

**THE SARASOTA**

Vol. 2, No. 31 — April 18, 2014

# News Leader

**ASSESSING THE SHELTER SITES  
DISCRIMINATION CONVERSATION  
QUESTIONS ABOUT A NEW 'NIGHTCLUB'**

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*Inside*



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# A.K.A. HELP

# SARASOTA NEWS LEADER

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# Welcome

Last weekend, we marked our second anniversary.

Those of you who have been readers from the beginning remember that we started out with a blog site, publishing stories as we completed them. It was not until Sept. 21, 2012 that we launched the digital version of the *News Leader*.

Of course, we celebrate that September anniversary as well, but April always will always be an extra special month for us.

One of my closest friends recently sent me an article from The Washington Post about the demise of the *Manassas News & Messenger* in Prince William County, VA. One paragraph immediately caught my eye: “It’s not that people aren’t interested in their communities — local news usually ranks as the top priority in surveys

— it’s that the economics of the digital age work strongly against reporting about schools, cops and the folks down the street.”

People in Sarasota County are keenly interested in their local news. Reporting those stories remains our mission, and doing it digitally enables us to provide far more comprehensive coverage than you will find in any print publication. Sadly, in this modern era dominated by the Internet, about the only time a newspaper devotes a lot of “ink” to a story is when its reporters have undertaken a major investigative series. For us, there is no column-inch limit dictated by a page layout.

I would be truly remiss at this point if I did not offer a heartfelt thanks to all of you, our readers. Your support is what makes it a pleasure to create the *News Leader* each week.

*Rachel Brown Hackney*

Editor and Publisher







Click Any **Headline** To Go Directly To That Article



## NEWS & COMMENTARY

### ASSESSING THE SHELTER SITES

9

On April 22, the City and County commissions will discuss costs and potential challenges of two proposed locations, with a key report having been released this week — *Roger Drouin*

### DISCRIMINATION CONVERSATION

19

Do federal rules really prevent anti-gay housing discrimination in Sarasota County? — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

### QUESTIONS ABOUT A NEW 'NIGHTCLUB'

23

Duval's wants patrons to have more alcoholic beverage options, but it is wary of the designation it needs to proceed — *Stan Zimmerman*

### STUDYING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

27

The U.S. Geological Survey soon will embark on a yearlong study of data collected about Warm Mineral Springs, from water temperature to water sources — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

### Q&A: ALAN MAIO

34

GOP Sarasota County Commission candidate speaks! — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

### PLEA FOR THE PASS

40

Video's release underscores preservationists' goal to keep dredges out of Big Sarasota Pass — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

### OFFERING REFUGE

46

Dangerous stretch of Bee Ridge getting a makeover — *Cooper Levey-Baker*

### DESIGN DRAMA

48

Hudson Bayou sewer station plans continue to evolve — *Stan Zimmerman*



### PHOTO CREDITS

Front cover: *Mystic Figure* - Robert Hackney

Sarasota Leisure: *Waterfront Leisure* - Norman Schimmel



## NEWS BRIEFS



## OPINION



Click Any **Headline** To Go Directly To That Article



### MAYOR OPPOSES ACCEPTING AUDIT

53

Next city budget starting \$3 million in the hole — *Stan Zimmerman*

### REALITY TV CON MAS

57

Homelessness, legal and downtown traffic issues join project cost overruns in making up most of the April 21 City Commission agenda — *Stan Zimmerman*

### BUILDING BEYOND THE SETBACK LINE

63

An Osprey couple will try once again to get County Commission approval to construct a house on Siesta Key land that has a history of flooding — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

### WAITING ON STATE MONEY

70

Fast-track plan for a diverging diamond interchange hinges on Senate and House negotiations — *Roger Drouin*

### SIDEWALK CLEANING AND TRANSPORTATION

76

The Downtown Improvement District Board learns a firm has been chosen for sidewalk cleaning, and it tests another electric 'circulator' — *Stan Zimmerman*

### NEWS BRIEFS

80

### CRIME BLOTTER

95

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Click Any **Headline** To Go Directly To That Article



## OPINION

### EDITORIAL

Two county employees' firings raise questions about the new administrator's priorities

101

## SARASOTA LEISURE

### BORN TO PERFORM

Chuck Sidlow lets his heart of gold shine through — *Barbara Dondero*

105

### SIESTA SEEN

The island's Code Enforcement officer is expected back on duty April 21; Gidget's is open and very busy; Siesta leads the way again with Tourist Development Tax collections; and the Tarpon Tournament will be starting soon — *Rachel Brown Hackney*

111

### A&E BRIEFS

120

### RELIGION BRIEFS

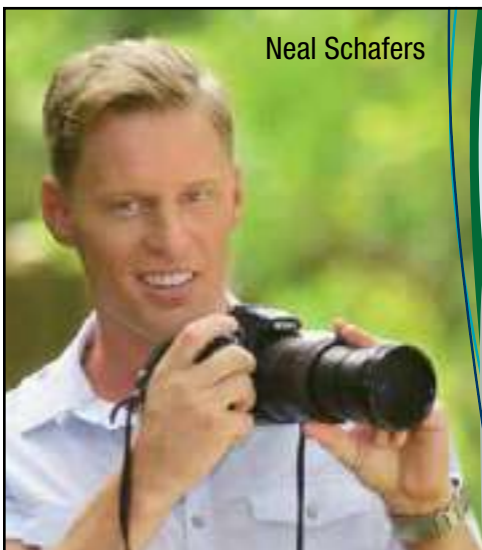
126

### COMMUNITY CALENDAR

128

### SCHIMMEL SIGHTINGS

129



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# ASSESSING THE SHELTER SITES

The [Cardno](#) report shows a concept for a shelter on the 1330 N. Osprey Ave. site. Image courtesy Sarasota County

## ON APRIL 22, THE CITY AND COUNTY COMMISSIONS WILL DISCUSS COSTS AND POTENTIAL CHALLENGES OF TWO PROPOSED LOCATIONS, WITH A KEY REPORT HAVING BEEN RELEASED THIS WEEK

By Roger Drouin  
County Editor

The preliminary environmental analyses of two potential homeless shelter sites in the City of Sarasota show both with problems indicating further testing is needed, according to the draft report released on April 17 by a Clearwater firm hired to perform the work.

The findings of that report are expected to be the primary focus of a joint meeting of the Sarasota County and City commissions on April 22. The draft document summarizes not only the

environmental analysis but also due diligence regarding the two prospective sites.

“All of these joint meetings we are having with the city on the shelter are becoming really instrumental in making sure we are staying on track — especially this one,” County Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson told *The*

*Sarasota News Leader* this week about the upcoming session.

The report released Thursday is expected to guide the elected

“I’m out-voted, and I accept I am out-voted.”

Susan Chapman  
Sarasota City Commissioner





officials in their next steps regarding the primary two sites considered for the shelter — 1330 N. Osprey Ave. and 1800 N. East Ave. It provides information relative to the boards’ potential financial investment in the facility and should enable the commissioners to focus on timelines, county staff has told the *News Leader*.

The draft report will be thoroughly discussed Tuesday, said Wayne Applebee, the county’s homelessness issues coordinator.

County staff also made it clear to the *News Leader* that the documents in the report have not been finalized. They “will most likely change as the process moves forward,” Jamie Carson, a county spokeswoman, pointed out in an email to the *News Leader*.

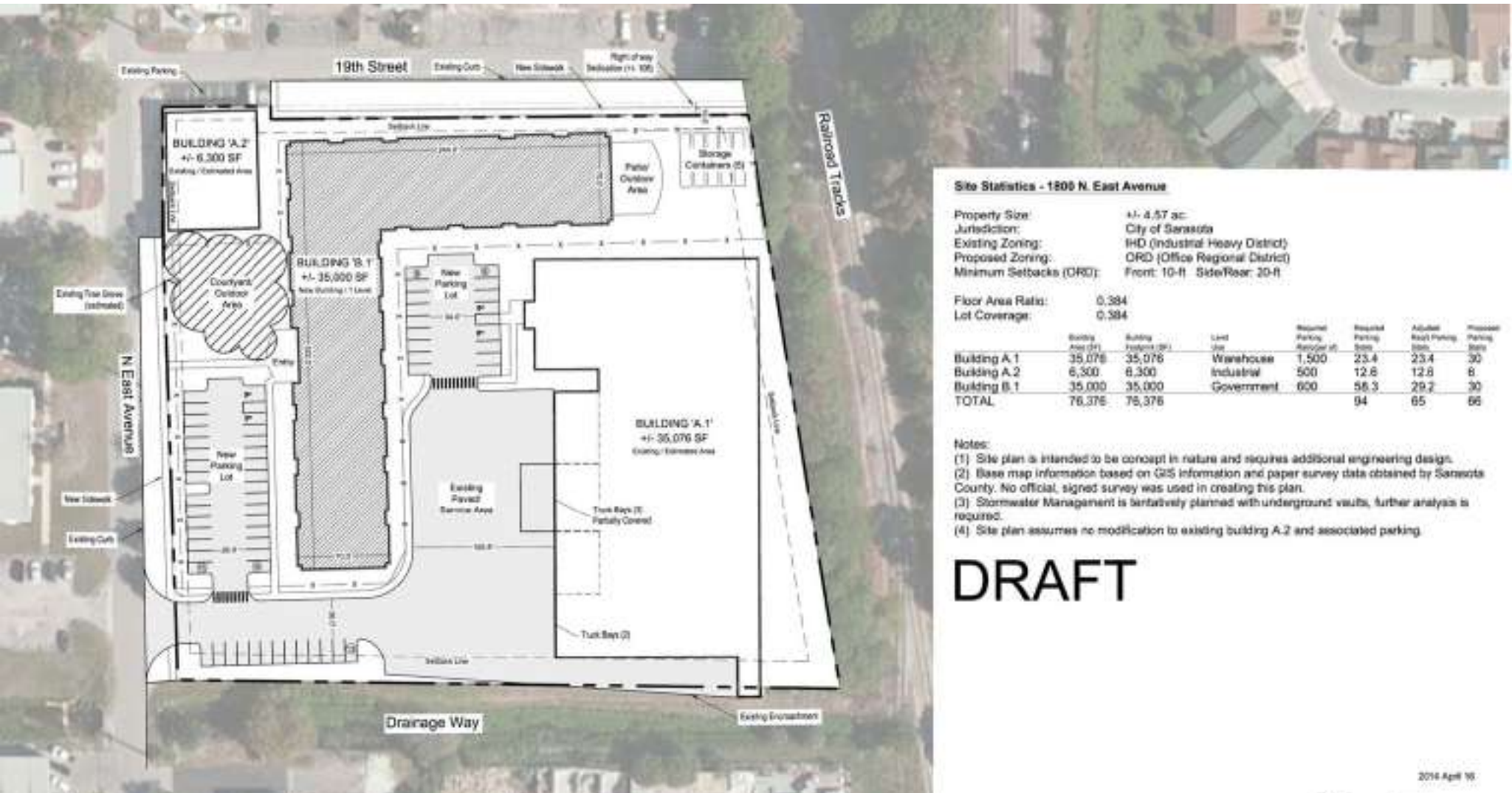
Prepared by environmental engineering firm [Cardno ENTRIX Inc.](#), the draft report says of

the East Avenue property, “benzo(a)pyrene,” a hydrocarbon often found close to asphalt parking lots, and arsenic exceeded residential limits in soil samples taken close to portions of that site paved with asphalt.

According to the Phase II environmental assessment in the draft report: “Based on the findings of the investigation, additional assessment appears to be warranted if the client wishes to determine the extent of on-site arsenic and PAH impacts to soil.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, [PAHs](#), such as benzo(a)anthracene, are created when products such as coal, oil, gas and garbage are burned but the burning process is not complete.

Cardno recommends resampling two monitor wells “to confirm the presence of the low level benzo(a)anthracene concentrations.”



The Cardno report shows a concept for the shelter site plan on the 1800 N. East Ave. property. Image courtesy Sarasota County



### 3 - Zoning/Land Use Summary

The two sites, 1800 N. East Avenue and 1330 N. Osprey Avenue, are located within the City of Sarasota municipal limits and applicable to the City's land use regulations. The proposed Homeless Shelter use is more broadly defined as a *Social Service Facility* by the City of Sarasota Zoning Code. The following Sites Summary table lists the basic land use designations for the sites. Each element is described in more detail later in this sub-section.

Sites Summary		
	Site A 1800 N. East Avenue	Site B 1330 N. Osprey Avenue
Parcel Number	0043-13-0001, (0000-00-8345 & 0000-00-8345)	2025-08-0001
Size	4.65 acres (Prior to right-of-way dedication)	2.36 acres (Prior to right-of-way dedication)
Jurisdiction	City of Sarasota	City of Sarasota
Enterprise Zone	No	Yes
Future Land Use Designation	PIC (Production Intensive Commercial)	PIC (Productive Intensive Commercial)
Zoning District	IHD (Industrial Heavy District)	G (Government)
Social Service Facility Permitted in Current Zone	NO	NO
Social Service Facility Allowed in following Zones as <u>Major Conditional Use</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; ORD (Office Regional District) - <i>Requires Future Land Use Map Amendment</i></li> <li>&gt; MCI (Medical Charitable and Institutional) <i>no rezones permitted</i></li> <li>&gt; CI (Commercial Intensive) <i>no rezones permitted</i></li> </ul>	
Potential Zone Change District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; ORD (Office Regional District)</li> </ul>	
Conditional Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The planning board or the city commission, whichever is appropriate may approve a conditional use that modifies the setback requirements, height requirements, landscaping requirements, parking requirements, or buffering requirements by no more than ten percent, provided that the board or city commission expressly finds that the modification will enhance the ability of the proposed conditional use to meet the general standards for all conditional uses.</li> </ul>	
Social Service Facility Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; A facility owned and operated by a private nonprofit organization or by a public agency which offers counseling services, meals and temporary shelter to transient or indigent persons. Such facilities may also provide counseling and temporary custodial care to nonviolent prerelease inmates from federal and state correctional facilities.</li> </ul>	



On the Osprey site, pollutants common to urban settings were discovered, as well as elevated levels of lead.

The draft report's section on the Osprey land says, "Based on the findings of the investigation, additional assessment appears to be warranted if the client wishes to determine the extent of on-site arsenic, lead [and] PAH impacts to soil. Additionally, the installation of at least one additional well, located down gradient of [another well], would be required to define the extent of lead concentrations in groundwater above GCTLs [Groundwater Cleanup Target Levels]."

If the commissioners do not choose to proceed with one of the two sites, they will have to draw on "back-up" parcels from

homelessness consultant Robert Marbut's second tier list of possible shelter locations.

"We're at a stage where we have to keep all options open," Applebee said. "We don't know how these sites will end up at the end of the day."

## CONCEPTUAL PLANS

The Cardno report includes conceptual plans showing how an approximately 35,000-square-foot shelter, parking, outdoor patio areas and storage could fit onto both sites. It also indicates possible fencing and vegetative buffers along the borders of the parcels.

In addition to the environmental analyses, likely topics Tuesday are legal research related to site boundaries and related challenges; the

**“** *We're at a stage where we have to keep all options open. We don't know how these sites will end up at the end of the day.*

Wayne Applebee  
Homelessness Issues Coordinator  
Sarasota County

**”**



*The City of Sarasota owns the site at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



zoning and permitting process necessary for use of either site; a timeline for construction; and cost estimates for the facilities. Both parcels, for example, will require rezoning that could take up to 10 months under the city's development guidelines.

Applebee said staff will also address concerns raised by residents about sexual offenders staying at the proposed shelter.

"My goal is to give the boards the best information about the sites and allow them to make the best decision for the community as a whole," Applebee told the *News Leader*.

## CONFUSION BEFORE THE RELEASE

City and county staff met Thursday, April 17, at 10 a.m. to talk about the findings in the 60-plus-page report, the *News Leader* learned.

While the draft, which is considered a public document, was released to the *News Leader* later in the day, that came after some confusion was cleared up.

While the report was presented to county and city staff during the Thursday morning meeting, it was not initially made available to the *News Leader* in spite of the *News Leader* having made a request earlier in the week



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

**Cardno**  
TBE



**1330 N Osprey Avenue**  
Sarasota, Florida

**Proposed Sampling Locations**

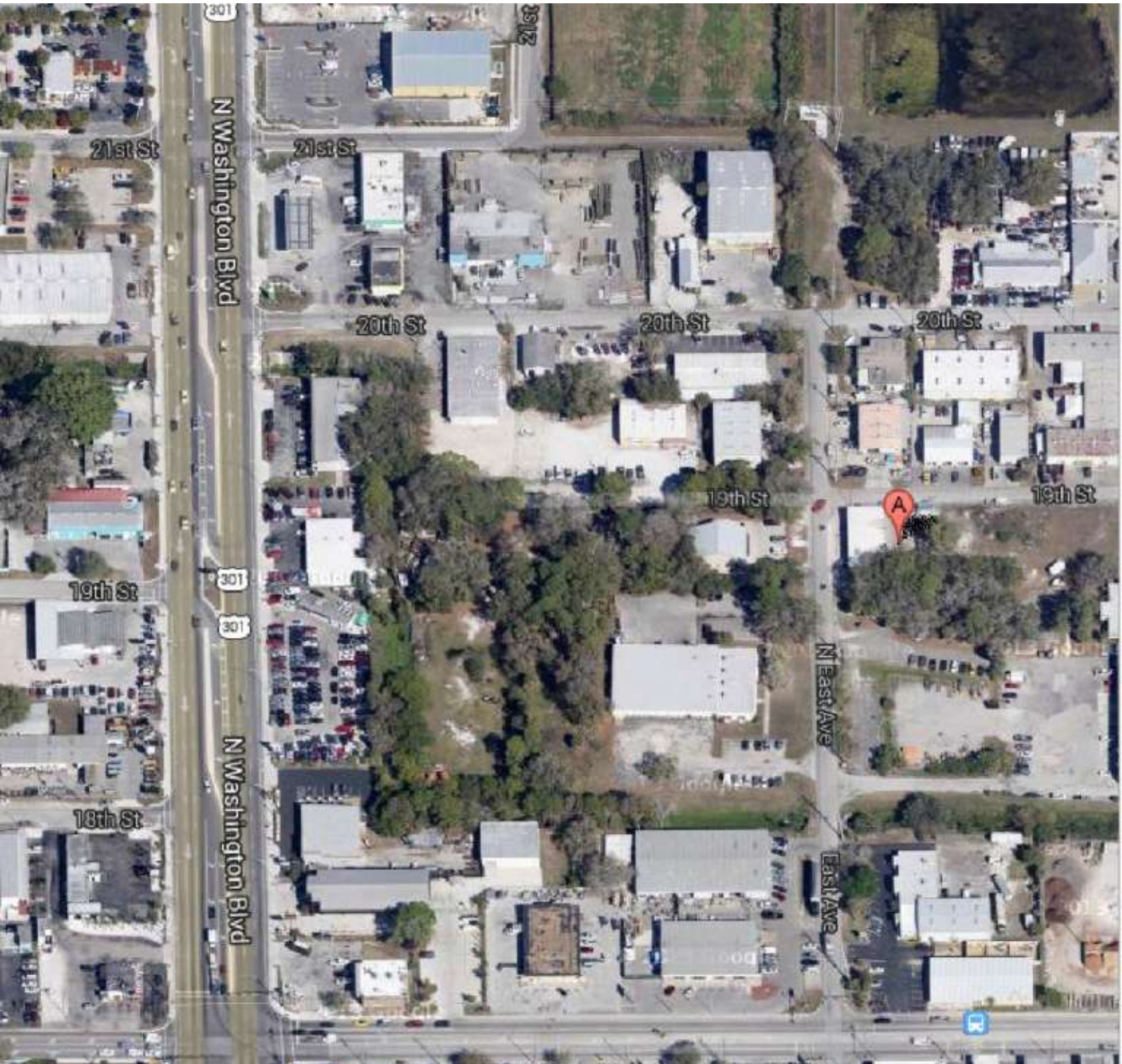
*A graphic prepared by Cardno shows the plan for borings that were part of the environmental analysis. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



for a copy of the document after it had been released to the city and county. Early Thursday, county Project Manager Brad Gaubatz told the *News Leader* the document likely would not be made public until the April 22 meeting. Gaubatz, the county's point of contact with

Cardno, called the report an "in-progress document," noting it could "change daily" until that April 22 meeting.

"The soup is still cooking," Gaubatz said Thursday in response to a *News Leader* inquiry about the status of the report's release.



An aerial view shows the site at 1800 N. East Ave. in Sarasota. Image from Google Maps



Both city and county staffers would need time to look over the report before it was offered to the news media, Gaubatz added. “This is staff’s first look at a report we commissioned, and we are trying to make sure the assumptions the consultant had when they went in are accurate — some of that has to do with zoning — and that issues raised in the draft are accurate ... It is fairly complicated stuff.”

He continued, “I am hesitant to get any of this out there until we can get as many eyes on it as we can.” Some information still needed to be added to the draft, Gaubatz pointed out.

The previous day, April 16, county staff told the *News Leader* the report would be available to the public at some point on Thursday.

Finally, the *News Leader* received the draft report by email early Thursday afternoon.

## OTHER POSSIBLE SITE ISSUES

On another front, the property at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. looked a little more feasible as a shelter site after city staffers recently proposed a city lease of nearby land on Osprey Avenue across from 12th Street. That property could be used as a staging area for construction of a shelter at 1330 N. Osprey. The lease



A 'For Sale' sign stands at the corner of the 1800 N. East Ave. property. Photo by Norman Schimmel



to use the other land as a “staging area” for the construction will cost \$1,075 per month, and the city proposes to pay for it from “homeless project funds,” according to communications among city and county staff. On Monday, April 21, the city commissioners will discuss whether to agree to the proposed lease. (See the related story in this issue.)

At the East Avenue site, issues involving a condominium association would have to be worked out before a shelter could be built there.

Early signs also indicate that the environmental concerns regarding both sites could

prevent the use of federal funds to build a homeless shelter on either of them.

## WHERE TO BUILD

Those who want to see the shelter constructed in the community say the county and city are already behind on dealing with the pressing issue of chronic homelessness and that time is of the essence. “[Pinellas] Safe Harbor [proponents] had theirs up and working in three to four months, for the whole project,” Robinson said, referring to the homeless shelter in Clearwater with which consultant Marbut was associated.



*The Pinellas Safe Harbor shelter in Clearwater has been proposed as a model for the Sarasota facility. Image courtesy Pinellas Safe Harbor*



“We need deadlines to get this done,” Robinson added of the Sarasota initiative.

Robinson pointed out earlier this week that the Osprey Avenue site, which is city-owned, and the East Avenue site are the “most ideal,” according to criteria used by Marbut.

But any votes on them would depend on the information contained in the Cardno report, Robinson cautioned the day before the report was slated to be released.

City Commissioner Paul Caragiulo told the *News Leader* that while no site will be popular for a shelter, a positive aspect of the 1330 Osprey Ave. parcel is that it is surrounded to a degree by industrial uses and therefore buffered from homes.

That property has been Marbut’s top recommendation for a come-as-you-are shelter for the chronic homeless.

“By [Marbut’s] parameters, that site makes the most sense,” Caragiulo said.

The city-owned property is zoned Governmental, which could make its transition to a shelter smoother if the facility is operated by the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office, as intended, Caragiulo added.

Although the county commissioners have been unanimous in their support of a shelter in the city, they have said a lack of political will at City Hall, especially a lack of urgency on the part of some administrative officials, has hindered the process.

Vice Mayor Willie Shaw and City Commissioner Susan Chapman have reiterated their

opposition to a city shelter project on numerous occasions. Shaw did vote in favor of considering a third potential site on North Lime Avenue, but city staff discovered soon afterward that the parcel was not available for sale or lease for a shelter.

A growing number of residents and some downtown business owners have voiced concerns about a homeless shelter in north Sarasota close to Sarasota Military Academy, the Pines of Sarasota retirement home and planned redevelopment that has been slow to happen.

Chapman told the *News Leader* that the Osprey Avenue site, which will be home to a deep-injection well, is a city utility location and should maintain that status only. She would prefer other sites outside the city limits be considered, perhaps in mid-county — something that has not been done, she pointed out.

“I don’t think the two sites they are looking at are appropriate,” Chapman said. But she added that she realizes she is “in the minority.”

“I’m out-voted,” Chapman said, “and I accept I am out-voted.”

*The joint meeting will be held at 1:30 p.m. in the County Commission Chambers, located at 1660 Ringling Blvd. in downtown Sarasota.*

*City Editor Stan Zimmerman contributed to this report.* 





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# DISCRIMINATION CONVERSATION

*Advocates of a Sarasota County human rights ordinance still are awaiting County Commission action. Photo by Benson Kua, via Fotopedia*

## DO FEDERAL RULES REALLY PREVENT ANTI-GAY HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IN SARASOTA COUNTY?

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

A new memo from the Sarasota County Attorney's Office suggests that federal regulations protect gays and lesbians from housing discrimination. Not true, says one local attorney who specializes in employment discrimination law.

County Attorney Steve DeMarsh sent the new memo to the County Commission on April 7; it's an update to a

memo he sent to the board in March detailing his office's research into how the county might implement a so-called "human rights ordinance." Such laws, which have been approved in several Florida municipalities, including the City of Sarasota, protect gays and lesbians from being discriminated against in housing and employment.

**“** *The point of having a county ordinance is to make sure people are protected, not to leave it [to] chance (on the possibility that some court in the future may go against all the prior case law to decide that sexual orientation discrimination is 'sex' discrimination after all).*

Kendra Presswood  
Attorney  
Shankman Leone  
Tampa

**”**



The original March memo includes a paragraph dealing with the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which outlawed discrimination based on a variety of categories, but not sexual orientation. "There is no protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation in federal or state housing laws," reads the memo.

But the April follow-up from DeMarsh complicates that picture.

"While the [Fair Housing] Act does not explicitly include the term 'sexual orientation,' sex discrimination includes non-conformity with gender stereotypes according to agency guidelines," the new memo reads. "[U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] Regulations also provide some

protection from discrimination under some circumstances based upon familial status."

According to county spokesperson Curt Preisser, DeMarsh's office continued its research on the topic on its own. The new memo was not requested by the commission or staff.

Attached to the memo is an explanation from the Housing and Urban Development website, with a few examples of how gays and lesbians may already be protected, if not explicitly. In one example, a gay man is evicted because "the landlord believes he will infect other tenants with HIV/AIDS." He would be protected because the man is "perceived to have a disability." Another example involves a potential transgender applicant,



*The Sarasota County Commission prepares for the start of a meeting. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



who cannot be discriminated against because the agency covers “non-conformity with gender stereotypes.”

“The Fair Housing Act does not specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity as prohibited bases,” the Housing and Urban Development fact sheet states. “However, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) person’s experience with sexual orientation or gender identity discrimination may still be covered by the Fair Housing Act.”

According to attorney Kendra Presswood of Holmes Beach, the key word there is “may.” As the department’s examples suggest, the federal government can only offer LGBT folks protection if a case involves other categories — e.g. “disability” or “non-conformity with gender stereotypes.”

“The courts for years have been saying that sexual orientation is not sex discrimination, so I don’t agree with the county attorney that the gender stereotype case law covers you,” says Presswood, an attorney with Tampa’s Shankman Leone who has worked on employment discrimination cases for more than 15 years. An effeminate gay man may be able to show he was discriminated against because of “non-conformity with gender stereotypes,” but “that doesn’t account for all the gay guys that are not effeminate at all,” Presswood explains.

“The point of having a county ordinance is to make sure people are protected, not to leave it [to] chance (on the possibility that some court in the future may go against all the prior case law to decide that sexual orientation discrimination is ‘sex’ discrimination after all),” Presswood later writes in an email.

“The first Memo had it right, there is no federal or state protection against discrimination based upon sexual orientation,” she adds. That’s why LGBT rights groups have pushed Congress to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act — approved by the Senate last year and still sitting idle in the Republican-controlled House — and “it is also why LGBT organizations try to get local ordinances like this passed, so that there IS protection.”

County Commissioner Carolyn Mason was the primary motivator for the original memo from DeMarsh. Last fall, she asked him to research human rights ordinances approved by other local governments. She has so far declined to respond to *Sarasota News Leader* voicemails, but spokesman Preisser says she plans to bring up the matter during the April 22 board meeting.

April is Fair Housing Month, and the Sarasota County Commission this month issued a proclamation celebrating the 46th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act: “Fair Housing laws provide the opportunity for all citizens to reside in decent and safe housing, free from discrimination.” 

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## QUESTIONS ABOUT A NEW 'NIGHTCLUB'

Duval's New World Café wants to expand its alcoholic beverage options for patrons. Image from the website

## DUVAL'S WANTS PATRONS TO HAVE MORE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE OPTIONS, BUT IT IS WARY OF THE DESIGNATION IT NEEDS TO PROCEED

By Stan Zimmerman  
City Editor

The Wednesday morning, April 16, meeting of the City of Sarasota Development Review Committee was an uncharacteristically swift one. Two proposals were aired, and one was approved in less than two minutes.

The committee had previously considered a six-unit development at 1343 Fourth St. called Aegis Court. The project was

*"This is not desirable to the continued development of the district for retail uses. There is also concern that an additional nightclub will further encourage this block of Main Street to continue development as an 'entertainment' block."*

Norm Gollub  
Economic Development Coordinator  
City of Sarasota

approved to proceed in the Downtown Edge zoning category, and the sign-off sheet was circulated to department representatives.

Because the committee's previous concerns were satisfied, the approval required one minute and 45 seconds.

The second proposal was not nearly as straightforward. The





*City staff is wary of granting another 'nightclub' designation in the aftermath of controversy over the Ivory Lounge in the Plaza at Five Points. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



owners of Duval's New World Cafe at 1435 Main St. want to upgrade their alcohol service from beer and wine to cocktails and other hard liquor. Because of the way the zoning code works, that requires the restaurant to request a "nightclub" designation.

The restaurant owners and operators do not want a nightclub, just the ability to provide additional drink options. Thus, they have tried to mute any opposition by making a variety of promises, including limits on the hours of operation and foreswearing live music except on three nights of the year.

The restaurant opened in 2011 with 76 seats. To meet state and local regulations, it must ask for a zoning adjustment because of its proximity to the First United Methodist Church on Pineapple Avenue. And it needs approval for a "conditional use" because the facility's "footprint" is 300 square feet less than the minimum required for a full liquor license. Staff also needs to review and approve a site plan for the new use.

The owners say they will offer live music on only three evenings per year. One would be New Year's Eve, to complement the big party downtown. The second would be Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday and part of the pre-Lenten celebration. And the third date would be Nov. 14, the anniversary of the restaurant's opening in 2011.


City staff is leery of approving any new "nightclub," after a similar request was granted to

allow a jazz club and wine bar that eventually turned into a full-blown, late-night club called the Ivory Lounge in downtown Sarasota on Central Avenue.

Joel Freedman, representing Duval's owners, said the business would offer an additional "proffer": that it would continue serving its full menu until closing and that any piped-in background music would be of low volume.

Gretchen Schneider, a senior building and zoning official, reminded Freedman and his clients that all these proffers and promises would "go with the land," so if the property were sold, the same conditions would be imposed on any new owners.

The city's downtown economic development coordinator had written a letter to the Development Review Committee (DRC) to object to the restaurant's proposal. "Having reviewed the requested approval for a nightclub use, I find that I cannot support this application," wrote Norm Gollub. "This is not desirable to the continued development of the district for retail uses. There is also concern that an additional nightclub will further encourage this block of Main Street to continue development as an 'entertainment' block."

Freedman will be back at the May DRC meeting to present the restaurant's case again. The matter is scheduled to show up on the Planning Board agenda in June. 



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# STUDYING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

*A collection of photos from Sarasota County and the City of North Port reflect the past and present of Warm Mineral Springs. Images courtesy Sarasota County*

## THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY SOON WILL EMBARK ON A YEARLONG STUDY OF DATA COLLECTED ABOUT WARM MINERAL SPRINGS, FROM WATER TEMPERATURE TO WATER SOURCES

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

The senior hydrologist for Sarasota County is hopeful that a contract with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for a study of Warm Mineral Springs can be executed by the start of May, so the project envisioned almost two years ago can move forward.

The primary goal of the undertaking “is to provide a professional scientific analysis and a clear understanding of existing hydrological data, setting the

stage for future decisions regarding what additional information may be required to better guide ... proper and responsible future resource management at Warm Mineral Springs,” says a March 19 staff memo to the County Commission.

“*The story we want to tell is the story of the true health and the vitality of Warm Mineral Springs based on solid scientific evidence and reasoning.*”

Cliff Harrison  
Senior Hydrologist  
Sarasota County



Cliff Harrison told *The Sarasota News Leader* on April 15 that since both the North Port City Commission and the County Commission approved the study



during votes in March, staff members of the two local governments have been working on the most efficient way to get the contract executed and pay the \$30,000 — split between the city and county — for the \$50,000 project.

The U.S. Department of the Interior will pick up the remaining portion of the expense, Harrison explained last month.

Once the contract is executed, he added, it will take about a year for the USGS to complete the study.

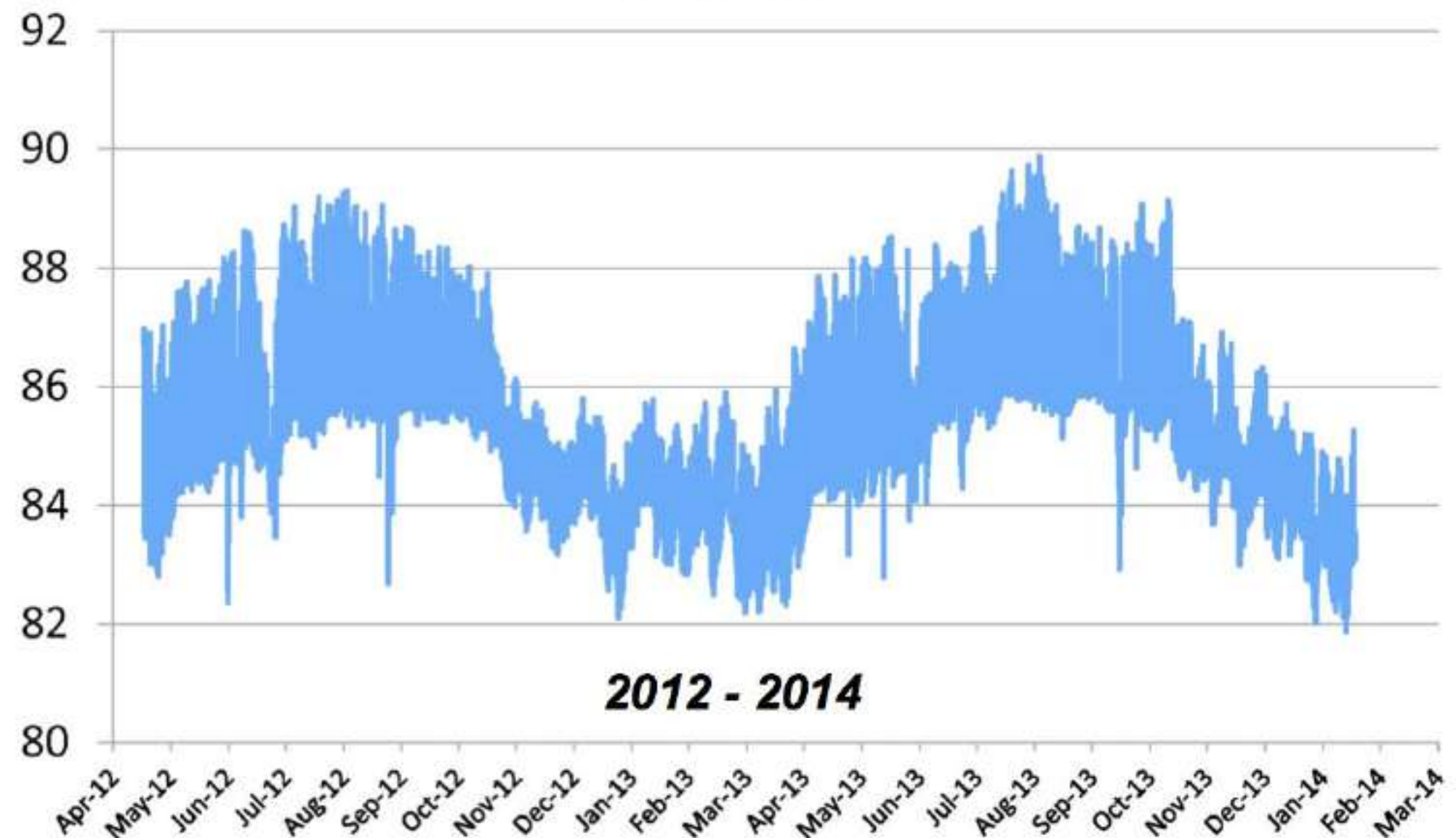
The County Commission voted unanimously on March 19 to proceed with the project; the North Port board also voted unanimously

to support it after a brief discussion with Harrison on March 24.

During the county meeting, Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson pointed out that the boards originally agreed to the USGS study in July 2012. That was the same meeting during which the commissioners also voted unanimously to pursue an Invitation to Negotiate regarding the long-term future of Warm Mineral Springs. Subsequent changes on the North Port Commission led to a months-long standoff over the 81-acre resort the city and county purchased together for \$5.5 million in December 2010. Then, following an April 2013 facilitated meeting held under the guidelines

## Spring Discharge Creek Temperature

(hourly readings)



*A graph shows temperatures recorded in the Warm Mineral Springs discharge creek from 2012 through March 2014. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



**WARM MINERAL SPRINGS, SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA:  
A SUMMARY OF RETROSPECTIVE DATA**

***IDEA PROPOSAL***

**November 27, 2012**

**BACKGROUND**

Warm Mineral Springs, located in southern Sarasota County (fig. 1), is the only warm (87° F), highly-mineralized spring in Florida. This unique geothermal spring has hydrologic importance, ecological and archeological significance, and economic value for Sarasota County. Since 1946, a day spa has operated at the spring, attracting vacationers and health enthusiasts. In addition, the warm water from the spring attracts manatees to the adjoining spring run during the winter months, and provides vital habitat for these mammals as well as an opportunity for environmental education. Archeological evidence indicates that the spring has long been an attraction for humans. Well-preserved human bones, artifacts, and Pleistocene age animal bones and plant remains have been found in and around the spring (Rupert, 1994). Clearly, Warm Mineral Springs is a multi-use resource, with numerous stakeholders involved in its development, management and sustainable use.

Conditions that led to the formation of Warm Mineral Springs and the source(s) of the spring water are uncertain. The primary warm-water conduit of the spring is developed in carbonate unit belonging to the Arcadia Formation of the Hawthorn Group which resides within the intermediate aquifer system (Rupert, 1994). The spring water is highly mineralized with chloride and sulfate concentrations ranging from 9,200-10,000 mg/L and 1,600-1,700 mg/L, respectively (Ferguson and others, 1947; Rosenau and others, 1977; Scott and others, 2004).



of a state statute governing conflict resolution among local governments, the boards began working together again.

The Springs reopened under a short-term management contract on April 12; it was the first time since June 30, 2013 that people have been able to swim there.

“It was always our intention to look at this,” Robinson said of the USGS study during her board’s March 19 meeting. “I think that it’s important to note that we’re getting this back on track. ... We’re beginning to see things

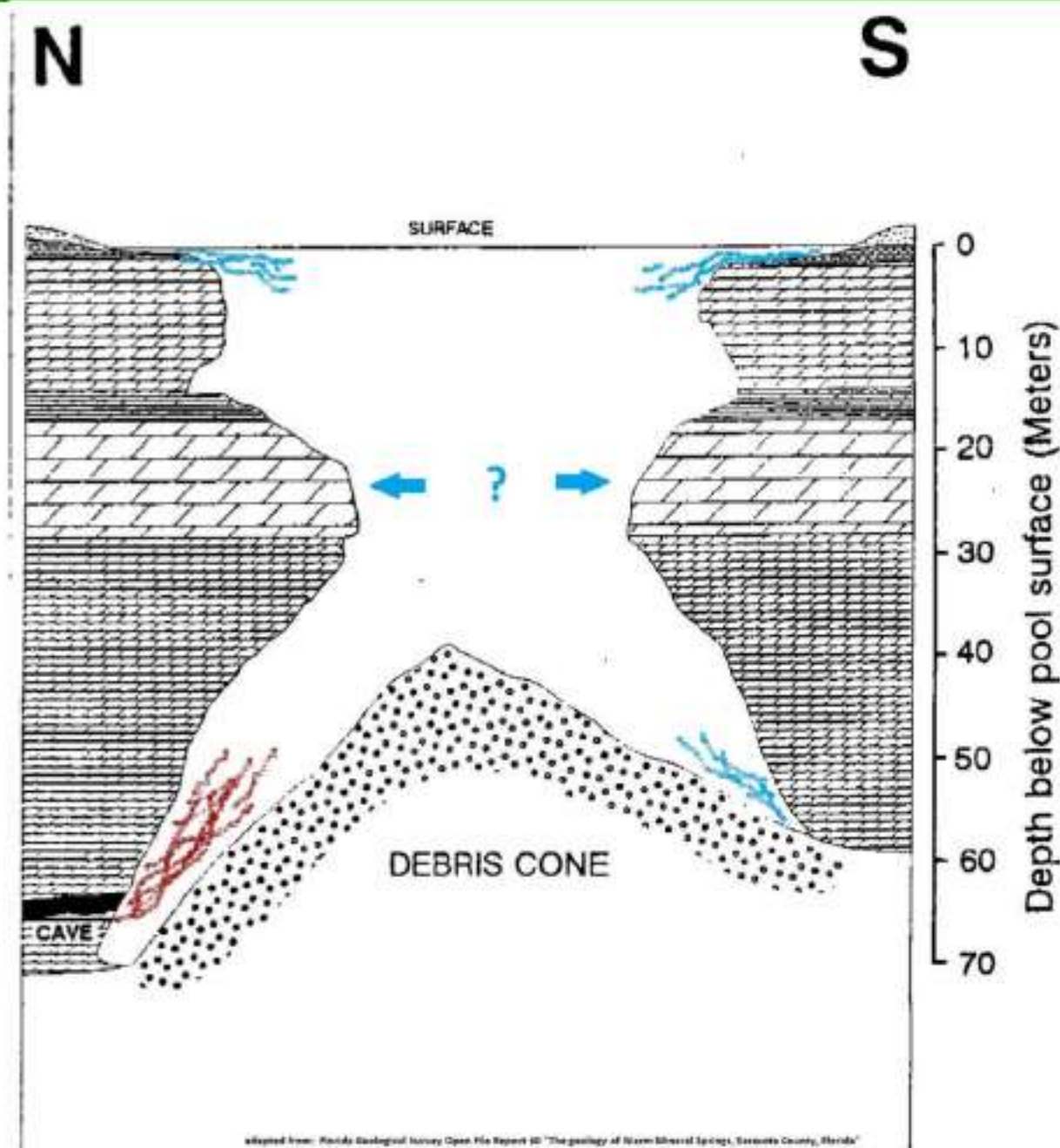
happen again. ... We’re really starting to see some intergovernmental cooperation on Warm Mineral Springs ...”

The North Port commissioners engaged in little discussion before their vote, with Commissioner Cheryl Cook making the motion to proceed.

“I’m glad to see this finally get off the ground,” Commissioner Linda Yates said. “It’s the first step in the bigger study that I think we definitely are going to need.”



## Multiple Sources – hot & cold spring vents





# CLARIFICATIONS

Before the County Commission vote, Robinson sought to clarify a section of backup agenda material indicating that public outreach sessions would be held during the project.

Harrison explained that if people in the community have issues they feel should be part of the work, staff will make certain they have the opportunity to convey those ideas to the USGS.

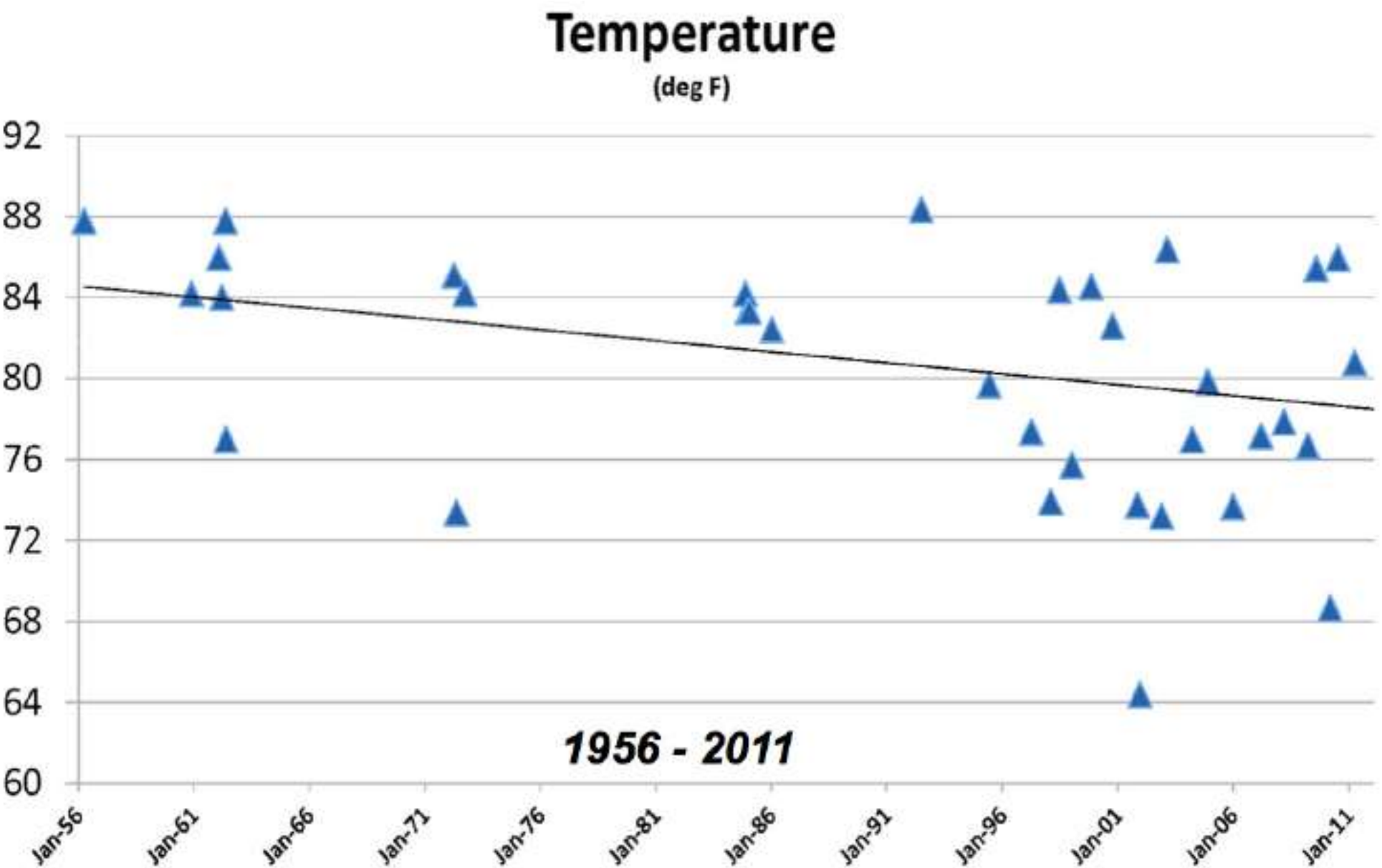
When Robinson asked whether any public meeting would be conducted, Harrison replied, “We can certainly schedule something like that if we need to.”

Robinson also sought Harrison’s view of whether the potential for data collection on the site could have an impact on either the

short-term operation or any initiatives of the firm the boards plan to have in place by Sept. 1 to handle the long-range vision for the Springs.

“For this study, no,” he told her. Staff will just continue to use the monitoring station in the creek at Warm Mineral Springs between the rock dam and the culvert, he explained. The results of the USGS study will indicate what steps should be taken next. Then the city and county could work with the long-term vendor in regard to any potential impacts on operations, he added.

In 2012, the USGS developed a proposal that included a broad array of activities regarding research at the Springs, Harrison said. “The budget was exceedingly high and exceedingly



A chart shows temperatures that have been recorded in Warm Mineral Springs since 1956. Image courtesy Sarasota County



long-term,” he pointed out — about \$1 million over five years.

“It was almost a fantasy project’s proposal,” Harrison noted.

After subsequent discussions with staff, he continued, USGS representatives suggested a yearlong study of data that already has been collected, which would guide the city and county on how to proceed in the future.

## ANOMALIES IN THE DATA

During his March 19 presentation to the County Commission, Harrison pointed out that a separate effort had begun to develop scopes of services and cost estimates “for a broader study of the history, archaeology and geology” of Warm Mineral Springs.”

He also noted that no new data collection or monitoring will be conducted as part of the USGS study. At the conclusion of the study, the USGS will issue a “Fact Sheet” incorporating its findings, the county staff memo explained. The document will “aid in focusing limited public funds towards answering questions about the spring system with real-world implications instead of potentially expending great effort and cost towards collecting additional data that may have little relevance to the management and protection of the spring resource,” the memo notes.

The USGS study, Harrison explained, will focus on data collected at the Springs over the past decades. The three primary questions are as follows:

- Has the water been getting colder?
- Has the water been getting less mineralized?
- Has the flow of water diminished?

“If we don’t properly understand these issues,” he said, “then any resource protection or

management plan that we developed would be a wobbly stool at best.”

At worst, he told the board, misinformation or misconceptions “could lead to unintentionally contributing to the degradation of the Springs.”

Without a scientific analysis of the data collected, he pointed out, the city and county would be left with what Mark Twain characterized as “lies, dang lies and statistics,” drawing laughter from commissioners.


“The story we want to tell is the story of the true health and the vitality of Warm Mineral Springs based on solid scientific evidence and reasoning,” Harrison added.

For example, data collected since 1956 indicates the water temperature has declined. One reading in December 2001 was 64 degrees, he noted. “I don’t think that anyone believes that Warm Mineral Springs put out water one day at 64 degrees,” he said.

A quick analysis of weather conditions on the same day showed a 35-degree reading in the City of North Port, he told the board, indicating the water temperature could be influenced by external factors.

Among the data most interesting to him, Harrison continued, were observations over the years showing the flow from the main hot water vent “appeared to greatly exceed the amount of water that’s coming from the spring discharge creek.”

If that is true, he said, it suggests “a significant volume of water may be exiting the basin through the basin walls directly into the immediate aquifer.”

Robinson complimented Harrison on his presentation, noting that while his day job is senior hydrologist for the county, “Your night job may be on [MythBusters](#).” 





# My Sunday Paper...

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## **Q&A: ALAN MAIO**

*Alan Maio is a candidate for the Sarasota County Commission. Contributed photo by Barbara Banks*



## GOP SARASOTA COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE SPEAKS!

By Cooper Levey-Baker

Associate Editor

*After months of persistent (read: annoying) emails and phone messages from The Sarasota News Leader, Republican Sarasota County Commission candidate Alan Maio this week agreed to sit down with us in his Nokomis home over coffee and cake to discuss his candidacy and the issues currently gripping the county, as well as what the future might hold in store.*

*A longtime local businessman, Maio, 64, has most recently worked as an executive with the engineering firm Kimley-Horn and Associates, a position from which he just stepped down. In the August Republican primary, he will face off against Lourdes Ramirez; and he's already socked away some serious cash — nearly \$95,000 as of early April — and has lined up some influential supporters: developer Pat Neal, former state Sen. Mike Bennett and Commissioners Joe Barbetta, Charles Hines and Christine Robinson, among many others. Here's what he had to say.*



*The Sarasota News Leader: Why run now?*

**Alan Maio:** I started working full-time in September of 1963, which as I say it to you seems far-fetched, but I came out of a real city environment, the northeastern corner of New Jersey. I was the first person in my family — big old Italian family — to graduate from high school, first one to go to college. If we were to classify people, we were the working poor. I went to work in a factory that made

air-conditioning filters in my senior year of high school, quite frankly by exaggerating — I'm going to use that word, 'exaggerating' — my age.

I'm very proud of that. I've been working full-time or full-time and going to school for 51 years, so now I get to do something I've always wanted to do. I've helped a lot of my friends with their campaigns, locally here and in the county, and got involved in state campaigns, so it's my time to do that, and hopefully I will convince at least 50 percent plus one that it is my time.

You'll get a calm, capable, full-time commissioner who's very technically competent and who is not the least bit intimidated by the numbers. I got my degree in accounting; I've been an accountant running an engineering firm, so numbers are something I live with on a daily basis.



**SNL:** What do you think will be the biggest issues the commission will have to deal with after the election?

**AM:** Some big issues will have been resolved by then. The change in county administrator has already occurred and [Sarasota] 2050 has one more series of big meetings that should happen before I'm elected.

There are probably a dozen things that none of us are even thinking about that will become big issues. A balanced budget, the amount of taxes coming in from new growth



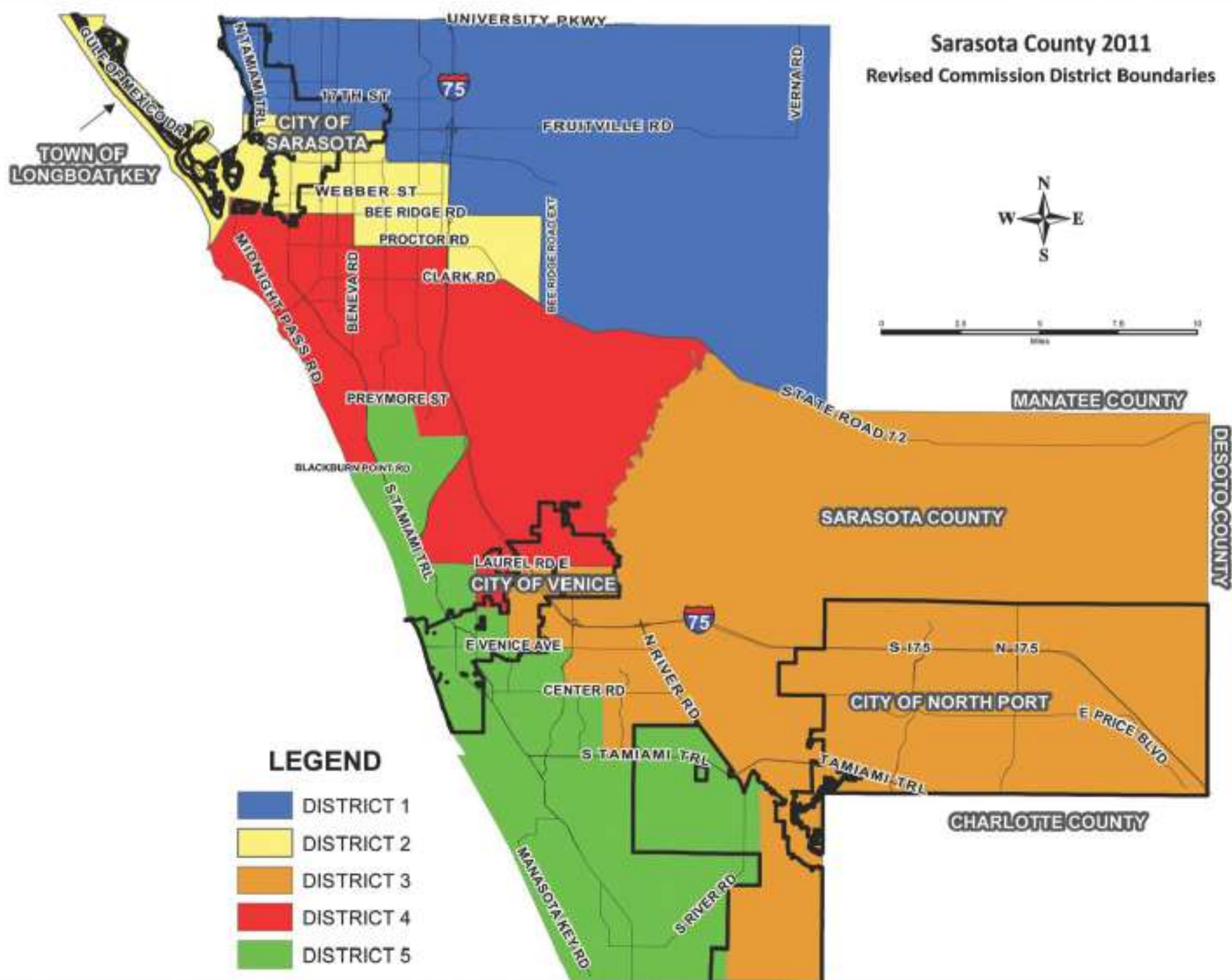
— those will be the issues, and I think my background's perfectly suited. When someone gives us a contract to build a road, I can look at it and know what should be charged to build that road.

I took my businesses through this economic tsunami. What you get out of that, in addition to a lot of extra work, is you learn how to face adversity; you learn how to tighten your belt; you learn how to move forward not frightened to death.

■ ■ ■

**SNL:** Do you think the commission has handled the process of rewriting 2050 well?

**AM:** When the community decided they were going to start talking about 2050, there were only three paths that they could go down: One was to throw the whole thing out — I was opposed to that; do nothing — I was opposed to that; or start making some changes that make it more workable. That's just my calm, reasoned technical background coming into play.





There are some people who think it has gone too far, but I don't think staff believes that. The [final] issue that will move forward is fiscal neutrality. I suspect they'll make some changes. They need a definitive model and rules with some certainty and predictability and a formula that people can look at.

You know what disturbs me the most? I don't think it's productive; I don't think it's well mannered. I think it's frankly exactly what we shouldn't be doing: When you stand there and call county commissioners liars, thieves, cheats and crooks, that's not the way citizens are supposed to treat each other.

Lost in all the volume and intensity is that a lot of stuff — these developers do pay a lot of impact fees.

You hear a lot of people saying, "Well, you know, the people who are already living here bear the burden of bringing that here." Not so. These impact fees on water and wastewater and the user fees are what pay all the bonds that build the sewer plants and water plants.



*SNL:* What would you like to see happen at Warm Mineral Springs?

**AM:** I had a client that owns a big chunk of land, I think 18 acres in total, to the west of it and across the street to the south, and I thought his plan was a good one. What we put forward was: We're not going to touch the [81] acres of the Springs. We're going to take your historic building, clean it up, update it to historical standards. We'll put in a new parking lot, just generally upgrade the site. The

difficulty was that there are five city commissioners and five county commissioners.

I was pretty sad when they ended up closing it. My former client is no longer involved. I think they need to keep the [81] acres because it provides a trailhead to the giant county ownership to the north. I never was a fan of building more on the [81] acres.



*SNL:* Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center Associates has been in the news because it briefly lost its ability to solicit donations. Do you still have faith that the organization can effectively manage the new rowing facility?

**AM:** I don't know that much about it, but I know [Suncoast Aquatic President] Paul Blackketter and that's a very, very honorable guy. I think they're absolutely up to managing it, and quite frankly, this whole dust-up about the forms not being filed was an accounting "Oops." It fell through the cracks of getting everything built and up and running.



*SNL:* As someone who's actually worked with the county, how do you respond to complaints that Sarasota County is hostile to new businesses when compared to other counties?

**AM:** I started pulling permits for my restaurants 30 years ago — I have never come across someone who absolutely had some ideological bent that they did not want what I was doing to go through. It was a process. You need to be ready for the process. You'll never see me be anything but cordial to county employees.



I've done giant projects and I'm pretty sure there's no county employee that will say to you, "Al was impossible to deal with. He was rude. He's a barbarian." Plus I'm kind of jaded: My wife retired from the school district. My son is a deputy.

I think this current administration, under [Administrator] Tom Harmer, they're now approaching it not as regulators. They're approaching it as, "OK, tell me what you want to do." When people want to do something that doesn't fit in the tight little box, the county employees are not saying, "Nope, not doing it." They say, "All right, I see what you want to do. Not a bad idea. It's not going to work if you do it that way, but let's think about this." That's all you ask. You don't ask for an automatic yes.

■ ■ ■

*SNL:* How do you think Harmer's been doing since taking over?

**AM:** I think he gets an "A." He's a good guy with a heck of a background — three quarters of it in the public sphere and a quarter of it in private practice. He's got the right personality at the right time in the right place.

■ ■ ■

*SNL:* Was it right to let [former Administrator] Randy Reid go?

**AM:** I have no comment on that. I like the outcome. Harmer's wonderful.

■ ■ ■

*SNL:* One thing commission critics harp on is a lack of transparency. Do you think

the commission does enough to involve the public?

**AM:** I've never been an elected official, so I'm not sure, but I do know that it's awfully transparent. If you send me an email and I respond to it, the whole world gets it.

■ ■ ■

*SNL:* Should the county charge for access to public records?

**AM:** I think when it's a nominal question, no. But when you sit people down and give them a big, big project to do, where boxes of files are brought in, I think they should be charged. I'm told the charges are modest. I'm sure I've sent checks in with my businesses where I wanted to know certain things. When you tie up county employees for a big period of time on a major project, it needs to be charged. The charge also can't be overwhelming so the charge precludes people from asking.

■ ■ ■

*SNL:* Would you support a human rights ordinance that would protect gays and lesbians from discrimination?

**AM:** In private life, I've hired hundreds of people and never even think about their gender, sexual orientation, their religious beliefs, their ethnic backgrounds. I just don't think about it.

I'm as ethnic as they come and a couple of my cousins are gay, so it would be preposterous to think of somebody not letting them live or work where they want.

■ ■ ■



*SNL:* But is the county doing enough to make sure other businesses are following that?

*AM:* I just don't know that much about it.



*SNL:* I need to ask you about your relationship with Bob Waechter, who pled guilty to illegally impersonating the woman you're running against. At the sentencing, the prosecutor specifically said Waechter did what he did to help your campaign, which I know your attorney, Morgan Bentley, has disputed. What was your relationship with Waechter like?

*AM:* I only met Bob two-and-a-half years ago. He did that for his own reasons [the legal case involving Ramirez], but not to help me. That's just the case, but, unfortunately, the incorrect version makes for a great story.



*SNL:* How would you describe your relationship with Waechter before his arrest? Advisor? Consultant?

*AM:* Not at all. Acquaintance.



*SNL:* Has the campaign been civil so far? Do you expect it to stay that way?

*AM:* I don't know. Politics is a rough game. I'll say only this: My opponent has been extremely civil to me, and I guess at the end of the day, that's all that matters.



*SNL:* You were sued in 2010 for \$9.8 million. Can you tell me about that case?

*AM:* Nobody showed up in court. It got dismissed and we're done with it.




*SNL:* Was it a frivolous lawsuit?

*AM:* You'd have to ask Morgan [Bentley]. I don't know the legal definition of "frivolous," but they never showed up in court.



*SNL:* On most of the things we've talked about, it sounds like you're pretty satisfied with how the commissioners have tackled things in recent years. Is there anything you think they did wrong? Anything you would have done differently?

*AM:* I would not categorize anything as being mistakes. I look back on an all-Republican commission — all of them my friends — and I might have done some things a little differently from an intensity perspective. I've got a big group of friends that are all over me about doing more for people with bikes. I'm a big proponent of expanding the [Legacy Trail](#). The county doesn't have money to do everything, but I probably would have given them all the money for the due diligence.

There's times that [the commissioners] pull their hair out, and I'm sure I'll pull my hair out, but everyone's got the right to have their say, and you do your best to accommodate a lot of opinions but stay true to your own personal, moral and ethical compass. 



A close-up, profile shot of a woman with long dark hair, wearing large turquoise earrings, singing passionately. The background is a blurred view of the ocean under a clear blue sky.

# PLEA FOR THE PASS

*Maria Lane performs Let It Be in the middle of Big Pass. Image from Big Pass Piano*

## VIDEO'S RELEASE UNDERSCORES PRESERVATIONISTS' GOAL TO KEEP DREDGES OUT OF BIG SARASOTA PASS

**By Rachel Brown Hackney**  
*Editor*

With the melody of *Let It Be* and the soothing sound of lapping waves in the background, the video opens with a black screen and the statement, "Big Pass in Sarasota is one of the last unspoiled inlets left in Florida and its sand nourishes Siesta Key."

Within moments, hands appear on the keys of an organ and then the camera pulls back to show the lovely young woman seated at the musical instrument, her turquoise earrings a slightly lighter shade than the waves flowing behind her.

As Sarasota native Maria Lane sings that last, haunting ballad of The Beatles, the scene

shifts again to show the viewer that she is surrounded by water.

Thus opens [Big Pass Piano](#), the video whose [primary shooting](#) was the focus of a March 1 production team in Big Sarasota Pass.

*Big Pass Piano* is the latest salvo launched by the nonprofit organization [Save Our Siesta Sand 2 \(SOSS2\)](#) in an effort to halt the U.S.

**WATCH THE VIDEO**



*Click here to watch the full video*





*A drone films Maria Lane as she sings at the organ in Big Pass on March 1. File photo*



Army Corps of Engineers' and the City of Sarasota's plans to dredge Big Pass to renourish a critically eroded section of Lido Key.

Released on April 11, the video urges viewers to recognize the need to preserve Big Pass and to donate funds in support of that cause. A news release about the video's launch references the risk to Siesta Key's public beach and the island's businesses and residences if the Corps is allowed to remove more than 1 million cubic yards of sand from the inlet in an initial renourishment — and millions more cubic yards of sand in later years — to build up the endangered section of Lido Key. The project has been planned for a 50-year span with renourishments to take place every five years, alternating between Big Pass and New Pass, the Army Corps' project engineer, Milan

A. Mora, told groups in multiple public meetings last year.

The Army Corps has been working on models and analysis about the effects the dredging of Big Pass would have on Siesta Key. The most recent information from the federal agency has confirmed the release of those materials by the end of this month.

Mora has pointed out that the project is not funded. The Army Corps is committed to covering about 62.4 percent of the approximately \$22 million cost, with the rest covered by a state grant and Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenue set aside for beach renourishments, City Engineer Alexandria DavisShaw has explained.



*Rich Schineller, on the paddleboards with the organ, gets a tow from Mike Hagan (in yellow jacket) as Sarah Fulton and John Lichtenstein assist. File photo*



“Lane’s soulful rendition” of the Beatles classic and the video’s “stunning imagery of the pass” encourage viewers to learn more about the project at the [SOSS2 website](#), the news release points out. *Big Pass Piano* “was created to heighten awareness of the risks in fundamentally altering a natural inlet that has been open to navigation and untouched since it first appeared on charts” in the 1800s, the release adds.

The news release quotes Siesta Key resident Peter van Roekens, who is also chairman of the Boaters’ Coalition: “This video captures the essence of the pristine beauty that is Big Pass. If Big Pass had a voice, this would be it.”

[Lane](#), a professional singer and voice instructor in New York City, is the niece of the video’s director and producer, Rich Schineller of Siesta Key. Schineller told *The Sarasota*



*Maria Bankemper is immediate past chairwoman of the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce. File photo*



*The water is calm in Big Sarasota Pass on March 1, with Lido Key in the background. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

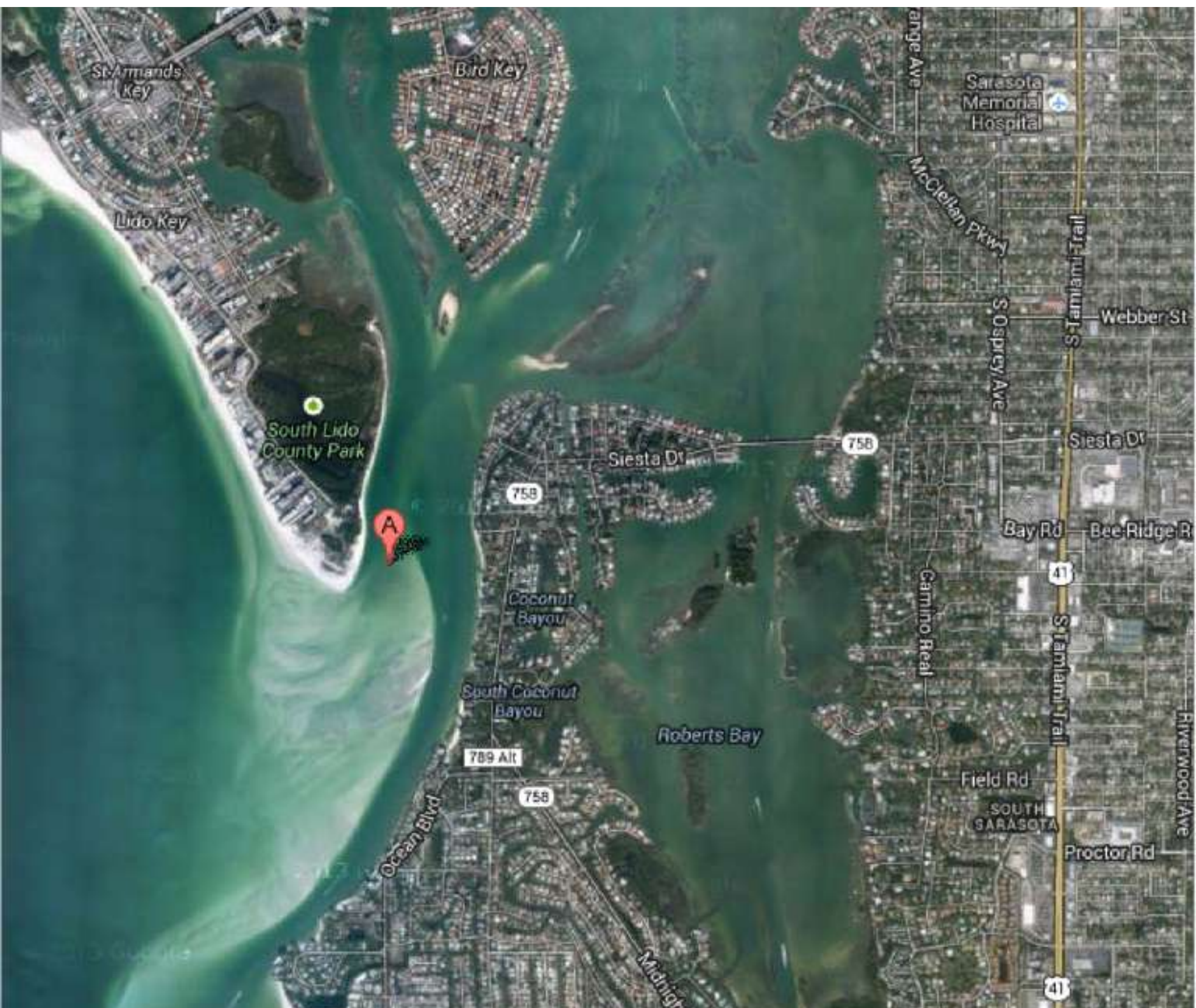


*News Leader* last month that after hearing her recording of *Let It Be*, he began thinking about how to use it in the effort to preserve Big Pass.

Jimmy Scott Jr. was in charge of the video's cinematography and editing, and Ryan Perrone was the flight camera operator for the aerial visuals. Becca Dahmen was the post-production supervisor, and Sarah Fulton

and John Lichtenstein served as production assistants. Mike Hagan and Gary McDermott captained the support vessels for the shooting, while Diane Schineller Sulimirski shot production stills and SUP Sarasota provided logistics support.

The news release points out that "Big Pass, Big Sarasota Shoal and the North Siesta Key Beaches and Crescent Beach comprise the



*An aerial view shows Big Sarasota Pass as the inlet between Lido Key to the north and Siesta Key. Image from Google Maps*



Siesta Key Littoral Cell (SKCLC),” which stretches from the entrance of Big Sarasota Pass to Point of Rocks. “This complex closed natural system has for centuries transferred sand down the shoal, continuously circulating sand onto Crescent Beach as well as protecting the beaches it nourishes from wave impact,” the release adds. “It is a delicately balanced system and coastal geologists do not quite understand the exact mechanism of its operation.”

## **SOSS2**

Save Our Siesta Sand 2 was organized “to raise funds to finance an independent coastal engineering study of the SKCLC to determine the potential for damage to the system from dredging,” the release notes.

SOSS2 filed its papers with the state of Florida’s Division of Corporations in mid-March. Its registered agent is M&M Lodgings LLC, whose directors are Maria Bankemper, co-owner and general manager of the Best Western Plus-Siesta Key, located at 6600 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota; her husband, Edward Bankemper; and Mike Lepore, Maria Bankemper’s father.

On April 4, Lepore sent an email to the Sarasota County commissioners, noting his position with SOSS2 and with the hotel.

“We moved our family to Sarasota in 1976 and raised our children on Siesta Key,” he continued. “We harken back to the days of Commissioners John Saba and Jim Neville, who worked very diligently to preserve this wonderful Paradise. So it is with a love for all of Sarasota that has brought us to this position of wanting great caution to be taken with


an important eco-system that ... maintains the equilibrium that has made Siesta Key’s beach the envy of the nation.”

He stressed, “[T]hat does not mean that we are against Lido’s need for re-nourishment,” adding, “in fact, we support it, as Lido, St. Armands, and Longboat are extremely important aspects of the beauty that is Sarasota.”

However, in regard to the Army Corps/City of Sarasota plan for dredging Big Pass, Lepore wrote, “They can do damage with impunity. As you well know, Big Pass, unlike others, has never been dredged, and naturally continues to allow for comfortable boating access (boating does not need dredging — in fact it is harmful to the natural channel).”

Secondly, he pointed out, “As you may also know, Siesta Key beach is natural and one of the few areas on [Florida’s west coast] that has remained stable while both Lido and Longboat have continuously needed re-nourishing.”

When a similar plan to dredge Big Pass was pursued for a period in 1994-95, he continued, environmental engineers who “addressed the [Sarasota County] commission explained there will never to be a sure way to predict how dredging ... Big Pass ... will affect Siesta Key’s Beach and its north shore due to the balance that is currently in place there.”

“Most importantly,” Lepore added, the dredging of Big Pass is unnecessary for this project. “According to well informed sources,” he wrote, “there is enough sand available at New Pass and offshore to fill the current need to re-nourish [Lido Beach] without going further. Lido has been re-nourished many times and will continue to need that assistance.” 





# OFFERING REFUGE

*A pedestrian refuge island under construction in Chicago. Photo by Josh K, via Flickr*

## DANGEROUS STRETCH OF BEE RIDGE GETTING A MAKEOVER

**By Cooper Levey-Baker**

*Associate Editor*

A dangerous stretch of Bee Ridge Road will soon be getting a makeover, thanks to the Florida Department of Transportation, which is planning to install a dozen pedestrian refuge islands in the middle of the busy east-west thoroughfare.

Just how hazardous is Bee Ridge? Between 2008 and 2012, there were 61 crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists between U.S. 41 and Dunn Drive (near McIntosh Road), a figure provided by Department of Transportation Communications Specialist Robin Stublen. Of those crashes, 59 resulted in injuries and two resulted in fatalities.

And in one particularly dangerous 1.25-mile section of Bee Ridge, between 2010 and 2012,

there were 32 bicycle and pedestrian crashes, 23 of which happened in daylight.

“That sends up a red flag to us almost immediately,” Stublen says.

To combat the problem, the department has mapped the crashes and developed a plan to strategically install 12 so-called pedestrian refuge islands. Stublen says islands are typically up to 60 feet long and 5 feet wide, with openings for turn lanes in and out of businesses.

The islands — which cost \$11,000 each — won’t be distributed evenly along the road; they will be concentrated around hot spots. For example, bus stops encourage pedestrians to cross the seven-lane road in dangerous




areas; those areas should be targeted for islands. According to Stublen, the Bee Ridge/Beneva Road intersection is particularly hazardous, a high-traffic area that will only get busier with the new Walmart scheduled to go in on the southwest corner.

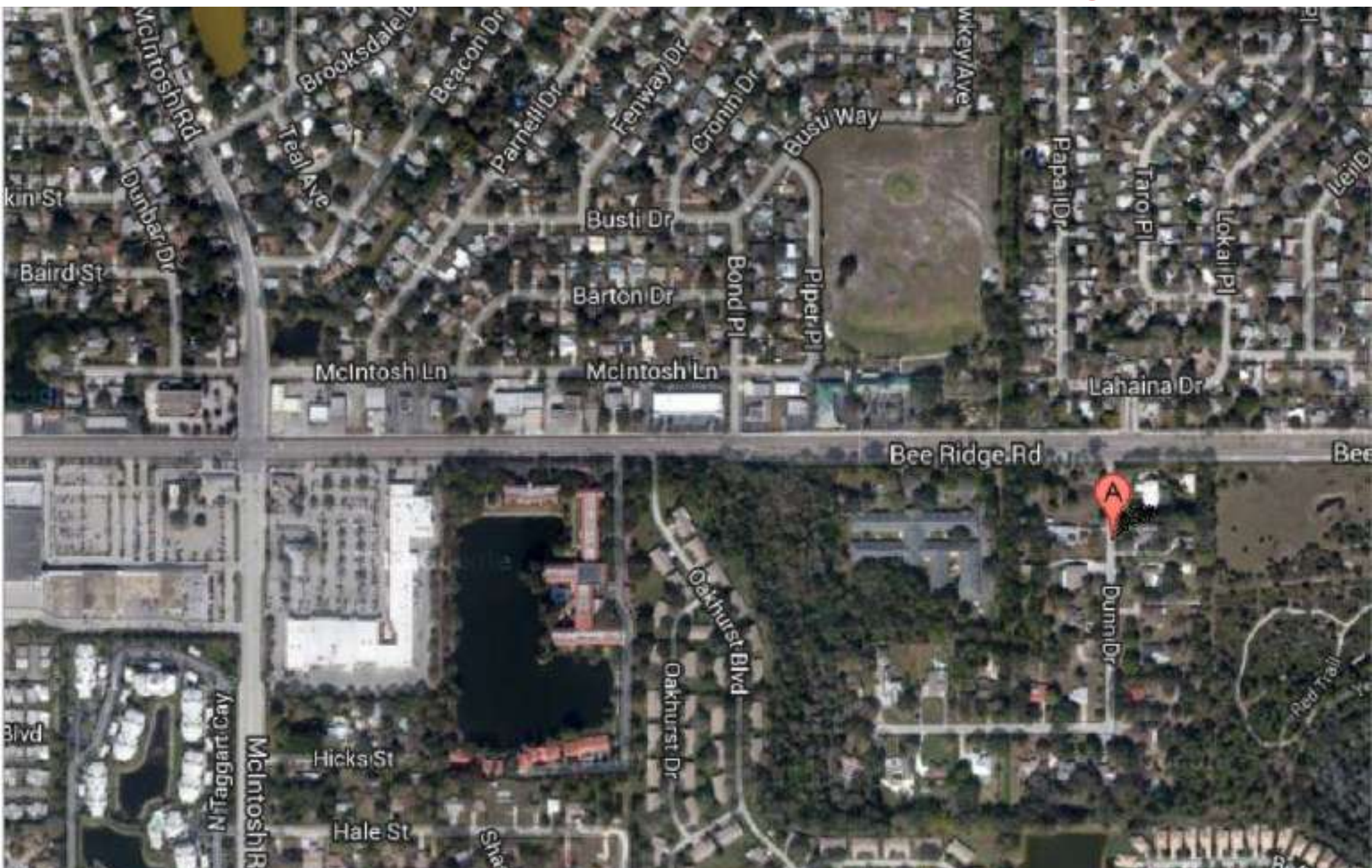
The islands aren't the only fix in the works. The department is also going to resurface some of the road, replace a drainage pipe, repair some cracked sidewalks, upgrade pedestrian signals and improve pavement marking as well.

But the plans aren't set in stone. The Department of Transportation is seeking public input on its map. Beginning April 15, Sarasota residents can see for themselves what the state department has in store: The

plans will be on display at the Fruitville Public Library for a month. A public hearing on the topic will also be held, on May 1, at Trinity United Methodist Church. State representatives will be on hand with blown-up images of the plan and a slideshow, and the public can offer oral comments.

The library is located at 100 Coburn Road in Sarasota. The church is at 4150 S. Shade Ave. in Sarasota.

With so many lanes and so much suburban traffic, the Department of Transportation is never going to entirely eliminate the danger of crossing Bee Ridge, but Stublen says the department is doing what it can: "How can you reduce the problem?" 



*A map shows one segment of Bee Ridge Road where pedestrian refuge islands are planned. Dunn Drive, the eastern termination point for the project, is marked with a flag. Image from Google Maps*



# Lift Station 87



## DESIGN DRAMA

*An image from a section of the city website dedicated to the Lift Station 87 project shows work under way. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

## HUDSON BAYOU SEWER STATION PLANS CONTINUE TO EVOLVE

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

City utility staffers and engineering consultants are on the verge of abandoning an existing structure at the new Lift Station 87 and recommending digging a new and deeper hole. For the past two months, they have danced around the decision, knowing the abandonment of one facility to build another could be time-consuming and controversial.

During the monthly meeting of senior city utility staffers and consulting engineers on Monday, April 14, more deficiencies in the original design

surfaced. Robert Garland, project manager with the consulting firm of [McKim & Creed](#), said, “We’ve made some design changes for emergency power. The existing system uses engine-driven pumps when the power goes out to transport the flow. From the time power is lost to when the pumps kick in is about an hour delay and causes overflows into the system.”

“*We should evaluate the existing structure and decide if we can rehabilitate it or replace it. It might be faster and cheaper to build a new one.*”

Robert Garland  
Project Manager  
McKim & Creed

“The flow” he is talking about is roughly one-third of all the sewage produced in the City of Sarasota. Garland recommended scrapping



the diesel-engine-driven emergency pumps, adding two additional electrical pumps (identical to the four already planned) and using diesel generators for backup power.

“It means increasing the size of the wet well and adding additional pumps,” noted Steve Topovski, the city’s project manager. It further means that if power is lost, the emergency generators can get the pumping restarted in a matter of minutes at most.

Garland and Topovski are wrestling with the engineering mess left when representatives of a previous firm walked off the job at the Mound Street and Osprey Avenue site. The aftermath has turned up a series of horrors, including a system designed to operate in a semi-permanent state of backup, and a planned boring under Hudson Bayou that would have drilled through the base of the

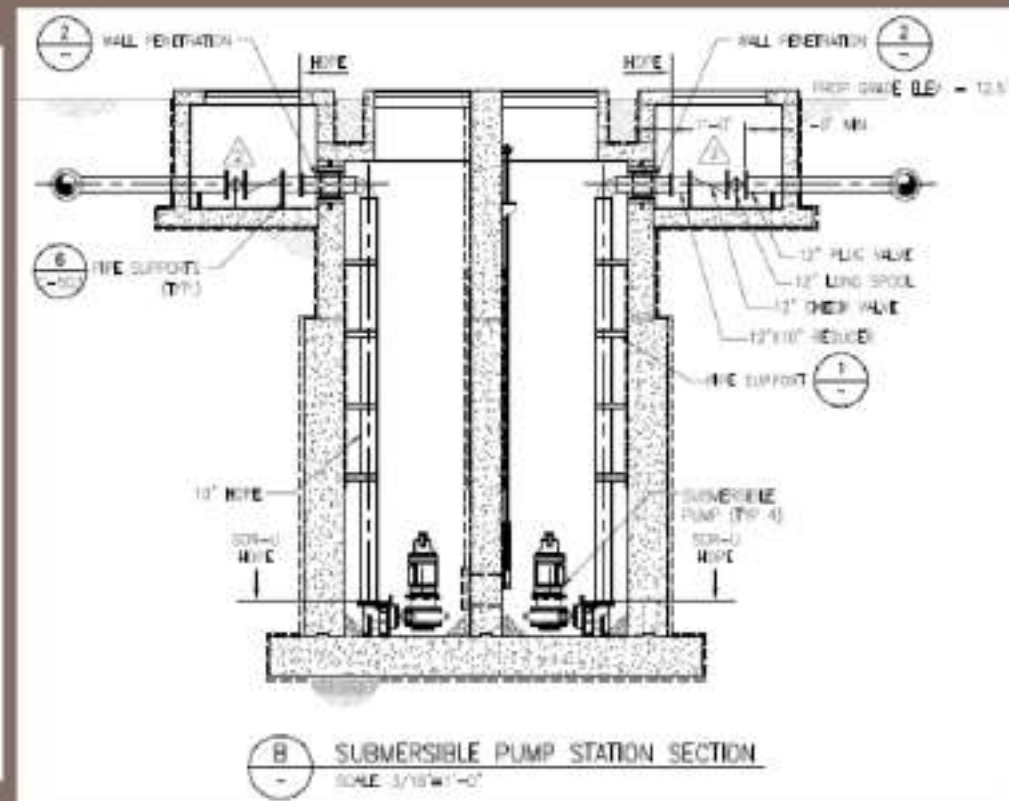
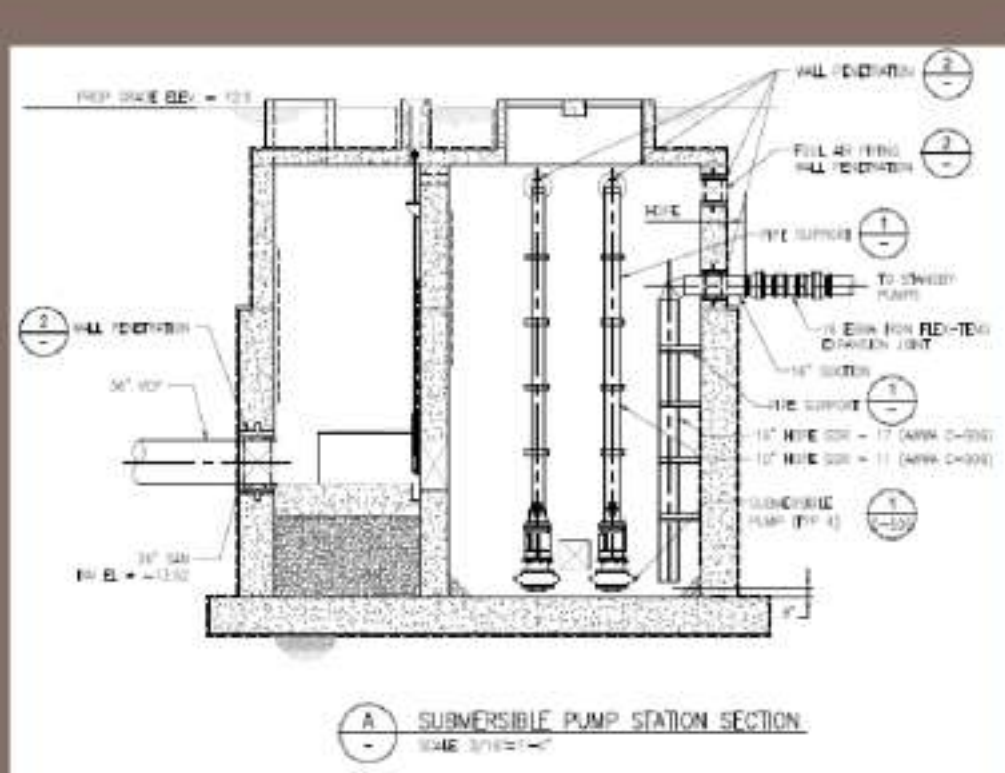
Osprey Avenue bridge. Needless to say, there is a lawsuit over all this.

The project began after Lift Station 7, which is three blocks away from the new Lift Station 87 site, repeatedly failed and sent hundreds of thousands of gallons of sewage into Hudson Bayou and hence into Sarasota Bay. The city is operating under a Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) consent order until the new station is functional.

Monday’s meeting saw the first slip in the work schedule. Garland said the switch from diesel-powered emergency pumps to diesel generator-powered pumps would take three weeks to design. That would push the completion date into January 2016, if the decision were made to go with the switch.

A second decision will determine the resilience of the facility to hurricanes. The state

## Submersible Pump Station



*A November 2013 presentation to the City Commission shows the design of the pump station for the lift station. Image courtesy McKim & Creed*



requires functionality in a 100-year storm. As Topovski noted, Sarasota “in the past two years had two rain events that were close to 100-year storms.” Garland is asking if the city wants to use a higher standard — survivability in a Category 2 hurricane storm surge.

“We now can withstand a Category 2 if we raise the grade about 3.5 feet around the structures,” he said. Because Lift Station 87 is being built in the middle of a public park, neighbors in the nearby Central Park condominiums are increasingly concerned about all the construction activity and what will remain when the project is finished.

A third decision is the most momentous. Should the existing “submersible pump station” be abandoned? “We should evaluate the existing structure and decide if we can rehabilitate it or replace it,” Garland told *The Sarasota News Leader*. “It might be faster and cheaper to build a new one.”

A change is necessary because the previous gravity-flow design was too shallow to prevent a permanent backup condition called

“surcharge.” That means the existing deep well must be lowered to meet the submerged elevation of the 36-inch diameter pipe that will carry all the sewage from the southern half of the city.

And that means the foundation for all the pumps must be lowered, too. They require at least a foot of reinforced concrete.

“We need to lower the existing submersible pump structure 11 feet,” said Topovski, meaning the overall depth of the well must go down 13 feet further and maybe more.

How much will this cost? “We are still developing a conceptual cost estimate,” said Garland. “We inherited a design that was already installed. But until we have a preliminary design, we cannot determine a cost.”

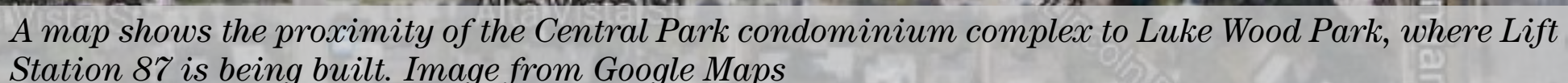
## PUBLIC SCRUTINY

The monthly progress meetings are open to the public, but they were sparsely attended until Monday, when a contingent from the Central Park condos showed up. Mike Taylor, retired chief planner for the city, asked a



*The previous firm that worked on the lift station project was using plans that could have significantly damaged the Osprey Avenue bridge over Hudson Bayou. Photo courtesy City of Sarasota*







financial question. “This was budgeted at \$9.6 million. We’ve now spent \$8 million. How are we going to do the rest of this project? Where’s the rest of the money coming from? And reliability? Should we be looking at a different site?”

Topovski said the proceeds from the sale of the city-owned “spray fields” at the Hi Hat Ranch east of Interstate 75 will be used to finish the job. As for reliability: “We are re-looking at the functionality of the system,” he replied.


Pauline Kingsbury stepped up to cross-examine the engineers, peppering them with questions. “So what’s the completion date now?” she asked. “Jan. 13, 2016 is the final conclusion date, when [Lift Station] 7 is closed down and we make the park good,” said Garland.

“Odor control fixed?” she asked.

“The system is sized properly, but we are looking at additional guards upstream to minimize those risks, too,” Garland told her.

“How long can you stay on schedule as the scope gets bigger and bigger?” asked Ellen Miller.

“In Phase One, we did a fairly detailed design of the sewer system,” said Garland. “In Phase Two, we’re designing the lift station. The depth does not impact our design schedule.”

“The consent order [with the FDEP] goes to May 2016,” noted Miller. “I think you’re working to that schedule. I’m worried about the construction schedule. I don’t think it’s realistic.” Of all the people in the city, Miller has the greatest reason to worry. She lives directly next to the failed and failing Lift Station 7 that is still handling one-third of the city’s sewage. 



*The site of Lift Station 87 in Luke Wood Park showed little sign of progress in October 2013. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



# MAYOR OPPOSES ACCEPTING AUDIT



*The State Street parking garage is expected to cost about \$4 million more than its original estimate. Image courtesy City of Sarasota*

## NEXT CITY BUDGET STARTING \$3 MILLION IN THE HOLE

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

This week, the Sarasota city commissioners received their first peek at next year's budget, which will kick in Oct. 1. Between now and that date, they will hold more workshops and public hearings. But at the starting gate, they are about \$3 million in the red.

On April 14, in a break from past presentations, Finance Director John Lege first conducted a tour of last year's budget, the one that ended Sept. 30, 2013. When auditors completed their work, they returned a clean report, making no recommendations for changes or modifications. The city was able to keep its "rainy day money" — the revenue stabilization fund — intact and untouched.

Lege then went on to look at the current fiscal year, now about halfway finished. The commission tapped into the "rainy day money" for \$1.1 million to avoid raising taxes during last year's budget-setting exercise. But it looks as though the city will need \$1.8 million to keep the budget intact for the current year. This is due to revenues falling about \$2 million short of original estimates.

Using the \$1.8 million to plug the current hole leaves about \$1.1 million in the rainy day fund for the coming fiscal year. This year's reduced revenues are attributed to falling red-light camera fines, nearly nothing earned on investments and a communications service tax revenue decline.



While the economy may be climbing out of the recession, the city's property tax revenues lag well behind because of government procedures. Property assessments for tax purposes are always at least two years behind the market, for example. The city's property tax revenues for the just completed (and audited) fiscal year 2013 period were \$16.2 million, a mere \$100,000 above the figure at the bottom of the recession.

Meanwhile, the city is projected to use up all but \$1.1 million in its "rainy day fund," the revenue stabilization money. But the budget estimates for the coming fiscal period show a \$3 million shortfall.

Several ongoing city projects have provided the city with financial headaches, too. The State Street parking garage is about \$4 million over the original estimate; Lift Station 87 is certain to demand more money as the project redesign continues (see the related story in this issue); and the elimination of parking meters now necessitates a subsidy for the Parking Department to function.

In preparing the 2015 fiscal year spending plan, Lege asked all city department heads to come back with flat budgets. "Anything over that," he said, "would be what we call a 'budget issue.'" He noted the need for \$193,000 to subsidize the operations of the Municipal



*More money for the Sarasota Police Department is reflected in the city's 2015 fiscal year budget. Photo by Norman Schimmel*





Auditorium and \$544,000 “for the parking subsidy,” and he said that when the State Street garage is finished in February 2015, it will require city maintenance and utilities expenses, which are not yet in the proposed budget. Additionally, Sarasota County will cut funding for the upkeep of parks by \$200,000 in the coming fiscal year.

Other adjustments in the proposed budget include increased funding for the Police Department and the Fire Department and general employee pension funds, plus higher medical and dental expenses for retirees. Overall, \$13 million of the \$60 million in the general fund is reflected in pensions and retiree costs.

*Parking meter stumps now symbolize the City Commission's need to plug the hole in the city's Parking Department budget. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



Lege previously pointed out that while other Florida cities raised property taxes to offset the drop in property values, Sarasota maintained its tax rate and, instead, cut services and employees. The city preferred to let go more than a quarter of its staff than to raise taxes.

While the property tax roll is expected to rise again this year, as it did last year, Lege does not anticipate the increased revenue will cope with the subsidies needed for the Municipal Auditorium or the Parking Department — to say nothing of what a homeless shelter will cost the city, either directly or in policing efforts

The head-scratching moment came at the end of the meeting. The budget presentation was over, and a team from the city's auditing firm of Purvis, Grey and Co. came forward to

explain its review of the fiscal year finances ending Sept. 30, 2013. Auditor Joe Welch said his team had “no findings; it was a clean report.”

While not unprecedented, it is uncommon for independent auditors of city or county finances to come back without a quibble. Any student receiving an A+/100 percent grade on a tough test knows how rare it is.

But when it came time for the City Commission to accept the glowing report from the independent auditors, one member took the tack of “No.” Mayor Shannon Snyder, without any explanation, voted against accepting the auditor's report. He then adjourned the meeting.

As he left the City Commission Chambers, *The Sarasota News Leader* asked Snyder why he voted against accepting the audit. He said, “No comment.” 

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## REALITY TV CON MAS

*With permit finally in hand, the firm that will undertake the rehabilitation of Dolphin Tower can begin its work. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

## HOMELESSNESS, LEGAL AND DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC ISSUES JOIN PROJECT COST OVERRUNS IN MAKING UP MOST OF THE APRIL 21 CITY COMMISSION AGENDA

**By Stan Zimmerman**  
*City Editor*

Big construction overruns, four separate issues on vagrancy, untangling traffic issues and mediating a lawyerly cat fight are on the “playbill” for the Monday, April 21, Sarasota City Commission meeting.

Two major city building projects are escalating in cost well beyond the original estimates, and on Monday, the commissioners will be asked to approve ways to scrape up the cash to fund one of them. The State Street parking garage is anticipated to cost a minimum of \$4 million above its 2008 estimate. Staff will ask the City Commission to approve a \$10.6

million contract with A.D. Morgan Corp. to build the garage.

To pay for it, the city will be borrowing money internally from its Fleet Liability Fund and the Worker’s Compensation Fund. The commission also will be considering a budget amendment necessary to formally reallocate the money to cover the \$4.1 million shortfall.

Later, in the evening session, the commissioners will get an update on Lift Station 87 (see the related story in this issue). In January, city Utility Director Mitt Tidwell estimated





*The groundbreaking for The Jewel in downtown Sarasota is set for April 22. Image from the website*



the project eventually might cost \$9 million more than anticipated. With lawsuits and contract renegotiations under way, the additional money is not needed immediately, but the commissioners will hear a status report on the project and all its mechanical, legal and scientific problems. It is not a trivial endeavor. The lift station handles all the sewage from the southern half of the city, including Sarasota Memorial Hospital.

Speaking of construction, city staff members are going to look for commission direction about downtown special events and street closures. Downtown construction is starting to create traffic turmoil, with approved projects coming out of the ground. The rehab project at Dolphin Tower now has a structural renovation permit, so work can begin in earnest to repair the “broken” building. Groundbreaking for [The Jewel](#) condominium complex at 1301



*City staff has worked out a lease agreement to use nearby property for a staging area if a homeless shelter is built at 1330 N. Osprey Ave. Image from Google Maps*



Main St. is set for Tuesday, April 22, and foundation work is proceeding for the [Aloft Hotel](#) at Palm Avenue and Ringling Boulevard. Plus, the city will be doing a variety of utility projects downtown.

Meanwhile, city staffers are looking at a calendar for the next 12 months that is jammed with street closures for 37 civic events. The agenda item simply says, "Direct staff on how to proceed."

## VAGRANCY ISSUES PROLIFERATE

When City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell complained on TV news last year that she was afraid to walk downtown because of all the vagrants, little did she realize her remarks would create a flashpoint of controversy that continues to burn. Four separate issues

linked to vagrancy show up on the April 21 City Commission agenda.

The first will appear in the afternoon after the commission finishes work on the consent agenda. Mayor Shannon Snyder has asked the city manager to provide a "homelessness status update" at every meeting. This will be City Manager Tom Barwin's debut report. There may be a lot to report. The environmental assessments of the two proposed shelter sites will be public by that time. (See the related story in this issue.)

The following agenda item will help clear one of the two proposed sites in case it is selected to house the shelter. City staffers propose leasing property to provide staging and parking for the city's deep-well injection project on Osprey Avenue across 12th Street



*(From left) County Attorney Stephen DeMarsh and City Attorney Robert Fournier are at odds over the city's plan to 'reset' the base year for the Newtown Community Redevelopment Agency. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



from the city's sewage treatment plant. The parcel at 1330 N. Osprey Ave., which is the highest ranked of those identified for a shelter location by homelessness and vagrancy consultant Robert Marbut, was to have been used for that staging area. With the other property under lease, the 1330 N. Osprey site would be clear for shelter construction. The lease to use the additional land as a "staging area" for the well work will cost \$1,075 per month, and the city proposes to pay for it from "homeless project funds." Putting the supplies, machinery and parking elsewhere will allow shelter construction.

In the evening session, the commissioners will conduct two public hearings on ordinances involving vagrancy. One would ban people from "sitting, standing or placing objects in roadway medians and roundabouts." This springs from an individual who regularly inhabits the center of the roundabout at Charles Ringling Boulevard and South Pineapple Avenue. His encampment is on the apron of the center of the roundabout, where he displays his paintings.

A second public hearing on another ordinance is designed to streamline the city's "lodging out-of-doors" law, bringing it into line with the county's regulations. Consultant Marbut recommended the city and county harmonize their ordinances aimed at behavior demonstrated by homeless and vagrant people.

## REAL POLICY ISSUES

After untangling the issue of downtown parades versus concrete trucks, scraping the barrel to pay for construction overruns and stamping out the homeless "fires," the commissioners can turn their attention to other issues of lasting importance.



*City Manager Tom Barwin. Photo by Norman Schimmel*

The first public hearing of the evening could be a showdown between two hired guns — the city and county attorneys. The issue is a "reset" of the Newtown Community Redevelopment Agency's benchmark year for collection of tax-increment financing money. The county attorney says the city cannot do that by itself. The city attorney has stuffed his proposed ordinance with multiple references to reasons why the city can do what it wants.

This is not a trivial question, because over the coming decades, it will mean the difference between nothing and something for Newtown redevelopment. It is doubtful the City and County commissions want a showdown over this issue, because the implications are vast. The political gods will be watching closely.

The skids also are well greased for an afternoon issue involving the city and county. The



city now collects impact fees for transportation from developers of new construction; the money can be used only to increase the capacity of roadways.

The city wants more discretion, and it wants out of the transportation impact fee regime and into the multi-modal mobility fee business; same concept but different uses. New development imposes additional strains, but instead of making developers pay to widen the roads, the money can be used for better bike lanes, mass transit, downtown shuttles and other alternatives to more cars on the streets.

The city and county staffs have worked together on this for months, and there are no surprises here. The switch, however, would put the city on a different path to moving residents, if the measure is approved. There is

more work needed, but this afternoon item will be a watershed.

The final public hearing of the evening will be another kind of confrontation. Earlier this month, the city was threatened by a Sunshine lawsuit if it did not repudiate all the work of the past three years by its Independent Police Advisory Panel. A lawyer charged that the ordinance establishing the board included “*ex officio* members” and claimed they, too, were obliged to abide by the Sunshine law based on a Florida Attorney General Office’s opinion.

Two weeks ago, the City Commission decided to ignore the threat of a suit and simply amend the ordinance to clarify that the “*ex officio* members” were simply staffers supporting the work of the committee. Mayor Snyder proposed the city offer to settle the suit for \$2,500, but he was outvoted 4-1. **SNL**

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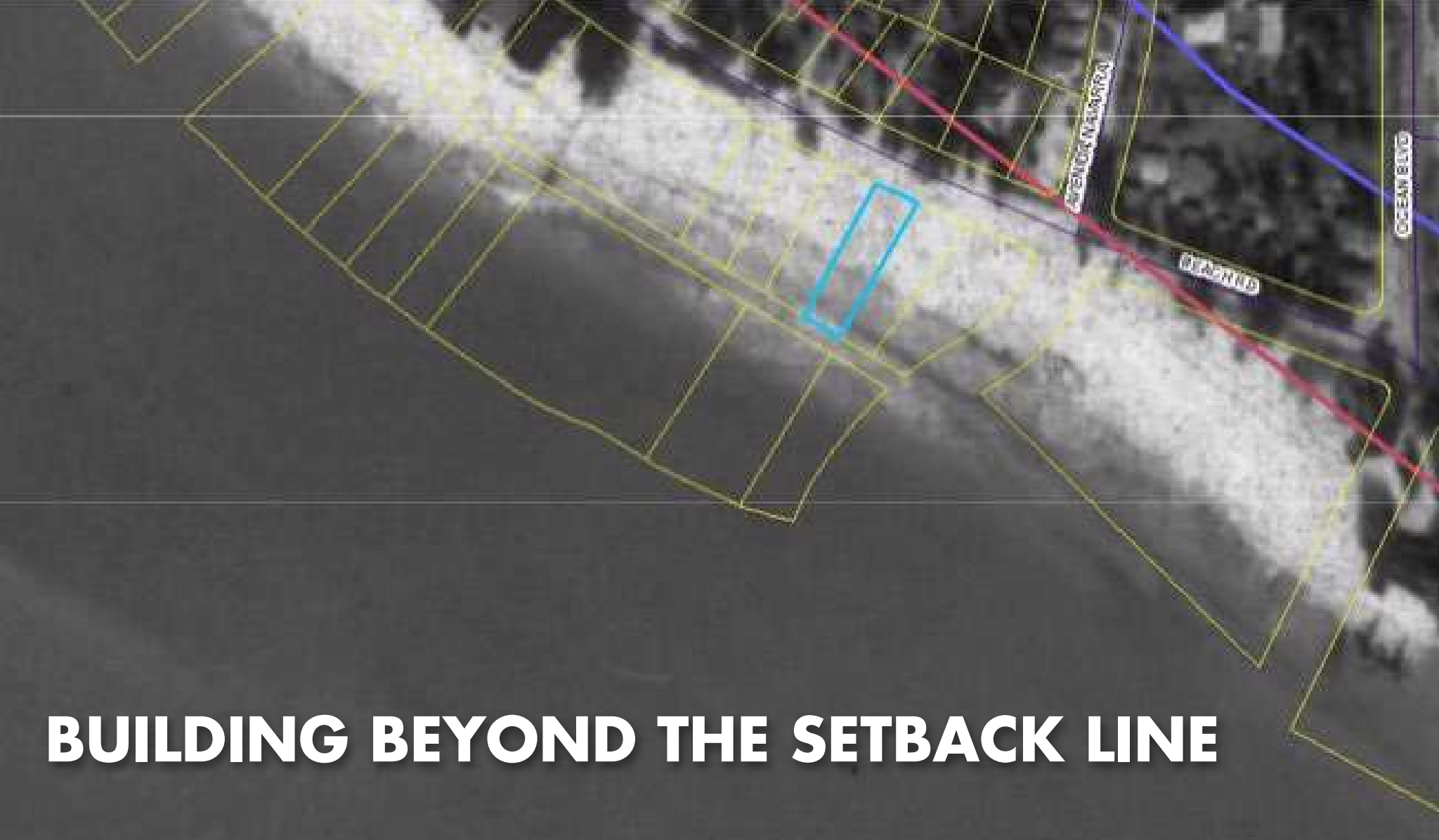


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# BUILDING BEYOND THE SETBACK LINE

*A county photo shows the lot at 162 Beach Road in 1948. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## AN OSPREY COUPLE WILL TRY ONCE AGAIN TO GET COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVAL TO CONSTRUCT A HOUSE ON SIESTA KEY LAND THAT HAS A HISTORY OF FLOODING

By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

On Feb. 19, the agent for a couple who wish to build a house on Siesta Key land that has been underwater in past decades asked for a postponement of a public hearing on their request. They need a variance for construction seaward of the county's Gulf Beach Setback Line (GBSL) to make their project a reality.

William Merrill of the Icard Merrill firm in Sarasota told the commissioners, "My client and a couple of neighbor property owners had discussions [as

recently as the previous weekend] about some alternatives to what is being proposed today, and they would like additional time to be able to discuss that ... to see if that is a fruitful discussion ..."

As it turns out, Merrill will be coming back to the County Commission next week with

the very same petition that was on the Feb. 19 board agenda. Reached by *The Sarasota News Leader* this week, he said of the effort to

“All of us know that the Gulf Beach Setback Line is a last line of defense.”

Catherine Luckner  
Vice President  
Siesta Key Association





work out something different with the neighbors of the property at 162 Beach Road, “That hasn’t come to fruition at this time. ... We’re going to be proceeding with the same plans filed with the county.”

Those plans call for a house and paver driveway with construction a maximum of 176.5 feet seaward of the GBSL, according to a PowerPoint presentation prepared for the Feb. 19 meeting. The house would have two floors above ground level, each with 1,922 square feet of space, on the 7,652-square-foot lot. The design for the ground level calls for a footprint of 1,305 square feet.

During the Feb. 19 meeting, to the dismay of several audience members, the commissioners agreed, after discussion with the county attorney, to reschedule the hearing for April

23. They wanted to give Merrill a chance to try to work out something different.

However, two Siesta residents who took the opportunity to address the commission expressed their displeasure. Bruce Appleton, who owns a condominium in The Terrace on Beach Road, pointed out that a lot of seasonal residents who might like to speak on the request would be gone by late April.

Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson and Commissioner Carolyn Mason urged those who could not be present on April 23 to email or write the board to make their views about the petition clear.

## THE BACKGROUND

In January 2013, the County Commission unanimously turned down a request for a



*An aerial view shows the 162 Beach Road parcel in 2008. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



variance on the same parcel that called for construction 200.16 feet seaward of the GBSL. During that public hearing, the owners of the property, Ronald and Sania Allen, also sought a variance to build a second house of the same design on the parcel they own at 168 Beach Road. During that Jan. 9, 2013 meeting, Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta Key, pointed out that she had “absolutely seen that whole area [under water] ...”

Because of the history of those lots and that entire section of Siesta Key, Patterson said,

“It’s really rough for me to even envision somebody wanting to build on those properties.”

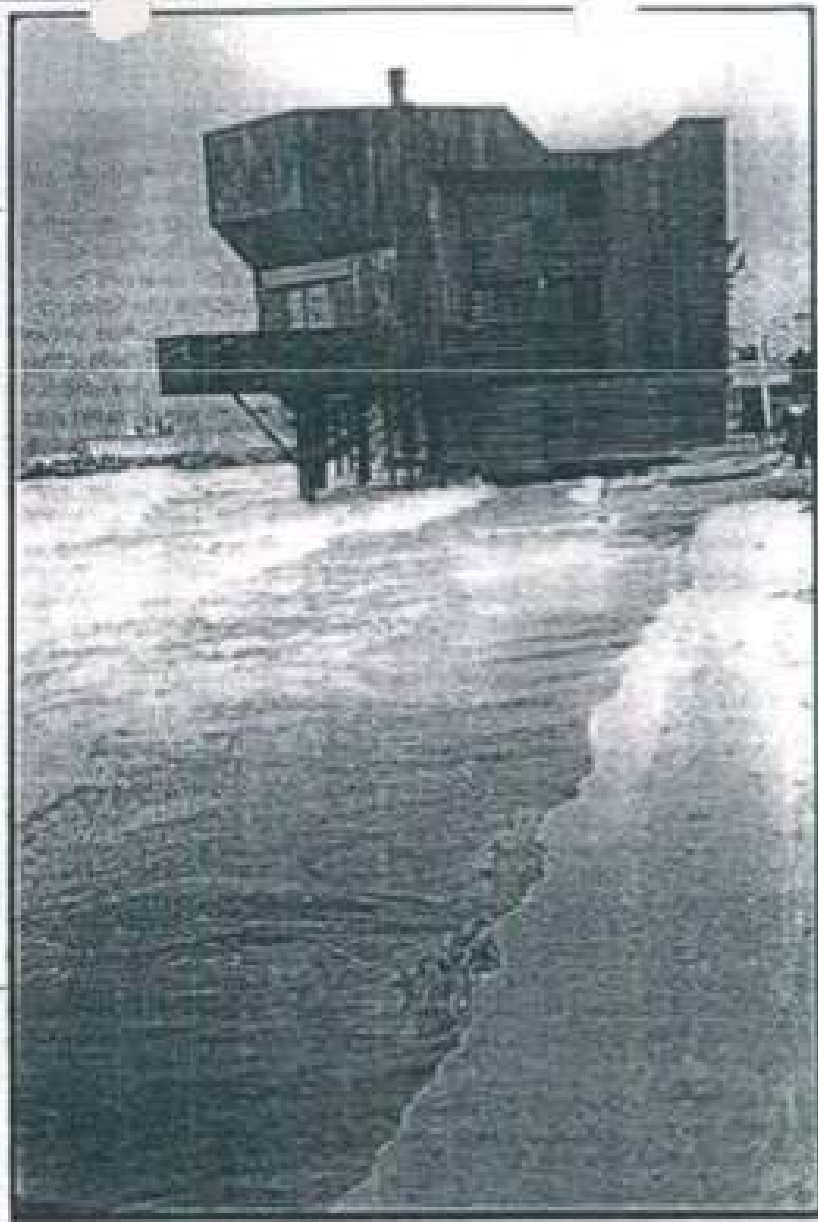
A *News Leader* search of county property records shows the 7,429-square-foot parcel at 162 Beach Road was purchased by the Allens on May 29, 2009 for \$5.4 million. The seller was Brent R. Cooper, trustee.

The lot sold in September 2007 for \$500,000.

In 2013, the Sarasota County Property Appraiser’s Office put a value of \$1,047,500 on the land. A year earlier, the value was \$1,161,200.

# 1980

Erosion along the shoreline by the Davidoff property was quite evident during last Friday's rain and wind storm. There was much opposition by residents and the Siesta Key Association to granting the Davidoff's a permit to build so close to the water. Photo by Rebecca Wild.



**Siesta Key Pelican, January 1980**



**January 2012**

*The vacant lot at 162 Beach Road is underwater in a January 1980 photo that appeared in the Siesta Key Pelican; the same property is shown in a January 2012 photo. Images courtesy Sarasota County*



## OPPOSITION

The Siesta Key Association (SKA) has announced its opposition to the Allens' latest plan — just as it opposed the 2013 variance petitions.

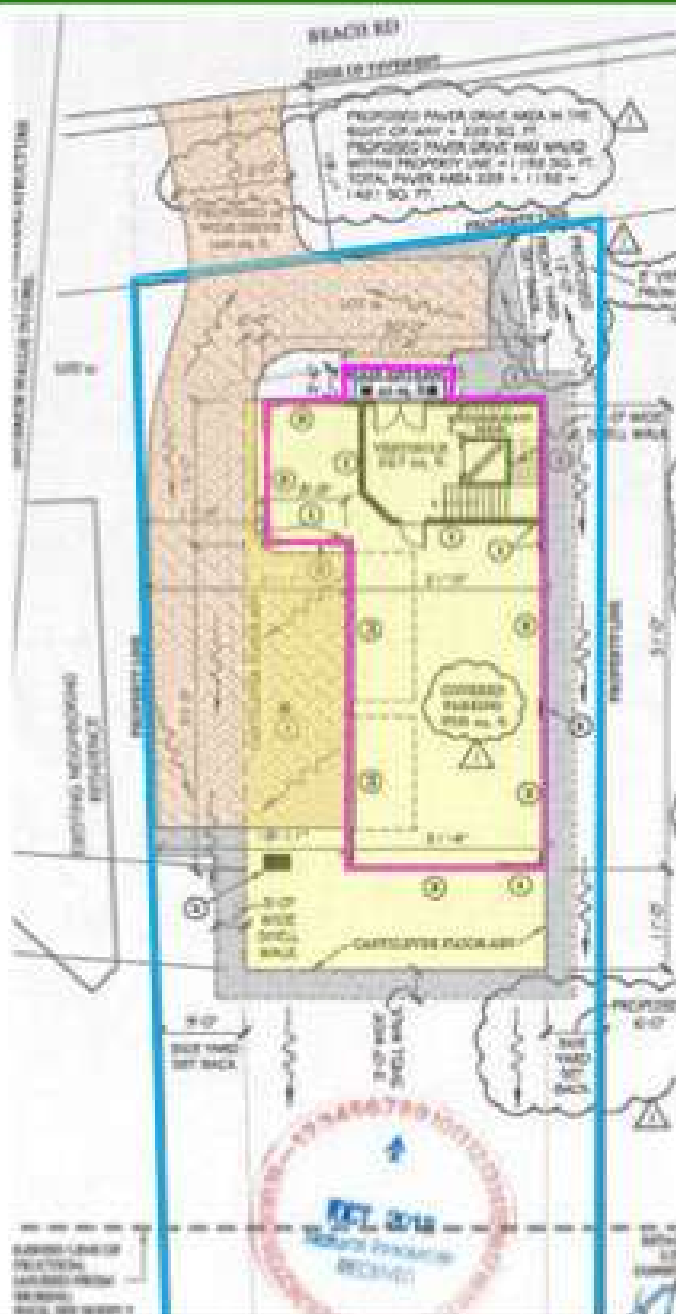
In a Feb. 7 letter the organization sent to the County Commission, then-President Catherine Luckner wrote that the parcel at 162 Beach Road “exists within a State of Florida defined area of *Critical Beach Erosion*. While an accreted shoreline currently is noted,

there is repeated history of rapid flooding and storm surge. The vegetated dune, described in the Variance Petition, is a defense against storm surge for residential and business properties landward of the GBSL. The Gulf Beach Setback Line (GBSL) and Barrier Island Pass 20 year High Hazard Line (PHL) provide governance for development to enhance property owner safety, protect our natural environment and secure property value.”

Luckner added, “Our organization supports residential interests on civic issues which

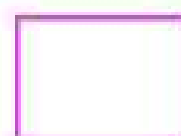


## Dimensioned Site Plan – CSV 79-03-13-440



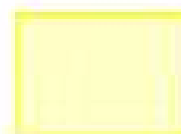
**Paver Driveway**

1,421 ft<sup>2</sup> (1,192 ft<sup>2</sup>)



**Ground Level**

1,305 ft<sup>2</sup>



**Floors Above**

Approx. 1,922 ft<sup>2</sup>

Footprint

**176.5 ft Seaward of GBSL**



may impact property values and the environment of Siesta Key. We support the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD) and all ordinances that protect the barrier island environment. We support the rights of private land use by owners [when plans] are within ordinance and when [the] use has no adverse impact to other property owners or the barrier island environment.”

During the April 3 SKA meeting, Luckner, now the SKA’s second vice president, reported that the variance petition is scheduled to be heard by the County Commission on April 23.

Recently retired SKA Director Peter van Roekens, who was in the audience, said he had heard some discussion regarding an effort by the owners to modify the plan to include a proposal for a conservation easement.

Howard Berna, environmental supervisor in the county’s Natural Resources Department, told the *News Leader* on April 15, “I have had an indication that [the Allens] wanted to do a conservation easement, but I haven’t seen a plan for that.”

Approval Criteria Sec. 54-724	Facts Demonstrating Consistency	Facts Demonstrating Inconsistency
4(2): <i>Reduce and minimize future public expenditures for flood and erosion control measures;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposed construction is on private property and any expenditure for flood and erosion control measures would be the responsibility of the property owner.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The property is located in a FEMA velocity flood zone.</li><li>• A structure built within a velocity zone could be damaged or destroyed by storm activity and may result in flood damage insurance claims, which are often subsidized by public tax supported programs such as the National Flood Insurance Program.</li></ul>
4(3): <i>Reduce and minimize future public expenditures for relief and/or restoration of projects following natural disasters or gradual erosion;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposed construction is on private property and is not likely to increase public expenditures for relief and restoration following natural disasters or gradual erosion.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposed residential structure is located on a state-designated critically eroded beach in a high hazard coastal area.</li><li>• Damage to the residence following a severe natural disaster may result in higher public expenditures for removal of debris from the coastal area.</li></ul>
4(4): <i>Insure public access along the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico and barrier island passes;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposed construction is approximately 320 feet from the open sandy beach and more than 670 feet from the MHWL. Therefore, no impacts to lateral public pedestrian access along the beach are anticipated as a direct result of the proposed project.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposed construction does not appear to be inconsistent with this criterion at this time, given the current state of the beach; however, the MHWL was once located on the subject property.</li></ul>
4(5): <i>Avoid erosion damage to adjacent property resulting from man-made structures;</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No shoreline hardening structures are currently proposed, nor would such shoreline hardening structures be allowed if this variance were approved.</li><li>• The proposed residential construction is a pile-supported building.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The site is prone to overwash and flooding during storm events.</li><li>• The project removes pervious surface from the site and will likely increase stormwater runoff.</li><li>• Fill is proposed to level the area under the residence. Given the limited elevation changes on the property, the addition of fill may result in adverse impacts by directing stormwater runoff and gulf overwash toward neighboring properties or Beach Road.</li></ul>

A page of the staff report on the variance request for the 162 Beach Road parcel shows points of consistency and inconsistency with approval criteria for such construction. ‘MHWL’ stands for Mean High Water Line. Image courtesy Sarasota County



That interview took place a day prior to the *News Leader* interview with Merrill.

During the SKA meeting, Luckner emphasized the organization opposes any request to build beyond the GBSL. “All of us know that the Gulf Beach Setback Line is a last line of defense,” she said.

Prior to the County Commission hearing in January 2013 regarding the petitions for variances regarding the parcel at 162 Beach Road and 168 Beach Road, the commissioners received a plethora of email pleading for them to deny the requests.

Before the commissioners addressed the latest petition on Feb. 19, they had received nine

protests by email, which were included in their agenda packet for that meeting.

A property owner at 5300 Ocean Blvd. in Siesta Village, who works in New York City, wrote that the GBSL “is the only thing protecting our beach from further erosion — please this is common sense.” If approved, he added, the variance “would set a precedent that would lead to even more development and loss of our dunes, grasses and wildlife.”

An owner of multiple parcels on Siesta Key wrote, “The Gulf Beach Setback Line was established for a reason — as a society, we cannot afford to continue to build stuff in harm’s way.”



## January 2013 – Oblique Aerial Image



*A January 2013 aerial view shows Beach Road and The Terrace condominium complex (left) in proximity to the land at 162 Beach Road. Image courtesy Sarasota County*



As recently as April 7, a 91-year-old resident of the Terrace East condominium complex at 5300 Ocean Blvd., who has owned that unit since 1973, sent an email to the commissioners pleading with them to deny the request.

“During the time I have lived at Terrace East, I have personally witnessed a number of weather incidents that have caused erosion and serious flooding to Beach Road and the lot involved in the above variance request,” she wrote. “Significant damage could be done to the surrounding properties as well as the natural beachfront as a result of construction on this lot.

The changes made in this variance request when compared to the variance request for the same property in 2013 are minimal and should result in denial of variance petition for all the same reasons it was denied in 2013.”

## STAFF REPORT

The staff review of the Allens’ latest request notes that while facts do demonstrate consistency with the approval criteria for the variance, those are outweighed by the aspects of the plan that are inconsistent with the criteria.

For example, the construction of a three-story residence over a parking area, with 3,088 square feet of habitable area, and a paver driveway of 1,421 square feet “may not be viewed as the minimum necessary for reasonable use of the property.”

The report does point out that the modified petition removed the pool, pool deck and landscape retaining wall that were part of the Jan. 9, 2013 request.

Other positive factors are that about “4,114 square feet of the 7,652-square-foot lot will remain as unaltered dune habitat and native vegetation,” and the Allens “have proffered planting 1,350 square feet of dune vegetation in areas where non-native plants are to be removed.”

However, the review also points out, “The site is located in a high hazard coastal area that has exhibited dynamic shoreline changes over the past 60 years,” and “The project would result in direct impacts to more than 3,538 square feet of existing shoreline stabilizing dune habitat and native vegetation.”

It adds that the county’s comprehensive plan says, “Dune systems and their native vegetation shall be preserved.” 

## QUICK TIP



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



# WAITING ON STATE MONEY



*A mid-March aerial photo of Nathan Benderson Park (top) and the Mall at University Town Center (lower right) shows Interstate 75 (at left) and University Parkway (bottom of photo). Image courtesy Sarasota County*

## FAST-TRACK PLAN FOR A DIVERGING DIAMOND INTERCHANGE HINGES ON SENATE AND HOUSE NEGOTIATIONS

**By Roger Drouin**  
*County Editor*

While elected officials of Sarasota and Manatee counties have been working with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) representatives to move a “diverging diamond” interchange project into the fast lane, they are hopeful the project will not hit the brakes in the Legislature this session.

Last month, both County Commissions approved resolutions formally supporting the new plan at Interstate 75 and University Parkway and pledged to proceed with their

own separate, future roadway improvements in the area. Meanwhile, FDOT officials are making the diverging diamond a priority and seeking state transportation dollars for it, saying the project will improve traffic flow in a highly congested part of Southwest Florida. This diverging diamond would be the first such design in the state.

“Next week, hopefully, this gets hammered out.”

Charles Hines  
Chairman  
Sarasota County Commission

The fate of the plan rests with state legislators, when the Senate and House will head into the last two weeks of the legislative session after the



Easter break. There is a gulf between the two chambers' budget proposals.

In their version of the annual budget, House representatives have appropriated \$115 million in supplemental transportation funding that could be appropriated for construction projects throughout the state, including the Sarasota interchange, said Sarasota County Commission Chairman Charles Hines. But the Senate budget does not include any discretionary funding for transportation proposals.

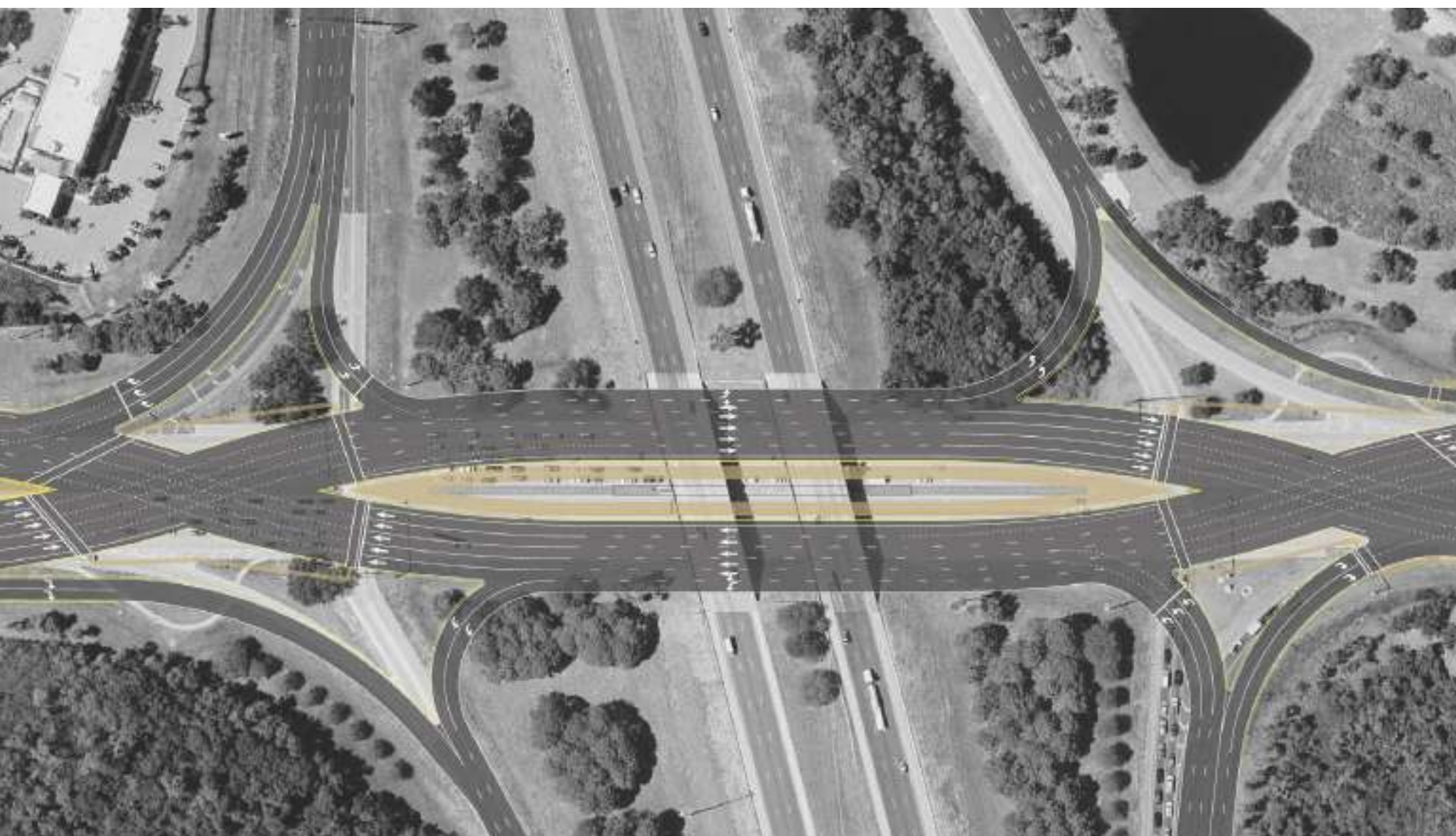
"Next week, hopefully, this gets hammered out," Hines told *The Sarasota News Leader* on Tuesday, April 15.

Part of the problem is that the project was not on state legislators' radar a year ago, said Hines, who has traveled to Tallahassee twice

recently to meet with FDOT officials about the project. Funding has to be secured this year if construction is to start soon, a timeline local leaders are pushing.

After speaking with the county's legislative lobbyist this week, Hines told the *News Leader* he is optimistic the Senate and House will compromise on a budget agreement that includes funding for the interchange between Sarasota and Manatee counties. So far, local and state officials have been collaborating well on the proposal, especially given the sense of urgency to get the project under way well before the 2017 World Rowing Championships are held at Nathan Benderson Park off University Parkway.

There is momentum, Hines said: The project is in the design phase already; the state does



*A graphic shows how a diverging diamond interchange would be constructed at Interstate 75 and University Parkway. Image courtesy Sarasota County*





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April 9, 2014

The Honorable Nancy Detert  
State Senator, District 28  
416 Senate Office Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

**Re: Support House level of funding for Transportation in budget/Provide opportunity for University Parkway and I-75 Interchange to go forward**

Dear Senator Detert:

Thank you for your outstanding leadership and efforts on behalf of our community this session. We particularly thank you for your work related to funding for Dona Bay.

We urge your support during the upcoming legislative budget conference process for the additional \$115 million in the House budget, but not currently in the Senate, which would provide the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) supplemental funding for transportation projects such as the University/I-75 Interchange. (Line Item 1912, Fixed Capital Outlay, Intrastate Highway Construction).

Sarasota and Manatee counties are closely partnered on this effort and fully support FDOT's request for funding of this critical state project. FDOT's advises that if funding is provided the construction of the diverging diamond interchange could begin as early as August 2015.

As a demonstration of the counties' partnership, both have approved resolutions declaring the counties' support of FDOT's proposed plan. I recently met with FDOT Secretary Ananth Prasad in person, to present him a copy of the resolution, and to affirm the Counties desire to work cooperatively on addressing the area's transportation challenges. He indicated that this supplemental funding is fairly critical to meeting the advanced timeline.

In the meantime, both counties are working diligently on the region's traffic capacity improvements and to address community members' concerns about the congestion. Sarasota County's plan includes: Construction of a bridge over I-75 on the southern boundaries of the Nathan Benderson Park and Schroeder-Manatee Ranch; Extension of Lakewood Ranch Boulevard from its current end south of University Parkway to Fruitville Road; and Construction of Lorraine Road between University Parkway and Fruitville Road.

If I or the Commission can be of assistance to you in this effort please call on us at any time.

Sincerely,

Charles D. Hines  
Chairman

C: Sarasota County Commission  
Thomas A. Harner, County Administrator  
Robert R. Lewis, Director, Community/Intergovernmental Relations

Carolyn J. Mason, District 1 ▪ Joseph A. Barbetta, District 2 ▪ Christine Robinson, District 3 ▪ Nora Patterson, District 4 ▪ Charles D. Hines, District 5  
cmason@scgov.net jbarbett@scgov.net crobenson@scgov.net npatters@scgov.net chines@scgov.net



not need to purchase any extra right of way (a process that usually takes years); and the diverging diamond plan is being showcased as a new kind of interchange model for the state.

“Everything has aligned like last night’s red moon,” Hines pointed out on Tuesday, referring to the eclipse that produced the “blood moon.”

But the funding details have to be worked out. Hines expects there will be a little bit of “horse trading going on” when the House and Senate negotiate over the budget.

The new project, which includes the drainage and interstate bridge improvements, could cost about \$50 million, sources say.

The Sarasota County Commission sent identical letters on April 9 to state Sens. Nancy Detert, R-Venice, and Bill Galvano, R-Bradenton, requesting their backing for the necessary financial resources for the diverging diamond.

“We urge your support during the upcoming legislative budget conference process for the additional \$115 million in the House budget, but not currently in the Senate, which would provide the Florida Department of Transportation’s (FDOT) supplemental funding for transportation projects such as the University/I-75 Interchange,” the letter says.

## A BIG PROJECT

If funding is secured this year, construction is slated to start in the fall of 2015. The work



*Drivers navigate through a diverging diamond interchange in Springfield, MO. Photo by Brandonrush via Wikimedia Commons*



could take two to four years, said Jim Harriott Jr., the county's chief engineer.

"It's a big project," Harriott told the *News Leader* this week. "There is a lot of bridge work to the interstate and nearby drainage in addition to the interchange improvement itself."

That timeline would necessitate a plan for handling construction around the World Rowing Championships.

## A NEW PLAN AND A NEW PUSH

The diverging diamond project has been on FDOT's project list. However, the initial proposal, pitched in 2013, called for construction to begin in 2018. The earlier plan did not have much support from local officials.

That all changed in January, when state Rep. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, met with FDOT District One Secretary Billy Hattaway. After their discussion, Steube was able to organize a meeting in Tallahassee with FDOT Secretary Ananth Prasad and local leaders, including Hines. State officials said they wanted to put the project in the fast lane and utilize it as a key piece in solving the transportation puzzle at one of the region's fastest growing intersections.

The design for the interchange was also refined. The new proposal is smaller, and it would be funded entirely by the state, two modifications that won the support of Sarasota County Commission Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson. She had expressed reservations about the 2013 proposal.

Robinson said that because of the size of the initial project, the state wanted the county to chip in for construction costs. "It has been



*Ananth Prasad is the secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation. Image courtesy FDOT*

dramatically scaled back," Robinson pointed out of the project.

Robinson has also seen videos and other examples of diverging diamonds in the United States. "I am much more comfortable with it," Robinson told the *News Leader* this week.

She added that state funding is now the biggest "piece of the puzzle."

State officials have explained that a diverging diamond would work best at University Parkway/I-75 because it can handle more traffic than a standard "cloverleaf" design. Even though this type of intersection is new — the first was built in Missouri in 2009 — it has been proven to function well. Along with those in Missouri, diverging diamond interchanges are located in Kentucky and Utah.



By the end of 2015, as many as 70 could be in place throughout the country, transportation officials say.


## THE OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

Even if the state sets aside funding for the interchange, the onus will be on the two counties to complete roadway improvements around it. They will have the help of Schroeder Manatee Ranch Inc., developer of Lakewood Ranch, and Benderson, developer of the new Mall at University Town Center; both firms are obligated to provide area infrastructure improvements through development agreements and impact fee guidelines.

In the April 9 letter to Detert and Galvano, the Sarasota County Commission wrote that

“both counties are working diligently on the region’s traffic capacity improvements.”

In Sarasota County, that work could include Lakewood Ranch Boulevard and Lorraine Road extensions, as well as a proposed overpass connection between University Parkway and Fruitville Road, according to a March 6 update to the Sarasota county commissioners and staff.

Steube said his understanding is that the preliminary plan calls for Sarasota County and Schroeder Manatee to split the cost of the overpass. That would become one of the alternative routes for residents and commuters heading into Lakewood Ranch. Those other accesses are needed badly, as was evidenced by a January accident that closed a section of University Parkway, Steube pointed out. 

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## SIDEWALK CLEANING AND TRANSPORTATION

*The 'classy chassis' of Lectric Limo's low-speed electric people mover has more in common with a modern sports car than a traditional golf cart. Image courtesy Lectric Limo*

### THE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT BOARD LEARNS A FIRM HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR SIDEWALK CLEANING, AND IT TESTS ANOTHER ELECTRIC 'CIRCULATOR'

By Stan Zimmerman  
*City Editor*

Anybody who has lived in Germany knows households are responsible for their sidewalks. It is not uncommon to see people with scrub brushes and hoses on a weekend morning, cleaning "their" sidewalk.

It is a habit many wish was shared by downtown Sarasota merchants and property owners. The buildup of filth is especially noticeable near establishments with outdoor food and beverage services.

Instead of the businesses handling the work, it has been left to the city to see that the sidewalks are cleaned. For the past three years, that upkeep has not happened. But "clean" is coming back. The city recently issued a Request for Proposals, and after a "clean-off,"

Sunshine Cleaning emerged the victor.

The firm will be covering four separate areas: downtown, Newtown, Hillview

“This is going to be our salvation downtown.”

Dr. Mark Kauffman  
Board Member  
Downtown Improvement District





Street and St. Armands Circle. The Downtown Improvement District (DID) board has been pushing for years to see the city work out a deal for the commercial cleaning of the sidewalks. Thanks to the selection of Sunshine, the board members believe the downtown sidewalks can be scoured and transformed again into pleasant pathways.

DID Operations Manager John Moran said Sunshine would charge \$795 “per cleaning.” The city will pay for two per year, and Moran suggested the DID could find \$7,950 to pay for 10 more. “I’d say we start with the dirtiest

sidewalk in Sarasota, along Main from Orange to Gulfstream,” he suggested.

“This eliminates the need for restaurants to do it themselves?” asked DID member Mark Kauffman. “That is correct,” replied Moran.

The next piece of downtown beautification the DID proposes is the re-sodding of Five Points Park. Heavy foot traffic, sandy soil and deep shade all contribute to heavy wear on the grass. Moran proposed the park be re-sodded every two years, and it is time now to get that schedule started. “It is a collaborative venture



*Five passengers plus the driver makes for a full load. Photo courtesy Lectric Limo*



with [the city's] Public Works [Department]," he said. "We pay and they install."

## NEW DOWNTOWN CRUISER TESTED

By the time you read this, the DID will have conducted a test of another vehicle proposed to serve as a "circulator" to take people from hotels and parking garages to downtown destinations.

On Thursday, April 17, a six-seat low-speed electric vehicle was scheduled to be tried out on a 5.2-mile route. It was to simulate a trip with regular stops at a variety of locations, and it was expected to require about one hour to finish the loop. Last month, the DID tested a six-seat electric vehicle made by Cruise Cars of Sarasota, a well-established company that produces golf carts and low-speed electric vehicles based on golf carts.

However, testing found the lead-acid batteries in the Cruise Cars needed recharging after about five hours of service. To maintain a reliable system, the five-hour battery life meant two vehicles would be necessary to work a 10-hour day, pushing up capital and maintenance costs.

April's test vehicle is made by Lectric Limos of Largo. It uses lithium-ion batteries, and it is designed and built as a low-speed electric vehicle. The modern batteries do not need recharging in the middle of a daily schedule. Moran hopes the test will be a proof-of-concept that a fleet of 10 electric vehicles can travel a circuit with wait times as short as five minutes for a ride. The route would include existing and planned hotels, plus a run up and down Main Street.



*Downtown Improvement District board members have complained that restaurateurs do not keep sidewalks clean where outdoor dining is provided. Photo by Norman Schimmel*




During the April 15 DID meeting, Moran presented a spreadsheet examining how such a system might work financially. Using a five-year lease to acquire 10 vehicles, along with paying for the insurance and maintenance, would require approximately \$113,000. However, to buffer the cost, Moran suggested a private firm might want to operate the system and raise funds by selling advertising and renting the vehicles to operators who would drive for tips.

Additional funds might come from the hotels themselves, while local foundations could be yet another option for assistance. The Downtown Sarasota Community Redevelopment Agency, the DID and perhaps even the city's Parking Department might want to support the idea.

Each parking space in the new State Street garage will cost roughly \$30,000, so eliminating a single car's need for a downtown parking space potentially is worth that one-time amount.

Kauffman did a little mental math to assess the size of the ridership. "You have four downtown hotels with 814 rooms. With 70 percent occupancy [on an annual basis] and a four-day stay of 1.8 people per room, times 365. That's 100,000 visitors per year," he said. "This is going to be our salvation downtown."

Moran was quick to point out his spreadsheet contained a lot of estimates. "But the \$113,000 annually is an amount that is affordable," he said. "It is not a back-breaking amount to consider." 



*Outdoor dining is a common feature on both ends of Main Street, east and west of Five Points. Photo by Norman Schimmel*





*Before state law stopped Sarasota County from banning tobacco products on Siesta Public Beach, visitors often lauded the absence of cigarette butts in the sand. Photo by Rachel Hackney*

## **SWAT CHAPTER TO RID SIESTA PUBLIC BEACH OF TOBACCO LITTER**

In recognition of Earth Day, members of Sarasota County's Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) chapter will travel to Siesta Key Beach to pick up litter from cigarettes and other tobacco products, the county has announced.

Earth Day is Saturday, April 26. The students plan to be on the beach from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., a news release notes.

"People don't always realize that smoking is not only bad for their health, it is bad for the environment," said Riverview High SWAT student Faye Ramos in the release. "This is the second year SWAT has organized a beach

cleanup; we hope that more people will be aware of the negative impact tobacco is having on our community."

Cigarettes make up the majority of litter in the world, the release points out. Their remnants comprise more than 4.5 trillion pieces of litter each year, the release says.

Such statistics tell only one part of the story, the release notes. Cigarette butts and the remnants of tobacco leaves resulting after a cigarette is extinguished "contain hundreds of toxic chemicals that can leach into waterways or be ingested by wildlife," the release adds.



“Tobacco use remains the No. 1 preventable cause of death in the United States, and we know that the effect does not stop there,” said Jeanette Robinson, Tobacco Prevention Program manager for the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County, in the release. “Tobacco use negatively impacts the health of a smoker; secondhand smoke negatively impacts the health of non-smokers; and tobacco litter negatively impacts our environment.”

For more information about resources to quit smoking, visit [tobaccofreeflorida.com/](http://tobaccofreeflorida.com/) or call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a “Quit Coach,” the release continues.

For details about the local SWAT chapter, visit [swatssc.com/swat-teams/](http://swatssc.com/swat-teams/) or call 861-2997.



## K9 ANDRO JOINS THE SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Sarasota Police Department has a new member: K9 Andro, the department has announced.

The 21-month-old German Shepherd was brought to Sarasota from Germany last weekend, a news release says. He will serve as the K9 partner for Officer Nick Dominis, replacing K9 Kuda, the release notes.

Kuda, who was handled by Officer Trip Schwenk, retired after nearly eight years with the Police Department, the release continues.

Dominis and Andro will spend “the next two weeks bonding and socializing,” it points out. Afterward, they will attend a 480-hour K9 school mandated by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

Training, the release explains. Upon completion of that training, both Dominis and K9 Andro will be required to pass a state certification test before they begin working the streets of the City of Sarasota.

Historically, the handler is given the opportunity to name the K9 partner when the two are bonding, the release notes. Andro’s given name at his kennel in Germany was Roby, which Dominis decided to change, the release says.

“In honor of my heritage and, specifically, my father, who is Croatian, I chose the name Andro,” Dominis points out in the release. “‘Andro’ is a recognized warrior name by the citizens of Croatia.”





*K9 Andro has become the newest canine member of the Sarasota Police Department. Contributed photo*



## BIG TRUCK DAY TO ROLL INTO TWIN LAKES PARK ON SATURDAY

Sarasota County will host its 18th annual Big Truck Day on Saturday, April 19, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Twin Lakes Park, located at 6700 Clark Road in Sarasota, the county has announced.

The free event will feature vehicles of all sizes from Sarasota County Fleet and Emergency Services along with those of private businesses, a news release says.

“Big Truck Day gives children a chance to explore the big vehicles they see on the streets as well as provide parents an opportunity to meet and talk with the people who operate them,” said Jamal Edwards, Sarasota County

Parks and Recreation program coordinator, in the release.

Youngsters of all ages will be able “to climb inside the cabs, pull the levers, push the pedals and honk the horns of dump trucks, fire trucks, pay loaders, buses and more,” the release adds.

Beyond that, eggs will be hidden on the grounds and in vehicles throughout the day for children to find, the release notes. Parents are encouraged to bring their cameras to snap photos of their youngsters with the Easter Bunny.

Children’s games and food vendors will be part of the fun as well, the release says.

**18th Annual**

# BIG TRUCK DAY





## BAY GUARDIANS TO TEAM WITH PARTNERS FOR EARTH DAY PLANTING

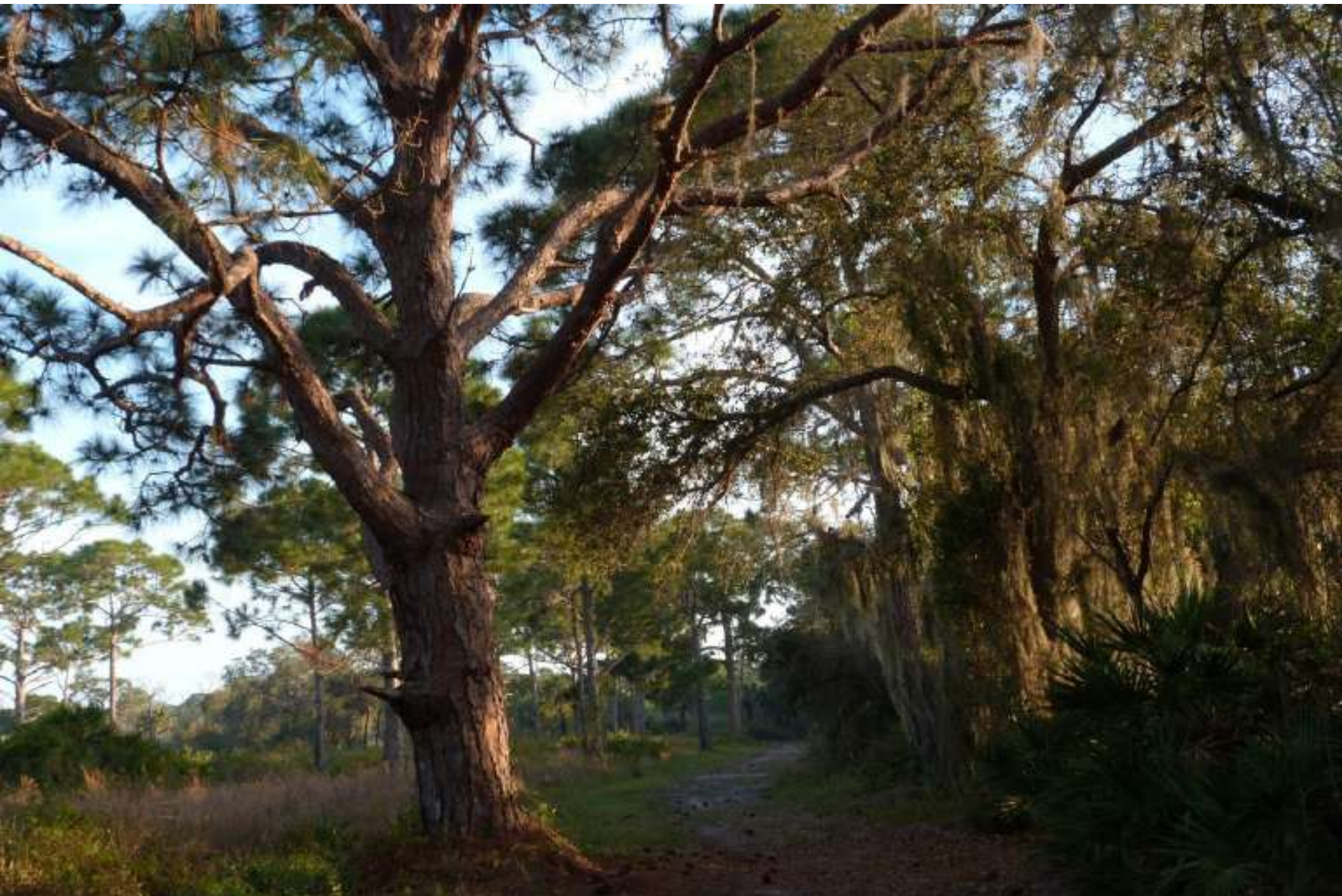
In celebration of World Environment Day, the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's Bay Guardians will team up with Oscar Scherer State Park, Scheda Ecological Associates and Around the Bend Nature Tours for a volunteer planting on Earth Day, April 27, the Bay Guardians have announced.

Nine thousand wetland plants will be placed in shallow water in the park that day, a news release says. The event will begin at 11 a.m., with lunch to be provided at noon by Friends of Oscar Scherer Park. An [RSVP](#) is required.

"This event is suitable for ages 6 and up," the release points out.

Participants are encouraged to wear hats, sunscreen, close-toed shoes ("old tennis shoes work great," the release notes), clothes that can get dirty and work gloves. "Bring a trowel if you have one," the release adds, and "please bring a reusable water bottle if you have one to reduce our plastic pollution."

Oscar Scherer State Park is located at 1843 S. Tamiami Trail in Osprey. Anyone with questions may contact Camille Boffa at [info@sarasotabay.org](mailto:info@sarasotabay.org) or 955-8085.



*Oscar Scherer State Park will be the site of an Earth Day event on April 27. Photo courtesy of Fran Palmeri*



## COUNTY TO HOLD ITS ANNUAL TRANSIT DAY ON APRIL 25

Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) will hold its annual Try Transit Day Friday, April 25, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Payne Park in downtown Sarasota to promote the use of SCAT buses and share information about other alternative forms of transportation, the county has announced.

The event, which will feature prizes, giveaways, a food truck and exhibits, will be free and open to the public, a news release says.

As part of the celebration, SCAT will waive all fares for its fixed-route service on April 25. Every rider, including those on Express routes, will be able to take the buses for free, the news release points out.

During the Payne Park event, staff from the Florida Department of Transportation's Commuter Services Division will be on hand to register new members and promote its EZtrack program, which allows members to log their trips and track their savings, the release continues. Users can enter commute trips daily, weekly or monthly for up to 30 calendar days, it notes. Participants become eligible for prize drawings from Commuter Services.

To learn more about the EZtrack program, visit [www.commuterservicesfl.com](http://www.commuterservicesfl.com).

For more information about Try Transit Day, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 861-5000 (TTY 7-1-1), or visit [scgov.net](http://scgov.net).



*All riders on Sarasota County Area Transit fixed routes will be able to take buses for free on April 25.  
Photo courtesy Sarasota County*



## FIRST GIVING SARASOTA A HEALTHY START LUNCHEON PLANNED

The Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County, whose mission is to improve the health and well being of Sarasota's pregnant women, infants and young children, has announced it will hold its first spring luncheon fundraiser, *Giving Sarasota a Healthy Start*.

The event will take place in the grand foyer of the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall in Sarasota on Friday, April 25, at 11:30 a.m., a news release says.

Guests will be treated to food — including desserts — and wine catered by Mattison's; a performance by Stage Door Preschool of the Arts; a city proclamation presented by City Commissioner Suzanne Atwell, a Healthy Start board member who also will serve as mistress of ceremonies; and a keynote address by Jack Levine, founder of the [4Generations Institute](#).

"I'm a supporter of the excellent services for maternal, infant and childhood health provided by Healthy Start Coalitions in every county of Florida and know that Sarasota's successful program services are reaching

thousands of your community's families," said Levine in the release.

The Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County served 1,356 pregnant women and 903 infants last year, the release points out. Among its free services are child-care coordination; classes on caring for babies, parenting and childbirth; programs to help people stop smoking, to help women maintain a healthy pregnancy weight and to reduce stress; postpartum depression counseling; and breastfeeding support, the release notes.

Tickets to *Giving Sarasota a Healthy Start* are \$75. Sponsorship tickets begin at \$150 and include a VIP reception presented by Vin Cella Wine Cellar to welcome new Healthy Start Executive Director Shon Ewens.

For registration or more information, visit [healthystartsarasota.org/givingluncheon](http://healthystartsarasota.org/givingluncheon).

For more information about the Healthy Start Coalition, call 373-7070 or visit [healthystartsarasota.org](http://healthystartsarasota.org).



*Giving Sarasota a  
Healthy Start*

*Luncheon featuring Jack Levine*



## MILITARY INSTITUTE HISTORICAL MARKER TO BE UNVEILED IN VENICE

The Kentucky Military Institute (KMI) will forever have its mark in Sarasota County following a ceremony scheduled for Saturday, April 26, at 3 p.m. at Centennial Park in Venice, Sarasota County has announced.

All members of the community are invited to the event, hosted by the Sarasota County Historical Commission, during which an historical marker honoring KMI will be unveiled.

The institute's connection to the state of Florida dates back to 1906, when a winter campus was established near Melbourne, a news release explains. The winter campus was seen as a location where cadets could escape Kentucky winters, making it easier for them to improve their health and academic performance by reducing sick leave, the release notes.

In 1932, the campus was relocated to Venice after a fire at the Melbourne site. KMI initially rented and then later purchased the San Marco Hotel (now the site of the Venice Centre Mall), the Hotel Venice (now Park Place, a retirement center) and the annex between the two, which provided housing for faculty and cadets, classrooms, kitchens, offices, an infirmary and a dining hall, the release points out. The contingent of KMI students, staff and faculty, totaling 1,500, arrived in Venice in January 1933.

According to the Sarasota County Historical Commission, "the school breathed new life into the city," the release says. Centennial Park and the nearby municipal parking lot served as parade grounds for KMI, it notes. During those days, KMI held formal parades, attracting residents and tourists to watch the



*The Kentucky Military Institute's Venice campus was an important part of the community for decades, county historians say. Image courtesy Sarasota County*

cadets demonstrating marching skills along with the Kentucky Rifles, a precision drill platoon, and the cadet band.

Although the KMI campus closed in the early 1970s, "the Venice community has never forgotten the cadets" and their importance in the city's history, according to the Sarasota County Historical Commission.

For more information about this event and other Sarasota County historical markers, call the Sarasota Call Center at 861-5000 or visit [scgov.net](http://scgov.net).



## REVISIONARIES TO BE SHOWN AT FREE GATHERING ON APRIL 29

During an April 29 program presented by Americans United for Separation of Church & State and The Peace Education & Action Center, an award-winning documentary, *The Revisionaries*, will be shown at Sarasota's Fogartyville, located at 525 Kumquat Court in Sarasota, organizers have announced.

The free event will be co-sponsored by the Sarasota chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Religious Tolerance and the Humanists of Sarasota Bay, a news release says.

"*The Revisionaries* showcases how public education has become the latest battleground" amid a new wave of cultural, religious and ideological class warfare, the release adds. It highlights how tactics used in that fight have led to the "rewriting [of] key tenets of U.S. democracy and are affecting educational policy at the national level for generations to come," the release notes.

The documentary won the Special Jury Award at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2012. The showing will begin at 6 p.m. on April 29.

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## REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR AWARD WINNERS NAMED

On the evening of April 10, an audience of more than 300 “honored the area’s most promising young scientists, engineers and inventors with monetary awards [and] other prizes” during the 25th annual Regional Science, Engineering and Technology Fair Awards presentations, the Education Foundation of Sarasota County has announced.

Superintendent Lori White, school board members, district leaders and fair sponsors congratulated the 56 students from grades 3 through 12 whose projects scored highest in 21 research categories this year, a news release explains.

Susan Scott, executive director of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, presented first-place awards in each category

to elementary (grades 3 to 5), middle (grades 6 to 8) and high school (grades 9 to 12) students. The recipients took home more than \$12,500 in cash gifts and additional prizes for exceptional achievement, the release says.

The two overall winners, Cardinal Mooney’s Courtney Astore and Sarasota High’s Rebecca Elsishans, will represent Sarasota County next month at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, with all expenses paid by the Education Foundation, the release says.

The Dart Foundation Award for Medicine & Health and a check for \$1,000 went to Natalie Olson. The Sarasota High student took first place in the category of Medicine and Health Sciences for her project, *The Effect of Aromatase Inhibitor Aminoglutethimide*



*Mote Marine’s Dr. Carl Luer, Rebecca Elsishans, Courtney Astore and Science Fair Director Brad Porinchak at the closing of the 2014 Science Fair Awards on April 10. Contributed photo*



*on Nitric Oxide Production of Human Endothelial Cells.*

The Dart Foundation Inspiration Award of \$1,000 went to Courtney Astore, a top prize-winner for the second year in a row, the release points out. The Cardinal Mooney junior's project was *Linking the Severity of One's Autism Diagnosis with Symptoms and Causations*.

The \$1,000 Faulhaber Foundation Prizes for the Scientific Exploration of Nature went to Jerry Allen DeBusk of Suncoast Polytechnical High for his project in the space sciences, *Correlation of Coronal Mass Ejections*, and to North Port High's Kaitlyn West for *How Sweet is This*, one of three winners in the field of botany, the release adds.

For the sixth consecutive year, two Omar Y. Cooper Student Achievement Awards were

presented. Both offer \$2,000 and a 12-month mentorship with an adult professional in the student's chosen field. Pine View School junior James Niffenegger received his award for an environmental science project, *Mud Treatment: Clean Energy and Cleaner Water Using Biological Fuel Cells*. Sarasota High junior Rebecca Elsishans won for her environmental science project, *Optimization of CO<sub>2</sub> calcination reaction using a nickel catalyst and varying concentrations of calcium*.

Brad Porinchak, Regional Science Fair director, said in the release that 822 Sarasota County students from 49 public, private and home schools submitted 657 individual and team projects to the competition. More than 160 volunteer judges evaluated the entries and interviewed students, the release notes. The judges' scores determined the overall winners as well as the champions in each category.



*Jerry Allen DeBusk from Suncoast Polytechnical High and Kaitlyn West from North Port High with Regional Science Fair sponsors Ping and Dr. Fritz Faulhaber. Contributed photo*



## SBEP REMINDS RESIDENTS TO USE SLOW-RELEASE FERTILIZER

In accordance with Sarasota and Manatee counties' urban fertilizer ordinances, the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) is reminding residents to use fertilizers with a minimum of 50-percent slow-release nitrogen if they fertilize their lawns or flowerbeds during the spring.

"Slow-release products (also called controlled release or timed release) feed lawns and plants gradually and for a longer period of time, an SBEP news release points out. "They are more easily absorbed by the plants

and less likely to become stormwater runoff after heavy rains."

The SBEP also is reminding residents that local ordinances prohibit fertilizer application in the summer months, from June 1 through Sept. 30, the release notes. "Using too much fertilizer has an adverse impact on water quality and aquatic life because of the high amount of nitrogen and phosphorus." Learn more by visiting [befloridian.org](http://befloridian.org) or the SBEP website at [sarasotabay.org](http://sarasotabay.org).



*The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is reminding area residents to help protect the water quality in the bay. Photo by Norman Schimmel*



## BUCHANAN TO BE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT APRIL 24 MEETING

Congressman Vern Buchanan, R-Longboat Key, will be the keynote speaker for the April 24 meeting of the Sarasota Republican Club, the organization has announced.

Buchanan will provide an update on the latest issues in the nation's capital and discuss his campaign, a news release says.

He "has a very exciting opportunity" as a member of the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, the release adds, because the current chairman of that committee will be retiring at the end of this year.

The club will meet at 6 p.m. on April 24 at Marina Jack, located at 2 Marina Plaza on Sarasota's bayfront. Dinner reservations are required, the release points out. To make reservations, visit the club [website](#) or call 888-325-3212.



*Vern Buchanan is Sarasota's congressman. Photo from the U.S. Congress via Wikimedia Commons*

## VENICE HIGH AND RIVERVIEW GIRLS TEAMS HONORED FOR ACADEMICS

The Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) has awarded the Venice High School Lady Indians basketball team the FHSAA 6A Academic Team Champion Award for winter 2013-14, the Sarasota County Schools has announced.

Team members had a cumulative 3.6 grade point average, "the best academic record in their category in Class 6A," a news release points out.

The Riverview High School Lady Rams soccer team also received an Academic Team Champion Award for having the best academic record in its 5A category for winter 2013-14, the news release continues. The team had a cumulative 3.56 grade point average.

This is the 11th Academic Team Champion Award for a Venice High Athletic team since 2007, the release points out. The awards are displayed in the school's Championship Hall under a heading that says, *Athletics in the Classroom*.

The following are the other years and Venice teams that have won this award:

- 2007 boys basketball and boys baseball.
- 2008 boys basketball, girls track and field and girls volleyball.
- 2009 girls volleyball.
- 2010 boys basketball.
- 2011 boys weightlifting.
- 2013 girls weightlifting and boys basketball.





*The Venice High School Lady Indians basketball team for 2013-14: (front row, from left) Ashley Ceglia, Ashlyn Weed, Lucy Whitney, Karlee Ream, Hannah Whitney, Koree Resm; (back row, from left) Assistant Coach Dan Wolfe, Maggie Flynn, Mariah Miller, Emma Hanewinckel, Gabby Perez, Brooke Bezdek, Taira Ward, Kaylee McCutcheon, Taylor Angelo, Sara Hanewinckel, Assistant Coach Georgia Miller and Head Coach Jim Davis. Not pictured is team member Talee Howard. Photo courtesy Shannon Weed of Artistic Avenues Photography*



*The Riverview High School girls soccer team for 2013-14: (front and center) Katy Mixon; (front row, from left) Natalie Hullinger, Lauren Noblit, Ansley Saba, Paige Reichenberger, Danielle Allen, Abigal Donnelly, Madison Buscemi, Gabrielle Levy; (back row, from left) Morgan Johnson, Rachel Roberts, Claire Mobley, Dana Berkowitz, Bagrielle Abello, Gabrielle Falco, Allison Jones, Allison Gollnick, Victoria Gowan and Leah West. Head Coach Jamie Brester is not pictured. Contributed photo*



## AGRICULTURE LITERACY DAY TO BE OBSERVED IN COUNTY

Sarasota County's University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension staff and volunteers will participate in this year's Florida Agriculture in the Classroom's (FAITC) Literacy Day on Tuesday, April 29, the county has announced.

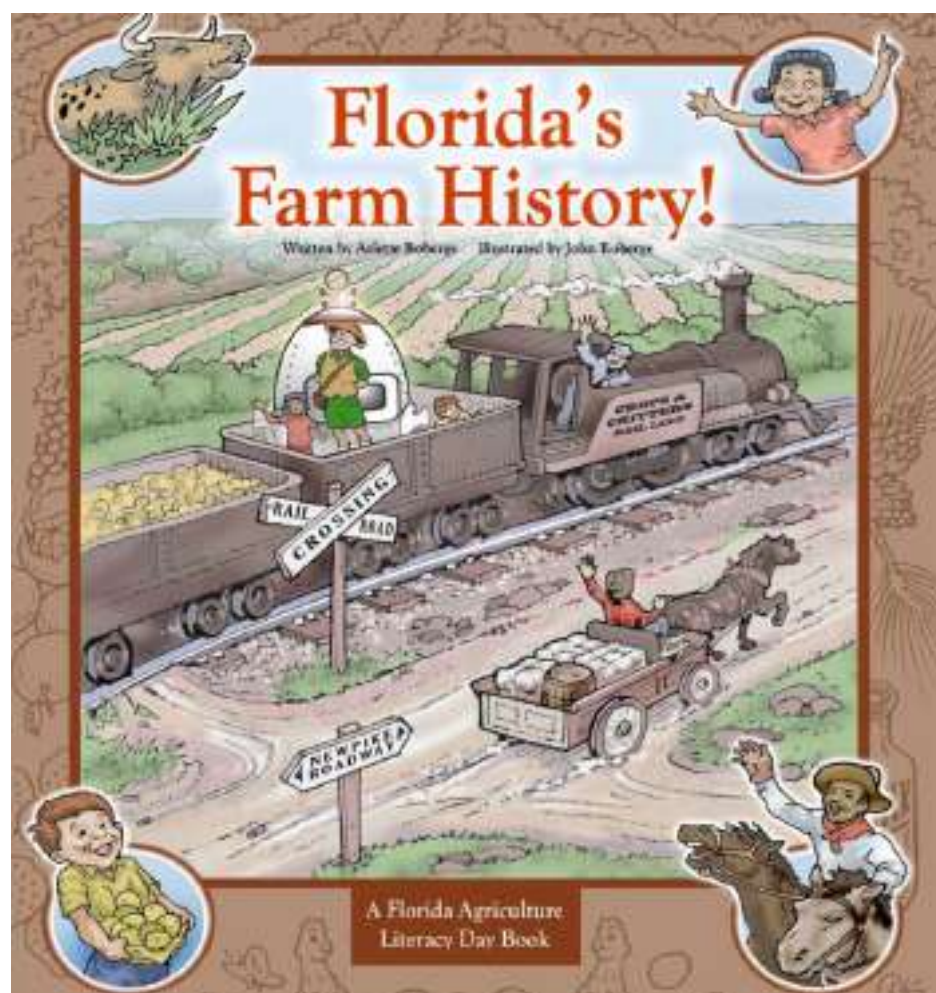
"During this annual event, in elementary classrooms across the state, volunteers read an agriculture-related book to inform students about the importance of farming in Florida," a news release explains.

This year, Extension staff is pairing volunteers with interested teachers to reach an anticipated 375 children in classrooms throughout Sarasota County, the release points out.

Each year, FAITC provides books and supplemental materials to participating volunteers, the release continues. The current book selection, targeted to elementary-age children, is titled *Florida Farms at School*, written by Arlette Roberge.


This book provides an overview of farmers and uses of their products, the release adds.

Extension is a partnership among Sarasota County, UF/IFAS and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), designed "to translate



*Florida's Farm History has been read to students on past observances of Agriculture Literacy Day. Image courtesy Florida Agriculture in the Classroom*

research into community initiatives, classes and volunteer opportunities," the release says.

For more information about Florida Agriculture Literacy Day, contact Stacy Spriggs, community and school gardens coordinator, at 861-9815, or visit [sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu](http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu). 

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## **SARASOTA MOTORIST CHARGED AFTER PEDESTRIAN'S DEATH**

Mark Steinberg, 66, of 2219 Sunnyside Place in Sarasota, has been charged with DUI Manslaughter (a felony), DUI with Property Damage (a misdemeanor), Leaving the Scene of a Crash Involving Death (a felony) and Leaving the Scene with Property Damage (a misdemeanor) following a crash on the morning of April 16 in which a pedestrian was killed, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

A police sergeant reported that he and another officer were driving southbound on U.S. 41, in the area of Irving Street and South Tamiami Trail, when they passed a man walking on the sidewalk. Shortly afterward, according to the report, the sergeant said he heard a very loud noise like an explosion and saw a black Ford with extensive damage go by the officers' vehicle.

*(Above) A truck has visible damage after its driver allegedly struck and killed a pedestrian in Sarasota on April 16. Photo courtesy Police Department*



About 12:45 a.m., the officers stopped the truck and saw the driver, Steinberg, was the sole occupant, a news release notes. They placed him in the back of a patrol vehicle, it adds.

During their investigation, the officers concluded that Steinberg was driving south on U.S. 41 in the outside lane. Just past the Hudson Bayou bridge, the report says, the truck appeared to have swerved up onto the curb and the sidewalk. The victim was struck by the right side of the truck, which continued south and hit a light pole before officers stopped it, the release continues.

The victim in the original crash was identified as Gerald Blalock, 44, of Sarasota, the release says. He appeared to have broken bones and a head laceration, the report notes. He was pronounced dead at the scene at 12:41 a.m.

Steinberg was arrested and transported to the Sarasota County Jail.



*Mark Steinberg/Contributed photo*

## **CUSTOMER INSIDE CVS TACKLES WOULD-BE ROBBER**

A 65-year-old Sarasota man has been charged with Armed Robbery in connection with an incident on Sunday at the CVS located at 2773 Fruitville Road, the Sarasota Police Department has reported.

About 1:20 p.m. on April 13, officers with the Sarasota Police Department responded to a report about an armed robbery at the store, a news release explains.

The suspect walked into the CVS with a bandanna over his face and threatened the clerk at the front of the store, the release says. He then walked to the pharmacy, at the rear of the store, and demanded all of the Oxycodone and Hydromorphone pills, which are prescription drugs, the release points out.

"The suspect had his hand in his pocket and implied he had a gun," the release continues. Pharmacy staff placed the pills on the counter for him, and then he demanded a bag. That was when "he was taken down by Jaanus Jurisoo," a witness inside the store at the time of the incident, the release explains. Jurisoo held the defendant down until the officers arrived, it adds.

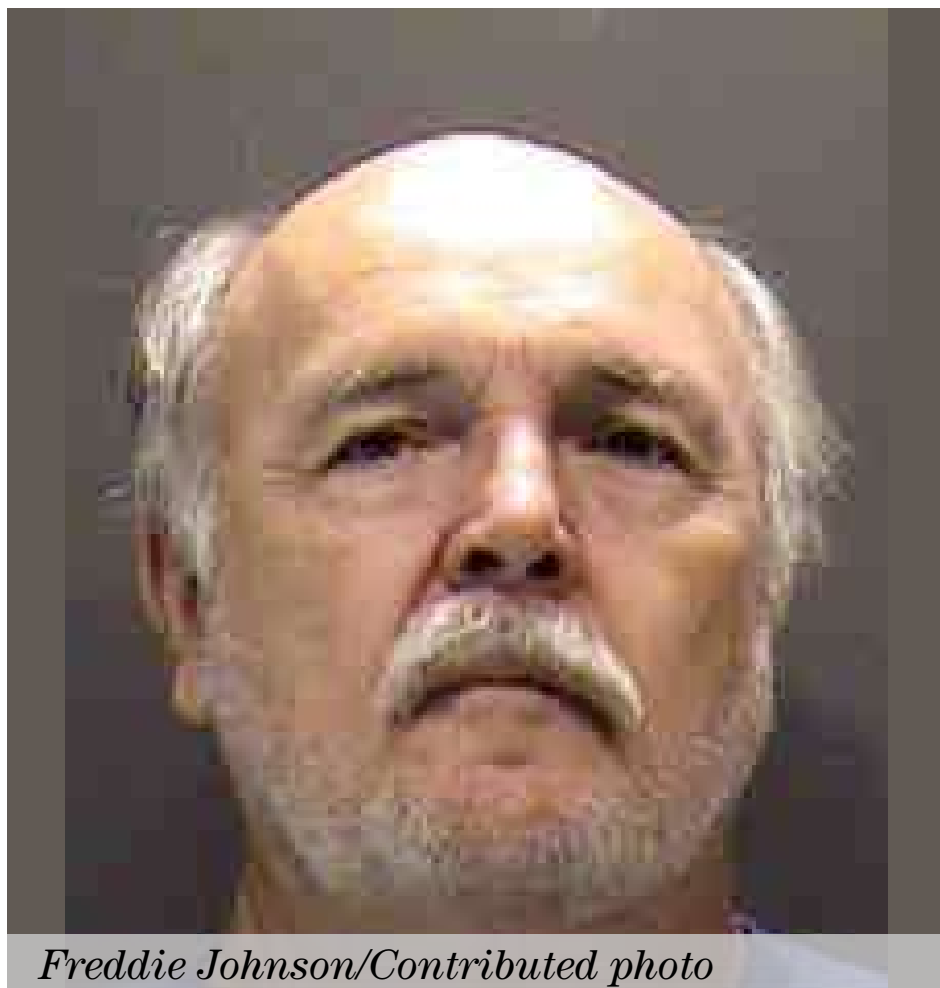
Further investigation showed the suspect was not armed, the release notes.

Freddie F. Johnson, 65, of 704 Rellim Lane, Sarasota, is also facing one count of Armed Robbery in connection with the Hedges Pharmacy robbery that occurred on Feb. 27, the release notes.



“Although we applaud the actions of Mr. Jurisoo in bringing this suspect into custody, we do not encourage or recommend that members of the public take matters into their own hands when they observe a crime,” said Capt. Patrick Robinson of the Police Department’s Bureau of Patrol Operations in the release.

“We recommend that individuals who observe criminal activity not put themselves into harm’s way or place themselves into a position to become a victim. We would ask that if you see a crime in progress to call 911 immediately and provide ... information to the responding police officers,” he added.



*Freddie Johnson/Contributed photo*



**WATCH THE VIDEO**

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*Click here to watch the full video*

*Surveillance video taken inside the CVS shows a customer tackling a man who attempted to rob the store. Video courtesy Sarasota Police Department*



## 38-YEAR-OLD MAN CHARGED WITH MURDER IN OAK TERRACE INCIDENT

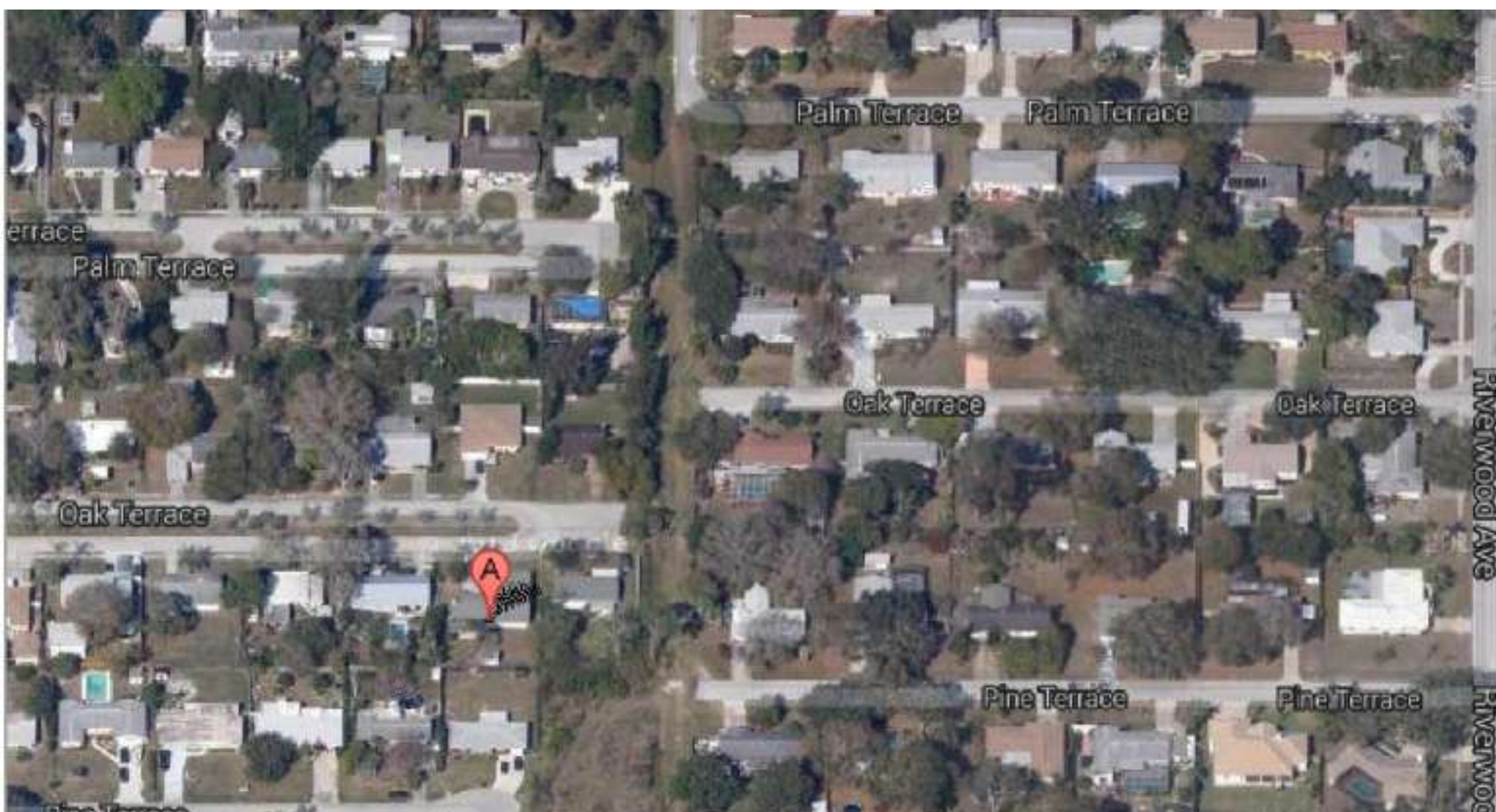
The Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has arrested a 38-year-old man for murder, the office has announced.

At 4:25 p.m. on April 14, a woman called the office to report that a man named Ed Rutherford had phoned her, claiming he had found her husband dead at their home, 2144 Oak Terrace in Sarasota, a news release says. "The woman, who was parked just up the street when she received the call, saw Rutherford speed away from the house," the release continues.

Deputies found the door locked but also recognized signs of forced entry, the release notes. Upon searching the home, "they found 45-year-old David Alessandrini dead of homicidal trauma," the release says. Detectives issued a bulletin to all local law enforcement



*Edward Rutherford/Contributed photo*



*A map shows the house at 2144 Oak Terrace in Sarasota, where a murder was reported on April 14. Photo from Google Maps*



offices, asking for help in locating Rutherford and providing a description of his vehicle. Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport Police quickly responded that its officers had spoken with Rutherford when he picked up a relative who had flown in for a family gathering at [Sun-N-Fun](#), the release continues.

Rutherford appeared to have blood on his clothing, the report notes, but he told witnesses that he had just found his friend dead.

Deputies located Rutherford at his parents' home at the RV park "and recovered evidence of the crime," the release adds.

The wife of David Alessandrini told detectives that Rutherford and her husband "had been in an ongoing dispute over unpaid debts," according to the report. She also said that earlier on April 14, she received a call from Rutherford asking if she would be leaving the residence soon and "if she would take all [her] children with her," the report adds.

Rutherford, whose address is listed as 4438 Cocoa Ridge Circle, Sarasota, is charged with Homicide without Premeditation. He is being held without bond in the Sarasota County Jail.

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## SARASOTA MAN SENTENCED FOR TRAFFICKING COCAINE

Dayle Thompson, 37, of Sarasota pleaded guilty and was sentenced to seven years in prison and a \$5,000 fine on Monday, April 14, for Trafficking Cocaine and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia in connection with a 2013 case in the City of Sarasota, the Police Department has announced.

The sentence dictates that he serve a minimum of three years, according to the Police Department.

When officers stopped a vehicle in the 1500 block of 24th Street in Sarasota on Oct. 25, 2013, a news release says, Thompson was one of the four occupants. "There was an extremely strong smell of marijuana coming from inside the car," the release adds. The four people in the vehicle "admitted to smoking marijuana earlier," it notes.

During a search, officers located two golf ball-size baggies of white powder in the left pocket of Thompson's shorts, the release continues. "The powder was tested and came back positive for the presence of cocaine," it notes. The cocaine weighed 53.8 grams, the release says.



*Dayle Thompson/Contributed photo*



## PAIR INDICTED FOR DISTRIBUTING HUNDREDS OF POUNDS OF POT

On April 11, U.S. Attorney A. Lee Bentley III announced the unsealing of an indictment charging Michael Allen Babiarz, 42, of Sarasota and Aaron Edwin Remaley, 39, of Riverview with conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute 100 kilograms or more of marijuana, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office reported.

The case is in the U.S. District Court in the Middle District of Florida, which is in Tampa.

According to the indictment, from at least August 2012 to this month, "Babiarz and Remaley conspired with each other, and with others, to distribute and to possess with the intent to distribute 100 kilograms or more of marijuana in Sarasota, Hillsborough and Polk counties," a news release says.

Detectives with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Section began the investigation, which grew to involve the Drug Enforcement Administration, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and Polk County Sheriff's Office, the release adds.

If convicted, Babiarz and Remaley face a maximum penalty of 40 years in federal prison, it notes. "There is no parole in the federal system," it points out. "In addition to significant prison time, federal prosecution results in more rigorous supervision by federal probation officers when felons are released to the community," it says.

The current indictment brings to 12 the number of federal drug and weapons cases initiated by a Sarasota County Sheriff's Office investigation since 2011.

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## SHERIFF'S OFFICE OFFERS NEW PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR BAIL


As of April 16, consumers who wish to make bail payments of up to \$750 for inmates at the Sarasota County Jail can do so using major credit cards via GovPayNet®, the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office has announced.

GovPayNet accepts major credit, debit and prepaid debit card brands for bail 24 hours a day, seven days a week, onsite, online or by phone, a news release explains. Cardholders can make payments for themselves or on behalf of friends or family members who are incarcerated, the release adds. "Users will need to provide basic information about the arrestee and the bail amount," it says.

There is no cost to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office for providing this service and convenience, but GovPayNet charges cardholders a fee for the transaction, the

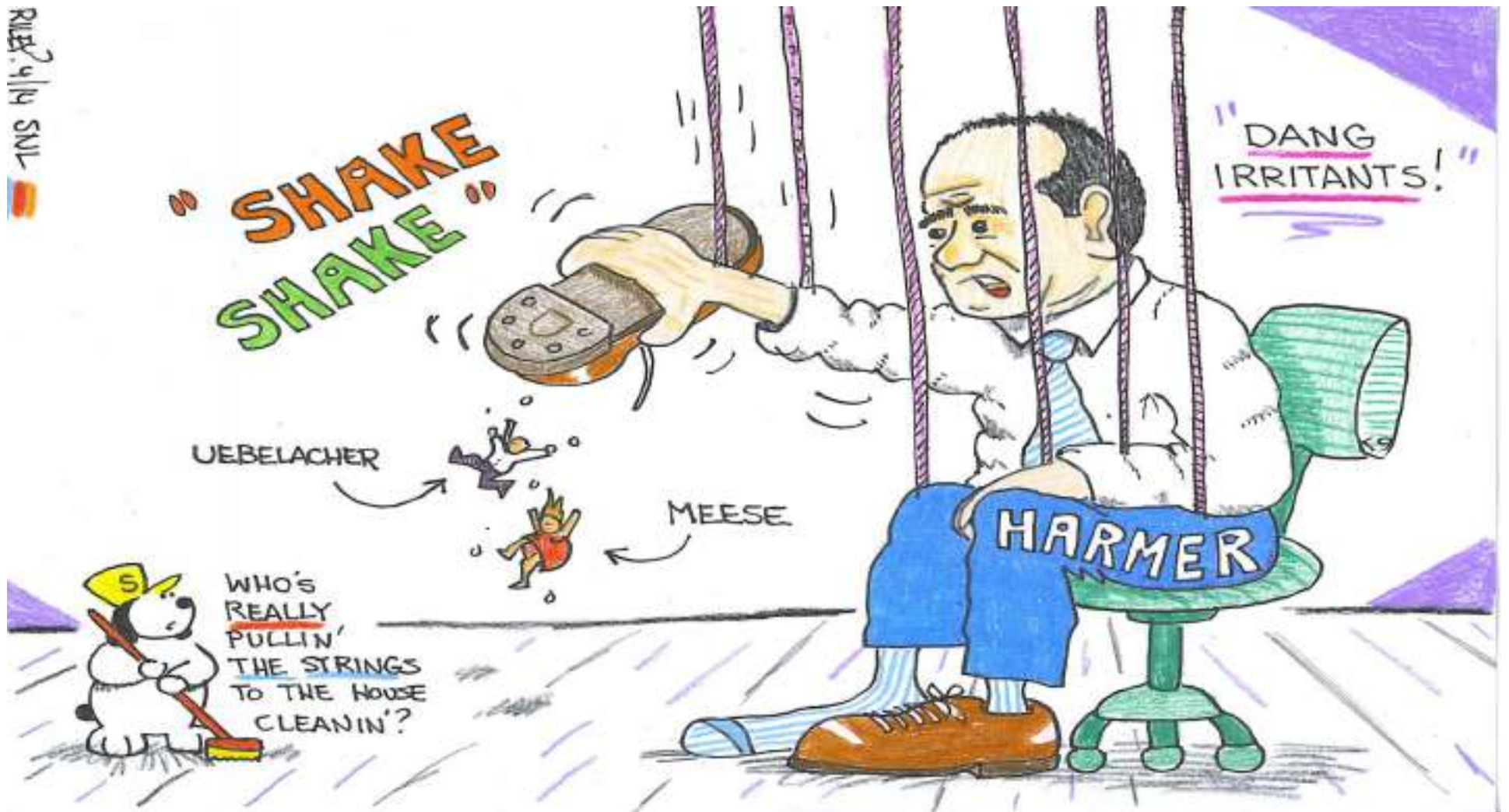
release points out. More information about this service is on [sarasotasheriff.org](http://sarasotasheriff.org) under the "Operations" tab; click "Corrections" and "Jail Booking."

"This will help keep people who have been granted bail from spending a night or weekend in jail when banks are closed or they don't have access to enough cash," said Sheriff Tom Knight in the release. "That will save taxpayers money and improve overall service."

According to GovPayNet, more than 650 corrections systems nationally rely on the company to process bail and other criminal justice payments, the release notes. "In addition, GovPayNet has dedicated bilingual criminal justice payment specialists available for assistance." 



# OPINION



## TWO COUNTY EMPLOYEES' FIRINGS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW ADMINISTRATOR'S PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

### EDITORIAL

It is a given that a new CEO will make changes in an organization, and the manner in which they occur offers insight into how that CEO operates. What has raised alarm bells for us is how new Sarasota County Administrator Tom Harmer has launched his plans for a major county reorganization.

If he has fired people to appease disgruntled commissioners, he may be making his bosses happy, but he also may be leading the county onto a path that bodes ill for its future.

The recent public announcement about Harmer's plans to reorganize departments simply indicated his goal to make them more efficient and responsive to the public.

However, an email he sent to the commissioners on the same subject announced two significant staff changes omitted from the public release.

Not only did Harmer fire Steve Uebelacker, the ethics and compliance officer hired in October 2011 by former Interim County Administrator Terry Lewis after a purchasing scandal, Harmer also fired Amy Meese, a 13-year employee who had been the chief of the Natural Resources Department since June 2006.

Harmer replaced Uebelacker with Steve Olmstead, a Human Resources Department employee who has been with the county more than 12 years, and noted Olmstead "will be



# OPINION

assisting in the re-evaluation of this position.” That rang more alarm bells in our heads.

As for Natural Resources: Matt Osterhoudt was named the acting director, and Harmer made it clear the department itself will be undergoing major changes. Its regulatory functions will become part of Planning and Development Services — home to the county’s building and permitting staff — and its management of Environmentally Sensitive Lands will be handled by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Our first thought after reading about those changes was obvious: What did Uebelacker and Meese do to lose their jobs?

Harmer did not return *The Sarasota News Leader’s* requests for even a brief telephone interview on the subject.

Were Uebelacker and Meese paying for actions that irritated county commissioners?

As Associate Editor Cooper Levey-Baker reported last year, Uebelacker had a nasty series of exchanges with Commissioner Joe Barbetta. An unnamed county employee had alleged that Barbetta had behaved unethically in two situations. No ethical impropriety ever was proven — a point Levey-Baker made clear.

Yet, what also became very clear in that story was Barbetta’s disdain for how Uebelacker handled the investigation.

The very fact that Uebelacker was hired by Terry Lewis is a critical show of faith in the man’s abilities as far as we are concerned. We have the utmost respect for Lewis and have yet to encounter anyone who does not.

Before Uebelacker accepted Lewis’ job offer, he served as a special agent with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement; prior to that, he was with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and a detective with the Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office. Those are not the types of jobs that would lead us to believe him unqualified to deal with delicate situations.

Indications that could be linked to Meese’s dismissal are far murkier. Back in 2012, she was highly visible in County Commission meetings regarding use of revenue from transfers of development rights (TDRs) under the aegis of the [Sarasota 2050](#) plan. Then other staff in her department — including Osterhoudt — began appearing on the “2050 front.”

Then last summer, Meese seemed to rouse anger among commissioners when she addressed them during a budget workshop, explaining the need for another position in her department. She pointed to the increased workload of her staff as a result of meetings regarding the RESTORE funds, which communities eventually will receive from BP in

compensation for the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, and the need to refocus attention on the county’s Post Disaster Response Plan.

“Did Steve Uebelacker and Amy Meese pay for actions that irritated county commissioners?”




# OPINION

Meese was not alone in being the target of board exasperation that day, though she is the only one among them given the heave-ho so far.

Beyond those staffing questions, one other telling aspect of the Harmer reorganization that will go into effect Oct. 1 is his decision to take on oversight of economic development efforts. Development in the county obviously has been a very high priority for a majority of the current commission.

His other areas of responsibility are communications, community/intergovernmental relations and ethics. Everything else is being divvied up among his assistant county administrators.

As Chairman Charles Hines and Vice Chairwoman Christine Robinson pointed out to the *News Leader*, Harmer had a lot of time as deputy county administrator to judge how Sarasota County government worked — who and what functioned well and who and what did not.

Yet, one big reason County Administrator Randall Reid lost his job was because he would not cave to commissioners' wishes if he felt they were not in the best interest of Sarasota County. We most certainly hope Harmer is not so keen on keeping his job that he would work to keep the few happy only to harm the majority. 



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

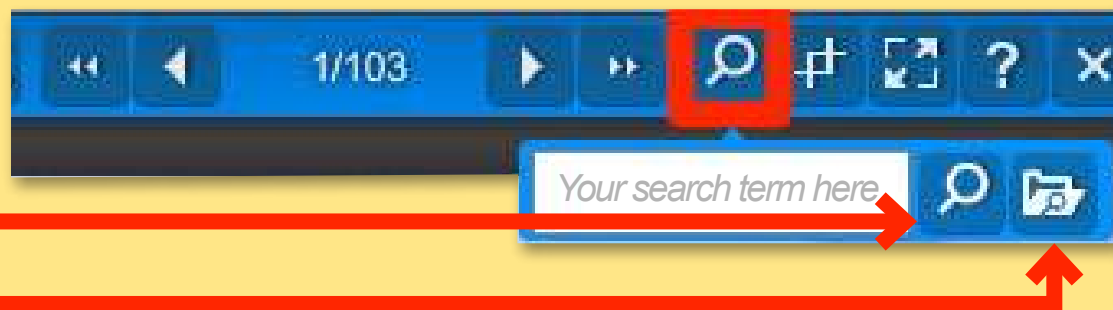
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[Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com](mailto:Letters@SarasotaNewsLeader.com), with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters actually printed will be selected based on space available, subject matter and other factors. We reserve the right to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

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# Sarasota Leisure

**BORN TO PERFORM**  
**SIESTA SEEN**  
**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

*Inside*

**Your Lifestyle Guide To The Suncoast**



# BORN TO PERFORM



“*Real Clowning should always be in full gallop.*

Bill Ballantine

”

*Chuck Sidlow, funny fellow, in the circus ring. Contributed photo*



## CHUCK SIDLOW LETS HIS HEART OF GOLD SHINE THROUGH

By Barbara Dondero

Contributing Writer

If you wanted to call Chuck Sidlow names, you could say, “What a mirth-raiser he is”; “what a mischief-maker”; “what a funny fellow!”

His friends call him “the consummate performer with a heart of gold.”

Sidlow is in a long line of legendary clowns. “I go back to the Stone Age,” he says. “You can see my ancestors painted on cave walls.”

If you want to see him perform, you need to be — well — *everywhere* in Sarasota: at the Ringling Circus Museum, starring in a video showing how he applies his clown makeup; at Circus Sarasota’s month-long International

Big Top Show; on St. Armands Circle, where he plays King of Mardi Gras; at “Road Scholar” events, talking about the history of the circus; and at Circus Sarasota’s community outreach programs, where he personifies [Laughter Unlimited](#) for those most in need.

Sidlow thrives on his whirling-dervish schedule.

### BORN TO MERRIMENT

In school, near Philadelphia, he took his title of “class clown” seriously. He practiced his timing in the hallways between classes.

“Chuck has a magical way of unlocking memories and feelings for our participants..

Debbie Morrill  
Activities Director  
Senior Friendship Centers’ Living Room

”



After the event for United Cerebral Palsy: ‘Thank you and goodbye until next time.’ Photo by Barbara Dondero



“I staged two-and-a-half-minute brawls,” he said, “so that we wouldn’t be late for class.”

At Atlantic City’s Steel Pier, he idolized professional wrestlers Mr. Fuji, Lonnie “Moon Dog” Mayne and Dean Ho, who taught him arena entertainment and body control.

“Thanks to them,” Sidlow told me, “I was dubbed one of the best ‘fall men’ in the business. These wrestlers may have been villains in the ring but were very kind to young people on the way up.”

On graduation day, his teachers urged him to audition for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. He did — and won a coveted place at Clown College, in Venice, FL. There, he studied with famed clown/writer/artist Bill Ballantine, who considered Sidlow “my most diligent student.”

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus hired Sidlow after he completed the program, and he soon became the “youngest boss clown” ever, he says, in charge of 28



*Sidlow in ‘Charlie Chaplin mode.’ Contributed photo from Chuck Sidlow’s website, [Worldofchucko.com](http://Worldofchucko.com)*

clowns, 16 crates and 33 trunks (crammed with orange wigs, unicycles and other comedic accessories). They visited 52 cities in 11-and-a-half months. “I learned to adapt to different situations, nationalities, personalities and animals,” Sidlow pointed out.

The Associated Press reported that “in addition to originating good gags and being a natural comic, Chuck Sidlow has a flair for keeping things organized.”

## BORN TO ROAM THE WORLD

*In early circuses, clowns were generally skilled performers who brought outrageousness (and costumes) to genuine acrobatic, juggling and equestrian feats. Then they began to speak, sing and even play musical instruments. Slapstick clowning became prominent later to suit the size of American circuses.”*

Noel Daniel



*Chuck Sidlow as Groucho Marx. Contributed photo from Chuck Sidlow’s website, [Worldofchucko.com](http://Worldofchucko.com)*



The world beckoned. In Japan, with Ringling Bros., he played the role of acclaimed “All American Clown,” bespangled in red, white and blue. A major Japanese restaurant chain noticed and hired him to be its live cartoon “image character.”

During his 11 years in that country, he mastered the language and studied Japan’s ancient theatre traditions. Noh and Kabuki impressed Sidlow, but, “Honestly,” he said, “I was strongly attracted to Kyougen, Japan’s version of slapstick. One of my high-wire

comic acts featured a cable car. I staged it 50 feet in the air.”

Then came the time when Noriko Takayama’s production company was desperate for a last-minute replacement act. A New Orleans jazz band was already booked, and she needed another “foreigner” to complete her corporate package. With an English dictionary in front of her, she made a phone call to Sidlow, who by then was producing shows of his own. She did not need the dictionary. They agreed on a deal in Japanese, and the rest is history.



*Chuck Sidlow and friends prepare for a final run-through before a presentation at the United Cerebral Palsy facility in Bradenton: (from left) ‘Billy Bob’ Steinberg, ‘Chucko’ with his bag of gags, a video representative from Circus Sarasota, Noriko Sidlow — who will be the accompanist — and Karen Snow. Photo by Barbara Dondero*



## BORN TO PARTNER — KYORYOKU-SHA

“Chuck was a big shot in my country,” notes Takayama, now his wife.

Multi-talented herself, she is a trained classical pianist, a teacher of classes on Japanese culture at State College of Florida Sarasota-Manatee, a fine artist and an international chef.

Husband and wife bring to this area a double dose of talent and joy in putting their gifts to work.

## BORN TO SERVE

*What we do with our talents is up to each of us. Passion is something else. Passion comes from within and can transform a person with mere talent into a virtuoso.*

Pedro Reis and Dolly Jacobs  
Co-Founders of Circus Sarasota

Outside the circus ring, Sidlow uses every talent in his repertoire to enrich the lives of those in need.

His friend Karen Snow recalls the formation of Laughter Unlimited when she was with the



*Chuck Sidlow: always on call. Photo by Fran Palmeri*



**Pines of Sarasota Foundation.** It was envisioned as a community outreach program of Circus Sarasota.

“Oddly enough,” Snow remembered, “our association began when we needed a performer in a hurry for a humor show one evening. The scheduled act didn’t show up. Joe Barney, a famous clown visiting the area, and Chuck were in the audience. ‘You’re on!’ I told them. Chuck became Elvis Presley in an instant, and Joe belted out a zany medley of Broadway tunes. They brought the house down.”

“Let’s have them here on a regular basis,” Pines of Sarasota CEO John Overton said between fits of laughter, as Snow tells it. Snow, the Selby Foundation and the Pines Foundation made it happen. That was 15 years ago.

“Chucko is a grand master at bringing people together,” Snow points out. “From his bag of gags, he takes jokes, music, dancing, hugs and hand-holding to create a safe environment.”

An art teacher for the Pines Memory Unit remembers the time Sidlow recognized Carmen, a former circus colleague. He stopped in to admire her painting. Non-verbal skills had become her form of expression, even though she was once a glamorous performer.

Sidlow began to draw a cartoon of a lady riding Jumbo the elephant, Carmen’s role in the 1952 movie *The Greatest Show on Earth*. At first she stared. Then she shrieked. “Me?”

“Yes!” he replied.


They hugged and laughed together as onlookers applauded.



“We concentrate on the healthy part of people, not the sick part,” Sidlow told me recently. “Sometimes the box is a little damaged on the outside, but the inside is pure gold.”

Debbie Morrill, the activities director at the **Senior Friendship Centers’ Living Room**, agrees. “Chuck has a magical way of unlocking memories and feelings for our participants.”

For Chuck Sidlow, *virtuoso*, it is all in a day’s work.

For more, visit Sidlow’s website, [worldofchucko.com](http://worldofchucko.com), or visit Noriko’s Facebook page: *Moshi Moshi Bonjour*. 





**THE ISLAND'S CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER IS EXPECTED BACK ON DUTY APRIL 21; GIDGET'S IS OPEN AND VERY BUSY; SIESTA LEADS THE WAY AGAIN WITH TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX COLLECTIONS; AND THE TARPON TOURNAMENT WILL BE STARTING SOON**



By Rachel Brown Hackney  
*Editor*

Comments have been aired this month at Siesta Key organization meetings and at a County Commission session about Code Enforcement activities on Siesta Key because John Lally, the long-time officer on the

island, has been out on family medical leave since February.

Lally is due back on the job April 21, I learned from the Code Enforcement Office this week.



*A couple checks out the posted menu at the Daiquiri Deck in Siesta Village as visitors crowd the sidewalks on an early April evening. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



## ***Siesta Seen***

In his absence, one of the other 10 regular staff members has been doing double duty to cover the island. Code Enforcement staff also pointed out that Kevin Burns, the night and weekend officer, has taken on more hours to help.

Still, given how incredibly busy season has been, I think it is safe to say two full-time people probably would have had their hands full, given the talk of illegal rentals and people illegally charging visitors to park in neighborhoods near the beach, for two examples.

By the way, if anyone else is thinking the same thing I was thinking, I should note that

according to the U.S. Census, Sarasota County had an estimated population of 390,429 as of July 1, 2013. Of course, the municipalities in the county do have their own staffs to deal with issues.

I might also note that the county commissioners voted 4-1 last summer — with Commissioner Christine Robinson dissenting — to hire two new Code Enforcement officers at an estimated cost of \$264,842 for this fiscal year. The amount included the expense of salaries, two trucks, two computers and operating funds. Fees were expected to cover about 80 percent of the cost, according to administrative staff.



*John Lally addresses the Siesta Key Association in May 2013. File photo*



## ***Siesta Seen***

The subsequent annual estimated expense for the two positions was put at \$204,302 with fees again covering 80 percent of the total.

One reason the board majority did vote for the extra personnel was the rise in reports of problems related to activities of unlicensed contractors.

As part of the budget process in August 2012, the County Commission agreed to an extra \$21,060 in the 2013 fiscal year budget to enable a Code Enforcement officer to work an additional 10 to 15 hours a week to handle

weekend and nighttime noise complaints. Burns was ready to accept that assignment when it was approved.

At the time, then-Administrator Randall Reid said he did not believe “we’ll have someone out every weekend.”

Commissioner Nora Patterson, who lives on Siesta, called the decision “a reasonable compromise,” adding, “It’s like speeding, where every once in a while you have to rattle someone’s cage to let people know you really do want some cooperation.”



*Kevin Burns handles weekend and nighttime Code Enforcement calls for Sarasota County. Photo by Rachel Hackney*





*Gidget's Coastal Provisions opened in Siesta Village on March 24. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# Siesta Seen

## CONGRATS TO GIDGET’S

It may have taken Brian and Trudy Wigelsworth a bit longer than they had hoped to open Gidget’s Coastal Provisions in Siesta Village, but business has been going gangbusters, Brian told me this week.

The doors swung open to the public on March 24. “We’ve had such wonderful comments from the visitors and the locals,” he said. “It really makes us happy that the locals are loving it.”

The store — and upstairs transient apartments — took the spot Napoli’s Restaurant occupied for years, right between the Siesta

Key Oyster Bar and the Daiquiri Deck. It sells Margaritaville Apparel and more upscale gift items.

“We’re seeing locals and visitors coming in multiple days,” Brian added on April 14. “It’s hard for us to keep up on reordering the stock.”

The store is open from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Sunday.

Brian said he and Trudy typically are there until 11:30 or midnight each night so they can restock, but he made it clear he was not complaining about the demand.

SARASOTA COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX  
COLLECTIONS BY LOCATION  
Collections through 3/31/2014

	CONSOLIDATED	LONGBOAT KEY	NORTH PORT	SARASOTA	SARASOTA COUNTY	SIESTA KEY	VENICE	TOTAL
October 2013	17,308.97	85,893.27	3,037.25	295,616.79	123,203.46	197,405.67	33,157.86	755,425.29
November 2013	22,434.20	91,971.41	3,131.14	307,802.69	141,100.89	207,735.31	40,550.68	814,726.32
December 2013	48,456.76	153,720.70	6,719.93	384,038.91	228,322.16	325,197.53	67,021.30	1,213,477.29
January 2014	141,844.36	186,079.29	6,986.32	425,928.51	366,377.41	507,683.07	216,891.44	1,851,792.40
February 2014	80,759.46	217,291.88	8,690.76	554,463.42	378,820.87	739,706.85	153,584.28	2,133,317.52
March 2014								
April 2014								
May 2014								
June 2014								
July 2014								
August 2014								
September 2014								
Grand Totals	310,803.75	734,756.55	28,567.40	1,967,852.32	1,237,824.81	1,977,728.43	511,205.56	6,768,738.82
Percentage of Total (%)	4.59%	10.86%	0.42%	29.07%	18.29%	29.22%	7.55%	100.00%

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

The latest chart showing Tourist Development Tax revenue collections has Siesta Key in the lead once again. Image courtesy Sarasota County Tax Collector’s Office



# ***Siesta Seen***

The couple originally envisioned opening the store before the Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition began on Siesta Public Beach last November. (Margaritaville Apparel was a big sponsor of the event.) Still, with Easter marking the official end of season, and Easter coming later this year, the Wigelsworths obviously have been able to make the most of the last part of the 2014 tourist season.

As for the next Crystal Classic: Brian also told me this week that he had just held the first meeting to start planning for the fifth competition. More details will be coming later.

## **SPEAKING OF TOURIST SEASON ...**

The county Tax Collector's Office has posted the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) numbers for February, and — no surprise — revenue is up \$177,165.65 in comparison to the same month for 2013.

As staff in the Tax Collector's Office has noted, these figures often are updated in subsequent months, as some reporting agencies finalize numbers after the office's deadline for each accounting period.

The total TDT revenue for February so far is \$2,133,317.52. This fiscal year, TDT revenue is



*The existing tennis courts at Siesta Public Beach will be removed and new ones will be constructed to the east, next to Beach Road. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



## Phase I (Nov 01, 2013 – June 15, 2014)

- All of the items shown to be constructed in phase I can be done so with little disruption to the existing operations of the park.
- The new tennis courts and maintenance facility are priority #1 and must be complete and operational prior to moving to phase II.
- Phase I will add approx. 260 additional parking spaces and would be available for use during phase II. (available for use prior to July 04, 2014)
- It is the intent to construct the East Concessions as soon as possible with completion of the building required prior to the start of phase III.
- We are committed to leave the existing east restrooms, picnic area, pavilions, and playground in use during the phase I construction. (this is with the exception of possible rerouting of the underground utilities which could impose a temporary restriction in the area)



A graphic shows the area of Phase I work at Siesta Public Beach. Image courtesy Sarasota County



# ***Siesta Seen***

already up \$695,232.54 over the same period in FY 2013.

As for location: Siesta Key edged the City of Sarasota in February with 29.22 percent of the pie, compared to the city's 29.07 percent. Siesta entities reported collecting \$739,706.85, while those in the city brought in \$554,463.42.

## **SPEAKING OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS ...**

Isaac Brownman, director of public works for the county, told the County Commission during the March 25 capital project workshop that Phase I of the Siesta Public Beach

improvements is expected to be complete by the July 4 weekend.

That work includes the construction of the new tennis courts and the maintenance facility. Most important, though, are the 260 additional parking spaces that should be available before the holiday weekend. According to the plan, the east restrooms, the picnic area and the playground will remain intact during Phase I.

Commissioner Nora Patterson took the opportunity of that update to point out that the general manager of the Gulf & Bay Club



*Picnic tables stand outside the construction area at Siesta Public Beach on April 1. Photo by Rachel Hackney*



# Siesta Seen

condominiums, adjacent to the new stormwater site and the beach park, had asked that the shape of a piece of county property it uses for its recycling initiative be modified.

Brownman told her of staff's concern that reconfiguring the shape at this stage of the construction would have an impact on the planned landscaping buffer between the stormwater site and the condo complex. "We weren't looking to change it at this time because we didn't want to slow down the project," he added.

When she then asked if staff had conveyed that news to Gulf & Bay management, Brownman

replied, "We will confirm [that] ... I thought we had ...."

## TARPON TIME

**CB's Saltwater Outfitters** on Siesta Key is reminding the public that the 84th Annual Sarasota Tarpon Tournament will kick off at the Sarasota Hyatt on May 7. Fishing will take place May 10 through June 15, and the awards banquet will be at the Hyatt on July 19.

The updated [website](#) for the tournament has all the details. A section of the website allows people to RSVP for the kickoff party.

Event information is on Facebook, too, under *Sarasota Tarpon Tournament*.

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*Jason Stearns/Contributed photo*

## **STEARNS AND ROSS TO COLLABORATE ON *LEADING MEN AND MUSIC***

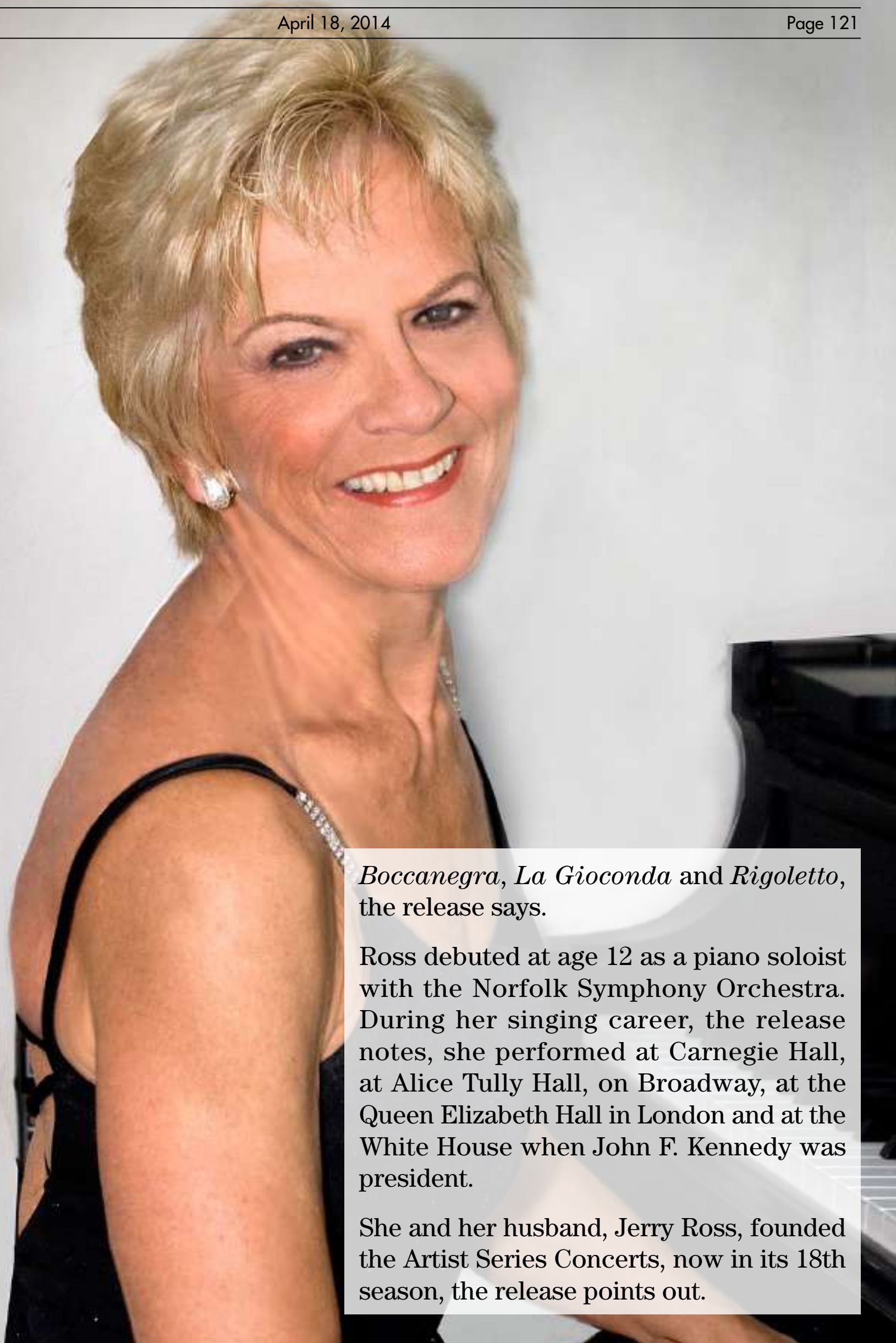
Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota will present baritone Jason Stearns and pianist Lee Dougherty Ross in *Leading Men and their Music* on Sunday, April 20, at 2 p.m., and Monday, April 21, at 7:30 p.m., at the Weisenborne/Fischer residence, the organization has announced.

The program will feature the *Toreador Song* from Bizet's *Carmen*; *The Desert Song* from Romberg's operetta; and Broadway favorites, including selections from *Carousel* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, a news release says.

Tickets, which include refreshments, are \$45. They may be purchased online at [artistseriesconcerts.org](http://artistseriesconcerts.org) or by calling 306-1202, the release adds. (The address of the program also may be obtained by calling 306-1202.)

Stearns "has steadily built a reputation as a distinguished interpreter" of unique and challenging roles in the dramatic baritone repertoire, the release notes. He "has made impressive appearances with the Metropolitan Opera," where he has performed dramatic roles in *Tosca*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Simon*





*Boccanegra, La Gioconda and Rigoletto*, the release says.

Ross debuted at age 12 as a piano soloist with the Norfolk Symphony Orchestra. During her singing career, the release notes, she performed at Carnegie Hall, at Alice Tully Hall, on Broadway, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London and at the White House when John F. Kennedy was president.

She and her husband, Jerry Ross, founded the Artist Series Concerts, now in its 18th season, the release points out.



## **4000 MILES CONTINUING AT ASOLO THEATER THROUGH APRIL 27**

The Asolo Repertory Theatre has continued its celebration of the American family with Amy Herzog's "soulful intergenerational play *4000 Miles*, a 2013 Pulitzer Prize finalist and 2012 Obie Award winner for Best New Play," the theatre has announced.

The play will run through April 27 in the Historic Asolo Theater.

Leo, a 21-year-old laid-back hippie, and his 91-year-old Jewish "old-school liberal grandma," Vera, are 70 years apart in age, but they find common ground in this comedy/drama, a news release explains. After a 4,000-mile cross-country bicycling trip, "Leo unexpectedly shows up at his grandma's rent-controlled Greenwich Village apartment in the middle of the night with his bike, a backpack and no plan for his future," the release continues. "While he plans to

crash for the night, he stays for weeks and, as roommates, Leo and Vera share their polarizing views on love, government, technology, life and family," the release notes.

"As a parent, there is a particular structure that one must follow, but as a grandparent, there is this wonderfully freeing gap," said Tea Alagi, director of *4000 Miles*, in the release.

The play premiered at the Duke on 42nd Street in New York City as part of the Lincoln Center Theater/LCT3 Steinberg New Works Program, the release notes.

Tickets for *4000 Miles* start at \$15, the release continues. To purchase them, call 351-8000, go online at [asolorep.org](http://asolorep.org) or visit the box office in the lobby of the theatre at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in the Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts in Sarasota.





## POETRYLIFE WEEKEND TO BE HELD AT FST MAY 2-3

Florida Studio Theatre has announced tickets are on sale for PoetryLife Weekend on May 2 and 3.

All proceeds will benefit The PoetryLife Fund, which supports educators teaching poetry in the community, a news release says.

Tickets for the events may be purchased through the Florida Studio Theatre (FST) box office at 366-9000, online at [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org) or in person at 1241 N. Palm Ave. in downtown Sarasota.

Made possible with the support of BookStore1Sarasota, FST and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, “the events of this creative weekend will bring together the poets and readers of our community as they share their passion for poetry as well as their original poetry,” the release adds.

Event organizer Georgia Court, proprietor of Bookstore1Sarasota, said in the release, “PoetryLife brings the nation’s — and the

world’s — finest poets to Sarasota each year. I’m delighted to be part of a project that serves to enhance this city’s already thriving arts community. Theater, opera, symphony, ballet, fine art, jazz — it’s a joy to help bring poetry to the mix.”

The schedule follows:

- Friday, May 2, *The Craft of Poetry*, a panel discussion — 10 a.m., Bowne’s Lab; \$15.
- Friday, May 2, *Mark Doty and Kevin Young Live Onstage* — 7:30 p.m., Goldstein Cabaret; \$15.
- Saturday, May 3, *Young Voices Poetry Reading* — 10 a.m., Keating Theatre; \$15.
- Saturday, May 3, *Above and Beyond Luncheon* — noon, John C. Court Cabaret; \$35.
- Saturday, May 3, *Community Favorite Poem Reading* — 3 p.m., Keating Theatre; \$15.



## GLORIA MUSICAE TO PRESENT VOICES OF THE HOLOCAUST ON APRIL 28

On April 28, the 2014 International Day of Holocaust Remembrance, Gloria Musicae will present the Florida premiere of *Voices of the Holocaust*, “a dramatic cantata based on 22 songs sung in ghettos and concentration camps during World War II, composed by Sheridan Seyfried,” the musical group has announced.

The Gloria Musicae Singers will be joined by the Sarasota-Manatee Dance Alliance (SMDA), the Chroma Quartet, Sarasota Young Voices, the Sarasota Jewish Chorale, the Booker High School Concert Choir and the Sarasota Choral Society, the release points out. This multimedia event, under the direction of Dr. Joseph Holt, Gloria Musicae’s artistic director, will feature original choreography by Elizabeth Weil Bergmann, retired Harvard director of dance, the release adds.

Charlayne Hunter-Gault, civil rights activist and award-winning author and correspondent for such media outlets as *The New York Times*, PBS, NPR and CNN, will offer opening remarks for the program, the release continues.

The concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. on April 28 at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, located at 777 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Tickets are \$25 to \$70. To purchase them, call the Van Wezel box office at 953-3368 or visit [gloriamusicae.org](http://gloriamusicae.org).

“Dramatic and poignant, *Voices of the Holocaust* celebrates the proud defiance of the human spirit in the face of adversity,” the release says. “Singers and dancers join together in this musical piece that underscores the tenet that any injustice towards a single human being is an injustice against



Gloria Musicae/Contributed photo



us all,” it adds. According to the composer, Sheridan Seyfried, “the heartfelt goal is giving voice to the millions rendered voiceless,” the release explains.

Holt, the Gloria Musicae artistic director, says in the release, “Through music, multimedia and dance, the audience will be enriched by an understanding of how the arts played an important role in helping families cope with the horrific conditions imposed during their imprisonment.”

According to Holt, “extensive research was undertaken” to select the most poignant visual representation of life during the time of the Holocaust, including input from The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., The Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg and The Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee’s Education Department.



*Dancers from Sarasota-Manatee Dance Alliance who will be featured in the program are (left) Topaz von Wood, Matthew Griffin, Pedro Batista, Hannah Jordan, Carson Sandiford and Adriana Baez-Hitchcock. Contributed photo by Carol Pettengill.*

## POET TESS GALLAGHER TO APPEAR AT RINGLING COLLEGE

On Thursday, April 24, Ringling College of Art and Design and Bookstore1Sarasota will host poet Tess Gallagher at 6 p.m. at the college, located at 2700 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, the bookstore has announced.

Gallagher has published numerous collections of poetry, a news release says. Among them are *Instructions for a Double* (1976), which won the Elliston Book Award; *Willingly* (1984); *Amplitude: New and Selected Poems* (1987); and *Moon Crossing Bridge* (1992), “a series of 60 poems that centers on the theme of loss and grieving,” the release notes.

*Moon Crossing Bridge* followed the death of her husband, Raymond Carver, in 1988, the release adds.

Her most recent poetry collections are *My Black Horse* (1995) and *Dear Ghosts* (2006). The latter is a series of “moving, highly personal elegies for family, friends and lovers,” the release says.

The event will be free, and valet parking will be provided.

More event information is available at [bookstore1sarasota.com](http://bookstore1sarasota.com) or by calling 365-7900. 

# Take Your Time You Have All Week

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*Rabbi Bob Alper will perform again at Temple Emanu-El on May 1. Contributed photo*

## **STAND-UP COMIC RABBI ALPER TO PERFORM AT TEMPLE EMANU-EL**

Temple Emanu-El is pleased to announce that Rabbi Bob Alper — known as “the world’s only practicing clergyman doing stand-up comedy (intentionally!)” — will perform on Thursday, May 1, at 7:30 p.m.

“Hilarious, Gentile-friendly and 100 percent clean, Rabbi Alper performs sold-out comedy shows all over North America, is featured daily on Sirius/XM satellite radio and has appeared on *The Today Show*, *ABC Evening News*, *Good Morning America*, Comedy Central, Showtime, and CNN,” a news release points out. Alper’s comedy performance at Temple Emanu-El four years ago “was a sold-out sensation, and event organizers are delighted to welcome him (and his new material!) back again,” the release adds.

The Temple is located at 151 McIntosh Road in Sarasota.

General admission tickets for the show are \$20 if purchased by April 25; they will be \$25 at the door. The performance will be preceded by a dessert reception with the comedian at 7 p.m.; tickets for that event are \$36 and include reserved seating for the show, the release notes. Adults and children age 11 and older are welcome.

Paid reservations may be mailed to Temple Emanu-El Comedy Show, 151 McIntosh Road, Sarasota, Florida 34232. The names of people attending and the types of tickets being purchased (\$36 dessert reception tickets or \$20 general admission tickets) should be included. For more information, call 379-1997.




## MERWIN TO SPEAK ON OVERSTUFFED HISTORY OF THE JEWISH DELI

During a May 5 gathering of the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism (CHJ), Ted Merwin, “writer, journalist, noted public speaker and just plain fun,” will present an interactive multimedia program on the changing place of the Jewish deli in American life, a news release says.

The topic officially is *An Overstuffed History of the Jewish Deli or You Don't Have to be Jewish to Enjoy This*, the release notes.

“Everyone can relate, laugh and applaud, and some will get hungry,” the release notes. For the latter, box lunches from [TooJay's](#) will be available following the lecture, the release adds. “Folks can stay, sit around and remember their own experiences,” it says.

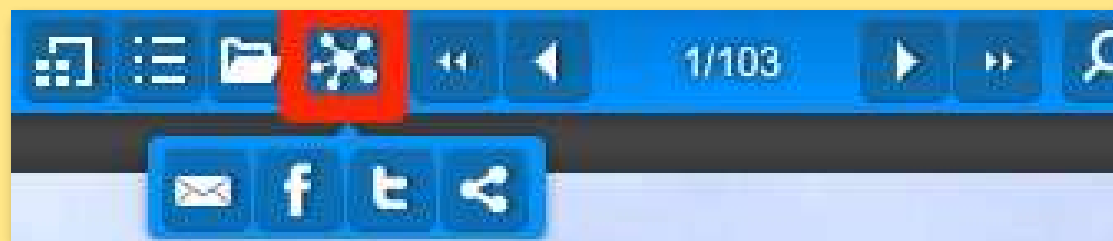
The lecture will begin at 11 a.m. The CHJ meets at Unity, located at 3023 Proctor Road in Sarasota. The cost is \$10 in advance or \$12 at the door.

The registration deadline is April 27, the release points out. Forms for tickets and ordering lunch, if you wish (\$13), are available at [chj-sarasota.org](http://chj-sarasota.org) or by calling 377-1003. 



Ted Merwin/Contributed photo

### QUICK TIP



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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## THE BEST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>18+</b> APRIL	<b>Asolo Repertory Theatre presents <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i></b> Through April 19; times vary. Mertz Theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$23 to \$76. Information: 351-8000 or <a href="http://AsoloRep.org">AsoloRep.org</a> .
<b>18+</b> APRIL	<b>Dabbert Gallery presents Barbara Krupp and Allan Teger</b> Through April 28; times vary. 76 S. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Free admission. Information: 955-1315 or <a href="http://DabbertGallery.com">DabbertGallery.com</a> .
<b>18+</b> APRIL	<b>Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe presents <i>Bubbling Brown Sugar</i></b> Through May 11; times vary. 1646 10th Way, Sarasota. Tickets: \$29.50. Information: 366-1505 or <a href="http://wbtsrq.org">wbtsrq.org</a> .
<b>18+</b> APRIL	<b>Florida Studio Theatre presents <i>Tom Jones</i></b> Through June 1; times vary. Gompertz Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets: \$19 to \$42. Information: 366-9000 or <a href="http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org">FloridaStudioTheatre.org</a> .
<b>19</b> APRIL	<b>Annual Siesta Village Easter Egg Hunt</b> April 19, 9 to 11:30 a.m. For children ages 1 to 6. Preregistration required at <a href="http://siestakeyvillage.org">siestakeyvillage.org</a> . 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.
<b>26+</b> APRIL	<b>36th Annual Siesta Fiesta</b> 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 <a href="http://website">website</a> .
<b>28</b> APRIL	<b>Gloria Musicae presents <i>Voices of the Holocaust</i></b> April 28, 7:30 p.m. Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets: \$25 to \$70. Information: 953-3368 or <a href="http://GloriaMusicae.org">GloriaMusicae.org</a> .



# SAFE HARBOR AT LAST

PRESS



**Norman Schimmel**  
Photographer

**The Sarasota News Leader**  
WEEK 10/15/18 2018      Expires 10/15/2018

## 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.*