



THE SARASOTA

Vol. 2, No. 30 — April 11, 2014

News Leader

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Welcome

A faithful reader has told me she has no idea how I can tolerate hours of listening to County Commission meetings. And while I have confessed on previous occasions to being a “local government junkie,” I have to say the element of surprise is one big factor that entices me to keep watching.

Frankly, in recent weeks — especially given some of the biting remarks made at the County Commission and City Commission daises regarding the proposed homeless shelter — the viewing has been pretty riveting.

Additionally, topics tend to pop up unexpectedly. I can find myself grabbing a pen when comments also start to fly over something that was not on the agenda.

Sometimes we misjudge in advance how exciting a local government discussion will be, but then our dashed hopes are buoyed again by a discussion we had figured would be inconsequential.

Such is the game of local news — and enough of my Journalism Philosophy 101.

On the less serious side this week, we have a superb Sailor Circus photo essay by Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel and a review of the latest Sarasota Ballet performance by Elinor Rogosin. Even if I do not attend the ballet, I have no trouble “seeing” it later through Elinor’s remarkable and perceptive accounts.

Finally, I want to put in a plug for commentary this week by contributor Harriet Cuthbert. Harriet exudes such confidence and *joie de vivre*, it is difficult to believe she can find any travel adventure unnerving. That is all the more reason you will not want to miss her tale of overcoming terror.

Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor and Publisher



ESCALATING TENSION



'RESET' PLAN BLASTED



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ESCALATING TENSION

Property on Lime Avenue has been taken off the table for the homeless shelter site discussions. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE PROMISE OF A THIRD POSSIBLE HOMELESS SHELTER SITE PROVED TO BE SHORT-LIVED

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

On Tuesday, April 8, Sarasota County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson suggested her board send a note to the North Port city commissioners to thank them for their cooperation and work on a South County Family Intake Portal and Emergency Shelter.

Designed to help homeless families gain the necessary assistance to get back on their feet, it will be built into the North Port Family Services Center. An architect

will start helping with the renovations soon, she noted.

Referring to the North Port City Commission,” Robinson added, “They have been amazing, quite frankly.”

“We are letting all of our constituents down throughout the county by just continuing to talk about it.

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission



The County Commission voted unanimously to send the letter.

County commissioners, however, had no such praise for leaders of the City of Sarasota,

whom they had expected to be a partner with them in the construction of a come-as-you-are shelter in Sarasota, the linchpin of consultant Robert Marbut's recommendations for addressing homelessness in the area.

Last week, a sense of collaboration again was in the air after a joint session of the City and County commissions, when the boards voted 9-1 to add a third property — on North Lime Avenue — to the list of three potential sites for a shelter. That site looked especially promising because buildings are already on it — although their renovation would be needed — and its location amid light industrial uses seemed more palatable to people who have railed against a shelter near residences. Even Vice Mayor Willie Shaw, a vociferous opponent of a shelter in the city, voted to add that site to the list.

But city officials learned on April 4 that the property at 1502 and 1562 N. Lime Ave. no longer was available; the new owner does not wish to sell or lease it for a homeless shelter.

“There was an indication that the particular buyer was a landlord for a number of government agencies, and he would be willing to explore the option with us,” Wayne Applebee, the county's homelessness efforts coordinator, told the County Commission on April 8.

On April 4, Deputy City Manager Marlon Brown sent an email to the county saying the property was no longer available.

The news almost immediately reignited tensions Tuesday between the city and county commissioners, with the latter already having cited what they perceive as delays and “foot dragging” on the part of administrative staff at City Hall.

During Tuesday's county board meeting, Commissioner Joe Barbetta questioned the process the city used to contact the owner of the North Lime Avenue property. He was frustrated, he said, after hearing that the owner — who appeared to be willing to work with the county in March — had suddenly decided not to offer the property for sale or lease to



Homelessness consultant Robert Marbut has called the parcel at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. in Sarasota his top choice for a shelter. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the local governments. He also spoke about a lack of progress from the City Manager's Office on discussions with owners of two other parcels that could be used as a staging area for the possible shelter site at 1330 N. Osprey Ave.

"If that is what is going to happen and this thing is going to be delayed for awhile ... why don't we just say to the city, 'Why don't you just call us when you are ready,' and put our money in escrow," Barbetta said. "We are spending a lot of time and money on this, and everywhere we turn, we hit a roadblock."

Chairman Charles Hines pointed out he has been hearing concerns from city business owners.

"They are saying, 'You need to help us' with regard to the chronic homelessness," Hines told his colleagues.

Hines added that he believes inaction at City Hall has spurred the business owners to

reach out to the county, especially following the April 1 joint city/county meeting. "I think in the past, those calls probably went to the City Commission," Hines said. "In the past, I didn't get those calls."

A lack of political will among city leaders combined with a lack of urgency on the part of some city officials, Hines continued, are factors hindering the process. He agreed with Barbetta that "it's time we say we need to move on or make a decision on this."

"The continued debate over sites — 'Here is one. No. Here is one. No.' — That isn't going to get us there," Hines said. "And so we are letting all of our constituents down throughout the county by just continuing to talk about it."

Regarding the shelter location selection process, Hines vented more frustration. He had this message for city officials: "Sites are being reviewed by an expert. If those don't work, come up with some alternatives, and if you can't come up with any solution that will

“ *Why don't we just say to the city, 'Why don't you just call us when you are ready?'*

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

”



A site on East Avenue remains one of two potential locations for a homeless shelter. Photo by Norman Schimmel

work, please make a public statement that you are against a shelter.”

A CONCENTRATED AREA

Barbetta said the shelter should be in the city because that is where the homeless population is.

“That seems to be lost in all of this,” Barbetta pointed out. “People are saying, ‘We don’t want it in the city.’ If they don’t want it in the city, we will back off, but the homeless problem isn’t going away. Right now, the homeless shelter is the city of Sarasota and its parks and its streets.”

The reality, Barbetta continued, is that problems will exist until a shelter is built.

Hines said he thinks people in the community would prefer a homeless shelter not be necessary. “We wish that we didn’t have this problem. We would rather build parks and boat ramps and other things. But the reality is we have this problem and it is clearly concentrated in one particular area. That is the reality we are dealing with.”

Hines pointed to reports from the Sarasota County Fire Department that have estimates showing 75 percent of the homeless people in the area sleep within the city.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said she would like for Applebee, the county’s homelessness efforts coordinator, and Marbut to keep the commissioners updated if a new viable shelter site becomes available. “If there are another



A flag marks the UPS drop-off facility on 17th Street, near the proposed homeless shelter site on Osprey Avenue (to the left). Image from Google Maps

one or two possibilities, it would be good to know,” Patterson said.

“It is really getting kind of frustrating,” she added of the effort to find property that would work for the facility.


BACK TO TWO

Local government officials remain focused on two sites Marbut proposed last year: the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. property, owned by the city, and 1800 N. East Ave.

Applebee told the county commissioners on Tuesday that a Phase Two environmental analysis and due diligence on both parcels should be wrapped up by April 17. Another joint session of the City and County commissions is scheduled for April 22.

Marbut’s No. 1 recommended site is the city-owned property on Osprey. But its potential as a shelter location has been clouded by city officials, who have voiced concerns about utilities on the site.

During Tuesday’s meeting, Barbetta asked whether the city has contacted UPS about a two-acre parcel bordering 1330 N. Osprey Ave. It is possible that property could be used for staging during construction of the shelter, although chances are slim because of UPS corporate policy prohibiting leasing or selling land the company owns. Another possible staging area is across the street from the Osprey site, Barbetta indicated.

Deputy City Manager Brown has not sent the county any recent information regarding talks with either property owner, Applebee said. 



A flag marks the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. site. Image from Google Maps

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'RESET' PLAN BLASTED

The city and county commissioners sit in session on April 1. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY ATTORNEY SAYS THE CITY DOES NOT HAVE THE AUTHORITY ON ITS OWN TO CHANGE THE BASE YEAR FOR THE NEWTOWN COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

A city effort to make the Newtown Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) self-supporting is the subject of a salvo from the chairman of the Sarasota County Commission.

While the plan was under way in the city for weeks, the arrival of the notice for a city public hearing apparently caught county commissioners by surprise.

The issue becomes yet another flash point of contention between the two boards. It joins the search for a homeless shelter site and the future of city-owned property adjacent to the

“ *Administration for the city remained quiet about the upcoming public hearing and then sent certified mail the day we were meeting — the very day! — to us that they were having this public hearing. That’s disturbing to me that that piece of information did not enter the conversation.* ”

Christine Robinson
Vice Chairwoman
Sarasota County Commission

Silvertooth Judicial Center (see the related stories in this issue), along with the extension of the downtown CRA and other “kick sand” issues.

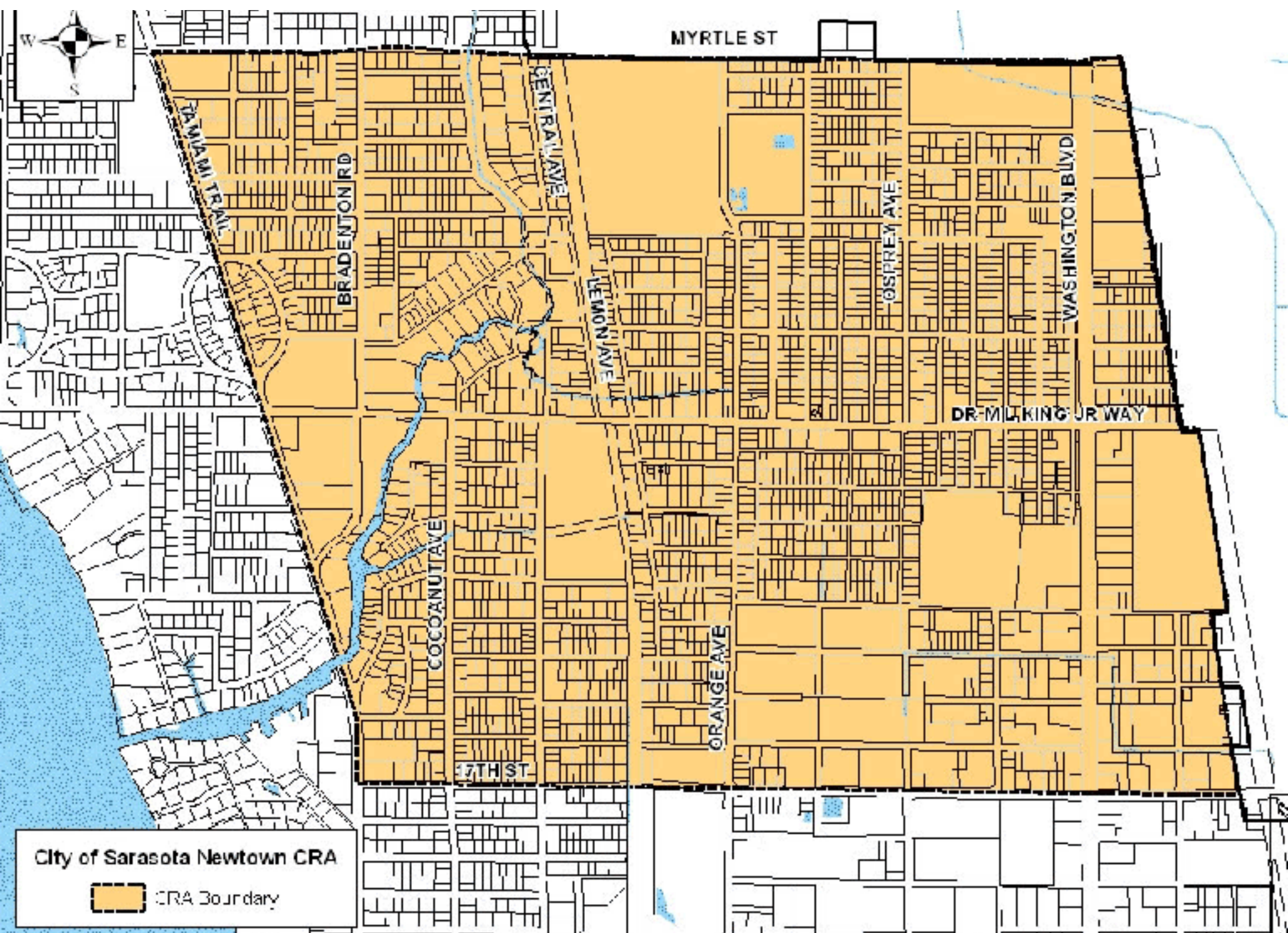
The City of Sarasota is pushing ahead with plans to “reset” the base year for computation of property tax revenue going into the Newtown Community Redevelopment Agency. The CRA was established in 2008, at the peak of property tax values, which have since fallen.

Because the CRA takes the difference — called the “increment” — between revenue

produced by tax levies in the base year and each subsequent year, the Newtown CRA has not produced a dime; the “increment” has been negative.

For the defined area of Newtown covered by the CRA, the total property value was \$176 million in the base year of 2008. In 2012, the value fell to \$94.5 million, a drop of more than 46 percent.

However, the city commissioners planned a public hearing for April 21 to shift the Newtown CRA base year to 2013. Property values in the area have started to rebound,



A map shows the boundaries of the Newtown CRA. Image courtesy Sarasota County

so a “reset” of the base year would allow the Newtown CRA to capitalize on the recovery.

On April 1, City Auditor and Clerk Pam Nadalini sent County Administrator Tom Harmer a routine notice of the public hearing on April 21 to consider the “reset” of the base year to 2013.

April 1 was the same day the two local government bodies were supposed to discuss the future of both the Newtown and Downtown Sarasota CRAs. However, the discussion was

truncated to merely “accepting” a committee report on the future of the Downtown CRA because the county commissioners added another item to the agenda that took up the first four hours of the meeting. The other item was discussion of a location for a shelter to house the homeless and vagrants in the community.

PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION

On Tuesday, April 8, when Harmer informed the County Commission about the Newtown



A 2005 map created during planning for the Newtown CRA shows its location in the county. Image courtesy City of Sarasota

CRA public hearing, the response was heated. “[W]e were having specific discussions about the Newtown CRA,” said Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson, referring to the joint meeting of the boards on April 1. “And administration for the city remained quiet about the upcoming public hearing and then sent certified mail the day we were meeting — the *very* day! — to us that they were having this public hearing. That’s disturbing to me that that piece of information did not enter the conversation.”

The CRA report was the result of nine months of effort by a committee appointed jointly by the City and County commissions. Apparently, nobody in county government bothered to read it. On pages 33 and 34 are two lengthy tables showing the Newtown CRA receipts. One shows income to the Newtown CRA with “no change in base year” until 2033. The second shows the impact of a reset in the base year, allowing receipt of tax increments.

County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh said on April 8 that he had reviewed the document creating the Newtown CRA. Because of longstanding disagreements regarding the creation of the Downtown Sarasota CRA, he said a very specific “delegation of powers resolution” was created for the Newtown CRA.

Because Sarasota County is a home rule charter county, it is given power over CRAs, he added. The state statute says that if a CRA is created in a city in a home rule county, the city has to abide by the powers delegated to it in the resolution. Any powers not delegated to it do not reside with the city.

DeMarsh said that according to his review of the resolution for the Newtown CRA, two facets regard delegating powers. “Neither of



*Tom Barwin is the Sarasota city manager.
Photo by Norman Schimmel*

those two specific provisions addresses any delegation of power to reset the base year.” Instead, DeMarsh told his board, the city should petition the county for permission to do a reset. Further, he said any action to reset the base year would require “two readings” to make it legal, meaning two votes would be needed in two separate meetings.

County Commissioner Joe Barbetta suggested DeMarsh explain his interpretation to the city attorney. Commission Chairman Charles Hines went further and urged a formal letter to the city. Robinson turned that idea into a motion.

The following day, April 9, Hines fired a letter to Sarasota Mayor Shannon Snyder and the City Commission. He said the city “does not possess the power to adopt an ordinance resetting the base tax year” without the express approval of the County Commission.


“Please accept this correspondence as Sarasota County’s formal objection to the attempted adoption of the ordinance,” the letter concludes. “The County Commission believes that the city does not have the legal authority to change the base tax year.”

In a subsequent statement released to *The Sarasota News Leader* on April 10, City Manager Tom Barwin said, “The foreclosure crisis left the Newtown CRA in a negative position. Resetting the base tax year to the current year would generate a modest redevelopment tax increment funding source sooner. This was brought up in the joint City-County meeting last week.”

When the city created the Newtown CRA, the county refused to participate in the tax increment plan, which cut any possible income by more than half. More recently, the county

cancelled an interlocal agreement with the city over parks maintenance, and it began to taper off support for the Robert Taylor Community Complex in Newtown.

While the county is responsible for storm-water infrastructure in the community, neighborhoods from Newtown to Harbor Acres on Orange Avenue have suffered significant flooding this spring.

Barwin wrote, “As a major shopping mall, sporting venue and new subdivisions are being supported in the unincorporated areas of the county, we must not forget our diverse anchor city. I believe there is the will and desire by both the city and county to work together to take advantage of the essential CRA economic development tool the city has used so well to create jobs, tax base and regional cultural attractions.” 

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NUN STILL 'RUFFLING FEATHERS'



Earthy reality meets high-end shopping, raising hackles and shekels. Image courtesy St. Armands Circle Association

ST. ARMANDS CIRCLE PROPERTY OWNERS DECRY WOMAN'S SOLICITATIONS

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The sporadic appearance of a woman dressed as a nun, soliciting money for children in the Third World, continues to raise the tempers of St. Armands Circle merchants. Once again, her presence in the shopping district came up during a meeting of the Business Improvement District (BID), this time on April 8, under the agenda item "Update on the Nun."

The woman, dressed in a summer habit, showed up in January asking for donations to help children in Haiti. She immediately caught the attention of Diana Corrigan, executive director of the St. Armands Circle

Association. Corrigan told the BID board members then, "Next thing, she's got a card table and a cooler and hand-painted signs, handing out paper and asking for money."

“We gave her a foot and she's taken a football field.”

Diana Corrigan
Executive Director
St. Armands Circle Association

It is illegal for a St. Armands merchant to have a table outside, so Corrigan thinks the solicitor should follow the same rules. "This is going to proliferate if we don't fight it," said the district's then-chairman, Marty Rappaport.

During the April meeting, reports indicated little had changed except that the solicitor has begun using a "sandwich board," which use is also denied to the merchants under city code. "We understand First Amendment rights," said Corrigan. "But tables and chairs and a cooler and signs? She's out there all the time."

City staff and police have both told Corrigan and the BID members this appears to be a legitimate expression of freedom of speech, and there is little they can do. "She's not selling anything, and she has a First Amendment right for a sign," said Mary Tucker, the city purchasing manager and staff liaison to the BID. "If the table isn't blocking anything, and she's not selling anything, she can have it."

"This diminishes the image of one of the finest shopping districts in the county," noted Rappaport. "It opens the floodgates to this being continued."


Sarasota Police Officer Cherie McKeon, who runs the Crime Prevention Unit, told the group, "What she's doing is not panhandling."

The woman asked the city engineer and the top city code official for a permit to solicit donations on the Circle before she appeared on St. Armands earlier this year. In both cases, according to earlier reports, she was told she did not need one if she did not block the sidewalk.

"If we don't do anything, we could have 50 people lined up with tables and signs. There's got to be a solution," said the BID's current chairman, Gavin Meshad. "How can we change the code? Other districts have addressed this, I'm sure."

"We gave her a foot and she's taken a football field," added Corrigan.

A later agenda item addressed amplified music on the Circle, prompting Meshad to ask, "So the nun could get an amplifier?"

The BID board is composed of St. Armands commercial landowners who levy a property tax on themselves to provide enhanced maintenance, beautification and marketing of the shopping venue. 



Tonya Herschberger & Linda Keefe

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D.C. DECISION

Florida Rep. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota. Photo by Meredith Geddings, via myfloridahouse.gov

SARASOTA COUNTY PICKS NEW FEDERAL LOBBYING FIRM WITH TIES TO LOCAL STATE REP

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission this week finalized its latest contract for federal lobbying, awarding the work to a new firm — one with ties to a local state representative — for the first time in almost two decades.

Between 1996 and 2013, the commission had tasked the powerful international law firm Holland & Knight with representing the county's interests in D.C., but through a Request for Quotation process begun last fall, county staff decided to go in a different direction, and it recommended the county hire Becker & Poliakoff instead. Unlike Holland & Knight, Becker & Poliakoff actually runs a Sarasota office, and it employs state Rep. Greg

Steube, who works as an attorney when he is not in Tallahassee.

The contract will pay Becker & Poliakoff up to \$10,000 each month, plus travel expenses, which are capped at \$10,000 annually. It's a three-year deal, with options for extensions after it expires.

Becker & Poliakoff Marketing Director Susan Greene tells *The Sarasota News Leader* she believes the firm's local connections gave it an advantage over competitors. She calls Steube a "local liaison" for the firm and also emphasizes the Washington office's deep ties to Florida politics. Becker & Poliakoff

Government Consultant Amanda Wood served as a legislative director for Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla., and she has worked extensively on Florida-centric legislation, dealing with issues such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Greene says the firm handles federal lobbying for about eight or 10 cities and counties in Florida.


Steube tells the *News Leader* having a local connection between the county and its lobbyists should be “productive,” emphasizing as well that he is “not a federal lobbyist.” He sees his role as one in which he’ll “guide and help the commission on the issues that affect Sarasota County” and communicate county needs to D.C. “Our guys are very keyed into the issues that are going on up there,” Steube says.

Sarasota County Director of Community and Intergovernmental Relations Rob Lewis tells the *News Leader* the firm’s main task is to be the county’s “eyes and ears” in D.C.

Recent issues such as spiking flood insurance premiums and removing tax exemptions on

municipal bonds can have a major effect on local governments, Lewis says.

And it’s not just Congress Becker & Poliakoff will be monitoring. With the new Benderson Park rowing facility coming online and international events planned for the park, Lewis anticipates close coordination with the State and Homeland Security departments. The law firm will also be on the ground to make sure the county is heard in decisions on housing and transportation programs. Steube says keeping an eye out for any “unfunded mandates” that may be handed down by federal rule makers is a major priority.

Lewis notes that it’s “nice” Becker & Poliakoff has a Sarasota presence, but the county’s day-to-day work will still be directly with the firm’s Washington office. In the scoring system county staffers used to evaluate five lobbyist proposals, the firm earned two bonus points for “local preference,” but those points didn’t make a substantial difference in the overall scoring. The county’s longtime reps at Holland & Knight placed third in the tabulation. 



A new firm will be lobbying for Sarasota County at the U.S. Capitol. Photo by synty-tact via Wikimedia Commons



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CALLING A BLUFF

City commissioners try to decide what to do with the latest challenge from Citizens for Sunshine. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

THE CITY COMMISSION DECIDES TO CREATE A NEW ORDINANCE FOR AN ADVISORY PANEL INSTEAD OF SETTLING A LAWSUIT OVER THE BOARD

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

The Sarasota City Commission voted 4-1 Monday, April 7, not to respond to an Open Meetings Law challenge by Citizens for Sunshine. Mayor Shannon Snyder wanted to settle the case, but he was out-voted.

The attorney for Citizens — Andrea Mogensen — wrote the city on April 2 saying the city’s Independent Police Advisory Panel (IPAP) “has been routinely violating the Sunshine Law since the inception of its existence.”

She demanded the city disband the panel, void all its actions and pay her fees of \$2,500. She wrote, “This offer is extended only through April 11, 2014 and will expire at 5 p.m. on that date.”

On the following Monday, the City Commission voted to correct what it termed a “scrivener’s error” in the original ordinance establishing the IPAP and not respond to Mogensen’s charges. “Scrivener’s error”

“*We need to stand. This is our city. Why do you allow somebody to hold you hostage? Again?*”

Valerie Buchand
Advisory Board Member
City of Sarasota



is a term for a mistake made while drafting a document.

The heart of the issue is the definition of “*ex officio* members.” The ordinance says the city manager, police chief, city attorney and program administrator shall serve as non-voting, *ex officio* members of the police panel. Mogensen cites a 1975 Florida Attorney General’s Office opinion saying *ex officio* members of a board are subject to the requirements of the Public Records and Open Meetings laws of Florida.

Deputy City Attorney Mike Connolly said he searched for a court case or judicial decision on the status of *ex officio* members of panels, but he could find nothing. He reminded the City Commission that an attorney general’s opinion is just that — one lawyer’s opinion.

Connolly boiled down the commission’s options to three: Ignore Mogensen’s letter and rewrite the ordinance to change “*ex officio*” to “staff”; abolish the IPAP and remove it from the city code; or abolish the panel and re-establish it later.

He noted that because the city attorney is one of the *ex officio* members, his office could not represent the city if Mogensen’s client decided to file a suit. “It would cost about twice as much to defend than if we handled the case,” said Connolly.

“It will be an incredibly expensive litigation because it is so fact-intensive,” he added. “It covers a three-year period, and every single email and calendar entry will be printed and read by the attorneys on both sides. And the



In a more pleasant time, the three principals of the Independent Police Advisory Panel share a moment in City Hall: (from left) Program Administrator Peter Graham, IPAP Chairwoman Eileen Normile and founding Chairman Elmer Berkel. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

whole purpose is to explore all email to look for a single instance of policy discussion.”

City Manager Tom Barwin reminded the commission the IPAP “is a recommending body. They do not make decisions. Those are referred to the City Commission. Nor are their recommendations binding on the chief [of police].”

During the “open to the public” period in the discussion, people raised issues about the purpose of the suit. Dale Orlando noted that IPAP Chairwoman Eileen Normile has publicly questioned the establishment of a come-as-you-are shelter for the homeless after visiting one in Pinellas County that has been held up as a model. “Following that, this lawsuit came up,” he said.

Early last year, Barwin was told he would face a Sunshine suit unless he disbanded an *ad hoc* task force of city staffers and community leaders working on the issue of homelessness. And most recently, Commissioner Susan Chapman has been defending herself with her own money against a Citizens for Sunshine suit challenging a meeting with constituents on the issue of homelessness.

Long-time civic activist Kate Lowman told the City Commission, “It now looks like [members of Citizens for Sunshine] selectively target people who oppose them. Is it a coincidence this threat follows the release of a preliminary report by the chair [of the IPAP] opposing the shelter? If we simply roll over every time there is a threat, who will run for



Police Chief Bernadette DiPino is one of the ex officio members of the Independent Police Advisory Panel. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the seats you fill? Who will sit on these [advisory] panels?”

Valerie Buchand is another citizen activist and member of an advisory board. “We need to stand,” she said. “This is our city. Why do you allow somebody to hold you hostage? Again?”

Mayor Snyder wanted no part of it. “If we created a new IPAP, they could in a half-hour repair all the voidable actions. We pay \$2,500, plus whatever we have to pay our attorney to write a new ordinance. A mistake was made, and how do we get back to move this forward? In 90 days, we could have everything in order,” he pointed out.

Nobody else bought his argument. “This is extortion,” said Chapman. “There was

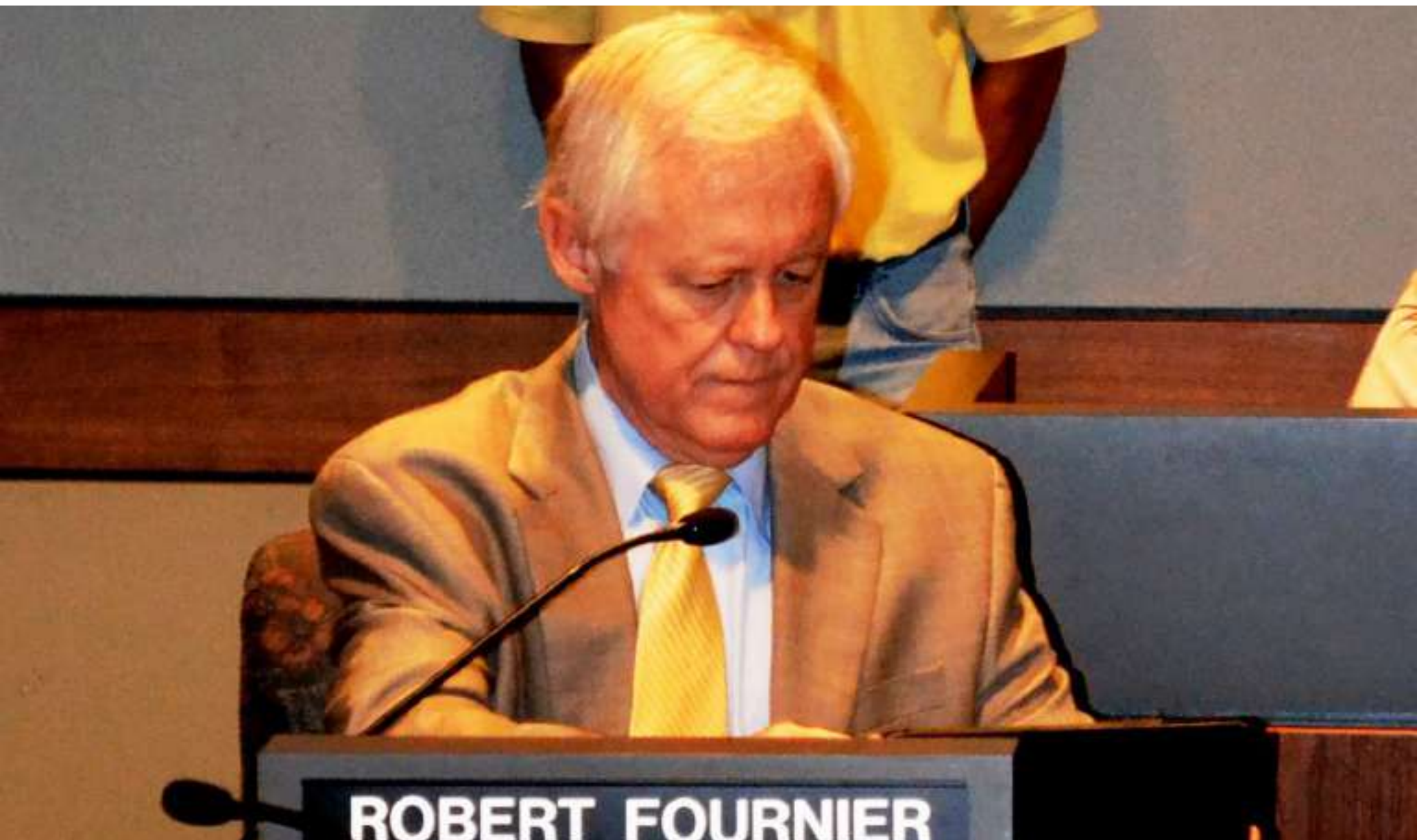
a scrivener’s error. We don’t believe this is worth a lawsuit. There was no secret decision-making.”

“This is so glaringly wrong,” said Commissioner Suzanne Atwell. “The irony of this is absolutely unbelievable. This is over the top.”

Commissioner Paul Caragiulo made a motion for the city attorney to draft a new ordinance substituting “staff” for “*ex officio*” and nothing further. “No money; no fault; no use of the word ‘Sunshine,’” he said. “We should just pass ‘Go’ and not turn this into a fencing match.”

Then the commission voted 4-1 to approve the motion, with Snyder in the minority.

A new IPAP ordinance should be ready for a public hearing by the next City Commission meeting on April 21. 



Robert Fournier is the city attorney. Photo by Norman Schimmel

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A MATTER OF COMPROMISE

Vehicles are parked at the end of North Shell Road on a less busy day for tourists in August 2013. Photo by Rachel Hackney

ON A SPLIT VOTE, THE COUNTY COMMISSION AGREES TO CREATE 16 PARKING SPACES ON NORTH SHELL ROAD IN A PLAN DESIGNED TO PROMOTE SAFETY AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE BEACH

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

It took about 45 minutes of public comments along with board discussion and then three motions before the Sarasota County Commission on Wednesday, April 9, approved a parking plan designed to eliminate safety hazards on Siesta Key's North Shell Road.

Siesta resident Nora Patterson made the motion that finally passed, thanks to support from Chairman Charles Hines and Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson. It lent approval to Option 3,

which calls for a post-and-rope design for 16 spaces; it will eliminate the sidewalk on the south side of the road.

The motion included the removal of one space proposed on the east side of the Solymar residential development, action residents had requested to prevent line-of-sight problems involving their driveway.

The plan calls for seven parallel spots on the north side of the road, one angled

“We just want enforceable parking in designated parking spaces.”

Chuck McGovern
Resident
North Shell Road



spot for handicapped parking at the very end of the street on the north side and eight parallel spaces on the south side of the road. The estimated cost of construction is \$30,627.38, plus some additional expense for design work, according to a memo the county's chief engineer, James K. Harriott Jr., provided to the commission.

"I think this will ... actually be safe and so much safer than the situation that you have today," Patterson said in making her motion.

However, prior to the final vote, the public safety factor was at the crux of an exchange between Commissioner Joe Barbetta and Robinson over views county Emergency Services personnel had voiced.


During the public comments segment at the beginning of the meeting in Sarasota, Solymar resident Paul Eklund said he counted 44 cars parked along the road on March 1 and 42 on April 6, "and these are not unusual numbers."

Most of the year, but especially in high season, Eklund pointed out, cars are parked all over the road, impeding traffic, including emergency vehicles if they need to traverse the street.

In supporting Patterson's motion, Robinson pointed out that Fire Marshal John Reed had told the board that all the options Harriott had offered met the standards for safe passage of emergency vehicles. "This is not a public safety hazard, this option," she said of No. 3.



Current signage indicates where parking is not allowed and warns people not to block the driveway near the end of North Shell Road. Photo by Rachel Hackney



“ *I don't care how many people get angry when it deals with public safety.*

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

”

"I'm going by the pictures and actions of the public," Barbetta replied, referring to photos Harriott had shown the board.

"We had a professional testify. This is not a safety hazard," Robinson reiterated.

"Well, in my opinion, it is," Barbetta said. "I'm entitled to my opinion." "You are entitled to your opinion," she told him, "and I trust the opinion of our public safety professionals."

Commissioners Carolyn Mason and Barbetta supported an option that would have allowed 10 parking spaces on only one side of the road and kept the sidewalk intact.

"Whenever I'm faced with accommodating cars versus accommodating people, particularly when there's a public safety hazard, I'm always going to side with accommodating people," Barbetta said. "To me, it's all about public safety and quality of life."

"I agree with Joe," Mason said.

Barbetta's motion failed 2-3, with Hines, Patterson and Robinson opposing it.

The first motion that failed, also by Patterson, was to approve an option calling for 14 spaces split between the two sides of the road. It included the relocation of part of the sidewalk. That motion died for lack of a second.

County spokesman Curt Preisser told *The Sarasota News Leader* on the afternoon of April 9 that no timeline has been set for creating the parking spaces. Staff will be meeting very soon with the contractor who will handle the work, he added.

THE BACKGROUND

Harriott's memo pointed out that the commissioners asked staff in May 2013 "to explore the feasibility of providing organized parking along North Shell Road. Currently," the memo continued, "parking is unorganized and hard to enforce by our Sarasota County Sheriff's Office."

Staff has been working since May 2013, Harriott told the commissioners on April 9, to figure out how to maximize the number of parking spaces on the road, which leads to Beach Access 1 on the north end of Siesta Key. The access overlooks Big Sarasota Pass.

Harriott and other county staff members organized meetings with residents "in an effort to address their concerns and design parking [options]," the memo said.

Photos Harriott presented showed double-parked vehicles on the road. He added, "I have heard upward of 50 vehicles" are in that area at one time.

The pavement is 24 feet at its widest, Harriott explained, though in most places, it ranges from 20 to 22 feet. However, the county right of way is 80 feet wide, which is "very wide for a local road," Harriott pointed out. Usually, 50 feet is the maximum amount of right of way on such a road, he noted. That expanse of right of way made the parking design possible.

Six other residents besides Eklund — most of whom also live in Solymar — urged the County Commission to take action to ameliorate the parking problems.

Lynne Hansen told the board that following her purchase of her Solymar house about



The Sarasota County Commission approved Option 3 for a parking plan on North Shell Road, with the elimination of the solitary space to the east of Solymar Drive. Image courtesy Sarasota County



Commissioners Joe Barbetta and Carolyn Mason favored Option 1. Image courtesy Sarasota County

two-and-a-half years ago, someone said to her, “Oh, you live by the lawless beach.”

“We just want enforceable parking in designated parking spaces,” said Chuck McGovern, who lives at the end of North Shell Road. Otherwise, he added, Sarasota County Sheriff’s deputies cannot cite people, a point they have made to him.

Still, Claudia Eklund — Paul’s wife — pointed out that whatever option was adopted “will be a complete waste of money unless there is enforcement, signage [such as] ‘No Parking, You Will Be Towed.’”

People commonly park right next to the fire hydrant, she added. “They don’t respect [it].”

During his presentation, Harriott also commented on the latter fact. “I don’t get it. I don’t understand it. As long as I’ve been alive, I think, it’s been illegal to park in front of a fire hydrant. People [here] do it all the time.”

He continued, “What the plans do is provide a formal area where the Sheriff’s Office can enforce where there’s parking allowed and where there’s not parking allowed.” Yet, if people refuse to abide by the law, he said, “There’s not a lot we can do to stop them.

THE DISCUSSION

When Patterson asked Harriott whether including the handicapped parking space in the plan would compromise the ability of drivers to turn around at the end of the road, he said, “It would not,” presuming illegal parking on the street did not impede such motion. “That space is completely outside the paved area,” he told her.

“You can have all the turnaround space you want,” Barbetta pointed out, “but if the fire truck can’t get down the street, it doesn’t do any good.”



(From left) Chairman Charles Hines, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson and Commissioner Nora Patterson participate in a recent board discussion. File photo

Barbetta said Emergency Services personnel had told him they preferred parking be allowed on only one side of the street.

Robinson noted she had received numerous emails from residents “saying all sorts of things [reportedly] from Emergency Services ... from no parking on the street to as little as possible and only at one end.”

County Administrator Tom Harmer said Fire Marshal Reed was in the audience, so he asked Reed to step to the podium.

For a road to permit Fire Department access, Reed explained, it has to have 20 feet of unobstructed width. Furthermore, he said, no one legally can park within seven-and-a-half feet of a fire hydrant. “That is something that’s very important for us, too.”

“So all of these options are OK?” Robinson asked of Harriott’s proposals.

“Yes,” Reed replied.

As the discussion wound down, Patterson noted, “If you were really going to please everybody, you couldn’t even accept the [option] with the least amount of parking, because there have been some objections to the handicapped spot down at the end [of the road].”

She added that she “really would like to see us try to preserve as much access as we can but make it safe and reasonable for people who have to live there.”

When Barbetta argued for “minimal intrusion” by restricting parking to one side, Robinson countered that public access to the beach is also important.

While she did not believe 40 cars should be allowed to park along the road at one time, Patterson said, she agreed with Robinson that as many spots as possible should be permitted because many people regularly go to that beach access.

“I think this is a balancing act,” Robinson added. “I understand that not everybody’s going to be happy.”

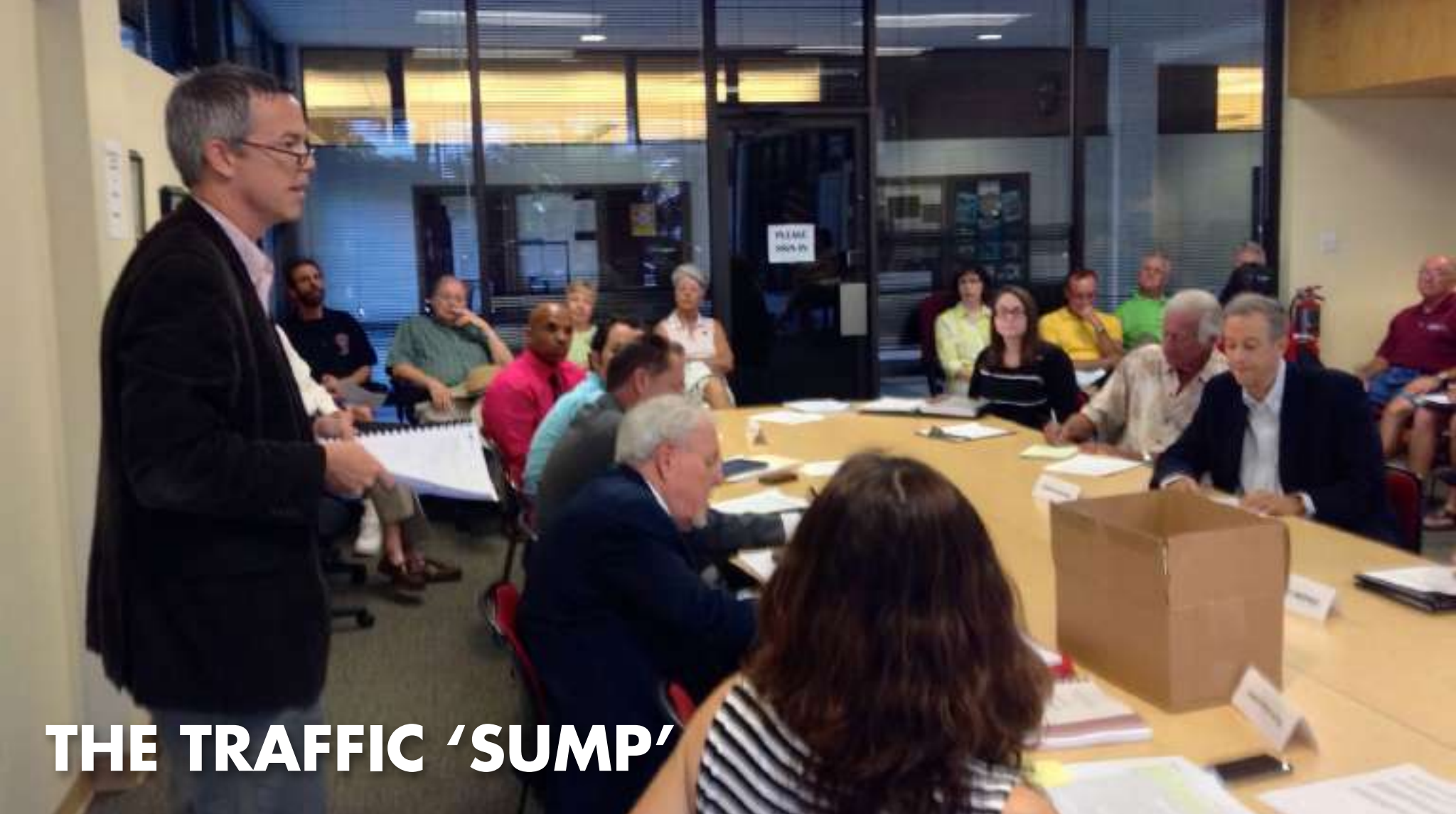
“I don’t care how many people get angry when it deals with public safety,” Barbetta replied.

“The key to that public safety is enforcement,” Hines pointed out. “So I’m really speaking to the Sheriff’s Office and our Emergency [Services] folks.” He added that people have to be informed that they no longer can park there illegally, “and if they continue, they’re [going to be] towed.” 

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THE TRAFFIC 'SUMP'

Chris Hatten with Kimley-Horn and Associates goes through the 'reviewed' traffic report for the Vue condominium complex to be built at U.S. 41 and the Ringling Causeway. Photo by Stan Zimmerman

LIGHTS TURNING GREEN FOR THE VUE

By Stan Zimmerman
City Editor

Drinking from a fire hose; swimming up a waterfall; fighting City Hall: These are expressions of human futility, people courting inevitable failure. The phrases all came to mind Monday morning, April 7, when downtown residents met with developers, consultants and city staffers to talk about traffic near the intersection of U.S. 41 and the John Ringling Causeway/Gulfstream Avenue.

For almost a decade, the old Holiday Inn site has stood vacant, the building demolished. A condominium complex was planned there in the past, but when the economy fell apart, so did the plans. About a year ago, the owners came forward with a new plan, a more

intensive plan, with 144 condominiums and 275 hotel rooms. They call it The Vue.

The rules, however, have changed over the past 10 years. For one thing, traffic concurrency regulations were eased in that part of Sarasota after the city approved a "transportation concurrency exception area" allowing a 125 percent overage, reflecting local knowledge that virtually all roads lead to downtown.

State regulations weakened, too. The Department of Community Affairs was abolished to the figurative sound of wild applause from the development community all over Florida. And as the local economy — meaning real estate and construction — started to

rebound, there was a feeling among policy-makers that they needed to facilitate and not handicap new development.

But arcane rules or “exception areas” were not on residents’ minds Monday. The focus was “traffic,” as in “too much.” This has been an epic tourist season with pent-up demand exploding in the South under the pressure of polar vortices; families have fled to the Florida sun. The congestion is the worst in living memory, and nowhere is it greater than at the junction of U.S. 41 and the Ringling Causeway. Traffic backups have become epic.

The addition of 400 new dwellings at The Vue have been seen as the final insult to the

residents of the existing condominiums in that area — those at the Ritz-Carlton and in One Watergate, plus the people living in Golden Gate Point.

A number of them trooped into City Hall to voice their concerns in January, to figuratively drink from the fire hose. To their credit, they were promised a sip. The city agreed to ask consulting firm Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc. to review the original traffic study for The Vue, which was released in October 2013.

TRAFFIC DÉJA VU

Three months later the (slightly) amended study was released. With one small exception, the findings were unchanged. “Based upon

“ *Based upon the analysis of the study roadway segments, the study ... segment of Gulfstream Avenue/John Ringling Causeway from Bird Key Drive to U.S. 41/Tamiami Trail is currently operating at an acceptable level of service and is expected to continue to operate at an acceptable level of service for future total traffic conditions.*

Transportation Impact Analysis
Kimley-Horn and Associates

”



The Vue will sit adjacent to One Watergate on the northwest corner of U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue/Ringling Causeway. Photo by Norman Schimmel

the analysis of the study roadway segments, the study roadway segment of Gulfstream Avenue/John Ringling Causeway from Bird Key Drive to U.S. 41/Tamiami Trail is currently operating at an acceptable level of service and is expected to continue to operate at an acceptable level of service for future total traffic conditions,” the study concludes.

You would be hard-pressed to get local residents to believe the traffic is “acceptable.” Art Levin lives at One Watergate. “On U.S. 41, traffic backs up to Sixth Street,” he said. “And the traffic backs up across the [Ringling] Bridge.”



Residents of condominiums at the intersection of U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue are concerned about the additional traffic the new Vue complex will generate. Photo by Norman Schimmel



An artist's rendering shows the design of The Vue. Image from the project [website](#)


One man said he relocated from Longboat Key to Bird Key because he could not get to the mainland during tourist season. And now, he added, “I can’t get out of there either, going east or west.”

While the study makes several recommendations, only the first one is the responsibility of the developer. The others include crosswalks on U.S. 41 in front of the Ritz-Carlton, better lighting, more signage (including flashing beacons) to safeguard pedestrians, and other plans.

The single proposal for the developer is that the firm furnish a five-foot-wide sidewalk to connect with existing sidewalks along U.S. 41 and the causeway. “The sidewalk should be designed to comply with the Americans

with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines,” the report says.

“These ADA issues are under discussion with the developer,” said City Engineer Alex DavisShaw. “There are no additional burdens on The Vue.”

“The city attorney says this meets the minimum legal standards, and I’ll be signing off on the traffic concurrency certificate,” explained Tim Litchet, the city’s chief of planning and development services. “The major holdup is concurrency. And once it is in writing, I will sign off on the administrative site plan approval. The building permit application for a foundation is under review and near completion.” 

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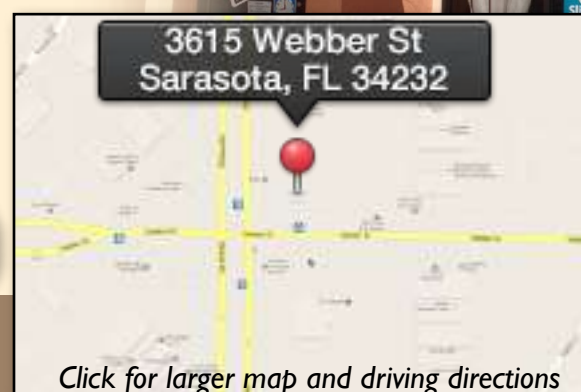
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SPINE ON TAP

Sarasota County staff maps show the planned route for Spine Road. Images courtesy Sarasota County

DECISION DELAYED ON STREET NEAR NEW PROPOSED BEE RIDGE COMMERCIAL ZONE

By Cooper Levey-Baker
Associate Editor

The Sarasota County Commission this week kicked the can down the road on a decision about, well, a road — a proposed north-south artery east of Interstate 75 that could one day connect Bee Ridge Road to University Parkway and Lakewood Ranch.

The move was prompted by a request from developer Richard Fischer, who is in the middle of asking the county to rezone seven acres on the north side of Bee Ridge, near the site where Bee Ridge intersects with Mauna

Loa Boulevard. A RaceTrac gas station is already planned for the northeast corner there; Terracap BR Partners' Bee Ridge Park of Commerce proposal would wrap around that station to the north and east. According to a staff report on the rezoning petition, Terracap wants to build a 77,000-square-foot retail and office building there, plus two smaller outbuildings.

“ We did all this years and years ago, because the county back then didn't want to plan for roads east of I-75. ”

Richard Fischer
Developer

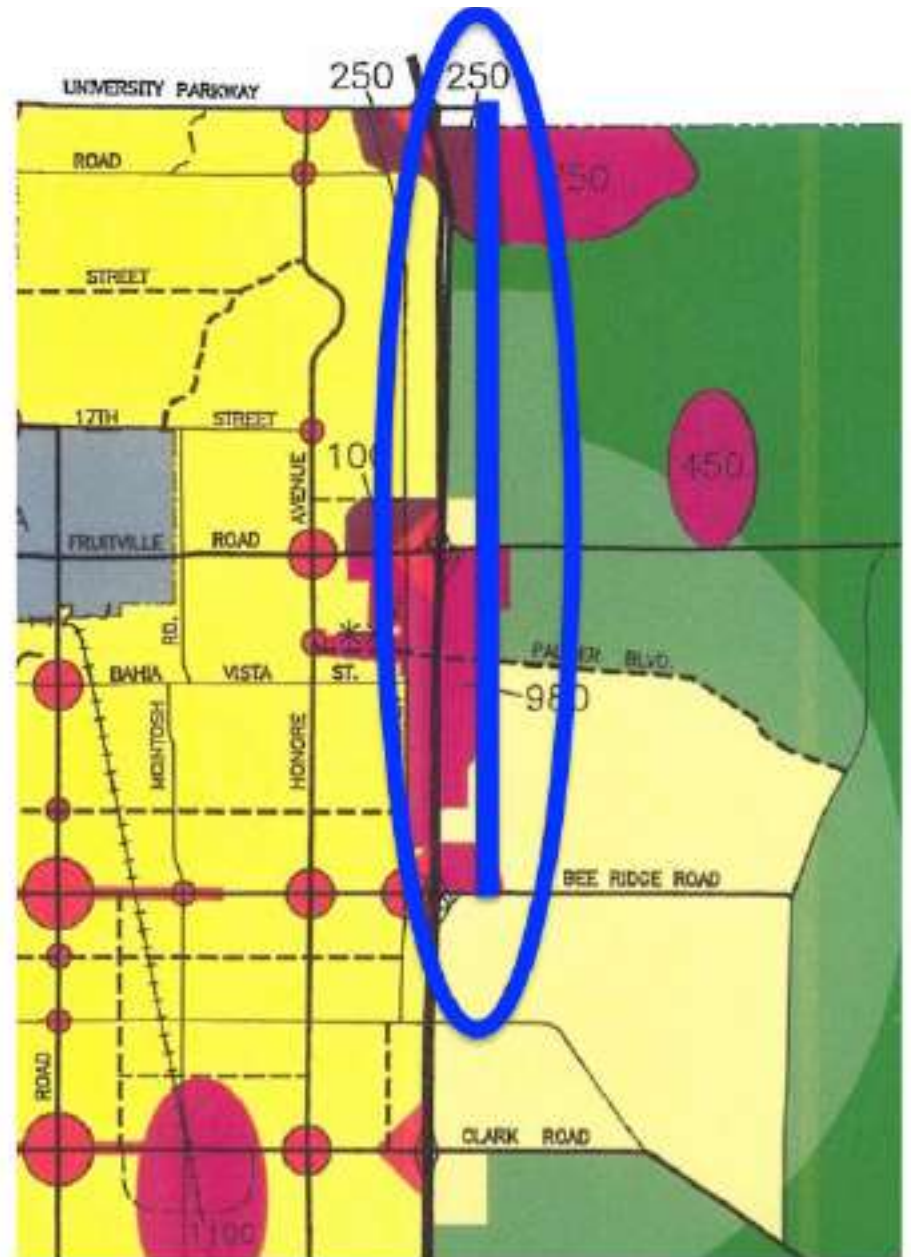
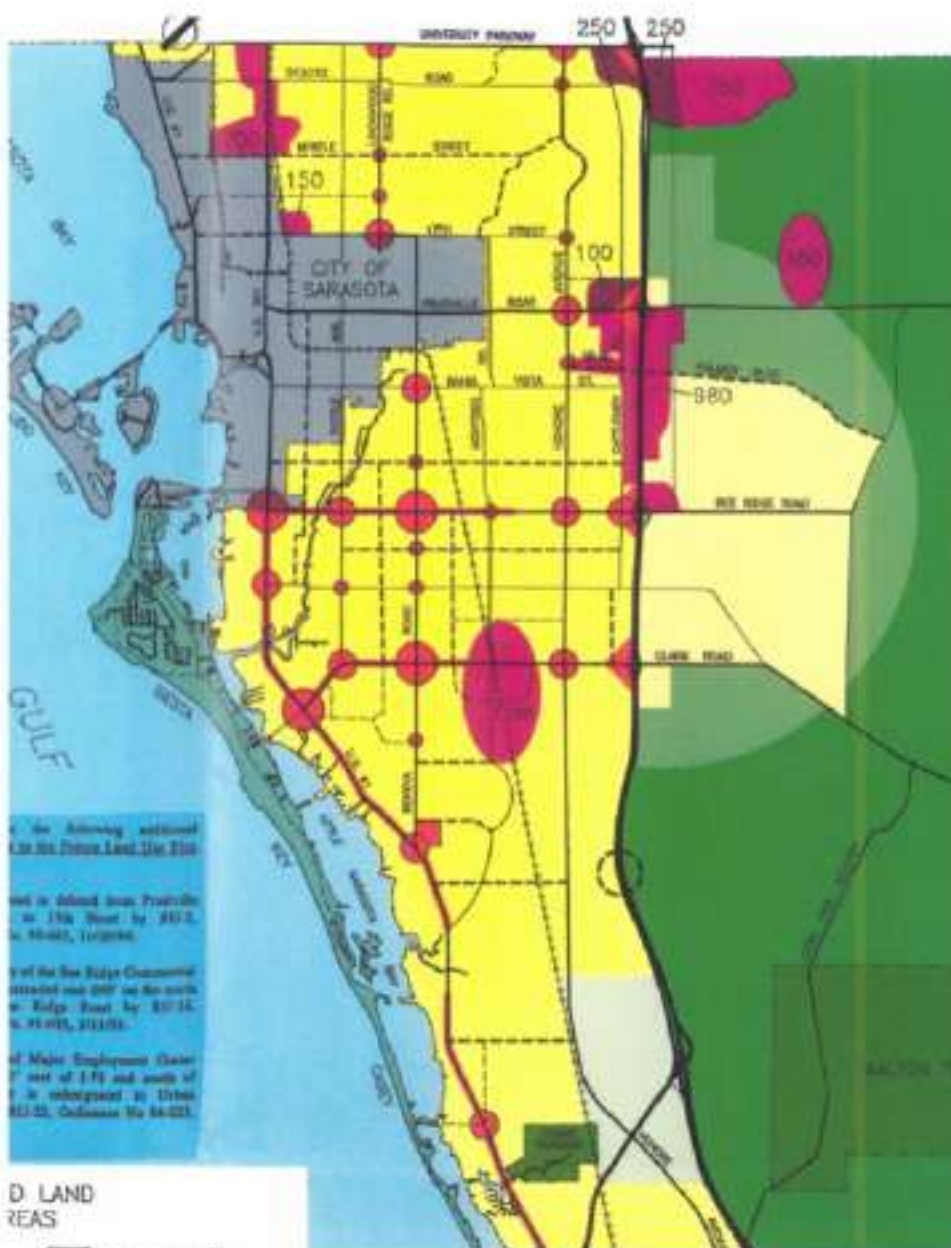
According to Thomas Matrullo, a member of the Bee Ridge Neighborhoods Association and the secretary of the Lake

Sarasota Community Group, neighbors are concerned about what the changes might mean. “A recent poll of Lake Sarasota residents shows that many who responded are concerned that the Bee Ridge Park of Commerce will present traffic, noise, and perhaps other problems for the quiet community directly across the road,” Matrullo wrote to the Planning Commission on April 3.

Neighbors are also concerned about Spine Road, a planned artery that would extend north from the Bee Ridge/Mauna Loa intersection and then west toward I-75, before turning back east, where it would hook up with Porter Road. Marked as a “future thoroughfare” in the county’s comprehensive plan, the road would create a much-needed

north-south corridor east of I-75 in an area of major interstate congestion. A primary cause of that congestion is local drivers who use I-75 to hop an exit or two.

But those who live nearby worry that Spine Road would dump traffic directly onto Mauna Loa, south of Bee Ridge. Mauna Loa is lined with single-family homes. “Mauna Loa, the main internal road for the wholly residential neighborhood of Lake Sarasota, would now become a segment of a north-south connector fed by at least seven significant east-west corridors: University, Fruitville, Palmer, Webber, Bee Ridge, Proctor and Clark,” Matrullo wrote in another letter, this one to the County Commission.



Fischer and Terracap BR Partners requested in January that Spine Road be removed from the county's map of future thoroughfares, the matter that was brought before the County Commission on April 9. Originally added to the county's comprehensive plan in 1989, Spine Road was removed in 1992 when residents realized it was drawn through existing homes. Then it was re-added in 1995, when it was redrawn to avoid breaking up neighborhoods.

Interim Transportation and Planning Director Jonathan Paul agreed with residents that it wouldn't be "appropriate" to increase traffic on Mauna Loa south of Bee Ridge, given that street's residential characteristics, but he did argue that Spine Road should be maintained

as a future thoroughfare. The route is "circuitous," he acknowledged, but it would still serve as a vital "north-south alternative to the interstate."

"There's definitely a need for connectivity in the community," he said.

The commission decided to punt on the issue, essentially delaying a decision till after it considers the broader rezoning petition Fischer and Terracap have submitted. That is scheduled to come to the board on May 21.

Fischer tells *The Sarasota News Leader* he's been working on the project since the 1980s. Coordinating with Lakewood Ranch developer Rex Jensen, he planned what he calls a




A graphic shows proposed connections to improve mobility on Sarasota County roads. Image courtesy Sarasota County

better north-south road east of the interstate that was later scrapped by the county.

“We did all this years and years ago, because the county back then didn’t want to plan for roads east of I-75,” Fischer says. “We, the developers of the community, knew we weren’t going to grow west into the Gulf of Mexico, so we planned these roads long before the county did.”

Fischer calls the county’s current Spine Road plan “cockamamie at best.”

“Nobody’s ever going to build this road,” he adds.

He requested that Spine be removed from the thoroughfare map, he says, because he believes its designation will impact rules for turn lanes around his Bee Ridge project. He feels frustrated by all the red tape that has held him up, reiterating his long-held desire for a north-south road. “I’m the one who created it, and they took it away from us,” he says. “This time it’s simply being used as a tool to make our lives more difficult.” 



Jonathan Paul is the interim transportation and planning director for Sarasota County. File photo



NO DEAL YET

The former site of the Sarasota Police Department is a cleared lot in front of the new police facility, which fronts on Adams Lane in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS HAD HOPED FOR A QUICK DIPLOMATIC AGREEMENT IN A DISPUTE OVER THE OLD SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT SITE, BUT THAT REMAINS OUT OF REACH

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

In 2003, the City of Sarasota agreed to deed to Sarasota County the property on which its Police Department stood in exchange for the county's vow to keep its primary operations in downtown Sarasota.

But the city never followed through on the transfer, and in January, the issue resurfaced as a simmering political debate between the two local governments.

On Jan. 14, the county commissioners opted to have the county's

and city's legal teams meet. At the heart of the issue is the county commissioners' desire to begin planning for expanded judicial and law enforcement facilities on Ringling Boulevard. They cannot do that, they point out, until the county owns the site. But before they will deed it over, city officials say they want reassurances the property will be used for public purposes only.

“ *It has been a decade.* ”

Joe Barbetta
Commissioner
Sarasota County

During the Tuesday, April 8, County Commission meeting, Chairman Charles Hines asked for an

update on the transfer. There is no deal yet, according to County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh.

Hines joined County Commissioner Joe Barbetta in voicing frustration over that news.

DeMarsh reported that when city and county representatives met most recently to address the matter — in March — they agreed the county would draft a proposal outlining the terms of the transfer of the property from the city to the county.

But the city attorney and his staff have been “reviewing old city files,” DeMarsh added, with the city attorney saying he first had to make certain the proper legal description of the parcel had been recorded. After the city has verified that, the county can send over a draft agreement.

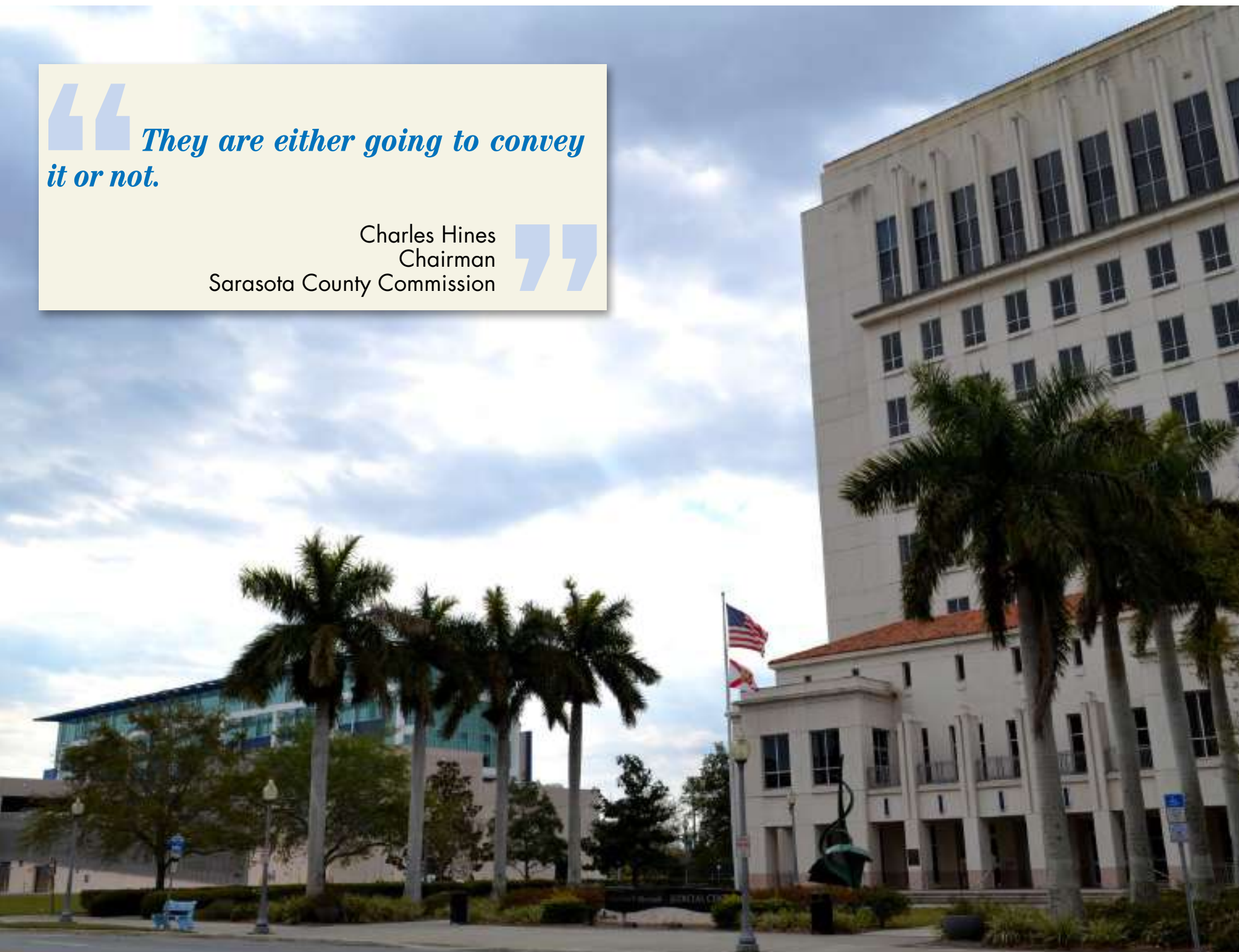
“So the city has agreed to convey it?” Hines asked.

Well, not exactly, DeMarsh replied. The next step would be for the City Commission and



They are either going to convey it or not.

Charles Hines
Chairman
Sarasota County Commission



The Silvertooth Judicial Center stands adjacent to the parcel where the Police Department once had its headquarters. Photo by Norman Schimmel

city staff to “discuss terms of a contract to convey” the property, DeMarsh pointed out. “Their most obvious [concern] is they want to make sure it is a public use.”

Hines then asked whether that was a condition of the 2003 agreement between the city and county.

The agreement did not require such a condition, according to the document. On July 15, 2003, a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by then-Mayor Lou Ann Palmer and then-County Commission Chairwoman Shannon Staub. “The county agrees to satisfy its facilities master plan for Court and Administration needs within the

downtown judicial complex area, and the City agrees to provide the county with the police facility site ready to build,” the document says.

“They are either going to convey it or not,” Hines said on April 8, “or convey it with conditions.”

“It has been a decade,” added Barbetta, referring to the date when the MOU was signed.

The commissioners’ displeasure reflected similar reactions earlier during Tuesday’s meeting, when the board grappled again with problems related to plans for a homeless shelter in Sarasota. (See the related story in this issue.)



An aerial view of a segment of Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota, shown to the County Commission in March 2013, includes the Criminal Justice Center (with Sheriff’s Office administrative facilities and the jail) across the street from the Silvertooth Judicial Center. The old Police Department is shown in the red box marked ‘Judicial Expansion Site.’ Image courtesy Sarasota County

There was even some talk Tuesday of using the old Police Department parcel for the shelter. Commissioner Carolyn Mason said that should be considered, but the idea ultimately was ruled out after Commissioner Nora Patterson convinced her colleagues “the negatives” of using the property for that purpose would outweigh the positive factors of having the shelter close to the judicial center and other offices that could provide services to the homeless.

The county Health Department is also on Ringling Boulevard.

Some nearby residents already have objected to county research into whether the downtown Sarasota County Area Transit transfer station could be relocated to a site on Ringling, because of the

additional pedestrian and vehicle traffic that would generate.

County leaders say they believe the former Police Department site is an important piece of the puzzle as they proceed with conceptual planning for county facilities on Ringling Boulevard. Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson has pointed out that the county eventually will get state funding for the extra judges it needs in the 12th Judicial Circuit, and those judges will have to have space to conduct court business.

The county Tax Collector’s Office and Supervisor of Elections Office are other facets of that master planning process. Headquartered in the Terrace Building at the southeast intersection of Ringling Boulevard and U.S. 301, they both are dealing with space constraints as well. 

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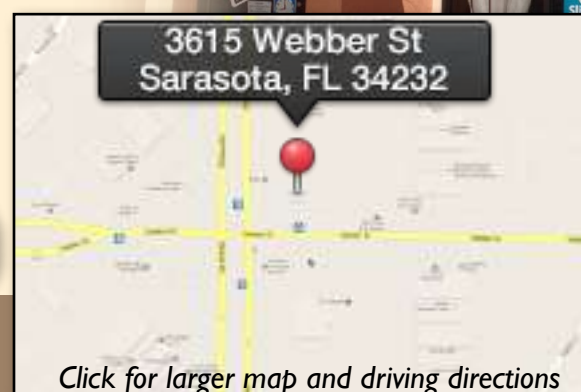
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A DISPUTE OVER NOISE



We're fighting quite a battle

James Aker
Attorney
For Bob's Boathouse



By order of a Special Magistrate, Bob's Boathouse has 45 days from March 21 to complete the removal of all nuisance and invasive vegetation on the property, a process that is under way. Photo by Norman Schimmel

THE ATTORNEY FOR BOB'S BOATHOUSE SAYS THE BUSINESS WILL DENY IT HAS VIOLATED A REVISED COUNTY ORDINANCE NEIGHBORS HAD HOPED WOULD BRING THEM PEACE

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The attorney for Bob's Boathouse on South Tamiami Trail told *The Sarasota News Leader* this week he plans to fight the noise citations that have been issued against the business since the Sarasota County Commission approved [a revised Air and Sound Pollution Ordinance](#) on March 19.

The board action followed pleas from residents living near businesses that offer live music, including people who live across Phillippi Creek from Bob's Boathouse.

Through March 30, one warning and five citations had been issued against Bob's Boathouse, county spokesman Curt Preisser

told the *News Leader* on April 8. The warning was on March 21, a day after the revised ordinance went into effect. That was followed by two citations on March 22, one on March 23, one on March 28 and one on March 30. Two other complaints about violations of the ordinance — both on March 30 — did not result in citations, Preisser said, based on county records.

As a result of the citations, Bob's Boathouse owes the county \$2,250, Preisser added. By law, the business has 30 days from the date a citation is issued either to pay a fine or to appeal it, he explained.

**Bob's Boathouse Certificate of Occupancy Punch List
Timeline for Completion of Activities**

Public Utility Department:

1. Fence needs to be installed at the Lift station. 60 days.
2. Crushed concrete to be installed with weed barrier in lift station area. 60 days.
3. Abandon the existing water service on back side of lift station. 60 days.
4. Record drawing Mylar's and disk with AutoCAD files are required. 60 days.

Natural Resources:

1. Install all watercourse buffers planting consistent with the approved watercourse buffer planting plan dated August, 10, 2010. 90 days.
2. Complete the removal of all nuisance and invasive vegetation on the property. 45 days.

Land Development:

The following is our list of deficiencies required to be completed for the subject site in order to receive final certification. Items 1-5 and 7 are required to be completed prior to the Engineer of Record, Cavoli Engineering, and certification. The Final Land Development Inspection will be completed per the as-built that are submitted.

1. The fence around the storm basin must be replaced per code. 60 days.
2. Landscape must be checked for compliance with the permitted plans and certified complete by a registered Landscape Architect. 60 days.

Zoning Administration:

1. Lighting Plan- Submit a photometric lighting plan to the Zoning Administrator for review and approval. 60 days
2. Lighting Plan – Complete installation according to lighting plan. 120 days.

Building:

Final inspections need to be scheduled and approved on the following permits prior to final Certificate of Occupancy:

1. Permit No. 12 102936- Dumpster Enclosure. 60 days.
2. Permit No. 12 102935- Storm water retention structure. 60 days.

“We’re still within the 30 days” for the first one,” attorney James Aker told the *News Leader* on April 8. He added that his response would not be appeals. “We plan to deny the claim,” he said. Asked to elaborate, Aker replied that he could not. “That’s work product. ... That will come later.”

A resident who lives close to the establishment at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail, who asked not to be identified, told the *News Leader* this week that neighbors still are complaining about “deep thumping bass music coming into River Forest from [the] outdoor band” at Bob’s Boathouse. After a Sarasota County Sheriff’s deputy drove away one day recently, following the issuance of another citation, neighbors across Phillippi Creek said the band’s next song was Eric Clapton’s *I Shot the Sheriff*, the resident reported.

Additionally, the resident told the *News Leader*, people have complained that “the business [has] sent its bullies back onto our neighborhood streets,” after deputies have responded to Bob’s Boathouse regarding noise violations. Recently, the resident added, one vehicle from the restaurant was observed “peeling out in a complainant’s driveway and nearly hitting another [vehicle].”

THE LEGAL PROCESS

County spokesman Preisser explained to the *News Leader* that someone who has received a citation like those lodged against Bob’s Boathouse has three options: Pay the fine in person at the Office of the Clerk of Court and County Comptroller; pay it by mail, with a check sent to the Clerk of Court; or deny the violation and submit a request for a hearing to the county Code Enforcement Office. If a



The sign for Bob's Boathouse stands near the entrance to the property, which is located at 5515 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. File photo

person chooses that last option, he said, the person gets a notice from the Office of the County Attorney telling him the date of the hearing before the Special Magistrate.

If a person who has received a citation fails to pay it or contest it — or does not show up for the hearing after requesting that option — the person receives a civil penalty of \$500.

Ultimately, Preisser said, if no payment or any other resolution of the matter takes place after 90 days from the time the citation was issued, the county turns over the case to a collection agency.

THE PUNCH LIST

Not only is Bob’s Boathouse contending with the noise violations, it also is working to complete the list of items county staff has deemed

necessary before the business can earn a Certificate of Occupancy (CO).

County Building Official Greg Yantorno notified representatives of the establishment on Jan. 31 that the county would not issue a third Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) because the business had 19 outstanding items on a “punch list” that had to be completed, in spite of the county’s having made clear to the owners in late December that those must be finished.

Following a March 21 hearing, Special Magistrate Meg Wittmer gave the business 120 days to complete the remaining 12 items

on the list. Another hearing is scheduled for May 23, when the business will have to provide Wittmer an update on its progress.

On April 8, attorney Aker told the *News Leader*, “Things seem to be moving along satisfactorily in regard to that [list],” except for a delay on the part of county staff regarding one item. That work — capping off water service to the property from the east — is holding up three other items on the list, all fences that have to be installed, Aker noted. The holdup was related to a county employee’s leave because of a family emergency, he said he understood. The staff member has to approve the work, he added.



James Aker, the attorney for Bob's Boathouse, hands a document on March 21 to Assistant Sarasota County Attorney David Pearce. At right is county Code Enforcement Officer Kevin Burns. Photo by Rachel Hackney

The hole has been dug for the capping, he pointed out, and the owners have secured a \$15,000 bond the county required for the work.

The effort to complete the landscaping on the list also has proven problematic, he said. Invasive vegetation on the Phillippi Creek bank has to be removed, he added, “and that stuff — it’s been sprayed three or four times now and it’s been hard to kill.”

“I’m hopeful that it will be quite soon,” he said in reference to the timeline for finishing the remaining items on the punch list. “We’re working on this daily.”

Going back to the noise issues, Aker continued, “We’re fighting quite a battle,” noting the

complaints are coming from “just a couple of people.”

In late March, he said, Bob’s Boathouse was cited on a Sunday when it was hosting a charity event. For every person complaining, he pointed out, thousands have been enjoying activities at the restaurant. “The music is not that loud.”

While residents continue to vent frustrations to the County Commission — as recently as email on April 3 — Commissioner Joe Barbetta has explained that the matter of whether the business ultimately is allowed to remain open lies with the Special Magistrate. “It is out of our hands,” he wrote. 



The front entrance to Bob’s Boathouse is marked by boats. File photo

COMING ATTRACTION



THE COUNTY COMMISSION EXTENDS THE PERIOD OF A \$1.75-MILLION GRANT FOR A NEW RINGLING COLLEGE SOUNDSTAGE AND POST-PRODUCTION STUDIO

By Roger Drouin
County Editor

In spring of 2012, Harmony Korine, director of the comedy/drama *Spring Breakers*, spent five days shooting scenes for the movie at the Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota. More than 80 people worked on the film on campus, along with a number of student interns.

Although the students in the crew for the Hollywood production operated cameras, they did not handle the video or audio editing.

The hope at Ringling College, however, is that type of situation soon will be part of the past. They say a planned soundstage and

(Above) A Ringling College student sets up a night shot. Photo courtesy Ringling College

post-production studio at the private arts college could open the door to a variety of film projects — including more Hollywood movies like *Spring Breakers*.

“They could have done post-production here, had we had the soundstage here,” Christine Meeker Lange, the college’s special assistant to the president for media relations, told *The Sarasota News Leader*. “This facility can open opportunities here.”

It will not be cheap, though.

This week, Sarasota County officials, who have set a long-term goal to draw major film projects to the region, renewed financial support for the soundstage and post-production studio. On Tuesday, the County Commission unanimously approved an extension of a \$1.75-million economic development



2012 Ringling College alumnus Jason Letkiewicz on the set of his student-produced music video, which debuted at No. 1 on mtv.com. Photo courtesy Ringling College



A Ringling College student works on a daytime set. Photo courtesy Ringling College

Financial Incentive Grant that will help fund construction of the facilities, complete with high-tech equipment.

SOMETHING UNIQUE

In December 2010, the County Commission initially approved the grant, but it had expired. The college had been working on the project design, and it had not spent any of the \$1.75 million, according to an April 8 memo to the commission from Jeff Maultsby, the county's director of business and economic development.

Over the past few years, the soundstage has become a goal for Ringling.

In April 2010, the college pitched a plan to turn the 72-year-old Municipal Auditorium into a soundstage for movie production. But Ringling College President Larry Thompson withdraw his proposal after an array of community groups said the auditorium filled an essential role in the community and protested its closing for use as a soundstage.



I like it even better.

Nora Patterson
Commissioner
Sarasota County



The college also moved away from another plan to renovate its Ann and Alfred Goldstein Center



Ringling College students set up a movie scene. Photo courtesy Ringling College

to create a soundstage and studio. Instead, the college is opting for a new facility.

Because of current infrastructure demands and the Goldstein Center's configuration, college administrative staff concluded the renovation was not a viable option, Meeker Lange told the *News Leader* Wednesday.

A plan to build the soundstage was also found to be more cost-effective than restoring the center. Additionally, the project will allow the college to create something unique, "distinguishing the entire operation from other soundstages and post-production studios, making it attractive to producers and directors," according to the county memo.

"The scope of the project has changed, some of which is still under confidential considerations by Ringling College," Maultsby told the commissioners Tuesday.

The college will submit updated plans to the county in several weeks, Meeker Lange told the *News Leader*.

AN AGREEMENT

A lot of preliminary work still has to take place, and additional college funding must be identified, before construction can begin, Meeker Lange said. Some of the money the college has already raised for its film program might be available for the project.

A new facility and the technological array that will fill it will cost upwards of the \$1.75 million county grant. "We are talking bricks and mortar and all the equipment," Meeker Lange said.

The soundstage, which will be part of the college's Digital Filmmaking Lab, has the



Ringling College students film an interview with actor Forest Whitaker. Photo courtesy Ringling College

potential to help distinguish the college's young film program. That initiative began in 2008, making it the "ingénue" amid far more established programs in New York and Los Angeles.

In addition to providing an opportunity for students to work alongside film professionals, the college has touted the soundstage as an economic generator for the county.

"We can employ people and bring more projects to Sarasota," Meeker Lange pointed out.

One thing that is clear is that the college's current film facilities remain a work in progress. For example, its equipment is not sufficiently high-tech to help the region become a film mecca. "We don't have something that meets our needs, something a professional can use," Meeker Lange said.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said she liked the concept of a brand-new, post-production facility. "I like it even better" than the original renovation concept, Patterson added.

The County Commission's grant extension will keep the \$1.75 million available for the new soundstage. In exchange, the college has agreed to follow the county's recently adopted local hiring initiative and also to make the post-production facility available to outside companies and filmmakers. "The use of the facility and equipment by private business/individuals will take precedence over the

use by Ringling College students or faculty," according to the county memo.

BUILDING A REPUTATION

Since starting its film program in 2008, Ringling College has been burnishing its reputation for the program and its movie projects.


Last year, the college made *The Hollywood Reporter's* list of 25 Best Film Schools for the second time in three years. Altogether, 2013 was a **banner year** for the college in the film and entertainment industry. 2011 alumnus Jason Letkiewicz received an Emmy nom-

ination for his *I'm Positive* television campaign for MTV, two student films won Student Academy Awards for animation and a production by motion design stu-

dents was selected as the commercial for the Sarasota Film Festival. Last summer, the college produced *The Lucky 6*, a student feature film that premiered at the Sarasota Film Festival this week.

The arts school also has been involved with some nationally known productions besides *Spring Breakers*. For example, it helped in the shooting of the crime drama **Free Ride**, starring Anna Paquin.

"We filmed one day inside the old Sarasota High School and had some interns who transformed one of the classrooms into a first-grade classroom," Meeker Lange said. "They edited part of that film in our film editing bays on campus."

The movie was shot entirely in Sarasota County. 



This facility can open opportunities here.

Christine Meeker Lange
Special Assistant to the President
For Media Relations





PLANNING FOR DISASTER

Sarasota County staff has said the Bolivar Peninsula in Texas, shown after Hurricane Ike devastated it in 2008, is similar geographically to Sarasota County's barrier islands. Image from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

SARASOTA COUNTY HOMEOWNERS WILL HAVE TO ABIDE BY THE STATE BUILDING CODE WITH REDEVELOPMENT FOLLOWING ANY CATASTROPHE, THE COUNTY'S COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGER SAYS

By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

The Florida Building Code and regulations of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be the ultimate guides to rebuilding Sarasota County if it ever suffers a major catastrophe like Hurricane Charley, which struck Charlotte County in 2004, Laird Wreford, Sarasota County's coastal resources manager, told about 35 people during the April 3 meeting of the Siesta Key Association (SKA).

In an effort to provide as much certainty as possible about how homeowners, especially, can deal with the aftermath of a natural disaster, Sarasota County staff has been working on a Post Disaster Response Plan (PDRP) since 2007, Wreford explained. The effort was put on hiatus following the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, he pointed out, because staff was diverted to overseeing contingency

“*At this moment in the draft, we do not have language that changes what the normal code would provide for.*”

Laird Wreford
Manager
Coastal Resources
Sarasota County



Photos show a segment of the Bolivar Peninsula in Texas in September 2008, before and after Hurricane Ike struck it. Images from the U.S. Geological Survey

plans in the event oil made it to the Sarasota County shoreline.

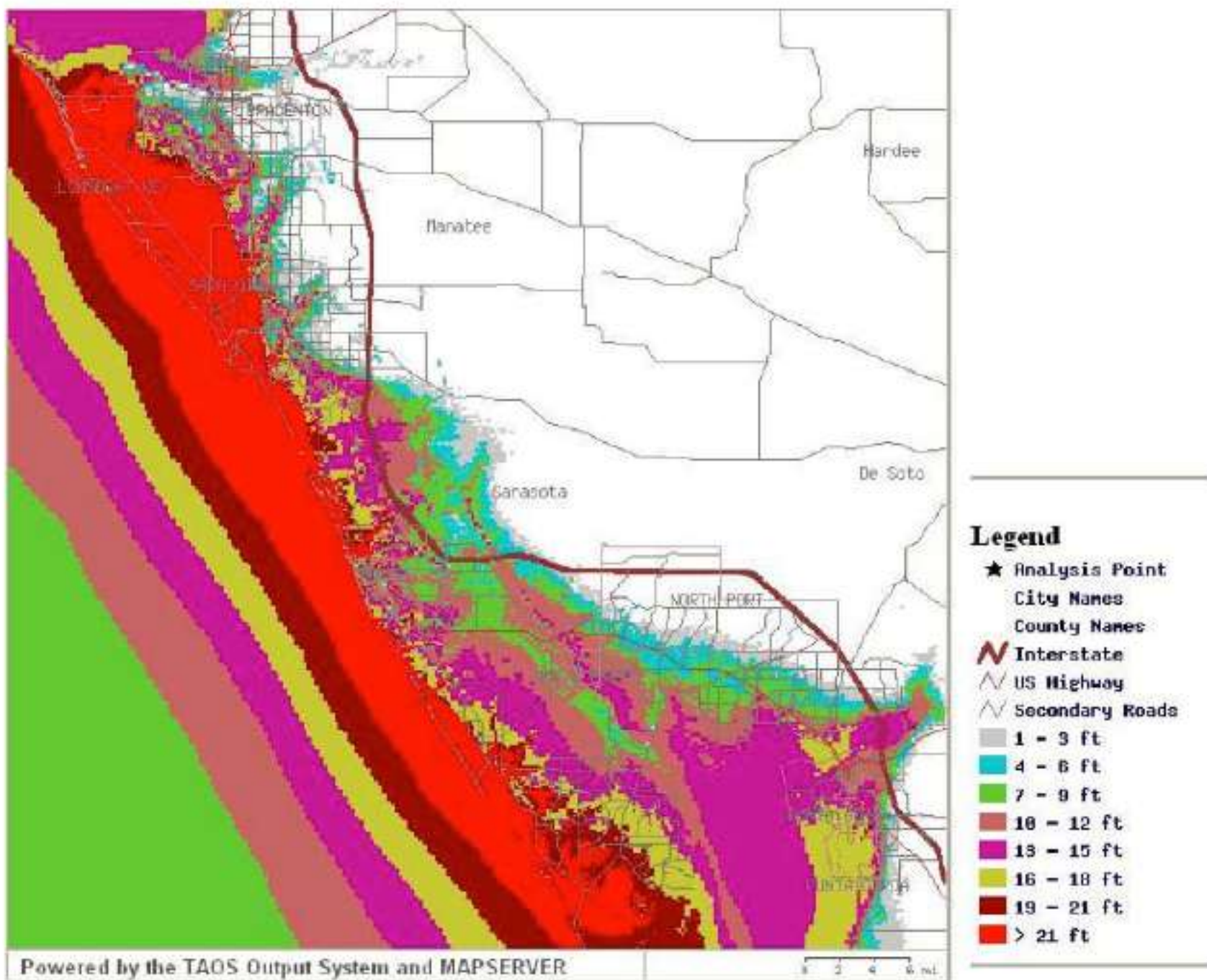
Over the past months, however, the PDRP has been put back on track, he said. Two public meetings have been scheduled, he continued, to renew residents' participation in the process.

A North County workshop will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 29, at Twin Lakes Park, located at 6700 Clark Road in Sarasota. A South County session will be held the

following day — again, from 6 to 8 p.m. — at the Venice Community Center, located at 326 Nokomis Ave. in Venice.

Then the Sarasota County Commission will discuss the PDRP on June 11, following staff's compilation of the feedback from the two workshops, Wreford noted.

Residents also will be welcome to send questions or comments about the plan to PDRP@sarasotagov.net or to read up-to-date information on the project by visiting the county



Category 5 Storm Surge

A map created with Federal Emergency Management Agency software shows the expected storm surge in Sarasota County as a result of a Category 5 hurricane strike. Image courtesy Sarasota County

website and then going to the information page for the [PDRP](#).

The draft PDRP was expected to be available early this week, he said, though a *Sarasota News Leader* search could not locate it on the information page on April 8.

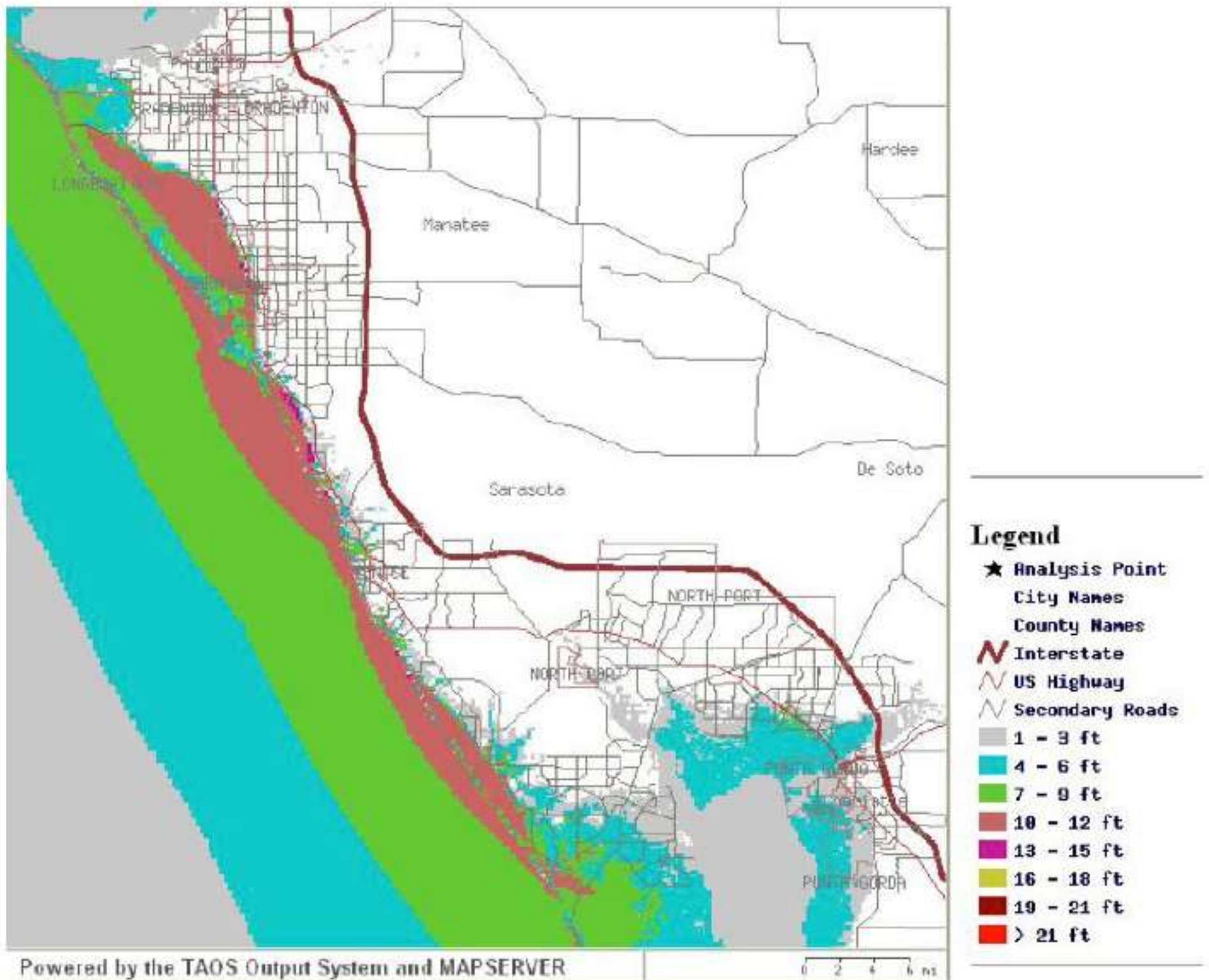
A NECESSARY UNDERTAKING

To emphasize the need for the PDRP, Wreford showed the audience two slides taken of the Bolivar Peninsula near Galveston, TX, in

2008. The first was shot before Hurricane Ike made landfall; the second, six days later. “[It] looks like nuclear winter,” Wreford said of the “after” photo.

The Bolivar Peninsula, he explained, “is very much like our Sarasota County barrier islands.”

Hurricane Ike was just a Category 2 storm, he pointed out. Yet, the ability of the fetch to build up across a long expanse of the Gulf of Mexico resulted in the water having a



A map created with federal software shows the areas expected to be affected by storm surge from a Category 2 hurricane. Image courtesy Sarasota County



Laird Wreford, manager of coastal resources for Sarasota County, addresses Siesta Key Association members on April 3. Photo by Rachel Hackney

“pile-driving” effect on the structures, he continued. “We need to plan for and be able to respond to those kinds of issues.”

In the second slide, Wreford noted one the few houses that remained standing. The story goes that the owner used “a special experimental technique” when he constructed it, Wreford added. “Word [also] is that he watched the storm from inside the house ...”

Wreford then showed the audience slides projecting how far inland storm surge could flow in Sarasota County as a result of hurricanes rated Category 1 through Category 5.

Those graphics, he said, underscore “how vulnerable we are.”

SKA member Bob Luckner, who said he used to live in Texas, noted that the storm surge from Ike stopped more than 20 miles inland, a distance greater than Lakewood Ranch is from Siesta Key.

With the potential for devastation, many questions have arisen about how redevelopment would be handled on the county’s barrier islands, Wreford acknowledged. He commended representatives of the Barrier Island League of Sarasota County, which incorporates Casey, Manasota and Siesta keys, for their work on the housing chapter of the PDRP. Catherine Luckner, vice president of the SKA, and Dennis Doughty, president of the Casey Key Association, both were integral in that process, he said.

The PDRP will include a scenario matrix to try to help homeowners enjoy as much certainty as possible about what they will be able to do in terms of rebuilding, based on a number of factors relative to their houses, such as the

level of damage, its location and its elevation, Wreford explained.

Referring to the Florida Building Code, he continued, “That trumps our PDRP. ... We cannot override or dictate to the Florida Building Code what it says.”

The county’s Building Department is expected to complete that matrix “very soon,” Wreford added. “I think that that’s going to be, in itself, a big benefit to the community.”

When resident Diane Erne asked whether the PDRP would address condominium complexes as well as single-family homes, Wreford replied that it would. “Siesta is fairly unique,” he said, in that it has many of those complexes as well as commercial enterprises, distinguishing it from other barrier islands in the county.

One of the primary goals of the PDRP, he continued, will be to lay out guidelines for redevelopment so it “will be done in a more sustainable fashion, more resilient, so as to try to avoid repetitive loss.”

THE HARD QUESTIONS

“There are two or three really kind of knotty policy questions,” Commissioner Nora Patterson, a guest at the meeting, pointed out. First, she said she believed that, based on the current county code, if someone were to demolish some of the bigger condominium complexes existing today, those structures could not be rebuilt with the same density and height.

“Correct,” Wreford responded.

“If a storm came and essentially necessitated scraping [remains of structures to the

Florida Post-Disaster Redevelopment Planning Initiative

The Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and Division of Emergency Management have begun a three-year post-disaster redevelopment planning initiative that will culminate in a guidebook that can be used by local governments to prepare a Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan (PDRP) for their community. All of Florida's coastal counties and municipalities, a total of 203 communities, are required to adopt a PDRP and most have stated their intent to do so in their comprehensive plan. The state recommends that "these plans should, at minimum, establish long-term policies regarding redevelopment, infrastructure, densities, nonconforming uses, and future land use patterns (§163.3177(7)(I) F.S.). In addition, inland communities are also encouraged under Florida Statutes to prepare PDRPs. In the aftermath of the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, there has been an increased awareness of the need for sound and feasible guidance for both coastal and inland jurisdictions undertaking this planning process. The state has commenced this essential initiative with funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration through the Coastal Management Program of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The program is being overseen by a focus group comprised of knowledgeable individuals representing federal, state, regional, and local organizations, as well as the academic community.

The initiative is being conducted in three phases, spanning from 2007 to 2009. The goal of the **first phase**, recently completed, was to develop draft guidelines for post-disaster redevelopment planning. These guidelines are based on an extensive literature review, assessment of existing PDRPs, and focus group input.

The key component of the initiative lies in the **second phase** in which the draft PDRP Guidelines are being tested on pilot communities to determine their effectiveness in providing assistance to local governments preparing PDRPs. Each community is provided a planning consultant that will guide the community in their planning process and develop the PDRP based on community inputs as well as the draft guidelines. The pilot communities will be models for the rest of the state, possibly even the nation, and will also assist in creating realistic planning guidance that is flexible enough to meet the needs of all of Florida's diverse communities. The pilot communities chosen include Hillsborough County, Manatee County, Nassau County, Panama City, Polk County, and Sarasota County.

The **third phase** will provide an objective analysis of the draft PDRP Guidelines as tested on the pilot communities and will result in lessons learned to be incorporated into the final PDRP Guidebook. This guidebook will be the latest addition to the Best Practices Series published by the DCA. In addition, recommendations for legislative changes that will complement the guidebook will be developed to clarify the minimum requirements of a PDRP for those communities who are required to develop a plan. Regional workshops will be conducted to educate local communities on the new guidebook and to announce grant opportunities for communities interested in developing PDRPs according to the guidance.

ground] and starting again, would you be able to rebuild to today's density and height?" she asked.

His understanding, Wreford told her, is that if a complex were destroyed by a storm — "an act of God kind of situation" — "for the vast majority of cases ... almost always, the same number of units would be allowed to be rebuilt."

That was when Patterson told him it was her understanding that other areas working on PDRPs have chosen to recommend less density during the rebuilding process. However,

she told Wreford, "I'm assuming you're not making that recommendation," based on his earlier comments.

"At this moment in the draft, we do not have language that changes what the normal code would provide for," Wreford said.

Then people would be able to rebuild the complexes as the structures exist today, Patterson clarified his answer.

While that is correct, Wreford confirmed, he said part of the discussion with the County Commission will focus on policy direction for the PDRP.



Nonetheless, Patterson continued, he had pointed out earlier that owners would have to abide by the Florida Building Code in reconstructing condominium complexes, and the code “in many, many instances is a whole lot more demanding” than it was when the buildings were erected.

Further, she said, “I’m assuming that you can’t rebuild ignoring FEMA, either.”

“Correct,” Wreford told her.

“Which means that all kinds of things will have to be elevated,” Patterson noted.

“In many cases, yes, they will,” he replied.

Further, he said, “Some buildable lots will no longer be” because of insufficient fill.

In response to an audience member’s question, Wreford said Bolivar Peninsula residents have “been fairly slow in getting back up and running ... well, because they didn’t have a PDRP like we’re going to have.”

Wreford also explained that staff is working on the best means of providing residents with the most updated records regarding their properties, material that will be invaluable during a recovery. With such documentation in hand, a resident would be able to hand a

building official a thumb drive or CD with the records and speed up the permitting process for redevelopment. Further, satellite permit stations would be established in the field, he said.

DOWN THE ROAD

Wreford explained that the County Commission will hold a public hearing before the PDRP is adopted. After its adoption, however, he noted, “It is going to be an evolution-type plan. ... As time goes on, there’s going to be a need for ever-increasing specificity ... and things added to it.”

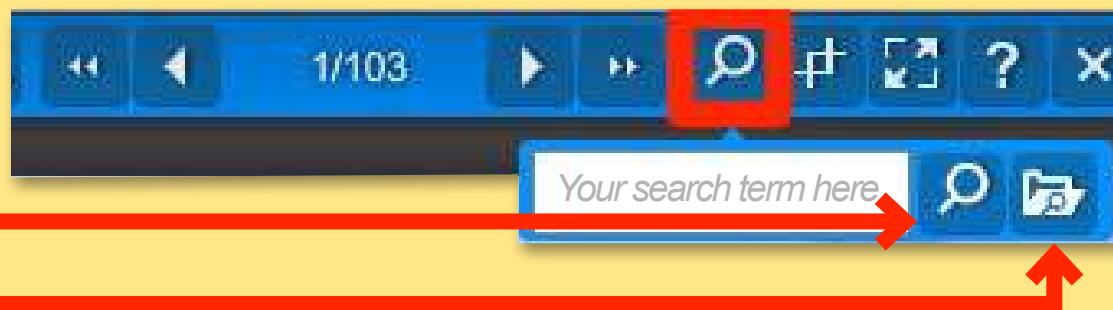
Doughty of the Casey Key Association, who also was present for the discussion, said, “We shouldn’t rely 100 percent on the government to be helping us [after a disaster].” The final draft of the plan needs to encourage private citizens and business owners to take steps on their own in preparation for a catastrophic event, he added.

Wreford characterized the development of the PDRP as “a chance under blue-sky conditions to calmly think through scenarios: “What is the best for the community as a whole” and for the mainland and barrier islands separately. **SNL**

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CITY BUDGET CYCLE TO BEGIN



The City Commission's first budget workshop will begin at 2 p.m. on April 14 at City Hall. Photo by Norman Schimmel

ON MONDAY, THE CITY COMMISSION WILL GET ITS FIRST LOOK AT A DRAFT OF ITS 2015 FISCAL YEAR SPENDING PLAN

By Stan Zimmerman

City Editor

On Monday, April 14, the Sarasota City commissioners will get their first peek at staff's draft of the next fiscal year's budget. City Finance Director John Lege, who has been collecting the budget requests of each city department, will present an overview during the 2 p.m. workshop.

One new wrinkle Lege still was wrestling with at press time was how to incorporate a commission directive to apply a 3-percent cap on increases in general fund expenses, using a system similar to a charter amendment approved by voters in the City of Venice.

While the City Commission, on a 3-2 vote, approved the exploration of such a cap (with Commissioner Susan Chapman and Vice Mayor Willie Shaw opposed), even supporters were not enthusiastic about it. Commissioner Suzanne Atwell, who had the swing vote, said, "I'm willing to listen, but I'm leery of capping funds. We have issues coming up — a homeless shelter, a parking deficit."

Lege told *The Sarasota News Leader* he will not be posting lengthy or complicated financial documents as part of the agenda backup material. Instead, he will try to make a short and succinct presentation during the workshop.

The “Venice solution” was proposed by Mayor Shannon Snyder during the April 7 City Commission meeting. He said it “gives more predictability to future taxes.”

Deputy City Attorney Mike Connolly noted the Venice charter amendment “did not cap the millage rate.” Instead, it requires Venice City Commission approval if the Venice city manager wants to offer his board a budget with a general fund showing an increase of more than 3 percent compared to the general fund of the previous fiscal year budget.

This is not as easy as Connolly makes it sound, because the general fund comprises only about 30 percent of the total budget, or \$18 million of Sarasota’s \$60-million budget (using rounded numbers). Any increase in the Sarasota County Property Appraiser’s roll — as property values begin to climb out of the recessionary slump — would be added to the budget even if the millage rate were held constant.

Using rough figures, Lege scratched out a scenario in which a 10-percent jump in the tax roll would push the general fund beyond the 3-percent cap Snyder suggests.

As property values fell, many other cities in Florida raised their tax rates to compensate. Sarasota held its rate constant and coped with the reduced income by laying off about 30 percent of the city payroll and tapping deeply into city reserves.


Lege will first review the past fiscal year’s budget with the commissioners on Monday, pointing out how the reality compared



The City Commission will start on its 2015 fiscal year budget next week, though the County Commission already has had workshops on its 2015 spending plan. Photo by Norman Schimmel

with the estimates used in its preparation. Members of the public can follow along if they use the city’s new *Popular Annual Financial Report*, available at City Hall, or they can go online at <http://sarasotagov.org/PDF/FIN/PAFR/2013%20PAFR.pdf>.

From there, Lege will look at the current year’s budget, now at the halfway mark. Then he will begin to point out the Fiscal Year 2014-15 projections for revenues and expenses. He will conclude his presentation with a set of questions, seeking direction from the City Commission to refine or change the proposed budget that will start Oct. 1.

As always this time of year, one imponderable facet of the budget process is how it might be affected by action of the Florida Legislature. House and Senate members in Tallahassee still have two more weeks before adjournment. 



The public once again will be welcome at Warm Mineral Springs, starting Saturday, April 12. Photo courtesy Sarasota County

WARM MINERAL SPRINGS TO REOPEN AT 9 A.M. ON APRIL 12

About eight-and-a-half months after it closed, [Warm Mineral Springs](#) will reopen at 9 a.m. on April 12, but for swimming only, Sarasota County has announced.

National and State Parks Concessions Inc., which won a short-term bid from the county and the City of North Port, “will oversee operations at Florida’s only naturally formed warm mineral spring,” a county news release says.

Warm Mineral Springs will remain open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through the end of August, according to terms of the bid. Guests are encouraged to bring their own lawn or beach chairs, the news release notes.

Entry prices follow:

- Adults 18 and older — \$15 per resident; \$20 per non-resident.
- Students ages 6 to 17 — \$11.25 per resident; \$15 per non-resident.
- Children ages 5 and under — \$7.50 per resident; \$10 per non-resident.
- Ten-day passes (days do not have to be consecutive) — adult residents, \$112.50; non-residents, \$170.
- Monthly pass — \$150 for adult residents; \$200 for non-residents.

Spa services will not be available during this period, the news release points out. Additionally, previously issued 10-day passes are no longer valid, the release adds.

GILLESPIE PARK PLAYGROUND REOPENS WITH NEW EQUIPMENT

The new playground at Gillespie Park has opened for tots and school-age children, the City of Sarasota has announced.

Three play areas — including swings, slides and climbing structures — are available in the northwest corner of the park, a news release points out. The modern equipment is designed to help children bolster their dexterity and eye-hand coordination, the release adds.

The playground equipment previously in place was approximately 20 years old, so an update of the facility was necessary, the release notes. The project cost approximately \$90,000, it says.

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



A child enjoys a new slide in Gillespie Park. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota

COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVES NEW GRAFFITI ORDINANCE

On a unanimous vote April 9, the Sarasota County Commission approved a revised ordinance declaring graffiti a public nuisance and prohibiting it on private property.

No one addressed the board during a public hearing before the vote was taken. Commissioner Carolyn Mason made the motion to approve the ordinance changes, adding, "Let's get 'er done."

At the recommendation of staff, property owners first will be contacted with a request to remove graffiti from a site, a memo to the commission explains. If voluntary compliance does not result, "then staff may utilize the Special Magistrate process and/or immediate abatement process in which a contractor will be hired to remove or obscure the graffiti," the memo adds.

The revised ordinance dealing with the matter includes new language saying, "Graffiti is an aesthetic blight that adversely affects and

impairs the value of neighboring properties, and otherwise threatens the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Sarasota County."

The law describes graffiti as "any inscription, word, figure, design, painting, sticker, adhesive, writing, drawing or carving that is marked, etched, scratched, drawn, painted, or otherwise applied to public or private property without the prior authorization of the owner of the property regardless of the graffiti content, or nature of the material used in the commission of the act, or the material of the property."

A Jan. 4, 2013, memo to the County Commission from Tom Polk, director of planning and development services, pointed out that the county had no ordinance that addressed graffiti on private property; therefore, "we don't have a direct enforcement mechanism in this regard."

Rachel Brown Hackney



Graffiti is visible on a section of the new Q condominiums under construction in Ringling Boulevard in downtown Sarasota. Photo by Robert Hackney

PINE VIEW VICTORIOUS IN 2014 ACADEMIC OLYMPICS FINALS

“Fans and families were on the edges of their seats” during the final two matches of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County’s Academic Olympics season on the last Saturday in March, the Foundation says in a news release.

Teams were neck-and-neck all the way, “with the lead switching back and forth all afternoon,” it adds.

In the last minutes of the championship game, perennial rivals Pine View School and Riverview High School were tied 100-100, it continues, but the Pine View Pythons “scored big” with answers to the final questions and went on to claim the “Culture Vulture” trophy. The score was 194-156, the release notes.

Nine weeks of round robin competition were held from January through March, the release explains, featuring top players from 10 area high schools. The games “culminated in the intellectual ‘final four’ on March 29,” it points out.

For the first time in the program’s history, the Most Valuable Player from each of the 10 participating high school teams was honored, the release says. Each received a \$250 award from the Education Foundation. They were Booker High’s Sarah Bell; Cardinal Mooney’s Nick Etz; Imagine School at North Port’s Michael DeHay; North Port High’s Nick Sawyer; Pine View’s Thomas Chaffee; Riverview High’s Turner Means; Sarasota High’s Nathaniel Folkins; Sarasota Military Academy’s Alex Bardenhagan; Suncoast Polytechnical High’s Erik Palm; and Venice High’s Patrizio Murdocca.

“The college bowl-style Academic Olympics, now in its 33rd year, is the only program for



Pine View team members and coaches celebrated capturing the ‘Culture Vulture’ trophy: (back row, from left) Coach Blake Wiley, Alisse Palmer, Aravind Byju, Manish Narasimman, Tyler Evon, Coach Paul Dean; (front row, from left) Jaclyn Wiley, Thomas Junker, Thomas Chaffee and Alexander Clark. Contributed photo

Sarasota County high schools that provides the opportunity for competitive team efforts in academics comparable to athletics,” the release notes.

Over the years, members of the Sarasota County teams have won scholarships and competed nationally with Team Florida, it adds. The Education Foundation, which produces the series in partnership with the schools, covers Academic Olympics expenses the release says.

Both Venice and Sarasota branches of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) have supported the program from its inception by recruiting, training and deploying volunteers as procedural judges, timekeepers and moderators, the release points out. The Military Officers Association of Sarasota donates the prizes awarded to the student teams. Sarasota County teachers and retired teachers serve as content judges.

GOODWILL MANASOTA TO HOLD ANNUAL BOOKAPALOOZA ON APRIL 12

Goodwill Manasota will host its annual Bookapalooza book sale on Saturday, April 12, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Tara Bookstore, located at 7200 55th Ave. East in Bradenton, Goodwill has announced.

The sale will feature thousands of books, including rare and out-of-print editions, fiction, children's stories, travel books, cookbooks and history and specialty items, a news release says. All will be offered at 25 percent off regular Goodwill prices, the release adds. There will also be a chance to win a \$25 gift certificate.

The event will be free and open to the public. For more information, call 755-9864.

"We found there is a large market for secondhand books in our area and our annual Bookapalooza is a great opportunity for book lovers to purchase valuable books at a fantastic value," said Bob Rosinsky, president & CEO of Goodwill Manasota, in the release.

Goodwill Manasota diverted more than 1.3 million pounds of books from area landfills in 2013 and expects to recycle even more books



Photo by Leon Brooks via Wikimedia Commons

as the organization expands, the release adds. All proceeds from the book sale go to support Goodwill's mission of providing career services and job placement and training to members of the community, with a focus on people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, it notes.

FUTURE OF VENICE TO BE FOCUS OF NEXT CONA MEETING

On Monday, April 14, the featured topic at the monthly meeting of the Sarasota County Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) will be *Venice's Future: Charming Or Choked?*

The session will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Venice Library, a news release says.

The presentation will focus on anticipated impacts of revisions to Sarasota County's 2050

Plan and how new development will affect wildlife, flooding and traffic, the release adds.

"Come and speak out on which future you would like to see for Venice," the release notes.

The Venice Library is located at 300 S. Nokomis Ave. in Venice.

For more information, visit conasarasota.org.

NEXT PRINCIPAL NAMED FOR TUTTLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sarasota County Schools Superintendent Lori White has named a North Port High School assistant principal as the next leader of Tuttle Elementary School in Sarasota.

Tomas Dinverno, 40, is scheduled to begin July 1 as principal of the school, pending School Board approval, a news release points out. He will succeed Tom Buchanan, who has been principal of Tuttle since 2004. The school has 670 students, the release adds.

Dinverno has worked at North Port High since 2003, when he was hired by the Sarasota County School District, the release notes. He was a Spanish teacher, data coach, test coordinator and World Languages Department chairman before becoming an administrative intern in the 2009-10 school year, it notes. In the 2010-11 school year, he began serving as an assistant principal, it says. "In that role he developed and drafted the School Improvement Plan; led the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) initiative; and served as an instructional technology facilitator and a professional development coordinator," the release points out.

"I'm excited about the chance to work with the Tuttle Elementary community," said Dinverno in the release. Before joining the school district, Dinverno taught Spanish and outdoor education at Viewpoint School in Calabasas, CA. Prior to that, the release continues, he was a Spanish teacher, Electives Department chairman and World Languages Department chairman at Thunder Ridge Middle School in Denver.

He holds a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of South Florida



Tomas Dinverno/Contributed photo

and a bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of Colorado.

"Dinverno was recently selected by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation as one of 25 participants in the 2014 class of Gulf Coast Leadership Institute, a group of aspiring and veteran community leaders who will take part in a comprehensive leadership-training program," the release notes. The participants were selected from more than 60 applicants "to represent the diversity of the region's public, private and independent sectors," it says.

Dinverno and his wife, Sudi, have one son, Van, 5.

Tuttle Elementary School is located at 2863 Eighth St. in Sarasota.

ZERO-PERCENT DEFERRED LOANS OFFERED FOR HOME REPAIRS

The Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development is offering zero-percent deferred loans for home repairs on owner-occupied residences throughout Sarasota County, the office has announced.

Homeowners must meet certain criteria to be eligible for the loans, a news release points out. The requirements follow:

- Home value cannot exceed \$272,195.
- Income must meet certain guidelines: for a one-person household, the maximum income allowed is \$32,100; for a two-person household, a maximum of \$36,700; and for a four-person household, a maximum of \$45,850.

- Property must be owner-occupied and located within Sarasota County.
- Loans are not available for mobile home repairs.

No monthly payment is required for the loan, the release notes.

The loan will be repaid when the home is sold or when it has not been owner-occupied for 30 years, whichever comes first, the release adds.

For more information about the zero-percent loan program, call the Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development at 951-3640, and press “0” for assistance or call Jane Hindall directly at 951-3610.



Home repair loans are available to Sarasota County residents. Contributed photo

COUNTY TO BE HOST COMMUNITY FOR WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

The United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for North America (UNEP RONA) has selected Sarasota County as the official North American host community for World Environment Day (WED) 2014, the county has announced.

Established in 1972 and celebrated every year in more than 100 countries on June 5, WED is one of the UN's primary means of stimulating environmental awareness and action worldwide, a news release explains.

"According to UNEP RONA, Sarasota County was selected because of its positive and proactive environmental track record," the release says. The WED theme is *Small Island Developing States*, the release points out, and Sarasota County, as a coastal community, faces environmental challenges similar to those of small island nations.

"We are impressed by the number of innovative environmental protection initiatives undertaken by Sarasota County," said UNEP RONA Acting Director Elliot Harris in the release. "The 21st century has been a game changer for the county, and the leadership shown on the sustainability front by its citizens has been exemplary," he added in the release.

The WED program and events in Sarasota County will be shared on the Sarasota County website at scgov.net/WED, the release notes.

"Sarasota County is a 'lighthouse' community, and we look forward to this opportunity to serve as a guiding light for other coastal communities searching for environmental best practices," said Sarasota County Commission Chairman Charles D. Hines in the release.



"Plus, we embrace this worldwide platform as a chance to learn from other communities facing similar environmental concerns."

One of the county's programs, the Green Business Partnership (GBP), provides technical assistance, certification and marketing support to local businesses and nonprofits of all sizes in their efforts to improve the sustainability of their operations, the release points out. "To date, about 200 area businesses have achieved the GBP certification, reducing energy, water use and waste generation from the private sector," it says.

Additionally, Sarasota County was the first county in the United States to adopt the American Institute of Architects 2030 Challenge to design and construct new buildings to be carbon neutral by 2030, the release explains.


Sarasota County also has the third highest number of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) projects per capita in Florida. "In 2005, Sarasota County was the first county in Florida to make a commitment that all new construction and major renovations would meet green buildings standards," the release says.

MOUNTED PATROL'S NEWEST HORSE GETS A NAME

It is official: The newest Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Mounted Patrol horse will go by the name "Honor," the office has announced.

In March, the public was asked to choose one of four possible options listed in a survey posted on the agency's Facebook page: Colonel, Recruit, Pursuit or Honor, a news release explains. "Honor was the clear favorite with 53 percent of the vote," it adds. Several other names were suggested by the nearly

5,000 people who participated, it notes; those will be considered for future horses.

Honor, a 10-year-old American Warm Blood gelding (aka "Larry") was donated by Terry and Darlene Geiser of Ocala, the release says. "Honor will stand beside hooved colleagues Patriot, Major, Liberty, Legacy, Sentinel, Valor, Justice — and yes, Charlie — as they patrol Sarasota County to keep all citizens safe," the release adds. 



Honor is the newest member of the Sheriff's Office's Mounted Patrol. Contributed photo



William S. Griffin/Contributed photo



CRIME BLOTTER

An aerial view shows the intersection of 12th Street and Huntington Place Drive, which is between North Lockwood Ridge and Beneva roads in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps

FOUR-TIME CONVICTED FELON ARRESTED IN SARASOTA

Over the weekend, officers with the Sarasota Police Department arrested a four-time convicted felon who was in possession of a semiautomatic pistol and a magazine with 10 rounds, the office has announced.

Officers stopped William S. Griffin, 47, of Palmetto, at 12th Street and Huntington Place Drive in Sarasota, a news release says. When they ran a check on him, they learned he had a suspended driver's license as a result of a court order, the release notes.

The investigation also revealed he was a high-risk sexual offender and that he was on inmate release for the sale of cocaine, the release points out.

When the officers asked him if there was anything illegal in the car, Griffin told them, "No," the release continues. They then asked for permission to search the vehicle, and Griffin consented, the release says. The officers found a firearm concealed under the driver's seat, where Griffin was sitting, the release adds. The firearm was a Hi-Point .40-caliber semiautomatic pistol; it already was loaded with a magazine containing 10 rounds, the release says.

Griffin was arrested and charged with Driving on a Suspended License with Knowledge (a misdemeanor), Carrying a Concealed Firearm (a felony) and Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon (also a felony). Griffin was transported to the Sarasota County Jail without incident, the release notes.

MAN ARRESTED FOR MISUSE OF LASER LIGHTING DEVICE ON SIESTA KEY

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office arrested a 20-year-old man on April 4 for shining a laser light into the office's helicopter, the office has reported.

About 11:45 p.m. on April 4, a news release says, deputies responded to a report of a large group of people partying on Siesta Public Beach in the area of 5900 Midnight Pass Road. Upon arrival, they observed more than 500 people, mainly juveniles, in a group on the beach, the release adds. Deputies then saw several small fights under way "and began to break up the altercations," the release notes.

After the Sheriff's Office helicopter arrived to assist and monitor the activity with the use of forward-looking infrared equipment and a

camera, one of the men in the crowd "began to shine a green laser light onto the helicopter and into the cockpit," the release continues. Deputies operating the helicopter were able to direct deputies on the ground to the man's location, so they could arrest him, the release says. The man, identified as Aroldo Castaneda of 2900 Oak St., Sarasota, was charged with one felony count of Misuse of Laser Lighting Devices, the release adds.

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

10 DUI ARRESTS MADE DURING MARCH SATURATION PATROLS

In March, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office made 10 DUI arrests and issued two citations to people under the age of 21 for driving after consuming alcohol but not being criminally impaired, the office has reported.

It issued another 154 citations for other traffic offenses, a news release says.

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

"Because of the commitment to keep the public aware of these ongoing education and enforcement efforts, results are provided at the end of each month and dates for the next month's activity are announced," it notes.

The March numbers do not include DUI arrests "made outside of these specific initiatives," the release explains.

Saturation patrols are conducted instead of what is referred to as a "DUI checkpoint," it adds. They include a number of Patrol and Traffic division deputies working targeted zones at the same time to monitor driving activity. Saturation patrols are mobile and take place in different areas of the county, the release points out.

Saturation patrols will be conducted on April 12, 19 and 26, the release says. "This initiative is conducted in partnership with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and supported through a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)," it concludes.

UNLICENSED CONTRACTOR ARRESTED BY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested an unlicensed contractor, who has a history of similar crimes, on dozens of new charges, the office has announced.


Detectives found that Jose Rivera, 43, of 2731 Grand Cayman St., Sarasota, claimed to be a licensed contractor who was hired to do repairs at Bella Villano on Central Sarasota Parkway, a news release explains. From February 2013 to June 2013, Rivera submitted 33 invoices to the complex's management company for jobs ranging from minor repairs to new installations, the release adds. "The management company paid him nearly \$8,000 for this work, even though Rivera never pulled any required permits and has never been a licensed [heating and air conditioning system] contractor in Florida," the release says.

Rivera was found guilty of unlicensed contracting in Manatee County following his arrest in a sting by the Sheriff's Office there in 2012, the release notes. He was also charged with unlicensed contracting by the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office in March 2013 for similar offenses.

As a result of the most recent investigation in Sarasota, Rivera has been charged with



Jose Rivera/Contributed photo

33 felony counts of Unlicensed Contracting and one misdemeanor count of Unlicensed Contracting with a Previous Conviction. He was placed in jail under a \$17,000 bond. 



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

Call: (941) 366-TIPS (8477)

Click: SarasotaCrimeStoppers.com

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

OPINION



EDUCATION WILL BE KEY TO MAKING DIVERGING DIAMOND WORK

EDITORIAL

It was a scary proposition almost exactly a year ago when Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) consultants unveiled a radical new concept in interchanges during a local government meeting in Sarasota.

The “diverging diamond” discussion came during a joint session of the Sarasota and Manatee county commissions. And we believe it is safe to say not one of the board members present felt the least bit reassured when the consultants said the design would solve the headaches in the Lakewood Ranch/University Parkway/Interstate 75 area, which were going to be compounded by the October 2014 opening of the Mall at University Town Center.

At that point, the community had not won its bid to host the 2017 World Rowing Championships at Nathan Benderson Park, with the portent of heavier use of that venue, which is just down the road from the mall, in the years leading up to the international event.

Flash forward to the spring of 2014, and it appears the diverging diamond is on its way to a Florida debut — if FDOT can convince enough state legislators to provide the funding. A Sarasota County news release issued on March 31 underscored FDOT’s hope that construction can begin in 2015.

Chief among our reservations about the diverging diamond is whether drivers will

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pay enough attention to the signage to make traffic flow as smoothly as those consultants claim it will.

If FDOT is successful in getting the money from the Legislature during the current session, the next big step has to be a public relations campaign. And that must be followed quickly by planning of strategies to ensure construction will “flow” around the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

Given the estimate of 42,000 attendees that has been bandied about by local tourism leaders and the head of the nonprofit organization that manages park events — plus the fact the event will be the first exposure of many of those visitors to Sarasota and Manatee counties — the last thing any of us needs is a traffic nightmare that would make the evacuation scenes in the film *Independence Day* pale in comparison.

To say a dramatic change in traffic management is needed at University Parkway and Interstate 75 is a vast understatement. State Rep. Greg Steube pointed out last month to Roger Drouin, *The Sarasota News Leader's* county editor, that the dire demand for improvements was painted for him in bold colors when a January accident on I-75 resulted in horrendous backups as commuters and

residents navigated around a closed section of University Parkway.

It was just weeks later that Steube organized a meeting in Tallahassee so FDOT Secretary Ananth Prasad could talk in can-do terms about the diverging diamond with leaders from Sarasota and Manatee counties as well as representatives of Schroeder Manatee Ranch and Benderson. The latter firms are committed through development agreements to helping

with some of the smaller local pieces of the big jigsaw puzzle whose heart will be the new interchange.

County officials came back home with the news that FDOT needed resolutions of support for the diverging diamond so the department could plead its case in the Legislature. Those resolutions followed in pretty quick order — about as fast as we have seen local governments move on a matter.

For all this, we highly commend Steube and the two county commissions and their managers.

Of course, the big “if” now is whether Steube and FDOT can make the money a reality. Nobody has been talking about a figure, but we feel it is safe to assume that it is at least going to be in double digits, with “million” behind them.

“Chief among our reservations about the diverging diamond is whether drivers will pay enough attention to the signage to make traffic flow as smoothly as those consultants claim it will.”

OPINION

Given the improving Florida economy and the extra revenue the Legislature has to work with this year, that still should be doable.


If the money is made available, then the clock has to start ticking on an FDOT public relations campaign.

We like to consider ourselves pretty open-minded when we are faced with radical new ideas. When we watched the video those consultants showed to the Sarasota and Manatee commissioners last year, we had no trouble grasping how a diverging diamond works. What we did find unsettling was the prospect of major crashes resulting from drivers failing to pay attention to what they were doing. The message of that video that has stayed with us the longest is that people have to read the signs; otherwise, they will have no idea how to navigate the diverging diamond.

Not only do we live in a world where drivers already are “challenged” by the temptations

of their cellphones — regardless of state law — but we also reside in a community with a significant number of senior citizens, some of whom suffer with vision and comprehension problems. Regardless of any driver’s age, though, education is going to be necessary to convince the average motorist that if people can drive with ease through diverging diamonds in Utah and Missouri, by golly, we can drive through one here.

Just as consultants have been creative enough to come up with the idea of the diverging diamond itself, they need to start figuring out the best ways to get the message out that this concept can work at I-75 and University Parkway.

What could possibly be worse than constructing something to ameliorate traffic problems only to compound them through a steady stream of collisions — and high volumes of vehicles suddenly appearing on side roads to avoid the interchange at all costs? 

EVEN THE WORST FEARS CAN BE CONQUERED — IN THE RIGHT SETTING



By Harriet Cuthbert
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

Most of us suffer from some kind of fears or phobias. How we deal with them, and occasionally conquer them, is my subject in this “outing.”

I will admit it upfront: I experience severe acrophobia when I have to be way up high,

unprotected in an open conveyance, if I have to look at whatever is below me. Among the times I have suffered this dread have been in open cable cars, on a Ferris wheel and in the elevator of the Eiffel Tower. I *cannot* look down. I am positive I will get sick and want to jump out just to relieve the agony of vertigo.

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However, and unbelievable still, I was somehow able to conquer this fear during two amazing incidents on my latest trip.

I recently traveled to Ecuador and the Amazon for an unforgettable adventure. We visited cities that showcased the brilliant craftsmanship of the local people; saw beautiful waterfalls; swam in thermal pools; straddled Middle Earth, with one foot in the Northern Hemisphere and the other in the Southern Hemisphere; and sat mesmerized in our tour bus as our incomparable driver wound 'round and 'round and upwards through the magnificent Andes until he finally stopped at the top of the peak — the Papallacta Pass, at an altitude of 13,900 feet. Just running out of the bus for two minutes to snap a quick photo made me breathless.

But the highlight of our adventure was our hike through the Amazon jungle, the portion of the trip all 26 of us on the tour had been anticipating the most, and none of us had ever done before.

We awoke to a cloudy day at our lodge, which comprised a series of beautiful buildings surrounded by stunning tropical flowers and overlooking the Rio Napo. After breakfast, we walked down to the river, climbed into rickety motorized canoes and “zoomed” down the river for 30 minutes to our destination, an ecological preserve. The boat ride was so calming, the water so serene, but it did nothing to calm my nerves, especially given what would soon take place.

Hiking up the hill, wading through mud, trying to avoid tripping over huge logs and branches — these were my primary goals. My backpack seemed to gain weight as I kept climbing higher and higher.

Two wonderful new friends, Colin and Maddie, became my bookends. As one pushed me up from behind, the other one firmly grabbed my arm and guided me along while telling me to hold on tight.

And then, suddenly, it appeared from nowhere: a small single-person basket connected to a rope and a wire. We had to use it to cross a ravine in order to continue our hike. I was not prepared for this at all. I barely had time to acknowledge my terror when somebody “escorted” me into the basket and then the guide gave me a heavy push. Off I went along this wild and crazy zip-line in the jungle. I really do remember nothing because I closed my eyes and screamed the whole time. But when everyone was applauding and I was once again standing on solid mud, I knew I had survived.

I barely had time to catch my breath when, 10 minutes later, we were staring at a very long, wiry suspension bridge. And once again, we had to cross it — continuing our quest to win a prize for masochism.

They called my name and told me to “hold tight,” and off I went. But this time I kept my eyes open so I would not miss the spot where I had to grab the iron railings.

OPINION

I did it! I somehow conquered two enormously fearful segments of the journey and came through intact.

Hiking back down through the jungle to the river was not easy. The rains came; the mud puddles multiplied. But I was very confident

that I could slip and slide my way back to the boat and never fall down once.

And that is exactly how my hike in the Amazon jungle ended.

It was truly an unforgettable adventure. 



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

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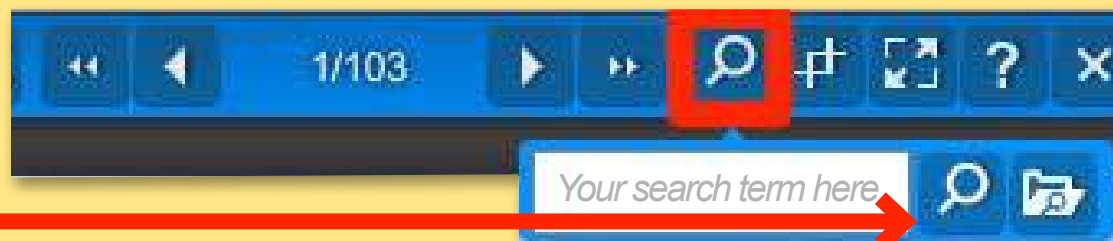
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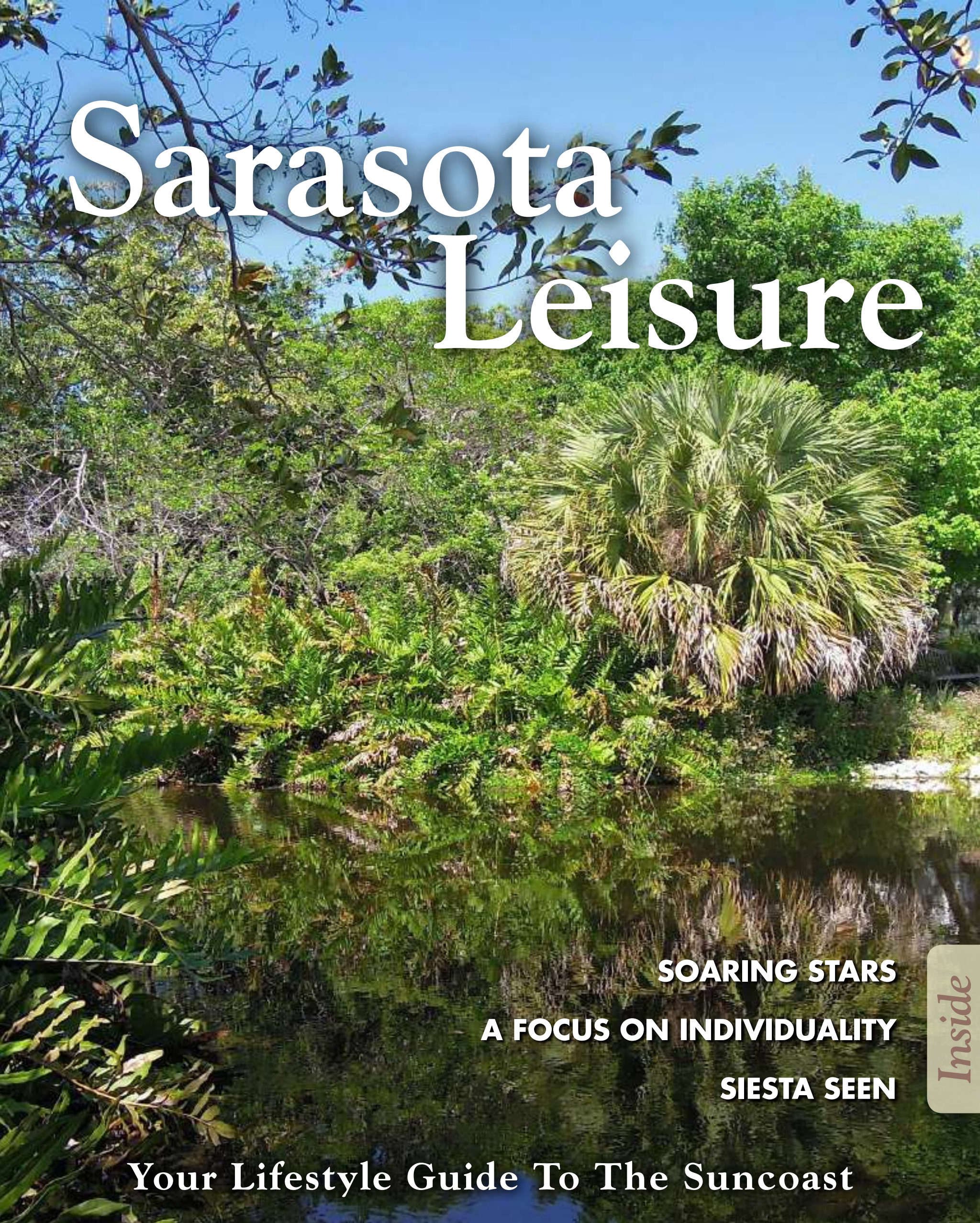
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Sarasota Leisure

SOARING STARS

A FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALITY

SIESTA SEEN

Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast

Inside

SOARING STARS




STUDENTS SHINE IN SAILOR CIRCUS PRODUCTION

Staff Reports

Continuing the celebration of its 65th year, Sailor Circus recently presented its spring *Legacy* show under the Big Top on Bahia Vista Street in Sarasota.

[The Sailor Circus Academy](#) is the oldest youth circus in the United States, its website points out. It is an afterschool training program for students ages 8 to 18. The youth spend countless hours each week working

with dedicated coaches and volunteers, the website notes. The results are awe-inspiring performances that surely make audiences forget these stars are not long-time circus veterans.

Staff Photographer Norman Schimmel attended one of the final performances of the *Legacy* show, where he recorded feats of these extraordinary young people. 

















A FOCUS ON INDIVIDUALITY

Symphony of Sorrows incorporates many lifts. Contributed photo by Frank Atura

PHOTO BY FRANK ATURA

BALLERINAS SHINE IN ASHTON AND TUDOR PIECES WHILE GRAZIANO'S EARLIER WORK HAS SOME WEAKNESS

By Elinor Rogosin

A&E Writer

If I had been in the 1956 audience for the premiere of *Birthday Offering*, Sir Frederick Ashton's tribute ballet to the ballerinas who were the jewels of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company, I would have appreciated his perceptive characterizations of each dancer. I would have nodded in agreement at his ability to capture their individuality.

Instead, I rely on Sarasota Ballet's assistant director, Margaret Barbieri, who has staged this production with a knowing eye to both the past and the present, to match Sarasota Ballet dancers with their English alter egos. And the individual solos are the focus of *Birthday Offering*, the ballet Ashton choreographed to

celebrate a royal charter changing the name of Sadler's Wells Ballet to The Royal Ballet.

The roots of the English ballet are hidden deep in the Russian tradition; the latter was obviously in Ashton's mind, given his choice of the sweet, familiar and deeply Russian romantic music of Glazunov and choreography based firmly in the strict academic vocabulary.

As the ballet unfolded, each of the seven women of the Sarasota Ballet Company, wearing glittering jeweled dresses, had an opportunity to shine in a solo variation, displaying aspects of her own personality that have been hidden in other roles. Nicole Padilla



Victoria Hulland in Gala Performance. Contributed photo

was pert as Elaine Fifield; Danielle Brown, not surprisingly, was effective in the mock abandon and tricky balances that defined Rowena Jackson; Amy Wood was effective in a dreamy solo as Svetlana Beriosova; Kate Honea was perfect in a quick silvery reference to Nadia Nerina; Ellen Overstreet charmed as Violetta Elvin; and Sareen Tchekmedyan was a flirtatious Beryl Grey.

Victoria Hulland was given the role of Margot Fonteyn, who was Ashton's special muse. In addition to her solo, Hulland was paired in two duets with Ricardo Graziano. Margot Fonteyn was noted for her musicality and grace, as is Hulland. Though Graziano was an attentive partner, he lacked a sense of urgency in his dancing, sliding over the movements.

Graziano is fast becoming the star of the Sarasota Ballet, and in a surprise moment during the evening, Director Iain Webb, named him the company's resident choreographer for the 2014-2015 season. As a choreographer, Graziano shows promise, but he is still finding his way. On the positive side, he has an ear for the right music and does not crowd the choreography with a lot of busy movement. In fact, one of his strengths is an eye for spare stage design. However, he has to be aware that a reliance on lifts — no matter how unusual, acrobatic or dramatic — can become repetitious, undermining their usefulness.

ANOTHER TURN BY GRAZIANO

Symphony of Sorrows, Graziano's first piece for the Sarasota Ballet, performed in 2012 and reprised on this program, is set to a score of emotional songs by the contemporary Polish composer Henryk Gorecki. Overall, this is a dance portraying grief and the responses to

loss. There are some effective sections, particularly when the first dancers emerge silently from the darkness, followed by another two and another two until all 10 have stepped out onto the stage. Over and over, the dancers reach out to one another in desperation, searching for support. At moments, their hands cover their faces to hide their grief while their arms reach out like wings sputtering in the air.

The women wear black; the men have bare torsos and are there to support their partners as they frantically clutch one another in a series of dramatic lifts. It is here that the ballet is weakest, for the lifts get repetitious, diminishing the overall emotional impact, even though *Symphony of Sorrows* is danced with deep feeling and intense concentration by the cast of 10.

THE TOUCH OF TUDOR

Regarding the final, but not least noteworthy, ballet of the evening: Antony Tudor cast a witty and jaundiced eye on the ballet world, and the result was *Gala Performance*, a piece set to the music of Sergei Prokofiev. Though it premiered in 1938, it still charms audiences in 2014. This is a ballet ostensibly about the ballet world, but the constant emphasis on vanity and competition is Tudor's sly comment on humanity in general. One of the 20th century's giant choreographers, Tudor created ballets that are dark explorations of human emotions. In this ballet, though his preoccupation with the human condition remains the same, he has shifted the angle of his approach.

In the first of two scenes of *Gala Performance*, set to Prokofiev's *Third Piano Concerto*, there is a haphazard rehearsal in preparation

for a ballet performance. The 10 hopeful girls in the corps de ballet vie for the attention of the ballet master and the conductor, each one primping and showing off.

The second scene, set to Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, is a surprise, shifting to the "show" itself, complete with beautiful new scenery and the entrance of three competing ballerinas from Russia, Italy and France. They each represent not only a country, but also a style of classical ballet, as well as their own idiosyncrasies.

The dancers from the rehearsal scene of *Gala Performance* reappear in a set piece of choreography, while the three ballerinas dance the traditional variations common to many classical ballets.

Kristianne Kleine pulled out all the stops as the flamboyant Russian ballerina, boldly stamping her feet and showing off her turns. As the Italian ballerina, Victoria Hulland, in an outrageous costume with a tall feathery black hat, remained poker-faced, never changing her expression as she entered and




Kristianne Kleine/Contributed photo

left the stage in a strange walk, extending first one leg straight in front of her and then the other. Her duet with Edward Gonzalez as an over-attentive, effusive smiling cavalier was a parody of partnering, with awkward turns and twists. Then, center stage and ready for her solo of daunting balances, Hulland dismissed the other dancers, including her partner, with a sharp flip of her wrist first to the left and then to the right.

Not to be outshone, Kate Honea swept across the stage, smiling flirtatiously at the audience as the frisky French ballerina while ignoring her partner — Alex Harrison as a fussy and effeminate cavalier.

Each one of the ballerinas kept bowing as the final curtain closed, but the ballet ended before the tricks and the jokes grew tiresome.

This ballet was marked by stereotypical casting and “tongue-in-cheek” humor, but it was a true reflection of earlier times, when curtain calls could go on longer than a performance.

Gala Performance does depend on individuals’ perfect comic timing for its charm, so kudos to the ballerinas and cavaliers who made this performance an awesome way to end the evening. 



Margaret Barbieri/Photo courtesy Sarasota Ballet



WORK SHOULD START AGAIN SOON IN BAY ISLAND PARK; A COMMISSIONER AIRS A REQUEST FOR THE FUTURE OF THE WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY SITE; AND MORE DISCUSSION ENSUES OVER THE OUTDOOR DISPLAY ORDINANCE



By Rachel Brown Hackney
Editor

Replacement of the seawall in Bay Island Park could be getting under way again very soon.

That was the news Sarasota County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh gave the county commissioners during their April 8 meeting in Venice,

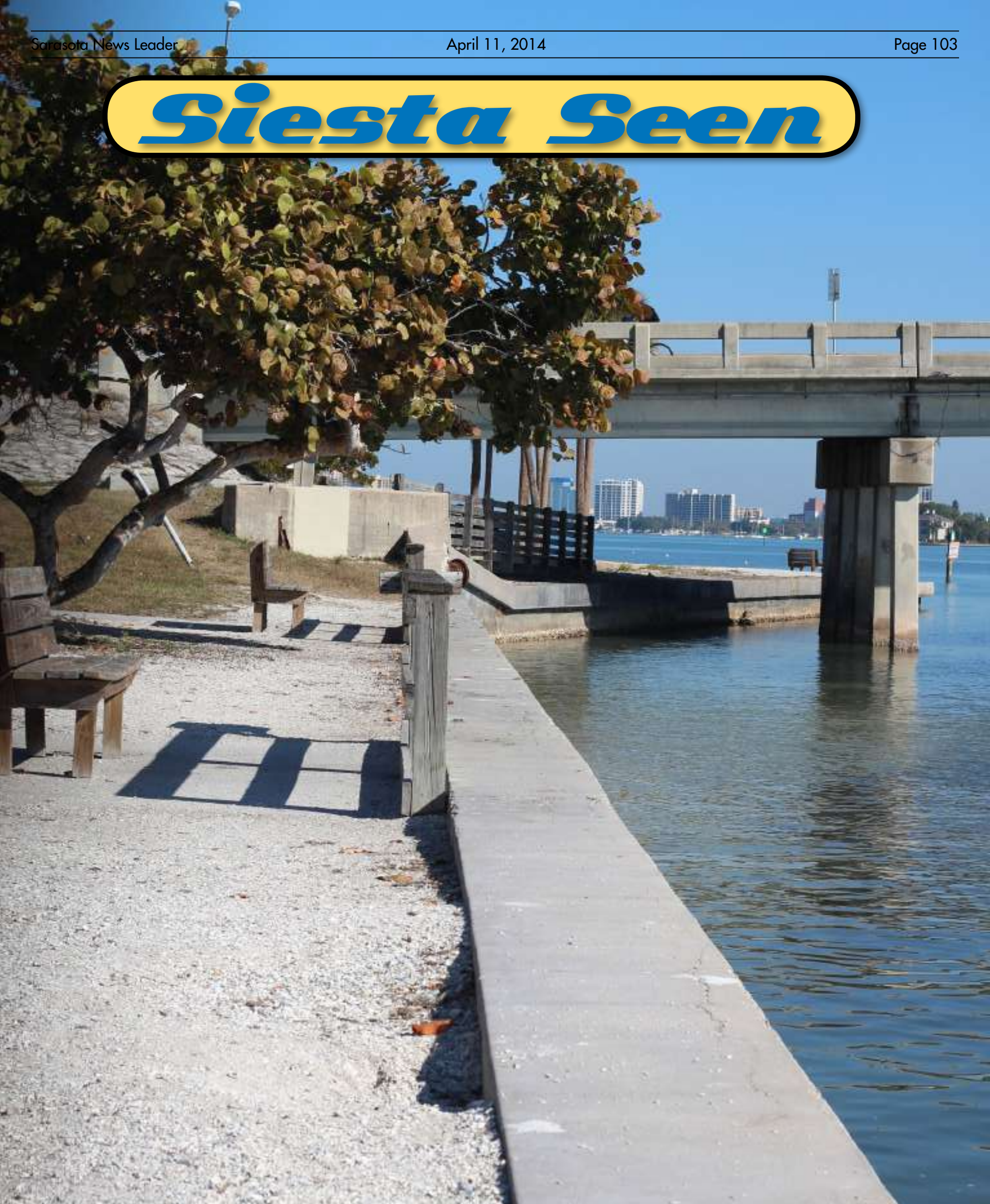
after a unanimous board vote agreeing to a stipulated settlement in a federal court case.

Following the August 2013 death of the owner of CB Construction Services Corp. of Fort Myers, work came to a halt on the \$997,379



A segment of Bay Island Park on the Intracoastal Waterway has been cordoned off since work on the replacement of the seawall came to a halt in the summer of 2013. File photo

Siesta Seen



Plans call for replacement of the seawall that runs the length of Bay Island Park. File photo

Siesta Seen

project to construct a new seawall in the park, which is at the entry to Bay Island — the point of land people reach before they arrive on Siesta Key proper if they use the north bridge on Siesta Drive.

County staff had hoped the company holding the bond on the project would find another contractor to take over the work in the aftermath of the man's death — which was ruled to have been by natural causes. However, the matter ended up in U.S. District Court.

Project Manager Paul Semenec notified the commissioners in late March that the firm that held the bond advertised the project

in November 2013; but when the bids were opened in January of this year, all the bids exceeded the bond amount, which was the same as CB Construction Services' bid last year.

The stipulated settlement, DeMarsh explained on April 8, would give the county \$802,147.62. Added to funds awarded to the project but left unspent, DeMarsh pointed out, the county would have about \$1.4 million altogether to complete the project.

"We think that this is in the best interest of the county," DeMarsh added of the stipulated settlement.



The north Siesta Key bridge is in full view from the section of Bay Island Park that faces Sarasota Bay. Photo by Norman Schimmel

Siesta Seen

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, made the motion to accept DeMarsh's recommendation. Commissioner Carolyn Mason seconded it.

"Although the county has neatened up the [construction] site, it's quite an eyesore," Patterson said, "and I'm increasingly getting concerns emailed to me that it's the entrance to Siesta Key." She added, "A lot of tourists and people who are new in town are passing it ..."

Patterson also noted the park is "a pretty good recreational asset," that has been partly cordoned off since the project has been on hold.

The park's location was a factor in his recommendation, DeMarsh responded. Additionally, with the stipulated settlement approved, he said, the county could pursue an emergency procurement procedure to get the work started again, further speeding up the process.

The seawall is more than 40 years old, according to a staff memo issued prior to the awarding of the bid to CB Construction Services in March 2013.

THE SKUA SITE

Bay Island Park was not the only Siesta issue Commissioner Patterson brought up during the April 8 board meeting. A second one involved the site of the old Siesta Key Utility Authority sewer plant, which is near Glebe Park.

The facility is scheduled to be decommissioned at the end of 2016, according to county staff.

Patterson prefaced her comments about the wastewater treatment plant site by saying she expected she and Commissioner Joe Barbetta would be long gone from the board before any real consideration could be given to the proposal she planned to offer. (They both will be stepping down after the November election.)

Over the past couple of years, Patterson said, people occasionally have emailed her to suggest what a great place for a park the wastewater treatment facility property would be. However, she continued, the board previously had discussed selling the land after the plant was decommissioned.

"There's not a lot of access to it," she added, and residents on the nearby Shadow Lawn Drive probably would oppose such an intensive use of the property, because Shadow Lawn Drive is the main route to the site.

Further, if a park were placed there, she pointed out, a home would block a direct route from the land to Glebe Park.

Nonetheless, Patterson said, she recently received an email suggesting the county could create a bicycle and pedestrian path to connect the three other streets closest to the treatment plant site — Oakmont Place, Dewey Place and Siesta Woods Drive. "Then you could basically get to the beach without ever going on the main road."

Siesta Seen

Instead of just automatically putting the property up for sale, Patterson added, she would like to see staff investigate the prospect of such connectivity.

She also pointed out that the treatment plant has water access; it is on the Grand Canal. In fact, she noted, one person had suggested to her that the site would be great for launching kayaks.

Barbetta reminded her that the plan is to sell the treatment plant parcel to pay off utility bonds. "It's basically prime buildable property," he said. "Sell it to somebody to develop in conjunction with the surrounding neighborhood."

Still, he told Patterson, he did not object to having staff investigate whether a pedestrian and bike path could be incorporated into the deal conveying the land to a new owner.

"It's an interesting piece of property," Patterson said.

On a related note: During the commission's capital budget workshop on March 25, Public Works Director Isaac Brownman explained that the new Siesta Key master pump station will be one facet of the upcoming segment of septic system work in the Phillippi Creek basin. The pipeline for the pump station, he said, will follow the same route as the pipeline



An aerial view shows the location of the Siesta Key wastewater treatment plant on the Grand Canal, a short distance from Glebe Park. Shadow Lawn Drive is the road in the center at the bottom of the photo (highlighted in yellow), leading to the plant. Image from Google Maps

Siesta Seen



Siesta Key Association Director Beverly Arias posed with new President Michael Shay before the April 3 meeting began. Photo by Rachel Hackney

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that will serve the next 1,500 properties to get sewer service, minimizing inconveniences to the surrounding neighborhoods. The pipeline route will cross Constitution Boulevard, he added.

OUTDOOR DISPLAYS

As for the third Siesta issue Patterson raised during the County Commission meeting: She told her colleagues the Siesta Key Village Association (SKVA) gave its full support last week to the proposal for revising the section of the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD) ordinance governing [outdoor displays](#).

Patterson wanted to know whether the ordinance automatically would be brought to the County Commission for action.

County Administrator Tom Harmer replied that he would check on its progress; he had not been briefed on it since the SKVA took its vote.

“I just want to make sure it’s not just going to float off somewhere,” she said of the proposal.

Then Patterson noted that the SKVA has asked merchants to abide by the guidelines in the revised ordinance, “especially since Code Enforcement [staff] at this point has



Traffic snakes down Ocean Boulevard about 6:30 p.m. on April 3, a clear indication of how busy the island continues to be this season. Photo by Rachel Hackney

Siesta Seen

sort of thrown up their hands” and refused to cite anyone for violations of any type relative to displays.

Tom Polk, director of the county’s Planning and Development Services Department, stepped to the podium then, telling Patterson he was not aware of any formal proposal having been submitted to staff. If and when it is, he said, his department can make certain the commission addresses it.

“Will you do that automatically?” Patterson asked.

“We have the ability to,” he replied.

When Patterson asked her colleagues for their consensus to provide Polk that direction, Commissioner Carolyn Mason immediately concurred. Barbetta, however, asked whether the revised section of the SKOD includes any language regarding sandwich boards, an issue that came up last year.

“There’s nothing [in the proposal] about sandwich boards at all,” Patterson said, “nor have they taken a vote to support or not support that.”

Patterson added that she would let the new SKVA president, Wendall Jacobsen, know of Barbetta’s concern.

When Barbetta then asked whether the revised ordinance would apply to island restaurateurs or just retail merchants, Patterson responded,

“It’s a decent question. I’ll relay the issue and we’ll see what the staff brings back to us.”

(Brad Stewart, an owner of Captain Curt’s Crab & Oyster Bar on South Midnight Pass Road, was among the committee members who crafted the revision. That was part of the information Mark Toomey, a leader of the committee, told SKVA members last week.)

Patterson did tell Barbetta, “A pretty extensive group of [business owners] got together and worked on this, with quite a bit of input.”

Polk said he would provide Harmer a timeline for getting the ordinance to the commission, adding that Donna Thompson, the assistant zoning administrator “has a lot of zoning ordinance amendments ... that she’s working through.”

“In the meantime, as I said, the county’s stopped all code enforcement out there ... so time is of the essence,” Patterson responded.

The Code Enforcement officer who normally works on the key is out on sick leave, Polk said. “We’re doing our best to pick that load up” with two other officers.

“OK,” Patterson answered.

The lack of compliance with the proposed changes has been a source of frustration for new Siesta Key Association (SKA) President Michael Shay. During his organization’s monthly meeting on April 3, he reported that he had been told all the businesses on the

Siesta Seen

island are adhering to the guidelines, though he remained unconvinced.

The SKA board members opposed an earlier draft of the SKOD revision, he added, but they have not seen the latest version.

Both former SKA Director Peter van Roekens and Patterson reminded him that after a business has been cited twice for violations under the proposed ordinance, the business would lose its county permit for outdoor displays. (A \$25 annual permit will be required of any retail or rental firm that wants to put merchandise outside its doors, according to the proposal.)

“Of course, [as with] anything else,” Patterson said during the SKA meeting, “the key is going to be enforcement.”

‘HOPPING DOWN THE BUNNY TRAIL’

Registration is under way for the annual Siesta Key Village Association Easter Egg Hunt, which will be held from 9 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, April 19. The event will


include face painting, displays of county Fire Department equipment, an appearance by the Sheriff’s Office’s Mounted Patrol and the distribution of gift bags to the 125 children who participate. (The SKVA puts a limitation on the number of youngsters who can take part.)

For more details, and to download a registration form, visit the SKVA [website](#).

During the April 1 SKVA meeting, past President Russell Matthes pointed out that the hunt draws the maximum number of children year after year.

When SKVA Treasurer Roz Hyman pointed out that a group of volunteers would be gathering shortly to stuff the eggs for the children, a puzzled Commissioner Patterson asked, “How do you stuff an egg?”

Vice President Kay Kouvatsos replied that each egg has toys in it; the organization orders thousands of tiny toys each year for those eggs.

“No candy,” President Cheryl Gaddie added. 



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Works by Wilfred Berg are included in the Gulf Coast Heritage exhibit at Selby Gardens. Contributed image

GULF COAST HERITAGE EXHIBIT PRESENTED AT SELBY GARDENS

[Marie Selby Botanical Gardens](#) in Sarasota and Sarasota Bay Watch are presenting an art exhibit, *Gulf Coast Heritage: At the Intersection of Art and History*, which opened on April 8 in the historic Selby House at Selby Gardens, the organizations have announced.

This exhibit showcases “early life impressions of Florida’s Gulf Coast by three longtime local artists, William Hartman (1906-1989), Larry

Stults (1899-1996) and Wilfred Berg (1908-2002),” a news release explains. “Hartman was a true Sarasota native,” it adds. Stults lived on Cabbage Key for 25 years, followed by a move to Sarasota, and Berg wintered in Sarasota for many years, the release notes.

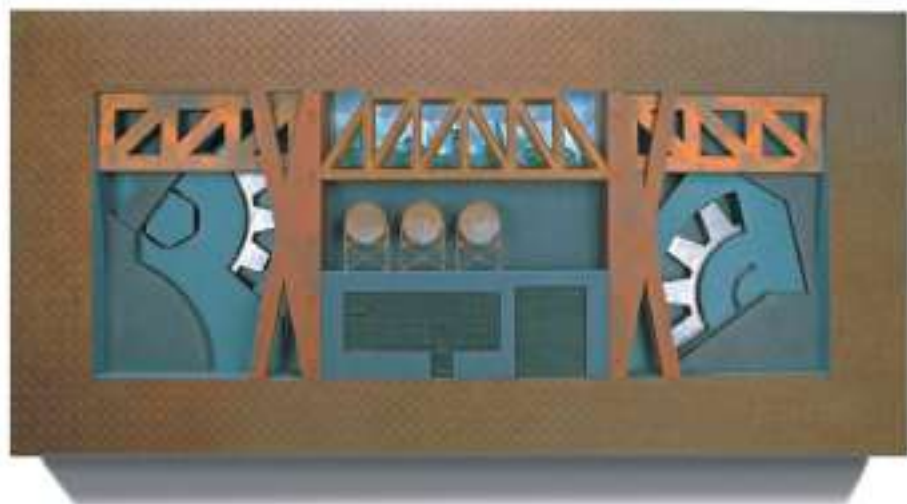
The artwork will be on display in the Selby House from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily through June 8, the release says. All of the paintings are on loan from private collections.

GALLUP ART'S NEW SHOW FEATURES WORKS BY ENYEDI

Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art is presenting *Janos Enyedi: Images of Industry* through May 10, showcasing works by the late St. Petersburg-based artist, the gallery has announced.

Among Enyedi's wide-ranging creations are three-dimensional paintings, digital mixed media, sculptures and photographs, a news release points out. The exhibit's curators are Roy Slade, the former director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Cranbrook Art Museum, and Diana Enyedi, the artist's surviving wife and the representative of the Janos Enyedi collection in St. Petersburg, the release adds.

"Janos' body of work is a whole. Each piece contributes to an epic American story that he told across a lifetime," says gallery director Allyn Gallup in the release. "Roy and Diana selected work that distills that larger story into a self-contained narrative that stands on its own. It's an amazing compression, and it's unlikely these pieces will ever be seen together again."



Heartland Souvenir by Janos Enyedi. Contributed image



Port of Virginia by Janos Enyedi. Contributed image

According to Gallup, Enyedi's art "evokes the haunting scope of America's industrial and post-industrial landscapes," the release continues. The artist's two-dimensional work reveals glimpses of warehouses, abandoned mills and smokestacks, the release explains, while "his three-dimensional constructivist pieces were actually assembled from fragments of that world."

Enyedi's "fascination with the vistas of American industry" began when he was 8, the release says. He was enjoying a late afternoon car ride with his parents in Gary, IN, when they turned a corner and he "saw a sudden apocalyptic vision of factories and refineries, spewing fire and smoke into the dimming sky," the release notes.

"I looked at it as pure visual imagery," Enyedi once said. "The colors and forms and textures just stuck with me all my life."

For more information, call 366-2454 or visit allyngallup.com. The gallery is at 1288 N. Palm Ave. in Sarasota.

JAZZ AT FIRST CHURCH TO PRESENT JAZZ TRIO ON APRIL 13

The Jazz at First Church program on Sunday, April 13, will feature traditional jazz with the Jazz Trio of Johnny Moore on drums, Dominic Mancini on bass and Tommy Goodman on piano, the First United Methodist Church has announced.

The group will join special guest Jeff Lego on trombone, a news release says.

Two identical concerts will be presented: from 4 to 5 p.m. and from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. A freewill offering will be taken.

The church is located at 104 S. Pineapple Ave. in downtown Sarasota. For more information, call the church office at 955-0935 or visit the [website](#).

ACTING CONSERVATORY PRESENTING ANTIGONE THROUGH APRIL 27

The Florida State University (FSU)/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training is presenting *Antigone*, Jean Anouilh's retelling of Sophocles' classic tale, through April 27 in the Cook Theatre in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts located at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota.

Tickets are \$29 for evening shows and \$28 for matinees, a news release says. Students receive 50 percent off the price with advance ticket purchase. Tickets are available at the Asolo Repertory Theatre's box office at the FSU Center for Performing Arts or by phone at 351-8000.

This FSU/Asolo Conservatory production will be directed by Andrei Malaev-Babel, head of acting at the Conservatory, the release notes. "He sees Anouilh's play as a cry for freedom," it adds. "Antigone refuses to compromise for political reasons," he says in the release. "She refuses to abandon her youthful ideals. She must remain true to herself, even at the expense of her own life."

"In 1944, when Jean Anouilh wrote *Antigone*, and Nazi occupiers had consolidated their

grip on France, this was dangerous thinking," the release explains. "Anouilh's reinvention of Sophocles' tragic heroine quickly took on a life of its own. The French Resistance saw a kindred soul in Antigone," the release continues. "She became a compelling symbol of the defiant human spirit — willing to stand up to unjust power, no matter what the personal cost."

Malaev-Babel knows what that's like on a personal level.

"I grew up in the former Soviet Union," he says in the release. "In that society, the question of compromising one's ideals for the sake of survival was very real. For artists, scientists, and ordinary people across society, that question was inescapable."

Malaev-Babel notes in the release that set designer Rick Cannon and costume designer David Covach have been working "to create the fantastical world of Anouilh's *Antigone*, one in which ancient Greece fuses with Nazi-occupied Europe."



Andrea Adnoff and Brian Owen star in the Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory's production of Antigone. Contributed photo by Frank Atura

VENICE THEATRE'S STAGE II PRESENTING *PARALLEL LIVES*

Venice Theatre's final Stage II production of its 2013-2014 Season is the "smart, provocative" (*Variety*) collection of vignettes, *Parallel Lives*, the theatre has announced.

The show the *Orlando Sentinel* called "a knee-slapping, raucous hoot and a half" opened April 10 in the Pinkerton Theatre and will run through Sunday, April 27, a news release says. Tickets are \$25 to \$28 for adults and \$10 to \$15 for students; they are on sale at the theatre's box office, online at venice-stage.com or available by phone at 488-1115.

Parallel Lives is a two-woman show originally written and performed off-Broadway (and on HBO as *The Kathy and Mo Show*) by comic duo Kathy Najimy and Moe Gaffney, the release notes. Venice Theatre's version stars two performers familiar to local audiences: Nancy Denton (*Hairspray*, *Random Acts*, *Second Samuel*, *Stand by Your Van*) and Alison Prouty (*Frankenstein*, *Random Acts*,

A Behanding in Spokane, *The 39 Steps*), the release points out. Under the direction of James Bond (a New York-based director in his first outing at Venice Theatre), "they will lead audiences through an outrageous universe where they play women and men struggling through the common rituals of modern life," the release adds.

By the end of their performances, Denton and Prouty will have introduced audiences to a couple dozen characters, including a blond college girl, a jock college guy, a Third World farmworker, "two manly men," "two high school girls from New Jersey" and "a wry mother of a 5-year-old," the release explains.

According to broadwayworld.com, these characters are "vividly imagined" and "appealing to audiences of all genders," the release points out.



*Alison Prouty (left) and Nancy Denton (right) play more than 20 characters in *Parallel Lives*. Contributed photo by Renee McVety*

FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE TO PRESENT WORLD PREMIERE OF *TOM JONES*

Florida Studio Theatre has announced the opening of the world premiere of *Tom Jones* by Mark Brown in the Gompertz Theatre on April 11. Performances will run through June 1.

Single tickets range from \$18 to \$42. They may be purchased online at FloridaStudioTheatre.org, by phone at 366-9000 or by visiting the box office at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, a news release says.

Playwright Brown also wrote FST audience favorite *Around the World in 80 Days*, the release notes. This new play is an adaptation of the groundbreaking novel, *The History of*



Wilmari Myburgh, Matthew Goodrich and Eileen Ward are featured in Tom Jones. Contributed photo by Cliff Roles



(From left) Faith Sandberg, Wilmari Myburgh, Matthew Goodrich and Eileen Ward star in Tom Jones at Florida Studio Theatre. Contributed photo by Cliff Roles.

Tom Jones, a Foundling, by Henry Fielding, the release points out. “In this thrilling adventure of the heart, Tom Jones, a charming young man of questionable birth, is madly in love with Sophia Western. But when Sophia’s father arranges for her to marry a loathsome man, she flees for her life. Aristocrats, wenches and scalawags abound in this bawdy and rollicking romp through the back roads and bedchambers of England,” the release continues.

“Hot off the success of the recent FST record-breaking hit,” *Monty Python’s Spamalot*, FST company member Bruce Warren will play multiple roles in the production, the release notes.

GLORIA MUSICAE TO PERFORM IN MUNCHTIME MUSICALE PROGRAM

The Sarasota Concert Association's 2013-2014 Munchtime Musicales series of free lunchtime concerts will conclude on April 16 with the Gloria Musicae singers, "Sarasota's professional vocal ensemble known for stimulating performances of great choral music," the association has announced in a news release.

The group will perform opera choruses by Verdi and Bizet and a salute to George Gershwin, the release adds. The program will begin at noon in [Holley Hall](#) at the Beatrice Friedman Symphony Center, located at 709 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. The concert is free and open to the public. For more information

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

The critically acclaimed Gloria Musicae, under the direction of Dr. Joseph Holt, performs a repertoire spanning four centuries, the release points out — "major works with orchestras, intimate madrigals, church motets, folk songs, close-harmony jazz and Broadway show music." The ensemble also specializes in premieres of lesser-known choral works, particularly those by living American composers, the release adds.

Holt says in the release that this concert will feature works for solo and apprentice singers, as well as for the entire group.



Gloria Musicae will perform on April 16 in Holley Hall in Sarasota. Photo courtesy of the group

CHROMA QUARTET TO PERFORM AT THE GLENRIDGE ON APRIL 18

The Chroma Quartet will present Mendelssohn's *String Quartet in f minor, Op. 8* and Borodin's *String Quartet No. 2* at The Glenridge Performing Arts Center on Friday, April 18, at 8 p.m., The Glenridge has announced.

Tickets, which are \$15 for the general public, may be purchased online at GPACTIX.com.

The Chroma Quartet was formed in 2008 by violinists Christopher Takeda and Jennifer Best Takeda, violist Michael McClelland and cellist Abraham Feder, a news release explains. Individually, they "have performed

chamber music around the world to great critical acclaim," it adds.

When the four musicians started performing together, "they knew they had something special going," the release notes. "Right away, our sounds melded together musically," says Feder in the release. Since then, audiences have proved them correct about that sentiment, the release notes. "People are excited. They love the intimacy, the melting together of our music. They can see our personality come out in our music," Feder adds in the release.



The Chroma Quartet/Contributed photo

DISCOVER DAVINCI & MICHELANGELO COMING TO THE VAN WEZEL

The Discover DaVinci & Michelangelo: Side by Side multi-media event will continue its North American tour at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota on Saturday, April 19, tour organizers have announced.

Mark Rodgers, the creator and host of the event, developed the show as a way to compare and contrast the two geniuses. The idea came to him while he was curating a DaVinci and Michelangelo exhibition in Denver, CO, a news release explains.

“I realized you can’t talk about DaVinci without Michelangelo,” says Rodgers in the release. “They were contemporaries, and many people don’t know that.”

The multi-media event has evolved over the last couple of years, the release continues.

What began as a tour focused on DaVinci came to incorporate an examination of Michelangelo as well, the release adds.

The show features remarks by Rodgers and a PowerPoint presentation that includes movies; 3D animations of machines and inventions; and images of codices, paintings and sculptures, the release points out.

Tickets for reserved seats are \$10 to \$30. They may be purchased at the Van Wezel box office, located at 777 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota; by phone at 953-3368; or online at vanwezel.org.

Before the show and during intermission, local artist Charles Miano will perform an art demonstration, the release adds.



The Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall is located at 777 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Photo by Norman Schimmel

MEN FROM MARS, WOMEN FROM VENUS TO BE THEME OF SHOW

“The hilarious fusion of theatre and stand-up [comedy],” *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, starring Peter Story, will come to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall on April 24, the hall has announced in a news release.

The show is based on the New York Times best-selling book by author and relationship counselor Dr. John Gray, the release explains. The book has sold more than 50 million copies, the release adds. According to CNN, the

release notes, it was the “highest ranked work of nonfiction” of the ’90s.

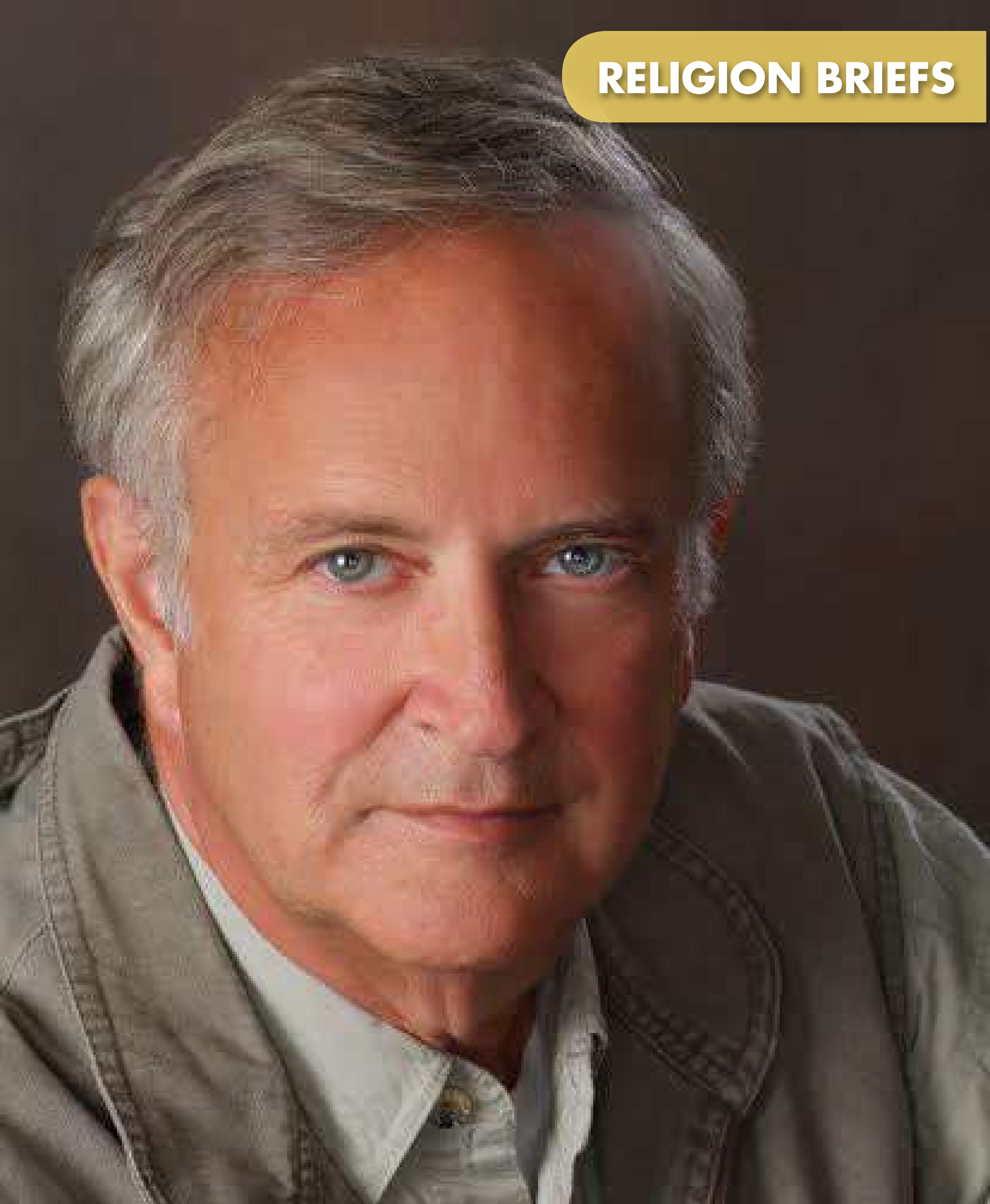
Story’s production of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* “covers everything from dating and marriage to the bedroom, providing an interesting and witty glimpse into the complex psyches of men and women,” the release continues.

Tickets are \$25 to \$40. For more information or tickets, call the box office at 953-3368 or visit VanWezel.org. 



Peter Story/Contributed photo

RELIGION BRIEFS



BUDDHIST TO PRESENT NEXT FREETHINKERS' BRIEFING

Can you really be a freethinker? will be the topic of the next Freethinkers' Briefing, scheduled from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Friday, April 11, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, the church has announced.

The guest speaker will be Page Brown, a practicing Buddhist affiliated with the Mindfulness Meditation Center in Sarasota, a news release says.

The church is located at 3975 Fruitville Road in Sarasota.

This free briefing, in cooperation with the Lifelong Learning Academy (lla-sm.org), will help answer questions such as the following, the release adds: Do you consider yourself a freethinker? How would you describe a freethinker? What if you are merely a product of your conditioning or trapped by your past?

"The Buddha had a radical view of the self that flies in the face of most Western thinking," the release continues. "Come hear what the Buddha had to say and judge for yourself whether Western scholars and scientists got it wrong and saddled you with their mistaken and 'topsy-turvy' views," it says.

Brown holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Cornell University and a law degree from the New England School of Law, the release notes. He was a trial lawyer for 24 years. Brown's initial exposure to Buddhism was in the late 1960s, while he was in college and then in Vietnam, the release points out. "He first studied and practiced on a regular basis with the Friends of the Western Buddhist

Order," beginning in the late 1980s, it notes. Further, he has traveled throughout Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong and Japan, observing Buddhist cultures, the release adds.

Brown regularly attends lectures and retreats in the United States and has taught and lectured locally on Buddhist meditation, the release says.

"Freethinkers' Briefings are evidence-based summaries of what the general public needs to know about complex issues in the fields of religion, morality, ethics and justice," the release explains. Upcoming Freethinkers' Briefings, held in cooperation with the Lifelong Learning Academy, will include Marden Paru on *Health and Medicine in the Bible* on April 25. Two upcoming programs will feature Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan. The topic of the first will be *Roman Catholic Women Priests: A Spiritual Revolution or a Holy Shakeup*, set for May 2. The second, with Meehan participating, will be *Everything You've Ever Wanted to Know About Mormonism*, presented by Ryan T. Cragun on June 6, the release points out.

All sessions begin at 10 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota.

For information, call David Ryan at 365-4027 or email d2mryan@verizon.net.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota is a Welcoming Congregation serving Sarasota and Manatee counties. More information may be found at uusarasota.org.

TEMPLE EMANU-EL STUDENTS SPREAD PASSOVER CHEER

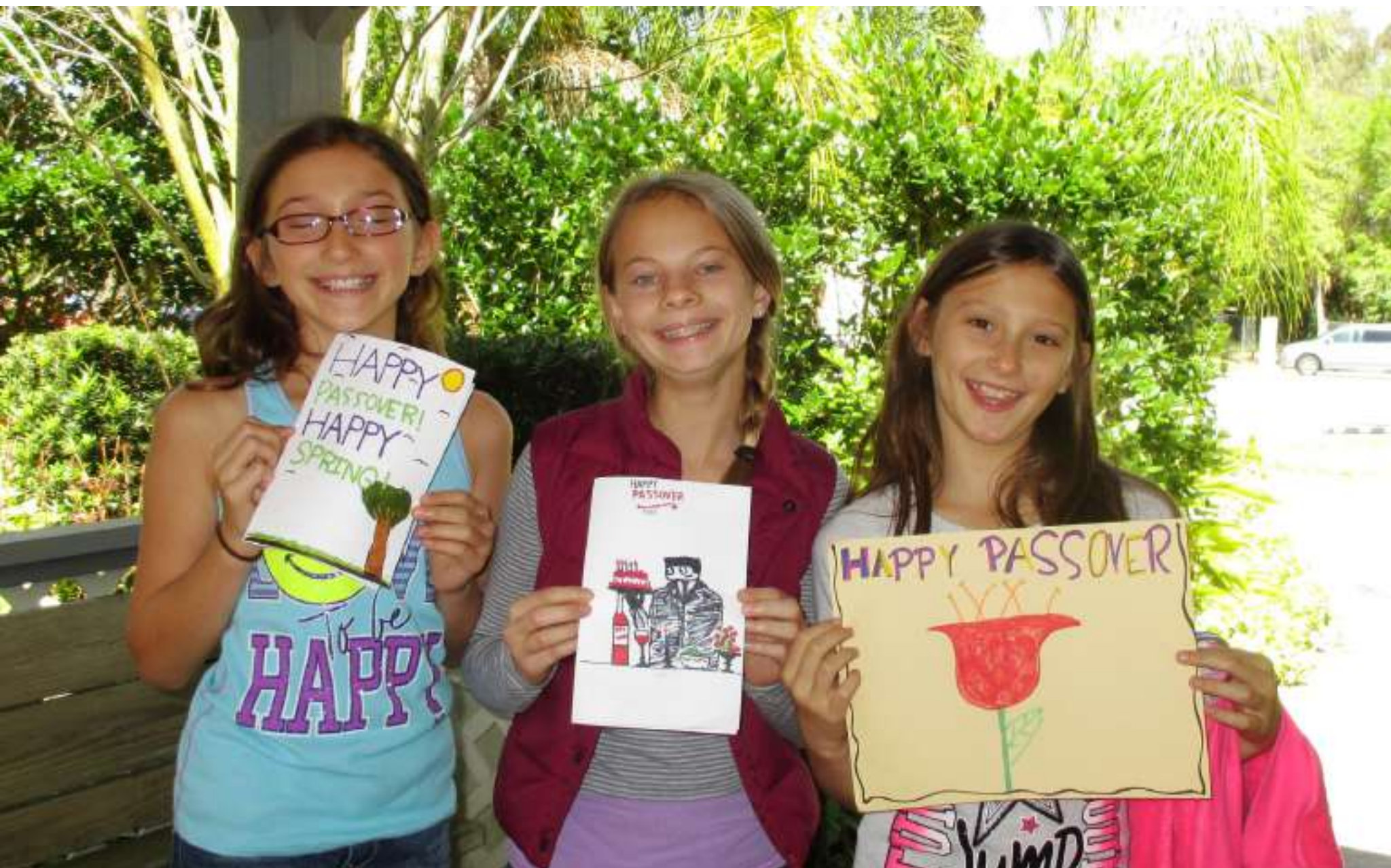
Local nursing home residents and hospitalized patients will enjoy a brighter Passover holiday thanks to the creativity and care of Temple Emanu-El Religious School students.

Temple Emanu-El's sixth-grade class spent the morning of March 30 creating Passover cards to be distributed through Jewish Family and Children's Service (JFCS) during the holiday season, a Temple Emanu-El news release explains. "Decorated with Passover symbols and spring motifs, the cards are intended to brighten the holiday for every recipient as well as deepen the students' learning about Jewish values," the release adds.

"It made me feel very good that I was able to help an elderly person just by giving them a sincere card," one sixth-grade student stated in the release. "I hope that the recipient enjoys reading it as much as I enjoyed making it!"

"By making this card, we were observing the commandment to honor our elders and remembering the Passover holiday," he concluded in the release.

Passover, the Jewish holiday that commemorates the Exodus from Egypt and the ancient Israelites' redemption from slavery, begins at sundown April 14 and lasts for seven days, the release points out.



Temple Emanu-El Religious School students Danielle Rudd, Katie Hurwitz and Jayme Rudd display some of the Passover cards to be distributed to elderly and hospitalized patients during the holiday season. Contributed photo

REDEEMER'S FINAL LENTEN ORGAN RECITAL TO FEATURE SIEBECKER

The Church of the Redeemer in Sarasota will present a half-hour Lenten organ recital on Wednesday, April 16, featuring Nancy Siebecker, an artist and instructor at the Wausau Conservatory of Music in Wausau, WI, 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.

CONGREGATION TO HOLD YOM HASHOAH SERVICE ON APRIL 18

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ) will hold a special Yom Hashoah service on Friday, April 18, at 8 p.m., it has announced.

The keynote speaker will be Sandy Mermelstein, whose topic will be *Memoirs and Diaries from the Holocaust*, a news release says. Her parents, Edith and Walter Loebenberg, both German refugees, helped found and create the Florida Holocaust Museum, the release notes.

Also on the program will be Sarasota resident, Holocaust survivor and frequent area speaker Paul Molnar, the release adds.

Members of the community are invited to share in this special service.

The Congregation meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota.

For more information, visit chj-sarasota.org or call 929-7771.



Sandy Mermelstein/Contributed photo

Take Your Time

You Have All Week

Enjoy The News Leader Anytime - Day or Night

CELEBRATE HOLY WEEK AND EASTER WITH REDEEMER

The Church of the Redeemer, located at 222 S. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota, invites the entire community to join the parish in celebrating Holy Week and Easter, “the focal point and heart of the Christian faith,” a news release says.

The Great Three Days (*Paschal Triduum*) will begin on Maundy Thursday, April 17, the release explains. Masses that day will commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus. The institution of the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., the release adds. The evening service will be a choral Mass that will include the washing of feet, a procession to the Altar of Repose and stripping of the altars.

On April 18, the Solemn Liturgy for Good Friday will begin at noon, the release continues. “This beautiful, three-hour liturgy” commemorates the time Jesus was hanging on the cross, the release notes. It will include the singing of the Passion according to John, Solemn Collects, the Veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament, the release says.

Also on April 18, the Church of the Redeemer will lead the walking of the Stations of the Cross down Main Street in Sarasota beginning at 7:30 a.m. (See the related article in *Religion Briefs*.)

Confessions will be heard this day between 3:30 and 4:30 p.m., the release continues.

The celebration of the Resurrection will begin with the Great Vigil of Easter at 8 p.m. on Saturday, April 19.



The Church of the Redeemer welcomes the public to join its members in Holy Week and Easter celebrations. Contributed photo

On Easter Sunday, April 20, choral celebrations of the Eucharist of the Resurrection will be offered at 7, 9 and 11 a.m., the release says. Children in the First Communion Class will receive their First Communion during the 9 a.m. Mass. At 1 p.m., Redeemer will offer a Mass in Spanish, the release adds.

Complimentary parking is available in the BMO Harris Bank parking garage on McAnsh Square on the following days: Maundy Thursday, April 17, 6:30 to 10 p.m.; Easter eve, April 19, 6:45 p.m. to midnight; and Easter Sunday, April 20, from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m., the release points out.

For more information, call 955-4263, visit redeemersarasota.org or follow the parish and its activities on Facebook at [RedeemerSarasota](https://www.facebook.com/RedeemerSarasota).

MORE THAN 600 'PILGRIMS' EXPECTED FOR STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Church of the Redeemer, an Episcopal church in downtown Sarasota, and the Sarasota Ministerial Association invite the Sarasota community to observe the Passion of Jesus Christ by participating in walking the Stations of the Cross down Main Street in Sarasota on Good Friday, April 18, beginning at 7:30 a.m.

The Christian pilgrimage will gather at 7:15 a.m. in front of the Hollywood 20 theater on Main Street, and the walking of the Stations will begin promptly at 7:30 a.m., led by Redeemer's rector, the Very Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson, and members of Redeemer's Men's Ministry and the Sarasota Ministerial Association, a news release says.

Along the way, pilgrims will stop for worship and prayer at each of the 14 stations — “an opportunity for reflection upon the different moments of Christ's passion journey,” the release explains. “A service booklet sharing the acts of worship for each station is provided to all participating pilgrims,” it notes.

The cross will be carried the entire route by Redeemer's youth minister, Father David Bumsted, it continues. Representatives of all of the church choirs will follow him, singing the *Trisagion* in refrain after each station reading.

The procession will include stations in front of the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune* building, the steps of the First Baptist Church, the First



Redeemer Youth Minister Father David Bumsted is surrounded by clergy and members of the Church of the Redeemer and friends and members of the Sarasota Ministerial Association. Bumsted holds the cross he will carry during the walking of the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, April 18. Contributed photo



The Rev. Henry Porter of the Westcoast Center for Human Development; Church of the Redeemer Men's Ministry team member Jeff Kern; Redeemer's youth minister, Father David Bumsted (holding the cross he will carry during the Good Friday walking of the Stations of the Cross); Redeemer's rector, the Very Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson; the Sarasota Ministerial Association's chairman, the Rev. Dr. Tom Pfaff; and Sarasota City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo. Contributed photo

GOOD FRIDAY MORNING STATIONS OF THE CROSS DOWN MAIN STREET

April 18, 2014

Sponsored and Led by the
Men's Ministry of Church of the Redeemer
In conjunction with the
Sarasota Ministerial Association



THIS WALK IS A TIME OF MEDITATION AND PRAYER

Fr. Fred Robinson from Redeemer will lead the opening devotion. The cross is being carried by Rev. David Bumsted.

Gather on Hollywood 20 sidewalk (corner Main and 301) 7:15 AM

Call to order:

Welcome, overview, review singing, prayer

Fr. Fred Robinson – 7:30 AM

1st Station: Bench on North Side Links and Main

Sarasota Mayor Shannon Snyder
Sarasota County Commissioner Carolyn Mason

2nd Station: Front of City Center Building

{Being Confirmed} Sarasota Commissioner Paul Caragiulo
Church of Redeemer Men

3rd Station: Park Steps, West Side of City Center Building

Deacon Kevin McKenney
St. Martha's Catholic Church

4th Station: Bench Area in front of SunTrust

Pastor Glen Bell & Pastor Julio Traviero
First Presbyterian Church (Spanish/English)

5th Station: Plaza at the Herald-Tribune building

Tom Tryon, Christ Church

6th Station: First Baptist Church steps

Westcoast School for Human Development (Singing & Reading)

7th Station: Bench Area, In Front of Bank of America

Deacon Humberto Alvia
St. Jude Catholic Church (Spanish/English)

8th Station: C'est la Vie parking lot

Rev. Dr. David and Lori Sutton, The Salvation Army

9th Station: Newspaper Boxes at Intersection of Main & Lemon

Jody Maxwell, Church of the Redeemer

10th Station: Five Points Turn-Around

Redeemer Hispanic Ministry

11th Station: First United Methodist Church

First United Methodist Youth Group

12th Station: Pineapple Park

Lauren Yenari, Church of Redeemer Youth Reading and
Westcoast School Singing Chorus

13th Station: Playground area - First United Methodist Church

Pastor Rod Myers, Central Church of Christ

14th Station: Front of Church of the Redeemer

Fr. Fred Robinson, Redeemer

****Following the Stations, the Church of the Redeemer warmly invites the community to attend the service of Morning Prayer inside the church. Joining Fr. Fred Robinson will be: Sarasota City Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and Deacon Leonardo Pastore, St. Jude Catholic Church.***


United Methodist Church and many other sites on and near Main Street, the release continues. It will conclude at approximately 8:30 a.m. at the Church of the Redeemer, located at 222 S. Palm Ave., with a closing devotion. All pilgrims are invited to stay at Redeemer for the 9 a.m. Morning Prayer service, led by Robinson, Sarasota Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and Deacon Leonardo Pastore of St. Jude Catholic Church, a founding congregation of the Sarasota Ministerial Association, the release says.

“Walking the Stations of the Cross is a centuries-old Christian tradition of remembering and experiencing 14 events along the way of Christ’s journey to the cross,” the release points out. The Church of the Redeemer’s Friday Men’s Breakfast Prayer Group founded this tradition of walking down Main Street in 1996; the event began with fewer than 15 participants and has since grown into a multi-church and community-wide event with more than 500 “pilgrims” participating last year, the release adds.

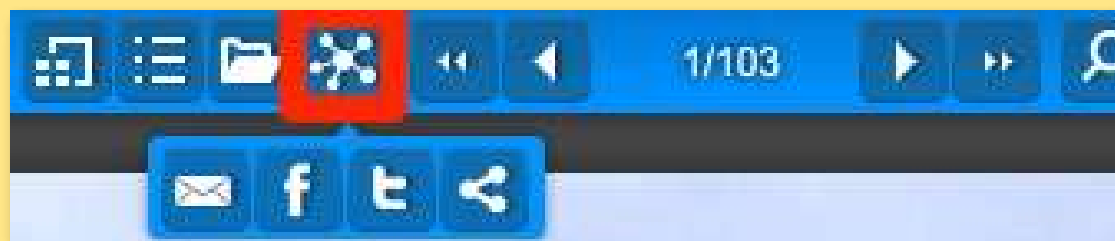
“Since 2002, the Sarasota Ministerial Association, comprising 60 local area churches and faith-based organizations, has joined Redeemer in being a witness to

Sarasota of Christ’s redemptive sufferings,” the release says. Many of the association’s churches will be participating in the walking of the Stations of the Cross, with pastors, priests, church leaders and youth groups taking part throughout the event and at specific stations. This year, Sarasota Mayor Shannon Snyder and County Commissioner Carolyn Mason will read the First Station, the release notes, and City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo will read the Second Station.

Small buses will provide transport to the Hollywood 20 location for those who wish to park at the final station at the Church of the Redeemer, beginning at 6:45 a.m., the release points out. After the 9 a.m. Morning Prayer service, bus transportation will again be offered from Redeemer to Hollywood 20 for pilgrims who parked at the beginning of the route.

For more information about walking the Stations of the Cross, call the Redeemer parish office at 955-4263 or visit redeemersarasota.org. For information about the Sarasota Ministerial Association, call its chairman, the Rev. Dr. Tom Pfaff, at 724-5018 or visit sarasotaministerialassociation.org. 

QUICK TIP



Share stories by clicking the  icon in the menubar and choosing to share via e-mail, post to Facebook or Twitter, or many other sharing options.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

11+ 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 .
11+ 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 .
11+ APRIL	Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents <i>Bubbling Brown Sugar</i> Through May 11; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or wbttsrq.org .
11+ APRIL	Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Tom Jones</i> Through June 1; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$19 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or FloridaStudioTheatre.org .
18 APRIL	The Chroma Quartet in concert April 18, 8 p.m. Glenridge Performing Arts Center, 7333 Scotland Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$15. Information: 552-5325 or TheGlenridge.com .
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 with a stuffed animal, toys and coupons for Siesta Village businesses. 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.
26+ APRIL	36th Annual Siesta Fiesta April 26-27, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Ocean Boulevard and Beach Road in Siesta Key Village. Event to feature fine arts and crafts created by 250 artists from around the country, presented by the Siesta Key Village Association and Howard Alan Events Ltd. For more information, visit the website .

FUTURE WALLENDAS?

PRESS



Norman Schimmel
Photographer

The Sarasota News Leader
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SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS



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