table Tuesday, March 11. To his left are Michael Valentino and Gavin Meshad, the other two members of the Business Improvement District board. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

### ST. ARMANDS CIRCLE BUSINESSES GET A NEW LEADER

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

The official custodian of St. Armands Circle is stepping aside. On Tuesday, March 11, Marty Rappaport resigned as the chairman of the Business Improvement District (BID), which he helped found 11 years ago. Prior to that, he spent 15 years participating in and leading the St. Armands Commercial Land Owners Association, the predecessor to the BID.

Rappaport will remain a member of the board, but he turned over the gavel to board

member Gavin Meshad. Rappaport will be vice chairman.

Rappaport said he needs to spend more time with his wife, who is in weak health. “I cannot allocate the amount of time this

position requires,” he told his colleagues. “I am asking that I get a sabbatical from the position.”

Meshad then was elected chairman. Board member Michael Valentino will assume the responsibilities of BID secretary.

“*I find it a little bit offensive we can't keep the promises we made in the past because we don't have the money but are willing to match a grant for something new, which will also require maintenance.*”

Marty Rappaport  
Vice Chairman  
St. Armands  
Business Improvement District



The board, which has only three members, levies a property tax on commercial land on and around St. Armands Circle. Under the aegis of the district's enabling ordinance, all members of the governing board must be commercial property owners.

"I have spoken with some of the larger land-owners," Rappaport said. "Their concern was to have somebody [in the chairman's seat] with the background and knowledge and ... a large investment in the circle," said Rappaport. "I got the support from a majority of the land-owners before making this recommendation."

The district proved so successful after its establishment that a group of commercial property owners in downtown Sarasota created a similar tax-collecting body called the Downtown Improvement District.

## EXOTICS — PEOPLE AND PLANTS

A woman dressed in a nun's summer habit continues to generate complaints from merchants on St. Armands Circle. "She's setting up at the Edward Jones elevator [entrance]. She knows it's closed on Saturday and Sundays," said Diana Corrigan, the executive director of the St. Armands Circle Association. "She has stationary signs. I don't know what to tell our merchants, why she can do this and they can't. We've spent millions upgrading St. Armands."

When the topic came up a month ago, the BID board was told by city police representatives that the woman is exercising her constitutional right to free speech. The woman says she is raising money for children in Haiti.



*In January, St. Armands Circle merchants began complaining that a woman purporting to be a nun was soliciting money from shoppers. Image courtesy St. Armands Business Improvement District*

“We need to ask the city manager to attend the next meeting,” said Rappaport. “If we don’t get a satisfactory response, we’ll need a motion to bring this before [city] commissioners.”

Meanwhile, another matter has won BID attention: The Australian pines on North Lido Beach may disappear. Todd Kacharski, general manager of the city’s Public Works Department, asked the BID to endorse a city grant request to the state for \$10,000 to cut down the invasive species, including Brazilian Peppers.

Kacharski said he has the support of the Lido Key Neighborhood Association, the National Estuary Program and the St. Armands Neighborhood Association. The city would match the \$10,000 state grant with local

money. The latter comment set Rappaport on edge.

“One of the landlord’s main concerns — the BID will take care of things and the city can then let [them] drop. The city has made promises in the past but now says there is a shortage of staff, of funds,” said Rappaport. “I find it a little bit offensive we can’t keep the promises we made in the past because we don’t have the money but are willing to match a grant for something new, which will also require maintenance.”

Despite Rappaport’s rant, the motion to support the grant request was approved unanimously. Previous attempts to clear the exotic pines proved controversial, but not as controversial as the land’s use 30 years ago as a topless beach. 



*St. Armands Circle property owners tax themselves to provide revenue for enhanced upkeep of the shopping district. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

# A LIGHT AGENDA



*City staff has been working on a \$10,000 grant application for funds to eradicate invasive trees and plants from North Lido Beach. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **RIDDING NORTH LIDO BEACH OF INVASIVE SPECIES, THE MATTISON'S CITY GRILLE LEASE AND THE CHAPMAN LEGAL DEFENSE WILL BE FODDER FOR CITY COMMISSION ACTION MONDAY**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

After trying out the County Commission chambers March 3 while work was under way at City Hall, the Sarasota city commissioners will return to their own seats on March 17 to face a relatively unambitious agenda.

Should the city vie for a \$10,000 state grant to exterminate exotic trees and plants from North Lido Beach? Should it extend the Lemon Avenue lease to Paul Mattison's outdoor restaurant? Will the commissioners continue to refuse funding for the legal defense of a fellow commissioner on a Sunshine violation complaint?

### **PAPER DOES NOT GROW ON TREES**

The \$10,000 grant would normally fall below the radar, but the amount of work Todd Kucharski has put into getting it has changed the circumstances. The application with 16 attachments runs 68 pages in total. It is full of fascinating details, all in the name of ridding the city's North Lido Beach of much derided invasive species and planting native trees "to improve the condition of the City's tree canopy," as the agenda item puts it.

For one example, a tiebreaker in the award process could be whether one bidder has an

official drug-free workplace (with all six steps documented and attested).

The 68 pages include “Planting and Maintenance Guidelines” with insightful suggestions such as, “Additional water may be needed during hot or dry periods.” And do not forget, “All synthetic or non-biodegradable material such as nylon rope, synthetic wrap, treated burlap etc. must be removed from the root ball before planting.”

Kucharski then solicited letters of support from the Lido Key Neighborhood Association and the Sarasota Estuary Bay Program. He hopes to get letters from the St. Armands Neighborhood Association, the Business Improvement District of St. Armands and Mote Marine Laboratory — all for \$10,000, not to mention the money comes from the federal government and it was part of the

whole “sequester” episode. So the money has not yet made it to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

The purpose of the grant “is not tree planting, but to develop and enhance urban and community forestry programs.” In case the money shows up, Kucharski is ready with his 68 pages of grant material and letters of support. Call this one, “How to use paper to cut down trees.”

## **MATTISON’S SEEKS LEASE EXTENSION**

Chef Paul Mattison’s lease of city-owned property on Lemon Avenue expires at the end of September. He replaced a hot dog vendor with an outdoor bistro that has proven enormously popular. The city charges rent on the basis of the value of the property, levying



*Chef Paul Mattison on March 17 will be asking the City Commission for better lease terms in regard to his Lemon Avenue City Grille. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

10 percent of the property appraiser's "just market value." Mattison also pays the property taxes.

The original lease was good for five years, with two five-year extensions. It was renewed in 2009 (the first extension) and is up for renewal this year (the second).

When the lease went into effect in 2004, the rent was \$30,800 per year, or about \$2,600 per month. In 2013, the taxable value was \$593,100, so rent was \$59,310 per year, or \$4,950 per month. And Mattison gets a rent credit for improvements to the property, up to \$279,346.

Staff wants commission guidance for this lease renewal because Mattison wants more than his final extension. He wants a longer-term lease, or the possibility of more

renewals, to justify paying for more improvements. Any long-term lease would require a supermajority vote of the commission.

## PLAYING DEFENSE FOR DEFENSE

About two weeks ago, by taking no positive action, the City Commission stopped paying for the legal defense of one of its own members. This is a circumstance being watched closely by many members of city advisory boards who wonder if they, too, could be sacrificed on the fiscal altar.

City Commissioner Susan Chapman maintains her innocence, saying she fears the lawsuit is an attempt to expand the scope of the state's Government in the Sunshine statutes. City Attorney Bob Fournier asked on March 3 that discussion be continued during the March 17 meeting. 

## QUICK TIP



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## STILL A MUDDLE

*A photo taken by Marlene Merkle on the evening of March 7 shows numerous vehicles parked illegally on Avenida de Mayo. Photo courtesy Marlene Merkle*

### **AVENIDA DE MAYO RESIDENTS ARE ASKING THAT COUNTY STAFF MAKE ONE MORE ATTEMPT AT CLARIFYING NEW 'NO PARKING' SIGNAGE ON THEIR STREET**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

Although county staff put up one more “No Parking” sign on Siesta Key’s Avenida de Mayo and the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office has signed off on the restrictions implemented there, residents remain in a quandary over continued illegal parking along their street, *The Sarasota News Leader* has learned.

On March 8, Avenida de Mayo resident Marlene Merkle emailed a new batch of photos to the Sarasota

County commissioners, pointing out that drivers are not obeying the parking prohibitions the board approved on Oct. 23, 2013. As stipulated by the commission, no parking is allowed on the street or the public right of

way from the intersection of Avenida de Mayo and Canal Road to the intersection of Avenida de Mayo and Avenida de Cortez. Beyond that, no-parking zones are staggered in 500-foot

“*My neighbors and I understand we can call dispatch when we see violations, but we don’t want to become pests because drivers are confused.*”

Marlene Merkle  
Resident  
Avenida de Mayo



sections from Avenida de Cortez to Avenida Del Norte.

The goal was to ensure emergency vehicles have sufficient room to traverse the street, as stipulated by the National Fire Protection Code.

In her email, sent just before 8 a.m. on March 8, Merkle pointed out that while she appreciated the board's efforts, "I am sorry to say ... that the signs are confusing, even to those of us who live on the street."

That confusion, cited by Sheriff's Office deputies in early February, led to a moratorium on enforcement until county staff could reassess the situation. Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, asked for such action after hearing Deputy Chris McGregor remark

on the signage during a [report](#) at the Feb. 6 Siesta Key Association (SKA) meeting.

Merkle continued in her March 8 email, "I cannot really fault the drivers because the signs are ambiguous and so far apart. In one case the arrow of a sign is pointing into someone's driveway."

She added, "The confusion can be alleviated if the signs clearly state: 'No parking any time on street or right of way,' and if a couple more are erected."

"I think one only needs to walk the first block of Avenida de Mayo to see the problem," she pointed out.

Patterson responded to Merkle, copying Chief County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. and County Administrator Tom Harmer, saying,



*A new 'No Parking Any Time' sign has been attached to the sign pointing drivers to the municipal lot, which has an entrance/exit on Avenida de Mayo. Photo courtesy Marlene Merkle*

“Guess staff should go look again. Thought they had corrected issues.”

Late on the morning of March 10, Harriott replied to Merkle and the commissioners. “Traffic Operations staff coordinated the installation [of the signs] with the Sheriff’s Department,” he wrote. “The signs are installed consistent with standards and the needs of the Sheriff’s Department for proper enforcement. The current sign spacing is closer than recommended in standard practice.”

However, he continued, as a result of Merkle’s email, he had asked staff to contact the Sheriff’s Office for another review of the signs’ placement. “There are two things we are considering,” he added. “A key to successful no-parking zones is enforcement and the understanding of the drivers that there

is a financial repercussion for violating the restriction. Another key is to successfully convey the restriction through signage. There is a balance between adding signs and creating a ‘sign polluted’ area. If the messaging is not successful with the current placement, we can continue to add signs, even to the point of one or two signs per yard. However,” Harriott continued, “we did not want to do this as a first step, because we were already receiving complaints from some residents” about the excessive number of signs.

Merkle told the *News Leader* on March 10 that during one period the previous day, she counted 11 cars parked illegally in the first block of Avenida de Mayo, north of the Canal Road intersection. While people had advised her to call the Sheriff’s Office to report



Two ‘No Parking’ signs (highlighted in yellow) stand in the block between Canal Road and Avenida de Cortez on the south side of Avenida de Mayo. Photo by Rachel Hackney

violations, she added, “I feel bad for those [drivers]” because the signs are not clear in some places.

The most confusing one remains the sign that appears to indicate no parking in one resident’s driveway, Merkle noted.

The only new sign county staff added after Patterson brought up the matter to her colleagues in early February, Merkle pointed out, indicates no parking on the right of way on the north side of the road in the first block from the Canal Road intersection; it faces drivers as they exit the municipal parking lot, which is located between Avenida de Mayo and Avenida Madera.

As she noted in her email to the County Commission, Merkle told the *News Leader*

she feels strongly that signage in the first block of the street should say, “No Parking on Street or Right of Way Here to Corner.” She added, “There’s no argument with that.”

Contacted by the *News Leader*, Michael Shay, the new SKA president, said his organization has been in touch with Avenida de Mayo residents. “We are aware that there is still a safety issue,” he said, “and we are asking the residents to follow the process that has been set up by the Sheriff’s Office”: calling Dispatch when they see violations.

Merkle told the commissioners in her email, “My neighbors and I understand we can call dispatch when we see violations ...” However, she added, “[W]e don’t want to become pests because drivers are confused.” 



One ‘No Parking’ sign (highlighted in yellow) on Avenida de Mayo appears to point toward a driveway on the north side of the road. File photo



*The Riverview High School Kiltie Band marches in the 2013 Sarasota Veterans Day Parade with (from left) J.D. Kurman, Felecity Warner, Tai Rohan and Judson Cressey leading the way. Photo courtesy Sarasota County Schools*

## **KILTIES TO MARCH IN NEW YORK'S ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE**

The Riverview High School Kiltie Band is headed to New York City this week, where students will march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade at 11 a.m. on Monday, March 17, the Sarasota County School District has announced.

More than 150 members of the Kiltie Band, Color Guard, Bagpipers and Highland Dancers will join an estimated 150,000 to 250,000 other marchers in the 253rd annual 1.5-mile trek up Fifth Avenue "celebrating all things Irish," a news release says.

Recognized as the oldest and largest parade celebrating the popular observance, the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade draws crowds of more than 2 million people to the streets of Manhattan, the release notes. "The Kilties will be surrounded by dozens of other Celtic-themed musicians and performers as they proceed alongside Central Park to St. Patrick's Cathedral at 79th Street."

"Marching in this parade is the culmination of months of hard work and dedication on the part of our students," said Kiltie Band Director Mark Spreen in the release. "They've spent hundreds of hours preparing and practicing to ensure a perfect performance."

"Each student was responsible for raising the money to pay his or her way by participating in dozens of fundraisers over the past two years," the release points out. "From yard sales to babysitting to car washes and cookie sales, the Kilties have worked hard to earn the honor of making the trip and marching in the parade," the release adds.

"We try to take the band on a road trip every other year, so most of the kids have been saving and earning money since our last trip when the band performed at the Pearl Harbor Memorial in 2011," Spreen said in the release.

With most of the students being Florida natives, a trip to New York might be their first opportunity to see snow, the release also points out.

“For those of us who moved here to escape the white stuff, it may be hard to believe that a lot of our band members are actually hoping it snows during our visit,” said Spreen. “Of course, walking on a snow-covered city street may be less appealing once the flakes hit the pavement, but if it means a chance to experience something new and exotic, I’m sure they won’t complain.”

“In addition to marching in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, the Kilties will take a whirlwind tour of the Big Apple, spending an afternoon in Times Square, getting a behind-the-scenes tour of Radio City Music Hall, taking in a Broadway show, touring the aircraft carrier Intrepid and visiting the 9/11 Memorial,” the release continues.

Kiltie fans can watch the students march in the New York St. Patrick’s Day Parade by going to the live link [nycstpatricksparade.org](http://nycstpatricksparade.org) at 11 a.m., Monday, March 17.

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## GLITZ AT THE RITZ TO BENEFIT SALVATION ARMY PROGRAM

Alice Rau and Joyce Tate of Sarasota will be honored with the 2014 Schoenbaum Humanitarian Award during Glitz at the Ritz on Thursday, March 20, organizers have announced.

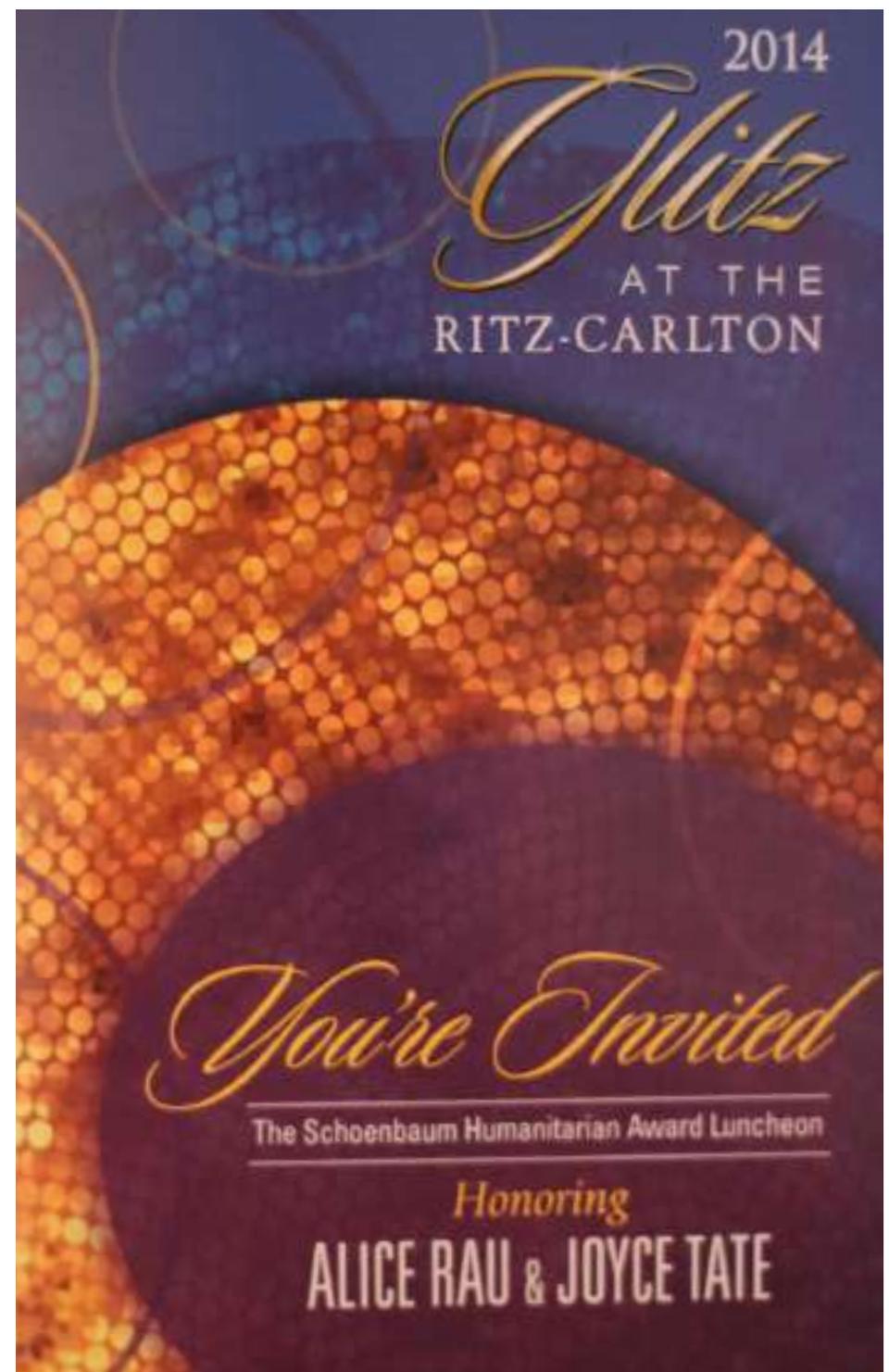
Proceeds from the program at Sarasota’s Ritz-Carlton will benefit homeless families in The Salvation Army’s [FAITH \(Families in Transitional Housing\) program](#) in Sarasota, a news release notes.

The prestigious Schoenbaum Humanitarian Award “is named for the late Alex Schoenbaum, founder of Shoney’s Restaurants,” the release explains. In 1994, he served as the capital campaign chairman for The Salvation Army in Atlanta. Under his guidance, \$33 million was raised for The Salvation Army Officers Training College in that city, the release adds.

A reception and silent auction preview will begin at 11:15 a.m. on March 20 at the hotel on Sarasota’s bayfront. The luncheon and awards presentation will follow at noon.

Individual tickets are \$75. For more information, call 364-8845, Ext. 221.

The Salvation Army’s Sarasota operations are headquartered at 1400 10th St. in Sarasota.



## **IT'S TIME SARASOTA 2014 CAMPAIGN TO HAVE FAIR BOOTH**

Supporters of *It's Time Sarasota 2014*, the campaign to revise the City of Sarasota's charter, will have a booth at the Sarasota County Fair March 14-23 to seek signatures on their petition and to educate the public about their initiative, the group has announced.

Representatives will be at Booth 124 in Robarts Arena at the county fairgrounds on Fruitville Road, providing many residents their first opportunity to learn about the specific charter changes being proposed, a news release says. Fair-goers will be able to read the proposed charter, watch a short video

“and speak with our friendly, knowledgeable volunteers,” the release adds. Those who are registered to vote in the city also may sign the petition seeking to place the charter initiative on the November ballot, the release notes.

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### **CORRECTION**

The article titled *Raising more concerns* in the March 7 issue incorrectly stated that Michael Barfield, who is vice president of the Florida chapter of the Americans for Civil Liberties Union and who works with local attorney Andrea Mogensen, lives in Bradenton. He is a Sarasota resident.



*Supporters of a new charter for the City of Sarasota will be seeking signatures on their petition at the County Fair. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## SARASOTA COUNTY WINS HIGHER STANDARD & POOR'S BOND RATING

Standard & Poor's Ratings Services has raised its long-term rating on Sarasota County's limited ad valorem tax bonds to A- from BBB+, the county has announced

The rating reflects the following, a news release says:

- Evidence of some tax-base stabilization, with values increasing 4.1 percent in fiscal 2014.
- Stronger annual debt service coverage in fiscal 2013.
- A revised debt service schedule following a 2011 defeasance, with lower payments through 2019.
- The county's demonstrated willingness to step in when coverage falls to low levels to ensure that debt service on the bonds is paid from lawfully available funds.

"This is further evidence of not only an improving economy, but also the [County] Commission's ongoing fiscal prudence when it comes to prioritizing our investments into the projects that the community needs most," said Steve Botelho, acting assistant county administrator and director of the Office of Financial Management, in the release.



*The Sarasota County seal. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

"Sarasota County originally issued the bonds to provide funds for its Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection and Parklands Program, a voter-approved and taxpayer-funded initiative designed to acquire and protect natural lands and parklands," the release points out. The voters authorized the bonds in 1999 and renewed the authorization for an additional 10 years in 2005.

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

## REPUBLICAN CLUB TO HOST CANDIDATES FORUM ON MARCH 20

The [Sarasota Republican Club](#) will host a candidates forum during its monthly meeting on March 20 at Marina Jack in downtown Sarasota, the club has announced.

All four Sarasota County Commission candidates “will be on hand to debate their perspectives on the county’s top priorities,” a news release says.

The club’s first vice president, Rod Thomson, will moderate the debate, the release adds. “This is sure to be a lively and eventful evening as there are critical issues facing the county,”

it notes. “Two new county commissioners will emerge from the November elections,” it says, “but the winners are likely to be decided in the Republican Primary.”

The primary will be held on Aug. 26. The candidates for District 2 are Paul Caragiulo and Pete Theisen. For District 4, they are Lourdes Ramirez and Alan Maio.

The event will begin at 6 p.m. on March 20. For dinner reservations, call 888-325-3212. The cost is \$30 for members and \$35 for guests.



*Marina Jack is located on Sarasota’s bayfront. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## BREAST CANCER EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY CONFERENCE PLANNED

On Saturday, March 22, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation (FBCF) will present an Education & Advocacy Day Conference in Tampa, a free event open to all breast cancer survivors, patients and caregivers who are interested in learning about the most current findings and advances in breast cancer research, the organization has announced.

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in the United States and worldwide except for skin cancer, a news release says. Each year, 240,000 new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed (one in eight women), the release adds. In Florida this year, "12,650 new cases will be diagnosed and 2,730 will die from this terrible disease," the release continues.

Breast cancer not only affects women, but men as well. Annually 2,030 men are diagnosed with breast cancer and 450 will die, the release points out.

Through statewide educational programs such as Education and Advocacy Day, the FBCF is working to reduce these numbers, the release adds. Attendees at the March 22 conference not only will be able to attend educational sessions featuring top local breast cancer experts and advocates, but they also will have an opportunity to meet with local exhibitors, the release continues.

A complimentary lunch will be served. Although the event is free, attendees are asked to RSVP, as space is limited.

Presented by the  
Florida Breast Cancer Foundation  
Saturday, March 22, 2014  
9:00 am to 2:00 pm

CROWNE PLAZA TAMPA - WESTSHORE  
5303 W. Kennedy Blvd.  
Tampa FL

2014 PRESENTERS

**2014 Education and Advocacy Day 2014 PROGRAM**

08:30am - 09:00am:	Registration
09:00am - 09:15am:	Welcome
09:15am - 10:00am:	"Using Evolutionary Principles to Improve Breast Cancer Therapy" Robert A. Gatenby, MD Diagnostic Imaging, Moffitt Cancer Center
10:00am - 10:45am:	"The Past, Present & Future of Breast Cancer Management" John V. Kirk, MD, FACS The Center for Women's Oncology, Moffitt Cancer Center
10:45am - 11:00am:	Advocacy
11:00am - 11:30am:	Lunch
11:30am - 12:15pm:	"Killing Cancer Cells with Nano-Peptides" Annette Khaled, PhD University of Central Florida
12:15pm - 01:00pm:	"Lymphedema: How to Reduce Your Risk" Nancy K. Biler, OTR/L, CHT, UE-CLT, RYT St. Joseph's Hospital
01:00pm - 01:15pm:	Break
01:15pm - 01:30pm:	"Stay Away Breast Cancer" Hattan Algharib, MD. University of Miami
01:30pm - 01:45pm:	"How to become an Advocate Grant Reviewer"
01:45pm - 02:00pm:	Closing and Prize Drawing

**FREE to the public but space is limited. RSVP's are a must.**  
To RSVP call 1-877-644-3222 or  
email: [assistant@FloridaBreastCancer.org](mailto:assistant@FloridaBreastCancer.org)  
[www.FloridaBreastCancer.org](http://www.FloridaBreastCancer.org)

Together we WILL end breast cancer!

**I-CARE**  
I-CARE is a registered trademark of the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

FLORIDA BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION  
A Strong Education. A Bold Future.

The event will be held at the Crowne Plaza Tampa — Westshore, located at 5303 W. Kennedy Blvd.

To RSVP, visit [FloridaBreastCancer.org](http://FloridaBreastCancer.org) or call 877-644-3222.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, FBCF relies upon the financial support of corporations and individuals, the release notes. All money raised stays in Florida. It is the only organization in the state that receives revenue from sales of the *End Breast Cancer* license plates, the release adds.

Press Releases & News Tips

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

## SARASOTA MEMORIAL TAKES RECEIPT OF UNUSUAL SPECIAL DELIVERY

If you were driving down Fruitville Road or near Sarasota Memorial Hospital (SMH) on Wednesday night, March 5, you might have witnessed a very special delivery, hospital representatives say: A 73-foot-long, 25,400-pound prefabricated pedestrian bridge arrived by police escort about 10 p.m. that day.

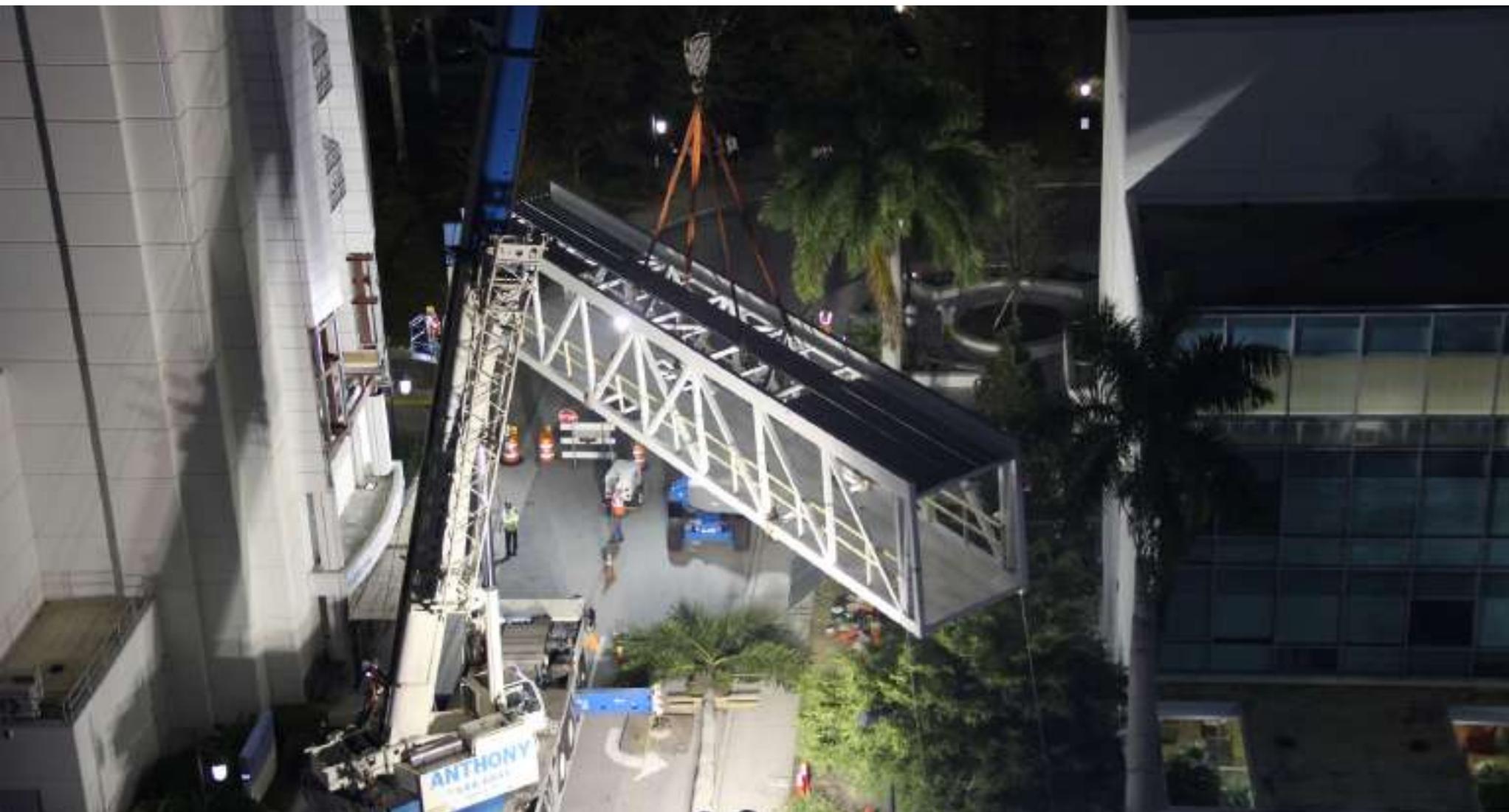
The bridge is being constructed between SMH's South Parking Garage and Medical Arts Building, according to a news release. "Last week's delivery was a spectacular sight," Kim Savage, the hospital's senior communications editor, wrote in the release.

The aluminum connector was assembled at the Mullet's Aluminum facility on Ponder Avenue in east Sarasota County and then transported by a heavy haul expert down Fruitville Road and Tamiami Trail to the

hospital's main campus, Savage explained in the release. A work crew spent several hours placing it between the South Parking Garage and the Medical Arts Building near the 1900 block of Arlington Street and Laurent Avenue, she added. Adjacent roads were closed during the placement, but they had reopened by 6 a.m. on Thursday, March 6, Savage noted.

Work on the structure will continue for the next few weeks, she wrote.

"Although there may be periodic lane closures, there are no daytime road closures planned and the construction will not impact the hospital's Emergency Care Center on Arlington [Street] or impede emergency rescue vehicles," she noted in the release. "The South Garage also will remain open 24/7."



*A crane maneuvers a new pedestrian bridge toward its destination at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Photo courtesy Sarasota Memorial Hospital*



*A work crew watches as the new pedestrian bridge is slotted between buildings. Photo courtesy Sarasota Memorial Hospital*

## ORIOLES TO AUCTION CAPS FOR CHARITY AFTER MARCH 17 GAME

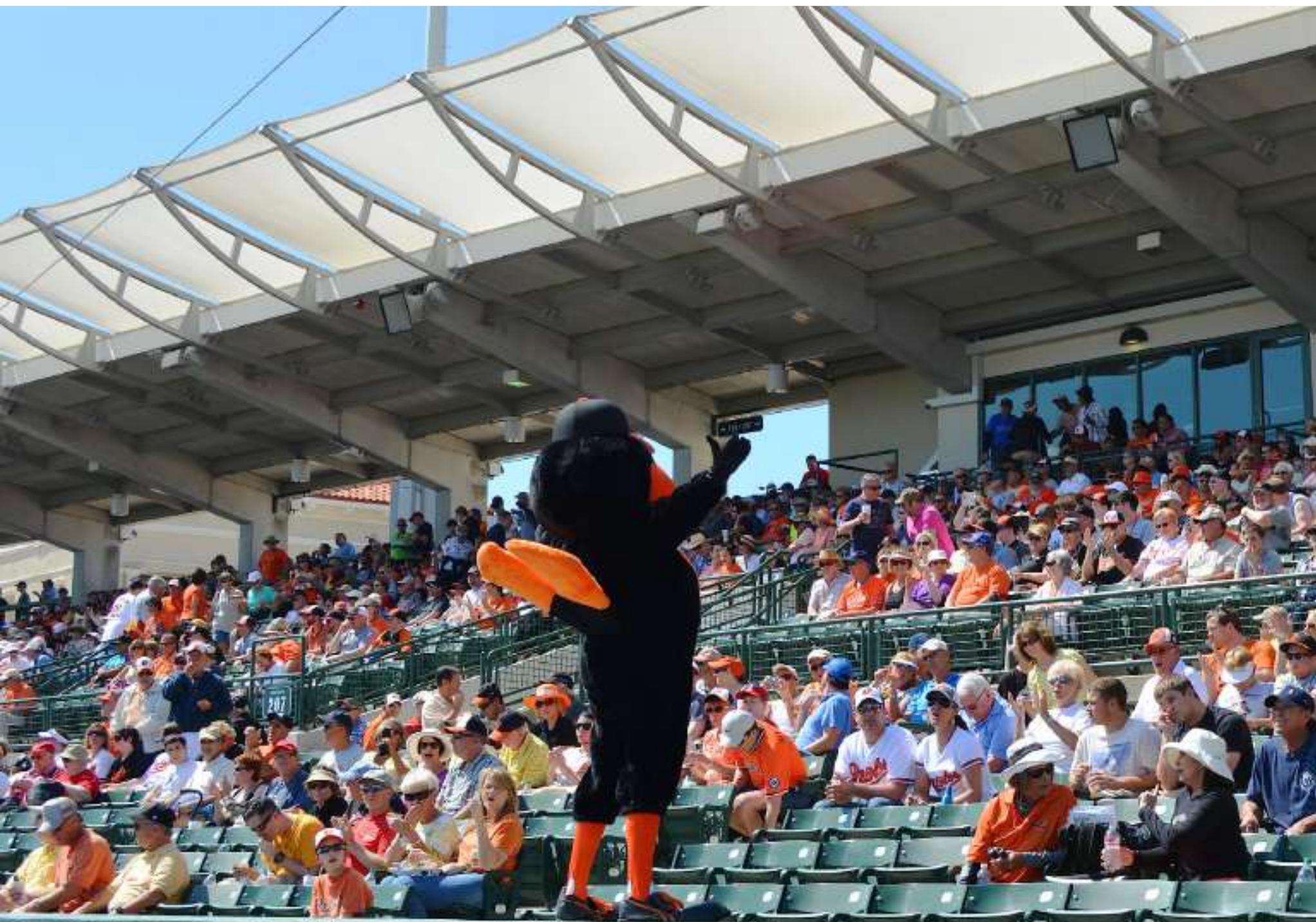
The Baltimore Orioles will host *Go Green Night* on St. Patrick's Day, Monday, March 17, when the team faces the Minnesota Twins at 7:05 p.m., the team has announced.

The Orioles will wear black-and-green cartoon bird caps for the contest, after which the caps will be autographed and auctioned online at [orioles.com/spring](http://orioles.com/spring) as a benefit for the animal hospitals at Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, a news release points out.

"The Sarasota-based hospitals treat sick and injured dolphins, small whales and sea

turtles with the goal of returning them to the wild," the release explains. Fans can learn more about Mote's animal hospitals at the OriolesREACH community booth on the main concourse during the game, the release adds.

The Orioles will also wear the black-and-green cartoon bird caps for a March 17 game at 1:05 p.m. against the Phillies in Clearwater. Fans may bid online for those caps as well at [orioles.com/spring](http://orioles.com/spring) from 1:05 p.m. on Monday, March 17, through Monday, March 24, at 11:59 p.m., the release continues.



*The Orioles mascot works the crowd during the March 9 game against the Pittsburgh Pirates. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## KICK BUTTS DAY TO BE MARKED ON MARCH 19 IN THE COUNTY

With tobacco use remaining the leading cause of preventable death in Americans today, “Sarasota County’s Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) is fighting back and raising awareness of the tactics used every day by cigarette manufacturers to find new smokers,” a county news release says.

“Organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and sponsored by the United Health Foundation, Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youths to fight back against Big Tobacco,” the release adds.

In observance of that day, four Sarasota County high schools will host presentations by Patrick “Pac Man” Perez, the release continues. “A youth motivational speaker, Perez combines a mix of creativity, energy and education to help students understand the tactics used by Big Tobacco to target youths through retail advertising placement and flavored tobacco products,” the release says. Presentations will be held on Monday, March 17, at North Port High School and Venice High School. On March 18, presentations are scheduled at Riverview High School in Sarasota and Pine View School in Osprey.

“These presentations will raise the awareness of hundreds of students throughout Sarasota County regarding the dangers of tobacco use,” said Hilary Woodcum, tobacco prevention specialist with the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, in the release. “Every day in Florida, 88 people will die from a tobacco-related illness,” she pointed out

In addition to those local events, students from Pine View School are celebrating national recognition as the 2014 Kick Butts



Patrick 'Pac Man' Perez/Contributed photo

Day Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest winners, selected by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the release continues. Their PSA, titled *The Science Behind a Cigarette*, took first place, the release adds.

“Making this video helped us learn how many harmful ingredients are in tobacco products,” said the film’s co-creator and Pine View ninth-grader, Jonah Mundy, who is president of the school’s SWAT Club. “I feel strongly about this topic and am excited that I had the opportunity to share this video with a large audience.”

The PSA may be viewed [online](#).

## DENTAL ASSISTANTS RECOGNIZED FOR IMPORTANCE OF THEIR WORK

Sarasota County joined communities across the nation last week in observing Dental Assistant Recognition Week, the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) announced.

The department provides a range of preventive and restorative dental services for children, a news release points out. “A dental assistant who dresses up as ‘The Tooth Fairy’ can make a child’s first experience of going to the dentist a positive one — even for parents,” the release points out.

Dental assistants handle a variety of responsibilities, the release continues. “Whether working alongside our dentists, taking X-rays, managing the office, working with insurance providers or providing dental health education dressed in costume as the Tooth Fairy, dental assistants are essential to the services we provide to children at our two dental clinics in Sarasota [County],” said DOH-Sarasota Dental Health Director Dr. Chander Malik in the release.

The two clinics are located on Ringling Boulevard in Sarasota and in North Port, the release notes.



*A ‘Tooth Fairy’ at the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County can make a child’s first dental experience a positive one, health officials say. Contributed photo*

“Children as young as 1 to 2 years of age can benefit from preventive dental care,” it adds. These visits consist of a visual dental exam, cleaning, fluoride treatment and dental health education in a family-friendly environment, the release notes.

“It’s not uncommon for people to think that ‘baby teeth’ don’t matter,” noted DOH-Sarasota pediatric dentist Zaida Marcano in the release. “However, by the second grade, children are getting their first molars. So getting sealants applied on the chewing surfaces of their back teeth is optimal at this age in reducing the risk of tooth decay and damage to their permanent teeth.”

Since April 2012, more than 1,200 low-income and uninsured children from five North Port elementary schools have been receiving

preventive dental care at the North Port Health Center through a grant that DOH-Sarasota received from the Florida Blue Foundation, the release adds.

Officials hope to secure funding to expand the program to North County, the release says.

DOH-Sarasota provides for children who qualify for a range of dental care services — preventive cleanings and fluoride treatments, exams, X-rays, sealants, space maintainers, extractions, stainless steel crowns and front tooth root canals, the release points out.

These services are available to those who have Medicaid and are under the age of 21.

For information about eligibility, service sites and appointments, visit [sarasotahealth.org](http://sarasotahealth.org) or call 861-2900.

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## **NORTH JETTY FISH CAMP HAS REOPENED FOR THE PUBLIC**

The historic trolley-car concession stand at North Jetty Park, also known as “the Fish Camp,” has reopened, Sarasota County has announced.

After 31 years operating the Fish Camp, the previous concessionaire retired at the end of 2013, a news release explains. The new concessionaire was selected following a competitive bidding process. County staff evaluated the trolley-car structure to ensure compliance with current requirements before issuing a new certificate of occupancy and, as expected with any older building, “a few deficiencies were identified,” the release points out. Staff of the county’s Facilities Department “spent the last few weeks working with the new concessionaire to rectify the issues,” the release continues.

“We know how much the community loves the historic trolley and we are very happy to see it reopen,” said Carolyn Brown, director

of the Parks and Recreation Department, in the release. “I would like to thank the community for being patient as we worked through the challenges that seemed to come up each time we thought we were getting close to completion.”

North Jetty Park, located at 1000 Casey Key Road in Nokomis, is in the final stages of a \$1.4 million renovation project that began last year, the release notes. In addition to the historic trolley, the park will feature a new concession building with an eating area, a restroom compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a cistern for rain capture and repurposing of rainwater, reconfiguration of the shell parking lot for improved traffic flow and ADA-compliant sidewalks for safer pedestrian access, the release adds.

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

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE SEEKING HELP WITH NAME FOR NEWEST MEMBER

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office is asking the public to help name its newest Mounted Patrol horse, a 10-year old American Warm Blood gelding.

The "horse with no name" is 17.2 hands tall; he was donated by Terry and Darlene Geiser of Ocala, a news release explains.

Four options are being posted on the agency's Facebook page, and residents are being invited to vote for their favorite between now and the end of March. Possible names are Colonel, Recruit, Pursuit or Honor, the release adds.

The "horse with no name" is already patrolling Siesta Key Beach and other areas of the county during spring break operations, alongside his hooped colleagues Patriot, Major, Liberty, Legacy, Sentinel, Valor, Justice and Charlie, the release notes.

The winning selection will be announced in April.

The Facebook page address is [facebook.com/SarasotaCountySheriff](https://facebook.com/SarasotaCountySheriff). To go directly to the voting app, [click here](#).



*A 10-year-old American Warm Blood has been added to the Sheriff's Office's Mounted Patrol team. Contributed photo*



*The Sheriff's Office is asking the public to name its newest Mounted Patrol horse. Contributed photo*

## PINES OF SARASOTA FOUNDATION MEETS \$65,000 MATCH

The Pines of Sarasota Foundation has successfully met a \$65,000 match offered by an anonymous donor of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and has strengthened its capacity — fundraising and digital — in the process, the Community Foundation has announced.

The \$65,000 Challenge was conceived in honor of the organization's 65 years of service to the community, a news release points out. It was launched during the *Pines' Wit & Wisdom Luncheon* on Oct. 30, 2013, and it concluded 65 days later, on Jan. 2, the release notes.

Other elements of the campaign beyond fundraising included reaching goals of 650 "likes" on Facebook and 65 followers on Twitter and the creation of 65 stories of Pines residents, families, rehab patients, staff, volunteers and donors to be shared on the Pines website, e-newsletter and Facebook, the release continues. "All goals were reached; most were exceeded handily," the release adds.

Ron Royal, vice chairman of the Pines Foundation, "was thrilled to see that the Challenge served to generate new annual donors who became Giving Tree Society



(From left) Roxie Jerde, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, presents the ceremonial check to John Overton, president and CEO of the Pines of Sarasota, and Estelle Crawford, Pines Foundation president. Contributed photo

members,” and he acknowledged that the match helped to grow this new initiative, the release continues. “The Pines is needed in Sarasota because of our benevolent policies toward the elderly who have no other way to cope with the last chapter of their lives,” Royal said in the release.

“This kind of creative and results-driven philanthropy is a perfect illustration of how we work with our donors to better our community,” noted Roxie Jerde, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, in the release. “Not only were we able to connect this anonymous donor and the Pines Foundation in a meaningful and successful fundraising campaign, but the results of the effort — through the power of video and social media — are that the Pines has additional capacity to engage new supporters and better nurture existing

ones. This makes the organization stronger now and in the future.”

The residents of Pines are seniors, 70 percent of whom have low incomes that qualify them for Medicaid in the skilled nursing and dementia facilities, the release explains. “The assisted living facility continues to provide a home and services to residents, even if they can no longer pay for care,” the release adds.

Including the facility’s two child-care and rehabilitation centers, Pines provided direct services to 846 area residents over the past year, and it “has touched an additional 8,000 to 10,000 lives through the global distribution of educational media training programs for professional and family caregivers of people with dementia,” the release notes.

For more information about the Pines of Sarasota and its Foundation, call 365-0250 or go to [pinesofsarasota.org](http://pinesofsarasota.org). 

## A Very Special Offer For Advertisers



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*Edward Grinnell (inset, contributed photo) has been charged in connection with burglaries at condominiums on Midnight Pass Road on Siesta Key, including a November 2013 incident at Crescent Arms, located at 6310 Midnight Pass Road. Image from Google Maps*

## **SUSPECT IN SIESTA CONDO BURGLARIES NABBED THIS WEEK**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has charged a career criminal from Pinellas County in connection with a spate of Siesta Key condo burglaries, the office has announced.

Detectives identified the suspect as Edward Grinnell, 49, of 9204 66th St. North, Lot 54, and worked with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office on this investigation, a news release says. On Monday, March 10, Grinnell ran from Pinellas County Sheriff's deputies during a traffic stop but was taken into custody a short time later, the release adds. He was wearing the same dark Nike sandals, cargo shorts, T-shirt and hat seen in surveillance photos the Sarasota County Sheriff's

Office had released during its investigation of the Siesta incidents, the release notes. "He was also carrying a plastic bag containing burglary tools," it adds.

Grinnell has been charged with one count each of Burglary and Grand Theft, the release says. He will be charged in at least six other Siesta Key cases when he is transferred to the Sarasota County Jail. However, the investigation is ongoing, the release points out. He remains jailed in Pinellas County, where he faces additional charges.

"Grinnell is a career criminal with more than 40 felony and misdemeanor convictions for burglary, grand theft, trafficking in stolen property and escape," the release says.

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE ENHANCING PATROLS DURING SPRING BREAK PERIOD

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has been enhancing patrols as spring break visitors come to town and local students enjoy their time off from school.

“An increased law enforcement presence at local beaches and popular entertainment establishments is intended to disrupt incidents before they happen,” a news release explains. “Special attention is being paid to underage drinking and drug possession, as well as traffic enforcement.”

The Sheriff's Office asks that people keep the following safety tips in mind whether they are staying in town or visiting other areas:

- Lock the doors and windows at your place of lodging.
- Do not leave valuables in your room. Lock them in a safe if possible.
- Always carry wallets, purses and room and car keys securely.
- Keep your room key in a safe place on your person when at the hotel pool, bar or dining room.
- Watch out for traffic when crossing the street and use designated crosswalks.
- When driving, obey speed limits and watch for pedestrians.
- Lock your vehicle at all times, when it is parked and when you are traveling in it.
- Keep valuables out of sight at all times. Lock them in the trunk, glove box or console. Covering them with a blanket or clothing does not deter criminals.
- When at the beach, never leave valuables unattended.
- Never go out alone and do not ever leave a public place with a stranger.
- Be observant and report any suspicious activity to law enforcement, security personnel or hotel management.
- Do not advertise your plans to strangers.
- If you are of legal drinking age and plan to consume alcohol, do not drink too much, do not leave drinks unattended or accept an open drink from a stranger, and never drink and drive.



*Tens of thousands of people are expected to visit Sarasota County, especially Siesta Public Beach, during spring break weeks this year. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## SHERIFF'S CRIME SCENE UNIT PERSONNEL ALL CERTIFIED

Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that all personnel in the agency's Crime Scene Unit are now certified through the International Association for Identification (IAI).

"IAI is the world's oldest and largest forensic science identification association," a news release explains. Crime scene certification involves meeting certain background prerequisites in terms of education, training and experience, the release notes. "In addition, personnel must pass a comprehensive test that takes several hours to complete and involves upwards of 300 questions," the release says.

Crime Scene Technicians Jerry Wagner, Alison Gugliotta and Megan Krahe were the most recent forensics employees to pass their exams, the release continues. Supervisor Mike Gorn has held his certification since 2001, and technicians Jessica Hendrickson and Maxine Miller received their certifications last year.

"Certification is a measure of quality," said Knight in the release. "Becoming certified means that a forensic scientist has the training, knowledge and experience to perform their job at a high level. This also provides confidence to those in the criminal justice system and courts who rely on our personnel as they carry out their respective duties." 

Simply put, Crime Stoppers relies upon the cooperation between the police the media and the community to provide a flow of information about crime and criminals.

**Call:** (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

**Click:** [SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com](http://SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com)

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

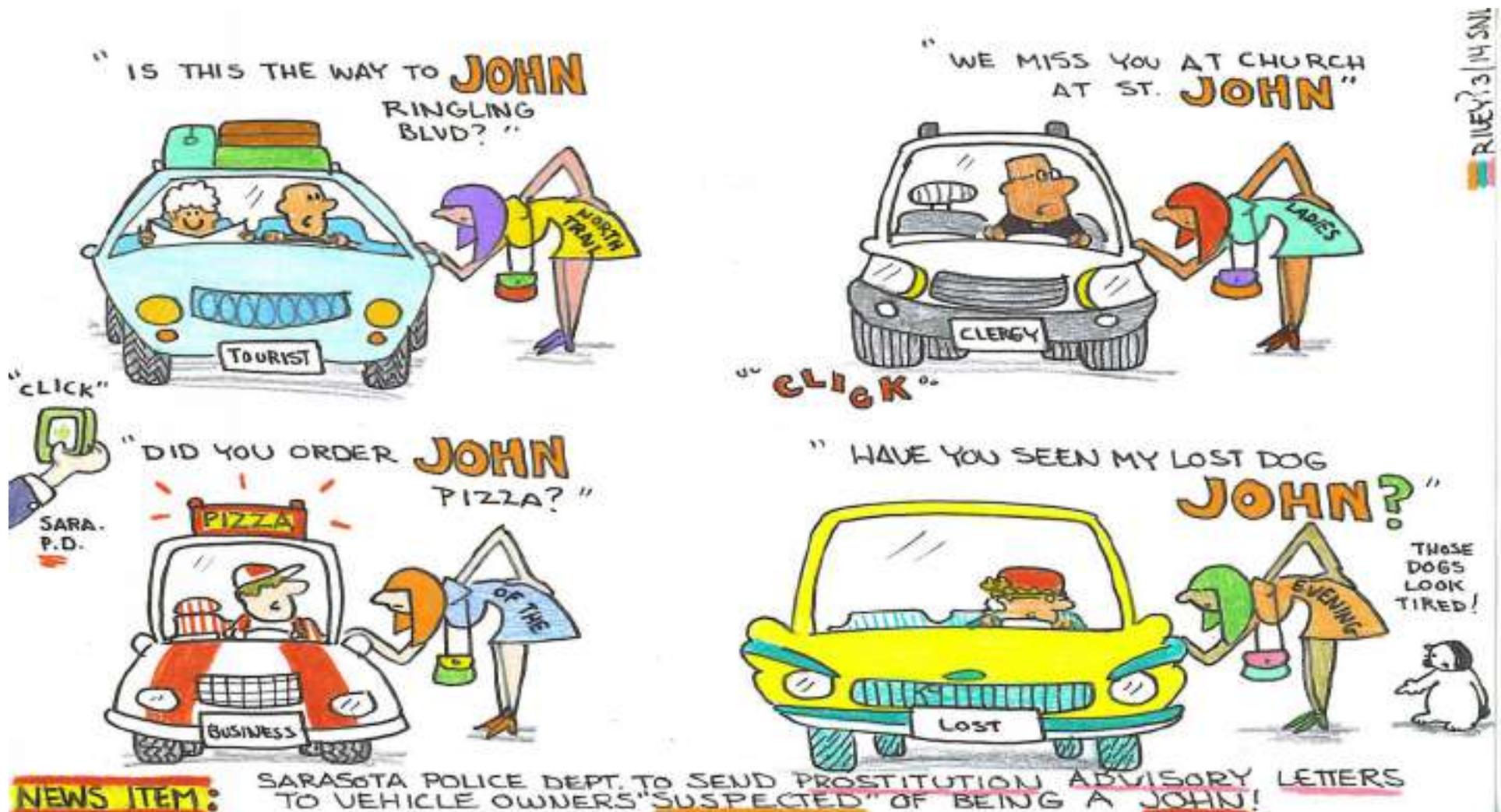
*All submitted tips are secure and anonymous*

941-366-TIPS (8477)

**Crime stoppers**  
of  
Sarasota County

[www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://www.sarasotacrimestoppers.com)

# OPINION



## THE NEW 'SCARLET LETTER'

### EDITORIAL

If you are new to Sarasota, please be advised that the women lingering along a stretch of the North Tamiami Trail are not affiliated with the local Chamber of Commerce or the tourism office. Even though they might look like knowledgeable locals, it is best not to ask them for directions or other advice.

That is because the Sarasota Police Department, at the direction of Chief Bernadette DiPino, has instituted a constitutionally questionable new program whereby any motorist observed stopping to converse with these women will find himself the recipient of a new kind of "scarlet letter" — one in which the owner of the vehicle is warned by

mail that the driver of the vehicle was observed engaged in potentially illegal activity.

As of March 4, any vehicle stopped in this ill-defined "forbidden zone" is considered suspect for engaging in "prostitution related crimes" if anyone in the vehicle talks with any of the women along the street. Of course, the subject of this conversation must remain unknown to the police, since it is illegal to secretly record such conversations between two people not committing any criminal act.

DiPino and the SPD are not deterred by such limitations, however. If you stopped, you must be looking for a prostitute. And if you are a woman standing on the side of the street, you must be a prostitute. And if the two of you

# OPINION

speak, you must be arranging an illegal sexual tryst.

Unfortunately, the rules of evidence, the presumption of innocence, due process and a host of other constitutional complications prevent the chief and her minions from busting these nefarious evildoers on the spot, so they do the next best thing: They send a letter to the registered owner of the vehicle.

The letter essentially alerts the vehicle's owner to the sincere belief of DiPino and the police that a crime was committed by the occupants of the vehicle and the sidewalk denizen with whom they were conversing. But — because of the Constitution, the rule of law, blah blah blah — all DiPino can do is send this warning letter alerting the owner to the horrific penalties that befall those who ... do things that are against the law — which stopping in a public area and talking with someone is not. But let this be a warning to you anyway.

“*Law enforcement is a tough job because you have to catch the criminals without infringing on the rights of the innocent.*”

In classic “ready, fire, aim” fashion, the SPD apparently did not consider that these letters would be a matter of public record. In addition to creating some domestic consternation in situations in which the vehicle is owned by the driver's wife or girlfriend, the SPD also has opened up all of these recipients to public ridicule by any person who wants to pick up a copy of the letters at the police station.

When confronted with this question, SPD officials reportedly did some backpedaling and maintained that the question of the letters being public records was still being determined by the city attorney (who likely knew nothing about this boondoggle before it blew up in city staffers' faces).

Yet at the bottom of each letter sent out is the following: “SPD Case # \_\_\_\_\_ was generated documenting this incident.” And since all case files are public records, the letters should be public records, too.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

# OPINION

We understand the concerns of Chief DiPino and the SPD regarding prostitution. It is indeed not a victimless crime. And those women who find themselves in the unfortunate position of trading sex for money should be helped, not thrown in prison. Those soliciting such acts are the real offenders, and they should face tough penalties. But you cannot do either by engaging in willy-nilly end runs around civil liberties. Even prostitutes and their johns have rights.

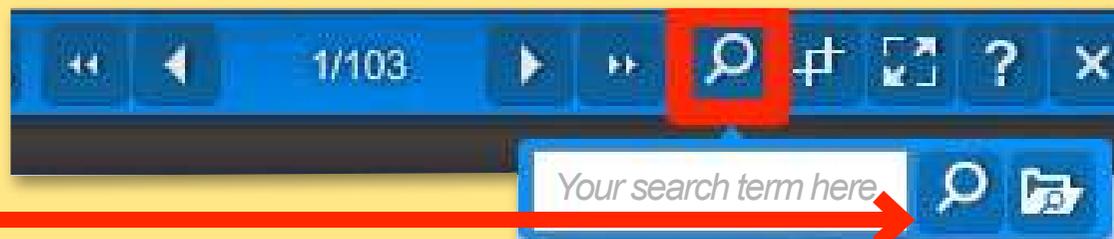
Law enforcement is a tough job because you have to catch the criminals without infringing on the rights of the innocent. We thought all

of our local law enforcement agencies were aware of this, but perhaps we were wrong in that assumption.

Worse, such tactics often have the opposite effect. Public support wanes when the people doubt the virtue and sincerity of their law enforcement officials. Evading due process and engaging in questionable practices can even provide criminals with the legal justification to avoid conviction. And the original problem continues unabated.

DiPino has a noble intention in trying to eradicate prostitution, but she cannot accomplish it by trampling on the people's civil liberties. **SNL**

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# Sarasota Leisure

*Inside*

**WHAT'S PLAYING**

**SIESTA SEEN**

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**



**Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast**



## WHAT'S PLAYING

Novelist Jonathan Franzen in Roger Kass' *Emptying the Skies*. Contributed photo

### JUST SOME OF WHAT'S WORTH SEEING AT THIS YEAR'S SARASOTA FILM FESTIVAL

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

It's springtime in Sarasota, which means two things: The pollen is falling like snow and the Sarasota Film Festival is about to start.

That's right; it's here again: The city's annual celebration of cinema is set to run April 4-13, with all the requisite parties and shindigs and blowouts and a ton of quality films. Festival staffers officially announced the complete lineup this Thursday, and we've browsed the [catalogue](#) to pick out a few highlights. Even if none of my picks sound good, with 252 films, I'd bet you can probably find something you'll like.

### EMPTYING THE SKIES

1:15 p.m. Saturday, April 5, and 2 p.m. Sunday, April 6

Based on a long essay by novelist Jonathan Franzen, first published in *The New Yorker* and then later in his collection *Farther Away*, this documentary goes undercover with a squad of European activists who are fighting the illegal trapping of songbirds. Sounds boring, but Franzen's reporting made for a thrilling read, as he examined the cultural roots of dining on small birds and the effect declining bird populations may have on other species.



## A STREET IN PALERMO

*2:45 p.m. Saturday, April 5, and 4:15 p.m. Monday, April 7*

This Sicilian feature begins with an unusual standoff. There are no guns involved, just two automobiles that meet hood to hood in a narrow Palermo alley, with drivers who refuse to budge. The trailer has no subtitles, so I have no clue what this film is really about, but the absurdist setup suggests bitter rage and social comedy.



## MOOD INDIGO

*6 p.m. Saturday, April 5, and 7 p.m. Sunday, April 6*

Michel Gondry's career has been all over the map, with era-defining triumphs such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* to big-budget fare such as *The Green Hornet* and experimental documentaries such as the Noam Chomsky piece *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?* *Mood Indigo* seems closest in spirit to Gondry's 2006 feature *The Science of Sleep*, with its focus on love, its whimsical tone and its surrealist visual touches.



*A still from Michel Gondry's Mood Indigo. Contributed photo*

## DEEP CITY: THE BIRTH OF THE MIAMI SOUND

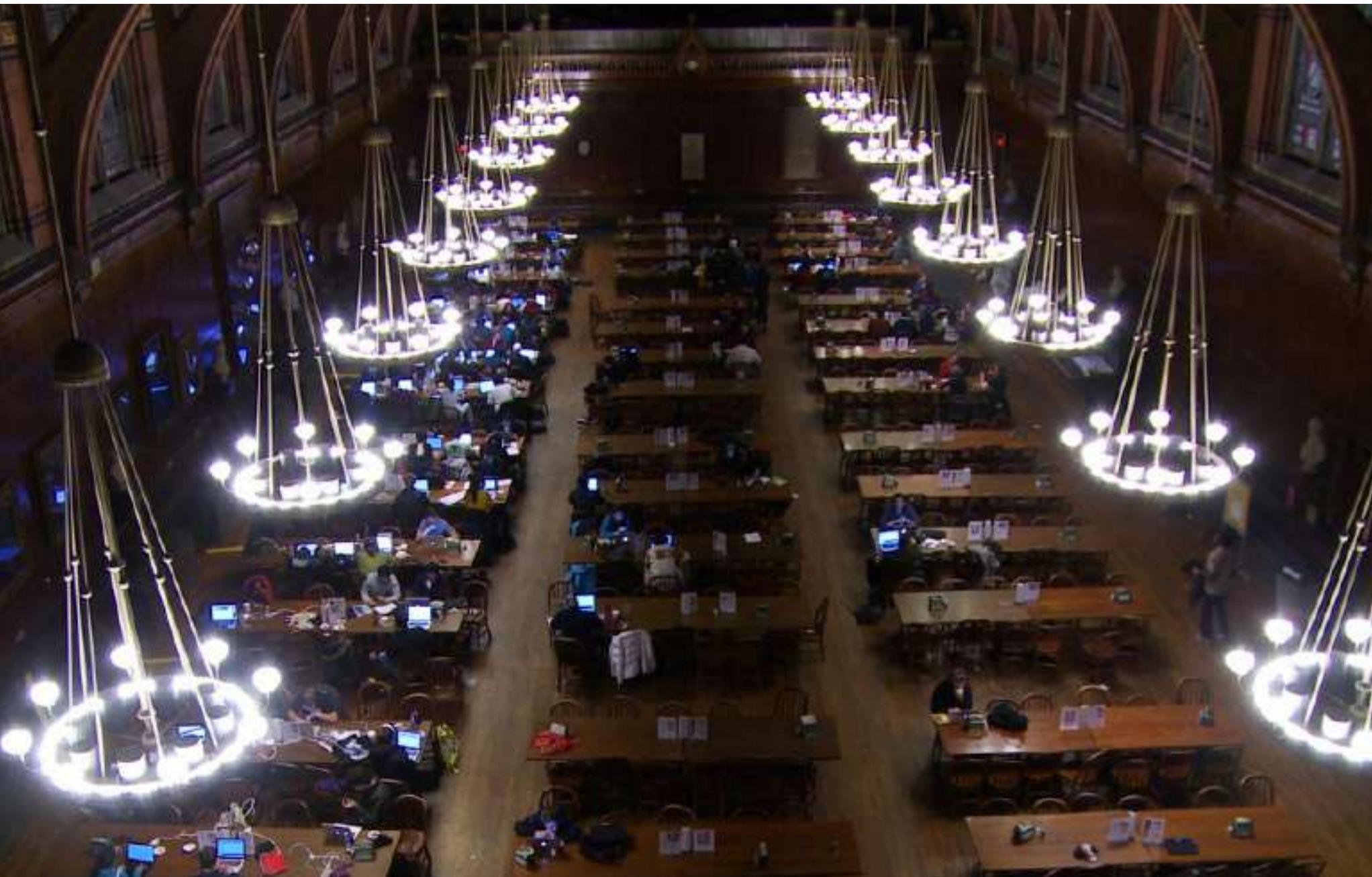
6:15 p.m. Saturday, April 5, and 2:45 p.m. Monday, April 7

I love films that uncover hidden music histories, and that's exactly what *Deep City* promises. The movie is an hour-long documentary about Deep City Records, a Miami-based funk and soul label that delivered hot tracks to 1960s audiences. Deep City also happened to be the first black-owned label in Florida. The Motown of Miami? Perhaps.

## WETLANDS

9:15 p.m. Saturday, April 5, and 8:45 p.m. Friday, April 11

True film lovers should always look to be provoked and disgusted, and *Wetlands* promises a good opportunity for both. The feature is based on German author Charlotte Roche's provocative novel of the same name; after it screened at Sundance, it was dubbed the festival's "crassest," "most outrageous," "raunchiest" and "most WTF NSFW" film. I'll just quote the festival's description, if you don't mind: "The movie is about a twenty-something woman obsessed with pushing the boundaries of her own feminine hygiene." For the adventurous.



A still from Andrew Rossi's *Ivory Tower*. Contributed photo

# LET THERE BE LIGHT

2:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 9, and noon Sunday, April 13

Legendary director John Huston (*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, et al.) made this documentary between 1944 and 1946, following a group of soldiers seeking treatment for depression and trauma. We'd recognize the symptoms now as PTSD, but the movie was so controversial at the time it wasn't screened till the 1980s. The Film Festival has been actively addressing veterans' issues for the past few years, and this historic film adds weight to how we view wars and those who fight them.

# IVORY TOWER

5:45 p.m. Thursday, April 10

*Page One: A Year Inside the New York Times* kicked off the Film Festival a few years ago, and now its director, Andrew Rossi, is back with *Ivory Tower*, an angry look at the rising cost of an American college education and the challenges facing people in a generation who are likely to end up worse off than their parents. If you want to get pissed off, this is a can't-miss.

For full info on the festival and to buy tickets, visit [sarasotafilmfestival.com](http://sarasotafilmfestival.com). 



## SARASOTA FILM FESTIVAL

APRIL 4 - 13, 2014

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### FEATURES



Interview

#### MICHAEL TULLY: DIRECTOR OF PING PONG SUMMER

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Spotlight

#### THE ENDURING BEAUTY OF MEMORY

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Movie

#### SFF ON DEMAND: WEEK OF MARCH 5, 2014

SEPTIEN and other SFF movies are now available on VOD (Video on Demand).  



Spotlight

#### EMILY HARRIS, SFF 2014 EDUCATION DIRECTOR

This year the Sarasota Film Festival welcomes a new Education Director. Emily Harris grew up in...

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# Siesta Seen

**NEW BUS SHELTERS AND BETTER ACCESS TO THEM WILL BE COMPLETED IN 2016; COUNTY STAFF RECOMMENDS AGAINST BUYING A PARCEL NEXT TO THE FIRE STATION; AND THE CONDO COUNCIL MEETS NEXT WEEK**



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

New bus shelters and improved pedestrian crosswalks near Siesta Public Beach are in the works for 2016, thanks to action the Sarasota County Commission took on March 5.

Additionally, Commissioner Nora Patterson won unanimous support from her colleagues for staff in the Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) department to investigate whether

one extra shelter can be erected across from the beach parking lot, which would accommodate people waiting for buses on the north side of Beach Road.

It appeared, based on an aerial map SCAT Senior Planner Sarah Blanchard provided in her presentation last week, that the additional shelter could be erected without obstructing



*A SCAT stop and bench are located on the north side of Beach Road between Beach Way and the La Siesta condominium complex. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

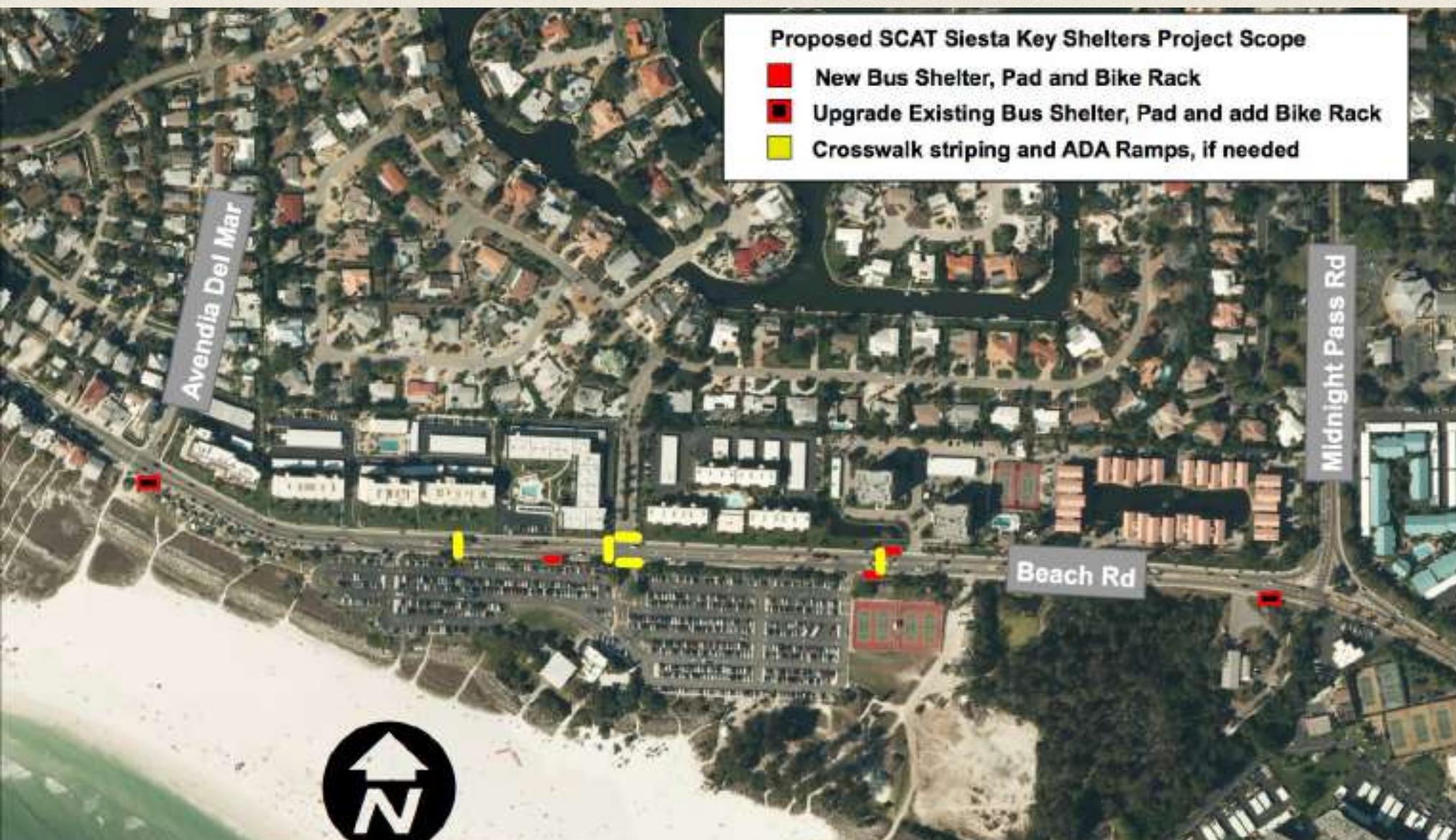
views of people living in condominiums on that side of the road, Patterson pointed out.

The other formal vote the board took on the project last week authorized Chairman Charles Hines to send a letter to the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) board requesting a modification of a congestion mitigative project involving pedestrian safety improvements on Beach Road at Beach Way Drive.

On July 26, 2010, the MPO adopted the original project, which called for one new SCAT bus pullout lane and three bus shelters on Beach Road in the vicinity of Siesta Public

Beach Park, a March 5 staff memo explained. Subsequently, preliminary engineering work on the project determined “bus pullout lanes are not feasible at any location” along the approximately half-mile segment of Beach Road adjacent to the park because of land-use constraints, the memo pointed out.

Therefore, Blanchard told the commissioners, SCAT staff was seeking the project modifications to put the focus on shelters and pedestrian access to those shelters. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) representatives have approved the revised project, the March 5 memo noted. Though Beach Road is a county route, FDOT provided the



*A graphic shows where new bus shelters and crosswalk improvements are planned near Siesta Public Beach. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



*A SCAT stop stands just west of the entrance to Siesta Public Beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# *Siesta Seen*

\$312,372 in grant funds for the original work. Therefore, the proposed changes will have no impact on the funding, Blanchard said.

As explained in the memo, the modified project would expand the number of shelters from three to five, add way-finding signage and two new crosswalks on Beach Road, upgrade one existing crosswalk and improve the current crosswalks at the beach park to add ramps and other features to enhance access under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines.

SCAT staff has been asked to postpone the start of the project until the beach park improvements have been completed in November 2015, Blanchard added. Thus, the timeline calls for the shelter and crosswalk work to begin in December 2015.

“I realize that the condos across the street from the beach did not want a bus shelter in front of them” when one was proposed a number of years ago, Patterson pointed out. “But it seems almost a glaring omission that you have one on one side and not on the other,” she told Blanchard.

Because a bus stop is in that location on the north side of the road, Blanchard replied, staff could assess the possibility of putting a shelter there. Referencing the aerial map, she noted that parking areas are in the vicinity of the spot Patterson had indicated.

“So [the shelter is] not going to disrupt somebody’s view of the beach,” Patterson responded.

When Hines asked whether Patterson’s request would entail another staff evaluation of the entire project, Blanchard responded, “Design has not started,” so that would not be a problem.

Further, Blanchard said, staff plans to seek public comment on the full proposal as part of the design process.

“That’s all I’m asking,” Patterson replied. “Explore it and take it to the public.”

When Patterson also complained that one crosswalk appeared to be far from the bus stop it was designed to serve, Blanchard explained, “We had some difficulty in siting the approximate location of the shelter [there] due to trees ... It’s not too far, really.” It will be about 800 feet from the crosswalk, she added.

## **NO, THANK YOU**

The county’s chief engineer, James K. Harriott Jr., notified the commissioners in a March 6 memo that staff is not recommending the county purchase a parcel for sale at 5700 Midnight Pass Road. Apparently staff was already leaning in that direction when it found the price was more than \$1 million higher than it originally appeared to be.

According to the memo, Commissioner Nora Patterson was approached on Jan. 30 by Siesta Key Real Estate Consultants, wondering if the county would have any interest in the property. The land, which contains an office building and a parking lot, is adjacent

# Siesta Seen

to Fire Station No. 13. In fact, part of that lot is on county property.

The sheet provided to county staff showed the asking price was \$808,600, Harriott explained in the memo.

The county's Real Estate Department contacted various other departments, Harriott continued, but only the Parks and Recreation staff had any interest in the parcel, and that was because of the proximity of the property to Siesta Public Beach.

However, Harriott noted, even at \$808,500, staff felt the price was too high.

As it turns out, the actual price is \$2 million, the listing agent advised staff during the review, Harriott continued. The earlier figure was from 2006. He added, "The last appraisal was completed in 2006 for \$1.3 million."

## CONDO COUNCIL MEETING

The Siesta Key Condominium Council will hold its next regular meeting at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 18, at Siesta Key Chapel, which is located at 4615 Gleason Ave., east of Siesta Village.

Refreshments will be served during a social period, starting at 3 p.m.



*An aerial view shows the building and parking lot located at 5700 Midnight Pass on Siesta Key. Image from Google Maps*

# Siesta Seen

The guest speaker for the meeting will be Sarasota attorney Dan Lobeck, who has expertise in matters involving condominium associations, a news release says. “He has practiced in that field for 34 years, after serving as a policy maker for the Division of Florida Condominiums, Timeshares and Mobile Homes,” the release notes. He is the managing partner of Lobeck & Hanson, which represents several hundred associations in Sarasota County — including a number on Siesta Key — and in other parts of the region.

## BIGGER BAFFLE BOXES

If drivers along Beach Road the past couple of weeks were curious about a crew working on a section between Beach Accesses 7 and 8, I have an explanation, thanks to county spokesman Curt Preisser.

The crew was installing larger baffle boxes to increase the flow of stormwater to the new 1-acre stormwater pond next to Siesta Public Beach.

A baffle box, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is a concrete or fiberglass structure that contains a series of sediment settling chambers separated by baffles. The box’s primary function “is to remove sediment, suspended particles and associated pollutants” from stormwater, an EPA fact sheet says. It “also may contain trash screens or skimmers to capture larger materials, trash, and floatables.”

## KUDOS FOR THE CAMPGROUND

In late February, the county commissioners received an email lauding Turtle Beach Campground.



*A county crew works to repair a section of Beach Road on March 4 after the installation of larger baffle boxes to increase the flow of stormwater to the new pond at the site adjacent to Siesta Public Beach.*

# Siesta Seen

A New Hampshire woman wrote, “My family has been visiting Turtle Beach Campground for at least 25 years, and I thought it was high time I let someone (other than friends and acquaintances) know how much we love coming here. It is a nice size facility with all the necessities, and is wonderful for people of all ages and backgrounds. My husband and I brought our young children here and have continued to come every year now that they are on their own. Our children chose Turtle Beach over Disney World when asked! There is no substitute for nature. The campground

is well maintained and the personnel are friendly and helpful. We truly hope to be able to return every year to come. Thank you for sustaining this gem; it is the only place like it that we have seen.”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta responded, “Many thanks for your email and your kind words. ... We are most fortunate here in Sarasota County with all of our natural resources together with our Arts, Culture, and overall quality of life. Here’s hoping you’re able to continue visiting here for many years to come.” 



*Turtle Beach Campground, which is owned by Sarasota County, is adjacent to Turtle Beach. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

*Angel Trumpets by James Griffin. Contributed image*

## **GRIFFIN'S WORKS FEATURED IN *SUNLIGHT SEDUCTION* THIS MONTH**

Dabbert Gallery in downtown Sarasota is showcasing works by James Griffin in *Sunlight Seduction*, which will continue through March 31, the gallery has announced.

It is located at 76 S. Palm Ave.

“Sunlight ... is the engine that drives the paintings of James Griffin,” a news release says. “His work is at once classic and up-to-the minute in its focus, moving between vivid realistic depictions of sunlit streets to rhythmic compositions that include abstraction

in a fascinating painterly dance,” the release adds.

“Sometimes the light in his images is intense, with strong definition between areas of sun and shade,” the release continues. At other times, the light “is the softest glow of the post-sunset evening, washing everything with gold. But always it is the sunlight that seduces this artist.”

For more information, call 955-1315 or visit [dabbertgallery.com](http://dabbertgallery.com).



*Prelude to a Miracle by James Griffin.  
Contributed image*



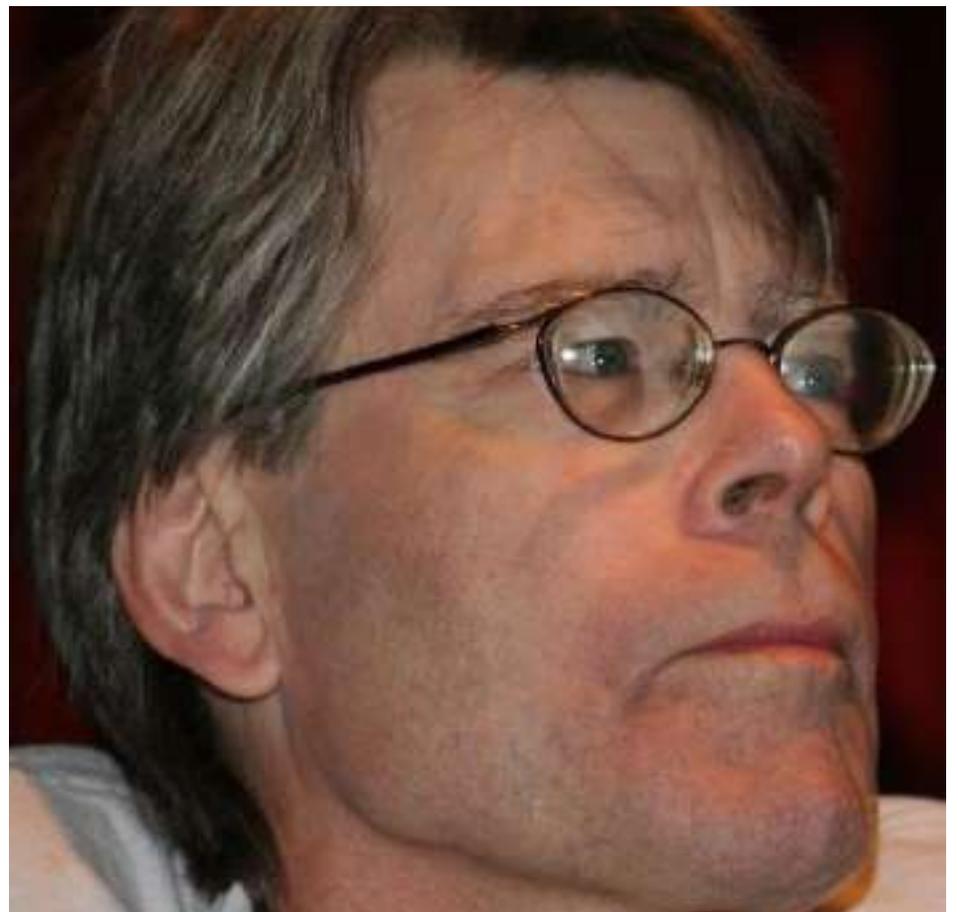
*Adagio For Morning by James Griffin.  
Contributed image*

## **STEPHEN KING, DAVID CLEVELAND SCHEDULED FOR BOOK SIGNINGS**

Bookstore1Sarasota will present best-selling author Stephen King for book signings on Sunday, March 16, at 4 p.m., the store has announced.

King will sign copies of *Doctor Sleep*, a news release says. The book must be purchased at Bookstore1. "Only those with a ticket provided at time of purchase will be admitted to the signing," the release adds. The shop has imposed a limit of one book and one signature per person. No backlist books or memorabilia will be signed by King, the release points out.

On March 23 at 2 p.m., David Cleveland, the author of *Love's Attraction*, will be at the store to sign books.



*Stephen King will sign books at Bookstore1Sarasota on March 16. Photo by Pinguino via Flickr and Wikimedia Commons*

His novel is about “a Washington political “fixer” facing an impending bribery scandal who is confronted with a past he never knew and a legacy of deception he cannot escape,” the release says.

Bookstore1Sarasota is located at 1359 Main St. in downtown Sarasota. More event information is available at [bookstore1sarasota.com](http://bookstore1sarasota.com) or 365-7900.



Image courtesy  
[stephenking.com](http://stephenking.com)

## CELEBRATING THE GULF COAST

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) and Sarasota Bay Watch are hosting the Gulf Coast Heritage Art Exhibit through March at the Federal Building in downtown Sarasota, the organizations have announced. The Federal Building, which is located at 111 S. Orange Ave., is open during normal business hours, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.

to 5 p.m., a news release says. SBEP's headquarters is in the building. “The free exhibit showcases art that celebrates local history, including paintings of early life along the Gulf Coast,” the release notes. Among the participating artists are William Harman, Wilfred Berg and Larry Stults, the release continues. Stults' *Chief's Fish House* is shown.



## FST ANNOUNCES LIMITED ENGAGEMENT OF *FREUD'S LAST SESSION*

Florida Studio Theatre has announced *Freud's Last Session* by Mark St. Germain will have a limited engagement beginning March 12 in the Keating Theatre.

Tickets range from \$32 to \$34 and may be purchased from the box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in Sarasota, by calling 366-9000 or going online at [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

"*Freud's Last Session* is in an imagined depiction of a meeting between Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis, set in the final days of Freud's life, on the very day that England entered the Second World War," a news release explains. The play was inspired by Dr. Armand M. Nicholi Jr.'s book *The Question of God*, which speculates on this meeting between Freud

and Lewis "that history can neither confirm nor deny," the release adds.

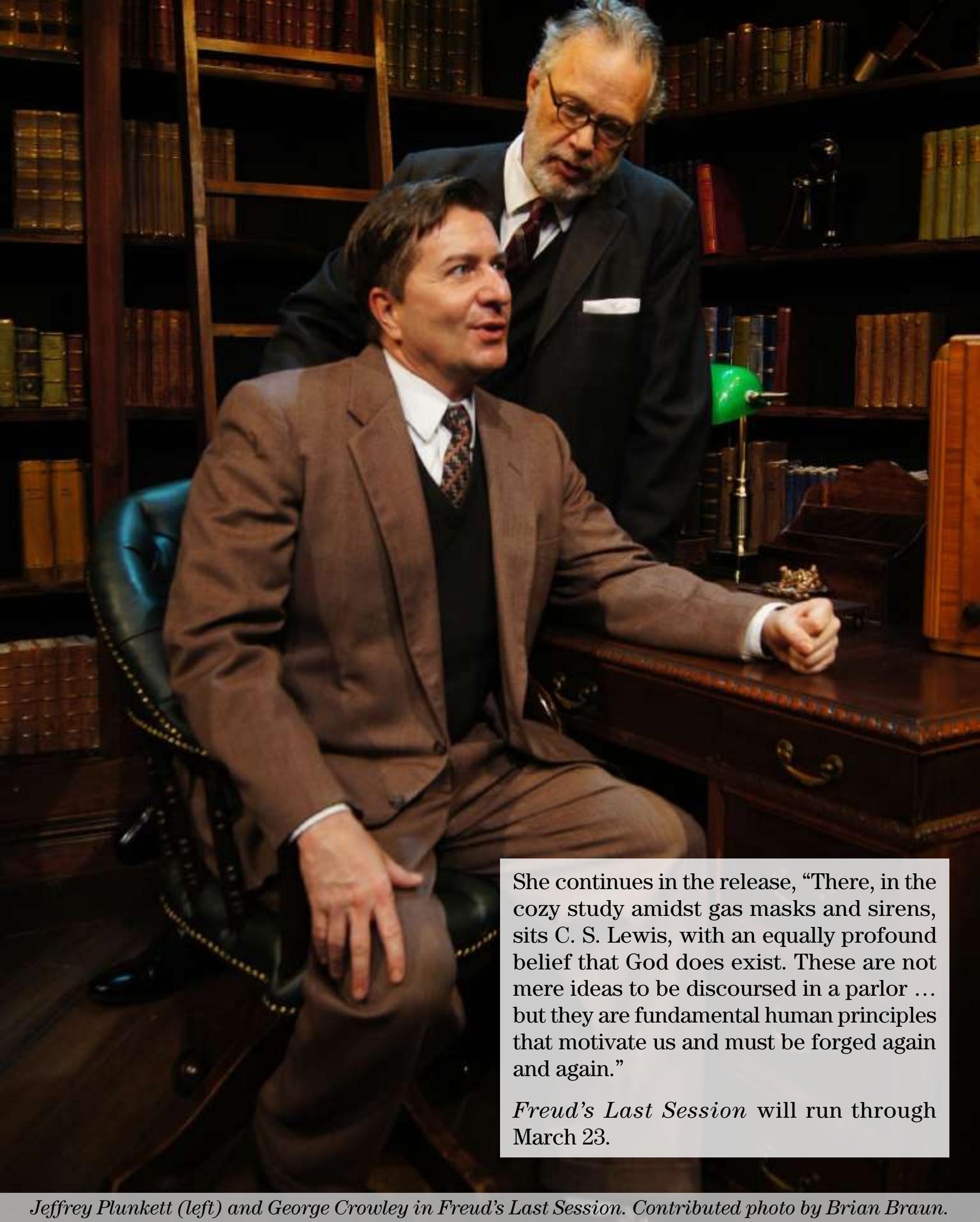
"St. Germain's play takes the scenario one step farther, bringing the imagined meeting to life in exquisite, thought-provoking detail," the release continues.

St. Germain previously worked with Florida Studio Theatre on last year's production of *Best of Enemies*, the release notes.

Director Kate Alexander describes the show in the release: "World War II was one of the most horrific times in the 20th century," and it "birthed" existentialists such as Freud, Camus, Sartre and Beauvoir, "who could not believe that a God could exist amidst such world depravity."



George Crowley (left) and Jeffrey Plunkett in *Freud's Last Session*. Contributed photo by Brian Braun.



She continues in the release, “There, in the cozy study amidst gas masks and sirens, sits C. S. Lewis, with an equally profound belief that God does exist. These are not mere ideas to be discoursed in a parlor ... but they are fundamental human principles that motivate us and must be forged again and again.”

*Freud’s Last Session* will run through March 23.

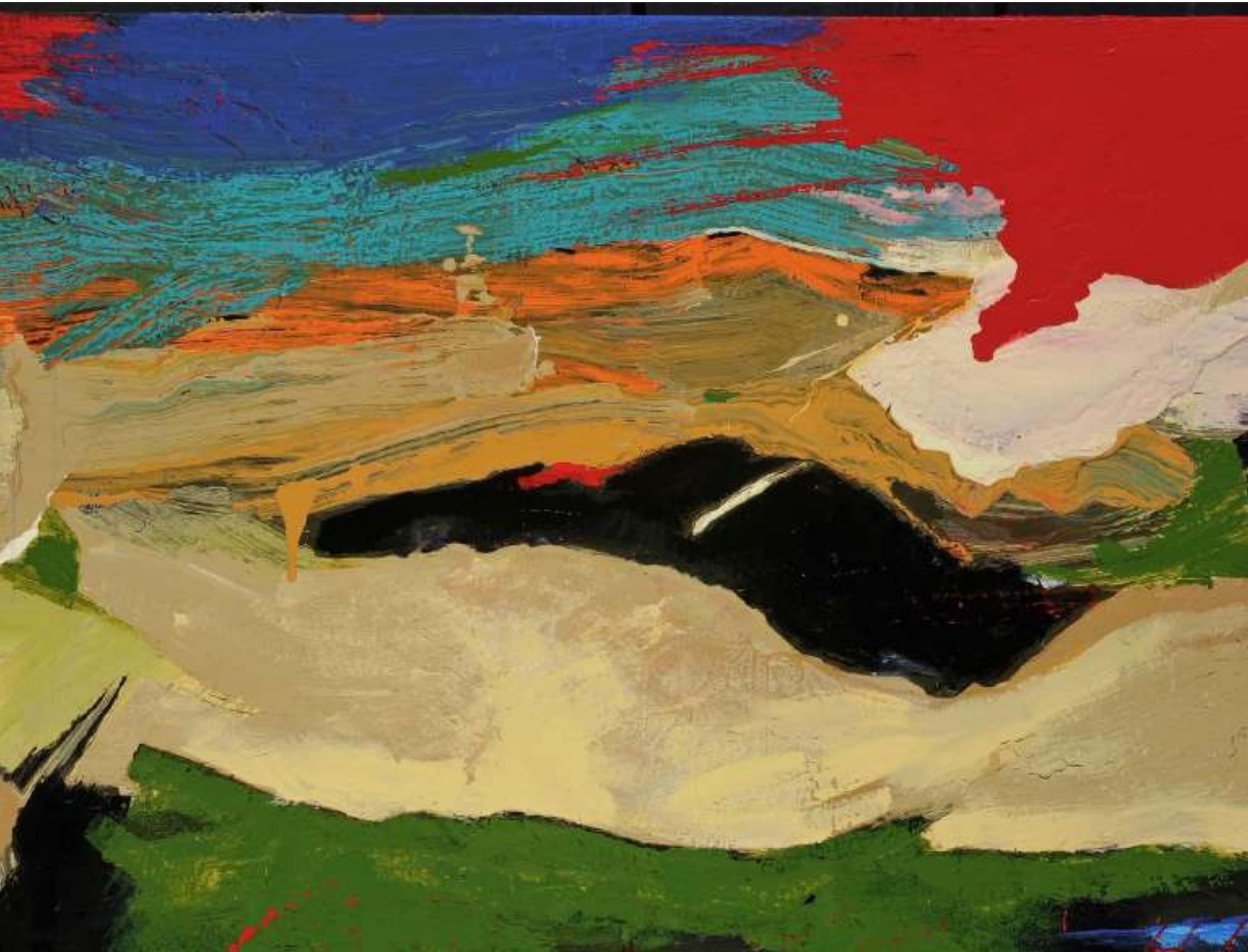
## GALLUP GALLERY SPOTLIGHTING ART MADE IN SARASOTA

Through March 29, Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art gallery is presenting *Made in Sarasota*, featuring works by “Sarasota-based and globally celebrated artists,” the gallery has announced in a news release.

The exhibit’s artists are Kim Anderson, Jean Blackburn, Jorge Blanco, Aaron Board, Tom Carabasi, Hugh Davies, Robert Farber, Hugh Davies, Nancy Hellebrand, Susan Klein, Dennis Kowal, Andrew Kuziak, George Pappas, Vicky Randall, Gale Fulton Ross, Rob Tarbell and

Susan Zukowsky, the release says. “This stylistically diverse show cuts a broad swath across both medium and theme and includes abstractions of the natural world, hyper-real photography, nuanced graphite drawings on paper, thickly layered baroque surrealism and heroic sculptural pieces,” the release adds.

Gallery director Allyn Gallup notes in the release that the artists in this exhibition represent some of the region’s top talents. “But just because their art is made here doesn’t mean



*Red Tide by Gale Fulton Ross. Contributed image*



*Anna Balance by Rob Tarbelli. Contributed image*

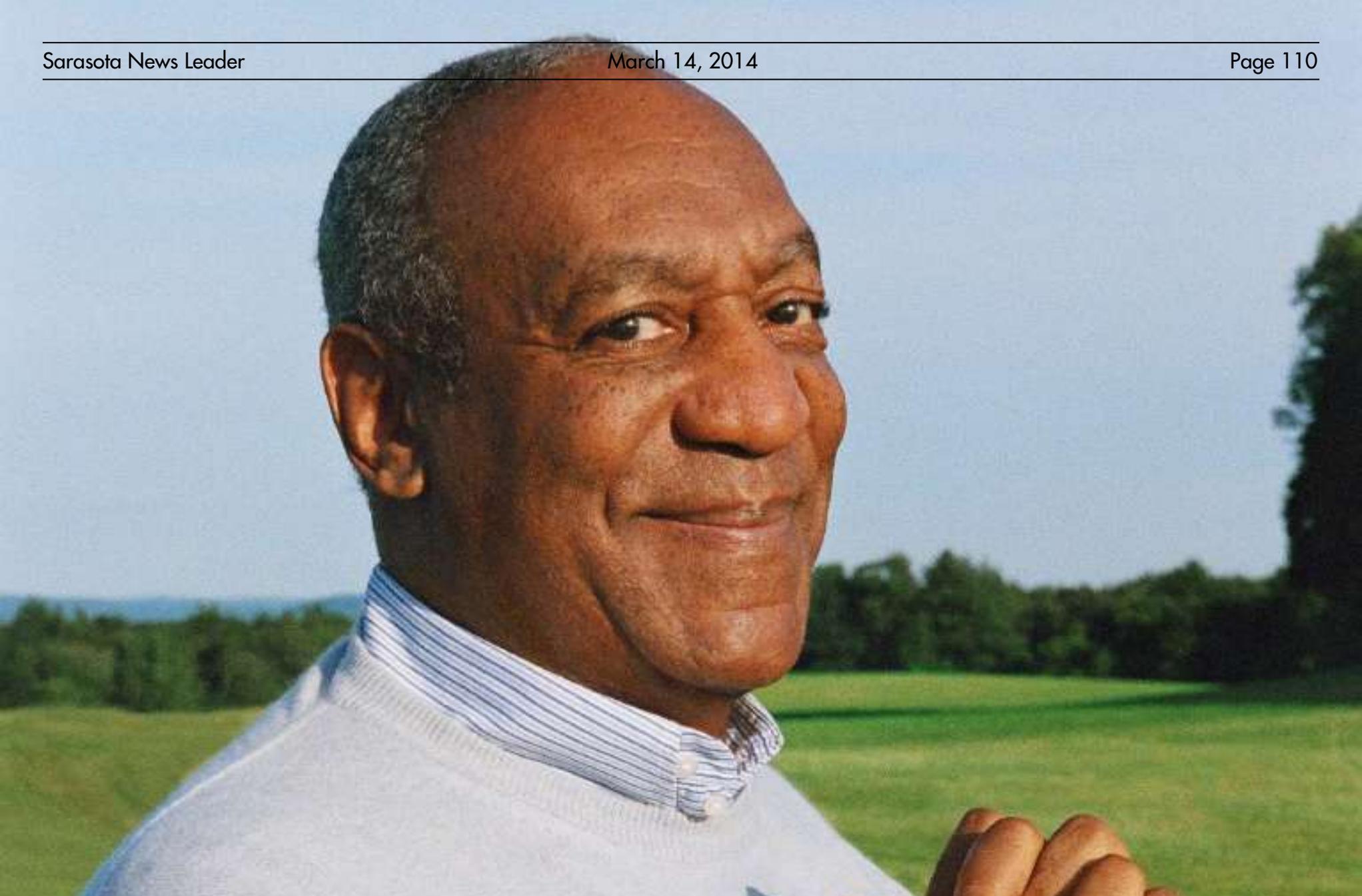
it stays here,” the release notes. “According to Gallup, the talent on display is globally respected, though often neglected at home,” the release continues. “The title’s ironic,” he says in the release. “I don’t want people to see this exhibit because these artists are from around here. I want people to see it because it’s world-class art by established artists.

There’s an invisible prejudice against hometown artists. As the saying goes, ‘A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country.’ These artists deserve our honor. I’m just trying to set the record straight.”

For more information, call 366-2454 or visit [allyngallup.com](http://allyngallup.com). The gallery is located at 1288 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.



*Rice Terraces in Bali by Thomas Carabasi. Contributed image*



## **COSBY BRINGING HIS BELOVED BLEND OF COMEDY TO SARASOTA**

One of America's most beloved comedians of all time, Bill Cosby, will be at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota for two shows on March 16 at 3 and 7 p.m., the hall has announced.

"Few entertainers have achieved the incredible status of Bill Cosby," who has performed for five decades, a news release says.

He "has captivated generations of fans with his comedy routines, iconic albums and best-selling books," such as *Fatherhood*, the release adds. "His comedy transcends age, gender and cultural barriers," it points out. Cosby broke television's racial barrier with *I Spy*, when he became the first African American to costar on a series; the

role won him three consecutive Emmys, the release continues.

"Arguably one of Cosby's greatest contributions to American entertainment and culture is *The Cosby Show*," the release notes. The show dominated the No. 1 ratings spot for years and earned nearly unanimous critical praise. *Life* magazine described it as "a gentle, whimsical, warmhearted" program whose "delicious ordinariness of ... pleasures and tribulations has given millions a fresh, laughter-splashed perspective on their own domestic lives."

Tickets are priced from \$50 to \$70. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [VanWezel.org](http://VanWezel.org).

## BELLE AND THE BEAST BRINGING THEIR STORY TO THE VAN WEZEL

NETworks will present *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, the smash Broadway musical hit, at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall March 17 and 18, the Van Wezel has announced.

A traditional fairy tale first published in France in the mid-18th century, *Beauty and the Beast* “is an enduring story of love and friendship that has been translated into hundreds of versions worldwide,” the news release says. When Walt Disney Pictures released the animated feature film *Beauty and the Beast* in 1991, “it was hailed as an instant classic, with critics praising its ‘songs worthy of a Broadway musical,’” the release notes. The

film went on to win Academy Awards for Best Song (*Beauty and the Beast*) and Best Original Score, and it was the first animated feature to be nominated for Best Picture, the release points out.

Rob Roth, who directed the Broadway premiere and is back at the helm for the new tour, says in the release that the “story of the show is about seeing past the exterior of a person and into his or her heart.”

Tickets are \$55 to \$80. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [VanWezel.org](http://VanWezel.org).



*Hilary Maiberger as Belle with the cast of Disney's Beauty and the Beast. Contributed photo by Joan Marcus*

## SARASOTA OPERA'S STUDIO ARTISTS TO PERFORM IN CONCERT

The Sarasota Concert Association will present Sarasota Opera's Studio Artists in a Munchtime Musicales performance on Wednesday, March 19, at noon in David Cohen Hall at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center in Sarasota, the association has announced.

The Symphony Center is located at 709 N. Tamiami Trail.

The concert is free and open to the public.

Sarasota Opera's Studio Artists is a group of singers who perform in mainstage productions by understudying principal roles and performing supporting roles, a news release explains. "With dozens of roles needing understudies each season, the Studio Artists are often called on to substitute for an ill or injured principal, sometimes with little notice," the release explains.

Members of the Studio Artists "are also Sarasota Opera's ambassadors of opera, bringing music to communities outside the Sarasota Opera House," the release notes. "They perform concerts of operatic and non-operatic greats" throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties for people who might not otherwise be able to attend a performance, it adds. These outreach initiatives are held in schools, retirement homes, community centers and at guild meetings, for examples.

Studio Artists not only return often to Sarasota Opera as principal artists, but they also have gone on to perform with opera companies around the world, including La Scala, the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera and the Paris Opera, the release continues.



*Sarasota Opera's Studio Artists for 2014 gather at the Opera House. Contributed photo*

“Munchtime Musicales is a series of free concerts featuring performances by high-caliber, area-based artists,” the release points out. The series is designed to offer a wide variety of musical genres, including classical, folk and jazz, featuring both vocal and instrumental performers, the release notes.

The 2013-2014 concert season will conclude on April 16 with the Gloria Musicae Singers,

“Sarasota’s professional vocal ensemble known for stimulating performances of great choral music that both educate and entertain,” the release adds. All performances are at noon at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center. The series is free and open to the public. Seating is open; no reservations are taken.

For more information about Munchtime Musicales, call 351-7467 or visit [scasarasota.org](http://scasarasota.org).

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## ART CENTER SARASOTA TO PRESENT SIXTH ANNUAL *ICONCEPT*

Art Center Sarasota will present the sixth annual *iconcept* runway event on March 28 at Sarasota Municipal Auditorium, located at 801 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the gallery has announced.

Lorenzo Hubbard, an award-winning Miami designer and public personality, will return to host this year’s event, which will feature a runway fashion show of original ensembles created by area artists and designers especially for *iconcept*, a news release points out. A dinner, a boutique and a performance by Fuzión Dance Artists will be part of the festivities, the release adds.

Doors will open at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the fashion show at 8 p.m. Tickets for the dinner seating are \$125, and they include wine. General admission will open at 7:30 p.m. with those tickets priced at \$45, including the runway show and a desert bar.

Advance sales for tables of 10 and single dinner seats are available as well. Funds raised by this event benefit Art Center Sarasota’s youth art education programs.

“For six years, Art Center Sarasota’s *iconcept* team has challenged area artists to

create ensembles from unexpected and non-traditional materials,” the release continues. “The results have been nothing less than extraordinary.”

Lisa Berger, Art Center Sarasota’s executive director and the founder of *iconcept*, says in the release, “These artists never fail to amaze us; their ingenuity, originality and wit have made this one of the season’s most colorful and anticipated events.”

Among this year’s highlights will be Cathy Comora’s *BRAdal Gown*, constructed with actual bras; Andrea Silvergleit’s *Regular Fashion for Regular People*, made from Activia containers; Sharon White’s *No More Wire Hangers*; and Jim Stewart’s *Calendar Girl*, made from recycled Art Center calendars, the release notes.

Prizes will be awarded once again for the “most unique” guest ensembles, the release adds.

According to Berger, *iconcept* has become a vital fundraiser and awareness builder for Art Center Sarasota

For information and reservations, call 365-2032 or visit [artsarasota.org/iconcept](http://artsarasota.org/iconcept).



*SRQ in Transparent View by Barbara and Neal Gerdeman and Amanda and Zach Gilliland from the 2013 iconcept event. Contributed photo by Mike Brousseau*



*It's Who We Are by Emma Thurgood from the 2013 iconcept event. Contributed photo by Mike Brousseau*



*Courage, Courrèges by Pamela Sumner from the 2013 iconcept event. Contributed photo by Mike Brousseau*

## FST LAUNCHES ITS 2014 FAVORITE POEM PROJECT

Florida Studio Theatre has announced the beginning of the 2014 Favorite Poem Project in partnership with BookStore1Sarasota.

FST will host the 2014 Favorite Poem Reading with special guests Mark Doty, winner of the National Book Award, and Kevin Young, an award-winning poet, on May 3 at 3 p.m. in the Keating Theatre. Submission forms for people who wish to participate are available at the FST box office (1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota) or at BookStore1Sarasota, located at 1359 Main St. in downtown Sarasota, a news release says.

All submissions are due at BookStore1Sarasota no later than April 7. Interested persons may mail submissions to Poetry Life Favorite Poem Project c/o Bookstore1Sarasota, 1359 Main St., Sarasota, Fl. 34236; they may drop off materials at the store; or they may email them to [poetryadmin@poetrylife.org](mailto:poetryadmin@poetrylife.org).

For more information, call the FST box office at 366-9000, visit [floridastudiotheatre.org](http://floridastudiotheatre.org) or visit [BookStore1Sarasota.com](http://BookStore1Sarasota.com).

“The Favorite Poem Project is just one component of the Poetry Life Weekend,” the release notes. This is an opportunity for community members to bring to life the works of their favorite poets, it adds.

“BookStore1Sarasota and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation have made it possible to host this event along with Florida Studio Theatre,” the release notes.

Doty and Young also will explore their works and methods with teachers during a luncheon honoring community educators, the release continues. Further, students will have the chance to submit their own works for possible readings during the weekend of May 2 and 3, the release adds.

All members of the community are encouraged to submit their favorite poems — written by an established poet — for the opportunity to participate in the Favorite Poem Reading, the release says.



*The Keating Theatre at Florida Studio Theatre will be the scene of favorite poem readings on May 3. Contributed photo*

## PARADISE IN SEASON TO PUT SPOTLIGHT ON THREE ARTISTS

*Paradise in Season: New Works by Beverly A. Smith, Vladislav Yeliseyev and Joseph Palmerio* will be on exhibit from March 14 through April 30 at the Celery Barn in Towles Court, the gallery has announced.

The Celery Barn is located at 266 S. Links Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

The exhibit includes abstract and impressionistic landscapes in oil and watercolor, a news release points out. The artists, who represent themselves in this show, will be available on the opening weekend, March 14-15, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a life painting demonstration by Yeliseyev on March 15 at 2 p.m., the release adds. A reception, with the artists in attendance, is set for March 21 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. For more information, call 330-6865.

Smith has been a teacher, coach and exercise physiologist, but she now devotes most of her time to creating art, the release explains. “My expressionistic work is intuitive,” she says in the release. “As I add more paint, movement, shape and texture to the work, it develops itself and becomes a painting.”

Smith adds that she is continuing her studies at the Renaissance School of Art in Sarasota, where she is concentrating on anatomy and figure drawing.

For more information about Smith, visit [beverlyasmith.com](http://beverlyasmith.com).



*Sarasota Bayfront by Joseph Palmerio. Contributed image*

Classically trained, “Yeliseyev combines an artist’s eye with an architect’s obsession,” the release notes. After graduating with a degree in fine art from the Moscow School of Arts, he earned a master’s degree in architecture from the Moscow Institute of Architecture in 1983. “My every work is a manifest of light existence,” he says in the release. “Understanding the nuances of light is a matter of life and death in landscape painting,” he adds.



*Hideaway by Vladislav Yeliseyev. Contributed image*

His works have won numerous awards at juried art competitions in the United States and Russia. “To share his passion and expertise,” he founded the Renaissance School of Art in Sarasota, where he teaches a formal curriculum and educates his students in classical drawing and painting, the release points out.

For more information about Yeliseyev, visit [yeliseyevstudio.com](http://yeliseyevstudio.com).

Palmerio is a graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, the release

continues. His works are in private collections throughout the country, and he previously exhibited at the Coutts Museum in Kansas as one of the “100 National Parks Artists,” the release notes. He also has completed large murals for the city of Philadelphia, the Acme Market Corp. in Great Valley, PA, and Motivation Inc. in the Orlando Airport. Further, he has served as artist-in-residence for Everglades National Park and the Great Sand Dunes National Park in Colorado, the release adds.

For more information, visit [palmerioart.com](http://palmerioart.com). 



*Acceptance by Beverly Smith*



### **UUCS WILL PRESENT GUITARIST JAMES DURST IN CONCERT**

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota will present internationally known performer James Durst in concert at 7 p.m. on Sunday, March 16, the church has announced.

“Quietly traversing the planet ... since 1965, Durst has performed for rapt audiences of every age in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and more than 200 cities in 45 countries,” a news release says. He has

presented concerts throughout the Americas and in Europe, Scandinavia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Japan and Korea, it points out.

Admission will be \$15 in advance by contacting Gail Colella at 924-2848 or \$18 at the door, the release notes.

The church is located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

Most recently, he has toured in India and Israel, the release says. In October 2011, he returned to Vietnam for the first time since 1974 to honor his friend, composer Pham Duy (1920-2013) on the occasion of Duy's 91st birthday, the release points out.

“Drawing from a rich and ever-evolving repertoire of distinctive songs” — both original works and compositions in some two dozen other languages — “Durst engages each disparate audience in a participatory journey,” the release adds. The songs “reflect a global perspective and underscore the interconnectedness of life,” the release points out.

Although he often performs solo, Durst is a member of Work O' The Weavers, a folk group organized as an homage to Pete Seeger and the three other members of the Weavers, the release explains. “The Weavers were very popular during the ‘folk’ era,” the release notes,

“and Seeger and Durst were good friends until Seeger's recent death at the age of 94.”

The release continues, “Durst employs his role as minstrel to communicate global and social concerns common to his audiences, such as environmental sustainability, world peace and greater human understanding ...”

Once, following a concert in Skopje, Macedonia, a woman who spoke no English found Durst backstage, the release adds. Through an interpreter, she told him, “I didn't understand a word, but I understood what you were saying,” touching the area of her heart as she spoke.

More details about Durst may be found at [jamesdurst.com](http://jamesdurst.com).

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota is a Welcoming Congregation serving Sarasota and Manatee counties. More information may be found at [uusarasota.org](http://uusarasota.org) or by emailing [engage@uusarasota.org](mailto:engage@uusarasota.org).

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## REDEEMER'S LENTEN ORGAN RECITALS CONTINUE WITH MARY MOZELLE

The Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota will present a half-hour Lenten organ recital on Wednesday, March 19, featuring guest organist Mary Mozelle, organist and choir director for First United Methodist Church in Bradenton, the church has announced.

The recital will begin at 12:10 p.m. and end at 12:40 p.m., a news release says. It is free and open to the public.

The church is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

For more information, call 955-4263 or visit [redeemersarasota.org](http://redeemersarasota.org).



*Mary Mozelle/Contributed photo*

## 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. Photo from Wikimedia

## SEX TRAFFICKING IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA TO BE TOPIC OF PROGRAM

At 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 21, author Michael Hirsh, whose newest novel focuses on the sex trafficking of young girls in Southwest Florida, will be the guest speaker at the program of the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) in Sarasota.

Hirsh spent over a year researching and writing his latest work, discovering early on that most people are under the impression that the girls used in sex trafficking are brought here from foreign countries, while the fact is the vast majority of those forced into prostitution are Americans, a news release points out.

“The FBI’s best estimate is that between 100,000 and 300,000 girls are being trafficked in this country at any one time,” the release adds. “We need to learn how to recognize it, and what to do to help rescue girls and boys who are being held against their will,” the release says.

Hirsh, a member of CHJ, is a lifelong journalist. He has produced documentaries and specials for ABC, CBS, PBS and HBO, winning the Peabody Award and multiple Emmys in the process, the release notes. He also “had a long association with the folks who created *M\*A\*S\*H*,” the release continues.



Michael Hirsh/Contributed photo

Hirsh has written six nonfiction books, including *The New York Times* best-seller, *Terri — the Truth*, which he co-authored with Michael Schiavo, the release adds.

The program is free for CHJ members; for non-members, the cost is \$5.

CHJ meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota.

For more information, call 929-7771 or visit [chj-sarasota.org](http://chj-sarasota.org). 

## QUICK TIP

SARASOTA NEWS LEADER



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



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**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](http://WSLR.org).

**14+**  
MARCH

### **Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents *Harry and Lena***

Through March 23; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or [wbtsrq.org](http://wbtsrq.org).

**14+**  
MARCH

### **Dabbert Gallery presents James Griffin's *Sunlight Seduction***

Through March 31; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or [DabbertGallery.com](http://DabbertGallery.com).

**14+**  
MARCH

### **Florida Studio Theatre presents *Daddy Long Legs***

Through April 5; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$39 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

**14+**  
MARCH

### **Asolo Repertory Theatre presents *The Grapes of Wrath***

Through April 19; times vary. Mertz Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$23 to \$76. Information: 351-8000 or [AsoloRep.org](http://AsoloRep.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 *Music of 007 and Other Movies***

March 16, 3 p.m. Riverview Performing Arts Center, 1 Ram Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$5 to \$25. Information: 926-7677 or [SarasotaPops.org](http://SarasotaPops.org).

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**

# BIRD ... WATCHING

**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
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Circle 121/5/2000

## **SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS**



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