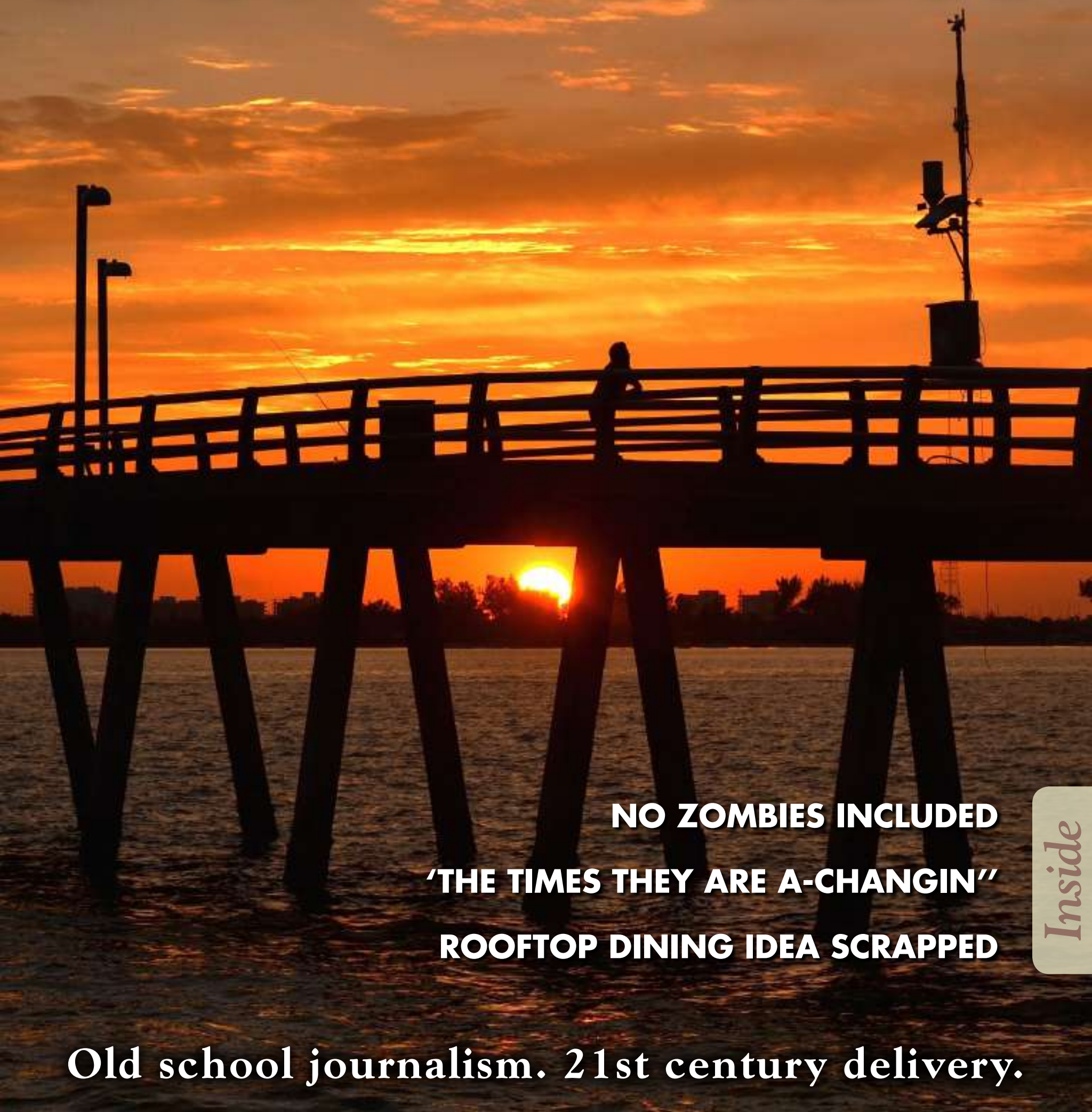


THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 29 — April 4, 2014

News Leader



NO ZOMBIES INCLUDED

'THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN''

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Welcome

It seems safe to say the No. 1 topic in the news this week is the joint meeting of the City and County commissions to discuss plans for a homeless shelter. As made plain in Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel's audience photos, many area residents took the opportunity to tell their elected officials just what they think about the project.

And while you may have read about the meeting in another publication, I highly recommend County Editor Roger Drouin's recap. As usual, Roger has been very thorough in his reporting, and he is a master at serving up the "flavor" of a discussion.

Of course, the shelter was not the only item on that agenda, as City Editor Stan Zimmerman points out in his article about the community redevelopment agency discussion that was shortened by the length of time the boards spent listening to residents' concerns about homeless people.

As for other news: County Administrator Tom Harmer has taken his first big steps in planning for the county's future; a rooftop dining proposal drew quite a crowd to the city's Development Review Committee session this week; the Fruitville Initiative is moving forward — with renderings; and trolley service finally will be coming to Siesta Key after what has seemed an interminable wait.

With reports from the County Commission budget workshop last week, more topics of note on Siesta Key and a look at the annual *Embracing Our Differences* exhibit on the bayfront, you will see quite a lot has been taking place beyond the "shelter front."

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher





NO ZOMBIES INCLUDED



'THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN''



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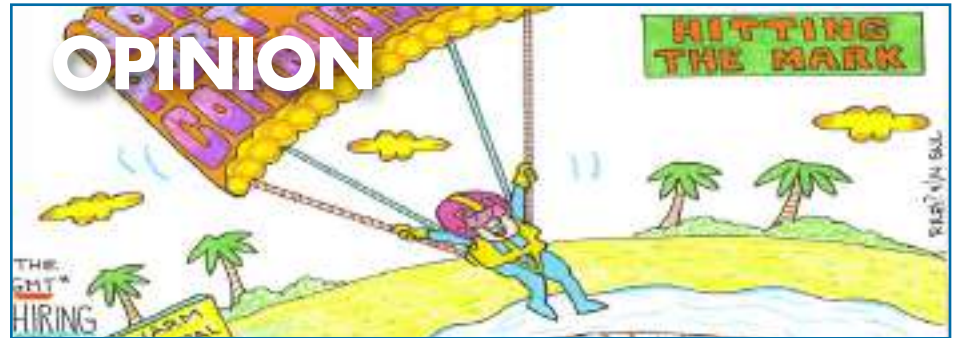
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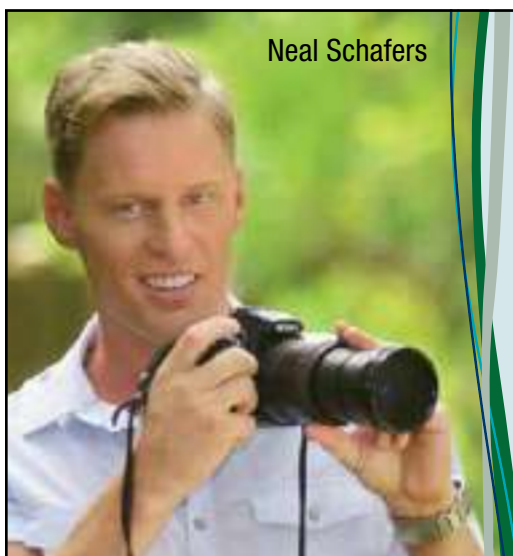
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The Sarasota County Commission Chambers is nearly full before the start of the meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

WITH RESIDENTS WRANGLING OVER THE HOMELESS SHELTER PROJECT, THE CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS AGREE TO ADD A THIRD SITE TO THE POTENTIAL LOCATION LIST

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

The City and County commissions in a joint meeting on Tuesday, April 1, were one vote shy of unanimous action on the homeless shelter front.

The two boards added a third site — at 1502 and 1562 N. Lime Ave. — to the list of possible shelter locations. They are still considering two other parcels, both of which have drawn the ire of neighbors and downtown business owners,

as well as scrutiny by two city commissioners who oppose a shelter in the city core.

The property on North Lime could be more costly, but it holds promise because buildings are already there — although in need of renovation — and its location amid light industrial uses might be seen as more palatable to people in the city.

“That area [on North Lime] is less

“ *When I hear people talking about this, I get a picture of Walking Dead (a TV show): zombies going up walls.*

Diana Hamilton
Resident
City of Sarasota



residential, more industrialized,” said Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, one of the two city commissioners critical of the two other potential sites.

“That would be my choice,” Shaw said of the property at the corner of North Lime Avenue and 15th Street.

The 5-0 County Commission and 4-1 City Commission votes Tuesday were the first show of unified progress towards a shelter since November 2013, when both boards accepted the recommendations of homelessness consultant Robert Marbut. In the past few months, however, the project has been sinking into a political morass reminiscent of the battle over the cost of renovations and expansion of Ed Smith Stadium to draw the Baltimore Orioles to town for Spring Training.

Shaw and fellow City Commissioner Susan Chapman have been firing a barrage of questions and voicing opposition to a facility for the homeless in downtown Sarasota, while anxiety among residents has been growing as they contemplate the idea of a shelter built near homes and businesses.

Chapman cast the lone “No” vote Tuesday.

The 9-1 action signaled forward momentum, said Sarasota City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell.

“I feel really good about this, and I think we are on our way,” Atwell added.

It is important for the city’s Police Department, which will provide security outside the shelter, and the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, which will manage it, to work together, she



“My recommendation is to build it in a cow pasture somewhere.

Andrea Singer
Resident
City of Sarasota

”

The City and County commissions agreed to add the property at 1502 and 1562 N. Lime Ave. to the list of sites to be considered for a homeless shelter. Photo by Norman Schimmel

pointed out, and she was glad to hear the leaders of both agencies say they would do so.

The next step in the push for a come-as-you-are shelter in the range of 30,000 square feet will be the release of data from environmental assessments, which are under way at the two other potential sites, along with due diligence at all three potential locations. On April 22, the city and county commissioners will meet again to talk over the project.

While there were tense moments at the dais and several inquiries regarding projections of crime and other impacts that could accompany a shelter, the outcome was the closest the elected officials have been this year to moving ahead with the facility.

The two other sites are located at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. (city-owned property) and 1800 N. East Ave.

FOR AND AGAINST

The commissioners first heard from more than 25 residents, many of whom voiced concerns about a shelter in north Sarasota close to Sarasota Military Academy, the Pines of Sarasota retirement home and planned redevelopment that has been slow to materialize.

“They shouldn’t be congregating in an area with children in school,” said Elaine Muhammad, a mother of three, regarding the possibility of homeless people gathering outside a shelter.



(From left) Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino; consultant Robert Marbut; Wayne Applebee, coordinator of homelessness issues for the county; Bill Spitler, director of planning and research at the Sheriff's Office; and Sheriff Tom Knight sat as a panel to answer questions during the meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Retired Judge Frank Brenner said a facility will draw homeless people from “everywhere.” “You can’t unscramble an egg,” he added. “If we do this wrong, we will deal with the repercussions for decades.”

“We have been trying to rebuild north Sarasota for years,” said Andrea Singer, who emphasized her worries about an increase in crimes such as sexual assault and drug sales. “A homeless shelter is not the solution [here]. My recommendation is to build it in a cow pasture somewhere.”

“We are already saturated with challenges,” Lori Sykora said of north Sarasota neighborhoods, including the Rosemary District. “The spill-over, I feel, would personally affect our safety,” Sykora added, referring to shelter residents.

Not everyone was opposed to the project, however. Diana Hamilton, a former City Commission candidate, said some of the comments made it seem as though the homeless would take over the area near a shelter like zombies in a TV show.

“When I hear people talking about this, I get a picture of *Walking Dead*: zombies going up walls,” Hamilton added. “I wonder if we could not have done a better job of speaking to these fears, having one-on-one conversations with people.”

“Please make it happen,” Steve McAllister told the commissioners in a plea for the shelter.

“This is an emotional topic,” County Commission Chairman Charles Hines said at



Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut awaits the start of the discussion. Photo by Norman Schimmel

one point during the public comments portion of the meeting.

A THIRD SITE

County Commissioner Nora Patterson led the initiative to include the third site in the process. She said she would like to see two parcels on North Lime considered, if the cost was not too high.

City commissioners, however, ruled out the second of those sites, the parcel at 1011 N. Lime Ave., because of its proximity to a residential community. That property is also in the middle of planned redevelopment, noted Mayor Shannon Snyder.

The site at 1502 N. Lime seemed more promising.

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, who has spoken about the need for a shelter in the city, said it was a positive development to add that property to the list. "More choices and more due diligence is a good thing," Caragiulo pointed out.

Regarding crime, or perceived crime, in conjunction with the establishment of a shelter, Caragiulo said residents such as Singer, who had voiced anxiety about the possibility of sexual offenders and violent crimes, get everyone's attention. However, he wanted to know if those concerns were well founded.

"As father of two girls, nothing could scare me more than the potential abduction of a child," Caragiulo said. "Has there been any analysis with regard to serious, violent crime?"



A second potential shelter site is at 1800 N. East Ave. Photo by Norman Schimmel

he asked Sarasota Police Chief Bernadette DiPino and Sheriff Tom Knight.

DiPino replied that her department was gathering data, but statistics have shown an increase in calls to police departments in areas where shelters have been built. In San Antonio, such calls “more than doubled” after a facility was constructed, DiPino added. The increase, however, was attributed to quality-of-life issues, DiPino noted.

“We are collecting the crime data ... We should get the facts,” DiPino said. “We need to be prepared to respond to the calls and the issues.”

Consultant Marbut told the boards that while there has been documentation of an uptick in calls, there is no evidence showing a rise in

violent crimes in the vicinity of other homeless shelters that have been built recently across the country, including Pinellas Safe Harbor in Clearwater. Marbut could recall only one serious incident in three years at Pinellas Safe Harbor, he added.

“The conversations are about loitering at the bus stop. ‘Somebody took my bike out of the parking lot,’” Marbut pointed out as examples. “They are quality-of-life issues.”

Marbut also said a shelter should be near services needed by the residents: the courthouse, the Public Defender’s Office and centers offering programs to help those with substance abuse and mental health problems. That is why the facility should be located in the city core, he noted.



Businessman John Minder was among more than two-dozen people who took to the podium during the public comments portion of the meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel

“[The shelters in] St Louis, San Diego, north Miami — they are all located where the central services are. All the services need to be located as closely as possible,” Marbut stressed. “There is no other way to say it.”

“I’m not a fan of putting a shelter out with the cows,” said Patterson in response to the earlier comment from a resident about constructing a shelter in pasture.

“To be used, you have to put it not only where the homeless are but within some proximity of the services,” Patterson added. “It just makes logistical sense.”


A DELAY?

County commissioners urged their city counterparts to renew the focus on Sarasota’s shelter project, citing what they characterized as stalling tactics emanating from City Hall.

“I perceive from reading different emails that the administration in the city is putting up roadblocks as it relates to the Osprey Avenue site,” said Commissioner Carolyn Mason. “That is my opinion, which I am entitled to.”

“I’m very concerned as to foot dragging here,” Barbetta added, noting he had seen a delay, too, on the part of city administrative staff.

Barbetta said he does not want to give up on the Osprey Avenue site, which was Marbut’s No. 1 recommendation for a shelter location.

The rezoning of Ed Smith Stadium was handled quickly when the community was trying to work out a deal with the Baltimore Orioles, Barbetta pointed out. He would like to see the city approach the shelter project, once a site has been chosen, with the same gusto, he said. 



The site at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. in north Sarasota ranked highest on consultant Robert Marbut’s list. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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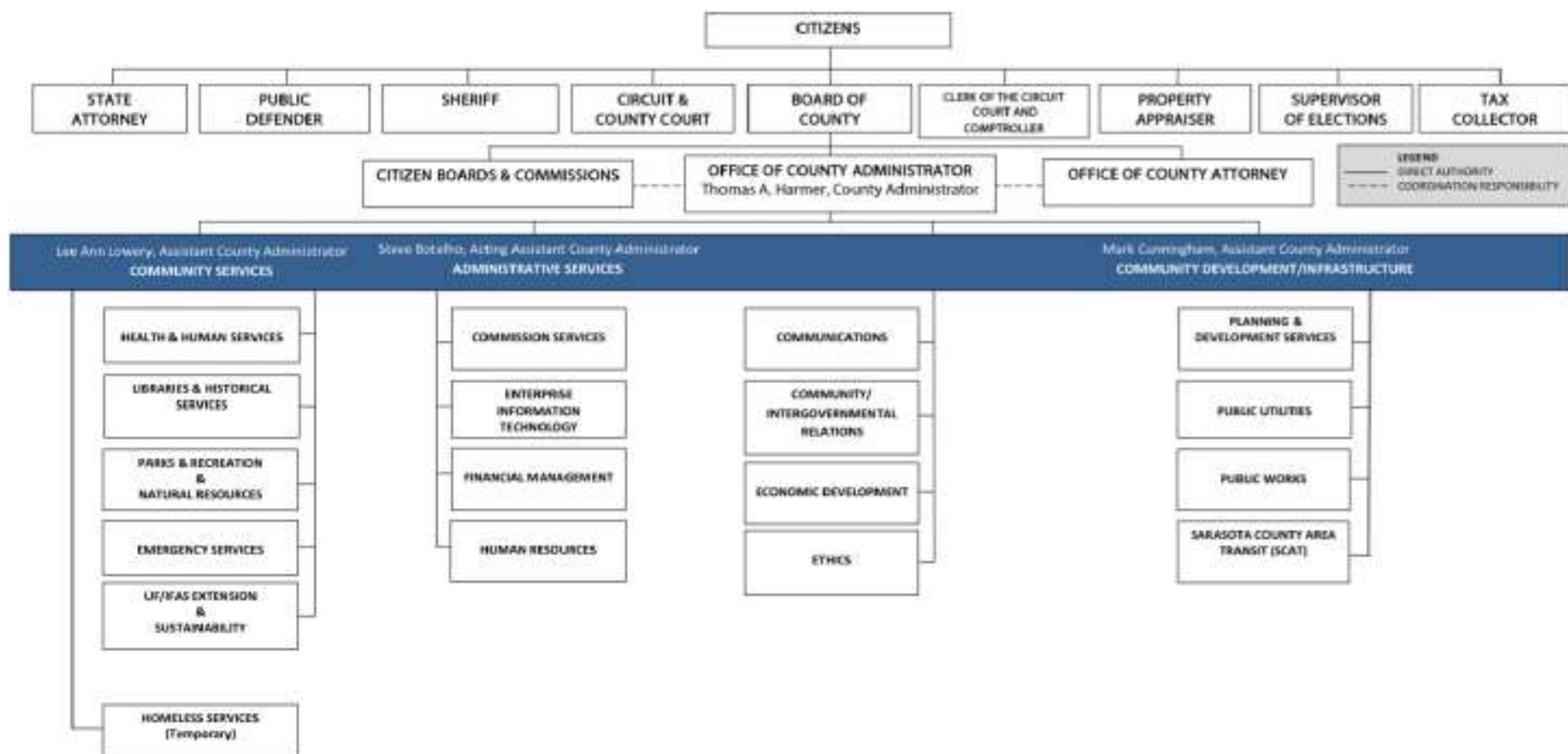
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'THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' '

A chart shows the new organization of Sarasota County departments effective as of Oct. 1. Image courtesy Sarasota County

TWO DEPARTMENT CHIEFS LOSE THEIR JOBS AS THE ADMINISTRATOR BEGINS TO PUT HIS OWN STAMP ON SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The chairman and vice chairwoman of the Sarasota County Commission say it was no surprise to learn last week that County Administrator Tom Harmer had begun making significant changes to the county's organizational plan.

"That's his role as administrator," Chairman Charles Hines told *The Sarasota News Leader* on March 31, three days after Harmer announced in an email that he was appointing

a new ethics officer and an acting director of the Natural Resources Department.

"And I agree with what he's done," Hines added. The actions are among a number of changes set to go into effect on Oct. 1.

"[Tom Harmer has] had the ability to actively review this. ... Like any CEO, he's putting his personal touch on things."

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

The new ethics officer, Steve Olmstead, has been with Sarasota County Government for about 12-and-a-half years, all in Human Resources, Jamie Carson, a

county spokeswoman, said in response to a *News Leader* request for information about the appointments. Olmstead replaces Steve Uebelacker, who was hired on Oct. 3, 2011, by then-Interim County Administrator Terry Lewis. Uebelacker's hiring followed months of turmoil after a scandal erupted in the county's Procurement Department.

Carson pointed out that the county is maintaining the reporting system it implemented for any employee to convey concerns about ethics violations, and it will continue its focus on transparency.

Matt Osterhoudt, who has been with Sarasota County Government for almost 15 years, all in the Natural Resources Department, has become acting director of that division. Prior to that, Osterhoudt served as manager of conservation and environmental permitting. He has been among the staff members working on the revisions of [Sarasota 2050](#).

Osterhoudt replaces Amy Meese, who had been a county employee since July 2001. She was named director of the Natural Resources Department in June 2006, Carson told the *News Leader*.

Effective Oct. 1, Harmer added in his March 28 email, "Natural Resources will no longer be a stand-alone department. It will be divided into sections. The regulatory function will report to Planning and Development Services, and the management of Environmentally Sensitive Lands will report to [the] Parks and Recreation [Department]." During this transition period, Harmer added, Osterhoudt will coordinate the changes associated with that realignment.

Harmer also noted that Olmstead "will be assisting in the re-evaluation of this position and working closely with the [Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller] on any outstanding issues during the transition."



Then-Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer listened on Jan. 28 as Commissioner Joe Barbetta talked about why the board should give Harmer the job of administrator. Photo by Norman Schimmel



March 25, 2014

OPERATIONAL CHANGE

From County Administrator
Tom Harmer

Dear County Employees:

During the past few months, I have had the opportunity to evaluate our operations and receive feedback from various groups about the services we provide.

Based on my assessment, I continue to be impressed with the quality of the services that we provide and the work effort of our staff. I can say with confidence that Sarasota County Government has a very strong foundation. You have helped create a culture centered on excellent customer service and a sincere concern for our residents and visitors — and you have kept that alive during one of the worst economic downturns in history.

As we cautiously go forward in an improving economy, I have tried to thoughtfully consider how best to build on this foundation. It is critical that we carefully consider how we address increasing service levels and resource demands within a leaner government model.

To address the allocation of our current resources, I have developed a plan for changes in our organizational structure that will take effect Oct. 1. These changes are designed to increase efficiencies, create cost savings, maximize resources, streamline processes and align services within functional areas. The changes will include:

1. Separating Public Utilities from the Public Works Department
2. Grouping all Public Works functions under one department and under the supervision of one director
3. Aligning all development, planning, zoning, permitting, environmental protection and regulatory functions as well as Neighborhood Services and the Community Redevelopment Areas program within one department - Planning and Development Services
4. Consolidating the Parks and Recreation Department with the natural resources/lands-management function into one department
5. Shifting the responsibility of sustainability programs into the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Sarasota County Extension
6. Including Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) Department (along with Public Utilities, Public Works, and Planning and Development Services) in the Community Development/Infrastructure group, under Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham
7. Moving Commission Services, Enterprise Information Technology and Human Resources departments, along with the Office of Financial Management, into the Administrative Services group under Acting Assistant County Administrator Steve Botelho
8. Grouping Health and Human Services; Libraries and Historical Resources; Parks and Recreation; Emergency Services; Sarasota County Extension and Sustainability; and Homeless Services under the Community Services group administered by ACA Lee Ann Lowery
9. Realigning the Office of Business and Economic Development so it directly reports to the county administrator.

These changes create the basis of our overall structure and will require further evaluation and decisions to fully implement between now and Oct. 1. I look forward to working with each of the departments on this transition.

Thank you for your continued efforts to provide the best possible service to our community.

Sincerely,

Tom

Both Uebelacker and Meese were among the approximately 140 “at-will” employees of the county, Carson added. Anyone in that group of managers, directors and other executives can have his or her employment terminated at the will of the administrator, she said, according to Florida law.

Meese is eligible for six weeks of salary and benefits, Carson explained, while Uebelacker is entitled to four weeks of pay and benefits.

Regarding the recent and coming realignment of departments and positions, Hines told the *News Leader*, “[Harmer has] had the ability to actively review this. ... Like any CEO, he’s putting his personal touch on things.”

“It’s expected that the county administrator is going to reorganize” and shift personnel

into positions he feels will work best, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson concurred in an interview with the *News Leader* on March 31. “I think that he had an advantage of working in the previous system. ... The time frame [for the changes] was much quicker because of his job experience here.”

Harmer was hired by former County Administrator Randall Reid in July 2012. When the commissioners fired Reid on Oct. 23, 2013, they quickly asked Harmer to step into the position on an interim basis. On Jan. 28, they asked him to stay on and remove the “interim” from his title.

Harmer began his March 28 email by referencing his short tenure in the position: “I have experienced an incredible first 45 days on the job as your new County Administrator. Thank



Then-Interim County Administrator Tom Harmer (left) listened as Ed Gable, the county’s facilities services director, made a presentation during an Oct. 29, 2013 workshop. Photo by Norman Schimmel

you for your support and hard work to help make the transition as smooth as possible.”

NEWS AND NOTICE

Three days earlier, on March 25, Harmer sent an electronic letter to all county employees. “During the past few months,” he wrote, “I have had the opportunity to evaluate our operations and receive feedback from various groups about the service we provide. Based on that assessment, I continue to be impressed with the quality of the services ... and the work effort of our staff. ... You have helped create a culture centered on excellent customer service and a sincere concern for our residents and visitors — and you have kept that alive during one of the worst economic downturns in history.”

He added, “As we cautiously go forward in an improving economy, I have tried to thoughtfully consider how best to build on this foundation. It is critical that we carefully consider how we address increasing service levels and resource demands within a leaner government model.”

In a March 28 news release during which he announced an array of changes that will go into effect on Oct. 1, Harmer said, “I believe in the basic fundamentals, direct communication, accountability and productivity. ... The improved structure is designed to create cost savings, maximize resources, streamline processes and realign services within functional areas; so we can better serve our community and meet our goals.”

The list of changes laid out in that news release follows:



Steve Uebelacker. Image courtesy Sarasota County

- Separating Public Utilities from the Public Works Department.
- Grouping all Public Works functions under one department and under the supervision of one director.
- Aligning all development, planning, zoning, permitting, environmental protection and regulatory functions, as well as Neighborhood Services and the Community Redevelopment Areas program, within one department — Planning and Development Services.
- Consolidating the Parks and Recreation Department with the natural resources/lands-management function into one department.

- Shifting the responsibility of sustainability programs into the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Sarasota County Extension.
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- Grouping Health and Human Services; Libraries and Historical Resources; Parks and Recreation; Emergency Services; Sarasota County Extension and Sustainability; and Homeless Services under the Community Services group administered by Assistant County Administrator Lee Ann Lowery.
- Realigning the Office of Business and Economic Development so it directly reports to the county administrator.

EARLIER STEPS

Harmer's first personnel action as county administrator was naming Steve Botelho acting assistant county administrator, effective Feb. 24. Botelho was the county's chief financial management officer.

Harmer announced the appointment during a county budget workshop on Feb. 21.

Exactly a month later, on March 21, Harmer appointed Isaac Brownman as the county's public works director, effective March 24.


The news release announcing that decision said Brownman will "continue to oversee Capital Projects as part of the Public Works Department and [he] will also oversee Transportation & Real Estate, General Services and Field Services."

REID'S FIRST DECISIONS

Harmer's hiring as deputy county administrator in July 2012 was among former County Administrator Randall Reid's first public decisions. Reid started working for the county in late January 2012.

At the same time Reid announced that news, he also made public his appointment of Botelho as chief financial planning officer.

Slightly more than a month later, on Aug. 22, 2012, Reid told the commission during a regular meeting that the new organizational structure he was proposing would be based on multiple assistant managers, similar to the organizations of former county administrators Jim Ley and John Wesley White, the news release said. He added that he would create groups of directors and managers focused on common tasks and responsibilities, with oversight of each group by an assistant county administrator.

According to the chart he sent to county employees with the electronic letter on March 25, Harmer has maintained that organizational concept. 

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ROOFTOP DINING IDEA SCRAPPED



A flag marks the United Way building at 1445 Second St. in downtown Sarasota, separated by a parking lot from 1401 Second St. A 10-story building is planned for the site. Image from Google Maps

BITER'S 10-STORY DOWNTOWN BUILDING PLANS EXPAND, AND EACH RESIDENT IN THE NEW Q CONDOS WILL HAVE HIS OWN DEED

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

A rare standing-room-only crowd attended the City of Sarasota's Development Review Committee (DRC) meeting on Wednesday, April 3. Was it the planned new office building on Fruitville Road that drew these people? A quarter-acre addition to the footprint of a downtown residential high-rise? Or that rarest of planning actions, a new subdivision plat?

The audience was quiet and unconcerned as Tom Jackson explained his plan to demolish three houses on the south side of Fruitville Road

just west of Tuttle Avenue. In their place, he plans a 5,000-square-foot office building to complement a nearly 4,000-square-foot existing office structure.

Staff with the city's Building Department reminded Jackson he needed to provide a staging plan for construction and that he had to obtain a demolition permit for the three

houses. The matter was all cut and dried, and the all-important sign-off sheet was circulated among staff. Jackson had achieved a milestone for his project.

“Nothing here allows greater density or new uses.”

Brenda Patten
Attorney



The tension in the room subtly rose as Joel Freedman, the planning consultant representing entrepreneur Jesse Biter's 10-story residential complex, came to the table. Biter was planning to build 168 units on a site, but he purchased an adjacent quarter-acre to supplement the property he already owned. The two parcels are at 1401 and 1445 Second St. He was asking the DRC to allow him to include the new parcel in his original plans, enabling him to erect one building instead of having to construct a second structure on the adjacent property.

The original plans also called for a rooftop restaurant, which was a source of angst for residents of other downtown high-rise structures. Noise has become a major issue for them, and the sigh of relief was almost audible when Freedman opened his presentation by saying, "The new plan will have no rooftop restaurant."

Downtown planning allows developers to utilize the administrative review process, meaning there is no opportunity for public input at the Planning Board or City Commission for a project that gets the go-ahead. Staff alone has the power to approve or reject new development, based on existing city codes, overlays, regulations, design standards and other requirements. And no neighborhood workshop is required.

The additional property Biter purchased would allow him to incorporate 12 more residential units in plans for a single building, along with about 7,000 more square feet of commercial space. "Nothing here allows greater density or new uses," said Biter's attorney, Brenda Patten, of the proposal. "It is a better design to make one cohesive beautiful building."



An artist's rendering shows the design of the Q condos planned for Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Image from [Dwell Real Estate](#)

She and Freedman were joined at the table by Gary Hoyt, Biter's architect.

As is customary regarding projects in their infancy, the staff peppered Freedman with questions about parking, garbage, fire protection, infrastructure and a host of related matters big and miniscule. A formal site plan has not been submitted, and the project is a long way from the sign-off stage.

When Freedman thanked the committee members for their attention and rose to leave, the audience members left, too. That meant the committee was alone to conduct a rare procedure — approval of a new subdivision plat.

The Q is a townhouse condominium development already under construction along Charles Ringling Boulevard, across the street from the GTE building. Matt Morris came to ask the DRC's approval so he can file a plat

allowing buyers of individual townhouses in the Q to own the property "fee simple." The absence of large pieces of developable land in the city makes the platting process almost unseen in modern times.

For someone to develop a property today, the city requires that all the land under the building be combined into one tax parcel. But in Morris' case, once the 40 townhomes are completed and ready for sale, each one will need its own deed. Hence, he came to seek approval for his plan to divide the land into smaller parcels, which the DRC gave him.

The city was "platted out" years ago. Condominiums do not require subdivision of the underlying land, which is held in common by the tenants-owners. So Morris' request harkened back to the city's early roots, and then the suburban construction rush of the 1950s. **SNL**

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FRUITVILLE INITIATIVE UPDATE

Steve Suau makes a presentation on the Fruitville Initiative to about 50 residents on March 27. Photo by Roger Drouin

RESIDENTS HEAR ABOUT PLANS FOR 2,000 RESIDENTIAL UNITS, 1.2 MILLION SQUARE FEET OF MAJOR EMPLOYMENT CENTER OFFICES AND LIGHT INDUSTRIAL SPACE, AND 640,000 SQUARE FEET OF COMMERCIAL AREA

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

During a neighborhood workshop on Thursday, March 27, planning consultants and Sarasota County staff members presented plans illustrating how 300-plus acres along Fruitville Road east of Interstate 75 will be transformed.

The property, mostly cattle pasture now, will be converted into a mixed-use community with 2,000 residential units, 1.2 million square feet of Major Employment

Center (MEC) offices and light industrial space, and 640,000 square feet of commercial area. A multi-use boulevard on Fruitville Road and a new street grid will run through the heart of the development. (See the accompanying illustration.)

“We haven’t really planned like this in 100 years. Setting up a framework for development is usually reactive.”

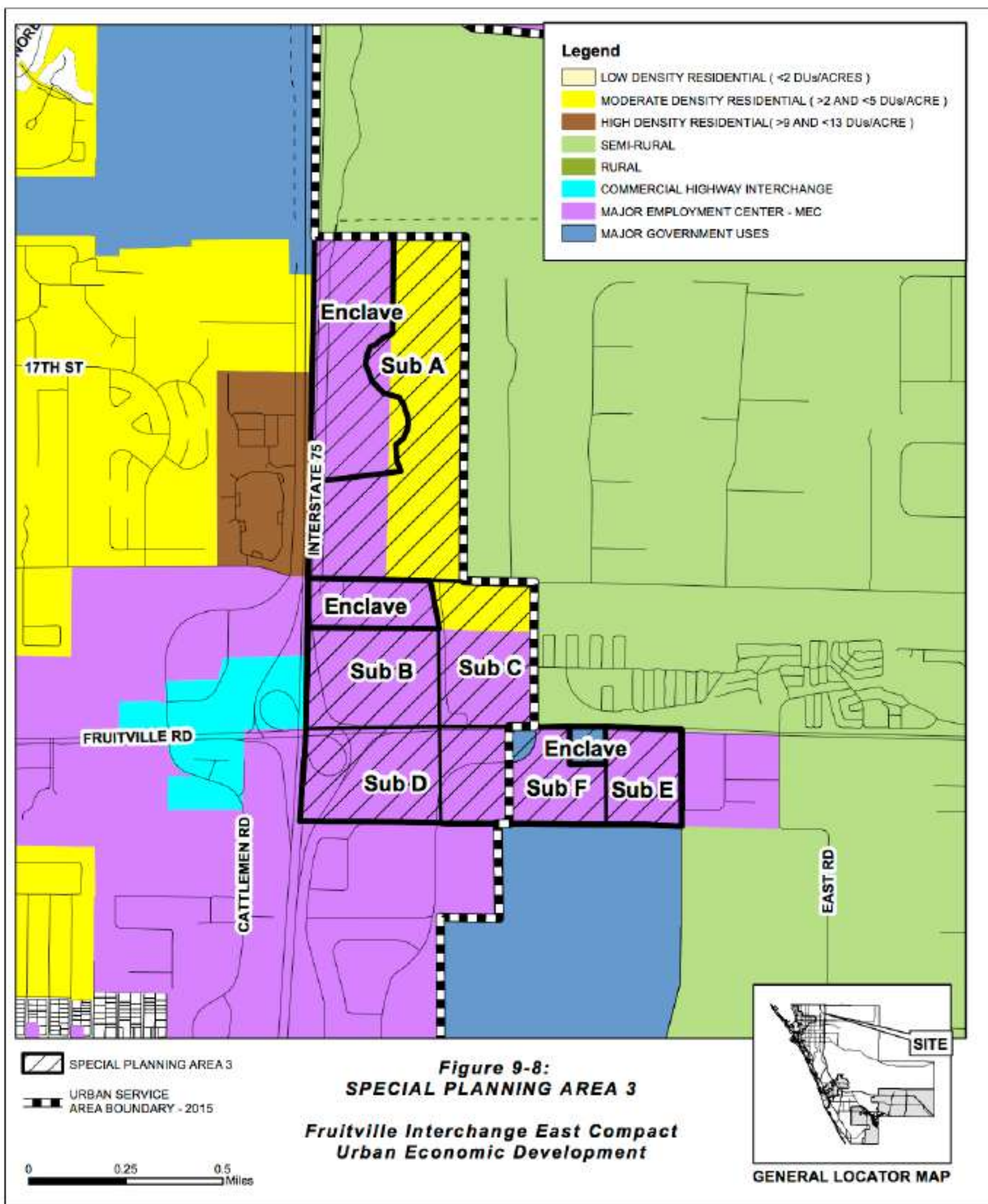
Steve Suau
Engineer
Planning Consultant
Sweet Sparkman Architects

“This is a very long-term project, so it won’t happen overnight,” Steve Suau, a civil engineer and planning consultant with Sweet Sparkman Architects, told the approximately 50 residents in attendance.

Future Lakewood Ranch Village



An aerial map shows the land as it is today. Image courtesy Sarasota County



The Fruitville Initiative's Special Planning Area 3 includes densities from moderate residential to high residential to Major Employment Center. There will be a new street grid. Image courtesy Sarasota County

The ratio of projected commercial space to residential units has morphed. Previous plans called for even more non-residential area, but the commercial and office portion was trimmed back — by more than 1 million square feet — while another 1,000 residential units were added, Suau told the residents.

Big-box stores will be prohibited, and on-street parking, slower speeds for vehicles and New Urbanism design standards are being incorporated in the project with the intention of creating a more walkable, village-like atmosphere. County leaders say they hope the development becomes a “gateway village” for people headed to Sarasota from that side of town. An early proposal was aired in 2010; in July, county officials revived the effort to get the Fruitville Initiative area rezoned.

“We haven’t really planned like this in 100 years,” Suau said. “Setting up a framework for development is usually reactive.”

Among the possible uses for the 300-plus acres are research and development facilities, condos, townhouses, hotels (including mixed-use projects), commercial space, a youth center, shops and offices. That list is based on discussions involving property owners in the development area and county staff members and consultants. “We sat down and talked to property owners and talked about what could happen on their site,” Suau noted.

All the property owners except one within Special Planning Area 3 in the Fruitville Initiative have opted into the county’s planning and rezoning effort.

RESIDENTS’ CONCERNS

Residents at the meeting did have questions about traffic on Fruitville Road and environmental buffers.

Some said they feel it is important to close East Richardson Road, so drivers will not head from the developed area directly into the neighborhoods to the east. They want to retain the rural atmosphere of that part of the county, where single-family homes sit on larger lots.

“We’re just trying to protect what we have here in Fox Creek One,” Dave Ulsh told *The Sarasota News Leader* after the workshop.

Suau said Sweet Sparkman is recommending that East Richardson be closed at the development’s border.

Ulsh is also concerned that the environmental buffer proposed along the eastern boundary of the special planning area is not wide enough. In the current plan, 35-foot-tall buildings would be 100 feet from the neighborhood, infringing on the semi-rural atmosphere the homeowners enjoy.

It also means wildlife would have only a small path to use as they roamed from the rural and semi-rural space south towards the county’s [Celery Fields](#).

“We’re concerned about wildlife and the vitality of our neighborhood,” Ulsh added.

But Ulsh understands that the Fruitville Initiative has been in the works for years. “It’s a done deal,” he said.

Tom and Toni Weliki are worried about traffic, and they want to see county staff plan carefully for the expected increase in the number of motorists.

Wade Matthews, conservation chairman with Sarasota Audubon, also offered comments




Planners presented a slide on March 27 showing what the multi-use boulevard would look like. The image at the bottom shows the area upon the initiative's completion. Image courtesy Sarasota County

about the planned environmental buffer, which he said would provide a route for wildlife along the edge of the development. That corridor, however, dead-ends at the new boulevard planned for Fruitville Road. Matthews said wildlife will need a way to cross the boulevard.

A wildlife underpass or overpass would be an expensive endeavor, planning officials responded.

Matthews then suggested widening a strip of cleared land that runs beside a canal under the road. "Broaden that with some greenway on the side."

Matthews said some wildlife would use such a crossing, typically late at night or early in the morning. "Otherwise, they will get squashed on the roadway," he pointed out. 



Audience members get a look at the potential of the Fruitville Initiative during the March 27 presentation. Photo by Roger Drouin

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A DEBATE YET TO BEGIN

Sarasota County Commission Chairman Charles Hines (left) and Mayor Shannon Snyder listen to public comments on April 1. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS ACCEPT A COMMITTEE REPORT ON EXTENDING THE DOWNTOWN SARASOTA COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY BUT PUT OFF DECISIONS UNTIL APRIL 22

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Nine months of work was distilled down to 90 minutes of presentation and discussion on Tuesday, April 1, during a joint meeting of the Sarasota City and County commissions. What was to have been an all-afternoon examination of the merits and demerits of the extension of a community redevelopment agency (CRA) for downtown Sarasota instead became a quickie show of “Here’s the report” and “Thank you. Goodbye.”

At stake is more than \$500 million over the next 30 years in a city-county scheme called tax increment financing. When the CRA was established in 1986, property tax revenue collected by the city and county in a defined downtown area was frozen. Anything that came in over the 1986 level (the “increment”) was to be spent only in the defined area. In the interim, property values have increased more than 300 percent, and the CRA

“When I look at the request to extend the CRA, I’m a lot less enthusiastic. What’s the biggest need for it?”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



“increment” is almost \$7 million, with more than half of that reflecting the county’s share.

As with all tax plans, the CRA represents a shift of assets. In medieval days, the shift went one way — from the peasant to the lord. With today’s income and sales taxes, property and business taxes and others commingled and jumbled by legislatures and the U.S. Congress, it is hard to discern who gets what and who is paying. But for the CRA in downtown Sarasota benefits when the city and county property tax increment cannot be spent anywhere elsewhere.

Instead of devoting the full afternoon to the subject, the county commissioners insisted on adding to the agenda a discussion of a transient shelter, which consumed four hours.

(See the related story in this issue.) By the time the boards were ready for the original agenda item, commissioners were looking at their watches and telling their chairmen they had evening engagements. They will return to the CRA extension debate on April 22.

QUESTIONS FLY

A majority of the city commissioners, it is safe to assume, think the CRA increment scheme is wonderful. This year, \$4 million that normally would have gone to Sarasota County was shifted instead to downtown Sarasota. Recently, the city has been tapping the CRA “cash cow” to help with the Sarasota Police Department budget, while “brick and mortar projects” use up about half the CRA budget, compared to 95 percent in the earliest days.



A number of local government leaders are in the audience as members of the public speak on the homelessness issue, the first item on the meeting agenda. At left on the front row are County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh and County Administrator Tom Harmer. Behind them is Sheriff Tom Knight. Photo by Norman Schimmel

In the three intervening weeks before the April 22 meeting, it is likely county commissioners will pore over the 155-page final report of the committee appointed to consider the future of the CRA, looking for reasons to question any extension of the plan. The 10-member *ad hoc* committee named last summer to develop recommendations added two provisions to sweeten the deal for the county.

It proposed “sharing” the CRA receipts. Just as the city dips into the CRA for \$1 million per year for its police budget, the county — so thought the committee — should be able to dip into the fund, too. How much and for how long could be decided later, the committee recommended. Therefore, instead of losing all the increment, the county could recoup some of it.

The other sweetener was a change in the governing structure. For the past 28 years, the Sarasota City Commission has sat as the CRA governing board, even though the city kicks in less than half the proceeds. The *ad hoc* committee suggested replacing the all-city board with a seven-member panel. Two would be

city commissioners, two would be county commissioners and the other three would be appointed by the City Commission.

“If this goes through, and the county contributes more than the city, why are the three citizens appointed by the city and not the county?” asked County Commissioner Nora Patterson.

“We had a great debate on that,” said Committee Chairman Andy Dorr. “That was our recommendation. You can take that under advisement.”

County Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson read extensively from the state statute creating the idea of a CRA. “The language is very explicit on slum and blight,” she pointed out, referring to the intent for establishing CRAs. Patterson followed up on that, asking Dorr, “Would you consider downtown slum and blighted? Would downtown qualify now for the establishment of a new CRA?”

Dorr replied some parts of the defined area — the Rosemary District and the eastern end of downtown — are “significantly depressed.”



(From left) County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo, County Commissioner Nora Patterson, Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, County Commission Chairman Charles Hines and Mayor Shannon Snyder sit at the dais. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Robinson zeroed in on the increment. “Some of these numbers here are large,” she said. “Three hundred fifty million dollars out to 2048.” Assistant County Administrator Mark Cunningham noted, “And that’s just the county’s contribution.”

In other words, should the CRA be extended another 30 years, the county will see more than one-third of a billion dollars in county tax revenue stay in downtown Sarasota.


“That’s a lot of money,” said Patterson. “When I look at the request to extend the CRA, I’m a lot less enthusiastic. What’s the biggest need for it? There is investment in the [proposed] cultural district, which will take huge dollars that otherwise the city and county could not raise. But by no stretch of the imagination can you call the Van Wezel [Performing Arts Hall] parking lot slum and blight.”

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta told his colleagues he did not need any convincing. “We have to decide if we want to extend it,

and I certainly do. And then we decide on the allowable uses, and there are plenty of them. With the right kind of vision, we can get a lot accomplished. Great cities make great counties.”

Patterson was not convinced. “In the end, the CRA is a shell game because it transfers money to an area that could be used for projects all over the county,” she said. “This will be echoed by the Englewood CRA seeking an extension, and Venice and North Port, that asked years ago [for CRAs]. If you cut these holes in the fabric of the county, it seems like at some point you have to raise taxes to make up the difference.”

City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell then noted that Venice City Vice Mayor Emilio Carlesimo was in the audience, paying close attention.

Both commissions voted unanimously to “accept the report.” The committee was thanked for its efforts and then disbanded. 



The plan for a cultural district between the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and U.S. 41 has been revived, a possible recipient of future Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency funding. Photo by Norman Schimmel



FUNDING GOES ONLY SO FAR

The County Commission has agreed to about \$250,000 in unanticipated repairs of undermining beneath the end walls and culverts of a crossing on Singletary Road in eastern Sarasota County as well as a partially collapsed 24-inch pipe on Verna Road. The infrastructure problems were discovered during a road resurfacing project that began in late January. Photo by Rachel Hackney

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AGREE TO AN EXTRA \$4.1 MILLION FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS FOR THE NEXT FIVE FISCAL YEARS BUT VOICE FRUSTRATIONS OVER UNFUNDED NEEDS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

If sales tax revenue continues to come in at the pace Sarasota County has experienced since the recession, the County Commission will have only about \$5.8 million left over the next five years to put toward capital projects not already funded.

That was the blunt news Public Works Director Isaac Brownman and Shannon Lafon, manager of capital projects in the county's Office of Financial

Management, delivered to the board during its March 25 workshop.

However, as Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed out, that \$5.8 million should be more than sufficient to cover payments if the commission pursues bond

money for three major facilities projects — more space for the Tax Collector's Office so it can take over all driver's license renewals starting in June 2015, as mandated

I don't think it's gotten to the point where you're having to fix or repair just completely substandard roads.

James K. Harriott Jr.
Chief Engineer
Sarasota County

by the state; expanded room sought by the Supervisor of Elections Office for storing voting equipment; and renovations to the R.L. Anderson Administration Center in Venice to create a new South County courthouse, plus the expense of relocating other county offices from that building to free up space.

Brownman noted that more details about expenses for those facilities would be provided in a May 16 workshop.


“We need to get those things priced out relatively quickly,” Barbetta said, so the board could decide whether to pursue a bond or loan to cover the costs.

Chairman Charles Hines concurred, especially in regard to the Anderson Center. “What does it cost to build a courthouse these days?”

The local option sales tax revenue mechanism — Surtax 3 — approved by county voters in 2007 is available into 2025, staff pointed out. The tax levy went into effect in September 2009 and will end on Dec. 31, 2024, according to county documents.

“We do see more growth as we move outside of the five-year plan,” Lafon told the board, referring to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for fiscal years 2015 through 2019.

In a series of votes on March 25, the board unanimously approved about \$4.1 million in expenditures for what Brownman described as extra “critical needs” — from new athletic field lighting to replacement buses and new shelters for Sarasota County Area Transit to up-to-date laptop computers for the Sarasota



“What does it cost to build a courthouse these days?”

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission

”

Chief County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. (at right on the left side of the room) discusses road resurfacing issues during the County Commission's March 25 workshop. Photo by Norman Schimmel

County Sheriff's Office. Five new replacement buses of the clean diesel variety made up \$2,250,000 of the total, with Sheriff Tom Knight's request totaling \$450,000.

The latter item was on the original list for the surtax funding, Brownman told the commissioners.

Lafon explained that staff soon will bring to the board a budget resolution for a formal vote on the funding.

The commissioners also voted unanimously to add several projects to a list deemed essential for the CIP, though no funding has been dedicated to them. They include a North Port Connector as well as a new [North Port library](#) that would be part of a proposed Sarasota County Technical Institute (SCTI) campus.

Additionally, the board approved about \$250,000 in an unexpected funding request for emergency repairs to a pipe and culverts



Roadway Resurfacing

Roadway Resurfacing FY15 - FY19 Programmed

\$25.1 Million Surtax + \$12.5 Million Gas Tax = \$37.6 Million

Priority	Project Name	Estimated Cost
1	Knight's Trail Rd and Laurel Rd	\$ 2,500,000
2	Cattlemen Rd Area	\$ 2,000,000
3	Uplands Sub and Ridgewood Estates	\$ 1,500,000
4	Englewood Area	\$ 2,500,000
5	Venice City Area	\$ 750,000
6	Jacaranda Blvd	\$ 1,750,000
7	Center Rd Area	\$ 2,500,000
8	Laurel Rd	\$ 3,300,000
9	Beneva Rd	\$ 2,100,000
10	Sarasota Golf Club and Colonial Oaks	\$ 3,000,000
11	Casey Key Area	\$ 2,400,000
12	PCSSR Area N Ph. 1	\$ 1,250,000
13	PCSSR Area N Ph. 2	\$ 1,600,000
14	PCSSR Area N Ph. 3	\$ 1,000,000
15	PCSSR Area O	\$ 2,200,000
16	PCSSR Area P	\$ 1,250,000
17	City of Venice & Lake Sarasota	\$ 6,000,000

**Surtax
Critical**

\$25,100,000

**Gas Tax
Critical**

\$12,500,000

A chart shows the list of county road resurfacing priorities for the fiscal years 2015 through 2019. Image courtesy Sarasota County

discovered to be deteriorating early this year during the resurfacing of Verna and Singletary roads, east of Fruitville Road.

The bid the commissioners awarded for that project on Dec. 10, 2013 was \$1,896,381.87.

THE ROADS

Last year, the County Commission split 3-2 to allocate an extra \$10 million to road repaving plus about \$4.1 million more to bridge repairs. Barbetta and Hines were in the minority, with then-Chairwoman Carolyn Mason joining

Commissioners Christine Robinson and Nora Patterson in the majority.

County Chief Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. explained then that that amount would be necessary to keep no more than 40 percent of the county's roads from falling below a rating of 60. If a road is rated under 60, he noted, that is when drivers start to complain about surface conditions.

On March 25, Brownman pointed out that the 2015-2019 CIP has \$25.1 million in surtax revenue and \$12.5 million in gas tax revenue allocated for road projects.



Athletic Field Improvements

Athletic Field Improvements FY15 - FY19 Programmed = \$3.1 Million

Priority	Project Name	Project Description	Estimated Cost
1	Miss Sarasota Softball(MSS)	Lighting System Replacement (3)	\$450,000
2	Miss Sarasota Softball(MSS)	Relighting 3 fields Poles excluded	\$300,000
3	Ringling Redskins Football	Lighting System Replacement (2)	\$400,000
4	Misc Emergency Repairs-Annual	250K/YR Contingency Repairs/Replacement	\$250,000
5	Youth Athletic Complex-Twin Lakes Baseball	Lighting System Replacement (4) & 2 new fields	\$1,000,000
6	*Youth Athletic Complex-Cal Ripken	Lighting System Replacement (6)	\$706,800

Critical

\$3,106,800

Athletic Field Improvements FY15 - FY19 Additional Funding Needed = \$12.4 Million

Priority	Project Name	Project Description	Estimated Cost
7	*Youth Athletic Complex-Cal Ripken	Lighting System Replacement (6)	\$293,200
8	Babe Ruth Baseball Complex	Field Lighting System-New-#4 & Replace #3	\$325,000

Critical

\$618,200

* Partial Funding

Recommend Funding

A chart shows the top priorities for county athletic field improvements over the next five fiscal years beginning in 2015. Image courtesy Sarasota County

However, Robinson voiced frustration about several resurfacing projects linked to the continuing replacement of septic tanks with a sewer system in the Phillippi Creek basin. “It’s not knocking the Phillippi Creek project, but every time we add [a Phillippi Creek resurfacing plan], we knock a roadway off the list, correct?” she asked Harriott.

“We work those streets into the road resurfacing program,” Harriott told her regarding roads affected by sewer line installations. “I wouldn’t say it’s sliding things down.”

Of the 17 projects on the priority list for 2015-2019, Items 12 through 16 are for resurfacing in the Phillippi Creek basin area.

However, the top priority is the repaving of Knight Trail Road and Laurel Road near Venice at an estimated cost of \$2.5 million.

Still, Robinson pointed out, when the board voted on the \$10 million last year, “We thought we were bringing more streets up [in priority] than we were ... We’re already behind in roadways, and this is knocking us back even further, correct?”



Bus Shelters

Shelter Improvement FY15 - FY19 Programmed \$300,000 Surtax + \$500,000 Grants = \$800,000

Priority	Project Name	Estimated Cost
1	6 shelters	\$ 240,000
2	6 shelters	\$ 240,000
3	6 shelters	\$ 240,000
4	2 shelters	\$ 80,000

**Surtax
Critical**

\$300,000

Grant

Critical

\$500,000

Shelter Improvement FY15-FY19 Additional Funding Needed = \$400,000

Priority	Project Name	Estimated Cost
5	4 shelters	\$ 160,000
6	6 shelters	\$ 240,000

Critical

\$400,000

Recommend Funding

The County Commission has agreed to an extra \$400,000 in funding for bus shelters over the next five fiscal years. However, the board reminded staff of its prior agreement to try to stretch the money further by exploring new options for building the facilities. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“Correct,” Harriott replied. “You’re falling behind.”

When Robinson asked whether delaying other projects because of the work in the Phillippi Creek basin would result in the county spending even more money on them, Harriott responded, “I don’t think it’s gotten to the point where you’re having to fix or repair just completely substandard roads.”

However, he acknowledged that some of the projects would be done “maybe a little bit after an ideal resurfacing date.”

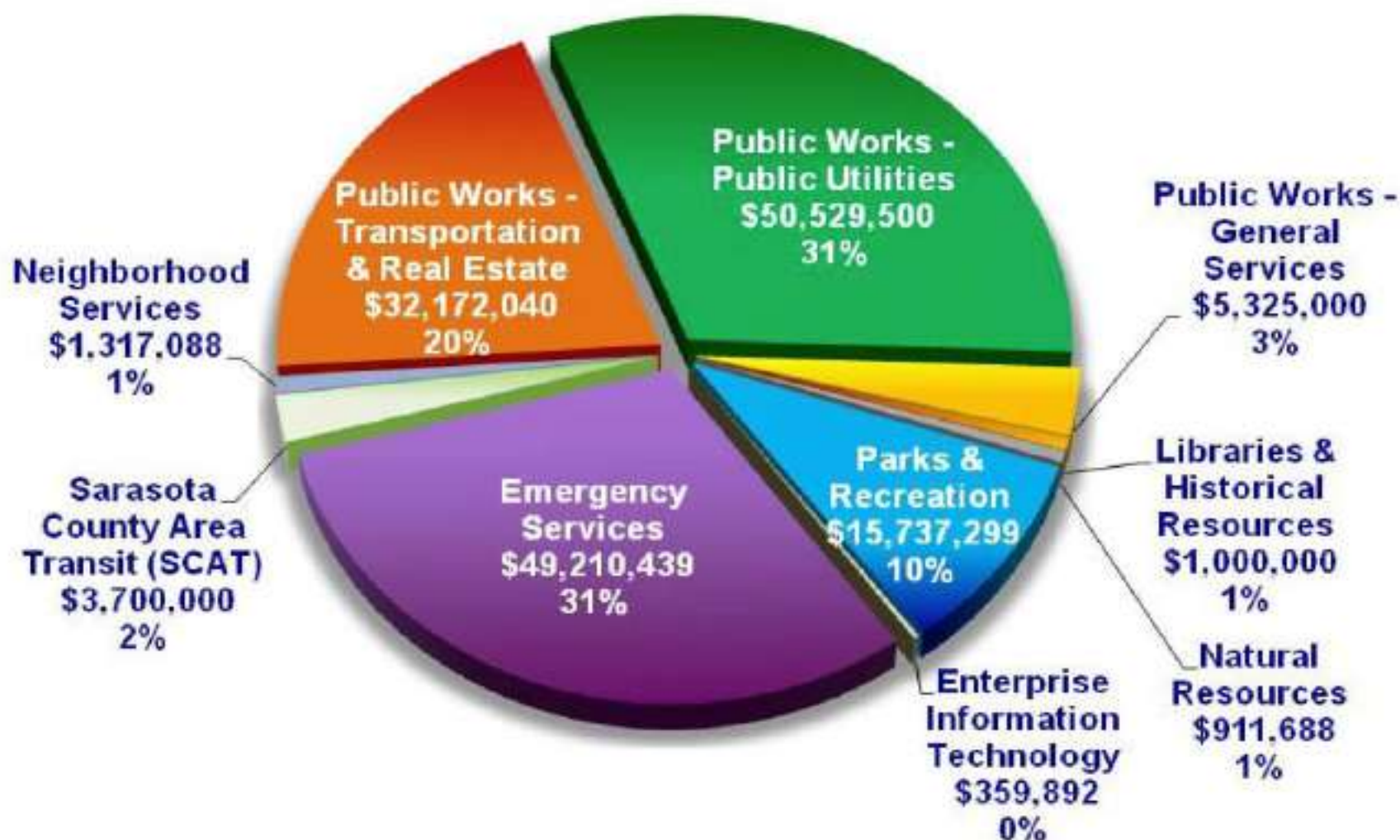
He also said that one big concern is how deteriorated some of the county’s major “collector” or arterial roads might become. For example, he said, when Webber Street between U.S. 41 and McIntosh Road was resurfaced late last year, its rating was “about as low as you would ever want” on an arterial or collector.

In spite of the \$10 million infusion last year, Harriott said, the county is expected to spend just \$5.5 million to \$6 million each year over the next five years. “Next year is a fairly lean year,” he added, in terms of revenue anticipated to be available.



FY14 Adopted CIP Project Funding by Department

CIP \$160,262,946



A pie chart shows the allocation of capital project funding by county department for the current fiscal year. Image courtesy Sarasota County

When Robinson asked whether that meant the county might have only \$2 million for road resurfacing by the fourth or fifth year of the CIP, Harriott told her, “[The amount] changes year to year.”

ATHLETIC FIELDS

During a review of proposed athletic field improvements, Brownman explained that staff had identified projects totaling about \$618,200 as additional critical needs beyond those already estimated to cost \$3,106,800 over the next five fiscal years.

However, Chairman Hines questioned the \$293,200 expense for the replacement of lighting systems at the [Cal Ripken Complex](#). Because the Parks and Recreation Department is working on a new master plan, Hines said, “I just don’t want to put good money toward a bad park ... if this isn’t a long-term vision.”

“These are critical projects that really need to move forward,” Parks and Recreation Department Director Carolyn Brown replied.

Then Ed Exner, a manager in that department, explained that the lights at the Ripken Complex “are in desperate need of replacement. They are structurally unsound,” he added, and the lighting they provide is insufficient for players. After replacing the systems, he pointed out, the county also would be able to pursue more tournaments, which would have a positive impact on economic development.

“I don’t mind going out on a limb for that,” Patterson said of the extra money staff requested, but she bemoaned the lack of sur-tax revenue to pay for other needs.

Staff also had identified “High Importance” athletic field projects estimated at \$6,165,000 and “Important” ones totaling \$5,626,000 that were unfunded over the next five years. Among the former are turf and replacement work and the installation of new batting cages. The latter list has more batting cages as well as new lighting and irrigation systems.

Barbetta seconded Patterson’s motion to cover the additional \$618,200. “This is critical not only for our users of the fields, for our youth and adults,” he noted, but also for attracting sports tourism.

NEW PRIORITIES

Among the new projects whose inclusion the board approved for the next five-year CIP was the North Port Connector, a bridge between the county’s Carlton Ranch and the City of North Port’s Myakkahatchee Environmental Park at a cost of \$200,000. It could be funded by the county’s Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program if the project were deemed “essential,” according to a staff PowerPoint presentation.

While she emphasized, “This is not a knock on staff,” Robinson said, “This almost seems silly that access for 58,000 people [would have to be deemed ‘essential’].”

Patterson pointed out that when the county sought the public’s approval of a dedicated revenue stream for the county’s [Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program](#) — first in a 1999 referendum and again in 2005 — “We said we would provide additional access to those lands. So to me, that’s an essential promise.” 

TROLLEY TIME!

“ *Our intention is to dress those [trolleys] in a very colorful way that fits into the island atmosphere.*

Glama Carter
Manager
Sarasota County Area Transit

”

Sarasota County Area Transit Director Glama Carter tells Siesta Key Village Association members about plans for the Siesta trolley service. Photo by Rachel Hackney

NEW SARASOTA COUNTY BUS SERVICE TO SIESTA KEY, 'DRESSED' AS A TROLLEY, WILL BEGIN JULY 12 AND RUN APPROXIMATELY EVERY 20 MINUTES

By Rachel Brown Hackney

Editor

The long awaited Siesta trolley route will begin on July 12, Glama Carter, manager of Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT), told about 30 people during the April 1 meeting of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA).

The new Route 10 will supplement the current Route 11 that serves Siesta Key, with buses running from Southgate Mall and circulating through Siesta Village before stopping at a transfer station behind the Michaels store in Sarasota Pavilion, Carter and SCAT Planner Susan Montgomery explained.

Michaels is located at 6549 S. Tamiami Trail. (See the accompanying map.)

Stops will be approximately every 20 minutes, Montgomery pointed out, though delays

are possible during season — just as they are with regular SCAT routes. “None of our buses run to schedule during season,” she cautioned. “It’s a real challenge to keep those buses on schedule.”

(This year, Montgomery said, SCAT has used “little helper buses during the day” when Route 11 has fallen behind schedule, to assist people in reaching Siesta Key.)

Additionally, Carter told the group, “Our intention is to dress those [trolleys] in a very colorful way that fits into the island atmosphere” while making it clear they are part of a Sarasota County operation.

The goal, she noted, is for tourists to clearly associate the buses with service to Siesta Key.



(Clockwise from left) Helene Hyland, Kay Kouvatsos, Russell Matthes, Cheryl Gaddie, Roz Hyman and Chastanna Nieman listen to remarks during the April 1 Siesta Key Village Association meeting. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Asked whether she had photos of the possible designs, Carter said she did not. However, she explained that one of them has more of a trolley look, while the other “is more island-style.” They will not be ready until the end of April, she added.

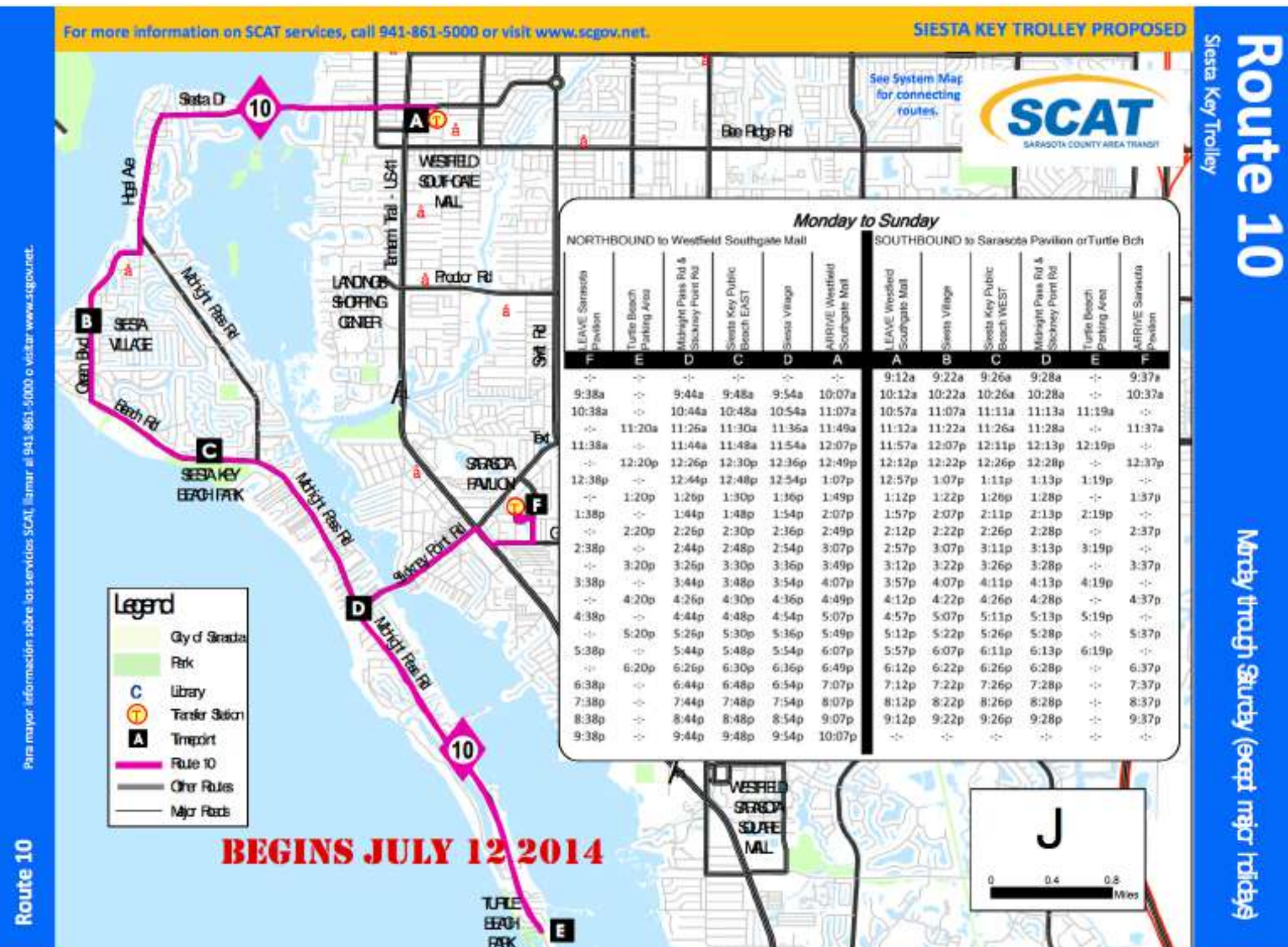
In response to a question from SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos, Carter said SCAT plans a “big marketing campaign” about all its bus routes, beginning in about two months.

SCAT also is working on a new rider guide that will be much more user-friendly, she

noted, and it is developing a smartphone app with [QR codes](#) that people will be able to use to check schedules. The app should be ready in about two months as well, she said, adding that that initiative has been a bit of a secret.

In response to a question from SKVA Secretary Helene Hyland, Carter said the cost for the Siesta trolley will be the same as the fee for any bus ride: \$1.25.

When Hyland then asked if passes would be available, Sarasota County Commissioner Nora Patterson — a guest at the meeting



A Sarasota County Area Transit map shows the new Route 10, the Siesta trolley route. Image courtesy Sarasota County



County staff will consider making the gazebo in Siesta Village one of the stops for Route 10, instead of having the trolley stop at Davidson Plaza on Ocean Boulevard. Photo by Norman Schimmel

— pointed out, “Everybody can buy a seasonal pass to SCAT.”

No special pass will be provided for the trolley, Carter said. However, daily and monthly SCAT passes are offered and discounts are available to people ages 65 and up.

Hyland noted that several years ago, SKVA discussion focused on some type of weekly or monthly trolley pass that would enable families to let their children use the service to visit the beach as many times as the children wanted during a single week, for example. That talk included the concept of people purchasing passes at the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce office in Davidson Plaza, Hyland added.

A daily SCAT pass is \$4, Carter told Hyland. It allows a rider to take as many routes as he or she desires during a single day, she added, and passes may be purchased from the fare-box on any bus.

Incoming SKVA Vice President Mark Smith suggested that the gazebo at the four-way intersection on Ocean Boulevard serve as the Siesta Village bus stop instead of Davidson Plaza. “It’s more in the center of the Village.”

Montgomery said she would bring out her operations team and county traffic operations staff to look into that proposal, noting it would affect the route schedule. “But that’s a great suggestion, and we will certainly look at that.”

Monday through Sunday (except major holidays)

SOUTHBOUND to TURTLE BEACH or SARASOTA PAVILION										NORTHBOUND to SOUTHGATE MALL or DOWNTOWN SARASOTA									
Downtown Sarasota Transfer Station	Bahia Vista St. & US 41	Bahia Vista St. & Turtle Ave	ARRIVE Westfield Southgate Mall	LEAVE Westfield Southgate Mall	Siesta Village	Siesta Key Public Beach WEST	Midnight Pass Rd & Skyway Point Rd	Turtle Beach Parking Area	ARRIVE Sarasota Pavilion	LEAVE Sarasota Pavilion	Turtle Beach Parking Area	Midnight Pass Rd & Skyway Point Rd	Siesta Key Public Beach EAST	Siesta Village	ARRIVE Westfield Southgate Mall	LEAVE Westfield Southgate Mall	Bahia Vista St. & Turtle Ave	Bahia Vista St. & US 41	Downtown Sarasota Transfer Station
A	B	C	D	D	E	F	F	G	G	G	F	F	C	C	D	D	C	B	A
7:15a	7:19a	7:23a	7:31a	7:32a	7:44a	7:47a	7:50a	7:55a	8:10a	8:10a	8:15a	8:20a	8:24a	8:28a	8:37a	8:40a	8:45a	8:50a	9:02a
8:15a	8:23a	8:28a	8:31a	8:32a	8:44a	8:47a	8:50a	8:55a	9:10a	9:10a	9:15a	9:20a	9:24a	9:28a	9:37a	9:40a	9:45a	9:50a	10:02a
9:15a	9:23a	9:28a	9:34a	9:37a	9:47a	9:50a	9:52a	10:00a	10:10a	10:10a	10:15a	10:20a	10:24a	10:28a	10:37a	10:40a	10:45a	10:50a	11:02a
10:15a	10:23a	10:28a	10:34a	10:37a	10:47a	10:50a	10:52a	11:00a	11:10a	11:10a	11:15a	11:20a	11:24a	11:28a	11:37a	11:40a	11:45a	11:50a	12:02p
11:15a	11:23a	11:28a	11:34a	11:37a	11:47a	11:50a	11:52a	12:00p	12:10p	12:10p	12:15p	12:20p	12:24p	12:28p	12:37p	12:40p	12:45p	12:50p	1:02p
12:15p	12:23p	12:28p	12:34p	12:37p	12:47p	12:50p	12:52p	1:00p	1:10p	1:10p	1:15p	1:20p	1:24p	1:28p	1:37p	1:40p	1:45p	1:50p	2:02p
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2:15p	2:23p	2:28p	2:34p	2:37p	2:47p	2:50p	2:52p	3:00p	3:10p	3:10p	3:15p	3:20p	3:24p	3:28p	3:37p	3:40p	3:45p	3:50p	4:02p
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4:15p	4:23p	4:28p	4:34p	4:37p	4:47p	4:50p	4:52p	5:00p	5:10p	5:10p	5:15p	5:20p	5:24p	5:28p	5:37p	5:40p	5:45p	5:50p	6:02p
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8:15p	8:23p	8:28p	8:34p	8:37p	8:47p	8:50p	8:52p	9:00p	9:10p	9:10p	9:15p	9:20p	9:24p	9:28p	9:37p	9:40p	9:45p	9:50p	10:02p
9:15p	9:23p	9:28p	9:34p	9:37p	9:47p	9:50p	9:52p	10:00p	10:10p	10:10p	10:15p	10:20p	10:24p	10:28p	10:37p	10:40p	10:45p	10:50p	11:02p

A schedule shows the times of stops for Siesta trolley service. Siesta Village stops are in yellow. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“And save one of your \$40,000 shelters,” Patterson said, referring both to the substitution of the gazebo as a stop and the estimated cost of a SCAT shelter that Carter noted in a presentation to the County Commission in early 2013.

“They are \$32,000,” Carter said of the shelter expense, laughing softly.

When Montgomery asked where he would propose the stop be on the other side of Ocean Boulevard, Smith replied that it should be across the road from the gazebo.

In response to another question, Carter said the trolleys will have bike racks. However, the maximum number of bicycles some SCAT racks hold is three, per Florida Department of Transportation safety regulations. Most of the SCAT racks hold two bikes, she said.

MORE SIESTA SERVICE

During her remarks Tuesday, Carter also pointed out that SCAT implemented Route 33 from Pinecraft to Siesta this season as a pilot program. Pinecraft is the Amish and Mennonite community in the vicinity of Bahia Vista Street and Beneva Road in Sarasota that swells with winter tourists, just as other parts of the community do.

When SCAT staff decided to start the pilot program, Carter continued, the goal was to see whether it would alleviate some of the demand for Route 11, “and, bingo, it did. It worked tremendously. ... [The buses were] so full that we couldn’t keep up.”

That new service also enabled Route 11 to operate closer to its posted schedule, she said.

“That was just a great idea,” Sarasota County Sheriff’s Deputy Chris McGregor told Carter, referring to Route 33. Those buses were

“always full,” he concurred with her, and he heard “nothing but great things about that route.”

The service began on Feb. 1 and will end on May 2, Montgomery noted.

When SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie asked whether Route 33 would be revived in late December, Carter explained that she and her staff are “in the process of updating what we call the ‘Transit Bible,’” their long-range planning document. That will be presented to the County Commission in June or July, she added. It will be up to the commissioners to approve the new route plans, she said, but she is hopeful not only that Route 33 will continue, given the ridership numbers, but also that it will start again in late December.

“You don’t predict sufficient ridership to make the Pinecraft [route] a year-round thing?” Patterson asked.

“No,” Carter replied.

When Patterson then asked whether Route 11 or Route 10 would provide service on South Midnight Pass Road, Montgomery said neither would. However, she said, Route 33 does pick up people in that area who want to head into town.

“But it will do no good to somebody that lives in Hidden Harbor [for example] and wants to go to [Siesta Public Beach] and not take their car,” Patterson said.

“That is absolutely correct,” Montgomery responded.

“Ultimately, it adds more time to the route,” Carter added.

“I get it,” Patterson said. “We only have so many dollars.” 

A PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS



An aerial view shows the new two-story Gulf Gate Library under construction in March. Image courtesy Sarasota County

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SAY THEY HOPE A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT WILL ALLOW MORE IMPROVEMENTS ON MYRTLE STREET THAN PLANNED, AND THEY HEAR THE LATEST ON OTHER COUNTY PROJECTS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Although Myrtle Street between U.S. 41 and U.S. 301 is not wide enough for bike lanes, if the bid for the second phase of improvements on that road comes in lower than anticipated, the possibility exists that a bike lane could be added, the Sarasota County Commission has learned.

Phase 2 of the project is set to begin in October 2015.

During an update on major capital projects in the county, presented during the board's March 25 workshop, Commissioners Carolyn Mason and Nora Patterson sought to

clarify what will be included in Phase 2 on Myrtle Street.

On April 10, 2013, the County Commission awarded a \$499,496 contract to Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc. for the design of the Myrtle Street project. That plan calls for the widening of the existing two-lane road in north Sarasota with bike lanes, closed drainage, sidewalks and street lighting along about 1.25 miles.

Isaac Brownman, director of public works for the county, pointed out during the March 25 workshop that the construction contract for

Phase 1 of the work should be ready for the board's award later this month, with the work to be completed by the end of the year.

According to a slide recapping that part of the project, an eastbound right-turn lane will be added, the existing eastbound left-turn lane will be extended and sidewalks will be installed from U.S. 301 to the first bridge west of U.S. 301.

Phase 2, Brownman pointed out, will include the design of the full cross-section of the street with all the planned new features, but the construction work the county has budgeted will encompass sidewalks on just one side of the road, along with stormwater and lighting improvements.

The design work should be completed this summer, Brownman continued, with right of way acquisition beginning in October and construction starting in October 2015.

Then Mason asked about the bike lanes. That was a feature still under evaluation, Brownman told her.

Thai Tran, a program manager in the Public Works Department, reminded the commissioners that the Sarasota City Commission, in collaboration with the County Commission, approved the sidewalk on one side of the street and lighting for Phase 2. That decision was made in a joint session of the boards held April 17, 2012.



A map shows the area where improvements will be made to Myrtle Street in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County

When Patterson asked for clarification that the road is not wide enough for bike lanes, Tran said the existing pavement is not. The design work will include wider shoulders for the lanes, he added, but their actual construction is part of Phase 3, which remains unfunded.

When Patterson asked how much it would cost to add enough pavement for the bike lanes, Tran told her, "It's not as easy as adding pavement." The whole road has to be redesigned, he explained, to provide sufficient drainage and bring it out of the flood plain before the lanes can be incorporated into it.

"So Phase 3 is going to be a really expensive project," Patterson noted; Mason concurred with that. If the Phase 2 bids come in lower than anticipated, Tran replied, it might be possible to

include some of the Phase 3 work in that part of the project.

Brownman reminded the board that a construction manager at risk contract had been awarded for the construction of Phase 2. (A construction manager at risk handles the hiring of subcontractors to ensure a project is completed at the guaranteed maximum price set by the commission.) Brownman said staff can ask the construction manager to find out the cost of incorporating the bike lanes in Phase 2, "so we can have that number ... as a point of discussion when we're ready to bring the guaranteed maximum price to the board."

In the meantime, on a motion by Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, the commission agreed unanimously to ask County Administrator Tom Harmer to send a memo



A March aerial view of Nathan Benderson Park shows the new Mall at University Town Center (bottom of the photo) and the wave attenuator system (top center, extending out from the island). Image courtesy Sarasota County

to City Manager Tom Barwin providing an update on the entire project. A city commissioner had asked her for a status report, Robinson noted.

OTHER PROJECTS

Patterson also expressed some concern about the timeline for completing the new Gulf Gate Library, which is under construction on Curtiss Avenue in Sarasota. The board approved a guaranteed maximum price of \$7,694,022 for that project in May 2013, and work began in June 2013.

After offering a summary of the features planned for the facility, Brownman told the

board that substantial completion is set for mid- to late October, while the project should be finished in November.

Patterson, who long was a champion of the project, will step down from the board after the November election. "I was promised before I leave office" that the library would be complete, she told Brownman.

He promised her staff would push for an earlier conclusion of the work.

Yet another project that drew some questions involves the upgrades to the BMX track at the county's 17th Street Youth Athletic Complex, with a total projected cost of \$1.8 million.



U.S. 41 and River Road intersection include:

Reconstruction of River Road at the intersection to six lanes and the widening of U.S. 41 to provide receiving lanes from River Road.

Interlocal agreement between Sarasota County, City of Northport, and West Village Improvement District (WVID).

- Construction contract is \$8,698,244.
- The construction has reached final completion.



The photo on the left shows the completed new intersection at River Road and U.S. 41. At right is the resurfaced South River Road. Images courtesy Sarasota County

Chairman Charles Hines asked about the level of involvement that would be expected from the nonprofit group that has been managing the track, Sarasota BMX.

Carolyn Brown, director of the county's Parks and Recreation Department, replied that she would be back before the board in October with a comprehensive review of [Sarasota BMX](#)'s business plan as part of the organization's lease renewal process for the facility.

"This is now going to be something that's going to attract people from all across the country,"

Hines pointed out of the track, where the county will be installing new 5- and 8-meter ramps, a starting gate system and upgraded lighting and drainage. The track itself will be reconfigured as well.

Hines questioned whether the nonprofit group would be required to help cover some of the expense or share more of the maintenance costs, "other than us just building this and then turning it over to them without some conditions." "They're a very good group to work with," Brown assured him.



An aerial view shows the BMX track on 17th Street in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County



An illustration shows the new ramps planned for the BMX track in Sarasota. Image courtesy Sarasota County

“I know they are,” Hines said.

A combination of projects that won commissioner accolades during the presentation involved the reconstruction of River Road at the intersection of U.S. 41 — including the widening of River Road to six lanes — and the resurfacing of South River Road.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you,” Robinson told Brownman.

Patterson pointed out how badly the resurfacing project had been needed.

During an update on the work at Nathan Benderson Park, commissioners gasped when Brownman showed the board a recent aerial view that included the new Mall at University Town Center, which is set to open in October.

“That puts it in perspective,” Hines said of the mall.

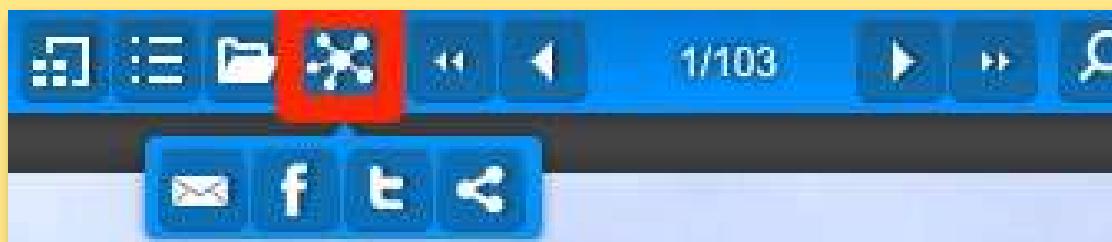
By late this month, all the trails in the park will be open to the public, Project Manager Brad Gaubatz confirmed for the board. A second pedestrian bridge will be completed as well, Brownman noted.

All the utilities for the park should be in place by the end of June, Brownman added.

Referring to the aerial, Commissioner Joe Barbetta pointed to the [wave attenuator](#), which is wide enough for a vehicle to cross. “It’s incredible the way it breaks the waves,” he added, making racing conditions “much fairer.” Barbetta noted, “It separates us from a lot of venues around the world.”

“We’re one of the leading ones in that technology,” Hines added. 

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TRANSPORTATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS



The wooden bridge from the former G.WIZ property to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall will undergo significant repairs. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE CITY COMMISSION WILL HAVE DIVERSE ISSUES TO TACKLE ON APRIL 7

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota City Commission's agenda for April 7 has some goodies for strollers, cyclists and motorists. It includes a rehab of the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall bayfront promenade, a new bridge to Coon Key and a pair of roundabouts. A second feature of the Monday meeting deals with fighting abuse and assault.

On the consent agenda soon after the meeting begins at 2:30 p.m. will be approval of a new concrete boardwalk along the bayfront north of the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. It will be a precast concrete deck with a timber handrail. The contract also calls for major work on the pedestrian bridge across Hog Creek connecting the Van Wezel with the former G.WIZ property. The recommended winning bid from Bayshore Construction is \$236,622.

A similar bridge is on the evening agenda, when the city engineer will call for consideration of

a new bicycle and pedestrian structure along the John Ringling Causeway to Coon Key, where the Sarasota Yacht Club is located. Alex DavisShaw says what every bicyclist in town knows: The existing Coon Key bridge is a nail-biter, the scariest piece of asphalt between downtown Sarasota and Longboat Key.

DavisShaw is putting together proposals for the future budgets of the [Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (MPO) and is asking city approval to propose either expanding the existing Coon Key bridge or installing a new, lighter-weight bridge for non-motorized traffic.

She is also proposing another roundabout for Charles Ringling Boulevard. This one would replace the signal at Pine Place, the side street at the downtown post office and Sarasota County Administration Center. She wants to

put the proposed roundabout at U.S. 41 and Ringling Boulevard on the MPO's list as well.

The Ringling roundabout — if approved by the MPO and the Florida Department of Transportation — would join six already in the funding plan. They will be at 10th Street, 14th Street, Fruitville Road, Gulfstream Avenue (the Ringling causeway), Main Street and Orange Avenue.


PROMOTING HUMANE BEHAVIOR

On March 30, the 11th annual *Embracing Our Differences* public art exhibit opened in Sarasota's Island Park and along Bradenton's Riverwalk. (See the related story in this issue.) It is a juried show of billboard-sized pieces created by local, national and international artists of all ages to promote tolerance.

As the City Commission's evening session begins, that exhibit's theme will be reflected by three reminders of the importance of tempering human behavior with compassion. The commission will present two proclamations. The first recognizes April as Child Abuse Prevention Month; the second notes that April is Sexual Assault Awareness month. Sarasota is home to shelters for abused women and children.

But abuse in the community is not limited to women and children. After the proclamations are read and bestowed, the commissioners will hear a presentation by one woman working to revive the lives and hopes of former modern slaves — the victims of human trafficking. Every year, thousands of immigrants are forced into sexual bondage and impressed labor in Florida.

Brooke Bello is an author, activist and founder of More Too Life, which offers rehabilitation to the victims of trafficking. "Some are sex-slaved minors, some adults, some forced into prostitution, some women in prostitution that were trafficked as children and have now been cast aside as homeless, addicts and so on, in addition to farm and domestic servitude," she writes.

In addition to her work in Sarasota and Tampa, Bello is a fellow at the Skinner Institute in Washington, D.C., and she works internationally to fight the horrors of human trafficking. The trade in people is estimated by the U.S. Department of State to rank third — following drugs and arms — in the amount of worldwide profits it produces. 



The City of Sarasota wants to build a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge from the Ringling Causeway to Coon Key, where the Sarasota Yacht Club stands. Photo by Norman Schimmel



SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR DISPLAYS

Two racks of clothing are displayed outside Coconuts on south Siesta Key in March. Photo by Rachel Hackney`

THE SIESTA KEY VILLAGE ASSOCIATION ENDORSES A PROPOSED NEW ORDINANCE THAT WOULD ALLOW ISLAND MERCHANTS TO ADVERTISE SOME WARES OUTSIDE BUSINESSES

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

With a unanimous vote on Tuesday morning, April 1, members of the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) endorsed a proposed outdoor display ordinance crafted by island business owners.

However, Mark Toomey, owner of [Robin Hood Rentals](#), cautioned he expected it would be months before the document is aired during its first public hearing,

which will be before the Sarasota County Planning Commission.

First, it will go to county staff to be drawn up in appropriate language prior to its begin-

ning the track through the process necessary for adoption, explained architect Mark Smith, the past SKVA president who worked with county staff in drafting the document.

“*But the important thing is, really, it will have to be enforced, and the county’s not going to be able to devote an army of people to enforce it.*”

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



Toomey pointed out that more than 20 businesses on the island, representing 85 percent of the retail and rental operations, are in support of the proposal.

It would require a person to pay a \$25 fee for an annual permit to display merchandise or rental equipment outside in clearly defined parameters. A drawing showing the display plans would have to be submitted to the county for approval before the permit could be granted. The permit would be revoked if the county received two complaints regarding the business' noncompliance with the plan it had filed with the county.

SKVA Vice President Kay Kouvatsos said she particularly liked the latter item's inclusion in the draft.

SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie explained to the approximately 30 people present that the outdoor display issue on Siesta arose almost exactly a year ago — in May 2013 — when a number of owners of new businesses were cited for outdoor displays, which are not allowed under the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD) ordinance that governs the island.

Sarasota County Code Enforcement Officer John Lally, who is the primary person handling SKOD violations on the key, had been out on leave. When he returned in May 2013, he began writing the citations.

“We are a unique island with our architecture and our built environment,” Gaddie continued. “It's very tough, always tough, for anyone to run a small business.”



Mark Toomey, owner of Robin Hood Rentals, explains the facets of the proposed new outdoor display ordinance as incoming Siesta Key Village Association President Wendall Jacobsen (rear) listens. Photo by Rachel Hackney

After Lally cited businesses last year, several owners complained that their revenue dropped dramatically. Toomey and Rick Lizotte, owner of [Comfort Shoes in Siesta Village](#), began working with other island entrepreneurs several months ago to try to craft a new ordinance that would be acceptable to residents as well as business owners. The other members of their committee are John Davidson, owner of Davidson Drugs and numerous parcels in Siesta Village; Lori Eible, owner of Foxy Lady; Brad Stewart, co-owner of Captain Curt's Crab & Oyster Bar; and Aledia Tush, co-owner of CB's Saltwater Outfitters.

The SKVA officers, Toomey pointed out, "were pretty instrumental in connecting us with the county" and gaining the involvement of County Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on the island.

Toomey also noted that the displays would be "very easy for [county Code Enforcement personnel] to police and enforce simply by driving through Siesta Village." He added, "We're not going to end up looking like a flea market," referencing a comment Lizotte had made to him. (Lizotte was unable to attend the meeting because of a family emergency, Toomey told members.)

The ordinance will enable Siesta Key to remain "the beautiful place she is," Toomey pointed out.

In response to questions from Debra Lynn-Schmitz, the new executive director of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, Gaddie explained that a business would be allowed to change its display during the year its permit is valid. However, the business would have to maintain the displays within the parameters



Commissioner Nora Patterson (forefront) looks over Siesta Key Village Association material on April 1 with (in the background, from left) Mark Smith, Deputy Chris McGregor and Lt. Charlie Kaspar listening to discussion. Photo by Rachel Hackney

provided, though no hours of operation are specified.

The draft says the outdoor display area for a retail business cannot contain more than two of the following:

- A table no longer than 72 inches, wider than 36 inches or taller than 30 inches.
- A mannequin no larger than 24 inches in diameter and 72 inches in height.
- One clothing rack no longer than 72 inches, wider than 24 inches or taller than 72 inches.
- One mobile cart no larger than 60 inches in length, 30 inches in width or 36 inches in height.

Further, no signage will be allowed on any display racks, and no items will be allowed except on the designated displays or racks.

Gaddie pointed out that business owners will “have to be engaged in the process and know all of the facts and the law ...”

Patterson, who was present during the meeting, said of the proposal, “This is pretty subdued. I don’t think this will make the area look junky, which I know a lot of people here feared, and I certainly have been concerned about.”

Patterson added, “But the important thing is, really, it will have to be enforced, and the county’s not going to be able to devote an



Customers browse outdoor displays at Comfort Shoes in Siesta Village in March. Photo by Rachel Hackney

army of people to enforce it.” Addressing the SKVA members who were present, she continued, “You guys are going to have to behave very much like they do on St. Armands [Circle] and basically enforce it on each other and let Code Enforcement know if people are taking advantage of the system. Otherwise, this is not going to work.”

Michael Shay, president of the Siesta Key Association (SKA) asked whether businesses on the island are abiding by the proposed restrictions as a show of support of the draft ordinance. He had raised that issue during the March 4 SKVA meeting, too, leading to a discussion about the number of shops at the time that were not in compliance with the proposal.

“I think that the Village has actually done a fairly decent job” of complying, Gaddie replied. “I don’t think it’s 100 percent.”

Smith noted that Toomey had sent an email to the business owners, encouraging them to voluntarily abide by the proposed restrictions “to ensure public support for when this goes to public hearing.” It would be “a slap in the face” if business owners were not willing to abide by the new parameters, he added.

“So you’re relying in essence on the businesses to kind of enforce themselves,” Shay responded. “This obviously hasn’t been easily done up to this point.”

Patterson said she felt Code Enforcement Officer Lally “sort of gave up [citing businesses] on the key” while work was under way to craft the new ordinance.

Lally told SKA members last year that he had been instructed by his boss not to write any citations of businesses while the committee was developing the proposed ordinance.

Smith emphasized that the way the ordinance has been crafted should make enforcement



Rental equipment stands outside Robin Hood Rentals in Siesta Village. File photo

simple. He added that when he met with county Zoning Administration and Code Enforcement staff members for them to review the draft, “they felt this was easily enforceable.”

Smith also pointed out that a Code Enforcement officer would be able to pull up on a laptop computer the outdoor display drawing for each business with a permit.

He explained that he modeled the draft ordinance on the City of Sarasota’s and St. Armands’ outdoor dining permit applications.

Additionally, Smith and Patterson explained that no outdoor displays are allowed anywhere in Sarasota County under the current ordinances. The SKOD governs Siesta Key only, they noted, so the changes will affect just the island.

MORE QUESTIONS

When Chastanna Neiman, events and office manager for the Siesta Chamber, then asked whether Toomey’s committee would make new business owners aware of the ordinance, Toomey told her, “We’re not responsible, but we can take that on for sure and make it our responsibility to go introduce ourselves and outline the parameters.”

Gaddie reminded SKVA members that no business would be able to have an outdoor display without a permit. However, she suggested that owners and managers of rental property make certain new tenants know about the regulations.

Shay said he felt Gaddie’s idea “makes more sense,” adding, “A prospective buyer or renter [should know] upfront what the rules are.”

Nonetheless, Shay noted that some of the business owners cited last year implied

afterward that the property owners from whom they were renting had indicated displays were permissible.

Cheryl agreed that Shay’s point was valid. However, she said, any new business owner should take personal responsibility for doing “due diligence.”

SKVA Treasurer Roz Hyman of Siesta Center said property owners will not have to allow displays if they oppose the practice, even if the proposed ordinance becomes law. Gaddie said such stipulations should be in leases.

When Rami Nehme, owner of Blasé Café, asked whether the \$25 permit fee would cover the costs of enforcement, Patterson responded, “Code Enforcement costs the county anyway.”

Toomey noted that his committee is facing a \$1,000 expense to submit the draft ordinance to the county for staff and Planning Commission and County Commission review. Additionally, he said, the committee will have to reimburse the county for the costs of advertising the public hearings before the two commissions address the matter.

Patterson told the group she did not feel the permit cost should be higher.

Smith added that the amount was based on the fee the City of Sarasota charges for outdoor dining permits.

Russell Matthes, past SKVA president, also suggested the ordinance require a business to post its permit. That is the practice on St. Armands, he noted, where he co-owns the Daiquiri Deck Raw Bar restaurant. Having the permits visible is helpful to other business owners as well as the public, he added.

“I think that’s a great idea,” Gaddie replied. 



(From left) John Nicholas of All Faiths Food Bank; Terri Hansen of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation; Sandra Frank of All Faiths Food Bank; Veronica Brady of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation; and Keith Monda of All Faiths Food Bank. Contributed photo by Cliff Roles

FOOD BANK LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN AGAINST SUMMER HUNGER

Local business owners, corporate sponsors and government and community leaders gathered on the morning of April 1 to kick off All Faiths Food Bank's Campaign Against Summer Hunger, the food bank has announced.

This is a first-of-its-kind countywide food and fund drive, a news release notes.

[All Faiths Food Bank](#) will lead the 40-day campaign, which will culminate on May 10, the release says. The initiative has been planned to help feed the 21,000 Sarasota County students who receive free or reduced-price lunches during the school year; the number represents 50 percent of the student

population, the release points out. During the summer, those children — and their siblings and families — may go without regular meals, the release adds.

All Faiths Food Bank, with support from [Gulf Coast Community Foundation](#) and [The Jewish Federation of Sarasota Manatee](#), created the community campaign to encourage Sarasota residents to “empty their shelves” and to make cash gifts so no child in the county goes hungry this summer, the release says.

All Faiths Food Bank also issued a \$500,000 challenge match made possible by early supporters of the effort.

“We are excited and very pleased to have raised \$500,000 in advance of the campaign,” said Sandra Frank, CEO of All Faiths Food Bank, in the release. “We’re now asking our community to meet this challenge by raising an additional \$500,000.”

All Faiths announced a number of strategies to feed children, including partnering with the Sarasota County Schools to open 45 feeding sites this summer, the release explains. The food bank will also provide a new summer backpack program, and plans call for opening six new mobile school pantry sites as well as routing Sprout, the mobile farm market, to new locations.

The HuB was enlisted to manage the official campaign site, SkipALunch.org “and help engage the online community,” the release notes. Representatives of businesses are invited to go online to sign up as community partners; “their generosity will be recognized on the site,” the release adds.

The campaign will wrap up on Saturday, May 10, with the National Letter Carriers Food Drive, when residents traditionally fill bags with nonperishable food and leave the bags at their mailboxes for pick up. “This year, All Faiths Food Bank hopes to double the amount of food collected, with a goal of collecting 600,000 pounds of food,” the release points out.

For more information, to donate to the campaign or learn about the many special events planned, visit www.SkipALunch.org. Nonperishable food donations may be dropped off at any Sarasota County Goodwill facility or Sarasota County fire station, the release says.

For more information about All Faiths Food Bank, call 379-6333 or visit allfaithsfoodbank.org.



LIBRARIES TO HOST LOCAL AUTHORS DURING NATIONAL CELEBRATION

Sarasota County Libraries will host more than 30 local authors during National Library Week in April, the county has announced.

Community members are invited to attend the free celebrations that will be held at five of the county's libraries from April 11 to April 18. Attendees will hear from local authors and have the opportunity to talk with them and get their autographs, a news release says.

Selby Library will host authors Ernesto Epistola, Eric Casey, Jane Webb, Brenda Spalding, Barbara Fleisher, Elinor Rogosin, Lucy Tobias and Diane Adams Taylor on Tuesday, April 15, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., the release notes. The library is located at 1331 First St. in Sarasota.

Jacaranda Library is scheduled to host Palmist Myrna Lou Goldbaum on Wednesday, April 16, 12:30 p.m. The library is located at 4143 Woodmere Park Blvd. in Venice.

Gulf Gate Library will host authors J.B. Hamilton Queen, Madonna Dries Christensen, Adrian Doyle, Gabrielle Lennon, Edith Fiore, Nadja Bernitt, Joan Hiatt Harlow and Fred Gosman on Wednesday, April 16, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., the release continues. The library is located in the Westfield Sarasota Square mall at 8201 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

The Osprey Library at Historic Spanish Point will host Barb Marvin, Lucy Tobias, Nancy Buscher, Robert Coons, Clarissa Thomasson, D.L. Havlin, Kate Nixon and Janet Hasselbring on Thursday, April 17, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., the release continues. The library is located at 337 N. Tamiami Trail in Osprey.



Gulf Gate Library has been operating in space at Westfield Sarasota Square mall while its new facility is under construction on Curtiss Avenue. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Elsie Quirk Library will host Margaret Jones, Cornel Dolana, Dawn Penwell, Roy Ault, Kate Nixon, Jane Gill, Gaile Harpan, Pete Dimarcello and Thomas Goodrich on Friday, April 18, from 2 to 4 p.m., the release adds. The library is located at 100 W. Dearborn St. in Englewood.

Additionally, local author Ronni Miller will provide two *Feel It! Write!* writing workshops. The first will be on Friday, April 11, at 2 p.m. at the Gulf Gate Library; the second, on Thursday, April 17, at 5 p.m. at the Jacaranda Library.

For more information, call 861-5000 or visit scgov.net.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATOR NAMED DISTRICT'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Taylor Ranch Elementary science teacher Lisa Figueroa was named the Sarasota County Teacher of the Year on March 27 in an evening ceremony at Laurel Oak Country Club in Sarasota. The event also honored the candidates from schools throughout the county, the Sarasota County Schools has announced.

Figueroa was chosen from among three finalists, the release notes. The others were Ian Ackroyd, a Venice Middle School music teacher, and Gina Barresi, a Sarasota High School English teacher.

Accepting the award, Figueroa told the audience of teachers, administrators, School Board members and community supporters about the call-and-response ritual she leads

every day in her science labs at the Venice school, the release continues.

"Who are you?" she asks her students. "I am a unique and powerful person!" they answer. "Why are you here?" she asks. The children respond, "I am here to believe in myself and make a difference!"

"The kids are the reason I'm here," said Figueroa during her remarks. "Their excitement about science makes me want to be a better teacher."

Figueroa has 14 years of teaching experience, all of them in Sarasota County, the release points out. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Memorial University of Newfoundland and a master's degree in



Lisa Figueroa addresses the audience after being named Teacher of the Year. Contributed photo by Prestige Portraits by Lifetouch

elementary education from the University of South Florida. Outside the classroom, she acts and sings in Venice-area theater productions, the release says.

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County presented Figueroa with a \$1,500 cash award, and she received \$2,500 from Sunset Chevrolet Buick GMC. The other two finalists received \$500 each from the foundation and \$500 each from Sunset Chevrolet Buick GMC, the release continues.

All three finalists received scholarships from Nova Southeastern University, the release adds. Figueroa also will attend the October 2014 Excellence in Teaching Conference at the University of Notre Dame, with all expenses paid by the Notre Dame Club of Greater Sarasota, the release notes.

Further, Figueroa will represent the school district at the Florida Department of Education-Macy's Teacher of the Year gala and serve as the community spokesperson for the teaching profession throughout the 2014-15 academic year, the release explains.

A partnership between the Education Foundation of Sarasota County and the Sarasota County School District produces the annual Teacher of the Year event, the release points out.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, its founder, Shirley Ritchey, also presented \$250 awards to the principals of Sarasota High, Venice Middle and Taylor Ranch Elementary schools in honor of the three finalists. "Figueroa, Ackroyd and Barresi will decide how the money is spent at each school," the release says.

K9 TEAM CERTIFIED IN EXPLOSIVES DETECTION

Sheriff Tom Knight has announced that Deputy Brian Biegel and K9 Ryker have been certified in explosives detection by the National Police Canine Association (NPCA).

The K9 team attended 80 hours of training, which included searching dozens of vehicles and thousands of parcels, and it conducted more than a dozen building and area searches, a news release points out. Biegel and Ryker "also performed hundreds of discrimination searches," which ensures Ryker alerts only to bomb-making materials among the hundreds of items that could potentially distract him, the release explains.

"K9s are a force multiplier and currently the best method available to detect explosives,"

said Knight in the release. "As Sarasota County grows and becomes an international destination for large crowds, we have to be prepared to identify concealed threats."

"The certification test included a variety of searches and Ryker did not miss a single item," the release adds. Ryker can locate 31 different odors associated with bomb-making materials, it notes. Next, the team will pursue certification to search for firearms and spent shell casings, the release says.

"Biegel and K9 Ryker are the only certified bomb detection team in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, Hardee, DeSoto and Highlands counties, and the first at [the Sheriff's Office] since 2004," the release notes.



Deputy Brian Biegel and K9 Ryker have received explosive detection certification. Contributed photo

STANDARD & POOR'S RAISES COUNTY BOND RATING

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

The rating reflects the company's opinion of the following, a news release explains:

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

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



Steve Botelho. File photo

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

SHERIFF KNIGHT RECOGNIZES THE 2013 EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

On April 1, Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight recognized the office's 2013 Employees of the Year, the office has announced.

The Law Enforcement Deputy of the Year is Ray Vleck, who is assigned to the Patrol Bureau. He also has responsibilities as a Field Training Officer (FTO), Tactical Flight Officer

(TFO) and, for the majority of the year, as a Mounted Patrol deputy, a news release says.

"Specialty units routinely rely on him to help locate suspects because of his vast knowledge of prolific offenders in this community," it notes.

The Corrections Deputy of the Year, Donald Bennett, "has a vast knowledge of jail

operations and a tireless work ethic that is emulated by his squad,” the release continues. “Bennett mentored several new deputies last year and continually makes suggestions to help Corrections operate efficiently and in a safer manner,” the release says. He is also a senior member of the Corrections Emergency Response Team (CERT) and is a training coordinator.

The Civilian Employee of the Year, Investigative Aide Lynn Thomson, was recognized for her dedication to the Pharmaceutical Diversion Investigative Unit (PDIU) “and the professional dedication and dogged determination that led to the arrest of the ringleader and 75 local defendants in Operation Main Pain,” the release points out. This two-and-a-half-year investigation focused on “220 fraudulent prescriptions for 19,980 Oxycodone pills that were diverted from legitimate medical use,

with a street value of about \$300,000,” the release adds.

The Emergency Medical/Emergency Fire/Emergency Police Dispatch Quality Assurance Award was presented to Operator Stephanie Franklin, the release notes. The award is based on the combination of overall quality assurance scores, the number of calls audited and scores on pre-arrival instructions, it explains. “Franklin demonstrated outstanding performance while handling emergency medical and fire calls, scoring 99.95% on all calls reviewed by quality assurance coordinators,” it adds.

Knight said in the release, “It is difficult to distinguish yourself in an agency with nearly 1,000 employees, but these four people have performed exemplary service and it is an honor to recognize them for their hard work, dedication and leadership.”



(From left) Deputy Ray Vleck, Investigative Aide Lynn Thomson, Operator Stephanie Franklin, Deputy Donald Bennett and Sheriff Tom Knight

COUNTY TOURISM OFFICE PUBLISHES NEW HAND-HELD GUIDE

Visit Sarasota County has announced the debut of the second edition of its *Discover Natural Sarasota* guide.

“This hand-held paper guide provides fast facts and tips on the best way to discover Sarasota’s natural paradise,” a news release says. The free guide is available at the Official Visitor Information Center, located at 701 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

The first edition, developed in partnership with local parks and nature associations and organizations, was published in 2008, the release points out. This second edition, designed by Knight Marketing with assistance from local groups, “has a refreshed look and updated information,” the release notes.

The guide provides information on hiking, walking, running, paddle sports, cycling, wildlife viewing, birding and fishing, as well as a list of parks, preserves and other natural places in Sarasota County, the release adds. Each

section has an overview, top spots, frequently asked questions and their answers and an “Ask a Local” section, the release points out. The latter feature “provides insider tips on how to best enjoy the outdoor adventures in Sarasota County,” offered by individuals such as John Krotec, owner of Envirooneers; Jon Thaxton of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, who is an environmental advocate; and Tommy Klauber, a triathlete and owner of the Polo Grill and Pattigeorge’s restaurants, the release continues.

Clyde Butcher, an internationally renowned photographer, environmentalist and local Sarasota County resident, provided the cover picture of Myakka River State Park, the release notes.

In future months, VSC will update the discovernatural Sarasota.org website with refreshed content, images and information, the release says.

For more information, visit visitsarasota.org. 



Visit Sarasota County encourages residents and tourists to discover the county’s natural gems. Image from Discover Natural Sarasota

The Mobil station at 2525 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota was among those where Sheriff's Office personnel recently cited a clerk for selling alcohol to a minor. Image from Google Maps

SEVEN CONVENIENCE STORE CLERKS CITED FOR ALCOHOL SALES

Seven local convenience store clerks have been cited for selling alcohol to minors during an undercover operation conducted by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Juvenile Alcohol Task Force (JATF), the office has announced.

On Friday, March 28, deputies, with the assistance of officers from the Sarasota Police Department, visited 67 convenience stores in Sarasota, Venice and Nokomis and found 60 locations to be in compliance, a news release says. Each of those businesses will receive a letter thanking it for its diligence in reducing the sale of alcoholic beverages to minors, the release notes. Seven stores were in violation of selling alcohol to a person under 21, the release adds; each of their clerks received a misdemeanor Notice to Appear. Those locations follow:

- Mobil, 2525 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.
- Sunoco, 3138 17th St., Sarasota.
- Palmer Market, 5300 Clark Road, Sarasota.
- BP, 3605 Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota.
- 7-Eleven, 1240 Venice Ave., Venice.
- Hess Express, 350 Commercial Court, Venice.
- Circle K, 1848 S. Tamiami Trail, Venice.

The results of this operation were forwarded to the Florida Bureau of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco's Department of Business & Professional Regulation, which licenses alcohol sales at each establishment, the release points out.

MAN CHARGED IN SARASOTA METH LAB CASE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has charged Joshua M. Bradley, 37, of Sarasota, after discovering materials used to make methamphetamine when they responded to a complaint about possible explosives at 2739 Grand Cayman St. in Sarasota, the office has announced.


Just before 6 p.m. on March 28, deputies found the materials at Bradley's residence on Grand Cayman Street and called the Sarasota County Fire Department, because the materials "can be highly volatile," a news release says.

After Fire Department personnel had ensured the area was safe, detectives with the Special Investigations Section responded and conducted an investigation which led to the following charges against Bradley: Trafficking in Methamphetamine 28-200 grams, Production of Methamphetamine and Possession of Paraphernalia.

Bradley was already in jail after being arrested on March 27 for an outstanding warrant, the release notes.



Joshua Bradley/Contributed photo

Anyone with information about the case is encouraged to call the Criminal Investigations Section at 861-4900, leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers by calling 366-TIPS (8477) or going online at sarasotacrimestoppers.com. 



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. All submitted tips are secure and anonymous.

(941) 366-TIPS (8477) • SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

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OPINION



WARM MINERAL SPRINGS FINALLY APPEARS BACK ON A PATH TO ACHIEVING ITS FULL POTENTIAL AS A COMMUNITY RESORT

EDITORIAL

After watching the recent votes on the future of Warm Mineral Springs — culminating at the Sarasota County Commission dais last week — we were practically ready to burst into our own version of *High Hopes*. Close to a year after the North Port resort closed, it appears a firm with an excellent reputation will be able to open it back up for swimming.

Beyond that, we also are strongly encouraged that almost 21 months after a unanimous vote of the North Port City Commission and the County Commission seemed to pave the way for a creative future for the property, that possibility once again seems plausible.

Yes, we know it is too early to even think about chilling the champagne, but the two boards — co-owners of Warm Mineral Springs since late 2010 — have come quite a distance from a year ago.

On April 17, 2013, the City and County commissions spent a long day with a facilitator to try to come to consensus on how to proceed on the resort's future. Not enough steps could be taken smoothly and quickly enough to keep the Springs open after the lease with Cypress Lending expired on June 30, 2013. Since then, the two boards have managed to move methodically — if sometimes on tiptoes — to figure out how best to appease an untold number of residents who have complained bitterly and at length about not being

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able to enjoy the warm healing waters of the Springs this season.

If all continues to go as it appears it will, a firm called National and State Parks Concessions Inc. will figuratively swing open the gates to Warm Mineral Springs very soon. The firm appears to have a stellar reputation for park management, underscored by a March 26 email the county's director of parks and recreation sent to county administrators.

Carolyn Brown wrote that county and city staff had met that morning with the owner, CFO and management personnel of National and State Parks Concessions. "We were thoroughly impressed with their organizational skills and implementation plans to operate the Springs," she added, with emphasis. "They have already provided their insurance and will be providing a signed agreement within the 5 day period," she continued in the email.

That is a huge relief, especially in the wake of the frustrations that arose late last summer after a local firm called WMS Sarasota Management LLC won a short-term operation contract to reopen the resort. It did not take long for representatives of the firm to begin wrangling with North Port City Manager Jonathan Lewis over changing terms of the bid. Ultimately, the City and County commissions had no choice but to rescind the bid award.

And although we are hopeful nothing unforeseen will

prevent National and State Parks Concessions from proceeding as the two boards hope, the bigger challenge will be securing a plan for the long term. We applaud both boards for taking the extra step of approving a major national and international marketing campaign to try to garner as much attention as possible from worthy bidders. County Commissioner Joe Barbetta was wrong to think the Springs could in effect sell itself. We wholeheartedly concur with commissioners who expressed the view that the boards' sometimes bitter dispute over the resort cannot help but have tainted the Springs' reputation.

The goal here is to bring in the best ideas imaginable — and we mean that in every sense of the word "imaginable."

What proved the major point of contention between the City and County commissions last year was that the majority of members of the former wanted to preserve the property in a park-like state. The County Commission was interested in exploring development opportunities — a sentiment with which the North Port City Commission of July 2012 concurred. It was only after the November 2012 election shifted the majority view of the city board that problems arose — and shut down the Springs.

During the North Port City Commission's special meeting last month to consider and vote on the long-term solicitation package for the Springs,


“As we see it, the goal in awarding a contract for the long-term operation is to ensure the best possible use of the entire 81 acres.”

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Commissioner Cheryl Cook reiterated her objection to the fact that the zoning of the property could open it up to as many as 270 residential units. Just because that is allowed does not make it a given.

Facilities assessments undertaken while the boards were clashing over how to proceed on Warm Mineral Springs have made clear that a *lot* of work needs to be done to upgrade the structures on the site if whoever ends up with the long-term contract wants to keep them. However, the goal in awarding a contract for the long-term operation should be to ensure the best possible use of the entire 81 acres.

That could include a first-class hotel as well as condominiums. And such development can be done tastefully and in a manner to enhance the natural beauty of the property.

We strongly encourage the commissioners on both boards to keep an open mind — and listen closely to constituents — while the solicitation package is on the market. What we envision for Warm Mineral Springs is a future in which it enjoys world renown as a first-class resort. That is exactly what can happen, given the right vision on the part of some highly respected company, in collaboration with the commissions. 

APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED NEW CITY CHARTER COULD LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT UNWANTED CHANGES



By Mollie Cardamone
Guest Columnist

COMMENTARY

I had the privilege of serving eight years as a Sarasota city commissioner and two as mayor. I have carefully examined a proposed new city charter, produced out of the sunshine by 18 people, with the final draft crafted by four city residents and four who do not live in our city. If enough signatures are collected, the proposal will go on the ballot in November. **I will not sign that petition.**

The power proposed for the mayor and the extreme weakening of the City Commission cause me to question if even the best of mayors will be unable to resist the temptation of extreme power. Those temptations in the

past, which led to cronyism and corruption, resulted in a reform movement that instituted professional city and county management.

Below are some scenarios that give me serious doubts about our future under the latest strong mayor proposal.

Suppose we elect a person as mayor who ran on a platform calling for open and honest government and neighborhood protection and preservation. Once elected, this mayor could find he does not have the expertise to manage the departments and hundreds of employees, so he immediately would need help and support and a trusted person to watch his back.

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He might call his son (someone with a Master of Business Administration with management experience) and move him and his family to Sarasota so he could serve as deputy mayor, with a budget and instructions to run the city. That would be nepotism!

Within a few months, a friend and supporter could approach our new strong mayor with an idea and financing for a big project that needs special consideration. The newly elected mayor, somewhat beholden to that developer (who was a major contributor to the mayor's campaign) would set up the plan to proceed — a real “make it happen moment.”

Some unfortunate occurrence might cause the daughter of a close friend of the mayor to lose her job. That friend could make an appeal to the mayor, who would feel obligated to find an appropriate spot for her in City Hall. Cronyism?

Next, let us suppose the police chief, Planning Department director or public information officer retires/resigns or is fired within a short time after the election. That would provide another possibility for the powerful mayor to appoint “his guys” to work for his agenda. Wow, then he would definitely be the mayor in charge!

Nothing illegal is reflected in the above scenarios, but some relatives and cronies would be given free rein to run our city. Most likely, our new mayor would be busy entertaining developers and traveling to other cities on the lookout for economic development ideas. Recall that the proposed new charter

would give him a salary of “at least \$100,000” and, for sure, a nice car and generous expense account would be provided. Our new mayor would be on the move!

The mayor would appoint all advisory boards and would certainly appoint like-minded associates who support his ideas. Got the picture?

Slowly but surely, maybe without even realizing it, he would be corrupted by special interests without a care about our quality of life.

Our city has been governed by many citizen advisory boards and assisted by citizens developing regulations, building visions and creating overlay districts; and thousands have participated in public hearings, always with elected commissioners representing constituents. I believe the strong mayor could twist and turn our comprehensive plan and Downtown Master Plan to fulfill requests of friends. Is that not an example of a quality of life issue being destroyed?

Because the proposed charter would create five single-member districts, we would see a major dilution of strength of the elected commission members. Under our current charter, we each vote for three commissioners — one in a district and two at-large; a majority of the commission. The change is recommended under the guise of providing diversity. Baloney. It has been made to weaken the commission and strengthen the mayor.

Cronyism and corruption could and probably would happen with even the most benevolent mayor under this proposal.

OPINION

Some think of the governance of our city as “by committee,” but by committee is the way all governing boards in Sarasota operate ... those of our county government, hospital board, School Board and other municipalities in Sarasota County, none with a strong all-powerful mayor. Representative government is the foundation of democracy!

Proponents say, “It’s time,” but I say it is not time. It is never time for a charter created by a small group to further its unknown agenda. It is a hijacking of this wonderful city’s government. **Do not sign the petition for this new charter!** 



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

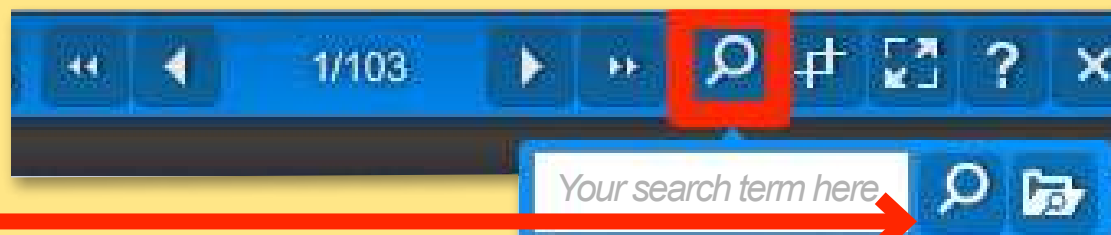
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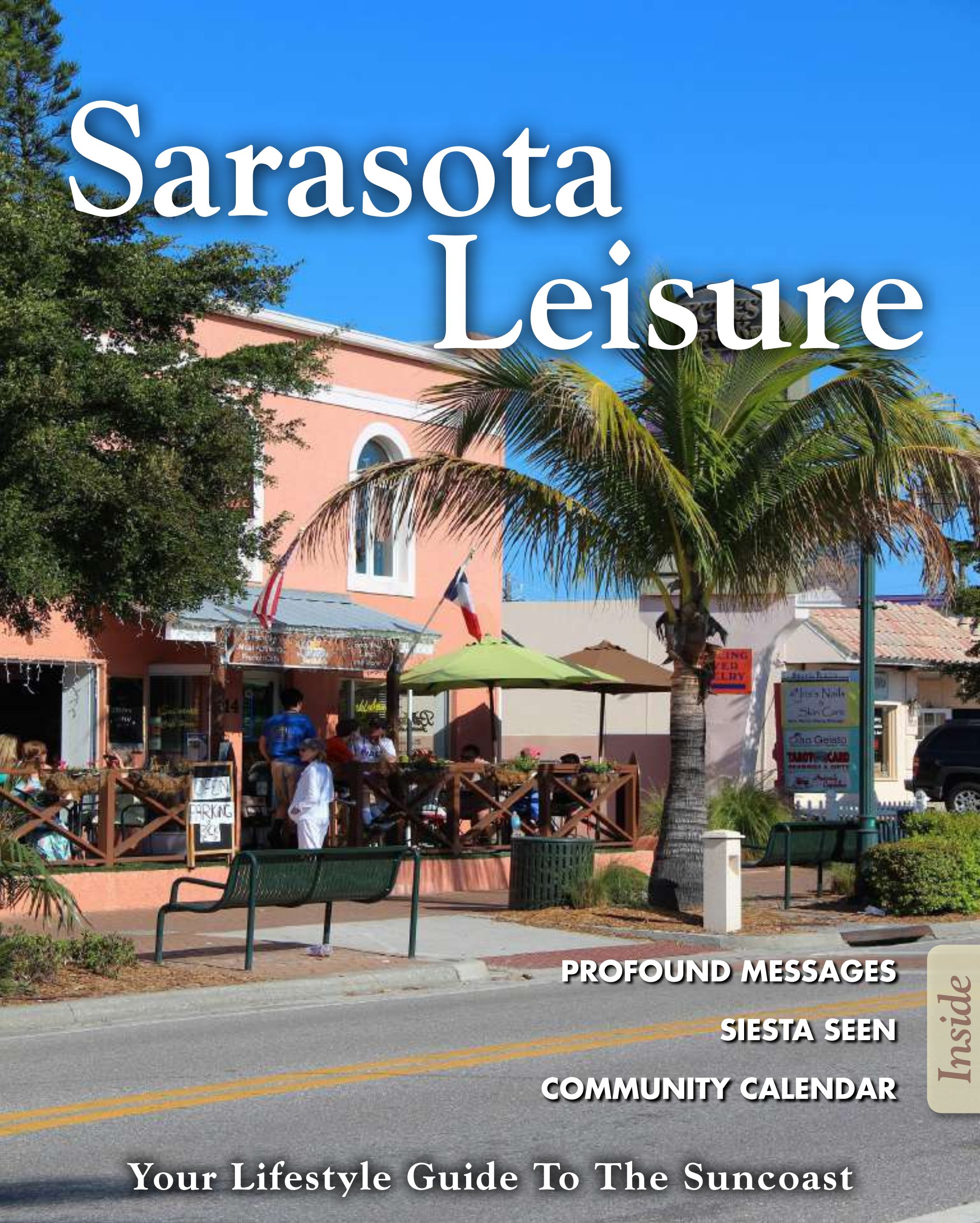
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Sarasota Leisure

PROFOUND MESSAGES

SIESTA SEEN

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

Inside



PROFOUND MESSAGES

All photos by Norman Schimmel

THE 2014 **EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES** EXHIBIT IN SARASOTA'S ISLAND PARK INVITES FAR MORE THAN PASSING GLANCES

Staff Reports

A stroll through the City of Sarasota's Island Park this time of year offers more than a respite from the madness of traffic on the nearby Tamiami Trail. It is an invitation to think about "enriching lives through diversity."

That is the theme of the 11th annual *Embracing Our Differences* juried art exhibit, which will make its home in the park until June 1.

Along with creating visual interpretations, people from all over the world offered quotations based on the theme. The selections for the exhibit came from more than 6,000 submissions from people in 52 countries,

including South Korea, Greece, Israel, Serbia, China, Canada, India, Portugal, Scotland and the United States. Students from 110 elementary, junior and high schools entered both art and quotes in the competition, according to a news release.

Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel was among the Sarasotans who explored the works on the opening day of the 2014 show, March 30.

Organizers say approximately 275,000 people viewed the 2013 exhibit. 



EMBRACING OUR DIFFERENCES









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The full list of sponsors for the 2014 exhibit. Courtesy www.embracingourdifferences.org

Wait a minute... are you the wrong **COLOR** or am I? - Irene Nicola

Happy Together by Young Sook Park

THIS PRIZE IS SPONSORED BY Janelle & Carlos Beruff

Embracing Our Differences.org

SNL



Siesta Seen

THE NEW STICKNEY POINT INTERSECTION 'BLANK-OUT SIGN' WENT UP THIS WEEK; THE ROUNDABOUT REMAINS A FOCUS FOR STATE TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS; AND A U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS BARGE PAYS A VISIT TO BIG PASS



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The date may have been April 1, but there was no fooling in the news: The “blank-out sign” that will allow traffic once again to make a right turn from Stickney Point Road onto Midnight Pass Road without stopping was expected to “go live” that day.

That was the word from Chief Sarasota County Engineer James K. Harriott Jr. in an update to County Commissioner Christine

Robinson, who was kind enough to share the information.

“[The Florida Department of Transportation] has or will be making some changes [to existing infrastructure] and [installing] static signs at the intersection to ensure proper messaging to the drivers with the new sign,” Harriott added in his email to Robinson.



A family strays partly outside the crosswalk at the Stickney Point Road/Midnight Pass Road intersection, walking against the light. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen



Although covered up, the new blank-out sign was in place on the morning of April 1 at the intersection of Stickney Point Road and Midnight Pass Road, replacing the 'No Turn on Red' sign. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

The blank-out sign will light up with the directive “No Turn on Red” only when pedestrians push a button at the crosswalk on Stickney Point Road to activate it, according to Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Public Information Officer Lauren Hatchell. That is the ongoing plan “as long as everything goes well,” she stressed.

On March 31, Hatchell called me with the news that an FDOT crew was scheduled to arrive at the site between 4:30 and 5 a.m. April 1 to take the necessary steps to ameliorate the situation that has roused driver anger. The “No Turn on Red Sign” prompted a flood of agitated emails to county leaders, according to comments Commissioner Nora



A steady stream of traffic heads both on and off Siesta Key via the Stickney Point bridge about 10:30 a.m. on April 1. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen



Colorful catamaran sails stand out against a cloudy Siesta sky in late March. Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens

Siesta Seen

Patterson made during the April 1 Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) meeting.

“It’s funny how those little issues sometimes blow up,” Patterson added.

FDOT installed the “No Turn on Red” sign in mid-February, responding to complaints from pedestrians who felt threatened by traffic turning right onto Midnight Pass Road at the intersection without looking for people in the crosswalk, Hatchell explained to me in late February.

However, with the new sign in place, traffic began backing up on Stickney Point Road and the south bridge — even onto U.S. 41 during

heavy travel periods. Hatchell said FDOT staff was not sure how much of the traffic clog was directly attributable to the new edict against the turn on red and how much was related to a very busy tourist season. Nonetheless, FDOT staff began trying to figure out how to deal with the complaints.

Hatchell added on March 31 that she was hopeful “everybody will be happy, pedestrians and motorists alike,” with the new situation at the intersection.

Patterson pointed out during the April 1 SKVA meeting that FDOT staff and district secretaries do not feel they need to consult



A few beachgoers remain late on a Sunday afternoon on Siesta Public Beach. Contributed photo by Peter van Roekens

Siesta Seen

county or regional leaders when a pedestrian safety issue arises. That was why department representatives did not discuss the plan for the “No Turn on Red” sign before erecting it, she indicated.

Likewise, she continued, Billy Hattaway, secretary for FDOT District One — which includes Sarasota County — seems adamant about building a roundabout at the intersection of Beach Road and Midnight Pass Road to improve safety of pedestrians trying to get to and from Siesta Public Beach.

Nonetheless, she said, “I think [FDOT staff members are] going to hold public hearings”

before proceeding with that proposal, which also has generated complaints.

“We will see,” she added.

SKVA President Cheryl Gaddie noted that when she discussed the roundabout with FDOT staff about a month ago, she was told nothing would be done on that project until 2015.

When Deputy Chris McGregor questioned how FDOT can proceed unilaterally on the roundabout at that intersection, since Beach Road is a county road, Patterson told him, “You’ve got a good point, but I don’t know how it’s going to shake out.”



Sure signs of season on Siesta: A three-wheel rental vehicle with tourists passes a tractor-trailer loaded with beer in front of Siesta Key Oyster Bar on Ocean Boulevard on the morning of April 1. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

Patterson added that FDOT's engineer in Sarasota County is "a decent guy," so she expects "we'll all get to have our 2 cents' [worth]."

THE LIDO BEACH RENOURISHMENT PROJECT

The [Save Our Siesta Sand 2 Facebook page](#) reported on March 29 that a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers barge was sighted in Big Sarasota Pass that morning. Word about the vessel had circulated through membership of the Boaters' Coalition, but it took awhile for someone to spot the Army Corps identification on it, I learned.

The Save Our Siesta Sand 2 (SOSS2) Facebook page — and a new [website](#) — are part of an advocacy effort to preserve Big Pass from dredging, which is part of the Army Corps' plans to add about 1.1 million cubic yards of sand to the critically eroded Lido Beach. The Corps confirmed just last week that it still is on schedule to release models and analysis about the dredging and effects of its renourishment plan on Siesta Key — including the construction of three groins on South Lido Key to slow the downdrift of sand to the pass and Siesta — in late April.

During the April 1 SKVA meeting, Patterson mentioned the project during an update on governmental affairs.


Given the scientific complexity of the materials the Army Corps will release, she pointed

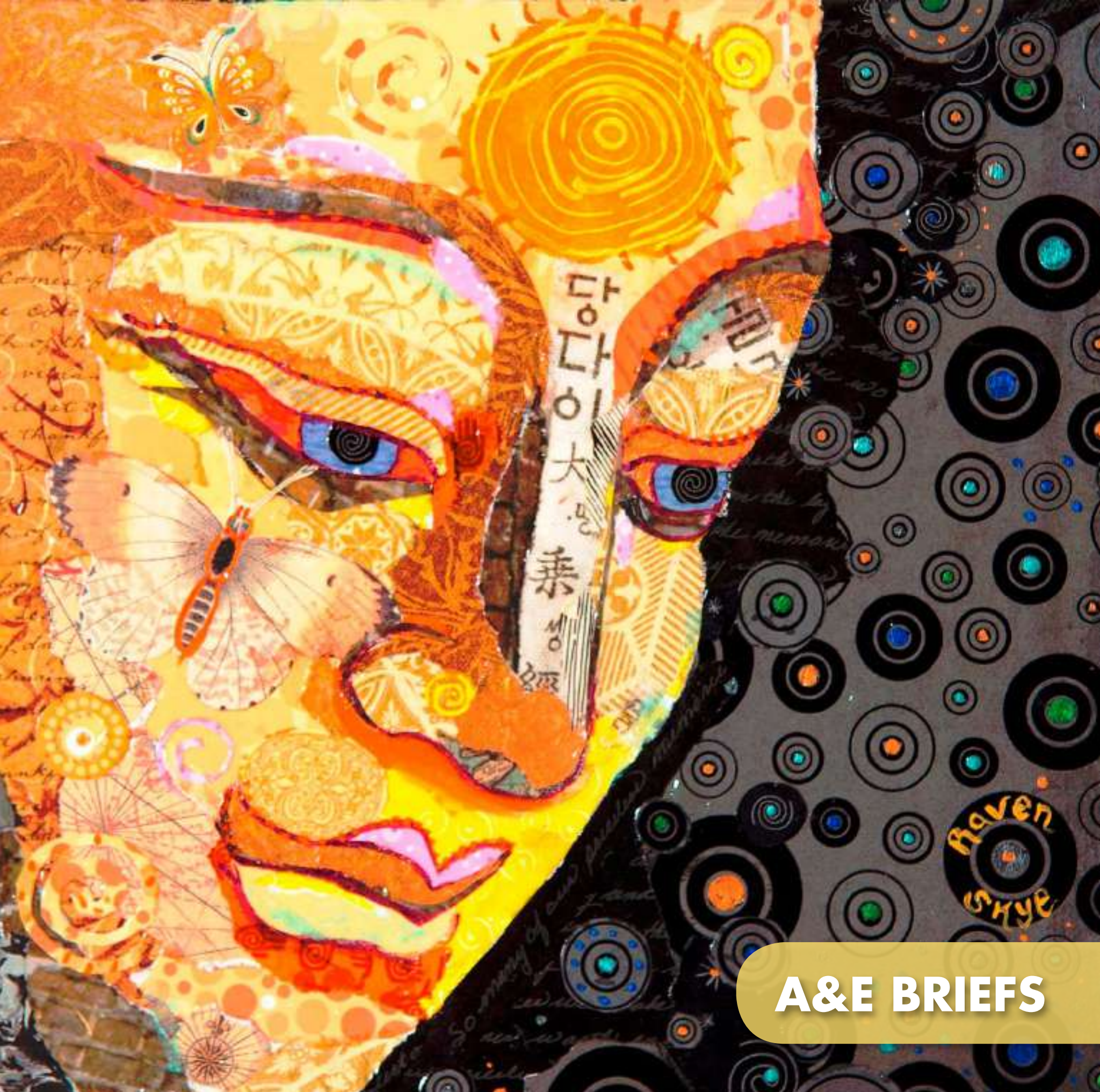
out, she expects the average person will find them difficult to understand. That is all the more reason an independent peer review of the analysis and modeling would be valuable, Patterson said.

During a recent meeting of Lido residents, she continued, Virginia Haley, president of the county's tourism arm, Visit Sarasota County, suggested that Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman — known internationally as "[Dr. Beach](#)" — might be a good choice to undertake such a peer review. Leatherman is the same person who named Siesta Public Beach No. 1 in the nation in 2011.

Patterson said she is not certain Leatherman has the expertise to handle the work. Regardless of who is chosen for the review, she noted, she feels the county should pay for the work.

NEW SKVA OFFICERS

Congratulations go to Wendall Jacobsen, general manager of Beach Bazaar in Siesta Village, for being elected the new president of the SKVA, replacing Cheryl Gaddie of CG Interior Design. Mark Smith of Smith Architects was elected vice president, replacing Kay Kouvatsos of Village Café. Helene Hyland of Coldwell Banker Residential Real Estate will continue as secretary, and Roz Hyman of Siesta Center was reelected treasurer. The vote was taken on April 1. 



A&E BRIEFS

Be the Light by Raven Skye McDonough. Contributed image

MCDONOUGH'S COLLAGE WORKS TO BE ON DISPLAY THIS MONTH

Raven Skye McDonough — Redefining the Art of Collage will be the next exhibit featured in the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota's Lexow Wing Gallery, beginning April 6, the church has announced.

A reception with the artist will be held on Sunday, April 27, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., a news release adds. The show will continue through May 29. Gallery hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and Sundays



Show Me the Way by Raven Skye McDonough. Contributed image

after services, the release notes. The church is located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota. Admission is free.

McDonough is an award-winning Florida artist “with deep ties to her native New England upbringing,” the release continues. “Her love of experimentation with color, texture and pattern is evident in her vibrant work,” it adds. McDonough says in the release that inspiration for her recent work comes from spirituality, social commentary and her

nightly dreams. The subjects range from war to environmental issues to political concerns to man’s journey to become enlightened.

McDonough was named Florida Artist of the Year in 2013 by *Twin Cities TOSCA Magazine* “for her passion and excellence in creating ‘art that is visually beautiful, art that is emotionally or spiritually provocative or art that is intellectually challenging,’” the release notes.

Learn more about her and her work at raven-skyemcdonough.com.

BUBBLING BROWN SUGAR TO END WBTT’S 2013-14 SEASON

Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe (WBTT) plans to end the season on a “hot note,” a news release says, opening *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, a musical revue featuring the music of numerous African-American artists popular during the Harlem Renaissance, on Friday, April 11.

The show will run through May 11, the release notes. Tickets are \$29.50. To purchase them, visit www.wbttstrq.org or call the box office at 366-1505.

“This is an iconic work of African-American theater, one of the first successful musicals on Broadway with a primarily African-American cast,” said Director Harry Bryce in the release. “It was also one of the first times that Broadway paid homage to the Harlem Renaissance. Surprisingly, *Bubbling Brown Sugar* is not done very often so this is a wonderful, rare occasion,” he added in the release. “It’s an important selection for WBTT and reinforces the Troupe’s effort to keep African-American literature alive and present.”

The play is about two couples — one white, one black — who travel back in time to visit various Harlem nightclubs, the release explains. It was conceived by Rosetta LeNoire, founder of Amas, a nonprofit theater group partly created to promote interracial casting, the release points out. The company produced many hits, one of which was *Bubbling Brown Sugar*. Music featured in the show is by Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Fats Waller and Eubie Blake. Blake was LeNoire’s music teacher, the release adds.

The music director of the WBTT show is LaTerry Butler, who toured nationally with *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, working with musicians who were in the original Broadway production, the release continues.

“This show features some of the most recognizable music from the period running from 1920 to 1940,” said Nate Jacobs, founding artistic director of WBTT, in the release.



*Bubbling Brown Sugar will be presented by the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe starting April 11.
Contributed photo*

ORIOLES TO PRESENT FREE CELEBRITY SOFTBALL GAME AND CONCERT

The Baltimore Orioles have announced the “home team” lineup for a celebrity softball game versus a “visitors” team of military veterans scheduled for Sunday, April 6, at Ed Smith Stadium. The game will be part of a full day of free activities at the All-American Family Day & Concert, featuring a performance by

Grammy Award-winning band America, a news release points out. The event is part of the Orioles’ *Arts in the Ballpark* series and the Legacy of Valor campaign.

“The Orioles are proud to field an enthusiastic team of media personalities, elected officials

THE ORIOLES AND LEGACY OF VALOR PRESENT A FREE DAY OF ALL-AMERICAN FUN



ALL-AMERICAN FAMILY DAY SUNDAY, APRIL 6 - 12 P.M. • ED SMITH STADIUM

Join us for a day of free family activities honoring returning military veterans.

Part of The Patterson Foundation’s Legacy of Valor campaign, enjoy:

- FREE FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES!
- Patriotic Opening Ceremonies featuring SMA Drum Line and more
- Celebrity Softball game featuring Sarasota Celebrities - 1:00PM
- Performance by singer-songwriter Margaret Valentine
- Grand Finale - Sit on the outfield grass and enjoy Grammy award artists AMERICA - 4:00PM

FREE EVENT
Parking is \$5

PART OF THE



SERIES

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and other community leaders in this game to honor America's military heroes," said David Rovine, vice president of Orioles-Sarasota, in the release.

Among those scheduled to take the field in the Orioles' colors are ABC-7's Scott Dennis and Matt Winitz; ClearChannel radio personalities Maverick, LuLu, David Jones and Billy Jack; SNN's Grant Boxleitner, Cassie Nall and Amber Stidham; Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce representative Bob Messick; North Port Mayor Jim Blucher; Saks Fifth Avenue's Sally Schule; Sarasota City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell; Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta; Sarasota County Sheriff Tom Knight; Norman Schimmel, representing the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council; Sarasota Police Chief

Bernadette DiPino; Venice Mayor John Holic; and Venice Vice Mayor Emilio Carlesimo.

"So that none of our players gets too serious, comedian Tim Wilkins will be master of ceremonies for the game," Rovine added in the release.

The gates open at noon, when families will be able to enjoy kid-friendly hands-on activities such as a baseball trivia game hosted by the South Florida Museum and an exhibit from Mote Marine Laboratory. Following a *Salute to Returning Veterans* ceremony, the softball game will take place on the ballpark's main field, the release continues.

Following the game, New York-based singer/songwriter Margaret Valentine will perform.



With Spring Training concluded, Ed Smith Stadium will be the site of the All-American Family Day & Concert on April 6. Photo by Norman Schimmel

The All-American Family Day will conclude with a free concert by America at 4 p.m.

Concessions will be available for purchase, the release notes. Parking will be available in the East Lot at a cost of \$5 per vehicle. For the concert, attendees may sit on the out-field grass or in the stands; however, no lawn chairs or high-heeled shoes will be permitted on the field, the release points out.

The *Arts in the Ballpark* series will continue on May 10 when the Sarasota Orchestra performs *Spirit of America*, an outdoor concert featuring guest artist Molly Cherryholmes, a five-time Grammy-nominated violinist, vocalist and songwriter.

Visit orioles.com/Sarasota to view the complete schedule.

CONTEMPORARY DANCE CELEBRITIES TO PERFORM PROGRAM

“A stunning ensemble of contemporary dance celebrities presented by the Sarasota International Dance Festival (SIDAF) will be spotlighted at the Sarasota Opera House” on April 15 in its opening 2014 program, organizers have announced.

Leading interpreters of contemporary dance from the Netherlands, New York and California have been assembled by Robert de Warren, president of SIDAF, for a one-night only performance, a news release says.

Returning to the Opera House after “her extraordinary appearances in 2010 and 2011” will be Drew Jacoby, an internationally renowned contemporary dancer who is also co-producing the event’s unique performance of *Lifted*, “an exciting and hip program,” the release points out. She will be partnered by Medhi Walerski, originally from the Paris Opera and now a principal dancer/choreographer at the Netherlands Dance Theatre, with whom she has danced most recently, the release notes.

Li'l Buck, “a spectacular dancer who has appeared with Madonna and Cirque du Soleil,” will be making his first appearance in Sarasota, the release continues. His rendition of *The Dying Swan*, accompanied by cellist

SARASOTA INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL
by Robert de Warren present

AN EVENING OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE

LIFTED

Starring **DREW JACOBY**
Sarasota's Favorite Dancer and friends

NETHERLANDS DANCE THEATER
Medhi Walerski & Drew Jacoby

CEDAR LAKE CONTEMPORARY BALLET
Acacia Schnick & Jason Hittelberger

ALONZO KING'S LINES BALLET
Meredith Webster & David Harvey

KIDD PIVOT
Bryan Arias

FEATURING SPECIAL GUEST **LIL BUCK**

LIVE CONCERT CELLIST **NINA KOTOVA**
 IN THE DYING SWAN

TUESDAY / APRIL 15, 2014 / 8 PM
SARASOTA OPERA HOUSE

TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW
 TELEPHONE 941-338-1300
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Yo Yo Ma, “caused a sensation from New York to China” and garnered more than 2 million YouTube views, the release adds. In a reprise for Sarasota audiences, he will perform this piece with accompaniment by noted Russian concert cellist Nina Kotova and Sarasota’s Lee Dougherty Ross, the release says.

Among other guest artists who will appear in *Lifted*, de Warren, will be Meredith Webster and David Harvey of Alonzo King’s celebrated company. According to LINES, “a celebration that has won international applause,” and Bryan Arias, “a magical

artist who has performed with the Netherlands Dance Theatre and Crystal Pite’s Kidd Divot,” the release points out.

Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet performers Acacia Schachte and Jason Kittelberger also will be featured.

“With the assistance of Drew Jacoby, we have prepared a program that represents the best in the various styles of contemporary dance, with leading dancers from the worldwide scene,” de Warren notes in the release.

Curtain time for *Lifted* will be 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 15, at the Sarasota Opera



House on Pineapple Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Tickets are \$95 to \$25; they may be obtained at the Sarasota Opera House box office by calling 328-1300 or on line at sarasotaopera.org/lifted.aspx.

For additional information, visit the SIDAF website at sarasotainternationaldancefestival.org.

FOG AND MIST OPENING AT DABBERT GALLERY APRIL 4

Dabbert Gallery in downtown Sarasota will present *Fog and Mist*, featuring the work of Barbara Krupp, from April 4 through April 28, the gallery has announced.

A public reception with the artist will be held from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Friday, April 4, a news release says.

The gallery is located at 76 S. Palm Ave. in Sarasota.

The exhibit runs through April 28.

In this series, Krupp's latest paintings explore "the textures of nature in a more subjective interpretation that awakens and inspires emotion," a news release says. "Modern, mystical, sometimes euphoric, her large canvases

liberate your stream of consciousness beyond the five senses," it adds.

"Krupp creates and endeavors to share beauty and wonder, whether a place in the dreamscapes of her mind, an enchanted memory from her past or an experience not yet realized," the release notes.

Krupp has won numerous awards for her work since 1981 when she took the France Bronze Medal in the Salon D'Aout at Musée Duncan in Paris, the release adds. Her paintings are in collections in the United States and Europe.

For more information, call 955-1315 or visit dabbertgallery.com.



The Days of Wine & Wildflowers by Barbara Krupp. Contributed image



Up High In Banana Tree by Barbara Krupp. Contributed image

SELBY GARDENS TO BEGIN SPRING MUSIC SERIES ON APRIL 6

Selby Gardens has announced that its Spring Music Series will begin on April 6 and continue on Sundays through May 11.

Each event will start at 1 p.m. and end at 3 p.m., a news release says. The programs are included with admission to the gardens; they are free to members and children ages 3 and under. Regular admission is \$19 for those ages 12 and up; \$6 for ages 4 to 11.

Food and beverages will be available for purchase, the release notes. The gardens has free on-site parking.

“The Selby Gardens’ Spring Music Series is always a popular way to spend a Sunday afternoon,” the news release continues. “Music fills the air amidst flowers and nature under the banyans,” it adds.

Guests are welcome to bring folding chairs or lawn blankets, but no coolers, the release points out.

Selby Gardens is located at 900 South Palm Ave. in Sarasota.

The scheduled performers are as follows:

- April 6 — SoulRcoaster.
- April 13 — Tom Ellison & Hip Pockets.
- April 20 — Venturas.
- April 27 — Pine View Jazz Band.
- May 4 — Kim Betts & the Gamble Creek Band.
- May 11 — Yesterdayze.

The series is a fundraiser to benefit Selby Gardens’ education, horticulture and research efforts, the release explains. For schedule changes and updates in the event of inclement weather, visit selby.org/events/spring-music-series.



Music will reign under the banyans at Selby Gardens each Sunday from April 6 through May 11. Photo by Norman Schimmel

KEIPER'S WORKS TO BE EXHIBITED AT WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

Rita Keiper, an award-winning artist “whose work reflects the pervasive and changing moods of nature,” will debut her latest pieces on April 10 from 5 to 7 p.m. at The Women's Resource Center of Sarasota, located at 340 S. Tuttle Ave. in Sarasota, the Center has announced.

The public is invited to a reception; refreshments will be served, a news release says.

The show will run through June 25; it can be seen most weekdays from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., the release adds.

Keiper has exhibited widely in New Jersey and Florida, the release continues. Her works hang in many banks, offices and private collections throughout the United States, it notes. An art critic in *Music and Arts Magazine* wrote of Keiper, “This artist calls herself a landscape painter yet she is, to my way of thinking, an abstract expressionist. She establishes an atmospheric mood and superimposes a subject over it, thereby painting nature with the frugality of palette akin to poetry. I find creativity, beauty and charm in Mrs. Keiper's paintings.”



Blue Horizon by Rita Keiper. Contributed image

Keiper “credits Cezanne for inspiring her to paint interpretive art in the form of abstract and non-representational painting,” the release continues. Recent developments by chemists have led to new acrylic media and new ways to paint on flat surfaces, it notes. Among the works in this show will be some created with techniques that involve working with liquid acrylics.

For her traditional work, Keiper uses watercolor and oil “to interpret the moods of nature,” the release adds.

“As an artist, I have found a way to build upon years of study — to explore new techniques

and new ways of expression,” she says in the release. “I use these ideas to create a ‘flowing together’ of abstraction and realism, trying for a warmth that is unique to the often [harsh quality] of contemporary abstract paintings.”

“The Women’s Resource Center of Sarasota County is a not-for-profit organization that creates personal, social and professional growth opportunities for women by providing them with strategies for living that strengthen them, their families and their communities,” the release explains. For more information, call 366-1700 or visit thewomensresourcecenter.org/.



House by Rita Keiper. Contributed image

STETSON UNIVERSITY CONCERT CHOIR TO PERFORM ON APRIL 6

Music Fine Arts at First Church in downtown Sarasota will present the Stetson University Concert Choir in concert at 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 6, the church has announced.

The 52-voice ensemble will perform works by Tallis, Stanford, Ives and Vaughan Williams, “in addition to many beautiful sacred works” and secular folk songs from around the world, accompanied by pipe organ, a news release says.

The ensemble just performed in Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center in New York City, the release notes.

Admission is a \$10 donation. Tickets are available at firstsrq.com/music/fine-arts-series.

For additional information, call the church office at 955-0935. The First United Methodist Church is located at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in Sarasota. Parking for the program is available in the Zenith parking garage on Mira Mar Court, the release adds.



The Stetson University Concert Choir will present a program in Sarasota at First Church. Photo courtesy of the university

MUSEUM OF ART RECEIVES \$1 MILLION CHALLENGE FOR CAMPAIGN

Ringling College of Art and Design President Larry R. Thompson and Wendy G. Surkis, president of the Sarasota Museum of Art/SMOA, a division of Ringling College, have announced the receipt of a \$1 million challenge from an anonymous donor at the Gulf Coast Community Foundation.

This challenge follows the successful completion of a Million Dollar Match program created in January by SMOA board member and Ringling College Trustee Elaine Keating, a news release explains. That program — which matched dollar for dollar donor contributions up to \$1 million — added \$2.3 million in six weeks toward the completion of the campaign, the release points out.

The anonymous donor credited Keating's leadership with inspiration for this latest challenge, saying it "was the best way that the donor could help finish the project," the release adds. The donor offered the \$1 Million Challenge on the condition that SMOA secure the balance of \$1.45 million by May 31, the close of the college's fiscal year, the release continues.

"We are incredibly grateful to Elaine Keating for her generosity to SMOA and now to the donor of this second \$1 Million Challenge gift," Surkis said in the release. "The outpouring of philanthropic leadership for the project is just extraordinary. It has added momentum to our efforts and has been electrifying."



(From left) Wendy Surkis, president of the Sarasota Museum of Art (SMOA); Elaine Keating, a Ringling College of Art and Design trustee; and Larry Thompson, president of Ringling College. Contributed photo

SMOA began fundraising efforts in 2007 to transform the historic Sarasota High School into a modern/contemporary art museum and visual arts education center, the release explains. To date, the campaign has raised \$19,551,896.66 out of a total \$22 million needed to renovate the structure and to establish an operating endowment.

“This Challenge validates the creative risk we took in undertaking this monumental project,” Ringling College President Thompson noted in the release. “To see this groundswell of community support is so gratifying, and we look forward to opening the doors to the public in as little as 18 months after we secure final funding,” he added.

“As Sarasota’s first art museum devoted to modern and contemporary art, SMOA

interweaves exhibitions, educational programs and community outreach initiatives to engage a diverse audience and serve as a stimulating hub for creative discovery,” the release continues. When fully funded, SMOA and Ringling College will transform the former Sarasota High School building into nearly 60,000 square feet of exhibition space; a 110-seat multi-purpose auditorium; sculpture court; indoor/outdoor café; classrooms and studios providing education programs for adults and children; and meeting spaces.

This year, SMOA continued its community education and engagement efforts through the ARTmuse program featuring installation artist Lisa Hoke, the release notes. “Using massive quantities of everyday consumer materials, Lisa created one of her color-saturated



Patrick Dougherty began his Stickworks piece at the Sarasota Museum of Art in January 2013. Photo by Arielle Scherr

installations with the assistance of volunteers from our community,” akin to the work SMOA is doing to repurpose the location “into a dynamic arts destination for contemporary visual art,” the release adds.

The 2013 ARTmuse *Stickworks* project with artist Patrick Dougherty “exemplified the power of art to engage residents and visitors, with hundreds of volunteers helping Patrick weave his work, thousands visiting and walking through his creation and millions seeing *Stickworks*” as they passed the campus on U.S. 41 in their vehicles, the release points out.

In addition, the historic Sarasota High School is hosting *Origins*, a collaborative exhibition

first created for the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale in Venice, Italy, by Sweet-Sparkman Architects and students from Ringling College of Art and Design. It “showcases the sand of Siesta Key as an object of art,” the release explains.

Free docent tours of all three exhibitions will be conducted each Saturday and Sunday from 1:30 to 3 p.m. through April 19 at the historic Sarasota High School, the release says.

For more information on contributing to the Sarasota Museum of Art/SMOA, contact Wendy G. Surkis at 309-SMOA (7662), visit SarasotaMuseumOfArt.org or email smoa@ringling.edu.

ABUELAISH, NYIRUMBE AND GUTFELD TO HOLD BOOK SIGNINGS

On April 9, Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee, founder of Daughters for Life and author of *I Shall Not Hate*, will sign books at the Sarasota Opera House beginning at 7:30 p.m., Bookstore1Sarasota has announced.

A renowned physician in the Middle East, Abuelaish “lost his three daughters in 2009 when an errant tank shell hit his apartment,” a news release explains. “Refusing to respond with hate or revenge, he wrote *I Shall Not Hate*.”

As part of his appearance at the Sarasota Film Festival, Abuelaish will sign his book following the showing of the film *Sepideh*.

On April 10 at 6 p.m. Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe, author of *Sewing Hope*, will speak at Bookstore1 in downtown Sarasota and sign her book, which was the basis for the film of the same name, the release continues. *Sewing Hope* the movie features Oscar-nominated

actor Forest Whitaker as the storyteller, the release notes. The film will be shown April 11 and 13 during the Sarasota Film Festival, and Nyirumbe will receive the Impact Award from the Festival, co-presented by the festival and the Gulf Coast Chapter of UN Women, the release points out.

On April 11 at 7 p.m., Greg Gutfeld will arrive at Bookstore1 to sign copies of his books. His latest, the release continues, is *Not Cool*. His previous book was *The Joy of Hate*, it adds.

Gutfeld serves as host of Fox News’ *Red Eye with Greg Gutfeld*, and he is co-host of *The Five*. “He has been called ‘outrageous and outspoken,’ neither of which he denies,” the release points out. He is a “libertarian political satirist, humorist, magazine editor and blogger,” it says.

Bookstore1 is located at 1359 Main St. in Sarasota. More event information may be found at bookstore1sarasota.com or 365-7900. 

RELIGION BRIEFS



Three generations of the Clark family participated in a previous Passover Seder at Temple Emanu-El. Contributed photo

RESERVATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR APRIL 14 PASSOVER SEDER

Reservations are being accepted for a community Passover Seder to be held at Temple Emanu-El in Sarasota on Monday evening, April 14, at 6 p.m., the Temple has announced. Members of the community are warmly invited, a news release says.

Temple Emanu-El is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

The Seder will be conducted by Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman, the release continues. The *Sarasota Haggadah*, an original *haggadah*

created by Glickman, will be available for all Seder participants. Catered by Michael's on East, the Seder meal will feature all of the holiday's traditional foods as well as a chicken, brisket or vegetarian entrée. Each table will also have its own Seder plate and festival candles, the release points out.

Paid reservations for the Passover Seder are required by April 9. For more information about costs and making reservations, call 371-2788.



Rabbi Brenner J. Glickman (right) and guest Cantor Marshall Portnoy display the Sarasota Haggadah used at Temple Emanu-El's Passover Seder. Contributed photo

TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM SCHOOLS APPOINTS KATZ AS INTERIM DIRECTOR

Effective June 1, Temple Beth Sholom Schools (TBSS) in Sarasota has appointed Wendy Katz its interim director as it launches a national search for a new head of school, TBSS has announced.

Kavita Vasil, who has held the position for the past 20 years, is moving to Birmingham, AL, to take a new position and to be closer to family, a news release explains.

“I am humbled by the encouragement I have received not only for me personally as I move forward with the next phase of my life, but also for our staff’s excitement about this new chapter for TBS Schools,” said Vasil in the release. “Dr. Katz’s institutional knowledge of our school, the region’s education system and our students makes her the perfect choice to step in as I transition out.”

Over the past 38 years, Katz has served as teacher, principal, mentor and administrator at the K-12 level in the public school system in Sarasota County, the release notes. Among her achievements in the district, she initiated the first school in the county serving students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade at Laurel Nokomis in Nokomis, the release says.

For eight years, she served as director of leadership development for the Sarasota County Schools, and for five years, she was a consultant to multiple independent schools, the release notes.

“I am thrilled to have been considered for this important position,” said Katz in the release. “During this transition, as we continue our search for a permanent director of TBSS, I



Dr. Wendy Katz/Contributed photo

look forward to working collaboratively with our talented team of teachers and staff to cultivate and offer dynamic and responsive programming.” She added in the release, “I strongly encourage parent participation and interaction as we introduce changes that will uphold and support the academic excellence and supportive learning environment that has distinguished TBSS as a premier educational institution.”

Vasil will stay on as director through the rest of the school year, which ends in May, the release points out.

Temple Beth Sholom Schools is an independent private, all faiths day school affiliated with Temple Beth Sholom; its students are from Sarasota and Manatee counties, the release adds.

ST. MARK'S ORGANIST TO PRESENT REDEEMER RECITAL ON APRIL 9

The Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota will present a half-hour Lenten organ recital on Wednesday, April 9, featuring Peter Madpak, the organist and choirmaster at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Venice, the church has announced.

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

The church is located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota. For more information, call 955-4263 or visit redeemersarasota.org.



The Church of the Redeemer is continuing to present Wednesday organ recitals during Lent. Photo by Norman Schimmel

HAGGADAH TO BE CELEBRATED BY CHJ MEMBERS ON APRIL 15

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Sarasota will hold "a celebration of freedom with an inclusive, wonderful humanistic *Haggadah*" on Tuesday, April 15, at 6 p.m. at Michael's on East, the Congregation has announced.

The cost is \$60 for non-CHJ members and \$50 for members. The reservation deadline is April 5, a news release says.

For a list of menu choices and how to make your reservation, visit chj-sarasota.org or call 929-7771.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL'S TOT SHABBAT TO PREPARE FOR PASSOVER

Jewish and interfaith families are warmly invited to get into the Passover spirit at a special Tot Shabbat on Saturday, April 12, at 10:30 a.m. at Temple Emanu-El, located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

"This relaxed, welcoming and festive Shabbat celebration" for families with children up to age 6 will feature playground time, a bagel breakfast and age-appropriate Shabbat prayers, songs and movement with Rabbi

Brenner Glickman, a news release explains. To honor the upcoming Passover holiday, families will also enjoy a special Passover craft, story and even a matzah-tasting, it adds.

Tot Shabbat is free and open to the community, the release notes. The program is sponsored by Temple Emanu-El and the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee.

For more information, call 379-1997. 



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

04+ APRIL	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Daddy Long Legs</i> Through April 5; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$39 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
04+ APRIL	Asolo Repertory Theatre presents <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> Through April 19; times vary. Mertz Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$23 to \$76. Information: 351-8000 or AsoloRep.org .
04+ APRIL	Dabbert Gallery presents Barbara Krupp and Allan Teger Through April 28; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or DabbertGallery.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 .
11+ APRIL	Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents <i>Bubbling Brown Sugar</i> April 11 through May 11; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbtsrq.org .
19 APRIL	Annual Siesta Village Easter Egg Hunt April 19, 9 to 11:30 a.m., for children ages 1 to 6. Preregistration required at siestakeyvil-lage.org . Fee: \$10. Each child receives a goodie bag. Along with the egg hunt, organizers host games, face painting, a fire truck display and a visit by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Mounted Patrol.
28 APRIL	Gloria Musicae presents <i>Voices of the Holocaust</i> 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 .

YOUR LIFESTYLE GUIDE TO THE SUNCOAST

**'HEY, BUDDY ... KILL
TH' LIGHTS, WILL YA!'**



**SCHIMMEL
SIGHTINGS**

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