

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 27 — March 21, 2014

# News Leader

**MELTING DOWN**

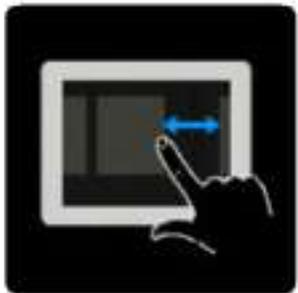
**PEACE IN OUR TIME**

**MAN OVERBOARD!**

*Inside*

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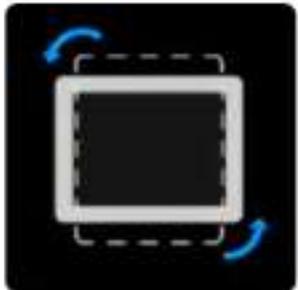
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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

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# Welcome

I had to chuckle this week when City Editor Stan Zimmerman sent an email saying that if we were still operating in the good old days of the *Pelican Press*, I would be swatting him. The reason: His City Commission stories came in a bit long.

A print publication editor almost assuredly would have cut them or asked him to do so. Fortunately, the *News Leader* does not have such a concern. I prefer to err, if you will, on the side of providing too much detail instead of not enough. And this week provided us plenty of fodder for detail.

The homelessness topic was at the forefront this week, with both Stan and County Editor Roger Drouin on the beat. The County Commission's revision of its noise ordinance also is one of our top stories. (I am long overdue in pointing out that without Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker's assistance, I probably would be bald from tearing out my hair every week, trying to figure out the priority of our articles.)

And speaking of Cooper: He took on two assignments for this issue that I have not seen covered elsewhere: Control Growth Now's recognition of former County Administrator Randy Reid as Citizen of the Year and the remarks Strong Towns President and Founder Chuck Marohn made to members of the Sarasota County Coalition of Neighborhood Organizations.

Cooper also dealt with Sarasota 2050 and the county contract for operations of Nathan Benderson Park.

Thankfully, on the light side, Harriet Cuthbert has a delightful story about Southeastern Guide Dogs. If you find canines cuddly, do not miss this story!

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher





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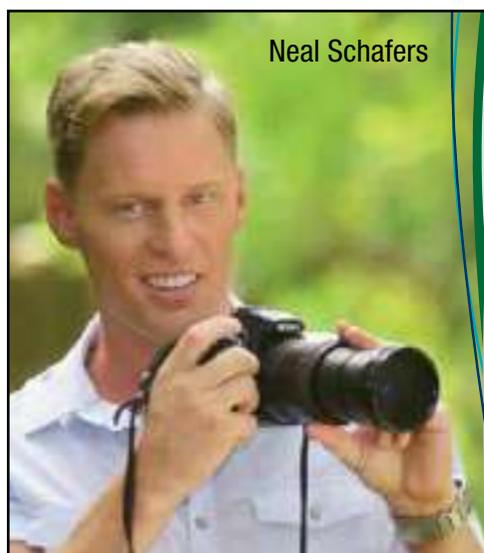
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# MELTING DOWN



*Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut presents his recommendations during a joint City/County commission meeting on Nov. 25, 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **WITH THEIR FRUSTRATIONS BUILDING, THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HAVE GAINED AGREEMENT OF THE CITY COMMISSION TO ADD HOMELESSNESS ISSUES TO AN APRIL 1 JOINT MEETING AGENDA**

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

Another update on addressing homelessness countywide, another venting session: One county commissioner says he is tired of working on a plan for a homeless shelter only to have every effort hit “a brick wall with the city.” Another characterizes the most recent City Commission dialogue on the subject as “toxic.”

On Tuesday, March 18, frustration continued to build in the Sarasota County Commission Chambers over the

issue of a come-as-you-are homeless shelter. And the mounting frustration may be a precursor to a tense meeting on April 1, when the City and County commissions will address the shelter project during a joint session that already had been planned.

“*I am really getting fed up with the whole situation. I'd rather pull the [county] funding. The city thinks they have the homeless issue under control.*”

Joe Barbeta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County

The city and county were supposed to be partners in the effort to build a shelter, the linchpin to homelessness consultant Robert Marbut's recommendations for addressing problems

in the community. But a pact formed between the city and county boards during a joint meeting on Nov. 25 has been melting down.

On Tuesday, the county commissioners renewed their recounting of displeasure with City Hall, where two city commissioners have reiterated their opposition to the shelter project and where the administration has appeared to retreat from the city's earlier commitment to the plan.

In voicing his frustration, County Commissioner Joe Barbetta focused on

comments aired during the City Commission meeting the previous day. Those included remarks by a Sarasota Police Department officer about a shelter in Pinellas County that has been called a model for the one proposed in Sarasota; statements by City Commissioner Susan Chapman that the joint city-county decision in November to approve a homeless strategy was a "sandbag" vote; and another comment by Chapman that prospective shelter sites were "flunking" environmental tests — which is untrue, according to county staff.

**A** 1530 N. Osprey Ave. (Property owned by United Parcel Services, Inc.)

**B** 1330 N. Osprey Ave. (Property owned by the City of Sarasota)



*The city-owned site at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. remains one of the two parcels under review for a community homeless shelter. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

Barbetta also called attention to a comment by Vice Mayor Willie Shaw.

During Monday's City Commission meeting, Shaw once again mentioned the unknown expenses of building a shelter and operating it. He questioned how the two final prospective shelter sites, both located in north Sarasota, were chosen, and he accused Marbut, the consultant brought in by the city and county together to address homelessness, of being "fraudulent."

"Your intent was to put [the shelter] in north Sarasota from the beginning," he said, referring to Marbut. "It was never a county issue. To play this game in front of all these people is fraudulent."

On Tuesday, Barbetta said the matter has reached the point where every effort to move forward with the shelter proposal results in "hitting a brick wall with the city." He is tired of trying to work with an unwilling partner, he added. "I am really getting fed up with the whole situation," Barbetta said. "I'd rather pull the [county] funding. The city thinks they have the homeless issue under control."

"They are insulting Dr. Marbut and Pinellas Safe Harbor... The sheriff [of Sarasota County] was attacked," Barbetta pointed out.

## **SABOTAGING THE PROCESS**

Barbetta said the city's recent actions make it clear that two city commissioners do not want to a shelter built in the city. It also has become obvious, Barbetta continued, that city administrative staff is intent on blocking Marbut's recommendation for a come-as-you-are homeless shelter.



*County Commissioner Joe Barbetta/File photo*

"It is not the entire City Commission; it is a couple of them. But I think the administration is helping them out," Barbetta added. "There is a clear path by [those] city commissioners and the administration to sabotage this process, and I don't want to be a part of that process."

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson also voiced displeasure at the tone of the discussion the prior evening. The city dialogue has "turned toxic," she said. "That is the best way to describe that meeting."

She made a motion to invite Marbut to the April 1 joint meeting scheduled with the City Commission to discuss the proposed extension of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). (See the related story in this issue.) City commissioners previously had said they did not want to

put additional items on that agenda; instead, they wanted to tackle the homelessness issues later in April during another joint meeting. But Robinson challenged the City Commission to come to the table on the homelessness matter, given its high priority in the community.

“Because of their actions and what I saw yesterday, we need to have a discussion sooner than later,” Robinson said.

County Chairman Charles Hines pleaded for the city commissioners to accept the invitation to meet earlier, saying the shelter and other homelessness topics need to be addressed in the immediate future. “Hopefully, the city will be open to that,” Hines added.

City staff was. On March 19, County Administrator Tom Harmer informed the county commissioners in an email that

“*This is a case study in incompetence. It's a mess.*”

Paul Caragiulo  
Commissioner  
City of Sarasota

”



**PAUL CARAGIULO**  
COMMISSIONER

city staff members have “notified their Commissioners that the Homeless Project will be added to the [April 1] agenda.”

The early April discussion is critical, county commissioners indicated on March 18, because city representatives likely will be airing grievances again during the April 7 City Commission session, which Marbut is set to attend.

County Commissioner Carolyn Mason said she understood Barbetta’s frustration. However, pulling away from the shelter project would only fulfill the “intent of the minority of that [City] Commission’s actions,” Mason pointed out. “The majority [of the City Commission] is still with us.”

Barbetta replied, “The administration, from what I have seen, is doing anything they can to push us away from the two sites.”

### **‘CASE STUDY IN INCOMPETENCE’**

After the meeting, City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo stood outside the County Administration Center, talking with Wayne

Applebee, the county’s homelessness liaison. Caragiulo had some venting to do, as well. He explained to *The Sarasota News Leader* that homelessness is a countywide issue, but instead of waiting for Marbut and county staffers to complete an environmental site analysis and cost estimate — providing answers to legitimate questions — some city representatives have been busily throwing obstacles in the way.

“This is a case study in incompetence,” Caragiulo said. “It’s a mess.”

Part of the reason for the current state of disorganization is the recalcitrant approach of City Manager Tom Barwin and his administration, Caragiulo continued. The City Commission unanimously voted in November to support Marbut’s recommendations, including the recommendation for a come-as-you-are 24/7 shelter, Caragiulo pointed out.

“We have a city manager who, as far as he believes, is operating as a sixth commissioner,” Caragiulo said. “He has said he is



*County Homelessness Liaison Wayne Applebee speaks to the City and County commissions on Nov. 25, 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

open to carrying out the will of the commission. He has not been executing the will of the commission.”

Barwin did not return *News Leader* calls for comment.

The city manager, Caragiulo continued, appears to have “zero confidence” in Marbut’s recommendations, although Barwin played a significant role in bringing the consultant to Sarasota.

As for City Commissioners Chapman and Willie Shaw, “They don’t want [the shelter] in the city, period,” Caragiulo added.

A day earlier, Caragiulo said during the City Commission meeting, “It is my understanding that the administration is fundamentally against the philosophy of having a shelter within the city limits. And I think that needs

to be put on the record and qualified *per se*. It is not fair [to residents] ... I want to hear [the administration’s] compelling arguments.”

Shaw and Chapman, meanwhile, have continued to reiterate their opposition to a shelter in the city.

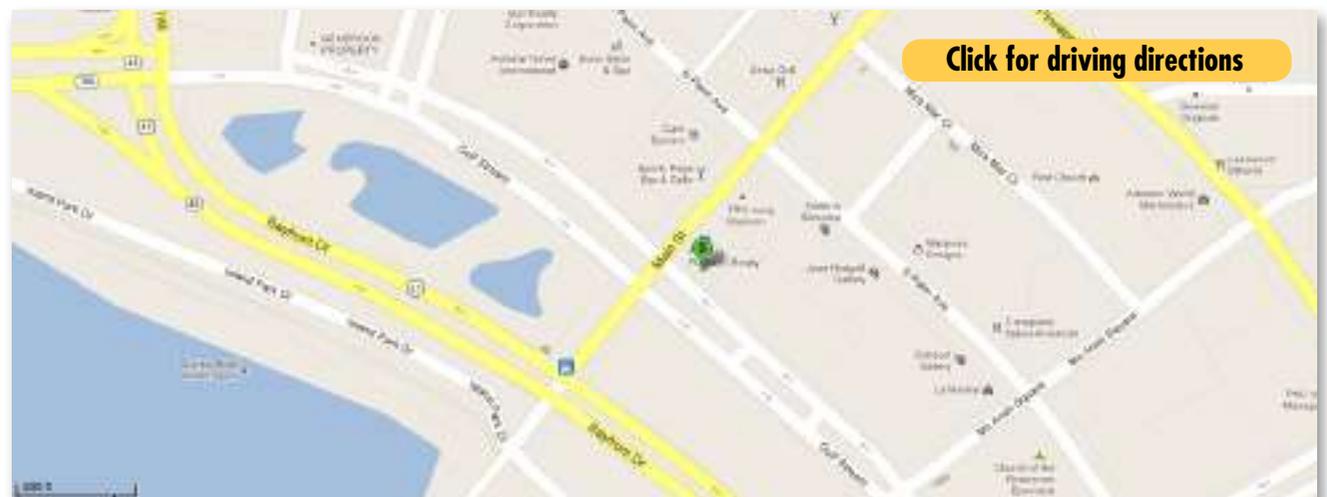
Shaw wants more open discussion with members of the public before any further work is undertaken on the shelter project.

Chapman said Monday that the vote at the joint meeting in November was a “sandbag.” She also accused Caragiulo of trying to oust Barwin to push the most recently proposed revision of the city charter, which calls for a strong elected mayor. Caragiulo has been identified with that initiative almost from its start. 

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# PEACE IN OUR TIME



*As Michele Chapman watches from the podium (left), Code Enforcement Officer Kevin Burns and Jim McWhorter compare decibel readings on a recording Chapman made of music from Bob's Boathouse. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **A REVISED COUNTY SOUND ORDINANCE MAY PROVIDE RELIEF AT LAST TO NEIGHBORS OF BOB'S BOATHOUSE, BUT SOME BUSINESS OWNERS REMAIN WARY OF 'UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES'**

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

By the first of next week, Michele Chapman and her neighbors on Montclair Drive — as well as other residents in the vicinity of Bob's Boathouse — should be getting some relief from sound levels they say have been damaging their health.

It will take three to five days for the State of Florida to record the revised Sarasota County Air and Sound

Pollution Ordinance the County Commission approved 3-1 on March 19 following a public hearing that lasted about 90 minutes.

**“ We could be buying ourselves some incredible lawsuits here, going countywide and not vetting [the revised ordinance] first, with the unintended consequences that could occur.**

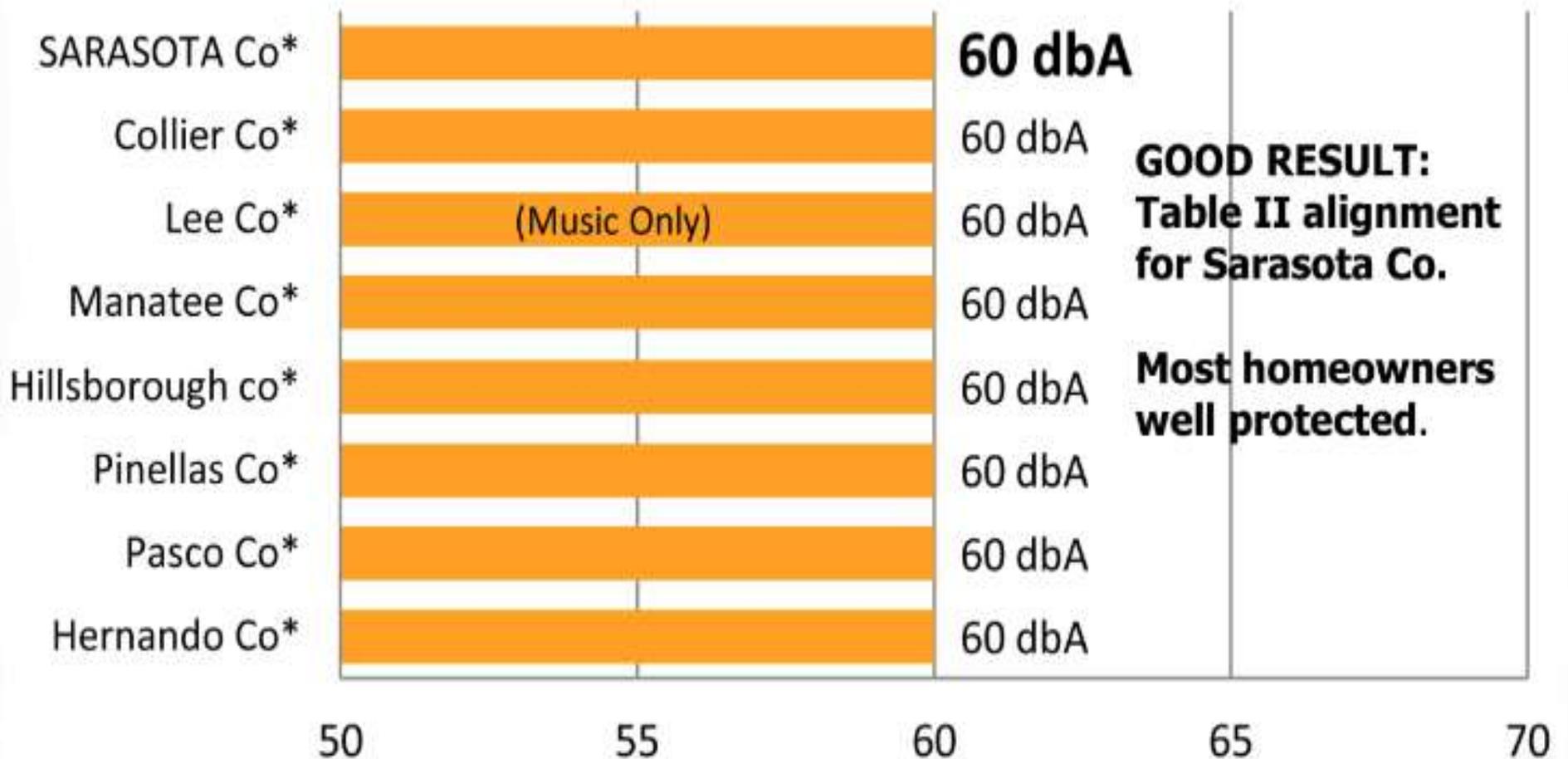
Joe Barbetta  
Commissioner  
Sarasota County



Another 30 minutes of public comments were offered on the topic at the beginning of the board's regular meeting in Sarasota by people who could not stay for discussion of the agenda item.

<b>RECEIVING</b> Land Use Category	<u>Time</u>	<u>Sound Level Limit (dbA)</u>	<u>Sound Level Limit (dbC)</u>
<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>

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

*As requested by the River Forest Civic Association, the County Commission approved lower maximum decibel readings for noise received at residential property lines. A second table shows the request puts Sarasota County in company with its Southwest Florida neighbors. Image courtesy Jim McWhorter*

“I think we got some relief,” Chapman told *The Sarasota News Leader* as she and other residents enjoyed a quiet celebration outside the Commission Chambers following the vote. If the owners of Bob’s Boathouse at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail had been considerate of them, she pointed out, they never would have pressed for changes in the ordinance. “I want people to be able to live in their houses in peace,” Chapman added.

“Relief,” was the way Montclair Drive resident Michelle Lee described her feelings. “That’s absolute relief. We are jubilant, because it’s just been hell for four-and-a-half months,” since Bob’s Boathouse opened in early November 2013.

Commissioner Nora Patterson made the motion to approve the revised ordinance. Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson seconded it, though she cautioned members of the audience, “I don’t want anyone to think that is going to solve the problem. We have

rules that are already being broken by [Bob’s Boathouse].” Referring to the owners of that establishment, she added, “They’re intent on doing what they’re doing.”

Robinson continued, “Most of the establishments have been pretty good with communicating with neighbors and complying [with county ordinances] ...”

Commissioner Joe Barbetta was in the minority on the vote, and Commissioner Carolyn Mason was not present.

“I believe there’s going to be huge unintended consequences,” Barbetta said of the revised ordinance, noting that many people remain unaware of the proposed changes. “I think it becomes an enforcement problem. I don’t think this is a solution, so I can’t support it.”

Not only does the new ordinance set lower decibel levels in residential areas, but it also eliminates the land-use categories that



Marked by the flag, Bob’s Boathouse is across Phillippi Creek from Montclair Drive residents. Image from Google Maps

had been in effect. Instead, the zoning of a parcel will determine how it is treated for noise enforcement. As Assistant Zoning Administrator Donna Thompson explained to the board, “Changing the definitions of generating land categories would ... assist in the noise level with the Phillippi Creek area.”

Under the current ordinance, Bob’s Boathouse has been considered a commercial business. The new ordinance will classify Bob’s as commercial/intensive, holding it to a stricter standard, she pointed out.

Among the changes approved, the maximum dbC, or bass level, allowed at the receiving line in residential areas will be lowered from 70 to 65 between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., while the dbA level — what county Code Enforcement Officer Kevin Burns described as the range of sound people hear — will be lowered from 65 to 60 during the same period of time.

Additionally, sound level measurements can be taken in the future at the receiving property line when a Code Enforcement or law enforcement officer “cannot obtain a measurement at the real property line of the Generating Property” for one of several reasons, the revised ordinance says. Among those reasons would be if the generating

property line is not easily accessible, such as a steep embankment.

Bob’s Boathouse sits on Phillippi Creek.

## THE DEBATE

Barbetta sought early on to clarify that a reduction of 5 degrees in the noise levels is not as small a change as the number might indicate.

In response to Barbetta’s questioning, Burns explained that if a measurement increases by 10 decibels, “You’re basically doubling the sound.” With a 5-decibel hike, Burns added, the noise is 20 to 25 percent louder.

Barbetta also asked how the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office views the proposed changes. “This is going to be an enforcement nightmare if it’s not easily understood,” he pointed out, adding he felt the revisions had been proposed just in response to complaints regarding Bob’s Boathouse and Walt’s Fish Market and its Chickee Bar. The latter establishments are located at 4144 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Commissioners have dealt with numerous complaints from residents about the music levels at the Chickee Bar.

“We could be buying ourselves some incredible lawsuits here, going countywide and not



*Chairman Charles Hines and Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson listen as Commissioner Nora Patterson makes a point. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

vetting [the revised ordinance] first, with the unintended consequences that could occur,” Barbetta said.

Maj. Kurt Hoffman, head of the Administrative Division and general counsel for the Sheriff’s Office, had expressed support for the staff’s proposed changes, Thompson told Barbetta.

However, those did not include the 5-degree lower readings approved Wednesday.

Additionally, Thompson said, she had not had emails from business owners or any of the county’s Chambers of Commerce, to which she had sent notices of the draft revisions.

When Barbetta pressed her about whether staff had notified the businesses in Gulf Gate, many of which are bars and restaurants,

Thompson responded, “Directly, we didn’t notify them.”

Later, Barbetta asked County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh, “Can we do a site specific time/place and manner [ordinance], where [music is] limited to certain times” and cannot be amplified?

The amplification restriction could lead to free-speech lawsuits, DeMarsh responded. “However, there are places that create districts with different decibel standards.”

Restrictions that are too narrow can be seen by the courts as “a pretext for regulating a particular speaker’s viewpoint,” Assistant County Attorney David Pearce explained.



*Sound mixer Christopher Young protests the proposed sound ordinance changes. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

Only one of the 14 people who addressed the board during the public hearing advocated against the changes. Christopher Young, who said he is a sound mixer for bands, told the commissioners they were “on the verge of breaking the Sunshine law” for not giving musicians ample notice about the proposed revisions. “You cannot put a noise ordinance upon the people, folks!” Young said. “This is petty. This live music debate is petty,” he added, noting he and others in the music business would lose their jobs if the changes were approved.

Among the other speakers, Chapman, the Montclair Drive resident, had arranged in advance to provide a demonstration of the sound level of music she has been hearing at her bedroom window, thanks to the bands at Bob’s Boathouse.



*Assistant Zoning Administrator Donna Thompson. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*Commissioner Joe Barbetta reviews material before the start of the discussion. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

After Jim McWhorter, president of the River Forest Civic Association, Code Enforcement Officer Burns and Henry Lee of Montclair Drive played music Chapman had recorded from Bob’s on her cellphone, Chapman noted that it was at the 75-decibel level. “This is for 30 hours a week that we’re hearing this,” she said. “Now you may be able to understand why we’re breaking down mentally, psychologically and physically, and that’s not a joke. We really are.”

During his comments, McWhorter reiterated the points he made during remarks to the board at its regular meeting on March 4 in Venice. “Sarasota County allows three times the loudness of other counties [in Southwest Florida].”

“We need an ordinance that results in an actual violation,” he added. “There have been

no [noise] violations in our case,” he pointed out, referring to residents’ complaints about the music from Bob’s Boathouse.

McWhorter concluded his remarks by saying, “Thank you, commissioners, for showing that local government can work at light speed. Impressive!”

McWhorter first had proposed lower decibel levels to Patterson in January. She put the process in motion that led to the vote Wednesday, she told the audience.

## CLARIFICATIONS

During their discussion, Chairman Charles Hines asked why the county’s Zoning Administration staff had settled on the 65-dbA level for residential areas under the proposed ordinance when other Southwest Florida communities use 60 dbA as the threshold. Thompson replied that the recommendation

was “based on taking into consideration the ambient noise. ... It’s hard to pinpoint a number that’s going to be fair to everybody without doing somewhat of an extensive study. The 65 seemed a reasonable limit to us.”

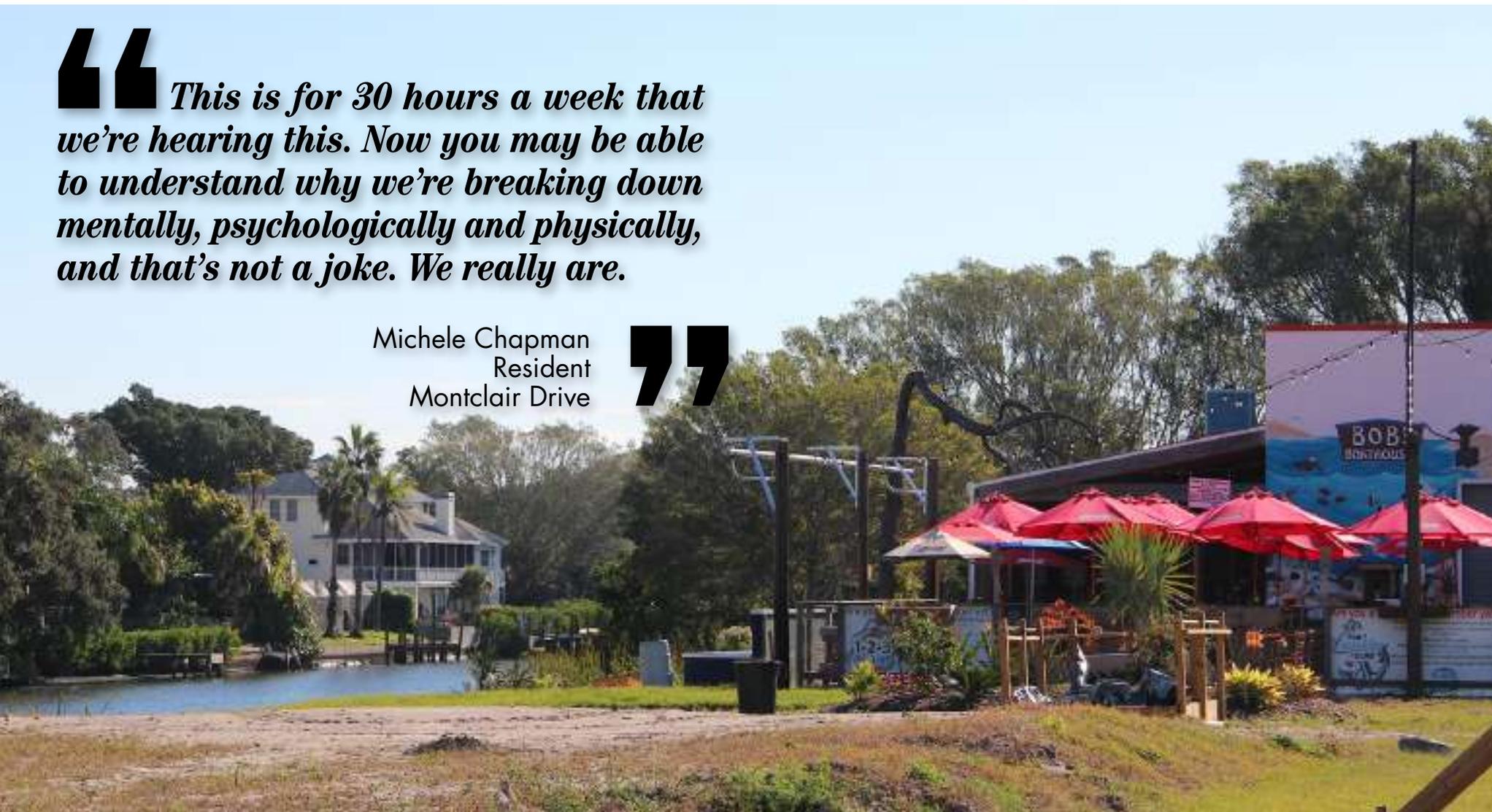
Robinson also pointed out that other Southwest Florida communities generally measure sound from the receiving lines, instead of the generating lines, which Sarasota County uses. That, she noted, accounts for the lower decibel levels McWhorter found through his research.

Patterson explained the current ordinance was crafted over time in response to court cases. “We didn’t do this deliberately to make it a noisier county,” she said. “There were some judicial decisions, as I recollect, even back in the City of Sarasota years ago,” regarding problems with distinguishing the offending parties when noise complaints were lodged.

**“** *This is for 30 hours a week that we’re hearing this. Now you may be able to understand why we’re breaking down mentally, psychologically and physically, and that’s not a joke. We really are.*

Michele Chapman  
Resident  
Montclair Drive

**”**



*Bob's Boathouse sits on the bank of Phillippi Creek. File photo*

Hines also asked for clarification of a remark McWhorter had made — that a few decibels have to be added to a noise meter reading to make sure a citation will stand up in court.

Burns, the Code Enforcement officer, explained that for a 65-decibel reading, “We’re required to give 2 or 3 extra decibels, just to make up for the accuracy of the machine itself, if that makes sense.”

He also pointed out that if a reading is taken close to the noise source — a band, for example — because of the ambient noise factor, an officer is required to add 3 decibels to the result. In the same type of situation, he said, if the level is within 4 or 5 decibels of the maximum allowed, the officer has to add 2 decibels to the reading.

“It is a complicated way of doing things,” Burns pointed out, “but it’s the best way we have.”

Hines pointed out, then, that if the commission set the level at 65 dbA, an officer would have to show a reading of 67 or 68 decibels in court for a citation to be valid. “We would do that as a regular course,” Burns replied.

Would he cite a band playing at 68 decibels if the maximum level allowed was 65, Patterson asked.

“If they’re 68 ... they would not be in violation, because we have to give them 3 decibels,” Burns told her.

After Patterson made the motion to adopt the lower levels for which the River Forest Civic Association had advocated, Hines said, “I was kind of astounded ... the first time I saw the chart comparing us to other communities.” He added that he also had been swayed by

Burns’ comments regarding the necessity of flexibility in the readings Code Enforcement officers take.

Barbetta reiterated that while he felt bad for the people living near Bob’s Boathouse and Walt’s Fish Market, “We’re reacting to [those situations].”

“It’s really only going to affect a very few properties,” Patterson countered. “After a little bit,” she said, “[bands] learn; they get their own decibel meters and, by and large, try to cooperate.”

“What’s really got me struggling on this,” Robinson said, “is the sheriff’s endorsing the staff-recommended version.” Finally, she said, “I’m going to support [Patterson’s motion]. I have reservations. ... This may need to be readdressed again.”

After the 3-1 vote, 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, told the *News Leader*, “I think it comes down to an enforcement issue.” He added that the changes should have little impact in Siesta Village. Based on the table approved, he pointed out, if a band is in compliance at the emitting line, the sound should not be higher than allowed at a residential receiving line.

Jay Lancer, who co-owns the parcels where the Siesta Key Oyster Bar and Daiquiri Deck stand in Siesta Village, told the *News Leader*, “I don’t think it was a bad solution as far as it went.” Nonetheless, he agreed with Barbetta that unintended consequences would arise.

Lancer added, “My main point here is the out-laws aren’t going to pay attention to what they’re supposed to do. It’s naïve to think so.” 



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# MAN OVERBOARD!

“ So we’ve gotten to the point now where we’re attacking volunteers.

Christine Robinson  
Vice Chairwoman  
Sarasota County Commission

”



Illustrations presented to the county's Tourist Development Council in November 2013 show facilities planned for Benderson Park. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## COUNTY COMMISSIONER RECUSES HIMSELF FROM VOTE ON ROWING FACILITY OPERATING AGREEMENT

By Cooper Levey-Baker  
Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission this week approved a long-term operating agreement with the nonprofit created to manage the rowing facility at Nathan Benderson Park, but not without a dose of controversy.

For months, the county has been negotiating over the terms of the operating agreement with Suncoast Aquatics Nature Center Associates, the nonprofit headed by Benderson Development's executive director

for planning, Paul Blackketter. Blackketter told the board last year that issues on the table ranged from insurance rules for the park to the extent of the property for which Suncoast Aquatics would actually be responsible.

According to the contract approved Wednesday, March 19, Suncoast Aquatics will be in charge of the entire park, not just the rowing facility, and it will manage all bookings and reservations for the facility. In exchange, Sarasota County agrees to reimburse Suncoast Aquatics up to \$788,000 each fiscal year for maintenance, personnel costs, etc. and authorizes the county administrator

to direct up to \$100,000 more for nonrecurring expenses without consulting the board. Suncoast Aquatics is “entitled to retain all revenue, proceeds and fees generated by events and activities.”

With the board’s OK, the contract will come online April 15 and run through Sept. 30, 2019. At that point, if certain goals are met and there has been no “material breach” of the agreement, the contract will be re-upped for another 10 years. After that, Suncoast Aquatics can decide whether to continue extending the agreement in 10-year increments for three decades.



*Cathy Antunes addresses the County Commission during a meeting in October 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*(From left) Paul Blacketter, Commissioner Joe Barbetta and Randy Benderson, CEO of Benderson Development, pose during an event at Benderson Park. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The commission eventually approved the deal unanimously, with a 4-0 vote. Why only four votes?

Early in the meeting, Commissioner Joe Barbetta recused himself from speaking or voting on the issue. “There’s been a comment about my wife’s business,” Barbetta explained. According to the commissioner, his wife’s event planning company, [Mary Kenealy Events](#), has done work at Benderson Park, and according to a Suncoast Aquatics financial reporting document dated last Oct. 15, Kenealy received nearly \$21,000 for such business in 2013.

Barbetta said he was the “agent of record” when the company became a limited liability corporation, nothing more. “I get no remuneration from the business,” he added. But nevertheless, “I’ll be more than happy to recuse myself.”

Sarasota Citizens for Responsible Growth President Cathy Antunes disputed Barbetta’s account. The Florida Division of Corporations [lists](#) Barbetta as Mary Kenealy Events “manager,” she pointed out. “Why do I have to bring it up?” she asked. “Shouldn’t you have been recusing yourself from SANCA votes before?”

Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson called Barbetta a “volunteer.” “So we’ve gotten to

the point now where we’re attacking volunteers,” Robinson said.

“I recused myself for this very reason,” Barbetta answered. Blackketter later assured the board and meeting attendees that Suncoast Aquatics has “used multiple caterers throughout Manatee and Sarasota counties.”

Antunes laid out a number of other concerns about the contract, arguing it doesn’t do enough to protect the public interest. She tells *The Sarasota News Leader* it will be “great” to have a rowing facility, but she worries about the details. “We love the big sexy projects,” she says. “There’s kind of this ego gratification with these splashy things, but when you look at the question of building true indefinite wealth, it’s these modest, incremental investments over time that create that.”

Voting to approve the deal, Commissioner Nora Patterson assured the public that the park won’t become a profit-making center for Suncoast Aquatics or Benderson. The more revenue going to Suncoast Aquatics, the lower the burden on the county. “Yes, it’s a bunch of money,” she said, “but obviously we believe it’s worth it, or we wouldn’t be sticking our necks out.” 

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# COMPLAINTS, CODES AND THE MARBUT PLAN



*A census of the homeless staying at Valerie Guillory's sanctuary on North Washington Boulevard was taken on Jan. 29. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

## **CITY STAFF IS STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO CITY COMMISSION ACTION THIS WEEK REGARDING A HOMELESS CAMP**

**By Stan Zimmerman**

*City Editor*

By the time the final agenda item came up for discussion, nerves were raw both on the dais and among audience members in the chambers of the Sarasota City Commission on Monday evening, March 17.

Officially, the agenda item was presentation of the concept of “homeless outreach teams.” The teams are encouraged in the report of Robert Marbut, the consultant hired by the city and county to develop

an “action plan” to combat vagrancy and homelessness.

The 10th recommendation on Page 23 of his Nov. 25 report says, “Once Sarasota Safe

“ *Allow us to continue moving forward with this. If not you'll have people see this as a kind of free zone, and you'll see a lot more people there.* ”

Bernadette DiPino  
Police Chief  
City of Sarasota



Harbor and the Family Portals [shelters for homeless individuals and families] are almost ready to open, ‘homeless outreach teams’ (HOTs) should then be activated 2-4 weeks before the opening of these new facilities.”

A shelter for individuals could be a year away from completion, and while short-term family shelters are being prepared, they are at least several months away. Meanwhile, pressures are growing to do something sooner.

In January, city police were called to 1003 N. Washington Blvd. by Valerie Guillory to investigate a burglary on property she leases, which she calls Trinity without Borders. She initially rented the property to provide a “sanctuary” for the homeless, but she was dissuaded from starting up a tent city by city officials and then Marbut. But the tent city evolved anyway.

She also complained about criminal and health issues in a homeless and vagrant camp located adjacent to her leased property. It is near a stand of bamboo at the end of 10th Way, adjacent to the Oakland Park Cemetery. According to a police memo, she complained of “drinking, drugs, fights, prostitution and sexual batteries” in the campsite.

A physical examination turned up about 30 tents and as many as 70 people on the property.

## ENTER THE POTTINGER CASE

A federal court case filed in 1988 by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in Miami has come to be a guideline on how cities must handle homelessness and vagrancy. It has bounced back and forth among interpretations (and is still bouncing), but its meaning is clear: You cannot arrest somebody if the person is doing what can be considered life-sustaining activities.

For example, if there is no shelter available, police cannot arrest people for sleeping on the street if the people are not causing an obstruction. If there is no public toilet within a quarter of a mile, arrest for exposure or public urination is banned. And the case made city commissioners personally liable for ordinances that mandated police violate the so-called Pottinger Protocol.



*City Commissioner Susan Chapman argues against a city shelter during the Feb. 18 City Commission meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Valerie Guillory addresses the County Commission on Feb. 19. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

However, in January, the ACLU and the City of Miami renegotiated the protocol. *The Miami Herald* reported on Jan. 9 that the new settlement “would water down homeless rights.” In early February, Federal Judge Federico Moreno approved the changes.

The case is named after Michael Pottinger, who, with two other homeless men, sued the City of Miami after police arrested them for camping in a park. The resulting protocol was not established until 1998.

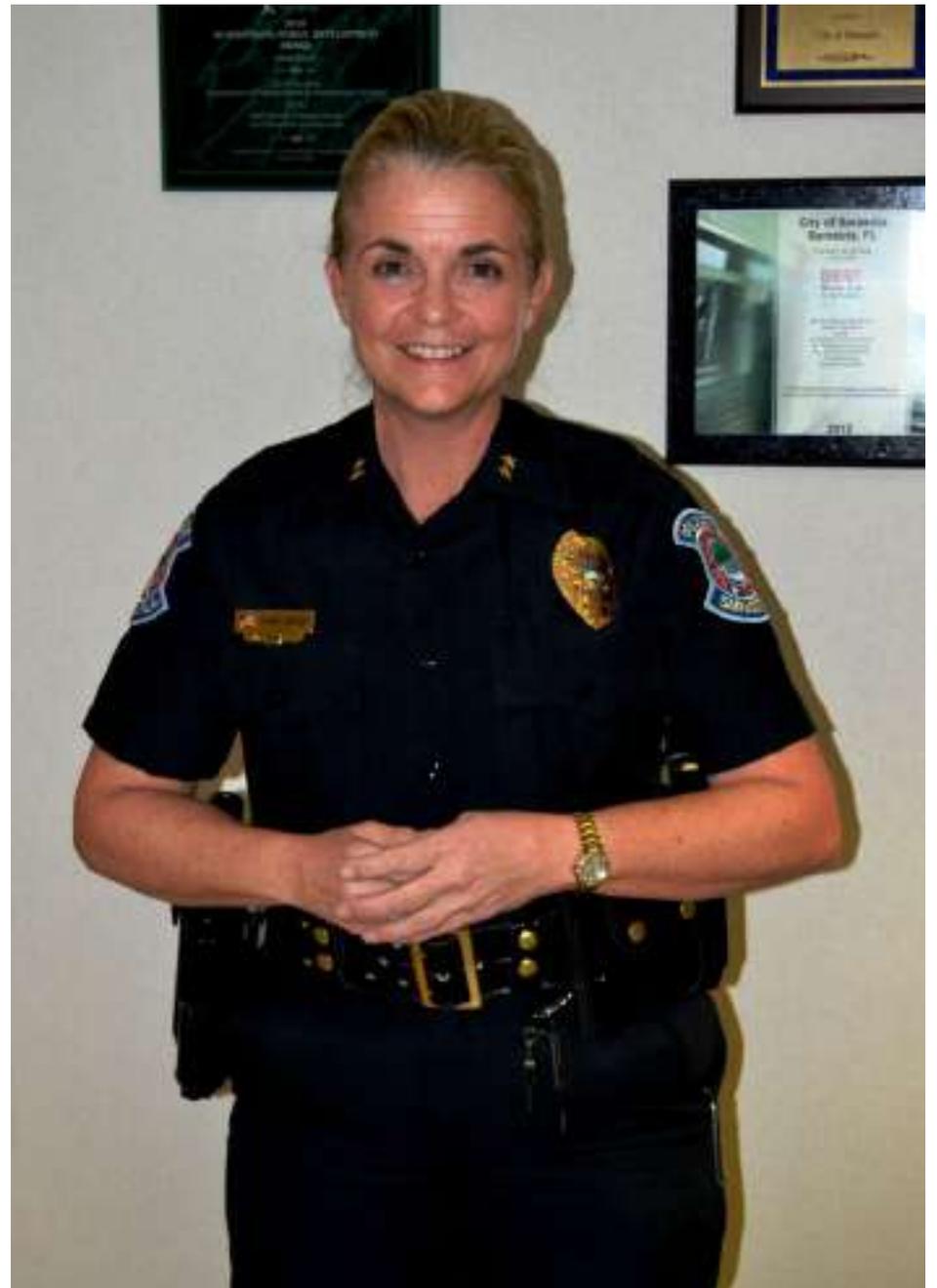
“You can’t criminalize homelessness,” said City Attorney Bob Fournier Monday night. “Only if there is an available shelter and a homeless person refuses it, then the police can arrest for a life-sustaining conduct misdemeanor. For example, public nudity in bathing or defecating, fires in parks, littering, living in vehicles.”

Fournier told the commissioners, “Normally, this would be an administrative matter and it would not be necessary for the City Commission to involve themselves. But a policy issue has come up because of the belief there are plans for something inconsistent.”

## THE ROUST RESTRAINED

The “something inconsistent” was plans by the city police to clean out the tent city growing in the bamboo grove near Guillory’s sanctuary and next to the Oakland Park Cemetery. In early March, police officers handed out notices that they would be moving people out of the area on March 18 and that 30 days of free shelter was available at the Salvation Army.

The officers had with them representatives from [Resurrection House](#), Veterans Affairs,



*Police Chief Bernadette DiPino. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

[Jewish Family and Children’s Service](#), [Goodwill Manasota](#) and [The Salvation Army](#). In effect, this was a “homeless outreach team” of law enforcement and social services people. Through the offer of shelter, the Pottinger Protocol was followed.

On March 12, Guillory repeated to the police “she really did want the individuals on the property removed by the Sarasota Police Department,” according to city police records. Meanwhile, a daily newspaper article outlined city police plans to clear the tent city near the cemetery. The article said the activity was inconsistent with the plans laid out by Robert

Marbut, the city and county consultant, and it quoted him.

However, Marbut's plan has a page with the heading, *Immediate Next Steps*, and the first step seems to encourage the city to take such an initiative: "Get started and do not get bogged down in politics. Simply just start!!" The exclamation points are in the original version. Another "immediate next step" is to *Operationalize Homeless Outreach Teams*.

Thus, Marbut's own report seems inconsistent. "Simply just start!!" but only activate outreach "2-4 weeks before the opening of these new [shelter] facilities."

Also on March 12, Sarasota County Sheriff's deputies responded to a property owner's complaint of a homeless camp along the railroad near Mango Avenue.

"At approximately 0930 I was notified by our dayshift north-side sergeant that the Sarasota Sheriff's Office had made a number of arrests and displaced a large number of homeless individuals from a number of camps in the county in the area of 17th St. and East Ave," Police Capt. Pat Robertson wrote in a memo to the police chief the next day. "The night shift central sergeant advised there was a perceivable increase in transients in doorways and public areas in the downtown and Rosemary [District] neighborhoods."

Marbut's report was created for both the city and county. So while a city police plan to clear out a homeless camp was stalled by City Commission questions, the sheriff went ahead and responded to public complaints. Meanwhile, Guillory is still waiting for action.



*City Attorney Robert Fournier. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## THE PUSHBACK

When the floor was opened to the public at the commission meeting Monday night, several of the tent city residents came forward to speak.

Robin Couzino asked, "Are you going to get us a motel? The offer of the [Salvation Army] ... will only allow us to do worse."

Another person who did not give his name showed a picture of the sleeping arrangements at The Salvation Army. "Everybody reeks of alcohol and drugs; that's just the way it is," he said. "I'd rather go back to my camp. I felt more safe at my camp rather than at The Salvation Army."

"I went to The Salvation Army and they couldn't help me. I called 211 and got nowhere," said Tonia Clum. "This is ridiculous. We are being

forced out of the one little place we've found sanctuary. Not everybody wants help." (Mind you, she made those comments was after she had been doused with gasoline and threatened with immolation by one of the people in her "sanctuary." See the related item in *Crime Blotter* in this issue.)

After the public testimony, City Commissioner Susan Chapman said, "I can remember the

last meeting where people came forward and said they needed showers and bathrooms and a safe place to live. So the city found that [at The Salvation Army], and now [people] say they don't want it."

"Contrast this with the sheriff's operation, and downtown was flooded with people the day after," added Chapman. "And they didn't establish any protocols."



*City Manager Tom Barwin addresses a joint City/County commission meeting in February 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

Mayor Shannon Snyder said he was personally afraid of the consequences of a local Pottinger-style lawsuit. "Make no mistake, Pottinger is breathing down our throats. I don't want to be exposed personally," he added.

Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, echoing remarks made previously by County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, said, "The [city] administration is fundamentally against having a shelter in the city limits. It should be put on the record. There is a sense of undermining going on."

Barbetta earlier had called it "sabotage."

Chapman made a motion to allow the police to go forward with cleaning out the tent city. "I move we enforce the existing codes and ordinances [even] if that requires relocation of people and follows the guidelines the city attorney feels is compliant with the Pottinger protocol." Shaw seconded the motion, but it failed 2-3.

Said Fournier, "You're just delaying action right now."

City Manager Tom Barwin asked for clarity. "The motion is for this site only?" Fournier replied that that was his understanding.

The failure of the motion had meant the City Commission suddenly was giving direction to *not* enforce the city's codes and ordinances.

"And if we go from 10 or 11 to 20, 30, 40 or 50 [people] at this site?" asked Barwin.

Police Chief Bernadette DiPino said, "Not enforcing the ordinances at this location, it's going to attract a lot more people. Allow us to continue moving forward with this. If not,

you'll have people see this as a kind of free zone, and you'll see a lot more people there."

In the meantime, DiPino is getting shuffled around in her efforts to handle the situation, and the City Commission was not helping. "We called Dr. Marbut, who said to call [County Homelessness Coordinator Wayne] Applebee, who referred us to the Sheriff's Office, and they said there would be a training about two weeks before the new [shelter] facility opens," she said. "We get complaints every single day about individuals. We need to move forward."

Barwin, too, found deaf ears. "Is the city giving permission to lodge on this site? We need some clarity here," he repeated. But he did not get any.

By this time, the commission had been meeting for four and one-half hours straight with no break. Chapman then moved to instruct staff to call Marbut and ask how the city should handle public safety in homeless camps. Shaw seconded that, and the motion passed 5-0.

Snyder slammed down the gavel and the meeting was adjourned. Staff members immediately huddled then, and in the days afterward, it still has been trying to discern what direction it had received. Some suggested the City Commission had created a "free zone" in the bamboo thicket for the homeless and vagrants who cannot or will not be accepted at The Salvation Army.

The following day, the Sarasota County commissioners figuratively picked up their verbal cudgels and the beatings continued. (See the related story in this issue.) 



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# CHOPPY WATERS BEFORE THE STORM

*The City Commission sits in session in January. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## **CHAPMAN IS LEFT TO PAY HER OWN LEGAL FEES; MATTISON'S LEASE EXTENSION TABLED FOR NOW; AND ONE ST. ARMANDS SEASONAL EVENT WILL GO ON**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

The March 17 afternoon session of the Sarasota City Commission was finished in less than 30 minutes. The major and minor consent agenda items were left untouched, passed without comment. Commissioners and staff had very little to say during the "Reports" section of the agenda, and the meeting recessed to the evening session. It was an eerily calm half-hour.

The evening began with a proclamation to declare National Crime Victims' Rights

Week. By the end of the meeting, more than four hours later, it is safe to say nearly everybody left the chambers feeling as if he or she had survived a gale. The build-up started slowly with consideration of a lease extension for the Mattison's City Grill on Lemon Avenue in downtown Sarasota.

“*This is about people trying to shut down public debate on important issues.*”

Susan Chapman  
Commissioner  
City of Sarasota

Hardly anyone remembers the awful hot dogs from the stand at the city-owned Lemon Avenue mall property a decade ago. Even the proprietor finally

gave up on them, and the city was left with little but a figurative bad taste in its mouth over leasing any vending operation on the site. Enter Paul Mattison, a young chef willing to scrape together some money to create a café with a tasty menu.

It was the start of a mini empire of enterprises for Mattison. His Lemon Avenue lease expires later this year, and Chef Paul would like not only to extend it for another five years, but also perhaps for longer — or even buy the property at the northwest corner of Main Street.

City Purchasing Manager Mary Tucker asked the city commissioners for guidance. Extend the lease? Sell the parcel? If so, under what

terms? Right now the rent is based on the county property appraiser's annual estimates of its value. Tucker said she would prefer to change the basis for rent, perhaps tying it to the café's finances.

The establishment enjoys a solitary privilege envied by other downtown venues. Mattison can allow the playing of live music an hour longer than anybody else. "Back in the day," that was considered a way to help him build his fledgling business. But outdoor music is controversial now, and the city is redrafting its "sound ordinance."

Mayor Shannon Snyder said the city should retain ownership of the property. And he said Mattison's special treatment for music needed



*Mattison's City Grille is in a popular section of Main Street, near Pineapple Square's shops and Whole Foods. Special events, such as this February art show, also are held in that area. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*The Sarasota Farmers Market also is held in the vicinity of Mattison's City Grille. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

to be reevaluated. “Do we need to raise this one restaurant up, or take them down to the basic level of everybody else?” Snyder asked.

The commissioners told Tucker to talk with Mattison, but they deferred any action until after the “sound ordinance” has been considered. The current lease expires Sept. 30.

## THE LEGAL SQUALL

Next up was the issue of Commissioner Susan Chapman’s legal fees. She is charged with a violation of the Open Meetings Law for attending a gathering of downtown constituents and city staffers about the topic of homelessness and vagrancy. Fellow Commissioner Suzanne

Atwell attended that gathering as well, and both were named personally in a suit filed by Citizens for Sunshine. The city admitted a technical violation (lack of prior notice), while Atwell admitted nothing but agreed to pay \$500 to a charity to settle the suit against her.

There is consistent confusion over this issue in both the local media (the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*), the statewide media (the *Brechner Report*) and even in the mind of Judge Kimberly Bonner, who is presiding over the Chapman case. All three have stated and written that Atwell admitted to violating the law, when she did no such thing. The judge later



*City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini asks newly elected City Commissioners Suzanne Atwell and Susan Chapman to recite the oath of office on May 17, 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

amended her written opinion to expunge the error, and the statewide publication following Sunshine issues ran a correction.

Chapman has admitted nothing, claiming she did not violate the law. She is a practicing attorney, and she was a member of several official advisory boards in the past, covered by Florida's constellation of Government in the Sunshine Laws. She has been under great pressure to settle the suit and avoid more legal fees, with both Commissioner Paul Caragiulo and Mayor Snyder saying it would be fiscally responsible for her to do so.

Chapman says she did not discuss the issue of homelessness, that she only listened to her constituents. Depositions so far support her. Andrea Mogensen, the attorney for the plaintiffs, argues that any meeting with two

or more commissioners present must be officially noticed, whether or not they participate in any discussion of public issues.

Chapman says this is an unwarranted expansion of the law, not supported by statute, and that it would bar commissioners from attending such constituent events as the monthly Coalition of City Neighborhood Association meetings or the Tiger Bay Club gatherings.

City Attorney Bob Fournier told the commissioners Monday that he agrees with her. "It has been my position consistently: Two commissioners ought to be able to attend a meeting on a topic that reasonably, foreseeably could come back [to the commission], if they just listened," he told the board. "When is a public official entitled to legal representation at public expense? If it arises from part of



*In spite of residents' protests, one art show will be allowed in the St. Armands Circle park at the height of season. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

their official duties and while serving a public purpose.”

Fournier spoke along these lines for almost half an hour. When he finished, the first question came from Caragiulo: “Any cost projections?”

“The fees to date are just shy of \$85,000,” replied Fournier. “And they are running about \$15,000 to \$20,000 a month.”

## A GALE OF WORDS

Two weeks ago, several people spoke in support of the city’s continuing to pay Chapman’s legal fees, but Snyder ruled they could only address the topic before the commission once. Two new speakers were recognized Monday. Pat Kolodgy is the treasurer of CCNA, the neighborhood coalition, and Mollie Cardamone is a former city mayor.

“I believe this commission should join in solidarity, show some guts and stand behind Ms. Chapman,” asserted Kolodgy. “[The plaintiffs] are extortionists and bullies, and they may come for you one day. I know she would stand up for you.”

Cardamone reflected on her career of public service and said, “I would have to say I don’t know a former commissioner who would have ever sat at this table if they didn’t believe they had full legal coverage. If you think people will continue to serve our city in such an important way and know they are at such great risk, that’s wrong-headed thinking.”

Both statements were punctuated with cheers and applause from audience members. Snyder made no attempt to calm the attendees.

Caragiulo asked if Chapman had ever received an offer to settle. She said she did not receive any offer when Atwell received hers. Later, she filed a counterclaim and she offered to drop that after the plaintiffs made the same offer afforded to Atwell, but there was no agreement.

Vice Mayor Willie Shaw twice moved to extend coverage of Chapman’s legal fees, and both times he failed to get a second. Caragiulo then moved to extend payment for 14 days “to facilitate some type of settlement.” Atwell seconded the motion “for discussion.”

In that discussion, Caragiulo said, “It’s all well and good to fly the flag that this is some encumbrance on your freedom of

speech. You have to put your office in front of yourself.”

Chapman responded, “This is not about me individually. When can a commissioner attend a meeting of constituents? This is about people trying to shut down public debate on important issues. This is exactly what I was doing, listening to my constituents.”

Atwell, who benefitted from city payment of her expenses, offered this rationale for her vote: “I defend to the death your ability to defend yourself, but I cannot support the city supporting an individual’s quest for justice.”

*I defend to the death your ability to defend yourself, but I cannot support the city supporting an individual’s quest for justice.*

Suzanne Atwell  
Commissioner  
City of Sarasota

In an interesting twist, Snyder combined Chapman's legal fees in a Sunshine case with potential litigation over the city's treatment of the homeless. (Recall the initial discussion at the heart of the case involved homelessness and vagrancy.)

"This is not just about Sunshine," said the mayor. "I think this will be part of a Pottinger case against the city. And we will all be held personally liable for the civil rights violations in such a case." (See more on Pottinger in the related article this week about the City Commission meeting.)

The motion to extend coverage of legal fees for 14 days failed 1-3 (Caragiulo in favor and Chapman abstaining).

## LULL BEFORE THE BLOW

Snyder had asked that the next issue on the agenda be put there, so the board could

reexamine a moratorium on events in St. Armands Circle Park during high tourist season. Neighbors have claimed the extra traffic impedes emergency vehicles; they wanted the ban extended for two more weeks.

However, the city last October approved an art show in the park during season, and organizers have paid all the necessary deposits. "I know they don't like this event," said Fournier of the St. Armands neighbors. "But you could run into personal liability here if you extend the moratorium where this one event is a specific target. Applicants who offer the same event have to be treated equally."

The neighbors clearly had been pressuring the commissioners to use a moratorium extension to cancel the event, but Fournier prevailed. "Leave it alone," he counseled. And the commissioners did.

Then the storm hit: the homelessness discussion. (See the related stories in this issue.) 

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# NIBBLING AWAY

*Cattle graze in a pasture on Fruitville Road, one of the prime areas envisioned for planned development under Sarasota 2050. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## SEVENTEEN MORE CHANGES TO SARASOTA 2050 APPROVED

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

The Sarasota County Commission unanimously approved 17 changes to its Sarasota 2050 land-use plan Tuesday, March 18, overcoming one commissioner's concern that the board is gradually "nibbling away" at its regulations.

2050 was approved roughly a decade ago (although even its date of birth was a matter of hot dispute between Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Nora Patterson on Tuesday) with the intent of encouraging the construction of compact, walkable mixed-use

communities, particularly east of Interstate 75. But developers have complained that 2050's rules are too complex and unwieldy and say the plan is blocking new growth. In late 2012, the commission launched a reevaluation of the plan.

The rewrites discussed Tuesday include loosening requirements for how much open space must be preserved in a new development by allowing developers to count stormwater ponds and greenways as open space.

“Unrestrained growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.”

Wade Matthews  
Conservation Chairman  
Sarasota Audubon



Julie Byrne, who serves on the county's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee, criticized the idea that stormwater ponds would count as preserved space. "These things are not lakes," she said. While praising the neighborhood of Palmer Ranch for its attractive stormwater ponds, she added

that there is no guarantee other developers will follow suit.

"It may turn out that these developers are perfectly fine," Byrne tells *The Sarasota News Leader*, "but my guess is they're not going to be as careful as Palmer Ranch was."

## EXHIBIT A

requirements for a Greenbelt as provided by, and consistent with, the conditions described in items 1, 2, or 3, above.

6. Where a Village Center is approved to be located adjacent to the Greenbelt, the width of the Greenbelt between the Village Center and the adjacent roadway located at an outer edge of a Village Developed Area may be reduced. The approved width of the reduced Greenbelt will be directly related to the amount of landscape buffer required. Wider Greenbelts will require less landscape plantings and opacity. Narrower Greenbelts will require more landscape plantings and opacity.

However, if the Village Center edge adjacent to the subject roadway displays a superior visual and pedestrian environment based on uses, building orientation, form and connectivity, no landscape buffering is required except as required by street landscape buffers.

Any reduced Greenbelt configuration shall:

- Protect the Greenway systems, including wildlife corridors; and
- Avoid adverse impacts to adjacent publically owned environmentally sensitive lands.

This policy does not include reducing the Greenbelt width located in Developed Areas other than between the Village Center and adjacent roadway located at an outer edge of a Village Developed Area.

Where appropriate, within the Open Space that is designated as Greenbelt in a Village or Hamlet Master Plan, the Board of County Commissioners may also allow the following active uses adjacent to the Developed Area of the Village or Hamlet: golf courses using best management practices, regional stormwater facilities and public parks. Where such uses are allowed, the width of the Greenbelt shall be expanded to include these active uses as well as a minimum 500-foot wide section of Greenbelt located outside these active uses.

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## SARASOTA 2050 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AREA (RMA) POLICY REVISITED SUPPLEMENTAL STAFF REPORT

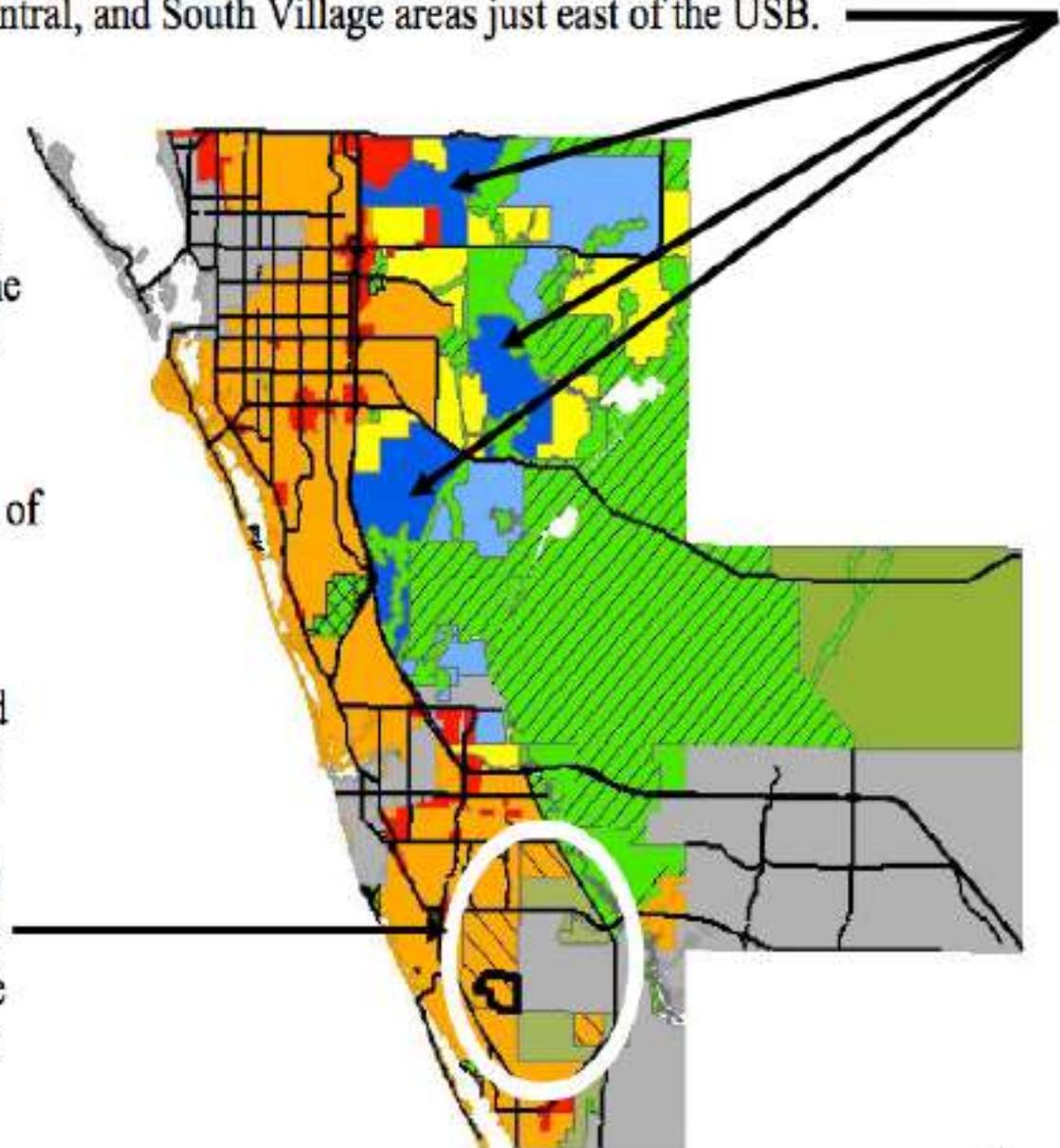
The Settlement Area form of development is located in the Future Urban Area that exists between the existing USB and the Future Urban Service Boundary line depicted on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) in the southern portion of the County. Settlement Areas are to be an urban form that recognizes the adjacent urban residential development. This form primarily uses the percentage open space requirement implementation mechanism, which may be reduced to 33% if a golf course is not a part of the project. Additionally, there are no Greenways associated with the Future Urban Area.

Each of these 2050 development forms has their own specific purpose:

1. Primarily, 2050 Policy attempts to steer development off of the eastern rural/agricultural areas of the County into the North, Central, and South Village areas just east of the USB.

2. The 'light blue' Hamlet area depicted on this map identifies a transitional zone within which the land use intensity shifts from the more urban Village form of development down to the more rural/agricultural eastern portion of the County.

3. The Settlement Area is limited to that area between the existing USB and the Future USB. It is intended to allow a development form that fits in with the context of the area recognizing that these lands were already identified for future development.



**SARASOTA COUNTY**



Byrne hears chatter about Sarasota 2050 in the checkout line at the grocery store, people speculating that “the developers have gotten to the commissioners.” At the meeting Tuesday, Byrne made an observation: “I’m noticing all these people that represent the developers are sitting very close to the county planners,” she says, “and they’re all much too friendly.”

“You have to go back to what the intent was,” Byrne told the board. “The intent wasn’t to make it easy to develop. It was to make it beautiful.”

Chairman Charles Hines said a stormwater pond “doesn’t really have a lot of value,” compared to a natural lake. “How do we protect against that, that stormwater ponds don’t become called lakes?” Hines asked.

“There really aren’t any naturally occurring lakes in the 2050 properties,” County Long Range Planning Manager Allen Parsons answered. The lakes under discussion are all stormwater ponds.

Patterson said her fear is that allowing stormwater ponds to count as open space could lead to a “Swiss cheese” effect, while the original intent of the open space rules was to preserve swaths of undeveloped land between neighborhoods. Patterson is the only commissioner who originally voted for 2050 still on the board, and she’s been the leading skeptic of the county’s reevaluation of the plan.

In addition to her concern over the open space rules, Patterson spoke about being uneasy

with loosening the regulations for how close the commercial portions of new development can be placed to roads. In previous action, the commission changed 2050 rules that originally required commercial properties to be located in the interior of a neighborhood.

Hines also questioned that change, saying he’d “hate” to see eastern roadways one day resemble U.S. 41’s long stretch of strip malls.

Wade Matthews, the conservation chairman of the Sarasota Audubon Society, praised Hines and Patterson for asking “good questions.” He said that crafting 2050 was a contentious process in which neither developers nor environmentalists got exactly what they wanted. That is now being undone, he argued. “Unrestrained growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.”

“The comprehensive plan is a living, breathing document,” Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson asserted after moving to approve the package of changes. She said the alterations will “allow for what the intent was to happen.”

Despite her reservations, Patterson came around to support the motion, saying that as the process moves along, she may not be OK with further changes.

“We’re nibbling away at it,” Patterson noted early in the meeting. “And I’m not sure we’ll have, at the end, anything remotely resembling what was intended.” 

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



## CONVERGING ON A PLAN

*A series of photos of the diverging diamond interchange in Springfield, MO, shows how the design works. Top left: Traffic enters the interchange along Missouri Route 13. Top right: Traffic crosses over to the left side of the road. Bottom left: Traffic crosses over Interstate 44. Bottom right: Traffic crosses back over to the right side of the road. Images via Wikimedia*

## THE COUNTY COMMISSION WILL FOCUS ON A DIVERGING DIAMOND INTERCHANGE PROPOSAL FOR INTERSTATE 75 WHEN IT MEETS ON TUESDAY, MARCH 25

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

During a workshop on Tuesday, March 25, the Sarasota County commissioners are scheduled to vote on a resolution that could serve as a show of support for state plans for a new “diverging diamond” interchange at Interstate 75 and University Parkway.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) officials want to prioritize the diverging diamond project and seek funds for it. Although this type of interchange has been built elsewhere — including Missouri, where the first one in the United States appeared

in 2009 — and it is part of a new initiative to transform interchanges, the I-75 diverging diamond would be the first example of its kind in Florida.

But before FDOT proceeds with its plans, state officials want Sarasota and Manatee counties to back the project through formal resolutions.

Sarasota County staff worked with Manatee County representatives to craft a resolution earlier this week. “Attached is the draft resolution that we have developed in partnership with Manatee County,” Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer wrote to his commissioners in a March 18 email. “The intent is to bring it to both Boards on March 25th.”

The Sarasota County Commission’s workshop will begin at 9 a.m. Tuesday in the third floor Think Tank of the County Administration

Center, located at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota.

If the resolution wins the board’s approval, it also would serve as a sign of support for other improvements in the area surrounding the interchange, according to Sarasota County’s draft resolution.

While the state is leading the effort to secure funding for the interchange project, it would be up to the counties to take the lead on those other improvements around

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*Sarasota County staff has drafted a resolution regarding the proposed diverging diamond interchange.*



*State Rep. Greg Steube of Sarasota is a supporter of the diverging diamond concept for Interstate 75 and University Parkway. Photo courtesy [myfloridahouse.gov](http://myfloridahouse.gov)*

the interchange, with the help of Schroeder Manatee Ranch Inc., developer of Lakewood Ranch, and Benderson, developer of the new Mall at University Town Center. Both firms are obligated to provide area infrastructure improvements through development agreements and impact fee guidelines.

Benderson and Schroeder Manatee Ranch (SMR) representatives have been given copies of the draft resolution, according to Harmer. “We have included Benderson and SMR in the review of the draft and also provided a copy of the draft to Rep. [Greg] Steube’s Office,” Harmer wrote in the March 18 email.

Steube, the Sarasota Republican who holds the District 73 seat in the Florida House, also is supportive of the project.

According to the draft resolution, the following regional improvements would be included in an area roadway plan: the construction of a bridge over I-75 on the southern boundaries of Nathan Benderson Park and Schroeder-Manatee Ranch; the extension of Lakewood Ranch Boulevard from its current terminus south of University Parkway to Fruitville Road, subject to contractual commitments tied to development approvals; and the construction of Lorraine Road between University Parkway and Fruitville Road, subject to contractual commitments tied to development approvals.

## TRAFFIC FLOW

The new I-75/University Parkway interchange could mark the first big step in improving traffic flow in that area.

While many residents already cite that interchange as one of the most congested in the region, the area will see even more cars as the



*A diagram shows how a diverging diamond would be created on Interstate 75 at University Parkway. Image courtesy Sarasota Connectivity*

new Mall at University Town Center opens in October and additional homes are built around it.

The diverging diamond design would require the traffic on University Parkway to briefly switch sides. That would reduce the two traffic signals to “two-phase” signals and remove the need for left-turn leads onto and off the interstate, in concept, reducing traffic delays. For a visualization of how a diverging diamond would work, watch a [video](#) produced by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, which shows free-flowing traffic moving onto and off an interstate and the path motorists travel over the interstate.

Although it is designed to improve traffic flow, this type of interchange has [advantages and disadvantages](#), depending on the location, traffic counts and other factors.

Rod Warner, a member of the citizens advisory committee to the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), also has posted some information online about [diverging diamonds](#). 



# MALIGNANT GROWTH

*Chuck Marohn/Contributed photo by Jim Kumon*

## **STRONG TOWNS FOUNDER WARNS SARASOTA ABOUT FISCAL RISKS OF SUBURBAN SPRAWL**

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

The Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations has been at the forefront of the fight against the County Commission's decision to rewrite large swaths of its Sarasota 2050 land-use plan. But the group also wants to give the county an "alternative," President Lourdes Ramirez told 100 or so CONA members at the organization's annual dinner Tuesday night, March 18. "And that's where Chuck Marohn comes in."

The founder and president of the Minnesota nonprofit [Strong Towns](#), Marohn began blogging about the fiscal crisis facing American cities back in 2008 and he's come up with a provocative thesis: that the very nature of the

“*In our rush to grab the elusive dollar on the edge, we're literally stepping over the nickels and dimes waiting there to be picked up.*”

Chuck Marohn  
Founder and President  
Strong Towns



post-World War II suburban growth pattern is the major reason cities are in such dire financial straits. He goes so far as to call the whole system a Ponzi scheme. Cities build new infrastructure farther and farther away

farther away from their cores, and when that sprawl becomes decrepit, the answer is always to just build more infrastructure.

Marohn expounded upon those views at length Tuesday night at The Francis in downtown Sarasota — using historic photos from his hometown of Brainerd, MN, to illustrate how the mass availability of the automobile has dramatically changed how our cities are organized. For thousands of years, Marohn argued, people around the world slowly perfected the art of city planning, and then within a few generations abandoned it.

Strong Towns, the organization that eventually grew from Marohn's blogging, has taken a hard look at the tax revenues generated by different types of development and the results are startling. Marohn showed an overhead

view of a brand-new big box store built on the outskirts of Brainerd side-by-side with an overhead view of a largely decrepit and disused section of the old downtown. The big box store generates \$600,000 in revenue per acre. That rundown urban area pumps out \$1.1 million.

From a city budget standpoint, traditional downtowns are “vastly more productive” than suburban projects, Marohn concluded. “In our rush to grab the elusive dollar on the edge, we're literally stepping over the nickels and dimes waiting there to be picked up.”

And the effect can be drastic. Marohn discussed cities such as Detroit and Memphis that rate high in “despair statistics” and how their planning decisions have gutted their communities.



*Memphis' abandoned Pyramid Arena. Photo by Thomas R. Machnitzki, via Wikimedia Commons*

According to the suburban model, Marohn said, Memphis did everything right. The city ran a highway through its center, knocking down buildings to do so. Memphis leaders got rid of streetcars. They built a beltway and then another one, extending sewer and water services each time.

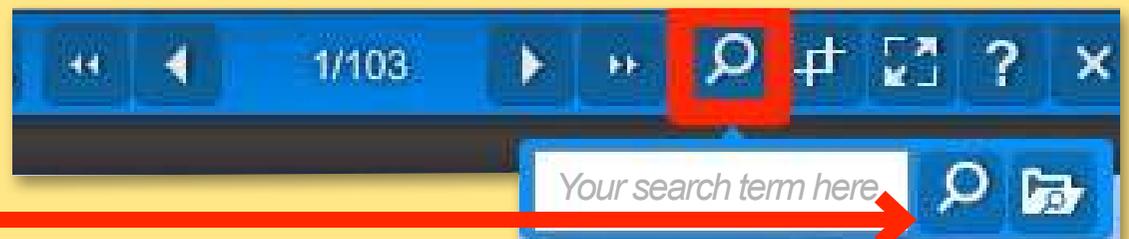
But the ultimate symbol of the city's misguided thinking was Pyramid Arena, Marohn pointed out. In the late '80s, city leaders became convinced that Memphis needed an NBA team to drive economic development, so they built a 20,000-seat arena on the banks of the Mississippi. But by the time the NBA's Vancouver Grizzlies decided to relocate to Memphis, in 2001, the arena was already 10 years old. The team played in the Pyramid for three seasons before a new arena was constructed right down the road. The Pyramid

is now being turned into a Bass Pro Shop, Marohn told the audience, to amazed guffaws.

But Memphis isn't entirely a grim tale. Marohn discussed several recent initiatives the city has undertaken to rethink its growth management, and he hypothesized that the cities that will thrive in the future will be those that are best able to transform themselves.

Asked for his thoughts on where Sarasota stands today, Marohn complimented downtown but also called for the city to build incrementally. Not every new property has to be a skyscraper, he emphasized. Make it easier for smaller projects to fill in the gaps in the urban core, he urged. "If every space is valued as if it's going to be a 22-story tower," he said, "instead of creating growth opportunities, it wipes them out." 

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# PUBLIC AND PRIVATE VENTURES



*An artist's rendering shows one view of the State Street garage. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

## **THE CITY GRANTS EXCEPTIONS TO ITS OWN PROJECTS, BUT TWO OTHER SETS OF PLANS NEED MORE TWEAKS BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE NEXT STAGE**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Even the City of Sarasota must abide by the City of Sarasota's rules, regulations and codes when it comes to projects, and that includes the plans for the State Street parking garage.

On Wednesday, March 19, the garage and two private proposals came before the Development Review Committee (DRC), composed of senior city staffers in the Planning, Zoning and Building departments.

The private projects were a new six-plex condominium at 1343 Fourth St. and an expansion

of the Marietta Museum of Art and Whimsy on the North Tamiami Trail.

The city needs to complete the State Street garage by mid-February of next year, and it is well behind the construction curve because the city commissioners dithered for months over the design. Earlier this month, the garage plans whisked through the city Planning Board process to gain approval for three zoning code "adjustments." On Wednesday, the DRC members looked over the construction drawings to check their compliance with the building code.

One side of the new parking garage “encroaches” six inches on the city’s right of way. That is because the site of an adjoining garage was not surveyed accurately; that structure juts six inches into the city lot where the new garage will be built. The design is tight because the lot is very narrow, and every inch counts. The DRC waived that problem away.

The first floor of the structure will be sold and built to the new owner’s specifications. Thus, the city does not know what will go there. Each possible use — retail, residential, commercial, restaurant — has different requirements.

“What about waste collection?” asked Bill Swick with the Utilities Department.

“If it’s retail, it’s this much. If it’s residential, it’s less. If it’s all a restaurant, it’s a lot more,”

replied Jon Kalaf with the designer-builder, A.D. Morgan.

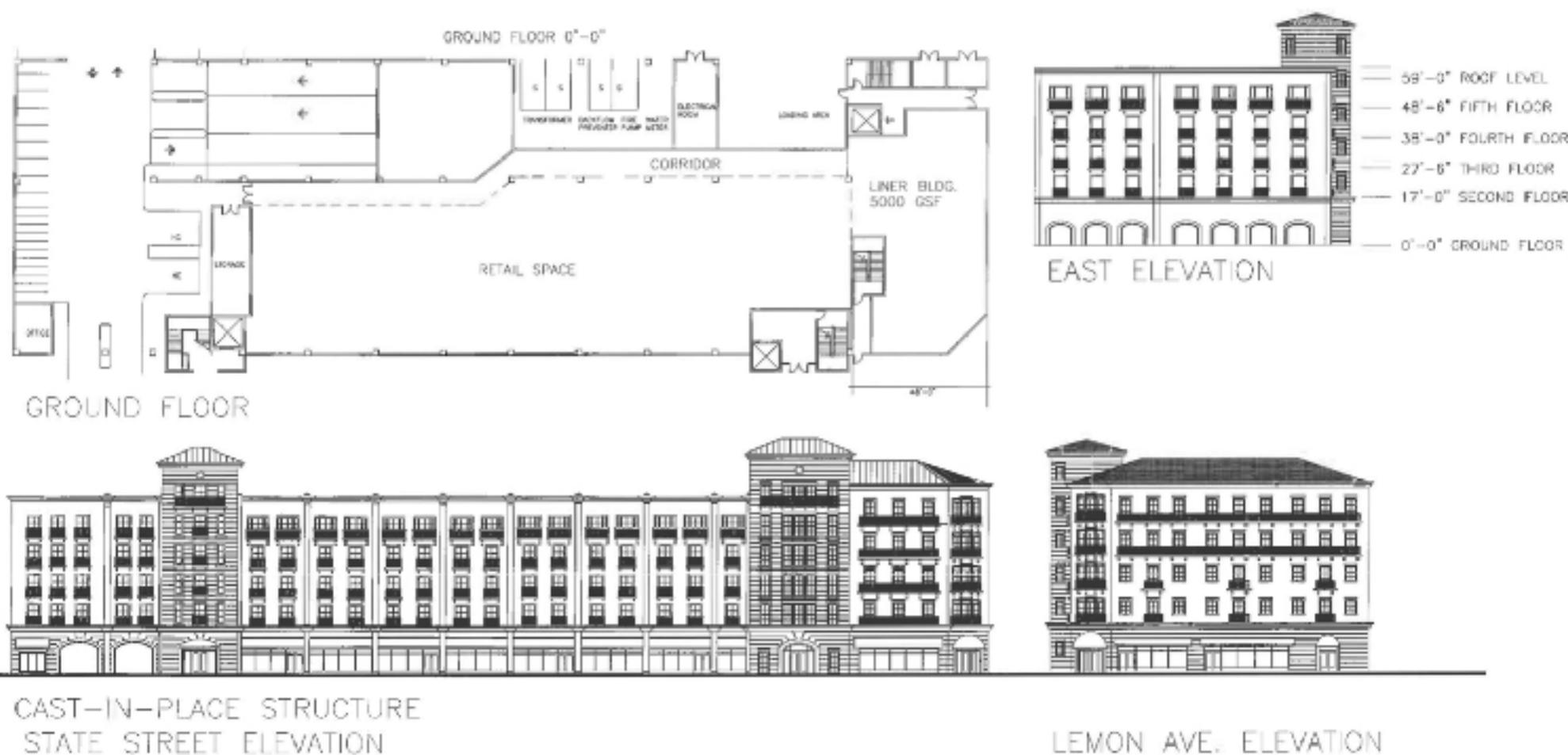
“Use the worst scenario,” said Swick. “That would be prohibitive,” responded Kalaf. “There won’t be enough space in the alley.”

Chief Planner Steve Stancel is managing the project for the city. He suggested all the tenants could share receptacles and work out the expenses later. “You can share the dumpster, and have it picked up more frequently,” said Stancel, “and share the recycling, too.”

“Is there a grease trap? Where is it?” asked Swick.

“It’s on the plans but not the construction plans because we don’t know if there will be a restaurant there,” said Kalaf.

In fact, there is a lot the city staff does not know about the building. Not only will the



*Drawings show plans for the ground level of the State Street garage and the ‘liner’ building. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

ground floor remain dirt until somebody buys it and builds it out, the western 45 feet of the lot will also remain vacant until it is sold to a developer to create a so-called “liner building” with retail, office or residential space.

Many of the utilities that will serve these two unknown uses must be built into the garage design. For example, the pipes must handle the water flow for a combined sprinkler system operation, and fresh water and sanitary sewer lines must be sized, installed and “stubbed up” appropriately.

The DRC survey Wednesday focused on the plans at the 45-percent completion point. City staff will return to the DRC when the plans are 75-percent complete so they can undergo another review. Meanwhile, Stancel

will be taking the exceptions approved by the Planning Board to the City Commission on April 21.

The project is estimated to cost about \$12 million, making the 398 parking spaces among the most expensive (per space) in the nation. Since 2008, the cost of the garage has grown by \$4.1 million.

## **THE ‘SHIELD OF ZEUS’ AND WHIMSY, TOO**

Kevin Byron and his family want to build a six-unit condominium complex on a vacant lot in the Rosemary District at 1343 Fourth St. in the first block west of Central Avenue. It is the third new residential project to pop up in that district in the past three months.



*The founder of the Marietta Museum of Art and Whimsy is seeking permission to add about 1,300 square feet of space to the site. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



*Whimsy museum founder Mary Lee points to the site plan she presented to the DRC this week, including the conservation space and gift shop. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

Byron wants the complex to have a central courtyard and a rooftop deck, with a separate structure planned for parking. He calls it "Aegis Court." Aegis was the shield of the Greeks' top god, Zeus. It is also the name of the missile defense system used on modern Navy cruisers and destroyers.

Bryon fielded a number of questions before the DRC group; he was asked to resubmit his plans after checking further with city staffers.

As for Whimsy: One of the city's newer roadside attractions, the Marietta Museum of Art and Whimsy on the North Tamiami Trail needs about 1,300 additional square feet for



*Just west of the site where a boxing club stood on Central Avenue, the Aegis Court condos will be built on a barren lot in the Rosemary District. The property is one block north of Fruitville Road. Photo of the design by Stan Zimmerman*

arts conservation, a gift shop and an outside restroom for landscape workers.

The museum is a collection of paintings, sculpture and mixed media. Founder Mary Lee says her organization is seeking accreditation, and it needs a loading dock and a conservation facility. She came to Sarasota from Connecticut in 2009 and opened the museum doors in 2010.

She ran into two snags Wednesday. Details of the curb cut for the loading zone drew some attention, and clarifications were requested. But the outside restroom for landscaper workers did not pass muster because — by law — it must be handicap-accessible.

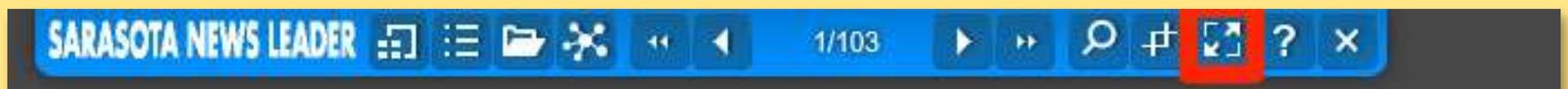
Lee said she was not planning on hiring handicapped landscape workers, but city

staff was adamant: No ramp, no permit. “All workers need equal access,” said senior planning, zoning and building official Gretchen Schneider, “even though it’s only used by landscape workers.”

Lee will return to the DRC with amended plans, which require Planning Board approval but not City Commission approval because they are below the square-foot threshold for the latter.

The planned hotel project at Cocoanut and Palm Avenues in Sarasota was pulled from the agenda for later review of a “major encroachment” for a *porte cochere*, a fixed canopy under which arriving guests can unload so they can check into their rooms. The tentative name of the project is Hotel Sarasota. 

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## REID SPEAKS

*Former Sarasota County Administrator Randy Reid greets well-wishers after being named Citizen of the Year by Control Growth Now. Photo by Cooper Levey-Baker*

### **OUSTED COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TOUCHES ON ETHICS, TRANSPARENCY AND CHOOSING TO BE FIRED**

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

Why would former Sarasota County Administrator Randy Reid speak at a luncheon for Control Growth Now, led by one of the County Commission's most vocal opponents on growth management?

"I'd go to any group," Reid said. "It really bugs me when there are certain groups you're not supposed to go to."

Control Growth Now President Dan Lobeck cited that open-mindedness when he described how "easy" it was to select Reid

as his organization's Citizen of the Year. Reid, fired by the County Commission last October after less than two years on the job, was an administrator "for all the people of our community," Lobeck said in his introductory remarks, and "he listened to all concerned voices." Developers felt they could work with him, as did citizens' interest groups, Lobeck argued.

**““ We'd love to have you sitting there making the decisions.**

Dan Lobeck  
President  
Control Growth Now



For the most part, Reid refrained from directly addressing some of the controversial issues that led to his ouster, instead,



*Randall Reid contemplates agenda material during a County Commission meeting in March 2013.  
File photo*

covering the broader importance of citizen engagement and the rights and responsibilities that come with living in a democratic society. But he did mention the “challenging world” local governments are facing and the pressing need for “sustainability.”

“There needs to be a vision of how we’re going to take care of this place,” Reid said, a vision that emphasizes “wise development practices.” He denied that he was a “no-growther,” but made the point that “home-building alone is not a sustainable economy” and that the region needs to “diversify.”

The Control Growth Now luncheon was the organization’s 25th annual meeting, and Reid urged the 120 or so who attended the Marina Jack event to “continue for another 25 years of guarding the place, paying attention to the planning process. Otherwise, it will be left to others, and those others have influence.”

Reid said he’s often asked, “Why did you choose to be fired?” He answered by referring to a flyer outlining the International City/County Management Association’s code of ethics, a copy of which was provided to each table. “This is what I live by,” he said. “This is where I stand.”

That led to conflict when it came to deciding whom to turn to in the county’s reevaluation of [Sarasota 2050](#) — in particular its fiscal neutrality policy. Reid originally proposed bringing in an academic team to evaluate fiscal neutrality (the principle that new growth should pay its own way), but the commission, led by Commissioner Joe Barbetta, instead pushed the county to hire consultant Donna Arduin, a close ally of Gov. Rick Scott. Her

partner, former Reagan administration official Arthur Laffer, calls himself the “father of supply-side economics.” The resulting report called for the total elimination of fiscal neutrality and lambasted the entire concept of smart growth, leading to criticism from both commission critics and commissioners.

“We tried to have a deliberative process,” Reid said. Arduin was originally intended to be part of the peer review team, “not to control the process, not to do it simply to arrive at a supply-side solution.” Reid wanted wide, inclusive input, he added.

Gayle Reynolds, a former leader of the local Sierra Club chapter, echoed Lobeck in praising Reid’s openness. She told *The Sarasota News Leader* Reid’s remarks were night and day compared to the attitude of longtime Administrator Jim Ley, who served for 14 years before resigning amid scandal in 2011. Ley’s door was “not an open door” when it came to environmental issues, Reynolds said.

Earlier this year, Reid accepted a position as the southeast regional director of the International City/County Management Association, the organization whose ethics he touted. He could live anywhere he’d like in the Southeastern U.S., but he’s chosen to remain in Sarasota, which he’s already calling his “hometown.”

Lobeck noted that Reid and his wife, Connie, live in the district of County Commissioner Carolyn Mason, and mock-suggested that he run for office, to much laughter and applause. “We’d love to have you sitting there making the decisions,” Lobeck said. 



## END OF THE LINE

*In 2003, the CRA provided almost \$5 million to bring Whole Foods to downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

### **ANALYSIS: THE DOWNTOWN SARASOTA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FACES A DOUBLE DEADLINE**

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Add the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to the list of property tax-supported boards that are nearly broke.

“There is some discretionary money available, but it will be hard to start other projects,” said City of Sarasota Chief Planner Steve Stancel during a March 13 meeting.

He was talking to the CRA’s advisory board, a group of community leaders appointed to oversee the almost \$7 million from this year’s tax-increment financing. The city and county agreed to freeze their property tax receipts

in 1986 in a defined area of downtown; any increase from that “base year” — the tax increment — would be used to improve the defined area.

As property values ballooned, the increment increased until it was bringing in millions and millions. The Sarasota City Commission, sitting as the governing board of the CRA, decided where every dime went. And as time went on, less and less went to “bricks and mortar” projects, and more went into typical general fund responsibilities, such as downtown policing. As a percentage of the income, administration costs almost doubled.



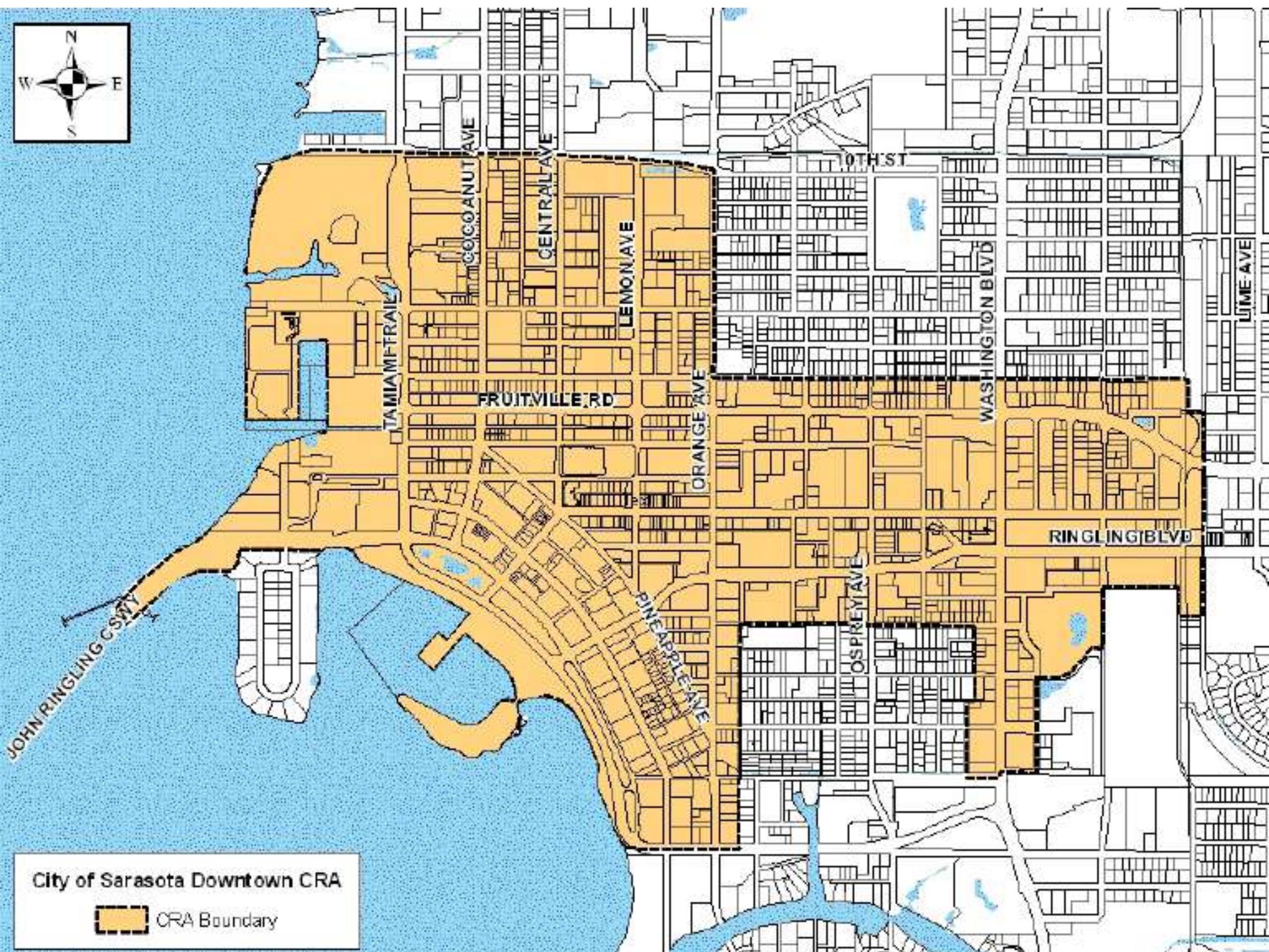
*Main Street in Sarasota shows no signs of 'blight' or 'slum,' whose eradications were listed as aims of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency when it was established in 1986. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The deal is good for 30 years, meaning it will expire in 2016. Another committee is urging the funding scheme be continued. More on that later.

One of the projects the CRA is financing is a new parking garage on State Street. However, the price has jumped \$4.1 million since the first estimate was released in 2009. The Sarasota City Commission — as the CRA governing body — simply dipped into the CRA's reserves and pushed off other projects to cover the anticipated shortfall.

“We lose that money because it's all going to the garage?” asked CRA Advisory Board member Paul Thorpe on March 13. In fact, the loss could be higher, as member Drayton Saunders pointed out, “If there are further cost overruns on the garage, we will see a further shift of funds from future projects or other discretionary funds.”

The CRA is in straits similar to those of two other boards. The Downtown Improvement District (DID) levies a property tax surcharge in a smaller area than the CRA; and after



*A map shows the boundaries of the Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

completing multi-million dollar projects, it is now running on about \$56,000 per year. “Not enough to hold meetings for,” joked one DID member.

A more parallel situation involves the St. Armands Business Improvement District (BID), which also levies a property tax surcharge. It faced an expiration date in 2013, by which all bills needed to be paid and books closed in case the property owners around the shopping district on St. Armands Key failed

to renew the levy in a referendum. The first vote failed, but a second was scheduled with only days to spare, and the measure passed.

Since the BID had to start from scratch with no carry-forward funds, it, too, has been struggling to pay its bills, including its legal expenses related to a public records lawsuit over use of private email accounts for public business, which was settled.

The CRA faces a similar fate. It expires in 2016, but instead of a group of self-interested



*The Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency Extension Study Committee works on issues during a November 2013 meeting. Photo by Stan Zimmerman*

businessmen as the electorate, the time extension of Sarasota's Community Redevelopment Agency faces a tougher audience.

Right now, the city's Finance Office is working to balance out the books and arrange the budgets so if the clock figuratively strikes midnight on the CRA, it can gracefully bow out of operation.

## FINAL CRA EXTENSION REPORT ISSUED

After nine months of study and debate, an *ad hoc* CRA Extension Study Committee with 10 people produced its final report this month. Copies were distributed to the CRA Advisory Board members to study in advance of a March 20 meeting when the *ad hoc* committee

will test-drive its sales pitch. The study committee members will deliver the real thing to the Sarasota City and County commissions during a joint session on April 1.

The city does not want to hear the peals marking midnight. Since inception in 1986, the CRA has pulled in \$57 million in tax-incremental finances and spent it all downtown. The second paragraph of the final report's executive summary provides the figure of \$76 million for the total amount of receipts through the end of the 30-year CRA term.

It is not until Page 33 of the report that you see an estimate of the total income if the CRA is extended another three decades. It is a staggering \$416 million for the total period, assuming a flat property tax rate and



*Funding from the CRA is being used to pay for cost overruns in the State Street garage project. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

a 5-percent annual growth in property value appraisals.

More than half of that is money from the county. If the CRA ceases to exist, the city will still collect its share of the property tax revenue, but it will not receive the county's share. Subtracting the \$57 million already collected means \$366 million — more than one-third of a billion dollars — is at stake in the decision about the future of the CRA.

This will certainly be the largest financial decision the city and county commissioners will make in their lifetimes. If the CRA is extended, it means a shift of \$183 million in county tax revenue over 30 years to city coffers.

This will be an easy matter for the city commissioners to support; it will be a harder pill to swallow for their county counterparts.

As with all financial projections, a small change in assumptions can make major changes in the downstream results. In fact, this projection is among the most conservative the *ad hoc* committee studied. Other forecasts showed the total take in excess of \$500 million.

## **SOFTENING THE BLOW**

So how could the county commissioners be convinced to give up an average of \$6 million or more every year to the city for the next three decades? If the initial argument to establish the CRA in 1986 was to fight “slum and blight” downtown, where would the extra \$366 million be spent?

The *ad hoc* committee members do not have answers for that. They recommend, however,

dumping the City Commission as the governing board. Instead, they call for two county commissioners and two city commissioners to be the governors, along with three citizens appointed by the city.

Since the city is now “skimming” part of the CRA monies to pay for general fund obligations, the *ad hoc* committee suggests the county be allowed the same privilege. The new governing board would decide how much, perhaps with an increasing or decreasing share as time elapses.

With “slum and blight” on the run downtown, another recommendation for an extended CRA would expand its official boundaries, opening up new territory for both income and expenditures. The North Tamiami Trail, the Rosemary District and other areas were suggested.

And the *ad hoc* committee recommended a realistic plan be developed for spending the money. Right now, the “plan” is about five years old and full of platitudes. Each year the advisory board and city commissioners tweak the actual projects. None of them can be called a long-range, visionary effort. The new parking garage should be finished by mid-February 2015.

The *ad hoc* committee is recommending establishment of “one long-term plan for the CRA” and the creation and implementation of a strategic action plan for each area, updated annually.

## **HALF-BILLION-DOLLAR POLITICS**

In 2006, at the peak of the real estate market boom, the City Commission unilaterally added property to the CRA. That land is located in

north Sarasota, and every year since 2006, it has declined in value. In effect, its tax increment is negative. Every year, the city has taken money from the Downtown Sarasota CRA to keep this Newtown CRA afloat.

The county authorized the geographic expansion, but it contributes nothing to the Newtown CRA (which has its own advisory board and list of projects and accomplishments). While the monies are commingled with downtown CRA funds and used to pay for Newtown CRA projects and administration, the Newtown CRA has a term of 40 years from its start in 2006.

The city commissioners are sure to resent losing their absolute authority over CRA expenditures, but the addition of \$133 million in county monies over the next three decades is also sure to ease their pain. However, the report has no similar balm for the county's continued loss of tax revenue for use in downtown Sarasota.

Outgoing County Commissioner Nora Patterson has remained opposed to the extension of the CRA from the time it was first mentioned. As a former mayor of Sarasota, her voice may resonate with the two younger members of her board. However, it is doubtful the April 1 meeting will be a time of decision. Both boards can accept the report, thank the *ad hoc* committee and ponder their moves.

One possibility is clear. The Sarasota County Commission could refuse to extend the CRA and begin to recoup the increment. In fact, over the past four years, the county has found new uses for the old tax-increment finance

money in its post-2016 environment. Budget projections for the 2017 fiscal year and beyond show the county taking back the money.

Conversely, the county might accept a larger role in deciding how CRA monies are spent, angling perhaps for its use in larger projects such as a new cultural district, a convention center, a research and development corridor once proposed for mid-county energy efficiency endeavors or other large public projects.

Or the county commissioners may use their votes as a lever to force other issues to swing in their direction. A homeless shelter is one current hot topic, as is conveyance of land on Ringling Boulevard next to the Silvertooth Judicial Center in downtown Sarasota. Is the county willing to forgo \$133 million in long-term money for some short-term solutions?

With city and county elections looming, nothing is certain, and no decision in the near future may be final. Two county commissioners are term-limited (Patterson and Joe Barbetta), while one city commissioner must resign to run for Barbetta's seat (Paul Caragiulo). And City Commission district elections will be held in the spring of 2015. New players with new ideas will be coming to the party.

Regardless of who is voting, the stakes are perhaps a profound half a billion dollars. But fundamentally, the question is simple: Should Sarasota County continue to funnel a share of the county property tax revenue paid by downtown Sarasota property owners back into the city? 



*Children enjoy a slide in Potter Park. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

## **POTTER PARK SELECTED FOR NATIONAL MACY'S PROGRAM**

Sarasota County's Potter Park has been selected for *Heart Your Park*, "a national program with local reach that partners Macy's with the National Recreation and Park Association (NPRA)," the county has announced in a news release.

The program, which runs through March 31, aims to raise awareness and funds for local parks across the country, the release points out. Customers at the Macy's store in Westfield Southgate Mall can donate \$1 or more at the register, with 100 percent of the money benefiting Potter Park, the release adds. To further "spread the love," Macy's will match the total customer donation across all stores, dollar for dollar, up to \$250,000, the release notes.

"Potter Park is one of more than 550 parks nationwide that was selected by Macy's *Heart Your Park* program in collaboration with NPRA, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of community parks, recreation and conservation," the release explains.

"We are thrilled to partner with Macy's and NRPA for *Heart Your Park*," said Carolyn Brown, director of the Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department, in the release. "Potter Park is one of the most popular family-oriented parks in our system, so increased awareness and additional funding for Potter Park is a real plus for the community."

Potter Park, located at 8587 Potter Park Drive in Sarasota, is a 37-acre neighborhood park within Palmer Ranch, the release adds. It offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

The park's amenities include a picnic pavilion, large gazebo, grills, an open area with

picnic tables, playground, basketball courts, four lighted tennis courts, multi-use playfield, natural trails and restrooms.

For more information about Potter Park and Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, visit [scgov.net](http://scgov.net) or call the Sarasota Call Center at 861-5000.

## MOTE MARINE TO HOLD 28TH ANNUAL RUN FOR THE TURTLES ON APRIL 5

The annual 5K road race and 1-mile fun run/walk held to raise funds for Mote Marine Laboratory's Sea Turtle Conservation and Research Program will take place on Siesta Key on April 5, Mote has announced.

People interested in participating will receive a discount if they register by March 21 for the 28th annual Run for the Turtles, a news release notes. The cost is \$30 for adults through Friday, March 21, and \$35 from March 22 through race day, the release says. The fee is \$20 for children age 10 and younger through March 21 and \$25 after that. Download the form at [mote.org/turtlerun](http://mote.org/turtlerun) or register online at [active.com](http://active.com), the release adds.

Participants also may register on-site starting at 6:30 a.m. Saturday, April 5, at the Siesta Public Beach gazebo south of the pavilion, the release points out.

Mote's turtle program, which will soon begin its 33rd year, is internationally recognized for coordinating conservation initiatives along the 35 miles of Sarasota County beaches, the release continues. All sea turtle species are considered threatened or endangered under federal law, it adds. "Mote's monitoring efforts provide crucial information to help resource managers protect these ancient reptiles," the



*A sea turtle nest is marked off with caution tape on Siesta Key's Turtle Beach in 2012. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

release says, "and Run for the Turtles helps to support these efforts."

Turtle nesting season runs from May 1 through Oct. 31 on beaches from Longboat Key through Venice.

The 1-mile fun run/walk will begin at 7:30 a.m. on April 5, while the 5K run will begin at 8 a.m. Prizes will be awarded to the overall male and female winners in each event, the release notes. Awards for the 5K race also will be presented to winners in specific categories, including age groups from 9 and younger to 85 and older.

For more information, visit [mote.org/turtlerun](http://mote.org/turtlerun) or contact Paula Clark at 388-4441, Ext. 357, or [pclark@mote.org](mailto:pclark@mote.org).

## EARLY VOTING CONTINUES FOR THE MARCH 25 ELECTIONS

Early voting for the March 25 Special County School District, Holiday Park Park & Recreation District, Town of Longboat Key and City of Venice elections began on Monday, March 10, and will continue through Saturday, March 22, the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Office is reminding the public.

During that period, eligible voters may cast their ballots at any of the three Supervisor of Elections (SOE) offices — in Sarasota, Venice and North Port — or at the Longboat Key Town Hall, between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily, a news release says.

The SOE office locations are the Terrace Building at 101 S. Washington Blvd. in Sarasota;

the R.L. Anderson Building, located at 4000 Tamiami Trail South in Venice; and Biscayne Plaza, located at 13640 Tamiami Trail in North Port. The Longboat Key Town Hall is located at 501 Bay Isles Road on Longboat Key.

Florida law requires a voter to present a photo and signature ID upon entering the polling place and prior to voting, the release points out. A voter who appears at the polls without photo and signature ID will be allowed to cast a provisional ballot.

Voters who have questions may contact the Supervisor of Elections Office at 861-8600 or visit the [website](#).

## Sarasota County Schools 1-mill referendum Vote Tuesday, March 25, 2014

- ★ Sarasota County is an A school district. Only five of Florida's 67 districts earned an A in 2013.
- ★ Referendum funds help the district
  - offer more advanced science, technology, engineering and math classes
  - preserve art, music and drama programs
  - attract and keep outstanding teachers
  - add 30 minutes to the school day, equal to 14 extra days of instruction per year



- ★ Renewing the voter-approved millage will *not* increase school taxes.
- ★ Since 2007, the district has reduced its annual budget by \$124 million and cut 651 jobs.
- ★ The 1 mill yields about \$40 million a year, roughly 12 percent of the district operating budget.

Voting by mail begins Feb. 18. Early voting is March 10-22.  
Visit [SarasotaVotes.com](http://SarasotaVotes.com) for details on voting by mail and early voting sites.

*The Sarasota County School District has created a flyer to inform voters about the March 25 referendum on its 1 mill tax. Image courtesy Sarasota County Schools*

## TWO BEACHES WIN TRIPADVISOR TRAVELERS' CHOICE AWARDS

TripAdvisor® has announced that Siesta Key Public Beach and Lido Beach have won spots on its list of the top 25 U.S. beaches.

The recognition came as it released its 2014 Travelers' Choice Awards.

Siesta Public Beach earned top honors in Florida and was third in the nation behind two beaches in Hawaii — Lanikai in Kailua on the island of Oahu and Ka'anapali in Lahaina on the island of Maui — Visit Sarasota County, the county's tourism office, noted in a March 18 news release.

Siesta was the only beach not in Hawaii among the top six on the list, according to the Travelers' Choice Awards website.

Lido Beach was No. 22 on the U.S. list.

"We are thrilled to share this news," said Erin Duggan, director of brand for Visit Sarasota

County, in the release. "We are honored so many visitors to our shores love their experience here and are willing to share it with others."

"TripAdvisor hosts more than 150 million reviews by travelers," the news release points out. More than 100 accommodations are listed on TripAdvisor's page for both the Siesta and Lido beaches.

In 2011, Siesta Public Beach was named the No. 1 Beach in America by Dr. Stephen Leatherman — aka Dr. Beach. It was rated a *Top 10 Family Beach* in 2013 by National Geographic Traveler, and it was named one of Conde Naste's Traveler's top white sand beaches in Florida earlier this year, the release adds.



*Siesta Public Beach has just put another proverbial feather in its cap, winning TripAdvisor honors. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## COUNTY NAMED A HEALTHY WEIGHT COMMUNITY CHAMPION

The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) has named Sarasota County a Healthy Weight Community Champion, the county has announced.

Sarasota County was among 37 communities recognized March 14 as part of the Healthiest Weight Florida program, “which highlights local government efforts to increase physical activity and improve nutrition,” a news release notes. “Healthiest Weight Florida is a public-private collaboration to help Florida’s children and adults make consistent, informed choices” about healthful eating and activities, the release adds.

“Efforts to improve health are often most effective at the local level, and the department wants to recognize the outstanding progress made by these communities to promote healthy weight,” said state Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong in the release. “The commitment of these municipalities and counties affects nearly 9.4 million Floridians and helps further statewide collaborative efforts to make Florida the healthiest state in the nation.”

According to FDOH in the release, local governments were identified because they can play a critical role in shaping environments so healthful choices become the easy choices, the release continues.

Between November 2013 and February 2014, local governments were invited to submit best-practice policies they have implemented to promote physical activity and improve nutrition in their jurisdictions, the release explains. “These best-practice policies are exemplified by the Healthy Weight Community Champions.”



*The Legacy Trail is among approximately 150 Sarasota County parks. Photo courtesy Sarasota County*

“We are honored to be recognized for our efforts at helping residents make healthy choices,” said County Administrator Thomas A. Harmer in the release. “By promoting healthy options and making it easier for our residents to make those choices, we are making Sarasota County that much more attractive to our current and future employers who will need to provide benefits to their employees.”

In the application Sarasota County Administration submitted for the program — with support from the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County — staff highlighted the approximately 150 parks, including the Legacy Trail/Venetian Waterway Park, the county manages and maintains. Also mentioned were the community gardens administered by the county through University of Florida Extension program and the Gold Achievement Award received by the Sarasota County School District.

More information on Healthiest Weight Florida, including a list of the Champion Communities and best practices, may be found online at [healthiestweightfl.com](http://healthiestweightfl.com).

## ENGLEWOOD COMMUNITY CLEANUP SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 22

Sarasota County's Development Services and Code Enforcement departments will hold the annual free community cleanup for Englewood area residences on Saturday, March 22, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., the county has announced.

Dumpsters will be provided at three locations for residents to dispose of discarded household items, yard waste, tree trimmings, junk and other refuse, a news release says:

- The intersection of West Dearborn Street and South McCall Road (southwest corner).
- The intersection of Green and Orange Streets (northeast corner).

- On Englewood Road at Buchan Airport.

Sarasota County Hazardous Waste personnel will be available only at the West Dearborn Street and South McCall Road location to accept hazardous materials, electronics, TVs and computers from residential customers, the release notes. Hazardous waste also may be taken to the county facility at 8750 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota Wednesdays through Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

## 'HATS OFF' TO WOMAN'S EXCHANGE VOLUNTEERS

The Woman's Exchange of Sarasota will celebrate its more than 260 volunteers at its annual volunteer luncheon, to be held on March 31 at Michaels on East in Sarasota, the nonprofit has announced.

This year's event, with a *Mad Hatter* theme, will acknowledge volunteers for their contribution not only to the Woman's Exchange but also to members of the local arts community, who are the beneficiaries of their hard work, a news release points out.

Entertainment will be provided by Debbie Keeton, a Sarasota pianist and vocalist.

According to Executive Director and CEO, Karen Koblenz, the Woman's Exchange will be

awarding \$250,000 in grants and scholarships at its awards celebration in June. In addition to its funding for the arts, the Exchange will give back 65 percent, or roughly \$2 million this year, to its consignors, further benefiting the local population and economy, the release notes.

Since opening in 1962, the Woman's Exchange Inc. has awarded more than \$7 million to support the arts of Sarasota and Manatee counties, the release says. It is one of Sarasota County's largest scholarship providers. All of the scholarship and grant monies have been generated through sales at the retail store located at 539 S. Orange Ave. in downtown Sarasota's Historic Burns Square, the release adds.

WOMAN'S  
EXCHANGE INC.



NON-PROFIT CONSIGNMENT SHOP  
SUPPORTING the ARTS of SARASOTA



## GOODWILL RELOCATES ITS BOUTIQUE TO HONORE AVENUE

Goodwill Manasota has relocated its Boutique from 5831 Derek Ave. in Sarasota to 1704 N. Honore Ave., Goodwill has announced.

“Our objective ... was to bring it to a location where it could be easier for shoppers to visit from both Sarasota and Manatee counties, and the Honore retail location had opportunity for expansion,” said Bob Rosinsky, president and CEO of Goodwill Manasota, in a news release. “We’re now able to accommodate more shopping in one location.”

Goodwill’s Boutique, which opened in 2011, has been a successful retail arm of the organization, the release points out. It has become known as the place “to discover the true meaning of ‘the thrill of the hunt’ to uncover upscale ladies’ apparel, shoes, accessories and more,” the release adds. “The chic store

offers several upscale brands,” including Armani, Oscar de la Renta, Coach, Vera Wang and St John, the release notes.

The Goodwill Bookstore, located at 5880 Bee Ridge Road in Sarasota, will move to the former Boutique store location off Clark Road, the release continues. The new bookstore’s grand opening is scheduled for May.

“All proceeds from the Boutique and the retail stores support Goodwill’s mission of providing career services and job placement and training to the community with a focus on those with disabilities and other barriers to employment,” the release adds.

The Boutique is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., the release says.


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Create your legacy by helping those with disabilities or employment barriers to become self-sufficient through a major gift to Goodwill Manasota. This special opportunity not only helps fund programs that create jobs, but also provides assistance to Goodwill’s Veterans Initiative that helps veterans reintegrate into the civilian workforce.

MAKE AN IMPACT TODAY



## SEASON OF SHARING EXCEEDS THE \$2 MILLION MARK IN GIFTS

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County has announced that the annual Season of Sharing campaign reached new heights, breaking the \$2 million mark.

“These funds will help more than 2,800 individuals and families on the verge of homelessness to stay in their homes,” a news release points out.

This year’s campaign, which launched the week of Thanksgiving, outpaced previous years, reaching the \$1 million mark in early January, the release adds. “Also noteworthy was the speed at which The Patterson Foundation’s \$500,000 match for new and increased gifts was reached,” it says. When campaign organizers met with area philanthropists Chuck and Margie Barancik — whose gift of \$100,000 last year helped the community meet the match — discussion centered on the possibility of aiming for a goal of \$2 million, the release explains.

In mid-January, with the campaign standing at \$1.6 million, the Baranciks pledged \$150,000 to be activated when the community campaign reached \$1.8 million. The Patterson Foundation agreed to match the \$50,000 increase in the Baranciks’ gift.

Season of Sharing prevents homelessness by providing targeted financial assistance of up to \$1,000 (per family, per year) for crucial needs such as rent, mortgages and utilities, as well as for other expenses, such as car repairs, childcare and food vouchers, the release explains. “While most of the funds are raised around the holiday season, from November through January, assistance from the Season of Sharing Fund is available all



year long through participating social service agencies for those in need in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and DeSoto counties,” it points out.

“Our nonprofit partners are critical in identifying those in need and administering the funds,” the Foundation release continues. “They do this without any administrative fees — just like the rest of the partners — showing their caring and compassion and ensuring more families on the brink are able to stay in their homes.”

A significant feature of Season of Sharing is that none of the participating organizations takes any fees or receives reimbursements for overhead expenses related to the Season of Sharing campaign, the release notes. One hundred percent of all donations “go to direct assistance for families at risk of homelessness,” the release adds.

More than 130 businesses contributed gifts ranging from \$15 to \$7,500, resulting in nearly \$43,000 in Season of Sharing contributions. Of the nearly 3,700 gifts, the release continues, 70 percent were \$100 or less.

“The Patterson Foundation, which has willingly and happily exceeded its match limit for new and increased gifts for several years (contributing \$540,000 in 2012 and \$555,000 last

year) will be matching a whopping \$632,000 this year,” the release points out.

“When we began our support of Season of Sharing in 2009, we knew our caring region would rise to the occasion to meet our dollar-for-dollar matching challenge to help families on the verge of homelessness,” said Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation, in the release. “Each year, generous people have stepped up to

surpass our expectations. We believe we live in one of the most generous places in the nation; this milestone proves it yet again.”

Season of Sharing, now in its 14th year of raising emergency funds, is a partnership of the Herald-Tribune Media Group and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, the release adds. Since 2000, more than \$11 million has been raised to prevent homelessness, it notes.

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## **SAF TO OFFER PROGRAM ON LE CORBUSIER AND ‘GREEN ARCHITECTURE’**

On Thursday, March 27, the Sarasota Architectural Foundation (SAF) will present the program *Le Corbusier’s Approach to Green Architecture*, featuring remarks by Jean Renoux, an interior designer, lecturer and tour guide, the foundation has announced.

The event will be held at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room at the Sarasota Herald-Tribune building, located at 1741 Main St. in downtown Sarasota. Check-in will begin at 5 p.m., a news release says. A complimentary wine reception from 7 to 8 p.m. will follow the lecture. The cost is \$10 for SAF members, \$15 for the general public and \$5 for students.

“One of the most influential architects of the 20th century, Le Corbusier (Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, 1887-1965) was a proponent of sustainable concepts utilizing green roofs, local weather patterns, cross ventilation principles, sound insulation and vibration suppression,” the release explains. “He promoted the economy of means and materials

without compromising the efficiency or security of a building.”

The release points out that, just like Paul Rudolph and his fellow ‘Sarasota School’ architects, Le Corbusier undertook projects that “reflected an understanding of the human form with proportionate and sustainable building design — important lessons in today’s built environment.”

For more than 30 years, Renoux has led tours exploring the architecture, décor, furniture, art, music, history, food and culture of France, Italy, England, the Netherlands, Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Romania, Croatia, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Mali, Morocco and Tunisia, the release notes.

Advance registration is recommended, the release says. Interested persons may pay online at [saf-srq.org/events](http://saf-srq.org/events) or pay at the door with cash, check or credit card. For more information, email [info@saf-srq.org](mailto:info@saf-srq.org) or call 364-2199.

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*A house designed by Le Corbusier stands in Stuttgart, Germany. Photo by Tyke via Wikimedia Commons*

## COUNTY MUSIC EDUCATORS HONORED AT STATE AWARDS EVENT

Music educators from four Sarasota County public schools were honored recently at the Florida Music Educators Association (FMEA) Conference Awards Breakfast, which was held at the Tampa Convention Center, the school district has announced.

Last year, Sarasota County Superintendent Lori White was recognized by FMEA as the Superintendent of the Year. This year, three of the district's middle schools — Laurel Nokomis, Venice Middle and Woodland Middle — received the organization's 2014 Middle School Music Enrollment Award for

having at least 35 percent of their student populations involved in their music programs, a news release explains. Additionally, Pine View chorus teacher Loisanne Robins was honored for her 34 years of service to FMEA, the release notes.

Representatives of those Sarasota County schools were among the music teachers, school and district administrators, businesses and others recognized at the January event for making "an outstanding contribution to music education," the release explains. 



*Sarasota County teachers and administrators honored at the Florida Music Educators Association Conference Awards Breakfast were (from left) Woodland Middle School Principal Cindy Hall, Woodland Middle teachers David Wing and Seth Gardner, Venice Middle teachers Kathleen Crane and Ian Ackroyd, Pine View teacher Loisanne Robins, Laurel Nokomis teacher Angela McKenzie and Sarasota County Schools Fine Arts Program Specialist Angela Hartvigsen. Contributed photo*



*Stolen property recovered through Operation Recommit was gathered together by Sheriff's Office staff. Photo courtesy of the Sheriff's Office*

## **SIX PEOPLE ARRESTED AS A RESULT OF OPERATION RECOMMIT**

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested six suspects during Operation Recommit, "an investigation into an organized crime ring led by a career criminal" who was stealing goods and selling them on the street as well as to pawn shops, the office has announced.

"The ringleader, Michael Rowles, has 22 previous felony convictions and was most recently released from Florida State Prison in February," a news release says. Within days of his release, members of the Sheriff's Office's Tactical Unit learned that Rowles "was directing several subjects to systematically commit thefts and make fraudulent returns of stolen merchandise," the release adds.

The result was a collaborative investigation involving the TAC Unit, Intelligence Unit, Criminal Investigations Section and

Special Investigations Section, it continues. Surveillance confirmed the group's involvement in criminal activity over a period of several weeks, which included thefts at multiple Walmart, Home Depot, Publix, CVS, Walgreens, Best Buy and Sweetbay locations from Sarasota to Venice, the release continues.

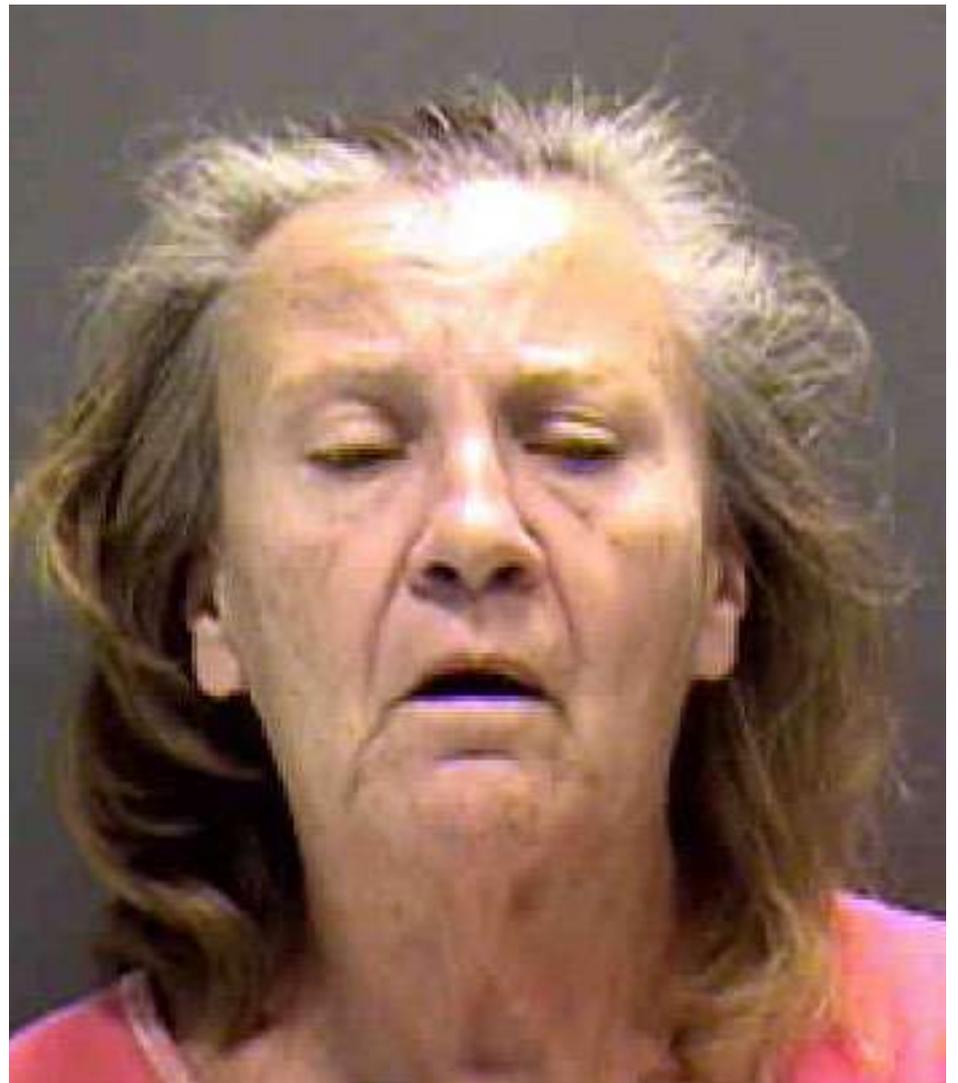


*This vehicle was seized during Operation Recommit. Photo courtesy of the Sheriff's Office*

While some stolen property was sold through various means, the crime ring also used Jim's Pawn, located at 6526 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the release says. "Owner Jim Smith knowingly purchased stolen property through his pawnshop and personally, which is illegal," it points out. "Smith also directed crime ring members to bring specific items to him, including 10 packages of pork chops from Publix that were found in his car [March 18] following his arrest," the release notes.

Smith is facing an enhanced charge of Organized Dealing in Stolen Property. The Department of Agriculture is also conducting an administrative investigation in regard to his pawnshop business license, the release says.

In addition to Smith and Rowles, the crime ring included Rowles' 63-year-old mother, Sandra Schaub; 19-year-old Gregory Cloud; 23-year-old Caitlyn McGrath; and 26-year-old



*Sandra Schaub/Contributed photo*



*Gregory Cloud/Contributed photo*



*Melanie Masalko/Contributed photo*

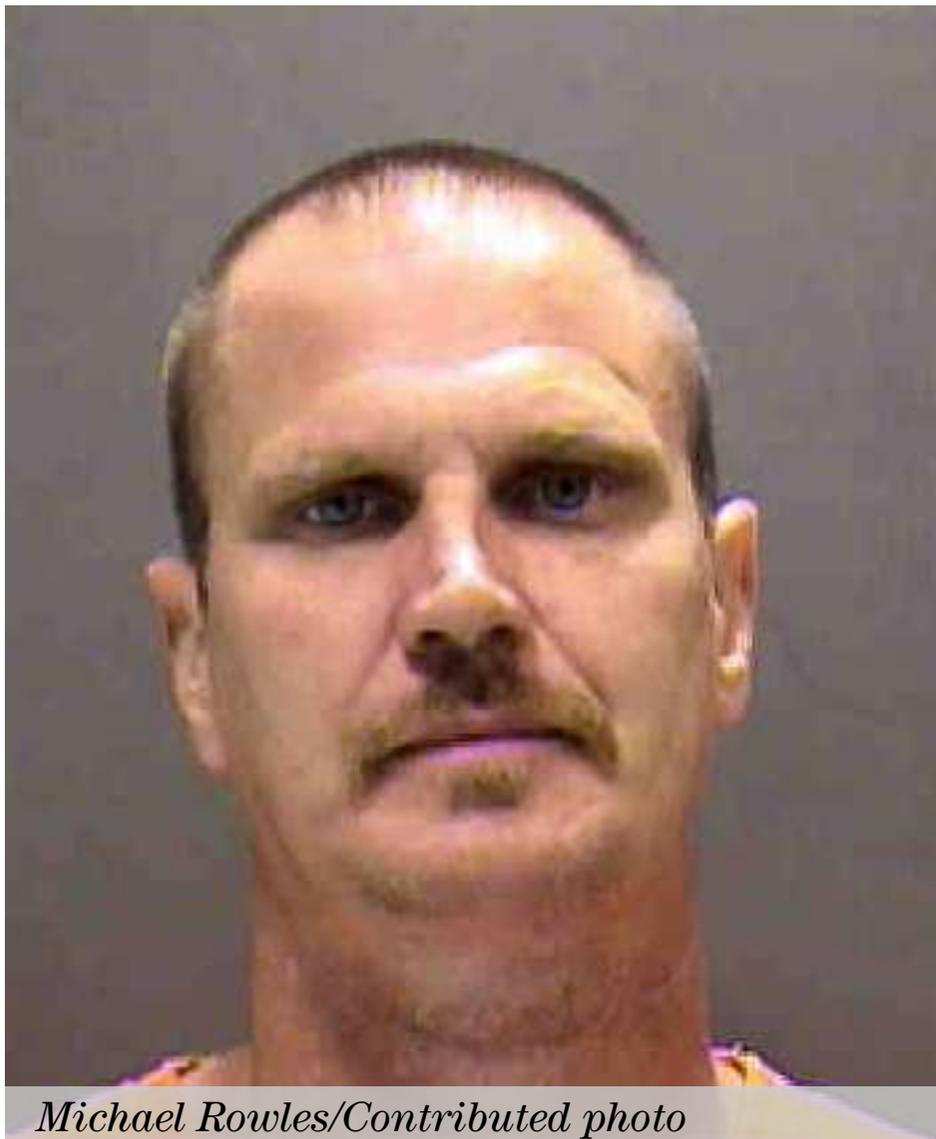
Melanie Masalko, who are all charged with Dealing in Stolen Property, the release continues. When Rowles was taken into custody on March 18, he was “carrying a bottle of prescription drugs that did not belong to him,” it notes, so he was charged with Trafficking in Hydromorphone.

“It is important for citizens to understand how we are using information developed through our Intelligence to Action (I2A) program,” said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. “Instead of simply arresting one man for one crime, the flexibility of our TAC Unit let us monitor his activities, which helped determine the scope of the crime ring and led to the arrest of all involved. This allows us to have a greater impact on overall crime in Sarasota County.”

The TAC Unit seized two vehicles in this operation, the release says. Dozens of additional charges are forthcoming as the investigation continues, it points out.



*Caitlin McGrath/Contributed photo*



*Michael Rowles/Contributed photo*



*James Smith/Contributed photo*

## POLICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATING A SHOOTING

Detectives with the Sarasota Police Department are investigating a shooting that occurred just after midnight on Tuesday, March 18, the department has reported.

Officers responded to the 1400 block of 18th Street in Sarasota after receiving reports of a shooting, a news release says. They found a 17-year-old male victim, who subsequently was transported to the Blake Medical Center trauma center in Bradenton, the release

adds. There, the teen underwent surgery for life-threatening injuries, the release notes.

As of mid-afternoon on March 19, no arrests had been made in the case, the release adds.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call Det. Maria Llovio at 364-7336, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 941-366-TIPS (8477) or go online at [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com).

## ENGLEWOOD MAN CHARGED IN EXPLOITATION OF ELDERLY CASE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested an Englewood man for allegedly stealing more than \$20,000 from an 88-year-old woman who allowed him to live in her home, the office has announced.

Anthony Rigali moved in with the victim and her son at 770 Michigan Ave. last July, a news release says. Detectives found that between August and November 2013, the victim signed 14 checks that she thought Rigali was using to pay bills, the release continues. Instead, Rigali used the money himself to pay for things such as overdue child support, a trip to Ohio and the purchase of a truck, the release adds. "Rigali also used the victim's ATM card at least twice to withdraw \$600 in cash," it says.

Rigali turned himself in to detectives on March 18. He was charged with Exploitation of an Elderly Person at a level between \$20,000 and \$100,000, according to the report. He was booked into the Sarasota County Jail, where he is being held on \$25,000 bond, the release notes.



*Anthony Rigali/Contributed photo*

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## DETECTIVES TRYING TO IDENTIFY WOMAN USING STOLEN CREDIT CARDS

Detectives with the Sarasota Police Department are looking for a woman who was caught on camera using allegedly stolen credit cards to buy gift cards, the office has announced.

On March 2 between 1 and 2 p.m., the woman seen in the accompanying photographs used two stolen credit cards to buy gift cards from three places, a news release says: Sweetbay in Midtown Plaza, located at 1821 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota; the Walgreens located at 1921

Waldemere St. in Sarasota; and Sonny's BBQ, located at 3926 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

In the surveillance photos, the woman is wearing a pink shirt, sunglasses, shorts and flip-flops, the release points out. Anyone with information about her is encouraged to call Detective Dwayne Shellhammer at 954-7014, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at [sarasotacrimestoppers.com](http://sarasotacrimestoppers.com).



*Sarasota Police Department detectives are searching for the woman pictured in this surveillance video still. Contributed image*



*The woman in pink (at right) in this video surveillance photo is being sought in connection with use of stolen credit cards. Contributed image*



*A third video surveillance photo shows the suspect engaged in a store transaction. Contributed image*

## TWO ARRESTED ON MULTIPLE CHARGES AFTER CAMPSITE INCIDENT

Darrell Arline, 41, has been charged with two counts of felony Aggravated Battery, and Shantel Moses Ward, 27, has been charged with one count of felony Aggravated Assault after an incident at a campsite over the weekend, the Sarasota Police Department has announced.

On Saturday, March 15, about 11:30 a.m., Sarasota Police officers were dispatched to a campsite located at 1746 10th Way in Sarasota in reference to a fight. The victims reported that Arline had doused them with gasoline while holding a lighter, a news release says.

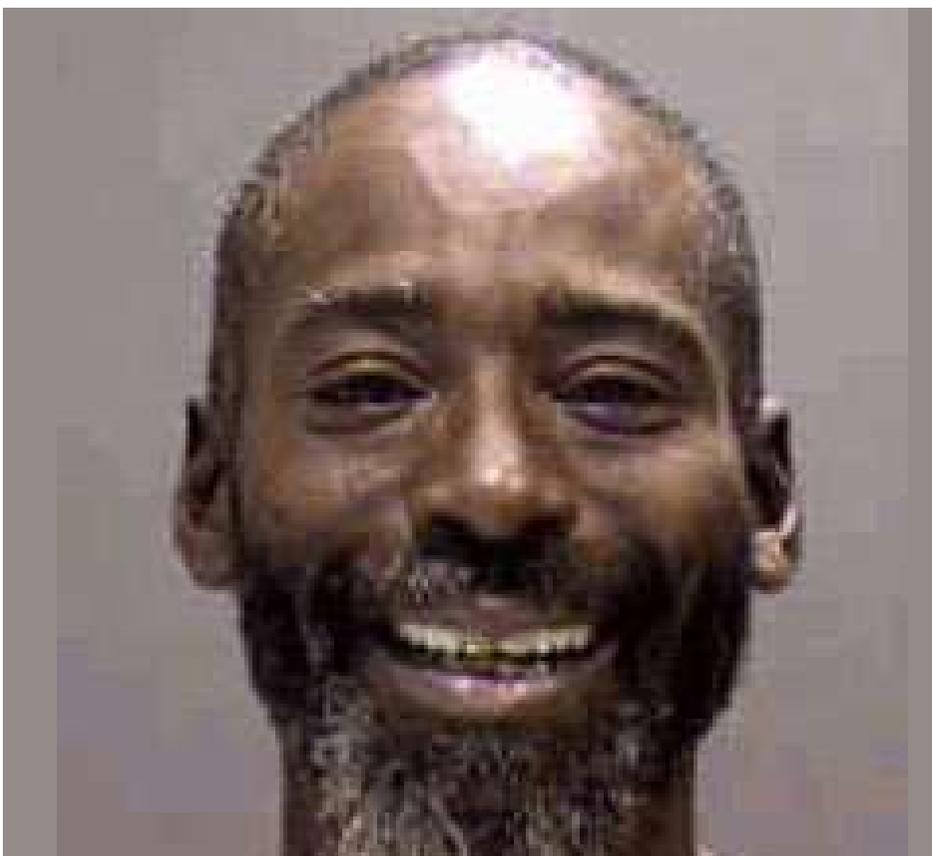
During a check of the area after they arrived, officers located two victims, a male and female, the release adds, and they could smell a strong odor of gasoline. When officers approached Arline at the campsite, he “was irate and would not speak to [them],” the release continues. They also came across Ward, whom they described in the report as “hostile” and “uncooperative.”

The victims filled out a witness statement and told officers the argument was over a spark plug for Arline’s scooter. The victims said another person gave Arline \$6 the previous night for a new spark plug, according to the report.

The male victim explained to the officers that when he came out of his campsite area earlier in the day and walked by Arline’s campsite, Arline cursed him and said, “I’ll kill you,” before he began pouring gasoline on them and a third person, the report says. The female victim told the officers that Ward followed her out of the campsite and verbally threatened her before pulling out a knife, the news release notes.

Ward, whom the officers learned is Arline’s girlfriend, also was alleged to have told another female in the campsite, “If [Arline] goes to jail, I’ll be coming after you,” the release continues.

Both Arline and Ward were transported to the Sarasota County Jail, the release says.



*Darrell Arline/Contributed photo*



*Shantel Moses Ward/Contributed photo*

## TWO SUSPECTS ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH ARMED ROBBERY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested two suspects in connection with an armed robbery last week of the Venice McDonald's at 4269 S. Tamiami Trail, the office has reported.

Shortly after the restaurant closed at midnight on March 7, staff heard a knock on the back door, a news release says. Two employees did not see anyone through the peephole, so they opened the door, the release adds. Then an armed suspect wearing a bandana over his face barged in, pointed his gun at employees and ordered them to the back of the store,

the release continues. The suspect grabbed a handful of money and fled but was not immediately located, it notes.

Detectives identified two suspects: Nicholas Holt, 18, of 8144 Trifono Ave., North Port, and Christopher Browning, 21, of 1472 Roosevelt Drive, Venice, the release adds. During interviews, both confessed to the crime, the release says.

Holt is charged with Armed Robbery and Browning is charged with Principle to Armed Robbery for helping to plan the robbery and driving the getaway car, the release adds.



*Nicholas Holt/Contributed photo*



*Christopher Browning/Contributed photo*

## VENICE MAN CHARGED WITH BATTERY COUNTS IN SIESTA KEY INCIDENTS

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested the suspect who beat a man, hit one deputy with his vehicle and threatened another before speeding away and crashing his car into several trees last week on Siesta Key, the office has announced.

Stephen Testa, 23, of 205 Fareham Drive, Venice, was booked into the Sarasota County Jail late March 13 after being released from Blake Medical Center in Bradenton, where he was treated for the injuries he sustained in the crash, a news release says.

Just after 1 a.m. on March 6, deputies were on foot patrol across the street from Davidson Plaza when the brother of the beating victim came up to them and told them what had happened, the report says. The victim, Christopher Edenfield, 23, was with his brother and two other men, walking to their vehicle in Davidson Plaza, when Testa approached them and asked if they wanted to purchase "molly," or Ecstasy, the report adds. After Edenfield told Testa he was not interested, Edenfield watched as Testa walked up to two women in the parking lot and began harassing them, the report says. Edenfield intervened, the report continues, at which time Testa struck Edenfield in the face with closed fists, knocking him unconscious; Edenfield fell to the pavement.

The report says Testa appeared to use a cell-phone to record himself striking Edenfield a second time. When witnesses on the scene confronted him, the report adds, Testa quickly climbed into a black Nissan and accelerated toward the exit of the parking lot.

When the law enforcement officers spotted Testa in the Nissan, the report says, Deputy



*Stephen Testa/Contributed photo*

Eric Ellis recognized him from three other incidents that had occurred that night on the island. Ellis was standing near the front of the Nissan when he identified himself as a deputy and ordered Testa to exit the vehicle, the report continues. Testa ignored the command and accelerated toward Ellis, hitting Ellis with the front of the car and knocking him onto the hood. Testa jerked the wheel of the vehicle to throw Ellis to the pavement and then turned his car toward Deputy Richard Hardin, who was able to jump out of the way, the news release adds.

Testa sped off, so the deputies returned to their vehicles and headed in the direction they had seen him flee, the report notes. They found his car crashed into several palm trees near 948 Beach Road, the report adds, with Testa injured and unconscious on the road.

He was transported by helicopter to Blake Medical Center.

A toxicology report showed PCP, marijuana and alcohol in Testa's system, the news release says.

Edenfield suffered contusions to both sides of his face, the report adds, while Ellis suffered minor abrasions to his legs.

Testa, who has prior arrests for Hit and Run, Fleeing to Elude, Aggravated Battery and Robbery with a Weapon, has been charged with Aggravated Battery, Aggravated Battery on a Law Enforcement Officer and Aggravated Assault on a Law Enforcement Officer. The Florida Highway Patrol is investigating the crash itself and additional charges are pending, the news release says. 



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)

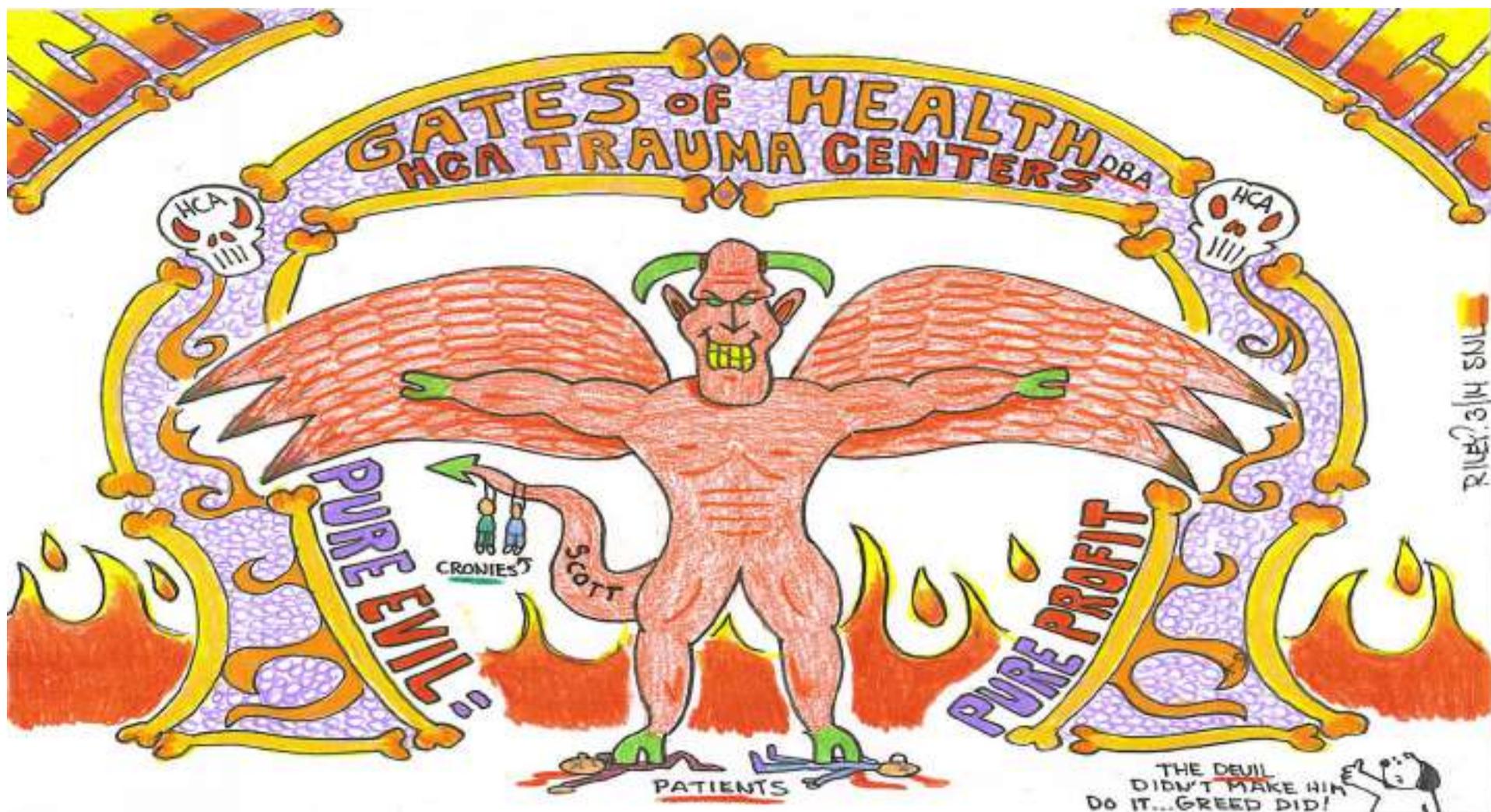
**Text:** Text "TIP109" plus your message to CRIMES (274637)

***All submitted tips are secure and anonymous***



*A Venice man has been charged with incidents that took place in the Davidson Plaza parking lot on March 6, the Sheriff's Office has reported. File photo*

# OPINION



## TRAUMA CENTER TUSSELE ENDANGERS HEALTH OF FLORIDIANS

### EDITORIAL

Trauma treatment is a subspecialty within emergency medicine. Physicians and support staff trained to deal with the most horrific injuries — gunshots, stabbings, car crashes and the like — give patients who might have died of their wounds a few decades ago the chance to live today. The window of opportunity in which they must begin their work, to be most successful, is almost universally called the “golden hour” — that hour between the injury and the commencement of treatment.

It is for that reason that many major hospitals that maintain trauma centers for treating these types of severe injuries also employ helicopters as air ambulances to speed the

injured to their treatment rooms in the shortest amount of time.

Yet a year-long investigation by the *Tampa Bay Times* of fees charged by trauma centers in the state has found that Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), which has recently opened six for-profit trauma centers in the state and wants to open four more, has a different interpretation of “golden hour.” For this company, the centers are an opportunity to levy outrageous and unjustified charges against patients, even when the injuries, while initially thought to be serious, were not that significant once examined in the hospital.

According to the *Times* investigation, the trauma fee — first allowed in 2002 as a way

# OPINION

for hospitals to recoup costs for this specialized care — was slightly more than \$2,500 in 2006.

When HCA entered the market, gaining state permission to open six trauma centers, the fees charged changed dramatically.

HCA-operated trauma centers charge the highest trauma fees in the state — one hospital has a \$33,000 fee — pushing the state average to almost \$11,000. That increase exceeds inflation for the same period by nearly 2,000 percent.

While nonprofit hospitals charge considerably less, on average, than HCA hospitals, their rates have crept up not because of increases in costs but because they want to keep up with “the market” ... ironically now driven by the emergence of HCA-operated trauma centers.

For example, two years ago, Lakeland Regional Medical Center doubled its trauma fee to \$10,000 when it learned what a nearby HCA hospital charged.

In just four years, trauma centers in the state have billed patients more than half a billion dollars in trauma fees.

Aside from the price gouging engaged in by HCA hospitals, and the spillover effect on nonprofit trauma centers trying to “keep up

with the Joneses,” the level of care might not be equal, either.

That is because the state’s nonprofit trauma centers are all accredited as Level 1 facilities, the highest designation for this type of specialized care. That means all of the staff and facilities must be available 24/7 in the event of a trauma patient entering the hospital. All of the HCA trauma centers are rated at Level 2, which requires only that the staff must be “on call” but not physically located in the hospital at all times.

Anyone who has driven in Bradenton traffic would have a difficult time imagining how Blake Medical Center could gather up all of its trauma personnel in an emergency in less time than a helicopter could fly the few extra miles to the Level 1 trauma center at Bayfront Medical Center in St. Petersburg, which used to be the trauma center assigned to Sarasota and Manatee counties.

Yet, HCA officials have argued — as have their devotees in the Legislature — that having more trauma centers closer together improves potential care for Floridians, saving valuable minutes that can mean the difference

between life and death.

Three nonprofit hospitals that have operated Level 1 trauma centers for years, including Bayfront and Tampa

**“HCA-operated trauma centers charge the highest trauma fees in the state — one hospital charges \$33,000 — pushing the state average to almost \$11,000.”**

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# OPINION

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General Hospital, sued the state when it granted permission for HCA to open its six new trauma centers. They have shown the court how difficult it is to recruit and maintain the specialists needed for a Level 1 facility and how adding competitive Level 2 centers only a few miles away can make that task much more difficult ... and expensive.

So far the courts have been siding more with the three nonprofit hospitals, and HCA has been looking to other avenues for relief in its efforts to protect this new “cash cow.”

State Rep. Jason Brodeur, R-Sanford, has sponsored a bill in the House of Representatives that effectively would shield the six HCA hospitals from the current litigation. The legislation, if passed and signed by the governor, would allow all existing Level 1 and Level 2 trauma centers in the state to continue operating, provided they comply with routine oversight and other operating regulations. A similar bill is pending in the Senate.

When one looks back a few years, the current cozy relationship HCA has with both the Florida Department of Health, which authorizes new trauma centers, and its obsequious allies in the Legislature makes more sense.

In the 1990s, the company — then known as HCA/Columbia, and helmed by none other than Rick Scott — was embroiled in a legal tussle with the federal government over gouging Medicare for unnecessary tests and treatments. Eventually, the company paid a

record fine of almost \$2 billion to settle all criminal and civil charges, including 14 felonies. Rick Scott left the company as part of the deal, having to admit to no complicity in the scam. He was showered with a severance package worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Now Rick Scott is governor of Florida, thanks in large part to the tens of millions of dollars, received from HCA, that he spent on his election campaign. And HCA has set its sights on making Florida a major part of its campaign for huge profits from trauma centers.

If allowed to keep its current six trauma centers — and the bills in the Legislature are designed to do just that, despite what the courts might conclude — and open the four additional centers it has planned, HCA's impact on health care costs for Floridians will be staggering.

Already, the six HCA trauma facilities charge more in fees and billed services than all of the other trauma centers in the state. Their patients got an average bill of \$124,806, which is more than \$40,000 higher than the average bill of other trauma centers.

But beyond the costs to patients is the question of quality care. Despite sycophantic posturing in the Legislature, the courts also have been taking a hard look at how well patients are cared for in Level 2 versus Level 1 trauma centers, and the Level 1 trauma centers have been winning.

# OPINION

For residents of Sarasota County, who formerly were transported by helicopter to Bayfront in St. Petersburg — or Tampa General for severe burns or spinal injuries — being forced to go to Blake Medical Center in Bradenton for all trauma cases holds the real possibility that outcomes will not be nearly as

favorable: more enduring complications from serious injuries, and even deaths, as a result of being treated in a less-capable facility.

Getting billed as much as 50 percent more for that potentially substandard care will only add insult to injury. **SNL**



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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# Sarasota Leisure

**PUPPY LOVE**

**BREAKING RECORDS**

**SIESTA SEEN**

*Inside*

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast



## PUPPY LOVE

*Harriet Cuthbert poses in front of a map of the Southeastern Guide Dog campus in Palmetto. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## IF YOU ADORE CANINES, SOUTHEASTERN GUIDE DOGS HAS MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU

**By Harriet Cuthbert**

*Contributing Writer*

I must have sensed that if I worked and volunteered at enough venues, which I always have enjoyed doing, I would eventually find my true passion. And I have achieved my goal at the Southeastern Guide Dogs shop in downtown Sarasota.

The No. 1 reason is obvious: We get to share our love for dogs and give our canine visitors many hugs and kisses. However, since the primary goal of [Southeastern Guide Dogs](#) is to train the dogs to be ready and qualified to go home with their “handlers,” when the students and dogs are in class in the store, we are not allowed to touch or disturb them. These magnificent animals are schooled to

help vision-impaired people, especially when it comes to navigating out in public.

The secondary goal at the store is to tempt our visitors with an incredible variety of dog foods, treats and gifts to help support the program. It is very easy to enter the shop and then spend an hour just wandering around and deciding how many goodies to buy for canine pets.

I gained first-hand knowledge of the program’s many elements when I visited the campus in Palmetto. This came thanks to a tour that left the downtown store every Tuesday, running from approximately 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. A

maximum of nine guests, plus the driver and tour guide, drove to the site in a cozy, comfortable van. Many times, one or two ambassador dogs were along for the ride. A \$10 donation was suggested.

When I took the trip, we had a very congenial group. For most of us, it was the first visit to the campus. Jim, our guide — who came with his best friend, Lindy — was very informative and well-prepared as he enthralled us with the story of how a puppy goes from newborn to school graduate. He told us we would be able to observe most of the dogs' training stages during our tour. In addition, Jim mentioned that the average cost to raise a dog and prepare it for life with its person is about \$60,000.

I cannot write this article without including a description of the magnificent grounds, 35



*Tour members say playing with the puppies is the best part of visiting the campus. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*



*A bus leaves the downtown shop every Tuesday for people who would like a tour of the Palmetto campus. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*

acres developed from former farmland in a secluded area of Palmetto. The landscaping is impeccable; the grounds are spotless; and the feeling exudes peace and being at one with nature. This is the environment that nurtures the doggies.

The first area Jim took us to is called Veterans' Park. He told us some of the canines that do not graduate as guide dogs are given the honor and duty of helping soldiers back from combat who have PTSD. This seems to be a very successful program. While Jim talked and we strolled to each stop, we observed many people walking dogs, some on a straight road and others on a circular path. This is part of the animals' learning and bonding experience. Of course, dog walking is also an all-volunteer activity.

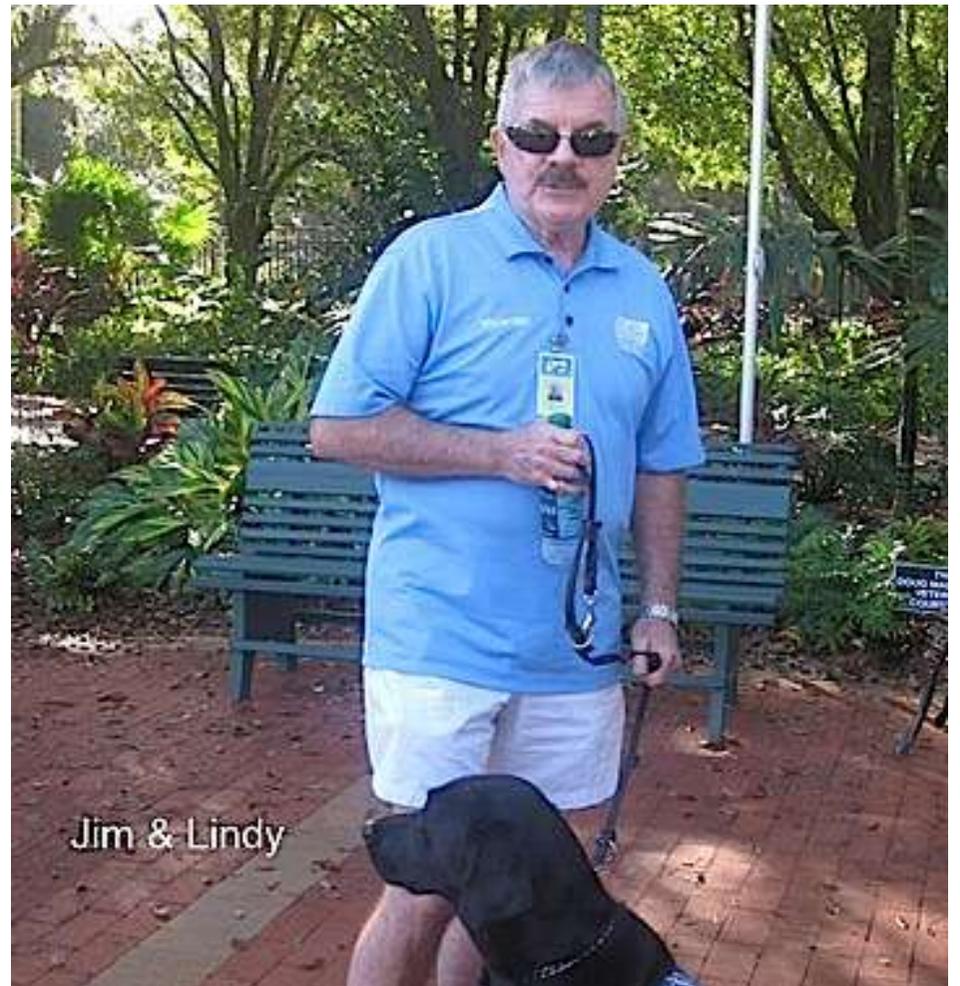
We also walked past the brand-new, state-of-the-art Barpal Veterinary Center, named after a wonderful couple whose generosity made it all possible. There are at least four veterinarians on campus at all times, plus their assistants. Southeastern guide dogs are given excellent care; their survival rate from birth is the highest out of all guide dog organizations in the U.S.



*Who can resist the plush toy versions of Southeastern Guide Dogs, which are available at the doghouse in the Main Street shop, as Harriet Cuthbert points out. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

As we continued our tour, Jim enlightened us with a recounting of the puppy-raising experience. Being a puppy raiser requires an enormous commitment, both time-wise and emotionally. Adults receive the pups when the canines are approximately nine weeks old. These people have to follow very strict guidelines established long ago under the tutelage of the Southeastern Guide Dog School. And they know going in that they are actually foster parents to their beautiful pets. When the dogs are between 16 and 18 months old, the people will have to return them to the school for further training in preparation for their final goal of living with a person.

Ahead of us at one point, I spied what always proves to be the “fan favorite” — the puppy kennel. This is why many visitors want to join the tour. They are allowed to play with, kiss



*Tour guide Jim and his dog, Lindy, have much to tell about Southeastern's operations. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*



*A volunteer works with a yellow Lab. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*

and cuddle the puppies, a real treat for both doggies and humans. Jim escorted us into a large sunny and airy room that was bordered by kennels. He opened up one kennel and, suddenly, all these adorable black “fuzz balls” scrambled over to us and wanted to play. The pups were six weeks old and just being weaned from their moms before moving on to the next step of living with puppy raisers.

There were laughs, shrieks and endless giggles as the pups licked our toes, our faces, our everything. They scrambled over our bodies, never sat still (even for a photo op) and seemed to enjoy their time with us as much as we did with them. I could not stop laughing. I think part of it was just joyful hysteria.

And then Jim said time was up, so we headed on to the training school sector. This section is set up like a high school, with four levels of



*The Margaret and Isaac Barpal Veterinary Center is on the Southeastern Guide Dog campus. Photo by Harriet Cuthbert*

work. The dogs have to pass each level to be promoted. After level four, they graduate and are ready to meet the persons with whom they generally will spend the rest of their lives.

The most common "trainees" are black and yellow Labrador retrievers, but not chocolate Labs, who seem not to learn as quickly as their cousins.

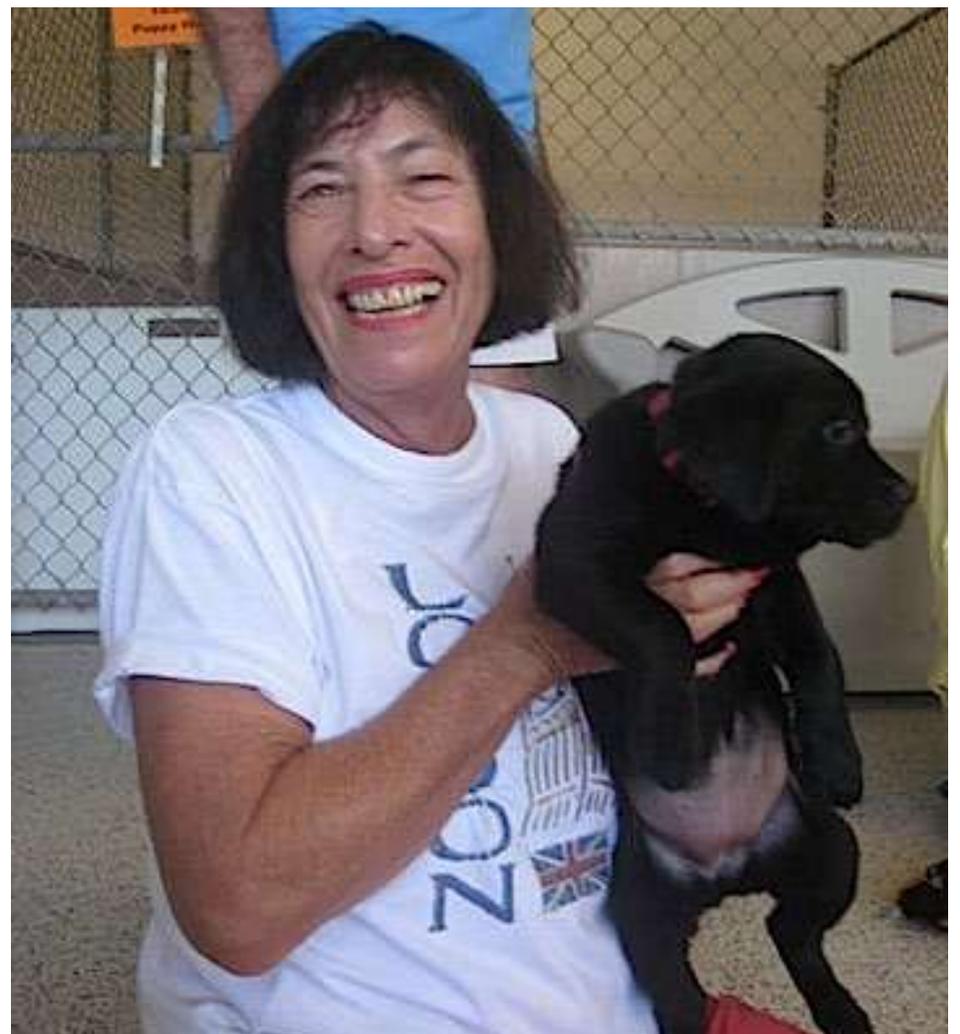
On our ride back to Sarasota, we peppered Jim with more questions. We could not seem to get our fill of information, even though, at times, it was obvious this amazing and successful program overwhelmed us.

We in Sarasota are very fortunate to be able to offer such high-quality care to visually impaired people through the marvelous Southeastern Guide Dogs.

Volunteers are always welcome at the store, which is located at 1618 Main St. in downtown Sarasota, near the intersection of Orange Avenue. The number is 953-2892.

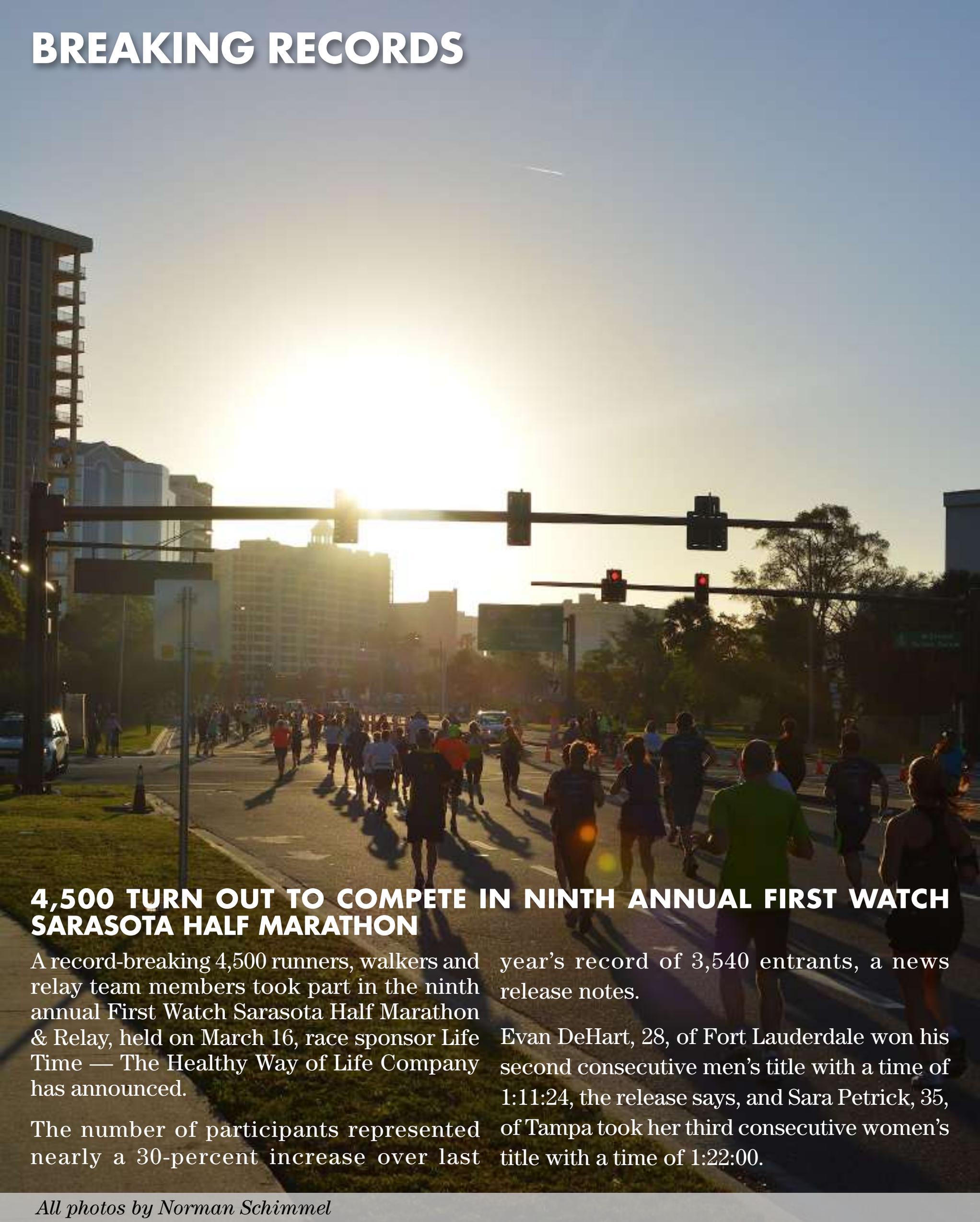
In Palmetto, puppy hugging and dog walking opportunities are available from 9 to 11 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. You can always walk around and enjoy the campus even if you are not engaged with the "students."

To reach [Southeastern Guide Dogs](#) in Palmetto, take Interstate 75 to Exit 229 for Parrish. Merge onto Moccasin Wallow Road and then take a left onto Ellenton Gillette Road/36th Avenue. Next, take a left onto 77th Street East, and then turn left into the campus 



*Harriet Cuthbert finds a lot to love in this Labrador retriever puppy. Contributed photo*

# BREAKING RECORDS



## **4,500 TURN OUT TO COMPETE IN NINTH ANNUAL FIRST WATCH SARASOTA HALF MARATHON**

A record-breaking 4,500 runners, walkers and relay team members took part in the ninth annual First Watch Sarasota Half Marathon & Relay, held on March 16, race sponsor Life Time — The Healthy Way of Life Company has announced.

The number of participants represented nearly a 30-percent increase over last

year's record of 3,540 entrants, a news release notes.

Evan DeHart, 28, of Fort Lauderdale won his second consecutive men's title with a time of 1:11:24, the release says, and Sara Petrick, 35, of Tampa took her third consecutive women's title with a time of 1:22:00.

Andre Hunt, 51, of Plantation won the wheelchair division in 45:04.

Among other winners, Brian Keno, 52, of Fort Lauderdale won the Masters Division in 1:20:42, finishing fifth overall, the release says. (The Masters winner is the fastest runner over age 40.) Robert Hammond, 53, of Sarasota, won the Grand Masters Division in 1:28:18.

Lisa Boehler, 44, of Lehigh Acres took the women's Masters title in 1:27:48, and New Port Richey's Diane Skiles, 52, won the Grand Masters title in 1:37:49, the release adds.

Javier Sanchez, co-director of the race, said in the release, "Sarasota is truly a special place that attracts runners and walkers from all over the world. It is the ideal mix of location and event support that will enable us to



*The full moon lends its glow to the early part of the race.*



*After all, the race was just a day before St. Patrick's Day.*

continue to grow the First Watch Sarasota Half Marathon & Relay into one of the must-do races in the country.”

**Life Time — The Healthy Way of Life Company** acquired US Road Sports and Entertainment Group in January, the release points out, so this was its first year presenting the half marathon.

For a complete list of race results, visit [sarasotahalfmarathon.com](http://sarasotahalfmarathon.com).

**Registration** for the 10th annual First Watch Sarasota Half Marathon & Relay, scheduled for March 15, 2015, opened on March 18, the release points out. Race organizers are offering a limited number of discounts starting at \$47.75 per person. Early registration discounts for the Relay portion will begin on March 24.

*Sarasota News Leader Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel was on hand to record the event.* 







*Evan DeHart closes in on the finish line for his second men's title.*



*Sara Petrick takes her third women's title with a time of 1:22:00.*





# *Siesta Seen*

**THE COUNTY HAS WON A LITTLE MORE GRANT MONEY FOR THE STORMWATER PROJECT; SIESTA TROLLEY DISCUSSION WILL BE ON THE VILLAGE ASSOCIATION'S APRIL 1 AGENDA; AND EFFORTS ARE PROCEEDING TO MAKE RECYCLING POSSIBLE IN THE VILLAGE**



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

The Sarasota County commissioners figuratively swallowed hard on April 23, 2013, and approved a \$4,550,683.82 contract with Forsberg Construction Inc. of Punta Gorda for the Beach Road Drainage Improvements Project — aka the Siesta stormwater project — even though the expense was about three times higher than the board had anticipated.

The board members were hopeful, they indicated, that the county would win more grant funds from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to help cover the cost. The county did get some extra district dollars, which the board approved without comment on its March 18 consent agenda. However, the total was \$22,222 — not



*By skateboard, on foot and in a wagon, a group of girls head through Siesta Village on the way to the beach. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# Siesta Seen

exactly the significant level of help for which the commissioners might have hoped.

A March 18 staff memo to the board says, “During the negotiation process, the District made clear its position that the intent of [the] agreement is to help fund improvements to water quality. The District further averred that the decision to change the stormwater treatment system’s outfall from the Grand Canal to the Gulf of Mexico did not improve water quality.”

The memo adds, “As a result, the District declined to provide additional cooperative funding for the higher than anticipated cost of the Gulf outfall portion of the project. Per the accepted bid price for construction, the District calculated that the cost of the water quality improvement portion of the project increased by \$44,444.”

Therefore, the memo noted, given the original 50-50 cost-sharing agreement on improving water quality, SWFWMD was contributing another \$22,222.

After Siesta residents protested the proposal for stormwater outfall in the Grand Canal, the county was able to obtain permits from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to shift the outfall to the gulf.

The goal of the project has been to prevent future closures of the No. 1 beach to swimming because of unhealthy bacterial levels resulting from stormwater runoff. A couple of closures in past years underscored the need for the project, Commissioner Nora Patterson has pointed out.

Because of various delays over the years, staff had to work hard to ensure the county could keep the original grant funds of up to \$975,000



*Heavy equipment stood on the site of the Siesta stormwater project on March 4. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



*A graphic shows the location of the Beach Road Drainage Project, also referred to as the Siesta stormwater project. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



*Mountains of sand from the excavation of the new 1-acre stormwater pond and other work on the stormwater site stand between the picnic shelter at Siesta Public Beach and the Gulf & Bay Club condominiums. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# *Siesta Seen*

that SWFWMD committed to the project. On Feb. 12, 2008, the County Commission approved a contract with SWFWMD for that funding assistance, the March 18 memo says. The amount was expected to pay for half the project's expense. Consultants' underestimation of costs for facets of the project — especially the pipeline that extends 2,000 feet into the Gulf of Mexico — was cited as the reason for the higher overall expense. Erickson Consulting Engineers of Sarasota predicted the expense of the pipeline to be \$681,475, but Forsberg's bid put it at \$2,291,200. Erickson subsequently agreed to forgo about \$6,000 of the approximately \$250,000 in its consulting fees from the county for the error.

“It's almost a slap in the face to give that small amount back to us,” Commissioner Christine Robinson said of the offer before that April 2013 vote on the Forsberg contract.

Regular readers know that because of rain delays last summer and fall, construction of the project has been running behind schedule, too. Last week, Isaac Brownman, director of capital projects in the county's Public Works Department, notified the commissioners by email that fabrication of the modular pump house that will be erected on the site had begun. The structure is expected to be delivered about April 8, and it will take three to four weeks for it to be set up and wired into



*A couple stakes out a spot on Siesta Public Beach well back from the water on a recent March morning. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

# *Siesta Seen*

the pump station, he wrote. Final testing of the pump station is anticipated in early May, he noted.

Additionally, prep work for the installation of a Florida Power & Light (FPL) transformer has started, he wrote. "This is a long lead item that may take up to 8 weeks," he continued in the email. "FPL has been contacted and requested to accelerate this schedule."

## **TROLLEY TALK**

Glama Carter, director of Sarasota County Area Transit, will be the guest speaker at the April 1 meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA), President Cheryl Gaddie told me last week.

Gaddie has been trying for a few months to schedule a county staff member to provide members an update on plans for the Siesta trolley service.

Commissioner Nora Patterson told members of the Siesta Key Association (SKA) during their annual breakfast meeting on March 1 that the trolley service still is scheduled to start before the end of the year. Sarah Blanchard, senior planner for SCAT, has pointed out that state grant funding for the service is available as of July, making service possible as early as this summer.

## **RECYCLING EFFORT CONTINUES**

Although the process is moving slowly, as SKVA member Mark Smith pointed out recently, the initiative to bring recycling to the Village remains under way.

During the March 4 SKVA meeting, President Gaddie pointed out that members of the Siesta Key Village Maintenance Corp. Board of Directors discussed the issue during a recent meeting.

The Maintenance Corp. works with Sarasota County staff to oversee the Village upkeep; Smith serves as the corporation's liaison with other entities. Owners of property in the area of the Village where the county paid for major improvements in 2008 and 2009 are assessed a special tax to cover the cost of the upkeep. The Maintenance Corp. board comprises five representatives of those property owners plus the SKVA president, Smith noted.

"The Maintenance Corp. board essentially, formally requested the county to begin the process of finding out what the costs would be to supply the [recycling] cans and what it would take for whoever has the contract for the maintenance to take care of the recycling," Smith explained.

County staff members are "going to be coming back ... with some suggestions on how we can make it happen," he added.

On Aug. 21, 2012, the County Commission unanimously approved awarding the Village upkeep contract to Championship Landscape Maintenance Professionals of Fort Myers. That annual contract — with automatic renewal for two additional one-year terms — was for \$97,417.70.

Smith told the SKVA members present for that March 4 meeting that county staff already is

# Siesta Seen

at work on the county's 2015 fiscal year budget. "We're trying to position ourselves to have the money in the [maintenance district] funds so that we can proceed with recycling."

In response to a question about whether any grant funds would be available to help with the expense, SKA President Michael Shay, who has spearheaded the recycling initiative, said he had received information from the county about a grant from Keep America Beautiful and the Coca-Cola Co. "They would provide the recycling bins ... if you won the grant," he pointed out, "but you [have] to pick a specific type [of bin] that they offer."

About four designs are available, he noted, but each bin would have to have a Keep America Beautiful or Coca-Cola logo on it.

"We have to make sure when we get the cans that they get emptied," Smith said, noting that is the top priority. "Getting the cans, to me, is, quite honestly, the easy part."

On a related note: In response to a question from past SKVA President Russell Matthes, Smith explained that during season, workers employed by Championship Landscape Maintenance pick up garbage in the Village every day of the week except Sunday and Tuesday. 



County recycling bins stand near the path to Beach Access 5 on Siesta Key. Photo by Rachel Hackney



## **BOLLING AND ROCKLEIN TO PRESENT *STABAT MATER* BY PERGOLESI**

“The recipe for a divine evening? Take one of Pergolesi’s most celebrated sacred works, add two exquisite soprano voices ... accompany them with the renowned Chroma Quartet and, voila — an evening of expressive, passionate music,” a news release from First United Methodist Church in Sarasota points out.

Music Fine Arts at First Church will present *Stabat Mater* by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, sung by sopranos Trine Bolling and Robyn Rocklein with accompaniment by the Chroma Quartet, on Sunday, March 23, at 7 p.m.

The First United Methodist Church is located at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

A \$10 donation is requested. Parking is available in the Zenith Garage on Mira Mar Court. For more information, visit [firstsrq.com](http://firstsrq.com) or call 955-0935.

*Stabat Mater* was composed by Pergolesi in 1736, when he was in the final weeks of his life, the release notes. His best known sacred work, it is based on a 13th-century Catholic hymn to Mary and has been set to music by many composers, including Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Haydn, Rossini, Poulenc and Dvorák.

“Pergolesi’s writing allows exquisitely warm voices to truly express the passion of this music,” says Elizabeth Goldstein, coordinator of Music Fine Arts at First Church, in the release. “The Chroma Quartet accompanying assures a stellar unforgettable performance.”

Danish soprano Bolling graduated from the Malmö Conservatoire and studied at the

Royal Northern College of Music in Great Britain, where she received a Professional Performer’s Diploma. She has performed throughout Europe. Since moving to Sarasota two years ago, she has been pursuing her musical career with Gloria Musicae, Belle Canto and Key Chorale while maintaining a teaching studio, the release continues.

Rocklein, a mezzo-soprano, has appeared throughout the United States and Europe, taking on opera roles such as Carmen in *Carmen*, Elizabeth in *The Crucible*, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* and Lucretia in *The Rape of Lucretia*, the release points out.

The Chroma Quartet, formed in 2008 by violinists Christopher Takeda and Jennifer Best-Takeda, violist Michael McClelland and cellist Abraham Feder, is noted for its members’ “dynamic musicianship,” the release adds.



Robyn Rocklein/Contributed photo



Trine Bolling/Contributed photo

## INTERNATIONAL ORGAN VIRTUOSO TO PRESENT SARASOTA CONCERT

Internationally acclaimed organist Isabelle Demers — hailed for her “dazzling virtuosity and a dramatic sense of timing” (the United Kingdom’s *Newbury Weekly News*) — will make her first appearance in Florida on Sunday, March 30, at the Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota, the church has announced.

The concert, which will begin at 5 p.m., is sponsored by Redeemer and the Sarasota-Manatee Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

“Intended to be a celebration of Redeemer’s massive 50-stop Nichols & Simpson organ,” a news release says, the concert will feature “an exhilarating program,” with Demers playing entirely from memory such works

as *Dances from Terpsichore* (Praetorius); *Scherzo and Nocturne* from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Mendelssohn); excerpts from *Sleeping Beauty, Op. 66* (Tchaikovsky); and *Prelude and Fugue in B-Major, Op. 7, No. 1* (Dupré).

“Isabelle Demers is a major contemporary artist — a true virtuoso of the organ,” said Redeemer organist and choirmaster Ann Stephenson-Moe in the release. “We are thrilled to be able to bring her to Sarasota.”

Praised for her “expressive” and “outstanding” performances by organ aficionados across the globe and in major publications such as the *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*, Demers has had recent engagements



Isabelle Demers/Contributed photo

at the cathedrals of Cologne and Regensburg in Germany, St. Paul's Cathedral in London and the Royal Opera House of Muscat, Oman, the release points out. She has played at major universities and concert halls in the United States, among them Davies Hall (San Francisco), Disney Hall (Los Angeles), the Kimmel Center (Philadelphia), the Wanamaker Organ (Philadelphia), Yale University and the Eastman School of Music, the release adds.

A native of Quebec, Demers is organ professor and head of the organ program at Baylor University, the release notes. She began studying piano and organ at the Montreal Conservatory of Music when she was 11.

After graduation, she studied in Paris at the Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris and then received her master's and doctoral degrees from Juilliard, the release adds.

While in New York, she studied with Paul Jacobs, a Grammy winner and the chairman of Juilliard's organ department.

Advance ticket purchase is highly recommended, the release points out. Tickets are \$20; they may be purchased online at [redeemersarasota.org](http://redeemersarasota.org) or by calling the parish office at 955-4263.

The Church of the Redeemer is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

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## ART, DRAMA AND A BEST-SELLING NOVELIST TO BE FEATURED

The Hermitage Artist Retreat invites the public to its Manasota Beach campus to meet its artists, tour visual arts studios and hear writers read from their works an hour before sunset on Friday, March 28, the retreat has announced.

The event will begin at 6 p.m., when visual artists [Bradley Wester](#) and [Nzuj De Magalhaes](#) will open their studios to showcase and talk about their work, a news release says. At 7 p.m., the attention will shift to the beach, where playwright [Y York](#) and novelist [Ann Hood](#) will read from and talk about their works, the release notes. "Sunset will end the evening's activities" about 7:50 p.m., the release adds.

Sarasota's Bookstore1 will have representatives on hand to assist anyone interested in purchasing an autographed copy of Ann Hood's novels, including *The Obituary Writer* and *The Knitting Circle*. Hood also will participate in a reading at Bookstore1 on

Wednesday, March 26, at 6 p.m., the release points out.

The Hermitage is located at 6660 Manasota Key Road in Englewood.

On his website, Wester says, "My work has evolved into a hybrid-practice that combines painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, and digital imaging into larger works/installations with particular and unique reference to color and light and to physical space," the release continues.

De Magalhaes was born and reared in Angola, whose culture is reflected in her work, the release adds. She depicts vividly stereotypical issues, post-colonial discourse, myth, ethnicity, politics and other genres in her art, the release says.

York writes plays for both adults and children, many of which have been produced in regional theaters throughout the United States, the

release continues. She is a three-time winner of the New Visions, New Voices honors from the Kennedy Center and a three-time winner of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) Distinguished Play Award, the release points out. According to *The New York Times*, “She makes her points by not taking herself too seriously, even as she offers astute observations about environmental, racial and family matters.”

Hood began her professional life as a flight attendant for TWA. During a furlough, she

worked in a bookstore and started writing her first novel, the release notes. When TWA personnel subsequently went on strike and all flight attendants were “replaced,” she became a fulltime writer.

Attendees are welcome to bring beach chairs, wine “and whatever for a evening in the arts as only the Hermitage can provide,” Bruce E. Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage, says in the release. “We love sharing our artists and their art. Always inspiring and exciting to see what and hear about what’s next on their horizons.”



Bradley Wester/Contributed photo

## ASOLO REP TO HOLD ITS FIFTH ANNUAL NEW PLAY FESTIVAL

Beginning Sunday, March 23, and continuing each consecutive Sunday through April 13, Asolo Repertory Theatre will present its fifth annual *Unplugged* play festival, the theatre has announced.

The festival will feature four new plays, with all performances starting at 7 p.m. in Asolo Rep's rehearsal hall, located at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, a news release says. Festival passes are \$21 and include admission to all the plays. Tickets for each individual reading are \$7, the release notes. Festival passes and tickets are available by visiting the box office located in the lobby of the theatre, by calling the box office at 351-8000 or visiting [asolorep.org](http://asolorep.org).

*Unplugged* will allow theater enthusiasts "to experience brand new plays in their most organic form, stripped of costumes, sets and special effects," the release continues. "Instead, Asolo Rep company members and select guest artists will perform the new plays with scripts in hand — providing patrons with the opportunity to focus solely on the playwright's story and words. Many of the plays are read aloud for the first time in the rehearsal room, allowing the playwright to revamp his/her piece based on the performance, the director's notes and, finally, audience reaction," it adds.

The plays follow:

- March 23: *Bad Dog* by Jennifer Hoppe-House — "After 10 years clean and sober, Molly Drexler tumbles off 'the wagon' and crashes her Prius through the side of her house. As the events of Molly's blackout (and the ghosts that chase her) emerge, her family members try to cope with her



wreckage but end up running headlong into their own," the release explains.

- March 30: *Assisted Loving* by Bob Morris — What would you do if your 75-year-old father dragged you into his hell-bent hunt for new love? "*New York Times* style writer Bob Morris, a chronically single son, shows us how it happened in this warm, witty and wacky comedy about a year of dating dangerously," the release says.
- April 6: *Goddess of Mercy* by Jenny Connell Davis — "Kate and Mike struggle to hold it together as they try to juggle their relationship and his transcontinental commute. When Mike's sister, Brianna, just back from the Peace Corps and crashing on their couch, finds out Mike's oil company is sending him to hush up trouble in the same part of Asia she just left, their opposing views provoke an international incident," the release says.
- April 13: *Ask/Tell* by David Bar Katz — "Set immediately after the repeal of Don't Ask/Don't Tell, and delving into the mysterious death of a soldier who had recently come out, *Ask/Tell* explores the hypocrisies — both spoken and unspoken — that accompany intense intimacy between men in a war zone," the release adds.

## INDIGO GIRLS AND A SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA TO COLLABORATE

Twenty years after they began releasing records as the Indigo Girls, “Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have refused to slow down and have been producing some of their best music yet,” a Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall news release says.

The duo will appear with a symphony orchestra on the Van Wezel stage in Sarasota on March 27.

After signing with Epic Records in 1988, the Indigo Girls released their first album, “for which they received thunderous praise, double platinum status” and a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist, the release adds. The duo won Best Contemporary Folk

Recording honors that year and “seemingly skyrocketed as folk icons overnight,” the release continues.

“Nine albums later, the Indigo Girls have gone back to their roots of self-producing and have blazed four new albums with their rekindled fire: *Poseidon and the Bitter Bug*, *Holly Happy Days*, *Staring Down the Brilliant Dream* and *Beauty Queen Sister*,” the release points out. Their new material is a product of their hearts, not their heads, ruling their performances, according to the release.

Tickets are priced from \$45 to \$75. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [VanWezel.org](http://VanWezel.org).



Amy Ray and Emily Saliers are the Indigo Girls. Contributed photo by Lynn Goldsmith

## TUROFFS TO STAR IN A SARASOTA VERSION OF QUARTET

The Glenridge Performing Arts Theatre (GPAC) in Sarasota is staging its own production of *Quartet*, a comedy by playwright Ronald Harwood, the theatre has announced.

The show will open on Thursday, March 27, at 8 p.m., featuring the founders of the long-running Golden Apple Dinner Theater, Roberta MacDonald Turoff and Robert Turoff. Actors Richard LeVene and Judy Glynn will portray the other two members of the eponymous *Quartet*, a news release says.

The ensemble will be directed by Peter Ivanov.

*Quartet*, which was a 2012 award-winning film directed by Dustin Hoffman, “follows the drama of retired opera divas and divos as they plan their annual concert to celebrate Verdi’s birthday,” the release explains.

Eight performances will be offered at The Glenridge Performing Arts Center, through April 2. Tickets, which are \$15 for the general

public, may be purchased by calling 552-5325 or by visiting [gpactix.com](http://gpactix.com).

*Quartet* begins with Beecham House abuzz with a rumor that the home for retired musicians will soon host a new resident, a star. “For Reginald Paget, Wilfred Bond and Cecily Robson, this sort of talk is par for the course at the gossipy home,” the release points out. “But they’re in for a special shock when the new arrival turns out to be none other than their former singing partner, Jean Horton. Her subsequent career as a star soloist, and the ego that accompanied it, split up their long friendship and ended her marriage to Reggie, who takes the news of her arrival particularly hard. Can the passage of time heal old wounds? And will the famous quartet be able to patch up their differences in time for Beecham House’s gala concert?”

The Glenridge Performing Arts Center is located at 7333 Scotland Way in Sarasota.



*The Glenridge Performing Arts Center will host its own version of Quartet in late March and early April. Contributed photo*

## JAZZ CLUB TO PRESENT RUSSIAN JAZZ TRUMPETER IN PROGRAM

The Jazz Club of Sarasota will welcome Russian jazz trumpeter Valery Ponomarev in a performance with former Duke Ellington bassist John Lamb, saxophonist Valerie Gillespie, pianist Judi Glover and drummer Ian Goodman on Friday, March 28, at 7:30 p.m. in Holley Hall at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, the club has announced.

The Symphony Center is located at 709 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Tickets are \$25 for Jazz Club members, \$30 for non-members and \$10 for students. For information and tickets, call 366-1552.

Ponomarev “is revered by fans and jazz critics alike for his gritty yet clean neo-bop style that recalls the approach of his idol, Clifford Brown,” a news release explains. “He is probably best known for being Wynton Marsalis’ predecessor in Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, with whom he performed at major concert halls, clubs and festivals around the world,” the release continues. As a solo artist, Ponomarev has completed tours of Australia, China and Europe. In 1990, he returned to his native Russia after a 17-year absence so he could participate in the First International Moscow Jazz Festival, the release adds. Since then, he has traveled regularly to Russia, accompanied by such American jazz greats as Benny Golson, Curtis Fuller, Bobbie Watson, James “Sid” Simmons, Bradford Leali, Vincent Lewis, Sean McGloin and Evelyn Blakey, the release notes.

Bassist Lamb is best known for his stint with the Duke Ellington Orchestra and for his contributions to jazz and to music education in the Tampa Bay area, the release says. In



*Valerie Gillespie/Contributed photo*



*Valery Ponomarev/Contributed photo*

March 2013, Lamb was awarded the Jazz Club of Sarasota's Satchmo Award for his contributions as an educator and performer, it adds.

Gillespie "is a spirited musician knee-deep in the tradition of New York jazz, blues and swing," the release continues. A professional musician since age 14, she has "performed with such luminaries as Chick Corea, Bobby McFerrin, Rosemary Clooney, George Burns, Ben Vereen and Ray Charles," the release adds. Gillespie has also toured with the Xavier Cugat Orchestra throughout the U.S. and abroad.

Pianist Glover has been a member of New Jersey's Alex Glover & Company since 1987, the release notes. "She performs with various size ensembles in Atlantic City and throughout the Delaware Valley."

Jazz drummer and University of South Florida faculty member Goodman is much in demand throughout central Florida. He has performed on more than 50 recordings in styles ranging from jazz to contemporary worship, to choral show music, the release says.

For more information about the Jazz Club of Sarasota, call 366-1552, or visit [jazzclubsarasota.org](http://jazzclubsarasota.org).



*John Lamb/Contributed photo*

## LUPONE TO RETURN TO THE VAN WEZEL STAGE ON MARCH 25

Two-time Tony Award winner and two-time Grammy Award winner Patti LuPone will return to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota on March 25 with her new one-woman show, *The Gypsy in My Soul*, the hall has announced.

Her performance will feature a mix of songs “from some of her most awe-inspiring performances” in shows such as *Gypsy*, *Anything Goes* and *Oliver*, as well as some of her personal pop favorites, a news release says.

A founding member of John Houseman’s The Acting Company, “LuPone has been a much-loved presence on the Broadway stage with leading roles in many classics,” the release continues. Her most recent Broadway appearances include starring opposite Debra Winger in the *Anarchist*, a reunion with co-star Mandy Patinkin in *An Evening with Patti LuPone and Mandy Patinkin*, and creating the role of Lucia in the new musical, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, for which she was nominated for Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards, the release adds.

Tickets are \$60 to \$90. For more information, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit [VanWezel.org](http://VanWezel.org).



*Patti LuPone/Contributed photo by Ethan Hill*

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## SARASOTA TO HOST FOUNDATION’S GARDEN DIALOGUE SERIES

The Cultural Landscape Foundation is launching the third season of its critically acclaimed Garden Dialogue Series on Saturday, March 29, at 3:30 p.m. in Sarasota at the award-winning Casey Key Pagoda Garden, the foundation has announced.

Registration and additional information may be found at the foundation website, [tclf.org/gardendialogues](http://tclf.org/gardendialogues), a news release notes.

The Casey Key Pagoda Garden was designed by Sarasota landscape architecture studio Michael A. Gilkey Inc., in collaboration with

Synergy Building Corp., the release adds. “The project has been featured in several publications,” the release continues, “and in July 2013, it was given the state’s only Award of Excellence for Residential Design by the Florida Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.”

“The Garden Dialogue Series was developed to answer the question: How do garden owners and their landscape architects or designers work together to create a great garden?” the release explains. “These conversations bring together patrons and designers to reveal the creative process, the give and take and the collaboration that yields a great garden,” it notes. “Garden Dialogues provides unique opportunities for small groups to experience

some of today’s most beautiful gardens created by some of the most accomplished designers,” it says.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation featured Gilkey’s work for the first time in the 2013 Garden Dialogue Series, the release points out. This year’s series includes dozens of projects in cities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

For the Casey Key Pagoda Garden Dialogue, Gilkey will be joined by the building contractor, Joe Jannopoulo, “to engage guests in their collaborative design process,” the release says.

Proceeds from the event will benefit The Cultural Landscape Foundation, the release adds. 



*The Casey Key Pagoda Garden was designed by the Sarasota firm of Michael A. Gilkey. Contributed photo*



*Temple Emanu-El Religious School teacher Sandy Ainbinder and Director of Education Sabrina Silverberg donned costumes for last year's Purim Pandemonium celebration and carnival at Temple Emanu-El. Contributed photo*

## **PURIM PANDEMONIUM TO BE HELD AT TEMPLE EMANU-EL MARCH 23**

The members of Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota, invite the community to their annual *Purim Pandemonium* celebration and carnival on Sunday, March 23, beginning at 11 a.m.

The carnival will feature a giant inflatable slide, bounce house, obstacle course, dunk tank, face-painting, games and prizes, lunch, cotton candy, snow-cones, frozen lemonade and plenty of home-baked *hamentashen*, with all proceeds benefitting Temple Emanu-El Religious School, a news release says.

Preceding the *Purim Pandemonium* carnival will be the annual family Purim service, which will include Purim songs, an original Purim play, a costume parade with prizes for all participants and a reading of the *Megillah* — a scroll containing the Book of Esther, the release points out. The service will begin at 10 a.m.; it is open to the community.

Anne Steinbach serves as chairwoman of *Purim Pandemonium*. For more information, contact Temple Emanu-El Religious School at 371-2788 or [teers@sarasotatemple.org](mailto:teers@sarasotatemple.org).



*Rocco Rell dressed as an Egyptian during last year's Purim Pandemonium celebration and carnival at Temple Emanu-El. Contributed photo*

## TRUMPETER MENDELOW TO BRING FLAIR TO ORGAN RECITAL

The Church of the Redeemer will present a half-hour Lenten organ recital on Wednesday, March 26, featuring Redeemer organist and choirmaster Ann Stephenson-Moe and trumpeter Daniel Mendelow, the former principal trumpet for the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the church has announced.

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

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).



*Daniel Mendelow/Contributed photo*

## DIOCESE TO HOST LEAVEN CONFERENCE ON HOMELESSNESS

Catholic Charities Diocese of Venice Inc. will host a Leaven Conference on Hunger and Homelessness on Saturday, March 29, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, located at 1301 Center Road in Venice, the Diocese has announced.

Numerous workshop sessions have been planned throughout the day, including those focusing on special needs of homeless families

and children, realities faced by homeless veterans, awareness of human trafficking, the impact of addictions “and networking and resources available in working together to end hunger and homelessness issues,” a news release says.

The keynote address will be given by Dr. Jonathan Reyes, executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development since 2012. The conference will conclude with a celebration of Mass, the release adds.

Discounted prices are offered for early ticket purchases: \$15 for adults, \$10 for advocates and \$5 for students, the release notes.

Register online at [dioceseofvenice.org/Leaven](http://dioceseofvenice.org/Leaven) or mail a completed form and payment to Leaven Conference, Diocese of Venice, 1000 Pinebrook Road, Venice, FL 34285.



*Leaven-XIX-Square-Banner*

## TEMPLE EMANU-EL TO WELCOME SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE

Temple Emanu-El invites the community to a weekend of learning at the synagogue's annual Peck Scholar-in-Residence program on March 21 and 22.

The Temple is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

This year's scholar-in-residence is Dr. Stephen Berk, the Henry and Sally Schaffer professor of Holocaust and Jewish studies at Union College in Schenectady, NY, a news release says. Berk has served as a scholar-in-residence at congregations around the country and on overseas trips to Russia, Spain, the Caribbean, Western and Eastern Europe and Israel, the release notes. "He is acclaimed for

this vast knowledge not only of the Holocaust and Judaica but also of Russia, Middle Eastern politics and contemporary American Jewish life," the release adds.

Berk will offer two presentations that are free and open to the community. He will join Rabbi Brenner Glickman on the pulpit and speak on *My People Are Your People: American Jews and the Struggle for Civil Rights* during Shabbat services on Friday, March 21, at 7:30 p.m. He will also offer a lecture on *The American Jewish Experience: Are We at Home Here or Not?* on Saturday, March 22, at 10 a.m.

For more information, call 371-2788. 

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**21+**  
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 [wbttsrq.org](http://wbttsrq.org).

**21+**  
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).

**21+**  
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).

**21+**  
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).

**23**  
MARCH

**FUMC presents Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, featuring sopranos Trine Bolling and Robyn Rocklein, with the Chroma Quartet**

March 23, 7 p.m., First Church, 104 S. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota  
Tickets: \$10 donation. Information: 955-0935 or [firstsrq.com](http://firstsrq.com).

**05**  
APRIL

**Jazz Duo Lenore Raphael and Howard Alden**

April 5, 8 p.m., Glenridge Performing Arts Center, 7333 Scotland Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$20. Information: 552-5325 or [TheGlenridge.com](http://TheGlenridge.com).

**28**  
APRIL

**Gloria Musicae presents *Voices of the Holocaust***

April 28, 7:30 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 to \$70. Information: 953-3368 or [GloriaMusicae.org](http://GloriaMusicae.org).

**YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST**

**PRESS**



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**

1944-04-23-11-04

04/23/2000

# SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



## TOMORROW'S ALL-STARS?

*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.*